



**Institute for
Research on
Poverty**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

2018–2020 Child Support Policy Research Agreement Task 11C:

**Satisfaction with Placement Arrangements Among Divorced Wisconsin
Families with Sole Mother and Shared Placement Orders**

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June 2021

The research reported in this paper was supported by the Child Support Policy Research Agreement between the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Any views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the sponsoring institutions. We are grateful for expert review, editing, and production assistance from Daniel R. Meyer, Lisa Klein Vogel, James T. Spartz, and Dawn Duren.

BACKGROUND

Children's living arrangements following parental divorce are increasingly characterized by considerable amounts of time spent in the home of each of their parents. Historically, most children were placed in the sole physical custody of their mother following their parents' divorce. However, rates of joint or shared (physical) placement arrangements (sometimes referred to as physical custody) after divorce, defined as a child spending 25% to 50% of their time with each parent,¹ have increased substantially in recent decades in both the United States and other wealthy countries (Steinbach, 2019). Wisconsin's shared placement rate has increased sharply over the past thirty years to roughly 50% (Meyer, Cancian, & Cook, 2017), which makes the state's rate one of the highest in the nation (Meyer, Carlson, & Alam, 2019). Current evidence suggests that the Wisconsin trend is not predominantly driven by changes over time in the characteristics of divorcing families (Cancian, Meyer, Brown, & Cook, 2014), nor by differences between either the characteristics of divorcing families or placement-related policies in Wisconsin compared to other states (Meyer, Carlson, & Alam, 2019).

A growing research literature has examined associations of post-divorce placement arrangements with the socioemotional and economic wellbeing of parents and children, typically by comparing shared placements to sole (most frequently mother) placements (see recent reviews by Baude, Pearson, & Drapeau, 2016; Bauserman, 2012; Nielsen, 2018; Steinbach, 2019; Steinbach, Augustijn, & Corkadi, 2021).² This literature generally suggests that shared placement is positively related to a range of wellbeing measures for both parents and children.

¹In contrast, sole parent placements are defined by a child spending more than 75% of their time under the supervision (physical custody) of one of their parents.

²For evidence from Wisconsin, see, Bartfeld, Ahn, & Ryu, 2012; Bartfeld & Han, 2014; Bartfeld & Men, 2018; and Bartfeld & Chanda, 2020.

However, it is unclear whether these relationships reflect ‘true’ effects of shared placement, or whether the observed differences can be explained by dissimilar characteristics of families with shared and sole placements. For instance, families with shared custody arrangements are more socially and economically advantaged, and exhibit lower levels of parental conflict, on average, than families with sole placements (see, e.g., Steinbach, 2019).

A small group of prior studies has examined parental and child satisfaction with shared versus sole placement arrangements with respect to differences in satisfaction by placement type and parent sex, producing somewhat mixed results. For example, in a meta-analysis that included nine studies from the United States and Canada (published prior to 2010) that employed parental satisfaction with the placement arrangement as an outcome, Bauserman (2012) concludes that fathers with shared placements consistently expressed greater satisfaction with the placement than did fathers with sole-mother placements. Conversely, mothers with sole placements expressed greater satisfaction with the placement than did mothers with shared placements. More recently, Steinbach (2019), in a literature review citing studies from Australia, Sweden, and the United States (with publication dates ranging from 2009 to 2014), concludes that, in general, parents with shared placements express greater satisfaction with the placement arrangement than do parents with sole placements, that fathers express greater satisfaction with shared placements than do mothers, and that parents express greater satisfaction with shared placements than do children.³

³In addition, a recent study of adolescent “life satisfaction” based on survey data from 37 North American and European countries (Steinbach, Augustijn, & Corkadi, 2021) found mean differences in life satisfaction to favor adolescents in shared placements over adolescents in sole placements. However, these differences were completely explained by differences in the characteristic of families with each placement type. Moreover, the satisfaction measure assessed adolescents’ global satisfaction with their lives and was not specific to satisfaction with their placement arrangements.

This report extends prior studies assessing differences in satisfaction with the placement arrangement by placement type in several ways. First, we employ a sample from Wisconsin which, as noted above, has particularly high rates of shared placements (that have increased markedly over time and across family sociodemographic groups) relative to both other U.S. states (Meyer, Cancian, & Cook, 2017; Meyer, Carlson, & Alam, 2019) and other wealthy nations (Smyth, 2017; Steinbach, 2019; Zilincikova, 2021). Second, our data include samples of sole-placement mothers and both mothers and fathers with shared placements. Third, we examine respondents' assessments of their own satisfaction with the legal arrangement at the time of the divorce (reported retrospectively) and at the time of the survey (approximately 7–10 years after the divorce). Furthermore, we examine their satisfaction with the actual placement arrangement in the year before the survey and their perceptions of both the other parent's and the focal child's⁴ satisfaction with the actual placement arrangement in the year prior to the survey. Fourth, we assess changes in respondents' satisfaction with the legal arrangement between the time of the divorce and the time of the survey by placement type and parent sex for shared-placement parents. Finally, we investigate potential heterogeneity in satisfaction levels on these measures by placement type and parent sex across a wide range of subgroups defined by family characteristics, divorce characteristics, whether the legal placement order was changed between the time of the divorce and the survey interview, and sample and interview characteristics.

⁴Many of the survey questions were asked regarding a pre-selected 'focal child'—for this survey identified as the couple's youngest child and, therefore, a child who would still be under 18 at the time of the survey. It is frequent practice in surveys to choose a focal child as the subject of in-depth information gathering, as it is often not feasible within time constraints to gather detail on all children.

DATA

Data are from the Wisconsin Parents Survey, which includes parents in cohorts 30 and 33 of the Wisconsin Court Record Database (CRD). The CRD includes data from the court records of a sample of parents filing for divorce in 21 counties in Wisconsin; in each CRD cohort, the sample is weighted to be representative of all divorcing parents in those counties. The cohorts from which the Wisconsin Parents Survey sample is drawn include divorces that entered the courts during 2009–2010 (cohort 30) and 2013 (cohort 33). The sample was limited to parents with a child age 6 or under at the time of the divorce petition, such that the youngest child would still be under 18 during the survey period. The sample was also limited to parents with mother-sole placement and shared placement as of the final divorce judgment. Only mothers are included from the sole-mother-placement couples, while both parents are included from the shared-placement couples. Fathers in sole-mother-placement couples were not included because of anticipated low response rates and difficulty reaching them. The final eligible survey sample included 1199 parents.

The survey was conducted by the University of Wisconsin–Madison (UW) Survey Center in conjunction with the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP). Participants were interviewed regarding characteristics such as health, housing, employment, economic well-being, income, social characteristics, and characteristics of the divorce. The survey also allowed for the assessment of stability of arrangements as well as parents' satisfaction with arrangements at various times during and following the divorce proceedings. Interviews were administered in person during February–March 2020, and by phone April–October 2020, with the change in survey mode due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The final sample, based on parents who completed interviews, includes 636 parents consisting of 236 shared-placement mothers, 230 shared-placement fathers, and 170 sole-placement mothers. This includes a final response

rate of 55% (ranging from 54%–56% across the three subgroups) after excluding 32 parents deemed ineligible due to reconciliation or death.

Among parents who completed the survey, mothers and fathers with shared placement exhibit no statistical or substantive differences in mothers' and fathers' income at the time of divorce, marriage length, number of children, or age of youngest child, suggesting that differences between shared placement mothers' and fathers' responses are not likely due to differential response patterns. For more details on the survey, including sample frame, response rates, characteristics of completes and non-completes, and details about survey administration, see Vogel (2021).

The survey data include a range of information about parents, children, and circumstances and living arrangements at the time of the divorce and during the year preceding the survey; this is supplemented with information about the original legal placement order and other case characteristics from the CRD. Data of particular relevance to this report include: information on the placement arrangement at the time of the divorce (based on the court record); respondents' reports of how the original placement order was established and whether there have been subsequent changes to the order, respondents' reports on their satisfaction with the legal placement order at the time of the divorce and at the time of the survey, and respondents' reports of their satisfaction with the actual placement arrangement in the year prior to the survey, as well as their perceptions of both the focal child's and the other parent's satisfaction with the actual placement arrangement in the year prior to the survey. The couple's youngest child, who would still be under 18 at the time of the survey, was selected as the 'focal child' for this survey. The survey focused on collecting detailed information on the focal child rather than on all of the couple's children.

