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**The “Boomerang generation” in Italy.**  
**Trend and determinants of young people returning to**  
**the parental home in a context of economic crisis and**  
**uncertainty**

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# Abstract

Few empirical researches have focused on young people returning to parental home and on its trend over time, even more so in Italy. This thesis is designed to contribute in filling this gap. The general aim is to establish a foundational understanding of this phenomenon in Italy, unfolding its main determinants, and understanding whether and to what extent it was affected by the economic crises of 2008. Using nine waves (from 2006 to 2014) of the Eurostat Longitudinal Survey on Income and Living Conditions was possible to compare the period of the crisis (2008-2012) with the one before (2006-2007) and the one after (2013-2014). The longitudinal design of the survey allowed to situate returning home phenomenon in the framework of life-course transitions, inquiring how it is related to other individual's life course turning points. Furthermore, panel-data structure of the dataset, made possible the use of longitudinal model allowed. The empirical analysis is mainly oriented to define the effect of economic uncertainty on the residential careers of individuals in the 18-34 age group, specifically on their return into parental home (*boomerang moves*). Since residential careers are embedded in social and cultural contexts which reproduce specific mechanisms of social inequalities, the analysis is also oriented to understand the role that individual characteristics (mainly educational level, gender and age), social class and familiar resources (household disposable income and tenure status) have on mediating the returning home phenomena.

The main findings suggest that, in Italy, the quota of young people *boomeranging* into parental home is relevant (especially those in their 20s). The analysis highlights a significant rising trend during the period of economic crises, especially in the second more severe phase (from the half of 2010 to 2012), emphasizing the determinant effect of economic hardships (condition of unemployment and inactivity) and marital instability. Regarding the economic transition markers, appears that is not so much the type of shift in the employment status (like getting unemployed), but the change in employment status itself, to be a good predictor of home returning. The most relevant finding, however, is about the interaction between social class and economic status. What emerges, is that family serves as a form of protection mainly for young people of the high class (in a status of unemployment/inactivity), who get residential

support until the achievement of a high-level and stable job which can fulfill their expectations.

# Introduction

In the past decades, the transition to the adult state has lost its previous linearity (Billari & Liefbroer, 2010; Micheli & Rosina, 2010; Bynner, 2012). Young adults are facing less standardized and more individualized pathways (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991) no longer marked by stable and shared biographical events that involve the acquisition of adult roles. In life course theory, these events are defined as turning points since they imply significant changes in life roles, involving a substantial adjustment of values, priorities, responsibilities, and external expectations (Wheaton & Gotlib, 1997). Especially within a context featured by instability and uncertainty (Mills, Blossfeld, & Klijzing, 2005; Brückner & Mayer, 2005), these biographic transitional events, like concluding education, entering into the labour market, leaving parental home, getting married and then having child, are postponed and not anymore granted (Billari & Liefbroer, 2010). Evidence from large scale comparative research has pointed out that uncertainty about economic and social developments has risen in any European country as a consequence of globalization and transnationalization (Buchholz, 2009; Blossfeld, 2008). In particular, “economic pressure on younger individuals and their increasing vulnerability to various types of insecurity in their early employment lives have impacted on individual decision in private life” (Hofäcker & Blossfeld, 2011, p. 9), affecting relationship formation and family planning.

Since the 90's, a strand of studies has given relevance to the relation between economic uncertainty growth and transitions to adulthood (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Mills, Blossfeld, & Klijzing, 2005; Bertolini, 2011). Those studies demonstrate that young adults' dependency on parents has amplified, provoking the increase and the extension of parent-child coresidence (Aassve, Cottini, & Vitali, 2013; Isengard & Szydlik, 2012). This trend has been interpreted as a response to the high unemployment rate, financial hardship and increasing risk of poverty, exacerbated by the global recession of the late 2000s (Wang & Morin, 2009; Scarpetta, Sonnet, & Manfredi, 2010; Mykyta & Macartney, 2011; Mykyta, 2012). However, besides those delaying leaving home, the rise in coresidence could reflect increasing rates of young adults returning to their parents' house (Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2011;

Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2014). According to Berngruber (2016, p. 209), “In quantitative empirical research, spatial detachment from the family of origin is mostly confined to analyzing the first time of leaving home, whereas leaving home can be a process, complex and non-linear”, and may include also home returning. Vaskovics (2001), pointing out the many facets of this process, distinguishes four typical configurations of detachment: *delayed*, *partial*, *gradual*, and *reversible*. In the first case, young people extend the stay in the parental home, postponing the ultimate detachment. In a condition of a partial detachment, instead, young people live with their parents despite the fact of being financially independent. While, gradual detachment refers to forms of commuting between the parents’ household and another place of residence, like student residences or flat-sharing community in other cities. Finally, he takes into account the possible reversibility of residential detachment. Young adults who return to their parents, after periods of living elsewhere, have been defined “boomerang kids” (Mitchell, 2006). Their experience represents the landmark of the complex and discontinuous process involved in the achievement of adult roles (Sassler, Ciambone, & Benway, 2008), in which traditional ‘transition markers’ have become reversible and revisable (Mitchell, 2006). It means that leaving home does not necessarily imply a permanent change. Young adults can move out and then return, one or more times, before achieving residential independence.

Focusing on “boomerangers” allows to take into account the increasing fluidity of the young adults’ life course and to analyze how the process of returning home affects intergenerational family relationships. The implications of returning home are ambivalent and influenced by many factors: from the personal reasons for returning to the coresidence norms consolidated in a context (Kleinepier, Berrington, & Stoeldraijer, 2017). On a side, returning home can be considered a form of protection against labor market risks, which offers financial and emotional support (Lewis et al., 2015; Kaplan, 2012). On the other, returning can be regarded as a personal failure. A forced renunciation of residential independence which may have a negative implication for the well-being of both parents and children (Sassler, Ciambone, & Benway, 2008; Pickhardt, 2011; Tosi & Grundy, 2018). Attaining or maintaining residential independence appears particularly hard in a period of economic setbacks,

and, in the last two decades, it is no longer uncommon for young adults to return after having left home. This phenomenon and its determinants has received a fair academic attention in the American context (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999; Da Vanzo & Goldscheider, 1990; Sassler, Ciambrone, & Benway, 2008; Wang & Morin, 2009) and in the Canadian one (Gee & Mitchell, 2003; Mitchell, 2006; Mitchell, 2017), while in Europe, the literature on this topic is still scarce, with the exception of few recent seminal work in UK (Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2011; Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2014; Sandberg-Thoma, Snyder, & Jang, 2015) and Germany (Berngruber, 2015; van den Berg, Kalmijn, & Leopold, 2019).

This thesis aims to contribute to this literature concerning the Italian case. Then, given that family resources and social class are considered the main explanatory factors of *boomeranging* phenomenon, the thesis also aims to contribute also the literature concerning the relationship between social class on the residential careers of young people, until now scarcely explored in Italy (Bertolini, 2011).

With regard to the structure of the thesis, have been developed four chapters, which are roughly outlined below. The first chapter is dedicated to the review of the literature concerning the field of youth studies (outlining the debate between the transitions approach and cultural approach) and to a detailed examination of the life course perspective, considered the most appropriate to analyze the boomeranging phenomenon. The second chapter, still dedicated to theory, deals with the literature review about intergenerational relations, focusing on the perspectives of intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational ambivalence. In the third chapter, after the definition of the research hypotheses, is described in details the empirical strategy: the structure of the survey (EU-SILC) used for the analyzes, the sample selection, the operationalization procedures of every single variable and the statistical method used. The fourth chapter is devoted to the discussion of the results.

# Chapter 1

## Main analytical Frameworks in Youth Studies and the Life Course Perspective

### 1.1 Introduction

The Chapter is initially dedicated to the debate that has developed in the field of youth studies, following the economic and demographic transformations that contemporary society has undergone. Then, the chapter focuses on the presentation of the life course framework, considered the most appropriate to analyze the returning home (*boomeranging*) phenomena.

At first, it is proposed a critical analysis of the conceptual construct of youth (1.2), with a broad reflection on the relationship between individual development and autonomy (1.2.1). Afterward, it is outlined the theoretical opposition between the “twin tracks” of transitions and cultural perspectives, that has characterized the field of youth studies from the beginning (1.3) and is still influencing the current debate, originated from the social transformations of the 70s (1.3.1). Social change and the process of de-standardization of biographical trajectories gave the birth to two new approaches that attempted to *bridge the previous theoretical gap*, albeit developing in opposition to each other. On a side, a new transitions approach (1.3.2), oriented to redefine the meaning of transitional processes, on the other, the generational approach (1.3.3), founded on contemporary cultural studies and interested to the new forms of subjectification of social change. After an overview of the main criticisms (1.3.3.1) and the main potentialities (1.3.3.2) of the generational approach, are emphasized its points of convergence with the transitional approach and highlighted the possibilities to integrate them (1.3.4). In vein with this conciliatory and integrative standpoints, the concept of *boomerang generation* (1.4) is used to frame the object of

the research of this doctoral thesis. Coherently, it is presented the life course theoretical framework (1.5) (with a focus on some of its most useful conceptual tenets), considered as the most appropriate to set interpretative hypothesis on *boomeranging* phenomena and grasp new form of inequalities among young people facing a phase of transition to adulthood (1.5.1).



## 1.2 Youth, a problematic conceptual construct

The economic and demographic transformations that contemporary society has undergone involved the whole society, although young people have been affected more than others. People born after 1980 are still facing far less favorable living conditions than their parents (Bessant, Farthing, & Watts, 2017) and their transition to adulthood (which has always been one of the most complex phase of biographical development) appears much more difficult than in the past. Individualization had two main consequences: a process of detraditionalization and a process of De-standardization (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). On the one hand, the detraditionalization process, strengthened by the neoliberal public discourse, favored the emergence of a value system based on self-interest and self-realization, placing on the shoulders of young people the responsibility of their own destiny. On the other hand, a process of De-standardization of biographies made the boundaries between the phases of life to become less defined and the order and the timing of transitional events lost their normative character.

Based on the new conditions in which young people have to face their transition to adulthood, and in particular the lengthening of the path to reach a condition of full autonomy, some scholars identify the existence of a new phase between those of youth and adulthood. Arnett (2007; 2000) defines this phase *emerging adulthood* and describes it as a period in which individuals, in their late teens and early twenties, tend to explore many possible life directions. In contrast to the Arnett's thesis and those who claim the existence of a new phase of individual development, some authors, including Wyn and Woodman (2006; 2007), argue that it is essential to redefine the very concepts of youth and of adulthood. They stress the importance of grasping the characteristics of a *new youth* and of a *new adulthood* (Wyn 2004; Wyn and Woodman 2006), which is no longer based on the achievement of a stable and definitive condition.

In the distinction between adulthood and youth (and in the definitional dispute over these terms) the biographical development of a person and his relationship with autonomy is fundamental. Thus, in the next paragraph the concept of autonomy will

be deepened, specifying three analytical dimensions that are useful to interpret the phenomenon of young people returning to their parents' home.

### **1.2.1 Autonomy, three relevant analytical dimensions**

As recalled by Bertolini (2018), in its etymological roots, the term autonomy indicates the ability of an individual to make a decision in a conscious and not forced way, assuming the moral responsibility for his actions. Nevertheless, in sociology the notion of youth autonomy refers to plural definitions, depending on whether the emphasis is placed on the independence from the family of origin or the creation of individual identity or the ability to manage the everyday life through relevant and personal choices. Moreover, the different definitions of autonomy have accumulated over time without having been replaced (Cicchelli & Galland, 2009). Since this heterogeneity, it is worthy to unfold the concept of autonomy into proper analytical dimensions which can offer an interpretative contribution regarding the relationship between uncertainty and autonomy, very relevant for my thesis. Indeed, the main research question aims to analyze how the conjugal instability and the employment uncertainty (experiences of unemployment or inactivity) of young people influence their housing career (specifically the return into parental home), a phenomenon which involves widely their personal autonomy. Consequently, the way in which Bertolini (2018) deals with the concept of autonomy, breaking it down into the three analytical dimensions of *residential autonomy*, *economic autonomy* and *psychological autonomy*, seems particularly fitting for my purposes. Taking from her book, these three dimensions are detailed below.

*Residential autonomy* is considered a particularly important event, because, among other things, it explicitly marks the development of individual independence and the assumption of roles of responsibility. Living independently is considered a crucial step towards adulthood, that is linked to the assumption of full responsibility of own actions and to a creation of an individual identity, beyond the one defined by the relations with parents (family identity). Once parental home is leaved, other steps to reach the adult life can take place. For many young people, for example, leaving without parents is seen as a precondition for getting married and having children.

*Economic autonomy* is pivotal to maintain an own residential autonomy, because it is a precondition for managing all expenses required by an independent life. Furthermore, economic autonomy emerges as a strong identity factor, which denotes capacity for self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and often entails a sense of self-realization. For example, for the young people of the lower classes, economic independence is the main ambition and the fundamental form of self-fulfillment. As we will see later, whether for high educated young people (belonging to higher classes) the concept of autonomy corresponds mainly to an issue of reaching a desired job position, for low educated peers (coming from the lower class), autonomy is associated to an issue of economic/financial independence (Colombo, Leonini, & Rebughini, 2018; Rebughini, Colombo, & Leonini, 2017; Bertolini, Hofäcker, & Torrioni, 2019). In this perspective, the precariousness of employment influences youth autonomy from different points of views. Economic autonomy can be seen as the ability of young people to meet their needs without using informal financial support or subsidies from public or private organizations (Bertolini, 2018). Said that, we must take into account that the economic autonomy of young people depends not only on their economic resources, coming from their work and their professional status, but also from the resources available in their own family. A young person may be able to cover his needs, whether unemployed or temporary inactive, due to the financial support of parents.

Autonomy is a fundamental psychological need in adult life, linked to personal well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Baranowska-Rataj & et al, 2015). When these need is supported by institutional and social contexts and can be met by individuals, well-being increases. Instead, when the context blocks or hinder the satisfaction of the fundamental need for autonomy, well-being diminishes. *Psychological autonomy* can be defined as the sense of individual free will, the desire to self-organize experience and behavior, and to have a concordance between practices and the perception of the own self (Deci & Ryan, 2000). A person is autonomous when he or she fully supports the actions in which is engaged and when takes full responsibility for the values expressed by his behavior (Baranowska-Rataj et al, 2015). In sum, the question of autonomy concerns the extent to which one determines and sustains his own actions (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The opportunity to act respecting individual interests, values

and desires also depends on the social and economic macro conditions in which young people are placed in.

These contingencies change the way young people deal with autonomy and also change the meaning assumed by adulthood, which is another pivotal topic of discussion in youth studies, that seen opposing the supporters of the transition approach and supporters of the generational approach

### 1.3 The “twin tracks” of *transitions* and *cultural perspectives*

For a long time, the youth studies proceeded on a "twin track": the cultural perspective on a side and the transitions one on the other (Cohen, 2003). The former centered on youth cultures, lifestyles, consumptions etc., the latter on the stages that mark the transition from youth to adulthood and in particular the transition from school to work (Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn, 2011). The separation between the two perspectives was based on different analytical frameworks and methodologies. As stated by Woodman and Bennett (2015, p. 1) “Researchers studying transitions look to identify patterns of transition and the structures of inequality visible within these patterns, often but not exclusively drawing on quantitative datasets”. Researchers using a cultural perspective, instead, “tend to draw on ethnographic methods, focusing on the meaning of experiences and events to young people themselves, often with the aim of highlighting young peoples’ creativity and/or ‘political’ resistance to the status quo” (ibidem). Since the two perspectives have distinctly different focuses, the authors rise a warning about potentially misleading or overly simplistic conclusions. The emphasis on cultural aspects, in fact, can lead to an underestimation of structural processes and therefore of the mechanisms of reproduction of inequality; on the contrary, the focus on structural processes risks underestimating the active role played by young people in dealing with the limits and opportunities dictated by the context. The aspects that give shape to young people’s lives are manifold and intertwined. To be properly analyzed they require an integration of cultural and structural perspectives, an attention to both subjective and objective dimensions, and a focus on the new forms and mechanisms of inequality reproduction.

The centrality that *change* assumed in youth studies put at the center of the debate another issue which is crucial for the whole social theory: the *agency-structure relationship*. Despite a substantial agreement regarding the greater relevance of the agency in the construction of youth biographies, a strong discussion developed between "voluntarists" and "determinists" (White e Wyn 1998). Between those who support the primacy of reflexivity and agency, and those who affirm that social

positions (in terms of class, gender and race) strongly binds the opportunities offered to young people, the resources on which they can rely to achieve their objectives, as well as their aspirations for the future and their scope for action. The dichotomy between agency and structure, put in these terms, is one of the main dimensions on which is grounded the *twin track* of transitions and culture. The debate was developed mainly through the opposition of Beck and Bourdieu, respectively the reference for the primacy of reflexivity and for the prevalence of structural conditioning. Beck (and the other theorists of individualization) is disputed for the excessive emphasis placed on the concept of *choice biography* (Woodman, 2009), to say the role of individual choices in the definition of life trajectories, as well as for the underestimation of the concept of social class. On the contrary, Bourdieu is accused of determinism by those who see in his concept of habitus the denial of agency possibilities (Evans, 2002; Archer, 2007). Some contributions attempted to overcome the controversy between the supporters of the end of inequality and the supporters of the persistence of the mechanisms of its reproduction, showing that agency and structure do not necessarily have to be conceived as opposed and self-excluding. Middle-ground theories such as the *structured individualism* of Rudd and Evans (1998) and the *bounded agency* of Evans (2007) are useful to understand how in contemporary societies the room for individual agency has widened, despite structural conditioning is still active and bonding.

Dealing with contemporary world requires many personal capacities, for instance the ability to face risks, to seize opportunities and to cope with uncertainty, but also the availability of many kind of resources to support own life projects. These resources and individual capabilities are not equally distributed among young people and depend almost entirely on their family of origin. For this reason, it is required an acknowledged about new forms of inequality and the new mechanisms by which it is reproduced. In this regard, some authors pointed out how the analysis of inequalities has become increasingly complex starting from the 70s. The main arguments to support their claim are influenced by the individualization thesis. One, is that the extension of access to higher education and the generalized precariousness of work made determination of social position by occupation more uncertain (Furlong, 2011). A second one, is that the subjective identification of class belonging

has become less readable, because of the erosion of collective belonging which weakened the connection between class membership and class consciousness (Furlong, 2012). Along this line, another argument is that classical factors of inequality (gender and race) also act less clearly than in the past, due to growing education, increasing participation of women in the labour market, and new employment opportunities that (in a globalized society) offer chances to foreigner young people (Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn, 2011).

While recognizing these significant changes in the educational system and in the labor market, in this thesis, the collective belongings (especially that of social class) and the family of origin's characteristics are considered factors that still strongly influence reproduction of inequalities and young people lives. To fit this theoretical position in the debate, it is worthy to get back to Bourdieu's theory. Contrary to what is claimed by those who accuse him of determinism, Bourdesian conceptual triad of capitals, habitus and fields, has much to offer on the crucial issues of inequalities (Spanò, 2018). He accounts simultaneously the relationship between the economic and the cultural spheres, the relationship between structure and reflexivity (or, in his terms, between *habitus* and *subjectivity*) and more generally the relationship between continuity and change. The recent perspectives of class analysis, more holistic and more attentive to cultural and subjective dimensions (Bottero, 2004; Crompton, 2008), as well as the approaches aimed at analyzing the intersections between the different axes of inequality (Anthias, 2013), take on the bourdieusian and post-bourdieusian foundation, coming to represent an important improvement in the extension of the conceptual repertoire to study inequality. New class analysis shows that economics and culture do not constitute a mutually exclusive alternative in the analysis of inequalities (Weeden & Grusky, 2005), since class difference is not just a matter of unequal distribution of economic resources, but also a matter of unequal recognition and dissimilar system of values, norms and expectations. That is the reason why, in the empirical design of this thesis (as will be detailed in the subchapter 3.3.4), to analyze the effect of social class on the *returning home* phenomena are taken into account both the cultural dimension (the highest educational level of parents) and the economic dimension (the household disposable income).

### 1.3.1 Recent transformations, social change and the current debate

Resuming the discussion on the growing complexity of young people lives and on the new forms of inequality, it must be recognized that the 70s were a turning point in Western societies. Although the origin of the youth studies can be traced back to almost a century ago, it is from the 70s that the debate took its current form, always maintaining that *twin track* that have characterized the field since the beginning and specifically opposing the *transitions* approach to the *generations* one (as will be detailed below). Starting from those years, the globalization and the changes in the economy, following the neoliberal turn (increasing unemployment and precarization of work), led to a substantial reshaping of the institutional scenario in which young people were called to become adults (Woodman & Bennett, 2015). The welfare system become more and more inadequate to support discontinuous and fragmented professional careers and its weaknesses entailed a shift from social responsibility to individual responsibility. All this led to a progressive disappearance of a model of transitions proper of the Fordist society, still considered as “normal” in the collective imaginary, in which youth is a phase of preparation to work, adulthood a phase of realization and old age a phase of withdrawal from work (Kohli 1985). Since linear transitions (from school to work, from youth to adulthood, from dependence to independence) can no longer be taken for granted, also the vocabulary of the studies on transitions need to be re-thought. Indeed, the attention that today is placed on the plurality of transitions to adulthood brings structural studies to redefine the very poles of the transition process and to reflect on the characteristics of a *new youth* (Leccardi and Ruspini 2006) and of a *new adulthood* (Wyn 2004; Wyn and Woodman 2006). The de-standardization of the life course also sparked the interest of new cultural studies, interested in the way young people build their own identity and orientate themselves towards the future (Cohen, 2003). This line of research, originated from the *Birmingham School*, takes the move from classical cultural studies, questioning the



existence of a general youth culture in itself<sup>1</sup>. The related studies, on one hand were focused on the dissimilarities that separate the experiences of young people of different generations, on the other, were oriented to analyze how the traits considered typical of a specific youth culture tend to persist along the life course (in other words, if specific attitudinal traits can be considered the result of an age effect or of a generational effect) (Woodman and Bennett 2015).

Social change and the process of de-standardization of biographical trajectories (that challenges the normative trait of age, implicit in the original conceptualization of transition) gave the birth to new approaches that attempt to *bridge the gap* between cultural and structural studies, so far considered two irreconcilable strands. On a side, a new transitions approach, oriented to redefine the meaning of transitional processes and to reflect on the new characteristics of youth and adulthood. On the other, the generational approach, which, founded on the new cultural studies, places great emphasis on the subjectivity of young people but also accounts the structural traits defining their generational belonging (Wyn & Woodman, 2011; Wyn, 2011). Especially this latter approach represents an important attempt to make the twin tracks converge, however, it has also aroused numerous criticisms. Some scholars underlined its excessively homogenizing vision, criticizing the dangerous underestimation of inequalities, and an excessive focus on change, which risk to leave in the shade the elements of continuity (first of all the reproduction of inequalities mechanisms) (Roberts K. , 2007; 2009).

To a closer look, the dilemmas that characterize today's debate in Youth Studies, namely the opposition between generations and transitions approaches, constitute a legacy of twin tracks that have characterized this area of studies from the beginning (Cohen 2003). The continuation of this subchapter is thus dedicated to these two approaches, starting with a brief introduction of each, then with a focus on criticisms and strengths of the generational approach and finally with a perspective of theoretical integration.

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<sup>1</sup> The reference is mainly to the sub-cultures approach (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson, & Roberts, 2006), developed in the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS)

### 1.3.2 Transitions approach

The transition to adulthood consists in achieving some crucial steps in the lives of individuals: leave parental home, find the first employment, get married and then have child. If once the life cycle was identified by well-defined phases, ordered and linked to the age of individuals, after the 70s, the transition to the adult state has lost its previous linearity (Billari & Liefbroer, 2010; Micheli & Rosina, 2010; Bynner, 2012). Trajectories within family and work life have gone from being very predictable and synchronized to complex and diversified. The de-standardization of individual trajectories makes *risk* a structural condition of social life (Beck, 1992) and thus, postponing the leave from parental home can be considered a way to cope with social uncertainty. In any case, beyond this specific dynamic, the transition to adulthood has become *reversible* and *revisable* (Mitchell, 2006). The fact that transitional markers follow an irregular chronological order and are often characterized by an alternation of “steps forward” and “steps backwards”, led Biggart and Walther (2006) to use the definition of “yo-yo transitions” and led Mitchell (2006) to coin the “boomerang” metaphor. However, this reversibility does not imply that the biographical events marking the transition to adult life have lost their relevance. Their meaning has profoundly changed, but they still remain a benchmark in the collective imagination, representing the reference of an appropriate transition to adulthood. An ideal-typical pattern that seem increasingly unable to find applicability in a post-modern scenario, progressively more individualistic and focused on present<sup>2</sup>, but still capable to drive expectations of young people and their parents.

Roberts (2009) states that these processes of transformation faced by the Western societies are not good evidence to claim the need for overcoming the transitions approach, as advocated by some scholar, including Wyn and Woodman (2007). According to Roberts, the criticisms to transitions approach derive from an incorrect assessment of the new theorization. Indeed, he highlights that the new approach went

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<sup>2</sup> In particular, the prolonged education, the precariousness of work and the growing unemployment have postponed the achievement of independence and have entailed a shift in the conception of youth (Spanò, 2018)

much further compared to the initial theorizations focused almost exclusively on the school-work transition and on assumptions of linearity, normativity and de-contextualization proper of the psycho-social model of development (France & Roberts, 2015). New transitions theorists do not deal exclusively with school-work transitions (overcoming the first major criticism) and have abandoned an evolutionary vision of the life course, as the assumption of a normative linearity of transitions, (overcoming the second major criticism) in favor of a more constructivist perspective in which transitions are conceived as social construction. Also the contextual specificities are now taken seriously into consideration. For instance, although across Western countries occurred a common extension in the permanence of adult children within parents' house (Bynner, 2012; Seifgge-Krenke, 2013; Sherrod, 1996), any national context, with its cultural, institutional and economic specificities, is considered to have an influence on the process of transitions to adulthood (Billari F. C., 2004). In this regard, some scholars, engaged in comparative investigations (Blossfeld et al., 2006), analyzed the variations in the main transition processes with respect to the institutional contexts of the countries, in order to grasp main similarities and differences. Walther (2006) has identified four different *transitions regimes*, accounting the institutional structures (education system, labor market, support policies for young people and the family), but also the cultural framework characterizing the different contexts. One is the *universalistic transition regime*, typical of the Scandinavian countries, characterized by a large public commitment towards young people. Then there is the *liberal regime*, taking place in the United Kingdom, where youth is seen as a transitional phase oriented to an economic independence, in which young people are considered responsible for their future (the benefits offered on a universalistic basis are limited, and the possibility of using interventions to support employability are scarce). Then the *employment-centered transition regime*, typical of continental European countries (Germany, France), which looks at young people as subjects engaged in the acquisition of a social and employment position and whose interventions are generally aimed to compensate for educational or social resource deficits (for those who are unable to find their place independently). Finally the *sub-protective transition regime*, present in Southern European countries (Italy, Spain and Portugal), where poor welfare protection and

reduced standard job opportunities charge on the family the cost of siblings' transition to adulthood (which is on average particularly extended in terms of timing).

The success of the transition to adult status, in the absence of institutional support (like the Italian case), depends almost completely on the resources of families and on the ability of the subjects to orient themselves, to make the right choices in condition of widespread uncertainty (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014). The relationship between young people and their family of origin is another issue on which is based the opposition between the transitions approach and the generational approach, which is going to be detailed in the next paragraph.

### **1.3.3 Generational approach**

The concept of generation is very much in use today both in academic discourse and in journalistic language. Terms like *baby boomers*, *generation x*, *generation y*, *millennials*, *digital generation* and so on, are terms widely used to highlight differences among groups of people of different ages. The term *generation*, however, is rather ambiguous. Arber and Attias-Donfut (2002) identify five different meanings of generation. The *demographic generation*, which indicates a group of people born in the same period, and who therefore found themselves living a certain period or historical event at the same age (here the concept of generation coincides with that of cohort). The *family generations*, referred to the succession of generations in kinship; the *historical generation*, which calculates the difference in years between the generation of the fathers and that of the children in a given historical period (measuring the speed of turnover between one (family) generation and another. Then the *institutional generation*, which is the aggregation of different age groups, defined on the basis of the institutionalized stages of the life course (education, work, pension) and based on the similarity of these characteristics fitted together. Finally, the *social generation*, introduced by Mannheim (1928), which is the basis of the generational approach in youth studies. The conceptualization of social generation, as highlighted by Woodman (2016), includes two essential elements. The first, is that a generation is not simply a group of people born more or less the same time but a group of people sharing a precise location, characterized by the same historical conditions. The

second, is that this location shapes common ways of acting and feeling meaningful experiences among who are part of it. The generation produces, although not in a deterministic way, new subjectivities, since the new social structures require new models of action and expression.

As said, the meaning of traditional markers in the passage to adulthood have profoundly changed, and although these changes have effects on all generations, the generations *post 1970* are the most affected. Driven by the need to adapt to the new world in which they live, new generations are developing new models and new priority systems. For some authors (Wyn & Woodman, 2011; Wyn, 2011; Wyn, Lantz, & Harris, 2012), these new models of life, as well as the new meanings that young people attribute to their experiences, are not simply temporary, due to an age-effect, but are destined to last well beyond the transition phase normally identified as "youth", which implies that we are faced with a generational shift (Wyn & Woodman, 2007). The proposal, on which these authors agree, is therefore to adopt the concept of social generation as the one best able to capture the link between social changes and the new subjectivities that take shape following these changes, trying to bridge the gap between agency and structure.

Woodman, who traces the history of the concept of generation, stress that its appearance in youth studies dates back in 60s, to describe the generation gap between youth culture and the culture of fathers. The success of sub-culture theories, which frame youth cultural trends as response to class inequality, led in the 1970s to the marginalization of the concept of generation, accused to be impermeable to the theme of inequality (Woodman & Wyn, 2015). Today the generational perspective is re-emerging, trying to overcome the criticism regarding the excessive homogenizing interpretation and the underestimation of inequalities. However, Mannheim (1952) already pointed out that within the same generation can be identified different social groups (which he calls *generational units*), who experience the same epochal events in a different way. Being women or men, native or immigrant, high educated or low educated, as well as belonging to a specific social class, entail constraints and resources that changes the experience of a common structural condition.

The youth condition requires a careful analysis of the new practices that young people put into practice in the various spheres of life. Also the role played by the family is crucial (Wyn, 2011). Lantz and Harris (2012) state that youth studies do not pay enough attention to the family and lack of adequate problematization of the adult status. In their opinion, achieving independence is usually defined deterministically by the event of leaving home, without considering the changes that have affected the relations between the young and the family of origin. These changes concern the extension of family permanence, but also the emergence of states of interdependence continuously negotiated, also when young people do not live in parents households (Lahelma & Gordon, 2008). The critical arguments against the transitional approach, for its excessive determinism and an over normativity, are taken up by Cuervo and Wyn (2014). Their proposal is to overcome the foundational spatial metaphor of the transitions, and all the related ones (trajectories, paths, navigations, etc.), in favor of the relational metaphor of belonging. In this representation, youth is not conceived as a space to be traversed, following normatively prescribed steps and trajectories, but rather as a social process in which young people actively participate. The reference to belonging is not to be understood in its political sense of membership, but in its sociological meaning, oriented to an “understanding of the ways in which relationships with others, with institutions and with places are implicated in the processes understood as transition” (ivi, p. 906). A belonging which shapes the practices that young people put in place in the everyday to build their lives. The metaphor of belonging tries to keep together material conditions and subjective elements, shifting the focus of the analysis from the outcomes of transitions to the process in itself.

### **1.3.3.1 Criticisms of the generational approach**

Although in the studies on young people the use of the term generation is ever wider, many criticisms are made of this concept, and of the use made of it by the theorists of the generational approach. Some scholars underlined its excessively homogenizing vision, criticizing the risk of underestimation of inequalities and an excessive focus on change (Roberts K. , 2007; 2009; France & Roberts, 2015), at the expenses of the

ongoing mechanisms of reproduction of inequality, which continue to function according to the classic criteria of class, race and gender (Furlong, 2009; Roberts K., 2009).

