

Plurilingualism and Brain Drain: Unexpected Consequences of Access to Foreign TV

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- ▶ **R.Q.: How does higher foreign language proficiency shape international migration?**
- ▶ Proficiency in a foreign language can:
 1. **Increase emigration** by raising the returns from migration in countries where the language is spoken:
 - ▶ By decreasing migration costs
 - ▶ **By increasing human capital transferability:** this effect should be **stronger for the high-skilled workers compared to the low-skilled** (language-skill complementarity)
 2. Decrease emigration by improving productivity in the home country
 - ▶ On-the-job returns from multilingualism (e.g., tourism)
 3. Increase immigration
 - ▶ Allowing foreigners to work in the country (e.g., English as a working language)

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1. **Efficiency:** language act as barrier to the optimal allocation of workers in the economy (e.g. European Union)
2. **Evaluate** the effects of **foreign language teaching programs**
 - ▶ In many countries higher education is increasingly in English
3. Understand the effect of foreign language proficiency on migration
 - ▶ **The causes of brain drain**

Strategy: A Natural Experiment

- ▶ **Foreign language proficiency and migration decision are endogenous**
- ▶ **We exploit a setting in which a share of Albanians was as good as randomly exposed to Italian television for more than 20 years**

We study the effect of exposure to Italian TV on:

- ▶ Italian language proficiency
- ▶ Migration probability to Italy by individual human capital

Issue: What about other effects of television on migration, **Information** and **Belief**

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Italian TV exposure in Albania:

- ▶ **Italian Language Proficiency** by at least 7 p.p. (150% of Italian knowledge in Albania in 1990)
- ▶ **Increased migration probabilities for high human capital** individuals by 26 p.p. & the probability of **migrating to Italy** by 22 p.p.
- ▶ **Had no effect on the probability to migrate for low human capital** individuals but redirect migrants from other countries to Italy by 3 p.p.

We interpret our findings as the effect of foreign language on brain drain

1. First causal evidence on the effect of foreign language proficiency on migration decisions
 - ▶ **Cultural & linguistic determinants of migration** (Adsera et al., 2015; Belot et al., 2011)
2. Linguistic determinants of brain drain
 - ▶ **Determinants of brain drain:** Information (Adema et al., 2021), differences in return to skills (Akcigit et al., 2016), productivity correlation between countries (Borjas, 1987, 2018), cultural proximity (Belot et al., 2012)
3. Foreign Media & Migration
 - ▶ **Media and migration:** Information (Farre et al., 2013), beliefs (Braga, 2007)

1. Historical Background
2. Data
3. Identification Strategy
4. The Effect of Italian TV on Italian Language Proficiency
5. The Effect of Italian TV on Migration
6. Robustness and Alternative mechanisms
7. Conclusion

In 1945 Enver Hoxha took power and establish the Albanian Communist regime

- ▶ Totalitarian, completely isolated, no access to foreign media and culture, closed borders, forbidden immigration and emigration, controlled internal migration

In 1990 the regime came to an end among popular protests

- ▶ Political pluralism and private property, passports and free migration, free internal migration

By 2000

- ▶ 700 thousand Albanians had migrated: $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Albanian population
- ▶ 500 thousand to Greece and **200 thousand to Italy**

▶ Migr- Patterns

Historical Background: a Tear in the Wall

- ▶ In 1957, the Italian public broadcasting company (RAI) built a transmitter to cover Puglia
- ▶ Because of distance the signal **unintentionally** reached Albania
- ▶ 10% of Albanian population was exposed to the signal
- ▶ 62% households had a TV set in 1990 capable of capturing Italian TV signal
- ▶ Albanian TV was on air for 4 hours

Countless historical records report Albanians were regularly watching Italian TV [▶ Shows](#)

- ▶ The transmitter's signal reached Albania **unintentionally**
- ▶ Until 1990, **self-selection into treatment was absent**: no strategic internal migration, no international migration

Conditional on:

1. Distance to Italy/Transmitter/Ports
2. Ruggedness and elevation of the terrain
3. District fixed effect

Until 1990 exposure to Italian TV signal is **as good as random**: we identify the **causal effect of exposure on the variables of interest**