The satisfaction items that are the key focus of this report were assessed on a five-point scale ranging from “not at all” satisfied to “extremely” satisfied. Two items refer specifically to the legal placement arrangement:

- At the time of your divorce, how satisfied were you with [FOCAL CHILD]’s living arrangement in the divorce agreement? Not at all, a little, somewhat, very or extremely?
- How satisfied are you with [FOCAL CHILD]’s living arrangement in the current legal agreement? Not at all, a little, somewhat, very or extremely?

Three additional items refer to the actual living arrangement in the year prior to the survey. They were asked of respondents immediately after they completed a detailed battery of questions about their actual living arrangement—as distinct from their legal placement arrangement—over the prior year. These items were:

- Over the past year, how satisfied were you with [FOCAL CHILD]’s living arrangement? Not at all, a little, somewhat, very or extremely?
- Over the past year, how satisfied do you think [FOCAL CHILD] was with [his/her] living arrangement?
- Over the past year, how satisfied do you think [OTHER PARENT] was with [FOCAL CHILD]’s living arrangement?

Note that, for sole-placement families, the item assessing the mother’s perception of the other parent’s (father’s) level of satisfaction with the living arrangement over the past year serves as an indirect/proxy measure of satisfaction among fathers in sole mother placement families, a key group of parents that is excluded from our survey sample. In contrast, for shared placement families we have information from both mothers and fathers on their own satisfaction and on their perception of the other parent’s satisfaction.

Because our primary interest is in assessing differences by placement type in whether parents are “very” or “extremely” satisfied (i.e., unambiguously satisfied), our analyses predominantly employ dichotomized versions of these measures indicating that the parent is

very/extremely satisfied (versus somewhat/a little/not at all satisfied). However, we present some analyses based on a trichotomized satisfaction measure in which the categories are very/extremely satisfied, somewhat satisfied, and a little/not at all satisfied. We discuss the implications of each measure for our findings.

METHODS

We provide descriptive analyses that compare satisfaction rates between three groups of families defined by the legal placement arrangement at the divorce and the sex of the parent responding to the survey: sole-placement mothers, shared-placement mothers, and shared-placement fathers. Shared placement is defined as a legal placement order in which each parent has 25%–50% physical custody, as recorded in the court record at the time of the divorce. We examine rates of respondent satisfaction with the legal arrangement at the time of the divorce and at the time of the survey, rates of respondent satisfaction with the actual placement arrangement in the year prior to the survey, and rates of both focal child and other parent satisfaction with the actual placement arrangement in the year prior to the survey, as perceived by the respondent. Here, we did not explicitly provide nor ask the respondent to provide a description of the placement arrangement. Rather, the respondent was asked “Over the past year, how satisfied were you with [FOCAL CHILD]’s living arrangement?” We also compare changes in respondent satisfaction with the legal arrangement between the time of the divorce and the time of the survey between the groups.

We examine these patterns for the sample as a whole and for range of subgroups defined by family characteristics, divorce characteristics, whether the legal placement order was changed between the time of the divorce and the survey interview, and sample and interview characteristics. Family characteristics include respondent and other parent education (high school

diploma, equivalent, or less; some college; four-year degree or more), the father's and mother's income (quintile in the sample) at the time of the final divorce judgment, focal child sex, number of children of the (divorced) couple, and focal child age. Divorce characteristics consist of whether the divorce occurred in an urban⁵ or rural county; whether each parent had legal representation (an attorney present) in court; and whether the placement arrangement at divorce was determined by the court, agreed on by the parents with mediation, or agreed on by the parents without mediation. Sample and interview characteristics include whether the respondent was drawn from CRD cohort 30 or 33 and whether the interview took place prior to or after the start of the COVID-19 epidemic.⁶

We conducted these analyses at the bivariate level to assess simple average differences in rates of satisfaction across groups. However, as a robustness check to ensure that our results are not solely driven by systematic differential selection into placement type and/or systematic differential participation in the survey by parent sex (for shared placement families) associated with family and/or divorce characteristics, we also estimated supplemental analyses consisting of logit models that adjust for a host of such factors (see Appendix Table A1).

RESULTS

Family characteristics by placement type and survey respondent

Table 1 presents descriptive data on family characteristics by placement type, assessing differences between sole mother and shared placement families in which the mother was the

⁵In IRP reports to DCF, we often present analyses for Milwaukee County, other urban counties, and rural counties separately. However, there were too few survey cases in Milwaukee County to allow for separate estimates.

⁶Data on father and mother income at the time of the final judgment, father and mother legal representation, urban or rural county, and cohort were drawn from the CRD. All other measures were drawn from the survey.

Table 1. Family characteristics by placement type and respondent sex

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Father Income at Final Judgment	39238.7 (31010.1)	54174.6 (38841.6)	56197.5 (45576.2)	***	
Mother Income at Final Judgment	29132.2 (25761.8)	40053.7 (27561.0)	39553.3 (31788.7)	***	
R: HS or Less than HS	14.4%	14.2%	18.2%		*
R: Some College/Tech/Two-year Degree	49.2%	37.6%	38.0%	+	
R: Four-year Degree or more	36.4%	48.2%	43.8%	*	
OP: HS or Less than HS	54.9%	35.4%	30.4%	***	
OP: College/Tech/Two-year Degree	27.1%	31.2%	23.3%		
OP: Four-year Degree or More	18.0%	33.4%	46.3%	**	**
Urban County	82.7%	80.8%	81.2%		
Father Had Legal Representation at Divorce	33.8%	52.6%	57.1%	***	
Mother Had Legal Representation at Divorce	59.4%	52.4%	57.0%		
Male Focal Child	50.1%	48.9%	53.3%		
Female Focal Child	49.9%	51.1%	46.7%		
Order Set: Court Determined Arrangement	26.8%	15.3%	21.1%	**	
Order Set: Mutual Agreement w/ Mediation	19.3%	24.6%	20.8%		
Order Set: Mutual Agreement w/o Mediation	53.8%	60.0%	58.2%	+	
Number of Children Under 18	1.712 (0.7)	1.684 (0.7)	1.697 (0.7)		
Focal Child Age	11.52 (2.2)	11.97 (2.5)	12 (2.4)	*	
Cohort 30	58.6%	54.6%	57.0%		
Cohort 33	41.4%	45.4%	43.0%		
Pre-COVID interview completion	30.0%	25.5%	29.4%		
Post-COVID interview completion	70.0%	74.5%	70.6%		
Observations	170	236	230	406	466

R=Respondent; OP=Other parent. + p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

respondent, as well as between shared placement families in which the mother was the respondent and shared placement families in which the father was the respondent. We see considerable differences by placement type, but relatively few differences by sex of the respondent. Overall, families with sole mother placements are more socioeconomically disadvantaged than those with shared placements. The former are characterized by lower incomes of both the mother and father at the time of the final divorce judgment and lesser educational attainment for both parents. Fathers were disproportionately likely to have legal representation in shared placement cases, whereas there was no difference in the rate of mothers' legal representation by placement type. Court determined arrangements were more common in sole mother than shared mother cases. In terms of differences in the characteristics of shared placement families in which the mother or father responded, we find only that less educated fathers and fathers divorced from more educated mothers were more likely than less educated mothers and mothers divorced from more educated fathers to respond to the survey. There were no differences by placement type in the characteristics of families drawn from CRD cohort 30 or 33, nor were there differences by placement type in the characteristics of families interviewed pre- and post-pandemic.

