The Wisconsin Mothers with Young Children Study (WiscMoms):
Report on a Pilot Survey of Formal and Informal Support of Children in Complex Families

Lawrence M. Berger
Maria Cancian
Daniel R. Meyer
University of Wisconsin–Madison
Institute for Research on Poverty

Nora Cate Schaeffer
Jessica Price
University of Wisconsin
Survey Center

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I. INTRODUCTION

Analyses supported by recent research agreements between the Bureau of Child Support and the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) suggest that (1) most children born to unmarried parents will live in complex families—where one or both parents have children with other partners; (2) many nonresident fathers contribute informal as well as formal support to their children; and (3) levels of formal and informal support are related to whether parents have other partners. Our understanding of family resources, and the role of formal and informal child support, is nonetheless limited by the lack of information about the full range of sources of support and obligation for complex families. In response, the Wisconsin Mothers with Young Children Study (WiscMoms) was initiated to develop and test a survey on family complexity and sources of economic resources for complex families through the collection of pilot data for a small sample of 205 complex families.

The effort builds on the third wave of the Survey of Wisconsin Works Families (SWWF; fielded as part of the Child Support Demonstration Evaluation), which included innovative questions about all prior and current the partners of the mother, and their contributions, both to their biological children and to other children living with the mother. The WiscMoms survey extends that effort by (1) using administrative records to identify and oversample complex families; (2) targeting complex families irrespective of their welfare status (the SWWF included only families who had participated in TANF); (3) collecting data on partners or others contributing to the household, even if they are not the father of any children living in the household and/or are not living in the household themselves; and (4) using newly available data on a range of public program participation from the Multi-Sample Person File Database, which is housed at IRP, to quantify the magnitude of differences in resources measured in administrative records from those measured by broader survey measures. This report describes the survey and presents descriptive results from the pilot data collection effort.

It is important to note that the sample for this pilot work was quite small and was purposely selected to obtain high rates of family complexity and limit costs related to surveying this population. As

such, it is unclear that the pilot results can be generalized, and they should be considered and interpreted with extreme caution. The overall goal of the pilot was to test the innovative instrument designed to capture family complexity, (food-related) resource sharing, and consistency (or lack thereof) between survey and administrative data, as well as to gather information through which to assess the feasibility, including cost, of fielding a larger survey intended to gather representative data on these issues.

Section II of this report provides an overview of the study design, sample description, and fielding procedures and outcomes. Section III presents descriptive data from the administrative records that allow for a comparison between surveyed mothers and mothers included in the sampling frame but not surveyed, as well as for a comparison between surveyed mothers who were designated to be "high-" or "low-effort" cases (described below). In Section IV, we present descriptive results on family complexity over time, which were made possible by the extensive calendaring exercises included in the interview. Section V describes family complexity in the month before the interview; Section VI provides a description of the types and range of individuals who contribute and consume food and food-related resources to the household; and Section VII presents a comparison between self-reported (survey) and administrative data on program participation vis-à-vis the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Child Support Enforcement. In sections IV through VII, we first briefly present descriptive results based on the data collected in the pilot. More importantly, however, we then highlight the types of information that were collected in the WiscMoms survey but are not available in standard household surveys. In the final section we highlight implications for future research on family complexity.

II. STUDY DESIGN, SAMPLE DESCRIPTION, AND FIELDING[1]

Overview of the Survey

The WiscMoms project was designed to describe complex families and households and identify who lives in and visits the household and how these individuals share informal and formal resources. The instrument was developed collaboratively by researchers at IRP and the University of Wisconsin Survey Center (UWSC). In this study, a series of complex rosters were used to get a picture of the household in the past 30 days, including who lived there, for how many nights, and how these individuals are related to each other. Standard survey questions regarding living arrangements were also administered in order to assess how responses to these items reflect families' dynamic living arrangements and experiences. The acts of eating together and providing food for each other were investigated in detail as one means to understand how resources are shared informally. Specifically, the survey carefully documents the many ways individuals contribute food-related resources to and consume them from the household. The instrument used a collaborative variant of standardized interviewing in which the structure of the rosters and timelines and the information the respondent provides are displayed on a tablet computer (iPad). The display serves several purposes: to help the respondent perceive the structure of the complex rosters, to enhance retrieval by providing memory cues, and to display information so that the respondent can review and correct it. Finally, the survey has been linked to administrative data from a range of public social welfare programs, which allows for assessment of the extent to which the structure and eligibility rules of these programs are responsive to families' actual living arrangements and resource situations.

Study Design and Sample Description

The methodological goals of the WiscMoms survey were two-fold: (1) to design and test a new collaborative instrument and a collaborative variant of standardized interviewing, and (2) to pilot the

[1]Much of this section is excerpted from the *Wisconsin Mothers with Young Children: Field and Response Rate Report* prepared by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center in June 2012. The full report is available upon request.

instrument with a sample of complex families to determine if we could achieve a successful response rate (over 80 percent). Given cost constraints, respondents were sampled from Dane and Milwaukee counties only. The sampling frame included only women who had a non-marital birth in the last quarter of 2011 and had at least one prior child (who may have been born within or outside of marriage). A total of 652 cases meeting these criteria were identified in the KIDS database.[2] Once sampled, respondents were randomly assigned to high- and low-effort groups. High-effort cases received UWSC best practices including refusal reassignment, tracing, and repeated contact attempts. Our experience with this group was intended to provide an estimate of potential future successes and budget requirements. Fewer resources were expended in seeking interviews with low-effort cases. The goal for the low-effort cases was to increase the quantity of cases available for analysis while limiting the cost of the pilot survey. Our goal was to complete interviews with 60 (30 percent) high-effort and 140 (70 percent) low-effort cases. Once these goals were achieved, pilot data collection was to be suspended.

The sample was extensively pre-traced by UWSC in order to confirm best contact information for respondents. All cases in the sample were fielded at the same time. Respondents were mailed an advance letter regarding the study.[3] After the advance letter was sent, interviewers attempted to contact all cases in-person. If in-person attempts were not successful, interviewers were then permitted to use phone numbers to reach out to respondents. Phone numbers for 81 percent of respondents were found via tracing or provided with original sample information. Many of these phone numbers were disconnected. Most field work consisted of in-person attempts, as these were most successful in securing participation.

Consistent with the pilot design, high-effort cases received considerably more contact attempts than low-effort cases. High-effort completed cases received an average of 6.1 contact attempts, while

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[2]Two of these cases consisted of mothers who were currently under 18 years of age. These mothers were not pursued for potential inclusion in the survey sample and were thus excluded from the UWSC field and response rate report.