We link three different datasets:

1. **RAI**: Italian television signal strength in Albania at a 100x100 meters resolution
 - ▶ Treatment: share of the municipality of living in 1990 exposed to Italian TV signal
2. **QGIS and NASA Shuttle Radar Topography Mission**: Distance and topographic municipalities' characteristics
3. **World Bank**: Albania Living Standard Measurement Survey 2005

1. **Base sample:** 17302 individuals in 480 municipalities

- ▶ 11,040 individuals aged 18 in 2005
- ▶ **Internal migration history, education, self reported foreign language proficiency in 1990: Italian, English Greek, Other**

2. **Sibling sample:** 27,666 individuals

- ▶ Head of the household and spouse in Base sample are asked about **country of residence, and date of departure abroad**, and demographics of their siblings
- ▶ Assume location of residence in 1990 is the same as the respondent's and education is correlated across siblings

▶ Add. Data

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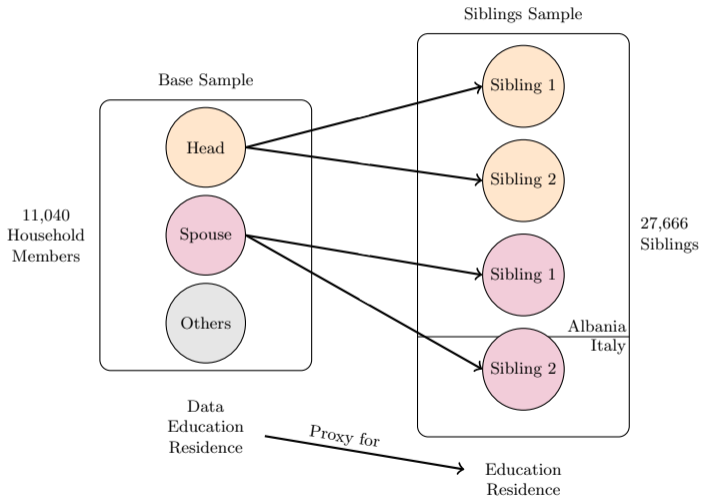
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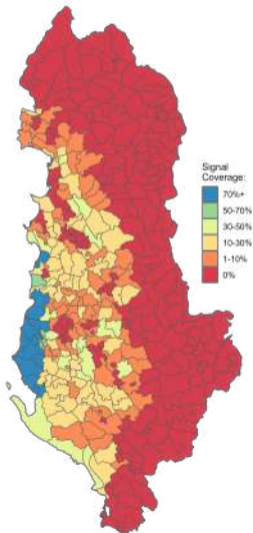
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Sample Structure



	LSMS sample			Siblings		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
Obs.	11,040	5,226	5,814	27,888	14,542	13,346
Age distribution						
mean	41	41	40	46	46	46
Education						
> HS	10%	10%	9%			
Foreign Language Proficiency in 1990						
Italian	5.3%	5.2%	5.3%			
English	4.4%	3.9%	5.0 %			
Greek	1,9%	2,5%	1.5%			
Other	3.6%	3.7%	3.6%			
Yearly Internal migration rate						
Before 1990	0.7%	0.5%	1%			
After 1990	1.4%	1.2%	1.6%			
International migration						
Share				17%	21%	12%
< 1990				0.7%	0.6%	1%
Destination Countries						
Italy				32%	32%	33%
Greece				50%	52%	46%
TV set in 1990 (household level)						
Share	62%					



We estimate the following regression (OLS):

$$Y_{i,m,d} = \alpha + \beta * \text{Signal}_m + \sum_{d=1}^{36} \gamma_d \text{Dis}_d + \theta_1 C_m + \epsilon_{i,m,d} \quad (1)$$

Where i is the individual, m is the municipality, d the district

1. $Y_{i,m,d}$ is the outcome variable
2. Signal_m is the proportion of municipality m covered by TV signal
3. Dis_d is a district fixed-effect
4. C_m vector of distance and topographic controls
5. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level (treatment level)

