The impact of parental characteristics and contextual effects on returns to the parental home in Britain

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses successive cohorts of rising 16 year olds followed up within the British Household Panel Study to examine the importance of parental resources and parental family structure on the likelihood of young adults returning to the parental home following an initial departure. We also examine whether local area effects such as urbanicity, housing or labour market factors are significant. Our analyses of individuals aged 18-24 indicate that although parental background and circumstances can contribute to young adults' propensity to return home, this is far outweighed by the impact of the individual-level characteristics of the young adults themselves. Of particular importance in promoting returns to the parental home are experiencing a change in economic activity, especially moving out of full-time education into unemployment, and experiencing a partnership dissolution. Whilst local house prices are shown to be related to the propensity to return home for women, most contextual factors are found to have little effect for either men or women.

KEYWORDS

Family structure; returning home; boomerang kids; parental resources; young adults

EDITORIAL NOTE

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THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS ON RETURNS TO THE PARENTAL HOME IN BRITAIN

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1   INTRODUCTION

Young adults' pathways to achieving residential independence are becoming increasingly prolonged, diverse and reversible in the UK (Berrington, Stone, and Falkingham 2009, Furlong and Cartmel 2007, Holdsworth and Morgan 2005, Jones, O'Sullivan, and Rouse 2006). The transition to independent living is often more of a process with young people leaving home only to return, and often doing so more than once. A number of socio-economic, institutional and cultural forces (including the expansion of higher education (particularly for women), increased precariousness of the youth labour market and the declining availability of affordable housing) have encouraged this diversity of transitions to independent living in the UK (Stone, Berrington, and Falkingham 2011). Most recently, economic recession has been blamed for an increase in the propensity of young adults to return to the parental home, the British media heralding a new "Generation Boomerang" (Bingham 2009, Koslow and Booth 2012, Waite 2008). These trends are not unique to the UK and previous North American research has examined trends and determinants of returning home in the US (Davanzo and Goldscheider 1990, Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1999, Wang and Morin 2009) and Canada (Billette, Le Bourdais, and Laplante 2011, Mitchell 2006).

Recent UK research has highlighted the role of key events or "turning points" in the life course (such as finishing full time education, losing a job and partnership dissolution) in encouraging returns to the parental home (Stone, Berrington, and Falkingham 2013). This emphasizes the need to return home at times where parental support is required. Parental support is particularly needed in situations where the welfare state does not underpin residential independence. Stone et al demonstrate how the UK welfare state, through the provision of housing benefit and social housing enables many young lone mothers to live independently of the parental home whereas young non-residential fathers are more likely to return home.

However, less is known about the way in which parental characteristics such as parental family structure and parental resources impact on the likelihood of returning. The parental home is not a homogeneous entity since an increasingly large proportion of adolescents are not living with both of their natural parents. Currently around one quarter of dependent children in the UK live in a lone parent (mostly lone

mother) family (Beaumont 2011). Among those in a two parent family a significant proportion are living with one natural parent and a step parent. In 2001 10% of all families with dependent children were step families. Of these, 80% consisted of a natural mother and step-father (Office for National Statistics 2005). In the following section we review theoretical discussion as to the pathways through which parental family structure might influence leaving and returning home behaviour.

Material circumstances in the parental home can also affect the propensity for coresidence, but via complex and competing mechanisms (Aassve et al. 2002), dependent upon propensity for the parents to be 'altruistic', the tastes of the individual and their parents for independence and privacy, as well as on the parents' capacity to make intergenerational transfers (Becker et al. 2010, Ermisch 2003, Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1999, Mulder and Clark 2002). Parental income is potentially transferable to the offspring for example in the form of a rental or mortgage deposit. Parental income may also act as a proxy for wider material resources such as the ability to provide cheap, or even free, accommodation at home (Ermisch 1999). The ability to provide private space for a young adult will relate not only to the size of the house but also the number of (step)siblings also remaining in the parental home (Smits, van Gaalen, and Mulder 2010). The impact of parental material resource on the likelihood of returning home is likely to be the result of a number of competing mechanisms as discussed in the following section.

