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An Examination of the Proportion of Special Education Students in Single-Parent Homes in Comparison to Regular Education Students in Similar Households

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by

Melissa M. Cook

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A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

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Abstract

This study was designed to determine the relationship between the family unit, which was defined as single-parent households and two-parent households, and educational placement. Data were collected from six Southwest Missouri K-8 districts in Region C. Participants reported student enrollment according to categories of single-parent special education, single-parent regular education, two-parent special education, and two-parent regular education. In addition, district special education coordinators were interviewed to gather data on their perspectives and experiences regarding the different household types and educational placement. This mixed methods design revealed students from single-parent households are more likely to be negatively affected by home environment situations and have a higher probability of academic deficits leading to special education placement. The negative effects included lack of stability, lack of organization, lack of availability to assist with academic tasks, lack of attention to diagnoses and treatment, lack of exposure to outside academic influences, increased demands on the student from inside the household, and hunger. These negative effects were attributed to decreased financial security, less stable working hours, and lower education levels of the single parents.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This mixed study was designed to examine the relationship between special education placement and the family unit, which included single-parent and two-parent households. Perceptions of special education coordinators were also gathered in regard to single-parent households and their effect on special education placement. Included in this research was insight into differentials between environmental disadvantages and true learning disabilities, which may allow administrators and teachers to aid families in accessing school and/or outside resources as well as allocating school funding appropriately.

This chapter includes a discussion of the background of the study with emphasis on defining specific child needs. Also included are the conceptual framework, purpose of the study, research questions, and hypotheses. The significance of the study is also delineated.

Background of the Study

Economists have developed a purpose in defining specific child needs, identifying what needs may be met by community actions, targeting what needs should be addressed, and determining in what order to address the needs (Smolensky, 2007). There have been large changes in the finances of schools throughout the nation due to a decline in the economy (Cox, Weiler, & Cornelius, 2013). During the 2011-2012 school year, the United States spent an average of $12,401 per student in the nation's public elementary-secondary school systems (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). While special education monies were generated from state and federal sources, funds often did

not cover the entire cost of special education; therefore, general education dollars made up the deficit (Christenson, 2004).

After the enactment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the United States government promised to offset the cost of educating special needs students by funding 40% of the average expense (National Education Association [NEA], 2015). In 2004, the average cost per student was $7,552 with an additional cost of $9,369 per special education student, totaling the special education per-student cost at $16,921 (NEA, 2015). The federal government was only covering 20% of the cost of special education students when the IDEA was reauthorized in 2004, causing a $10.6 billion deficit for local school districts and states (NEA, 2015).

Christenson (2004) stated a significant amount of research proves students from poverty tend to receive special education services in greater proportion than middle class students. Factors outside of school can affect student success and need to be addressed (Walsh et al., 2014). Since the Coleman Report in 1960, more credit has been given to out-of-school factors affecting school success, especially for children raised in poverty (Walsh et al., 2014). Although great strength has been shown by those living in poor households, the stress of the poverty lifestyle is evident (Walsh et al., 2014). Families living in poverty are less able to assist the growth of children due to limits in energy, money, and time (Walsh et al., 2014).

Non-marital births have increased substantially over the past half-century and have been linked to larger patterns of social and economic changes influencing family-formation behaviors (Upchurch, Lillard, & Panis, 2002). According to Upchurch et al. (2002), as women's economic status and rate of divorce have increased, the social and

financial gains of marriage have declined, and single motherhood has become regarded as a more acceptable lifestyle than in the past. Although women's economic status was on the rise, the most pronounced reduction in socioeconomic marriage benefits has been among economically disadvantaged women; however, all strata have been affected (Upchurch et al., 2002). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2016), the percentage of births to unmarried women was 40.2% in 2015.

Waldfogel, Craigie, and Brooks-Gunn (2010) alleged being raised in a single-parent family unit, even if stable, appears to have a larger negative impact on student behaviors than two-parent unstable homes. Growth in the number of single-parent households over the past several decades has translated into fewer fathers living with their children (Waldfogel et al., 2010). Hogan (2012) found couples who were together when their disabled children were born have a higher likelihood of divorcing than other parents. Hogan (2012) stated nearly one-third of children with disabilities live in single-parent homes.

The education of children with and without disabilities has been significantly impacted by environmental factors (Rosenberg, Bart, Ratzon, & Jarus, 2013). Students raised in a single-parent family unit have a greater likelihood of being served in special education classes (58%) than peers from two-parent family units (31%) (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). This study involved investigating specific factors of parental/home situations and how these factors connected with special education placement.

While the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was an improvement for students in educational opportunities, the act needed to be expanded (Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2016). In order to expand services, in 1990, the Education

for All Handicapped Children Act's name was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (OSEP, 2016). Congress reauthorized the IDEA in 2004 in an attempt to better align with the No Child Left Behind Act (OSEP, 2016). For the purposes of this study, the students placed in special education classrooms met the criteria for services under the IDEA criterion.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on the work of Cherlin (2010) and his model of an ideal family unit consisting of two biological or adoptive parents in the home. Cherlin's (2010) view of the ideal family unit as the most important factor during a child's formative years, along with negative effects for children due to disruptions of the family unit, was the appropriate lens to frame this study. Waldfogel et al. (2010) believed there is a direct link between fragmented families and the cognitive ability, behavior, and health of children.

According to Cherlin (2010), the concept of a family unit is different in the United States than in any other Western nation. What is different about America is the cultural ideal of a strong marriage; however, the United States has the highest rate of divorce of any Western nation (Cherlin, 2010). Cherlin (2010) observed frequent marriages, numerous divorces, and short-term cohabitations result in greater disturbances within the American family, and recurrent transitions might cause an increase in behavioral and emotional concerns. Cherlin (2010) also noted children involved in multiple transitions and single-parent situations, even stable ones, tend to experience more difficulties.

Statement of the Problem

According to Aron and Loprest (2012), it is necessary to look at what is and is not working for special education students in school systems, in addition to addressing outside factors affecting success or failure. Children with disabilities have been allowed much greater access to public education through special education systems (Aron & Loprest, 2012). The special education system has assisted with earlier identification of disabilities, allowed greater inclusion of students with their non-disabled peers, and created an infrastructure for educating students with special needs (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Although the special education system has advanced, many areas remain a concern including the following: delays in identifying and serving students; under- and over-identification of students; and financial, regulatory, and bureaucratic obstacles making the program more complicated for everyone (Aron & Loprest, 2012).

In addition, research shows special education students are less likely to access the full high school academic curriculum, are at greater risk of dropping out, and achieve at a lower level than non-disabled peers (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Aron and Loprest (2012) stated educators need better ways of measuring and understanding the special education system in order to improve; specifically, services required and received by special education students and subsequent academic outcomes need to be addressed. If the achievement gap is to be closed, the broader community must help, not just schools (Hough, 2016). Harvard Professor Paul Reville stated society cannot expect principals and teachers to shoulder the burden of change alone (as cited in Hough, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between the family unit, specifically single-parent and two-parent households, of students receiving services in a special education placement and students in a regular classroom. Furthermore, the insights of special education educators were gathered to provide their views of the family unit and environmental factors for students who are receiving services in special education classrooms.

Research questions and hypotheses. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What relationship exists between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households?

$H1_0$: There is no positive linear relationship between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households.

$H1_a$: There is a positive linear relationship between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households.

2. What relationship exists between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households?

$H2_0$: There is no positive linear relationship between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households.

$H2_a$: There is a positive linear relationship between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households.

3. What are the perceptions of special education coordinators regarding special education students in single-parent households versus special education students in two-parent households?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant due to the need to determine family environment and educational placement in relation to educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Thurston and Naverrete (2011) determined there is a proven relationship between educational achievement and poverty as well as between developmental outcomes and poverty. Since there is an increase in single-parent households, as determined by Cherlin (2010), this study will provide special education teachers insight into the impact the family unit has on student learning. By training educators to identify students from single-parent households, classroom teachers and counselors can begin interventions within the classroom that may prevent, in certain cases, special education placement.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Adaptive behavior. According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) (2016), the definition of adaptive behavior is "the collection of conceptual, social, and practical skills that all people learn in order to function in their daily lives" (p. 1).

Conceptual skills. According to the AAIDD (2016), the definition of conceptual skills is "language and literacy; money, time, and number concepts; and self-direction" (p. 1).

Deaf-blind. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2016) defined deaf-blind as "concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes severe communication and other developmental and educational needs" (para. 10).

Dysfluency. According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2016), the definition for dysfluency/disfluency is "an interruption in the flow of speaking characterized by repetitions (sounds, syllables, words, phrases), sound prolongations, blocks, interjections, and revisions, which may affect the rate and rhythm of speech" (p. 1).

Hearing impairment. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2016) defined a hearing impairment as follows:

> The capacity to hear, with amplification, is limited, impaired, or absent and results in one or more of the following: reduced performance in hearing acuity tasks; difficulty with oral communication; and/or difficulty in understanding auditorily-presented information in the education environment. The term includes students who are deaf and students who are hard-of-hearing. (para. 8)

Children with cochlear implants are considered hearing impaired (Marschark, Lang, & Albertini, 2002).

Intellectual disability. The definition of intellectual disability per the AAIDD (2016) is "a disability characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills, this disability originates before the age of 18**"** (p. 1).

Orthopedic impairment. Orthopedic impairment is a disorder of a physical nature which is severe enough to impede a student's educational performance (Arkansas Department of Education, 2016).

Other health impairment. The Arkansas Department of Education (2016) defined a student with other health impairment:

> Having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that—(i) Is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia; and (ii) Adversely affects a child's educational performance. (p. 1)

This category included an extensive spectrum of disorders, as 1.4% of all public students were categorized as other health impaired (Kozub, 2016).

Practical skills. The AAIDD (2016) defined practical skills as "activities of daily living (personal care), occupational skills, healthcare, travel/transportation, schedules/routines, safety, use of money, use of the telephone" (p. 1).

Sensory impairment. The Virginia Department of Education (2012) stated a sensory impairment "can involve any of the five senses; however, for educational purposes, it refers to a disability related to hearing, vision, or both hearing and vision" (p. 1).

Social skills. The AAIDD (2016) defined social skills "as interpersonal skills, social responsibility, self-esteem, gullibility, naïveté (i.e., wariness), social problem solving, and the ability to follow rules/obey laws and to avoid being victimized" (p. 1).

Specific learning disability. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2016) defined a specific learning disability as follows:

> A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (para. 1)

Federal guidelines set through the IDEA determine the procedure for identifying students with specific learning disabilities (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014).

Vision impairment. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2016) defined vision impairment as follows:

> The capacity to see, after correction, is limited, impaired, or absent and results in one or more of the following: reduced performance in visual acuity tasks; difficulty with written communication; and/or difficulty with understanding information presented visually in the education environment. (p. 1)

Early intervention is crucial for students with vision impairments (Chen, 2014).

Limitations and Assumptions

The following limitations were identified in this study:

Sample demographics. The sample represented only K-8 school districts in southwest Missouri. The student populations ranged from 50-400 students per district.

Student demographics. The majority of the students in the school districts were White. More than 50% of the student population in these districts were eligible for free and reduced price meals.

Interviews. Answers were ascertained only from special education coordinators who volunteered to participate; therefore, interview answers might not be indicative of all opinions of special education coordinators.

Instrument. Both the survey questions and the interview questions were created by the researcher.

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. The responses of the participants were offered honestly and without bias.
2. District coordinators reported accurate numbers of student populations.

Summary

Chapter One included a discussion of the background of the study. The conceptual framework, the purpose of the study, research questions, and hypotheses were presented. The significance of the study was outlined, key terms were defined, and the limitations and assumptions of the study were explained.

Chapter Two includes an analysis of research related to the research questions presented. In addition, other outside factors that may affect a student's academic performance are included in Chapter Two. Research topics include investigations of placement, relationship status/makeup of the home, single-parent homes and poverty, and the connection of these categories. The proportion of special education students residing in single-parent homes versus two-parent homes is identified in Chapter Two.

A review of previous works includes information on the different types of family environments and the residual effects of these households on student achievement. The review includes an explanation of guidelines for determining placement and categories of special education disabilities. In addition, the reappraisal of the literature includes an examination of the connection between effects of single-parent households and student placement for special education.

In Chapter Three, the methodology of the study is described and detailed. Chapter Four includes a review and analysis of data and responses collected from interviews. In addition, Chapter Four contains figures and tables to display the collected data. Chapter Five includes the findings and conclusions of this study. Also noted are implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Chapter Two includes a review of literature pertinent to the research questions presented in Chapter One. Also included in the chapter is information on multiple household makeups and the outcomes found to affect academic pathways. The factors of different homes, how these factors influence the lives of children, and the ramifications of those influences throughout academia are discussed.

Topics include investigations of eligibility, relationship status/makeup of the home, single-parent homes and poverty, and the connection of these categories. Chapter Two also includes topics on two-parent homes, single-parent homes, and other types of homes such as divorced, stepparent, and grandparent. This chapter will includes an investigation of poverty's effect on children in regard to education, childhood stressors in regard to education, and the increased risk in disabled children brought about by these issues.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was constructed around the concept of Cherlin's (2012) ideal family unit consisting of two biological or adoptive parents in the home. Nuclear family units, or conjugal family units, as delineated by William J. Goode, included a husband, wife, and children (as cited in Cherlin, 2012). Cherlin (2012) stated the conjugal family unit hypothesis generated by Goode changed, even while Goode's book was being published.

Cherlin (2012) stated the divorce rate rose during the 1960s and 1970s, and out-of-wedlock births began to rise. In his book, *World Revolution and Family Patterns*, Goode discussed the change in the family unit in correlation to industrialization (as cited

in Cherlin, 2012). Goode asserted the conjugal family unit evolved as a more appropriate fit with the industrializing Western nation (as cited in Cherlin, 2012).

Cherlin (2012) discussed Goode's conjugal family unit of the 1950s was made up of a working husband/father, stay-at-home wife/mother, and their children. However, during the 1960s and 1970s, the family pattern started changing with increased divorce rates and unmarried women giving birth (Cherlin, 2012). Due to necessity, these divorced and unwed mothers integrated into the workforce, which changed the dynamics of childrearing (Cherlin, 2012). The entrance of mothers into the workforce has raised the income levels of children in two-parent families, but not in single-parent homes (Ruhm, 2012). This change in the family unit has led to less time engaged in primary childcare than for non-working counterparts (Ruhm, 2012).

Cherlin (2010) observed frequent marriages, numerous divorces, and short-term cohabitations result in great disturbances within the American family. Recurrent transitions may cause an increase in behavior and emotional concerns (Cherlin, 2010). Cherlin (2010) also noted children involved in multiple transitions and single-parent situations, even stable ones, tend to experience more difficulties. Waldfogel et al. (2010) agreed the situations experienced by unstable families have an effect on the cognitive functioning, behavior, and health of children.

Throughout the last 20 years, homes headed by a single parent have become more common than the so-called "nuclear family" consisting of two married parents of opposite genders and children (American Psychological Association [APA], 2016). Today, there is a large variety of single-parent homes; some are mother-headed or father-headed, and some include grandparents raising their grandchildren (APA, 2016).

