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Master in Economic Development and Growth

The Formation of Return Migration Intentions: An Intra-Household Analysis of Foreign Families Residing in Italy

by

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Abstract: This study inspects the micro-determinants of return intentions for foreign nuclear families in Italy. In particular, I argue against the unitary nature of households and focus on intra-household patterns of decision-making, which have been largely neglected by previous studies. Using data from the “Statistics of Income and Living Conditions of Households with Foreigners” (Istat, 2009), I find that return intentions are indeed affected by both partners’ and their shared household’s characteristics. Analysis based on origin and regional fixed effects shows that some foreign nuclear families are target-earners complying with New Economics of Labour Migration hypotheses on return migration; yet interesting heterogeneity across spouses arises for transnational ties, which also maintain a strong crosswise effect, thus influencing the partner’s decision. The presence of daughters attending school is the strongest predictor of staying in Italy. Given the enhanced possibilities for wives and daughters, husbands display a remarkably increased propensity to settle abroad.

Keywords: Return migration, migration intentions, intra-household analysis, gender and migration, Italy

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1 Introduction

Family migration currently represents the predominant kind of migratory flow to Europe. With its favourable geographical position for arrivals from the sea, Italy is no exception to this trend. The first decade of the twenty-first century has seen an increase in migrant inflows to Italy, characterized in particular by family reunification and the movement of immigrant families. Between 2001 and 2011, as registered by the Italian Census, the number of families with at least one immigrant member increased by 172 percent (Girone & Grubanov-Boskovic, 2015). In 2011, 1.8 million households were headed by a foreign adult; in most cases, they were nuclear families with children (Carella, 2016). Accordingly, the number of immigrant women registered by the 2011 Census had more than tripled with respect to 2001. In the same year, 14.5 percent of births in Italy were from immigrant families (Giannantoni & Gabrielli, 2015).

In a context of aging population and low fertility, family migration assumes increased relevance for most parts of Europe (Nekby, 2006). Retaining the migrant population within the national territory could thus be an aim for policy-makers. At the same time, family reunifications have induced a progressive shift of the migrant population from workers to dependents (Constant & Massey, 2002). In the case of lagging economies like Italy, immigration has therefore generated increasing concerns among the native population, which is urging tougher immigration policies and even repatriation schemes. However, whether migrants decide to settle in Italy or return to their home country is – to a large extent – the result of a personal decision. Return migration is indeed a non-random sub-process of international labour migration. Understanding the dynamics behind it can therefore help predict the composition of the remaining foreign population and eventually design policies to retain (or disperse) potential returnees.

1.1 Research Problem

Extensive research has investigated the micro-determinants of return migration, drawing both on surveys that captured the intentions to outmigrate (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011; De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015; Dustmann, 1994, 1996, 2003; Paparusso & Ambrosetti, 2017) and on longitudinal surveys where immigrants can be tracked down until they leave the country, thus deducing return behaviour (Constant & Massey, 2002). Most studies have tried to establish which theory of international migration can explain more exhaustively the return of economic migrants. However, given the existence of varied migratory strategies, conflicting approaches often coexist in the findings. Neoclassical Economics and New Economics of Labour Migration define return as a “failure” or a “success” story, respectively. Despite being mainly bound to economic considerations, both theories provide meaningful insights, depending on

the context of migration. Studies on return also show the importance of transnational ties and social networks in the formation of migratory plans. In particular, they highlight how social and gender norms can produce differential expectations on migratory outcomes for different members of the household; such expectations, in turn, influence return intentions. Therefore, it emerges the need to account for distinct migratory plans among household members.

Nonetheless, theories and empirical studies analysing return at household level interpret household's intentions as unitary. In particular, return migration plans have been inspected using data on the head of the household's intentions (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011; De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015; Dustmann, 1994, 1996), thus assuming that the whole family would share the opinion of one person. This concept has been challenged by qualitative studies showing that wives and children – in the specific case of return – can present contrasting preferences to the ones of husbands (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010). However, few attempts have been made to analyse the distinct formation of return migration intentions between men and women (Paparusso & Ambrosetti, 2017). Moreover, previous empirical studies on return have not dealt with intra-household considerations, such as the crosswise effects of individual characteristics between spouses. Surprisingly, the differential effects of sons and daughters in the household, while having been introduced long ago (Dustman, 2003), has not been closely examined by more recent studies. Overall, a systematic understanding of how foreign nuclear families form their return migration intentions is still lacking.

1.2 Aim and Scope

This thesis discusses the case of foreign nuclear families residing in Italy, and examines the relationship between micro-level characteristics and return intentions. In contrast with previous studies, it attempts to show that the analysis of return migration should go beyond the unitary household structure; household members can have different plans and distinct ways of forming their preferences over return.

In order to achieve this aim, survey data from the “Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri” (Istat, 2009) will be used. A sample of nuclear families is selected, containing households either composed by a couple (two foreign individuals of different sex living in the same household and identifying as a couple), or by a couple with children (81 percent of the cases). Rejecting the male chauvinist idea that wives are tied migrants, this study analyses separately the intention to leave for husbands and wives. Starting from the hypothesis that household members care about the rest of the family, the intentions of each spouse will be modelled on personal and partner's characteristics and on the presence of children, among other household-level factors. Considering their differential experiences at destination described by anthropological and ethnographic studies, husbands and wives are expected to form their return intentions in different ways. Nonetheless, both spouses are predicted to increase their propensity to stay in the presence of children.

Among the 1,678 households in the sample, 20.7 percent of them present a univocal intention to leave Italy in the future, while in 8.4 percent of the cases one of the two spouses wants to

leave. Results from the analysis support the idea that some foreign nuclear families are target-earners, who comply with New Economics of Labour Migration hypotheses on return migration. Unemployment status, for example, negatively affects the return intention of both spouses, and maintains a significant impact as a partner's characteristic. Inspecting transnational ties makes it clear that focusing solely on the head of the household when analysing return intentions would discard important information that affect the decision-making process. Indeed, while remittances are a strong predictor of return for husbands, ownership of a house at home is the main factor inducing wives to leave; most interestingly, these transnational ties maintain a strong crosswise effect, thus influencing the partner's decision. Results on human capital accumulation make the greatest contribution to the understanding of intra-household considerations: receiving education or training in Italy results in increased chances of staying for wives, and even more for their partners. Husbands, instead, are affected oppositely by the same variable. This could be explained by the fact that while men might want to accumulate human capital and invest it in the origin country, for women it is more convenient to exploit it abroad, where they have better job opportunities. In line with this finding, the presence of daughters in education is what truly retains families in Italy, and affects fathers' more than mothers' intentions. Therefore, this study makes a major contribution to research on return by demonstrating that, thanks to the exposure to the destination country's culture and the enhanced possibilities for both their wives and daughters, husbands display an increased propensity to settle abroad.

The reader should bear in mind that the study is based on a selected sample, and is thus not representative for the entire foreign population residing in Italy. Data and findings are nonetheless valid for the most common type of foreign households – nuclear families – and the only family conformation where both spouses can express return intentions. At the same time, declared intentions are likely subject to reporting bias, whose direction is not known. Additionally, being the survey a cross-section, the intentions of households that had higher tendency to leave and already did so are not captured, constituting a selection bias; findings are thus a lower bound estimate. Lastly, this study is unable to encompass the entire migratory experience since it does not capture return behaviours. This information would be useful to infer whether husbands and wives' intentions materialize with equal probabilities, or if some family members exert more power in the realization of return plans.

This thesis begins by reviewing the theoretical approaches to return migration, thus laying out the main expectations on the formation of return intentions for foreign nuclear families; a summary of previous empirical findings follows. It will then go on to describe the data used for the analysis, the selected sample, and both the dependent and the independent variables in more detail. The fourth chapter describes the methodology: the dichotomous intention to leave is modelled on a series of individual and household-level variables, and is estimated using a logistic regression with origin and regional fixed effects. The fifth section presents the findings, focusing on three key aspects: the differential formation of return intention for husbands and wives, the crosswise effect of individual characteristics, and the impact of sons, daughters and children in education; a discussion follows, comparing results to previous findings. The last chapter concludes.

2 Theory

2.1 Theoretical Approaches to Return Migration

Formal analyses on return migration typically build on the theoretical framework of labour migration (Harris & Todaro, 1970; Lee, 1966; Sjaastad, 1962). Unless forcibly implemented, in fact, return represents a subsequent option to the decision of leaving the homeland. Depending on the assumptions made when explaining the initial decision to migrate, different (and sometimes contrasting) justifications for the event of returning home will form (Cassarino, 2004). Indeed, theories on international migration have to date not been unified: the cross-disciplinary character of the phenomenon, together with the different levels of analysis adopted by separate theories, produced a system of non-exclusive ideas (Massey et al. 1993). A number of studies have tried to identify which theory of international migration better explains the return of economic migrants to their home country; the scholarly understanding of the phenomenon, however, is still not cohesive. Arguably, it is not a matter of conflicting arguments and predictions, but rather one of varied migratory behaviours and strategies, each one of which better conforms with a strand of the literature (Constant & Massey, 2002; De Haas & Fokkema, 2011; De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015).

In the case of foreign nuclear families residing abroad, the propensity to leave would decrease under Neoclassical Economics (from now on NE) assumptions, but might increase following the New Economics of Labour Migration (from now on NELM) theory. While NE is possibly at the base of the theorization of labour migration, NELM emerged as a sharp modification and improvement to it, shifting the focus from individual to household level. Despite often yielding conflicting hypotheses, they usually coexist in empirical studies on return intentions and flows (Constant & Massey, 2002; De Haas et al. 2015). Structuralism, Transnationalism and Social Network theory all add some important considerations to the picture, but are rarely adopted for establishing the theoretical grounds of the analyses (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011; Haug, 2008). Recent studies have also challenged the unitary outlook over households and argued for the analysis of intra-household considerations and conflicts (Boyd, 1989; De Haas & Fokkema, 2010; Dustmann, 2003; Gubhaju & De Jong, 2009). Although a considerable amount of literature has been published on return migration, there remain several aspects of it about which relatively little is known.

2.1.1 Neoclassical Economics

Neoclassical Economics Micro theory of migration relies on the fact that individual rational agents undergo a cost-benefit analysis and consequently decide whether it is economically convenient to migrate. The decision is taken upon the expected discounted net returns of

migrating: it considers the costs of migrating, the probability of not being deported, the probability of finding employment and the expected wage at home and in the destination country (Massey et al. 1993). Within this framework, the occurrence of return migration can solely be the product of an initial miscalculation of costs or probabilities of employment. If the migrant has “failed”, he will return to his home country. Instead, in the case of successful migration, NE predicts for the migrant to settle at destination, where income is higher (Cassarino, 2004; De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015).