As noted by Billete et al (2011) a full model of home returning requires detailed contextual information about the area lived in by the respondent and their parents. The chances that a young adult boomerangs back to the parental home is also likely to be affected by the geographical closeness of the parental household and whether the parental household is in an urban area which would be more likely to offer employment opportunities (Billette et al. 2011). We might expect returns home to be greater when the young adult is living in an area of high unemployment due to difficulties in securing a wage sufficient to maintain independence from the parental home and in areas where housing costs are greatest (Ermisch 1999). In this paper we can move partially towards this aim by including a number of contextual variables including local unemployment levels, local house prices, distance between the young adult and their parent and the urbanicity of the parental home area.

Below we discuss the theoretical literature and previous empirical findings as to the impact of parental family structure, parental income and contextual effects on returning home. We then introduce the data and methods used in this study before presenting results from discrete time hazards models of returning home between age 18 and 24. Empirically our approach is novel in two respects. First, the prospective longitudinal design of the British Household Panel Study (BHPS) following up households even when they split off to form new ones, allows us to examine the factors predicting returning home from a multi-actor perspective – i.e. the individual and their parents. Second we position the young adult and their parents within a geographical context, including information about the geographical distance between parent and young adult, whether the parental household was in an urban or rural location, local levels of unemployment and local house prices. We thus provide new insights into the returning home process using a multi-level, multi-actor approach.

2 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 PARENTAL FAMILY STRUCTURE

There is consistent evidence from North America and Europe that children whose natural parents are not living together leave home earlier than other young adults (Blaauboer and Mulder 2010, Corijn and Klijzing 2001, Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1998, Holdsworth 2000, Mitchell, Wister, and Burch 1989). It is often argued that early home leaving among those who have experienced parental separation is mediated through less parental monitoring and an early transition to parenthood (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1998, Kiernan 1992). Furthermore, greater conflict has been reported among those living with step-parents and step-siblings encouraging an earlier departure. As noted by Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1998 p. 746) young adults living in blended families have to compete with a new parental figure and new siblings for attention, love and material support. They note "Those who experience family break-up in childhood may fear that their homes have left them". All of the previous studies on the impact of parental family structure on leaving home highlight the impact on reasons for departure, highlighting the fact that young adults from non-intact families are less likely to leave home to pursue

education, but more likely to leave for partnership or to achieve independence –see the work of Jones for evidence for Britain (Jones 1995).

There is little evidence from Europe and specifically from Britain regarding the impact of parental family structure on returning; however in North America and more recently in the Netherlands, lone parent and blended two parent family structures have been shown to discourage returning to the parental home (Gee, Mitchell, and Wister 1995, Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1998, Smits et al. 2010), although other studies found no significant effects (Billette et al. 2011). It is generally argued that the presence of a step-parent or step-siblings will make returning home less attractive. Our expectation then is that men and women whose parental home contains both of their natural (or adoptive) parents will be more likely to return than those who leave other family structures.

Other parental factors likely to be important in facilitating co-residence with an adult child but which we are not able to examine in this study include the extent to which the parents provide resources in kind, for example, through the provision of meals and a laundry service; the quality of the parental child relationship; the level of emotional support provided by the parents to their child and the relative health status and potential care needs of the parents and adult child. We are, however, able to investigate the role of the level of material resources in the parental home, measured via parental income.

2.1.1 PARENTAL INCOME

Using the US Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Mulder and Clark (2002) found evidence for the 'feathered nest' hypothesis (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1999), with the likelihood of returning to the parental home after attending college increasing with parental income (Mulder and Clark 2002). This framework assumes that parents are 'altruistic' towards their children, in terms of their economic resources – if their parents are 'stable' economically, children have more to gain by staying and sharing the parental resources (Becker et al. 2010, Ermisch 2003). In certain European countries and specifically in Great Britain, higher parental income has been shown to delay departures from the parental home (Aassve et al. 2002, Ermisch 1999) but there is little evidence regarding returning. Nevertheless, if we assume the altruistic model and that parents prefer to support their children via co-residence, we would expect the

higher the parental income, the more likely young adults will be to return to the parental home to take advantage of their financial resources.

On the other hand, the propensity for co-residence will also depend on the tastes of the individual and their parents for independence and privacy, as well as on the parents' capacity to make intergenerational transfers (Ermisch 2003). Parents who have adequate resources and a preference for privacy will favour supporting their children via financial transfers that will assist them in living independently and will not encourage co-residence. At the same time, for those with fewer resources who may be unable to afford direct financial transfers to their child(ren), it is likely be more cost-effective to support their child via co-residence even if the parents would prefer to live independently. If we assume that parents have a preference for privacy and that wealthier parents will be able to make more generous intergenerational transfers to support their child's independent living, this would lead to an alternative hypothesis where the higher the parental income, the less likely young adults will be to return to the parental home.

