

## **Divorced Wisconsin Families with Shared Child Placements**

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## **Abstract**

This report describes the living arrangements of children in Wisconsin families with (equal and unequal) shared physical placements following their parents' divorce, as well as the stability of those placements over approximately three years after the divorce. The sample is drawn from two cohorts of families, those entering the Wisconsin court system between 1996 and 1998, and those entering between 2000 and 2001. In the period between these cohorts, Wisconsin law was changed so as to maximize the amount of time that a child spends with each parent. This is the first study to investigate children's placements following that legislative change. While we can not attribute our results to this change in law, we find that (1) when families changed their legal placement status through the court system, they were more likely to move toward an equal shared placement arrangement in the later cohort; (2) approximately three years after a divorce, there is little evidence that children in shared placements are spending less time with their fathers than they were at the time of the divorce; (3) a considerable proportion of children in mother sole cases spend little or no time with their fathers; (4) approximately three years after the divorce, children tended to be spending more time with their fathers in the later cohort than in the earlier cohort; and (5) the amount of time children spend with their fathers appears relatively consistent with placement arrangements, such that children in mother sole placements spend the least amount of time with their fathers and children in equal shared placements spend the most time with their fathers.

## **Divorced Wisconsin Families with Shared Child Placements**

### INTRODUCTION

This report describes the living arrangements of children in Wisconsin families with shared physical placement court orders. It builds upon the analyses of an earlier report by Krecker, Brown, Melli, and Wimer (2003), making use of both newly collected data from Wisconsin court records and a new survey of families. The following questions are addressed:

- Does the proportion of families with shared placement orders differ among cohorts of Wisconsin families that were observed prior to and after the passage of legislation to promote “maximization of time with both parents”?
- How likely are families to revise physical placement orders?
- Does the likelihood of a revised physical placement order differ for families with shared placements compared to families with mother sole placements?
- To what extent do children’s living arrangements comply with legal placement orders?
- Which case characteristics differentiate families whose children’s living arrangements are in compliance with legal placement orders from those that depart from legal placement orders?
- How does father-child contact differ for children in various placement arrangements (e.g., sole mother, unequal shared, equal shared) approximately three years after a divorce?
- To what extent are placement arrangements associated with different patterns of child support orders and payments, as well as less formal contributions to child related expenses?

A central motivation for the earlier (Krecker, Brown, Melli, and Wimer, 2003) study stemmed from research by Maccoby and Mnookin (1992), which showed considerable fluidity in children’s living arrangements over time in shared placement divorce cases, leading the authors to conclude that “the label of joint physical custody often does not reflect the social reality” (p. 159). This raises the concern of “maternal drift,” in which mothers are gradually left with more and more physical care of the children, but without a return to court to adjust the child support order and, therefore, without the child support resources that would normally apply to this increased level of care.

A previous analysis of information from Wisconsin families who came to court more than a decade later than Maccoby and Mnookin's (1992) sample of California families reached substantially different conclusions regarding the distribution of shared physical custody cases and the behaviors of shared custody parents (Krecker, Brown, Melli, and Wimer, 2003). Most of the families in the California sample had "unequal" shared placement orders, with children spending the majority of their time in their mothers' households. In contrast, the Wisconsin families overwhelmingly had "equal" shared placement orders, with children spending comparable amounts of time with both parents. "Equal" shared placement families in the Wisconsin sample displayed substantially different patterns of behaviors than both families with less common "unequal" shared placements in that sample, and those in the Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) sample. While the Wisconsin report does identify some "fluidity" in children's living arrangements among families with shared placements, changes in the children's living situations were considerably more likely to be reported to the court, and child support was often adjusted accordingly. Informal changes in children's living arrangements (not recorded by the court) were reported less often by equal shared custody mothers than those with unequal shared custody arrangements. Furthermore, families with (equal and unequal) shared placements were significantly more likely to change in the direction of *more* father contact than families with sole mother placements. This finding was in stark contrast to the large percentage of children with sole mother placements who had little or no contact with their fathers by the second or third year after divorce.

This report utilizes a sample of 2,500 Wisconsin divorce cases from the Wisconsin Court Record Database (CRD) that came to court before (1,600 cases) and after (900 cases)<sup>1</sup> a change in Wisconsin law, described below, that requires the court to establish placement schedules that maximize the amount of time a child spends with each parent. Court record information detailing the physical placement and

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<sup>1</sup>Note that the analyses that make use of the parent survey data are conducted on a subsample of these cases, in which about 600 cases were surveyed in the cohort that preceded the legislative change and about 600 were surveyed in the cohort that followed this change.

child access arrangements, as well as child support order information, was collected for each case. In a subsample of these cases, both parents were also contacted and interviewed about the actual living arrangements experienced by a focal child during the previous year. One-half of these parents were parents in shared placement cases; the others were parents in sole mother placement cases. This survey (Parent Survey 5, or “PS5”) was identical to the survey of parents (Parent Survey 4, or “PS4”) from the earlier cohort of cases and, in some instances, we have combined the results from both surveys to report on a particular aspect of the study. Analyses have been weighted to reflect the population of cases in the 21 counties that constitute the study area, and survey data have been weighted to adjust for nonresponse bias.

#### Previous Research on Shared Placement Families

Maccoby and Mnookin’s *Dividing the Child* (1992) presented the results of a longitudinal study of families in the process of divorce and raised important questions about the long-term stability of shared physical placement. Using data on a sample of separated parents from California who petitioned for divorce in 1984–1985, Maccoby and Mnookin found that the stability of living arrangements over time differed by physical placement type. The vast majority (84 percent) of families in which the children initially lived primarily<sup>2</sup> with the mother at the time of the first interview (prior to the divorce) maintained this arrangement three years later. However, only 54 percent of families with “dual residence”<sup>3</sup> at the time of the first interview maintained this arrangement over the study period.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>At least 10 nights during a two-week period.

<sup>3</sup>Maccoby and Mnookin define an arrangement as “‘dual’ if the child spent a minimum of one-third of the time with each parent” (p. 336). A family exhibited a “dual residence” pattern if the child spent 4–10 overnights with the father in a 2-week period during the school year (pp. 74, 336). The dual residence designation overrode other classifications: If some children lived with each parent at least one-third of the time but other children did not, the family was considered “dual residence” in the analysis (p. 336).

<sup>4</sup>Not all of these families had shared placement orders. Only 46 percent of the 143 families with shared placement orders reported dual residence at the end of the study (p. 169). However, families reporting dual residence drew significantly from those who had orders for other types of physical placement, including 8 percent of families

Although Maccoby and Mnookin did not investigate whether the change in residence was ordered or acknowledged by the court, or if child support orders were appropriate to the types of residential arrangement over time, their results raised concerns about the long-term stability of placement arrangements that involved substantial sharing of time between the parents. Many policymakers and researchers have argued that placement provisions calling for children to spend substantial time with both parents have potentially beneficial effects for family and child well-being.<sup>5</sup> But, if shared placement families do drift toward sole mother residence or, less often, toward father sole residence, this leaves one parent with primary child-rearing responsibility and costs. Without corresponding modifications in child support, the primary parent may be left with inadequate financial support for raising the children.

It is understandable that Maccoby and Mnookin's (1992) research raised doubts about the viability of shared physical placement orders. It was the first large-scale study that included a sizable sample of shared placement families, and its key findings were not reassuring. The 2003 report on the Wisconsin sample of shared placement cases, however, was more heartening about these outcomes over time. While the legal environments in California in the late 1980s and Wisconsin in the late 1990s were similar, the social context in which the each study was conducted may have changed considerably in the 10–15 years between them. Additionally, the research methodologies used in the California and Wisconsin studies were quite different.<sup>6</sup> The timing of the surveys in the two studies was also somewhat different: the interviews with California parents were done 2 or 3 times over a three-year time space *during the process of divorce*, while the Wisconsin interviews were done *three years post-divorce*. Most important, the points of comparison are different in the two studies. Maccoby and Mnookin compare the child's living situation as reported in a Time 1 interview (just after filing for divorce) to a Time 3

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with mother sole placement, 15 percent of families with father sole placement, and 14 percent of split placement cases (computed from Table 8.1, p. 166).

<sup>5</sup>For example, see Bauserman (2002).

<sup>6</sup>The differences in research methodologies are covered in some detail in the Krecker, Brown, Melli, and Wimer (2003) report.

interview (three years later, usually post-divorce), without regard to the legal arrangement at either time period. In the PS4/PS5 analysis we compare the child's reported living situation (three years post-divorce, on average) to the legal document governing physical placement and child support in effect at that time. This comparison more directly focuses on the "maternal drift" problem of child support orders that are inappropriate for the child's "de facto" living situation.

Although there are several other related studies in this area,<sup>7</sup> the most recent large-scale study of a representative sample of shared custody cases is the Kreckler, Brown, Melli, and Wimer (2003) study of Wisconsin divorce cases (PS4) which entered the Wisconsin court system between 1996 and 1998. It is this study that is the point of comparison for the current report. The new information that this report is based upon is drawn from a similarly selected group of Wisconsin families, from the same set of counties, using identical survey and data collection instruments, but selected from a later cohort of parents—those entering the Wisconsin court system in 2000–2001 (PS5). Other than the passage of three to four years time and any changes in social context during this time, the major difference affecting the two cohorts of parents is a change in Wisconsin law in May 2000 that promotes more time with both parents. We will compare the two cohorts to determine if there is any evidence that there has been a change in behavior that may be attributed to this change in law. For other analyses we will combine the information from both cohorts, which will double the size of the sample and, for some purposes, will give us greater confidence in drawing conclusions.

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<sup>7</sup>Gunnoe and Braver (2001) investigate the effects of sole versus joint legal custody among a sample of 254 recently separated families and find that, two years after a divorce, children in families with joint legal custody had more contact with their fathers and fewer child adjustment problems, but that mothers were less satisfied with joint rather than sole legal custody arrangements. Arditti and Madden-Derdich (1997) compare 176 sole and 35 joint legal custody mothers and find that mothers with sole custody experience greater satisfaction with the custody arrangement, but also greater parenting stress than mothers with joint custody. They find no association between custody type and father involvement. Stephens (1996) finds that father involvement is relatively limited following a divorce and that it decreases over time. However, she finds small positive effects of joint legal custody, as compared to sole mother legal custody, on father involvement in some, but not all, of her models. Other studies that include shared placement families are hampered by designs that limit the scope and validity of their results, such as small, nonrandom convenience samples (Cloutier and Jacques, 1997; Luepnitz 1982).

*The Difference in Legal Environments of Wisconsin in the late 1990s and the early 2000s*

Wisconsin law (in both the late 1990s and today) clearly distinguishes between physical placement—with whom a child lives or spends time—and legal custody—the right to make decisions about a child (Wis. Stat. §767.24(2) and (4)). During the late 1990s, Wisconsin statutes did not provide for a presumption of shared physical placement. However, Wisconsin courts have historically entered orders for settlements that parents have agreed to, with or without statutory presumption (Melli, Erlanger, and Chambliss, 1988). And Wisconsin in the late 1990s allowed the courts to order shared physical placements “in the discretion of the court” in disputed cases. There is also some evidence to suggest that statutory requirements in Wisconsin during the late 1990s may have had consequences that favored shared physical placement. For example, Wis. Stat. §767.11 required that all cases where physical placement was contested be referred to mediation. It is possible that mediation in such disputes increased the likelihood of shared placement, since such an arrangement provided a compromise between the parents. Additionally, Wis. Stat. §767.11(5)(c) provided that any person with physical placement could seek assistance from the Family Court Commissioner to resolve problems with placement. The availability of such assistance may have increased the likelihood that shared placement would be successful, and that the terms of the order would be met. Wisconsin statutes did not specify, however, the minimum amount of time required by an order of shared physical placement. For that definition, one must refer to the Wisconsin child support administrative guidelines, which specify the amount of time that constitutes shared physical placement as over “30 percent time of a year or 109.5 out of every 365 days” (Wisconsin Administrative Code, DWD 40.02(25) and (28)).

Administrative guidelines covering child support and the amount of time that defines shared physical placement have not changed over the time period experienced by both cohorts of families in this study. Changes were made, however, in May 2000 to the Wisconsin statute governing the allocation physical placement. All families in our later cohort of cases entered the court system after June 2000, and were thus subject to this new legislation. One substantial addition to the 2000 Wisconsin Statutes, under

“Action Affecting the Family,” is the requirement that each parent file a fairly extensive and detailed “Parenting Plan” with the court, which includes that parent’s preferences for the physical placement schedule, including summers and holidays (Wis. Stat. §767.24(1)(1m)). And an important sentence was added to the statute in the paragraph listing considerations for physical placement orders: “The court shall set a placement schedule that allows the child to have regularly occurring, meaningful periods of physical placement with each parent and that maximizes the amount of time the child may spend with each parent, taking into account geographic separation and accommodations for different households.” (Wis. Stat. §767.24(4)(a)(2.)) It is possible that these two additions, particularly the phrase “maximize . . . time with each parent,” to the Wisconsin Statutes may have had an impact on the placement decisions of parents and judges and may, therefore, have led to changes in both placement orders and parental behaviors regarding children’s living arrangements, resulting in increases in shared physical placement and/or changes in the types of families or parents that have shared physical placement orders. With these changes in statute language in mind, we explore differences in placement orders and children’s living arrangements among two samples of Wisconsin families whose divorces were finalized pre-May 2000 and post-May 2000.

The sample of post-May 2000 families were interviewed in the summer of 2004, and were asked about a focal child’s living arrangements during the summer of 2003 and the 2003–2004 school year. If changes in children’s living arrangements occurred during the course of the school year, we then constructed measures of children’s living arrangements that reflect where they were living (and how often) during the summer and *only* the fall semester of 2003. This is important to note since the definition of shared placement and the Wisconsin administrative guidelines governing child support in shared placement cases were changed at the beginning of January 2004. We assume that this change in law did

not affect children's living arrangements in the fall of 2003, but that it may have affected living arrangements in the spring of 2004).<sup>8</sup>

*Changes in the Social Context of Divorce in Wisconsin*

Shared (“joint”) *legal* custody of children began to grow in popularity in the 1980s in Wisconsin: the rate was 18 percent in 1980, and reached 64 percent by the late 1980s. The latest cohort of CRD cases, entering the Wisconsin court system in the year 2000, and from which the PS5 survey sample was drawn, show a continued increase, to 87 percent of divorce decrees providing for joint legal custody (Appendix Table A1). *Joint legal custody* gives mothers and fathers equal responsibility in major post-divorce decision-making regarding the children in areas such as education, religion, and medical care, although it does not presume joint or shared residential care.

In the early 1990s Wisconsin began to see an increase in post-divorce shared residential care, or shared physical placement. Rates of shared placement in the mid-1980s were under 3 percent, but had risen to 6 percent by the early 1990s, and to 19 percent in the mid-to-late 1990s. For those cases coming to court in Wisconsin in the year 2000, the rate of shared physical placement had risen to over 27 percent.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Note that, given a 2004 change in administrative rules governing child support, the two cohorts of families on which we are reporting (both PS4 and PS5) were living in a very different environment than now exists in Wisconsin. The 2004 child support guideline has reduced the level of time-share in defining shared placement (from 30 to 25 percent time) (Wisconsin Administrative Code, DWD40.02(2)(a)(1.)), while simultaneously calling for much reduced child support amounts in 25–40 percentage time (unequal) shared placement cases (Wisconsin Administrative Code, DWD40.04(2)(a)(2.) and Wisconsin Administrative Code, DWD40.02(b)(1-6.)). On the other hand, the revised child support guideline formula produces a much higher level of child support to be ordered in equal shared placement cases where the incomes of the parents are dissimilar. To the degree that state laws and guidelines affect the behavior of parents in decisions about physical placement, significant changes may be currently underway in the rate and type of shared placement orders in Wisconsin.

<sup>9</sup>These percentages are conservative estimates. They do not include cases with “mixed” physical placements, where one child in the family may have a shared placement, but another child resides solely with the father or mother. Additionally, they are based on the child support guideline used in each case, rather than by assessing the time-share outlined in the placement agreements (i.e., if the standard percentage guideline was used in a case, this case was counted as a “sole placement” case, even though the time-share arrangement may have called for more than 30 percent of time with both parents).