β identifies the causal effect of the treatment

	Base Sample					
	Italian	English	Other	Greek	Italian	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
TV Signal	0.070** (0.033)	0.020 (0.018)	0.006 (0.023)	0.013 (0.030)	0.104*** (0.040)	0.012 (0.023)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greek Community				✓		
District fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample	All	All	All	All	TV	No TV
Observations	11,040	11,040	11,040	11,040	6,667	3,837
Mean dependent variable	5.3%	4.4%	3.6%	1.9%	6.0%	3.3%

St. Err. clustered at municipality lvl. # clusters 352 (1)-(4), 290 (5) 228 (6); * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Results: Effect of Italian TV on Emigration to Italy

	Siblings Dataset						
	Abroad			Italy		Elsewhere	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
TV Signal	-0.002 (0.031)	0.261*** (0.070)	-0.010 (0.031)	0.222** (0.086)	0.030* (0.018)	0.040 (0.072)	-0.057* (0.031)
Base Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
District fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample	All	High Skill	Low Skill	High Skill	Low Skill	High Skill	Low Skill
Observations	27,666	2,153	25,513	2,153	25,513	2,153	25,513
Mean dependent variable	17.1%	21.2%	16.7%	6.9%	5.3%	14.4%	11.3%

St. Err. clust. at municipality lvl.: (1) 310, (2)(4) 128, (3)(5) 302, (5), 290, (5) 228, (6) 128 (7) 306; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Robustness:

1. Removing coastal and border areas [Table](#)
2. Removing fully exposed and non-exposed municipalities [Table](#)
3. Using different measures of positive selection [Table](#)

What are the other effects of exposure to Italian TV on migration?

- ▶ **Information** (Adema et al. (2021)): TV provided high-skilled Albanians with costless information about jobs and economic opportunities in Italy
- ▶ **Belief** (Farre' et al. (2013)): TV led Albanians to overestimate the returns to migration to Italy:
The Italian Dream

Solution: We study the subset of individuals who already had a connection in Italy at the time of migration → they did not rely on TV for information/belief [Alt Mechanisms](#)

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- ▶ We exploit a natural experiment to show the effect of foreign language proficiency on migration
- ▶ We show that foreign media exposure affects migration probabilities through foreign language
- ▶ We show that foreign media exposure can increase foreign language proficiency

As the sign welfare effect of brain drain on stayer is still debated, we leave the welfare evaluation of our findings to future research

	Children/Spouses						
	Italian	English	Greek	Italian		Italian	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
TV Signal	0.093* (0.048)	0.046 (0.033)	0.027 (0.022)	0.158** (0.064)	0.032 (0.052)	0.147** (0.057)	0.005 (0.082)
Base Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greek Community			✓		✓		
District fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample	All	All	All	Abroad	Albania	TV	No TV
Observations	4,615	4,615	4,615	2,026	2,589	2,887	1,728
Dependent variable mean	7.9%	6.5%	3.2%	12.0%	4.8%	9.5%	5.4%

St. Err. clustered at the municipality lvl., # clusters: (1)-(3) 253, (4) 230, (5) 226, (6) 198, (7) 166. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

	Base		
	Italian	English	Other
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Signal	0.064* (0.0334)	0.012 (0.0181)	0.002 (0.0231)
Base Controls	✓	✓	✓
Greek Community	✓	✓	✓
District fixed effects	✓	✓	✓
Sample	All	All	All
Observations	11040	11040	11040