2.1.2 CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS

Distance from parents and urbanicity The proximity of independently-living young adults to their parental home is likely to affect the intergenerational relationship (Leopold, Geissler, and Pink 2012), which might in turn influence their propensity to return. We might further speculate that young adults will be more willing to return to the parental home if it is situated in an urban area where employment and other social opportunities may be greater.

Local area unemployment rates and house prices Increasing house prices and increased labour market insecurity for young adults mean that for many leaving home is a precarious and non-linear transition. In Britain, higher regional house prices have been shown to discourage leaving and encourage returns to the parental home (Ermisch 1999). We would expect these macro-level indicators of economic uncertainty to influence the propensity to return to the parental home, over and above individual-level factors, by their impact on the opportunities available to young adults, although the direction of association might not always be clear. For example, living in a region with high rates of unemployment might encourage co-residence with parents because this creates an environment where young adults feel

economically insecure, even if they are currently in employment. On the other hand, it could encourage young adults to leave the parental home to move to a region with more favourable employment prospects. Similarly, young adults living in regions with relatively high house prices might be more likely to live with their parents due to their inability to afford to buy their own home, or could be motivated to move to a more affordable geographical location to increase their chances of owner-occupation. In Britain, this is becoming increasingly important as house prices have increased substantially over the past two decades, both in absolute terms and relative to earnings, while mortgage lending has also becoming more restricted in the context of the recent recession, with a substantial deposit required in most cases order to secure a competitive loan (Wilcox and Pawson 2012). We therefore include local house prices and unemployment rates as covariates in our analyses.

2.2   OTHER   FACTORS   AFFECTING   THE   LIKELIHOOD   OF RETURNING HOME

A number of other individual and contextual factors have been found in the literature to impact on the likelihood of returning home and these are included in the analysis as control variables. Returning home is more common among younger respondents, among men and among those with lower incomes (Davanzo and Goldscheider 1990, Gee et al. 1995, Smits et al. 2010). Previous research has highlighted the impact of turning points in individuals' lives on the likelihood of returning (Stone et al. 2013). Changes in employment status can trigger a move back into the parental home – with those finishing full time education, or losing a job seen to be at a greater risk of returning. Transitions in partnership situation can also be critical points whereby splitting up with a partner can result in a move back home, particularly for men (Davanzo and Goldscheider 1990, Smits et al. 2010).

3   DATA AND METHODS

3.1   THE DATA

The British Household Panel Study (BHPS) is an on-going, nationally representative panel study of individuals from 5500 households first interviewed in 1991. The annual survey follows up individuals from original households even when they divide to form new households. Children from original households are added to the sample

each year when they reach age 16 and are followed up annually. We use data through to 2008. Household grid information is used to identify movement out of and back into the parental home from one year to the next. These annual transitions exclude short-term, temporary changes in living arrangements that occur between panel waves.

We include all young adults who participated in the survey at age 16^{1} years and were living with their parents at this age. This gives us access to information about parental background (as the parent(s) are also included in the survey) and about the timing and reasons for leaving home. As the vast majority (98%) of young adults in the BHPS sample are living in the parental home at this age, we can assume that when they leave home, this is their first experience of leaving. Our analyses begin at the point where an individual leaves the parental home (those who remain with their parents are excluded). We then follow up these individuals until they return home, are lost to follow-up, or reach age 24. By this age, the vast majority will have left full-time education. The sample includes 311 men and 391 women with 816 and 1,225 person-years of data, respectively. Taken from the point when they left the parental home, the five-year follow-up rates for eligible respondents were 73% of men and 80% of women, respectively. In this younger sub-sample, parental occupational class indicated that men and women from more advantaged Service or Intermediate class backgrounds were more likely to be followed up for at least five years.