Under the assumption of NE, social ties can be interpreted as a cost if they are at home and as a benefit (negative cost) if they are at destination. It makes sense for the migrant to develop an increasing detachment from the home country, while focusing on the new life and aiming at family reunification at destination. Foreign nuclear families are thus expected to settle permanently. Moreover, occupation and wages negatively select migrants for return, meaning that being unemployed or having a low income would increase the propensity to leave. On the contrary, skills and education acquired abroad increase the probability of staying, since they would doubtfully yield equal gains in the country of origin. (Constant & Massey, 2002).

By paying close attention to the actual motives driving return, Cerase (1974) rejects the idea of “failure” as the only explanation for the phenomenon. His seminal study on Italian migrants returning from the United States is one of the first trying to delineate a typology of returnee (Cassarino, 2004). Consistently with the description of the individualistic and non-ideological emigration of peasants from the South of Italy, the unit of analysis in Cerase’s work is still an income-maximizing individual, just like in NE. However, along with the *return of failure*, the author identifies three other models of return: *of retirement*, *of conservatism*, and *of innovation*. Most interestingly, the latter two entail a life-cycle strategy of migration, saving, and voluntary repatriation during the productive life in order to either enjoy the savings or invest them and the newly acquired skills in a productive activity.

In the same vein, Borjas and Bratsberg (1994) argue that return migration is either the effect of a life cycle residential location planning, or the result of a wrong initial move. The first claim builds on Rosen’s model of occupational mobility, where people decide to migrate for a limited amount of time in order to accumulate physical and human capital. The model assumes that spending some years abroad increases future earnings at home. Thus, workers have the incentive to temporarily migrate, since their expected earnings net of migration and outmigration costs might increase. Dustmann (1994) complements Borjas and Bratsberg’s work by considering two additional incentives for return: higher prices in the destination country and a strong preference for consuming at home. Indeed, social relations, climate, and all those elements that affect the subjective perception of quality of life can induce the migrant to return home once the necessary human capital has been accumulated abroad. Moreover, lower prices in the country of origin would induce the migrant to save abroad and enjoy higher purchasing power at home. Temporary migrants would therefore be characterized by higher efforts in the host country, and higher savings (Dustmann, 1996).

Nonetheless, all models following a NE approach cannot explain the presence of remittances (Constant & Massey, 2002). In fact, being based on an individual cost-benefit analysis, they disregard any transnational social tie and moral obligations of the migrant to remit (De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015).

2.1.2 New Economics of Labour Migration

Departing from the idea that origin and destination countries are substitutes, Stark (1991) developed the theory of New Economics of Labour Migration, according to which temporary migration can be part of a life-plan, and different countries become therefore complements (De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015). As a major critique to the NE analysis at individual level, NELM proposes a focus on households, where the goal is not only maximizing income but also minimizing risk. Accordingly, family members can migrate even without apparent gain, with the aim of diversifying income sources (Massey et al. 1993). Under NELM, return migration is therefore seen as part of the initial migratory plan (Cassarino, 2004). Families – or, more likely, selected family members – migrate in order to send remittances and accumulate savings, which are both ways of coping with market imperfections at home. Consequently, return becomes the signal of a successful migratory experience: enough capital has been gathered and the migrant is ready to go home (De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015).

Social ties would affect migrants likewise both under NE and NELM, with a possible stronger impact in the latter case. However, having a spouse at destination would increase the chances of staying under NE, while decreasing them under NELM. In fact, with two earners, the target could be met faster and return could be quicker (Boyd, 1989; Morokvasic, 1984). Therefore, nuclear families residing abroad are not necessarily permanent settlers under NELM. Nonetheless, the presence of children at destination would not only make it less likely for both spouses to work, but also increase the attachment to the host country, thus decreasing the chances of leaving. In accordance to Borjas and Bratsberg's conjecture, human capital accumulation can also be accounted as an aim for migrants, who would then return home to exploit the new competences; the acquisition of human capital therefore makes return more likely. Instead, if integration is unsuccessful, return is postponed; low income, unemployment and high costs prolong the stay at destination (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011). Moreover, under NELM assumptions, pre-existing human capital should not produce any selection: every migrant, regardless of his skills and education, returns home once the target has been met. Other indicators, such as house ownership and citizenship acquisition, would increase the likelihood of staying under NE, while they would only have an effect under NELM if they affect earnings (Constant & Massey, 2002).

Overall, NE and NELM lay out a success/failure paradigm, which is likely to exclude many episodes of return migration. As Cassarino (2004) highlights in his review of theories on return migration, both approaches remain bound to economic motives, and fail in accounting for the relationship between the returnee and the origin society.

2.1.3 Structural Approach, Transnationalism and Social Network Theory

Leaving behind the success/failure paradigm, the Structural Approach to Return Migration shifts the focus on the origin country, where social and economic elements shape the experience of the returnee. The theory thus puts an emphasis on contextual factors, which can influence the decision to return and the adaptation process. Return, therefore, cannot be labelled as an achievement or a defeat before considering its consequences. The theory also

agrees with NELM in predicting an inverse-U shaped pattern of return: having spent too little time abroad does not increase substantially skills nor means; at the same time, staying abroad very long weakens the ties with the home country (Cassarino, 2004). Nonetheless, Structural Approaches to migration remain constrained by the vision of sending and receiving countries as two separate worlds.

Abandoning this conjecture, Transnationalism and Social Network theory both recognize that home and destination countries are part of a continuous exchange across borders. In particular, transnational theory has challenged the idea that maintaining transnational ties conflicts with integration (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005). Alike, NELM theory has the merit of framing transnationalism and integration as complements: it makes sense for the household to optimize integration – and thus earnings abroad – so that remittances can be sent home (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011). Similarly, social network theory describes returnees as maintaining strong links with both origin and destination country's communities (Cassarino, 2004). Drawing on rational choice theory, Haug (2008) argues for the relevance of social networks in influencing the expected utility of living in a place or another: the closer the family (or the larger the network), the higher the utility. Complying largely with NE, this theory predicts that rational individuals undergo cost-benefit analyses based on their expected utility, and that social structures increase the availability of resources and information. Non-economic factors, such as networks, are therefore important in the decision to stay or return.

However, social networks do not only provide resources. In fact, family and friends also play a role in the formation of return intentions. In particular, according to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, intentions to migrate are produced by expectations on outcomes and social norms (De Jong, 2000). It is through the approval and disapproval of family and friends that people model their migratory plans. By taking into account social networks, migration is no longer the result of an individual decision, but rather a social product. Since personal characteristics influence expectations on migration's consequences, intentions might vary within the same household (Boyd, 1989). For example, the migration of women could be incentivized or discouraged based on the home country's social norms, which typically vary by gender (Morokvasic, 1984).

2.1.4 Beyond the Unitary Household

The household unit can be defined as a group of people who reside together, generating and allocating resources collectively among themselves. Despite this bond, not all household members dispose of the same resources; when it comes to migration decision-making, the person with the greatest resources – both tangible and intangible – usually exerts greater power (Boyd, 1989). Nonetheless, studies performing their analyses at household levels interpret the will of household members as unitary: the household becomes a single entity with well-defined plans and preferences. NELM theory, while appropriately focusing on households as the main migratory unit, remains unable to capture any intra-household consideration. It emerges the need to consider households not as unitary decision-making bodies, but as composed by different members with personal opinions, needs and abilities to exert their power. Indeed, household strategies do not always coincide to the ones of their individual components (Boyd, 1989).

Household-level migration decisions are typically modelled on the characteristics of the male head of the family. In fact, throughout the episodes of mass migration of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, women have been described as passive actors following their husbands or families. This narrative has moved the attention away from the role of women in mass migration, thus neglecting the conceptualization of their decisions (Lutz, 2010). While there is a general consensus on the subordinate role of women in the initial decision to move, whether the migratory experience has an empowering effect over them is discussed. On one hand, migrant women are expected to improve their status abroad by gaining access to waged work and thus developing the means to question their position within the household. On the other hand, there are a number of studies arguing that migrant husbands exert increased power over their wives (Morokvasic, 1984). In particular, women with paid employment increase their economic independence while also creating a dependence on possibly oppressing working conditions (Boyd, 1989). Whether migration empowers women is relative to the context; nonetheless, the consensus is that some benefits are gained from settling abroad (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Piché, 2013).

In their study on Moroccan migrant families, De Haas and Fokkema (2010) analyse the decision-making process behind return, which is predicted to display non-traditional power relations given the contact with the destination country's social norms. Their findings, coming from a series of semi-structured interviews, confirm that – in the specific case of return – wives and children exert more power than the husbands do. Moreover, ethnographic and anthropological studies have suggested that the way men and women perceive integration in the host society is different (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Gubhaju & De Jong, 2009). In particular, men are found to give more importance to public and institutionalized ties across borders, while women often commit to a greater extent to the host country daily life. Arguably, women's migratory experience differs from the one of their male counterparts given the increased access to employment and protective institutions, and thus to resources. Therefore, migrant women are expected to prefer permanent settlement in order to enjoy their newly gained independence. On the contrary, migrant men might experience a loss of status when arriving at destination. For this reason, they might be more prone to return home, where their public recognition would be higher and their traditional gender role strengthened (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005).

2.2 Return Intentions of Foreign Nuclear Families

Whether it is just some individuals who migrate, or the whole nucleus, families can be regarded as the central migratory unit. In fact, they are also the main source of norms and values, which greatly affect the possibility of migrating in the first place (Boyd, 1989). Regardless of the goal of migration, it is common for male heads of the family to act as forerunners (Carella, 2016). If the final intention is to settle permanently, they will try to reunite their families abroad as soon as possible; if moving was a household strategy to cope with economic risks, the family could either follow or remain at home, where everyone will eventually return. Referring to the latter case, De Haas and Fokkema (2010) report that many of the Moroccan women and nearly all the children interviewed for their study indicated the

desire to move to Europe. Husbands, nonetheless, were often reluctant to the idea, given the cultural differences between home and their destination country.

Foreign households with both spouses residing in Europe are therefore a selected group among migrant families. In particular, following the rationale of NE, they should have increased propensity to stay permanently compared to transnational families who did not undergo reunification at destination (Boyd, 1989). Indeed, for an income-maximizing migrant, it makes sense to bring the family along and completely adjust to the host country life. Nonetheless, marriage and family migration can sometimes be interpreted as economic migration, and better comply with the NELM theory. This happens when the woman is supposed to contribute to the achievement of a target together with her husband (Morokvasic, 1984). Along these lines, Boyd (1989) challenges the fact that family migration is “noneconomic”. In fact, migrant women are often as integrated in the labour market as their male counterparts. Within this framework, the actual aim of the household might be to return home; accomplishing such goal in a short period would then be the real reason for family reunification.