Although common, life can be rather stressful for the adult and children living in a single-parent household (APA, 2016). Single-parent family members might expect, unrealistically, they could function just like a two-parent family, therefore feeling something was wrong when they were unable to meet that expectation (APA, 2016). The responsibility of managing a job, child care, bills, and household tasks might become overwhelming for a single parent (APA, 2016). In addition, a single parent, and sometimes children, might face problems and pressures not confronted by a nuclear family (APA, 2016).

Recent studies show adolescents in single-parent homes are at a higher risk for school discipline problems, truancy, antisocial peer pressure, sexual activity, drug use, and arrest (Turner, Irwin, & Millstein, 2013). Christenson (2004) stated a significant amount of research proves students from poverty tend to receive special education services in greater proportion than middle class students. The United States Census Bureau (2016) showed, as of March 2014, 6.2% of married-couple families, with or without children, lived below the poverty level; whereas 15.7% of single male-headed households with or without children lived below the poverty level and 30.6% of single female-headed households with or without children lived below the poverty level. There is a proven relationship between educational achievement and poverty in addition to developmental outcomes and poverty (Thurston & Naverrete, 2011).

Economists have determined the purpose in defining specific child needs, what needs may be met by community actions, what needs should be undertaken, and in what order (Smolensky, 2007). A parent's ability to manage skills and faithfully adhere to treatment poses an obstacle to prime outcomes (Danforth, 2016). Behavioral

management techniques can be unknowingly complicated and difficult to complete, which may limit the effectiveness of parent training (Danforth, 2016).

Two-Parent Households

Fathers and mothers both hold vital roles in the development and growth of children (Child Trends, 2015). A child's well-being correlates with the number and type of parents, such as step or biological, in the household (Child Trends, 2015). Research has shown the importance of complex, biologically rooted interaction for the development of boys and girls (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2016). Having a mother and father in the home allows children to have gender-specific support such as nurturing from the mother and discipline from the father (USCCB, 2016). Research in the area of social science reveals true advantages for children raised in married parent homes; however, this does not diminish the exemplary efforts of many single parents (USCCB, 2016).

According to Cherlin (2012), the two-parent household, consisting of a father, mother, and children, continues to remain the ideal family unit. In 2015, 69.2% of children were living with two parents, and 64.7% of the parents were married (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016). Children residing with two married or adoptive parents, in general, have better access to health care, have fewer behavioral and emotional concerns, and have overall better health than children residing in other types of households (Child Trends, 2015).

In the United States, there is not a statically significant difference between adopted children and the overall population of children living with two married parents; however, children adopted from foster care are significantly more likely to live with two

married parents than children adopted by other means (Child Trends, 2015). Parents in an intact marriage and raising children are more likely to have children who are emotionally and physically healthy and who are at a lower risk of being raised in poverty, using drugs or alcohol, engaging in delinquent behaviors, being physically or sexually abused, becoming pregnant or impregnating someone as a teenager, and divorcing after marriage (USCCB, 2016).

Among developed countries, the United States has had one of the highest percentages of single-parent families (External Relations, Education Next, 2015). The United States, compared to other countries, had a pronounced gap in educational achievement between children from two-parent families and single-parent families (External Relations, Education Next, 2015). The number of American 15-year-olds living in single-parent families climbed from 18% in 2000 to 21% in 2012; however, the average of 12-14% was found in 28 industrialized countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (External Relations, Education Next, 2015).

Children living within intact families are more likely to have greater academic success and less likely to display behavioral problems in school (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). Parents from intact families tend to set higher expectations for their children and were more involved in school activities (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). Compared to students raised in single-parent or blended families, on average, students from intact families complete more years of schooling and have a higher probability of graduating from high school, attending college, and completing college (FamilyFacts.org, 2016).

A child in a single-parent household headed by the mother is 14 times more likely to encounter serious physical abuse than a child in a two-parent household consisting of

both biological parents (USCCB, 2016). A child living in a household consisting of the mother and a man, other than the child's father, is 33 times more likely to encounter serious physical abuse (USCCB, 2016). Teenagers living with single unwed parents, divorced families, stepfamilies, or cohabitating households have over a 50% likelihood of being sexually active; however, teenagers living with married families have about a 33% likelihood of being sexually active (USCCB, 2016).

Students living with single-mother families with or without a cohabitating partner and children living with mother and stepfather are more likely to have been suspended or expelled from school; more likely to have participated in delinquent behaviors; more likely to have lower grade point averages; and more likely to have had problems with teachers, completing homework, and paying attention in school compared to peers living in intact families (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). Researchers examined the performances of children given the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, a cognitive development indicator, and discovered children from married biological-parent households fared far better than peers from single-mother households with or without a cohabitating partner, while children living in married biological-parent households and mother-with-stepfather households fared similarly (FamilyFacts.org, 2016).

A large international study indicated children from stepparent households, single-parent households, or non-parent households, on average, scored lower on science and math achievement tests compared to peers living in intact families (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). The families' resources, such as household size, immigrant status, possessions, and books in the home, only accounted for partial explanation of the relationship between achievement and family structure (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). Preschoolers from intact

families had higher scores in verbal reasoning skills than those living with single mothers (FamilyFacts.org, 2016).

When race, gender, and socio-economic status are controlled, divorce and widowhood, more so than remarriage, cause a declining impact on grade point average and increases the tendency of being retained a grade; however, remarriage, more so than divorce or widowhood, causes a declining impact on standardized test scores (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). Compared to peers from disrupted families, students from intact families are 9% more likely to apply to college, 3% more likely to be admitted to college, 10% more likely to attend a four-year college following high school, and 14% more likely to ever attend a four-year college (FamilyFacts.org, 2016).

Single-Parent Households

The number of children under 18 years of age and living with two married parents decreased from 85% in 1960 to 68% in 1996 (Child Trends, 2015). During the late 1990s into the early 2000s, the rate was stable; however, in 2012 it decreased to 64% and then was back up to 65% by 2015 (Child Trends, 2015). In 2015, 23.1% of children were living in a single-parent household headed by the mother and 3.7% of children were living in a single-parent household headed by the father (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016). The proportion of children living in a single-parent household headed by a mother was 8% in 1960, but the proportion had tripled to 24% by 1996 (Child Trends, 2015).

Young children who live with two biological parents are less likely to be exposed to high levels of aggravated parenting and exhibit more self-control of behavior than peers living in a single-parent household or with no biological parents (Child Trends,

2015). Students who reside in an intact household aim for higher educational goals than peers who have gone through parental marital disruptions (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). Students who live in intact households reported higher educational expectations than their peers who lived in single-parent or stepparent households (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). Students from single-parent or stepparent households reported less supervision of schoolwork and less overall monitoring of social activities than peers in intact households (FamilyFacts.org, 2016).

Compared to peers residing in intact households, teens from divorced single-parent households reported higher frequencies of tardies, absences, and truancies (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). Divorce not only affects the schedules of single parents, it affects the daily routines of children and increases the demands on the parents and children (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). Most teens from single-parent households take on more responsibility for household chores and younger siblings; in addition, some work jobs outside the household to help financially (FamilyFacts.org, 2016).

Taking care of children can be especially tasking for single mothers who have a higher risk of economic hardship, vulnerability, and psychological well-being, which puts children at a higher rate of maladjustment (Taylor & Conger, 2017). Children raised in single-parent households have more behavior and achievement problems than those raised in two-parent households (Zill, 2015). Developmental problems have been directly linked, by family sociologists, to inadequate supervision of children from single-parent homes and the lack of financial resources brought into single-parent homes (Zill, 2015). Zill's (2015) analysis of national survey data revealed children of never-married

parents and divorced parents have a higher risk of witnessing domestic violence than peers in married two-parent households.

Zill's (2015) analysis of the 2011-2012 *National Survey of Children's Health*, showed children living with both biological married parents were rarely (19 of 1,000) exposed to family violence. However, children living with a separated or divorced mother were seven times more likely (144 of 1,000) to witness family violence (Zill, 2015). In comparison, children living with never-married mothers witnessed family violence almost as often as those living with separated or divorced mothers (116 of 1,000), six times as high as children living with two biological married parents (Zill, 2015). Children living with both parents, but whose parents were not married, were twice as likely (45 of 1,000) to witness family violence than those living with married biological parents (Zill, 2015).

Zill (2015) noted family structure was a more accurate predictor of a child being exposed to family violence than the household income, poverty status, parents' education, or race. A child's exposure to family violence equated to stress and in turn significantly reduced the admiration and respect for family members involved in the violent behaviors (Zill, 2015). Children who witness family violence had an increased risk of behavioral and emotional problems at school and at home (Zill, 2015). Children who lived with never-married mothers and who never witnessed family violence still had a fairly high rate (36%) of academic or conduct problems at school that required parental contact; however, the rate (58%) for those witnessing family violence was significantly higher (Zill, 2015). Children who live with separated or divorced mothers have a similarly high (48%) rate of problems at school (Zill, 2015).

Among the children living with intact families and witnessing family violence, there was a significantly high (51%) rate of school problems requiring parental contact, twice the rate of children from intact families not exposed to family violence (Zill, 2015). Children from disrupted and intact families exposed to family violence were at an increased risk of repeating a grade and were more likely to receive psychological counseling for behavioral and emotional problems (Zill, 2015). Child abuse and neglect were frequently tied to persons in the home, especially with no biological ties as was often the case in separated, divorced, or never-married parent households (Zill, 2015).

No matter the design of the household, one of the greatest indicators of future social and emotional health for the child is quality parenting (Amato, 2013). Compared to intact family units, single parents struggle with effective parenting skills are less likely to provide emotional support, set good guidelines, establish meaningful discipline, and refrain from fighting with the children (Amato, 2013). Although single parents struggle with many aspects of providing quality parenting, two of the top reasons may be lack of assistance from a second parent and lack of resources and funds (Amato, 2013). Regardless of the reasoning behind the poor quality of parenting, the children are affected in every academic, behavioral, social, and emotional realm (Amato, 2013).

Other Types of Households

Stepparent. In most situations, growing up in stepparent households have the same results for children as growing up in single-parent households (Child Trends, 2015). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, new stepfamilies are developing at a rate of 1,300 per day (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). This is due, in part, to the fact average marriages in the United States lasts only seven years, and one in two marriages results in

divorce (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). The U.S. Census Bureau indicated over 50% of families were re-coupled or remarried, and 66% of those new couples split when the union involved children (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). There are 30 million children in the United States under 13 years of age residing in a household with one biological parent and the cohabitating partner of that parent (The Step Family Foundation, 2016).

Research is unclear or has not address the effects of biological fathers involved with their children (60%) through a single-parent or stepparent household during visitation; therefore, these children might be going between two single-parent and/or stepparent families (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). Hosier (2015) reviewed the research of McLanahan and Sandefur which showed children who resided in stepparent families had lower quality of health, left home at an earlier age, demonstrated less academic success, and had twice the risk of incurring behavioral and psychological issues as peers who resided in an intact family. Children in a stepparent situation were at greater risk for emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and an alarming finding was stepfamilies had a significantly higher likelihood of murder taking place within the household (Hosier, 2015).

According to McLanahan and Sandefur's research, stepparent households were at a higher risk for dysfunction and stress; therefore, couples were more likely to divorce than couples where each were married for the first time (Hosier, 2015). Stress on the children within a stepparent situation stems from a multitude of factors including the following: confusing, unstable, and complex relationships between the stepparent and child; resentment due to the splitting up of the original family unit; weakening of the

child and non-custodial parent relationship; poor relationships between stepsiblings; and changes in the relationship of the child and the custodial parent (Hosier, 2015).

Cohabitating. In 1996, the number of children (1.2 million) under the age of 18 living with a parent and the cohabitating partner was beginning to significantly rise, reaching 3.3 million in 2015 (Child Trends, 2015). Couples living in a cohabitating situation with children were more likely to be younger, have less education, have lower income resources, and were less likely to have secure employment than married parents with children (Child Trends, 2015). Of married couples with children, less than three in 10 were between the ages of 25 and 34 (Child Trends, 2015).

Four in 10 married couples were between the ages of 35 and 44 (Child Trends, 2015). However, over four in 10 cohabitating couples with children were between the ages of 25 and 34 (Child Trends, 2015). Furthermore, under one-third of cohabitating couples with children were between the ages of 35 and 44 (Child Trends, 2015).

Within cohabitating couples, 35% of women had no college education, and 16% of women did not have a high school diploma, compared to 21% of women living as part of a married couple with no college education and 9% without a high school diploma (Child Trends, 2015). Men and women cohabitating with children were less likely to be employed, 81% and 63%, respectively, than married men and women at 91% and 66%, respectively (Child Trends, 2015).

In 2015, couples living in a cohabitating-with-children situation had an 8% rate of both parents being unemployed compared to 4% in a married-with-children household (Child Trends, 2015). Children born into a married-parent family had a greater chance of

stability (75%) than children under the age of 12 who experienced instability within a cohabitating couple household (67%) (Child Trends, 2015).

Divorced. Children have a higher risk of divorcing or becoming unwed parents if they experience childhood outside an intact marriage (USCCB, 2016). Divorce leaves lasting tension for children due to increased differences between the parents' ideas and values (USCCB, 2016). Children growing up with low-conflict, but unhappily married, biological parents are more emotionally stable than children of divorces referred to as good (USCCB, 2016).

Although experts do not agree on the effects of divorce, three of the most respected experts are Judith Wallerstein, E. Mavis Hetherington, and Elizabeth Marquardt (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). Wallerstein, psychologist and author, conducted a 25-year-long study of 93 children in order to study the effects of parental divorce (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). Of those 93 people, now adults, Wallerstein found the following:

1. 45% considered themselves doing well after the divorce; 41% were often angry, had suffered underachievement, and considered themselves as doing poorly;
2. several believed they did not have a role model for a working and loving relationship with the opposite sex;
3. most felt they were given less time and discipline, in addition to less attention due to the chaos of parents dealing with the divorce;
4. the parents involved in the divorce were less organized and less effective; most described disrupted functionality;

5. and most identified less-than-normal development in the emotional arena (The Step Family Foundation, 2016).

According to Wallerstein's findings, children of divorced parents fare much better if both parents are able to set aside differences and continue the roles of parenting while maintaining a good relationship; however, only a small number of children experience this positive aspect (The Step Family Foundation, 2016).

In contrast to Wallerstein's findings, E. Mavis Hetherington found positive results of divorce are ignored while detrimental results are exaggerated (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). Hetherington conducted a 30-year-long study of approximately 2,500 children within 1,400 families (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). The study found the following:

1. by two years post-divorce, most of the people were considered to be doing fairly well;
2. while 10% of those from intact families had significant emotional or social issues, there was only a 15% increase for those same issues for those from divorced families;
3. after the divorce, most adults were able to establish careers and become a part of a meaningful relationship as part of creating a happy life;
4. and, although only 40% of those from intact families believe divorce was an acceptable resolution to an unsatisfactory union, 70% of those from divorced families say divorce was an acceptable outcome (The Step Family Foundation, 2016).

An Institute for American Values scholar, Elizabeth Marquardt, engineered a nationwide survey of 1,500 adults ages 18 to 35 with 50% from intact households and 50% from divorced households (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). Marquardt's study revealed children feel torn between two parents (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). Marquardt contended children of divorced parents, even raised in the greatest of situations, frequently deal with lifetime emotional effects and difficulties in establishing adult relationships on an intimate level (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). Marquardt asserted the idea of a good divorce was a self-centered idea of adults (The Step Family Foundation, 2016).