3.2   MEASURES

3.2.1   RETURNING HOME

We classify young adults who are living in the same household as at least one natural, adoptive or step-parent as living in the parental home. Those who are living outside the parental home at one time-point and are co-resident with their parents one year later at the subsequent survey wave are classified as returning to the parental home. In the BHPS, students living in the parental home during vacations are not enumerated at this address but are treated as members of their term-time household, therefore these temporary returns are not included in our analyses. Young adults leaving the parental

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[1] To increase the sample size, in 1991 we also included those who were aged 17 who were assumed never to have left home. In subsequent sweeps of BHPS, those aged 17 are mostly made up of those who had already entered the sample as a rising 16 year old.

home to go into an institutional setting are included and hence students in halls of residence are followed up (Taylor et al. 2010). Sample attrition is probably greater for those who remain outside the parental home than for those who return, potentially inflating the level of returning. However, we have no reason to believe that this bias will be inconsistent over time, or that it will be concentrated within particular sub-groups of young adults, so do not anticipate that it will affect our results markedly. Furthermore, earlier research by Ermisch (1999) using the same dataset found that such bias was likely to be small.

3.2.2   PARENTAL FAMILY STRUCTURE

Parental family type was based on information from the household grid to establish whether respondents were living with: two natural parents; two parents, mixed (usually one natural and one step-parent); a lone parent (the majority being lone mothers). Very few cases had missing data for this variable, largely because a criterion for inclusion was that we had valid information about parental co-residence at each wave. As such, we had complete household information in the majority of cases. Those few cases with missing values were able to be accounted for by using the parental family type in adjacent waves, conditional on no change between the previous and subsequent waves.

3.2.3   PARENTAL INCOME

Parental (household) income is based on the total reported household income in the month prior to interview when the respondent was aged 16 years and co-resident with parents and is adjusted for household composition using the McClements equivalence scale. We produce wave-specific quartiles of household income, with quartile 1 representing the lowest household income.

3.2.4   CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS

We measure distance from parents to children by the distance in kilometres that the young adult moved on leaving the parental home. A categorical variable groups these distances into <5km, 5-49km, 50-149km or 150km+. We use a categorical variable indicating whether the area in which their parent is living is urban, rural or mixed. We use the local authority district (LAD) to link annual information about local labour markets and housing markets to the BHPS data. We include these two contextual variables in the analysis as time-varying, observed covariates. In our statistical model

we also include LAD as a random effect. The mean number of person-years per LAD ranges from 4.5 to 42.6. Labour market information was obtained from NOMIS. Youth unemployment rates are not available at the level of LAD for the full period (1991 to 2008), but we are able to identify aggregate levels of unemployment using the percentage of the working age population who are receiving unemployment benefit. This "claimant count" rate is taken from September each year to reflect the start date of the BHPS fieldwork. We present wave-specific quintiles, with quintile 1 representing the lowest claimant count (ie. lowest unemployment rate). Information on housing markets for England and Wales was obtained from Department of Communities and Local Government.

Ideally we would like to have both information on rental prices as well as purchase prices but the former are not available. Mean house prices (based on Land Registry data) by LAD are available from 1996. For the years 1991-1995, the 1996 values are extended back. Data for Scotland were obtained from the Scottish Government, primarily from the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics website. Data on mean house prices are available for Scottish datazones (equivalent to local authority district level) for all years from 1991-2007. As for claimant count, we calculate mean house prices as a wave-specific, relative measure (in quintiles), with quintile 1 representing the lowest mean house prices. Finally, to assess changes over historical time we include a period indicator in three banded groups: 1991-1996; 1997-2002; 2003-2008. We group the years since the number of returning events within any individual calendar year within some sub-groups is small, especially within the cohort sample. The break in 1997 reflects the change in Great Britain Government from Conservative to Labour. The cut-off points also coincide with key trends in youth unemployment. The mid-1990s saw a decrease in the youth unemployment rate among young adults aged 18-24 years that continued into the early 2000s; at this point, rates began to rise and continued to do so throughout the subsequent decade (Leacker 2009).

3.2.5   BACKGROUND CONTROLS

Following Davanzo and Goldscheider (1990) we construct change variables that denote a change in circumstances between two annual waves. Based on the change in economic activity (employed; unemployed or inactive; full-time student) between two consecutive waves, we constructed an eight-category variable: 1. Student to

employed; 2. Student to unemployed/inactive; 3. Unemployed/inactive to employed; 4. Employed to unemployed/inactive; 5. New student; 6. Stable student; 7. Stable employed; 8. Stable unemployed/inactive. Table 1 shows that almost half (44.9%) of young adults are in employment at both time-points, while around a third (32.6%) are in education for at least one time-point. We include three categories of partnership dynamics: 1. New or stable partnership; 2. Consistently unpartnered; 3. Partnership dissolution. We do not include newly partnered as a separate category in our models as none of the sample members following this pattern returned to the parental home. As seen in Table 1 the sample are most likely to be in a new or stable partnership (50.3%). As a final turning point, we include an indicator of whether the respondent was a parent at t0.