Satisfaction with placement by placement type and survey respondent sex

Table 2 presents descriptive data on satisfaction with the placement arrangement by placement type (for mother respondents) and, for shared placements, whether the survey respondent was the mother or the father. Overall, we see considerable differences by placement type in satisfaction but few differences by whether the mother or father was the respondent for shared placement cases. In terms of satisfaction, 78% of sole placement mothers, 48% of shared placement mothers, and 40% of shared placement fathers reported being very or extremely satisfied (versus somewhat, a little, or not at all satisfied) with the legal placement arrangement

Table 2. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by placement type and respondent sex

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	77.8%	47.9%	40.4%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	68.8%	58.7%	61.7%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	80.9%	65.3%	64.6%	**	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	72.7%	57.0%	59.4%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	57.4%	69.7%	67.1%	**	
Observations	170	236	230	406	466

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

at the time of the divorce. These figures were 69%, 59%, and 62% for the legal placement at the time of the interview and 81%, 66%, and 65% with the actual placement arrangement over the year prior to the interview. Notably, for all satisfaction measures, sole-placement mothers report significantly greater satisfaction than shared-placement mothers, whereas differences in satisfaction between share-placement mothers and shared-placement fathers never attain statistical significance. In addition, though never significant, the gap between shared placement mother and shared placement father reports of satisfaction is considerably smaller with respect to both the legal arrangement at the time of the interview and the actual arrangement in the year preceding the interview than with respect to the legal arrangement at the time of the divorce, at which point 48% of shared mothers and 40% of shared fathers reported being satisfied with the arrangement

Respondents also reported their perception of the focal child's satisfaction and the other parent's satisfaction with the actual arrangement over the year prior to the interview. Consistent with reports of their own satisfaction, sole-placement mothers reported that that focal children were more satisfied with the placement arrangement than did shared-placement mothers. Conversely, however, sole-placement mothers reported lower rates of perceived satisfaction with the arrangement on the part of the other parent (father) than did mothers with shared placements. Again, reports by shared-placement mothers and fathers did not significantly differ from one another. Sole-placement mothers reported that 73% of children and 57% of fathers were very or extremely satisfied with the actual placement arrangement in the year preceding the survey. By comparison, shared-placement mothers reported this to be the case for 57% and 70% of children and fathers, respectively, whereas shared-placement fathers reported this for 59% and 67% of children and mothers.

For the analyses in Table 2, we dichotomized satisfaction to represent whether the respondent reported they were or the child or the other parent was very or extremely satisfied versus somewhat, a little, or not at all satisfied. To assess whether our results were driven by the decision to include “somewhat satisfied” in the “not-satisfied”, as opposed to “satisfied”, category, Table 3 presents results with satisfaction considered in three categories: (1) very or extremely satisfied, (2) somewhat satisfied, and (3) a little or not at all satisfied. Overall, these results indicate that, whereas large proportions of shared-placement mothers and fathers (ranging from 19% to 38%) reported that they, the child, or the other parent was “somewhat satisfied” with the (legal or actual) placement arrangement, the general pattern is consistent with results using the simpler dichotomized satisfaction measure. With only two exceptions, we find that, across all measures, sole-placement mothers are significantly less likely to report that they and the child are “unsatisfied” than are both shared-placement mothers and shared-placement fathers, that sole-placement mothers report higher rates of the other parent being somewhat satisfied or unsatisfied than do shared-placement mothers, and that reports from shared-placement mothers and fathers do not significantly differ. The two exceptions to this pattern are that (1) there are no significant differences in reports of child dissatisfaction over the year before the interview; and (2) sole-placement mothers report significantly higher rates of the other parent’s dissatisfaction in the year before the interview relative to shared-placement mothers (14% vs. 11%).

As described above, there are considerable differences in the characteristics of sole and shared placement families. Thus, to examine whether differences in satisfaction with the placement arrangement may be driven by differences in family characteristics rather than placement type, we estimated logistic regressions in which we controlled for the full set of family characteristics presented in Table 1. Results (see Appendix Table A1) indicate that

Table 3. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by placement type and respondent sex – trichotomous satisfaction measure

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce					
Satisfied	77.8%	47.9%	40.4%	***	
Somewhat	13.4%	32.7%	38.2%	***	
Unsatisfied	8.8%	19.4%	21.4%	**	
Satisfaction with Legal Now					
Satisfied	68.8%	58.7%	61.7%	*	
Somewhat	19.3%	25.7%	23.1%		
Unsatisfied	11.9%	15.6%	15.3%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent					
Satisfied	80.9%	65.3%	64.6%	**	
Somewhat	15.8%	24.9%	19.0%	*	
Unsatisfied	3.2%	9.7%	16.5%	*	+
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child					
Satisfied	72.7%	57.0%	59.4%	*	
Somewhat	19.8%	33.0%	31.4%	+	
Unsatisfied	7.5%	10.0%	9.2%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent					
Satisfied	57.4%	69.7%	67.1%	**	
Somewhat	28.3%	19.7%	23.1%	*	
Unsatisfied	14.3%	10.6%	9.9%	*	
Observations	170	236	230	406	466

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

reported differences in satisfaction between sole- and shared-placement mothers generally remain statistically significant, and also that differences in satisfaction between sole-placement mothers and sole-placement fathers remain statistically nonsignificant, after controlling for the characteristics of families in different placement types.

Change in satisfaction with placement arrangement by placement type and respondent sex

Our next set of descriptive analyses, shown in Table 4, examine changes in reported satisfaction with the legal placement arrangement between the time of divorce and the time of the survey by placement type (at divorce) and, for shared placements, respondent sex. Again, these results indicate significant differences between sole and shared placement families, but no significant differences by respondent sex among shared placement families. On the whole, 57% of sole-placement mothers, 40% of shared-placement mothers, and 35% of shared-placement fathers reported being (very or extremely) satisfied with the legal arrangement at both the divorce and the time of the survey, whereas 10%, 33%, and 33%, respectively, reported being unsatisfied at both time points.

Considering shifts in satisfaction over time, we see that 20% of sole-placement mothers, 8% of shared-placement mothers, and 5% of shared-placement fathers reported being satisfied with the legal arrangement at the time of the divorce, but unsatisfied with the arrangement at the time of the survey. In contrast, 12%, 19%, and 26% reported being unsatisfied at the time of the divorce but satisfied at the time of the survey. Together, these patterns suggest that, whereas sole-placement mothers report being more satisfied with the legal arrangement at both the time of the divorce and the time of the survey than shared-placement mothers, as well as with the actual arrangement in the year before the survey, sole-placement mothers report becoming less

Table 4. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement between divorce and survey by placement type and respondent sex

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Satisfied → Satisfied	57.1%	39.8%	35.3%	***	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	20.4%	8.3%	5.1%	***	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	12.3%	18.8%	26.4%	+	
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	10.1%	33.0%	33.2%	***	
Observations	168	236	230	404	466

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

satisfied and shared-placement mothers and fathers report becoming more satisfied with the legal arrangement over time.⁷

We repeated these analyses using the trichotomous satisfaction measure to ascertain the extent to which changes in satisfaction with the legal arrangement between the divorce and survey were driven by changes to-and-from the “somewhat satisfied” category. These results, presented in Table 5, indicate that the largest changes among sole mothers were from satisfied to somewhat satisfied (rather than to “a little” or “not at all” satisfied), whereas changes among shared-placement mothers and fathers reflect both changes from somewhat satisfied, (very or extremely) satisfied, and unsatisfied to either somewhat satisfied or satisfied. Shared-placement parents were also more likely than sole-placement mothers to move from unsatisfied to somewhat satisfied. On the whole, then, the results using the trichotomous satisfaction measure are relatively consistent with those using the dichotomous measure—despite that a non-negligible portion of changes between “unsatisfied” and “satisfied” found using the dichotomous measure consist of changes to or from the “somewhat satisfied” category which is coded in that measure as “unsatisfied.” Given the relative consistency of results using the dichotomous and trichotomous satisfaction measures as well as considerably larger cell sizes for analyses of the dichotomous measure, we focus the remainder of the report on results using the dichotomous measure.

⁷At the same time, it is important to recognize that, conditional on initially being unsatisfied, sole-placement mothers are more likely to move to satisfied (12.3%) than to remain unsatisfied (10.1%), whereas this is not the case for shared-placement mothers (18.8% and 33.0%) or fathers (26.4% and 33.2%) who, on average, are more likely to remain unsatisfied than to move to satisfied. These seemingly contradictory patterns at least in part reflect changes between “somewhat satisfied,” which is evaluated as a separate category in the trichotomous measure of satisfaction, but coded as “unsatisfied” in the dichotomous measure, and either “satisfied” or “unsatisfied,” as shown in our analyses of changes in satisfaction over time using the trichotomous measure (see below).