Children from split families must face a group of challenges those from intact families do not, and this is the case given all levels of conflict (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). Marquardt concluded children of divorced parents must transition from a secure environment to living in two separate environments that may feel completely different from each other (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). These children must find a way to make both environments work (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). The results of Marquardt's survey showed children from divorced families feel secrets must be kept from each household, and there were vague standards on right and wrong; therefore, the children consulted friends and siblings (The Step Family Foundation, 2016). Marquardt and Wallerstein supported the fact adults saw divorce as a second chance for a content life, while children suffered lifetime effects from the trauma of divorce (The Step Family Foundation, 2016).

Grandparents. There has been a remarkable rise in the number of families headed by grandparents in the last three decades (Dolbin-MacNab, 2016). The U.S.

Census Bureau reported roughly 4.5 million children are being raised by 2.4 million grandparents (Dolbin-MacNab, 2016). Children raised by grandparents made up 7% of the total population of children in 2015 (Child Trends, 2015). The role of custodial grandparents began when the grandparents took on the responsibility of raising a child due to the biological parents' inability or choice not to be responsible (Dolbin-MacNab, 2016).

In general, children placed with grandparents, due to the involvement of social services, fare better than children placed into foster family homes (Pittman, 2014). Culture and age, among other factors, are indicators of how a child responds to living with grandparents (Pittman, 2014). Adolescents living with grandparents and trying to find a niche in the world might question parental roles; however, grandparents successfully meet the needs of younger children seeking care and love (Pittman, 2014). Pittman found children two to six years of age growing up in a family headed by custodial grandparents experience normal emotional balance, but academic skills are slightly delayed (as cited in Scommegna, 2012). While children raised by custodial grandparents have a higher risk for psychological problems than peers raised by two-parent families, many do fine (Pittman, 2014).

Homes with adopted children. In the United States, about 1.8 million (2%) of the child population are adopted through private adoption, domestic adoption, or from foster care (Child Trends, 2015). Adoption is an option for many people wishing to start or expand a family; however, it is unique in the fact the government, for varied periods of time, has had a part in organizing a parent-child relationship (Child Trends, 2015). Due to seeing adoption as a public good, the government has provided tax credits, subsidies,

and health insurance to assist families adopting children from foster care (Child Trends, 2015).

Although adopted children are like children in the overall population in many ways, there are differences in the two groups (Child Trends, 2015). Adopted children are more likely to be Black or Asian than White or Hispanic; race, in addition to age and amount of time spent in other household situations before adoption, are some of the differences compared to other children in two-parent families (Child Trends, 2015). Adopted children are less likely to live below the poverty level and actually more likely to live in households with more than four times the poverty level in income (Child Trends, 2015).

According to developmental research, most adopted children live with families who provide experiences important for the well-being of the child, and in some circumstances, these children fare better than children in the general population (Child Trends, 2015). Most parents (85%) report their adopted children to be in very good or excellent health; however, the special health care needs within this group (39%) are twice as high as the overall population of children (19%) (Child Trends, 2015).

While behavior and conduct problems have been reported for 4% of the overall child population, 15% were reported in adopted children (Child Trends, 2015). In addition, 26% of adopted children were reported as having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), while only 10% were reported in the overall population of children (Child Trends, 2015).

Poverty and Education

Children living in poverty are at a higher risk for health, safety, educational, and environmental concerns (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016). Children, especially young children, who live in poverty are at a higher risk for behavioral, socio-emotional, and cognitive difficulties compared with peers (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016). Throughout the lifetime of a child living in poverty, the risk is higher for not completing schooling and for unemployment (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016). In general, children growing up in poverty have lower academic performance, lower academic goals, and significantly lower scores on standardized tests (Hair, Hanson, Wolfe, & Pollak, 2015). In addition, the more time spent in a poverty-level household, the higher the risk of academic delays (Hair et al., 2015).

Various factors cause the economic hardship of children growing up in single-parent households (Amato, 2013). Children are affected academically by the parents' inability to pay for necessary tutoring, computers, and books, in addition to social effects due to lack of funds for shoes, clothing, phones, and other status-setting belongings possessed by peers (Amato, 2013). Furthermore, single-parent families are at a greater risk for living in unkempt areas with a lack of community resources, sub-par schools, and high rates of crime (Amato, 2013).

The National Institutes of Health Magnetic Resonance Imaging Study of Normal Brain Development was a six-year research project involving 389 children, ages four to 22 (Hair et al., 2015). The study showed normal development in 823 magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans in addition to socio-demographic information (Hair et al., 2015).

Hair et al. (2015) also revealed a substantial amount of information in regard to the significant effects of poverty on brain development and education. There are regions in the brain linked to academic preparedness (Hair et al., 2015). Poverty was found to cause changes in the structure of these regions, specifically in children from households with the lowest incomes (Hair et al., 2015).

Children who reside in households below 150% of the federal poverty level present with a volume of gray matter in certain areas of the brain at 3% to 4% lower than typical development, and children below the poverty level present at 8% to 10% lower (Hair et al., 2015). The architecture of brain development of children is slowed by the effects of poverty, which in turn affects the child's ability to learn and reach specific levels of academic success (Hair et al., 2015). Recommendations, as a result of the study, were to focus more resources on families living below 150% of the poverty level guidelines set by the federal government, specifically early childhood education, in an effort to thwart higher and longer-running expenses of remediating delayed academic performance (Hair et al., 2015).

The National Center for Education Statistics declared the majority (51%) of enrollment in U.S. public schools in 2013 was made up of students living in low-income households (Hair et al., 2015). The pattern of low grades, low test scores, and low academic success of children residing in poverty carries over to low-income status as adults; the longer time raised in poverty, the larger the disparities (Hair et al., 2015). Evidence revealed the major factors affecting brain functioning and development were poverty, early childhood stressors, lack of a stimulating environment, and lack of nurturing from parents (Hair et al., 2015).

Strong evidence for the effects of poverty on educational outcomes was presented through another study with adopted children as participants (Hair et al., 2015). The study of adopted children measured intellectual quotients (IQs) of children before adoption and compared quotients of the same children as teenagers (Hair et al., 2015). Of the 5,000 children studied, the ones adopted by higher socioeconomic families averaged 13 points higher in IQ scores as teens than the teens adopted by lower socioeconomic families (Hair et al., 2015). The researchers used the amygdala, the part of the brain used for processing emotions, as a constant, but researchers were surprised to discover the effects poverty had on cognition (Hair et al., 2015). Researchers were able to tie 15% to 20% of the low-income child's deficits in academics to differences in the development of the temporal and frontal lobes of the brain (Hair et al., 2015).

The majority of single-parent households were headed by mothers, which lead to a greater risk of poverty (Child Trends, 2015). A large factor to the socioeconomic status of the single-parent family was child support (Child Trends, 2015). In 2011, only 43% of custodial parents reported receiving the full amount of awarded support for the previous year (Child Trends, 2015). Studies have shown children had a higher academic success rate and fewer behavioral issues when non-custodial fathers fulfilled child support requirements (Amato, 2013).

Changes in recent years by federal and state governments have helped enforce child support orders due to the financial impact on the welfare system by families not receiving awarded support (Child Trends, 2015). In 2010, 22% of payments for child support were given to the custodial parent by the non-custodial parent directly, and 24% of payments for support were drafted from the non-custodial parent's earnings, leaving

54% of support awards only partially fulfilled or unpaid (Child Trends, 2015). Although one-third of fathers without custody of children were considered poverty-stricken, 40% were ordered to pay support on more than one child (Child Trends, 2015). Previously married custodial parents were more likely to obtain full payments of child support compared to the 35% of custodial parents never involved in marriage (Child Trends, 2015).

In 2011, college-educated custodial parents had a higher likelihood of procuring the complete child support award (51%) compared to counterparts with an associate's degree or some college (43%), high school diploma (42%), or those not completing high school (36%) (Child Trends, 2015). In 2011, 53% of mothers with custody of the children secured child support payment awards; however, only 29% of fathers with custody of the children were awarded support payments (Child Trends, 2015). Of the parents reporting in 2011, 22% stated the non-custodial parent carried health insurance on the child(ren) the previous year, and 57% of the non-custodial parents contributed by methods other than cash (Child Trends, 2013).

In 2014, 15.5 million children in the United States between infancy and age 17 lived in poverty (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016). Data for 2014 revealed children living in married households were at lower risk for living in poverty than children living in a single-parent household headed by a female (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016). Of children in a female-headed single-parent household, 46% were in poverty, whereas 11% of children living in a married household were in poverty (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016).

A large factor in the financial well-being of families was secure parental employment, which allowed for greater access to health insurance and higher family income (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016). Several positive outcomes have been associated with secure parental employment, including socioemotional development, health, and education (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016). In 2014, children living in married-parent households, regardless of race and Hispanic origin, were most likely to live with a securely employed parent, whereas children living in a female-headed household were the least likely to live with a securely employed parent (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016). Regardless of race and Hispanic origin, since 2000 there has been a decline in the percentage of children living in households with a securely employed parent (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2016).

Childhood Stressors and Education

There were multiple researched theories as to the reason children living in single-parent households have a greater risk for emotional, social, and cognitive issues (Amato, 2013). The majority of indicators pointed to lack of financial resources, lack of quality parenting, and stressful childhood incidents (Amato, 2013). Amato (2013) believed children residing in single-parent homes deal with a greater number of stressful occurrences and situations than peers residing in a two-parent home. Discord between non-custodial parent and custodial parent tends to leave the child feeling torn; this stressor is worsened if parents speak negatively about each other or use the children as a tool to hurt the other parent (Amato, 2013). Children lose emotional security and become detached from parents when placed in the middle of parental conflict (Amato, 2013).

Another significant childhood stressor is moving, which brings about loss of friends and other meaningful relationships along with academic gaps caused by enrollment in a different school (Amato, 2013). Moving is more common with single-parent households due to the parent's need for different jobs, cheaper housing, and sometimes due to involvement in a new romantic relationship (Amato, 2013). Researchers have found reoccurring moves of the single-parent family heighten problems for children's emotions, academics, and behavior (Amato, 2013).

Adding a cohabitating partner or stepparent to the family leads to changes within the dynamics of the unit, and in turn, leads to significant stress on the children (Amato, 2013). Most of these cohabitating situations or remarriages result in a break up, which causes more loss and change for the children (Amato, 2013). The more changes in the dynamics of the family unit the child experiences, the more the child's stress level increases (Amato, 2013).

The number of transitions a human being copes with throughout childhood is directly correlated with the amount of emotional and behavioral issues seen during teenage and early adult years (Amato, 2013). Before a child ever starts school, there is a strong bond with family, which becomes the child's reality and the primary source of input (McCaleb, 2013). A child's development and health, specifically in the hormone, neurological, and immune-response systems, can be damaged due to stress (Child Trends, 2013). Nearly 12% of children have experienced three or more harmful levels of stress affecting development and health (Child Trends, 2013). Although stressors are a constant, the levels of stress vary with the age of the child, individuals, and situations, but specific experiences in life are met with biological stress levels that have proven to be

toxic (Child Trends, 2013). These toxic life experiences include parental divorce or separation, the incarceration of a household member, abuse or neglect, domestic violence, death of a parent, and residing with a person afflicted with mental illness or substance addiction (Child Trends, 2013). In addition, ongoing financial hardship and social ostracizing by peers might have a similar negative effect (Child Trends, 2013).

The cumulative stress over extended time, more so than any individual trauma, is particularly harmful to a child's mental and physical health (Child Trends, 2013). Research shows these negative childhood experiences carry over into adulthood in the form of increased risk of heart, lung, and liver disease; obesity; depression; smoking; drug and alcohol abuse; unsound sexual behaviors; greater rate of illness; self-directed violence; and early death (Child Trends, 2013).

Disabled Children at Greater Risk

A higher percentage of students who receive special education services reside in single-parent households (58%) compared to those from two-parent households (31%), in addition to an elevated proportion belonging to an ethnic minority (FamilyFacts.org, 2016). Persons with disabilities have a greater risk of living in poverty than those without, and children with disabilities have a 400% greater risk of succumbing to violence than non-disabled peers (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2016). There might not be one individual situation that puts a child at risk for neglect or abuse, but there are circumstances that raised the risk; two of the top factors are poverty and single-parent households (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). The Child Welfare Information Gateway (2012) found children with disabilities were more likely to suffer neglect than non-disabled children.

According to the CDC (2016), “Social barriers were related to the conditions in which people were born, grow, live, learn, work and age – or social determinants of health – that can contribute to decreased functioning among people with disabilities” (p. 1). Social barriers take a toll on those with disabilities in many aspects; one area is employment (CDC, 2016). In 2012, disabled persons had a higher rate of unemployment (13.9%) than those without disabilities (6.0%) (CDC, 2016).

Summary

Chapter Two included a discussion of diverse household types and how those household styles affect children. Also presented were the factors associated with how different homes influence the life of a child. Research topics included investigations of eligibility, relationship status/makeup of the home, single-parent homes, poverty, and the connection of these categories.

Chapter Three includes a description and detailed account of the methodology used for this study. Chapter Four presents a review and analysis of the data and responses collected from interviews. Tables and figures are presented to further explain the data. Chapter Five is comprised of a summary of findings, conclusions, and implications for practice. Recommendations for further research are also discussed.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter, a thorough description of the methodology of this study is presented. The purpose of the study is identified, and the research questions are restated. The specifics of the population and sample are included. Also contained in this chapter is a detailed narrative of the instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analyses processes. Finally, the ethical considerations are addressed ensuring anonymity for all participants and their school districts.

Problem and Purpose Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between the family unit and educational placement in special education. Specifically, the research addressed single-parent and two-parent homes and the relationship to students receiving special education services and students in regular classrooms. The perceptions of special education coordinators from K-8 school districts were gathered through interviews about family configuration and home environment of students in regular and special education to provide qualitative data.

Research questions and hypotheses. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What relationship exists between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households?

$H1_0$: There is no positive linear relationship between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households.

$H1_a$: There is a positive linear relationship between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households.

2. What relationship exists between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households?

$H2_0$: There is no positive linear relationship between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households.

$H2_a$: There is a positive linear relationship between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households.

3. What are the perceptions of special education coordinators regarding special education students in single-parent households versus special education students in two-parent households?

Research Design

This mixed-method study included procedures for collection and analysis of data using both quantitative and qualitative research and methodology (Creswell, 2014). This design was chosen to better examine the relationship between single-parent households and two-parent households in addition to the proportion of students placed in special education from single-parent households and two-parent households. This inquiry also included examination of the perceptions of special education coordinators working on a daily basis with special education students.

Interview questions (see Appendix A) were created to collect qualitative data regarding the perceived concerns and opinions about the family unit and special education placement from special education coordinators. A spreadsheet (see Appendix B) was developed to gather quantitative data regarding the students' placements and current family unit. Email addresses of the coordinators were obtained from school websites.