These shifts in physical placement rates are not unique to a small number of Wisconsin counties; they have occurred throughout all of the 21 counties of the Wisconsin study area (Appendix Table A2). Sixteen of the 21 CRD counties show rates of 20 to 40 percent shared physical placement in the post-2000 cohort of cases. Two counties had rates of over 40 percent shared placement. The results presented on this table clearly show a substantial trend toward increases in shared placements over time.

Appendix Table A3 shows a wider disparity in shared placement orders by judgeship. Thirty-six judges presiding over cases in the latest cohort of year 2000 cases in the 21 CRD counties had signed the divorce decrees of at least 10 divorce cases. We calculated percentages of shared placement orders from these cases. The percentage of shared placement cases ordered by the modal number of five judges totaled 50–55 percent. Two judges ordered shared placements in at least 80 percent of their cases. In all, there appears to be a large increase in the percentage of shared placement orders by a considerable proportion of judges, compared to prior cohorts, where the highest percentage of cases ordered to be shared placement by a single judge was 50–55 percent. However, except for a small number of unresolved cases, judges routinely sign-off on stipulated agreements brought to the court by the divorcing parties (Melli, Erlanger, and Chambliss, 1988). It is therefore unlikely that the high rate of shared placement found for some judges in the most recent cohort of cases is a result of decisions by individual judges. The high percentages associated with some judges may also result from the climate of mediation services available in the counties. It is possible that mediation counselors, judges, lawyers, and parents in post-2000 cases may have interpreted the May 2000 legal changes as proscribing “presumptive” or “default” shared placement.

There are no available national figures to indicate the level or distribution of shared physical placements as a proportion of divorce judgments. The Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) study of California cases from 1985–1988 indicate a rate of 20 percent of cases with a shared placement outcome (pp. 112–113). A more nationally based Advance Report of Final Divorce Statistics, 1989 and 1990, in a section entitled “Physical Custody of Children,” calculate an average of 15.7 percent of divorce cases with shared

physical placement, from 19 reporting states (Clarke, 1995, p. 25). These figures are suspect, however, and probably suffer from confusion in terminology between joint legal custody and shared physical placement.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the lack of statistical evidence on the proportion of divorce cases resulting in shared placements, legislative trends suggest that, over time, shared physical placements have become more widespread, as evidenced by the growing number of states that have implemented child support guidelines to cover shared placement cases. In the early 1990s, 11 states offered no guidance, and did not mention shared physical placement in their child support guidelines. Only 17 states cited a “threshold” of time-share which defined “shared” placement,<sup>11</sup> and offered a formula or guideline for calculating child support in these cases.<sup>12</sup> By the end of 2004, only five states still failed to offer guidance or some mention of shared physical placement, and 28 states cited thresholds for defining shared placement and formulas for calculating child support.<sup>13</sup> An indication of the difficulty in measuring shared parenting, however, is evident in the disparity in threshold levels of time-share used by the states to define shared placement, ranging from a low of 14 percent in Indiana<sup>14</sup> to a high of 45 percent in North Dakota.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>For example, Wisconsin was included in these statistics, with a rate of 33.7 percent shared placement in the year 1989, which is almost certainly a (several years out of date) figure for *joint legal* custody, as opposed to shared physical placement. State of Wisconsin data was not included in similar statistics in following years.

<sup>11</sup>Some states use the terminology of “extended visitation” instead of “shared” or “joint” placement.

<sup>12</sup>From Melli and Brown (1994), Appendix A.

<sup>13</sup>Patricia Brown and Philip Brenner, (in research in progress), identify states with no child support guidance for shared placement cases (KY, MO, MS, NY, TX) and states with both a threshold and a child support guideline (AK, AZ, CA, CO, DE, FL, HI, IA, ID, IN, LA, MD, MI, MT, NC, ND, NJ, NM, OK, OR, PA, SC, SD, VA, VT, WI, WV, WY).

<sup>14</sup>52 overnights per year (Indiana Child Support Guidelines, amended July 1, 2003, effective January 1, 2004, page 27).

<sup>15</sup>164 overnights per year (North Dakota Child Support Guidelines, effective August 1, 1999, page 13).

## DATA AND METHODS

For this report, as in the earlier Wisconsin report, we begin with data from the Wisconsin Court Record Data (CRD). The CRD is a sample of cases that entered the court system in 21 Wisconsin counties.<sup>16</sup> The three most recent cohorts of CRD sample cases provided the sample frame for two parent surveys, PS4 and PS5. We used the CRD to select divorce cases that entered the court system between July 1, 1996, and June 30, 1998, for PS4, and between July 1, 2000, and June 30, 2001, for PS5. In PS4, all surveyed cases had a final divorce decree granted between November 1, 1996, and March 1, 2000, and in PS5, between October 1, 2000, and June 1, 2003. In this report we focus exclusively on divorced families, as shared placement orders occur very rarely in paternity cases.<sup>17</sup>

The survey sample was limited to divorce cases with orders for shared placement (equal or unequal) at the time of the divorce judgment<sup>18</sup> and a comparison group of mother sole placement cases. Father sole placement, split placement, third-party placement, and arrangements involving a mixture of sole or shared placement were not included in the survey sample. We further limited the sample to cases in which there was at least one child under age 18 on June 1 prior to the survey, so that survey questions about minor children's living arrangements would be applicable. After these exclusions, we derived target survey samples of 293 (PS4) and 305 (PS5) shared placement cases and a comparison sample of 300 (PS4) and 295 (PS5) mother sole placement cases. The top panel of Appendix Table A4 shows the percentage of physical placement types represented by the full CRD samples and the samples selected for the surveys. Columns 1 and 2 show information for the pre-May 2000 CRD sample and the selected PS4 survey sample; columns 5 and 6 show information for the post-May 2000 CRD sample and the selected

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<sup>16</sup>See Brown and Marshall (1992), Brown and Roan (1997), Brown and Wimer (2002), and Brown (2005) for details on the design and methodology of the CRD.

<sup>17</sup>See Cook and Brown (2005).

<sup>18</sup>By "divorce judgment" we mean the order issued when the divorce decree was entered.

PS5 survey sample. (Additional rows in this table show information, discussed below, on selected characteristics of cases from the CRD and Unemployment Insurance wage record databases.)

The interview field period for PS4 was summer and early fall of 2001; for PS5 the field period was summer and fall of 2004. Prior to fielding the surveys, we randomly selected a focal child from among the children listed in each case who were under age 18 on June 1. The survey instrument included detailed questions about the living arrangements of the focal child during the previous 12 months. Time constraints for a telephone survey prevented us from asking the full sequence of living arrangement questions about other children.

We attempted to interview the mother and the father associated with each case,<sup>19</sup> and each parent was asked questions about the same focal child. In addition to children's living arrangements, we collected data on the respondent's demographic characteristics and economic resources, employment, and household composition, as well as the frequency of contact and extent of conflict with the other parent.<sup>20</sup> Our response rates for both surveys were higher for shared placement parents (67.8 percent of PS4 mothers, 67.7 percent of PS5 mothers, 70.8 percent of PS4 fathers, 66.7 percent of PS5 fathers) than for parents in mother sole custody cases (70.0 percent of PS4 mothers, 61.3 percent of PS5 mothers, 49.0 percent of PS4 fathers, 46.9 percent of PS5 fathers).<sup>21</sup>

Appendix Table A4 shows characteristics of the CRD and survey samples for the two time-periods, and characteristics of mother and father respondents for the two surveys. The first panel on physical placement at the time of final divorce judgment shows that the survey samples consisted of about

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<sup>19</sup>Our analyses are not, however, based on "matched pairs" of parents.

<sup>20</sup>We conducted abbreviated interviews if a parent reported that the couple was reconciled or if the other parent or the focal child was reported to have died. Cases in which the other parent or the child were reported to have died, or the parents were reconciled, are not included in the analyses.

<sup>21</sup>Interviews lasted an average of 30–35 minutes. Survey efforts included several measures to minimize nonresponse, including advance notification letters, a follow-up/thank you letter which included a free telephone calling card, and, in PS5, in-person contacts with households in selected counties. PA Consulting Group was contracted to conduct the fieldwork for both surveys.

50 percent mother sole cases, but that only about 40–41 percent (indicated in bold) of the fathers that responded to the surveys were fathers in these cases. Alternatively, higher response rates were achieved with fathers in shared placement cases, in every category (unequal shared/mother primary, equal shared, and unequal shared/father primary). This means that responses to questions from fathers are heavily biased toward fathers in shared placement cases, who may be very different from fathers in sole mother placement cases. For example, these fathers live in closer proximity to their children, spend much greater amounts of time with children, provide larger amounts of financial support to their children, and are generally higher-earning than nonrespondent fathers.

In order to adjust for bias introduced in the results due to nonrandom response to the surveys, we used two variables from state of Wisconsin administrative data to weight the responses. These two variables were fathers' earnings from Unemployment Insurance wage records and child support payments from the child support accounting system (KIDS). These two variables were calculated for the year prior to the survey field periods. Even with these adjustments, the response rate for fathers in mother sole custody cases was low enough in both PS4 and PS5 that we are unable to make adequate adjustments for nonresponse bias to provide reliable data for this subset of the respondents. For example, Appendix Table A4 shows that the *weighted* percentage of fathers who had been previously married (shown in bold) is several percentage points lower for father respondents than for the survey sample as a whole, and the *weighted* percentage of fathers who paid something on their child support orders was 95–98 percent (shown in bold), compared to 91–92 percent of the full survey sample. Fathers' reports are presented in this report, but the mothers' reports are more representative of the entire sample. Fathers undoubtedly have different perceptions and perspectives from mothers on various issues relating to the raising of their children, including the quantity and quality of the time they spend with children. Given the bias in response of fathers to the survey, however, we are generally unable to disentangle differences in behavior or perceptions from the bias in respondent characteristics.

### Analytic Strategy

The CRD provides a history of physical placement from the final judgment at divorce to the end of the December prior to the survey field period, for both surveys. We use this information to examine changes in legal orders for physical placement over time. Responses to the parent surveys record the children's living arrangements for a 12-month period that corresponds to the same time period as the court records in the CRD. We can, therefore, use the survey data to compare parents' reports of children's living arrangements to the physical placement order in effect, and measure consistency or deviations from the legal agreement.

In comparing the survey and court record data, we use definitions of time as defined by the Wisconsin Administrative Code. These definitions measure time in terms of "overnight child care" or "equivalent care:"

"Threshold" means 30 percent of a year or 109.5 out of every 365 days (Wisconsin Administrative Code, DWD 40.02(28)).

"Shared-time payer" means a payer who provides overnight child care or equivalent care beyond the threshold and assumes all variable child care costs in proportion to the number of days he or she cares for the child under the shared-time arrangement.

Note: There are physical placement arrangements in which the payer provides child care beyond the threshold and incurs additional cost in proportion to the time he or she provides care, but because of the physical placement arrangement he or she does not provide overnight care (e.g., payer provides day care while the payee is working). Upon request of one of the parties the court may determine that the physical placement arrangement other than overnight care is the equivalent of overnight care. (Wisconsin Administrative Code, DWD 40.02(25))

For purposes of comparison with the court record order of physical placement, we measure the percentage of time that the child lived with the father during the 12-month period that included the school year and summer prior to the survey. We begin with a count of overnights with the father, which include summer, summer holidays, school year, and school year holidays. In order to capture the concept of "equivalent care," we use additional questions from the questionnaire which measure daytime care, as well as other assessments of father's participation in the child's life and contact with the child.

Time-share measurements from (unmatched) mothers and fathers reports are calculated separately, since we expect parents' reports to differ. Prior research indicates a number of differences in parents' reports of time with the child. For example, fathers report that they have more frequent contact with their children than do mothers (Seltzer and Brandreth 1995); mothers and fathers use different thresholds for determining whether or not a child "lives" with them (Tuschen 1994); and mothers' and fathers' reports differ in terms of contact with a child and child support payments (Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Klawitter, 1991; Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Dykema, 1998).

In this report we do not limit our analyses to responses from matched pairs of parents, since this would reduce the sample size of usable interviews and would bias the information toward families with highly involved fathers and more cooperative and friendly parents.<sup>22</sup> Some of the differences we find between mothers' and fathers' reports are therefore due to slightly different response samples. We weight our analyses to reduce nonresponse bias, but acknowledge that some bias probably still exists, and may contribute to some of the differences in reports by mothers compared to fathers. In particular, if fathers are more likely to respond when they are more involved, but if mothers' response rates are unrelated (or negatively related) to fathers' involvement, then fathers' reports of their own involvement would be higher than mothers' reports of their involvement—even if both were reporting accurately.

### Definitions

Thirty percent time is the threshold used to calculate child support obligations for shared placement cases in the state of Wisconsin (Wisconsin Administrative Code, DWD 40.02(25),

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<sup>22</sup>We attempted to contact each father and mother for every case in the survey samples. In some cases we were not able to interview the mother; in other cases we were not able to interview the father. If we were to limit our analysis to only cases in which we had interviewed both the father and mother (matched pairs), the number of cases would be smaller than if we used all mothers' and all fathers' responses. Also, reporting only "matched pair" responses would create a biased representation of the target sample, since the likelihood of getting interviews with both the father and mother in a case would be higher for highly involved fathers or from highly cooperative parents. This report is, therefore, based on "unmatched" mother and father responses.

40.02(28)).<sup>23</sup> Therefore, we define *shared physical placement* cases as those in which each parent is responsible for overnight or equivalent care of the child for more than 30 percent of the time according to the legal agreement in effect at the time of the final divorce decree. We define *mother sole placement* cases as those cases in which the mother has physical placement of the child for more than 70 percent of the time.

We further differentiate shared physical placement cases into three groups: *equal shared placement*, *unequal shared placement with mother as primary parent*, and *unequal shared placement with father as primary parent*. The Wisconsin Administrative Code provides the definition for these distinctions. *Equal shared placement* cases are those in which each parent has physical placement of the child for 50 percent of the year. *Unequal shared placement* refers to physical placement orders in which each parent has placement of the child more than 30 percent of the year (i.e., at least 110 overnights, Wisconsin Administrative Code, DWD 40.04(2a)). In unequal shared placement cases, we identify whether it is the mother (“mother primary”) or the father (“father primary”) who has physical placement of the child for more than 50 percent (183 days) of a year (Wisconsin Administrative Code, DWD 40.02(21)).

## RESULTS

### Court-Ordered Changes in Physical Placement Agreements

We first examine changes in physical placement agreements over time by comparing the language (as agreed upon or ordered) in the final divorce decree and the language in any subsequent order that would have been in effect in the summer and fall prior to the surveys. In Tables 1a and 1b we show the distribution of placement orders in effect at the time of the divorce judgment (in the rows) for the two

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<sup>23</sup>Above thirty percent time was the definition of shared placement for cases entering the Wisconsin court system during the time period represented by the PS4 and PS5 cases. That definition was changed to “at least 25 percent” time, effective January 1, 2004 (Wisconsin Administrative Code, DWD40.04(2)(a)(1.), December, 2003).

**Table 1a: PS4 Survey Sample**  
**Distribution of Child Placement Orders at the Time of Divorce Judgment and of Orders at the Time of Survey**

| Placement Order at Survey             | Child Placement Order at Time of Divorce Judgment |     |                          |    |                |    |              |     |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----|--------------------------|----|----------------|----|--------------|-----|
|                                       | Mother Sole                                       |     | Unequal Shared Placement |    |                |    | Equal Shared |     |
|                                       | Percentage  | N   | Mother Primary           |    | Father Primary |    | Percentage   | N   |
|                                       |   |     | Percentage               | N  | Percentage     | N  |              |     |
| Sole placement:                       |   |     |                          |    |                |    |              |     |
| Mother sole                           | <b>94.67</b>                                      | 284 | 1.49                     | 1  | 0.00           | 0  | 6.51         | 14  |
| Father sole                           | 1.33  | 4   | 2.99                     | 2  | 0.00           | 0  | 1.86         | 4   |
| Unequal shared placement:             |   |     |                          |    |                |    |              |     |
| Mother primary                        | 0.33  | 1   | <b>89.55</b>             | 60 | 0.00           | 0  | 2.79         | 6   |
| Father primary                        | 0.00  | 0   | 0.00                     | 0  | <b>100.00</b>  | 11 | 0.00         | 0   |
| Equal shared placement                | 0.67  | 2   | 5.97                     | 4  | 0.00           | 0  | <b>87.91</b> | 189 |
| Other:                                |   |     |                          |    |                |    |              |     |
| Split placement                       | 1.33  | 4   | 0.00                     | 0  | 0.00           | 0  | 0.93         | 2   |
| Third party                           | 0.67  | 2   | 0.00                     | 0  | 0.00           | 0  | 0.00         | 0   |
| Parents reconciled                    | 1.00  | 3   | 0.00                     | 0  | 0.00           | 0  | 0.00         | 0   |
| Totals                                | 100.00%   | 300 | 100.00%                  | 67 | 100.00%        | 11 | 100.00%      | 215 |
| Years from divorce judgment to survey |   |     |                          |    |                |    |              |     |
| Mean (sd)                             | 3.1 (0.7)   |     | 2.8 (0.7)                |    | 2.6 (0.7)      |    | 3.0 (0.7)    |     |
| Minimum                               | 1.3   |     | 1.5                      |    | 1.6            |    | 1.3          |     |
| Maximum                               | 4.6   |     | 4.2                      |    | 3.8            |    | 4.5          |     |

**Note:** Percentages and Ns are unweighted. Figures in bold indicate percentages of cases unchanged over the two time periods.