Table 5. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement between divorce and survey by placement type and respondent sex – trichotomous satisfaction measure

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Satisfied → Satisfied	57.1%	39.8%	35.3%	***	
Satisfied → Somewhat	15.0%	5.1%	2.9%	***	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	5.4%	3.2%	2.3%		
Somewhat → Satisfied	7.9%	14.3%	18.3%	*	
Somewhat → Somewhat	2.9%	13.6%	14.5%	**	
Somewhat → Unsatisfied	2.8%	4.7%	5.5%		
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	4.4%	4.6%	8.1%		
Unsatisfied → Somewhat	1.6%	7.0%	5.8%	*	
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	2.9%	7.7%	7.5%	*	
Observations	168	236	230	404	466

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Heterogeneity in satisfaction with placement arrangement by family characteristics⁸

Tables 6 and 7 present descriptive statistics on satisfaction with the placement arrangement by respondent and other parent education, respectively. Although there are some differences in the statistical significance of the association between placement type and satisfaction within education groups (potentially due to limited statistical power as a result of small cell sizes), the basic pattern of results is consistent across all education groups in both tables. As with the overall sample results, regardless of the educational attainment of the respondent or other parent, sole-placement mothers were generally more likely than shared-placement mothers to report that they were satisfied with the legal arrangement at the time of the divorce, the legal arrangement at the time of the interview, and the actual arrangement in the year prior to the interview, and also that the child was satisfied with the actual arrangement over the year before the interview. Shared-placement mothers, however, tended to be more likely than sole-placement mothers to report that the other parent was satisfied with the actual arrangement over the past year. Here, we also find that, relative to share-placement mothers, shared-placement fathers in the other parent lowest education group report significantly less satisfaction with the legal arrangement at the time of the divorce and with the actual arrangement at the time of the survey.

Turning to change in satisfaction over time (Tables 8 and 9), regardless of respondent or other parent education level, sole-placement mothers were more likely to report being satisfied with the legal arrangement at both the time of the divorce and the time of the survey than shared-placement mothers. Again, however, sole-placement mothers were more likely to experience

⁸Note that in these and all subsequent subgroup analyses we focus on differences in satisfaction by placement type within each subgroup (e.g., education level) rather than differences in satisfaction between subgroups (e.g., by education level) between families with the same placement type.

Table 6. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by respondent education

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
HS or Less Than HS					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	77.3%	56.2%	43.3%		
Satisfaction with Legal Now	67.4%	62.0%	75.3%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	83.9%	59.8%	67.6%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	77.7%	49.8%	66.9%	**	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	55.8%	68.6%	70.4%		
Observations	28	32	49	60	81
Some College/Tech/Two Year					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	80.2%	47.4%	36.9%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	69.5%	61.8%	53.1%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	79.5%	70.1%	64.4%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	67.8%	61.5%	50.6%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	61.9%	63.4%	67.4%		
Observations	84	97	86	181	183
Four Year Degree or More					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	74.7%	46.4%	42.3%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	68.5%	55.6%	63.4%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	81.6%	63.6%	63.5%	+	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	77.2%	54.9%	63.9%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	52.2%	75.5%	65.3%	**	
Observations	58	108	95	166	203

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 7. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by other parent education

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
HS or Less than HS					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	81.7%	53.2%	38.1%	***	*
Satisfaction with Legal Now	68.1%	65.9%	56.2%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	85.1%	71.9%	52.6%	*	**
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	75.1%	61.5%	57.3%	+	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	63.6%	65.0%	58.1%		
Observations	91	91	70	182	161
Some College/Tech/Two Year					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	67.2%	42.7%	41.3%	**	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	74.7%	50.7%	65.8%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	78.8%	64.1%	71.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	70.0%	57.3%	70.8%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	46.2%	77.5%	74.2%	***	
Observations	42	71	55	113	126
Four-year degree or more					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	79.3%	46.6%	44.2%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	65.1%	58.0%	61.9%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	78.7%	59.2%	69.5%	+	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	68.3%	50.1%	56.4%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	60.3%	69.5%	70.8%		
Observations	27	73	98	100	171

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 8. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by respondent education

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
HS or Less than HS					
Satisfied → Satisfied	57.7%	43.6%	40.8%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	19.6%	12.6%	2.4%		
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	14.0%	18.4%	34.5%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	8.7%	25.4%	22.2%	+	
Observations	27	32	49	59	81
Some College/Tech/Two Year					
Satisfied → Satisfied	56.0%	38.1%	32.1%	**	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	23.9%	9.3%	4.8%	*	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	13.5%	23.7%	21.0%	+	
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	6.7%	28.9%	42.1%	***	*
Observations	83	97	86	180	183
Four Year Degree or more					
Satisfied → Satisfied	58.5%	40.1%	35.8%	*	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	16.2%	6.3%	6.6%	*	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	10.0%	15.0%	27.6%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	15.3%	38.6%	30.0%	**	
Observations	58	107	95	165	202

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 9. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by other parent education

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
HS or Less than HS					
Satisfied → Satisfied	59.3%	46.4%	29.8%		+
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	22.3%	6.8%	8.3%	**	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	9.9%	19.5%	26.4%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	8.4%	27.3%	35.5%	***	+
Observations	90	91	70	181	161
Some college/Tech/Two Year					
Satisfied → Satisfied	51.7%	32.2%	37.2%	*	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	14.3%	10.5%	4.2%		
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	23.0%	18.5%	28.6%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	10.9%	38.8%	30.0%	**	
Observations	41	71	55	112	126
Four Year Degree or More					
Satisfied → Satisfied	58.5%	38.4%	40.4%	*	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	20.8%	8.2%	3.9%		
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	6.6%	18.7%	21.6%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	14.1%	34.7%	34.2%	*	
Observations	27	72	98	99	170

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

decreased satisfaction, and shared-placement mothers were more likely to report increased satisfaction with the legal arrangement between the divorce and survey. Compared to shared-placement respondents in the middle education group, shared-placement father respondents in the middle education group were significantly more likely to report being unsatisfied with the legal arrangement at both the time of the divorce and the time of the survey; this was also case among respondents for whom the other parent was in the lowest education group (marginally significant at $p < .10$). Also, among families for whom the other parent was in the lowest education group, shared-placement fathers were significantly less likely than shared-placement mothers to be satisfied with the legal arrangement at both the divorce and survey.

The overall pattern of results also held across quartiles⁹ of both fathers' and mothers' income at the time of the final divorce judgment, albeit with some variation in the magnitude of difference between placement type and, for shared placements, respondent sex groups within income quartiles (see Tables 10 and 11 for overall satisfaction and Tables 12 and 13 for change over time in satisfaction). The most notable variation from the general pattern is that a large proportion (18%–25%) of sole-placement mothers in the highest quintile of their own or the other father's income at the time of the final judgment reported experiencing increased satisfaction with the legal order between the divorce and survey, a pattern not exhibited in the lower three income quartiles. In addition, among shared placement families, father respondents in the lowest income quartile at the time of the divorce were more likely than mother respondents for whom the father was the lowest income quartile at the time of the divorce to report that the other parent was satisfied, whereas father respondents in the second income quintile were less

⁹Note that income quartiles were computed for the full sample, not by placement type. Thus, the distribution within each placement type is not equal.

Table 10. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by father income at final judgment

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
First Quartile					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	76.3%	34.9%	31.7%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	71.6%	48.0%	55.1%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	86.6%	67.2%	56.9%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	74.2%	52.1%	61.9%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	61.7%	54.8%	87.5%		**
Observations	50	47	41	97	88
Second Quartile					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	79.1%	51.2%	28.0%	**	+
Satisfaction with Legal Now	60.7%	57.1%	46.6%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	86.3%	60.1%	58.4%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	71.2%	69.2%	52.1%		*
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	50.7%	76.6%	50.7%	**	*
Observations	34	48	54	82	102
Third Quartile					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	73.8%	52.2%	45.7%	+	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	62.0%	63.5%	59.2%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	73.0%	65.8%	66.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	69.5%	61.0%	56.7%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	67.0%	66.6%	67.8%		
Observations	24	59	54	83	113
Fourth Quartile					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	75.3%	52.2%	51.3%	**	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	77.0%	61.0%	77.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	81.4%	62.8%	73.4%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	68.0%	51.0%	70.4%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	42.5%	79.5%	68.2%	***	
Observations	24	57	56	81	113

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 11. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by mother income at final judgment

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
First Quartile					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	81.1%	52.4%	39.0%	**	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	55.8%	50.6%	61.9%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	71.3%	64.3%	61.6%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	65.3%	59.2%	66.7%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	56.8%	68.2%	63.0%	*	
Observations	44	42	47	86	89
Second Quartile					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	73.4%	47.8%	34.5%	**	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	63.0%	62.1%	53.2%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	92.8%	64.5%	55.5%	**	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	78.2%	56.6%	60.0%	+	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	55.8%	65.3%	65.0%		
Observations	43	45	45	88	90
Third Quartile					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	83.4%	46.2%	43.8%	**	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	89.0%	64.3%	56.4%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	87.1%	65.3%	66.2%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	73.5%	57.8%	55.1%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	55.9%	69.5%	70.6%		
Observations	28	56	49	84	105
Fourth Quartile					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	60.4%	45.9%	42.3%		
Satisfaction with Legal Now	71.6%	55.2%	73.1%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	82.3%	64.3%	75.3%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	76.8%	59.9%	64.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	57.9%	78.7%	74.9%	+	
Observations	17	59	57	76	116