Upon approval of the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C), a letter of introduction (see Appendix D) was sent via email to special education coordinators in 10 school districts. The letter explained the purpose and intent of the study and included the following attachments: Informed Consent (see Appendix E), the interview questions, and the data collection spreadsheet. Coordinators were assured no identifying information would be gathered and participation was voluntary. A follow-up phone call was made to those who did not respond after two weeks. Coordinators who responded and wished to participate were notified by phone to establish a date and time for the interview. Any questions regarding the spreadsheet were addressed at that time. After the spreadsheets were collected, the data were divided into one of two categories: special education placement or regular education placement.

Regular education had a two-direction pathway: two-parent household or single-parent household, and special education had two-direction pathway. The data contained in the special education section were divided into two-parent households or single-parent households.

After the district special education coordinators responded to questions regarding their perceptions and direct experiences with students and parents, the responses were analyzed using open and axial coding to allow for themes and categories to emerge (Creswell, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

Participants were provided with a copy of the Informed Consent form. No data were collected prior to approval by the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board. All paper data were secured in a locked cabinet under the supervision of the

principal investigator. All electronic data were secured by the researcher on a password-protected computer. Student placement and household status did not include any identifying information. All student information was kept anonymous for the purpose of the research. Finally, emails to participants assured anonymity and confidentiality. All documents, paper and electronic, will be destroyed three years from the completion of the study.

Population and Sample

The population originated from all Missouri K-8 districts. Missouri public school demographics included the following: 73.7% Caucasian, 5.1% Hispanic, 0.4% Indian, 16.6% Black, 1.9% Asian, and 49.9% free or reduced price meals students (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2017). In 2016, there were 72, K-8 school districts in Missouri (MODESE, 2017). The Missouri K-8 Schools Association is divided into nine regions (*Missouri K-8 region map*, 2016). The region selected for this study is geographically located in southwest Missouri and was selected due to its location. There are 10 school districts in the region selected (*Missouri K-8 region map*, 2016).

The purposive sampling for this study focused on 10 southwest Missouri K-8 school districts that were members of the Missouri K-8 Schools Association (Creswell, 2014). The sample population consisted of six K-8 districts from Region C in southwest Missouri. The districts within the region consisted of kindergarten through eighth-grade students with individual district total student enrollments of approximately 40 to 400 students per district. Each district was given equal opportunity to participate in the study.

A cluster sample of all Region C districts was attempted. A cluster sample is defined as subjects selected by using the entire group representing the entire population (Bluman, 2015). Once a 60% participation rate had been obtained, the study moved forward. The total student sample was 1,773 for the three years (2013-14, 2014-2015, 2015-2016). The average demographics for the districts studied included the following: 93.9% Caucasian, 3.6% Hispanic, 0% Indian, 0% Black, 0.2% Asian, and 72.1% free or reduced price meals students (MODESE, 2017).

A random sampling was not appropriate for this study due to the small population of the districts (Bluman, 2015). Random sampling should be well-defined and rigorous, but tends to result in small examples with high risk for errors and bias (Bluman, 2015). Sampling of a population may lead to a representative sample only if the research characteristics are normally distributed within the population (Bluman, 2015). Therefore, as compared to the entire population of Missouri school districts, the districts studied were rural, had a high free and reduced price meals percentage, and consisted of a low minority population. This study's sample should be considered understudied due to unique demographics of the sample districts.

Instrumentation

The interview questions were developed from the framework and the purpose statement for this study. The questions were field-tested using educators not participating in the study. Comments and suggestions were reviewed, and questions were amended to assure clarity and understanding.

In addition to the interview questions, each participant was given a spreadsheet allowing the participant to categorize student population by grade level, into single-parent

household or two-parent household, and by full-time regular education classes or receiving special education services. Once the data were collected, an Excel spreadsheet was created.

Data Collection

Interview questions were fashioned to collect qualitative data regarding special education coordinators' perceived concerns and opinions about family/home environment and placement. A spreadsheet (recording form) was developed to gather quantitative data regarding the students' placements and current home environments. Email addresses were obtained from school websites.

Upon approval of the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board, a letter of introduction was sent via email to special education coordinators in 10 school districts. The letter explained the purpose and intent of the study. The email included the Informed Consent form, a copy of the interview questions, and the data collection spreadsheet. Coordinators were assured no identifying information was gathered and participation was voluntary. A follow-up phone call was made to those who did not respond after two weeks. The researcher phoned each of the coordinators who responded and wished to participate to establish a day/time for the interview. The researcher addressed any questions regarding the spreadsheet at that time.

After the spreadsheet data were collected, subjects were divided into one of two categories: special education category of disability and regular education students. Both regular education subjects and special education subjects had a two-direction pathway: two-parent household and single-parent household (see Figure 1).

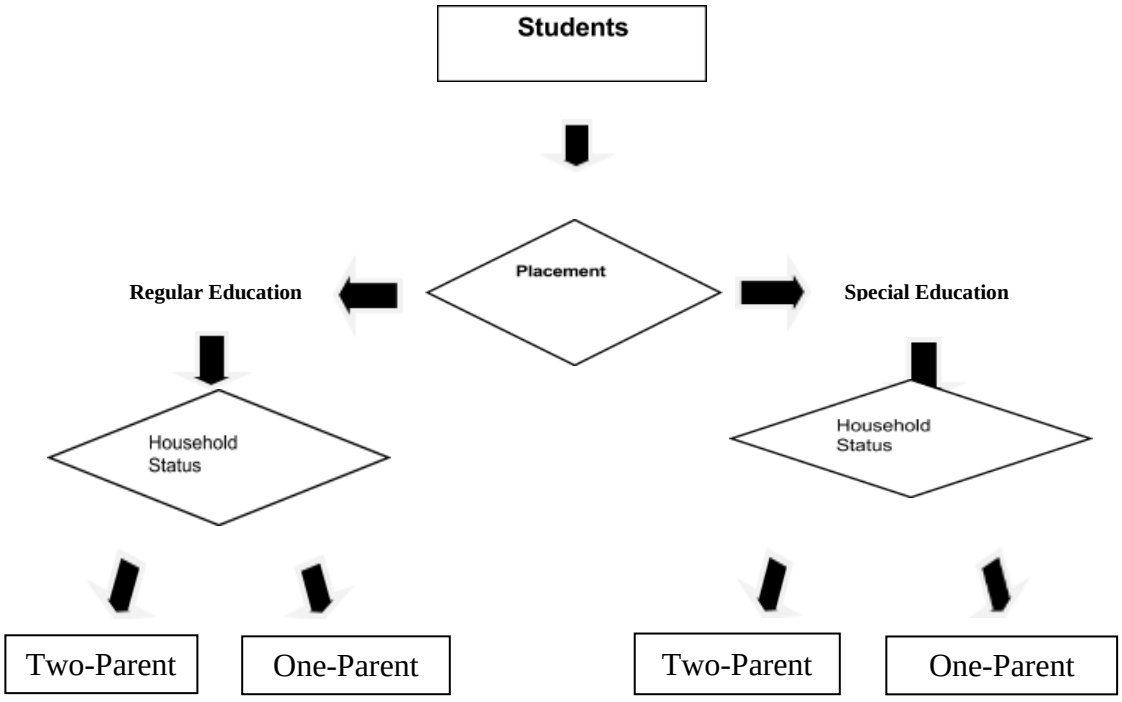

Figure 1. Categorization of students. This figure indicates the pathways for categorization of special education subjects.

Data Analysis

The qualitative portion of the study included interviews that were conducted either in person or by phone. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Each participant was then emailed a copy of the transcript in order to validate the data (Maxwell, 2013). The data will be retained for three years following the conclusion of the study. After completion of the interviews, the transcripts were reviewed and organized. Key phrases and trends were identified by using coding methods during analysis of the responses. Coding is a procedure used to arrange data into specific categories which permitted the researcher identify comparisons (Maxwell, 2013).

The quantitative portion of this study required participating districts to submit a spreadsheet which contained student classification data. Participants were asked to record, by grade level, the number of special education students living in single-parent households, the number of special education students living in two-parent households, the number of regular education students living in single-parent households, and the number of regular education students living in two-parent households.

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict the correlation between students in single-parent homes in regular education and students in single-parent homes in special education. Another linear regression was calculated to predict the correlation between students in two-parent homes in regular education and students in two-parent homes in special education. A scatterplot was created and a line of best fit drawn in order to determine if there was a linear correlation between the two variables for each sample population (Bluman, 2015). A p value of $<.05$ indicated significance in this study (Bluman, 2015).

Summary

Chapter Three included a review of the problem and purpose of this study to examine family environment and educational placement. Research questions and hypotheses were presented. The research design was reviewed, along with the researcher's purpose for using a mixed-method design. Ethical considerations were presented, and the researcher discussed how anonymity and security would be protected.

The population and sample were presented. Chapter Three also included a description of the instrumentation used and the methodology for data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four includes an in-depth perspective of the data collected, how they were analyzed, and the information drawn from the data. Chapter Five is comprised of the summary of findings, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research. Literature from Chapter Two is discussed in relation to the conclusions of this study.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between family units and special education placement. This study addressed the family unit, specifically single-parent homes, and its relationship to students receiving special education services. Literature was reviewed and revealed pertinent information connecting the effects of homes on children and how these effects translate into issues affecting educational success. The information gained in this study is relevant to teachers and administrators. Teachers can use this information to look outside of the classroom for problems affecting educational success of students. Administrators can access this information to explore areas in need of funding to meet student needs.

Quantitative Data

Of the 10 districts selected for participation, six agreed to participate. In addition to the interview questions, each participant was given a spreadsheet to identify the school district's student population by grade level. Then, students in special education and students in regular education were categorized by type of family unit, either single-parent or two-parent households. Once the data were collected from each participating district, the spreadsheets were combined for further analysis. The quantitative data were run through a multi-directional pathway to code the results. Then, results were entered into an Excel spreadsheet, and tables and figures were created. A positive linear correlation between two variables was used to determine relationship, if any.

Strengths. According to InterAction (2016), the strengths of quantitative data (QUANT) are as follows:

- Samples of individuals, communities, or organizations can be selected to ensure that the results will be representative of the population studied.
- Structural factors that determine how inequalities (such as gender inequalities) are produced can be analyzed.
- QUANT estimates can be obtained of the magnitude and distribution of impacts.
- QUANT estimates can be obtained of the costs and benefits of interventions.
- Clear documentation can be provided regarding the content and application of the survey instruments so that other researchers can assess the validity of the findings.
- Standardized approaches permit the study to be replicated in different areas or over time with the production of comparable findings.
- It is possible to control for the effects of extraneous variables that might result in misleading interpretations of causality (although this can be challenging in the natural settings of evaluations). (p. 1)

Weaknesses. According to InterAction (2016), the weaknesses of quantitative data are as follows:

- Many kinds of information are difficult to obtain through structured data collection instruments, particularly on sensitive topics such as domestic violence or income.

- Many groups such as sex workers, drug users, illegal immigrants, squatters and ethnic minorities are always difficult to reach, but the problems are often greater for QUANT data collection methods.
- Self-reported information obtained from questionnaires may be inaccurate or incomplete.
- There is often no information on contextual factors to help interpret the results or to explain variations in behavior between households with similar economic and demographic characteristics.
- The administration of a structured questionnaire creates an unnatural situation that may alienate respondents.
- Studies are expensive and time-consuming, and even the preliminary results are usually not available for a long period of time.
- Research methods are inflexible because the instruments cannot be modified once the study begins.
- Reduction of data to numbers results in lost information.
- The correlations produced (e.g., between costs and benefits, gender, and access to services or benefits) may mask or ignore underlying causes or realities.
- Untested variables may account for program impacts.
- Errors in the hypotheses tested may yield misimpressions of program quality or influential factors.
- Errors in the selection of procedures for determining statistical significance can result in erroneous findings regarding impact. (p. 1)

Table 1 shows the total school populations for all districts participating in the study by grade level. The data presented show the range of district size by population.

Table 1

Total Student Population for All Participating School Districts (2013-2014)

District	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	Total
A	26	25	33	25	36	30	31	28	29	263
B	16	13	9	6	6	8	8	13	5	84
C	29	18	19	14	18	23	14	24	20	179
D	3	6	4	5	11	5	10	10	9	63
E	20	12	16	15	12	9	15	19	16	134
F	5	6	7	5	4	5	5	7	11	55
Total	99	80	86	71	87	80	83	101	90	778

Note. $N = 778$.

Each district's data are represented by three tables and two figures. One table consists of the district's special education population placed in appropriate categories of single-parent or two-parent homes. The second table consists of the district's regular education population placed in appropriate categories of single-parent or two-parent homes. The third table consists of the total school population for all districts participating in the study for the 2015-2016 school year.

The figures for each district represent the district's entire population by percentages, with appropriate categories for special education students living in single-parent homes, special education students living in two-parent homes, regular education students living in single-parent homes, and regular education students living in two-parent homes.

Table 2 shows the total school population for all districts participating in the study by grade level for the 2014-2015 school year. The largest district, District A, did not provide data for the 2014-2015 or 2015-2016 school years. The population of District F dropped 11 students from the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 2

Total Student Population for All Participating School Districts (2014-2015)

District	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	Total
A										
B	6	5	5	3	6	9	6	10	9	59
C	16	24	17	20	16	16	22	12	23	166
D	11	13	15	10	3	4	8	6	11	81
E	15	18	16	16	21	14	15	19	19	153
F	9	3	6	3	4	5	4	3	7	44
Total	57	63	59	52	50	48	55	50	69	503

Note. $N = 503$. Data not available for district A.

Table 3 shows the total school population for all districts participating in the study for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 3

Total Student Population for All Participating School Districts (2015-2016)

District	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	Total
A										
B	5	7	1	9	3	5	8	5	11	54
C	18	19	27	18	18	15	12	21	11	159
D	12	10	12	14	11	6	5	9	6	85
E	13	16	17	18	16	24	16	14	17	151
F	2	10	4	5	6	4	6	4	2	43
Total	50	62	61	64	54	54	47	53	47	492

Note. $N = 492$. Data not available for District A.

Table 4 represents District A's special education student makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and the total of special education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 4

District A Special Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	1	1	2
First	3	1	4
Second	2	4	6
Third	2	3	5
Fourth	3	5	8
Fifth	1	4	5
Sixth	2	4	6
Seventh	0	3	3
Eighth	3	1	4
Total	17	26	43

Note. $n = 43$.

Table 5 represents District A's regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 5

District A Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	13	11	24
First	10	11	21
Second	14	13	27
Third	8	12	20
Fourth	10	18	28
Fifth	9	16	25
Sixth	7	18	25
Seventh	7	18	25
Eighth	3	22	25
Total	81	139	220

Note. $n = 220$.

Table 6 represents District B's special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and the total of special education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 6

District B Special Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten			
First			
Second		1	1
Third		1	1
Fourth	1		1
Fifth	1		1
Sixth	1	1	2
Seventh	2	1	3
Eighth			
Total	5	4	9

Note. $n = 9$.

Table 7 represents District B regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and the total of regular education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 7

District B Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	1	2	3
First	3	3	6
Second	1	2	3
Third	2	2	4
Fourth	3	7	10
Fifth	1	3	4
Sixth	3	5	8
Seventh	3	4	7
Eighth	1	8	9
Total	18	36	54

Note. $n = 54$.

