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**Publication Date**

2003-12-01



**California Center for Population Research**  
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**CCPR-029-03**

***December 2003***

***California Center for Population Research***  
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# Divorced Parents' Qualitative and Quantitative Reports of Children's Living Arrangements

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December 8, 2003

This research was supported by grants from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (HD-24571), the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services (DHHS-30020), and a Hilldale Award from the University of Wisconsin-Madison that provided partial support for a preliminary version of this analysis. Support was also provided by the Center for Demography and Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the California Center for Population Research at the University of California-Los Angeles, and the Center for Family and Demographic Research at Bowling Green State University, which receive core support from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (HD-05976, R24-HD041022 and R21-HD042831). We thank Susan L. Brown, Alfred DeMaris, and three anonymous reviewers for their helpful advice and comments. Any errors are the authors'.

## Divorced Parents' Qualitative and Quantitative Reports of Children's Living Arrangements

### **Abstract**

We use data from a sample of divorced parents in Wisconsin ( $N = 1,392$ ) to examine how parents describe their children's living arrangements. Parents are likely to say that the children live with them as opposed to the other parent, controlling for the number of nights children spend with the mother. When the children spend substantial time in both parents' homes, both parents are less likely to use the phrase *live with* to describe living arrangements. Together these findings suggest that family researchers no longer can rely on simple questions to capture complex living arrangements. We need clearer and more careful question wording and, in some instances, follow-up questions to accurately describe where children live.

Keywords: children, divorced parents, household composition, living arrangements, measurement errors, Wisconsin

Family sociology, especially in the United States, relies extensively on survey data that assume that family members live together. The changing demography of U.S. families challenges this assumption. Nonresident fathers' relationships with children after divorce show that important family relationships sometimes span household boundaries. Our paper addresses this challenge by asking how mothers and fathers understand questions about where their children live. Questions about who lives together are the basis of household-based surveys and censuses, determine which children are treated as coresident and which are treated as having an "absent" parent who might still be an important family member, and define the resources and needs counted in estimates of childhood poverty that contribute to important policy debates. Very little research treats the essential element of household enumeration as problematic. Most studies use only qualitative evidence, are primarily concerned with adults, or are limited by their focus on subgroups such as the homeless or those likely to be homeless. Other studies have design flaws that prevent clear comparisons between qualitative and quantitative assessments of where children live. We advance previous work by combining qualitative and quantitative evidence in a way that recognizes the need to improve survey measurement in light of the new demography of children's families.

The accuracy of our picture of separated families developed in sample surveys depends on the accuracy of parents' reports in household rosters about where children live, as does the extent of coverage error in the decennial census for children in these families. But exactly where the children in a separated family actually live is sometimes ambiguous in ways that can lead to errors. For example, recent increases in the number of children whose parents have joint placement contributed to the problem of duplicate enumeration in the 2000 census (National Academies Letter Report, 2001). Responding to questions about where children live may be

particularly challenging when children spend time in both parents' homes. In such situations, whether the child lives someplace may not be a simple dichotomy, and the judgment that a child lives with the mother, for example, may be associated with a spectrum of arrangements.

Most literature on the accuracy of household roster enumeration comes from studies of coverage errors in the decennial census. Previous researchers have found that a household informant's report of living arrangements largely depends on the number of nights people spend at the dwelling units (Tourangeau et al., 1997). The reliability of an informant's report is low when someone spends a substantial amount of time away from the household (Martin, 1999). When someone visits a household repeatedly, it may be difficult for a household informant to decide whether that person usually lives in the household (Bates & Gerber, 1998). Using cognitive interviews about living arrangements described in vignettes and standardized follow-up questions asking about the definitions of *live* and *stay* with respondents in the Living Situation Survey, Gerber and Bates (Gerber, 1990, 1993; Gerber & Bates, 1994) looked at how answers about whether a person lives in a household might be affected by the language used to inquire about residence. They found that a majority of their respondents thought the word *live* entailed a different meaning from the word *stay*: *Live* was associated with a permanent residence such as a home, whereas *stay* was associated with a temporary place to which the person was less attached. These studies suggest that where a child resides is likely to be more ambiguous when children spend time in both parents' homes as after divorce or when children are born to unmarried parents who are living apart. Little research has directly examined how divorced parents report about where their children live, however, especially when children spend about equal time with both parents.

Another methodological issue in studying separated families is the difference between

reports by mothers and those by fathers. Previous studies have shown that mothers and fathers, women and men, report differently about parent-child relationships and the occurrence and timing of family events (e.g., Auriat, 1993; Braver et al., 1991; Seltzer & Brandreth, 1995; Teitler & Reichman, 2001). Using Wisconsin court records as an external source for validation, Schaeffer and her colleagues (Schaeffer, Seltzer, & Klawitter, 1991) found that resident mothers' reports of child support received are more accurate than nonresident fathers' reports of child support paid. Also based on Wisconsin data, Kreckler and her colleagues (Kreckler et al., 2002) compared divorced mothers' and fathers' reports of the number of nights their children spend with the father for parents who had been awarded equally shared physical custody of their children. They found that about 60 percent of the mothers and fathers gave reports that are consistent with the physical placement recorded by the court, but both mothers and fathers tend to report that their children spend a greater number of nights with them than with the other parent. Studies suggest that observed differences in the reports of fathers and mothers may result in part because patterns of participation in surveys differ for mothers and fathers and in part because mothers and fathers answer questions differently (for a review, see Schaeffer, Seltzer, & Dykema, 1998).

