The Decision Making Process of Leaving Home: A Longitudinal Analysis of Italian Young Adults

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Giulia Ferrari[1*]. Alessandro Rosina[2]. Emiliano Sironi[3]

Abstract

It is well established that the departure from the parental home of young Italian adults occurs at a particularly late age, especially if compared to northern Europeans countries. Moreover, in Italy a large gap exists between young people's aspirations and their subsequent realization. This study aims at understanding which factors favor or impede the behavior of leaving the family of origin, conditioning on intentions. Referring to the Theory of Planned Behavior, we analyze the issue of leaving the parental home as a mid-term decision-making process. Using data from the longitudinal survey "Family and Social Subjects", carried out by Istat (Italian National Institute of Statistics) in 2003 and 2007, our results suggest that the determinants of actual behavior do not differ much by gender. Young women and men are both more likely to realize their intentions of residential autonomy if they are 25 years old or more and if they are employed. Only religiosity and background factors as parents' education affect attainment differently for males and females.

1. Introduction

The transition to adulthood is a multifaceted process involving several stages such as the completion of school education, the entry into the labor market, leaving the parental home, union formation and parenthood (Hogan and Astone 1986, Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1993).

Hence, leaving the parental home holds a central role in the process of family formation (Billari & Liefbroer, 2007) representing the achievement of the residential autonomy from the family of origin. Under a comparative perspective, prior research recorded a strong geographical heterogeneity in the timing (Aassve et al., 2002) and in the determinants (Iacovu, 2002) of the path toward residential independence.

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[1] Carlo F. Dondena Centre for Research on Social Dynamics, Bocconi University. Via G. Rontgen, 1 20136 Milan
 Email: giulia.ferrari@unibocconi.it
[*] Corresponding author.
[2] Department of Statistical Sciences, Catholic University. Largo Gemelli,1 20123 Milan.
Email: alessandro.rosina@unicatt.it
[3] Department of Statistical Sciences, Catholic University. Largo Gemelli,1 20123 Milan.
Email: emiliano.sironi@unicatt.it

In particular, in Italy young people leave home on average at a higher age than in the other Western countries, especially with respect to the Northern European ones. The peculiarities of the Italian context can be explained under both cultural and structural points of view. On the one hand, the presence of strong intergenerational ties is coherent with a long permanence in the family of origin (Dalla Zuanna, 2001). On the other hand, the unfavorable labor market and a public welfare not generous towards the young generations discourage individual autonomy (Rosina et al. 2007).

However, if we analyze the phenomenon of leaving the parental home under a more complex perspective of midterm decision-making process, we need to connect to the Theory of Planned Behavior approach (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and to reframe the issue longitudinally. Indeed, according to the above-cited theory, the decision of exiting from the nest is preceded by the formation of intentions toward that behavior; the intention derives from several determinants, such as attitudes, beliefs, social norms, which should their self arise from background factors. The literature directly or indirectly recalls the impact of ideational and background factors in affecting behavior but does not specifically address the process of formation of intentions and the link with their realization. Moreover, changes in economic background and in life course events may impede the realization of intentions or, in most severe cases, may negatively change them. In Italy higher timing of leaving home is caused on the one hand by the late formation of positive intentions, on the other by the increased difficulty to actually realize intentions. As a matter of fact, and according to Istat reports (Istat, 2009), only 53% of young people aged 18-39 who declared the certain intention of leaving home have achieved their goal after three years.

Many scholars have either investigated the impact of intentions on subsequent behavior in the field of the transition to adulthood (mostly focusing on fertility behavior) or analyzed the late Italian parental home leaving in a macro perspective, since suitable panel data were unavailable. However, up to now no one has approached to the issue considering both intentions and socio-economic constraints as determinants of the home leaving behavior for the Italian context. Thus, our work aims at covering the need of empirical results under that specific viewpoint.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: the second section summarizes the theoretical background of the study; section three describes data, variables that have been used and statistical methods implemented in the empirical analysis. Section four presents empirical results, while the final section includes the discussion and the conclusions of the paper.

2. Background

Leaving the parental home has been widely discussed in literature with respect to the Italian context. Iacovou (2002) compared USA and Western European countries finding that Italy has the lowest proportion of young people living apart from their parents across countries. In particular, she found that the median ages at the departure from parental home were 27 for females and 30 for males.

The debate about the explanations provided for the timing of leaving home involves two different kinds of reasons. Some studies highlight the effect of ideational factors: Billari and Liefbroer (2007) for instance,

referring to s Dutch sample, state that beliefs and parental norms play a decisive role in determining the at which young adults leave home. This approach is confirmed also by An et al. (2003) who remark the role of parents' attitudes and beliefs in adolescents leaving home. Furthermore, Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1993) focus on the expectations that parents have about the timing of their child's leaving home and observe that this affect the process of leaving away significantly. Other studies (Aassve et al. 2010), without being in conflict with the previous, concentrate on the process of formation of age norms and highlight the importance of socio-economic factors: norms are characterized by strong inter-countries heterogeneity explained at a macro level by differences in labor market conditions (especially in unemployment rate). In addition, this study underlines the effect of cultural factors at regional level. In this framework, and as remarked in the introduction, the Italian situation is striking among European countries for the lateness with which young adults leave the parental home. but geographical heterogeneity still exists also within Italy. As a matter of fact, in the northern and central urban areas one-person households and non marital cohabitation are replacing marriage as the main form of departure from home, whereas the south of Italy preserve the traditional pattern of leaving home only for married couples (Benassi and Novello. 2009). In this case it is difficult to disentangle the determinants of the preference pattern since both cultural and material reasons do coexist. If traditional family is stronger in the south, here the above-mentioned dualism is mostly linked to economic development and labor market opportunities. The effect of income and employment status has been emphasized and considered as the key predictor of the likelihood of leaving home in literature focusing on Italy (Aassve et al. 2002) in comparison to the other European countries. Indeed, young adults generally tend to stay at home if leaving away increases the poverty risk (Aassve et al. 2007), where the expectation of a risk of poverty is stronger also in the medium run, the proportion of young adults living independently is also lower, and this is true especially in those areas like southern Italy, where employment rates are lower (Benassi and Novello, 2009).