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 12. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by father income at final judgment

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
First Quartile					
Satisfied → Satisfied	57.2%	25.0%	24.3%	**	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	19.1%	9.9%	7.5%		
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	14.4%	23.0%	30.9%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	9.3%	42.1%	37.4%	***	
Observations	50	47	41	97	88
Second Quartile					
Satisfied → Satisfied	53.5%	46.7%	23.7%		+
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	25.6%	4.5%	4.3%	**	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	7.2%	10.4%	22.9%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	13.7%	38.4%	49.1%	*	
Observations	34	48	54	82	102
Third Quartile					
Satisfied → Satisfied	52.3%	37.2%	38.1%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	21.5%	15.0%	7.6%		
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	9.6%	25.3%	21.1%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	16.5%	22.6%	33.2%		
Observations	24	58	54	82	112
Fourth Quartile					
Satisfied → Satisfied	58.6%	45.5%	47.8%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	16.7%	6.7%	3.5%	*	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	18.4%	15.5%	29.8%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	6.3%	32.3%	19.0%	**	
Observations	24	57	56	81	113

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 13. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by mother income at final judgment

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
First Quartile					
Satisfied → Satisfied	46.2%	39.2%	34.5%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	34.9%	13.2%	4.5%	*	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	9.6%	11.4%	27.3%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	9.3%	36.2%	33.7%	**	
Observations	44	42	47	86	89
Second Quartile					
Satisfied → Satisfied	49.0%	38.5%	30.2%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	24.3%	9.3%	4.2%	+	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	14.0%	22.3%	23.0%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	12.6%	29.9%	42.6%	*	
Observations	43	44	45	87	89
Third Quartile					
Satisfied → Satisfied	80.0%	42.3%	34.4%	**	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	2.5%	3.8%	9.4%		
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	8.9%	21.9%	22.0%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	8.6%	31.9%	34.3%	*	
Observations	27	56	49	83	105
Fourth Quartile					
Satisfied → Satisfied	46.9%	36.1%	41.2%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	13.5%	9.8%	1.1%		+
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	24.7%	19.1%	32.0%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	14.9%	35.0%	25.8%	+	
Observations	17	59	57	76	116

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

likely to report both that the other parent and the child was satisfied. Father respondents in shared placement families in which the mother was in the top income quintile at the time of the divorce were marginally significantly less likely than mother respondents who were in the top income quintile at the time of the divorce to change from being satisfied to being unsatisfied with the legal arrangement between the divorce and survey.

Table 14 presents levels of satisfaction by placement type and respondent sex, and Table 15 presents changes over time in satisfaction with the legal arrangement, stratified by whether the focal child was male or female. Again, we see no substantively meaningful variation in satisfaction or change therein over time, between groups. Likewise, we observe no substantively meaningful variation in the pattern of results by number of children (Tables 16 and 17) or age of the focal child (Tables 18 and 19).

Heterogeneity in satisfaction with placement arrangement by divorce characteristics

We also examined whether there was heterogeneity in satisfaction by several characteristics of the divorce: whether the divorce occurred in an urban or rural county (Tables 20 and 21); whether each of the parents had legal representation (Tables 22–25); and whether the placement order at divorce was determined by the court, agreed on by the parents with mediation, or agreed on by the parents without mediation (Tables 26 and 27). The full-sample pattern of results generally holds across all these subgroups albeit, again, with some variation in magnitude and statistical significance. Notably, however, gaps in satisfaction by placement type and respondent sex tend to be considerably smaller and less likely to attain statistical significance for families that came to an agreement (with or without mediation) than for those whose placement arrangement at the time of the divorce was court ordered. Moreover, sole-placement mothers reported larger declines in satisfaction with the legal arrangement between the divorce

Table 14. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by focal child sex

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Male Focal Child					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	81.6%	45.5%	39.3%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	65.5%	61.9%	56.7%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	82.6%	70.9%	64.5%		+
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	69.4%	62.2%	61.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	59.0%	69.5%	68.0%	*	
Observations	82	116	122	198	238
Female Focal Child					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	74.0%	50.1%	41.7%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	72.1%	55.6%	67.4%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	79.2%	60.0%	64.7%	**	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	75.9%	52.0%	56.9%	**	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	55.8%	69.9%	66.1%	*	
Observations	88	120	108	208	228

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 15. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by focal child sex

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Male Focal Child					
Satisfied → Satisfied	56.8%	41.3%	35.0%	*	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	24.5%	4.2%	4.3%	***	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	9.8%	20.0%	21.7%	*	
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	8.9%	34.4%	39.0%	***	
Observations	80	115	122	195	237
Female Focal Child					
Satisfied → Satisfied	57.5%	37.7%	35.6%	**	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	16.5%	12.3%	6.0%		
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	14.6%	17.8%	31.7%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	11.4%	32.1%	26.6%	***	
Observations	88	120	108	208	228

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 16. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by number of children

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
One Child					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	74.2%	44.5%	43.3%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	61.6%	62.2%	69.4%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	74.4%	68.7%	71.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	71.3%	61.9%	67.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	63.2%	67.4%	72.5%		
Observations	70	102	94	172	196
Two Children					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	75.6%	51.0%	37.3%	***	*
Satisfaction with Legal Now	73.1%	53.5%	56.2%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	82.6%	60.3%	60.2%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	67.3%	48.8%	50.0%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	42.2%	69.4%	60.4%	***	
Observations	78	104	104	182	208
Three or More Children					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	98.8%	50.7%	41.9%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	76.3%	66.9%	54.8%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	96.3%	73.9%	57.1%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	96.3%	67.8%	65.3%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	89.0%	82.4%	73.1%		
Observations	22	31	32	53	63

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 17. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by number of children

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
One Child					
Satisfied → Satisfied	50.0%	38.6%	37.2%	+	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	23.6%	5.9%	6.0%	**	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	11.6%	23.7%	32.2%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	14.7%	31.8%	24.5%	***	
Observations	69	102	94	171	196
Two Children					
Satisfied → Satisfied	57.4%	39.9%	32.6%	*	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	18.2%	11.2%	4.7%		+
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	15.7%	13.7%	23.6%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	8.7%	35.3%	39.1%	***	+
Observations	78	104	104	182	208
Three Children or More					
Satisfied → Satisfied	80.6%	44.4%	38.3%	*	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	18.2%	6.2%	3.5%	+	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	1.2%	20.7%	16.4%	+	
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	0.0%	28.7%	41.7%	**	
Observations	21	30	32	51	62

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 18. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by age of focal child at survey

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
6 to 7 Years Old					
Satisfaction at Time of Divorce	89.5%	18.1%	59.2%	**	+
Satisfaction with Legal Now	58.3%	62.3%	59.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	81.4%	62.3%	68.1%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	65.6%	18.1%	49.5%	+	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	82.7%	40.1%	72.4%		*
Observations	8	10	12	18	22
8 to 10 Years Old					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	80.9%	32.0%	36.6%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	69.9%	58.8%	59.7%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	83.4%	65.8%	61.2%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	73.4%	55.3%	52.3%	+	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	48.0%	65.6%	61.3%	+	
Observations	54	56	47	110	103
11 to 13 Years Old					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	74.3%	55.3%	42.3%	**	+
Satisfaction with Legal Now	72.2%	58.8%	59.0%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	80.8%	64.2%	64.7%	+	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	70.6%	58.4%	57.8%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	60.6%	70.6%	73.8%	*	
Observations	79	118	119	197	237
14 Years Old or Older					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	80.1%	52.4%	36.9%	*	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	60.4%	58.5%	68.6%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	77.5%	68.3%	66.1%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	78.1%	60.3%	68.9%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	60.1%	76.6%	57.4%		*
Observations	29	53	52	82	105

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 19. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by age of focal child at survey