**Table 1b: PS5 Survey Sample**  
**Distribution of Child Placement Orders at the Time of Divorce Judgment and of Orders at the Time of Survey**

| Placement Order at Survey             | Child Placement Order at Time of Divorce Judgment |     |                          |    |                |    |              |     |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----|--------------------------|----|----------------|----|--------------|-----|
|                                       | Mother Sole                                       |     | Unequal Shared Placement |    |                |    | Equal Shared |     |
|                                       | Percentage  | N   | Mother Primary           |    | Father Primary |    | Percentage   | N   |
|                                       |   |     | Percentage               | N  | Percentage     | N  | Percentage   | N   |
| Sole placement:                       |   |     |                          |    |                |    |              |     |
| Mother sole                           | <b>94.92</b>                                      | 280 | 5.00                     | 3  | 9.09           | 1  | 5.56         | 13  |
| Father sole                           | 1.69  | 5   | 3.33                     | 2  | 0.00           | 0  | 2.99         | 7   |
| Unequal shared placement:             |   |     |                          |    |                |    |              |     |
| Mother primary                        | 0.34  | 1   | <b>70.00</b>             | 42 | 0.00           | 0  | 2.56         | 6   |
| Father primary                        | 0.00  | 0   | 0.00                     | 0  | <b>81.82</b>   | 9  | 0.43         | 1   |
| Equal shared placement                | 1.69  | 5   | 20.00                    | 12 | 9.09           | 1  | <b>88.46</b> | 207 |
| Other:                                |   |     |                          |    |                |    |              |     |
| Split placement                       | 1.02  | 3   | 1.67                     | 1  | 0.00           | 0  | 0.00         | 0   |
| Third party                           | 0.34  | 1   | 0.00                     | 0  | 0.00           | 0  | 0.00         | 0   |
| Totals                                | 100.00%   | 295 | 100.00%                  | 60 | 100.00%        | 11 | 100.00%      | 234 |
| Years from divorce judgment to survey |   |     |                          |    |                |    |              |     |
| Mean (sd)                             | 2.7 (0.5)   |     | 2.6(0.6)                 |    | 2.6 (0.7)      |    | 2.6 (0.5)    |     |
| Minimum                               | 1.1   |     | 1.1                      |    | 1.6            |    | 1            |     |
| Maximum                               | 3.6   |     | 3.6                      |    | 3.5            |    | 3.6          |     |

**Note:** Percentages and Ns are unweighted.

survey samples, and at the end of the year (in the columns) prior to the surveys. These tables show the frequency of changes for the entire survey sample, irrespective of whether the parents responded to the survey questionnaires. On average, about three years elapsed between these two points in time in the PS4 sample (bottom panel, Table 1a). The PS4 sample was, however, drawn from two CRD cohorts, and the older PS4 cohort has a greater average time-lapse between divorce date and survey time period: 3.6 years, compared to 2.7 years (data not shown) for the younger PS4 cohort. For the PS5 sample (Table 1b), the mean is comparable to the younger PS4 cohort, with a mean of slightly above 2.6 years (data not shown).

Figures in bold on Tables 1a and 1b show the percentage of cases that remained unchanged in the time period observed after the final divorce decree. Physical placement type remained unchanged for a majority of parents in each placement category of the survey sample.<sup>24</sup> Cases with sole mother placement maintained the same placement type in about 95 percent of the cases in both the PS4 and PS5 samples. About 88 percent of the equal shared placement cases also maintained that placement type in both samples. The unequal shared placement cases may suggest some differences in the two samples. The PS4 sample (shown in Table 1a) of unequal shared cases, both mother-primary and father-primary, remained unchanged at higher rates (90 percent and 100 percent, respectively) than the cases in the PS5 sample (shown in Table 1b; 70 percent and 82 percent, respectively). As the number of cases in the unequal shared categories are small (particularly the father-primary cases, with only 11 cases in both PS4 and PS5), these differences should be interpreted with caution.

#### *Parent Reports of Father-Child Contact Change since the Time of Divorce*

We next examine changes in children's living situations over time. These analyses are based on parental responses to several survey questions that asked about parent-child contact in the 12 months prior

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<sup>24</sup>This stability among physical placement provisions is not surprising. Wisconsin Statute §767.325(2) prohibited substantial modifications of physical placement within two years of the order except under two conditions: (a) if circumstances made it impractical for parties to continue to have substantially equal physical placement (Wis. Stat. §767.325(2)), and (b) when both parties agreed to a modification of physical placement or legal custody (Wis. Stat. §767.329).

to the interview and differences in children's living situations at the time of the divorce and at the time of the interview. These data, drawn from both mothers' and fathers' reports are shown on Tables 2a and 2b, where both mothers (Table 2a) and fathers (Table 2b) report on changes in father-child contact. For these analyses, we exclude the small number of unequal shared/father primary cases, as the number of cases in this category is too small to draw reliable conclusions.

The first row of each panel of these tables shows the percentage of interviewed cases in which there was a court-ordered change in the physical placement order. In Table 2a, mothers' reports show that significantly more PS4 equal shared cases returned to court for a change in placement order, as compared to other types of cases. However, in PS5 it is the unequal shared placement cases that have returned to court to change placement, significantly more often than either equal shared or mother sole cases, although equal shared cases are significantly more likely to return to court than mother sole cases. We account for these cases (which could result in more time or less time with the father) in the first row of each panel of Tables 2a and 2b, but do not consider them further, since these changes have been recognized and legally recorded or ordered by the court.

In Tables 2a and 2b, the row labeled "same" presents descriptive statistics for cases in which the reporting parent does not indicate a difference in the amount of time children are spending with fathers in the current living situation, compared to the time of divorce. In the mothers' reports, equal shared placement cases are significantly more likely to have remained the same than mother sole cases, and unequal shared cases fall between the two. The percentages are quite similar for PS4 and PS5: 30–32 percent of sole mothers report no difference in father's time with the child, 35–39 percent of unequal shared cases report no difference, and 51–53 percent of equal shared cases report no difference.

In the PS4 mothers' reports, the percentage of shared (equal and unequal) mothers who report that the father now has more contact with the child than at the time of divorce is more than twice the number that report less contact. This is in contrast to sole mothers, who report a larger percentage with less or no in-person contact (25.5 percent and 17.8 percent, respectively). This pattern differs somewhat in the PS5

**Table 2a**  
**Change in Father-Child Contact since the Time of Divorce, by Placement Type:**  
**Mothers' Survey Reports (PS4 and PS5 Reported Separately)**

|   | Mother Sole |            | Mother Primary |            | Equal Shared |            | Test of Differences (p-value) |                         |                          |
|---|-------------|------------|----------------|------------|--------------|------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
|   | N           | Percentage | N              | Percentage | N            | Percentage | Sole vs. Equal                | Sole vs. Mother Primary | Equal vs. Mother Primary |
| PS4 Survey  | 208         |            | 48             |            | 137          |            |                               |                         |                          |
| Change in Placement through Return to Court           | 7           | 3.01       | 2              | 2.16       | 18           | 14.85      | <b>0.0001</b>                 | NS                      | <b>0.0124</b>            |
| Change in Amount of Father-Child Contact <sup>a</sup> |             |            |                |            |              |            |                               |                         |                          |
| No in-Person Contact                                  | 26          | 17.82      | 0              | 0.00       | 0            | 0.00       | <b>0.0012</b>                 | <b>0.0402</b>           | NA                       |
| Less  | 59          | 25.54      | 6              | 15.86      | 17           | 10.22      | <b>0.0329</b>                 | NS                      | NS                       |
| Same <sup>b</sup>                                     | 66          | 32.20      | 21             | 39.49      | 75           | 53.02      | <b>0.0001</b>                 | NS                      | <b>0.0080</b>            |
| More  | 49          | 21.16      | 18             | 41.51      | 26           | 21.51      | NS                            | <b>0.0413</b>           | <b>0.0255</b>            |
| Parents Reconciled                                    | 1           | 0.28       | 1              | 0.98       | 1            | 0.40       |                               |                         |                          |
| PS5 Survey  | 180         |            | 39             |            | 161          |            |                               |                         |                          |
| Change in Placement through Return to Court           | 9           | 4.88       | 14             | 34.12      | 14           | 6.08       | <b>&lt;.0001</b>              | <b>&lt;.0001</b>        | <b>&lt;.0001</b>         |
| Change in Amount of Father-Child Contact <sup>a</sup> |             |            |                |            |              |            |                               |                         |                          |
| No in-Person Contact                                  | 22          | 11.01      | 0              | 0.00       | 1            | 0.43       | <b>0.0015</b>                 | NS                      | NS                       |
| Less  | 54          | 31.07      | 4              | 8.46       | 34           | 21.73      | <b>0.0995</b>                 | NS                      | NS                       |
| Same <sup>b</sup>                                     | 53          | 29.90      | 14             | 35.40      | 77           | 50.86      | <b>0.0001</b>                 | NS                      | NS                       |
| More  | 41          | 22.48      | 7              | 22.02      | 32           | 18.96      | NS                            | NS                      | NS                       |
| Parents Reconciled                                    | 1           | 0.66       | 0              | 0.00       | 3            | 1.94       |                               |                         |                          |

|   | Test of Differences (p-value) |                            |                          |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
|   | Sole PS4 vs. PS5              | Mother Primary PS4 vs. PS5 | Equal Shared PS4 vs. PS5 |
| Change in Placement through Return to Court           | NS                            | <b>&lt;.0001</b>           | <b>0.015</b>             |
| Change in Amount of Father-Child Contact <sup>a</sup> |                               |                            |                          |
| No in-Person Contact                                  | NS                            | NA                         | NS                       |
| Less  | NS                            | NS                         | <b>0.0166</b>            |
| Same <sup>b</sup>                                     | NS                            | NS                         | NS                       |
| More  | NS                            | NS                         | NS                       |

**Note:** Percentages are weighted, Ns are unweighted. Significance tests are based on weighted data. NS = not significant. NA = not applicable. Figures in bold are statistically significant.

<sup>a</sup>In cases where there had been no return to court for a legal change in physical placement.

<sup>b</sup>Includes cases in which the parent reported the amount of father-child contact was “not more or less but different.”

**Table 2b**  
**Change in Father-Child Contact Since the Time of Divorce, by Placement Type:**  
**Fathers' Survey Reports (PS4 and PS5 Reported Separately)**

|   | Mother Sole                   |            | Mother Primary             |            | Equal Shared             |            | Test of Differences (p-value) |                         |                          |
|---|-------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
|   | N                             | Percentage | N                          | Percentage | N                        | Percentage | Sole vs. Equal                | Sole vs. Mother Primary | Equal vs. Mother Primary |
| PS4 Survey  | 145                           |            | 52                         |            | 145                      |            |                               |                         |                          |
| Change in Placement through Return to Court           | 8                             | 6.67       | 6                          | 10.03      | 17                       | 12.97      | NS                            | NS                      | NS                       |
| Change in Amount of Father-Child Contact <sup>a</sup> |                               |            |                            |            |                          |            |                               |                         |                          |
| No in-Person Contact                                  | 7                             | 5.30       | 0                          | 0.00       | 0                        | 0.00       | NS                            | NS                      | NA                       |
| Less  | 43                            | 28.05      | 5                          | 5.93       | 29                       | 16.33      | NS                            | <b>0.0584</b>           | <b>0.0381</b>            |
| Same <sup>b</sup>                                     | 43                            | 26.24      | 32                         | 67.77      | 71                       | 52.32      | <b>&lt;.0001</b>              | <b>0.0002</b>           | <b>0.0527</b>            |
| More  | 43                            | 33.45      | 9                          | 16.26      | 26                       | 17.84      | <b>0.0524</b>                 | NS                      | NS                       |
| Parents Reconciled                                    | 1                             | 0.29       | 0                          | 0.00       | 2                        | 0.53       |                               |                         |                          |
| PS5 Survey  | 137                           |            | 43                         |            | 150                      |            |                               |                         |                          |
| Change in Placement through Return to Court           | 10                            | 6.77       | 12                         | 25.68      | 13                       | 6.78       | NS                            | <b>0.0079</b>           | <b>0.0004</b>            |
| Change in Amount of Father-Child Contact <sup>a</sup> |                               |            |                            |            |                          |            |                               |                         |                          |
| No in-Person Contact                                  | 3                             | 1.78       | 0                          | 0.00       | 0                        | 0.00       | NS                            | NS                      | NA                       |
| Less  | 35                            | 24.13      | 4                          | 6.83       | 24                       | 13.87      | <b>0.0652</b>                 | NS                      | NS                       |
| Same <sup>b</sup>                                     | 46                            | 38.61      | 15                         | 36.50      | 83                       | 62.05      | <b>0.0003</b>                 | NS                      | <b>0.0638</b>            |
| More  | 43                            | 28.71      | 11                         | 30.45      | 29                       | 16.87      | <b>0.0446</b>                 | NS                      | <b>0.0047</b>            |
| Parents Reconciled                                    | 0                             | 0.00       | 1                          | 0.53       | 1                        | 0.43       |                               |                         |                          |
|   | Test of Differences (p-value) |            |                            |            |                          |            |                               |                         |                          |
|   | Sole PS4 vs. PS5              |            | Mother Primary PS4 vs. PS5 |            | Equal Shared PS4 vs. PS5 |            |                               |                         |                          |
| Change in Placement through Return to Court           | NS                            |            | <b>0.0445</b>              |            | <b>0.0817</b>            |            |                               |                         |                          |
| Change in Amount of Father-Child Contact <sup>a</sup> |                               |            |                            |            |                          |            |                               |                         |                          |
| No in-Person Contact                                  | NS                            |            | NA                         |            | NA                       |            |                               |                         |                          |
| Less  | NS                            |            | <b>0.0318</b>              |            | NS                       |            |                               |                         |                          |
| Same <sup>b</sup>                                     | <b>0.031</b>                  |            | <b>0.0228</b>              |            | NS                       |            |                               |                         |                          |
| More  | NS                            |            | NS                         |            | NS                       |            |                               |                         |                          |

**Note:** Percentages are weighted, Ns are unweighted. Significance tests are based on weighted data. NS = not significant. NA = not applicable. Figures in bold are statistically significant.

<sup>a</sup>In cases where there had been no return to court for a legal change in physical placement.

<sup>b</sup>Includes cases in which the parent reported the amount of father-child contact was “not more or less but different.”

mothers' data: similar percentages of equal shared mothers report shifts to more father-child (19 percent) contact and to less father-child contact (21.7 percent), and significantly more PS5 equal shared mothers report that the father spent less time since the divorce than PS4 mothers (21.7 percent, compared to 10.2 percent).

Fathers' reports (Table 2b) suggest relatively similar patterns as mothers' reports, although, when mother and father reports differ, fathers are more likely to report spending the same or more time with the child. Note that, while we have adjusted for nonresponse bias, there is some evidence that those fathers who have little or no contact with their children are likely either to refuse to participate in the survey or to not be located for an interview.<sup>25</sup> Due to their lack of representation in the survey, it is likely that the table of fathers' reports underestimates some decline of father-child contact since the time of divorce, particularly in the sole mother cases.