Individual income is based upon total reported income in the month prior to interview and is time-varying. Income is coded in age-specific quartiles at each wave, with quartile 1 representing the lowest individual income.

Variable	Categories	Percentage (n=2,041 person-years)
Returned home	Yes	11.4
	No	88.6
Sex	Female	60.0
	Male	40.0
Age group	18-19	10.7
	20-21	32.8
	22-23	33.3
	24-25	23.2
Parental family type	Two natural parents	66.2
	Two parents mixed	10.7
	Lone parent	23.1
Parental household income	Quartile 1 (lowest)	18.9
	Quartile 2	31.5
	Quartile 3	31.5
	Quartile 4 (highest)	18.1
Distance moved from parental home	<5km	37.9
	5-49km	17.7
	50-149km	20.8
	150km[†]	19.5
Parental household in urban / rural	Urban	60.8
	Rural	22.0
	Mixed	17.3
Unemployment claimant count (local area)	Quartile 1 (lowest)	17.1
	Quartile 2	20.2
	Quartile 3	21.5
	Quartile 4	18.1
	Quartile 5 (highest)	23.1
House prices (local area)	Quartile 1 (lowest)	22.9
	Quartile 2	21.7
	Quartile 3	19.2
	Quartile 4	19.5
	Quartile 5 (highest)	16.8
Individual income	Quartile 1 (lowest)	26.5
	Quartile 2	26.0
	Quartile 3	24.0
	Quartile 4 (highest)	23.5
Country of birth	UK	96.8
	Outside UK	3.2
Change in economic activity	Student to employed	8.4
	Student to unemployed or inactive	2.6
	Unemployed or inactive to employed	3.8
	Employed to unemployed or inactive	3.5
	New student	2.4
	Stable student	21.6
	Stable employed	44.9
	Stable unemployed or inactive	12.8
Change in partnership status	New/stable partnered	50.3
	Consistently unpartnered	43.3
	Dissolution	6.4
Already a parent	Yes	22.0
	No	88.0
Period	1991-1996	11.5
	1997-2002	54.7
	2003-2008	33.9

Table 1: Distribution of variables (% of total person-years)

3.3 MODEL SPECIFICATION

We use a multilevel discrete time hazards model to estimate the annual probability of returning home. We fit the model in STATA as a logistic regression (Allison 1982), with LAD included as a random effect to control for the geographical clustering of the data at the local area level .

$$\text{logit}(p_i) = \beta_0 + \underline{x}_i^T \underline{\beta} + u_i$$

where ui is a random intercept with mean zero and variance σu2. Time-varying covariates are measured at the start of each one-year period during which returning home can occur, apart from the turning points variables which measure change in status between the start and the end of the year. Age is used as the unit of time.

Our initial model (Model 1 in Table 2) tests the impact of parental characteristics on the likelihood of returning home when just age is controlled. The remaining control variables including changes in economic activity, partnership and parenthood status are then controlled in Model 2 to help establish the pathways through which parental background might impact on the likelihood of returning home. We retain all parental background and contextual variables in both models regardless of significance levels, given that these are the variables of interest with regard to our research questions. We retain those control variables that show at least one association at the 10% level in either men or women.

4 RESULTS

Table 2 shows the results of the multilevel discrete time hazards models, with separate models for men and women.

4.1 PARENTAL FAMILY STRUCTURE

Model 1 in Table 2 does not show any evidence for a significant association between parental family type and returning to the parental home. The association does, however, act in the expected direction, with those coming from a home with two natural parents showing the highest propensity to return. In Model 2, with the addition of the contextual and control variables, the coefficients are largely unchanged for

men. For women, the coefficient for women in the 'two parents (mixed)' category, which primarily refers to the presence of a step-parent, changes direction, becoming positive, although still not statistically significant. This is likely explained by women from step-families being more likely to be partnered, have children to be consistently unemployed/inactive than those from households with two natural parents. All of these factors are also associated with a reduced likelihood of returning home and controlling for them therefore modifies the association between parental family type and returning. Nevertheless, overall we find no statistically significant relationship between parental family type and returning to the parental home for men or women in either model.