Given the heterogeneity in initial reasons to migrate, and the possibility of adjusting migration plans, univocally predicting the return behaviour of foreign nuclear households is impossible. Actually, it could be argued that return cannot be properly planned a priori, since it depends on contextual factors at home and in the host country (Cassarino, 2004). On the contrary, return intentions are expected to form upon a series of considerations on the migratory experience. In the case of NE-motivated migration, a missed integration should generate the desire to return home; for NELM-complying migrants, the opposite applies. Moreover, drawing on the findings of social psychology (in particular the Theory of Planned Behaviour) intentions are produced by expectations on outcomes. Such expectations develop in a precise framework, defined by the existing social norms and gender roles. Therefore, normative pressures exercised by family and friends influence intentions, and might do so in different ways depending on the gender of the migrant (Gubhaju & De Jong, 2009; De Jong, 2000). For this reason, the intention to return for foreign nuclear families should be analysed separately for husbands and wives.

When forming their migratory plan, both spouses are expected to not only take into account their future well-being, but also the one of people who are close to them, like their partner and their offspring. In particular, the presence of children at destination is supposed to increase the propensity to stay under both NE and NELM assumptions. More precisely, Dustmann (1994) predicts that having children enrolled in a school at destination would increase the propensity to settle. In a later study, he argues that migrant fathers should however be more likely to migrate back home in the event of having daughters. The argument is that, under a patriarchal scheme, fathers wish for their sons greater job opportunities, and thus to stay abroad; for their daughters, instead, they wish an environment preserving traditional social norms, and thus returning home (Dustmann, 2003). Moreover, according to ethnographic and anthropological studies, husbands are expected to favour considerations related to the public sphere, while wives should be more concerned about the private one (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005).

In contrast with these hypotheses, it could be argued that by residing abroad, migrant households would increasingly endorse gender egalitarian values (Morokvasic, 1984). This

would translate in an equivalent effect of sons and daughters in increasing the propensity to stay, or even in an accentuated impact of daughters over such decision. Indeed, considering the relative gain in educational and working opportunities that women experience at destination, the concern for the daughters' future could negatively affect the willingness to return home for both parents. Likewise, husbands could value the expanded labour prospects of their wives and have a further incentive to settle. In line with this reasoning, Lutz (2010) highlights that if migrant women are persistently depicted as victims, at the same time men – and those of Muslim origin in particular – are portrayed as patriarchal perpetrators, thus ignoring the multiplicity of masculinities existing among migrants.

Without doubt, there is a discrepancy between factors influencing return intentions and those shaping actual return behaviour (De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015; De Haas & Fokkema, 2011; De Jong, 2000). In their qualitative study, De Haas and Fokkema (2010) confirm that, when family reunification has happened, return is more problematic. For those who did reunite their families, the most common choice is to remain in Europe. It seems that this decision is driven by their spouses and children's desires. In fact, having improved their educational and working conditions, and having gained more agency, wives and children have a greater weight in the intra-household decision-making process. Nonetheless, accurate data on return intention of both spouses and return behaviour of the household should be used in order to establish a pattern in the realization of return plans. Establishing power relationships in the migration decision-making process within foreign nuclear families is beyond the scope of this study.

2.3 Previous Empirical Evidence

Empirical evidence on return migration patterns has mainly drawn on two kinds of data: intentions to migrate, as registered by surveys that addressed the specific issue (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011; De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015; Dustmann, 1994, 2003; Paparusso & Ambrosetti, 2017) or return migration behaviour, deduced from census data or other kinds of longitudinal surveys where immigrants can be tracked down until they leave the country (Borjas & Bratsberg, 1994; Constant & Massey, 2002). As already discussed, intentions and behaviours do not always go along. Some studies, therefore, try to test for the predictive power of intentions over actual return and provide evidence on the materialization of return desires (Dustmann, 1996; Haug, 2008).

2.3.1 Seminal Works

The study of Borjas and Bratsberg (1994) is the first to empirically test return behaviour. The authors start from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) data on migrants who legally arrived to the US between 1971 and 1986, and calculate the expected number of migrants who remain in the country. This number is then compared with the one from the 1980 Census to obtain average outmigration rates, which are regressed on origin country characteristics. GNP per capita emerges as a determining factor of return, demonstrating that

it is more likely for migrants to outmigrate if their home country is rich; inequality and outmigration have an inverse-U relationship; distance also has a strong negative effect, due to its impact on migration costs. Borjas and Bratsberg's study provides some evidence on basic economic factors that lead return decisions. In particular, by considering income inequality at home as a proxy for the return to schooling, they support their theory on the intensification of the initial self-selection. Nonetheless, as De Haas, Fokkema and Fihri (2015) argue, the optimal kind of data to assess the determinant of return migration would be at micro level. In fact, deriving inference from macro-data observations, such as the number of returnees and some country-level indicators, would assume that each group of conational migrants is homogeneous.

Some first results on micro-level determinants of return migration were gathered by the seminal work of Dustmann (1994), which drew on the first wave of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), collected in 1984. From the 1500 surveyed migrant households – predominantly “guest-workers” from Spain, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Greece and Italy – the author further restricts the data to male heads of the family in working age, and thus regresses their intention to return migrate on a set of individual and household characteristics. The argument justifying the exclusion of female respondents is that their intentions would be likely correlated to the ones of their spouses. Nonetheless, Dustman includes a series of variables capturing partner's characteristics. The analysis shows that having a German spouse has a strong and significant positive effect on the desired length of stay, while having a partner at home has the opposite effect, although insignificant. When the partner also resides in Germany and is part of the labour force, desired length of stay shortens: since guestworkers from Southern Europe had the initial plan to move as target earners, a household with both spouses working can reach the target faster. With regards to the household composition, the presence of children attending school in Germany makes the migratory plan more long-term, while having children at home has the opposite effect, with a higher magnitude.

2.3.2 Testing NE and NELM Simultaneously

Remaining on the case of guestworkers in Germany, and still using the SOEP from 1984, Constant and Massey (2002) expand Dustmann's study on return behaviour. In the intent to test NE and NELM simultaneously, they find evidence in support of both migration theories. In line with the NE approach, length of stay makes the probability of return go down. At the same time, migrants who are unemployed or marginally employed are more prone to return home compared to those with a job, which could be a signal or *return of failure*. In support of NELM, human capital characteristics do not prove to be significant. Moreover, sending remittances proves to be a good predictor of return, and only finds explanation under NELM assumptions. In agreement with both NE and NELM, social ties at home increase the chances of outmigrating, while social ties at destination have the opposite effect. In order to set apart people who should comply with NELM hypotheses from income-maximizing individuals, they perform the analysis separately for remitting and non-remitting migrants. Actually, they find differential effects for some of the variables. Being unemployed has a stronger effect for people who remit and their likelihood to return is not affected by time spent in Germany, as it is instead for non-remitting migrants. Moreover, having a spouse at destination makes return

more likely for remitting migrants, which is consistent with the idea that having two incomes allows reaching the target faster; for non-remitters, the effect is opposite. The presence of children at destination, on the other hand, univocally makes the propensity to stay higher.

Similarly to Constant and Massey (2002), De Haas and Fokkema (2011) test for NE and NELM and concentrate on the effects of integration and transnational ties with the use of data on Egyptian, Moroccan, Turkish, Ghanaian and Senegalese guestworkers residing in Spain and Italy in 1997. As a novelty, the authors introduce an indicator of sociocultural integration, which includes attitudinal changes, membership to native social groups and feeling of belonging to the new country of residence. The indicator turns out to be negatively correlated to return intentions, as NE would predict. However, structural integration (like obtaining citizenship, owning a house, receiving education and being employed) does not yield such clear-cut results. In fact, occupational status and owning a house in the host country do not have a significant effect over the intention to return. Moreover, education is positively correlated with the intention to leave. The direction of the effects of social ties make sense under both theories again, but are not significant. Lastly, while investments at home make migration more likely, remittances yield ambiguous results. In fact, sending remittances for community use decreases the likelihood to return, which could make sense if remittances are to repay debts incurred when migrating, provide the means for the family to reunite at destination, for altruistic, or for insurance reasons. Results from a further study on Moroccan emigrants only confirm what already found and add that having a bad residential experience – which comprehends residential quality of life, discrimination in public services, dissatisfaction with religious facilities and feelings of racism – gives some incentives to return (Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015).

2.3.3 Beyond the Unitary Household

It is important to stress how the studies presented either employed micro-data on male migrants only, or neglected any gender difference throughout their analyses. In some cases, the samples were purposefully restricted to the male heads of the households (Dustmann, 1994, 1996). In other cases, the analysis used data on heads of households, and it was recognized by the authors how male individuals outnumbered females in the sample (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011; De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015). Lastly, when the sample included males and females in almost equal proportions, no effort was made into carefully inspecting gender differences in the pattern of return migration (Constant & Massy, 2002). Including a gender dummy, as argued by Morokvasic (1984), is in fact a scant attempt to shed light over the differential formation of return intentions for male and female migrants. Paparusso and Ambrosetti (2017) take a step further in the inspection of gender-specific determinants of return intentions. Indeed, after noticing that females and married people are less likely to leave compared to male and single migrants, they perform separate analyses for males and females by interacting the gender dummy with the main variables of interest. Married males display risk ratios of the intention to return that are lower only to single male migrants; regardless of the civil status, female migrants are less likely to leave compared to married males. Education also displays a stronger retaining effect for females, generally decreasing the intention to leave (compared to males with no education), and increasing it to a lesser

extent compared to males in the case of higher education. Women are also more likely to stay compared to employed male migrants, whichever their work status is. Lastly, the presence of children in the home country surprisingly does not increase the propensity to leave for women, compared to males without children at home; the effect of having a partner at home is analogous. Despite being confined to the appendix and lacking a proper discussion, these results on interaction effects provide some evidence that male and female migrants display some differences in the way they form return intentions.

Some studies examining the initial decision to leave the home country have also gone in this direction. Based on data from the Thailand and from South Africa respectively, De Jong (2000) and Gubhaju and De Jong (2009)'s studies aim at disentangling the effect of gender norms and social pressures in the process of migration decision-making. For accomplishing this goal, data for males and females is analysed separately in the first study, and a further division based on civil status is performed in the second. The argument for this strategy is that since some predicting variables have opposite effects for men and women (or never married men/women and married men/women), running the regression on the whole sample and controlling for gender would risk yielding non-significant coefficients. The results indeed display striking gender differences in the determinants of migration intentions. For men, an important factor is having lower affiliation expectancies within their local community, while for women the prospect of lower income and work satisfaction count most. This is consistent with traditional gender roles, where men occupy the public sphere and women the private one. The presence of elderly and children in the household has opposite effects: while for men it increases the intention to migrate, for women it decreases it. Indeed, once a family is formed, the woman is expected to take care of the children and the elderly. When dividing the sample by civil status, NE arguments prove true for never-married individuals regardless of gender, while the motives related to NELM are better predictors for married prospective migrants. Overall, some major differences in how migration intentions are formed among men and women are found.