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
6 to 7 Years Old					
Satisfied → Satisfied	47.7%	18.1%	47.1%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	41.7%	0.0%	12.1%	*	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	10.5%	44.2%	12.4%		+
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	0.0%	37.7%	28.4%	*	
Observations	8	10	12	18	22
8 to 10 Years Old					
Satisfied → Satisfied	57.0%	30.2%	34.2%	**	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	23.9%	1.8%	2.4%	**	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	12.9%	28.6%	25.4%	+	
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	6.2%	39.4%	38.0%	***	
Observations	54	56	47	110	103
11 to 13 Years Old					
Satisfied → Satisfied	58.8%	42.4%	34.7%	*	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	15.5%	13.0%	7.7%		
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	13.4%	15.9%	24.3%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	12.4%	28.7%	33.4%	**	
Observations	79	117	119	196	236
14 Years Old or Older					
Satisfied → Satisfied	54.8%	46.2%	35.7%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	24.3%	6.2%	1.2%	+	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	8.5%	12.3%	33.0%		*
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	12.4%	35.3%	30.1%	*	
Observations	27	53	52	80	105

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 20. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by urban/rural county at divorce

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Urban County					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	78.2%	48.1%	42.7%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	68.6%	60.1%	64.6%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	81.0%	64.8%	67.1%	**	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	73.4%	53.7%	58.3%	***	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	61.1%	68.9%	66.6%		
Observations	121	165	158	286	323
Rural County					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	76.1%	48.2%	30.8%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	70.0%	53.6%	48.8%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	80.7%	68.6%	53.6%		*
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	69.0%	69.5%	64.3%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	40.6%	74.0%	69.2%	***	
Observations	49	72	72	121	144

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 21. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by urban/rural county at divorce

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Urban County					
Satisfied → Satisfied	56.9%	39.9%	38.0%	**	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	21.0%	8.2%	4.6%	**	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	12.4%	19.9%	26.6%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	9.7%	32.0%	30.7%	***	
Observations	119	164	158	283	322
Rural County					
Satisfied → Satisfied	58.2%	39.2%	23.5%	*	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	17.9%	8.9%	7.3%	+	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	11.8%	14.4%	25.3%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	12.1%	37.4%	43.9%	**	
Observations	49	72	72	121	144

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 22. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by father legal representation status at divorce

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Attorney					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	65.5%	35.9%	35.8%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	64.6%	46.3%	62.6%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	79.2%	58.2%	63.2%	**	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	72.7%	52.2%	57.2%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	52.6%	68.3%	64.3%	*	
Observations	52	124	129	176	253
No Attorney					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	84.1%	61.7%	46.6%	***	*
Satisfaction with Legal Now	71.0%	72.9%	60.4%		+
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	81.8%	73.7%	66.4%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	72.7%	61.8%	62.3%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	59.8%	71.7%	70.9%	*	
Observations	118	113	101	231	214

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 23. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by father legal representation at divorce

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Attorney					
Satisfied → Satisfied	45.2%	25.7%	33.0%	**	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	20.3%	10.2%	2.8%	+	+
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	19.4%	19.9%	29.6%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	15.1%	44.1%	34.5%	***	
Observations	52	123	129	175	252
No Attorney					
Satisfied → Satisfied	63.4%	55.4%	38.4%		*
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	20.5%	6.3%	8.2%	**	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	8.5%	17.6%	22.0%	+	
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	7.5%	20.8%	31.4%	**	+
Observations	116	113	101	229	214

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 24. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by mother legal representation at divorce

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Attorney					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	69.9%	36.0%	33.1%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	70.5%	50.3%	60.5%	**	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	81.1%	55.0%	60.8%	***	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	69.4%	53.2%	55.9%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	51.1%	65.6%	64.6%	**	
Observations	95	123	126	218	249
No Attorney					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	89.5%	61.2%	50.2%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	66.3%	68.2%	63.3%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	80.7%	76.9%	69.7%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	77.4%	60.5%	64.0%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	65.9%	74.7%	70.5%	+	
Observations	75	114	104	189	218

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 25. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by mother legal representation at divorce

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Attorney					
Satisfied → Satisfied	54.5%	29.9%	30.7%	***	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	15.5%	6.1%	2.4%	+	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	16.0%	19.8%	29.7%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	14.0%	44.2%	37.2%	***	
Observations	95	122	126	217	248
No Attorney					
Satisfied → Satisfied	61.3%	50.5%	41.4%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	28.0%	10.7%	8.8%	**	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	6.5%	17.7%	21.9%	+	
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	4.2%	21.1%	27.9%	***	
Observations	73	114	104	187	218

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 26. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by how divorce order was set

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Court Determined					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	68.3%	24.8%	20.1%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	72.9%	39.4%	38.1%	***	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	85.1%	47.2%	44.7%	***	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	70.4%	43.4%	40.2%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	25.0%	60.8%	56.7%	***	
Observations	44	34	46	78	80
Agreement w/ Mediation					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	74.1%	38.1%	41.3%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	62.4%	51.1%	71.6%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	81.8%	63.2%	61.2%	+	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	64.5%	49.7%	60.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	53.7%	73.1%	65.5%	*	
Observations	35	54	44	89	98
Agreement w/o Mediation					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	84.3%	59.2%	47.3%	***	+
Satisfaction with Legal Now	69.3%	69.2%	66.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	79.7%	72.6%	72.8%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	77.5%	64.9%	65.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	70.5%	72.4%	71.4%		
Observations	44	34	46	78	80

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 27. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by how divorce order was set

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs. Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Court Determined					
Satisfied → Satisfied	55.5%	13.9%	14.0%	***	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	12.8%	10.9%	6.2%		
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	17.4%	25.5%	24.1%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	14.3%	49.7%	55.7%	***	
Observations	44	34	46	78	80
Agreement w/ Mediation					
Satisfied → Satisfied	45.7%	34.2%	41.3%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	28.4%	3.9%	0.0%	***	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	19.7%	16.9%	30.3%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	6.2%	45.0%	28.4%	**	
Observations	34	54	44	88	98
Agreement w/o Mediation					
Satisfied → Satisfied	61.8%	50.5%	40.7%	*	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	22.2%	8.7%	6.6%	*	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	7.5%	18.7%	25.9%	*	
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	8.4%	22.0%	26.9%	**	
Observations	87	143	139	230	282

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

and survey when the initial arrangement was agreed upon (with or without mediation), relative to court-ordered arrangement.

Heterogeneity in satisfaction with placement arrangement by change in legal placement order

We also performed subgroup analyses (Tables 28 and 29) by whether the initial order at the divorce judgment was subsequently altered. Similar to the other subgroup analyses, we find relatively few differences in the overall pattern of results for families that did and did not experience a change in the placement order. That is, compared to shared-placement mothers, sole-placement mothers, for the most part, report the highest level of satisfaction for themselves (with both the legal and actual arrangement) and the child (with the actual arrangement), but a similar or lower level satisfaction with the actual arrangement for the other parent. Moreover, shared-placement mothers are more likely than sole-placement mothers to experience an increase over time in satisfaction with the legal arrangement.

Notably, there are also considerable differences in the magnitude of rates of satisfaction, regardless of placement type and respondent sex. Specifically, all parents who did not experience a change in order report greater satisfaction for themselves (with both the legal and actual arrangement), the child (with the actual arrangement), and the other parent (with the actual arrangement) at all time points than those who experienced a change in order. At the same time, however, parents who experienced a change in order were more likely to report increased satisfaction with the legal arrangement between the divorce and survey, regardless of initial placement type. A potential interpretation of this finding is that parents who were less satisfied with the legal arrangement at divorce worked to change the arrangement and were subsequently more satisfied with it. Yet, such changes in satisfaction were not of large enough magnitude to reach an equivalent level of satisfaction with the legal or actual arrangement at the time of or in

Table 28. Satisfaction with placement by change in legal order

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Change					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	62.6%	37.8%	15.4%	+	+
Satisfaction with Legal Now	52.3%	54.1%	48.4%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	60.4%	55.3%	52.0%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	62.6%	49.7%	49.7%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	54.9%	53.0%	60.1%		
Observations	33	50	44	83	94
No Change					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	81.5%	50.8%	46.8%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	72.6%	60.1%	65.0%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	85.1%	68.1%	67.8%	***	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	74.4%	58.5%	61.7%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	58.4%	73.8%	68.9%	***	
Observations	135	187	186	322	373

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 29. Change in satisfaction with legal placement by change in legal order

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Change in Order					
Satisfied → Satisfied	33.0%	19.5%	5.6%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	29.6%	18.3%	9.8%		
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	19.3%	34.6%	42.7%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	18.1%	27.6%	41.9%		
Observations	33	50	44	83	94
No Change in Order					
Satisfied → Satisfied	62.5%	44.9%	42.8%	***	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	18.7%	5.8%	4.0%	***	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	10.9%	14.8%	22.2%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	7.8%	34.4%	31.0%	***	
Observations	133	186	186	319	372

+ p<.10, *p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

the year before the survey compared to that reported by parents who did not experience a change in order (and had higher levels of satisfaction with the legal and actual arrangement at the time of the divorce).