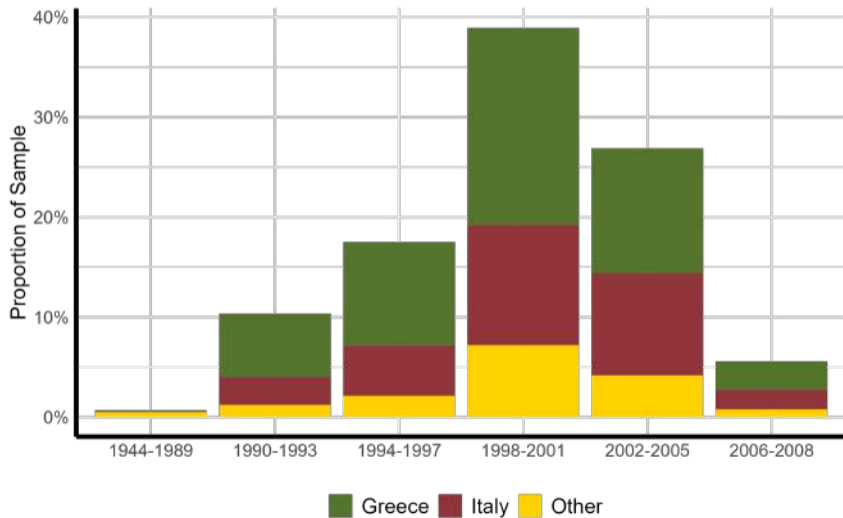
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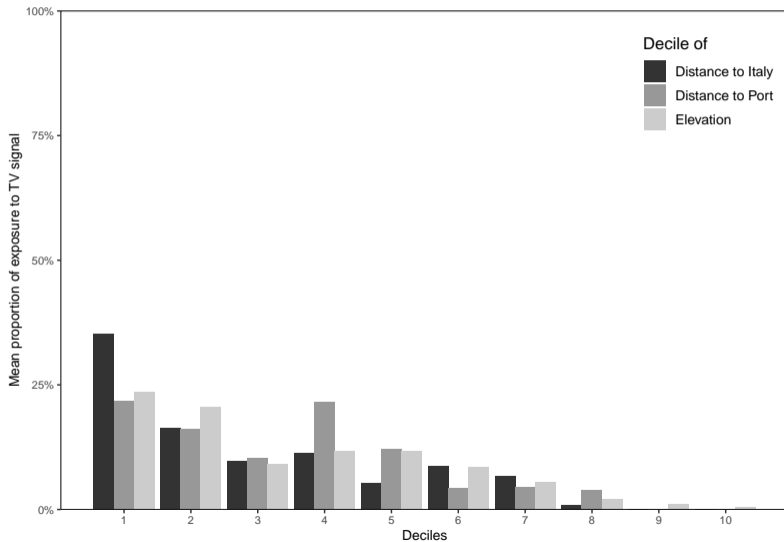
	How did you learn Italian?	
	Yes	No
Formal Study	33%	67%
Watching TV	90%	10%

Show	Obs.	Share	Type
Domenica In	183	25%	Entertainment
Fantastico	92	13%	Entertainment
Piacere Raiuno	86	12%	Entertainment
Domenica sportiva	84	11%	Entertainment
Creme Caramel	35	5%	Entertainment
Quark	34	5%	Entertainment
Sanremo	30	4%	Entertainment
La Piovra	25	3%	Entertainment
Lunedì film	23	3%	Entertainment
Tg1	21	3%	Information
Mercoledì <i>~sport</i>	19	3%	Entertainment
Big	17	2%	Entertainment
Tg1 7	13	2%	Information
Discoring	13	2%	Entertainment
Speciale Tg1	12	2%	Information
Linea Verde	12	2%	Entertainment
Viaggio intorno all uomo	10	1%	Entertainment
Colpo Grosso	10	1%	Entertainment
Telemike	9	1%	Entertainment
Notte Rock	7	1%	Entertainment

Shows	Share	Shows	Share
Domenica In	25%	Quark	5%
Fantastico	13%	Sanremo	4%
Piacere Raiuno	12%	La Piovra	3%
Domenica Sportiva	11%	TG1	3%
Creme Caramel	5%	Mercoledì' Sport	3%

Table: Italian shows usually watched in Albania





Providers of Information	Abs.	Share
Family/relatives in Albania	30	0.03
Family/relatives abroad	298	0.30
Friends in Albania	137	0.14
Friends abroad	409	0.41
Previous personal experience	81	0.08
Neighbours	19	0.02
TV, radio, newspaper or book	8	0.01
Internet	0	0
Other	14	0.01
Tot.	996	1

Table: Who provided information on where to go and/or how to find work during this first migration episode?
Sample of Return Migrants in 2005 LSMS survey