There are some important considerations to bear in mind in interpreting the information shown on Tables 2a and 2b. The first consideration is how respondents interpreted the phrase "when you were first divorced." We would like to think that the time period that the respondent had in mind was the day/week/month after the final divorce decree. But it is possible that their interpretation of this phrase pre-dates that point in time, and extends back as far as the date of first separation, during which time the living situation may not have been the same as at the time of the divorce. Another consideration is whether to assume that the physical placement agreement, as detailed in the final divorce decree, was actually implemented, and implemented immediately. We acknowledge that this may not be true in all cases, but we did not ask parents if the placement order was ever implemented, and we have no way of assessing the degree to which orders are actually implemented. Therefore, when a respondent says that

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<sup>25</sup>For PS4 and PS5 mothers who reported that the father had no contact with the child in the last 12 months, we were able to contact and interview only 28 percent of fathers. However, for mothers who reported that the father did spend time with their child, we were able to contact and interview 68 percent of fathers. This disparity in response rates indicates that the fathers' results under-represent fathers with little or no time with the child, and our weights cannot fully rectify this nonresponse bias.

there has been no change in father-child contact, we assume that the physical placement agreement is still in effect. If the physical placement agreement was never implemented, then this assumption is not correct. A third consideration is that, despite father-child contact being reported to be the same at the time of the survey and divorce, a child's living situation may have undergone some changes in the intervening time period. Finally, parental reports of "less" or "more" time with fathers could be indicative of trivial amounts of time or significant amounts of time. "Less" and "more" are purely the interpretations of the respondent.

Despite these caveats in regard to interpreting the data on Tables 2a and 2b, the general implications regarding changes in these three types of placement cases are useful. The PS4 equal shared placement mothers indicated that about 10 percent of the fathers were seeing their children less, and almost 22 percent were seeing their children more, than at the time of divorce—without a return to court to adjust the child support order. According to the shared placement child support formula in effect in Wisconsin during the time period covering the PS4 and PS5 cases, a 1 percent change in time-share would entail a change in child support amount. If we assume that "at the time of divorce" the parents had implemented an equal shared placement time-share plan, then it is possible that more than 30 percent of these cases could be eligible to return to court to have child support adjusted (depending upon the size of the change in time-share): 10 percent adjusted upward (assuming father earns more and therefore owes child support), and 22 percent adjusted downward (or reversed, with mother to pay father). Instead of "maternal drift," as suggested by Maccoby and Mnookin, this looks more like "*paternal* drift." This pattern is somewhat stronger in the unequal primary mother cases, with about 16 percent reporting "less" time with father, but nearly 42 percent of mothers reporting "more" time with father. In the post-2000 reports of mothers from PS5, the pattern is less pronounced, with a fairly even balance between "less" (22 percent) and "more" (19 percent) reported by equal shared placement mothers, and 8 percent of unequal primary mothers reporting "less" and 22 percent reporting "more" time with father. Despite the difference

between the two time periods, there appears to be no evidence from these tables of “maternal drift” (without an adjustment in child support) in shared placement cases from either time period.

The information from mothers in mother sole placement cases tells a different story. The child support formula applicable to mother sole placement cases is not based upon time with the child, other than its defining characteristic: the physical placement arrangement assumes that less than 30 percent of the time is to be spent with the father. Therefore, father-child contact can go to as low as zero, or as high as 30 percent time, without a need to return to court for an adjustment of child support. Twenty-one to 22 percent of sole mothers in PS4 and PS5 indicated that father was spending “more” time with the child than at the divorce. Such increases in time would not necessarily require returns to court for an adjustment or reduction of child support orders.

On the other hand, relatively large percentages of fathers in mother sole placement cases appear to spend no time with their children: almost 18 percent of mothers in PS4 reported no personal contact between father and child in the 12 months prior to the interview.<sup>26</sup> The Wisconsin child support guidelines do not include any provision for increased child support to the mother when the father has no responsibility for personal care of the child. The child support percentage guideline is based, however, on the expectation of some direct costs to the father resulting from time with the child, although that level of time is not proscribed. Finally, fewer sole mothers in PS5 reported no contact between father and child (11 percent) than in PS4 (nearly 18 percent), although this difference is not statistically significant.

#### Comparisons between Detailed Living Arrangements and Physical Placement Orders

We next investigate the extent to which parents’ reports of living arrangements are consistent with physical placement orders by examining mothers’ and fathers’ survey reports of the percentage of

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<sup>26</sup>This lack of contact between father and child could result from a number of different parental situations, some of which could be: desire of the father or the child or the mother, out-of-state residential moves by the father or by the mother, illness or disability of the father, or incarceration of the father.

time that the child lived with the father. These measures are constructed from detailed questions about summer, school year, and holiday days and nights. In Table 3 we focus on families that had an equal shared placement order at the time of the final judgment, and whose equal placement order was still in effect at the time of the survey reference period.<sup>27</sup> We consider families with equal shared placement separately from those with unequal shared placement, because previous research suggests that there are differences in the characteristics of families with equal and unequal shared placements (Melli, Brown, and Cancian, 1997; Cancian and Meyer, 1998). And since the number of unequal shared placement cases is small, we focus most of our analysis on equal shared placement cases.

Table 3 shows detailed distributions (at 5 percent intervals) of reported time-share with the father. However, we focus on broader categories of time-share in our discussion. A number of factors such as measurement error, difficulties of memory and recall, response bias, and small cell sizes in certain categories advise against emphasizing a count of reported time that corresponds exactly to percentages of time used in the Wisconsin child support formula for shared placement cases. For example, we consider mothers' and fathers' reports of 46 to 54 percent time-share to be consistent with an order of equal shared, or "50–50" placement. We base our measurement of time-share on a count of overnights. However, we then adjust these percentages if there is good evidence of "equivalent care" based on a count of the number of days that the child spends time with the father during the year and on the parent's report of where the child "lives." The construction of this measure is described further in the Appendix.

The first panel of Table 3, mothers' reports, shows that a majority of mothers with equal shared placements report living arrangements that are consistent with the physical placement order in both PS4 and PS5. A total of 65 (PS5) to 73 (PS4) percent of mothers indicate that the child stayed with the father about half (46 to 54 percent) of the time. About 12 percent of mothers in both surveys reported that the

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<sup>27</sup>The reference periods of the surveys were the summer and fall of 2000 for PS4 and the summer and fall of 2003 for PS5. If the physical placement agreement had been changed between the divorce and prior to this time period, the case was not included in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Parents' Reports of Father's Time-Share at the Time of the Survey:**  
**Cases with Equal Shared Placement at the Time of Divorce and at the Time of the Survey**

| Percentage Time with Father | PS4: Mother's Reports<br>N=117 |                          |    | PS5: Mother's Reports<br>N=141 |                          |    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
|                             | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N  | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N  |
| 0 Percent                   | 0.00                           | 0.00                     | 0  | 0.47                           | 0.47                     | 1  |
| 1 to 30 percent             | 11.91                          |                          |    | 17.75                          |                          |    |
| 1–5                         | 2.07                           | 2.07                     | 1  | 4.17                           | 4.64                     | 5  |
| 6–10                        | 0.83                           | 2.90                     | 1  | 0.51                           | 5.15                     | 1  |
| 11–15                       | 1.98                           | 4.89                     | 3  | 2.74                           | 7.89                     | 4  |
| 16–20                       | 1.45                           | 6.34                     | 3  | 1.76                           | 9.65                     | 2  |
| 21–25                       | 1.72                           | 8.06                     | 2  | 3.02                           | 12.67                    | 5  |
| 26–30                       | 3.85                           | 11.91                    | 6  | 5.08                           | 17.75                    | 9  |
| 31 to 45 percent            | 2.89                           |                          |    | 5.86                           |                          |    |
| 31–35                       | 0.21                           | 12.13                    | 1  | 2.28                           | 20.03                    | 2  |
| 36–40                       | 1.70                           | 13.83                    | 2  | 2.08                           | 22.11                    | 4  |
| 41–45                       | 0.97                           | 14.80                    | 2  | 1.50                           | 23.61                    | 1  |
| 46 to 54 percent            | 73.27                          |                          |    | 64.73                          |                          |    |
| 46–49                       | 15.24                          | 30.05                    | 13 | 15.70                          | 39.31                    | 18 |
| 50–50                       | 53.28                          | 83.32                    | 66 | 46.21                          | 85.51                    | 71 |
| 51–54                       | 4.75                           | 88.07                    | 4  | 2.83                           | 88.34                    | 3  |
| More than 54 percent        | 11.93                          |                          |    | 11.66                          |                          |    |
| 55–59                       | 0.50                           | 88.57                    | 1  | 0.17                           | 88.51                    | 1  |
| 60–69                       | 5.91                           | 94.48                    | 8  | 1.67                           | 90.18                    | 2  |
| 70–99                       | 5.52                           | 100.00                   | 4  | 9.82                           | 100.00                   | 12 |
| 100                         | 0.00                           | 100.00                   | 0  | 0.00                           | 100.00                   | 0  |

(table continues)

Table 3, continued

| Percentage Time with Father | PS4: Fathers' Reports<br>N=125 |                          |    | PS5: Fathers' Reports<br>N=136 |                          |    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
|                             | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N  | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N  |
| 0 Percent                   | 0.00                           | 0.00                     | 0  | 0.00                           | 0.00                     | 0  |
| 1 to 30 percent             | 3.13                           |                          |    | 6.32                           |                          |    |
| 1–5                         | 0.00                           | 0.00                     | 0  | 3.21                           | 3.21                     | 3  |
| 6–10                        | 0.00                           | 0.00                     | 0  | 0.00                           | 3.21                     | 0  |
| 11–15                       | 0.69                           | 0.69                     | 1  | 0.17                           | 3.39                     | 1  |
| 16–20                       | 0.53                           | 1.22                     | 1  | 0.72                           | 4.11                     | 2  |
| 21–25                       | 0.66                           | 1.89                     | 1  | 2.04                           | 6.14                     | 3  |
| 26–30                       | 1.24                           | 3.13                     | 3  | 0.17                           | 6.32                     | 1  |
| 31 to 45 percent            | 0.80                           |                          |    | 5.72                           |                          |    |
| 31–35                       | 0.81                           | 3.93                     | 2  | 4.88                           | 11.19                    | 6  |
| 36–40                       | 0.00                           | 3.93                     | 0  | 0.85                           | 12.04                    | 2  |
| 41–45                       | 0.00                           | 3.93                     | 0  | 0.00                           | 12.04                    | 0  |
| 46 to 54 percent            | 79.82                          |                          |    | 65.96                          |                          |    |
| 46–49                       | 5.76                           | 9.69                     | 7  | 7.39                           | 19.44                    | 11 |
| 50–50                       | 72.27                          | 81.96                    | 86 | 55.31                          | 74.75                    | 74 |
| 51–54                       | 1.79                           | 83.75                    | 3  | 3.26                           | 78.00                    | 6  |
| More than 54 percent        | 16.25                          |                          |    | 22.00                          |                          |    |
| 55–59                       | 0.00                           | 83.75                    | 0  | 0.00                           | 78.00                    | 0  |
| 60–69                       | 2.42                           | 86.17                    | 2  | 5.79                           | 83.79                    | 4  |
| 70–99                       | 13.83                          | 100.00                   | 19 | 16.21                          | 100.00                   | 23 |
| 100                         | 0.00                           | 100.00                   | 0  | 0.00                           | 100.00                   | 0  |

**Notes:** Percentages are weighted, Ns are unweighted. Excludes cases in which the time share cannot be computed because of missing data. Includes counts of overnights, and “equivalent care.”

child actually stayed with the father more than “half” (i.e., more than 55 percent) of the time. In PS4 less than 15 percent of the mothers report that the child stayed with the father less than “half” (i.e., less than 45 percent) of the time,<sup>28</sup> and there were no fathers reported to have had no contact. In PS5 the percentage of mothers who reported that the child spent less than “half” time with the father was 23.6 percent. There was one equal shared placement father who was reported to have had no contact with the child in the previous 12 months.<sup>29</sup>

When we examine the fathers’ reports, in the second panel of Table 3, we see that fathers report that they have higher rates of contact with their children than was reported by mothers. This result is expected due to the high response rate of more involved fathers, although it may also be due to differences in perceptions of how much time they are spending with the children, compared to mothers. The pattern of difference between PS4 and PS5, however, is similar to that of mothers: a larger percentage of PS5 fathers (self-) reported spending less than “half” time with children, compared to PS4. Only 4 percent of PS4 fathers reported spending less than half time, while 12 percent of the PS5 fathers reported spending less than half time with the child.<sup>30</sup> To summarize these findings, both mothers and fathers with 50/50 placement orders report some decline in adherence to 50/50 time-share in PS5.

When we look specifically at children in equal shared placement cases who are reported to be living in “sole” father or mother situations (i.e., those spending 70 percent or more of their time living with one parent), despite the equal shared placement order, we see that mothers report that 5 to 10 percent

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<sup>28</sup>The percentages reported for the PS4 survey samples differ slightly from those reported for PS4 in the earlier report by Krecker, Brown, Melli, and Wimer (2003). These small differences are based on recent updates to the court record data for the PS4 sample, and on correction of computation errors not detected in the earlier work. None of the differences result in changes of interpretation of the data.

<sup>29</sup>Note that the proportion of mothers reporting that the child spent 46 to 54 percent of the time with the father is not statistically significantly different across PS4 and PS5, but that the proportion reporting less than 46 percent time spent with the father approaches statistical significance ( $p=0.072$ ) across these time periods. However, as discussed further below, these differences may partly result from differences in the sample across the two time periods (see discussion of Table 5).

<sup>30</sup>Note that statistically significantly more fathers reported spending 46 to 54 percent of the time with the focal child (and that significantly fewer fathers reported spending less than 46 percent time with the child) in PS4 than in PS5.

are living over 70 percent of the time with their fathers, and 12 to 18 percent are living over 70 percent of the time with their mothers. (Fathers responding to the surveys report that 14–16 percent of equal shared placement children are living more than 70 percent of the time with them, and that 3–6 percent of equal shared placement children are living more than 70 percent of the time with their mothers.) This increase in the failure to adhere to the 50/50 placement agreement may be due to more divorce cases resulting in equal shared placement orders in the post-May 2000 cohort, given the changes in legal language governing child physical placement. Perhaps the increase in equal shared cases included some parents who had not well considered the implications of half-time placement, either in terms of job or career, enjoyment of caring for children, financial consequences, or frequent contact with an ex-spouse.