However, international literature not only gives importance to the employment and educational status of young adults but also to the economic and social conditions of their parents in determining the age at leaving home (De Long Gierveld, Liefbroer, Beekink, 1991; De Marco and Cosner Berzin, 2008). In particular, the availability of financial support from the family has been seen as a critical factor involving the choice of leaving (Santarelli and Cottone, 2009) and also influences the choice of cohabiting (Di Giulio and Rosina, 2007).

In conclusion, a mix of cultural elements such as the emotional and economic ties between children and parents, the persistence of the social norm of leaving home to marry (Scabini et al. 2006) and socio-economic constraints, such difficulties to find a stable job, the length of time spent in education and problems in the housing availability, jointly contribute to the decision to leave, as summarized by Palomba (2002). The interaction of material conditions and cultural beliefs in determining behavioral intentions and subsequent behavior has been framed in sociological literature with respect to the "Theory of Reasoned Action" (TRA) and to the "Theory of Planned Behaviour" (TPB).

The TRA (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and its subsequent evolution into the TPB (Ajzen, 1988, 1991) represent here our main reference in linking the intention to a certain behavior and their realization. This model has been recently used in demography to investigate the decisional process allowing an individual to plan and to realize specific life course choices. The TPB has been developed to predict the intention to engage in a behavior at a specific time and place. The theory aims at explaining all behaviors over which individuals have the ability to exert self-control: the central aspect of the TPB is that intentions are good indicators for predicting behavior. in the case that people have their act under volitional control.

Figure 1: The scheme of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)
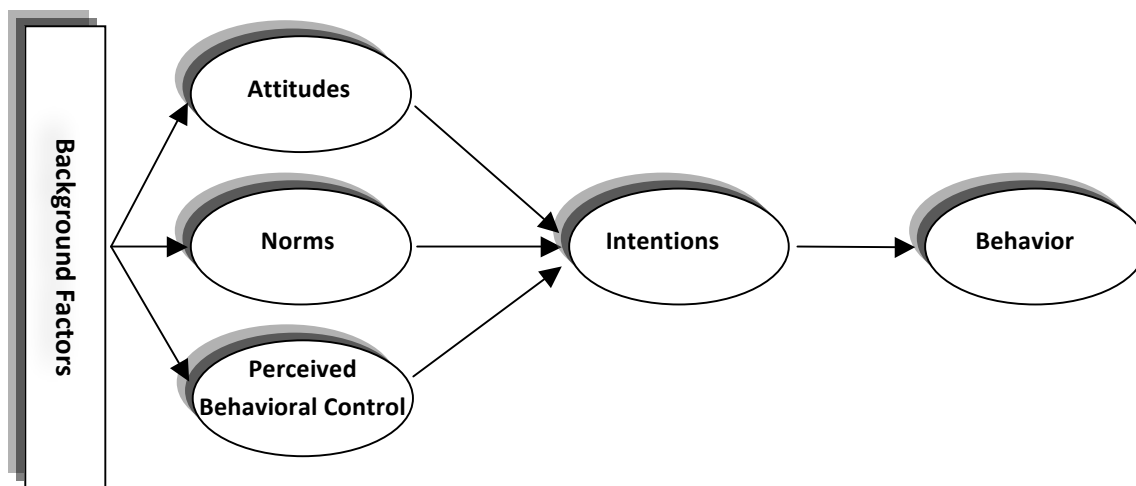
As explained in Figure 1, in the causal chain the main antecedents of behavior are the intentions that are in turn affected by three sets of factors:

1. Attitudes;
2. Subjective Norms;
3. Perceived Behavioral Control.

Following Ajzen (1991), Attitudes represent "the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question", Subjective norms refer to the customary codes of behavior in a group or larger cultural context, whereas Perceived behavioral control refers to people's perceptions of their ability to perform a given behavior.

Therefore, TPB asserts that the realization of a specific behavior under volitional control is predicted by the formation of positive intentions of performing that behavior. The formation of intentions is the consequence of the interactions of a system of personal beliefs and collective perceptions that are in turns affected by a set of background factors, including both material constraints and value orientations.

Several contributes in demographic literature used the TPB, even if they are in general limited to the decision making process on the basis of fertility choices: Miller and Pasta (1995) focused on the connection between intentions and behavior, applying a detailed theoretical model, where childbearing intentions strongly influence fertility behavior.

Furthermore, recalling the TPB paradigm, Billari et al. (2009) addressed the impact of Attitudes, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioral Control on the intentions of having a child, without empirically testing the realization of intentions due to the lack of longitudinal data.

Hence, demographic literature generally separates studies addressing the linkage between intentions and their realizations from those exploring the determinants of the intentions. More in details, most studies do not implement multi-process models where the determinants of intentions and of behavior are simultaneously investigated. At the best of our knowledge, the unique recent paper testing the TPB as a whole has been written by Mencarini et al. (2011), using graphical models and longitudinal data in order to apply TPB on fertility choices. In particular, Mencarini et al. (2011) developed an empirical analysis that showed as background factors play a role in several stages of TPB, not only as premise of individual and collective beliefs but also as direct predictors of intentions and behavior.