Besides these observations, there are also more specific criticisms concerning the issue of generational identity. With regard to the creation of a new generational identity, it has been underlined that, although the effects of social changes of 70s are greater for young people, social macro-changes are actually multigenerational by nature, since their impact extends to all members of society (Roberts K., 2007). In line with this critique, concerning the lack of attention paid to relations between generations, Goodwin and O'Connor (2009) argue that generational approach tends to ignore the relationship between family members who belong to different *family generations*. Social change does not only affect young people and it cannot be ignored that the lives of parents and children are strongly linked and mutually influenced. Roberts (2009) also raises doubts about the emergence of new subjectivities of young people after the *1970 generation*, since, in his opinion, the aspirations and attitudes of young people born after 70s are not substantially different from before. For him, youth was and still continues to be a period of transition and uncertainty by its nature. Furthermore, France and Roberts (2015) argue that it is unclear how social changes are linked to the emergence of a new generation, nor when a new generation begins, nor what are the factors capable of generating a new generational identity. In addition, they highlight the risk that what are defined as the traits of a new generation may actually be age-related characteristics, changing over years (when young people grow and move to other life course stages). In summary, what is a generation, what creates a new generation, and when a generation ends, remain largely unresolved issues for them.

### **1.3.3.2 Potentialities of the generational approaches**

In responding to these criticisms, Wyn and Woodman (2007) claim that we are facing an epochal turning point and although the change is a constant process, in some periods it is particularly significant. The changes occurred after the 70s have already altered the meaning of youth and adulthood and the traditional transitional markers,

which today are experienced as chosen goals, requiring a personal commitment for the achievement and implying individual responsibilities. In other words, for these authors, the orientations of young people have not changed, but their subjective meaning are. However, it is above all in relation to the critique of underestimation of the inequalities that the responses of generational approach scholars show a radical opposition. While acknowledging that the use of generation label can mask the differences within generations, producing a wrong homogeneous image, they argue to have continually highlighted how the gender, race and social background (including economic and territorial location) have great influence on the possibilities and on the choices of young people. For Wyn and Woodman (2007) the usefulness of adopting the construct of generation lies precisely in the possibility of showing the ways in which inequalities act in contemporary society, understanding the interplay between continuity and change. In their view, the Mannheim's vision of generation (especially the concept of *generational units*) allows to grasp the intersection between subjective experiences and social structures and consequently to expands, rather than limits, the possibility of analyzing the lives of young people, accounting different intertwined structural dimensions like geographical location, gender, race and social class (opening the room to fit the notion of generational unit into class analysis).

However, claiming that social change implies the emergence of a new generation and, even more, the possibility that this generation has the capacity to consciously act as a political subject (aspect implicated in Mannheim's theory), raises some legitimate doubts. On the theoretical level, the challenging point is the importance given to the political dimension. The idea of generational belonging contrasts with the thesis of the end of belongings and with the scarce political activism of today's young people, although the forms of recognition and participation today can take on new forms and be performed with very different dynamics and practices. On the empirical level, instead, the issue is the definition of the boundaries which allow to identify a new generation: how far changes in attitudes, values and norms should spread, in order to define new generational traits?

Some recent researches conducted in Italy, on youth in time of crises and uncertainty, (Colombo & Rebughini, 2015; Spanò, 2017; Bertolini, 2018) have revealed that signs of social change exist and are widely perceived by young people, but seem to concern



them differently due to their characteristics and belongings (the intersection of social class, educational level and gender). Looking at the meanings young people attributed to work and autonomy, but also to perspective on the future, to aspirations, to the value attributed to relationships (in particular with parents), emerges that the effects of this change may also vary significantly. From those who consider work a form of survival and uncertainty a serious threat to their future, to those who perceive work as an opportunity for self-realization and uncertainty as a universe of opportunities. What seems to emerge are new forms of social and political action which appear to be different from those of the past. A commitment which no longer passes through forms of institutionalized collective participation, but becomes consumption choices, interaction mediated by digital devices and individual activities practiced "from below " in the everyday life.

Only time can tell if these changes we are now witnessing will last (clarifying if we are now facing a generation effect or an age effect), and whether the changes in behavior, values and norms will spread homogenously among people belonging to the new generation or will remain bound to specific social groups. What is certain, is that the concept of generation does not have to be considered a monolithic entity, but a social construct, a fluid concept to be stressed and reframed to better understand the changes that are characterizing the contemporary societies and not only young people. As argued by the most important scholars of the generational turn, what can be really investigated today with the concept of generation, what can be revealed, is the relationship between continuity and change (Wyn & Woodman, 2007; Woodman & Wyn, 2015).

### **1.3.4 Perspectives of theoretical integration**

After having presented the core developments of the debate within the youth studies, until the current opposition between transitions and generational approaches (legacy of twin tracks that have characterized this field of study from the beginning), is time to draw some final considerations.

The first consideration to make, is that the youth universe is anything but homogeneous. As claimed by Furlong (2011), inequalities need to be considered more and more the core of youth studies. Indeed, recent researches highlighted the increasingly defined boundaries emerging between the “winners” and the “losers” of the social change actually affecting western societies. On a side those for which it means a widening of choices and possibilities, on the other those for which it means a continuous struggle with uncertainty and precariousness. With regard to inequalities, the real differences between the transitional approach and generational one are less than it may appear from the mutual exchange of criticisms. Both approaches affirm the need to focus on the issue of inequality reproduction, and both highlight the need to grasp the discontinuity elements in social reproduction mechanisms. The debate concerns the conceptual framework capable of capturing these changes. For the supporters of the generational perspective, the concept of generation is the one that allows to analyze the inequalities without reducing them to a deterministic reproduction of social positions, allowing to understand the ways in which the advantages of class are transmitted in a context in which the transmission of status has become more complex (Woodman, 2016). For the supporters of the transitional perspective, instead, the concept of class is the most effective to analyze inequality. However, they both recognized that changes in education (in particular the access to tertiary education) in occupation (transversal precarization of the employment system) and other social changes, affected the predictive power of some classical indicator of social belonging (for example occupational status and educational level). Nonetheless they both argue these indicators are still effective, especially when considered jointly and when a more holistic class perspective is adopted (accounting both cultural and subjective dimensions) (Furlong, 2009; 2011).

This leads to another consideration (the most important one): rather than framing the approach of transitions and the approach of generations as alternatives (sometimes even conceptualized as alternative *paradigms*), it is preferable to see them as complementary. The first informs about the material and normative consequences of the processes of change (the ways and times with which young people build their professional identity, reach their economic independence, leave the parenting house,

and so on) and the second about the subjective implications, including the definition of new goals and values, new ways of conceiving well-being and self-realization, new meanings of being young and being adult, new frame to social groups belongings and new practices in the everyday life. As argued by Woodman and Wyn (2015), supporting the importance of the generational approach does not mean to abandon the study of transitions and vice versa; as long as the attention is not only devoted to the school-work transition, but also to other salient biographical events of young people's lives (Helve and Evans 2013), among all those leading to housing autonomy (Roberts 2013). The arguments of these scholars bolster the claim of the complementarity of the approaches, both with regard to the theoretical frameworks and the empirical constructs. Seems that the points of contact are more numerous than the elements of disagreement and the affirmed irreconcilability of the concepts of transition/class and generation is due to an ideological pre-positioning on the structure-agency dichotomy.

We are in an historical period in which there is no room for undisputed certainties and sedimented knowledge about social changes, but still a time of reflection and understanding. With regard to transitions, there is the need to redefine the boundaries attributed to the concepts of youth and adulthood and overcome the conception that transition to adulthood imply a shift from a condition of dependence to a condition of independence. For instance, Furlong and Cartmel (2007) support an analytical perspective that frames youth as a prolonged condition of semi-dependence, in which young people enjoy wide autonomy without being self-sufficient. With regard to generations, only time can tell us if the changes we are seeing in the last two decades, with the emergence of new diffused behavior and new well-spread values are destined to last (in other words, if we are facing a generation effect or an age effect). The need to account both elements of continuity and elements of change requires scholars to overcome the dualisms that have characterized the studies on young people.

The understanding of the ways in which young people build their lives can only benefit from a dialogue between structural and cultural studies. Beck as a theorist of change (Beck, 1992; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), and Bourdieu as a theorist of reproduction (Bourdieu, 1985; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), do not offer alternative but complementary visions. The dialogue between perspectives that hitherto have

been considered incompatible, can only be fruitful if the aim is to adapt the theoretical framework to the new reality of young people. Understanding what is meant by "young" has undoubtedly become more complex, but on closer inspection it is not only youth that must be rethought, all the life stages should be reframed (Woodman & Bennett, 2015). The boundary between adolescence and youth, for example, is sometimes blurred, as well as the one that separates the condition of young from that of adult. Also in this case must be stressed that the life course is a social construct and age thresholds, that separate one phase from another, are completely arbitrary. Compared to the past, the correspondence between the chronological age and the phases of life has changed: the transition from one phase to another became less clear and reversible. The phases of life are, in short, a social construction, and it is for this reason that we need to analyze what they have become as a result of the processes of social change that run through contemporary society.

## 1.4 The concept of *boomerang generation*

Young people returning to their parental home are the object of research of this thesis. The concept used to frame their life experience, and especially the reversibility of their residential career, is that of *boomerang generation*. Its recent theorization is based on the claim that age similarity is the most influential element in the construction of an historical location (Mitchell, 2006). As already noted by Mannheim (1952[1927], p.297), “the fact that people are born at the same time...does not in itself involve similarity of location; what does create a similar location is that they are in a position to experience the same events”. The age similarity of people comprehensively involved in the process of transition to adulthood is claimed to create a specific historical location, which imply similar experiences related to the same historical events. Therefore, the boomerang generation has been defined as “somewhat akin to a ‘free-floating generation’. It is characteristic of modern times and comprised of a diverse set of young people rather than a distinct generation or group of cohorts confined to a specific time period” (Mitchell, 2006, p. 15). Although the definition may seem a bit vague, it gives precise orientation to the operational definition of the concept. Indeed, it is stated that the concept doesn’t apply to social generations, nor to cohorts, but to age groups, specifically, to the one which include individuals facing their process of transition to adulthood. The age group is a category that does not define uniquely a specific group of people over time (like the category of birth cohort). On the contrary, it classifies a group of people that in a specific time share the same stage of the life course<sup>3</sup>. The choice of the age range of this category is arbitrary, although, in the literature, to identify the individuals involved in the process of transition to adulthood is uses almost univocally the 18-34 age group.

In this thesis, the concept of boomerang generation is used both as theoretical construct of interpretation and as selection criterion in the operational phase. Indeed, for the analyses I selected young people who were aged 18 to 34 during the 2006 EU-

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<sup>3</sup> People classified with a specific age category change year after year, in function of the chronological time. That’s the reason why Mitchel (2006) define the concept of boomerang generation as a free-floating construct

SILC wave and all the individuals in the same age group in the following waves (until the wave of 2014. See cap. 3.3.2 for a more detailed information on sample selection). On a theoretical level, this concept allows to argue that people belonging to the 18-34 age group are experiencing in a similar way the constraints of the current historical context, characterized by widespread uncertainty, structural hardships, job precarity, poor social mobility, uncertain perspective on future and lack of utopias (Colombo, Leonini, & Rebughini, 2018). Such structural contingences was boosted by the economic crises of 2008, which exacerbated social and cultural transformations started with the end of the industrial era and furthered by the process of globalization<sup>4</sup>. The normalization of a persistent perception of crisis and uncertainty, can be considerate as the main common trait of this boomerang generation. The spread of this uncertainty, goes hand in hand with the pluralization and the de-standardization of biographical trajectories. Traditional markers of transition follow increasingly irregular chronological order and are characterized by an alternation of “steps forward” and “steps backwards”, making the transition to adulthood *reversible* and *revisable* (Mitchell, 2006). Thus, the reversibility of traditional transitional markers and the broader perception of reversibility of any important individual achievements can be considerate the other common trait of this boomerang generation.

Besides being a useful interpretative tool with a solid and clear empirical orientation, the concept of boomerang generation allows interesting theoretical speculations in the perspective of integrating generational and the transitional approach. This can be already intuit in its linguistic dimension. Indeed, the concept of *boomerang generation* is expressed using the compound of two words that, taken singularly, recall different semantics and opposite approaches (the one of transition and the one of generation), but put together aim to return an interpretative tool capable to integrate the analytical perspective of each. This concept can be thought as an interpretative tool which allows to understand jointly social change, and new forms of cultural identities, as well as inequalities, and old structures of social stratification. A concept which is

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<sup>4</sup> Namely the spread of digitalization, the affirmation of neoliberal policies and the financialization of the economy (Rebughini, Colombo, & Leonini, 2017).

capable to keep this duality together. On one side, grasping the common traits which are peculiar to the young people (belonging to the same age group) facing the actual macro-structural constrains; characterized by the widespread feeling of uncertainty, a lack of alternatives to this extensive condition of precarity and the reversibility of biographical events which traditionally marked the transition to adult life. On the other, analyzing the differences of their residential careers in the light of classical form of social stratification (grounded on family of origin and social class), accounting for the asymmetries in the availability of economic, social and cultural resources<sup>5</sup>. In the conceptualization of boomerang generation, the generational perspective prevails for understanding social change and the emergent elements of similarity among contemporary young people. Instead, the complemental transitional perspective prevails for accounting structural elements of continuity which entail forms of differentiation among young people, namely the mechanisms of reproduction of inequalities still function according to the classic criteria of race, gender and social class.

The return of children into parental home is witnessing the emergence of new form of interdependence (since achieving independence was usually defined by leaving home) which are negotiated in a differential manner on the basis of individual life experiences and social class of belonging. In light of all this, the theoretical framework considered most appropriate to set interpretative hypothesis on boomeranging phenomena and to grasp new form of inequalities is the one of *life course perspective*.

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to the specificities of class belonging, there are also individual characteristics (for instance, being women or men, high educated or low educated) which can mediate the experience of a common structural conditions and the “sharing” of a common historical location, affecting in turn their own residential career

## 1.5 Life course theoretical framework

During the 70s and the 80s, following the spread of post-positivist culture, family field became more inclusive and open to experimentation, witnessing the emergence of new multidisciplinary perspectives. Life course was the most relevant one, capable to bridge elements across many disciplines and methodological orientations, namely sociology, psychology, economics, history and demography. Its peculiarity, which makes the perspective particularly suitable to my research design, is to offer understanding about change over time in family structure and relationships. “The life course perspective involves a contextual, processual, and dynamic approach to the study of change in the lives of individual family members over time, and of families as social units as they change over historical periods. It thus involves both the micro-social and the macrosocial levels of analysis” (Bengtson & Allen, 2009, p. 492). Change over time has always been challenging for social sciences, due to the difficulties of being understood and explained. At the individual level, was often associated with the concept of *development*. In psychology, this process was compared to an ontogenetic evolution, characterized by change in structure or function of organisms over time (Williams & Wirths, 1965). Some psychologists studied individual change with a “life-span developmental approach” (Baltes, 1987), whose goal was to grasp general principles of lifelong development: recursive similarities and differences in individuals’ development, as well as well as modifications in the development process. With developmental approach has been studied also the change of groups and specifically of families, coining the notion of “family cycle”, considered as stages of family composition and change that affect members’ behavior over time (Hill & Duvall, 1948; Duvall, 1957; Hill & Hansen, 1960; Hill & Mattessich, 1987). Later on, the term “life course” has been reframed by some sociologists who shifted the focus on the social meanings that are applied to life events, individual development, and the development of relationships over time (Riley, Johnson, & Foner, *Aging and society: Volume 3. A sociology of age stratification.*, 1972; Elder, 1975; Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985; Bengtson & Black, 1973). Studying how families change with time, need to take into account connections among individuals, families and social context. Issues of transition and



transmission within families become relevant, and even more relevant become the social constructed meanings attributed to outcomes of these transitions and transmission within specific contexts.

The requirement to refine concepts, methods and theories, in order to understand how the family change over time, gave birth to a new framework known as *life course perspective*. This perspective is one of the most influential approaches in social sciences and focuses on how individuals change their roles and positions over time. It is particularly relevant in the literature on intergenerational relationships since its emphasizes on the interconnection between individual life course and the life course of relatives. The concept of *linked lives* is particularly effective in this regard and indicates that individual life course transitions affect other family members in a dynamic of mutual influence (Elder, 1994). Another analytical focus is about interconnections between individual biography, family and social-historical time (Elder, 1977; Kertzer & Schiaffino, 1983; 1978). As stated by Bengtson and Allen: “In sum, a life course perspective emphasizes the importance of time, context, process, and meaning on individual development and family life” (Bengtson & Allen, 2009, p. 471). These authors underline five essential implications emerging when life course perspective is applied to family field. First, in dealing with families, is necessary to face the issue of generations and accounting how relationships across generations change over time. Second, the social and cultural contexts are crucial to understanding individual lives development. Third, the life course perspective focuses on processes and changes, consequently the empirical design request a diachronic approach. Fourth, life course perspective imply to consider the heterogeneity and the interplay of structures and processes associated with development. Fifth, the benefits of multidisciplinary perspectives and the use of pluralistic methods are strongly emphasized.

Bengtson and Allen (2009), argue that the focus on family allow life course approach to bridges coherently together these two conceptualizations of lives over time. “Between the narrowly defined realm of the microlevel (individual-psychological) and the globally defined macrolevel (social-historical) is the context with which we are concerned here: the family as a small group and as a social structure. The family comprises interacting personalities, dynamic and developing over time, whose

behaviors, needs, and various career trajectories are contingent upon--and sometimes in conflict with--others in their family. All of this is set against an ever-changing backdrop of change in societies and social institutions (the historical level)" (Bengtson & Allen, 2009, p. 479). The family has the uniqueness of being in a mediational position. It lies in that meso-level (McDonald, 2011) between individual biographies, on which developmental psychology focus its attention, and the societal contexts, that sociology is concerned with. "The life course approach offers the missing conceptual links of "lineage" and "generational time" to analyses of family behavior [...]. Concepts of intergenerational transmission, conflict, and continuity, as reflected over time in family values, myths, interactive behaviors, beliefs, expectations, obligations, rights, and exchanges, are all crucial to an examination of family parameters of the life course over time. The family as a social group provides meaning to events; through the perceptions of its members it defines as a reality, enduring and continuing over time, passed on through the lineage" (Bengtson & Allen, 2009, p. 479).

### **1.5.1 Applying life course perspective to my research design**

As argued by Elder (1998) the family realm is a pivotal mediating force between societal changes and individual lives. Recalling the concept of *linked lives* (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003), we can state that individual life expectations, constrains and choices are largely constructed within the family field and consequently the transitions of one member affect trajectories of all close others. Nowadays these trajectories have to be framed in a structural context where consequences of society aging and social events arising from the economic crises are impacting on the way families form, develop, and dissolve (Dykstra & Hagestad, 2016).

My thesis, on one hand focuses on the role that social and, especially, economic transition markers play in the process of "boomeranging". On the other, assuming that macro-structural context is influencing different categories of young people in different ways, the analysis is oriented to inquire the impact of individual characteristics (mainly educational level, gender and age) as well as of familiar resources (parental socio-economic status) on the likelihood that young people return

to their parental home. From this description is already possible to find correspondence with the key aspects, identified by Bengtson and Allen, regarding the application of life course perspective into family field. To resume them briefly: the centrality of relationships across generations; the importance of cultural contexts to understanding individual lives development; the focus on processes and changes, with a consequent diachronic approach; the interplay of structures and processes as key point to understand family change and development. The life-course framework provides a conceptual road-map to deal with many levels of analysis: the micro-level of the individual, the meso-level of the family and the macro-level of societal context. It has been considered the most suitable to study the change of individuals over time and to acknowledge the possibility of transition reversals, like returning to parents' house after having reached housing independence. The life course principles of socio-historical and geographic location (Mitchell, 2006) stress on the fact that individual life take place in the context of broader events, as it could be the one of economic recession, which altered established life course sequences including patterns of home-leaving and home-returning.

Altogether, life course perspective allows to frame returning home trajectories in a structural context characterized by employment precariousness and general uncertainty, in a country where welfare system is highly dependent on the family and its resources. For these reasons, my thesis pays particular attention to the intersection of the economic status of young people "boomeranging" home and the social class.

Given the importance attributed to family of origin and to the parent-child relationship, in the next chapter will be deepen the concept of linked life and presented a review of the main contributions regarding intergenerational relations, with a particular focus on the intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational ambivalence perspectives.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Theoretical perspectives on intergenerational relations. Parent-child support, between solidarity and ambivalence**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In the last 30 years, the studies of intergenerational family relations have increased. On the one hand, the reasons can be found in the increasing demand for family support by the elderly, caused by a conspicuous aging of population, together with the shrinking of public expenditure. On the other, the reasons of this interest come from the pluralization of transitional pattern to adulthood and the hardships experienced by young people, which resulted in a relevant increase of parent-child coresidence. In this thesis the focus is placed on the changes experienced by Italian young people dealing with uncertainty, in which the reversibility of traditional transitional markers (specifically the reversibility of residential autonomy) entails a wide involvement of the family of origin, making the intergenerational support and the parent-child relationship decisive.

This chapter begins taking a detailed look at the model of intergenerational solidarity (2.2), from the initial formulation to the most recent developments, highlighting the theoretical foundations and the most diffused empirical applications. Dealing with the construct of solidarity requests a reflection on intergenerational support: the type of support available (2.2.1) and the reasons leading family members to support each other. Thus, a paragraph is dedicated to the three main theories which explain the mechanisms behind the intergenerational support (2.3). The first theoretical strand

frames support from a rational choice perspective (2.3.1), stressing the self-interest of members and the goal of maximizing benefit, the second one finds the basis of support in altruism (2.3.2) and the third one focuses on social norms as the basis of support (2.3.3). After this discussion, in the last paragraph, are accounted the main criticisms on the solidarity model (the overemphasis on cohesive aspects of family life and the lack of negative and conflictual dimensions of family relations) and is introduced the concept of intergenerational ambivalence (2.4). Ambivalence, intended as the coexistence of contradictory feelings between family members, is then used to frame the phenomenon of parental home returning (2.4.1). This allows to account the eventual mismatch in the expectations of parents and children about residential transition and the conflicting feelings of family dependency and individual autonomy which young people may experience.

## 2.2 Intergenerational Solidarity Model

Many studies on intergenerational relations have relied on the construct of solidarity, elaborated by Vern Bengtson and colleagues (Bengtson & Schrader, 1982; McChesney & Bengtson, 1988; Roberts, Richards, & Bengtson, 1991; Rossi & Rossi, 1990) and focused on the relations between old parents, their adult children, and grandchildren. In classical sociological theories, the term solidarity was used to explain the cohesion of social groups or even whole societies. “Solidarity referred to a tendency to do or mean something for each other and for the collective, while avoiding the pursuit of pure self-interest that would lead to a disintegration of the group” (Kalmijn, 2014, p. 386). The concept of solidarity was applied to family relations mainly in two ways, using a macro perspective in one case and micro perspective in the other. From classic macrosociological theories were taken two dichotomies: the one of Tonnies (1887), between *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (society), and the one of Durkheim (1921), between mechanical and organic solidarity. The idea is that family cohesion depends on the one hand by functional interdependencies of its members (mechanical solidarity and *gemeinschaft*) and internalized normative motivations (organic solidarity and *gesellschaft*) on the other. Instead, from classic microsociological theories, especially the work of Homans (1961), were taken the idea that family cohesion depends on levels of interaction and affection of its members.

The use of solidarity’s concept to analyze family relations have progressively refined, up to a theory in which intergenerational family solidarity is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that could be distinguished into six<sup>6</sup> essential components (Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997): affective solidarity (emotional links and positive feelings to each other), associational solidarity (contacts), consensual

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<sup>6</sup> The first conceptualization of intergenerational solidarity dates back to 1976, with the work of Bengtson and colleagues (Bengtson, Olander, & Haddad, 1976; Bengtson & Cutler, 1976), in which intergenerational solidarity was composed by three elements: association (“objective” dimension: frequency and types of family interactions), affect (“subjective” dimension: feelings and sentiment about family interaction); and consensus (agreement in values and opinions).

solidarity (agreement on attitudes and values), functional solidarity (instrumental support), normative solidarity (individual obligations to the family and to support each other) and structural solidarity (opportunities for contacts and specifically for parent-child interactions). Empirical findings reveal that the six dimensions of solidarity are interrelated to each another, although these six solidarity elements cannot be combined into a single additive scale or a unitary measurable construct (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991).

Studies on Intergenerational solidarity usually follow three different approaches: some are focused only on one of these dimension, some try to merge two or more components as indicators of solidarity, and others are oriented to examine the interdependence of different components. Besides being a scheme of classification, Intergenerational solidarity can thus be used as a theory about how different indicators of solidarity are causally related<sup>7</sup> (ivi). The model of intergenerational solidarity, therefore, emphasizes the multidimensionality and complexity of family relationships, rather than promote a simplistic idea of family cohesion (declinable in a single dimension and measurable with a single indicator).

On the matter of measurements, have been identified some factors that affect solidarity. They refer to three distinct analytical levels: individual, familiar and societal. Individual *need structure*, which includes financial, emotional, practical and health problems, seems the most relevant to activate solidaristic response. For example, old parents in need of care, parents without partners looking for help to manage working time and childcare activities, unemployed children in need for economical or housing support. Always on the individual level, has to be mentioned the *opportunities structure*: material, financial and time resources, which can foster or hinder solidarity. Then, on a meso level, *family structure* defines the relational possibilities among its members and affect family cohesion. It includes earlier family events (for example, parents' separation or divorce, leaving or returning of children from parental home, etc.) and includes current family composition (for example, the number of members, the size of the family network, the geographical proximity between the members and so on). Finally, on a macro level, the *socio-cultural* and

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<sup>7</sup> Almost always these indicators are tied up by not univocal causal direction.

*institutional context* represents the space in which intergenerational relations take shape, the structural constraint that limits and orients the modalities of solidarity relations. It is the outcome of economic and social conjunctures, like the welfare system, the labor policies, but also consolidated norms which define expectations about roles and behaviors within specific social groups. Therefore, the effects of resources, needs and family configuration on the weight of intergenerational solidarity and conflict depend on cultural and institutional context.

### **2.2.1 Type of intergenerational support**

There are three types of support that can be distinguished in the literature: practical, financial and emotional (Kalmijn, 2005).

*Practical support* is about behaviors which involve direct interactions and in particular all the activities related to caregiving. For example, children helping with household tasks or assisting parents in need, as well as parents aiding with homework or babysitting grandchildren. This form of support, therefore, requires face to face interaction and demanding activities, especially when healthcare problems are involved. Although the level of practical support between generations could be low in a specific time, the family seems to maintain its function of *safety net*. In case of necessity, when relevant problems rise or stressful events occur, family network is mobilized to support the members in need (Hogan, Eggebeen, & Clogg, 1993). The family network, thus, is considered a convoy of solidarity, in which the supportive capacity of its members gets adapted to the uncertainty of life course (Riley & Riley, 1993; Antonucci, Ajrouch, & Birdit, 2014). Because of norms and obligations internalized by primary familiar socialization, parents and children feel responsible to providing support when others' needs emerge. Obviously, needs and problems change over the life course and this make the support exchange dependent on the members' age (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). However, age affects also the support potential of members, leading some scholars to debate about the extent to which children are able to fulfil parents' needs (Hogan, Eggebeen, & Clogg, 1993).



In addition to practical support exchanges there are forms of *financial support*, which includes mainly transfers of money and transfers of consumer durables, like inheritances (Kohli, 2004). Transfers are downward when parents give to children or grandchildren gifts and money, to pay school fees, support rent costs, purchase a house and so on. Transfers are upward when children give money to parents or grandparents in order to support family expenses, once obtained a job position and a personal income. In western societies financial transfers are almost exclusively downward (Kohli, 1999), but in eastern societies, and among non-Western migrants, upward financial transfers are not so rare. Similarly, parents-children coresidence is not so diffused in highly modernized countries but common in many developing countries (as well as in some countries of southern Europe). In the literature of transfers, one relevant claim is that the flow of intergenerational exchange has been reversed as societies become more modern (Kalmijn, 2005).

Back to the types of intergenerational support, remains a third one to be mentioned: the *social support*. It is about affection, closeness, trust among family members and is based on the perception of reciprocity and relational fulfilment. Some researches on subjective dimensions of intergenerational solidarity, like the one carried out by Mandemakers and Dykstra (2008), suggest that both parents and children, on average, consider their relationship generally in a positive way, although parents more than children. The creation of this positive feeling is mainly due to a strong normative solidarity model (Ganong & Coleman, 2005) and a low generational gap in norms and values (Inglehart, 1977).

Given the aging of western societies, the well-being of elderlies has become a central issue in the current literature of intergenerational studies. The family results as one of the most important potential sources of well-being, next to having a good health and a good economic situation. However, this fundamental supportive role of family is challenged by some authors who argue that children are becoming less likely to support parents, in the light of an increasing levels of individualism and the rising of women's employment.

## 2.3 Theories of intergenerational support

In the literature, there are three different arguments about why people support their parents and their children. A first argument treat support from a rational choice perspective, stressing the self-interest of members and the goal of maximizing benefit, the second one finds the basis of support in altruism and the third one focuses on social norms as the basis of support (Kalmijn, 2014).

### 2.3.1 Rational choice exchange

The argument based on the rational choice perspective is embedded in the wider theoretical framework of social exchange, which is focused on “the personal and interpersonal factors that mediate the formation, maintenance, and dissolution of a relationship, recognizing the central role that expectations play in the evaluation of intimate relationships” (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009, p. 386). Using an economic metaphor, family members involved in intergenerational relationships are viewed as stakeholder who try to maximize their profits. The assumption is that giving support is a cost for the giver and a benefit for the receiver, an investment which implies something in return. The exchange within family can take two different forms.

The first, and most common, is the *delayed exchange*. Parents invest on children when they are young, to get a ‘pay back’ in their old age, in terms of practical support and emotional attention. The fact that parents give first and children return later in the life course rises an uncertainty about whether, when and how a pay back will take place. Unlike other theoretical perspectives (discussed below), the rational choice is not capable to explain properly this dynamic of reciprocation. Another form of *delayed exchange* occurs when, conversely, children give support to old parents in order to take hold of their inheritance. In this case children give first, but the uncertainty about obtaining the expected reward from parents is much lower. This form of exchange, however, is based on a problematic assumption that struggles to find an empirical foundation. Indeed, the mechanism stands upon the only negotiating

power available for parents at a late stage of their life course: the threat of disinheritance, that keeps the children engaged in these supportive behaviors.

The second form of rational exchange is the *direct exchange*. This occurs when parents and children exchange different goods or supportive activities more or less at the same time. One example, involving an exchange of social support, is that of parents taking care of grandchildren, in exchange of contacts and attentions of their children. Another example of exchange, involving financial and non-financial support, is that of parents giving money to their children in order to receive back support with household tasks help or more contacts and attention.

It is important to recognize that in the rational exchange perspective, the basis for support rely on an asymmetrical distribution of resources between parents and children. Through exchange relationships these resources are redistributed in order to maximize the satisfaction of the family members involved in the relationship. Satisfaction with the outcome of an exchange is a subjective evaluation that take into account individual characteristics, specific role expectation, and needs coming from specific stage of the life courses. Since there are resources of different nature: economic, affective and practical, any family member can put at stake a set of resources valuable for members of other family generations, making intergenerational exchange relationships meaningful.

### **2.3.2 Altruism**

The exchange approach has received many criticism, not only from the sociological literature, where assumptions of rational choice are often criticized, but also from the psychological and economic literature. In the rational choice perspective, humans are considered rational being who, depending on a limited amount of information, try to maximize profits for themselves and avoid punishments when interacting with others. The problem lies in the assumption that people are intrinsically selfish in personal and intimate relationships, especially in a familiar context. On an empirical level it is difficult to find situations in which, for example, parents are willing to

accept money (as pay back) for making available their home to a child who previously leave, or accept money for babysitting activities. It is difficult likewise to find parents who wants to give directly money to children after their visit. Undoubtedly, there are other forms of indirect financial reward, such as gifts, but most people would not feel comfortable with a strict economic understanding of family relationships. This is particularly evident with the exchange of economic resources with non-economic resources, as exemplified above, but the criticism also applies (although in a less evident way) to the exchange of other types of support.

“A competing theory holds that the way people behave in relationships depends on the type of relationship. In non-affective relations, people would behave selfish, and in affective relations, people would behave altruistically. Altruism means doing something for others because one is concerned with the welfare of others” (Kalmijn, 2005, p. 7).

### **2.3.3 Social norms. Kinship obligations and reciprocity**

The perspectives of rational exchange and altruism have often been framed as mutually exclusive. In the academic debate, a study which did not support a hypothesis based on exchange, was brought back to a corroboration for altruism thesis, and vice versa. In this dichotomous split, however, was not considered a very relevant factor which may motivate people in behavior toward their family members: social norms. Normative orientations refer to the societal views on acceptable and appropriate behavior in relationships. These norms are embedded within a cultural and social context, from which arise specific role expectations and prescriptions for the relationships taking place. In family relations there are mainly two norms which have a very relevant impact on expectations and behaviors of members: the one of *kinship obligation* and the one of *reciprocity* (ivi).