Heterogeneity in satisfaction with placement arrangement by interview timing (pre-/post-COVID-19 pandemic) and CRD cohort

Our final set of subgroup analyses consider potential differences by whether the interview was conducted prior to or in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Tables 30 and 31) and whether the respondent family was drawn from CRD cohort 30 or 33 (Tables 32 and 33). With respect to the timing of the interview, there were no major differences in the relative patterns of satisfaction between groups interviewed in the pre- and post-pandemic periods. Although there was some variation in magnitudes of the gaps and fewer differences attained statistical significance in the post-pandemic interview period, this likely reflects much smaller cell sizes and, hence, less statistical power in that period. Notably, sole-placement mothers tended to report lower absolute levels of satisfaction than shared-placement mothers on all measures (for themselves, the child, and the other parent) in the post-pandemic period than in the pre-pandemic period. We find no clear or substantively meaningful variation in satisfaction patterns by CRD cohort.

DISCUSSION

Three primary limitations should be taken into account in contextualizing and interpreting our results. First and foremost, the survey spanned the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and the vast majority of interviews were conducted in the wake of pandemic-related restrictions and associated economic consequences. Clearly, the context of the pandemic may have affected parent reports of satisfaction with the placement arrangement as well as many

Table 30. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by pre/post-COVID pandemic interview

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Post-COVID-19 Interview					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	79.4%	48.5%	44.6%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	70.9%	56.6%	64.1%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	84.1%	64.6%	63.5%	***	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	74.8%	56.2%	59.0%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	59.0%	70.1%	66.9%	*	
Observations	117	170	160	287	330
Pre-COVID-19 Interview					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	73.9%	47.2%	30.5%	*	*
Satisfaction with Legal Now	63.7%	65.5%	55.9%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	73.4%	68.0%	67.1%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	67.7%	58.0%	60.4%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	53.7%	69.2%	67.5%	*	
Observations	53	67	70	120	137

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 31. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by pre/post-COVID pandemic interview

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Post-COVID-19 Interview					
Satisfied → Satisfied	59.9%	39.8%	38.6%	***	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	19.5%	8.7%	6.0%	**	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	11.0%	16.4%	25.5%	+	
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	9.6%	35.1%	30.0%	***	
Observations	117	169	160	286	329
Pre-COVID-19 Interview					
Satisfied → Satisfied	50.2%	39.9%	27.3%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	22.9%	7.3%	3.1%	*	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	15.4%	25.6%	28.5%		
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	11.4%	27.2%	41.0%	*	+
Observations	51	67	70	118	137

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 32. Satisfaction with placement arrangement by CRD cohort

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Cohort 30					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	74.3%	50.8%	38.6%	**	*
Satisfaction with Legal Now	64.4%	60.8%	63.5%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	81.2%	70.5%	62.7%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	76.8%	60.7%	65.3%	*	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	62.8%	75.3%	67.6%	*	
Observations	85	109	112	194	221
Cohort 33					
Satisfaction with Legal at Divorce	82.6%	45.0%	42.9%	***	
Satisfaction with Legal Now	75.0%	56.5%	59.2%	**	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Respondent	80.5%	59.5%	67.0%	**	
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Child	66.8%	52.0%	51.7%		
Satisfaction w/ Actual: Other Parent	50.3%	63.3%	66.3%	*	
Observations	85	128	118	213	246

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 33. Change in satisfaction with legal placement arrangement by CRD cohort

	Sole Mother	Shared Mother	Shared Father	Sole M vs Shared M	Shared M vs Shared F
Cohort 30					
Satisfied → Satisfied	53.4%	44.0%	35.4%		
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	20.6%	6.8%	3.2%	**	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	11.9%	16.4%	28.1%		+
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	14.1%	32.8%	33.3%	**	
Observations	83	108	112	191	220
Cohort 33					
Satisfied → Satisfied	62.3%	34.9%	35.2%	***	
Satisfied → Unsatisfied	20.3%	10.1%	7.7%	*	
Unsatisfied → Satisfied	12.7%	21.7%	24.0%	+	
Unsatisfied → Unsatisfied	4.7%	33.3%	33.1%	***	
Observations	85	128	118	213	246

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

other aspects of individual and family functioning. Thus, responses may not be generalizable to more typical periods. Indeed, whereas the general patterns of satisfaction across placement types and, for shared placement families, the sex of the respondent were consistent between families in the pre- and post-pandemic periods, it is notable that sole-placement mothers tended to report lower absolute levels of satisfaction on all measures (for themselves, the child, and the other parent) in the post-COVID-19 period than in the pre-COVID-19 period.

Second, our sample size is relatively limited, particularly with respect to the subgroup analyses. This both limits statistical power to detect significant differences and raises concerns that some subgroups are too small to generate meaningful estimates.

Third, our sample is comprised of families whose children were relatively young at the time of the divorce, which may be a select group. As such, our results may not generalize to divorced parents, more generally, and particularly to parents who divorced when their children were older.

Fourth, our sample includes only sole-placement mothers and not also sole-placement fathers, nor non-custodial fathers associated with mothers with sole placements. Thus, our results may not be generalizable to overall differences in satisfaction by sole- versus shared-placement type as it is possible that sole-placement mothers and sole-placement fathers differ in their satisfaction with their placement arrangements. Furthermore, our results may not represent all parents' satisfaction following the event of divorce as both sole-placement fathers and non-custodial fathers associated with sole-placement mothers may offer unique insights into who ends up satisfied following divorce and why. With the exclusion of such fathers in this report, the resulting picture of satisfaction and placement (and related policy implications) may be incomplete. At the same time, however, our data include (for all respondents) proxy information

about the other parent's satisfaction. Interestingly, sole-placement mothers report particularly low levels of perceived satisfaction with the placement arrangement among their children's fathers (while also reporting particularly high levels of their own satisfaction with the arrangement). For sole-mother placement families, the mother's assessment of the other father's level of satisfaction with the arrangement serves as an important proxy of satisfaction among fathers in sole mother placement families. That fathers appear (at least via mother reports) to be particularly unsatisfied in sole mother families merits further research, including confirmatory evidence from fathers themselves that this is the case, and policy and practice considerations.

With these caveats in mind, the descriptive analyses presented in this report reveal several overarching patterns with respect to satisfaction with sole mother and shared placement arrangements. First, with respect to both the time of the divorce and the time of (or year prior to) the survey, and across all measures of satisfaction (i.e., vis-à-vis the legal or actual arrangement), mothers with sole placement report greater satisfaction with the placement for themselves and for the child focal child than do mothers with shared placements. This is consistent with findings from Bauserman's (2012) meta-analysis of earlier studies of placement arrangement and satisfaction in the United States and Canada, but stands in contrast to Steinbach's (2019) review of more recent studies from Australia, Sweden, and the United States, which found parents with shared placements to report greater satisfaction with the placement than parents with sole placements. A potential explanation for this difference in study results is that they may reflect differential selection processes into placement types. With respect to our study, it is important to consider that shared placement is now the widespread default arrangement among divorces in Wisconsin. This implies that families in Wisconsin are now likely only to receive a sole mother placement order if the father agrees to such an arrangement or if the court determines that the

father should not be granted shared custody. As such, mothers may report higher levels of satisfaction with sole placement because they explicitly petitioned for the arrangement; that is, a sole placement is unlikely to be imposed on a mother who prefers (or would be satisfied with) a shared placement. In contrast, because shared placement is now the norm in Wisconsin, parents who petition for sole placement (or a greater placement share) may have a shared placement (or a lesser placement share than they prefer) imposed on them by the court. This, itself, may result in reports of less satisfaction among shared placement parents than sole placement parents. Indeed, prior research indicates that court-imposed arrangements are associated with lower levels of parental satisfaction, particularly for mothers (e.g., Steinbach, 2019).