In any case, TPB applications in demographic context have been limited only to fertility matter, even if this modeling relies to all the life course events on which the individuals act under volitional control and where the intentions are not a deterministic premise of their realization. Therefore, the model appears as suitable also for analyzing the decision of leaving away. The aim of this paper is to apply the TPB scheme for addressing the residential autonomy choices of Italian young adults, controlling simultaneously for the factors affecting the intentions of leaving the parental home and with a particular emphasis on those that may impede the realization of the declared intentions.

3. Data, variables and methods

3.1. Data

We analyze intention and realization of leaving the parental home using data from the panel sample survey "Family and Social Subjects", belonging to the Multipurpose Survey Program carried out by the Italian National Statistical Institute (Istat). The first wave was conducted in November 2003 and it is part of the UNECE population unit's "Generation and Gender Program" which aims at collecting harmonized data for a number of European countries. The Italian sample is composed of about 50.000 males and females who were interviewed on topics regarding household demographic and socio-economic characteristics, children, partnership, parents and parental home, fertility, health and wellbeing, individuals' and partner's work and income, values and attitudes. The second wave was gathered in February 2007 on about 10.000 individuals aged 18 to 64 in 2003. Its principal focus was on the working careers criticalities under a gender view, since the Labor and Social Policies Minister promoted the survey. Interestingly for our purposes, it also aimed at acquiring information on young adults' characteristics and capturing their realization of expectations regarding the main steps towards the transition to adulthood. We restricted the analysis to the sample of individuals whose age was between 18 and 34 years old in the first wave (belonging to 1969-1985 cohorts) and thus between 21 and 39 in the second. Our final dataset pooled the two consecutive surveys for 2,605 individuals, of which 1,640 were still living with at least one parent. In summary, we used the first wave in

order to study the factors that act in forming young adults' intentions of leaving home in the following three years and the second to verify whether they succeed and what impede or facilitate their exit.

3.2. Variables

The empirical analysis has been conducted separately for males and females because there exist significant gender differences in the way they undertake adult roles, even if in the last century these differences have progressively narrowed (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005).

Our dependent variable accounts for the fact that the individual has left the parental home in the time between the two waves and it therefore consists of a dummy variable that assumes the value "1" if the individual lives autonomously and "0" if he/she is still living in the parental home.

In order to analyze the factors facilitating or impeding the effective exit from the parental home, we consider three sets of covariates that might have an impact on the observed phenomenon: (1) individual socio-economic characteristics, (2) background assets and (3) attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioral control. Young adults' age, level of education, employment condition, partnership status, other autonomous experiences and religiosity belong to the first category. The geographical area of residence, number of siblings, parents' level of education, mothers' activity status and parental divorce lie in the group of variables related to the family of origin. Finally, framing the analysis within the Theory of Planned Behavior, we accounts for factors concerning the three major elements that Fishbein and Ajzen relates to the formation of intentions, that is attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioral control linked to the specific phenomenon of leaving the parental home. In the next paragraphs we briefly outline the theoretical reasons for controlling for the above-cited factors.

(1) Individual socio-economic characteristics

Age

The definition of the age range at which an individual can be considered as a young adult is not shared in literature and many criterions can be used for its identification. Here, the minimum age for being adult is 18 years, age at which in Italy a person obtains civil rights and. at least theoretically, the necessary and sufficient commitments for becoming residentially independent from parents. However, the choice of the upper level is relatively harder, especially in a context of strong inter-generational ties. We restrict the sample to people aged up to 34 years old, assuming that by that age young adults should have completed their transition to residential independence and. if this is not the case, estimates might be bias. In fact, becoming adult not only means completing the compulsory education, being potentially able to have children and having the right to vote, but also being economically independent (Livi Bacci, 2008). In light of these considerations, we expect that both intention and behavior of leaving the parental home increase with age since the likelihood of being out of formal education, having found a stable job and a suitable partner follow a monotonous pattern with age. In the empirical analysis we divide the sample in two age categories: less than 25 years old and 25 and more years old.

Level of education

We assume that the higher the individual's education the more likely he/she will be intentioned to become residentially autonomous and thus the higher the probability of succeeding in exiting from the parental home. On the one hand, as the level of education progressively increases, people can move out of the parental home either for union, study or working reasons with a higher probability. On the other the other hand, a higher level of education might be a proxy of better levels of income and thus results in more economic resources at one's disposal, which in turn affect directly the likelihood of leaving the parental home. We thus expect this variable to be positively correlated with the intention and the actual abandon of home of origin. In the regression analysis we categorize education in two subgroups: "high" which accounts for people who have achieved at least an upper secondary school degree and "low" which refers to those who have a lower level of education.

Employment

Assuming that economic assets represent a prerogative for becoming independent from the parental home, having a job and, in particular, being permanently employed should be a crucial condition for achieving positive intentions to exit. As a matter of fact, young adults who are still enrolled in school or without a (stable) job own, *ceteris paribus*, less material resources than those who are employed. Moreover. the increasing economic uncertainty deriving from the absence of a job or from a fixed term one could prevent them from seeking residential independence. If this pattern has been found to hold in other European countries (Mills & Blossfeld, 2005), in Italy it frequently happens that young people even with a stable employment, especially males, carry on living in the parental home both because their income is not believed as enough to start residing independently or simply because they wish to keep their current living standard and save money. In fact, some scholars showed that young employed adults who still live in the parental home are the ones with less amount of responsibilities and limitations in the domestic domain (Menniti et al. 2000). In the empirical analysis we split the variable in 5 categories: students (our reference), unemployed, people with a permanent job, people with a fixed-term employment and self-employed. Given the available literature, we expect that young adults (permanently) employed result to be more likely both to be intentioned and to succeed in realizing their intentions to form an independent residence with respect to other categories.