In this paper we consider a set of questions about parents' reports about their children's living arrangements using data from a sample of divorced parents in Wisconsin. We use data from a single state because family laws about divorce vary across states; state-based samples are facilitated because samples of divorced parents can be drawn from a state's court records. In the 1980s, 88.4 percent of Wisconsin divorce cases had mother-sole physical custody; 9.2 percent of the cases had father-sole physical custody, and 2.3 percent had shared physical custody (Seltzer, 1990). The distribution of different custody arrangements in Wisconsin was similar to that in

Michigan (Fox & Kelly, 1995) and Minnesota (Christensen, Dahl, & Rettig, 1990); but shared physical custody was more common in California (20.2 percent, Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992, p. 113) than in Wisconsin. Since then, the number of divorce cases with shared physical custody has steadily increased in Wisconsin. In the early 1990s, approximately 14.2 percent of the Wisconsin divorce cases had shared physical custody (Cancian & Meyer, 1998; Melli, Brown, & Cancian, 1997). As shared physical custody has become more common over the past decade, the task of accurately describing their children's living arrangements is increasingly challenging for divorced parents as reflected in the results of the 2000 census mentioned earlier.

Our analysis has three goals. First, we examine how parents describe their children's living arrangements in their own words (i.e., qualitative reports). Second, we look at how well the parents' reports about the number of nights the children spend with the mother (i.e., quantitative reports) predict where the parents say the children live. Finally, we consider a series of factors that may affect parents' reports of their children's living arrangements. These factors include child's gender and age, number of children, parents' educational attainment, time lag between mother's and father's interviews, and whether parents share joint legal custody of their children. Previous studies have shown that after parents' divorce, boys are more likely than girls to live with their fathers, older children are more apt to live with their fathers than younger children, and family size increases the likelihood that fathers are awarded physical custody of some of their children (Maccoby, Depner, & Mnookin, 1988). The accuracy of reports may also be affected by a respondent's educational attainments (Cannell, Fisher, & Bakker, 1965) and the length of retrospective recall period (Auriat, 1993). Parents who share joint legal custody of their children may prefer to think of children living with each of them even though joint legal custody refers to legal rights to make decisions about the children and not living arrangements.



Throughout these analyses, we compare the reports of mothers and fathers and their use of the phrase *live with* to describe living arrangements.

Our work goes beyond previous studies (e.g., Gerber, 1990, 1993; Gerber & Bates, 1994) by making several unique contributions. First, our analysis of living arrangements concerns a large number of actual children whose living arrangements provide a range of ambiguity; we are not concerned with hypothetical situations, abstract definitions of terminology that we provided, or focusing on adults. Second, we have open-ended descriptions of children's living arrangements in the parents' own words for a large sample of divorced parents. Third, we quantify those verbatim descriptions of children's living arrangements by asking respondents about the numbers of nights children spend in each parent's household. Fourth, we examine the consistency between qualitative and quantitative reports to describe how each maps onto the other. Fifth, we compare (matched) mothers' and fathers' reports about the same time period because of well known gender differences in reports about family experiences. Our ability to compare parents of the same children is unique and allows us to explore whether the gender differences in reporting quality noted in other realms of family life are relevant here also. Finally, we address these questions for a large, highly visible subgroup of the population, divorced families. Between 50 and 60 percent of all U.S. children will spend time in a single parent household because of divorce or nonmarital childbearing. The only way we can study those children in household surveys – our primary way of documenting trends and differentials in the effects of family structure on children's adjustment – is to ask an adult to tell us whether the child lives there.

## Methods

Data for this paper come from telephone interviews with parents who filed for divorce in Wisconsin between 1986 and 1988. The survey was conducted between April and October 1989 and asked mothers and fathers about their children's living arrangements in 1988. The sample was drawn from court records of divorce cases. Attempts were made to interview both parents in each case, but some families in the sample are represented by only one parent. The analyses are based on 1,392 parents (748 mothers and 644 fathers) who were interviewed. Of the 1,392 parents, there are 476 former couples (i.e., matched samples). In other words, there are 440 (=  $1,392 - 476 * 2$ ) families in which only one parent was interviewed. Response rates for mothers, fathers, and couples are 66 percent, 57 percent, and 43 percent, respectively.

Studies of divorced parents tend to suffer from lower survey participation rates compared with surveys conducted in general population, although the response rates for the data we analyze compare favorably with those from other state samples of divorced parents (Lin, 2000, p. 391). Using the survey we analyze here along with court records, we have compared unlocated fathers with located fathers and compared located fathers who refused to participate in the survey with father respondents in terms of their demographic characteristics and various aspects of their divorce processes. We found that compared to fathers who could not be located, those who were located, on average, had been married longer before divorce, were more likely to be home owners, had higher incomes, and were more likely to have joint legal custody. Among those who were located, fathers who did not have a child support order were more likely to refuse to participate in the survey than fathers who had a child support order. We have also examined whether parents' reports about child support payments are biased by the fact that some fathers are not included in survey data. We found that although nonparticipation affects estimates of the

level of child support payments, it does not bias the coefficients of the predictors of payments (Lin, Schaeffer, & Seltzer, 1999).