Table 8 represents District B's special education student family make up by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and the total of special education students for the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 8

District B Special Education Student Family Makeup (2014-2015)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten			
First			
Second		1	1
Third		1	1
Fourth		1	1
Fifth	1		1
Sixth	1		1
Seventh	1	2	3
Eighth	2	1	3
Total	5	6	11

Note. $n = 11$.

Table 9 represents District B regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and the total of regular education students for the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 9

District B Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2014-2015)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	2	4	6
First	3	2	5
Second	2	2	4
Third	1	1	2
Fourth	1	4	5
Fifth	3	5	8
Sixth	1	4	5
Seventh	3	4	7
Eighth	2	4	6
Total	18	30	30

Note. $n = 48$.

Table 10 represents District B special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and the total of special education students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 10

District B Special Education Student Family Makeup (2015-2016)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten			
First			
Second			
Third		1	1
Fourth		1	1
Fifth		1	1
Sixth			
Seventh		1	1
Eighth	1	2	3
Total	1	6	7

Note. $n = 7$.

Table 11 represents District B regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and the total of regular education students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 11

District B Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2015-2016)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten		5	5
First	2	5	7
Second		1	1
Third	3	5	8
Fourth	1	1	2
Fifth		4	4
Sixth	3	5	8
Seventh		4	4
Eighth	5	3	8
Total	14	33	47

Note. $n = 47$.

Table 12 represents District C special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and the total of special education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 12

District C Special Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten			
First			
Second		2	2
Third	2	1	3
Fourth	1	1	2
Fifth	1		1
Sixth	2	3	5
Seventh	3	1	4
Eighth	1	1	2
Total	10	9	19

Note. $n = 19$.

Table 13 represents District C regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and the total of regular education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 13

District C Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	12	17	29
First	10	8	18
Second	10	7	17
Third	4	7	11
Fourth	11	5	16
Fifth	12	10	22
Sixth	3	6	9
Seventh	7	13	20
Eighth	9	9	18
Total	78	82	160

Note. $n = 160$.

Table 14 represents District C special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and the total of special education students for the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 14

District C Special Education Student Family Makeup (2014-2015)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten		1	1
First			
Second			
Third	4	1	5
Fourth	3	1	4
Fifth	1	1	2
Sixth	1		1
Seventh	2	1	3
Eighth	2		2
Total	13	5	18

Note. $n = 18$.

Table 15 represents District C regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 15

District C Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2014-2015)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	9	6	15
First	8	16	24
Second	10	7	17
Third	9	6	15
Fourth	5	7	12
Fifth	8	6	14
Sixth	9	12	21
Seventh	1	8	9
Eighth	8	13	21
Total	67	81	148

Note. $n = 148$.

Table 16 represents District C special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of special education students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 16

District C Special Education Student Family Makeup (2015-2016)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten			
First		1	1
Second	4	1	5
Third	1	1	2
Fourth	3	1	4
Fifth	2	1	3
Sixth	2	1	3
Seventh			
Eighth	1	1	2
Total	13	7	20

Note. $n = 20$.

Table 17 represents District C regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 17

District C Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2015-2016)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	7	11	18
First	8	10	18
Second	5	17	22
Third	6	10	16
Fourth	7	7	14
Fifth	4	8	12
Sixth	3	6	9
Seventh	8	13	21
Eighth	2	7	9
Total	50	89	139

Note. $n = 139$.

Table 18 represents District D special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of special education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 18

District D Special Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten			
First			
Second		1	1
Third		1	1
Fourth	1		1
Fifth	1		1
Sixth	1	1	2
Seventh	2	1	3
Eighth			
Total	5	4	9

Note. $n = 9$.

Table 19 represents District D regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 19

District D Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	1	2	3
First	3	3	6
Second	1	2	3
Third	2	2	4
Fourth	3	7	10
Fifth	1	3	4
Sixth	3	5	8
Seventh	3	4	7
Eighth	1	8	9
Total	18	36	54

Note. $n = 54$.

Table 20 represents District D special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of special education students for the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 20

District D Special Education Student Family Makeup (2014-2015)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten		3	3
First			
Second		1	1
Third		1	1
Fourth			
Fifth		1	1
Sixth		2	2
Seventh		1	1
Eighth			
Total		9	9

Note. $n = 10$.

Table 21 represents District D regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 21

District D Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2014-2015)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	1	7	8
First	4	9	13
Second	2	12	14
Third	4	5	9
Fourth		3	3
Fifth	1	2	3
Sixth	2	4	6
Seventh	1	4	5
Eighth	1	9	10
Total	16	55	71

Note. $n = 71$.

Table 22 represents District D special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of special education students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 22

District D Special Education Student Family Makeup (2015-2016)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten		1	1
First		3	3
Second	1		1
Third		1	1
Fourth		1	1
Fifth			
Sixth		1	1
Seventh		2	2
Eighth		1	1
Total	1	10	11

Note. $n = 11$.

Table 23 represents District D regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 23

District D Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2015-2016)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten		11	11
First	1	6	7
Second	4	7	11
Third	1	12	13
Fourth	3	7	10
Fifth	1	5	6
Sixth		4	4
Seventh	2	5	7
Eighth	1	4	5
Total	13	61	74

Note. $n = 74$.

Table 24 represents District E special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of special education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 24

District E Special Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten		1	1
First		5	5
Second		2	2
Third	2	3	5
Fourth	1	1	2
Fifth			
Sixth	1	4	5
Seventh	1	3	4
Eighth			
Total	5	19	24

Note. $n = 24$.

Table 25 represents District E regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 25

District E Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	3	16	19
First	4	3	7
Second	2	12	14
Third	6	4	10
Fourth	3	7	10
Fifth	6	3	9
Sixth	1	9	10
Seventh	4	11	15
Eighth	9	7	16
Total	38	72	110

Note. $n = 110$.

Table 26 represents District E special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of special education students for the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 26

District E Special Education Student Family Makeup (2014-2015)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten		1	1
First		3	3
Second	1	2	3
Third		2	2
Fourth	3	3	6
Fifth		2	2
Sixth			
Seventh		5	5
Eighth	1	4	5
Total	5	22	27

Note. $n = 27$.

Table 27 represents District E regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 27

District E Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2014-2015)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	1	13	14
First	3	12	15
Second	1	12	13
Third		14	14
Fourth	4	11	15
Fifth	2	10	12
Sixth	1	14	15
Seventh	3	11	14
Eighth	1	13	14
Total	16	110	126

Note. $n = 126$.

Table 28 represents District E special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of special education students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 28

District E Special Education Student Family Makeup (2015-2016)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten			
First	1	2	3
Second	1	4	5
Third		4	4
Fourth	2	3	5
Fifth	2	6	8
Sixth	1	3	4
Seventh			
Eighth		3	3
Total	7	25	32

Note. $n = 32$.

Table 29 represents District E regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 29

District E Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2015-2016)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	2	11	13
First	1	12	13
Second	3	9	12
Third	1	13	14
Fourth	1	10	11
Fifth	1	15	16
Sixth	2	10	12
Seventh	3	11	14
Eighth	2	12	14
Total	16	103	119

Note. $n = 119$.

Table 30 represents District F special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of special education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 30

District F Special Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten			
First		1	1
Second			
Third			
Fourth			
Fifth			
Sixth			
Seventh			
Eighth			
Total		1	1

Note. $n = 1$.

Table 31 represents District F regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2013-2014 school year.

Table 31

District F Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2014)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	2	3	5
First	4	1	5
Second	2	5	7
Third	1	4	5
Fourth	1	3	4
Fifth	3	2	5
Sixth	4	1	5
Seventh	4	3	7
Eighth	6	5	11
Total	27	27	54

Note. $n = 54$.

Table 32 represents District F special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of special education students for the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 32

District F Special Education Student Family Makeup (2014-2015)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten			
First			
Second		1	1
Third	1	1	2
Fourth			
Fifth	1		1
Sixth			
Seventh			
Eighth			
Total	2	2	4

Note. $n = 4$.

Table 33 represents District F regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 33

District F Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2014-2015)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	2	7	9
First	2	1	3
Second	4	1	5
Third		1	1
Fourth	1	3	4
Fifth		4	4
Sixth	2	2	4
Seventh	2	1	3
Eighth	4	3	7
Total	17	23	40

Note. $n = 40$.

Table 34 represents District F special education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of special education students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 34

District F Special Education Student Family Makeup (2015-2016)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten			
First	1	2	3
Second			
Third	1	1	2
Fourth	1	2	3
Fifth			
Sixth	2		2
Seventh			
Eighth			
Total	5	5	10

Note. $n = 10$.

Table 35 represents District F regular education student family makeup by categories of single-parent home and two-parent home and a total of regular education students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 35

District F Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2015-2016)

Grade Level	Single-Parent	Two-Parent	Total
Kindergarten	2		2
First	2	5	7
Second	2	2	4
Third	2	1	3
Fourth	1	2	3
Fifth	1	3	4
Sixth		4	4
Seventh	3	1	4
Eighth	1	1	2
Total	14	19	33

Note. $n = 33$.

Table 36 represents District A students in special education for 2013-2014 and Districts B-F special education students 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 by categories of two-parent and single-parent homes.

Table 36

Districts A-F Special Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2016)

District	Single-Parent	Two-Parent
A	39.5%	60.5%
B	40.7%	59.3%
C	66.7%	33.3%
D	18.8%	81.2%
E	20.5%	79.5%
F	46.7%	53.3%

Table 37 represents District A regular education students for 2013-2014 and Districts B-F regular education students for 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 by categories of two-parent homes and single-parent homes.

Table 37

Districts A-F Regular Education Student Family Makeup (2013-2016)

District	Single-Parent	Two-Parent
A	36.8%	63.2%
B	33.6%	66.4%
C	43.6%	56.4%
D	23.4%	76.6%
E	19.7%	80.3%
F	45.7%	54.3%

Qualitative Data

This study consisted of interviews with six special education coordinators from six different districts out of the 10 districts anticipated. These interviews consisted of a set of questions designed to answer research question three.

Strengths. Per the University of South Alabama (2016), the following are strengths of qualitative data:

- Data based on the participants' own categories of meaning
- Useful for studying a limited number of cases in depth
- Useful for describing complex phenomena

- Provides individual case information
- Can conduct cross-case comparisons and analysis
- Provides understanding and description of people's personal experiences of phenomena (i.e., the emic or insider's viewpoint)
- Can describe in rich detail phenomena as they are situated and embedded in local contexts
- The researcher almost always identifies contextual and setting factors as they relate to the phenomenon of interest
- The researcher can study dynamic processes (i.e., documenting sequential patterns and change)
- The researcher can use the primarily qualitative method of grounded theory to inductively generate a tentative but explanatory theory about a phenomenon
- Can determine how participants interpret constructs (e.g., self-esteem, IQ)
- Data are usually collected in naturalistic settings in qualitative research
- Qualitative approaches are especially responsive to local situations, conditions, and stakeholders' needs
- Qualitative researchers are especially responsive to changes that occur during the conduct of a study (especially during extended fieldwork) and may shift the focus of their studies as a result
- Qualitative data in the words and categories of participants lend themselves to exploring how and why phenomena occur
- You can use an important case to vividly demonstrate a phenomenon to the readers of a report

- Determine idiographic causation (i.e., determination of causes of a particular event). (p. 1)

Weaknesses. Per the University of South Alabama (2016), the following are weaknesses of qualitative data:

- Knowledge produced might not generalize to other people or other settings (i.e., findings might be unique to the relatively few people included in the research study).
- It is difficult to make quantitative predictions.
- It is more difficult to test hypotheses and theories with large participant pools.
- It might have lower credibility with some administrators and commissioners of programs.
- It generally takes more time to collect the data when compared to quantitative research.
- Data analysis is often time consuming.
- The results are more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies. (p. 1)

The questions asked during the interviews were to allow a better understanding of the perceptions held by special education coordinators about single-parent homes and two-parent homes in relation to special education placement. The questions asked of the interviewees stemmed from the conceptual framework, the statement of the problem, and the purpose statement for this study. Participants were given a letter of participation, a letter of informed consent, and a copy of the interview questions.

Interviews. Participants were labeled A, B, C, D, E, and F. The following interview questions were asked, and the responses from Participants A, B, C, D, E, and F are provided.

Interview question one. How involved are single-parents in school functions, for example parent/teacher conferences? How involved are parents of a two-parent home in school functions, for example parent/teacher conferences?

Participant A responded:

> With our fall parent/teacher conferences, we had 100% participation school wide at the elementary school (K-3). So, there was no difference in the parent status. At the middle school, the parent-teacher conference attendance was 100% in fourth and fifth. It was lower in sixth through eighth, but I am not sure what the difference was between single-parent households and two-parent households. Other programs within the school seem to have an even split.

Similarly, Participant B explained:

> I believe it is close to even; however, it depends on the work schedule of the parents. Due to at least one parent in a two-parent home being available, the student from a two-parent home is probably more likely to have a parent attend the conferences or other programs.

Participant C expressed succinctly, "Single-parents are not usually as involved due to lack of availability, not desire." In contrast, Participant D asserted, "Single parents are as involved as parents from a two-parent home." Participant E noted, "We have a high rate of attendance at school functions and parent/teacher conferences… There is no difference between the two groups in attending functions… Parents attend concerts,

basketball games, and activities that occur during the day." Finally, Participant F responded, "I see no difference in the involvement of my single parents versus my students from two-parent homes."

Interview question two. How engaged are students from single-parent homes in academic activities? How engaged are students from two-parent homes in academic activities? Do you perceive students from single-parent homes or two-parent homes tend to be more distracted during tasks? Why?

Participant A answered:

> It appears to be more difficult for parents from single-parent homes to participate in academic activities. I would think it is because those parents have complete responsibility for the household in terms of providing income and completing routine daily tasks without anyone to share the load with. Sometimes, there are extended family members (grandparents or aunts/uncles that help out). Students' distractibility tends to revolve around household events, disruptions, crises, etc. more so than just being from a single-parent household. There are students from disruptive households that involve two-parent homes. One significant area of concern within single-parent homes is the availability of help with homework, specifically reading.

Participant B added:

> As for parental involvement in academic activities, it is more of an individual situation. Students from single-parent households tend to be more distracted, especially older students. The older students' distractibility is due to extra responsibilities at home and taking care of younger siblings.

Likewise, Participant C shared:

> There is not much of a difference in the engagement of single parents versus two parents. Students from single-parent homes tend to be more distracted due to emotions about the missing parent, lack of time spent with the custodial parent and missing parent, hunger, household disturbances, etc.

Participant D also agreed:

> The students from single-parent households tend to be more distracted due to hunger, lack of preparation, and lack of organization. When the students from single-parent homes are on task, their performance averages with or is slightly below those students from two-parent homes.

However, Participant E expressed,

> There is no difference between the type of home that a student lives in when related to their attention during the school day… Children can have difficulties in their home that impact their school day; it does not matter if it is a single-parent or two-parent home.

Similarly, Participant F noted, "Students from both types of homes are equally engaged… We have good parental support all around, which shows through in the classroom."

Interview question three. Do students from single-parent homes or students from two-parent homes tend to struggle more with understanding new concepts? What are your perceptions as to the reason?