Partnership

In the Italian context, leaving the parental home most frequently means starting a union (Billari et al. 2001). Therefore, people with a partner are expected to be more likely to desire to become independent from their parental home and. most importantly, to effectively realize their intentions. We then hypothesize that young adults in a partnership, other things being equal, will show higher probabilities of being intentioned and effectively leave the parental home after three years.

Past experience out of the parental home and Religiosity

We expect that having experienced a period out of the parental home could increase the likelihood of being positively intentioned to leave again and to effectively leave. As a matter of fact, a past episode of

autonomous life might have trained young adults in managing every-day life independently from their parents' (mother's) help and could have increased their wish of living apart from them. We thus expect that this could positively affect both intentions and realizations to leave the parental home.

Concerning the last covariate that accounts for individual characteristics, that is religiosity, we do not have a precise assumption about its impact on the observed phenomenon. Nonetheless, it is true that if we analyze the pattern of leaving home for union motivations, we expect that the more religious ones would prefer to directly proceed towards marriage, while once we accounts for those who are less religious we could expect a higher preference for unmarried cohabitation. Moreover, since in Italy the main motivation to start living independently is marriage, we could expect that this variable increases the probability of actually leave.

(2) Background assets

Geographical area of residence

Historically, employment rates and GDP per capita have always been lower in the southern regions of Italy compared to the northern ones. In fact, young southern people (especially those belonging to cohorts born up to 1970s) used to move to the North of Italy, searching for a more dynamic job market and for better educational opportunities (Billari & Ongaro, 1998). Moreover, the average age at marriage in the southern regions of Italy is about 2 years lower than in the northern ones (ISTAT, 2011). Further, in the South the housing market is more flexible and the accommodation availability is relatively higher than in the North. We thus expect that living in the southern part of Italy affect positively the intention of becoming independent from the parental home and negatively the realization of intentions, even if the observed pattern is mainly linked with the age at experiencing events rather than with their effective occurrence. Still, the job market's deficiency and high levels of unemployment could represent an important check to the actual realization of independency intentions. In the empirical analysis we will consider the geographical aspect by grouping northern and center regions together against the southern ones.

Number of siblings

Some scholars assert that one of the main causes of later age at leaving the parental home in Italy is the fertility decline occurred in the last 40 years and the subsequent family size reduction (Barbagli et al. 2003, Livi Bacci, 2008). As a matter of fact, in larger families the quantity of available material and non-material resources result being diluted (Blake, 1989). Moreover, in larger families young adults have usually social and autonomy limitations, due to lack of space and to the presence of siblings (Menniti et al. 2000).

In the present analysis we assume that a larger family size, here meant as living with two or more siblings, affect positively the intention to become residentially independent from parents and its actual realization, since the lack of autonomy in a crowded household could motivate young adults to leave, if compared to only-children and to those with only one sibling.

Parental education and mother activity status

Among the background assets here considered. we believe that one of the more crucial aspects is the parental education as a proxy of the social class of origin and as an indicator of the level of material resources available for young adults independence (Billari & Liefbroer. 2007). Theoretically, a higher availability of background resources could more likely support young adults residential autonomy (at least under the accommodation viewpoint). However, in Italy previous studies found that the higher the parental social class the later young adults leave home (Barbagli et al. 2003). On the one hand, young adults' perceived wellness inside parental home could raise the opportunity cost of leaving and thus depress their expectation of becoming independent. On the other hand, a higher parental level of education could result in more economic resources available for their children's autonomy. We therefore assume that a high level of education of parents will reduce young individuals' intention to exit and increase the likelihood that they actually reach independence.

Accounting for mother's activity status serve as a proxy of the presence of mothers at home when young adults were adolescents. We assume that those whose mother were employed – and this should hold particularly for males – are also used to contribute to housework managing and thus more prone to start living independently.

Parental divorce

The last background factor that we use in the empirical analysis concerns young adults experience of parental marital dissolution. Divorce and the constitution of step-families are quite new phenomena for the Italian society and their impact on young adults patterns of leaving home are interestingly becoming significant (Barbagli et al. 2003). However, whether they facilitate or prevent young adults intentions and behavior to leave is still of ambiguous understanding. On the one hand, parental divorce, and in particular the previous period, could have created a hostile place where to live and thus and therefore young adults could be more oriented in leaving home. On the other hand, children of divorced people could be less prone to marry (Thornton, 1991) and, as we already said above, since in Italy the main motivation to start living independently is marriage, we could expect that this variable increases the probability of actually leave.

(3) Attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioral control

In order to analyze the impact of attitudes towards the behavior of leaving the parental home we performed a factor analysis on a set of related questions provided by the survey. In particular it is asked to young adults whether their decision to leave would improve or worsen a) their independence b) their job opportunities c) their economic situation d) their sexual life e) other people's opinion f) their joy and life satisfaction. The first resulting factor relates to individual increased independence while the second is linked to their economic and job opportunities improvement.

Social norms are also extracted by means of a factor analysis on a set of items about the level of agreement of "important others", that is mother's, father's, and friends'. The three items reduced into one factor.

Finally, perceived behavioral control is summarized by a factor based on the question of whether the eventual choice to leave in the next three years would depend on a) individual economic situation b) her/his

working conditions improvement c) his/her living arrangement conditions d) his/her health e) the improvement of his/her partner's working conditions.