[3]"Return to sender" letters were subsequently re-traced and re-sent if better information was found. For high-effort cases, tracing in the field was handled in real time with interviewers calling into the UWSC tracing hotline or submitting cases to hard tracing. Tracing continued up to the last day of the field period on all remaining high-effort non-completes.

low-effort completed cases received an average of 3.8 contact attempts. High- effort non-completes received an average of 7.9 contact attempts, and low-effort non-completes received an average of 3.6 contact attempts.

Survey Fielding

The interview for this project was conducted using a computer-assisted in-person interviewing system (CAPI). Using the CAPI program, the text of the survey appears question by question on a computer screen for the interviewer to read to the respondent. Routing through the interview is based on skip logic pre-programmed into the computer. Question wording is also adapted according to answers given previously in the interview. The system allows for pre-coded questions, open-ended questions, and combinations of the two. In addition, the computer allows only valid responses to be entered; when an invalid response is entered, the computer asks the interviewer to re-enter the response. In order to facilitate the collaborative standardized interviewing technique used for this project, flexible menu screens were developed. These screens allowed the interviewer to roster information and individuals in the most natural order for the respondent, rather than an order predetermined by the researchers. In addition to a standard CAPI-software program, WiscMoms utilized a UWSC-developed program referred to as the Viewer which displayed respondent data on an iPad in user-friendly tables. Showcards were also available on a question-by-question basis on the iPad. This program was developed as a shell that can be easily adapted to other projects or questions in the future.

Most interviews were conducted in the respondent's home. Interviewing began on March 8, 2012 and ended on May 3, 2012. The average length of the interview was 51.5 minutes. Of the 390 cases that were fielded, 205 interviews were completed; of these, 60 (29 percent) were high-effort and 145 (71 percent) were low-effort cases. The overall response rate for the high-effort sample was 82.2 percent and the overall response rate for the low-effort sample was 47.1 percent.

III. COMPARISON OF THE SURVEY SAMPLE TO THE SAMPLING FRAME AND BY EFFORT LEVEL

In order to assess the extent to which the survey sample was representative of the sampling frame, we produced descriptive statistics based on demographic variables that were available in the MSPF for four groups of mothers: (1) mothers in the initial sampling frame, but not included in the survey sample, (2) all mothers included in the survey sample, (3) mothers included in the survey sample as high-effort cases; and (4) mothers included as low-effort cases.[4] These results are presented in Table 1 where we compare mean differences between (1) and (2), with statistically significant differences represented by asterisks in column (2), and between (3) and (4), with statistically significant differences represented by asterisks in column (4). On the whole, there were few significant differences between groups. However, given the small sample size, this may to some degree reflect limited statistical power. This is particularly the case when considering differences between the high- and low-effort groups.

The only significant differences we find are between the not-surveyed and surveyed groups, and only with regard to race and SNAP receipt. Surveyed mothers were somewhat more likely to be white (34 percent vs. 25 percent) and somewhat less likely to be Asian (1 percent vs. 3 percent) than those not surveyed; the former were also more likely to have received a SNAP benefit in the final quarter of 2011 (98 percent vs. 90 percent). Though not attaining statistical significance, there also differences between these groups in terms of Hispanic representation (14 percent vs. 19 percent), average income in 2011 ($7,105 vs. $6,704), and W-2 receipt in the fourth quarter of 2011 (57 percent vs. 50 percent). On the whole, though, these figures do not suggest that one group is systematically more (less) advantaged than the other. For example, the surveyed group has higher average income, but also greater W-2 participation. In addition, whereas there were no significant differences between the high- and low-effort groups, the descriptive statistics suggest that the low-effort group included a greater proportion of white (38 percent vs. 27 percent) and smaller proportion of black (58 percent vs. 65 percent) mothers, who had higher mean

[4](3) and (4) are subsets of (2).

Table 1: Comparison of the Survey Sample to the Sampling Frame and by Effort Level

	Not Surveyed	Surveyed	High Effort	Low Effort
Race				
White	0.25	0.34*	0.27	0.38
Black	0.61	0.60	0.65	0.58
Native American	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02
Asian	0.03	0.01*	0.02	0.00
Hispanic	0.19	0.14	0.15	0.14
Income in 2011	6704.10	7104.76	5548.32	7753.28
	(9821.22)	(9796.00)	(9448.80)	(9896.94)
Respondent Age	27.56	27.34	27.54	27.25
	(5.31)	(5.01)	(4.79)	(5.12)
Respondent age at first birth	19.72	19.32	19.24	19.36
	(3.44)	(3.11)	(2.87)	(3.21)
Years since first child born	7.84	8.01	8.29	7.90
	(5.33)	(5.33)	(4.75)	(5.57)
Number of children	3.10	3.03	3.13	3.00
	(1.49)	(1.36)	(1.37)	(1.35)
Number of children/years since first child born	0.61	0.59	0.52	0.62
	(0.58)	(0.64)	(0.31)	(0.73)
Received SNAP 4th quarter 2011	0.90	0.98*	0.97	0.98
Received W2 4th quarter 2011	0.50	0.57	0.60	0.56
Education and income from survey:				
Less than high school			0.32	0.34
High school			0.25	0.33
More than high school			0.43	0.32
Self-reported income in past 30 days			849.22	960.82
			(755.36)	(919.42)
Observations	448	204	60	144

Note: 652 observations. *p < .05 for surveyed (vs. not survey) mean difference. There were no significant differences between the high and low effort cases.

incomes in 2011 ($7,753 vs. $5,548) and higher incomes in the past 30 days ($961 vs. $849, as reported on the survey), had given birth to their first child more recently (7.9 vs. 8.3 years ago), and had more children per year since the birth of their first child (.62 vs. .52). These factors suggest that the high-effort group is somewhat more disadvantaged than the low-effort group, with the exception that the latter had lower levels of educational attainment.

IV. SURVEY DATA ON FAMILY COMPLEXITY OVER TIME

Table 2 presents selected descriptive statistics on the extent to which mothers have experienced family complexity since the birth of their first child. In particular, we focus on survey reports gathered through an intensive calendaring exercise that asked respondents to identify the dates of all of their children's births and to link children to their respective fathers as well as the beginning and end of all periods of cohabitation and marriage—with children's fathers or any other men. We present these figures for the full survey sample and, separately, by high- or low-effort status. There was only one statistically significant difference between these two groups: low-effort cases include a disproportionate number of mothers who had children with a greater number of different men, adjusted for the number of years since the mother's first birth. There were no other statistically significant differences. However, the small sample size limits our ability to discern differences and it is noteworthy that some of the other estimated differences were relatively large in magnitude, even while they were not statistically significant.