Participant A replied:

> I don't know that students from one type of home or the other struggle more with new concepts. I think that it depends more on the child and his/her learning

> abilities or difficulties. However, due to financial stability of a two-parent homes, students from these homes have a larger opportunity to take family trips and spend more time with parents allowing a broader variety of learning experiences outside of the classroom. In addition, students from two-parent homes have more attention available to them which helps with focus and organization, two issues associated with students struggling with learning disabilities and ADHD.

Participant B agreed by stating, "I do not think there is necessarily a difference due to parental situations; however, students with two-parents in the home have more help at home to grasp the new concept better."

In comparison, Participant C articulated, "Students from single-parent homes may struggle more due to the lack of time a single-parent has to work with the child at home on things like spelling, flash cards, and other new concepts." Participant D agreed by responding, "Yes, students in single-parent homes are more on their own for homework and there is less follow-through." Participant E believed there are multiple negative factors in both categories of homes affecting students from both populations.

Interview question four. What is the most common factor for students from single-parent homes placed in special education? What is the most common factor for students from two-parent homes placed in special education?

Participant A acknowledged:

> They are placed because they meet the criteria of one of the categories of disability. I don't know if there is a difference between the two types of families. The highest placement category is Other Health Impaired (OHI) and within that category the highest most-common disability is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity

> Disorder (ADHD). Students with ADHD need more support strategies with organization and focus; parents from two-parent homes are better able to provide this support. The students with an OHI eligibility from single-parent and two-parent homes are about 50/50.

Participant B replied:

> Most all of them have some form of learning disability due to their diagnosis. Some of the students struggle with learning difficulties due to the genetics from the parents as these parents are Learning Disabled or Intellectually Disabled. Students from two-parent homes have more stability and help with their learning disabilities.

More generally, Participant C reported:

> The majority of the students have some form of behavior problem, even if that is not part of the diagnoses. A lot of the behaviors are attention-seeking due to the lack of time and attention received at home. In addition, the students show disruptive behaviors in response to household circumstances, such as new cohabitating partners coming and going along with hostile relationships between biological parents. The most common category is OHI, predominantly ADHD.

Participant D claimed more students are identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) due to being two years below grade-level performance. However, Participant E asserted issues with language deficits in both types of homes, and stated education is not a primary focus for many of the parents. Participant F noted the district does not have a large enough number of students to compare; therefore, the only commonality found is poverty.

Interview question five. What is the most common classroom disruption among students in special education from single-parent homes? What is the most common classroom disruption among students in special education from two-parent homes?

Participant A answered:

> The students from single-parent homes show more attention-seeking and emotional behaviors in an effort to gain basic needs that are not being met. These students, also, need more help with organization and task completion. The students from two-parent homes tend to have much less disruptive behaviors or they are seeking extra academic help.

Participants B, C, and D agreed with A, and stated common disruptions among single-parent students revolve around discipline problems, hunger, and lack of organization, which is heightened in ADHD students. The most common disruptions among two-parent students revolve around the need for academic help. In contrast, Participants E and F reported few disruptions within special education classes from both types of homes.

Interview question six. What is the most common category of special education eligibility for students from single-parent homes? What is the most common category of special education eligibility for students from two-parent homes?

Participant A answered, Other Health Impairment, specifically ADHD for both categories of homes. Participant B reported Specific Learning Disability for both types of homes and Intellectual Disability in single-parent homes only. Comparably, Participant C stated the most common category of eligibility for single-parent students was OHI, specifically ADHD, followed by Behavioral Disorders and Emotional

Disturbance, but for two-parent students it was SLD. In addition, Participant D reported OHI for single-parent students and SLD for both types of homes. In contrast, Participant E answered language impairment for single-parent students and OHI for two-parent students. Participant F declared an even distribution of SLD and speech/language.

Interview question seven. Are there other comments you would like to make? Participant A responded:

> I think that the major difficulty in most single-parent homes is the fact that the parent has all the household responsibilities and no one to share them with. When there is a stepparent situation, it probably depends on how long the blended family has been together. If the family has not been together long, the children could still be in a period of adjustment that could impact school performance. If the blended family has been together an extended time, then the quality and nature of the relationships are likely impacting the student. The type of home affects their learning experiences at school; the student could be in survival mode. When a student is able to learn outside through trips, etc., it equates to better learning and the student is more acclimated to learning.

Participant B stated, "The effects are all on an individual basis; however, with single-parent students there is not as much stability and the school has to do more for the kids." Participant D noted:

> With ADHD students in single-parent homes, the parent is more reluctant to seek diagnosis and/or treatment and therefore the student is not medicated. The other factors of the single-parent home are things such as lack of structure with meals and bedtimes which lends to enhancement of behaviors associated with ADHD.

Participants C, E, and F did not have any other comments.

Summary

This chapter included an analysis of all data gathered for this study. Revealed in this chapter was the information from spreadsheets provided by the six participating districts. Tables and figures were provided to display individual district data by year, educational placement, and household type. In addition, tables were created for the six districts combined. Chapter Four also included the participants' responses to the seven interview questions. Chapter Five includes a disclosure of the study's findings. The analyzed data and literature review are compared to assess similar or dissimilar findings.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

This study was designed to examine the relationship between the family unit and educational placement. Factors outside of the school environment were discussed. The primary investigator reviewed and analyzed home environments and the effects of these environments on students. This study's purpose was to determine if there is or is not a meaningful relationship between the family unit, which included single-parent households and two-parent households, and special education placement.

The literature reviewed in this study revealed significant findings relating the effects of household types on students, in addition to how these effects impacted the educational success of students. The information communicated in this study is pertinent to administrators and teachers. Administrators can use the data to examine areas of highest impact and allot funding accordingly. Teachers will be able to gain a better understanding of outside factors possibly affecting the educational success of students.

Findings

Quantitative results. Research questions one and two dealt with quantitative data collected from the participating school districts. It is important to remember District A, the largest district during the 2013-2014 school year, did not provide data for the 2014-2015 or 2015-2016 school years. A negative trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of -0.143. Therefore the null hypothesis ($H1_0$) was not rejected. There was not a positive linear relationship in District A between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households (see Figure 2).

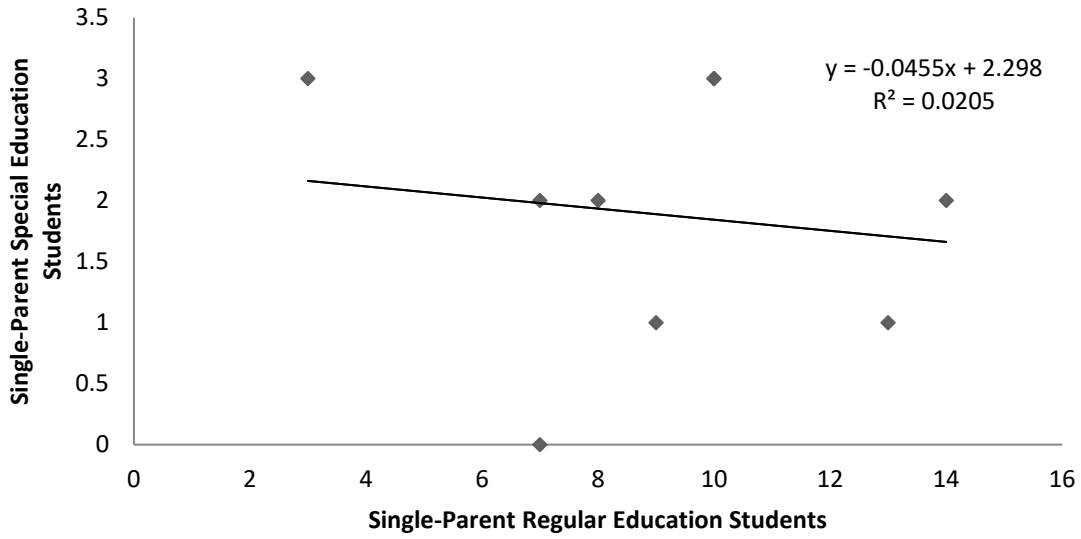

Figure 2. Scatterplot of District A 2013-2014 single-parent special education students in relationship to single-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = -0.0455x + 2.298.

There was a relationship in District B between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households (see Figure 3). A positive trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of 0.388. The null hypothesis ($H1_0$) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ($H1_a$) was supported.

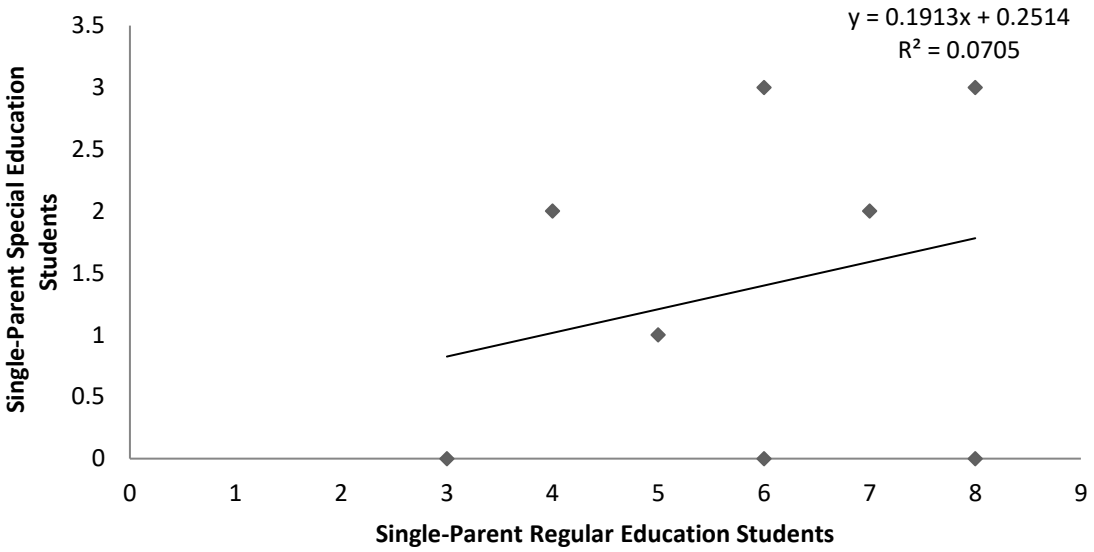

Figure 3. Scatterplot of District B 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 single-parent special education students in relationship to single-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = 0.1913x + 0.2514.

There was not a positive linear relationship in District C between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households (see Figure 4). A negative trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of -0.542. Therefore, the null hypothesis ($H1_0$) was not rejected.

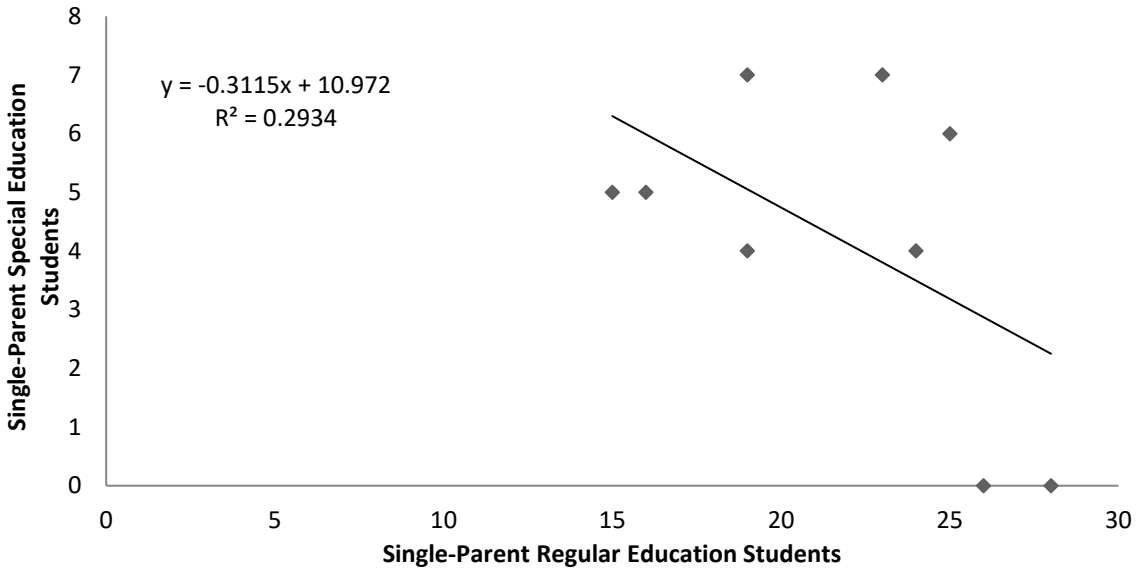

Figure 4. Scatterplot of District C 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 single-parent special education students in relationship to single-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = -0.3115x + 10.972.

There was not a positive linear relationship in District D between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households (see Figure 5). A negative trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of -0.176. Therefore, the null hypothesis ($H1_0$) was not rejected.

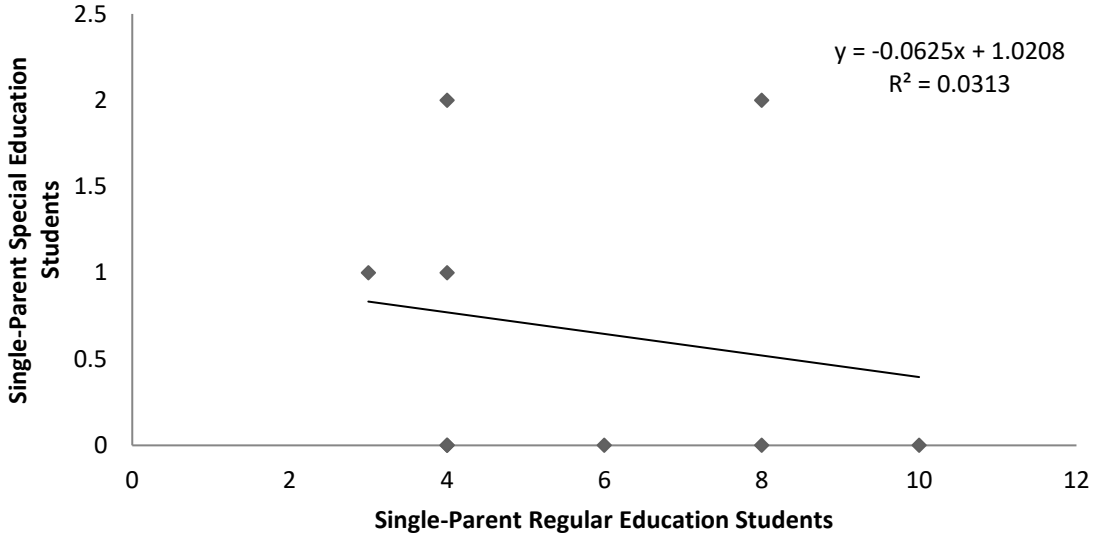

Figure 5. Scatterplot of District D 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 single-parent special education students in relationship to single-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = -0.0625x + 1.0208.

There was not a positive linear relationship in District E between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households (see Figure 6). A negative trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of -0.0688. Therefore, the null hypothesis ($H1_0$) was not rejected.