In the telephone survey we analyze, parents were asked to describe their children's living arrangements in their own words and then to report the actual number of nights children lived with them and the other parent in each month of 1988 (for exact question wording see Appendix). We compare parents' qualitative reports (i.e., parents' verbatim description) with their quantitative reports (i.e., number of nights) to capture the variation in living arrangements that is likely to be overlooked when a simple dichotomy is used. Our analyses mainly focus on the 476 former couples but we also conduct descriptive analyses for all parents because information on household composition usually relies on the report of one informant in the household. Thus it is important to examine the extent to which mothers' reports may differ from fathers' when researchers obtain information from only one parent.

The design of this research is similar to that of the Stanford Child Custody Study in which divorced parents were asked how many overnights their children spent in each parent's house during a two-week period of the school year and whether children lived with the mother, the father, both parents, or someone else (Maccoby et al., 1988). That study showed that if the children spent three or fewer nights with one parent over a two-week period, more than 90 percent of their parents said the children lived with the other parent. Parents were likely to say their children lived with both parents if the children spent four to eleven (out of fourteen) overnights with the father. That study is limited because more than half of the parents said living arrangements in the last two weeks were atypical and, when both parents were interviewed, they tended to refer to different two-week periods. To overcome this limitation, in our study we extend the reference period by asking respondents how many nights the children spent in each

parent's home in the last year. Although the reference period we asked about was quite long, we aided recall by asking first about contacts in the first month of the reference period, and then focused on which subsequent months were the same as or different from the month the respondent just described (see Appendix).

We ask parents about living arrangements for all their children, but here we examine only one child randomly selected from each family. To examine the consistency of parents' reports, we calculate Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients using reports of matched couples. The correlation coefficients for matched mothers' and fathers' reports of the number of nights the children spent in the reference period for the full year, the last six months, and the last three months are 0.80, 0.79, and 0.79, respectively. The means of the absolute differences between matched mothers' and fathers' reports about the number of nights their children spent with the mother for the full year, the last six months, and the last three months are about 39 nights, 20 nights, and 10 nights, respectively. The magnitude of the difference is larger for the longer time period, but the differences are proportional for these time intervals. In sum, the reports of mothers and those of fathers are similarly consistent regardless of the length of the recall period.

In the following analysis, a few of the divorced parents reported that they lived apart for less than a year (111 out of 1,392 parents). For these parents, we adjust the number of nights the children spent with each parent so that all parents' reports describe a 12-month period. We annualize the number of nights with each parent by first multiplying the number of nights by 12 and then dividing it by the number of months the two parents lived apart. This calculation makes no difference for parents who lived apart for the full year. For parents separated less than the full year, the calculation assumes that the arrangement the parents report for the time they live separately were in fact the arrangements for the entire year. We also conducted a parallel

analysis using an unadjusted number of nights to examine the extent to which this imputation method might affect the findings. As we indicate below, the adjustment does not affect our conclusions.

Parents were also asked to describe their children's living arrangements during 1988 in their own words. A small research team worked together closely to review parents' verbatim answers and resolve ambiguities that arose during the coding processes. Although no reliability coefficients were estimated, the research team attempted to develop a coding scheme that covered all dimensions of the answers. Parents' verbatim answers are classified into the following six categories: living with the mother, living with the father, living with both parents, living with neither parent, varying among children, and changing during the year. Other research suggests that people tend to use *live* as opposed to *stay* for a more permanent residence and for a residence to which a person is more attached (Gerber & Bates, 1994); because a nonresident parent's house may be perceived by parents as a temporary residence for children's visits over weekends, holidays, and school break, parents' verbatim answers are further classified as *explicit* or *implicit* expressions of living arrangements.

A parent's description of their children's living arrangements is classified as explicit when the parent uses the phrases *live with* or *live at* in their answers. For example, "Janet lives with her mother" is coded as living with the mother. "Eric lives at his father's" is coded as living with the father. "Janet lives with her mother Wednesday through Saturday and with me Sunday through Tuesday" is coded as living with both parents. "Janet lives at her grandmother's" is coded as living with neither parent. "Janet lives with me and Eric lives with his father" is coded as varying among children. Finally, "Eric lived with his mother until April when she moved to Texas, so then he lives with me" is coded as changing during the year. A similar logic is applied

to the implicit expression of children's living arrangements when the phrases *stay with* or *is with* are used or when the implication of the description is clear. For instance, "I have Janet for a two-week period and then she goes to her mother's for two weeks" is coded as implicit living with both parents. When parents' qualitative descriptions of living arrangements were coded, coders did not know the number of nights the parent reported the children spent with each parent.