Considering the survey sample as a whole, mothers had their first birth an average of 8 years prior to the interview, but with a large range from about 17 months to about 24 years prior to the interview.[5] Given this considerable range, we present many of the descriptive statistics both as raw numbers (for

[5]Four mothers reported that their first birth occurred within 7 months of the interview. This should not have been the case given that the sampling frame included mothers in the KIDS data who had a second or higher order birth in the last quarter of 2011. These discrepancies occurred for two reasons: mothers who gave birth to twins were (erroneously) included because the administrative data indicated that one of the twins was a second birth, and one mother reported the sample child as being her first birth despite that the KIDS data indicated that she had a previous birth.

Table 2: Mothers' Family Complexity since Birth of First Child

	Full Survey Sample	High Effort	Low Effort
Years since birth of first child	8.01	8.29	7.90
	(5.33)	(4.75)	(5.57)
Proportion of mothers with:			
0–2 years since birth of first child	0.07	0.03	0.07
2–5 years since birth of first child	0.30	0.25	0.32
5–10 years since birth of first child	0.34	0.40	0.33
10–15years since birth of first child	0.17	0.22	0.18
>15 years since birth of first child	0.11	0.10	0.10
Mean number of fathers	2.08	2.15	2.06
	(0.98)	(0.95)	(0.99)
Proportion with:			
1 father	0.27	0.23	0.28
2 fathers	0.48	0.48	0.48
3 fathers	0.19	0.22	0.17
4 fathers	0.04	0.05	0.04
5 or more fathers	0.02	0.02	0.02
Number of fathers/years since first birth	0.37	0.31	0.40*
	(0.36)	(0.14)	(0.42)
Mean number of marriages (range: 0–1)	0.12	0.08	0.13
Proportion ever married by:			
1 father	0.16	0.07	0.20
2 fathers	0.09	0.07	0.10
3 fathers	0.16	0.15	0.16
4 fathers	0.00	0.00	0.00
5 or more fathers	0.00	0.00	0.00
Number of fathers mother has lived with for >=30 days (range 0–2)	0.54	0.58	0.53
	(0.56)	(0.62)	(0.54)
Proportion living with:			
0 fathers	0.49	0.48	0.49
1 father	0.48	0.45	0.49
2 fathers	0.03	0.07	0.02
Number of fathers mother has lived with for >=30 days/total number of fathers	0.33	0.33	0.34
	(0.39)	(0.39)	(0.39)
Number of fathers mother has lived with for >=30 days/years since first birth	0.14	0.10	0.15
	(0.33)	(0.14)	(0.39)
Total years cohabiting with a father since first birth (across all fathers)	2.47	2.47	2.47
	(3.25)	(3.55)	(3.13)

(table continues)

Table 2 , continued

	Full Survey Sample	High Effort	Low Effort
Total years cohabiting with a father since first birth/years since first birth	0.33	0.29	0.35
	(0.34)	(0.31)	(0.35)
Total years cohabiting with a non-father since first birth (across all non-father partners)	0.04	0.04	0.04
	(0.29)	(0.25)	(0.31)
Years cohabiting with a non-father since first birth/years since first birth	0.01	0.00	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.06)
Observations	204	60	144

Note: *p<.05 for low effort (vs. high effort) mean difference.

example, number of fathers) and as a proportion of the number of years since the birth of the mother's first child (that is, relative to the amount of time a mother was at risk of experiencing a particular demographic event). Although, the mean number of men with whom a mother had a child was just over 2, the range was quite also wide (from 1 to 7). Just over a quarter of mothers had a child with only 1 father, about half had a child with 2 fathers, almost a fifth with 3 fathers, and about 6 percent (n = 13)[6] with 4 or more fathers. On average, mothers had children with.4 fathers per year following the birth of their first child; however, the mothers in our sample are relatively young (given our sampling criteria) and the probability of a birth with a new partner may decline as women age. Rates of ever having been married were relatively low (only 12 percent of mothers had ever married) and did not show a clear pattern of association with the number of men with whom a mother had children, with the exception that none of the mothers whose children had 4 or more fathers (about 6 percent of the sample; n = 13) had ever married. Rates of cohabitation were considerably higher, such that roughly half of all mothers had lived with one of their children's fathers and 3 percent (n = 7) had lived with two fathers for a period of 30 days or more; still, roughly half of these mothers had never cohabited with any of their children's fathers. On average, mothers lived with about a third of their children's fathers and cohabited with one or more fathers for a total of approximately one-third of the years since the birth of their first child (about 2.2 total years per father and 2.5 years for all fathers combined).[7] Only a few mothers (n = 6) reported ever having cohabited with a man who was not a father to one or more of their children since the birth of their first child. Thus, the number and proportions of years spent cohabiting with partners who are not (and will not become) fathers to their children was quite small. Among those mothers who did cohabit with a non-father partner,

[6]Number of observations is also presented throughout for figures of less than 10 percent.

[7]A few differences between the high- and low-effort groups warrant attention. As noted above, the low-effort mothers had a significantly greater mean number of fathers per year since the birth of their first child (.4 vs. .3). In addition, though nonsignificant, the difference in the proportion ever married between the low- and high-effort groups (13 percent vs. 8 percent; n = 19 and 5) is considerable. The low-effort mothers also spend a greater proportion of years since the birth of their first child cohabiting with a father than did the high-effort mothers (.35 vs. .29 years).

on average they spent 1.4 years or just under a quarter of the time since the birth of their first child in these cohabitations.

The extensive calendaring exercises in WiscMoms mean that several aspects of the information collected on family complexity over time are quite rare for a household survey. For example, these data enable analyses of the timing of cohabitations, marriages, and births (and, by association, pregnancies).Thus, we are able to determine whether a pregnancy or birth occurred prior to, during, or after a couple began cohabiting or was married. This may provide important but rarely available data on the likelihood that particular types of couples will move in together or marry before a pregnancy (and, if so, how long before) or after learning that they will have a child together, as well as what factors may affect these decisions. The data also allow for analyses such as precise calculations of whether each of a mother's births occurred during a period of singlehood, cohabitation, or marriage and how these patterns may differ by factors such as birth order, number (and order) of fathers, maternal age, and other demographic patterns. Combined with available detailed information on formal child support ordered and received, these data could support analyses of the relationship between child support enforcement efforts and the formation of complex families. Together, analyses focusing on these aspects of union formation and fertility behaviors may shed new light on the diverse pathways through which complex families are formed, which may have implications for studying links between number, type, and timing of demographic events and subsequent child and family outcomes. The small sample size for the pilot will not support these types of analyses. However, we did examine, for example, the proportion of births that occurred within periods of singlehood (76 percent), cohabitation (20 percent), and marriage (4 percent).[8] Moreover, the pilot provides a starting point for more extensive data collection.

[8]Furthermore, 43 percent of mothers had at least one birth while married to or cohabiting with the father; 9 percent had at least one birth while married to the father.