3 Data

In order to inspect the formation of return migration intentions, micro-data capturing the outmigration plans of foreign individuals is to be used. The survey “Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri” (or “Statistics of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) of Households with Foreigners”), carried out in the summer of 2009 by the Italian National Institute for Statistics (Istat), suits this aim well. Indeed, among the Individual Questionnaire’s queries, respondents older than 15 were asked:

[1.11] Eventually, do you intend to leave Italy to return to live in your home Country or another foreign Country?

To which the respondent could reply: “YES, to return to live in my home Country”, “YES, to go/return to another foreign Country”, “NO”, or “Don't know”. In case of positive answer, a follow up question inspected the imminence of return, by asking:

[1.12] How much longer do you plan to stay in Italy?

Despite its original aim of inspecting the socio-economic situation of foreign households, the survey adapts well to the inspection of return migration intentions given the presence of the aforementioned questions. Indeed, Paparusso and Ambrosetti (2017) have already exploited the data to analyse the micro-determinants of Moroccans’ return migration intentions. Other published studies have focused on immigrant households’ life conditions (Carella, 2016; Gironé & Grubanov-Boskovic, 2015), immigrants’ fertility behaviour (Giannantoni & Gabrielli, 2015) and immigrants’ remitting behaviour (Busetta et al., 2015).

All these studies treated respondents as individual observations, and generally regressed the variable of interest on personal characteristics or household level characteristics at most. Nonetheless, the way in which the data was collected allows for intra-household evaluations. Indeed, each individual respondent can be linked to other household members and to household-level information, which was provided by the head of the family. Therefore, it is possible to reconstruct familial bonds of the individuals, while at the same time maintaining first-hand information on personal socio-economic characteristics.

3.1 The Selected Sample

Data from the survey originally contains information on 6,014 households with at least one foreign member residing in Italy. In particular, 1,323 households are made of single foreigners, 1,870 are transnational families – defined by the geographical dispersion of their members – and 2,821 are nuclear families – where both spouses reside in the destination

country. With a total of 15,036 individuals interviewed, the data is statistically representative for the foreign population in Italy; being it oversampled compared to other studies of the residing foreign population, and given the vast array of questions it includes, it is the primary source of information on families with foreigners in Italy, up to date (Carella, 2016).

In order to delineate patterns of return migration intentions and their intra-household formation, the analysis will concentrate on nuclear foreign families. That is, households in the selected sample will be composed by at least two foreign spouses, who migrated to Italy when they were older than 16 and who were in working age (from 18 to 64) at the time of the survey. These restrictions are necessary for ensuring that the individuals are first generation migrants who have either arrived to Italy as a family, or who have undergone family reunification, or who have formed a family once in Italy. In this way, it will be possible to compare the micro-determinants of return between spouses. Households composed by single migrants remain automatically excluded from the analysis. Moreover, the sample leaves out transnational families and nuclear families with an Italian spouse, since the return intention would only be captured for one spouse. It is relevant to note that being married to an Italian national would increase the probability of staying: for husbands, 62 percent of those with an Italian wife want to stay, compared to 44 percent of those with a foreign wife; for wives, 73 percent of those with an Italian husband want to stay, compared to 45 percent of those with a foreign husband. This is consistent with Dustmann's (1994) finding of a strong and significant positive effect on the desired length of stay produced by having a native spouse.

Some further adjustments of the sample are performed. The 24 households where one or both spouses indicated the will to move to a third country are excluded from the sample. This is a common practice in studies analysing return intentions. The motivation behind the exclusion is twofold: first, the number of people wanting to reach a third country is often very modest (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011); second, onward migration is a strategy that should be studied separately (Nekby, 2006). In order to avoid having too small subgroups – which would impede performing the econometric analysis – the four households with North American origin are left out, while household from Oceania are already absent from the sample. The final sample therefore includes 1,678 foreign nuclear families, coming predominantly from Europe (52%), Northern Africa (18%) and Central Asia (16%), and to a lesser degree from Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin American and the Caribbean, and South East Asia.

Given the performed selection of the sample, results will not be representative of the entire foreign population residing in Italy. Nonetheless, they will hold true for the most numerous kind of foreign households present on the territory, that is, nuclear families (with children). As argued in Chapter 2.2 of this study, families with both spouses living abroad are of particular interest when it comes to the formation of return migration intentions, given the possible divergence of intentions, and the potential increased agency of wives. For these reasons, an intra-household analysis of return intention makes most sense if performed on a sample selected accordingly.

3.2 The Dependent Variable

Return intentions as captured by the survey “Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri” entail a multiplicity of plans. Among the people who want to leave, some want to return home and some want to go to a third country. Moreover, some people want to leave sooner than others. Lastly, some respondents do not have a clear plan on what to do. Confining the dependent variable to a binary choice therefore entails some degree of subjectivity. Nonetheless, a dichotomous delimitation of possible choices makes it easier to model the formation of return intentions and to interpret the findings.

Starting from the initial question on whether the respondent would like to stay in Italy or not in the future, one can deduct a basic measure of return intentions: migrants who answer “stay” are accounted as permanent settlers, while those who want to return to live in their home country are identified as returnees. From this basic definition of stay/leave are therefore excluded all those who want to migrate to a third country, and those who are not sure about their migratory plans. While the former do not constitute a big group, and thus should not bias the results, undecided people are arguably either stayers or returnees. However, given the impossibility of determining their belonging, the base line analysis will disregard them.

In order to provide a sharper measure of the intention to return, a second specification of the dependent variable is constructed. More specifically, returnees are identified as those who not only displayed the intention to return living in their home country, but also indicated a finite number of years within which they want to leave Italy. That is to say, in less than one year, one, two, three, four or five years. On the contrary, people who showed some interest in leaving Italy, but answered that they would do so in “6-10 years” or in “more than 10 years” are aggregated to the rest of respondents, who either want to stay or are undecided about their plan.

Whether adopting the baseline specification of return intentions or a sharper one, some issues of reliability remain present. Indeed, while indicated intentions are direct evidence provided by the respondent, they might be influenced by the presence of other members of the household when responding to the survey. This reporting bias threat calls for a careful interpretation of results. Stated return intentions likely represent an already agreed upon household plan; they might therefore conceal genuine intentions that might diverge from the accepted family strategy. Disagreement between spouses might therefore be a signal of sequential return migration or relay migration, rather than the outcome of contrasting opinion about migratory plans. Nonetheless, they remain the outcome of a household strategy that builds on micro-level determinants, and might respond differently to husband and wife’s characteristics.

3.3 The Independent Variables

According to the theoretical framework of return migration, a wide set of micro-level factors can influence the decision to move back to the home country. Socio-demographic characteristics of the individual and of the household, integration at destination and transnational ties are all to be considered when modelling the decision to leave. The survey provides a large set of questions that can be exploited to obtain valid information or useful proxies. A number of questionnaires composed the survey: a family registry, a family questionnaire, an individual registry for each member of the family, and an individual questionnaire taking a different form for children 15 and younger. The husband's and the wife's decision to return migrate is therefore modelled over data that is either coming directly from their individual questionnaire, or from questionnaires and registry data regarding their household and other household members. Appendix A presents summary statistics of the variables that follow for husbands and wives, depending on their intention to migrate.

The first set of variables taken into account pertains socio-demographic characteristics of husbands and wives. It is convenient to recall that all the individuals in the sample are married or co-living partners of opposite sex and in their working age years, who migrated to Italy as adults. Starting from the year of arrival in Italy would be the optimal way to deduce the age at entry of the migrant and the years of residence in Italy. However, this information is censored in the anonymized version of the data provided by Istat. Nonetheless, the answer to the query "Since when have you lived in Italy without leaving for more than one year?" can be a good proxy, and is reported in the dataset. *Age at entry* and *Years of residence* are therefore computed starting from this information and taking into account the year of birth of the respondent and the fact that all data was collected in 2009. A dummy for *Bad health* is also included, taking the value of 1 if the respondent indicated "poor" or "very poor" general health, and 0 otherwise. A categorical variable for *Education* is introduced, identifying under *Primary* all respondents with completed primary education at most, under *Secondary* those who completed upper secondary school (i.e. High school), and under *Tertiary* people with completed post-secondary education, including non-university education. Moreover, *Occupation* is classified as *Employed*, *Unemployed* and *Other* (including retired); this definition rests on the self-declared employment status. To complete the socio-demographic framework, the *Number of sons and daughters* in the household is attributed to each couple. The variable is constructed by counting the individual respondents identifying as sons or daughters of the head of the household or of his/her spouse. Therefore, children born from previous marriages or out of the wedlock who nonetheless reside with the couple are attributed specularly to both the husband and the wife.

One drawback of the survey used is that, given its focus on income and living conditions, it lacks information on socio-cultural integration, such as language proficiency and involvement in the local daily life. However, some good measures of structural integration are present. Occupational status itself could be regarded as one, and is included as previously described. Moreover, a dummy for having *Received education or professional training in Italy* is added with the aim of capturing investment in human capital abroad. It takes the value of 1 if the highest completed educational level was obtained in Italy, or if a professional training course

accredited by the Region was attended. At household level, *Ownership of the house in Italy* is expected to be a strong signal of wanting to settle abroad; this information is deduced from the household questionnaire and then attributed to both husband and wife. Lastly, having acquired the Italian citizenship would be a further measure of structural integration. Unfortunately, a very small number of respondents actually received it – 20 wives and 52 husbands within the selected sample. Most importantly, only 3 wives and 3 husbands among them want to leave Italy in the future; this creates a problem of perfect prediction of the intention to stay when modelling the intention to return on the whole set of independent variables, thus impeding the introduction of Italian Citizenship in the statistical analysis. Lastly, a measure indicating if the *Family is at risk of poverty* is included; the variable takes the value of 1 if total household income is lower than 9,382 €, which is the risk-of-poverty income as declared by Istat in 2008 (Girone & Grubanov-Boskovic, 2015).

The third set of factors included in the analysis captures the degree of transnationalism. Whether the respondent *Owns a house abroad* can be considered a strong link to the origin country. This information, coming from the individual questionnaire, is specific to each respondent. Having some *Family left behind* is a further measure of transnationalism; in particular, the variable will take the value of 1 if the respondent has parents and/or siblings and/or children living in the country of origin, and 0 if none of the relatives pertaining to these categories is left at home. Lastly, it would be useful to know if the respondent *Sends remittances*. While the specific question on sending money back home is censored in the data provided, it is possible to reconstruct a good proxy of remittances. In fact, each respondent indicates whether he/she gives money to people outside the household, and in particular to parents, siblings or children. By crossing this answer with the information on whether parents, siblings or children still live abroad, one can be almost sure that the money being given out is a remittance. However, the proxy could be overestimating the amount of people sending remittances by taking into account cases in which the relatives receiving the money live outside of the household but in Italy.