## Results

The first and second panels of Table 1 show the percentage distribution of parents' qualitative reports about where their children live. The first panel indicates results for explicit descriptions only (i.e., parents used *live with* or *live at*) and the second panel combines explicit and implicit descriptions (i.e., parents used or implied *live with*, *live at*, *stay at*, *is with*). For all parents who participated in the survey, the distribution of mothers' reports differs significantly from that of fathers' ( $\chi^2 = 64.0$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < .01$ ). When parents are asked to describe the living arrangements of their children, fathers are less likely than mothers to use the phrase *live with* – close to 67 percent versus 77 percent (100% – 33.4% versus 100% – 23.0%,  $\chi^2 = 18.7$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Approximately 66 percent of the mothers explicitly say the children live with the mother, whereas only 46 percent of the fathers do so. In contrast, five percent of the mothers explicitly say the children live with the father, but as many as 12 percent of the fathers report this living arrangement. Fathers are more apt than mothers to explicitly say the children live with both parents (3.1% versus 0.9%,  $\chi^2 = 11.7$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The pattern is also found among couples, with a smaller, but significant, discrepancy between mothers' and fathers' reports. When explicit and implicit reports are combined, as shown in the second panel of Table 1, the differences in parents' reports are no longer statistically significant for the couple sample. This is not surprising

given that the reports from matched couples are affected by response error only but the reports from the entire set of respondents are affected by both response error and differential survey participation.

(Table 1 about here)

The third panel of Table 1 shows the basic statistics for parents' quantitative reports of the number of nights their children live with the mother. Because nearly all children either spend the nights with their mothers or with their fathers, the pattern for the number of nights children spend with the father is opposite to the result shown here. On average, mother's report that their children spend significantly more nights with them than fathers report, a difference of about 44 nights for the full sample and 19 nights for the couple sample (based on adjusted number of nights). The distribution of parental reports is negatively skewed and has kurtosis greater than three.

We next examine the extent to which the parent's qualitative report about where the child lives is a function of the number of nights the child spends with each parent, and we consider whether this relationship is the same for mothers and fathers. To do this, we examine couples' verbatim responses controlling for how many nights the parent said that the child spent with the mother. In the following analysis, we treat number of nights as a categorical variable when reporting the results for three reasons. First, it eases the interpretation of the results. For example, if we treated number of nights as a continuous variable when plotting figures, the graphs would fluctuate dramatically at the lower end because of zero or small numbers of cases for some numbers of nights. Consequently, it would be difficult to detect any pattern in the relationship between quantitative and qualitative reports. Second, although the grouping is somewhat arbitrary, these categories have meaning in the enumeration of household rosters and interviewer

instructions about household rosters. We experimented with different cutoff points in the analysis, but the results do not change. We also estimate the multivariate model by treating number of nights as a continuous variable and the results are robust. Last, we choose to conduct the categorical analyses because we recognize that parents' reports of number of nights tend to be imprecise. Treating number of nights as a continuous variable is likely to introduce more noise to the analysis than treating number of nights as a categorical variable.

We look first at use of the phrase *live with* and then at which parent the respondent said the child lived with. The figures shown below omit 16 couples in which one of the parents is missing on the qualitative or quantitative report. In Figure 1, we show the percentage of parents who explicitly use the phrase *live with* by the number of nights the children spend with the mother. We expected this relationship to be roughly curvilinear: Parents should be most likely to use the phrase *lives with* when the child's situation is less ambiguous, that is, when the child spends many or few nights with the mother. The data are consistent with this expectation. Both parents are least likely to use the phrase when the children spend substantial time with both parents (a number of nights with the mother equivalent to between 150 and 210 nights,  $p < .05$ ). In these families, most children spend many nights with the mother, so the percentages in the left half of the figure are based on small numbers of cases. The more stable estimates in the right half of the figure suggest a possible difference between mothers and fathers: When the children spend a number of night's equivalent to about 210 to 366 nights with the mother, fathers are less likely than mothers to use the phrase *live with* ( $p < .10$ ).

In sum, the range of days that prompts parents to say the child lives with one or the other parent is narrower in Maccoby and Mnookin's study than that in our study. Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) show that parents are likely to say their children live with one of the parents



when the children spend at least 79 percent of the time during the two-week period with one parent (= 11/14). In our study, parents are apt to say their children live with one of the parents when children spend at least 57 percent of the time in the full year with one parent (= 210/366). The difference between the two studies may occur because our study asked about the nights children spend in a parent's home throughout the entire year, including summer and holiday vacations, but the Stanford Child Custody data that Maccoby and Mnookin use asked about nights spent in the past two weeks during the school year. As noted above, half of the parents in the Stanford Child Custody Study report that the past two weeks did not reflect the usual pattern for children's living arrangements.

(Figure 1 about here)

Figure 2 shows the percentage of parents who say their children live with the mother by the number of nights the children spend with their mothers. When children spend more than 180 days with the mother, mothers are more likely than their children's fathers to say their children live with the mother. When children spend between 120 and 180 nights with their mothers, fathers are more likely than their children's mother to say their children lived with the mother. The difference between the reports of mothers and fathers is significant when explicit and implicit expressions are combined.

(Figure 2 about here)

Finally, we examine the percentage of parents who say children live with both parents by the number of nights the children spend with the mother. As indicated in Figure 3, parents are most likely to say their children live with both parents when the children spend 180 to 210 nights with each parent. The pattern is statistically significant for mothers and fathers, regardless of whether we look at explicit expressions only or both explicit and implicit expressions combined.

When children spend a substantial amount of time with both parents, fathers are more likely than mothers to explicitly use the phrase *live with* to describe their children's living arrangements, and both parents are more likely to use the word *stay* than *live* in their verbatim responses. Results based on the unadjusted number of nights are very similar to the results described above (available on request).