3.3. Methods

As we are in presence of a binary response in the purpose of jointly estimating the determinants of intentions and of related behavior, we adopt a two-equations modeling strategy, using a bivariate probit. We focused our study on young women aged between 18 and 34 at the time of the first interview (thus aged 21 to 38 three years later) and living in the parental home. Using a latent variable approach, the model can be specified as follows:

$$
\begin{cases} y_{i1}^* = x_{i1}^T \beta_1 + u_{i1} \\ y_{i2}^* = x_{i2}^T \beta_2 + u_{i2} \end{cases}
\qquad
\begin{pmatrix} u_{i1} \\ u_{i2} \end{pmatrix} \sim N \left[\begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} ; \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \rho \\ \rho & 1 \end{pmatrix} \right]
$$

y_{i1}^* is the dependent variable of the first regression, indicating the propensity of an individual to be intentioned ($y_{i1} = 1$) or not intentioned ($y_{i1} = 0$) to leave parental home between 2003 and 2007; y_{i2}^* is the dependent variable of the second equation, where y_{i2}^* is a continuous latent variable for the event of home leaving labeled as $y_{i2} = 1$ and indicating the propensity of exiting for each individual. The correlation between the error terms underlines the presence of a potential link between omitted variables that may affect both the likelihood of being intentioned to leave the nest in the first wave and the effective departure from the parental home after three years. The decision to conjecture a correlation between the error terms of the two equations stems from the recent discussion that empirical literature has had around TPB. In fact, unlike the standard paradigm emerging from Ajzen (1988, 1991), that consider the effect of background factors on the intentions only through the mediation of Attitudes, Subjective norms and Perceived behavioral control, Mencarini et al. (2011) find that background factors have also a direct impact in affecting both intentions and behavior. Given that the data used in the analysis are longitudinal and the second interview has been realized with a gap of three years from the first one, it is reasonable to assume that changes in the individual background setting, such as a change in employment status, in partnership or the completion of the education path may modify the intentions of leaving away or the realization of the planned behavior. Hence, observable background factors (that literature considers as suitable predictors of the departure from home) are included among the determinants of the intentions and of the behavior. Furthermore, since some of these confounder may be omitted in the model or unobservable, we decided to test and eventually take into account the presence of a correlation between the errors.

Going into more detail in the model specification, we have to recall that identification conditions allow an identical vector of covariates for both the equations, even if econometric literature suggests that at least one variable included in x_{i2} or x_{i1} does not appear in the other equation. Following the Theory of Planned Behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), we have that three sets of variables associated to the intentions of leaving home do not directly affect subsequent behavior: indeed, attitudes, perceived behavioral control and social norms are directly linked only with intentions.

Observable confounders, taken into consideration for controlling changes in intentions and their realization due to a change in respondents' background, are included both in x_{i2} and x_{i1} instead.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Referring to the choice of leaving the parental home in the next three years, respondents were asked about their intentions in 2003 in the following way: "Do you intend to leave the parental home in the next three years?". The four different options presented in the survey were: "Surely not", "Probably not", "Probably yes" and "Surely yes". Figure 2 presents the percentages of people who answered to the previous question, according to the subsequent behavior.

Figure 2: Realization in 2007 of intentions of leaving the parental home in the next 3 years 2003
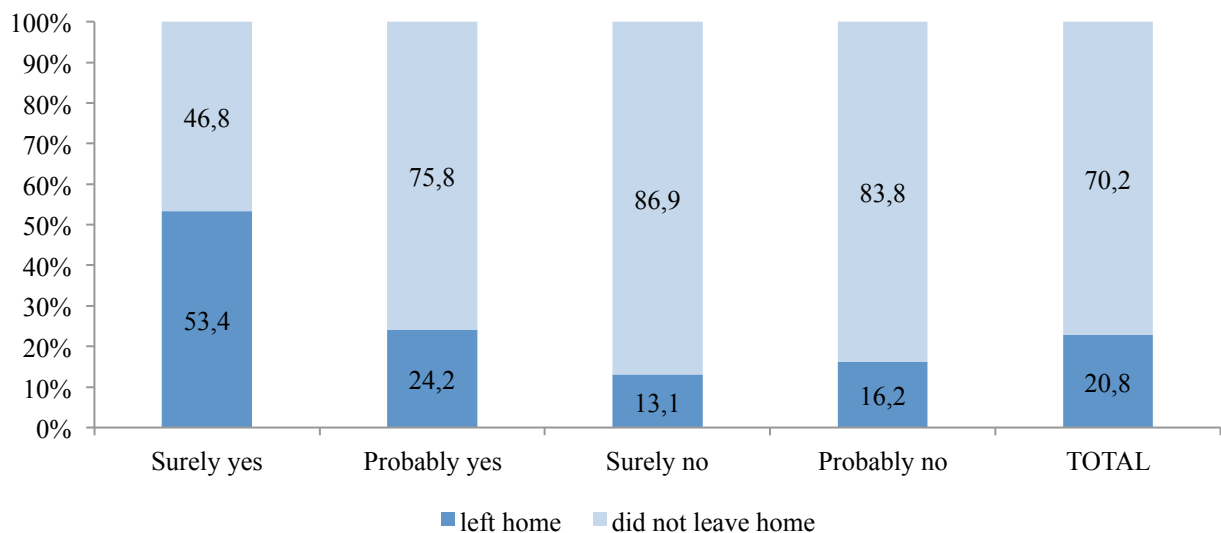
As we can see from Figure 2 and as suggested in literature (Liefbroer and Gerristen. 1994), positively intentioned respondents are more likely to realize their purpose. In particular, young adults who declared of being surely intentioned to leave show the highest rate of departure at 2007. However, only 24.2% of people answering "Probably yes" effectively left parental home at the time of the second inteview. This probably means that changes in life course events and in the socio-economic background impede in somewhat their realization of intentions to be independent.