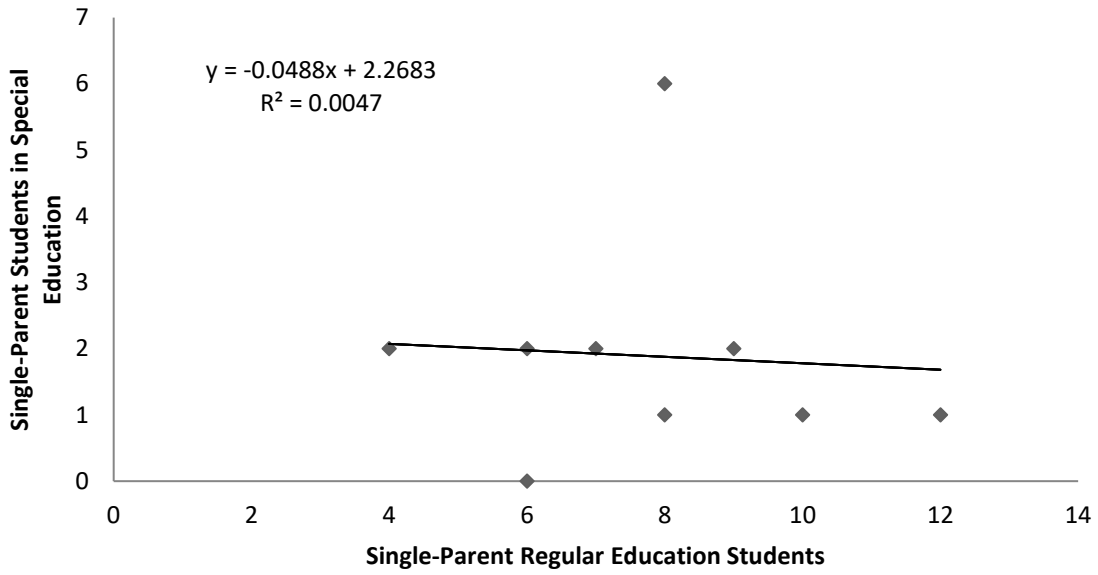

Figure 6. Scatterplot of District E 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 single-parent special education students in relationship to single-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = -0.0488x + 2.2683.

There was not a positive linear relationship in District F between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households (see Figure 7). A negative trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of -0.651. Therefore, the null hypothesis ($H1_0$) was not rejected.

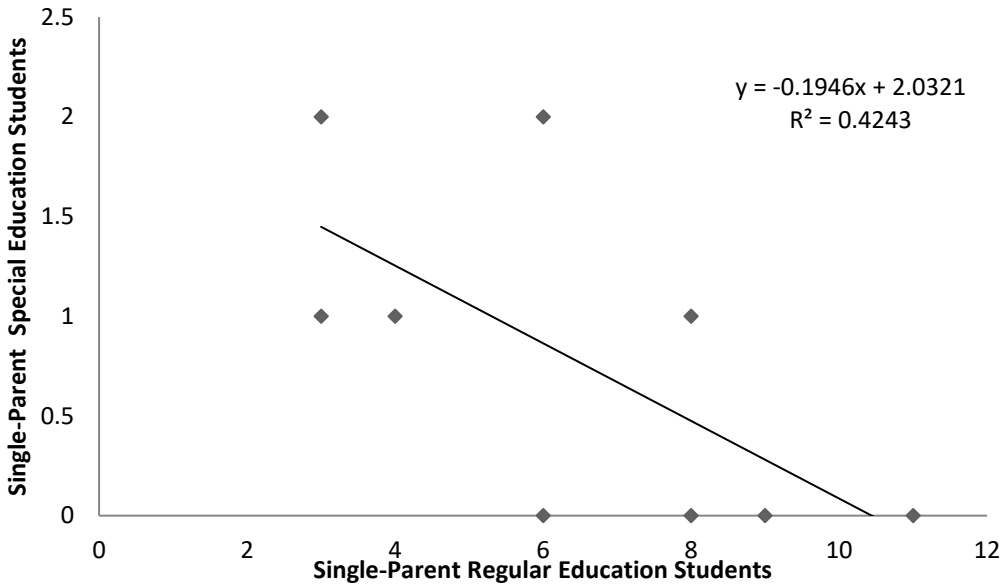

Figure 7. Scatterplot of District F 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 single-parent special education students in relationship to single-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = -0.1946x + 2.0321.

There was a positive linear relationship in all districts participating in this study between regular education students in single-parent households and special education students in single-parent households (see Figure 8). A positive trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of 0.446. The null hypothesis ($H1_0$) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ($H1_a$) was supported.

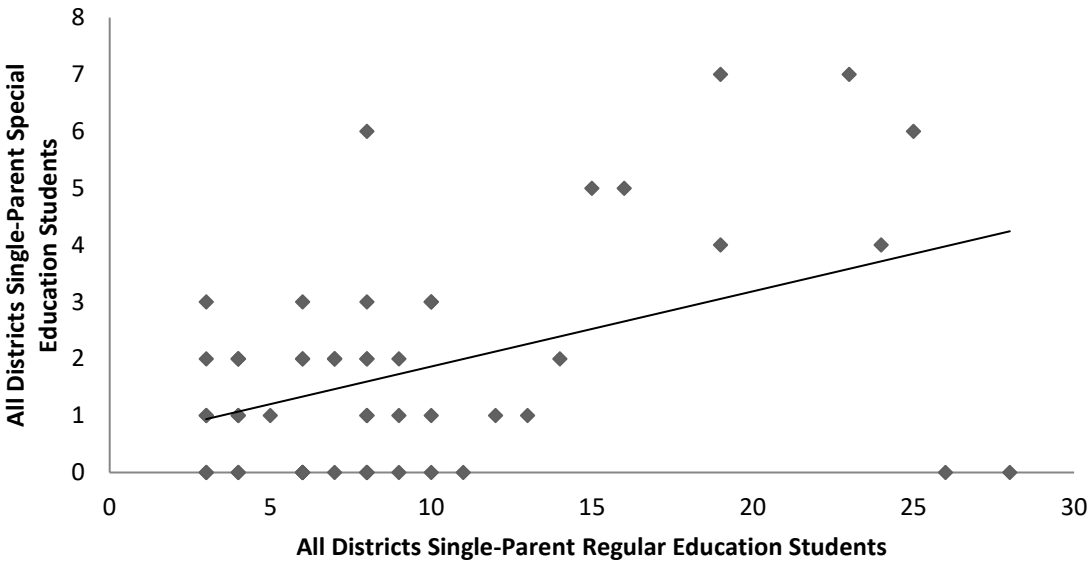

Figure 8. Scatterplot of District A 2013-2014 and Districts B, C, D, E, and F 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 single-parent special education students in relationship to single-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = 0.1322x + 0.5419.

There was a positive linear relationship in District A between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households (see Figure 9). A positive trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of 0.219. The null hypothesis ($H2_0$) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ($H2_a$) was supported.

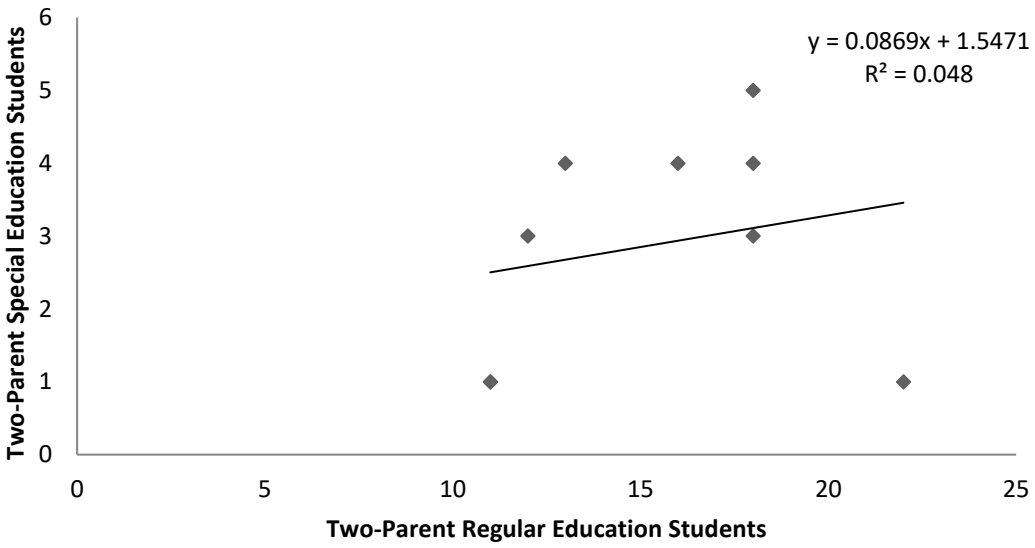

Figure 9. Scatterplot of District A 2013-2014 two-parent special education students in relationship to two-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = 0.0869x + 1.5471.

There was not a positive linear relationship in District B between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households (see Figure 10). A slight positive trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of 0.029. The null hypothesis ($H2_0$) was not rejected.

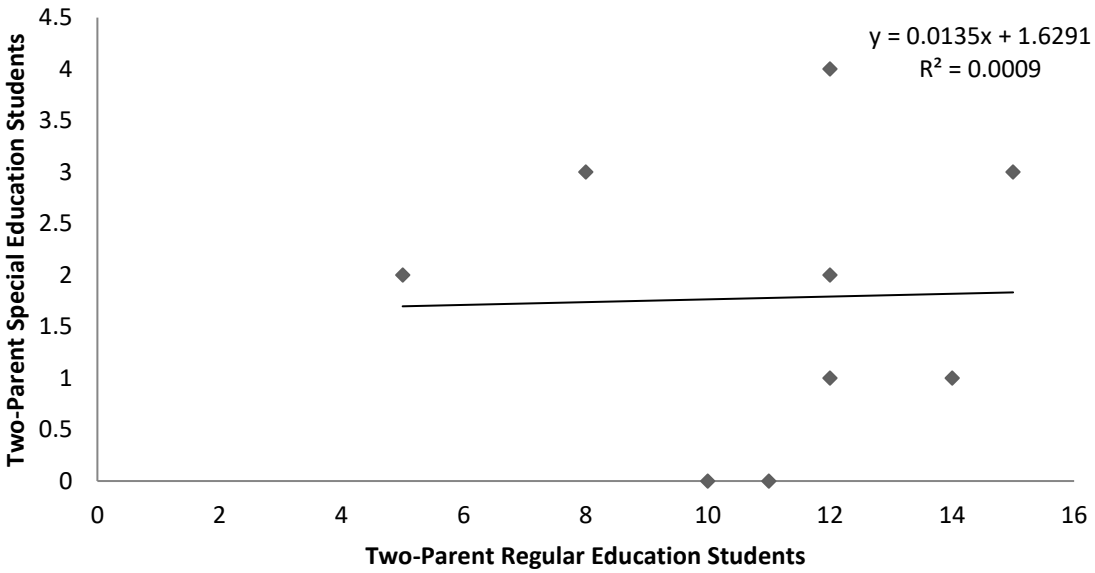

Figure 10. Scatterplot of District B 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 two-parent special education students in relationship to two-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = 0.0135x + 1.6291.

There was not a positive linear relationship in District C between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households (see Figure 11). A negative trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of -0.776. Therefore, null hypothesis ($H2_0$) was not rejected.

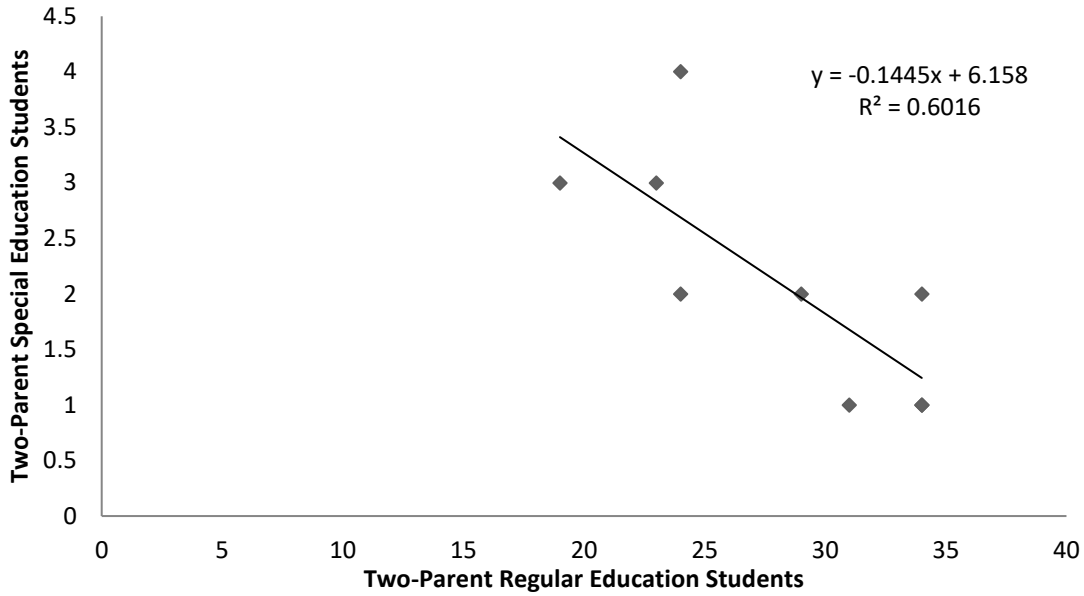

Figure 11. Scatterplot of District C 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 two-parent special education students in relationship to two-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = -0.1445x + 6.158.

There was a positive linear relationship in District D between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households (see Figure 12). A positive trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of 0.0646. The null hypothesis ($H2_0$) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ($H2_a$) was supported.

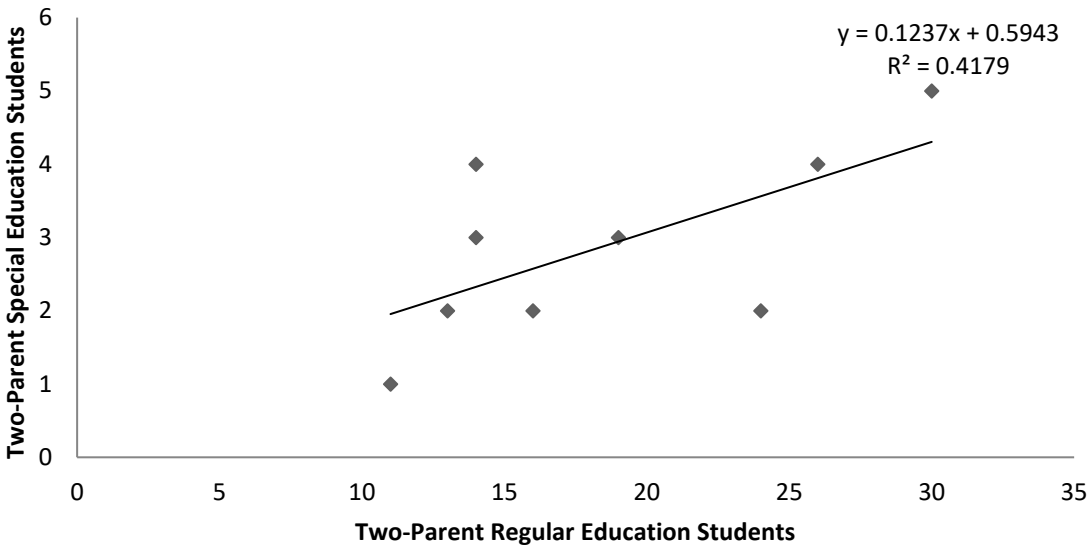

Figure 12. Scatterplot of District D 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 two-parent special education students in relationship to two-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = 0.1237x + 0.5943.