V. SURVEY DATA ON CURRENT FAMILY COMPLEXITY

Selected descriptive statistics on current family complexity related to children's living arrangements over the past 30 days are presented in Table 3A. The figures were chosen to highlight the data that were collected to help us understand the number, types, and range of individuals who live in and spend time in particular households. One advantage of the WiscMoms data collection strategy in this area is that we can look at family complexity and living arrangements from the perspectives of both biological children and mothers. This is not possible in most household surveys which tend to approach a family either from the mother's perspective or that of one particular "focal" child.

On average, mothers in this pilot sample (which included only mothers with 2 or more children) reported in the survey that they had just under 3 children, although the range was quite large (from 0 to 8). From the biological children's perspective, we see that most children were living with their biological mother, but about 7 percent were not (this includes minors living out-of-home as well as adult children). The picture is somewhat different when assessed from the mother's perspective; here we see that 84 percent of mothers lived with all of their biological children, 10 percent had one child living elsewhere, and about 6 percent (n = 11) had 2 or more children living elsewhere. We also see that a relatively large proportion of households (9 percent; n = 18) included a least one child who was not a biological child of the mother and that 10 percent had one or more nonbiological children who did not live in the household stay overnight there during the past 30 days. On the whole, children who the mother reported to be living in the household spent an average of 27 nights there, with biological children spending an average of 28 nights (ranges for all children and biological children were 6 to 30 and 8 to 30). Children reported not to be living in the household, but who stayed there at least one night, stayed there an average of 6 of the last 30 nights, with a range of 1 to 30 nights.

Table 3B focuses on current family complexity vis-à-vis mothers' and fathers' living arrangements. Most mothers (93 percent) reported staying all of the past 30 nights in the household, and the 7 percent who spent one or more nights elsewhere spent only an average of 1.8 nights (range 1 to 2) out of the household. Forty-four percent of mothers reported that a father of at least one of her children

Table 3A: Current Family Complexity (past 30 days) with Regard to Children's Living Arrangements

	Full Survey Sample	High Effort	Low Effort
Number of children born to mother	2.93	3.08	2.86
	(1.27)	(1.28)	(1.27)
Number of biological children living with mother	2.67	2.88	2.58
	(1.18)	(1.19)	(1.17)
Proportion of biological children living with mother	0.93	0.94	0.92
Proportion of biological children living elsewhere	0.07	0.06	0.08
Proportion of mothers with:			
0 children living elsewhere	0.84	0.87	0.83
1 child living elsewhere	0.10	0.10	0.10
2 living elsewhere	0.02	0.00	0.03
3 children living elsewhere	0.02	0.03	0.01
4 or more children living elsewhere	0.01	0.00	0.02
Number of children living in HH	2.83	2.98	2.77
	(1.28)	(1.28)	(1.28)
Proportion of mothers living with:			
0 nonbiological children	0.91	0.92	0.90
1 nonbiological child	0.05	0.07	0.05
2 nonbiological children	0.02	0.00	0.03
3 or more nonbiological children	0.02	0.02	0.02
Proportion of mothers with:			
0 nonbiological children staying	0.90	0.93	0.89
1 nonbiological child staying	0.03	0.02	0.04
2 nonbiological children staying	0.03	0.03	0.03
3 nonbiological children staying	0.02	0.00	0.02
4 or more nonbiological children staying	0.02	0.02	0.02
Mean nights (per child) spent in R's HH for children who lived with R	27.20	27.55	5.14
	(5.02)	(27.05)	(4.98)
Mean nights (per child) R's biological children spent in her HH	28.17	28.13	28.20
	(3.81)	(4.39)	(3.55)
Mean nights (per child) spent in R's HH for children who did not live there	6.17	10.10	5.19
	(8.80)	(13.38)	(7.57)
Observations	204	60	144

Note: There were no statistically significant mean differences between high and low effort cases at $p < .05$.

Table 3B: Current Family Complexity (Past 30 Days) with Regard to Mothers' and Fathers' Living Arrangements

	Full Survey Sample	High Effort	Low Effort
Proportion of mothers who stayed at a different place at least one night	0.07	0.07	0.08
Number of nights R stayed in HH	29.22	28.87	29.36
	(3.58)	(4.96)	(2.84)
Proportion of mothers who live with a father	0.44	0.43	0.44
Proportion of mothers with whom a father stayed (but did not live)	0.21	0.22	0.20
Proportion of fathers with keys/total number of fathers	0.44	0.45	0.43
Proportion of fathers with mail/total number of fathers	0.39	0.35	0.41
Proportion of fathers with belongings/total number of fathers	0.44	0.42	0.45
Number of nights a father slept in HH (all fathers)	14.54	13.72	14.88
	(13.82)	(13.75)	(13.88)
Number of nights a father who lived in HH slept there	28.72	27.88	29.06
	(4.71)	(6.39)	(3.82)
Proportion of mothers for whom a father lived there and spent:			
0 nights	0.00	0.00	0.00
1–5 nights	0.01	0.04	0.00
6–10 nights	0.01	0.00	0.02
11–15 nights	0.02	0.04	0.02
16–20 nights	0.02	0.04	0.02
21–30 nights	0.93	0.88	0.95
Number of nights a father who did not live in HH slept there (all fathers)	2.01	1.63	2.17
	(5.21)	(4.21)	(5.58)
Number of nights a father who did not live in HH slept there (of those who slept there)	9.76	7.54	10.76
	(7.55)	(6.25)	(7.97)
Proportion of mothers for whom a father did not live there and spent:			
0 nights	0.64	0.62	0.65
1–5 nights	0.14	0.21	0.11
6–10 nights	0.10	0.06	0.11
11–15 nights	0.06	0.09	0.05
16–20 nights	0.03	0.03	0.04
21–30 nights	0.03	0.00	0.04
Observations	204	60	144

Note: There were no statistically significant mean differences between high and low effort cases at $p < .05$.

lived in her household and another 21 percent reported that a father stayed there at least one night in the past 30 days.[9] Only 51 percent of mothers reported ever having lived with a man since the birth of their first child (Table 2) which suggests that relatively few mothers had prior cohabitation experiences. Similar proportions of fathers had keys (44 percent), received mail (39 percent), and kept most of their belongings (44 percent) at mothers' homes as lived there. Just 1 percent of mothers (n=2) reported that more than one father had a key, received mail, or kept belongings at her house. Furthermore, whereas the proportions of fathers in each of these categories was quite high when mothers lived with a father (83 percent for keys, 81 percent for mail, and 97 percent for belongings; not shown in table), a substantial proportion of fathers did not have keys or receive mail at the mother's house despite being described as living there. This is clearly an area for future research. At the same time, the proportion of fathers who mothers described as staying some nights, but not living with them and also reported to have keys to, receive mail at, or keep most of their belongings at the mothers household was quite low (13 percent, 7 percent (n = 8), and 3 percent (n = 4), respectively; not shown in table). Only 4 percent (n = 3) of fathers who neither lived nor stayed with the mother had keys to her household and none received mail or kept most of their belongings there (again, not shown in table). This suggests the potential importance of asking questions beyond the standard items used in household rosters.