In Table 1 we supply descriptive statistics on the variables used in the regression analysis. What emerges from the data is a an indication of the main characteristics of individuals according to their intention to leave the parental home expressed in 2003 and their actual outcome observed 3 years later. People who were intentioned to leave and succeed are on average older, females, own a medium/high level of education, are employed either permanently or temporarily, didn't have any previous experience out of home, have a

partner, are not religious, reside in the Centre-North areas of Italy, and are only children or have only one sibling. Their mothers were active, their parents' level of education was on average low and they didn't experience divorce. Concerning the group of young adults who didn't left home even if positively intentioned, we can observe that the most evident differences regard gender, with males who more frequently do not leave; employment, with higher frequencies of unemployed and students; partnership, with significant

Table 1: Summary statistics for the explanatory variables

Variables	Intended to leave and left (*n=200*)		Intended to leave and did NOT leave (*n=497*)		Did NOT intend to leave and did NOT leave (*n=778*)		Did NOT intend to leave and left (*n=165*)		Total (*n=1.640*)	
	Mean	**Std Dev**	**Mean**	**Std Dev**	**Mean**	**Std Dev**	**Mean**	**Std Dev**	**Mean**	**Std Dev**
Age										
Age 25 and more	0.92	0.28	0.83	0.38	0.58	0.49	0.67	0.47	0.70	0.46
Age less than 25	0.08	0.28	0.17	0.38	0.42	0.49	0.33	0.47	0.30	0.46
Gender										
Females	0.52	0.50	0.47	0.50	0.41	0.49	0.47	0.50	0.45	0.50
Males	0.48	0.50	0.53	0.50	0.59	0.49	0.53	0.50	0.55	0.50
Level of education										
Low	0.11	0.31	0.22	0.41	0.30	0.46	0.19	0.40	0.24	0.43
Medium-high	0.89	0.31	0.78	0.41	0.70	0.46	0.81	0.40	0.76	0.43
Employment										
Permanently job	0.38	0.49	0.34	0.48	0.26	0.44	0.24	0.43	0.30	0.46
Fixed-term job	0.70	0.60	0.62	0.62	0.52	0.65	0.45	0.60	0.56	0.63
Self-employment	0.17	0.38	0.13	0.34	0.08	0.28	0.10	0.30	0.11	0.31
Unemployed	0.16	0.36	0.19	0.39	0.12	0.33	0.16	0.37	0.15	0.36
Student	0.23	0.42	0.27	0.44	0.44	0.50	0.44	0.50	0.36	0.48
Past experience out										
Yes	0.19	0.39	0.10	0.30	0.09	0.29	0.24	0.43	0.12	0.33
No	0.81	0.39	0.90	0.30	0.91	0.29	0.76	0.43	0.88	0.33
Partner										
Yes	0.56	0.50	0.35	0.48	0.26	0.44	0.21	0.41	0.32	0.47
No	0.44	0.50	0.65	0.48	0.74	0.44	0.79	0.41	0.68	0.47
Religious										
Yes	0.41	0.49	0.40	0.49	0.42	0.49	0.47	0.50	0.42	0.49
No	0.59	0.49	0.60	0.49	0.58	0.49	0.53	0.50	0.58	0.49
Geographical area										
Centre-north	0.63	0.48	0.58	0.49	0.61	0.49	0.53	0.50	0.60	0.49
South	0.37	0.48	0.42	0.49	0.39	0.49	0.47	0.50	0.40	0.49
Number of siblings										
Only-children-one sibling	0.70	0.46	0.67	0.49	0.72	0.45	0.64	0.48	0.70	0.46
Two or more siblings	0.30	0.46	0.33	0.49	0.28	0.45	0.36	0.48	0.30	0.46
Father's level of education										
Low	0.57	0.50	0.66	0.48	0.60	0.49	0.52	0.50	0.61	0.49
Medium-high	0.43	0.50	0.34	0.48	0.40	0.49	0.48	0.50	0.39	0.49
Mother's level of education										
Low	0.61	0.49	0.67	0.47	0.59	0.49	0.51	0.50	0.60	0.49
Medium-high	0.39	0.49	0.33	0.47	0.41	0.49	0.49	0.50	0.40	0.49
Mother activity status										
Active	0.53	0.50	0.47	0.50	0.54	0.50	0.46	0.50	0.51	0.50
Inactive	0.47	0.50	0.53	0.50	0.46	0.50	0.54	0.50	0.49	0.50
Parent's divorce										
Divorced	0.08	0.27	0.05	0.22	0.05	0.21	0.67	0.25	0.05	0.22
Not divorced	0.92	0.27	0.95	0.22	0.95	0.21	0.33	0.25	0.95	0.22

evidence on the side of those who don't have a partner, and mother's activity status, with children of inactive mothers being less likely to actually exit from parental home.