Second, between the time of the divorce and the time of the survey, mothers with sole placements, on average, report decreased satisfaction with the legal placement arrangement, whereas mother and fathers with shared placements report increased satisfaction with the legal arrangement.¹⁰ At the same time, however, while this pattern serves to reduce the magnitude of the difference in satisfaction reported by sole placement mothers and shared placement parents, it does not change the fact that sole placement mothers, overall, report greater satisfaction with the placement than do shared placement parents in our sample. In other words, despite that the gap in satisfaction with the legal arrangement between sole mothers and shared parents is smaller at the time of the survey than at the time of the divorce, it continues to favor sole-placement mothers. This may suggest that, even if mothers were unsatisfied with receiving a shared (rather than sole) placement at the time of divorce (as discussed above), they may grow to better appreciate shared placement arrangements over time. This possibility is ripe for examination in future research.

¹⁰As noted above, whereas this is the pattern for the sample as a whole, conditional on being unsatisfied with the arrangement at the time of the divorce, sole-placement mothers were more likely to become satisfied with the placement by the time of the survey than to stay unsatisfied with the arrangement, whereas this was not the case for shared placement parents.

Third, parents with shared placements perceive the other parent as having been more satisfied with the placement over the past year than do mothers with sole placements. Future research leveraging data collected from matched pairs of divorced mothers and fathers—and also their children—to examine whether these perceptions are consistent with the other parents' own levels of satisfaction, as well as whether children's own levels of satisfaction are consistent with the levels of their satisfaction reported by their parents, may better inform placement satisfaction among the full family unit. Moreover, future research that includes data collected directly from fathers in sole mother cases is warranted to confirm that these fathers are particularly dissatisfied with their placement arrangements, as was reported to be the case by the sole mothers in our sample.

Fourth, there is little evidence of substantively meaningful heterogeneity in patterns of placement satisfaction by either parent sex in shared placement families or family characteristics (i.e., parent education, parent income, number of children, focal child sex, focal child age), divorce characteristics (i.e., urban or rural county, whether each parent had legal representation, and whether the arrangement was court ordered or mutually agreed upon either with or without mediation), and whether the family experienced a change in the legal order between the divorce and the survey interview. Overall, this may reflect that shared placement following divorce has now become the norm in Wisconsin regardless of family and divorce characteristics. However, it is particularly interesting that there are no substantial differences in subsequent satisfaction with the legal arrangement for families that did and did not experience a change in the legal order. This, too, warrants future inquiry.

Given changing trends in post-divorce arrangements and related orders, this work has implications to inform future research and policy and practice responses that attend to shifting

family arrangements and dynamics. Notably, prior research examining satisfaction among mothers, fathers, and children across sole and shared placements is relatively limited. This report provides new evidence about variation in satisfaction among these individuals across placement types. In the context of the small body of extant research, it suggests that future work examining how such differences in satisfaction may play out in terms of placement trajectories, child support patterns, and parent and child wellbeing may help to inform policy and practice related to placement decision-making procedures as well as the child support program's response to shared placement. Of particular salience, whereas mothers and fathers in shared placement families report similar levels of satisfaction, fathers in sole-mother placement families appear to be less satisfied (as assessed via mother reports of their satisfaction) and mothers in sole-mother placement are particularly satisfied with the arrangement. This implies that sole-mother placement decisions may inherently necessitate trade-offs between mother and father satisfaction. Future work should explicitly address how such trade-offs may be related to family functioning and child support payments and compliance.

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Appendix Table A1. Logistic regression results for satisfaction with placement arrangement by placement type and respondent sex

VARIABLES	Legal at Divorce	Legal Now	R Actual Last Year	OP Actual Last Year	CH Actual Last Year
Shared Placement Father ^a	0.137*** (0.0408)	0.716 (0.193)	0.355*** (0.104)	1.290 (0.335)	0.463*** (0.125)
Shared Placement Mother ^b	0.188*** (0.0539)	0.606** (0.155)	0.362*** (0.103)	1.445 (0.380)	0.411*** (0.109)
R: Some College/Tech/Two Year	0.728 (0.225)	0.551** (0.161)	0.962 (0.268)	0.827 (0.249)	0.846 (0.232)
R: Four Year Degree or More	0.710 (0.226)	0.507** (0.154)	0.812 (0.237)	0.781 (0.254)	1.103 (0.324)
OP: Some College/Tech/Two Year	0.689 (0.184)	0.918 (0.235)	1.004 (0.260)	1.256 (0.332)	0.952 (0.232)
OP: Four Year Degree or More	1.017 (0.281)	0.756 (0.203)	1.006 (0.264)	1.379 (0.423)	0.694 (0.182)
OP: Education Missing	0.745 (0.395)	1.751 (1.182)	0.578 (0.398)	0.585 (0.351)	1.075 (0.599)
Urban County	1.270 (0.268)	1.440* (0.295)	1.140 (0.259)	1.118 (0.236)	0.817 (0.185)
Father Legal Representation	0.593** (0.143)	0.581** (0.126)	0.933 (0.225)	1.051 (0.249)	1.057 (0.265)
Mother Legal Representation	0.558** (0.142)	1.242 (0.282)	0.659* (0.162)	0.721 (0.176)	0.931 (0.235)
Male Focal Child	0.973 (0.189)	0.832 (0.153)	1.153 (0.235)	0.907 (0.177)	0.985 (0.193)
Order: Agreement w/ Mediation	1.942** (0.583)	1.475 (0.416)	1.379 (0.409)	1.824** (0.523)	1.292 (0.364)
Order: Agreement w/o Mediation	2.562*** (0.704)	2.116*** (0.562)	1.725** (0.445)	2.294*** (0.603)	2.105*** (0.540)
Order: Missing	1.276 (1.325)	0.593 (0.485)	0.574 (0.405)	1.085 (0.845)	0.450 (0.342)
Two Children	1.148 (0.235)	0.808 (0.155)	0.877 (0.195)	0.694* (0.144)	0.638** (0.131)
Three Children or More	1.539 (0.543)	1.092 (0.399)	1.216 (0.478)	2.201** (0.773)	1.576 (0.578)
Focal Child Age	1.061 (0.0426)	1.002 (0.0352)	1.017 (0.0442)	1.066 (0.0418)	1.084** (0.0439)
Father Income at Final Judgment Q2	1.466 (0.430)	0.897 (0.239)	0.850 (0.268)	0.704 (0.199)	1.108 (0.326)
Father Income at Final Judgment Q3	2.187** (0.693)	1.366 (0.393)	0.980 (0.317)	0.914 (0.284)	1.161 (0.366)
Father Income at Final Judgment Q4	2.431*** (0.743)	2.305*** (0.704)	1.123 (0.396)	0.808 (0.264)	1.264 (0.434)
Father Income at Final Judgment Missing	1.765 (0.639)	1.680 (0.622)	1.200 (0.476)	1.136 (0.404)	1.267 (0.473)
Mother Income at Final Judgment Q2	0.859 (0.261)	1.442 (0.392)	1.390 (0.412)	1.010 (0.284)	1.154 (0.346)
Mother Income at Final Judgment Q3	0.941 (0.274)	1.904** (0.546)	1.442 (0.449)	1.171 (0.358)	0.862 (0.281)
Mother Income at Final Judgment Q4	0.837 (0.273)	1.776* (0.521)	1.748* (0.593)	1.746 (0.593)	1.213 (0.419)
Mother Income at Final Judgment Missing	1.018 (0.351)	1.444 (0.485)	1.024 (0.362)	0.856 (0.294)	0.697 (0.236)
Constant	1.448 (0.963)	1.348 (0.782)	2.771 (1.964)	0.503 (0.307)	1.100 (0.693)
Observations	634	635	635	595	633

Notes: Odds Ratios; Robust se eform in parentheses. Odds ratios may be interpreted as follows: an odds ratio of 1.0 indicates equal likelihood (i.e., no difference in the outcome), an odds ratio less than 1.0 suggests a reduced likelihood of an event, and an odds ratio greater than 1.0 suggests an increased likelihood of an event. The reference string represents respondents with sole custody that had female children who were the average sample age. Respondents had one child living with them and dwelled in a rural Wisconsin county. The respondents and the other parents associated with them had a high school or less than a high school education, were in the first quartile of the sample income distribution, had court determined orders set, and had no legal representation at the time of divorce. ^{a,b} No significant differences between shared mother and shared father care on any of the five outcomes.

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01