Distribution of TV and migration probabilities across human capital

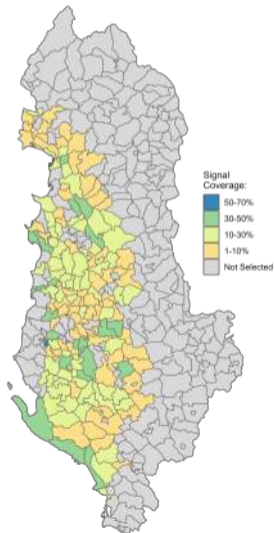
Education	Share of Migrants	Share of TV ownership in 1990 Albania
Less than HS	0.14 (.003)	0.57 (.006)
HS	0.20 (0.006)	0.68 (.010)
Vocational Secondary	0.20 (0.005)	0.68 (.008)
University	0.21 (0.009)	0.78 (0.011)

Table: Sibling Dataset: share of migrants and share of TV ownership in 1990

	Base Sibling Alr. Italy (1)	Control Sibling Alr. Italy (2)
Sibship Dimension	0.449*** (0.152)	0.378* (0.218)
_cons	-3.192*** (0.508)	1.461 (2.473)
	Sibship Dimension	Sibship Dimension
Male	-0.108*** (0.0317)	-0.103*** (0.0312)
_cons	4.871*** (0.0232)	5.452** (1.803)
<i>N</i>	48207	48207

(2) Controls: district f.e., distance to Italy/transmitter/port, elevation, ruggedness

St. Err. clustered at municipality lvl: (1)-(2) 12,142; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$



	Siblings Dataset			
	Small Family		Larger Housing	
	Abroad	Italy	Abroad	Italy
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
TV Signal	0.154** (0.0690)	0.0819* (0.0472)	0.177*** (0.0592)	0.104** (0.0450)
Base Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
District fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample	High Skill	High Skill	High Skill	High Skill
Observations	2449	2449	4043	4043

(1) & (2) Municipality closer 30 km to port and 48 km to Greek Border are removed St. Err. clustered at municipality lvl. # clusters: (1)-(2) 243; (3)-(4) 240; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

1. LSMS Albania 2008

- ▶ Not in main analysis due to data quality: municipality of residence in 2008 is imputed, and it does not specify which spouse is listing her siblings.
- ▶ We can replicate all results by pooling LSMS 2005 and 2008 data together.
- ▶ We exploit this data when studying *Alternative Mechanisms*, imputing municipality of residence and pooling the spouse's data.

2. Children/Spouse sample

- ▶ The head of the household in the base sample is asked about **country of residence, foreign language proficiency in 1990**, and the demographics of the spouse and children who no longer live in the household.
- ▶ We use this data to replicate the results of the effect of TV exposure on foreign language proficiency.

1. **Base sample:** 31,573 individuals in 353 municipalities

- ▶ 19,140 individuals aged at least 5 in 1990
- ▶ **Internal migration history, education, self reported foreign language proficiency in 1990: Italian, English Greek, Other**

2. **Sibling sample:** 50,720 individuals in 347 municipalities

- ▶ Head of the household and spouse in Base sample are asked about **country of residence, and date of departure abroad**, and demographics of their siblings
- ▶ 48,885 individuals aged at least 5 in 1990
- ▶ Assume location of residence in 1990 is the same as the respondent's and education is correlated across siblings

3. **Children/Spouse sample:** 8,791 individuals 336 municipalities

- ▶ Head of the household in Base sample is asked about **country of residence, foreign language proficiency in 1990** and demographics of spouse and children that are no longer living in the household
- ▶ 8,689 individuals aged at least 5 in 1990

Variable	Base			Siblings			Children/Spouse		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
<i>Observations</i>	19140	9078	10062	48885	25758	23127	8791	4225	4566
Mean Age	46	47	46	48	48	48	36	36	35
University	9.8%	10.9%	8.9%	.	.	.	10.3%	9.0%	11.5%
<i>Proficiency in 1990</i>									
Italian	4.0%	4.2%	3.8%	.	.	.	7.2%	7.9%	6.6%
Greek	1.6%	2.0%	1.3%	.	.	.	4.4%	5.2%	3.6%
English	3.8%	3.5%	3.5%	.	.	.	5.9%	5.4%	6.4%
Other	2.6%	2.7%	2.4%	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Internal Migration Rate</i>									
Before 1990	0.3%	0.2%	0.5%	.	.	.	.	.	.
After 1990	1.1%	0.9%	1.3%	.	.	.	.	.	.
<i>International Migration</i>									
Share migrated	.	.	.	17.6%	21.5%	13.2%	45.6%	60.3%	32.1%
Before 1990	.	.	.	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
<i>Destination</i>									
Italy	.	.	.	32.0%	31.4%	33.2%	39.4%	40.9%	36.8%
Greece	.	.	.	51.9%	53.9%	48.3%	43.4%	42.7%	44.5%
USA	.	.	.	6.3%	5.3%	8.2%	4.4%	3.3%	6.4%
Mean TV Signal	9.7%	9.5%	9.9%	10.7%	10.7%	10.6%	12.6%	12.9%	12.4%
1990 TV Ownership rate	65.1%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