The norm of kinship leads people to care for own family members in condition of need, without taking into account the eventual individual benefit of this behavior. Can be said that kinship norms are unconditional, although the strength of the

obligation depend on the type and the closeness of kin relationship. As one may expect, these obligations are weaker for distant kin and for in-law's relatives than for close kin and own family. Kinship norms are also weaker for ascendants (upward) than for descendants (downward). The obligation toward children is the strongest obligation, followed afterwards by the obligation toward parents, which is often called *filial obligation*. An interesting result (emerged from some studies in western societies) is the agreement, among individuals belonging to different family generations, on the ranking of these obligations and on the situations to which the obligation applies.

The other important norm is the norm of *reciprocity*. It leads people to give back what they have received from a relationship, proportionally to the degree to which was received. This norm characterizes generally the relationships between individuals and the interaction dynamics within social groups, although its application is particularly relevant in the family context. As mention earlier, the rational choice exchange theory can't explain properly the mechanism for which children pay back the investments which parents make on them. In this regard, the norm of reciprocity can overcome the gap and allows to understand why delayed exchange can work. Reciprocity has to do with whether exchanges are responsive to each other. Reciprocity orientation involves expectations about when and how resources or support should be paid back. Some exchanges require given resources to be reciprocated in kind while in others is allowed an exchange of different resources, similarly, some exchanges are expected to be reciprocate in the immediate while other are allowed to be paid back in the distant future (as occurs in the parent-child relationship). The motivation to adhere to reciprocity norms has been explained as a cognitive discomfort associated with a feeling of "indebtedness", understood as a state of obligation to repay someone (Greenberg, 1980). McDonald (1981) pointed out that also cognitive orientations are personal expression of internalized cultural norms. The internalization of reciprocity norm have important implications for exchanges, because the behavior of the actors is not guided only by the ratio of profit maximization, but is widely orientated by normative and cognitive frames (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).

People acquire reciprocity and kinship norms (as many others) in the process of primary family socialization, transmitted from parents to children. These norms are subsequently reinforced by secondary socialization agencies, with the aim of ensure their effective internalization. The internalization of norms means that people act according to their prescription even when there are no external sanctions, it is a process which develop a moral dimension. With reciprocity and kinship norms, people are led to consider the support for parents or for children as something morally right and proper, both in terms of individual orientation and in terms of expectations on other members. These norms led people to consider right and proper helping other family member in need and, at the same time, to consider fair giving back what have been received. The non-fulfillment of these norms, which (as mentioned earlier) take on moral and prescriptive characteristics, triggers feelings of guilt and dissonance which act as form of *internal sanctions*, reinforcing intergenerational support practices within families. The normative framework gives an effective sociological interpretation of intergenerational support. However, despite majority of people hold these norms, there can also be important variations across social groups and individual actors, in the way the norms are transmitted and acquire, as well as the way in which norms are put in use. In this regard Kalmijn (2005) underlines three issues. First, the strength of kinship obligations is weakening over time due to a process of individualization, which has introduced conflicting norms and values. Independence and individual well-being has become more important than interdependence and caring for relevant others. A second observation is that kinship norms vary from society to society and are stronger in more familistic countries like Italy and other south European countries. Third, there are also variations within a specific society, because of geographical locations or social groups of belonging. This applies most clearly between native and migrant ethnic groups, with stronger feelings of filial obligation. However, there are also differences between educational groups, with a tendency of the higher educated to be less bounded by traditional norms and kinship obligations. Gender, ethnicity and social class, are characteristics that affect the acquisition of specific norms and value orientations, with consequences on intergenerational relationships and on practices of support towards family members in need.

## 2.4 Intergenerational ambivalence

It has been argued that the solidarity model overemphasizes the harmonious and positive aspects of family life, neglecting conflicts and other negative sides of family relations (Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998; Hammarstrom, 2005). The term “solidarity” implies consensus, though there are noticeably nonconsensual aspects of family relationships. The main criticisms agree on arguing that the solidarity model contains normative implications that bring family relations to a kind of idealization (Marshall, Matthews, & Rosenthal, 1993; Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998), hindering the emergence of conflicting aspects of relationships. Some scholars even asserted that the model does not take into account conflict at all and is not designed to provide insight of conflictual intergenerational relationships (Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998). However, the discussion on the role of conflict in the construct of intergenerational solidarity, at the beginning, was emanated from Bengtson and colleagues themselves. Their main concern was to implement the intergenerational solidarity model with other concepts able to grasp conflict dynamics, or reconceptualize family comprising relationships that involve both solidarity and conflict between and within members of different generations (Bengtson, Rosenthal, & Burton, 1996; Parrott & Bengtson, 1999). The idea was that solidarity and conflict are not two opposite polarities mutually exclusive. A high level of solidarity not necessarily imply a low level of conflict and, vice versa, a high level of conflict not necessarily imply a high level of solidarity. In this vein, Luescher and Pillemer (1998) attempted to introduce ambivalence as a theoretically and empirically concept to improve the study of intergenerational family relations, trying to overcome the dichotomy between conflict and solidarity. From this work flourish a debate on whether the model of intergenerational solidarity should be supplemented with, incorporated in, or even be replaced by the concept of intergenerational ambivalence (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry, & Silverstein, 2002; Connidis & McMullin, 2002; Pillemer, et al., 2007).

The notion of intergenerational ambivalence, in the family context, is understood as the coexistence of contradictory feelings (that usually follow different norms) between family members and is generally used to integrate positive and negative aspect of parent-child relationships. It can be unfolded into two main dimensions. A

*psychological dimension*, based on the contradictory feelings experienced simultaneously by an individual toward a family member. And a *structural dimension*, based on “incompatible normative expectations of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior” (Merton & Barber, 1963, p. 94) that derive from different social positions or different family roles. From this analytical distinction, have been developed two different operationalizations of intergenerational ambivalence: the *psychological ambivalence*, referred to the experience of contradictory feelings toward the same family member (Raulin, 1984; Weigert, 1991; Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998) and the *sociological ambivalence*, which refers to conflicting norms and behavior between individuals bearing different roles in the family (Merton & Barber, 1963; Coser, 1966; Connidis & McMullin, 2002).

For instance, in the literature on “sandwich generations” (Henretta, Grundy, & Harris, 2002; Grundy & Henretta, 2006) the main focus is the ambivalence rising when women held the role of caregiver both for dependent children and for ill grandparents. The women of the middle generation usually face conflicting expectations about supporting the ascendant and descendant generation (Henretta, Grundy, & Harris, 2002). This may produce conditions of ambivalence, such favoring one generation over the other (to say fulfilling family expectations only from one side). However, Grundy and Henretta (2006) found that the middle generation women tend to answer expectations of both, rather than prioritizing the need of one, with the side effect of sacrificing their working careers. Contradictory expectations are “an ongoing feature of social relations and must be continually negotiated and renegotiated over the life course” (Connidis & McMullin, 2002, p. 559). Ambivalence appears as a provisional state that emerges from an interplay between social expectations (on roles and social interactions) and individual agency. The rise of ambivalence, as well as the possibilities of its resolution, depend on the actors involved in the relationship: their individual disposable resources (material, cultural, social), the distance between their normative structure of reference (transmitted by social groups of belonging), the cultural and institutional settings in which the relationship take place (Connidis & McMullin, 2002).



### **2.4.1 The ambivalences of returning into parental home**

In this thesis is relevant to take into account the possible situations of ambivalence that may arise when young people return to parental home: the eventual mismatch in the expectations of parents and children about residential transition and the conflicting feelings of family dependency and individual autonomy which young people may experience.

From parents' perspective, children failure to reach residential independence is likely to provoke *structural* kind of ambivalences (rooted in conflicting norms and expectations). On the one hand, children are expected to build their housing career counting on their own efforts and resources in a timely fashion, detaching themselves from parental support. On the other hand, parents feel obliged to support their children in a condition of need. Thus, when a child is no longer able to maintain his residential autonomy and returns to the parental nest, parents may experience ambivalent feelings of solidarity and conflict (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry, & Silverstein, 2002; Pillemer & Sutor, 2002; Pillemer, et al., 2007; Pillemer, Munsch, Fuller-Rowell, Riffin, & Sutor, 2012), which could affect in turn the perspective of coresidence. From children's perspective, returning home is much likely to provoke ambivalences than parents, since the awareness of the individual failure (which also affects the lives of the other family members), triggering a residential reset. In a society where self-achievement and autonomy are highly valued, they are expected to achieve independence by distancing themselves from their parents and focusing on their own family and working career. Social norms had widely accepted a postponement in the leave from parental home and are progressively legitimizing the reversibility of this transitional event, but young people returning into parental home are still stigmatized (Mitchell, 2006). Expectations and evaluations referred to young people postponing home-leaving are very different from those referred to young people returning into parental home. Whether responsibilities for late leaving are usually externalized and attributed to socio-structural constrains, responsibilities for returning home are internalized and attributed to individual failure, on charges of "have not been good enough" or "have not been sufficiently motivated". The failure to pursuit an individual independence, which is a fundamental value underpinning

the capitalistic society we are living in, is still stigmatized. Being no longer able to maintain independently a residential autonomy and ask for parental support may easily trigger a feeling of ambivalence. This feeling could be worsened whether parental expectations are very oriented towards the autonomy of their children. The literature suggests that the presence of adult children in the household is often considered a burden and a source of discomfort when intergenerational co-residence is seen as unwarranted dependency (Aquilino & Supple, 1991; Ward & Spitze, 1992). However, the consequences of a prolonged period of co-residence on the quality of parent-child relationships are still debated and the consequences of a return not properly inquired yet. In the parent-child relationship, some scholars stress that perceived involuntariness of co-residence choices makes more acceptable the stay of adult sons and daughters (Aquilino, 1991; Pillemer & Suitor, 2002) and more acceptable the request of parental support.

After this overview on intergenerational ambivalence, accounting the general mechanisms which affect the parent-child relation, we need to take in consideration the specificities of the individuals involved in the relationships. Structural ambivalence is widely influenced by the characteristics of parents and children involved in the relationship: their life course stages, their individual characteristics, their social class of belonging, their normative structures of reference. As said before, the biographical events traditionally used to define the transition to adulthood have become reversible. The fluidity of these transitions, in which the degree of self-determination is variable, brought many scholars of individualization to emphasized the greater freedom of individual choice and the less cultural/normative prescription on the modalities and timing of transitions. However, in recent studies done in Italy, have been highlighted that the cultural capital transmitted by the family and the level of education affect heavily aspirations and life projects of young people (Bertolini, 2018; Rebughini, Colombo & Leonini, 2017). In the transformations of the life courses, the differences due to the social stratification remained or perhaps increased. Social class and level of education are still determinant elements of social reproduction and still influence opportunities structures and individual needs and choices. Depending on the social groups, the strategies and mechanisms with which young people cope with uncertainty change. For example, if we look at the leave

from the parental home in Italy, we know that the children of the middle class, who often possess high educational qualifications, use a *waiting strategy* counting on the wide housing support of parents until the achievement of an “ideal job”, through complicated work paths<sup>8</sup> (Bagnasco, 2008; Barbera, Negri, & Zanetti, 2008; Reyneri, 2011; Bertolini, Hofäcker, & Torrioni, 2019). On the contrary, the children of the lower classes, who assign greater importance and economic independence, leave home earlier looking for a job that guarantees a salary.

In the same way, expectations and structural ambivalences based on specific social class of belonging can affect differently the choice/constrain of children to return into parental home. In this thesis, consequently, one focal point is to analyze how individual characteristics and social class of belonging affect the outcome of young people returning home. The interpretation and the discussion of the results have to bear into account the different perspectives of ambivalence, the specific norms and expectations featuring parent-child relationship, that may affect these return trajectories.

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<sup>8</sup> “They accept low-paid and unstable jobs, which are in their areas of interest, while waiting for the ideal stable job that will allow their exit from the family of origin, and therefore a standard of living similar to that of their parents. The mechanism is in that case an affordability norm, in which the elementary condition to the transition is having access to sufficient economic resources” (Bertolini, Hofäcker, & Torrioni, 2019, p. 42)

## Chapter 3

# Returning to parental home in a context of uncertainty. Which determinants in Italy?

### 3.1 Introduction

The chapter is organized in two main sections. In the first is introduced and discussed the theoretical background related to the home returning phenomena and then formulated the research hypotheses (3.2). More in detail, are distinguished and discussed four issues considered determinant to analyze *boomerang moves*: the economic crisis and the employment uncertainty (3.2.1); the reversibility of life courses transitions (3.2.2); the personal characteristics and the individual resources (3.2.3); the social class of belonging and the familiar resources (3.2.4).

In the second section, instead, is detailed the empirical strategy adopted for the analyses (3.3). Firstly, are described the specificities of the EU-SILC longitudinal survey and the characteristics of the data used (3.3.1). Then, are explained the sample selection criterion (3.3.2) and reported the variables used for the models, both the dependent variable (3.3.3) and the independents variables (3.3.4), detailing the recoding procedures to operationalize the variables and explicating expectations about their influence on returning home outcome. Finally, is presented the method used in the analyses, mentioning also the strategies used to test the validity of the models (3.3.5)

## 3.2 Theoretical background and Hypotheses

### 3.2.1 Economic crisis, employment uncertainty and home returning

The 2008 global economic crisis can be considered the most severe recession since the Great Depression (Crescenzi, Luca, & Milio, 2016). It has worsened the economic conditions of all European countries, increasing unemployment and financial hardship. Especially young population is forced to handle a perspective of economic uncertainty, with an increase of financial difficulties and poverty risks (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011), that make more difficult to gain or maintain their residential independence from the parental home (Mykyta & Macartney, 2011; Lee & Painter, 2013). Aassve and colleagues (2013), while analyzing the effect of the recession on the transition to adulthood across European countries, focused on two pivotal aspects: economic independence and residential autonomy. Framing the permanence with parents as a strategy for many young people to cope with economic uncertainty, they investigated the patterns of youth unemployment and poverty together with the rate of parental coresidence<sup>9</sup>. For the Southern Europe countries, characterized by familistic welfare (Saraceno & Keck, 2010), their hypothesis was to find the increase of the co-residence rate to be positively correlated to the measures of youth deprivation, but the results did not meet this expectation. “This might be counterintuitive, given the increase in youth unemployment observed in these countries. An explanation is that the vast majority of young people in these countries already live with their parents. Another possibility is that, for some, economic hardship becomes a push factor to leave home” (ivi, p. 953), in order to find an employment and to get an income. However, coresidence rate does not only measure the quota of children who have not left parental home yet, it also includes the ones who have returned. An alternative research approach to inquire the relationship between youth vulnerabilities and residential independence is to break down the

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<sup>9</sup> Among young people (aged 18-34) pooled in the survey, it is the quota of the ones living with parents on the total

concept of coresidence and focus on young people' returners. As highlighted by van den Berg and colleagues (2019), experiencing adverse economic circumstances after leaving home, increase the likelihood that young people return home. Furthermore, the study of Arundel and Lennartz (2017) supports the thesis that the welfare regime contexts play a relevant role in the housing careers of young people, particularly in moderating residential independence interruption. They highlight the "higher propensities for returned co-residence among the more 'familialistic' regimes of Southern European and New Member States, while lower likelihoods were apparent in the contexts of stronger state support and cultural practices of earlier autonomy found in Social Democratic and in the intermediate Conservative Cases" (ivi, p. 288). With a longitudinal analysis, they account the 2008-2011 period, in which was occurring "the most severe economic recession since the Great Depression" (Crescenzi, Luca , & Milio, 2016, p. 13). This crisis technically started in the first quarter of 2008, even though after the second half of 2010 the EU recorded a second wave of negative economic trend (Eurostat, 2014). In Italy, as in most Member States, a private debt crisis (in 2008) turned into a sovereign debt crisis (after half 2010), intensifying its negative externalities (Crescenzi, Luca , & Milio, 2016).

Based on these considerations, the first hypothesis is that *in Italy, during the period of economic crises and especially in the period of 2011-2012, is more likely that young people (aged 18-34) return home than the pre-crisis and the post-crisis periods* (H1).

This increasing rates of returns to the parental home is assumed to be correlated with a general worsening of young people economic condition (Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2014; Arundel & Lennartz, Returning to the parental home: Boomerang moves of younger adults and the welfare regime context, 2017; van den Berg, Kalmijn, & Leopold, 2019). In Italy, the crisis intensifies the structural problems emerged in previous years, when the labour-market reforms have brought greater flexibility without introducing a corresponding effective system of social protection (Barbieri, 2011; Gallino, 2007). Compared to other European countries, Italian young people suffer a higher unemployment rate and more instable employment (ISTAT, 2016). This condition binds to a great uncertainty about future perspective and entails an economic hardship, which in turn affects the living conditions of young workers and their transition to adulthood.

Hence, I expect that, *after having left parental home, young people (aged 18-34) in a condition of unemployment are more likely to return (H2).*

### **3.2.2 Life course transitions and home returning**

The process of returning home, being embedded within social, cultural and institutional contexts, can be considered as a transition related to other broader changes in the life course of young adults. Recent studies on “boomerang kid” (Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2014; Sandberg-Thoma, Snyder, & Jang, 2015; South & Lei, 2015; Arundel & Lennartz, *Returning to the parental home: Boomerang moves of younger adults and the welfare regime context*, 2017), situating returning home in the realm of other individual life course transitions, have demonstrated that some turning points (such as leaving full-time education, becoming unemployed, or facing a partnership dissolution) result key determinants of returning home. Within a life-course framework, turning points are considered as biographical events which imply relevant changes in individuals’ life, impacting on the subsequent life-course trajectory (Elder, 1977). “While home-leaving has been associated with such ‘turning points’ as marriage, family formation, entering full-time employment or education, returning home may be anticipated in the face of opposite and often (yet not necessarily) negatively connoted events” (Arundel & Lennartz, *Returning to the parental home: Boomerang moves of younger adults and the welfare regime context*, 2017, p. 278). Consequently, it is expected that opposite social transition markers (the break of a long-term relationship, the dissolution of a partnership, a separation or a divorce) and especially opposite economic transition markers (the end of an employment contract and the consequent passage to a condition of unemployment or inactivity) affect significantly the likelihood of returning home. While in the previous hypothesis was considered the condition of unemployment in itself, now the focus is on the transition to a status of unemployment or inactivity.

With reference to economic transition markers, the third hypothesis is that *becoming unemployed or inactive is associated with higher likelihood of returning to the parental home (H3).*

Partnership dissolution can be another turning point having a big impact on returning home (Da Vanzo & Goldscheider, 1990; Ongaro, Mazzucco, & Meggiolaro, 2009; Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2014). It has been argued that undergoing a breakup often results in a shortage of resources for at least one of the ex-spouses. Such event requires to move out from cohabitation arrangements and divide the household resources. Although some partners can apply form of division of property, the household disposable income can be potentially used to deal with economic setbacks of the couples or to compensate for temporary difficulties of one of the two. Further, sharing the same household makes available not only economic and material resources, but also relational and emotional ones. The end of a partnership entails the loss of these resources and, in turn, an increasing need for parental support. Parental aids can be provided in many ways and especially through an housing solution (accepting children to move into their own household), also in the light of constrained rental housing markets and residual social housing provisions (Arundel & Lennartz, 2017).

### **3.2.2.1 Partnership dissolution: data constraints and strategy of operationalization**

Although the analysis is based on the longitudinal component of EU-SILC, in many cases is not possible to compare the marital status of a person interviewed at  $T_0$  with his situation at  $T_1$ <sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, the EU-SILC survey does not include a variable which collects the change in the marital status since the previous interview (or in the last 12 months), as for economic activity (see cap. 3.3.4.2). Consequently, is not possible include in the model a variable which can be considered strictly a proxy for social transition markers. Although in the 18-34 age group a change of marital status almost always corresponds to a residential change, I decided to not use separations

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<sup>10</sup> As detailed in the section 3.3.1, the sampling unit of EU-SILC is the household. For individuals joining in a household which was already sampled in a previous wave (to say the individuals who were not household members at the time in which the household was included in the survey; or rather, those classified as “co-resident” by the variable RB100) there are no information on their previous condition, and thus, is not possible define eventual status changes occurred.



and divorces as proxy for the concept of partnership dissolution, intended as a 'turning point shock' (biographical event perceived as a stressor, which entails problematic condition and usually requests for economical and emotional support). To overcome this constrain, I therefore decided to analyze the effect of marital instability, of which separations and divorces can be considered good proxy indicators. It is an analogous concept referred to the wider idea of relational uncertainty, which is expected to have the same effect on boomeranging. This choice allows to use the same (abovementioned) literature and keep exactly the same expectations, but abandoning the idea to measure the effect of the change of status, or rather the effect of a turning point. Consequently, the hypothesis can be formulated as such:

*separated and divorced young people (aged 18-34) are more likely to return to parental home than the other peers (H4a).*

In the literature, the association between partnership dissolution and returning home has been showed to be moderated by gender and parenthood. Men are more likely than women to return to the parental home (Ongaro, Mazzucco, & Meggiolaro, 2009; Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2014) especially in presence of children, given that their custody is often retained by mothers in case of divorce or separation (Mulder & Wagner, 2010). However, my analyses are focused on a sample of young people aged 18-34, among which it is not common to find divorced or separated individuals and even less common to find parents. Due to this age composition, the only reasonable hypothesis in this regard is the following:

*divorced or separated women aged 18-34 are less likely to return to the parental home than men in the same age group (H4b).*

### 3.2.3 The impact of individual characteristic on home returning

Previous studies have highlighted that other individual and parental characteristics are associated with returning home. These characteristics are particularly relevant in the light of the current socio-economic conjuncture (exacerbated by the economic crisis), which is affecting different categories of young people in different ways, increasing previous social inequalities. On a side “The experience of job insecurity and precariat, the fragmentary nature of professional careers and the difficulty of achieving economic autonomy can be considered part of a wider scenario of social changes whose intertwining creates a new *generational location*” (Colombo, Leonini, & Rebughini, 2018, p. 62). On the other, despite this dimension of uncertainty can be considered a common generational trait, the consequences macro structural transformations are diversified according to the economic, cultural and social capital of families, as well as to gender, educational level and age of individuals. In the rest of this section, will be examined these individual characteristics.

Gender has been already accounted as an aspect which can moderate the effect of partnership dissolution, but its effect can directly affect the process of returning home. Different gender behaviour can be both cultural and rational. In a strong male breadwinner system, like Italy, the division of housework is deeply gendered and the expectation on gender roles widely binding. Women are socialized to homework and care activities and broadly to bear the domestic management of houses. They do much more household labor activity than male peers and may have higher propensity for autonomy. Obtaining a permanent job, it is more an issue for man, especially in the light of the expectations about their transitional path towards adulthood. Thus, staying or returning at home is more rational for male, who are more free from responsibilities, including financial burdens (Bertolini, 2011; Bernardi & Nazio, Globalization and the transition to adulthood in Italy, 2005).

Since these considerations and the previous hypothesis on gender moderation effect, the expectation is that *male young adults are more likely to return into parental home than their female peers (H5)*.

Along with gender, also education can have an important role in the dynamic of returning home. Different levels of education tend to rely on different family resources and different strategies regarding residential careers. For young adults with lower level of education, often, leaving home is not a choice but a necessity, which occurs earlier than what happens for others (Sironi, Barban, & Impicciatore, 2015). They tend to follow more normative transitional careers, both in term of sequence and timing (ivi). For young adults remaining in education, instead, the issue of living arrangement strategies is more complex. The choice to achieve higher education can imply a postponement of home leaving, or, for those attending university far from hometown, an early and indispensable move into residential independence. For the latter is not uncommon to experience shared housing solution with other students and to commute back to parental home during vacations or weekends (Ford, Rugg, & Burrows, 2002). Moreover, for all young adults enrolled in higher education, after completion of the degree there is always the risk of returning home due to the lack of job opportunities and an inadequate protection system. As already noted by Furlong and Cartmel (2007), young adults belonging to higher socioeconomic groups have extended relationships of dependency, or semi-dependency, on their parents.

In light of these reflections, *I expect individuals with a higher educational level to return more than those with low levels (H6).*

### **3.2.4 The role of social class and familiar resources on home returning**

Along with gender and education, also social classes play a pivotal role in defining timing and sequences of transition to adulthood patterns (Elzinga & Liefbroer, 2007; Sironi, Barban, & Impicciatore, 2015), especially in the transition to residential independence. Within the analytical framework of this thesis, the most relevant aspect to inquire is how social class may moderate the effect of economic uncertainty and employment precariat on the residential career of young adults, specifically on the likelihood of “boomeranging” back to the parental home.

As noted by Bertolini (2011), the relation between economic uncertainty and family did not received much attention in the literature. It has been analyzed mainly under two point of views. On a side, highlighting how the employment precariat hinder family formation and, more in general, oblige to postpone important decision that are fundamental for the transition to adulthood of young adults. On the other, focusing on family as an institution which provide protection in the lack of an adequate support from labour market or welfare state. In Italy, welfare rely widely on family resources and on informal forms of social support. In fact, families continue to bear the costs of the prolonged period of unstable employment or unemployment of their children and still play a predominating role in their process of school-to-work transition (Colombo & Rebughini, 2015). The transition to adult life in conditions of precarious employment is frequently dependent on the economic and cultural, resources of the parents (dimensions that are embedded in the concept of social class). Nevertheless, the impact of social class on the residential careers of young people, has not been explored that much, especially with respect to home returning.

Galland (2001) claims that job instability can have a 'suspensive' or 'creative' effect on the home leaving path of young people (who belong to higher classes). White collars' children remain partially supported by their family of origin until they reach a definitive access to the desired profession (and eventually until the marriage). Instead, for children of blue collar workers, job stability represents real economic independence, while situation of job precariousness act to postpone this process. Also for children coming from middle class, job precariousness has a delay effect. However, it occurs partly due to structural constrains and partly due to personal choice, made possible by family resources. For them, employment instability may be an occasion that open to creative effects. In Italy, late leaving can be considered a strategy for middle-class sons to waiting before entering into a high quality job position and satisfy their expectations acquired during the educational path (Bertolini, 2011; Raynieri, 2009). Other scholars have interpreted late home leaving in southern Europe as the result of long-term stable cultural factors. Saraceno (2004) and Dalla Zuanna (2004) argued that strong ties and mutual help between parents and children are central factors to explain home leaving patterns.

Despite these important studies concerning the relationship between family of origin and home leaving, it is still complicated to translate their main findings into a coherent hypothesis on the opposite phenomenon of home returning. In the Italian context, since the shortage of researches on boomeranging, it is not easy to induce expectations on the effect that social class, interacted with economic status, may have on boomerang phenomena. Consequently, two mutually exclusive hypotheses will be formulated. To define them properly, it can be helpful to quote some other studies which have examined the correlation between home leaving and home returning, claiming that “off-time home leavers are more likely to return home” (van den Berg, Kalmijn, & Leopold, 2019, p. 679) and, more specifically, that young adults who left at an early age are more likely to return home than the others (Billette, Bourdais, & Laplante, 2011; Berngruber, 2015; Kleinepier, Berrington, & Stoeldraijer, 2017). Relying on their findings it can be said that, having a shorter educational career and an earlier home leaving, as well as being more exposed to the negative effects of economic setbacks and to employment uncertainty, should increase the likelihood of boomeranging. It leads to hypothesize that *low class young people experiencing a condition of unemployment, are more likely to return into parental home than peers of higher classes* (H7a).

Instead, taking into account the ‘creative’ effect that higher class can have in a condition of job instability, as well as the cultural traits that make acceptable and normal for higher class to rely on family protection (until children achieve a high-level and fulfilling job), leaves room to an opposite hypothesis.

In this case, *high class young people experiencing a condition of unemployment, are the ones more likely to boomerang back to parental home* (H7b).

### **3.3 Empirical strategy**

The analysis is based on nine waves of the longitudinal EU-SILC survey, gathered from 2006 to 2014 in Italy. Nonlinear panel models with binary outcome are used to detect the determinants of returning to parental home (residential careers interruption) among young people aged 18 to 34, differentiating those who have experienced a return in the household of at least one parent against those who haven't left the parental home. In the models the dependent variable identifies young people aged from 18 to 34 who returned to parental home, while the covariates have been selected to account economic and conjugal status, biographical changes, as well as individual and familiar characteristics.

In the next paragraphs, I will start presenting the structure of the EU-SILC survey (3.3.1) to then define the criteria of the sample selection (3.3.2) and detail how the dependent variable (3.3.2) and the independent variables (3.3.4) have been coded.

#### **3.3.1 EU-SILC longitudinal survey**

The EU-SILC survey collects annually comparable cross-sectional and longitudinal microdata on income, poverty, social exclusion and living conditions. The longitudinal component is more limited in sample size compared to the cross-sectional component, but however representative of the whole population. According to the sampling and tracing rules defined by the Commission Regulation, “all components of EU-SILC (whether survey or register based), the cross-sectional and longitudinal (initial sample) data shall be based on a nationally representative probability sample of the population residing in private households within the country, irrespective of language, nationality or legal residence status.” (Eurostat, 2013, p. 24). The longitudinal component is characterized by a rotational design, in which “the sample selection is based on a number of subsamples or replications, each of them similar in size and design and representative of the whole population. From one year to the next, some replications are retained, while others are dropped and replaced by new replications” (ibidem). Any longitudinal dataset include data for the

current and all previous survey rounds in which a household was included Data are delivered by Eurostat as four separate files: household register (d-file) and household data (h-file), which are referred to the household level, as well as personal register (r-files) and personal data (p-files), whit all variables referred to individuals. Data are structured hierarchically, with individuals' nested in households. In the household files one observation correspond to one household, uniquely identifiable with the variable household ID. Coherently, also in the personal files one observation corresponds to a single individual, to whom is attributed a unique personal ID and the household ID of which he is a member. Therefore, all household and personal data are linkable, furthermore the related identifiers remain unique across the waves. This allow to study changes over time at individual level, and set up longitudinal analyses.

To harmonize data of 22 different European Countries, Eurostat defined a common sampling frame, which states that all private households and all persons aged 16 and over within the household have to be eligible. Any National Statistical Institute can use his own sampling design, accordingly to the structure and the population of the country (and the available budget) as long as it ensures “that every individual and household in the target population is assigned a known probability of selection that is not zero” (Eurostat, 2014). In Italy it is used a stratified multistage sampling, on data collected from a register of municipalities, in which the sampling unit is the household (and in turn all members of the household aged above 16). With respect to the sample size, the table 1 shows the effective sample size achieved in every waves, from 2006 to 2014<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> The first EU-SILC wave survey dates back to 2004 and the last to 2017, but I only show the data for the years of interest for the analysis.

Table 1 Effective sample size of EU-SILC longitudinal component in Italy , from wave 2004 to wave 2015.

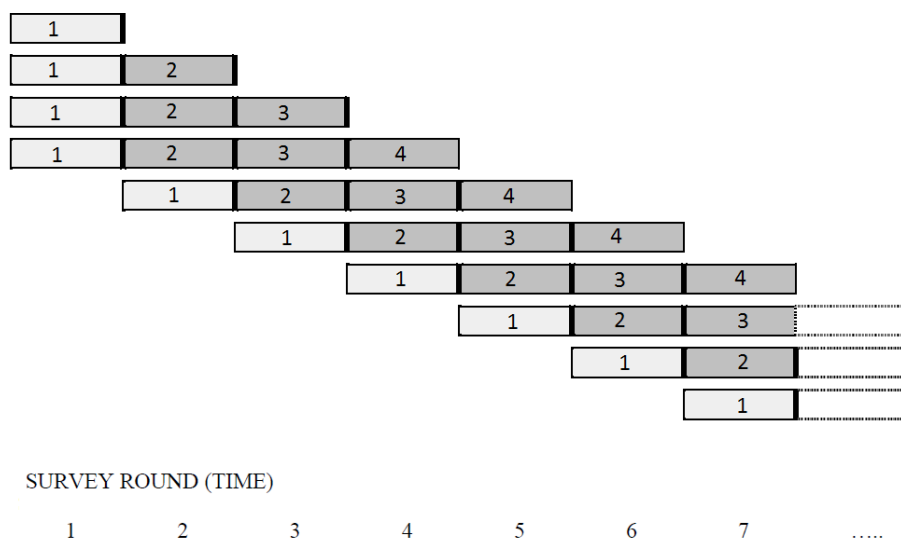
Wave	Number of individuals	Percentage
2006	51188	12.3
2007	49586	11.91
2008	49230	11.83
2009	48683	11.69
2010	44941	10.8
2011	44088	10.59
2012	43061	10.34
2013	40703	9.78
2014	44809	10.76
Total	416289	100

### 3.3.1.1 The rotational design

As mentioned above, the EU-SILC longitudinal component is organized with a rotational design, consisting in four sub-samples (or replications), similar in size and design and representative of the entire population. The sampled individuals are sequentially followed up to a four years' period. From one year to the next, three sub-sample are retained, while one is dropped and replaced by a new one. Thus, one new replication shall be introduced each year and retained for four years.