Since our focus is to understand what are the individual or background characteristics that facilitate or, on the contrary, hinder young adults' residential independence, we will not comment on means relative to the other two residual categories of people that were not intentioned to leave. However, we should keep in mind that the descriptive results could be spurious, because we are not controlling for many important factors. Indeed, unemployment rates are higher among young adults who have still not completed their education yet or who are in their early working career stages. Hence, in order to achieve more reliable results, we implemented the regression analyses in the forms described in section 3.3, whose results are showed in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Table 2: Determinants for the intentions of leaving home and their realization[4]

		Males		Females	
Intentions- main equation		coef.	sign.	coef.	sign.
Age (ref: less than 25)	Age 25 and more	0.48	***	0.59	***
Educational level 2003 (ref: low)	High	0.10		-0.04	
Employment status 2003 (ref: student)	Self Employed	0.51	**	0.56	**
	Fixed-term Employed	0.02		0.35	*
	Permanently Employed	0.40	**	0.55	***
	Unemployed	0.53	***	0.17	
Past experience out of the parental home (ref: No)	Yes	0.09		0.05	
Presence of a partner (ref: without partner)	With partner	0.29	**	0.38	***
Father's educational level (ref: low)	High	0.02		0.01	
Mother's educational level (ref: low)	High	-0.06		-0.01	
Negative attitudes towards individual independence	Factor1	-0.26	***	-0.28	***
Negative attitudes towards economic changes	Factor 2	-0.31	***	-0.37	***
Perceived behavioral control	Factor	0.00		0.02	
Social norms: mother. father and friends agreement	Factor	-0.24	***	-0.32	***
Intercept		-1.46	***	-1.29	***
Realization of Intentions					
Age (ref: less than 25)	Age 25 and more	0.45	**	0.63	***
Educational level 2003 (ref: low)	High	0.39	**	-0.05	
Employment status 2003 (ref: student)	Self Employed	0.40	**	0.82	***
	Fixed-term Employed	-0.03		0.05	
	Permanently Employed	0.35	**	0.70	***
	Unemployed	0.17		0.63	**
Past experience out of the parental home (ref: No)	Yes	0.03		0.21	
Presence of a partner (ref: without partner)	With partner	0.51	***	0.30	**
Religiosity (rif: religious)	Not Religious	-0.02		0.34	**
Father's educational level (ref: low)	High	0.25	*	0.01	
Mother's educational level (ref: low)	High	-0.22		0.46	**
Intercept		-2.86	***	-2.90	***
ρ		0.29	***	0.17	*

*** significant at 0.01 level; ** significant at 0.05 level; * significant at 0.1 level

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[4] For the purpose of simplifying the results, we do not report the full set of regression coefficients. In particular we omit the geographical area of residence, number of siblings, past experience out of the parental home, mother's employment status and parental divorce because their estimates are not statistically significant.

Using appropriate longitudinal data, we examined the process of formation of intentions to leave the parental home and their realization in Italy. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen. 1975), the choice of leaving is the outcome of a medium-run process that involves several factors and intermediate stages. In first instance, the life course event of interest (the departure) is anticipated by the formation of intentions that are considered as the strongest predictor of that behavior. Nevertheless, especially in Italy, even economic and social constraints play a dual role in both limiting intentions and their actual realization. Our results (displayed in Table 2) show that the likelihood of the intention to leave home depends significantly on age (in favor of the oldest), on having a permanent job or being self-employed, and on having a partner. Moreover, negative attitudes towards home leaving influence directly the formation of intentions as well as social norms: parents' and friends' agreement regarding a potential departure impacts positively on being intentioned of leaving the nest.

The second equation addresses the realization of intentions: empirical evidence confirms the importance of being self or permanently employed in order to realize the behavior, while fixed term employed are less likely to exit. In addition, young adults belonging to older cohorts and in a partnership are more likely to leave the parental home. A high individual and father's level of education is relevant for males only.

Women's realization of the intentions of leaving apart is instead associated to the education of the mother and to religiosity. Even if the presence of the partner seems to be a significant predictor of the exit, the effect is slightly lower than the one observed for males.

The positive and significant correlation between the error terms of the two equations underlines the presence of omitted variables that justify the use of a bivariate probit, especially in the males' model. However, once we started wondering about the possible omitted variables and their meanings, we realized that a plausible excluded covariate in the equation concerning the behavior realization was the intention it self. This is the main rational for the inclusion, in a second step, of the dummy variable accounting for intentions to leave the parental home. Coefficients of the binomial probit are shown in Table 3. As we suspected, the error term becomes non significant for both males and females, confirming that intentions were the omitted variable in the previous specification. Nevertheless, it seems not to affect the likelihood of realizing the effective residential independence, once intentions are taken into account. The signs and significance of the other covariates do not change from the model presented above. Therefore, given the pattern of uncorrelated errors we are legitimated, as a last step, to estimate the two equations separately, whose resulting coefficients are shown in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 3: Determinants for the intentions of leaving home and their realization (intentions as a variable inside the behavioral equation) [5]

Intentions- main equation		Males coef.	Males sign.	Females coef.	Females sign.
Age (ref: less than 25)	*Age 25 and more*	0.48	***	0.59	***
Educational level 2003 (ref: low)	*High*	0.10		-0.04	
Employment status 2003 (ref: student)	*Self Employed*	0.51	**	0.56	**
	Fixed-term Employed	0.02		0.35	*
	Permanently Employed	0.40	**	0.55	***
	Unemployed	0.53	***	0.17	
Past experience out of the parental home (ref: No)	*Yes*	0.09		0.05	
Presence of a partner (ref: without partner)	*With partner*	0.28	**	0.38	***
Father's educational level (ref: low)	*High*	0.02		0.01	
Mother's educational level (ref: low)	*High*	-0.06		-0.01	
Negative attitudes towards individual independence	*Factor1*	-0.26	***	-0.28	***
Negative attitudes towards economic changes	*Factor 2*	-0.31	***	-0.37	***
Perceived behavioral control	*Factor*	0.00		0.02	
Social norms: mother. father and friends agreement	*Factor*	-0.24	***	-0.32	***
Intercept		-1.46	***	-1.30	***
Realization of Intentions					
Intention to leave home in 3 years	*Intentioned*	0.02		-0.07	
Age (ref: less than 25)	*Age 25 and more*	0.44	**	0.65	**
Educational level 2003 (ref: low)	*High*	0.39	**	-0.05	
Employment status 2003 (ref: student)	*Self Employed*	0.40	*	0.83	***
	Fixed-term Employed	-0.03		0.06	
	Permanently Employed	0.35	**	0.71	***
	Unemployed	0.17		0.64	**
Past experience out of the parental home (ref: No)	*Yes*	0.03		0.21	
Presence of a partner (ref: without partner)	*With partner*	0.51	***	0.31	**
Religiosity (rif: religious)	*Not Religious*	-0.02		0.34	**
Father's educational level (ref: low)	*High*	0.25	*	0.01	
Mother's educational level (ref: low)	*High*	-0.22		0.46	**
Intercept		-2.87	***	-2.90	***
ρ		0.27		-0.28	