Across all mothers (households), a child's father slept in the household an average of 15 nights in the past month (range 0 to 30), with an average of 29 nights (range 4 to 30) among those for whom a father lived there and 2 nights (range 0 to 30) among those for whom one did not (mean of 10 nights with a range of 1 to 30 for fathers who did not live there but spent at least one night there). In many ways, however, the distributions of nights spent are more interesting than the means. For example, whereas about 93 percent of mothers who reported that a father lived with them reported he spent 20 to 30 nights there, approximately 4 percent (n = 4) reported that he spent 10 to 20 nights and approximately 2 percent

[9]Two mothers reported that two different fathers of their children lived in their household, however, only one reported that both fathers had stayed there in the last 30 days.

(n = 2) reported that he spent only 1 to 5 nights. Mothers also reported a considerable range of nights that fathers who did not live with them stayed there. Whereas 64 percent reported no nights, 14 percent reported 1 to 5 nights, 16 percent reported 6 to 15 nights, and 6 percent (n = 7) reported 16 to 30 nights. While the small sample limits our ability to draw conclusions, these findings suggest the potential importance of collecting more detailed information on living arrangements.

Table 3C looks more broadly at the range of adults that may live or stay in a household. On the whole, 19 percent of mothers' households included at least one other adult who she described as living there, but was not the father of any of her children; 6 percent (n = 12) included 2 or more such adults. On average, these adults spent about 27 nights there in the last month. An additional 15 percent of mothers reported that other adults stayed but did not live at their house; for two-thirds of the mothers, this was only 1 adult, but for a third this was 2 or more adults. Among mothers with other adults staying over, they did so for an average of 8 nights in the past month.

The other (non-father) adults who lived or stayed with mothers, consisted of current boyfriends, relatives, and nonrelatives. Of mothers with other adults (exclusive of fathers) living or staying in their households, 16 percent reported having a current boyfriend, 74 percent other relatives, and 17 percent other nonrelatives.[10] This demonstrates that a considerable proportion of children are exposed to a wide range of adults—to whom they may or may not be related by blood or marriage—but, who stay overnight in their homes. Current boyfriends followed by nonrelatives spent by far the most nights in mothers' homes (11 and 14 nights, on average, respectively); relatives spent an average of 2 nights a month in mothers' homes. We are aware of no existing survey that systematically collects data on individuals who stay over at, but do not live in, a household.

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[10]All current husbands and former boyfriends who were reported as living or staying at a mother's household were also fathers to at least one of her children and are therefore not included in these figures. Of all adults (including fathers) living or staying with mothers, 7 percent (n = 13) were mothers' current husbands, 52 percent were current boyfriends, 6 percent (n = 12) were former boyfriends, 25 percent were other relatives, and 11 percent were other nonrelatives (not shown in table).

Table 3C: Current Family Complexity (Past 30 Days) with Regard to Other Adults' Living Arrangements

	Full Survey Sample	High Effort	Low Effort
Proportion of mothers who live with other adults' (not including fathers)	0.19	0.17	0.20
Number of other adults who lived with R (range 0–11)	0.32	0.42	0.28
	(0.98)	(1.53)	(0.63)
Proportion of mothers with:			
0 other adults	0.81	0.83	0.80
1 other adult	0.13	0.10	0.15
2 other adults	0.03	0.02	0.03
3 or more other adults	0.03	0.05	0.02
Number of nights other adults who lived in HH slept there	26.89	25.58	27.43
	(6.51)	(6.91)	(6.38)
Proportion of mothers for whom other adults lived there and spent:			
0 nights	0.02	0.00	0.03
1–5 nights	0.00	0.00	0.00
6–10 nights	0.00	0.00	0.00
10–15 nights	0.05	0.08	0.03
15–20 nights	0.07	0.17	0.03
20–30 nights	0.86	0.75	0.90
Proportion of mothers who had other adults who did not live there stay there	0.15	0.15	0.15
Number of other adults who did not live in HH but stayed there	0.27	0.20	0.31
	(1.29)	(0.51)	(1.50)
Proportion of mothers with:			
0 other adults	0.85	0.85	0.85
1 other adult	0.11	0.10	0.12
2 other adults	0.03	0.05	0.02
3 or more other adults	0.01	0.00	0.01
Number of nights other adults who did not live in HH slept there (all)	1.80	1.67	1.86
	(3.64)	(3.19)	(3.83)
Number of nights other adult who did not live in HH slept there (of those who had other adults stay there)	8.06	7.74	8.19
	(6.48)	(7.43)	(6.11)

(table continues)

Table 3C, continued

	Full Survey Sample	High Effort	Low Effort
Proportion of mothers for whom other adult did not live there and spent:			
0 nights	0.60	0.60	0.60
1–5 nights	0.29	0.25	0.31
6–10 nights	0.07	0.13	0.04
10–15 nights	0.03	0.02	0.03
15–20 nights	0.01	0.00	0.02
20–30 nights	0.00	0.00	0.00
Proportion of mothers for whom the following other adults (non-fathers) stayed there (lived there or did not):			
Current boyfriend	0.16	0.11	0.18
Other relative	0.74	0.67	0.76
Other nonrelative	0.17	0.33	0.12
Mean number of nights (per individual) staying there for the following other adults (lived there or did not, but stayed there):			
Current boyfriend	10.62	8.00	11.09
	(11.46)	(0.00)	(12.49)
Relative	1.60	1.46	1.64
	(1.73)	(2.07)	(1.62)
Other nonrelative	13.96	16.79	11.13
	(12.98)	(11.70)	(14.64)
Total number of children and adults that lived in HH in last 30 days	3.15	3.42	3.04
	(1.55)	(1.67)	(1.48)
Total number of children and adults that stayed but did not live in HH in last 30 days	0.54	0.35	0.63
	(2.46)	(0.88)	(2.87)
Total number of children and adults that lived or stayed in HH in last 30 days	3.70	3.77	3.67
	(2.84)	(1.79)	(3.19)
Observations	204	60	144

Note: There were no statistically significant mean differences between high and low effort cases at $p < .05$.