Figure 1 rotational design structure. A representation from the first wave (2004) onwards



Source: Methodological guidelines and description of EU-SILC (Eurostat, 2016)

“At the beginning, a cross-sectional representative sample of households is selected. It is divided into four sub-samples, each by itself representative of the entire population and similar in structure to the entire sample. One sub-sample is purely cross-sectional and is not followed up after the first round. Respondents in the second sub-sample are requested to participate in the panel for two years, in the third sub-sample for three years, and in the fourth for four years.” (Eurostat, 2016, p.21). To make this concept clearer we can benefit the support of the previous figure (fig. 1). Can be seen that in the second round of the survey (year 2005), three sub-samples are panels in the second year. In the third round (year 2006), one sub-sample is a panel in the second year and two in the third year. For the subsequent rounds, one subsample is a panel in the second year, one in the third year, and one in the fourth (and final) year. Except for the year 2004 (the first survey round), in the other waves there is always one new cross-sectional subsample. In the next table are showed the cases included in the cross-sectional sub-sample and those in the panel sub-samples over wave.

Table 2 Number of cases included in the cross-sectional sub-sample and number of cases included in the panel sub-samples in every round of EU-SILC longitudinal survey

Wave	Cases in cross-sectional sub sample	Cases in panel sub-samples	Total
2006	14094	37094	51188
2007	14010	35576	49586
2008	14203	35027	49230
2009	13624	35059	48683
2010	11839	33102	44941
2011	14415	29673	44088
2012	13761	29300	43061
2013	13082	27621	40703
2014	13742	31067	44809
Total	122770	293519	416289

### 3.3.2 Sample

The analyses are based on nine waves (from 2006 to 2014) of the Eurostat Longitudinal Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). For each wave I created a unique dataset<sup>12</sup>, merging together individual level data (personal data file and personal register files) and household level data (household data file and household register file) on the key variable of *person\_ID*. Then I pooled all these datasets (obtaining 416289 cases) and I dropped the cases included in the cross-sectional sub-samples (n=122770)<sup>13</sup>. Done that, I identified the subset of 18 to 34 year olds (n=75636) and I merged on each of these cases the personal information of

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<sup>12</sup> Starting from the personal data file, which contains the largest number of variables, I merged all the other variables included in the personal register using the *person\_ID* (1:1 merge). Then, from the data at household level, I merged to all the household's members the following variables: *region*, *tenure status*, *equivalized disposable income* and *degree of urbanisation* (1:m merge).

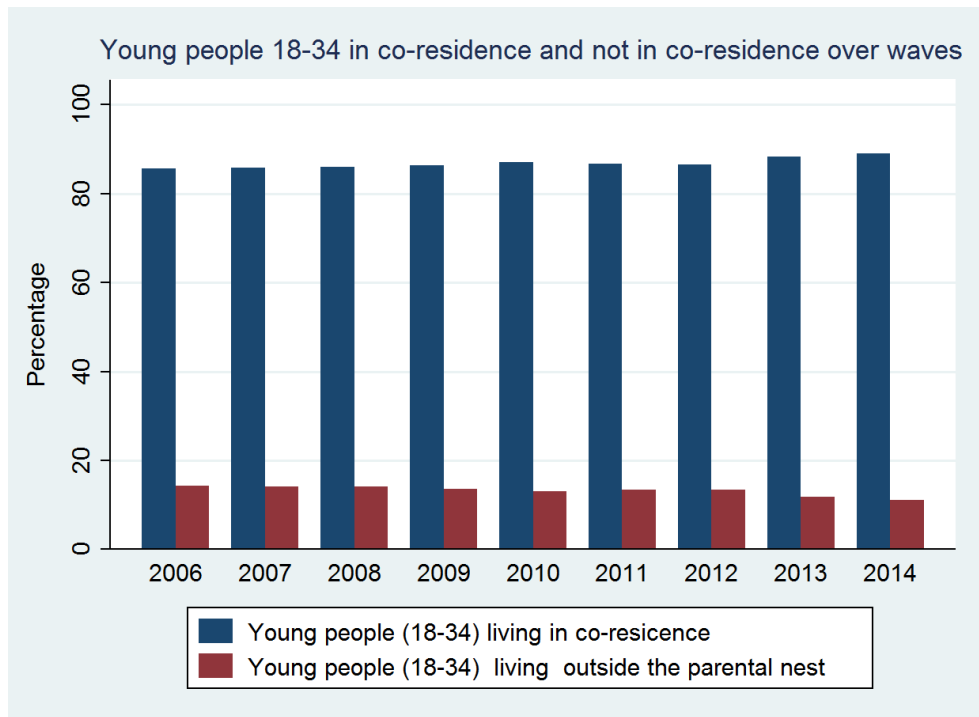
<sup>13</sup> These cases are referred to members of households included in the survey for the first year. They answer to the cross-sectional questionnaire, which, obviously, doesn't include questions about change of status compared to the previous wave. Without information on membership status changes, is not possible establish if they moved into parental home and thus they have to be dropped.

parents co-residing in the household, if any. At this stage of the selection was possible to establish a proportion between young people living in co-residence and those living outside the parental nest (in appendix I can be seen the related table and also a table showing the descriptive statistics of the *not in co-residence* group). Must be emphasized that EU-SILC individual questionnaire does not include questions related to parents<sup>14</sup>. To get information on their education (or occupation), on which is determined the social class of the family, parent(s) have to live in the same household of the respondent. Consequently, all the individuals aged 18-34 not living in co-residence (n= 7096) have been identified and excluded from the sample selection. In the graph below it is possible to see a graphical representation of the share of these individuals with respect to the young people aged 18-34 living in co-residence, during the nine years taken into consideration for the analysis.

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, a question about job position of parents when the respondent was aged 14, or a question about parental educational level etc.

Graph 1 Young people 18-34 in co-residence and not in co-residence over waves



This group of young people, however, was analyzed separately in comparison to the group of young people returned home, taking into account only individual characteristics. Such a strategy that doesn't allow the evaluation of family resources' effect, but gives the opportunity to broaden the understanding of the boomeranging phenomenon (see § 4.9). Also observations with missing information on one of the independent variables were dropped (n=124). In conclusion, my analyses on returning home are restricted to young people in the 18-34 age group living in co-residence with parents. This resulted in a usable sample of 46064 person-years, from 24513 individuals. In the following table (tab. 3) is shown an overview of the characteristics of the selected sample.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics of variables

	N (person-years)	Percentage	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Returned home	752	1.6%	0.02	0.13	0	1
Current Economic status						
Worker	26571	57.7%	0.58	0.49	0	1
Unemployed/inactive	8384	18.2%	0.18	0.39	0	1
Student	11109	24.1%	0.24	0.43	0	1
Change in Activity status						
No Change	39857	86.5%	0.87	0.34	0	1
Get Employed	2591	5.6%	0.06	0.23	0	1
Get Unemployed	1755	3.8%	0.04	0.19	0	1
Get Inactive	1861	4%	0.04	0.20	0	1
Marital status						
Never married	35383	76.8%	0.77	0.42	0	1
Married	10272	22.3%	0.22	0.42	0	1
Separated/divorced	409	0.9%	0.01	0.09	0	1
Social class						
High class	6642	14.4%	0.14	0.35	0	1
Middle class	20699	44.9%	0.45	0.50	0	1
Low class	18723	40.7%	0.41	0.49	0	1
Educational attainment		%				
High education	7003	15.2%	0.15	0.36	0	1
Medium education	27690	60.1%	0.60	0.49	0	1
Low education	11371	24.7%	0.25	0.43	0	1
Female	23192	50.4%	0.50	0.50	0	1
Year ranges		%				
2006-2007	12421	27%	0.27	0.44	0	1
2008-2010	16701	36.3%	0.36	0.48	0	1
2011-2012	8583	18.6%	0.19	0.39	0	1
2013-2014	8359	18.2%	0.18	0.39	0	1
Risk of poverty = equivalised disposable income < 60% of the national median	8670	18.8%	0.19	0.39	0	1
Geographical Area						
North	18306	39.7%	0.40	0.49	0	1
Centre	10602	23%	0.23	0.42	0	1
South & Islands	17156	37.2%	0.37	0.48	0	1
Urbanization degree		%				
Densely-populated area	16028	34.8%	0.35	0.48	0	1
Intermediate area	19020	41.3%	0.41	0.49	0	1
Thinly-populated area	11016	23.9%	0.24	0.43	0	1
Tenure status parental home		%				
Outright owner	31344	68%	0.68	0.47	0	1
Owner paying mortgage	6446	14%	0.14	0.35	0	1
Tenant or subtenant paying rent	3589	7.8%	0.08	0.27	0	1
Social housing tenure	4685	10.2%	0.10	0.30	0	1
Household size	46064	100%	3.62	1.03	0	6
Age (centered)	46064	100%	0.00	5.00	-8	8
Age squared (centered)	46064	100%	0.00	262.23	-380.28	451.72

### 3.3.3 Dependent variable

To identify the young people returned home, I have checked household composition changes. The EU-SILC variable *membership status* collects information on the household composition respect to the reference period of the survey, but gives information also on former household members. Specifically, it reports whether an individual “was in the household in previous wave”, or “moved into the household from another sample household since previous wave”, or “moved into the household from outside sample since previous wave”, or “moved out since previous wave or last interview (if not contacted in previous wave)”, or “lived in the household at least three months during the income reference period and was not recorded in the register as household member”, or if there is “a newly born since last wave” as well as if a former household member “died” (Eurostat,2011,p.135).

Starting from this information I created a dichotomous variable to identify all the young adults who moved into parents’ house since the previous wave. The criteria to fit this reference category require to be aged between 18 and 34 and to have moved into a household<sup>15</sup> in which at least one of the two parents is present<sup>16</sup> (or to have spent there not less than three months, during the income reference period).

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<sup>15</sup> It means that my dependent variable assumes value 1 when the EU\_SILC variable *membership status have* is coded as (2) “moved into the household from another sample household since previous wave”, or (3) “moved into the household from outside sample since previous wave”

<sup>16</sup> To verify the presence of father, mother or both, I checked that the Mother ID (RB230) and Father ID (RB220) variables were flagged as “filled”. These two variables are provided as individual level data. (in the personal register file) and include also step/adoptive/foster parents.

### 3.3.4 Independent variables

The main independent variables have been selected to analyze the effect of economic status (in particular of unemployment and inactivity, considered as proxy of economic hardships), conjugal status (in particular partnership dissolutions) and changes in the economic activities (intended as ‘turning points’ which may affect, positively or negatively, the economic condition) on the outcome of returning home.

Independent variables have been selected also to understand the role that individual characteristics (gender, educational level, age and age squared<sup>17</sup>), social class and familiar resources (tenure status and disposable household income) have on mediating this returning home phenomena. Then, to control for macro-level factors, have been used three variables: the year of the survey, the geographical area (to control for different cultural background on which intergenerational support relations are grounded), the degree of urbanisation (to control for spatial factors like housing costs and territorial resources).

In EU-SILC, almost all the information collected are measured in the ‘current’ survey year, with the exception of very few retrospective questions that ask for changes compared to the previous survey. These include the question on *household membership status* (used for the dependent variable) and the question on change in the individual’s activity status. Since the shift in reported activity (from different status to ‘employed’, ‘unemployed’, or ‘inactive’) occurs in the year previous to the ‘current’ survey (between T-1 and T0), it is expected that its effect on boomerang moves is already observable at T 0.

In the following sessions will be described in detail each of the above-mentioned covariates, explaining the reason for choosing a specific indicators and not others, detailing the recoding procedures to operationalize the variables and explicating expectations about their influence on returning home outcome.

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<sup>17</sup> Adding the squared term allows to model more accurately the effect of age, which may have a non-linear relationship with the dependent variable. Indeed, my models show that it has a reversed u-shaped relation.

### 3.3.4.1 Economic status

As said before, the 2008 economic crisis has worsened the economic conditions of young people (fostering occupational uncertainty and increasing unemployment) and has made more difficult for them to maintain a housing autonomy.

Consequently, to analyze the effect of economic independence on boomerang moves, I recoded the EU-SILC variable *self-defined current economic status*<sup>18</sup> in three categories<sup>19</sup>, distinguishing (0) *workers* (employee working full-time; employee working part-time; self-employed working full-time; self-employed working; part-time; family worker<sup>20</sup>), (1) *unemployed/inactive* (unemployed and other inactive person), and (2) *students* (pupil, student, further training, unpaid work experience). In the recoded variable, the category *workers* includes young people who perceive cash payments or payment in kind (non-monetary payments, like goods or services) for their working activities, enhancing their available material resources. The category *students*, instead, includes young people still in education or training, who are investing on their occupational career with the aids of the family of origin. And finally, the category (3)

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<sup>18</sup> This variable provides labour information on current activity status and on current job of respondents. The concept of ‘current’ implies that any definitive changes in the activity situation are taken into account. “For instance, if a person has lost a job, or the activity status has otherwise changed in a definitive manner, then the situation as of the time of the interview should be reported. In this sense, ‘current’ overrides any concept of averaging over any specific reference period” (Eurostat, Description of Target Variables. Cross-sectional and Longitudinal, 2011. Operation: 291, 2011, p. 290).

<sup>19</sup> The *self-defined current economic status* variable changed from the 2009 wave onwards. The former variable (PL030) have been replaced by another one (PL031), with slightly different answering categories, in order to harmonize it with other labour variables. Hence, for the waves before 2009 I had to change the variable of reference and the recode procedure. Specifically, for the category *workers*, I included respondents “working full time” and “working part-time” (values 1 and 2 of the variable PL030). For the category *students*, I included “pupil, student, further training, unpaid work experience” (value 4 of the variable PL030). And for the category *unemployed/inactive*, “unemployed” and “other inactive” respondents (values 3 and 9 of the variable PL030).

<sup>20</sup> “Family workers are persons working in a family business or on a family farm without pay and without being considered as employees. [...]Such people frequently receive remuneration in the form of fringe benefits and payments in kind” (Eurostat, Description of Target Variables. Cross-sectional and Longitudinal, 2011. Operation: 291, 2011, p. 290).



*unemployed/inactive* includes not-students young people without a personal income: both those actively looking for a work (the unemployed) and those not (the inactive, or, in other words, those neither in employment nor in education or training: the so called NEETs)<sup>21</sup>. In this latter category are grouped the individuals more affected by the economic crises, who no longer perceive an income and consequently are expected to be more at risk of returning to the parental home.

### 3.3.4.2 Change of economic status

As argued by Arundel and Lennartz (2017), returning home is often anticipated by events that ‘shocks’ young people life course: ‘turning points’ (often negatively connoted) that are opposite to those associated with home-leaving, especially if they entail an unanticipated economic setback. More specifically, Stone et al. (2014) demonstrated that the key ‘turning point shocks’ impacting on the likelihood of returning home are related to changes in the economic activity (especially moving to unemployment or inactivity condition). Therefore, besides focusing on the effect of economic status in itself, I decided to analyze also the effect of the changes in the economic status of young people

To do so, I recoded the EU-SILC variable *Most recent change in the individual’s activity status*<sup>22</sup> into four categories: (0) no change, (1) get-employed, (2) get-unemployed, (3) get-inactive. The category no change, includes all the cases flagged as “not applicable (no change since last year)”. The category get-employed includes all the individuals

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<sup>21</sup> In the definition given by Eurostat (2011), the category of *Inactive* includes 5 sub-categories (pupil, student, further training, unpaid work experience; permanently disabled or/and unfit to work; in compulsory military community or service; fulfilling domestic tasks and care responsibilities; other inactive person), but, in this specific question are kept separate. Consequently, the answering category *other inactive*, which I picked up for the recoding procedure, includes only the individuals not engaged in education, employment or training.

<sup>22</sup> "This variable collects whether there is a change in the individual activity status since the last interview (or last 12 months for the first year of data collection)" (Eurostat, Description of Target Variables. Cross-sectional and Longitudinal, 2011. Operation: 291, 2011, p. 319). Therefore, this question can also be answered also by individuals moved into a reference household from outside sample. If more than one change occurred, is recorded the most recent one.

moved from unemployed to employed status and from other inactive to employed status. The category get-unemployed includes all the individuals moved from employed to unemployed status and from other inactive to unemployed status. The category get-inactive includes all the individuals moved from employed to other inactive status and from unemployed to other inactive status.

In the variable *Most recent change in the individual's activity status*, the category “other inactive” includes students, persons in training and other inactive persons (those fulfilling domestic tasks and care responsibilities, or not in employment and not in education), consequently was not possible to isolate students for analyzing the effect of returning in education.

### **3.3.4.3 Marital status**

In many studies on young people returning to parental home, partnership dissolution emerges as a strong determinant (Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2014; Arundel & Lennartz, *Returning to the parental home: Boomerang moves of younger adults and the welfare regime context*, 2017). As already said, whether marriage and consensual union are positively associated with home-leaving, on the contrary, dissolution increase the likelihood of a boomerang event. A break up implies a division of the resources that were previously shared with the spouse, leading often to an economic setback. Furthermore, a partnership dissolution frequently requires to move out from the cohabiting house, for legal or relational reasons. Boomeranging to parental home can therefore represent a solid option to tackle these difficulties, benefitting the economical and emotional support of the family (Sassler, Ciambrone, & Benway, 2008; Swartz et al., 2011).

To analyze the effect of partnership and partnership dissolution, I recoded the EU-SILC *marital stats* variable into three categories: (0) never married, (1) married, (2) divorced/ separated. I basically collapsed the two categories of separated and divorced in a single one and recoded the very few cases (precisely 52) of widowed as missing. Although it was reasonable to integrate information on consensual unions,

the way the respective variable was surveyed would have create interpretative issues<sup>23</sup>.

#### 3.3.4.4 Educational level

Precariousness and employment uncertainty can affect in a very different way young people live, due to the economic, cultural and social capital transmitted by the family. Since educational level emerged as one important variables (together with gender and class) in designing the social location of young people (Colombo & Rebughini, 2015), it can be used to analyze the effect of educational differences on many aspects of the transition to adulthood. In this case, on the returning home phenomena. The higher cost of sustaining independent living and the postponement of labor market entrance results to foster young people in higher education to return to the parental home, in order to get ahead financially (Mitchell, 2006; Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2011). Must be said that, in Italy, leaving home for education is not as diffused as in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Moreover, the dynamic of living on campus during the semester and returning with parents during the academic breaks (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999) is pretty uncommon in Italy. But still, higher educated young adult are expected to return more, both for a matter of financial support and for a greater acceptance of housing support by the family.

I recoded the EU-SILC variable *highest ISCED level attained* into three categories: (0) high education, (1) medium education, (2) low education. The educational attainments are measured with the ISCED1997 code (UNESCO, 1999) and to define

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<sup>23</sup> The variable *consensual unions* (PB200) takes into account both the consensual unions with legal basis (married couples and the registered partners) and without. For my empirical design, however, this variable has a problem with the way it was surveyed. Indeed, for answering to be in union, “both partners have to live in the same household” (Eurostat, Description of Target Variables. Cross-sectional and Longitudinal, 2011. Operation: 291, 2011, p. 265). This means that a person still in union who returns to parental home (without the spouse), can no longer answer the questionnaire claiming to be in a consensual union. Such issue would therefore have affected (albeit marginally, given the number of cases) the effect of the marital dimension on the boomerang moves.

the category *low education* I collapsed together pre-primary education (ISCED 0), primary level (ISCED 1) and lower secondary (ISCED 2). To define the *medium education*, I joint the categories of upper secondary level (ISCED 3) and post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED 4), while for the *high education* I joint first stage (ISCED 5) or a second stage (ISCED 6) of tertiary education.

Since in the analysis are compared both employed individuals and individuals still in education, the use of the highest ISCED level can be problematic. There is the risk of grouping in the same category people with pretty different educational perspectives. Have to be considered that the extension of training experience involves both an increase in the cultural capital and an impact on the expectations concerning job prospective and life course choices. Consequently, with regard to educational level, it is useful to make a distinction between individuals in employment and individuals still in education. Following a common empirical strategy in the social stratification literature (see Bernardi & Ballarino, 2014), the still in-education individuals have been classified according to the '*current education activity*', while the ones in employment have been classified on the highest title obtained. In EU-SILC longitudinal, however, there is only one variable that refers to the highest academic qualification obtained (*highest ISCED level attained*). Consequently, for the individuals who are students, could be assumed that their current educational level corresponds to their highest ISCED title plus one category. For example, a young person who has a secondary education qualification as highest title, and results to be student<sup>24</sup>, can be assumed to be enrolled in a three-year degree course or in any equivalent training (first stage of tertiary education). In the same way, an individual who is a student and has a bachelor's degree as his highest qualification, can be assumed to be enrolled in a master's degree or a specialization master's degree (second stage of tertiary education). Once imputed these new ISCED values to the individuals still in education, the classification procedure is the same as described above

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<sup>24</sup> To define individuals still in education can be used the *economic status* variable (see § 3.3.4.1 )

### **3.3.4.5 Social class**

As already stressed, taking into account mechanisms of reproduction of inequalities and form of differentiation among young people is pivotal to analyze the returning home phenomena. Social class of belonging is one of the main element that affect social stratification. Belonging to a family rather than to another affects the possibility of accessing certain resources, economic, relational and cultural, and impacts on life trajectories of its members. Social origin is all the more important in countries where welfare state has a marginal role, where families are the main redistributive institutions and, consequently, strong mechanisms of intergenerational transmission are in force. In these contexts, like Italy, the family of origin and the social class affect strongly young people's opportunities and constraints.

Therefore, this paragraph, dedicated to the operational definition of the social class, will be particularly detailed. Initially, will be briefly presented the main empirical approaches adopted in the literature of social stratification (3.3.4.4.1). Then, will be described the reasons for choosing parents' educational attainment as proxy for social class and explained how ISCED codes have been recoded to define the independent variable of the model (3.3.4.4.2). Finally, will be presented the results of a robustness check, in which social class is measured with parents' occupation, to strengthen the choice of education as reliable (3.3.4.4.3).

#### **3.3.4.5.1 Social class definition, the main empirical approaches in the literature of social stratification**

Since the birth of the social sciences, on social class have been developed many theories and various methods of measurement, according to the discipline of reference. The concept of social class assumes a hierarchical stratification of societies and the most common way to make this concept operational is to identify and to rank groups of individuals with similar characteristics in terms of education, occupation, and income (focusing only on one of these dimensions or on the combination of them) (Buchmann, 2002). Economists have been mainly concerned to income and wealth distribution, while sociologists have tendentially focus their attention on

occupation and education, using both categorical and metric indicators. However, there is still an open debate to define what is a social class, whether is still meaningful to use this interpretative category in contemporary societies, and which are the better indicators to measure it.

In the researches on social stratification there is a tendency to measure class belonging according to the occupational position of parents and it is possible identify two main strands of empirical approaches: the first can be defined a "metric" approach and the second a "categorical" approach (Barone, 2013). Scholars using a metric approach are interested in socio-economic status of individuals and give to each occupation an attribution of scores that reflect its overall social advantage, expressed by the income and education attainment (socio-economic status) or by the degree of social desirability of the occupation (social prestige). The usage of continuous and metric variables to define and rank social groups is the reason why this approach is labeled in such a way. And precisely the fact that classes are identifiable only by means of statistical artefacts, lacking of any theoretical and substantive content, represents its main limit (ivi). Furthermore, should be noted that in some social theories the notion of class can't be reduced merely to the dimension of the socio-economic advantage of an occupation. In Weberian or Bourdieusian theories, for example, belonging to a class means to share values, lifestyles and social practices of individuals involved in the same occupation. The lack of theoretical background to define classes can be overcome with the categorical approach, based on social class schemes. Indeed, the most common class schemes, like the EGP (Erikson, Goldthorpe, & Portocarero, 1979) or the one developed by Cobalti and Schizzerotto (1994) provide for an explicit articulation of the social classes on three levels: upper classes, middle classes and subordinate classes. This articulation is based on two theoretical criteria of relevance: the first is about possession of the means of production and the second concerns the nature of the employment relationships between employees and their company.

It's worthy to recall that until the 70s, in the class analysis, scholars were used to account only the occupational position of fathers. Relying on their arguments, the strong male-breadwinner model featuring that historical period made men much more likely to be the head of family and their occupational position enough to derive

social position of families (Goldthorpe, 1983). However, the increasing level of female employment and the growing share of cross class families (family with spouses belonging to different social classes) disclose the limits of this assumption. In the Italian literature can be mentioned two scholars who elaborated effective strategies to solve this issue (both starting from an occupational criterion of stratification). Barbagli (1988) proposed to identify specific category of cross-class families, while Schizzerotto (1988) proposed to assume the class of the individual who is in the dominant social position, regardless of whether was the husband or the wife, a man or a women. This latter strategy allows to considers the social position of the individual with the higher disposal of resources and thus the most important member for the redistributive function that family has to fulfil. The *dominance position* principle used by Schizzerotto provides a good strategy to classify family social stratification adopting a categorical class-based scheme, which is also used to define my independent variable in the model.

Finally, after this digression, must be mentioned other recent critics addressed to social class analysis. For various scholar, conventional *big classes*<sup>25</sup> are now not anymore explanatory of individual attitude and behavior. The main claim is that the traditional class-based social divisions cannot adequately grasp new transformations and the shift in individual identities and lifestyles (Hechter, 2004; Kingston, 2000). These new trends can be captured “disaggregating big classes into detailed occupations “micro-classes” that better correspond to institutionalized boundaries” (Weeden & Grusky, 2004, p. 4). The debate around the usefulness of big-class or micro-class schemas has a long history and is still an open matter among sociologists studying inequality and occupational social class (Grusky & Sørensen, 1998).

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<sup>25</sup> Usually a three classes distinction, which assume that the stratification of a society can be represented distinguishing an upper class, a middle class and a lower class. Three social groups including many individuals who could be even very different among each other, also in terms of occupational condition.

### 3.3.4.5.2 Operationalization of social class

The recent approaches to class analysis, more holistic and more observant to cultural and subjective dimensions (Bottero, 2004; Crompton, 2008), shows that economics and culture do not constitute a mutually exclusive alternative in the analysis of inequalities (Weeden & Grusky, 2005). On the contrary, their integration represents a relevant interpretative improvement. Since class difference is not just a matter of unequal distribution of economic resources, but also a matter of unequal recognition and dissimilar system of values, norms and expectations. Quoting some pillar studies (Haveman & Wolfe, 1995; Ermisch & Francesconi, 2001; Davis-Kean, 2005), Sironi, Barban and Impicciatore (2015, p. 92) highlight that “parental educational level is a significant indicator of parental resources and an important predictor of children’s education and behavioral outcomes and subsequent income”. Furthermore, parental education is a relevant predictor of children’s attitudes, toward gender roles (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988), conjugal relationships and family life (Amato, 1988), educational careers and job prospects (Powell & Steelman, 1982).

Consequently, I decided to take parents’ education as proxy for social class, using a three-class classification: (0) high class, (1) middle class, (2) low class. Also for parents, the information on educational level is provided by the EU-SILC variable *highest ISCED level attained*, measured with the ISCED1997 code for all the waves of my interest. Following the principle of the ‘dominance position’, I recoded the higher educational level between the parents living in the same household of the selected individuals (if both parents are present, otherwise I took the educational level of the only coresident parent). The low class is composed by individuals whose higher parent’s educational level is pre-primary (ISCED 0) or primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary (ISCED 2). The middle class, by individuals whose most educated parent reached an upper secondary level (ISCED 3) or a post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED 4). The high class, by individuals whose most educated parent reached a first stage (ISCED 5) or a second stage (ISCED 6) of tertiary education.



### 3.3.4.5.3 The choice of parents' education, a robustness validation

As alternative approach to operationalize social class, I also used parents' occupation (with an aim of a robustness check). I recoded the ISCO code<sup>26</sup> of the coresident parents with the higher position following two strategies. The first was to use the EGP schema and to define three classes: the upper class (high skilled white collars including managers, professionals, legislators and high skills technicians), the middle class (low skilled white collar, high skilled blue collars, trades workers and small proprietors), and the lower class (low skilled blue collar involved in elementary manual occupations). The second was to use the ESeG classification (European socioeconomic groups)<sup>27</sup>, based on the combination of parents' occupation (ISCO code) and status in employment (employees/self-employed status), and to define again three classes: the high class (managers and professionals), the middle class (technicians and associated professionals' employees, small entrepreneurs self-employed), and the working class (clerks and skilled service employees, skilled industrial employees, lower status employees). These two classifications were employed as a robustness check for the results of the model. What emerged is that parent's education is robust to both these occupational indicators used to measure alternatively social class, indeed, the regression coefficients maintained their sign and significance. The difference is that occupational indicators reduce the effect of social class on boomerang moves. In this regard, must be noted that parents' occupation is an indicator accounting mainly for the material resources owned by the family of origin, thus its effect is partially absorbed by the variable *At risk of poverty* included in

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26 In the EU-SILC longitudinal survey, occupation is measured until the 2013 wave with a variable (PL050) using the ISCO-88 code. From the wave 2010 onwards, occupation is recorded in another variable (PL051) using the ISCO-08 code.

27 "ESeG is a two-level classification consisting of nine main groups. The nine main groups are divided into seven categories for the distinction of economically active and two categories for inactive persons. The classification, therefore, represents all persons in the sample. ESeG categories 1-7. The categories can be divided into three classes: high class (1+2), middle class (3+4) and working class (5+6+7). ESeG category 8 covers pensioners and inactive persons aged 65 and over. ESeG category 9 covers other non-active persons (students, permanently disabled, unemployed persons not classified elsewhere and other inactive persons younger than 65 years of age)" (Bohr, 2018, p. 6).

the model, which is defined on the base of the household's equivalised disposable income. This robustness makes the use of parental education even more legitimate. However, despite EU-SILC offers reliable measures of family income and detailed information on occupational status of respondents, the choice of education as indicator for operationalizing social class finds its very justification on the theoretical level. As already said, parents' education can account for all those non-material resources and those values transmitted by the family of origin which affect the transitional trajectories of young people and specifically their housing career. In addition, parent's education is (indirectly) also an indicator of material resources, although to account properly the economic support of the family of origin is used the household disposable income, to which the next paragraph is dedicated

#### **3.3.4.6 Risk of poverty**

Many studies have demonstrated that parental income is a relevant factor for explaining young people home-leaving, coresidence (Nilsson & Strandh, 1999; Albertini & Kohli, *The generational contract in the family: An analysis of transfer regimes in Europe*, 2012) and home-returning (Arundel & Lennartz, *Returning to the parental home: Boomerang moves of younger adults and the welfare regime context*, 2017). Others scholars, instead, focused on the role of children income (Avery, Goldscheider, & Speare, 1992; Le Blanc & Wolff, 2006), which is also affecting their housing careers. Clearly, the economic resources provided by the parents are much more relevant than those disposable by young people aged between 18 and 34 (tendentially inactive, or in an uncertain employment condition), however the EU-SILC variable *equivalized disposable income*<sup>28</sup> takes into account both, including also

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<sup>28</sup> This variable is calculated in three steps. First, "all monetary incomes received from any source by each member of a household are added up; these include income from work, investment and social benefits, plus any other household income; taxes and social contributions that have been paid, are deducted from this sum. Then, in order to reflect differences in a household's size and composition, the total (net) household income is divided by the number of 'equivalent adults', using a standard (equivalence) scale: the modified OECD scale (it gives a weight to all members of the household: 1.0 to the first adult; 0.5 to the second and each subsequent person aged 14 and

social transfers<sup>29</sup>(if family members are entitled to receive any). More precisely, it measures “the total income of a household, after tax and other deductions, that is available for spending or saving, divided by the number of household members” (Eurostat, Glossary: *Equivalised\_disposable\_income*, 2018).

The variable *risk of poverty*, included in the model, is a binary variable calculated just upon the equivalized disposable income. Its reference category identify all the sampled individual with an equivalized disposable income (after social transfers) below the “*risk-of-poverty threshold*, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers” (Eurostat, 2018). Hence, this binary variable does not measure poverty in itself, nor conditions of material deprivation, but identifies individuals with lower material resources in the country. Relying on this variable, young people at risk of poverty are not necessarily facing a low standard of living, but surely they are in a condition of disadvantage compared to the other peers. A condition which is expected to foster boomerang moves. I preferred to use this dichotomous variable, instead of the *equivalized disposable income*, because of the ease with which it can be interpreted and the greater coherence to the research design. A variable to address specifically a group of disadvantaged young people and test the effect of material resources’ lack on the likelihood of returning into parental home.