In Table 4 we show information on the aggregation of all types of shared placement cases. This aggregation allows us to consider a larger number of cases than shown on Table 3. It also allows us to more appropriately compare the living arrangements of children of divorced parents in Wisconsin in the early years of the current decade to those in California in the mid-1980s, as reported by Maccoby and Mnookin (1992). We construct the data for this table in the same way that it was constructed for Maccoby and Mnookin's Figure 8.2 (p. 169). Here, we consider all types of shared placements together—that is, equal shared, unequal shared with mother primary, and unequal shared with father primary, as well as cases that had switched between these three types of shared cases. We code these all simply as “shared” cases, consistent with the definition used by Maccoby and Mnookin, who make no distinction between these types of cases in their definition of “dual” residence. They defined “dual” residence as “spending at least 4 overnights with each parent in a typical two-week period” (p. 72). This definition amounts to more than 28 percent of the time, which is fairly comparable to the “over 109.5 nights” (or over 30 percent) shared time definition used in Wisconsin child support guidelines during the years that the PS4 and PS5 parents entered the court system, received a final divorce decree, and were interviewed in one of our two surveys. Excluded from Table 4 are shared cases that returned to court and changed placement to a sole

**Table 4**  
**Parents' Reports of Father's Time-Share at the Time of the Survey:**  
**Cases with Shared (Equal or Unequal) Placement at the Time of Divorce and at the Time of the Survey**

| Percentage Time with Father | PS4: Mother's Reports<br>N=177 |                          |    | PS5: Mother's Reports<br>N=185 |                          |    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
|                             | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N  | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N  |
| 0 Percent                   | <b>0.00</b>                    | 0.00                     | 0  | <b>0.37</b>                    | 0.37                     | 1  |
| 1 to 30 percent             | <b>20.09</b>                   |                          |    | <b>18.67</b>                   |                          |    |
| 1-5                         | 2.23                           | 2.23                     | 3  | 3.72                           | 4.10                     | 6  |
| 6-10                        | 0.87                           | 3.09                     | 2  | 0.81                           | 4.91                     | 2  |
| 11-15                       | 3.27                           | 6.36                     | 5  | 1.79                           | 6.71                     | 5  |
| 16-20                       | 3.06                           | 9.42                     | 8  | 2.85                           | 9.56                     | 4  |
| 21-25                       | 1.95                           | 11.37                    | 3  | 2.38                           | 11.94                    | 5  |
| 26-30                       | 8.72                           | 20.09                    | 16 | 6.73                           | 18.67                    | 13 |
| 31 to 45 percent            | <b>21.17</b>                   |                          |    | <b>13.46</b>                   |                          |    |
| 31-35                       | 4.26                           | 24.35                    | 5  | 3.27                           | 21.93                    | 6  |
| 36-40                       | 5.51                           | 29.86                    | 10 | 3.59                           | 25.53                    | 6  |
| 41-45                       | 11.40                          | 41.26                    | 18 | 6.60                           | 32.13                    | 12 |
| 46 to 54 percent            | <b>48.34</b>                   |                          |    | <b>55.85</b>                   |                          |    |
| 46-49                       | 9.63                           | 50.88                    | 14 | 12.62                          | 44.75                    | 19 |
| 50-50                       | 35.47                          | 86.36                    | 70 | 40.99                          | 85.74                    | 82 |
| 51-54                       | 3.25                           | 89.60                    | 5  | 2.25                           | 87.98                    | 3  |
| More than 54 percent        | <b>10.40</b>                   |                          |    | <b>12.02</b>                   |                          |    |
| 55-59                       | 1.21                           | 90.81                    | 3  | 0.82                           | 88.80                    | 3  |
| 60-69                       | 3.63                           | 94.44                    | 8  | 2.65                           | 91.46                    | 4  |
| 70-99                       | 5.56                           | 100.00                   | 7  | 8.54                           | 100.00                   | 14 |
| 100                         | 0.00                           | 100.00                   | 0  | 0.00                           | 100.00                   | 0  |

(table continues)

Table 4, continued

| Percentage Time with Father | PS4: Fathers' Reports<br>N=188 |                          |     | PS5: Fathers' Reports<br>N=188 |                          |    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
|                             | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N   | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N  |
| 0 Percent                   | <b>0.00</b>                    | 0.00                     | 0   | <b>0.00</b>                    | 0.00                     | 0  |
| 1 to 30 percent             | <b>4.35</b>                    |                          |     | <b>6.34</b>                    |                          |    |
| 1–5                         | 0.00                           | 0.00                     | 0   | 2.36                           | 2.36                     | 3  |
| 6–10                        | 0.35                           | 0.35                     | 1   | 0.00                           | 2.36                     | 0  |
| 11–15                       | 1.26                           | 1.61                     | 2   | 0.57                           | 2.93                     | 3  |
| 16–20                       | 0.33                           | 1.93                     | 1   | 1.19                           | 4.12                     | 3  |
| 21–25                       | 1.42                           | 3.35                     | 2   | 2.09                           | 6.21                     | 6  |
| 26–30                       | 1.01                           | 4.35                     | 4   | 0.13                           | 6.34                     | 1  |
| 31 to 45 percent            | <b>15.40</b>                   |                          |     | <b>15.78</b>                   |                          |    |
| 31–35                       | 2.02                           | 6.38                     | 6   | 7.88                           | 14.21                    | 13 |
| 36–40                       | 3.30                           | 9.67                     | 6   | 2.23                           | 16.44                    | 5  |
| 41–45                       | 10.08                          | 19.75                    | 16  | 5.68                           | 22.12                    | 7  |
| 46 to 54 percent            | <b>61.63</b>                   |                          |     | <b>55.24</b>                   |                          |    |
| 46–49                       | 4.63                           | 24.38                    | 10  | 5.55                           | 27.67                    | 12 |
| 50–50                       | 53.31                          | 77.70                    | 100 | 46.94                          | 74.62                    | 84 |
| 51–54                       | 3.69                           | 81.39                    | 7   | 2.74                           | 77.36                    | 7  |
| More than 54 percent        | <b>18.62</b>                   |                          |     | <b>22.64</b>                   |                          |    |
| 55–59                       | 2.00                           | 83.39                    | 5   | 0.51                           | 77.87                    | 4  |
| 60–69                       | 5.14                           | 88.52                    | 5   | 4.91                           | 82.78                    | 6  |
| 70–99                       | 11.48                          | 100.00                   | 23  | 17.22                          | 100.00                   | 34 |
| 100                         | 0.00                           | 100.00                   | 0   | 0.00                           | 100.00                   | 0  |

**Note:** Percentages highlighted in bold indicate section totals.

mother, sole father, or split placement order (and, at that time had the opportunity to adjust the child support order to an appropriate amount, given the new placement agreement).

The information shown on the first panel of Table 4 shows that out of 177 PS4 mothers with any type of shared placement, 20 percent reported “de facto” sole mother residence (0 to 30 percent time), and another 6 percent reported “de facto” sole father residence (over 70 percent time), for a total of 26 percent not adhering to their legal shared placement agreements.<sup>31</sup> In PS5, out of 185 mothers with shared placements, about 19 percent reported their children were living in “de facto” sole mother situations, and almost 9 percent were living in “de facto” sole father situations, for a total of 27 percent not adhering to their shared placement legal agreements. This total is strikingly unchanged from the PS4 responses. PS4 shared placement fathers (second panel of Table 4) responded that about 4 percent of their children were living with sole mother, and about 11 percent were living with them, for a total of 16 percent. For PS5 fathers the percentages are a little over 6 percent with sole mother, and 17 percent with sole father, for a total of 23 percent. Again, the responses from the father interviews present a biased picture of the full survey sample due to a high response rate among very involved post-divorce fathers, and a low response rate among less involved fathers, despite our efforts to weight the sample for nonresponse bias.

In the Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) study, only 54 percent of the 143 “dual” residence families had children continuing to live in “dual” residence three years later, at Time 3, hence their concern with “maternal drift” (p. 169). In the other 46 percent of families, children were living in “de facto” sole placements, living the majority of the time primarily with mothers. In comparison to the Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) figures, the Wisconsin data from PS4 and PS5, based on total of 362 mothers’ responses, indicate that only 25 to 27 percent of shared placement cases changed after three years to “de facto” sole placement. And nearly a third of these were living with sole *father* in the PS5 mother’s responses. In

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<sup>31</sup>Note that we use the term “cases” here, although the information gathered from parents referred to a single “focal child.” If there were other children in the family, it is possible that those other children may have had different “de facto” living situations, although all children in the cases selected for the interview were covered by a shared placement agreement at the final divorce judgment.

contrast to the California study, Wisconsin shared placement parents appear to be committed to maximizing time with both parents, with 61 to 63 percent of all shared placement parents still caring for their children for over 40 percent of the time, three years after the divorce, according to mothers' reports from both surveys.<sup>32</sup>

For comparison with shared placement families, we also examine the living arrangements of Wisconsin cases that began their divorce as sole mother placement cases and remained sole mother cases at the time of the survey. In the calculation of these percentages we begin with a count of overnights during the school year, summer, and holidays, and then make some adjustments based on daytime care if it appeared that an "equivalent care" situation was apparent from the details given by the respondents. This information is shown in Table 5.

The top panel of Table 5 shows that nearly 19 percent PS4 mothers reported that the father of their child had no personal contact with the child during the last 12 months. This percentage was reduced to about 12 percent, as reported by the PS5 mothers. About 14–16 percent of mothers from both surveys indicated that the fathers had cared for the child for more than 30 percent of the time.

The bottom panel of Table 5 shows survey results from fathers. As discussed above, we suspect that the fathers that participated in the survey were overwhelmingly the more involved fathers in the two samples, and so probably do not well represent the survey sample as a whole, despite weighting for nonresponse bias. From this table we see that 39 percent of the fathers that responded in the PS4 survey indicated that they care for the child for more than 30 percent of the time; in PS5, 33 percent of the fathers indicated this level of time with the child. We were able to interview only a handful of fathers from both time periods who indicated that they had no contact with the child in the previous 12 months. These low proportions (6 percent and 2 percent in the respective cohorts) could reflect a bias in respondent versus

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<sup>32</sup>Furthermore, in only one case out of the 362 survey responses did a PS4 or PS5 shared placement mother indicate that the father had not seen the child in the last 12 months.

**Table 5**  
**Parents' Reports of Father's Time-Share at the Time of the Survey:**  
**Cases with Mother Sole Placement Orders in Effect at the Divorce and at the Time of the Survey**

| Percentage Time with Father | PS4: Mothers' Reports<br>N=199 |                          |    | PS5: Mothers' Reports<br>N=166 |                          |    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
|                             | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N  | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N  |
| 0 Percent                   | <b>18.61</b>                   | 18.61                    | 27 | <b>11.92</b>                   | 11.92                    | 22 |
| 1 to 35 percent             | <b>67.81</b>                   |                          |    | <b>72.38</b>                   |                          |    |
| 1-5                         | 21.89                          | 40.50                    | 47 | 17.86                          | 29.78                    | 30 |
| 6-10                        | 7.03                           | 47.53                    | 19 | 12.27                          | 42.05                    | 20 |
| 11-15                       | 9.63                           | 57.16                    | 24 | 17.43                          | 59.48                    | 27 |
| 16-20                       | 12.46                          | 69.62                    | 26 | 10.74                          | 70.22                    | 22 |
| 21-25                       | 11.21                          | 80.83                    | 17 | 8.10                           | 78.32                    | 13 |
| 26-30                       | 5.59                           | 86.42                    | 16 | 5.97                           | 84.30                    | 8  |
| 31 to 99                    | <b>13.58</b>                   |                          |    | <b>15.70</b>                   |                          |    |
| 31-35                       | 3.97                           | 90.39                    | 7  | 3.74                           | 88.04                    | 8  |
| 36-49                       | 5.90                           | 96.29                    | 8  | 7.78                           | 95.82                    | 9  |
| 50-99                       | 3.71                           | 100.00                   | 8  | 4.18                           | 100.00                   | 7  |
| Percentage Time with Father | PS4: Fathers' Reports<br>N=134 |                          |    | PS5: Fathers' Reports<br>N=124 |                          |    |
|                             | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N  | Percentage                     | Cumulative<br>Percentage | N  |
| 0 Percent                   | <b>5.77</b>                    | 5.77                     | 7  | <b>1.94</b>                    | 1.94                     | 3  |
| 1 to 35 percent             | <b>55.39</b>                   |                          |    | <b>65.17</b>                   |                          |    |
| 1-5                         | 7.75                           | 13.52                    | 12 | 10.70                          | 12.64                    | 9  |
| 6-10                        | 5.99                           | 19.51                    | 9  | 7.67                           | 20.31                    | 10 |
| 11-15                       | 6.60                           | 26.11                    | 13 | 8.92                           | 29.24                    | 11 |
| 16-20                       | 5.82                           | 31.93                    | 7  | 13.36                          | 42.59                    | 21 |
| 21-25                       | 11.58                          | 43.51                    | 18 | 14.76                          | 57.35                    | 17 |
| 26-30                       | 17.65                          | 61.16                    | 21 | 9.76                           | 67.11                    | 12 |
| 31 to 99                    | <b>38.84</b>                   |                          |    | <b>32.89</b>                   |                          |    |
| 31-35                       | 9.45                           | 70.61                    | 15 | 6.83                           | 73.94                    | 9  |
| 36-49                       | 20.58                          | 91.19                    | 21 | 12.13                          | 86.06                    | 16 |
| 50-99                       | 8.81                           | 100.00                   | 11 | 13.94                          | 100.00                   | 16 |

**Note:** This analysis excludes those cases for which there has been a return to court for a legal change in physical placement, those in which the proportion of time with the father could not be computed, and those in which the parents reconciled. Percentages highlighted in bold indicate section totals.

nonrespondent experiences, or could result from different recollections of events than mothers have reported.

The reduction in the percentage of fathers who failed to see their children in the previous 12 months, as reported by PS5 mothers compared to PS4 mothers, may be due to a number of factors. The difference may be partly a result of sample differences between the two time periods: at the time of the PS4 survey one-half of the PS4 sample cases were cases from CRD Cohort 17, and were an additional year further from the time of divorce than were PS5 families. Twenty percent of the PS4 Cohort 17 mothers reported that the father had not seen the child in the previous year (data not shown). Seventeen percent of the PS4 Cohort 18 mothers reported that the father had not seen their children (data not shown). Other post-divorce research has found a drop-off in father-child contact over time, which this difference in reports between Cohort 17 and 18 mothers would support.<sup>33</sup>

But Cohorts 18 and 21 are similar in the length of time between divorce and survey, and there is a significant reduction in the reports of no father-child contact between the two surveys, from 17 percent in PS4 (Cohort 18 mothers), to 12 percent reported by PS5 mothers. The social context may have also changed somewhat in the three-year time period between the two surveys, with post-divorce father-child relationships more valued by both mothers and fathers in the later-dated PS5 sample. And the May 2000 changes in legal language, while not having resulted in shared placement orders for these families, may have still encouraged some of these mothers and/or fathers to better nurture the post-divorce father-child relationship.

Given recent Wisconsin policy emphasis on maximizing time with each parent, we are also interested in describing those family characteristics that are associated with more post-divorce father-

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<sup>33</sup>For example, Stephens (1996) finds that father-child contact decreases over time.

child contact. Thus, in Tables 6 and 7 we present results from ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions<sup>34</sup> that estimate associations between an array of family characteristics and the amount of time fathers spend with their children approximately three years after their divorce. In these tables we combine data from PS4 and PS5, and use survey information reported by the mother. Appendix Table A5 shows the frequency distributions of the variables used in these models. Because factors associated with father-child contact may differ by placement type, combining them in a single regression perhaps confounds the associations that might apply to each type separately. In order to look at associations more particularly by placement type, we therefore present OLS regression estimates for sole mother placement cases and shared placement cases, separately, in Tables 6 and 7.

In Table 6, we present information on the amount of time fathers spend with children from sole mother placement cases only. We estimate associations between family and case characteristics and the percentage of children's time that they spend with their fathers (as reported by mothers) in the 12 months prior to the survey. We find that having joint legal custody is positively associated with fathers' time with children, such that fathers with joint legal custody spend 8.7 percentage points more time with children in sole mother placements than fathers without joint legal custody. Father-child involvement is also positively associated with the youngest child in the family being between 6 and 12 years old at the time of the survey, as well as with fathers' education. Father-child contact is also higher when mothers have earnings under \$24,000 per year and when fathers have earnings between \$24,000 and \$36,000 per year.

Table 7 shows results from an OLS regression on the subsample of shared placement families. Here, we exclude the joint legal custody variable from the model since nearly 100 percent of shared physical placement families also have joint legal custody. Compared to children with equal shared placements, those in unequal shared, mother primary placements experience 13 percentage points less

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<sup>34</sup>Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is a method for establishing statistical association between predictor and outcome variables while ruling out the likelihood that this association is due to other, potentially confounding, factors.

**Table 6**  
**OLS Estimates of Father's Time-Share in the Year prior to the Survey:**  
**Sole Mother Placement Cases**  
**(PS4 and PS5 Mothers' Reports)**

| Independent Variables                                 | Time with Father |       |               |
|---|------------------|-------|---------------|
|   | Coefficient      | S.E.  | Pr > ChiSq    |
| Joint legal custody at final divorce judgment         | 8.716            | 2.086 | <.0001        |
| Years between final divorce judgment and survey       | -0.902           | 1.193 | 0.4503        |
| Post- May 2000 case                                   | 0.433            | 1.721 | 0.8013        |
| Father previously married                             | 0.597            | 2.132 | 0.7796        |
| Married 10 years or more                              | 1.736            | 1.998 | 0.3855        |
| Gender of children — any boys                         | 1.167            | 1.572 | 0.4581        |
| Age of youngest child at survey:                      |                  |       |               |
| Under age 6   | 0.125            | 3.027 | 0.967         |
| Age 6–12  | 4.281            | 2.180 | <b>0.0503</b> |
| Age 13 or over (omitted category)                     |                  |       |               |
| Parents' education level:                             |                  |       |               |
| Mother more than high school education                | 2.622            | 1.662 | 0.1154        |
| Father more than high school education                | 2.702            | 1.603 | <b>0.0927</b> |
| Mothers' earnings in year prior to survey:            |                  |       |               |
| Under \$24,000  | 6.130            | 3.714 | <b>0.0997</b> |
| \$24–\$36,000   | 2.855            | 3.728 | 0.4443        |
| More than \$36,000 (omitted category)                 |                  |       |               |
| Fathers' earnings in year prior to survey:            |                  |       |               |
| Under \$24,000  | -0.681           | 2.494 | 0.785         |
| \$24–\$36,000   | 6.315            | 2.270 | <b>0.0057</b> |
| More than \$36,000 (omitted category)                 |                  |       |               |
| Father paid child support in year prior to the survey | 0.364            | 2.118 | 0.8637        |
| Mother has married again                              | 1.008            | 1.714 | 0.5565        |
| Father has married again                              | -2.125           | 1.902 | 0.2646        |
| Intercept   | -4.199           | 6.308 | 0.506         |
| R <sup>2</sup>  |                  |       | 0.1604        |

**Notes:** This analysis is weighted to adjust for sample stratification, differential response, and nonresponse bias. Coefficients with a significance level of 0.05 or lower (in bold) are considered statistically significant. Includes only survey families with mother sole placement at the time of the survey. N = 386.