As an additional control, the *Reason for migrating* in the first place is included; it divides the foreign population into *Work* migrants, *Family* migrants and *Other* migrants (including students and refugees). Nonetheless, the three categories should be interpreted with some caution, since there could be a wide overlap between reasons for migrating (see discussion in Chapter 2.2). Apart from individual and household level characteristics, the situation in the home country and in the place of residence can also provide incentives to either stay abroad or return. In order to partially control for macroeconomic differences among origin countries, one common strategy is to include nationality dummies (Dustmann, 1996). Although knowing the nationality of each respondent, the multiplicity of sending countries makes it impossible to control for each one of them; this strategy would in fact subdivide the sample in too small groups to perform the analysis. Instead, geographical region dummies will be included, grouping sending countries according to the UN's "Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use". In particular, Central, Eastern, Southern and Western Asia will be put together under the label "Continental Asia", as well as Western, Northern and Southern Europe, which will go together as "Western Europe". Since origins do not always correspond between spouses, a dummy for *Different origin* is introduced. Lastly, regional dummies at NUTS1 level are also included to account for heterogeneous socio-economic conditions within the Italian territory.

4 Methods

Traditionally, return migration plans have been assessed by looking at the head of the household's intentions (De Haas & Fokkema, 2011; De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015; Dustmann, 1994, 1996), thus assuming that the decision of one person would apply to the whole household. Standing a proof that wives are not tied movers who automatically follow their husbands in migratory plans, 18 percent of the couples in the selected sample display mismatching intentions to return, while the remaining 82 percent agree on the future migratory plan (Table 1). Unfortunately, it is impossible to specify whether the mismatch is a symptom of contrasting opinions or the outcome of a household plan. Nonetheless, the fact that some households have distinct migratory arrangements for different family members is a sign that return intentions cannot be studied by looking at the head of the household only.

Rejecting the male chauvinist idea that wives are tied migrants when it comes to the decision to return migrate, this study analyses separately the probability of wanting to leave Italy for husbands and wives belonging to foreign nuclear families. This means that for the 1,678 couples present in the sample, a specular analysis will be performed for the husband first and for the wife then. In this way, it will be possible to assess whether micro-level determinants have different impacts over the intention to leave of the partners. It will also be assumed that the formation of return intentions entails an income-maximizing and risk-minimizing estimation at household level. Therefore, each spouse is expected to take into account the partner's characteristics and the household's characteristics when deciding upon future migratory plans. Thanks to this setting, it will also be possible to investigate whether spouses are more concerned about their own characteristics or other members of the household's characteristics, and if the results are different for husbands and wives.

Table 1 Intentions Mismatch Between Spouses

		Wife's Intention				Total	St1
		Stay	Leave later	Leave soon	Undecided		
Husband's Intention	Stay	632	30	6	65	733	1,152
	Leave later	25	224	8	28	285	
	Leave soon	7	11	104	12	134	
	Undecided	83	19	14	410	526	
Total		747	284	132	515	1,678	
Subtotal 2			1,163				

Note: Absolute frequencies are displayed. "Leave soon" corresponds to people who want to return home within 5 years, while "Leave later" only counts people who indicated the wish to return home but will do so in more than 6 years. Shaded cells correspond to households with matching intentions.

Source: own elaboration on "Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri" (Istat, 2009).

4.1 The Model

The plan to return migrate is modelled as a dichotomous decision. The baseline specification will compare the intention to stay to the intention to leave, as stated by respondents. A second specification of the dependent variable will instead aim at capturing the determinants of a sharper plan to leave – that is, to “leave soon” – compared to any other decision – stay, leave later or being undecided. The model will therefore take the following form:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 H_{ij} + \beta_2 W_{ij} + \beta_3 F_j + \sigma_i + \rho_j + \delta_{ij}$$

$$Z_{ij} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 W_{ij} + \gamma_2 H_{ij} + \gamma_3 F_j + \tau_i + \rho_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

where Y_{ij} is the intention to leave or the intention to leave soon for the husband i belonging to the household j , and Z_{ij} is the intention to leave or the intention to leave soon for the wife i belonging to the household j . β_0 and γ_0 are intercept terms. H_{ij} is a vector of individual characteristics of the husband, while W_{ij} is a vector of individual characteristics of the wife. The coefficients β_1 and γ_2 , and β_2 and γ_1 refer to the same set of characteristics, but differ in the fact that they either explain the return intention of the husband (β_1 and β_2) or the one of the wife (γ_1 and γ_2). F_j is a set of household characteristics, which are common to spouses belonging to the same household; β_3 and γ_3 are its sets of coefficients. σ_i and τ_i are origin area fixed effects; since origins do not always coincide between spouses, they are attributed to individuals. ρ_j , instead, represents regional fixed effects, which are shared between spouses who live together. Lastly, δ_{ij} and ε_{ij} are the error terms.

Estimations will use a logistic model, which ensures that predicted probabilities lie within the [0-1] interval. Estimated coefficients will therefore measure the individual contribution of each variable to the probability of return migrating; however, it would only be meaningful to interpret their signs, which show the (positive or negative) relationship between the probability of returning home for a positive change in the explanatory variable. To allow easier interpretability, the exponentials of the estimated coefficients (i.e. the odds ratios) will be reported in the results. The odds of returning are the ratio of the probability of returning and the probability of not doing so; they range from 0 to infinity. Odds ratios thus show the multiplicative effect on the odds of return migrating (compared to not doing so) of a unitary increase in the explanatory variable. Odds ratios greater than 1 indicate higher likelihood to leave, while odds ratios lower than 1 higher likelihood to remain in Italy.

While results will provide solid evidence on the correlates of return migration, causal interpretation of the estimated coefficients (and the derived odds ratios) should be avoided. Indeed, some of the explanatory variables present endogeneity problems. In particular, the issue of reverse causality is common among variables that could be the outcome of an already made plan to leave (stay). Having children, investing at destination and remitting are some clear examples of behaviours that could influence the decision to return, but could at the same time be influenced by a former and recurring migratory plan. Moreover, the data comes from a cross-section, meaning that only foreign nuclear families who remained in Italy can be surveyed. This produces a selection bias when capturing the intention to leave: findings are thus a lower bound estimate.

5 Empirical Analysis

When evaluating the possibility of return, migrants are expected – as rational agents – to base their decision on their socio-economic condition, on the degree of integration reached, and on the enduring transnational ties. Arguably, when migrants are part of a household, other considerations might come into play. Presumably, the micro-level characteristics of both spouses would influence the decision to stay or return. Moreover, nuclear foreign families are assumed to give weight to the prospects for their children. Firstly, the analysis will check if the formation of return migration intentions is based on both partners' characteristics and on their shared household's characteristics. Moreover, it will try to assess whether the micro-determinants of return migration intentions differ between husbands and wives. Secondly, intra-household patterns of decision-making will be delineated by comparing the personal micro-determinants of return with the impact they have on the partner's intention, and by inspecting the differential effect of children based on their gender and educational status.

5.1 The Formation of Return Intentions

Table 2 and Table 3 present the nested models of return migration intentions for husbands and wives, respectively. In particular, in specification (1), the intention of a spouse to leave (versus the intention to stay) is explained by its own characteristics; in specification (2), household characteristics are added; in specification (3), the characteristics of the partner also enter the specification. Note how *Age at entry* and *Years of residence* of the partner are not included in the third specification because of their high correlation with the respondent's corresponding variables. All fitted models are highly significant ($p < .0001$ for the log likelihood ratio and Chi squared statistic), indicating that the intention to return migrate is not a random resolution.

It is appropriate to specify why the number of observations differs between Table 2 and Table 3. When selecting the sample, households with the intention to migrate to a third country are excluded. However, people who are undecided stand along with those who want to stay in Italy and those who want to return home. Nonetheless, in the baseline specification of return intentions, undecided people are not taken into consideration (see Chapter 3.2). For this reason, in these regressions the sample really includes 1,047 households where both spouses want to either stay or leave, 105 households where the husband wants to stay/leave and the wife is undecided, and 116 households where the wife wants to stay/leave and the husband is undecided. Therefore, when modelling the return intentions of husbands using the baseline definition of stay/leave, there will be 1,152 observations in total, while when modelling the intentions of the wives the sample will include 1,163 households (refer to *Subtotal 1* and *Subtotal 2* in Table 1 for a cleared visualization).

Table 2 Husband's Intention to Leave

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)
Husband's characteristics			
Age at entry	0.939	0.963	0.952
Age at entry squared	1.001	1.001	1.001
Years of residence	1.086*	1.122**	1.116**
Years of residence squared	0.997	0.996*	0.996*
Bad health	0.487*	0.521	0.499
Education (Primary)			
Secondary	1.025	1.042	1.122
Tertiary	1.186	1.214	1.217
Received education or training in IT	1.094	1.112	1.130
Occupation (Employed)			
Unemployed	0.708	0.615*	0.602*
Other	1.121	1.021	0.935
Owns a house abroad	2.623***	2.465***	1.556
Sends remittances	2.103***	2.133***	2.196***
Family left behind	0.951	0.951	0.964
Reason for migrating (Work)			
Family	1.091	1.190	1.102
Other	0.450**	0.447**	0.346***
Wife's characteristics			
Bad health			0.624
Education (Primary)			
Secondary			0.806
Tertiary			1.019
Received education or training in IT			0.829
Occupation (Employed)			
Unemployed			0.543***
Other			0.757
Owns a house abroad			3.357***
Sends remittances			1.153
Family left behind			0.924
Reason for migrating (Work)			
Family			1.112
Other			2.049
Household's characteristics			
Number of sons and daughters		0.823***	0.833**
Ownership of house in IT		0.592***	0.601***
Family at risk of poverty		1.260	1.381
Spouses of different origin		0.541	0.444
Constant	0.373	0.291	0.483
Observations	1,152	1,152	1,152
LR Chi ²	119.79	140.61	166.03
Pseudo-R ²	0.0793	0.0931	0.1099

Note: Odds ratios coming from logistic regression estimations, with Origin and Regional Fixed Effects. Level of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Source: own elaboration on "Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri" (Istat, 2009).

Table 3 Wife's Intention to Leave

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)
Wife's characteristics			
Age at entry	0.924	0.946	0.940
Age at entry squared	1.001	1.001	1.001
Years of residence	1.030	1.066	1.058
Years of residence squared	0.998	0.997	0.998
Bad health	1.008	1.033	0.973
Education (Primary)			
Secondary	0.881	0.887	0.865
Tertiary	0.897	0.919	1.008
Received education or training in IT	0.745	0.817	0.864
Occupation (Employed)			
Unemployed	0.722*	0.686*	0.630**
Other	0.872	0.882	0.813
Owens a house abroad	6.806***	6.606***	4.194***
Sends remittances	1.440**	1.397*	1.327
Family left behind	1.060	1.040	0.977
Reason for migrating (Work)			
Family	1.120	1.162	1.115
Other	0.503	0.457	0.716
Husband's characteristics			
Bad health			0.718
Education (Primary)			
Secondary			1.078
Tertiary			0.752
Received education or training in IT			1.018
Occupation (Employed)			
Unemployed			0.622
Other			0.738
Owens a house abroad			1.679
Sends remittances			1.804***
Family left behind			0.890
Reason for migrating (Work)			
Family			0.887
Other			0.679
Household's characteristics			
Number of sons and daughters		0.852**	0.863**
Ownership of house in IT		0.637**	0.625**
Family at risk of poverty		0.924	1.147
Spouses of different origin		0.292**	0.394*
Constant	1.210	0.980	0.891
Observations	1,163	1,163	1,163
LR Chi ²	113.20	131.62	160.48
Pseudo-R ²	0.0746	0.0868	0.1058

Note: Odds ratios coming from logistic regression estimations, with Origin and Regional Fixed Effects. Level of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Source: own elaboration on "Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri" (Istat, 2009).