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over; 0.3 to each child aged under 14). Finally, the resulting figure is called the equivalised disposable income and is attributed equally to each member of the household” (Eurostat, 2018)

<sup>29</sup> They include: pensions, unemployment benefits, family-related benefits, sickness and invalidity benefits, education-related benefits, housing allowances, social assistance benefit, other benefits (Eurostat, 2018)

### 3.3.4.7 Geographical Area

This variable gives information on the geographical location of the house in which the respondents is living. In Italy is important to distinguish between the North, the Centre and the South. The rooted historical and cultural differences, as well as the unequal distribution of economic resources, affect reproductive behaviour (Impicciatore & Dalla Zuanna, 2016), family organization and household formation (Viazzo, 2003; Santarelli & Cottone, 2009). Hence, I expect geographical areas to have an effect also on home-returning, reflecting different cultural background on which intergenerational support relations are grounded and specifically the expectations on housing transition of both parents and children.

In EU-SILC, territorial areas are classified with the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS): a hierarchical system, with three different levels of specification (NUTS 1, NUTS 2, NUTS 3)<sup>30</sup>, for dividing up the economic territory of the EU into sub-national areas. To compute the independent variable *geographical areas* used in the model, I took the NUTS 1 codes attributed to Italy and I recoded them in order to define three categories: (0) North, (1) Centre, (2) South and Islands. To define North, I collapsed the NUTS code of North-West Italy (ITC) and North-East Italy (ITH), to define Centre, I kept the NUTS code of Centre Italy (ITI) and to define South and Islands, I collapsed the NUTS code of South Italy (ITF) and Italian Islands (ITG).

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<sup>30</sup> Specifically, NUTS 1 aggregates socio-economic regions, NUTS 2 basic regions for the application of regional policy, NUTS 3: small regions for specific diagnoses (Eurostat, 2018).

### 3.3.4.8 Degree of urbanization

The degree of urbanization was included in the model to control for spatial factors which could affect boomerang moves, especially in terms of affordability of independent living (Ermisch, 1999; Hughes, 2003). Indeed, in big cities and metropolitan areas the housing costs are higher and young people face more difficulties in managing their independent leaving, increasing the likelihood of returning into parental home (South & Lei, 2015).

In this case I used directly the EU-SILC variable *Degree of urbanization* without any recoding. The Degree of urbanization (DEGURBA) is a classification based on the share of local population living in urban clusters and in urban centers. It groups local administrative units (LAU2)<sup>31</sup> into three types of area: (0) densely populated area (cities/large urban area)<sup>32</sup>, (1) intermediate density area (towns and suburbs/small urban area)<sup>33</sup>, (2) thinly populated area (or rural area)<sup>34</sup> (Eurostat U. E., 2018).

### 3.3.4.9 Tenure status

The housing system of a country affect to a large extend the opportunities that young people have to leave the parental nest or maintain a residential independence. The affordability of the rental market, the public housing policies and the homeownership are decisive in the living conditions of young people. When private rental sector is

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<sup>31</sup> “The classification of local administrative units (LAU2) uses as a criterion the geographical contiguity in combination with the share of local population living in the different type of clusters. The typology of clusters starts by classifying grid cells according to their population size and density. High-density cluster/urban center: contiguous grid cells of 1 km<sup>2</sup> with a density of at least 1.500 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> and a minimum population of 50.000. Urban cluster: cluster of contiguous grid cells of 1 km<sup>2</sup> with a density of at least 300 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> and a minimum population of 5.000. Rural grid cell: grid cell outside high-density clusters and urban clusters.

<sup>32</sup> At least 50 % lives in high-density clusters; in addition, each high-density cluster should have at least 75 % of its population in densely-populated LAU2.

<sup>33</sup> Less than 50 % of the population lives in rural grid cells and less than 50 % live in high-density clusters.

<sup>34</sup> More than 50 % of the population lives in rural grid cells.

hardly approachable and the social housing inadequate, relying on family resources is the most favorable option. Addressing the cultural norms of residential independence and the forms of intergenerational support, some researches (Allen, Barlow, Leal, Maloutas, & Padovani, 2004; Albertini, Kohli M, & Vogel, 2007) have underlined that Social Democratic countries are frequently characterized by financial transfers to support the independent living of children, while Southern Europe countries by intra-family support and coresidence. In Italy, indeed, the housing system is tendentially oriented toward prolonged period of coresidence, ending with children moving directly into homeownership (usually with the spouse). Parental homeownership is an important familiar resource that has the effect of delaying children home leaving (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999; Ronald, 2008) and thereby reducing their likelihood to experience boomerang moves (Arundel & Doling, 2016).

Consequently, in the model I included the variable *tenure status*. It is a good proxy for family wealth and allows to distinguish young people co-residing in a family-owned house by those co-residing in other housing arrangements. I basically kept the same categories of the EU-SILC variable: (0) *outright owner*<sup>35</sup>, (1) *owner paying mortgage*<sup>36</sup> (2) *tenant or subtenant paying rent*; but I made a recode to create a fourth category, labeled (3) *rent at reduced rate or accommodation provided free*<sup>37</sup> Young people grouped in this latter category<sup>38</sup> have in common. the fact of relying on commodities and benefits provided by the public housing system.

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<sup>35</sup> “The owner of the accommodation should be a member of the household. The owner is considered as 'outright owner' when he/she has no more mortgage to pay for his/her main dwelling” (Eurostat, 2018, p.172).

<sup>36</sup> “An owner who has to pay a mortgage only for a second dwelling and/or for repairs, renovation, maintenance, etc. should be treated as 'outright owner” (Eurostat, 2018).

<sup>37</sup> Reduced-rate renters would include those (a) renting social housing, (b) renting at a reduced rate from an employer and (c) those in accommodation where the actual rent is fixed by law. Accommodations provided for free, instead, include situations in which rent is recovered from housing benefit.

<sup>38</sup> It joints together two modalities of the original variable. One of the two is labeled as ‘accommodation is rented at a reduced rate (lower price than the market price)’, while the other as ‘accommodation is provided free individuals’.

### 3.3.4.10 Year ranges

Unlike before, rather than using the *year of the survey* as continuous variable, I grouped the observation in four categories, based on specific time ranges. The first, referred to the pre-crisis period, goes from 2006 to 2007(0). The second, referred to the initial phase of the economic crisis, goes from 2008 to 2010 (1). The third, associate to the final and most severe phase of the crises, goes from 2011 to 2012 (2). The forth, in the post crises period, goes from 2013 to 2014 (3).

Having a four categories year variable, beside making the results more easily understandable, allows to better frame the issue of economic crisis and set proper interpretations. Indeed, I'm not interested in estimating the average effect that one unit (year) increase has on the likelihood of returning home, but to confront the effect of the reference category (referred to the pre-crisis period) with the effect of the others categories (during and after the crises)

Furthermore, the small number of the returned young people in the selected sample (751 over 9 waves) can imply high standard error in the regression models. If the amount of cases rises, the standard error decrees: more data gives less variation and, in turn, more precision in the estimations. Using a categorical year variable increases the number of cases in each category, improving the quality of the estimations.

### 3.3.5 Method

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, the empirical analysis is based on nine waves (2006-2014) of the longitudinal EU-SILC survey. It is therefore a panel dataset, containing repeated observations on the same individuals collected over time. The availability of repeated observations allows to specify and estimate more accurate and more realistic models than time series or cross-section can do. Panel data are suitable to model and explain why individual units behave differently, but also why a given individual behaves differently at different time periods (Verbeek, 2008). By combining two dimensions (an individual component and a time component), panel data are more suitable to analyze the dynamics of change and to understand transitions, like returning to parental home. In very general terms, a panel linear model can be specified as following:

$$y_{it} = x'_{it}\beta_{it} + \varepsilon_{it},$$

where  $x_{it}$  is K-dimensional vector of explanatory variables<sup>39</sup>, indexed by an  $i$  for the individual ( $i = 1, 2, [\dots], N$ ) and a  $t$  for the time period ( $t = 1, 2, [\dots], T$ ), and  $\beta_{it}$  is the estimator of the partial effects of  $x_{it}$  in period  $t$  for unit  $i$ . This general formula need to be further specified, in order to be useful. Depending on the choice of a random effect or a fixed effect approach, the assumptions change, as well as the meanings attributed to errors and estimators.

In fixed effect models, the assumption is that  $\beta_{it}$  is constant for all  $i$  and  $t$ , except the intercept term. This could be written in such a way:

$$y_{it} = \alpha_i + x'_{it}\beta + \varepsilon_{it}$$

In this case, " $\alpha_i$  represents random individual-specific effects constant over time and  $\varepsilon_{it}$  it is assumed to be independent and identically distributed over individuals and time, with mean zero and variance  $\sigma^2_\varepsilon$ " (Verbeek, 2008, p. 342). In other words, the intercept  $\alpha_i$  capture the effects of those unobserved variables which are affecting the

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<sup>39</sup> The elements are indexed from 1 to K and the first element does not refer to the intercept.



outcome  $y$  and which are assumed to be identically distributed over individuals and time. One of the great advantages of this approach is that, by assumption, this intercept can be an endogenous parameter correlated with the explanatory variables specified in the model.

The alternative Random Effect approach, instead, assumes that the intercepts of the individuals are different. “They can be treated as drawings from a distribution with mean  $\mu$  and variance  $\sigma_a^2$ , usually a normal distribution, under the essential assumption that these drawings are independent from the explanatory variables in  $x_{it}$ ” (ibidem). It could be written as follow:

$$y_{it} = \mu + x'_{it}\beta + \alpha_i + \varepsilon_{it}$$

To paraphrase the quote, there are many intercepts ( $\alpha_i$ ) because the effects of those unobserved variables which are affecting the outcome  $y$  change among individuals. These intercepts are assumed to be exogenous parameters (not correlated with regressors in  $x_{it}$ ) and distributed differently among individuals following a specific distribution which should reproduce the characteristics of the population from which the sample is extracted.

Whether to choose a fixed effect or a random effect is not a straightforward issue and the decision can lead to quite divergent estimates. In any case, panel-data methods give better estimates than cross-section ones, albeit involving some practical complications. First of all, standard errors of estimators need to be adjusted, because each additional observation over the same units is not independent of previous periods. Then, it must be verified if panel data are balanced or unbalanced and if they are complete or incomplete, checking for eventual selection bias. But above all, it must be decided on using a fixed effect approach or a random effect approach. As already mention, this choice has consequences for both inference and estimations consistency. Such importance advocates for both a theoretical justification, driven by the research questions, and an empirical one, oriented by the characteristic of the data.

### 3.3.5.1 Nonlinear panel models

Let's now focus on the empirical design of this PhD thesis and on the characteristics of the data. First of all, the analyses were carried out on a sample of young people (aged 18 to 34) living in co-residence, confronting those who have experienced a return in the parental home against those who have not left the parental nest. This led me to define a dependent variable with a binary outcome. Then, the availability of nine waves (2006-2014) of the longitudinal EU-SILC allowed me to exploit the panel structure of the data. Consequently, the strategy that I considered most effective to set my analyses was to use nonlinear regression methods and, specifically, longitudinal logit models. The functioning of nonlinear panel models is similar to the one of linear panel models. It is based on individual-effects and the fully parametric model may take the following form:

$$f(y_{it}|\alpha_i, x_{it}) = f(y_{it}, \alpha_i + x'_{it}\beta, \gamma)$$

Again,  $x_{it}$  is the K-dimensional vector of explanatory variables where  $i$  denotes for the individual and  $t$  for time, while  $\gamma$  indicates additional model parameters (such as variance parameters) and  $a_i$  indicates an individual effect.

With respect to mine panel-data organization, the following two table (tab.4 and tab.5) summarizes the most relevant information (further details can be seen in appendix II).

Table 4 Panel-data organization, general description

<i>Number of individuals</i>	24493
<i>Year</i>	2006, 2007, [...], 2014
<i>Delta(year)</i>	1 unit
<i>Span(year)</i>	9 periods

*(personal\_id\*year uniquely identifies each observation)*

Table 5 Panel-data organization, member of observations for individual units

N. of observations for individual unit	Frequencies	Percentage
1	9703	40
2	7719	32
3	7071	29
Total	24493	100

First of all, it must be remembered that I selected only young people aged 18 to 34 belonging to a longitudinal sub-sample. Therefore, concerning the table above, whoever appears one time in the dataset means that was interviewed for two years in a row, who appears twice means that was interviewed for three years in a row and who appears three times means that was interviewed for four years in a row<sup>40</sup>. Said that, from these tables emerges clearly that my data are configured as a short panel, with many individual units and few time periods, and that they are incomplete and unbalanced. Data are incomplete because the individuals interviewed in the last wave are not the same of the first survey. From a practical point of view, panel datasets are almost always incomplete (people may die, move to another country or just quit the survey, etc.), but what matters is to understand whether these losses could imply a selection bias (the fact that groups of individuals with similar characteristics quit the survey for any reason, compromising the representativeness of the sample). In some survey are defined refreshment samples to draw from to compensate attrition, otherwise other panel may be collected with a rotating sampling strategy, like EU-SILC. In a rotating panel, to prevent a selection bias, every year a fixed proportion of the units is replaced. A consequence of these strategy is that the resulting panel data become unbalanced (see tab. 10, appendix II), meaning that not all individual units are observed in all time periods. However, most modeling algorithms can handle both balanced and unbalanced data, including the *xtlogit* command of Stata,

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<sup>40</sup> In any EU-SILC wave there is at least a cross-sectional sub-sample that was eliminated during the sample selection process (see §3.3.2). More in details, in any wave there are four sub-samples, one is cross-sectional, one composed of respondents who participate in the panel for two years, one composed of respondents who participate in the panel for three years, composed of respondents who participate in the panel for four years (the maximum in the EU-SILC rotational design).

which was used for mine analysis (for unbalanced data, the consistency of estimator depend on the sample-selection process and specifically on the absence of any selection bias).

Before commenting on the results of the analysis, it is fundamental to explain the reasons that led me to use a random effect approach.

#### **3.3.4.10 Age and age squared**

Age is an attribute that can be operationalized in many ways. It can be dichotomized, it can be divided into category, or it can be treated as a discrete variable, as chosen for the empirical strategy of this thesis. To avoid the bias brought by the dichotomization of continuous predictor and to prevent the problematic definition of arbitrary 'cut points' for differentiating age groups, age was used as continuous variable. Adding the age squared term allows to model more accurately the effect of age, which may have a non-linear relationship with the dependent variable. Indeed, my models show a positive and significant effect of age and a negative and significant effect of age squared, meaning an inverted U-shaped relation between age and home returning (the younger and the older in the selected sample return less than those close to the median age).

#### **3.3.5.2 The choice of random effects models**

When only a few observations are available for each individual, it is very important to make the most efficient use of the data. Fixed effects approach, as already said, is conditional upon the values for  $a_i$ . Its use makes particularly sense if individuals taken into account are 'one of a kind' or very similar to each other, since individual effect cannot be viewed as a random draw from some underlying population, but a fixed unknown effect equally distributed among sampled individuals. Furthermore, this approach can only estimate the effects of explanatory variables that vary over time, measuring their within variance, but it is inadequate if in the model there are many time-invariant variables. To clarify this point can be quoted the explanation of

Cameron and Trivedi: “dependent variables and regressors can potentially vary over both time and individuals. Variation over time on a given individual is called within variation, and variation across individuals is called between variation. This distinction is important because estimators differ in their use of within and between variation. In particular, in the fixed effect model the coefficient of a regressor with little within variation will be imprecisely estimated and will be not identified if there is no within variation at all” (2009, p. 238). In contrast, the random effects approach is not conditional upon the individual *a*s and it allows to make inference with respect to the population characteristics. As underlined by Cameron and Trivedi, (2009), the main advantages of a random effects model are that it allows to estimates all coefficients, even those of time-invariant regressors, and that therefore it allows the prediction of marginal effects (essential to my interpretations). The disadvantage is that these estimates are inconsistent if the fixed effects model is appropriate.

In light of what have been said, to choose the best approach it is useful to quantify the relative importance of within and between variation of each explanatory variable and of the dependent variable. In table 11 (Appendix II) can be seen a detailed overview from which emerges that *social class, gender, marital status, geographical area, and degree of urbanization* are time-constant, the dependent variable is almost time-invariant, and that also for the other independent variables (*economic status, change in activity status, educational level, year ranges, poverty, tenure status, and age*) most of the variation is between variation rather than within variation. Furthermore, in my data I’m dealing with a representative sample of the population, and my research questions are strongly based on a comparison between groups (especially between social classes) with respect to the phenomenon of young people returning home. I therefore expect that fixed effect models are not fitting properly my empirical design, for the high number of time-invariant variables, for the heterogeneity of the individuals in the sample and for the hypotheses that I want to test. Besides these theoretical considerations, even on a practical side I was led to the choice of a random effect model. Indeed, the attempt to calculate fixed effect estimators failed, due to

the very high number of omitted observations caused by the lack of within variation in many variables (making the Hausman test<sup>41</sup> even superfluous).

In the end, with the aim of highlighting the determinants of home returning and testing the hypotheses formulated in a previous section (cap. 3.2), I run three separate longitudinal logit models (see tab. 6) with random effects and cluster-robust standard errors<sup>42</sup>. Due to endogeneity problems, it was not possible to create a full model containing both the *economic status* variable and the *change of economic status* variable. These two variables were therefore used in a mutually exclusive manner. Specifically, in addition to all the other covariates, model 1 and model 2 include the *economic status* variable, while model 3 includes the *change of economic status* variable (allowing to analyze the effect of turning point events). In model 2 were introduced two interactions effects. One, between social class and economic status, to answer the hypothesis concerning the relationship between family of origin, employment uncertainty and home returning. The other, between gender and marital status.

To check for multicollinearity between the independent variables was used the Vif test, which has not highlighted any problem (tab. 12, appendix IV)<sup>43</sup>, while, to assess the goodness of fit was used the likelihood-ratio test. For all the three full models, I compared as much competing statistical models as the number of predictors, each time omitting a different one (tab. 13, tab.14, tab.15, in appendix IV), in order to establishing if and which predictor do not increase the predictive power of the full

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41 The Hausman test determines whether the fixed effects and random effects estimator are significantly different. “An important reason why the two estimators would be different is the existence of correlation between  $x_{it}$  and  $a_i$ , although other sorts of misspecification may also lead to rejection (we shall see an example of this below)” (Verbeek, 2008, p. 352). The rejection of the  $H_0$  means that a fixed effect approach is consistent and thus to be preferred, and viceversa.

42 Since in my panel-data (often) there are more observations for the same individuals, I used the `vce(cluster)` Stata command to correct standard errors for any dependence over time for a given individual. The idea is that grouping more observation of the same individual in a single cluster reduces the bias coming from the dependence between observations.

43 Obviously, the variables of age and age squared have huge level of correlation, which also affect the mean VIF measure. However, all the other predictors prove to have no multicollinearity problems.

models<sup>44</sup>. The only dependent variable that turns out to be not significant is that of gender. Finally, cross-sectional pooled logit models (estimated with cluster robust standard errors) are shown in table 16, in order to confront on the results of the longitudinal medialization and highlight eventual significant differences. What emerged is that the estimators of these models are very similar to the ones calculated with longitudinal models, with same sign and equally significant, dissolving the doubt of any possible miss prediction.

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44 The test is based on a hypothesis testing approach. The null hypothesis assumes that the simpler model fits better, maximizing the log likelihood function. Whether the H0 is rejected, then the general (full) model is a significant improvement over the simpler one, meaning that the missing predictor is relevant for improving the goodness of the model. Whether the H0 is not rejected, the missing predictor is not improving the fitness of the model

# Chapter 4

## Empirical results and discussion

In this chapter are first discussed the descriptive evidences emerging from the analyses to determine the relevance of the boomerang phenomenon in Italy and its trend over time (4.1). Then are discussed the results of the statistical models, getting in the details of the variables of significant interest. The results of model 1 are discussed the effect of the main determinants on the likelihood of boomeranging to the parental home. One section (4.2) addresses the determinants related to economic hardships, with a specific focus on the effect that occurred during the period of economic crises. Relying on the results of model 3, in this section is also discussed the effect of life course turning points, and specifically the economic transition markers, on home returning. In the further section (4.3) are addressed the determinants related to relational instability, with a dedicated discussion on the role of gender and specifically on the interaction effect of marital status and gender (benefiting from the results of the model 2). Then, in the chapter are also discussed the effect of individual characteristics (age, gender, and educational level) (4.4) and, in the last section (4.5), the effect of social class and familiar resources, from which emerges the most relevant interpretative insights.

The results of the three models are summarized in the table below (table 6); in order to give a useful overview before discussing every single explanatory variable in detail. A graphic overview can be appreciated in appendix III, where are showed the conditional effects estimate for the explanatory variables of each model.



Table 6 Longitudinal random effects logit models for returning home

	Model 1		Model 2 (Interactions)		Model 3 (Turning points)	
	Coeff	Robust Std. Err.	Coeff	Robust Std. Err.	Coeff	Robust Std. Err.
Current Economic status (ref. Worker)						
Unemployed/inactive	0.308**	0.143	1.033**	0.424		
Student	-0.741***	0.236	-0.24	0.378		
Social class (ref. High class)						
Middle class	0.249	0.202	0.578**	0.278	0.187	0.196
Low class	0.623***	0.224	0.974***	0.301	0.574***	0.217
Last change in Activity.status (ref. No change)						
Get Employed					0.577***	0.19
Get Unemployed					0.536**	0.232
Get Inactive					0.490**	0.23
Economic status x Social class (ref. Worker x High class)						
Unemployed/inactive x Middle class			-0.672	0.468		
Unemployed/inactive x Low class			-0.882**	0.458		
Student x Middle class			-0.65	0.43		
Student x Low class			-0.51	0.454		
Marital status (ref. Never married)						
Married	-0.669***	0.204	-0.739***	0.28	-0.683***	0.202
Separated/divorced	2.142***	0.425	3.211***	0.63	2.099***	0.42
Marital status x Gender (ref. Never married x Male)						
Married/Female			0.123	0.305		
Separated,divorced/Female			-1.644**	0.774		
Gender = Female	0.00665	0.119	0.0161	0.129	-0.00928	0.117
Educational attainment (ref. High education)						
Medium education	-0.255	0.192	-0.283	0.193	0.151	0.146
Low education	-0.0527	0.229	-0.0849	0.232	0.402**	0.191
Year ranges (ref. 2006-2007)						
2008-2010	-0.0228	0.133	-0.0221	0.131	-0.0176	0.133
2011-2012	0.635***	0.154	0.634***	0.151	0.637***	0.152
2013-2014	-0.492***	0.178	-0.475***	0.175	-0.464***	0.175
Risk of poverty = equalised disposable income < 60% of the national median	0.446***	0.148	0.454***	0.145	0.444***	0.145
Geographical Area (ref. North)						
Centre	0.241*	0.146	0.244*	0.142	0.245*	0.143
South & Islands	-0.523***	0.15	-0.506***	0.146	-0.487***	0.145
Urbanization degree (ref. Densely-populated area)						
Intermediate area	-0.00838	0.131	-0.00565	0.129	-0.0259	0.13
Thinly-populated area	-0.317**	0.158	-0.303*	0.155	-0.328**	0.156
Tenure status parental home (ref. Outright owner)						
Owner paying mortgage	0.716***	0.159	0.713***	0.156	0.704***	0.157
Tenant or subtenant paying rent	0.762***	0.199	0.754***	0.194	0.751***	0.196
Social housing tenure	0.0241	0.203	0.0402	0.2	0.0126	0.2
Household size	0.103	0.0649	0.0982	0.0636	0.0957	0.0645
Age (centered)	0.405***	0.152	0.386**	0.15	0.535***	0.144
Age squared (centered)	-0.00809***	0.00288	-0.00771***	0.00284	-0.0102***	0.00276
Constant	-7.736***	0.493	-7.901***	0.515	-8.056***	0.489
lnsig2u						
Constan	2.135***	0.143	2.082***	0.141	2.110***	0.143
N Observations	46063		46064		46064	
N groups	24493		24493		24493	
sigma_u	2.908		2.831		2.871	
rho	0.72		0.709		0.715	
chibar2	37.44	(p=0.000)	36.76	(p=0.000)	35.86	(p=0.000)
Log likelihood	-3687.7		-3682.9		-3691.7	
Wald chi2	203.5	(p=0.000)	213.4	(p=0.000)	204.6	(p=0.000)

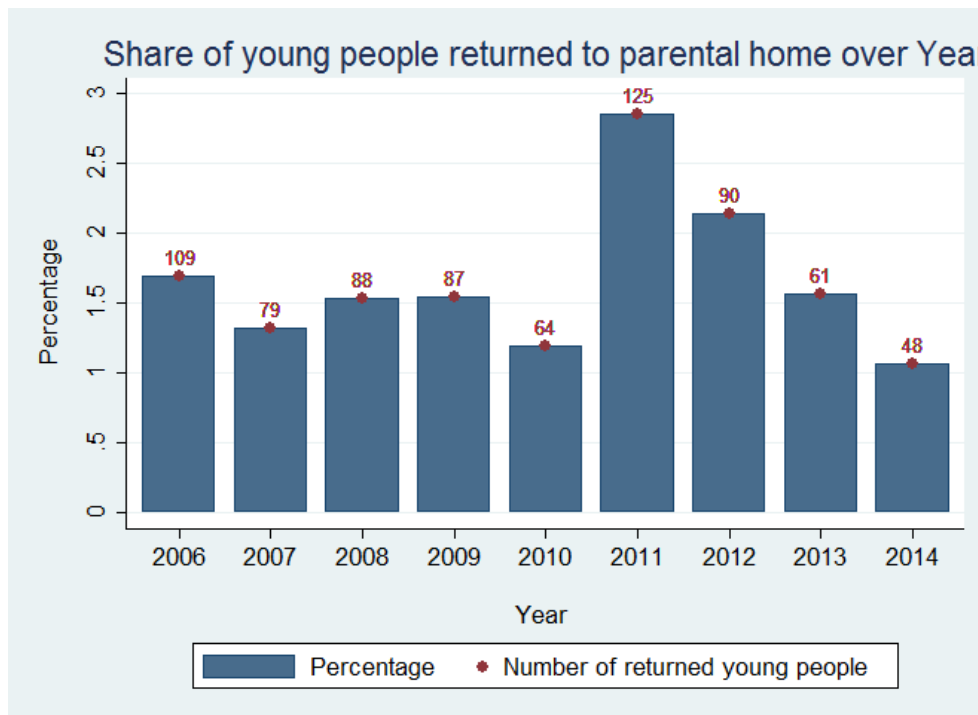
Standard errors in parentheses \* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

## 4.1 Trend of young people aged 18-34 returning home in Italy

In this paragraph will be discussed the descriptive results of the analysis, fundamental to determine the relevance and the extent of the boomerang phenomenon in Italy.

In the following graph (graph2) is presented the trend of the returns over time, showing both the percentage and the frequency of the young people (in the selected sample) moved back to parental home, from 2006 to 2014.

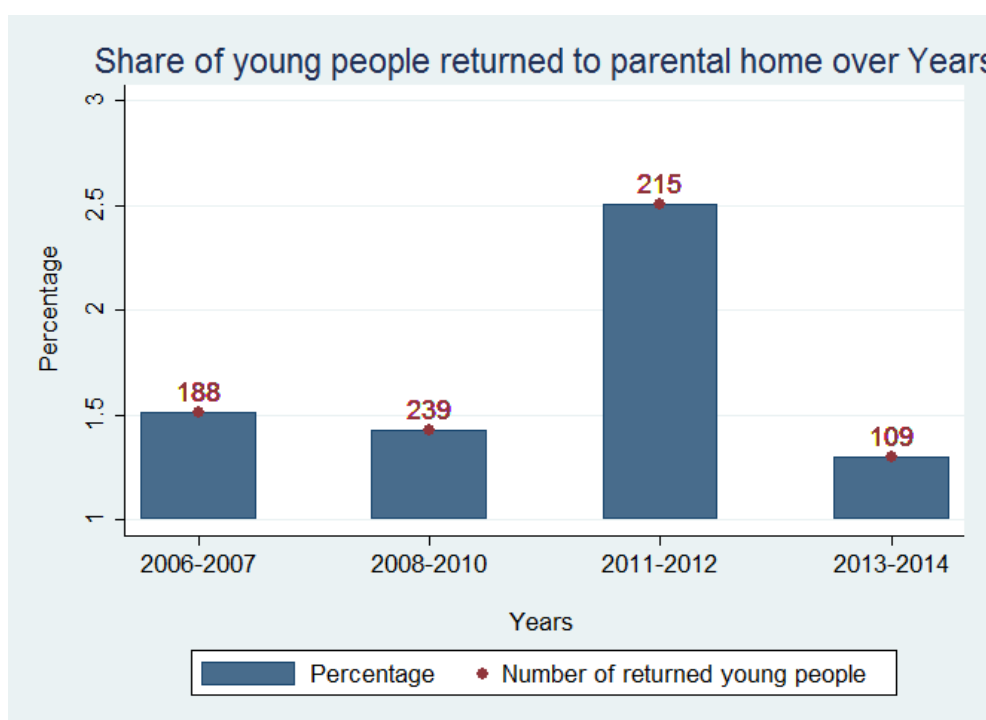
Graph 2 Share of young people returned to parental home over year (frequency on top of bars)



Looking at this descriptive statistics, can be noted that the absolute frequencies of boomerangers is not that high, albeit the percentages are relevant across all the analyzed period, especially considering the representativeness of the selected sample. Furthermore, must be emphasized that the structure of EU-SILC leads to underestimate the boomerang phenomenon, since short-term returns (lasted less than

6 months) are not recorded and due to possible attrition over the longitudinal sample (Iacovou, Kaminska, & Levy, 2012). In addition to the relevance of the phenomenon, this graphical representation reveals another remarkable evidence: the great increase in the quota of boomerangers occurred in the years 2011 and 2012, exactly those most affected by the effects of the economic crisis. To appreciate more clearly the increasing trend during the crisis period, is proposed another graph (graph 3), which use a categorical time variable. This variable has four categories: the first corresponding to the pre-crisis period (2006-2007), the second to the beginning of the crises (2008-2010), the third to the final phase of the crises (2011-2012) and the fourth to the post-crisis period (2013-2014).

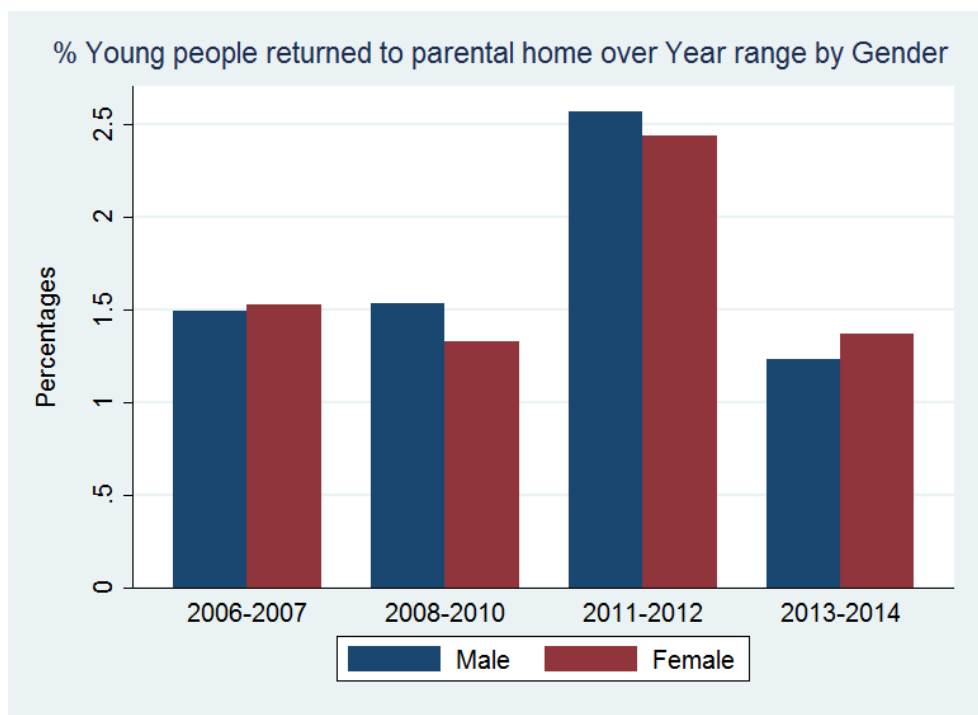
Graph 3 Share of young people returned to parental home over year ranges (frequency on top of bars)



The percentage of young people returning home in 2011 and 2012 is widely larger than the other periods taken into account, settling around 2,5 %. It means that during this period, roughly, one individual (aged 18 to 34) on 50 experienced a return into parental home.

Once highlighted this trend, it is worthy of deepening the characteristics of these young people who return home, focusing specifically on gender and age (graph 4).