**Table 7**  
**OLS Estimates of Father's Time-Share in the Year prior to the Survey: Shared Placement Cases**  
**(PS4 and PS5 Mothers' Reports)**

| Independent Variables                                 | Time with Father |       |                  |
|---|------------------|-------|------------------|
|   | Coefficient      | S.E.  | Pr > ChiSq       |
| Type of shared placement:                             |                  |       |                  |
| Unequal shared/ mother primary                        | -13.073          | 2.191 | <b>&lt;.0001</b> |
| Equal shared (omitted category)                       |                  |       |                  |
| Unequal shared/ father primary                        | -0.169           | 4.672 | 0.9712           |
| Years between final divorce judgment and survey       | 0.322            | 1.396 | 0.8179           |
| Post- May 2000 case                                   | 0.715            | 1.910 | 0.7083           |
| Father previously married                             | -1.419           | 2.379 | 0.5513           |
| Married 10 years or more                              | 0.766            | 2.144 | 0.721            |
| Gender of children — any boys                         | 3.607            | 1.872 | <b>0.0549</b>    |
| Age of youngest child at survey:                      |                  |       |                  |
| Under age 6   | 0.997            | 3.786 | 0.7925           |
| Age 6–12  | 1.082            | 2.556 | 0.6724           |
| Age 13 or over (omitted category)                     |                  |       |                  |
| Parents' education level:                             |                  |       |                  |
| Mother more than high school education                | -1.281           | 2.014 | 0.5252           |
| Father more than high school education                | 3.791            | 2.011 | <b>0.0603</b>    |
| Mothers earnings in year prior to survey:             |                  |       |                  |
| Under \$24,000  | 3.819            | 2.223 | <b>0.0868</b>    |
| \$24–\$36,000   | 4.632            | 2.227 | <b>0.0383</b>    |
| More than \$36,000 (omitted category)                 |                  |       |                  |
| Fathers earnings in year prior to survey:             |                  |       |                  |
| Under \$24,000  | -5.324           | 2.929 | <b>0.07</b>      |
| \$24–\$36,000   | -4.745           | 2.301 | <b>0.0399</b>    |
| More than \$36,000 (omitted category)                 |                  |       |                  |
| Father paid child support in year prior to the survey | 0.524            | 1.911 | 0.784            |
| Mother has married again                              | -1.906           | 2.107 | 0.3663           |
| Father has married again                              | -2.806           | 2.118 | 0.186            |
| Intercept   | 41.742           | 5.968 | <b>&lt;.0001</b> |
| R <sup>2</sup>  |                  |       | 0.1679           |

**Notes:** This analysis is weighted to adjust for sample stratification, differential response, and nonresponse bias. Coefficients with a significance level of 0.05 or lower (in bold) are considered statistically significant. Includes only survey families with shared physical placement at the time of divorce and at the time of the survey. N = 362.

father-child contact. Children in unequal shared, father primary placements do not differ from those in equal shared placements. Fathers also spend more time with children in shared placement families when the family includes boys, the father is more highly educated, and the mother has lower earnings. Lower father earnings are negatively associated with time spent with children in shared placement families.

#### Descriptive Information about Physical Placement Type and Child Support

In this section, we examine the financial arrangements that surveyed parents reported to us. Before we present the survey information, however, we have included a table on child support owed and paid, according to administrative data, in order to give some context to the survey information for the full survey sample (respondents and nonrespondents). Table 8 shows information on child support orders and payments at the time of the survey. Information from the full PS4 and PS5 samples were combined. The first row of Table 8 reveals that, in almost 90 percent of the mother sole cases, there was a child support order in the year prior to the survey. These percentages decline in shared placement cases: 82 percent owed in unequal/mother primary cases, 68 percent in unequal/father primary cases, and less than 39 percent in equal shared placement cases. There could be several reasons why we find low rates of child support orders in unequal/father primary cases, and very low rates in equal shared placement cases. First, in unequal shared placement cases where both parents have the child for more than 40 percent of the time, the paying parent is determined by a formula based on level of time-share and the incomes of both parents. In equal shared cases the child support formula depends solely upon both parents' incomes. Therefore, in both situations, if the mother has a higher income than the father, she could be designated as the payor in the case. It may be that fathers who feel that they have benefited by receiving a shared placement order in their divorce may not want to also receive child support from the mother of their children, and so may decline a child support order in their favor. Second, if the parents have equal incomes, then child support should not be owed by one parent or the other in equal shared placement cases. While this exact situation is extremely unlikely, in cases where parents have equal shared

**Table 8**  
**Child Support Orders and Payments (PS4 and PS5 Survey Samples, Respondents and Nonrespondents)**

| Child Support                               | Placement Type in Effect at Survey |                   |                   |                 |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|   | Sole<br>Mother                     | Unequal Shared    |                   | Equal<br>Shared |
|   |                                    | Mother<br>Primary | Father<br>Primary |                 |
| Child support owed                          | 89.60%                             | 81.85%            | 67.95%            | 38.88%          |
| Percentage of cases where payor is father   | 100.00%                            | 100.00%           | 78.50%            | 96.65%          |
|   | N=564                              | N=114             | N=21              | N=413           |
| Child support paid:                         |                                    |                   |                   |                 |
| Paid any, if was owed <sup>a</sup>          | 89.90%                             | 94.00%            | NC <sup>c</sup>   | 94.10%          |
|   | N=493                              | N=87              | N=10              | N=142           |
| Child support pay-to-owe ratio <sup>b</sup> | 76.33%                             | 85.90%            | NC <sup>c</sup>   | 89.11%          |
|   | N=399                              | N=72              | N=8               | N=135           |

<sup>a</sup>Excludes private pay cases

<sup>b</sup>If Child Support owed; if Child Support can be calculated; excludes private pay cases; pay-to-owe capped at 100%.

<sup>c</sup>NC = not calculated due to small Ns.

placement time-share and comparable incomes, the child support amount would be extremely low, and therefore probably not ordered. Third, the Wisconsin child support guidelines in effect during this period of time produced a calculation that was quite low in equal shared cases, even in situations where incomes were at very different levels. Again, parents may have chosen not to bother with a child support order if the owed amount would be fairly low. Fourth, equal time-sharing parents, both of whom have “adequate” incomes and careers, may be following a somewhat “independent” post-divorce approach to child rearing and child financial responsibilities, and may assume that each parent is responsible only for the expenditures and costs for the half time that the child is in their care.

Row 2 in Table 8 shows the percentage of cases in which the payor was designated to be the father. Note that in unequal shared/mother primary cases, where the *mother* could be designated the payor if her income was high enough, there is not a single case of a mother payor. On the other hand, in unequal/father primary cases, where the father has primary care of the child, in more than 78 percent of the cases with a child support order, it is not the mother but the *father* that is the designated payor.<sup>35</sup> Although there is a low level of child support in equal shared cases, in those with an order, 97 percent of the cases designate the father as payor.

In the bottom portion of Table 8, we present information on payments in those cases with an active child support order at the time of the survey.<sup>36</sup> Shared placement cases show a slightly higher rate of some payment (94 percent) compared to sole mother cases (90 percent); the final row shows that the pay-to-owe ratios in shared placement cases are higher (86–89 percent) than sole mother cases (76 percent). In other tabulations (results not shown on the table) we focused on cases in which there was no child support order. In 59 percent of the unequal/mother primary cases with no order, the mother should have been the designated payor (if the child support guidelines had been followed). In unequal/father

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<sup>35</sup>In all of these cases the father earned \$10,000 to \$115,000 more than the mother in the year prior to the survey, and in the majority of these cases, the father’s income was more than double the mother’s.

<sup>36</sup>Information on payments was not calculated for unequal/father primary cases since the number of cases is too low for unbiased results.

primary cases, 90 percent of the cases with no order should have been designated as mother payors. And, in 49 percent of the no order, equal shared cases, the mother should have been ordered to pay child support. Finally, we computed the percentage of no order cases in which the order would have been less than \$100 per month, had the guidelines been followed: 15 percent in sole mother cases, 30 percent in unequal/mother primary cases, and 71 percent in equal shared cases. It appears that, in a high percentage of the no order cases, the order would have been a relatively small amount and that, in many of the shared placement cases, the mother should have been designated as payor.

Against this backdrop of child support orders and payment we now examine survey reports of other child-rearing costs that are paid for by fathers in these cases (Table 9). The first panel of Table 9 shows the percentage of cases in which the mother reports that the father pays for one-half or more of the costs in the following areas: clothing and shoes; school supplies, educational expenses, and tuition (if applicable); music and other extracurricular lessons, sports fees and equipment, summer camp costs, health insurance, and out-of-pocket medical costs. The first three rows of this panel shows that mothers in sole mother cases pay for most of these costs for their children (in only 11–15 percent of cases do fathers pay directly for one-half or more of the these costs). Since most of these mothers receive child support, the parents may assume that child support will help provide for these expenditures. Fathers were reported to provide a higher percentage of health insurance and out-of-pocket costs medical care (about 27 percent of mothers reported that the father paid for one-half or more).

Unequal/mother primary shared cases show a greater percentage of costs being borne by fathers, with 33 percent of fathers paying directly for one-half or more of clothes, shoes, and educational expenses, 49 percent of fathers paying for one-half or more of extracurricular lessons and fees, and over 60 percent paying for one-half of health insurance or out-of-pocket medical expenses. The child support

**Table 9**  
**Shared Expenses for the Child (PS4 and PS5 Survey Respondents)**

| Father paid for half or more of: | Placement Type in Effect at Survey |                               |              |            |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|------------|
|                                  | Mothers' Reports                   |                               |              |            |
|                                  | Sole Mother                        | Unequal Shared Mother Primary | Equal Shared |            |
|                                  |                                    |                               | All Cases    | No CS Owed |
|                                  | N=365                              | N=78                          | N=272        | N=160      |
| Clothing, shoes                  | 11.09%                             | 32.98%                        | 56.52%       | 59.88%     |
| School supplies, tuition         | 14.54                              | 33.31                         | 69.91        | 75.13      |
| Lessons, fees, camp              | 15.38                              | 48.90                         | 61.67        | 62.07      |
| Health, medical                  | 26.78                              | 60.41                         | 63.88        | 64.27      |
|                                  | Fathers' Reports                   |                               |              |            |
|                                  | N=258                              | N=84                          | N=276        | N=170      |
| Clothing, shoes                  | 39.67%                             | 76.68%                        | 89.48%       | 94.02%     |
| School supplies, tuition         | 37.37                              | 84.50                         | 93.47        | 95.41      |
| Lessons, fees, camp              | 49.00                              | 85.09                         | 95.94        | 97.19      |
| Health, medical                  | 66.28                              | 89.14                         | 94.49        | 94.69      |

guidelines from this time period state (in language buried within the definition of a shared time payer)<sup>37</sup> that a nonprimary parent in an unequal shared custody case should expect to contribute to variable expenses according to the percentage of time that he/she has responsibility for the child. If this is an appropriate standard by which to measure the contributions of fathers, then we would not expect fathers to necessarily be contributing one-half or more in these cases where they have responsibility for the child for less than half time.

For equal shared placement cases we have provided two columns of information in Table 9: one column for all equal placement cases, and another column for equal placement cases with no child support order. Cases with no child support order show a small increase in the percentage of fathers who pay for one-half or more of variable costs. Perhaps there is not a greater difference in fathers' payments in these "no order" cases, since often it would have been the mother who should have been the payor, given her higher income, had there been a child support order. Although the rates of paying for variable costs are much higher (56–75 percent) in equal placement as compared to mother sole cases, it might be expected that most fathers in equal shared cases would be paying for at least one-half of the variable expenditures. It is also possible that mothers are underreporting expenditures made by fathers, or that they are not always aware when fathers are making direct purchases, or are not aware of the full amount of direct costs paid for by fathers.

The second panel of Table 9 shows the results from fathers' reports and, in all categories and for all placement types, fathers indicate much higher rates of direct payment for variable child-rearing costs. In sole mother cases, 37–66 percent of fathers report paying one-half or more of costs; in unequal/mother primary cases, 77–89 percent of fathers report paying for a large share of these costs; and in equal shared cases, 89–97 percent of fathers report paying for their share of these costs, at a rate that we would expect.

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<sup>37</sup>“Shared-time payer” means a payer who provides overnight child care or equivalent care beyond the threshold and assumes all variable child care costs in proportion to the number of days he or she cares for the child under the shared-time arrangement.” (Wisconsin Administrative Code, DWD 40.02(25)).

If we assume that mothers are underreporting fathers payments (lower bound), and/or that fathers are overreporting, or that we have a bias in the type of fathers who responded to the survey (upper bound), we then might assume that the rate of fathers paying directly for costs falls somewhere between the two reports.

In Table 10, we examine issues related to child care costs. The first panel shows the results of mothers' reports of use of paid nonrelative child care for focal children under the age of 13, and the number of hours per week that the child was in paid nonrelative care during the summer months and during the school year. This information was based on the days and weeks that the child was under mother's care and responsibility. During the summer, fewer children in shared placement families spent time in paid nonrelative childcare (31–33 percent) compared to children in sole mother placement (41 percent). The mean hours per week in paid nonrelative childcare for all shared placement children was therefore lower (10 hours per week) compared to sole mother children (13 hours per week). During the school year the rates of paid nonrelative child care were similar for sole mother and shared placement children, although the average number of hours per week in child care was lower (3.8–4.5 hours per week, compared to 6.8 hours per week).

The fact that shared placement children are spending fewer hours in paid nonrelative child care is not surprising since, by definition, these cases have both fathers and mothers dedicated to sharing time, and these parents may be able to work cooperatively to care for their children. This is a cost-savings that may be available to many shared placement families. Evidence for this may be seen in the final row of the first panel. This row shows the percentage of fathers who pay for one-half or more of the child care costs associated with time that the child is in the care and responsibility of the *mother*. For shared placement cases, these figures are lower than the rates found for other variable costs, and may be the result of fathers personally caring for the child rather than paying out-of-pocket for child care costs.

The second panel of Table 10 shows results for fathers' responses to these items regarding the time the child spent with them, rather than with the mother. These data are presented for children in equal

**Table 10**  
**Childcare for Focal Child (PS4 and PS5 Survey Respondents)**

|   | Placement Type in Effect at Survey |                               |              |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
|   | Mothers' Reports                   |                               |              |
|   | Sole Mother                        | Unequal Shared Mother Primary | Equal Shared |
| Child Care for Focal Child while Child was in Mother's Care:                            |                                    |                               |              |
| N cases with focal child under age 13   | N=247                              | N=65                          | N=190        |
| Summer child care for focal child: <sup>a</sup>   |                                    |                               |              |
| Use paid nonrelative child care   | 41.35%                             | 31.20%                        | 32.65%       |
| N hours/week in paid nonrelative child care   | 13.1                               | 10.2                          | 9.8          |
| School year child care for focal child: <sup>a</sup>                                    |                                    |                               |              |
| Used paid nonrelative child care  | 46.68%                             | 43.42%                        | 45.46%       |
| N hours/week in paid nonrelative child care   | 6.8                                | 3.8                           | 4.5          |
| Father paid for half or more of child care while child was in mother's care             | 14.28%                             | 21.09%                        | 52.39%       |
|   | Fathers' Reports                   |                               |              |
| Child Care for Focal Child while Child was in Father's Care:                            |                                    |                               |              |
| N cases with focal child under age 13   |                                    |                               | N=182        |
| Summer child care for focal child: <sup>a</sup>   |                                    |                               |              |
| Use paid nonrelative child care   | NC <sup>b</sup>                    | NC                            | 33.15%       |
| N hours/week in paid nonrelative child care   | NC                                 | NC                            | 9.6          |
| School year child care for focal child: <sup>a</sup>                                    |                                    |                               |              |
| Used paid nonrelative child care  | NC                                 | NC                            | 36.84%       |
| N hours/week in paid nonrelative child care   | NC                                 | NC                            | 3.6          |
| Father paid for half or more of childcare while child was in father's care <sup>a</sup> | NC                                 | NC                            | 99.14%       |

<sup>a</sup>Most frequently used type of child care.