(Figure 3 about here)

We also examine whether fathers and mothers differ in the propensity to report explicitly or implicitly that the children live with the mother as opposed to the father or both parents by controlling for the number of nights that children spend in the mother's home, parent's educational attainment, child's gender, age of the child, number of children, time lag between mother's and father's interviews, and joint legal custody. Table 2 shows the basic statistics for these explanatory variables for all parents and couples only. Couples' characteristics are very similar to those of all parents in the sample. The logistic model predicting the likelihood that a parent explicitly or implicitly reports the child lives with the mother as opposed to the father or both parents is shown in Table 3; the analysis is based on couple samples only. After holding the explanatory variables constant, we do not find a significant difference in the likelihood that matched mothers or fathers report that the children live with the mother (coefficient = 0.083, SE = 0.332). The only explanatory variables that are significantly associated with parents' reports of living arrangements are the number of nights children spend with the mother and joint legal custody. Parents are more likely to say their children live with the mother when the children spend more than four months (i.e., at least 121 days a year) with the mother and when they do not have shared legal custody. The latter result suggests that parents with joint legal custody may be more likely to adopt complex arrangements for their children than those with sole legal

custody. We also examine parents' explicit expressions of living arrangements only. We find no gender difference in the effect of the number of nights children spend with the mother on where the parent explicitly says the children live (available on request).

(Table 2 and Table 3 about here)

## **Discussion**

One source of the increasingly complex household composition and living arrangements in the United States is the number of children in separated families who spend time with both parents. Using a sample of divorced parents in Wisconsin, we examine mothers' and fathers' reports about their children's living arrangements after divorce. We find that when parents report the same numbers of nights children spend with the mother, mothers are more likely than fathers to say the children live with the mother, and fathers are more likely than mothers to say the children live with the father or both parents. The multivariate analysis suggests that the effect of the number of nights children spend with the mother on parents' reports of where the children live does not differ for mothers and fathers after holding parents' and children's characteristics constant. Finally, we find that parents are apt to say their children live with one of the parents when children spend at least 57 percent of the time in the full year with one parent. Both parents are less likely to use the phrase *live with* to describe living arrangements when the children spend substantial time in both parents' homes.

Our study has several limitations. First, because we rely on parents' recall of children's living arrangements for a long period of time, parents' reports are likely to contain response errors. If the structure of the errors differs for mothers and fathers, the differences between their reports are likely to be biased in the analysis. To reduce the influence of response errors, we used

the month-by-month calendar method to improve the accuracy of parents' reporting, and we analyzed the number of nights children spend in each parent's household as a categorical variable. Although these efforts cannot eliminate the effects of response error, they doubtless increase our confidence in the findings. We also examined the consistency of parents' answers for different reference periods and found that the reports of mothers and fathers are similarly consistent regardless of the length of the recall period. This finding suggests that the structure of errors is likely to be similar for mothers and fathers. Second, we lack a formal measure of reliability for coding parents' verbatim answers, although a small research team had extensively reviewed the answers and resolved any ambiguities that arose during the coding processes. Third, we find discrepancies between mothers' and fathers' qualitative reports, but the discrepancies are smaller for matched former couples than for the entire set of respondents (as shown in Table 1). Interpretation of the discrepancies between mothers and fathers must be qualified because the matched samples are affected by response errors only, but the entire samples are affected by both response errors and differential survey participation rates by gender. Finally, because this study is based on the divorce population from a single state, the extent to which the results presented here can be applied to different states and to different populations, such as unmarried parents who are living apart, merits further study.

Our findings have at least two important practical implications for future studies about U.S. families and child well-being. First, our research shows that when parents report the same number of nights children spend with the mother, mothers are more likely than fathers to say that the child lives with the mother, and fathers are more likely than mothers to say the children live with the father or both parents. This finding suggests that although parents' quantitative reports about how many nights children spent with the mother are consistent, they may reach completely

different qualitative conclusions regarding where children live. Because most surveys rely solely on informants' qualitative reports, it is important to provide informants and interviewers guidance about the criteria for deciding where a child lives. Our research also shows that other than the number of nights, the social characteristics that are routinely collected in household surveys do not predict parental reports about where children live. Together these findings suggest that researchers might distinguish temporary residences from usual residences when collecting information on household rosters as is done in the National Survey of America's Families (Wang, Dipko, & Vaden-Kiernan, 1999). Alternatively, questions to enumerate household residents might specify that the interviewer is interested in children who are in the household most of the time (e.g., spending the night at least half of the time in the past year) to improve the quality of their respondents' answers.

A second finding with practical implications is that when children spend a substantial amount of time in both parents' homes, parents are less likely to use the phrase *live with* to explicitly describe where children live. This finding implies that family researchers no longer can rely on a simple question, such as "who lives here?" to capture increasingly complex living arrangements. High rates of divorce, cohabitation, and separation among cohabiting parents force researchers and respondents to think critically about what it means to say that a child or adult lives with them. We need clearer and more careful question wording and, in some instances, follow-up questions to accurately describe children's living arrangements.