Table 4 presents data on fathers' time spent in the household, relationship type, and the keys, mail, and belongings measures by mother-father coresidence status. These data explicitly allow us to compare results from our innovative approach to collecting data on family complexity to that of standard survey items. The data indicate that, at the extremes, the standard question of whether a mother and father live together works quite well. All fathers who spent no nights in the household were reported to be not living with the mother, and 97 percent of those who spent 21 to 30 nights in the household were reported to be living with her. In the middle of the distribution of nights spent at the household, however, the standard question works less well. Here, we see, for example, that 19 percent of fathers reported to be not living with the mother spent 6 to 20 nights with her, whereas 4 percent (n = 4) of fathers reported to be living with her did so. The row percentages further amplify this point. Of those fathers who spent 11 to 15 and 16 to 20 nights with the mother, 78 percent and 80 percent were reported to be living with her, whereas 22 percent and 20 percent, substantial proportions, were reported not to be living with her. Thus, the standard questions do not appear to consistently classify this group.

The bottom panel of Table 4 presents data from fathers' and current boyfriends' perspectives. In contrast to most existing household surveys, we are able to present these data because we explicitly asked about each child's father as well as the mother's current boyfriend. The data in this panel are based on 423 fathers who had one or more children with the 204 mothers in the sample, as well as 17 additional current boyfriends who were non-fathers. While we saw in the previous panel that 36 percent mothers had at least one father or current boyfriend who did not live there but spent any nights in the household, here, we see that only 15 percent of fathers and current boyfriends who were reported not to be living with the mother spent at least one night in her home in the last month. On average, those not reported to be living with the mother spent 1 night and those reported to be living with her spent 28 nights with her during the prior 30 days. Again, however, the distribution tells a more complex story. For example, of those fathers who spent 16 to 20 nights at the mother's home, two-thirds were characterized as not living with her, whereas one-third were described as living with her.

Table 4: Father and Current Boyfriend Time Spent in the Household, Relationship Type, and Keys, Mail, and Belongings by Mother-Father Coresidence Status

	Do Not Live Together		Live Together	
	Column Total	Row Total	Column Total	Row Total
From Mothers' Perspectives				
Proportion of mothers for whom a father spent any nights in HH	0.36		1.00	
Number of nights a father slept in HH	3.52		28.78	
	(6.55)		(4.63)	
Proportion of mothers for whom a father spent:				
0 nights	0.64	1.00	0.00	0.00
1–5 nights	0.14	0.94	0.01	0.06
6–10 nights	0.10	0.92	0.01	0.08
11–15 nights	0.06	0.78	0.02	0.22
16–20 nights	0.03	0.80	0.01	0.20
21–30 nights	0.03	0.03	0.94	0.97
From Fathers' or Current Boyfriends' Perspectives				
Proportion of fathers and boyfriends who spent any nights in HH	0.15		0.99	
Number of nights fathers and boyfriends slept in HH	1.34		28.11	
	(4.23)		(6.14)	
Proportion of fathers or boyfriends who spent:				
0 nights	0.85	1.00	0.01	0.00
1–5 nights	0.06	0.91	0.02	0.09
6–10 nights	0.05	0.94	0.01	0.06
11–15 nights	0.02	0.78	0.02	0.22
16–20 nights	0.01	0.67	0.02	0.33
21–30 nights	0.01	0.03	0.92	0.97

(table continues)

Table 4, continued

	Do Not Live Together		Live Together	
	Column Total	Row Total	Column Total	Row Total
Proportion of fathers by relationship status:				
Married	0.03	0.41	0.14	0.59
Romantically involved	0.10	0.30	0.81	0.70
On and off	0.08	0.90	0.03	0.10
Just friends	0.29	0.99	0.01	0.01
Hardly ever talk	0.25	1.00	0.00	0.00
Never talk	0.26	1.00	0.00	0.00
Current boyfriend (non-father)		0.67		0.33
Proportion of fathers or boyfriends by:				
Has key	0.05	0.18	0.81	0.82
Gets mail	0.02	0.10	0.78	0.90
Keeps belongings	0.01	0.04	0.95	0.96

Note: The mother's perspective panel is based on 204 observations of mothers, of whom 115 reported that they did not live with a father and 89 reported living with a father. The fathers' and current boyfriends' perspective column is based on 441 fathers and current boyfriends of whom 344 were reported as not living with a mother and 97 were reported to be living with a mother.

Turning to relationship status, we see that, whereas in most surveys, couples who report being married are assumed to live together, only 59 percent of the men to whom mothers reported being currently married were also reported to be living in their household. This was the case for 70 percent of the men mothers reported being romantically involved with. Additionally, two-thirds of mothers' current boyfriends (who were not the fathers of any of their children) were considered not living with the mother, but 72 percent of these men spent at least one night at the mother's home in the last month. On average, these men spent 11 nights there; those described as living there had a mean of 24 nights and those described as not living there had a mean of 4 nights (not shown in table). Finally, whereas having keys, getting mail, and keeping belongings at the mothers house are all more common among men who live there than those who do not, the item on keeping belongings appears to differentiate men that mothers report as living with them and those they report as not living with them better than the other two items.

Table 5 presents results for the proportion of men for whom mothers responded affirmatively to the key, mail, and belongings items, separately, for men reported as living with and not living with the mother, conditional on relationship type with the mother. Again, we see that having keys to and receiving mail and keeping belongings at the mother's home are extremely common for men who live with the mother and also more common in higher order relationships (married, romantically involved) than lower order ones when she does not. Nonetheless, there is still considerable variation, particularly with regard to current boyfriends and to "on and off" and "just friends" relationships in which the father does not live with the mother (very few fathers in these categories, 3 and 1, respectively, were reported to be living with a mother). These relationships do not neatly fall into a single living arrangement category, nor are they reported to be consistent with regard to keys, mail, and belongings. Finally, of these items, keeping belongings at the mother's home appears to most consistently mirror mothers' reports of whether she lives with a man.

The data presented in this section highlight that the pilot survey instrument gathered much more detailed data on family complexity than is available in most household surveys. As such, the data suggest a much more nuanced picture of family relationships and living arrangements than is typically found.

Table 5: Father or Current Boyfriend Keys, Mail, and Belongings by Mother-Father Coresidence and Relationship

	Do Not Live Together	Live Together
Probability of having a key if:		
Father:		
Married	0.78	1.00
Romantically involved	0.19	0.78
On and off	0.07	1.00
Just friends	0.02	1.00
Hardly ever talk	0.00	n/a
Never talk	0.00	n/a
Current boyfriend (non-father)	0.12	0.77
Probability of getting mail if:		
Married	0.11	0.85
Romantically involved	0.09	0.80
On and off	0.07	1.00
Just friends	0.02	1.00
Hardly ever talk	0.00	n/a
Never talk	0.00	n/a
Current boyfriend (non-father)	0.06	0.77
Probability of keeping belongings if:		
Married	0.00	0.92
Romantically involved	0.06	0.97
On and off	0.04	1.00
Just friends	0.01	1.00
Hardly ever talk	0.00	n/a
Never talk	0.00	n/a
Current boyfriend (non-father)	0.04	0.95
Probability of having key, getting mail, or keeping belongings if:		
Married	0.78	1.00
Romantically involved	0.28	0.99
On and off	0.11	1.00
Just friends	0.04	1.00
Hardly ever talk	0.00	n/a
Never talk	0.00	n/a
Current boyfriend (non-father)	0.18	0.97
Observations	344	97

Note: Based on 441 fathers and current boyfriends. Observations for living together and not living together are: married (9 and 13); romantically involved (32 and 74); on and off (27 and 3); just friends (96 and 1); hardly ever talk (82 and 0); never talk (86 and 0); and current boyfriend (49 and 77).