<sup>b</sup>NC = Not calculated for father's with < 50/50.

shared placement cases only. Fathers reported using paid nonrelative care during the summer at about the same rate as mothers. But a lower level of child care use was reported by these fathers during the school year than for mothers, potentially because children spend less or different periods of time in child care during the school year than during the summer. And nearly every father reported paying for at least one-half of the child care costs during the time the child was in his care.

Table 11 shows areas of disagreement as reported by mothers and fathers in the surveys. The first panel shows responses by mothers. Shared placement mothers report higher levels of disagreement about child care issues than sole placement mothers. This would be expected, since shared placement fathers are more highly involved with the children's care. Some of these disagreements may not have anything to do with finances, but rather with quality or type of child care. Sole placement mothers have a fairly high level of disagreement (45 percent) with the fathers of their children about the father's financial support. Shared placement mothers have somewhat less disagreement about the father's financial support (38 percent), though still a considerable amount, and more disagreement about their own financial support of the children (19 percent, compared to less than 14 percent reported by sole placement mothers). Sole placement mothers report more disagreement about time spent with each parent (about 37 percent, compared to 30 percent of shared placement mothers). In the PS5 survey we added a question to the survey to ascertain how many mothers would prefer more or less involvement on the part of the fathers. Forty-six percent of sole placement mothers would prefer *more* involvement in their child's life by the fathers; 5 percent preferred less involvement. For shared placement mothers, 18 percent preferred more involvement and 13 percent would prefer less involvement.

The fathers' responses to the disagreement question indicated somewhat less disagreement than mothers reported. Fathers in sole mother placement cases reported more disagreement than shared fathers about the child's time with each parent. We do not know, however, what these fathers would prefer: more time, less time, or a different schedule with the child. Shared placement fathers report more disagreement about mothers' financial support of the child than any other group. The lower levels of disagreement

**Table 11**  
**Disagreement between Parents (PS4 and PS5 Survey Respondents)**

| Disagreements about:                      | Placement Type in Effect at Survey |                     |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------------|
|   | Mothers' Reports                   |                     |
|   | Sole Mother                        | Shared <sup>a</sup> |
|   | N=328                              | N=359               |
| Child care                                | 16.55%                             | 23.40%              |
| Father's financial support                | 44.78                              | 37.90               |
| Mother's financial support                | 13.69                              | 18.93               |
| Time spent with each parent               | 36.70                              | 29.90               |
| Mother prefers father to be: <sup>b</sup> | N=161                              | N=178               |
| More involved                             | 46.05%                             | 18.35%              |
| Involved at same level                    | 49.15                              | 68.73               |
| Less involved                             | 4.79                               | 12.92               |
|   | Fathers' Reports                   |                     |
|   | N=240                              | N=370               |
| Child care                                | 24.63%                             | 20.61%              |
| Father's financial support                | 29.07                              | 21.61               |
| Mother's financial support                | 20.26                              | 22.41               |
| Time spent with each parent               | 34.64                              | 22.55               |

<sup>a</sup>Includes equal shared, unequal/mother primary, unequal/father primary.

<sup>b</sup>This question was only asked of mothers in PS5.

reported by fathers in general may be partly a result of higher survey responses from fathers who are on good terms with the mothers of their children.

## CONCLUSIONS

This is the first study to investigate children's post-divorce living arrangements following a change in Wisconsin statute intended to maximize the amount of time that a child spends with each parent. As such, this report describes the living arrangements of children in Wisconsin families with (equal and unequal) shared physical placements following their parents' divorces, as well as the stability of those placements over approximately three years after a divorce. The sample is drawn from two cohorts of families, those entering the Wisconsin court system between 1996 and 1998 and those entering between 2000 and 2001—periods before and after the legislative change. Our descriptive findings suggest that, children in shared placements have greater amounts of contact with their fathers than children in mother sole placements, and that father-child contact is even greater in families with equal shared placements. Additionally, while we cannot attribute our results to this change in law, we find higher levels of father-child contact in the cohort sampled after the legislative change than in the earlier cohort. We also find that, when families returned to court to legally change their placement arrangements, they were more likely to move toward equal shared arrangements in the later cohort. Finally, we find limited evidence of “maternal drift,” or decreasing father-child contact, among shared placement families in the (approximately) three years following the divorce. However, a considerable proportion of children in sole mother placements spend little or no time with their fathers. While these trends are not directly attributable to legislative changes—families may be moving toward greater shared placement time for a variety of reasons, including legislative changes, changes in parental preferences and/or the social context, or some combination of both—they provide some evidence that shared placements and, in particular, equal shared placements are associated with a maximization of children's time with both parents. A major concern identified in previous research (see, e.g., Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992) was

that, over time, children in shared placements tended to drift toward sole mother placements without appropriate adjustments in legal placement and child support orders. That we do not find this to be a major issue provides descriptive evidence that shared placement options are consistent with current Wisconsin law, which explicitly states a preference for maximizing children's time with each of their parents after a divorce.



## **APPENDIX**

### **Measurement of Key Constructs**

#### Definition of Physical Placement Provisions in the Court Record Database

The CRD records the physical placement award in a case at the time of each court appearance. This includes information recorded at the time of the final divorce judgment as well as any change in the placement award prior to the end of the reference period of the surveys.

The placement award was coded by the data collectors, based on language used in the child custody and support sections of the final divorce judgment, whether or not there was a child support award. In most cases the child placement award was clear from a reading of the case: sole mother, sole father, split, serial family, third party, or shared placement. Within the “shared placement” category, however, the distinction between equal shared placement and unequal shared placement was not always clearly stated. To clarify this distinction we relied on information in the child access schedule to determine into which of two broad categories of shared placement a case should be assigned—equal shared placement, or shared placement with 31–49 percent time with the lesser-time parent.

After defining each case based on the physical placement award, we compared the placement award to the amount of time each parent should care for the child as indicated in a reading of the access language. Discrepancies between the placement award and actual time scheduled with the children occurred in a small number of cases. In all of these cases we maintained the original definition of physical placement; it appears that the wrong child support guideline may have been applied, given the amount of time the child is to spend in the care of each parent.

#### Measurement of Time-Share in Parent Surveys 4 and 5

The Parent Surveys included a detailed sequence of questions to measure the contact between a parent and the randomly selected focal child during the 12-month period that included the school year and the summer prior to the survey. We asked about the summer and school year separately because we

expected living arrangements and family schedules to vary over this time, and we also asked separately about holidays and about any period of one week or more during which the child stayed with someone other than the parents. Separate questions were asked about the number of nights the child spent with a parent and the number of days that a child stayed with a parent. Because of time constraints for a telephone interview and concerns about response bias, each respondent was asked to report on the time that the focal child spent with one of the parents, not both. The parent about whom the respondent was queried depended on whether the respondent indicated that the child lived with one parent all of the preceding 12 months or lived with each parent part of the time. The vast majority of mothers were asked questions about the time the focal child spent with the father, and most fathers were asked about the time the focal child spent with him.

Questions from the survey thus yielded measures of the number of days and the number of nights that the child stayed with the parent during the school year, during the summer months, and during holidays. We also had a direct measure of the number of nights the child stayed with someone other than a parent during the school year and during the summer. These variables were then used to construct a measure of the percentage of time over a 12-month period that the focal child stayed with each parent. The time-share construction began with a count of overnights spent with the father. In a small number of cases the time-share construction was adjusted to account for equivalent care if the count of daytime care was highly discrepant from the count of overnights. Time-share could not be computed if there was item nonresponse (e.g., a response of “don’t know” or “refused”) on a variable required by the calculation. Cases in which a time-share could not be computed were excluded from the analyses.

**Table A1**  
**Joint Legal Custody and Shared Physical Placement in Wisconsin Divorce Cases over Time**

| Cohort | Dates of Petition | Cases Awarded Joint Legal Custody |            | Cases Awarded Shared Physical Placement |            |
|--------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|---|------------|
|        |                   | N                                 | Percentage | N                                       | Percentage |
| 1      | 7/80–6/81         | 864                               | 18.2%      | 863                                     | 2.0%       |
| 2      | 7/81–6/82         | 843                               | 21.0       | 845                                     | 1.2        |
| 3      | 7/82–6/83         | 600                               | 22.2       | 599                                     | 2.2        |
| 4      | 7/83–6/84         | 694                               | 32.6       | 696                                     | 2.1        |
| 5      | 7/84–6/85         | 918                               | 33.1       | 914                                     | 2.8        |
| 6      | 7/85–6/86         | 1079                              | 33.2       | 1083                                    | 1.9        |
| 7      | 7/86–6/87         | 880                               | 35.1       | 880                                     | 2.8        |
| 8      | 7/87–6/88         | 808                               | 45.6       | 807                                     | 4.9        |
| 9      | 7/88–6/89         | 727                               | 63.8       | 736                                     | 6.5        |
| 10     | 7/89–6/90         | 720                               | 64.9       | 729                                     | 5.6        |
| 11     | 7/90–6/91         | 671                               | 72.8       | 676                                     | 5.9        |
| 12     | 7/91–6/92         | 669                               | 81.2       | 674                                     | 6.4        |
| 17     | 7/96–6/97         | 786                               | 82.9       | 785                                     | 18.2       |
| 18     | 7/97–6/98         | 750                               | 83.5       | 752                                     | 20.2       |
| 21     | 7/00–6/01         | 896                               | 86.8       | 899                                     | 27.6       |

**Data Source:** IRP Wisconsin Court Record Data (CRD). Data are weighted to correct for disproportionate sample sizes in small, medium, and large counties. Cases with missing information on the variables in question are deleted from the analysis.

**Notes:**

1. The court hearing examined for information on joint legal custody and shared physical placement was the final divorce judgment and decree.
2. The definition of “shared physical placement” is conservative. Cases in which parents were awarded sole placement of some children and shared placement of other children are considered “mixed placement” cases rather than shared placement cases. And situations where the physical placement order is sole or split placement, although the “child access” or “visitation” language of the award indicates that children were to be in the care of the both parents more than 30% of the year, are also not defined here as shared placement cases.
3. Data for CRD Cohorts 13–16 19–20 have not been collected.

**Table A2**  
**Percentage of Shared Placement Divorce Cases over Time:**  
**County Analysis**

| Shared Placement as a<br>Percentage of Divorce Caseload | Number of Counties |              |               |               |           |
|---|--------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|
|   | Cohorts 7–8        | Cohorts 9–10 | Cohorts 11–12 | Cohorts 17–18 | Cohort 21 |
|   | 7/86–6/88          | 7/88–6/90    | 7/91–6/92     | 7/96–6/98     | 7/00–6/01 |
| 0   | 5                  | 1            | 3             | 0             | 0         |
| 1–4.9   | 12                 | 6            | 6             | 2             | 1         |
| 5–9.9   | 4                  | 12           | 6             | 1             | 1         |
| 10–14.9   |                    | 2            | 5             | 3             | 1         |
| 15–19.9   |                    |              | 1             | 7             | 2         |
| 20–24.9   |                    |              |               | 4             | 6         |
| 25–29.9   |                    |              |               | 4             | 4         |
| 30–34.9   |                    |              |               |               | 4         |
| 35–39.9   |                    |              |               |               | 1         |
| 40–44.9   |                    |              |               |               | 1         |
| 45–49.9   |                    |              |               |               |           |
| Total counties  | 21                 | 21           | 21            | 21            | 21        |
| Mean % shared placement                                 | 3.8%               | 6.0%         | 6.2%          | 19.2%         | 27.6%     |
| N cases   | 1,687              | 1,465        | 1,350         | 1,537         | 899       |

**Data Source:** IRP Wisconsin Court Record Data (CRD). Data are weighted to correct for disproportionate sample sizes in small, medium and large counties. Cases with missing information on the variables in question are deleted from the analysis.

**Notes:**

1. The court hearing examined for information on shared physical placement was the final divorce judgment and decree.
2. Cohorts 7–8 include cases which petitioned to court for divorce in the period 7/86–6/88. Cohorts 9–10 include cases which petitioned to court for divorce in the period 7/88–6/90. Cohorts 11–12 include cases which petitioned to court for divorce in the period 7/90–6/92. No cases were collected from the court records in the period 7/93–6/96. Cohorts 17–18 include cases which petitioned to court for divorce in the period 7/96–6/98. No cases were collected from the court records in the period 7/86–6/00. Cohorts 21 include cases which petitioned to court for divorce in the period 7/00–6/01.
3. The definition of “shared physical placement” is conservative. Cases in which parents were awarded sole placement of some children and shared placement of other children are considered “mixed placement” cases rather than shared placement cases. And situations where the physical placement order is sole or split placement, although the “child access” or “visitation” language of the award indicates that children were to be in the care of the both parents more than 30% of the year are also not defined here as shared placement cases.

**Table A3**  
**Percentage of Shared Placement Divorce Cases over Time:**  
**Judge Analysis**

| Shared Physical Placement <sup>a</sup> as a<br>Percentage of Final Divorce<br>Judgments Presided Over | Number of Judges <sup>b</sup> |             |              |              |           |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
|   | Cohort 7–8                    | Cohort 9–10 | Cohort 11–12 | Cohort 17–18 | Cohort 21 |
| 0   | 23                            | 10          | 13           | 1            | 1         |
| 1–4.9   | 8                             | 6           | 5            | 1            | 0         |
| 5–9.9   | 6                             | 18          | 13           | 6            | 0         |
| 10–14.9   | 5                             | 9           | 9            | 10           | 2         |
| 15–19.9   | 1                             | 4           | 5            | 11           | 3         |
| 20–24.9   |                               | 1           | 2            | 9            | 4         |
| 25–29.9   |                               |             |              | 7            | 3         |
| 30–34.9   |                               |             |              | 8            | 3         |
| 35–39.9   |                               |             |              | 3            | 2         |
| 40–44.9   |                               |             |              | 1            | 4         |
| 45–49.9   |                               |             |              | 1            | 2         |
| 50–54.9   |                               |             |              | 1            | 5         |
| 55–59.9   |                               |             |              | 0            | 2         |
| 60–64.9   |                               |             |              | 0            | 0         |
| 65–69.9   |                               |             |              | 0            | 0         |
| 70–74.9   |                               |             |              | 0            | 2         |
| 75–79.9   |                               |             |              | 0            | 1         |
| 80–84.9   |                               |             |              | 0            | 1         |
| 85–89.5   |                               |             |              |              | 0         |
| 90–94.9   |                               |             |              | 0            | 1         |
| Total judges  | 43                            | 48          | 47           | 59           | 36        |
| N cases   | 1,126                         | 1,223       | 1,105        | 1,286        | 586       |

**Data Source:** IRP Wisconsin Court Record Data (CRD) Unweighted data.

<sup>a</sup>The definition of “shared physical placement” is conservative. Cases in which parents were awarded sole placement of some children and shared placement of other children are considered “mixed placement” cases rather than shared placement cases. And situations where the physical placement order is sole or split placement, although the “child access” or “visitation” language of the award indicates that children were to be in the care of the both parents more than 30% of the year are also not defined here as shared placement cases.

<sup>b</sup>Judges were included on this table if they had presided over at least 10 final divorce judgments within the two-cohort time frame. If they had presided over fewer than 10 divorce judgments, this was considered too few cases for purposes of computing a breakdown by placement type.