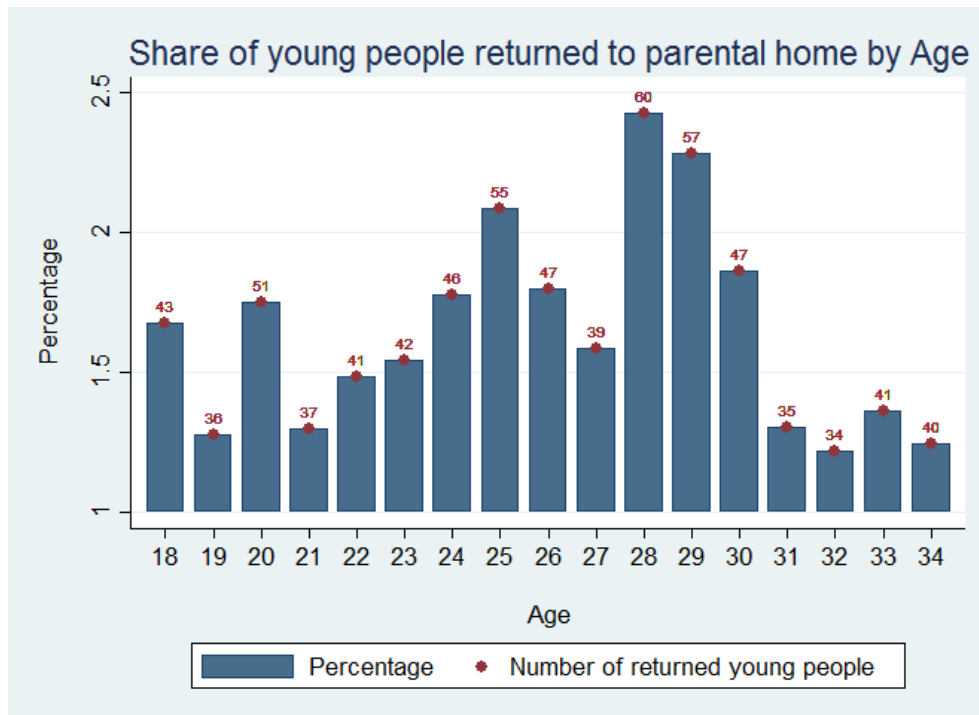
Graph 4 Share of young people returned to parental home over year range, by gender



What emerges is a balanced gender distribution, which is maintained over time.

The only consideration that could be made is that men return more than women during the crisis period, contrary to what happens in the preceding and following periods. It could find an explanation in the fact that men start working earlier. Therefore, as there are more workers among men in the 18-34 age group, the economic crisis may have involved them more than women. However, leaving this consideration on the sidelines, we can now focus on the age distribution of the young people returned to the parental home.

Graph 5 Share of young people returned to parental home by age (frequency on top of bars)

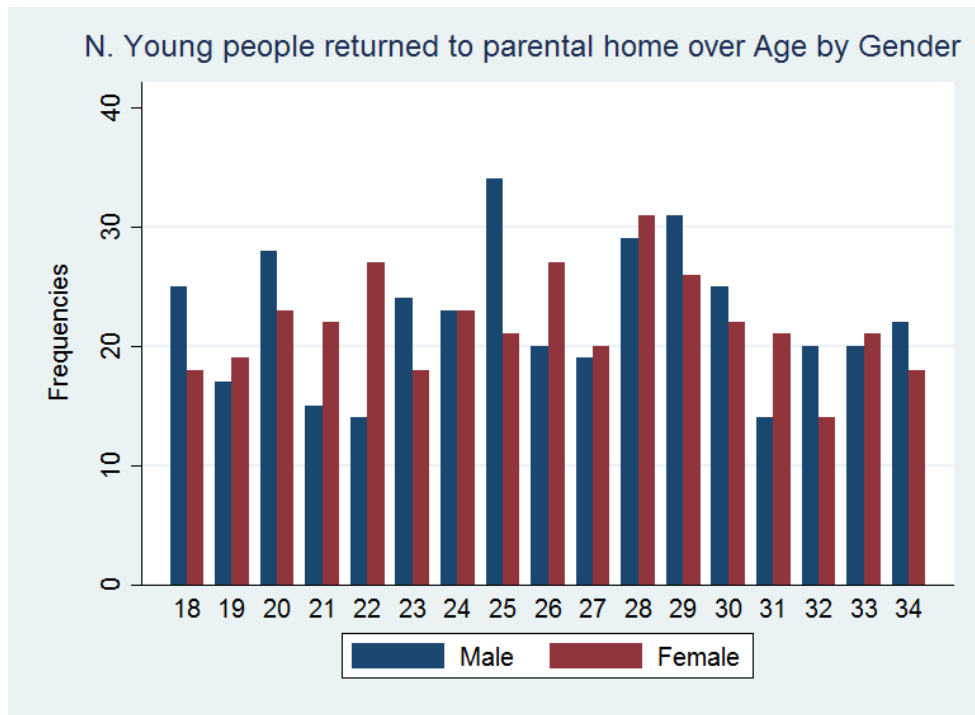


Regarding the age of boomerangers, this graphic representation (graph 5) suggests a distributive normality that is actually confirmed by its descriptive statistics<sup>45</sup>. Can be noted that the 25-year-olds are the ones who return the most, while, after the age of 30, the returners decrease considerably. To proceed in this descriptive focus on returners' characteristics, is proposed another graph which combine age and gender (graph 6).

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<sup>45</sup> As well explained by Gravette and Wallnau (2016), to statistically accept the distributive normality of a variable, its skewness value must be between -1 and 1, while its kurtosis value is between -2 and 2. The distribution of the variable *age* among the individuals returned to parental home, has a skewness of -0.19 and a kurtosis of 1.90, thus, can be stated that it has a normal distribution.

Graph 6 Number of young people returned to parental home over age by gender



It shows how the gender distribution of returners varies significantly according to age. Among 22-years-old there is the greater gap, with a number of women much higher than men. Instead, among the 25-year-olds occurs in the opposite situation, with the greater gap in favor of man. Another element that may be relevant to observe is the age in which the highest number of returns take place — especially considering the mismatch in the age of the first occupation between the two groups. An EU commission report (Eurostat, 2017) aimed to describe similarities and differences in the everyday life of women and men (across EU countries), shows that in Italy, the first occupation starts on average at 25 for men and at 28 for women. Correspondingly, in the graph, it can be noted that among 28-year-olds, there is the highest amount of returned women, as well as among the 25-year-olds the highest amount of returned men. This relation would suggest that obtaining the first occupation fosters the return to parental home<sup>46</sup>. However, avoiding further

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<sup>46</sup> This suggestion will be resumed in section 4.7, while discussing the effect of economic activity change on returning home and specifically the effect of getting employed.

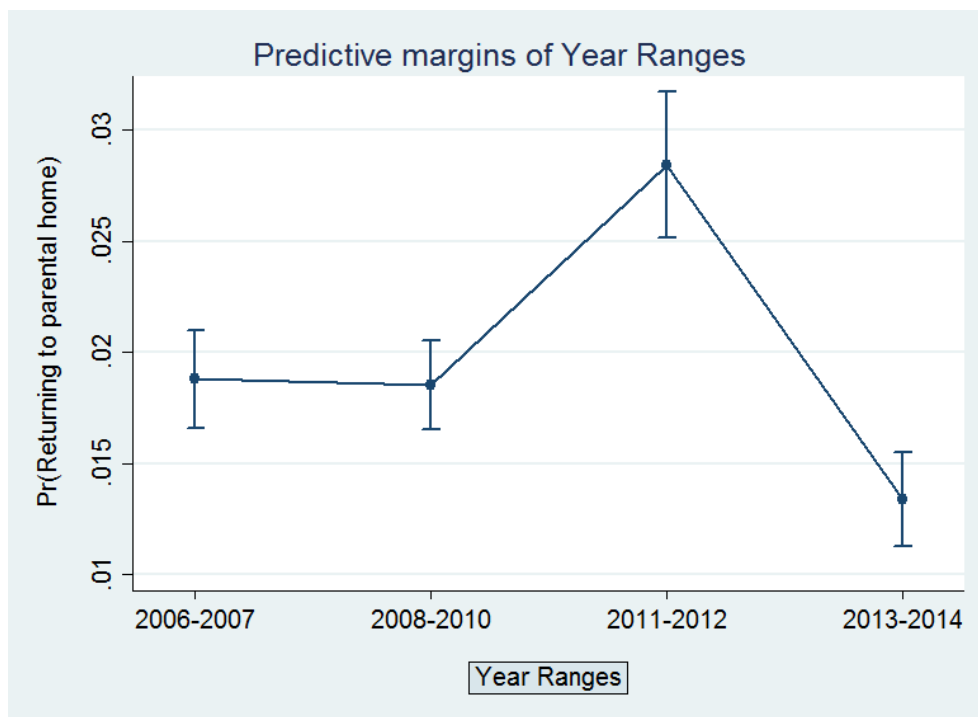
speculation based on descriptive statistics, in the next sections will be presented the results of the logistic regression models and verified the research hypotheses.

In conclusion, these descriptive findings suggest that, in Italy, the quota of young people boomeranging into the parental home is relevant. They also bring out that this phenomenon involves especially young people in their 20s and that, on the whole, it is not characterized by particular gender differences. Furthermore, the findings highlight a significant rising trend during the period of economic crises, especially in the second more severe phase (from half of 2010 to 2012).

## 4.2 Economic crises, between economic hardships, and employment uncertainty

Taking up the descriptive evidences on home returning trend, which highlight a remarkable increase during the economic crisis period, to validate the hypothesis H1 are used the estimates of model 1. Specifically, in graph 7 are showed the predictive margins of year range, in which can be observed the significant higher likelihood to returning home during the 2011-2012 time range with respect to all the others.

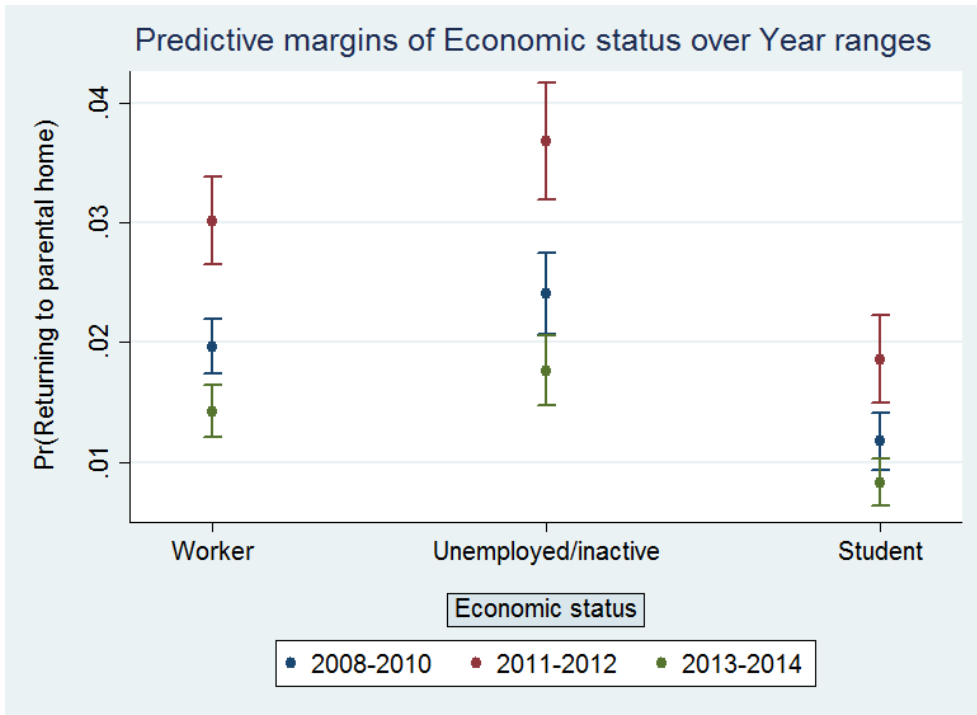
Graph 7 Predictive margins of Year Ranges



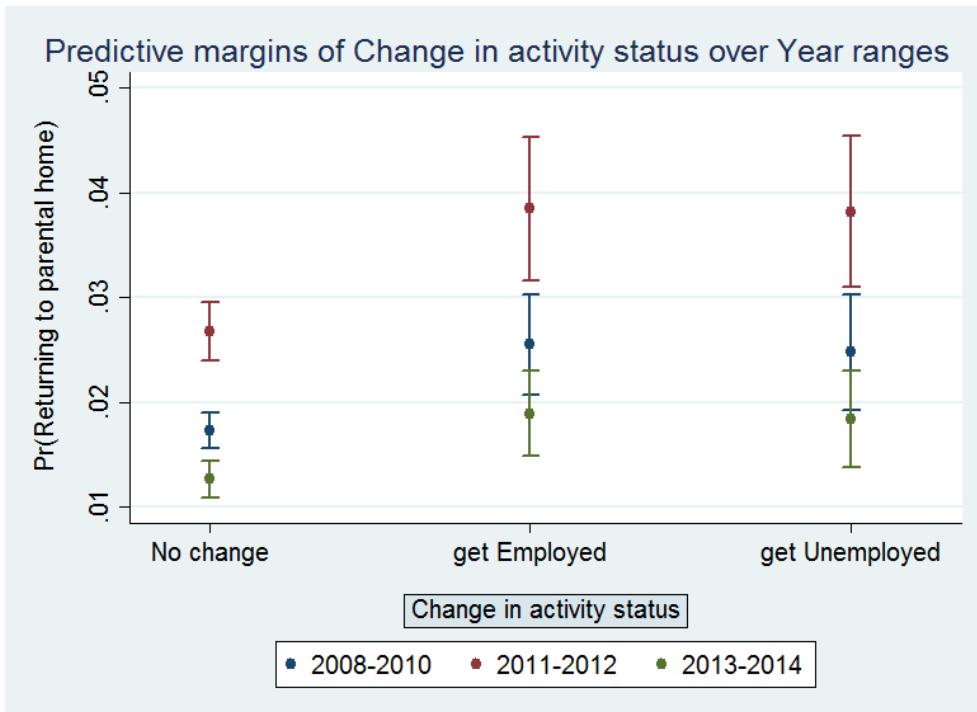
This evidence would be enough to validate the hypothesis H1, arguing that, in Italy, young people (aged 18-34) were more likely to return to their parental home during the 2011-2012 period (when the economic crises was more severe) than the pre-crisis and the post-crisis periods. However, to integrate this evidence, it is worthy also to consider how the effect of the main predictors change over time.



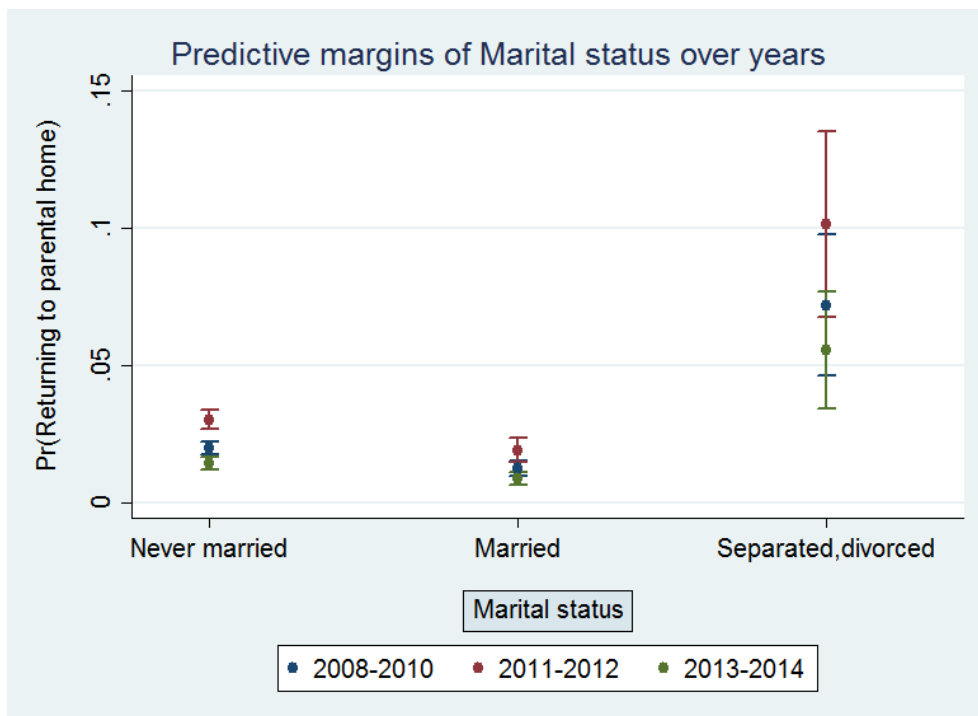
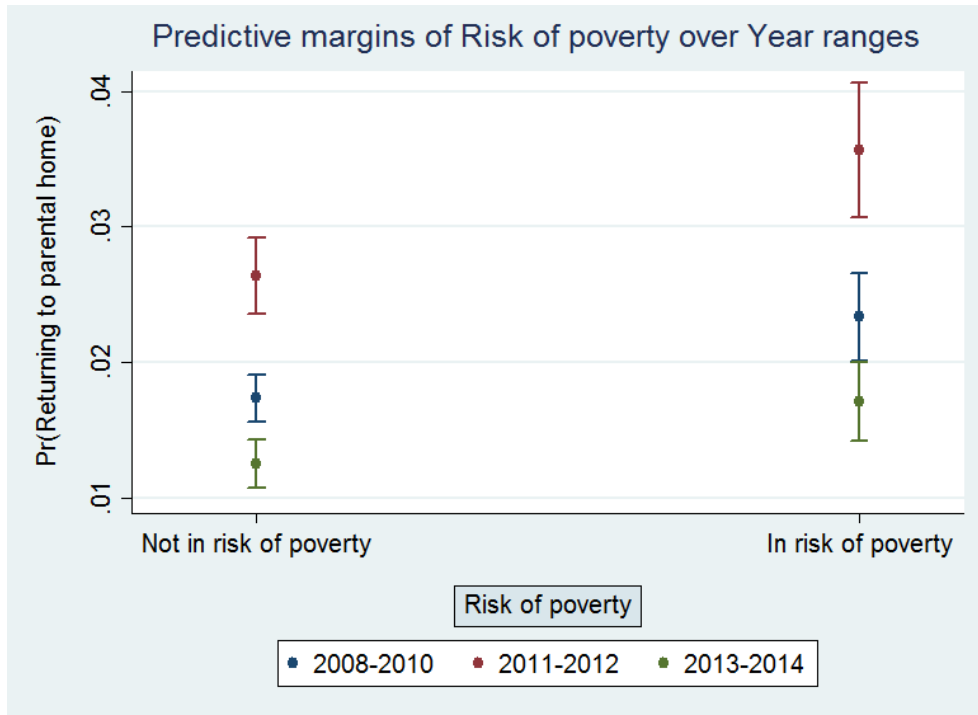
Graph 8 Predictive margins of Economic status over Year ranges



Graph 9 Predictive margins of Change in activity status over Year ranges



Graph 10 Predictive margins of Poverty over Year ranges



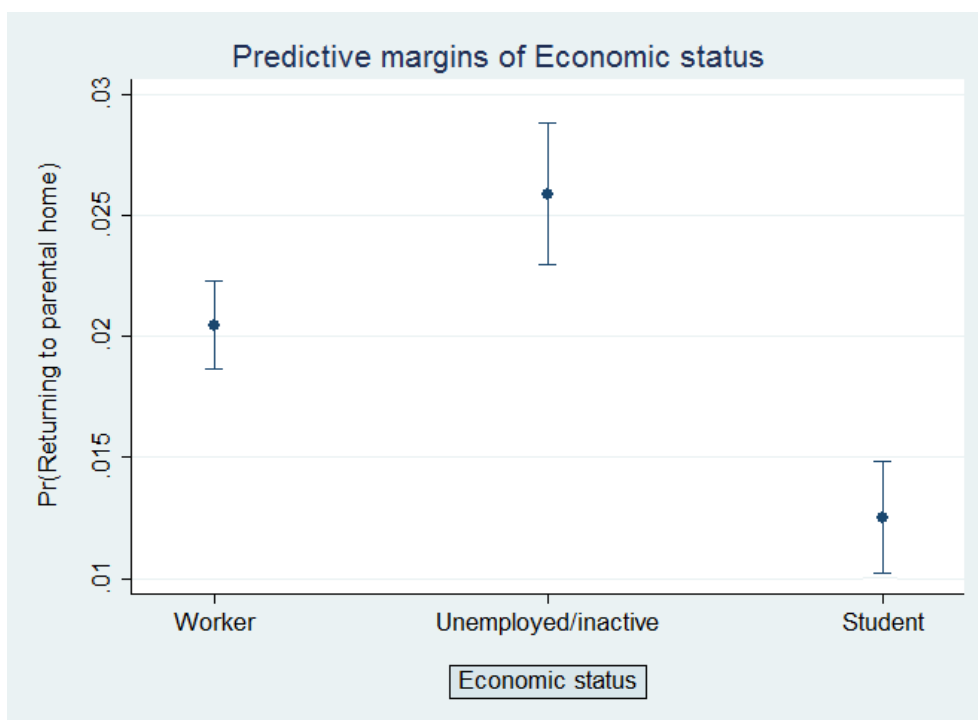
After having showed these predictive margins over time (in appendix V are collected the margins of all explanatory variables over time), what can be noted is that in any

category of the economic related variables (economic status, change in activity status, risk of poverty), the likelihood of returning home is significantly higher in the 2011-2012 year range than in the others year ranges. Differently, in the marital status, the likelihood of returning home for separated or divorced and married young people do not change significantly (although on this result the large confidence intervals have a great responsibility, due to the few observations on which the estimations are based). It suggests that the generalized increase of home returning likelihood in 2011-2012 is correlated to macro-structural economic changes, which affect transversally young people lives.

### 4.2.1 Economic status, unemployment and Inactivity

To get into the substance of the economical determinants, in this section are analyzed the effect of individual economic conditions on home returning. The following graph is specific to the effect of unemployment and inactivity (which are considered proxy indicators of economic hardships) on the probability of returning home.

Graph 11 Predictive margins of Economic status

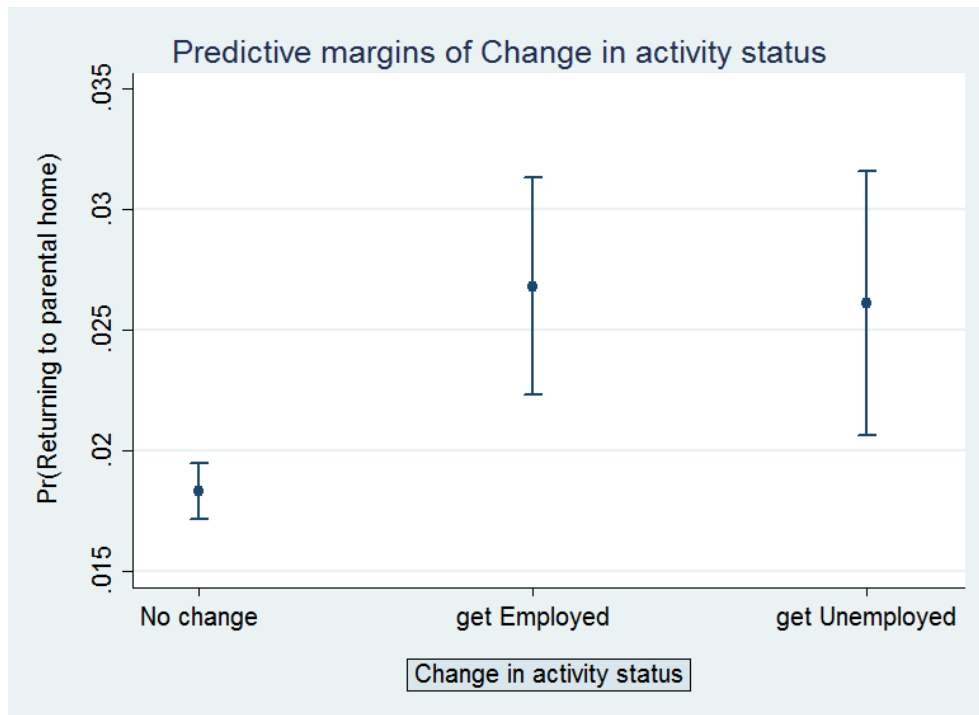


In line with the expectations of the Hypothesis 2 (H2), young people aged 18 to 34 in a condition of unemployment are more likely to return to parental home. It can also be noticed that, inversely, for students, the likelihood to return home is strongly and significantly lower than workers. As said, in Italy is not diffused leaving home for education. Thus, it's very likely that the vast majority individuals in the category of student are living in co-residence with parents without ever having left home. Even if there were students who live on campus and occasionally return home (as a relevant quota of young people in the Anglo-Saxon countries), they would be difficult to detect with the survey EU-SILC (as already mentioned, it does not record the changes in household location for short-period stays). Since my statistic models (which are based on binary longitudinal logistic regression) confront young people in returned co-residence from those in co-residence who never left parental home, the negative effect of students on returning home outcome is absolutely understandable.

#### **4.2.2 Turning points, economic transitional markers**

This section is addressed to test the hypothesis concerning turning points in the life course, discussing the effect of economic transitional markers, specifically the changes in individual activity status. Transitions to a condition of unemployment or inactivity are expected to be a stressor for young people aged 18-34, which increase the need for parental support and the likelihood to boomeranging.

Graph 12 Predictive margins of Change in activity status



Graph 12 shows the predictive margins of the variable *change in activity status*, estimated with model 3 (tab. 6). Compared with those who have not changed activity status, becoming unemployed or inactive is associated with a significant higher likelihood of returning to the parental home, confirming the hypothesis *H3*

Said that, two important things must be underlined. First, in line with the seminal work on home returning's determinants, developed by Stone, Berrington and Falkingham (2011), my results show that any change in status appears to significantly increase the likelihood to return into the parental home (with the effect of becoming employed, which is, on average, even higher than the one of getting unemployed /inactive). Second, the wide confidence interval of the estimates. It is due to the problematic distribution of the variable, with 86% of the selected sample in the category 'no change' (tab.3), which avoids an appropriate estimation of its effect on the returning home outcome (since the consistent standard errors). Furthermore, the low numerosity of individuals who experienced an activity change does not allow interaction with other covariates (in order to grasp more insightful evidence), nor the

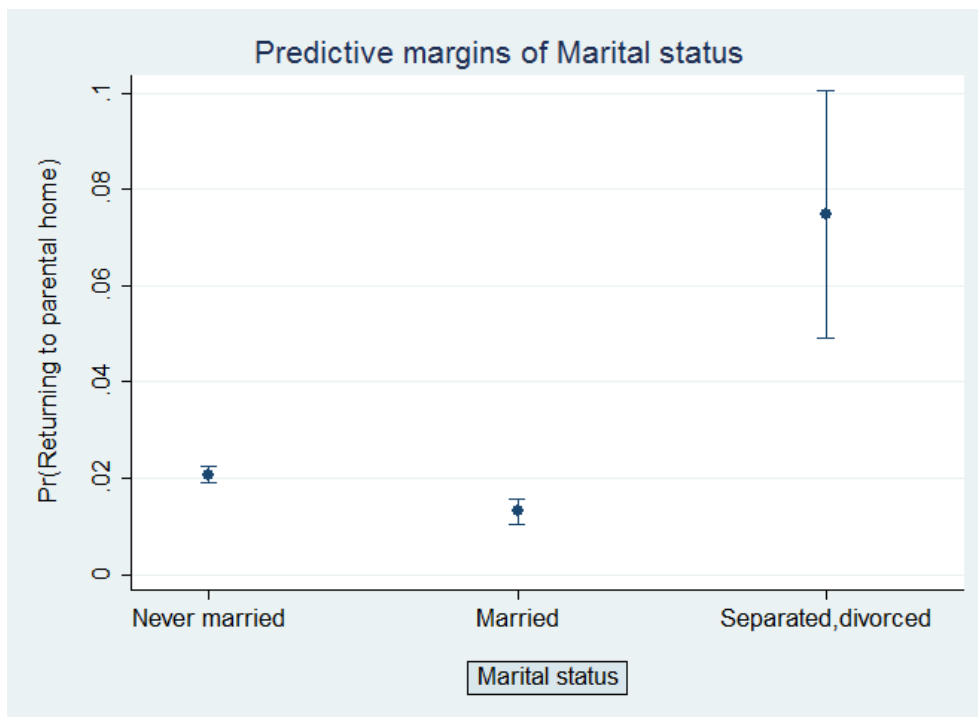
use of a more detailed category of status change (for instance, student-unemployed, employed-unemployed, employed-student, etc.).

In conclusion of this section can be highlighted that the effect of economic determinants is very relevant in the explanations of the boomeranging phenomenon. Regarding the issue of economic hardships, it emerges that the economic status of unemployment or inactivity increases significantly the likelihood of returning home. Regarding the economic transition markers, instead, appears that is not so much the type of shift in the employment status (and specifically the shift to a condition of unemployment, assumed as 'turning point shock'), but the change in employment status itself, to be a good predictor of home returning. Furthermore, the generalized increase of home returning in 2011-2012 appears to be statistically significant only for economic determinants, which affect transversally young people groups. Consequently, according to a transitive logic, can be argued that in Italy the economic crises (which has reached its peak in the 2011-2012 period) increased significantly the risk of home returning among young people aged 18-34.

### 4.3 Marital status and relational instability

We have seen that in some studies on home returning, partnership dissolution emerges as a strong determinant (Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2014; Arundel & Lennartz, 2017). In my analyses, due to data constraints<sup>47</sup> (see section 3.2.2.1), it was not possible to identify a proxy variable for partnership dissolution, intended as “a biographical event associated with change in a relationship” (Baxter & Bullis, 1986, p. 470), or, in other words, a relational turning point which imply a marital status change. However, with the same *ratio*, in this section is discussed the effect of relational instability, precisely the fact of being separated or divorced, on home returning.

Graph 13 Predictive margins of Marital status



<sup>47</sup> it was not possible to grasp marital status changes between an ‘actual’ survey-year and the previous one.

Still using the estimates of *model 1*, were computed the predictive margins of marital status. The results, showed in graph 13, suggest that separation and divorces are very strongly associated with returning home. Despite the wide confidence interval, due to the low frequencies of separated or divorced young people (see table 3), the effect is very strong and significant. This evidence is in support of the hypothesis H4a: separated and divorced young people (aged 18-34) are more likely to return to parental home than the other peers.

### 4.3.1 Married young people returning home

Also the dynamics of married people returning to parental home are interesting and are worth of an elucidation: do they move with the partner or on their own? Moreover, in this latter case, do they move to reach their spouse or move away from him/her? Unluckily, these questions cannot be answered with statistical methods, even though they can be used as a starting point for an insightful description. In any case, we must be aware of the few cases available, mainly for divorced/separated young people returned home<sup>48</sup>, but also for young married people returned home<sup>49</sup>, and be careful in do not jumping to conclusion .

Table 7 Young married people moved to parental home

<i>Young married people moved to parental home</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cum.</i>
Moved alone into spouse's household with in-law parent(s)	31	26.1	26.1
Moved alone into own parent(s)' household	72	60.5	86.6
Moved with the partner into parent(s)' household of one of the two	16	13.5	100
Total	119	100	

<sup>48</sup> This issue that explains the large confidence interval in the estimation of the effect of being separated/divorced on returning home.

<sup>49</sup> The narrow confidence interval of the corresponding margins is due to a consistent tendency to not returning into parental home among the young people 18-34 observed in the sample (and the consequent low standard error).



Table 8 Young married people moved to parental home over Gender

<i>Young married people moved to parental home over Gender</i>	<i>Gender</i>		Total
	Male	Female	
Moved alone into spouse's household with in-law parent(s)	11	20	31
Moved alone into own parent(s)' household	20	52	72
Moved with the partner into parent(s)' household of one of the two	8	8	16
Total	39	80	119

Tables 7 and 8 give some answers to the previous questions, but first of all, it must be made explicit that in EU-SILC are considered as parents also step-parents and in-law parents<sup>50</sup> living in the same household. In light of this, married young people returning to the parental home can face three scenarios. In one case, they move from an autonomous residential situation (not-living with parents) to the spouse's household, which is also present one or both in-law parents. In the second scenario, married young people return to their parents without the spouse, while in the last scenario, both spouses move together into the parent(s)' household of one of the two. Unfortunately, the numbers of married young people returning home are few (n=119); therefore, it can be provided just a few descriptive considerations. First, many more married women returned than men and, second, the most common scenario is that of returning alone to own parents' household without the spouse. It is not possible to go beyond with the interpretation, if not considering the economic status of these women.