4.2   PARENTAL INCOME

In model 1 (Table 2), including only age group and the parental background variables, the only significant association between parental household income and returning is for men from households in the highest income quartile, who are slightly more likely to return than those in the lowest quartile (p=0.06). However, in model 2, after controlling for contextual factors and individual characteristics, no significant associations are observed, with no clear pattern of coefficients emerging.

4.3   CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS

Model 2 (Table 2) suggests that the distance moved from the parental home does not have a very strong relationship with returning home in young adulthood. The most pronounced association is for men who moved between 5 and 49 km from their parental home, who are significantly less likely to return than those who moved less than 5km away and, overall, the least likely to return. We can speculate that this might relate to these men being independent enough to have moved a reasonable distance from the parental home while still being close enough to take advantage of parental support (Mulder and van der Meer 2009), thereby reducing both their desire and need to return. No significant associations with distance from parents are observed for women. For men and women, the coefficients relating to the urban/rural location of the parental home are largely working in the expected direction, with young adults whose parents live in a rural area less likely to return home than those whose parents live in an urban area. However, the relationship is weak and is not statistically

significant. There are no statistically significant associations between local unemployment rates, measured using claimant count, and returning to the parental home. However, we see a significant relationship between local house prices and returning, although only for women. As expected, women living in LADs with the highest house prices were the most likely to return home. The random effect for LAD was significant in both models for men and women.

	Men (n=816 person-years)		Women (n=1,225 person-years)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Age (ref 18-19)				
20-21	0.92*	1.37*	0.73†	0.78
22-23	0.53	1.41†	0.20	0.35
24-25	-0.48	0.83	-1.13*	-0.86
Parental family type (ref 2 nat. parents)				
Two parents, mixed	-0.76	-0.71	-0.01	0.77
Lone parent	-0.46	-0.39	-0.17	-0.48
Parental household income (ref quartile 1, lowest)				
Quartile 2	-0.15	0.45	0.14	0.70
Quartile 3	-0.28	0.17	0.28	0.51
Quartile 4 (highest)	0.75†	1.10	0.57	-0.31
Distance moved from parental home (ref <5km)				
5-49km		-1.54*		0.00
50-149km		-0.41		-0.53
150km†		-0.83		-0.68
Unknown		2.23†		-1.58
Parental household in urban/rural (ref Urban)				
Rural		-0.62		-0.23
Mixed		-0.94		0.31
Local area claimant count (ref quintile 1, lowest)				
Quintile 2		-0.50		-0.39
Quintile 3		-0.26		-0.24
Quintile 4		-0.47		0.39
Quintile 5 (highest)		-0.28		0.20
Local area house prices (ref quintile 1, lowest)				
Quintile 2		-0.01		1.20*
Quintile 3		0.02		1.32*
Quintile 4		0.06		1.61*
Quintile 5 (highest)		0.56		1.54*
Individual income (ref quartile 1, lowest)				
Quartile 2		0.07		-0.36
Quartile 3		0.33		-0.59
Quartile 4 (highest)		0.46		-1.09†
Country of birth (ref UK)				
Outside UK		-2.71†		-1.73
Change in economic activity (ref stable employed)				
Student to employed		2.59***		1.77**
Student to unemployed or inactive		4.17***		2.35**
Unemployed or inactive to employed		1.20		1.97**
Employed to unemployed or inactive		1.22		0.59
New student		-0.83		-0.85
Stable student		-0.57		-1.51*
Stable unemployed or inactive		2.21*		-0.83
Change in partnership status (ref consistently unpartnered)				
New or stable partnered		-4.84***		-4.34***
Dissolution		1.96**		1.62***
Already a parent (ref non-parent)				
Parent		1.28		-2.07**
Period (ref 1991-1996)				
1997-2002		-0.79		1.10†
2003-2008		-1.12†		1.11
Sigma (se) for random effect (LAD)	1.49***	1.90***	1.66***	1.74***
	(0.29)	(0.43)	(0.29)	(0.41)
Constant	-2.38***	-2.46†	-3.01***	-3.86**

Table 2: Discrete-time hazards model of returning to the parental home at ages 18-24 years, by sex.
Note: †p≤0.1, *p≤0.05, **p≤0.01, ***p≤0.001

4.4   CONTROL VARIABLES

In model 2 (Table 2), the strongest effects on returning for both men are women are observed in relation to transitions in economic activity and partnership status. In particular, moving out of student status or experiencing a partnership dissolution are strongly associated with returning, while those in a new or stable partnership are very unlikely to return. Individual income, country of birth and historical period appear to be relatively less important. The random effect for LAD was significant in all of our models, suggesting an effect of geographical location that is not captured by our contextual variables. In part, this might be explained by the specific localities of higher education institutions and the ability of these areas to retain graduates within the area when they have completed their studies (Hoare and Corver 2010).