Looking at Table 2 and Table 3, some evidence is provided on the appropriateness of specification (3) in explaining return intentions. Indeed, as the model sequentially includes households' characteristics and partner's characteristics, the measures of fit of the models (LR Chi2 and Pseudo-R2) increase. The individual characteristics that turned out significant in specification (1) generally remain significant through the subsequent specifications and the same is true for household characteristics. For husbands, additional years of residence make return more likely, while age at entry does not have a significant impact over return intentions. For wives, instead, both measures are insignificant in all specifications. The odds of returning for husbands with bad health are 0.487 times those of people in good health. This result could be explained by the extensive healthcare provided in Italy, which would make it more convenient to stay in case of illness; the variable loses significance in the following specifications, but its sign remains consistent. The educational level does not play a significant role in the formation of return intentions, neither for husbands nor for wives. However, it is interesting to note that for husbands, being more educated is correlated with being more likely to wish returning home; for wives, instead, a U-pattern seems to apply, with women with Primary education or lower having the highest chances of wanting to return. The effect of having received education or training in Italy does not prove significant across the three specifications. Nonetheless, its effect seems once again to differ between husbands and wives. For the former, it increases the likelihood to return, thus pointing at a human capital accumulation strategy. For the latter, it has a slight retaining effect, which could be explained by the increased empowerment obtained through education. Unemployed people are significantly less likely to outmigrate compared to those employed. Ownership of a house abroad is a strong signal of maintaining transnational ties, and enters significant in almost all specifications. In particular, the intention of women to return is increased by a factor of 6.806 (4.194 in the last specification) when they own a house abroad, compared to wives who do not. Sending remittances also represents strong and consistent evidence of existing transnational ties, and makes outmigration more likely especially for men. The dummy for having part of the family left behind, instead, does not enter significant in any specification. This result might be driven by the fact that the vast majority of migrants has some family left behind; nonetheless, their presence does not automatically entail the existence of a tie. Husbands who migrated for "Other" reasons are significantly more likely to stay in Italy compared to those who migrated for work. Considering that people under the "other" category are possibly refugees, this result makes sense. In fact, in presence of contingent reasons impeding the return home, the option to stay is automatically chosen. For wives the result is analogous but non-significant. Instead, people who migrated for family reasons are slightly more likely to return home, although the result is non significant.

With regards to household characteristics introduced in specification (2), they also prove to be consistent through the specifications. The presence of children in the household has a retaining effect for both husbands and wives, and surprisingly slightly more for the former. Owning the house where they reside makes both the husband and the wife want to stay more, again with a stronger effect for husbands. Being at risk of poverty does not impact any intention in both specifications (2) and (3). Lastly, for wives only, having a spouse from a different origin area (but not Italy) makes return much less likely compared to couples coming from the same geographical region. Indeed, return plans could be more problematic when the spouses have different origins. Looking at the partner's characteristics in specification (3),

only a few show a significant impact over the intention to return. For husbands, having an unemployed wife compared to an employed one makes return less likely; if the wife owns a house abroad, the chances to return increase by a factor of 3.357. For wives, having a husband who sends remittances is the only partner's trait that enters significant, and makes return more likely.

Table 4 and Table 5 display the nested models for the decision to leave soon, for husbands and wives respectively. Note how the sample now includes all 1,678 foreign nuclear families, since it includes people who are not sure whether to return or to stay. Like in the previous case, the models have increasing explanatory power: the intention to leave soon is explained not only by one owns characteristics, but also by the household's and the partner's characteristics. Again, individual level characteristics that explain return in (1) remain significant and consistent in (2) and (3). Compared to the previous findings, years of residence do not enter significant anymore in any specification, but age at entry plays a role in shaping the intention to leave soon. In particular, older individuals are less likely to migrate at an increasing rate and the result is slightly stronger for men. Bad health status remains consistent with what previously found but never shows a significant effect. Education replicates a similar pattern to the one shown for the intention to leave. Having received education or training in Italy has a strong retaining effect for wives, and proves as a significant factor in their migratory plans. For husbands, contrarily to what found before, it also makes outmigration less likely, but not significant. This could make sense if the strategy of human capital accumulation influences long-term plans, but not the decision to leave soon. The occupation status effect changes in sign for women who are unemployed: while their condition made them significantly less likely to leave, it now shows a positive effect on the decision to leave soon, although insignificant. For husbands instead the result is consistent with what found in Table 2, and even stronger. Owning a house abroad and sending remittances confirm to be two strong predicting factors of return. Having some family left behind shows a counterintuitive effect for husband's intentions to leave soon; nonetheless, the effect becomes insignificant in model (3). While the effect of transnational ties holds true through ownership of a house and sending remittances, husbands with some family left behind are less prone to return home compared to those who have no close relative remaining at home. Lastly, reasons for migrating do not have a decisive direction in influencing the intention to return soon, as it happened for the intention to leave.

The number of children consistently makes husbands less likely to leave soon, but has no significant effect on wives; the sign remains nonetheless coherent. House-owning households are less likely to return compared to those who are paying rent or receiving state housing. Differently from Table 2, Table 4 shows how husbands are positively influenced in their decision to leave soon if their family is at risk of poverty. The effect is not significant for wives, but maintains the same direction. Lastly, being a couple with different origins has the same effect as on the decision to leave, but is now insignificant. Husband's intentions are affected by the event of having a wife who received education or training in Italy, in case she owns a house, and if her reasons for migrating were "Others". All results mirror what already found in Table 2. However, for wives having unemployed husbands now makes them significantly more likely to stay, while the fact that they send remittances home does not show a significant effect anymore.

Table 4 Husband's Intention to Leave Soon

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)
Husband's characteristics			
Age at entry	0.769***	0.797***	0.782***
Age at entry squared	1.004***	1.003***	1.004***
Years of residence	1.057	1.094	1.088
Years of residence squared	0.997	0.997	0.997
Bad health	0.490	0.500	0.481
Education (Primary)			
Secondary	0.967	0.984	1.048
Tertiary	0.967	0.953	1.105
Received education or training in IT	0.741	0.715	0.778
Occupation (Employed)			
Unemployed	0.544	0.377*	0.352*
Other	1.098	0.818	0.715
Owens a house abroad	2.252***	2.193**	1.391
Sends remittances	2.203***	2.233***	2.313***
Family left behind	0.545*	0.562*	0.565
Reason for migrating (Work)			
Family	0.925	1.022	1.101
Other	1.117	1.189	0.925
Wife's characteristics			
Bad health			0.321
Education (Primary)			
Secondary			0.832
Tertiary			0.845
Received education or training in IT			0.295**
Occupation (Employed)			
Unemployed			1.124
Other			0.902
Owens a house abroad			2.990**
Sends remittances			1.249
Family left behind			0.946
Reason for migrating (Work)			
Family			1.236
Other			3.567**
Household's characteristics			
Number of sons and daughters		0.763**	0.775**
Ownership of house in IT		0.593*	0.666
Family at risk of poverty		2.032**	2.208***
Spouses of different origin		1.255	1.254
Constant	4.092	2.813	3.475
Observations	1,678	1,678	1,678
LR Chi ²	95.90	114.72	132.41
Pseudo-R ²	0.1026	0.1228	0.1417

Note: Odds ratios coming from logistic regression estimations, with Origin and Regional Fixed Effects. Level of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Source: own elaboration on "Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri" (Istat, 2009).

Table 5 Wife's Intention to Leave Soon

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)
Wife's characteristics			
Age at entry	0.794***	0.818***	0.808***
Age at entry squared	1.003***	1.003***	1.003***
Years of residence	1.015	1.045	1.022
Years of residence squared	0.998	0.998	0.999
Bad health	0.616	0.608	0.646
Education (Primary)			
Secondary	0.955	0.955	0.930
Tertiary	1.131	1.180	1.414
Received education or training in IT	0.277**	0.314**	0.309**
Occupation (Employed)			
Unemployed	1.236	1.209	1.143
Other	0.858	0.872	0.803
Owns a house abroad	5.424***	5.351***	3.816***
Sends remittances	1.088	1.042	1.020
Family left behind	1.620	1.551	1.466
Reason for migrating (Work)			
Family	1.028	1.077	1.030
Other	0.724	0.707	1.088
Husband's characteristics			
Bad health			0.500
Education (Primary)			
Secondary			1.002
Tertiary			0.603
Received education or training in IT			0.935
Occupation (Employed)			
Unemployed			0.311*
Other			0.536
Owns a house abroad			1.505
Sends remittances			1.426
Family left behind			0.878
Reason for migrating (Work)			
Family			0.772
Other			0.715
Household's characteristics			
Number of sons and daughters		0.847	0.862
Ownership of house in IT		0.549*	0.566*
Family at risk of poverty		1.006	1.331
Spouses of different origin		0.354	0.516
Constant	1.435	1.058	1.325
Observations	1,678	1,678	1,678
LR Chi ²	99.94	108.60	122.33
Pseudo-R ²	0.1081	0.1175	0.1323

Note: Odds ratios coming from logistic regression estimations, with Origin and Regional Fixed Effects. Level of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Source: own elaboration on "Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri" (Istat, 2009).

5.2 Intra-Household Considerations

The formation of return intentions for foreign nuclear families has proven to depend on micro-level characteristics of both spouses. When evaluating intra-household patterns of decision-making, it is interesting to notice the extent to which personal characteristics have the strength to impact the partner's decision. Table 6 thus puts together model (3) of each of the previous four tables in order to comment more easily on the crosswise effect of individual-level variables.

Moreover, the presence of children in the household has consistently displayed a holdback effect for the whole household. Arguably, having formed a family abroad signals the will to settle: even in cases in which the initial plan was not to stay, the presence of children often shifts the parents' opinion towards such decision (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010). However, according to Dustman (1994), it is not the presence of children to impact return decision, but the event in which they are currently in education. On the other hand, migrant fathers are believed to be more likely to migrate back home in case of having daughters (Dustman, 2003). Results displayed in Table 7 check for the aforementioned hypotheses.