Specific innovations of our approach in this area include: (1) the ability to assess living arrangements and relationships from the perspectives of mothers, fathers, and children (proportion of mothers for whom a father stayed over; proportion of fathers who stayed over, etc.); (2) our emphasis on capturing the exact number of nights all individuals spend in a household as well as whether each has keys, receives mail, or keeps belongings there, regardless of these individuals' relationships to the mothers or children; (3) the ability to describe relationships between all individuals who spent any nights in a household; (4) the inclusion of data on the frequency that mothers sleep outside of the household; and (5) the ability to analyze the ways in which various activities associated with living together (nights spent, keys, mail, belongings) map onto mothers' reports of which individuals do and do not live with them. Each of these aspects of our data collection effort is exceptionally rare in existing studies.

VI. SURVEY DATA ON FOOD RESOURCE PROVISION AND CONSUMPTION

The data presented in Table 6 pertain to the specific individuals who provide food-related resources to and consume them from a household. The table highlights that we are able to assess the specific type of resources (meals, groceries/take-out, money for food, food purchased at a restaurant, etc.) consumed or provided by individuals who live in the household and those who do not.[11] A few of the key empirical findings shown in the table include, for example, that 86 percent of all adults who lived with a mother made some kind of food-related contribution to the household, 42 percent of all mothers also received food-related contributions from outside of the household; a total of 78 percent of mothers received food-related contributions from other individuals; 25 percent of mothers made food-related contributions to others who did not live in the household; 92 percent of adults and 80 percent of children reported to be living in the household ate most of their food there; 96 percent of adults and 86 percent of children on the household's SNAP benefit ate most of their meals there; and that the ratio of total food consumers to food providers was .90, suggesting 9 adult consumers for every 10 adult providers. The data

[11]Furthermore, though we do not do so in Table 6, food-related resource contribution and consumption figures can be computed by number of nights an individual spends at the household or any of the associated factors (keys, mail, belongings) discussed in the previous section.

Table 6: Food-Related Resource Provision and Consumption

All food-related contributions	
Proportion of adults who make food-related contribution (of adults who live there)	0.86
Proportion of mothers who receive food-related contribution from someone who lives there	0.52
Proportion of mothers who receive food-related contribution from someone who doesn't live there	0.42
Proportion of mothers who receive food-related contribution from:	
0 adults who live there	0.48
1 adult who lives there	0.45
2 or more adults who live there	0.08
0 adults who do not live there	0.58
1 adult who does not live there	0.33
2 or more adults who do not live there	0.09
Proportion of mothers who receive any food-related contribution	0.78
Groceries and take-out	
Proportion of adults who provide groceries/take-out (of adults who live there)	0.84
Proportion of mothers who receive groceries/take-out from someone who lives there	0.51
Proportion of mothers who receive groceries/take-out from someone who doesn't live there	0.32
Proportion of mothers who receive groceries/take-out from:	
0 adults who live there	0.49
1 adult who lives there	0.44
2 or more adults who live there	0.07
0 adults who do not live there	0.68
1 adult who does not live there	0.27
2 or more adults who do not live there	0.05
Proportion of mothers who receive any groceries/take-out	0.72
Eating out	
Proportion of adults who take R/children out to eat (of adults who live there)	0.49
Proportion taken out to eat by someone who lives there	0.31
Proportion taken out to eat by someone who doesn't live there	0.23
Proportion taken out to eat by :	
0 adults who live there	0.69
1 adult who lives there	0.28
2 or more adults who live there	0.02
0 adults who do not live there	0.78
1 adult who does not live there	0.19
2 or more adults who do not live there	0.03
Proportion of mothers taken out to eat	0.48

(table continues)

Table 6, continued

Money for food	
Proportion of adults who provide money for food (of adults who live there)	0.62
Proportion of mothers who receive money for food from someone who lives there	0.39
Proportion of mothers who receive money for food from someone who doesn't live there	0.17
Proportion of mothers who receive money for food from:	
0 adults who live there	0.61
1 adult who lives there	0.36
2 or more adults who live there	0.02
0 adults who do not live there	0.83
1 adult who does not live there	0.16
2 or more adults who do not live there	0.01
Proportion of mothers who receive any money for food	0.50
Mother's contributions outside the household	
Proportion of mothers who had adults who don't live in HH over to eat	0.24
Proportion of mothers who bought groceries/takeout for adults who don't live in HH	0.10
Proportion of mothers who took adults who don't live in HH out to eat	0.05
Proportion of mothers who gave adults who don't live in HH money for food	0.02
Proportion of mothers who gave any food-related contributions	0.25
Adults and children eating in the household	
Number of adults who ate most of their food in HH/number of adults in HH	0.92
Number of adults who ate most of their food in HH/number of adults on SNAP benefit (if receiving)	0.96
Number of children who ate most of their food in HH/number of children in HH	0.80
Number of children who ate most of their food in HH/number of children on SNAP benefit (if receiving)	0.86
Sources of income used for food	
Primary source of income used for food:	
SNAP	0.87
WIC	0.02
Other government program	0.02
Own earnings	0.07
Other source	0.03
Proportion of total adult food consumers/total food providers	0.90
Proportion of total (adult and child) food consumers/total food providers	0.31
Proportion of mothers who received formal child support	0.28
Proportion of mothers who received informal child support	0.58
Proportion of mothers receiving more than $50 informal child support (of those receiving)	0.83
Fathers' and boyfriends' contributions and consumption	
Proportion of fathers who made food-related contributions	0.46
Proportion of father who consumed food-related resources	0.39
Proportion of current boyfriends who made food-related contributions	0.75
Proportion of current boyfriends who consumed food-related resources	1.00
Observations	204

also indicate that these families were quite disadvantaged: 87 percent reported that SNAP was their primary source of income used for food, whereas only 7 percent reported this to be earnings.