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**Appendix.**

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| Question Number | Question Wording  |
|-----------------|---|
| L.16            | Now I'm going to ask some questions about (CHILD/the children)'s living arrangements in 1988. First, to give me an overview, please briefly describe the living and visiting arrangement you had for (CHILD/the children) during 1988.<br><br>WE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT ACTUAL LIVING AND VISITING PATTERNS. RECORD VERBATIM_____   |
| L.19            | Some people have very complicated living arrangements and some do not. To make sure that I understand (CHILD)'s living arrangements, I need to record where (he/she) lived each month during 1988 (when you and the other parent were not living together).<br><br>It can be very difficult to remember, but this information is very important and we appreciate your taking the time to remember.<br><br>Let's start with (FIRST CIRCLED MONTH). In (MONTH) 1988, how many nights did (CHILD) spend with you? |
| L.21            | And how many nights did (CHILD) spend with the other parent in (MONTH) 1988?  |
| L.23            | Were there any months when (CHILD)'s routine was different from the one you just described?   |
| L.24            | In which months was (CHILD)'s routine different? (FOR EACH MONTH NAMED, CODE 1 IN BOX IN CHILD'S COLUMN C)  |
| L.25            | ASK FOR (FIRST/NEXT) MONTH WITH 1 IN COLUMN C.<br><br>In (MONTH) 1988, how many nights did (CHILD) spend with you?  |
| L.27            | And how many nights did (CHILD) spend with the other parent in (MONTH) 1988?  |

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**Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Mothers' and Fathers' Qualitative and Quantitative Reports of Their Children's Living Arrangements**

|  | All Parents |        | Couples |        |
|--|-------------|--------|---------|--------|
|  | Mother      | Father | Mother  | Father |
| <i>Explicitly said live with</i>                 |             |        |         |        |
| Mother   | 66.4        | 46.4   | 63.4    | 48.9   |
| Father   | 5.2         | 11.6   | 7.0     | 8.9    |
| Both   | 0.9         | 3.1    | 0.9     | 2.3    |
| Neither  | 0.4         | 0.3    | 0.2     | 0.2    |
| Varied among children                            | 2.3         | 2.7    | 2.5     | 2.8    |
| Changed during year                              | 1.8         | 2.5    | 2.3     | 1.9    |
| Did not explicitly use live with                 | 23.0        | 33.4   | 23.7    | 35.0   |
| $\chi^2$ ( $df=6$ )                              | 64.0**      |        | 23.5**  |        |
| $N^a$  | 744         | 640    | 472     | 472    |
| <i>Explicitly or implicitly said live with</i>   |             |        |         |        |
| Mother   | 80.9        | 68.3   | 77.8    | 72.7   |
| Father   | 7.8         | 13.8   | 10.0    | 11.2   |
| Both   | 3.6         | 7.3    | 4.5     | 6.8    |
| Neither  | 0.4         | 0.3    | 0.2     | 0.2    |
| Varied among children                            | 2.7         | 3.4    | 3.0     | 3.6    |
| Changed during year                              | 2.0         | 3.1    | 2.5     | 2.5    |
| Ambiguous  | 2.6         | 3.8    | 2.1     | 3.0    |
| $\chi^2$ ( $df=6$ )                              | 31.7**      |        | 4.4     |        |
| $N^a$  | 744         | 640    | 472     | 472    |
| <i>Number of nights child living with mother</i> |             |        |         |        |
| Mean   | 299.71      | 255.97 | 285.48  | 266.34 |
| Standard deviation                               | 92.04       | 111.54 | 96.95   | 102.75 |
| Skewness   | -1.88       | -1.11  | -1.62   | -1.29  |
| Kurtosis   | 5.78        | 3.07   | 4.77    | 3.73   |
| $t$ test for mean differences                    | 7.97**      |        | 2.92**  |        |
| $N^a$  | 745         | 630    | 464     | 464    |

\*\*  $p < .01$

Note: Column totals in each panel may deviate slightly from 100% due to rounding errors.

<sup>a</sup> The total number of all mothers, all fathers, and couples is not equal to 748, 644, and 476, respectively because of missing data.

**Table 2. Percentage and Mean (SD) of Selected Variables for All Parents and Couples**

|  | All Parents | Couples     |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| Mother's education <sup>a</sup>  |             |             |
| Less than high school  | 7.4         | 6.7         |
| High school graduate   | 38.5        | 38.0        |
| Some college, college graduate, or more  | 54.2        | 55.3        |
| Father's education <sup>b</sup>  |             |             |
| Less than high school  | 8.6         | 9.0         |
| High school graduate   | 37.7        | 36.8        |
| Some college, college graduate, or more  | 53.8        | 54.2        |
| Gender of random child (1 = <i>girl</i> )  | 50.0        | 52.5        |
| Age of random child, in years  | 8.9 (4.7)   | 8.8 (4.6)   |
| Number of children   | 1.9 (0.9)   | 1.9 (0.9)   |
| Absolute length of time between mother's<br>and father's interview dates, in days <sup>c</sup> | –           | 35.2 (36.9) |
| Joint legal custody (1 = <i>yes</i> )  | 38.6        | 40.5        |
| Number of observations   | 1,392       | 952         |

<sup>a</sup> For all parents, based on 1,224 interviewed mothers.

<sup>b</sup> For all parents, based on 1,120 interviewed fathers.