5.2.1 Crosswise Effect of Individual Characteristics

Within the "Leave" and the "Leave soon" columns of Table 6, one can check crosswise for odds ratios referring to the same variable, but being applied as own characteristics once, and as partner's characteristics then. By comparing their significance and their magnitude, a general pattern is brought to light: significant explanatory variables of the respondent (i.e. own characteristics) remain significant when modelling the partner's return intention (i.e. partner's characteristics), usually with a milder effect, but sometimes with greater magnitude. Within the decision to "Leave", the effects of ownership of a house abroad for the wife, and sending remittances for the husband lose some magnitude. For the decision to "Leave soon", it is the case of owning a house abroad for wives. A few variables that turned out significant as own characteristic increase in magnitude when explaining the partner's intention. It is the case of having received education and training for wives and of unemployment status for husbands, within the intention to "Leave Soon".

Having other reasons for migrating for wives within the decision to "Leave Soon" is the only case of a variable that was not significant for the respondent, but it is so for the partner. In some cases, however, variables that turned out significant as own characteristics lose their significance when used to explain the partner's decision. For the intention to "Leave", it is the case of unemployment status and of having other reasons for migrating for husbands. For the intention to "Leave soon", it is instead the case of sending remittances for husbands. Remarkably, personal characteristics of the wife never lose significance when used to explain the return intention of the husband. On the contrary, all cases of significant factors that become insignificant when used as partner's characteristics refer to husbands.

Table 6 Comparing Intentions to Leave and Leave Soon for Husbands and Wives

VARIABLES	Leave		Leave soon	
	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
Own characteristics				
Age at entry	0.952	0.940	0.782***	0.808***
Age at entry squared	1.001	1.001	1.004***	1.003***
Years of residence	1.116**	1.058	1.088	1.022
Years of residence squared	0.996*	0.998	0.997	0.999
Bad health	0.499	0.973	0.481	0.646
Education (Primary)				
Secondary	1.122	0.865	1.048	0.930
Tertiary	1.217	1.008	1.105	1.414
Received education or training in Italy	1.130	0.864	0.778	0.309**
Occupation (Employed)				
Unemployed	0.602*	0.630**	0.352*	1.143
Other	0.935	0.813	0.715	0.803
Owens a house abroad	1.556	4.194***	1.391	3.816***
Sends remittances	2.196***	1.327	2.313***	1.020
Family left behind	0.964	0.977	0.565	1.466
Reason for migrating (Work)				
Family	1.102	1.115	1.101	1.030
Other	0.346***	0.716	0.925	1.088
Partner's characteristics				
Bad health	0.624	0.718	0.321	0.500
Education (Primary)				
Secondary	0.806	1.078	0.832	1.002
Tertiary	1.019	0.752	0.845	0.603
Received education or training in Italy	0.829	1.018	0.295**	0.935
Occupation (Employed)				
Unemployed	0.543***	0.622	1.124	0.311*
Other	0.757	0.738	0.902	0.536
Owens a house abroad	3.357***	1.679	2.990**	1.505
Sends remittances	1.153	1.804***	1.249	1.426
Family left behind	0.924	0.890	0.946	0.878
Reason for migrating (Work)				
Family	1.112	0.887	1.236	0.772
Other	2.049	0.679	3.567**	0.715
Household's characteristics				
Number of sons and daughters	0.833**	0.863**	0.775**	0.862
Ownership of house in Italy	0.601***	0.625**	0.666	0.566*
Family at risk of poverty	1.381	1.147	2.208***	1.331
Spouses of different origin	0.444	0.394*	1.254	0.516
Constant	0.483	0.891	3.475	1.325
Observations	1,152 ^a	1,163 ^a	1,678	1,678

Note: Odds ratios coming from logistic regression estimations, with Origin and Regional Fixed Effects. ^a In the decision to leave or stay total respondents for husbands are 1,152, while total respondents for wives are 1,163. This mismatch is due to the exclusion of people who are not sure whether they want to stay or to leave.

Level of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Source: own elaboration on "Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri" (Istat, 2009).

5.2.2 Sons, Daughters, and Children in Education

In Table 7, model A reports the coefficients of *Number of sons and daughters* as presented in Table 6. Models B, C, and D, instead, are based on the very same logistic regressions, but substitute the variable *Number of sons and daughters* with some possible alternatives. In particular, Model B tests Dustman's (2003) hypothesis on the positive impact of daughters on return intentions. In contrast to his findings on Turkish migrants in Germany in the 80s and 90s, both foreign fathers and mothers in Italy in 2009 receive a strong effect by the number of daughters in the household, which makes return migration less likely. The effect of the number of sons is instead non-significant, and even points at an increased propensity to leave soon. Specifications C and D replicate the analysis counting only children in education. The argument is that the true retaining effect of having children can only be observed once they start attending school, and thus when the investment in education has started. Indeed, the effect of *Number of children attending school* is stronger than the one of *Number of sons and daughters*, making it even less likely to return. Consistently, the retaining role of daughters is accentuated in model D, while the effect of sons remains in the right direction but still mostly insignificant.

Having formed a family abroad has a holdback effect on the intention to leave, and even more so on the intention to leave soon. Comparing the effects of children between spouses, there is a rather unexpected result: husbands are more affected by the presence of children compared to their wives, throughout all specifications. This finding is contrary to the idea that mothers give more weight to the prospects of children when shaping their return intentions, and partially restores the figure of migrant fathers from the patriarchal narrative.

Table 7 Effect of Children on Intentions

MODEL	VARIABLES	Leave		Leave soon	
		Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
A	Number of sons and daughters	0.833**	0.863**	0.775**	0.862
B	Number of sons	0.912	0.933	1.013	1.029
	Number of daughters	0.763***	0.798**	0.538***	0.698**
C	Number of children attending school	0.769***	0.816**	0.608***	0.702**
	Number of children out of school	0.899	0.914	0.930	1.015
D	Number of sons attending school	0.833	0.903	0.614**	0.718
	Number of daughters attending school	0.707***	0.732**	0.601**	0.684*
	Number of children out of school	0.903	0.917	0.930	1.015
	Observations	1,152 ^a	1,163 ^a	1,678	1,678

Note: Odds ratios coming from logistic regression estimations, with Origin and Regional Fixed Effects. Each model corresponds to a different regression, which includes all variables displayed in Table 6, with the exception of "Number of sons and daughters" (models B, C and D). ^a In the decision to leave or stay total respondents for husbands are 1,152, while total respondents for wives are 1,163. This mismatch is due to the exclusion of people who are not sure whether they want to stay or to leave. Level of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Source: own elaboration on "Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri" (Istat, 2009).

5.3 Discussion

Results from the analysis generally support NELM hypotheses on return migration. This is consistent under the assumption that couples who migrate together or who reunite abroad might want to reach their target sooner. The main finding pointing at this direction is that being unemployed makes both spouses more likely to remain in Italy: until they have not reached their goal, target-earner households do not form an intention to return. This result is in line with Paparusso and Ambrosetti (2017), but goes against earlier findings (Constant & Massey, 2002; De Haas & Fokkema, 2011). Moreover, in agreement with Dustman’s (1994) finding, having an unemployed partner also gives a further incentive to stay. Nonetheless, it could be argued that Italian unemployment benefits could prevent situations of “return of failure”, thus avoiding a positive effect on return intentions as predicted by NELM. Providing further evidence that foreign nuclear families could indeed be target earners, people who migrated for “Family” reasons do not show a decreased likelihood to return home: family migration can be part of an economic strategy that encompasses return (Boyd, 1989).

Variables capturing integration factors show somewhat ambiguous results. In accordance with NE predictions, marginal propensities to leave increase considerably for higher ages at entry, for both husbands and wives (Figure 1). The U-shaped pattern could signal that migrants who reach Italy too late do not have a chance to properly integrate socially and economically, and thus are more prone to undergo a return of “failure”. At the same time, however, people who moved while young also display higher marginal propensity to return, which goes against NE predictions. This could be explained by having clear target-reaching behaviours early on in life, and thus migrating with the aim of accumulating human and physical capital to exploit at home. The effect of years of residence also contradicts NE predictions: longer stays make migrants more likely to return. Again, while Paparusso and Ambrosetti (2017) find similar results, other studies have proven the opposite (Dustmann, 1994; Constant & Massey, 2002). Lastly, the effect of education is non-significant, as predicted by NELM and in accordance with previous studies (Paparusso & Ambrosetti, 2017; De Haas & Fokkema, 2011). Husbands and wives with tertiary education nonetheless show an increased propensity to return home, which could be justified by a situation of over-qualification (Paparusso & Ambrosetti, 2017).



Figure 1 Marginal Propensity to Leave Soon for Age at Entry, With Other Variables at Means

The effect of transnational ties is in line with both NE and NELM theories, but shows a distinct pattern for husbands and wives. For the former, sending remittances home is a strong predictor of leaving Italy; for the latter, ownership of a house at home is the main factor leading to return. Moreover, transnational ties of the partner maintain a strong impact in intra-household considerations. This is of particular relevance for our case, and proves that modelling return intentions on the head of the household only might miss out some important economic and social ties of the spouse, which would affect the decision. Unlike previous studies (Paparusso & Ambrosetti, 2017; Constant & Massey, 2002), the effect of having family members at home does not prove significant: this could highlight that the mere presence of social networks abroad does not ensure the existence of transnational ties.

The most interesting results coming from the analysis pertain to the accumulation of human capital and the relative increase in job opportunities for women. In fact, having received education or training in Italy is a strong predictor for wives to remain abroad, and has an even stronger effect on their husbands. Arguably, the newly acquired skills and competences would not be recognized at home as much as in Europe, where women enjoy relatively better career prospects. The same variable displays an opposite effect on husbands, who, on the contrary, might find it convenient to accumulate human capital and invest it in the origin country. Along these lines, the holdback effect of children in the household is mainly driven by daughters in education. While this result confirms that the presence of children is mostly taken into consideration if they have started attending school (Dustman, 1994), it disproves the belief that daughters would have a milder effect in retaining the household abroad (Dustmann, 2003). Moreover, husbands are more affected by the presence of daughters compared to wives (Figure 2 and Figure 3), which rejects the patriarchal narrative that migrant fathers have been subjected to. Conceivably, Western European migrants would not enjoy relatively increased opportunities for women. Indeed, excluding them from the sample, the effects of wives and daughters' accumulation of human capital shows even greater magnitude, while the rest of the coefficients remain robust (Appendix B).