Finally, because the behaviors of children's fathers and mothers' current boyfriends was a particular focus of the pilot survey, the final panels of the table highlight child support contributions and these men's food-related resource behaviors. With regard to child support, 28 percent of mothers reported receiving formal child support and 58 percent reported receiving informal child support. Of those receiving informal support, 83 percent reported that they received more than $50 per month. Turning to food-related resources, we find that fathers were more likely to contribute more food-related resources than to consume them: 46 percent of all fathers contributed food-related resources whereas 39 percent consumed them. However, this was not the case for current boyfriends. Whereas 75 percent of current boyfriends made food-related resource contributions the household, 100 percent of these men consumed food-related resources from it.

The types of data on food-related resource sharing—and, in particular, the detailed level at which these data were collected—represent, to the best of our knowledge, the first effort of its kind. Collecting such data, not only on food-related resources, but in other areas of resource sharing (housing costs, household expenditures in other areas of consumption) can provide crucial information on which individuals make net economic contributions to households and which consume more than they contribute, and under what circumstances. Such information may have substantial implications for designing income support and other public policies that accurately reflect households' current situations and the economic and social needs of households' as a whole as well as their individual members.

VII. COMPARISON OF SURVEY AND ADMINISTRATIVE DATA ON PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

A final innovation of the WiscMoms project is that it allows for the explicit comparison of self-reported (survey) data on program participation with information included in administrative data from these programs. Examples of the types of comparisons that can be made, for SNAP and child support enforcement, are provided in Table 7. On the whole, the data reveal that mean statistics from the survey

Table 7: Consistency between Self-Reports and Administrative Data: SNAP and Child Support

	Survey	Admin Data
Proportion receiving SNAP	0.94	0.93
SNAP benefit received during month of interview (recipients only)	478.70	473.10
	(202.62)	(242.27)
Number of people on SNAP benefit during month of interview	3.88	3.83
	(1.43)	(1.33)
Proportion receiving child support	0.28	0.32
Proportion of fathers giving child support/total number of fathers	0.15	0.19
Total child support received during month of interview (recipients only)		241.12
		(330.58)
Proportion receiving informal child support (for expenses other than food)	0.58	
Observations	204	204

and administrative data are relatively consistent, particularly with regard to SNAP benefits. For example, 94 percent of survey respondents reported receiving SNAP benefits and 93 percent of survey respondents were found in the administrative to be receiving SNAP benefits. A cross-tabulation of SNAP reports in the survey and in the administrative data (not shown) revealed 93 percent agreement and 7 percent disagreement with regard to whether a mother had a SNAP benefit. The mean monthly amount of the SNAP reported and found in the administrative data was also quite consistent, at about $478 and $473, respectively, in the month of the interview. Moreover, when we divided the distribution of both the survey report and administrative data benefit amount into five identical categories (in $200 increments) we found 81 percent agreement and 19 percent disagreement with regard to the category in which a household was placed. Likewise, whereas the mean number of individuals included on the SNAP benefit was similar in the survey and administrative data (3.88 and 3.83), the correlation between the two (not shown) was only .71. This suggests that there is some variation between self-reports and administrative data which may be masked by analyses focusing only on central tendency—that is, by comparisons between aggregated survey and administrative reports not matched at the individual level.

Finally, we compared child support receipt statistics found using the survey data to those in the administrative data. A somewhat lower proportion of mothers reported receiving any child support on the survey (28 percent) than were found to be receiving child support in the administrative data (32 percent); a crosstab (not shown) revealed 87 percent agreement in reporting across the two datasets. Likewise, mothers reported that a smaller proportion of fathers was paying child support than was found in the administrative data (15 percent vs. 19 percent of all fathers), and the correlation here was only .62. In addition, though not asked on the survey, we found the average child support amount collected by mothers in the month before the survey to be $241, with a range of $0 to $1,574, and, though unavailable in administrative data, we found that 58 percent of mothers reported receiving some amount of informal child support for expenses other than food.

On the whole, these data reveal consistencies and inconsistencies between self-reported and survey data. As such, it is possible that analytic results may diverge depending on which data source is

used and for what particular purpose. This highlights the importance of linking self-report and administrative data as well as the need for further research to understand discrepancies between the two, the circumstances under which such discrepancies may arise, and how reliance on self-reported versus administrative data may substantively effect analyses of program participation.

VIII. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ON FAMILY COMPLEXITY

The WiscMoms project was intended to test an innovative instrument designed to measure current and historical family complexity, food-related resource sharing, and (in)consistency in program participation information drawn from survey and administrative data. The pilot survey was also intended to allow us to assess the feasibility of fielding a larger study intended to produce representative data on family complexity and associated issues. Findings from this pilot have multiple implications for future research. First, it should be quite feasible to conduct a larger survey of this type: both the response rate for and amount of effort expended to interview the high-effort cases were well within the norm for surveys of disadvantaged populations.

Second, the extensive calendaring exercises included in WiscMoms provide a relatively rare level of detail for a household survey with regard to family complexity over time. Data of this type may be useful for better understanding trajectories of union formation and dissolution, as well as fertility behaviors, that comprise the diverse pathways through which complex families are formed. A better understanding of the range of such pathways is needed to determine how the types and timing of particular demographic events may influence life trajectories.

Third, the instrument's unique approach to gathering data on current family complexity has the potential to yield much richer and more detailed data on who spends time in a household and what it means to "live" in a household, as well as for specifying types of relationships between all individuals spending time in a household, than has been possible to date. Data with this level of detail has, to the best of our knowledge never before been collected in a household survey. The pilot instrument thus provides a much more precise picture of household living arrangements, relationships, and involvement (particularly

of fathers and mothers' boyfriends) than is typical. Additional data collection of this sort has considerable potential to increase our understanding of modern-day family complexity as well as its causes and consequences.

Fourth, to the best of our knowledge, the WiscMoms pilot's careful and detailed accounting of the entire range of food-related resource contributions and consumption by all individuals who may contribute to or consume food from a household—regardless of these individuals' status as a household member or their relationships to other household members—is also unique. These data have great potential for documenting the myriad of ways individuals and families pool resources, as well as understanding which individuals tend to be net consumers versus net contributors. This information may be crucial for informing public policies. Future work should expand the collection of such data from solely the food-related resource arena to the wider range of resources contributed and consumed.

Finally, linking survey data to administrative data on program participation has the potential to provide important information both regarding the circumstances in which data from the two sources may be consistent or inconsistent and the extent to which program eligibility rules and benefit levels conform to families' real-life economic situations. Future research is necessary with regard to each of these issues.

In sum, the innovations offered by the WiscMoms pilot, coupled with evidence on the feasibility of conducting an intensive household survey on family complexity, suggest that engaging in a large scale effort based on the WiscMoms model may yield extensive returns with regard to understanding the pathways into family complexity, resource sharing within and among households, and the ways in which public policy may best respond to ongoing family complexity. As such, we encourage future research based on the WiscMoms model.