<sup>c</sup> For couples, based on 952 matched parents.

**Table 3. Coefficients and Adjusted Standard Errors from Logistic Models of Likelihood That a Parent Explicitly or Implicitly Reports the Random Child Lived with the Mother (As Opposed to the Father or Both Parents)<sup>a</sup>**

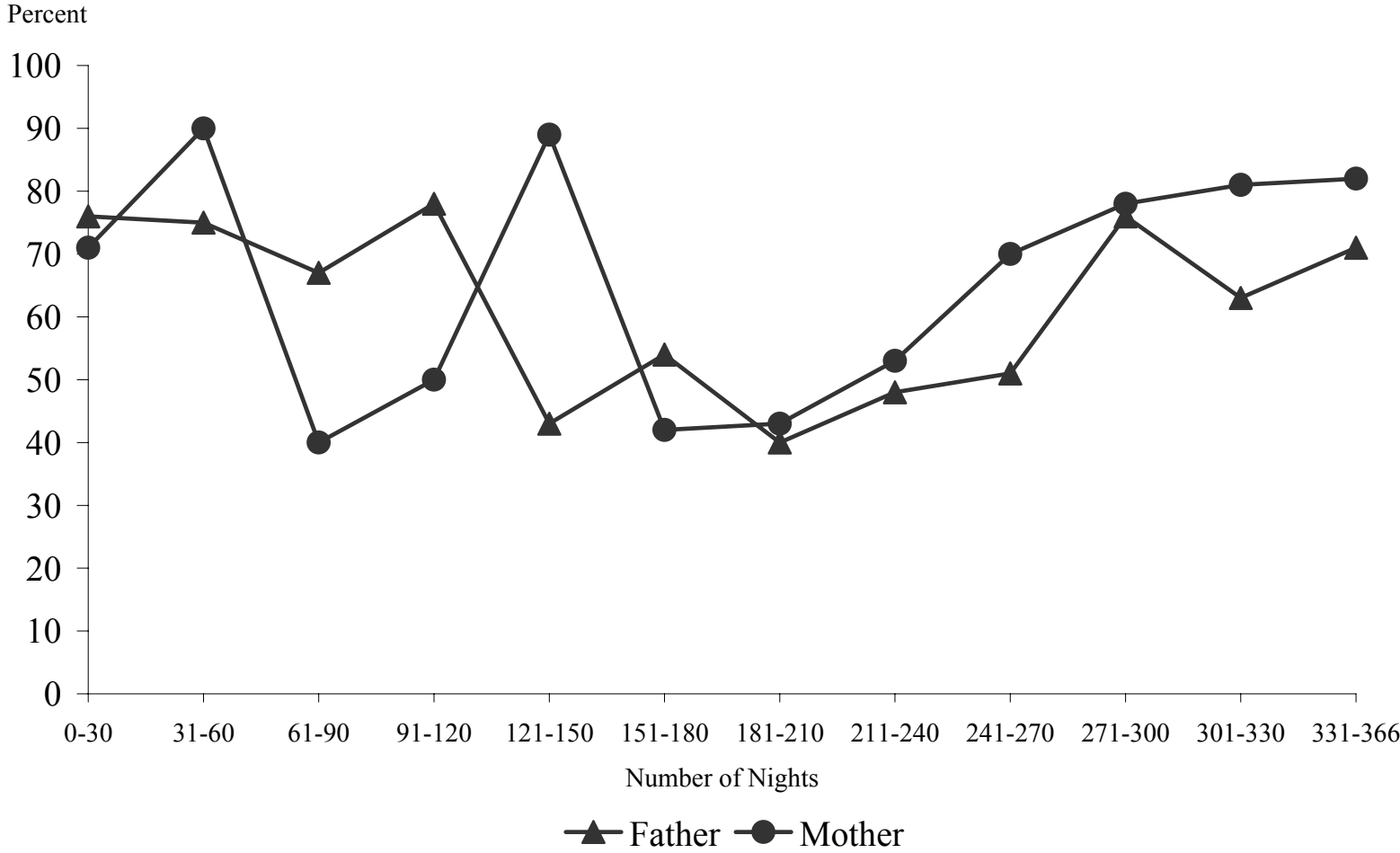
|  | Coefficient | SE <sup>b</sup> |
|--|-------------|-----------------|
| <b>Parent is:</b>  |             |                 |
| <i>Father</i>  |             |                 |
| Mother   | 0.083       | 0.332           |
| <b>Number of nights child spent with mother</b>                |             |                 |
| <i>0 - 120 nights</i>  |             |                 |
| 121 - 240 nights   | 3.518 *     | 0.717           |
| 241 - 366 nights   | 7.430 *     | 0.728           |
| <b>Mother's education</b>                                      |             |                 |
| <i>Less than high school</i>                                   |             |                 |
| High school graduate   | 0.989       | 0.719           |
| Some college, college graduate, or more                        | 0.668       | 0.669           |
| <b>Father's education</b>                                      |             |                 |
| <i>Less than high school</i>                                   |             |                 |
| High school graduate   | 0.200       | 0.579           |
| Some college, college graduate, or more                        | 0.838       | 0.563           |
| <b>Random child is:</b>  |             |                 |
| <i>Boy</i>   |             |                 |
| Girl   | -0.580      | 0.394           |
| <b>Age of random child</b>                                     | -0.005      | 0.040           |
| <b>Number of children</b>                                      | 0.061       | 0.219           |
| <b>Number of days between mother's and father's interviews</b> | 0.004       | 0.005           |
| <b>Joint legal custody</b>                                     |             |                 |
| <i>No</i>  |             |                 |
| Yes  | -1.226 *    | 0.390           |
| Intercept  | -3.991 *    | 1.113           |
| <i>df</i>  | 12          |                 |
| Log likelihood   | -123.05     |                 |