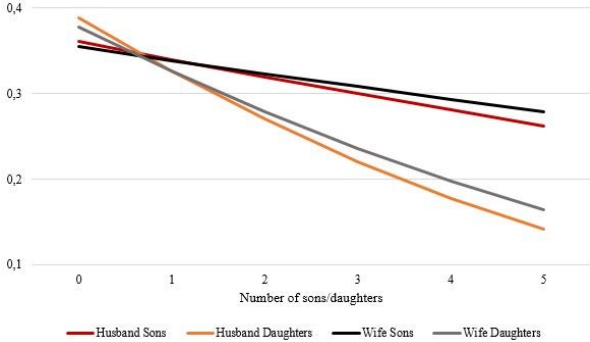


Figure 2 Marginal Propensity to Leave for Number of Children. With Other Variables at Means

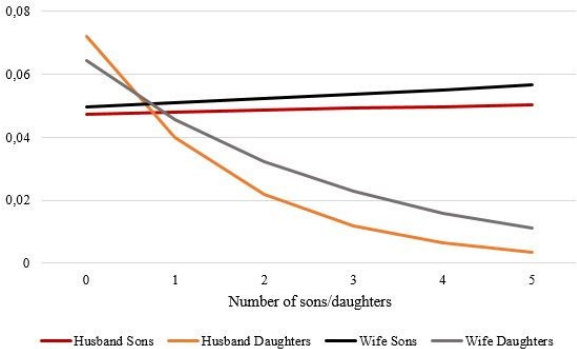


Figure 3 Marginal Propensity to Leave Soon for Number of Children. With Other Variables at Means

6 Conclusion

The present study was designed to gain a systematic understanding of how foreign nuclear families form their return intentions; for this purpose, intra-household dynamics have been inspected. This is the first study, to our knowledge, to separately examine the intentions of husbands and wives by modelling them on both partners' characteristics, and on shared household-level factors. Overall, the analysis shows that family members display varied migratory plans and have different ways of forming their intention to return. This is in accordance with previous qualitative studies (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010). Moreover, crosswise effects of individual characteristics between spouses produce significant predictions, pointing at the interdependence of family members. Any future analysis of return migration should therefore surpass the unitary household structure, and consider its members' varied opinions over outmigration.

By using a vast array of socio-economic information on family members and household characteristics and composition, this study found what follows. Explanatory variables affecting the respondent remain significant when modelling the partner's return intention: this is in particular true for wives' characteristics: husbands, indeed, take in great consideration human capital accumulation and transnational ties of their wives. Moreover, the presence of daughters attending school drives the holdback effect of children within the household, which is particularly strong for husbands. Taken together, these results suggest that the desire to settle for migrant fathers is influenced by the increased job prospects that both their wives and daughters face in Italy. At the same time, results support the idea that foreign households can be target-earners, and thus have return as their final goal. Within the specific context of foreign nuclear families, the recognition of return as a success story also challenges the fact that family migration is *non-economic*, as proposed by Boyd (1989). Therefore, the ambivalent nature of foreign nuclear families' migratory goals, as predicted by NE and NELM, is not resolved by this study, which confirms the coexistence of different migratory strategies conforming with different strands of the literature (Constant & Massey, 2002; De Haas & Fokkema, 2011; De Haas, Fokkema & Fihri, 2015).

A natural progression of this work would be to analyse the materialization of return plans. In fact, although intentions are expected to closely predict behaviours (Dustmann, 1996; Haug, 2008), in presence of contrasting return intentions power relations between household members could tell which plan will realize. Actually, it could be the case that wives and children exert more power, given their increased agency abroad (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010). Since it was not possible to assess return behaviour, it is unknown if the surveyed migrants who indicated a will to leave Italy have actually done so. Notwithstanding this limitation, this study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the non-random outmigration of foreign nuclear families, which constitute the most common type of foreign households in Italy.

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Appendix A

Table A-1 Descriptive Statistics of Migrants Residing in Italy According to the Decision to Leave

Number or respondents	Husbands		Wives	
	Stay 733	Leave 419	Stay 747	Leave 416
Individual characteristics				
Age at entry	32.4	32.5	27.8	28.1
Years of residence	8.6	8.1	8.5	7.9
Bad health	4.9%	2.4%	4.0%	3.6%
Education				
Primary	53.6%	47.5%	55.3%	52.6%
Secondary	37.9%	43.4%	35.7%	38.5%
Tertiary	8.5%	9.1%	9.0%	8.9%
Received education or train in IT	8.2%	8.6%	7.8%	7.0%
Occupation				
Employed	87.0%	91.7%	34.0%	45.7%
Unemployed	8.9%	5.0%	21.6%	16.8%
Other	4.1%	3.3%	44.4%	37.5%
Owens a house abroad	3.8%	10.3%	1.1%	7.9%
Sends remittances	50.2%	69.0%	18.5%	31.0%
Family left behind	87.2%	90.9%	88.4%	90.6%
Reason for migrating				
For work	85.5%	87.4%	32.9%	41.9%
For family	8.6%	9.8%	64.0%	56.7%
Other	5.9%	2.9%	3.1%	1.4%
Household characteristics				
Number of sons and daughters	1.6	1.3	1.6	1.3
Ownership of house in IT	23.2%	16.9%	22.5%	15.9%
Family at risk of poverty	11.3%	11.2%	11.5%	10.8%
Spouses of different origins	2.7%	1.0%	2.4%	1.4%
Origin and destination				
Origin				
Western Europe	28.3%	18.6%	28.8%	18.4%
Eastern Europe	21.6%	35.6%	22.1%	35.6%
Continental Asia	15.6%	13.8%	15.0%	14.2%
South East Asia	2.6%	4.1%	2.3%	4.8%
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.1%	6.9%	6.6%	6.7%
Northern Africa	22.1%	12.9%	21.4%	11.1%
Latin America and Caribbean	3.7%	8.1%	3.9%	9.1%
Region of residence				
Northwest	25.2%	23.9%	23.8%	25.6%
Northeast	28.0%	29.8%	29.5%	25.2%
Center	21.3%	21.0%	21.6%	22.1%
South	15.3%	13.6%	15.5%	14.4%
Islands	10.2%	11.7%	9.6%	12.7%

Note: Total respondents for husbands are 1,152, while total respondents for wives are 1,163. This mismatch is due to the exclusion of people who are not sure whether they want to stay or to leave. Further explanations are provided in the Chapter 4.

Source: own elaboration on "Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri" (Istat, 2009).

Table A-1 Descriptive Statistics of Migrants Residing in Italy According to the Decision to Leave Soon

	Husbands		Wives	
	Do not leave soon	Leave soon	Do not leave soon	Leave soon
Number of respondents	1544	134	1546	132
Individual characteristics				
Age at entry	32.4	32.4	28.1	28.0
Years of residence	8.3	7.3	8.2	6.9
Bad health	3.6%	1.5%	4.0%	2.3%
Education				
Primary	53.1%	44.7%	55.5%	47.7%
Secondary	38.3%	46.3%	35.3%	40.9%
Tertiary	8.6%	9.0%	9.3%	11.4%
Received education or train in IT	8.2%	6.7%	7.4%	3.0%
Occupation				
Employed	88.3%	93.3%	38.7%	42.4%
Unemployed	7.7%	3.0%	19.1%	25.0%
Other	4.0%	3.7%	42.2%	32.6%
Owns a house abroad	5.4%	12.7%	2.9%	12.1%
Sends remittances	52.2%	69.4%	22.1%	30.3%
Family left behind	89.4%	88.1%	89.4%	93.2%
Reason for migrating				
For work	87.0%	87.3%	36.6%	44.7%
For family	8.7%	9.0%	60.6%	53.8%
Other	4.3%	3.7%	2.8%	1.5%
Household characteristics				
Number of sons and daughters	1.6	1.1	1.5	1.1
Ownership of house in IT	19.2%	12.7%	19.5%	9.9%
Family at risk of poverty	11.6%	17.2%	11.9%	13.6%
Spouses of different origins	2.0%	1.5%	2.0%	1.5%
Origin and destination				
Origin				
Western Europe	25.0%	14.9%	24.4%	13.6%
Eastern Europe	25.8%	56.0%	26.8%	57.6%
Continental Asia	16.2%	8.2%	15.8%	7.6%
South East Asia	3.0%	1.5%	3.0%	1.5%
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.4%	3.0%	6.4%	3.0%
Northern Africa	19.0%	10.4%	18.8%	9.9%
Latin America and Caribbean	4.6%	6.0%	4.8%	6.8%
Region of residence				
Northwest	23.8%	28.3%	23.9%	27.3%
Northeast	26.4%	25.4%	26.7%	22.0%
Center	20.4%	21.6%	20.1%	25.0%
South	15.7%	17.2%	15.8%	15.9%
Islands	13.7%	7.5%	13.5%	9.9%

Note: Total respondents for husbands and for wives are 1,678.

Source: own elaboration on "Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri" (Istat, 2009).

Appendix B

Table B-1 Intentions to Leave and Leave Soon for Husbands and Wives Excluding Western Europeans

VARIABLES	Leave		Leave soon	
	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
Own characteristics				
Age at entry	0.997	1.001	0.789***	0.830**
Age at entry squared	1.000	1.000	1.003***	1.003**
Years of residence	1.130**	1.060	1.053	1.001
Years of residence squared	0.995*	0.997	0.999	1.000
Bad health	0.458	1.262	0.239	1.036
Education (Primary)				
Secondary	1.129	0.921	1.071	0.991
Tertiary	1.515	1.077	1.325	1.328
Received education or train in IT	1.207	0.813	0.840	0.235**
Occupation (Employed)				
Unemployed	0.518**	0.597**	0.253*	1.152
Other	0.687	0.798	0.515	0.693
Owens a house abroad	1.909	7.931***	1.293	4.283***
Sends remittances	1.643**	1.339	2.243***	0.989
Family left behind	1.042	1.066	0.760	1.198
Reason for migrating (Work)				
Family	1.002	1.201	0.794	1.244
Other	0.233***	0.454	0.445	-
Spouse's characteristics				
Bad health	0.762	0.737	0.465	0.204
Education (Primary)				
Secondary	0.809	1.000	0.960	1.000
Tertiary	1.033	0.583	0.790	0.604
Received education or train in IT	0.959	1.157	0.269**	1.209
Occupation (Employed)				
Unemployed	0.469***	0.564	1.079	0.278*
Other	0.700*	0.632	0.845	0.436
Owens a house abroad	3.503**	1.833	3.163**	1.448
Sends remittances	1.133	1.518**	1.226	1.259
Family left behind	0.974	0.916	0.681	0.878
Reason for migrating (Work)				
Family	1.060	0.881	1.253	0.631
Other	1.830	0.766	3.825*	0.248
Household's characteristics				
Number of sons attending school	0.862	0.858	0.616*	0.703
Number of daughters attending school	0.615***	0.577***	0.445***	0.529**
Number of children out of school	0.892	0.893	0.959	1.055
Ownership of house in IT	0.593**	0.615**	0.750	0.641
Family at risk of poverty	1.258	1.068	2.050**	1.296
Constant	0.560	0.886	11.867	3.182
Observations	853	859	1,257 ^a	1,240 ^a

Note: Odds ratios coming from logistic regression estimations, with Origin and Regional Fixed Effects. ^a The mismatch in obs. for the intention to Leave Soon is due to the reduction of the sample size and the omission of some variables that would yield perfect predictions. Level of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Source: own elaboration on "Indagine sulle condizioni di vita delle famiglie con stranieri" (Istat, 2009).