5   DISCUSSION

Previous authors have argued that a disrupted family background encourages home-leaving and discourages returning due to, for example, conflict with a step-parent or low 'intergenerational closeness' within the family (Bernhardt, Gahler, and Goldscheider 2005, Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1998, Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1989, Kiernan 1992, Mitchell et al. 1989). However, even before controlling for other factors, we failed to find any convincing evidence to support an association between parental family type and the propensity for young adults to return to the parental home. We further found that, particularly for women, individual-level variables relating to economic activity and family formation, which are related to both returning and to parental family type, were much more important than the parental background variables. This supports earlier findings from Canada, (Gee et al. 1995), where child characteristics including marital status, economic activity and reason for leaving home were much stronger predictors of returning than parental characteristics. They suggest that "if children want or need to return home there is a place for them, for the most part, regardless of family characteristics" (p.139). Of course we should also acknowledge that for an important minority of young adults, particularly those in vulnerable situations, returning to live with their parents is not an option – for example those who originally moved out due to a "crisis in the family home" will often have limited prospects for returning (Rugg, Rhodes, and Wilcox 2011).

There is a positive association between individual income and the probability of leaving home in countries across Europe (Iacovou 2010). However, Iacovou further suggests that the impact of parental income is dependent on preferences and on other factors such as age – for example, a higher parental income may allow the parents to inhibit their adult child's formation of partnerships at very young ages, but encourage partnerships at older ages. The fact that we do not see any clear relationship between parental household income and the propensity to return may relate to the potentially contradictory effects of this variable, if we assume that its impact depends on the preferences of the young adult and the parent for co-residence. Among those with a higher parental income and a preference for co-residence, we would see a positive relationship with returning; for those who have a preference for autonomy, higher income would allow greater intergenerational transfers to support independent living. If both of these conflicting processes are at work with equal influence, the net effect of parental income would be zero. This supports earlier findings from ECHP data that showed a comparably weak association between parental income and leaving home, which was similarly attributed to the 'double role of family income' (Aassve et al. 2002).

The contextual variables included in our models showed little impact on the likelihood of returning, especially when contrasted with the strong effects of individual-level factors. We found some effect of local house prices, although this was significant for women only. Supporting earlier findings those living in areas with higher house prices were more likely to return than those living in areas where buying a property was more affordable (Ermisch 1999). Such effects may become even more pronounced due to the credit constraints and changes in loan-to-value (LTV) ratios resulting from the banking crisis of the late 2000s (Clapham et al. 2012, Kennett, Forrest, and Marsh 2012).

A strength of our analysis lies in the use of panel data extending over two decades. Using these longitudinal data we were able to include explanatory variables that require data from multiple time-points, such as the turning points that form a key part of our conceptual framework. We were also able to examine the magnitude of different types of change over time, whether economic, demographic or social. However, sample sizes tend to be smaller in longitudinal than in in cross-sectional

surveys and the sample size of the BHPS is insufficient to examine ethnic differences in returning home, although we acknowledge that this is an important determinant of leaving (Zorlu and Mulder 2011). The BHPS also provides little insight into the impact of parents' downsizing their home following the departure of children, competing demands of siblings on parental resources, the tastes and attitudes of respondents and their families, or about social expectations of the wider peer-group. Nevertheless, these limitations are largely offset by the benefits of the panel in providing access to information about the same individuals over an extended time period and about the entire household with whom they are co-resident at any one time. Moreover, the new UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS), 'Understanding Society', provides a future opportunity to extend the research presented here into a much larger sample of around 40,000 households. The statistical power provided by this large sample size might give us a clearer idea of the extent to which parental background and family structure contribute to the propensity to return, in addition to the strong effects of individual-level factors demonstrated in the present paper. We should also note that data presented here are only available up to 2008, and more recent data (such as from the UKHLS) will allow us to assess the impact of changes over the past four years, for example in housing availability and affordability (Clapham et al. 2012), on patterns of returning home in young adulthood.

In conclusion, our analyses indicate that although parental background and circumstances can contribute to young adults' propensity to return home, this is by far outweighed by the impact of the individual-level characteristics of the young adults themselves.

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