**Table A4**  
**Divorce Cases with a Minor Child and a Final Divorce Decree Prior to Survey Field Period**

|                                       | Pre-May 2000 Cases      |               |                              |                              | Post-May 2000 Cases |               |                              |                              |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                                       | CRD<br>Cohorts<br>17–18 | PS4<br>Sample | PS4<br>Mother<br>Respondents | PS4<br>Father<br>Respondents | CRD<br>Cohort<br>21 | PS5<br>Sample | PS5<br>Mother<br>Respondents | PS5<br>Father<br>Respondents |
| N cases                               | 1,415                   | 593           | 405                          | 351                          | 825                 | 600           | 387                          | 340                          |
| Physical placement at final judgment: |                         |               |                              |                              |                     |               |                              |                              |
| Mother sole                           | 66.99%                  | 50.59%        | 51.85%                       | <b>41.31%</b>                | 61.86%              | 49.17%        | 46.77%                       | <b>40.29%</b>                |
| Unequal, mother primary               | 5.89                    | 12.48         | 12.84                        | 15.67                        | 5.66                | 10.00         | 10.08                        | 12.65                        |
| Equal shared                          | 13.38                   | 39.00         | 33.83                        | 41.03                        | 22.07               | 39.00         | 41.60                        | 44.12                        |
| Unequal, father primary               | 1.34                    | 1.83          | 1.48                         | 1.99                         | 0.92                | 1.83          | 1.55                         | 2.94                         |
| Other                                 | 12.40                   | 0.00          | 0.00                         | 0.00                         | 9.49                | 0.00          | 0.00                         | 0.00                         |
| Rural/Urban Location:                 |                         |               |                              |                              |                     |               |                              |                              |
| Milwaukee                             | 30.00%                  | 28.75         | 28.47%                       | 20.60%                       | 28.80%              | 29.07%        | 27.53%                       | 21.35%                       |
| Other urban                           | 51.90                   | 53.63         | 53.92                        | 59.85                        | 53.60               | 53.17         | 53.14                        | 56.85                        |
| Rural (non-SMSA)                      | 18.10                   | 17.62         | 17.62                        | 19.55                        | 17.60               | 17.76         | 19.32                        | 21.80                        |
| Father income 2003 (UI):              |                         |               |                              |                              |                     |               |                              |                              |
| \$1–12,000                            | 12.74%                  | 11.52%        | 14.93%                       | 14.87%                       | 11.03%              | 10.82%        | 12.59%                       | 9.31%                        |
| \$12–24,000                           | 12.77                   | 10.87         | 11.78                        | 9.29                         | 13.85               | 14.57         | 13.84                        | 19.46                        |
| \$24–36,000                           | 22.56                   | 22.30         | 22.22                        | 24.29                        | 23.22               | 20.19         | 17.06                        | 20.10                        |
| \$36–48,000                           | 21.27                   | 19.84         | 18.12                        | 19.23                        | 19.50               | 19.03         | 20.90                        | 18.22                        |
| \$48–60,000                           | 14.36                   | 13.99         | 10.69                        | 11.38                        | 13.99               | 12.81         | 10.04                        | 10.01                        |
| Over \$60,000                         | 16.30                   | 21.47         | 22.27                        | 20.94                        | 18.41               | 22.59         | 25.57                        | 22.89                        |
| Father has no UI earnings             | 24.43%                  | 22.23%        | 22.54%                       | 22.22%                       | 19.12%              | 19.53%        | 22.09%                       | 13.30%                       |
| Mother income 2003 (UI):              |                         |               |                              |                              |                     |               |                              |                              |
| \$1–12,000                            | 25.47%                  | 20.30%        | 19.37%                       | 16.23%                       | 21.70%              | 21.57%        | 17.22%                       | 21.69%                       |
| \$12–24,000                           | 28.25                   | 26.59         | 30.89                        | 29.25                        | 25.33               | 22.09         | 23.24                        | 22.71                        |
| \$24–36,000                           | 26.27                   | 30.90         | 29.37                        | 34.77                        | 24.81               | 26.69         | 31.06                        | 28.51                        |
| \$36–48,000                           | 9.86                    | 10.80         | 8.37                         | 5.50                         | 12.12               | 13.66         | 12.16                        | 13.44                        |
| \$48–60,000                           | 6.84                    | 6.58          | 6.66                         | 8.62                         | 8.43                | 7.76          | 7.04                         | 6.17                         |
| Over \$60,000                         | 3.30                    | 4.83          | 5.34                         | 5.63                         | 7.61                | 8.23          | 9.26                         | 7.41                         |

(table continues)

Table A4, continued

|                                    | Pre-May 2000 Cases      |                         |                              |                              | Post-May 2000 Cases |                         |                              |                              |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
|                                    | CRD<br>Cohorts<br>17–18 | PS4<br>Survey<br>Sample | PS4<br>Mother<br>Respondents | PS4<br>Father<br>Respondents | CRD<br>Cohort<br>21 | PS5<br>Survey<br>Sample | PS5<br>Mother<br>Respondents | PS5<br>Father<br>Respondents |
| Mother has no UI earnings          | 18.00%                  | 14.30%                  | 14.11%                       | 15.58%                       | 12.07%              | 8.05%                   | 8.53%                        | 9.79%                        |
| Father previously married          | 17.00%                  | 15.06%                  | 14.20%                       | <b>13.49%</b>                | 16.50%              | 17.26%                  | 17.13%                       | <b>15.33%</b>                |
| Mother previously married          | 15.70%                  | 15.18%                  | 16.36%                       | 17.13%                       | 15.00%              | 15.80%                  | 16.92%                       | 15.86%                       |
| Mean age of father                 | 39.31                   | 39.64                   | 39.18                        | 39.82                        | 39.35               | 39.50                   | 39.95                        | 39.34                        |
| Mean age of mother                 | 36.92                   | 37.31                   | 36.84                        | 37.23                        | 37.07               | 37.53                   | 38.06                        | 37.12                        |
| Length of marriage: years          | 10.61                   | 10.94                   | 10.09                        | 10.52                        | 10.60               | 10.61                   | 10.93                        | 10.84                        |
| Petition to final judgment: months | 9.38                    | 9.79                    | 9.60                         | 9.62                         | 9.09                | 9.16                    | 8.97                         | 9.29                         |
| Divorce to survey: years           | 3.14                    | 3.08                    | 3.14                         | 3.10                         | 2.65                | 2.65                    | 2.68                         | 2.62                         |
| Mean number of children            | 1.93                    | 1.82                    | 1.78                         | 1.79                         | 1.90                | 1.83                    | 1.77                         | 1.83                         |
| Age of youngest child:             |                         |                         |                              |                              |                     |                         |                              |                              |
| Under age 6                        | 15.40%                  | 15.61%                  | 16.37%                       | 13.80%                       | 20.60%              | 18.51%                  | 15.98%                       | 20.15%                       |
| 6 and over                         | 84.60                   | 84.39                   | 83.63                        | 86.20                        | 79.40               | 81.49                   | 84.02                        | 79.85                        |
| Child support order                | 79.70%                  | 72.92%                  | 84.24%                       | 82.93%                       | 73.40%              | 72.46%                  | 74.75%                       | 76.25%                       |
| Child support paid, if an order    | 91.20%                  | 91.61%                  | 90.60%                       | <b>95.32%</b>                | 92.60%              | 91.98%                  | 91.67%                       | <b>98.62%</b>                |

**Notes:** For pre-May 2000 cases, the survey was conducted in the summer and fall of 2001; for post-May 2000 cases, the survey was conducted in the summer and fall of 2004. “Other” physical placement at final judgment cases are: father sole placement, split placement, reconciled cases, and placement with a 3rd party. Earnings are for the calendar year prior to the survey, and are in 2003 dollars. Missing cases are dropped from the calculation of percentages and means. Percentages and means are weighted. Mean ages of parents and children are as of June 1 prior to the survey. Child support orders and payments are calculated for the 12 months prior to June 1 of the survey year. Percentages represented in bold indicate numbers highlighted in the text.

**Table A5**  
**Characteristics of PS4 and PS5 Mother Respondent Survey Cases:**  
**Frequencies for Tables 6, and 7**

| Independent Variables                       | N Cases | PS4 and PS5 Mothers' Reports<br>Weighted Row Percentages<br>Dependent Variables |                       |  |                      |  |                       |
|---|---------|---|-----------------------|--|----------------------|--|-----------------------|
|   |         | All Mother Respondents  |                       | Table 6<br>Mother Sole Placements Only |                      | Table 7<br>Shared Placement Cases Only |                       |
|   |         | Father Spent  |                       | Father Spent                           |                      | Father Spent                           |                       |
|   |         | Less than<br>25% Time   | More than<br>25% Time | Less or<br>No Time                     | Same or<br>More time | Less than<br>25% Time                  | More than<br>25% Time |
| All cases (percentages weighted)            | 754     | 60.29%  | 39.71%                |  |                      |  |                       |
| Type of shared placement at time of survey: |         |   |                       |  |                      |  |                       |
| Sole mother placement                       | 386     | 77.98   | 22.02                 | 45.60%                                 | 54.50%               |  |                       |
| Unequal shared/ mother primary              | 78      | 13.21   | 86.79                 | NA                                     | NA                   | 13.21%                                 | 86.79%                |
| Equal shared                                | 278     | 9.53  | 90.47                 | NA                                     | NA                   | 9.53                                   | 90.47                 |
| Unequal shared/father primary               | 12      | 7.30  | 92.70                 | NA                                     | NA                   | 7.30                                   | 92.70                 |
| All shared placement cases                  |         | NA  | NA                    | NA                                     | NA                   | 10.87                                  | 89.13                 |
| Joint legal custody                         |         |   |                       |  |                      |  |                       |
| Yes   | 695     | 43.63   | 56.37                 | 41.49                                  | 58.51                | NA                                     | NA                    |
| No  | 59      | 85.02   | 14.98                 | 64.59                                  | 35.41                | NA                                     | NA                    |
| Years between divorce judgment and survey   |         |   |                       |  |                      |  |                       |
| 1 year                                      | 68      | 48.23   | 51.77                 | 34.14                                  | 65.86                | 13.76                                  | 86.24                 |
| 2 years                                     | 365     | 57.55   | 42.45                 | 44.63                                  | 55.37                | 5.42                                   | 94.58                 |
| 3 years                                     | 269     | 63.43   | 36.57                 | 48.59                                  | 51.41                | 15.52                                  | 84.48                 |
| 4 years                                     | 52      | 66.37   | 33.63                 | 42.27                                  | 57.73                | 13.82                                  | 86.18                 |
| Pre-May 2000 case                           | 389     | 62.69   | 37.31                 | 45.75                                  | 54.25                | 10.20                                  | 89.80                 |
| Cohort 17 (entered court 7/96–6/97)         | 180     | 68.29   | 31.71                 | 42.48                                  | 57.52                | 13.27                                  | 86.73                 |
| Cohort 18 (entered court 7/97–6/98)         | 209     | 57.36   | 42.64                 | 49.06                                  | 50.94                | 7.83                                   | 92.17                 |
| Post- May 2000 case                         | 365     | 55.49   | 44.51                 | 45.25                                  | 54.75                | 11.81                                  | 88.19                 |
| Father previously married                   |         |   |                       |  |                      |  |                       |
| Yes   | 128     | 63.04   | 36.96                 | 34.15                                  | 65.85                | 12.31                                  | 87.69                 |
| No  | 626     | 59.81   | 40.19                 | 47.47                                  | 52.53                | 10.59                                  | 89.41                 |

(table continues)

Table A5, continued

| Independent Variables                             | PS4 and PS5 Mothers' Reports<br>Weighted Row Percentages<br>Dependent Variables |                        |                    |                             |                       |                             |        |
|---|---|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--------|
|   | N Cases   | Table 6                |                    |                             |                       | Table 7                     |        |
|   |   | All Mother Respondents |                    | Mother Sole Placements Only |                       | Shared Placement Cases Only |        |
|   |   | Father Spent           |                    | Father Spent                |                       | Father Spent                |        |
|   | Less than<br>25% Time   | More than<br>25% Time  | Less or<br>No Time | Same or<br>More time        | Less than<br>25% Time | More than<br>25% Time       |        |
| Married 10 years or more                          |   |                        |                    |                             |                       |                             |        |
| Yes   | 353   | 56.09%                 | 43.91%             | 41.66%                      | 58.34%                | 8.76%                       | 91.24% |
| No  | 401   | 63.31                  | 36.69              | 48.13                       | 51.87                 | 12.91                       | 87.09  |
| Gender of children                                |   |                        |                    |                             |                       |                             |        |
| Any boys  | 502   | 58.63                  | 41.37              | 45.47                       | 54.53                 | 8.46                        | 91.54  |
| No boys   | 252   | 63.12                  | 36.88              | 45.81                       | 54.19                 | 15.81                       | 84.19  |
| Age of youngest child at survey:                  |   |                        |                    |                             |                       |                             |        |
| Youngest child under age 6                        | 118   | 69.95                  | 30.05              | 47.16                       | 52.84                 | 9.22                        | 90.78  |
| Youngest child age 6–12                           | 471   | 54.15                  | 45.85              | 44.95                       | 55.05                 | 9.76                        | 90.24  |
| Youngest child age 13 or over                     | 165   | 71.18                  | 28.82              | 46.11                       | 53.89                 | 16.29                       | 83.71  |
| Parents' education level:                         |   |                        |                    |                             |                       |                             |        |
| Mother high school or less                        | 290   | 66.11                  | 33.89              | 53.97                       | 46.03                 | 13.21                       | 86.79  |
| Mother more than high school education            | 464   | 57.00                  | 43.00              | 40.64                       | 59.36                 | 9.64                        | 90.36  |
| Father high school or less                        | 401   | 69.45                  | 30.55              | 50.79                       | 49.21                 | 14.91                       | 85.09  |
| Father more than high school education            | 353   | 48.86                  | 51.14              | 37.51                       | 62.49                 | 9.34                        | 91.66  |
| Mothers earning under \$24,000                    | 325   | 63.22                  | 36.78              | 50.95                       | 49.05                 | 9.52                        | 90.48  |
| Mothers earning \$24–\$36,000                     | 208   | 59.52                  | 40.48              | 45.64                       | 54.36                 | 8.03                        | 91.97  |
| Mothers earning over \$36,000                     | 182   | 53.41                  | 46.59              | 31.20                       | 68.80                 | 14.22                       | 85.78  |
| Fathers earning under \$24,000                    | 164   | 77.50                  | 22.50              | 61.41                       | 38.59                 | 20.74                       | 79.26  |
| Fathers earning \$24–\$36,000                     | 164   | 63.16                  | 36.84              | 44.48                       | 55.52                 | 16.10                       | 83.90  |
| Fathers earning over \$36,000                     | 332   | 47.81                  | 52.19              | 32.08                       | 67.92                 | 5.87                        | 94.13  |
| Father paid child support in year prior to survey |   |                        |                    |                             |                       |                             |        |
| Yes   | 504   | 65.63                  | 34.37              | 42.36                       | 57.64                 | 9.32                        | 90.68  |
| No  | 250   | 46.17                  | 53.83              | 59.49                       | 40.51                 | 12.33                       | 87.67  |

(table continues)

Table A5, continued

| Independent Variables    | PS4 and PS5 Mothers' Reports<br>Weighted Row Percentages<br>Dependent Variables |                        |                       |  |                      |  |                       |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------|-----------------------|--|----------------------|--|-----------------------|
|                          | N Cases   | All Mother Respondents |                       | Table 6<br>Mother Sole Placements Only |                      | Table 7<br>Shared Placement Cases Only |                       |
|                          |   | Father Spent           |                       | Father Spent                           |                      | Father Spent                           |                       |
|                          |   | Less than<br>25% Time  | More than<br>25% Time | Less or<br>No Time                     | Same or<br>More time | Less than<br>25% Time                  | More than<br>25% Time |
| Mother has married again |   |                        |                       |  |                      |  |                       |
| Yes                      | 185   | 63.86%                 | 36.14%                | 47.66%                                 | 52.34%               | 17.07%                                 | 82.93%                |
| No                       | 569   | 59.00                  | 41.00                 | 44.81                                  | 55.19                | 8.99                                   | 91.01                 |
| Father has married again |   |                        |                       |  |                      |  |                       |
| Yes                      | 164   | 59.85                  | 40.15                 | 44.34                                  | 55.66                | 15.63                                  | 84.37                 |
| No                       | 590   | 60.41                  | 39.59                 | 45.94                                  | 54.06                | 9.42                                   | 90.58                 |

**Notes:** Percentages are weighted to adjust for sample stratification, differential response, and nonresponse bias.

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