Table 9 Young married female moved to parental home over Economic status

<i>Young married female moved to parental home over Economic status</i>	<i>Economic status</i>			Total
	Worker	Unemployed/Inactive	Student	
Moved alone into spouse's household with in-law parent(s)	7	10	3	20
Moved alone into own parent(s)' household	17	34	1	52
Moved with the partner into parent(s)' household of one of the two	3	5	0	8
Total	27	49	4	80

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<sup>50</sup> In-law parents are coded as parents (with the attribution of a *father\_id* or a *mother\_id* variable) when they live in the same household of a child's partner, but only whether he/she is a married spouse or in a consensual union with a legal basis.

Married women returning alone into their own parental home are mostly unemployed /inactive and, more accurately (checking their ISCO code individually), in a condition of other inactivity or involved in domestic tasks. Probably these trajectories respond to the contingent needs of one of the two parts. Perhaps the birth of a child, with a return motivated by the need for childbearing help from grandparents, or parents in need, with the returning of daughters motivated by caregiving requirement. Without going on with speculations not supported empirically, the spotlight can be shifted to an issue touched only in a collateral manner in the previous reflections: namely the relation between gender and economic status concerning the phenomena of returning home. We already said that in a strong male breadwinner system, like Italy, the division of housework is profoundly gendered, and the expectation on gender roles widely binding. Women are socialized to homework and care activities and broadly to bear the domestic management of houses. Therefore, it may be understandable that in a couple of young people recognized on a legal basis (marriage), it is the woman to manage issues related to childbearing and caregiving, when these needs arise. Within this context, the return to the parental home of a married young woman can be hypothesized as a strategy to cope with needs related to care<sup>51</sup>, of which female spouse are usually considered responsible for.

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<sup>51</sup> Among which, the most plausible are childbearing activities, with the return of the daughter to rely on parenting relational resources, or caregiving activities, with the return of the daughter for caregiving reasons

### 4.3.2 Separated/divorced young people returning home

However, when returns are not part of coping strategies within couples, but the result of a partnership dissolution, the effect of gender has a completely different outcome. In this regard, it is possible to go further than simple descriptions and discuss the results of the statistical model (model2<sup>52</sup>) to test the hypothesis on the interaction between gender and marital status.

*Table 10* Longitudinal logit model for returning home. Interaction terms between marital status and economic status<sup>53</sup>

	Model 2 (Interactions)	
	Coeff	Robust Std. Err.
Marital status x Gender (ref. Never married x Male)		
Married/Female	0.127	0.311
Separated,divorced/Female	<b>-1.665**</b>	0.777

Standard errors in parentheses: \* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

In the literature, the association between partnership dissolution and returning home has been showed to be moderated by gender and parenthood. Men are more likely than women to return to the parental home (Ongaro, Mazzucco, & Meggiolaro, 2009; Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2014) especially in the presence of children, given that mothers often retain their custody in case of divorce or separation (Mulder & Wagner, 2010). The results totally support this perspective, validating the hypothesis H4b, which stated that divorced or separated women aged 18-34 are less likely to return to the parental home than men in the same age group.

<sup>52</sup> In this model have been included the interaction effects between social class and economic activity and between marital status and gender.

<sup>53</sup> This model (model 2) is controlled for: current economic status (ref. worker)); social class (ref. high class);economic status x social class(ref. worker x high class), gender (ref. never married x male) marital status (ref. never married);gender; educational level (ref. high education);gender; years; risk of poverty ;geographical area (ref. north);urbanization degree (ref. densely-populated area);tenure status parental home (ref. outright owner);household size; age (centered);age squared (centered).

To close this section, dedicated to the analysis of relational instability's effect (and indirectly the effect of partnership dissolution) on the boomeranging phenomena, can be highlighted that being separated or divorced is a strong determinant of home returning, to be exact the strongest among the explanatory variables (see table 6 or graph 22) and that gender plays a determinant role in this dynamic. Concerning divorce and separation, the findings of statistical models stress that women are strongly less likely to return than men, dynamic that in literature is associated with the protection of the part to whom child custody is entrusted (guarantee on the housing protection is pivotal to judicial decisions). While, with regard to married young people retuning home (dynamic not triggered by a "shocking" biographic event like separation/divorce, that usually entails problematic condition and needs for economic and emotional support), women seem to be far the more involved than men, probably to handle situation requesting care tasks (deeply gendered in a male-breadwinner context like Italy).

## 4.4 The role of individual characteristics: gender, educational level and age

If, until now, all the research hypotheses were confirmed, results on the individual level factors do not match completely the expectations derived from the literature.

First, age appears as an essential factor to explain boomeranging. With the chance of returning home that increases with age (positive linear term) but weakening as the age increase (negative quadratic term). A reversed U shaped trend, that does not reflect the result of previous studies (Berngruber, 2015; Arundel & Lennartz, 2017), where the phenomenon resulted very age-dependent, with a decreasing probability of returning as age increases.

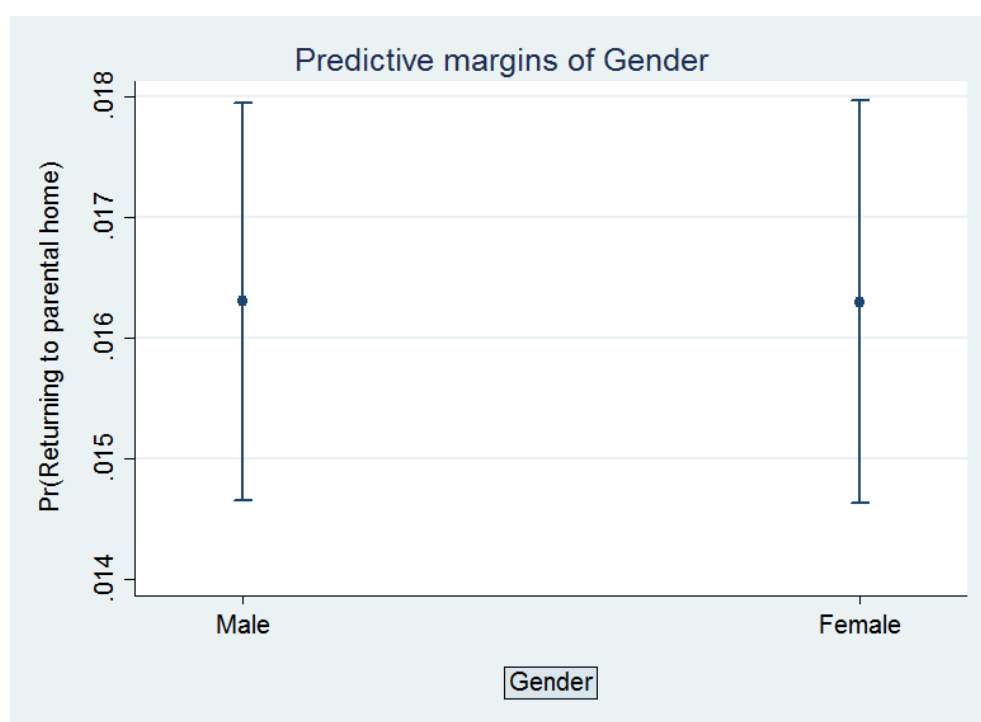
Graph 14 Predictive margins of Age Categories<sup>54</sup>



<sup>54</sup> To give a more direct interpretative reference to the effect of age, in the longitudinal logit model 1 was made a replacement between the two continuous variables of age and age squared and this categorical variable.

To give a more immediate representation of this reversed U-shaped relation, have been created a categorical age variable, whose predictive margins are shown in graph 14. It can be noted that young people in the 25-29 age group have a significantly higher likelihood of returning home than the ones in the other two age groups (although of little, the confidence interval does not overlap). It reveals a gradual transition to residential independence, characterized by traits of uncertainty and reversibility, which tend to diminish when young people become older and thus more likely to reach more stable achievements and roles.

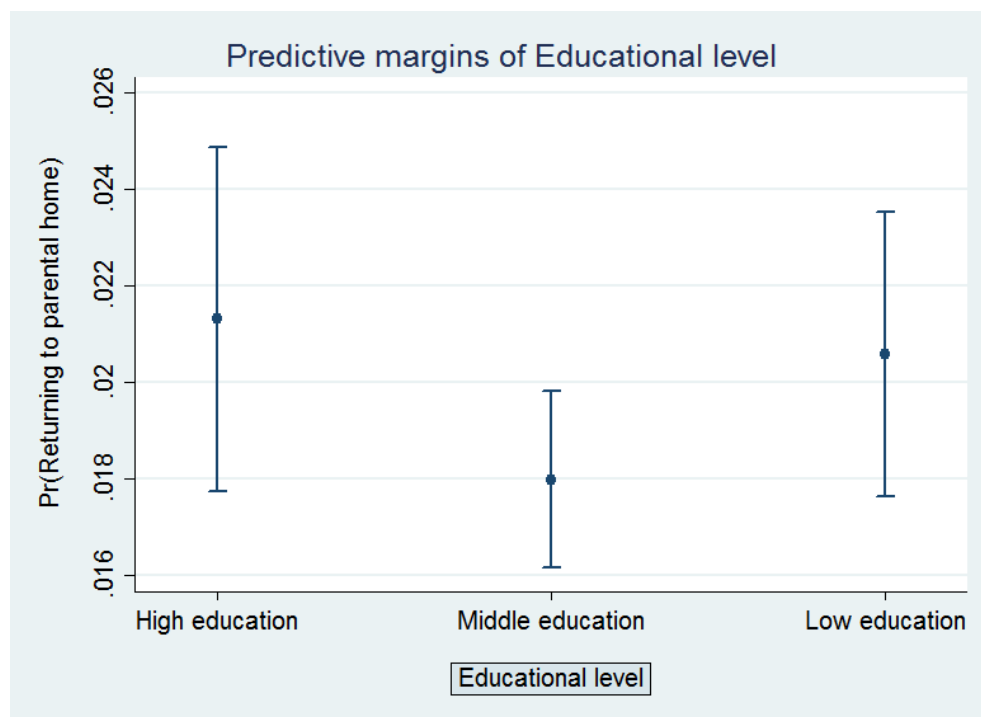
Graph 15 Predictive margins of Gender



Surprisingly, gender does not appear to have a significant role in home returning. In line with the results of other recent studies on boomeranging (Berngruber, 2015; Berg, Kalmijn, & Leopold, 2019), this finding goes against more dated researches relating home leaving and home returning (Aassve et al., 2013; Mandic, 2008) and against the expectation of an higher propensity for man to return, corroborating, leading to reject my hypothesis (H5). Many interaction effects with gender have been tested with the other covariates, but the only significant one was that with marital status,

presented in the previous section. However, the non-significance of this predictor is a very interesting find, also corroborated by the likelihood-ratio test (Appendix IV).

Graph 16 Predictive margins of Educational level



Along with gender, also education is an individual characteristic expected to have an important role in the dynamic of returning home. Different levels of education tend to rely on different family resources and different strategies regarding residential careers. Since the hypothesis (H6), *young people with a higher educational level were expected to return more than those with low levels* (due to extended relationships of dependency, or semi-dependency, on their parents), but these results (graph 11) lead to rejecting the hypothesis. High educated young people have, on average, a great propensity to return, which, however, is not significantly different from the other two educational classes. This could be partially due to the underestimation of EU-SILC for short-returns and the high standard error of the high education's estimate.

## **4.5 The role of social class and family resources**

Along with gender, education and age, also social class play a central role in defining timing and sequences of transition to adulthood, especially in the transition to residential independence. In the analytical framework of this thesis, indeed, social class and familiar resources are considered as pivotal in the understanding of the boomeranging phenomenon. I assume that these elements have a direct and significant effect on the residential career of young people, but also that they moderate the impact of economic uncertainty and employment precariat on the likelihood that individuals aged 18-34 return to their parental home. The relation between economic uncertainty and family resources, did not received much attention even in the study of the delayed home-leaving issue. In Italy, welfare rely widely on family resources and on informal forms of social support. In fact, families continue to bear the costs of the prolonged period of unstable employment or unemployment of their children and still play a predominating role in their process of school-to-work. Nevertheless, the impact of social class on the residential careers of young people has not been explored that much, least of all with respect to home returning phenomena. Consequently, with the aim of filling this gap in the literature, in the following sections we will analyze the role of tenure status, household income and social class

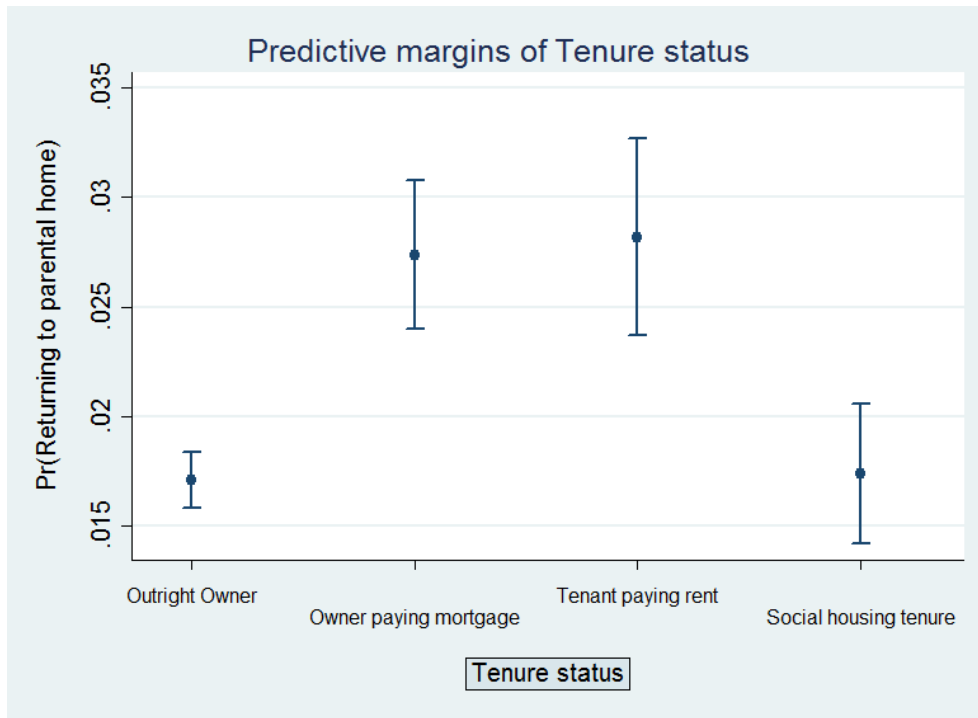
### **4.5.1 Tenure status**

Taking up the cue on the familistic welfare characterizing Italy, must be stressed that the housing system of a country affect to a large extend the opportunities that young people have to leave the parental nest or maintain a residential independence. As already said, the affordability of the private rental market, the public housing policies and the familiar homeownership are decisive in the living conditions of young people. When private rental sector is hardly approachable and the social housing inadequate, relying on family resources is the most favorable option. In this regard homeownership the most important familiar resource and in literature it has been proved to imply a delay in children home leaving (Goldscheider & Goldscheider,



1999; Ronald, 2008) Therefore, this delaying effect can be expected to reduce the likelihood of boomerang moves and the next graphs can help to establish the goodness of such expectation.

Graph 17 Predictive Margins of Tenure status



In the graph 17 are shown the effects of the different categories of tenure status on the likelihood of returning to parental home. Although it was not formulated an *ad hoc* hypothesis, seems that homeownership, postponing the children home leaving, reduce in turn the probability that young people aged 18-34 return to parental home, with respect to the other configurations of tenure status. The only exception is made by social housing, category for which there is no statistically significant difference with the effect of living in an owned house, on the probability of returning home.

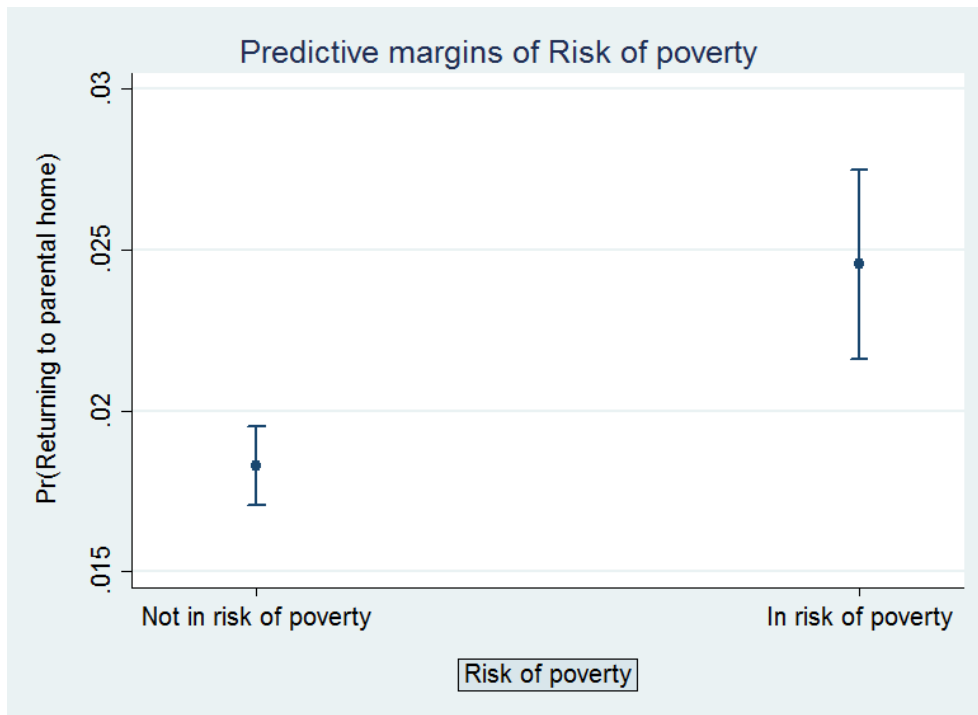
This finding could have important policy implications, since living in social housing seems to help the maintenance of residential autonomy for young people. A policy oriented to support social housing, tailored specifically for young people, would be particularly meaningful in a period of diffused economic hardship, when families are

called to fulfil the needs that welfare state is not able to provide and when inequalities are more impacting.

#### **4.5.2 Disposable income and risk of poverty**

Another fundamental familiar resource is the household income. Many studies have demonstrated that parental income is a relevant factor for explaining young people home-leaving, coresidence and home-returning (Nilsson & Strandh, 1999; Albertini & Kohli, 2012; Arundel & Lennartz, 2017). Nevertheless, in this thesis there is not an explicit formulated hypothesis on Household income. It has been recognized as an important element to take into account in the model, but not that relevant to become a core explanatory variable for the boomeranging phenomenon. Indeed, in the model in the model has been included a binary variable, *risk of poverty*, calculated upon the equivalized disposable income to define the individual under *risk-of-poverty threshold*, (which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers; see § 3.3.4.6). However, the following graph show the effect of being in risk of poverty on the probability of returning home.

Graph 18 Predictive Margins of Risk of poverty



This binary variable does not measure poverty in itself, nor conditions of material deprivation, nor low standard of living. It was used to address specifically a group of disadvantaged young people and analyze the material resources' lack on the likelihood of returning into parental home compared to other peers. The results of this graph, as expected, confirm that young people in risk of poverty are much more likely to return into parental home. A result very consistent with the previous evidences highlighting the importance of the economic-material determinants to explain the boomeranging phenomenon.

### **4.5.3 Social class**

After having discussed the effect of strictly material family resources, specifically homeownership and disposable income, in this section, it is the time to take into account the social class. On a theoretical side, belonging to a specific class rather than to another does not affect only the possibility of accessing to economic resources, but also to accessing relational and cultural ones. Class difference is not intended as just a matter of unequal distribution of material resources, but also a matter of unequal recognition and different system of values, norms, and expectations. Coming from a specific family of origin imply to be socialized to a specific system of norms and values, to be subjected to specific opportunities and constraints, and to put in place different strategies to cope with problematic biographical events and external stressors. Furthermore, the recent approaches to class analysis have shown that economics and culture do not constitute a mutually exclusive alternative in the analysis of inequalities, but, on the contrary, their integration represents a relevant interpretative improvement. Consequently, in this thesis, the choice was to use the highest parents' educational attainment as a proxy variable for social class, following this integrative perspective between economics and culture.

Understanding mechanisms of reproduction of inequalities and form of differentiation among young people is determinant to analyze and understand the returning home phenomena. Therefore, social class (with a measurement accounting for the education of parents) is a fundamental factor to take into account. In the next graph is shown the effect of social classes on the probability of returning to the parental home.

Graph 19 Predictive margins of Social class



The results highlight a significantly higher probability of returning among the young people belonging to the low class than the peers of the other classes. The interpretation of these findings would seem to be linear and straightforward. Low-class young people have a shorter educational career and an earlier home leaving. Furthermore, they are more exposed to the adverse effects of economic setbacks and to employment uncertainty. Thus, it is not surprising that low-class young people have a higher likelihood of boomeranging. However, the picture becomes more complicated if it is considered the effect of interaction between social class and economic status.

### 4.5.3.1 Interaction between social class and economic status

*Table 11* Longitudinal logit model for returning home. Interaction terms between social class and economic status<sup>55</sup>

	Model 2 (Interactions)	
	Coeff	Robust Std. Err.
Economic status x Social class (ref. Worker x High class)		
Unemployed/inactive x Middle class	-0.672	0.468
Unemployed/inactive x Low class	<b>-0.882**</b>	0.458
Student x Middle class	-0.65	0.43
Student x Low class	-0.51	0.454

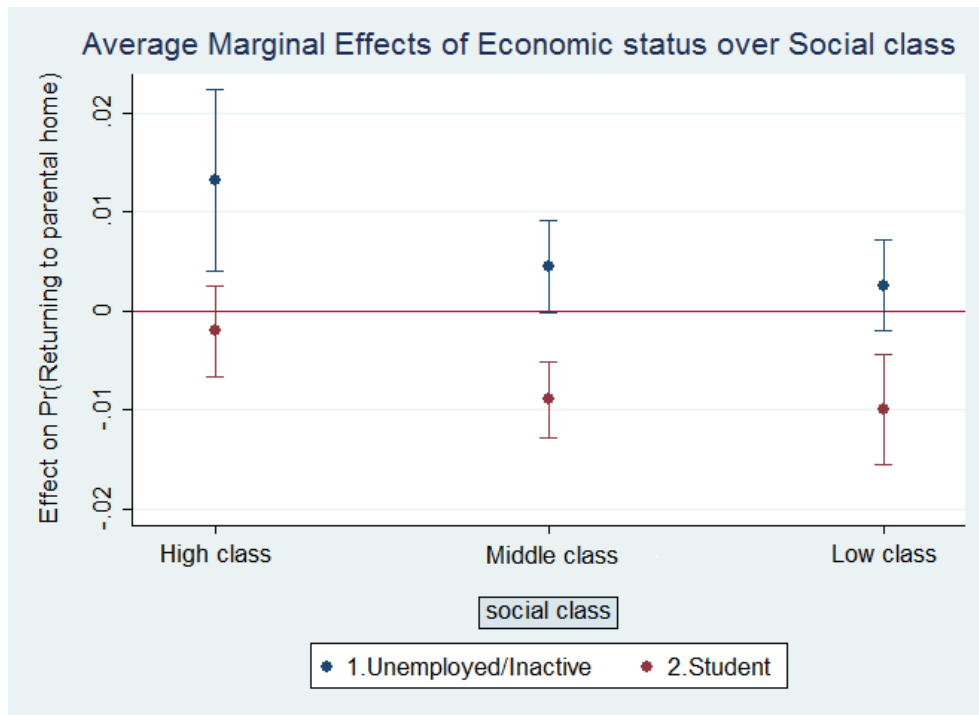
Standard errors in parentheses: \* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

In table 11, it can be seen that the only significant coefficient, with a strong negative effect, is the one referred to the interaction term between low class and unemployment. It means that an individual aged 18-34 from the low class, in a condition of unemployment, is much less likely to return home than a peer belonging to the high class in a condition of employment. In the absence of specific literature on boomeranging, there is a tendency to consider home return as a form of support for young people in conditions of greater vulnerability, but this evidence seems to suggest the opposite, challenging also the interpretations of the previous findings. The estimates of model 2 lead to rejecting the hypothesis (H7a), for which low class unemployed are more likely to return into parental home.

Consequently, further analyses were carried out to clarify this unexpected result (that does not even match the previous findings) and to understand if it was the low class or the high class to have an unforeseen effect on this outcome.

<sup>55</sup> This model (model 2) is controlled for current economic status (ref. worker); social class (ref. high class); marital status x gender (ref. never married x male) marital status (ref. never married); gender; educational level (ref. high education); gender; years; risk of poverty; geographical area (ref. north); urbanization degree (ref. densely-populated area); tenure status parental home (ref. outright owner); household size; age (centered); age squared (centered)

Graph 20 Average marginal effect of economic status over social class



Graph 20, in this regard, gives interesting insights. Indeed, it shown that the high class is the only one in which the effect of being unemployment or inactive (on the probability of returning home) is sensibly higher and significant than the effect of being employed (red line at  $y=0$ )<sup>56</sup> In the paragraph nothing is said about the interpretation of the student's category, in order to not lose the argumentative coherence on the discussion of unemployment. However, it can be seen that, contrary to what happens for the unemployed/inactive, in the upper class, the students have the same likelihood of returning than the workers of the same class. While for the other two classes, the likelihood of students to return is significantly lower. This result could be because high-class students are more likely to leave home for their

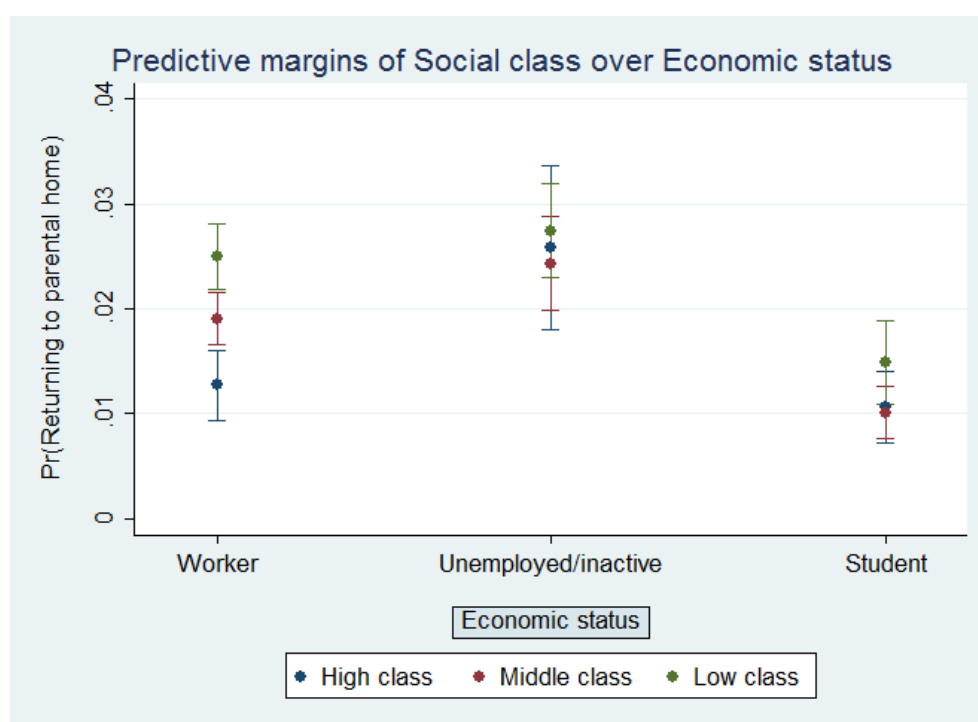
<sup>56</sup> In the paragraph, nothing is said about the interpretation of the student's category, in order to not lose the argumentative coherence on the discussion of unemployment. However, it can be seen that, contrary to what happens for the unemployed/inactive, in the upper class the students have the same likelihood of returning than the workers of the same class. While for the other two classes, the likelihood of students to return is significantly lower. This could be due to the fact that high class students are more likely to leave home for their educational career (which is also much longer) and thus increasing the risk of returning to parental home.

educational career (which is also much longer) and thus increasing the risk of returning to the parental home.

. What emerges, seems to support the theory of a 'creative' effect of higher class (Galland,2001), which is more likely to support their children in a condition of job instability, both for higher availability of material resources and for cultural traits of the upper class, for which is 'acceptable' and 'normal' rely on family protection until the achievement of a stable and fulfilling job.

Once made these considerations, how can, therefore, be explained the higher likelihood of returning among the low-class young people? To answer is proposed this graph, in which are presented the predictive margins of the previous interaction effect between social class and economic status.

Graph 21 Predictive margins of social class over economic status



From this different graphic visualization emerges clearly that among young adults' workers, the ones belonging to the low class have the highest likelihood of returning to the parental home. This estimation, significantly superior to both the other two



classes, suggests that the return home for the low-class young people is not triggered by a condition of vulnerability and economic hardship, but rather chosen as housing arrangement in a condition of stability. However, before giving into more pronounced interpretations, a piece of further empirical evidence is provided: two descriptive tables that allow analyzing not only the effects of these interactions but also the scope of these dynamics on the observed cases included in mine sample.

Table 12 Returned young people by economic status and social class (frequencies and cell percentages)

Economic status	Social class			Total
	High class	Middle class	Low class	
Worker	29 4%	177 24%	238 32%	444 59%
Unemployed/inactive	33 4%	63 8%	94 13%	190 25%
Student	24 3%	53 7%	41 5%	118 16%
Total	86 11%	293 39%	373 50%	752 100%

First of all, in table 12 can be noted that among young people returned home, the quota of high-class individuals is low (around 11%, with 86 cases), though in line with the distribution of the social class variable in the entire sample (in which the quota of high class is around 13%). Instead, the percentage of low-class individuals among those returned home is around 50% (373 cases).

Table 13 Returned young people by economic status and social class (frequencies and column percentages)

Economic status	Social class			Total
	High class	Middle class	Low class	
Worker	29 34%	177 60%	238 64%	444 59%
Unemployed/inactive	33 38%	63 22%	94 25%	190 25%
Student	24 28%	53 18%	41 11%	118 16%
Total	86 100%	293 100%	373 100%	752 100%

In table 13, with the percentages calculated on columns, the distribution of economic status can be compared between social classes. What emerges is a descriptive overview that includes coherently the findings that emerged in the previous analyses (specifically, the interaction effect between social class and economic status). For young people belonging to the high class, the largest share of returns comes from unemployed people, 38% of the sample, while for those belonging to the low class, the largest share of returners is composed of workers, touching the 64%.

Here is meaningful to recall the discussion on autonomy (§ 1.2.1), to consider the analytical distinction made by Bertolini (2011) between residential autonomy, economic autonomy and psychological autonomy, and to focus on the thesis of Ryan and Deci (2000), who stated that economic autonomy was emerging as a strong identity factor among the new generation: an achievement which denotes capacity for self-determination and often entails a sense of self-realization. They also stressed that economic independence was the main ambition and the fundamental form of self-fulfillment for low-class young people. The psychological dimension of autonomy attributes to personal self-fulfillment a fundamental role, which, however, is variable due to personal characteristics and social origins. In this regard, recent studies find out that for young people belonging to higher classes, the concept of autonomy corresponds mainly to an issue of reaching a desired job position, while for peers coming from the lower class, autonomy is associated to an issue of

economic and financial independence (Colombo, Leonini, & Rebughini, 2018; Bertolini, Hofäcker, & Torrioni, 2019).

After this caveat is possible to give some more grounded a comprehensive interpretation of the role of social class, and especially the interaction between economic status and social class, on the boomeranging phenomena. With regard to low class, can be argued that in a period of economic hardship young people are less likely to return, since it would correspond to a significant personal failure and, moreover, parents may not have enough material resources (and perhaps not even the will) to support the return of the child into their nest. While in a condition of employment, returning can be a win to win strategy. Young people could save money, otherwise used for the rent and other extra expenses, maintaining economic independence and perception of self-fulfillment. At the same time, parents could benefit the presence of children who do not request support, but that rather could be a source of help on an economical, practical (management of small domestic tasks) and emotional side. This interpretative perspective leaves open the issue of how the low-class young people cope with phases of economic hardships maintaining a residential autonomy. Although this question goes beyond the scope of this thesis, it could be hypothesized that they rely on undeclared labor market (which obviously is not declared in the EU-SICL survey), on informal financial support, on eventual subsidies from public or private organizations, on not-standard residential solution (like sharing the household with many other peers) and other makeshift solutions of such a kind.