*** significant at 0.01 level; ** significant at 0.05 level; * significant at 0.1 level

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[5] See note 4

Table 4: Determinants for the intentions of leaving home (probit model) [6]

Intentions		Males coef.	sign.	Females coef.	sign.
Age (ref: less than 25)	Age 25 and more	0.49	***	0.59	***
Educational level 2003 (ref: low)	High	0.10		-0.04	
Employment status 2003 (ref: student)	Self Employed	0.50	**	0.56	**
	Fixed-term Employed	0.02		0.34	*
	Permanently Employed	0.39	**	0.55	***
	Unemployed	0.52	***	0.18	
Past experience out of the parental home (ref: No)	Yes	0.09		0.05	
Presence of a partner (ref: without partner)	With partner	0.28	**	0.38	***
Father's educational level (ref: low)	High	0.02		0.01	
Mother's educational level (ref: low)	High	-0.06		-0.02	
Negative attitudes towards individual independence	Factor1	-0.25	***	-0.28	***
Negative attitudes towards economic changes	Factor 2	-0.31	***	-0.36	***
Perceived behavioral control	Factor	0.00		0.03	
Social norms: mother. father and friends agreement	Factor	-0.26	***	-0.33	***
Intercept		-1.47	***	-1.33	***

Table 5: Determinants for the realization of leaving home (probit model) [7]

Realization of Intentions		Males coef.	sign.	Females coef.	sign.
Intention to leave home in 3 years	Intentioned	0.43	***	0.24	*
Age (ref: less than 25)	Age 25 and more	0.35	*	0.58	**
Educational level 2003 (ref: low)	High	0.36	**	-0.06	
Employment status 2003 (ref: student)	Self Employed	0.35	*	0.78	***
	Fixed-term Employed	-0.01		0.02	
	Permanently Employed	0.33	*	0.66	***
	Unemployed	0.10		0.61	**
Past experience out of the parental home (ref: No)	Yes	0.02		0.20	
Presence of a partner (ref: without partner)	With partner	0.46	***	0.27	**
Religiosity (rif: religious)	Not Religious	-0.02		0.35	**
Father's educational level (ref: low)	High	0.25	*	0.02	
Mother's educational level (ref: low)	High	-0.21		0.46	**
Intercept		-2.89		-2.92	***

Under this final specification, we have proved that the same factors we found as significant in the previous model still affect young adults' prevision of leaving the parental home. Hence age, employment,

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[6] See note 4
[7] See note 4

being in a partnership as well as positive attitudes and "important others' " agreement, represent assets for positive intentions.

Concerning the second equation, we find again a confirmation of the main characteristics that facilitate the decision of actually leaving the parental home and start living independently. Contrary to results shown in Table 3, we now observe evidence of a positive and strong effect of being intentioned to leave, as stated by the Theory of Planned Behavior. Furthermore, we notice how the same covariates that resulted important in the bivariate probit models presented in Tables 2 and 3 still maintain their significant impact. Yet, the probability to realize intentions to leave are higher for young adults aged 25 or more, with a self or permanent employment, and in a partnership. We also observe some cases of gender heterogeneity: a high individual and father's level of education increases the likelihood of exiting for males only. Interestingly, mother's high level of education and religiosity affect positively solely the female sample.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Our paper has focused on the choice of Italian young adults to leave the parental home in a longitudinal perspective. In the framework of the TPB, the decision-making process of individuals, leading to the choice of exit, follows several steps that are determined sequentially across time. First, young adults, affected by value orientations and their material background, form attitudes and beliefs with respect to the hypothesis of leaving the nest. Then, positive beliefs are the premise of the formation of the intentions to leave apart within a specified period of time. Finally, there is the realization of the planned action. However, individuals' background factors or a series of unexpected events may modify the intentions or favor/obstacle the realization of the departure from the parental home, intervening in the standard setting of TPB. This is particularly true in a country like Italy characterized by a lack of opportunities for young generations.

Our results highlight the importance of being employed for Italian young adults who intend to leave and of being permanently of self-employed for those who achieve that purpose, consistently with the assumption that economic constraints do affect this kind of decision. More in detail, a comparison between the determinants of the intentions and of the behavior underlines that for females a fixed term employment is a key predictor for positive intentions but not for the realization. Further, the presence of a partner is another crucial factor in determining both the intention and the behavior of interest. Finally, parental background also plays a decisive role in increasing the likelihood of an effective departure from home: females' behavior is affected by the educational background of the mother, whereas males' choice of becoming residentially independent depends on a higher education of the father, showing considerably gender differences. Males appear to be more sensitive to their own level of education and to personal and affective experiences in the realization of leaving the family of origin.

Since panel data on life course events were hardly available until nowadays for the Italian context, this study contributes in filling up the lack of empirical research on the issue of leaving the parental home, considering attitudes, perceived behavioral control, social norms and intentions together with socio-economic constraints as its determinants.

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