\*  $p < .05$

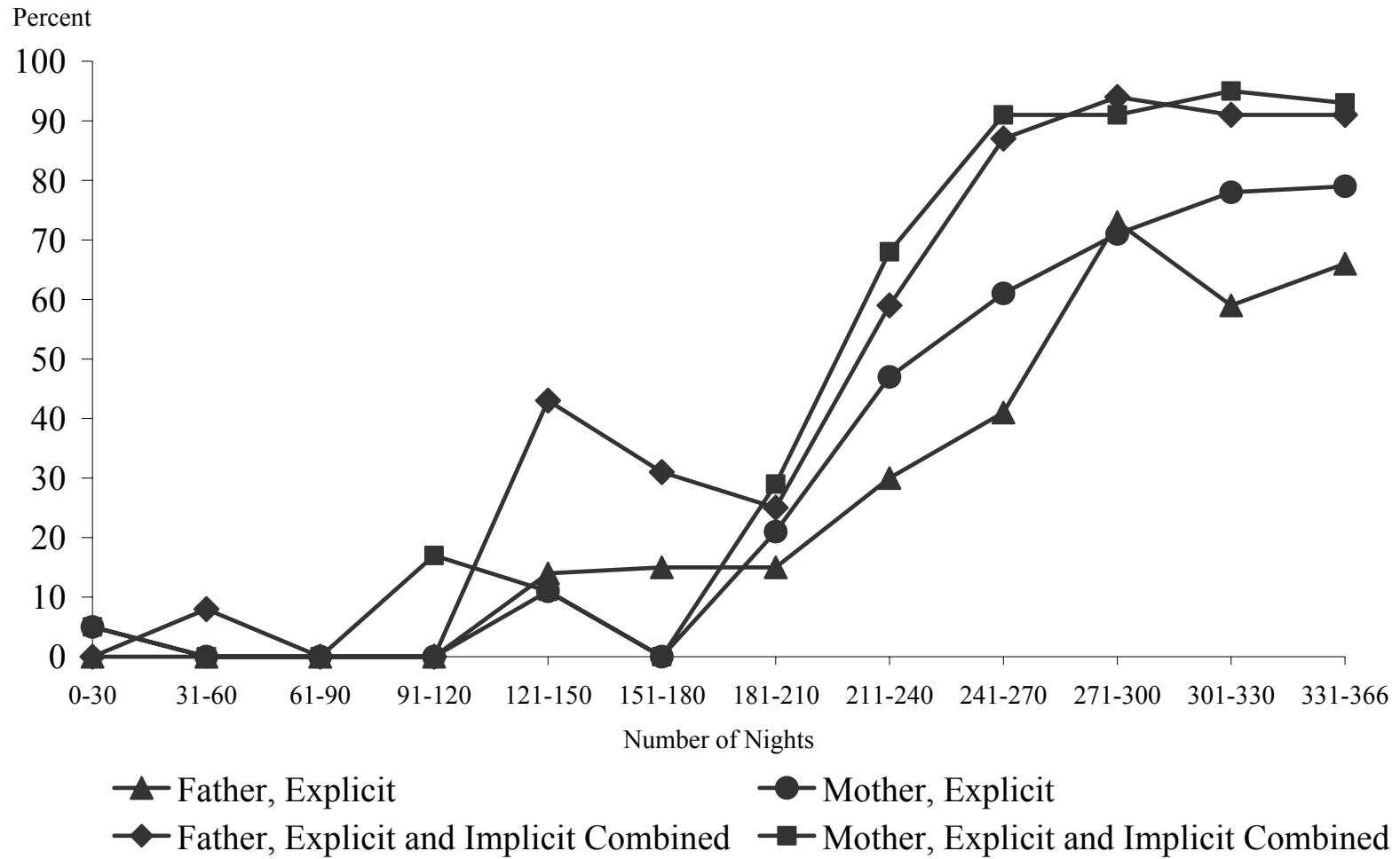
<sup>a</sup> The total number of parents in the regression is 792 because we limited the analysis to couples who reported that their children live with the mother, the father, or both parents.

<sup>b</sup> Because parents of the same couples share similar characteristics compared to parents of different couples, the Huber-White estimator is used to provide robust standard errors of the coefficients in the presence of clustering.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Parents Who Explicitly Use the Phrase *Live with* by Number of Nights the Children Spend with the Mother (460 Couples)**



**Figure 2. Percentage of Parents Who Say Children Live with the Mother by Number of Nights the Children Spend with the Mother (460 Couples)**



**Figure 3. Percentage of Parents Who Say Children Live with Both Parents by Number of Nights the Children Spend with the Mother (460 Couples)**