	Full Sample				Restricted Sample	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Age	Sex ratio	Age	Sex ratio	Age	Sex ratio
Signal	2.434*	-0.0253			0.441	-0.0573
	(1.254)	(0.0232)			(2.531)	(0.0450)
Signal II			1.497	-0.0208		
			(1.175)	(0.0197)		
N	27666	27666	27666	27666	18985	18985

Controls: District F.E., Distance to Italy/transmitter/port, Elevation, Ruggedness

Clustered standard errors in parentheses. St. Err. clustered at the municipality lvl: (1)-(4) (310 clusters); (5)-(6) 180 clusters). * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

	Siblings Dataset			
	No Coast & Border Abroad		Partially Treated Abroad	
	Italy	Italy	Italy	Italy
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
TV Signal	0.168** (0.0675)	0.168*** (0.0519)	0.549*** (0.123)	0.361** (0.0172)
Base Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
District fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sample	High Skill	High Skill	High Skill	High Skill
Observations	1,476	1,476	704	704

(1) & (2) Municipality closer 30 km to port and 48 km to Greek Border are removed
 St. Err. clustered at municipality lvl. # clusters: (1)-(2) 72, (3)-(4) 63; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

What about other effects of exposure to Italian TV on migration?

- ▶ **Information** (Adema et al.(2021)): TV provided high-skilled Albanians with costless information about jobs and economic opportunities in Italy
- ▶ **Belief** (Farre' et al. (2013)): TV led Albanians to over estimate return to migration to Italy *the Italian Dream*

Solution: We study the subset of individuals who have already a connection in Italy at time of migration → they do not rely on TV for information/belief

As a measure for having a connection in Italy at time of migration we exploit:

- ▶ Having a relative or a family friend in Italy in 1990: exogenous but small sample (1,1% of household)
- ▶ Having a sibling in Italy at time of migration: good sample size but endogenous

Solution: We model selection for having a sibling in Italy at time of migration

▶ **Instrument for the selection equations:**

1. Relative/Friend abroad in 1990
2. gender of the older sibling (Instrument for sibship dimension ▶ IVsib)

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Robustness to Alternative Mechanisms

	Siblings Dataset: Italy				
	OLS		Control Function		
	(1)	(2)	Sex of 1 _{st} Born	Rel. Abroad	Rel. Italy
TV Signal	0.142** (0.065)	0.135** (0.066)	.061 (.040)	0.059** (0.030)	0.057* (0.030)
Rel. In Italy 1990	0.0911** (0.042)	0.040 (0.049)			
TV Signal× Rel. In It.		0.470 (0.349)			
TV Signal× Uni			0.1482** (0.133)	0.236** (0.120)	0.238** (0.120)
Selection equation					
Male as First Born			-.054* (0.029)		
Rel. Abroad				0.147*** (0.029)	
Rel. Italy					0.469*** (0.071)
λ			-0.026*** (0.031)	0.0184 (0.187)	0.145 (0.095)
Sample	High Skill	High Skill	All	All	All
Observations	3,766	3,766	40,030	48,885	48,885

St. Err. clust. at municipality lvl. for (1)-(3), (4)-(5) Heck. est.; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

What about information:

- ▶ Information shows account for 7% among the Italian shows Albanians were watching [▶ Shows](#)
- ▶ Only 1% of return migrants answer TV as information provider for finding a job and where to go sampled [▶ table inf.](#)
- ▶ 70% of the sample is abroad since more than 4 years