To conclude this section, it must be stressed that in Italy, the impact of social class on the residential careers of young people has not been explored that much and, besides, the literature on the relationship between social class and home returning is entirely missing. What emerged from my analyses, seems to support the theory of a 'creative' effect of high class (Galland,2001), in which parents are more likely to support their children in a condition of job instability, both for higher availability of material resources and for cultural traits of the upper class, for which is 'acceptable' and 'normal' rely on family protection until the achievement of a stable and fulfilling job. On the contrary, for low class, returning home seems to be a diffused and profitable strategy when children are in a condition of employment stability. The

analytical perspective supported by Furlong and Cartmel (2007) seems particularly suitable to explain this scenario: a condition of semi-dependence, in which co-resident young people enjoy full economic autonomy and broad freedom in the management of the everyday life, but renouncing to a residential autonomy and a complete self-sufficiency.

# Conclusions

The results of this thesis suggest that, in Italy, home returning is a relevant phenomenon for young people in the 18-34 age group (boomerang generation), especially for those in their 20s facing economic and relational setbacks. The analysis is based on nine waves of the longitudinal EU-SILC survey, gathered from 2006 to 2014, which make it possible to compare the period of the crisis (2008-2012) with the one before (2006-2007) and the one after (2013-2014), and detect trends and changes over time. The descriptive statistics (based on a representative sample of the population) highlight a significant rising trend during the period of the economic crises, especially in the second more severe phase. Indeed, in the 2011-2012 time range, the share of young people (aged 18 to 34) returned home reached a peak of 2.5%. Statistical results emphasize the strong association between economic hardships and the increase of home returning in that period, suggesting that, in Italy, the economic crises increased significantly the risk of boomeranging among young people aged 18 to 34. However, despite the global reach of the economic crisis, not in any European country the rate of returned co-residence had increased over that period (e.g. Germany<sup>57</sup>). In comparison with the other studies available on boomeranging, my results seem to support the thesis of a 'welfare regime effect' (Arundel & Lennartz, 2017; Berngruber, 2015) claiming a higher propensity for home returning among the more 'familialistic' regimes of Southern European Countries.

Beyond the impact of macro-level factors, to define the more relevant determinants of home returning, this doctoral thesis takes into account individual characteristics, familiar resource, and also the influence of life course turning points, specifically of economic transitions markers. Concerning the changes in economic status, transitions like getting unemployment or getting inactive (which represents a transition to vulnerable situations) results to have a significant positive association with the likelihood of returning to the parental home. However, in line with the study of Stone, Berrington, and Falkingham (2011), what emerges is that any change in individual's activity status (including the transition to employment) increase the

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<sup>57</sup> Here the reference is to the work of Berngruber (2015) on "boomerang generation" in Germany.

propensity to return in the parental home, making the change in activity status in itself a good determinant of boomeranging. With regard to individual level factors, unemployment and inactivity<sup>58</sup>, intended as indicators for economic hardships, and separation and divorce, intended as indicator for marital instability, proved to be strong determinants for returns, consistently with previous researches (Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2011; Sandberg-Thoma, Snyder, & Jang, 2015; van den Berg, Kalmijn, & Leopold, 2019; Berngruber, 2015).

However, the most remarkable finding to highlight is the significant and "unexpected" role that social class has on the boomeranging phenomenon. Indeed, among the unemployed young adults, only the ones belonging to a higher class are significantly more like to return to parental home. In line with the findings of Bertolini (2011), it appears that family serves as a form of protection mainly for young adults from the higher class, who get supported until the achievement of a high-level and stable job which can fulfill their expectations. Due to familiar resources availability, high-class young adults can accept contracts with poor remuneration and face periods of unemployment, in perspective to achieve a further self-fulfilling work. On the contrary, young adults from low social class lack economic family protection and are forced to accept any job to avoid weighing on family resources (and possibly contributing with their income). They also refer to a different system of norms and values which affect employment perspectives and also residential transition. As well portrayed by Colombo and Rebughini (2015), whether for low-class young people, the concept of autonomy corresponds to an issue of financial independence, for high-class peers, autonomy is associated with an issue of self-realization. Thus, the dynamics of leaving and returning home are extensively affected by family resources, both in terms of economic possibilities and cultural norms, especially in periods of structural economic hardship, when families are called to bear the responsibility and the costs of children's transition to adulthood.

Taking on these considerations and the theory of Galland (2001), the role of social class on boomeranging phenomenon can be summed up as follow. On a side, the

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<sup>58</sup> Among the categories of inactivity, in my analyses I selected only those not in education, employment, or training (NEETs)

'creative' effect of the high class, in which parents are more likely to support their children in a condition of job instability, both for higher availability of material resources and for cultural traits (in the upper class is 'acceptable', and 'normal' rely on family protection until the achievement of a stable and fulfilling job). On the other, the low class, for which returning home is a very diffused and profitable strategy when children are in a condition of employment stability. This because, in a condition of economic hardships, returning would burden the already scarce parents' finances and would involve the renounce to that economic independence, which is fundamental in terms of personal identity and self-satisfaction. The analytical perspective supported by Furlong and Cartmel (2007) seems particularly suitable to explain this boomeranging scenario: a condition of semi-dependence, in which co-resident young people enjoy full economic autonomy and broad freedom in the management of the everyday life, but renouncing to a residential autonomy and complete self-sufficiency.

The results of the analysis provide relevant insights into the trend and the determinants of boomeranging in Italy. However, there are some limitations to highlight. First of all, in EU-SILC longitudinal survey, data on parents are not available unless they live in co-residence with children. This restricts the analytical possibilities and excludes from the analysis the young people who have already left the parental nests, whether they live alone or in cohabitation with a spouse. This constraint affects the estimation of returning home determinants and makes it impossible to inquire about any association between home leaving and home returning (that in the literature, it is identified as a very relevant aspect to understand boomeranging). A second limitation concerns the individual and parental characteristics not included in the models, although their association with home returning showed in the literature: family structure, intergenerational transfers, health changes, parent's health, etc. Similarly, a third limitation regards EU-SILC data availability, which lacks variables that could affect boomeranging: mainly geographical proximity, but also ethnicity, attitudinal orientations, and others. A fourth limitation derives from the difficulties of detecting short-term returns with EU-SILC, which imply an underestimation of the phenomena.

Despite the abovementioned limitations, this doctoral thesis provides insight on a phenomenon not yet studied in Italy, albeit it represents the landmark of the complexity and reversibility involved in the current transitions to adulthood. In a context of widespread uncertainty, the reversibility of residential careers, which young people are currently facing, has a relevant impact on intergenerational relations. It opens the room for the emergence of new forms of interdependence and new form of inequalities, making boomeranging a phenomenon of great analytical interest to grasp the specificities of recent social change.



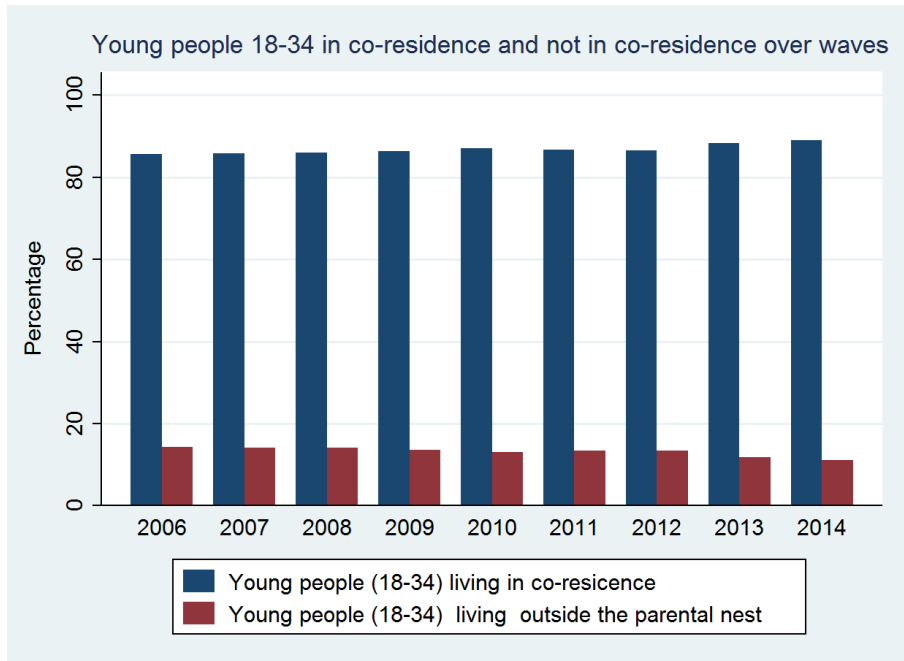
# Appendix

## Appendix I: A focus on young people aged 18 to 34 not in co-residence (excluded from the sample selection)

Table 14 Young people 18-34 in co-residence and not in co-residence over waves

Wave	In co-residence	Not in co-residence	Total
2006	6441	1077	7518
	86 %	14 %	100 %
2007	5985	984	6969
	86 %	14 %	100 %
2008	5721	938	6659
	86 %	14 %	100 %
2009	5618	890	6508
	86 %	14 %	100 %
2010	5382	805	6187
	87 %	13 %	100 %
2011	4383	677	5060
	87 %	13 %	100 %
2012	4212	652	4864
	87 %	13 %	100 %
2013	3884	518	4402
	88 %	12 %	100 %
2014	4480	555	5035
	89 %	11 %	100 %
Total	46106	7096	53202
	87 %	13 %	100 %

Table 15 Young people 18-34 in co-residence and not in co-residence over waves



## Appendix II: Panel-data description

Table 16 Panel-data organization, individual units observed over all the nine time periods T

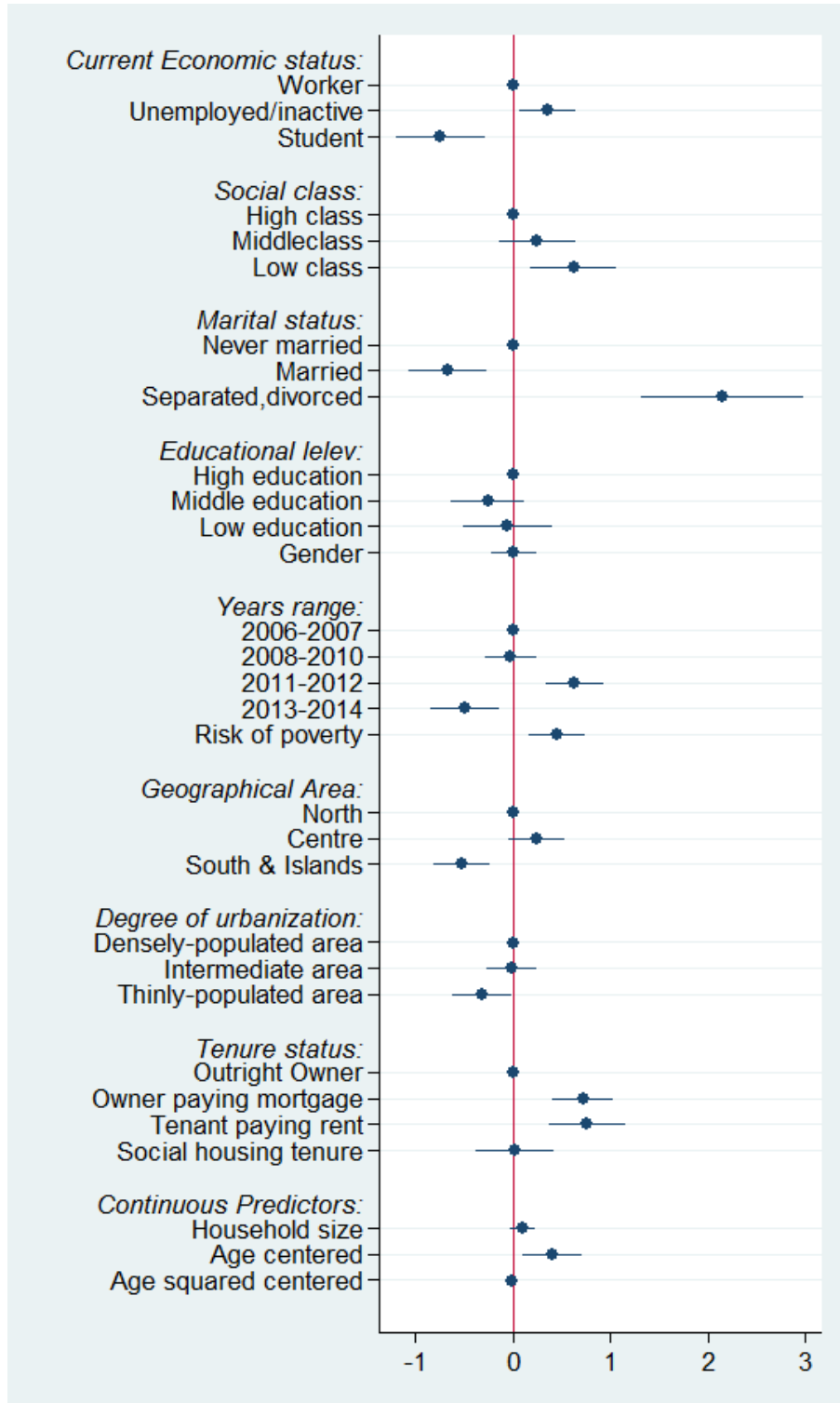
Pattern	Frequencies	Percentage
1 . . . . .	3473	12.22
. . . . . 1	2580	9.08
1 1 . . . . .	2487	8.75
1 1 1 . . . . .	1492	5.25
. . . . . 1 1	1457	5.13
. . 1 1 1 . . . .	1447	5.09
. 1 1 1 . . . . .	1311	4.61
. . . 1 1 1 . . .	1160	4.08
. . . 1 1 . . . .	1053	3.71
. . . . 1 . . . .	976	3.44
. . . . . 1 1 1	873	3.07
. 1 . . . . .	844	2.97
. . . . 1 1 1 . .	839	2.95
. . . . . 1 . .	822	2.89
. . . . . 1 . . .	816	2.87
. . . . . 1 1 1 .	794	2.79
. . 1 1 . . . . .	771	2.71
. 1 1 . . . . .	764	2.69
. . 1 . . . . .	758	2.67
. . . . . 1 1 . .	747	2.63
. . . . . 1 .	671	2.36
. . . 1 . . . . .	596	2.1
. . . . . 1 1 .	574	2.02
. . . . 1 1 . . .	572	2.01
(other patterns)	534	1.88
	28411	100

Table 17 Panel summary of time-varying and time-constant regressors

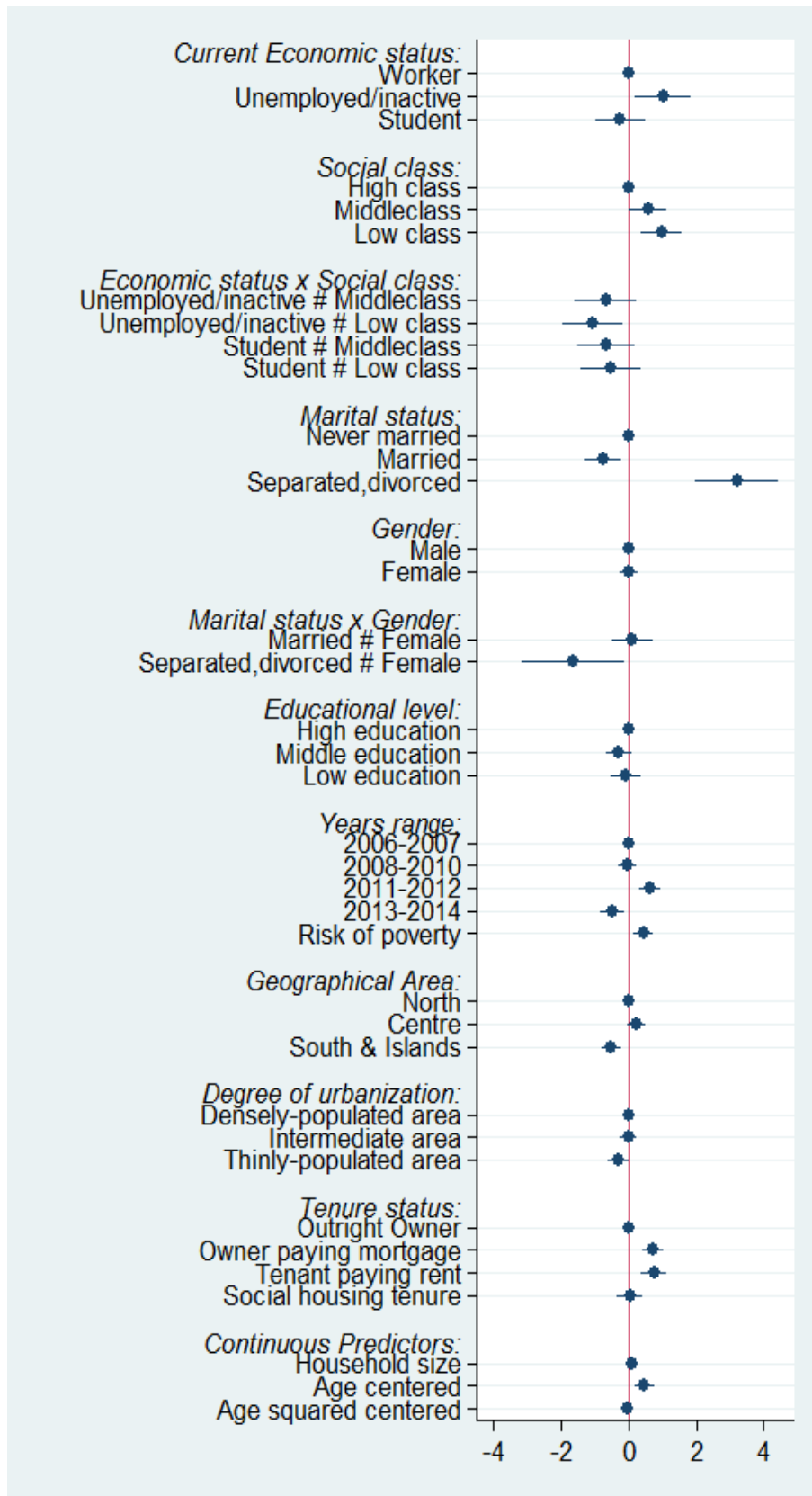
Variable		Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Observations
<b>Moved to parental home</b>	overall	0.02	0.13	0	1	N = 46106
	between		0.14	0	1	n = 24517
	within		0.06	-0.48	0.68	T-bar = 1.88
Current Economic status	overall	0.66	0.84	0	2	N = 46106
	between		0.81	0	2	n = 24517
	within		0.28	-0.67	2.00	T-bar = 1.88
Change in Activity status	overall	0.25	0.71	0	3	N = 46106
	between		0.60	0	3	n = 24517
	within		0.44	-1.75	2.25	T-bar = 1.88
Social class	overall	1.26	0.69	0	2	N = 46106
	between		0.69	0	2	n = 24517
	within		0.02	0.60	2.60	T-bar = 1.88
Marital status	overall	0.24	0.45	0	2	N = 46106
	between		0.46	0	2	n = 24517
	within		0.00	0.24	0.24	T-bar = 1.88
Educational level	overall	0.89	0.73	0	2	N = 46063
	between		0.72	0	2	n = 24493
	within		0.12	-0.11	2.22	T-bar = 1.88066
Gender	overall	0.50	0.50	0	1	N = 46106
	between		0.50	0	1	n = 24517
	within		0.00	-0.17	1.17	T-bar = 1.88
Year ranges	overall	1.28	1.05	0	3	N = 46106
	between		1.08	0	3	n = 24517
	within		0.32	0.61	1.95	T-bar = 1.88
Risk of poverty	overall	0.19	0.39	0	1	N = 46106
	between		0.36	0	1	n = 24517
	within		0.17	-0.48	0.85	T-bar = 1.88
Geographical Area	overall	0.98	0.88	0	2	N = 46106
	between		0.88	0	2	n = 24517
	within		0.00	0.64	1.64	T-bar = 1.88
Urbanization degree	overall	0.89	0.76	0	2	N = 46106
	between		0.76	0	2	n = 24517
	within		0.03	-0.44	2.22	T-bar = 1.88
Tenure status	overall	0.60	1.00	0	3	N = 46106
	between		0.96	0	3	n = 24517
	within		0.36	-1.40	2.60	T-bar = 1.88
Household size	overall	3.62	1.03	0	6	N = 46106
	between		1.02	0	6	n = 24517
	within		0.26	-0.38	7.62	T-bar = 1.88
Age (centered)	overall	-0.40	5.01	-8.462708	7.537292	N = 46106
	between		5.17	-8.462708	7.537292	n = 24517
	within		0.64	-8.07	3.93	T-bar = 1.88
Age squared (centered)	overall	-20.46	262.25	-400.8507	431.1493	N = 46106
	between		271.00	-400.8507	431.1493	n = 24517
	within		33.65	-415.46	208.54	T-bar = 1.88

# Appendix III: Conditional effects plots of longitudinal logit models

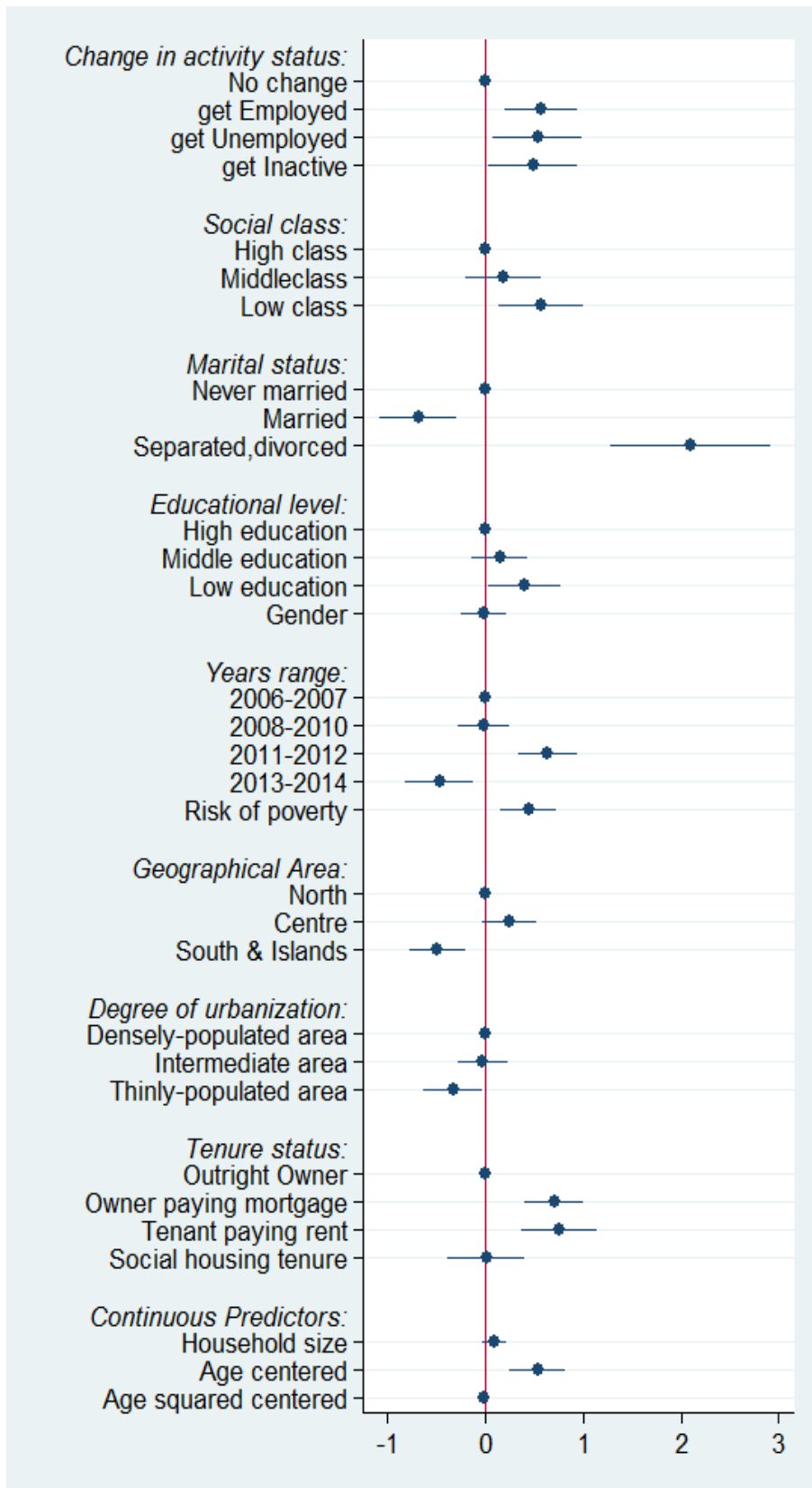
Graph 22 Conditional effects of explanatory variables, Model 1



Graph 23 Conditional effects of explanatory variables, Model 2 (interactions)



Graph 24 Conditional effects of explanatory variables, Model 3 (turning points)



## Appendix IV: Postestimation tests

Table 18 Vif test for multicollinearity

	model 1		model 2 (Interactions)		model 3 (turning points)	
	VIF	1/VIF	VIF	1/VIF	VIF	1/VIF
Current Economic status (ref. worker)						
Unemployed/inactive	1.21	0.826	9.26	0.108		
Student	1.66	0.601	6.8	0.147		
Last change in Activity.status (ref. no change)						
Get Employed					1.01	0.987
Get Unemployed					1.01	0.991
Get Inactive					1.02	0.981
Marital status (ref. never married)						
Married	1.67	0.600	1.69	0.593	1.63	0.613
Separated/divorced	1.04	0.959	1.04	0.959	1.04	0.960
Social class (ref. high class)						
Middle class	2.52	0.397	4.91	0.204	2.5	0.400
Low class	2.92	0.342	5.38	0.186	2.85	0.351
Economic status x Social class						
Unemployed/inactive x middle class			6.03	0.166		
Unemployed/inactive x low class			7.82	0.128		
Student x middle class			4.87	0.205		
Student x low class			3.38	0.296		
Educational attainment (ref. high education)						
Medium education	2.36	0.424	2.46	0.406	2.37	0.422
Low education	2.65	0.378	2.78	0.359	2.65	0.377
Gender = Female	1.06	0.943	1.06	0.942	1.06	0.944
Year ranges (ref. 2006-2007)						
2008-2010	1.5	0.666	1.5	0.666	1.5	0.666
2011-2012	1.42	0.705	1.42	0.705	1.42	0.706
2013-2014	1.43	0.698	1.43	0.698	1.43	0.699
< 60% of the national median	1.23	0.815	1.23	0.811	1.21	0.825
Geographical Area (ref. north)						
Centre	1.24	0.804	1.24	0.804	1.24	0.807
South & Islands	1.41	0.710	1.41	0.710	1.37	0.731
Urbanization degree (ref. densely-populated area)						
Intermediate area	1.33	0.750	1.33	0.750	1.33	0.750
Thinly-populated area	1.32	0.758	1.32	0.757	1.32	0.758
Tenure status parental home (ref. outright owner)						
Owner paying mortgage	1.11	0.900	1.11	0.900	1.11	0.902
Tenant or subtenant paying rent	1.13	0.887	1.13	0.887	1.12	0.890
Social housing tenure	1.1	0.913	1.1	0.913	1.09	0.914
Household size	1.05	0.956	1.05	0.956	1.05	0.956
Age (centered)	166.52	0.006	167.48	0.006	157.54	0.006
Age squared (centered)	164.3	0.006	165.23	0.006	158.25	0.006
Mean VIF	15.79		15.02		14.51	



Table 19 Likelihood-ratio test for goodness of fit, model 1.

Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>economic status</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(2) Prob > chi2	74.56 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>marital status</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(2) Prob > chi2	48.89 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>social class</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(2) Prob > chi2	13.19 0.0023
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>educationl attainment</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(2) Prob > chi2	9.6 0.0082
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>gender</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	0.01 <b>0.9271</b>
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>Years ranges</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(3) Prob > chi2	41.65 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>poverty</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	9.29 0.0023
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>geographical area</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(4) Prob > chi2	34.26 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>degree of urbanization</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(3) Prob > chi2	34.39 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>household size</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	5.38 0.0203
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>age</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	5.1 0.0239
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>age squared</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	5.61 0.0179

Table 20 Likelihood-ratio test for goodness of fit, model 2

Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model2_without- <i>interaction social class x economic status</i> nested in model2_full)	LR chi2(2) Prob > chi2	52.72 0.0216
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>interaction marital status x gender</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(2) Prob > chi2	49.68 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>educationl attainment</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(2) Prob > chi2	10.55 0.0051
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>Years ranges</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(3) Prob > chi2	41.46 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>poverty</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	9.83 0.0017
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>geographical area</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(4) Prob > chi2	33.51 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>degree of urbanization</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(3) Prob > chi2	40.17 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>household size</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	5.22 0.0223
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>age</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	4.48 0.0343
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model1_without- <i>age squared</i> nested in model1_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	4.96 0.0259

Table 21 Likelihood-ratio test for goodness of fit, model 3

Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>changes in activity status</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(2) Prob > chi2	17.7 0.0005
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>marital status</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(2) Prob > chi2	47.41 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>social class</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(2) Prob > chi2	17.06 0.0002
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>educationl attainment</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(2) Prob > chi2	9.58 0.0083
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>gender</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	0.37 <b>0.5455</b>
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>years</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(3) Prob > chi2	40.66 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>poverty</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	9.78 0.0018
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>geographical area</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(4) Prob > chi2	32.65 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>degree of urbanization</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(3) Prob > chi2	25.88 0
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>household size</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	5.4 0.0202
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>age</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	10.69 0.0011
Likelihood-ratio test (Assumption: model3_without- <i>age squared</i> nested in model3_full)	LR chi2(1) Prob > chi2	10.21 0.0014

## Appendix V: Pooled cross-section models

Table 22 Pooled logit models for returning home

	Model 1		Model 2 (interactions)		Model 3 (turning points)	
	Coeff	SE	Coeff	SE	Coeff	SE
Current Economic status (ref. worker)						
Unemployed/inactive	0.196**	0.094	0.778***	0.299		
Student	-0.446***	0.121	-0.024	0.278		
Social class (ref. high class)						
Middle class	0.208	0.136	0.471**	0.199	0.244*	0.135
Low class	0.431***	0.141	0.718***	0.202	0.504***	0.139
Last change in Activity status (ref. no change)						
Get Employed					0.474***	0.132
Get Unemployed					0.359**	0.165
Get Inactive					0.340**	0.164
Economic status x Social class (ref. Worker x High class)						
Unemployed/inactive x Middle class			-0.549*	0.332		
Unemployed/inactive x Low class			-0.686**	0.322		
Student x Middle class			-0.514	0.314		
Student x Low class			-0.443	0.323		
Marital status (ref. never married)						
Married	-0.470***	0.121	-0.525***	0.185	-0.447***	0.121
Separated/divorced	1.250***	0.222	1.904***	0.335	1.259***	0.222
Marital status x Gender (ref. Never married x Male)						
Married/Female			0.092	0.214		
Separated,divorced/Female			-0.983**	0.428		
Gender = Female	-0.007	0.076	0.005	0.084	-0.046	0.076
Educational attainment (ref. high education)						
Medium education	-0.314***	0.114	-0.337***	0.115	-0.275**	0.113
Low education	-0.138	0.132	-0.162	0.134	-0.059	0.132
Year ranges (ref. 2006-2007)						
2008-2010	-0.042	0.099	-0.043	0.099	-0.042	0.099
2011-2012	0.449***	0.103	0.454***	0.103	0.442***	0.103
2013-2014	-0.243*	0.124	-0.242*	0.124	-0.243**	0.124
Risk of poverty = equivalised disposable income < 60% of the national median	0.301***	0.097	0.312***	0.097	0.305***	0.096
Geographical Area (ref. north)						
Centre	0.153*	0.092	0.153*	0.092	0.155*	0.092
South & Islands	-0.361***	0.096	-0.356***	0.095	-0.340***	0.094
Urbanization degree (ref. densely-populated area)						
Intermediate area	-0.006	0.085	-0.007	0.085	-0.009	0.085
Thinly-populated area	-0.207**	0.104	-0.203*	0.104	-0.209**	0.104
Tenure status parental home (ref. outright owner)						
Owner paying mortgage	0.499***	0.100	0.504***	0.100	0.517***	0.100
Tenant or subtenant paying rent	0.505***	0.122	0.511***	0.122	0.541***	0.121
Social housing tenure	-0.012	0.138	0.006	0.138	0.002	0.138
Household size	0.0821**	0.036	0.0798**	0.036	0.0826**	0.036
Age (centered)	0.219**	0.098	0.207**	0.098	0.309***	0.096
Age squared (centered)	-0.00437**	0.002	-0.00413**	0.002	-0.00578***	0.002
Constant	-4.479***	0.211	-4.718***	0.245	-4.678***	0.209
Number of observations	46064		46064		46064	
Number of individuals	24493		24493		24493	
Pseudo R-squared	0.037		0.038		0.036	

\* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

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