There was not a positive linear relationship in District E between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households (see Figure 13). A negative trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of -0.824. The null hypothesis ($H2_0$) was not rejected.

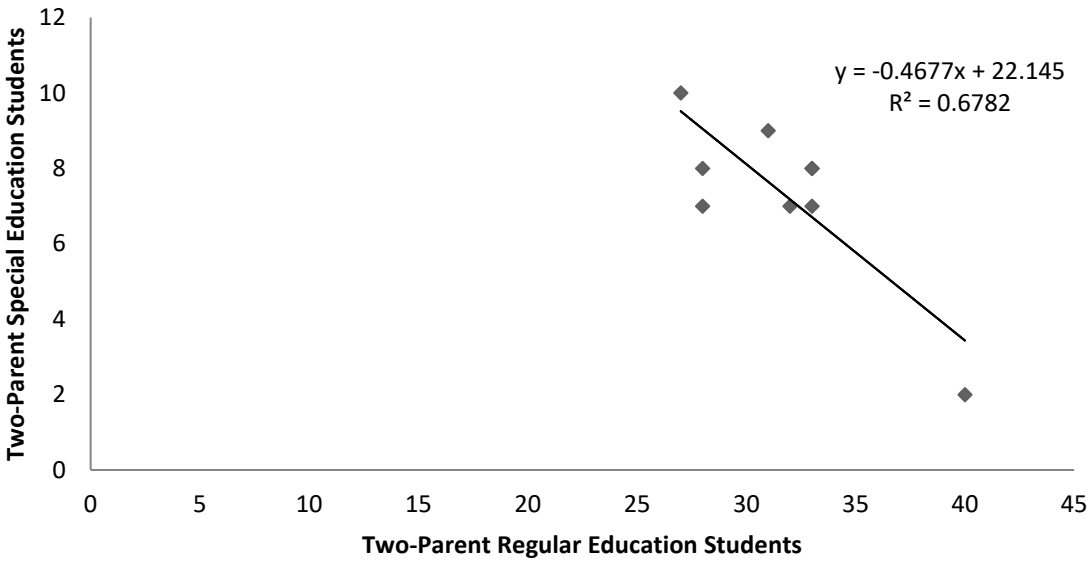

Figure 13. Scatterplot of District E 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 two-parent special education students in relationship to two-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = -0.4677x + 22.145.

There was not a positive linear relationship in District F between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households (see Figure 14). A negative trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of -0.158. The null hypothesis ($H2_0$) was not rejected.

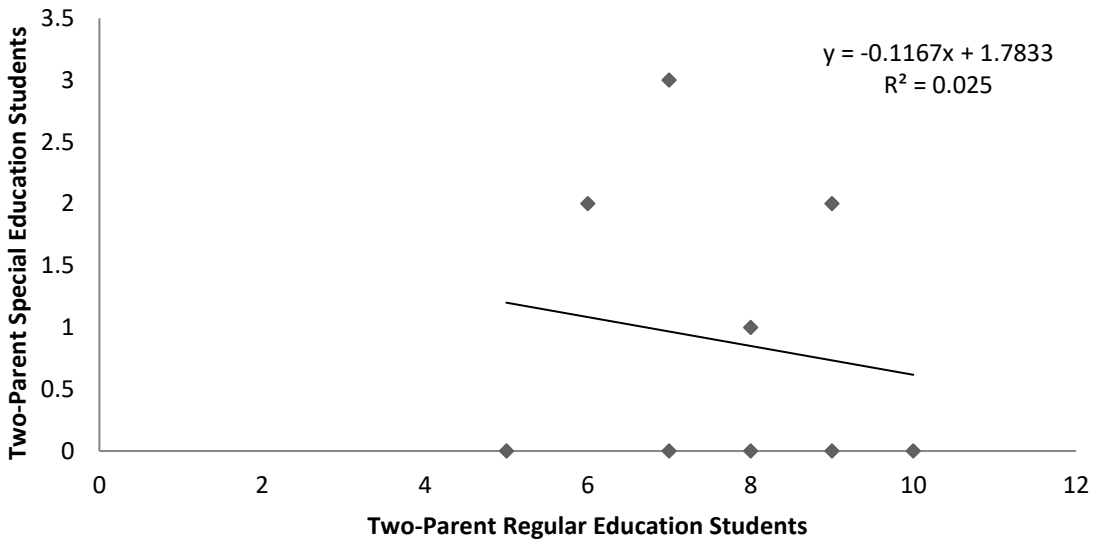

Figure 14. Scatterplot of District F 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 two-parent special education students in relationship to two-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation y = -0.1167x + 1.7833.

There was a positive linear relationship in all districts participating in this study between regular education students in two-parent households and special education students in two-parent households (see Figure 15). A positive trend line was drawn showing the correlation coefficient of 0.531. The null hypothesis ($H2_0$) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ($H2_a$) was supported.

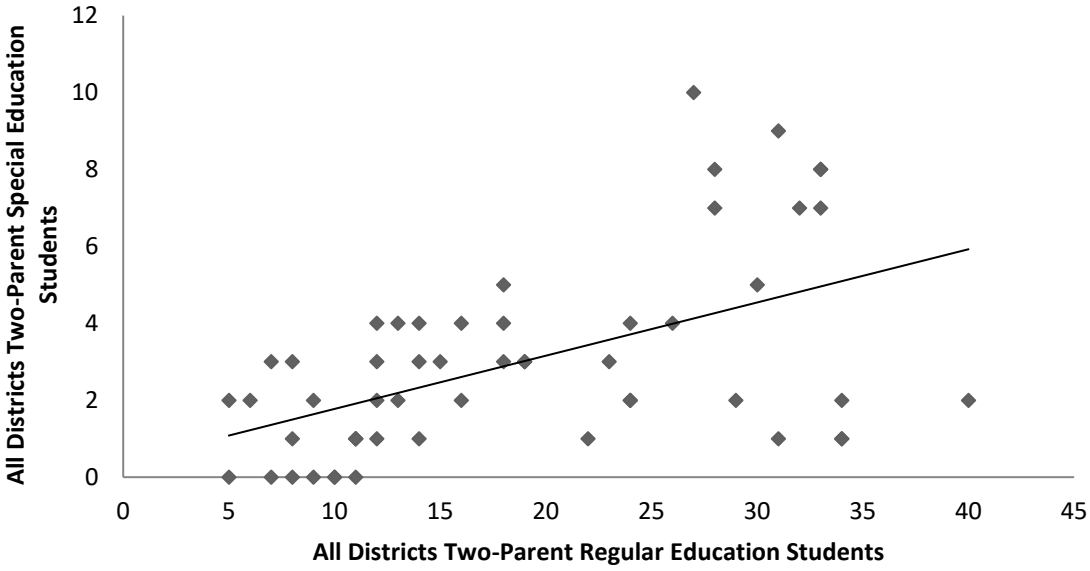

Figure 15. Scatterplot of District A 2013-2014 and Districts B, C, D, E, and F 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 two-parent special education students in relationship to two-parent regular education students. Solid dots represent individual student data. The dashed line represents the trend line of the data for the equation $y = 0.1384x + 0.3908$.

Qualitative results. The qualitative data were gathered from six interview questions and an opportunity for interviewees to give additional comments or feedback. The interviewees were persons responsible for overseeing special education students and/or special education documentation. There were commonalities and diversity among the respondents' answers.

Interview question one. How involved are single-parents in school functions, for example parent/teacher conferences? How involved are parents of a two-parent home in school functions, for example parent/teacher conferences?

The respondents saw no difference or little to no difference in the involvement of parents from both types of homes. Two of the respondents stated the small amount of

difference was due to lack of availability of single-parents, usually attributed to work schedules.

Interview question two. How engaged are students from single-parent homes in academic activities? How engaged are students from two-parent homes in academic activities? Do you perceive students from single-parent homes or two-parent homes tend to be more distracted during tasks? Why?

The majority of respondents stated there was little to no difference in academic activity engagement. However, the majority of the respondents stated they see more distractions among students from single-parent homes. The largest commonality among answers linked the distractions to extra chores and responsibilities of students in single-parent homes. In addition, distractions were linked to lack of preparation and organization, disruptive events in the household, and hunger.

Interview question three. Do students from single-parent homes or students from two-parent homes tend to struggle more with understanding new concepts? What are your perceptions as to the reason?

The majority of the respondents stated students from single-parent homes tend to struggle more with understanding new concepts. The most common reason given was lack of time for the single-parent to help students study and provide extra help with grasping concepts. Other reasons included less reading to and by the students, disruptions within the household, lack of financial resources, lack of educational experiences outside of the homes, and outside factors which affect students from both types of homes.

Interview questions four and six. What is the most common factor for students from single-parent homes placed in special education? What is the most common factor for students from two-parent homes placed in special education? What is the most common category of special education eligibility for students from single-parent homes? What is the most common category of special education eligibility for students from two-parent homes?

Most all the respondents answered these two questions similarly and/or tied factors and categories of eligibility together. The most common eligibility for both types of homes is Other Health Impairment, specifically ADHD, and Specific Learning Disability. Most stated the students from single-parent homes have a great impact from these disabilities due to lack of time for extra help, financial hardships, lack of structure and organization in the home, hunger, and lack of focus on educational importance.

Two respondents noted the delineation between genetically impacted disabilities, reported to be higher in two-parent homes, and environmentally impacted disabilities, reported to be higher in single-parent homes. One of these two respondents reported a high volume of emotional and behavioral disabilities in addition to higher incidents of emotional and behavioral problems with other categories of disabilities among students from single-parent households.

Interview question five. What is the most common classroom disruption among students in special education from single-parent homes? What is the most common classroom disruption among students in special education from two-parent homes?

Most respondents saw more disruptions among students from single-parent homes. The most common disruptive behaviors included attention seeking by verbally or

physically acting out, tiredness, and hunger. The most common disruptive behavior of students from two-parent homes was reported to be seeking academic assistance.

Interview question seven. Are there other comments you would like to make?

A few respondents added extra comments. The common perception was the type of home does have an impact on a student's success in the classroom. The impact stems from lack of time and attention available, lack of structure and organization, lack of outside learning experiences, and undiagnosed or untreated disorders.

The results of the cumulative findings of the interview questions showed a link between the negative effects of single-parent homes and students' academic difficulties. The negative effects exposed in the answers to the interview questions included lack of stability, lack of organization, lack of availability to assist with academic tasks, lack of attention to diagnoses and treatment, lack of exposure to outside academic influences, increased demands on the student from inside the household, and hunger. Several of these negative effects are linked to decreased financial security, less stable working hours, and lower education levels of the single parents.

The literature review revealed multiple studies concluding single-parent households expose children to a variety of negative effects on children (FamilyFact.org). The findings showed these negative effects are most harmful during the formative years of development (Cherlin, 2012). The effects can manifest in lack of brain development (Hair et al., 2015).

Conclusions

The primary premise of this study's conceptual framework was based on the work of Cherlin (2010). Cherlin (2010) stated the ideal family unit is the most important factor

during a child's formative years, and disruptions of the family unit have negative effects on the child. Cherlin's (2010) work revealed difficulties experienced by children involved in single-parent situations, even stable ones, and multiple transitions. Waldfogel et al. (2010) noted a direct link between fragmented families and the cognitive ability, behavior, and health of children.

The interview questions were designed to probe a group of educators to look at similar links to Cherlin's (2010) findings by examining their schools' student populations. Educators were asked to reveal any links to students from single-parent households and academic difficulties, specifically the students qualified for special education.

The findings from the qualitative data correlated with studies in the literature review. Thurston and Naverrete (2011) found a relationship between educational achievement and poverty in addition to developmental outcomes and poverty. FamilyFacts.org (2016) revealed students living in single-mother families with or without a cohabitating partner and children living with mother and stepfather are more likely to participate in delinquent behaviors, have lower grade point averages, have problems with teachers, have problems completing homework, and have problems paying attention in school compared to peers living in intact families.

FamilyFacts.org (2016) also reported students from single-parent or stepparent households report less supervision of schoolwork and less overall monitoring of social activities than peers in an intact household. Zill (2015) stated children raised in single-parent households have more behavior and achievement problems. In addition, Zill (2015) showed developmental problems have been directly linked to inadequate

supervision of children by single parents and the lack of resources within single-parent households.

This study revealed both positive and negative relationships between single-parent students in special education and single-parent regular education students, in addition to mixed findings in regard to the relationship between two-parent students and regular education students. Out of the six districts participating, five districts had a higher percentage of single-parent students in special education versus single-parent students in regular education. Therefore, these data show students in special education have a greater probability of residing in single-parent home than do peers in regular education.

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings of this study, implications for practice are commensurate with Hair et al. (2015) results, which are to increase the focus of resources on families living below 150% of the poverty level guidelines, specifically for early childhood education, in an effort to reduce the higher and longer-running expenses of remediating deficits or delays in academic performance. More money from community based resources should be funneled to families with children living below the poverty level, specifically single-parent homes. Also, utilizing outside resources for households including children living with grandparents would be an asset.

The information and data gained through this study would greatly support the implementation of a school social worker within small rural school districts. Although most districts could not financially support or justify a full-time position, a multi-district social worker could provide services throughout a large region and the cost be shared by

more than one district. One could conclude from the results of this study, if resources and services are provided within the homes of high risk students, the resources and services needed within the district would decrease.

By addressing the problem at the root source, the expenses and efforts to rectify the ramifications of the problem could be reduced. In-home visits would allow for greater insight to the needs of the students. If better insight is gained, resources can be distributed more efficiently to benefit the family as a whole and therefore increase the success of the student. The benefits of a school social worker would include increases in attendance rates, higher standardized test scores, decrease in special education expenses and at risk programs, and a decrease in discipline problems.

Districts should consider programs to assist student learning in the home. Audio books and educational videos would provide a helpful learning tool for students not receiving in-home reading time. Parenting classes to explain how curriculum is being implemented, i.e. how division is being taught in the fourth-grade classroom, could be provided by the school. Outreach to community resources would provide meals for the entire family as an incentive to attend helpful parenting tips. In addition, the classes could be recorded and a DVD provided to interested parents, as well as students leading and recording their own progress reports or conference to give the recording to the parents.

The results of this study can be used to assist school administrators with a better understanding of where and how resources have the most impact. The findings of this study can provide teachers with more insight as to the basis of students' academic struggles and direction on providing for students' needs. In addition to allotment of

district funds, grants and gifts from outside sources can be directed to areas and families providing the most impact.

Recommendations for Future Research

It would be advantageous to extend this study to high school students. In addition, inquiring about household income status relevant to the poverty level would allow for further insight. An interesting perspective could be gained from researching a correlation between single-parent students above and below the poverty level in special education and regular education. Another recommendation would be to follow the students throughout high school and into college or career years.

A more in-depth aspect of this study would be to look specifically at students in special education and delve deeper into household dynamics to determine any correlation between effects of households on deficits or disabilities and special education needs. The use of a school social worker would allow a greater view of the correlation of household effects on student success and provide feedback to the district. This feedback would allow the district to provide individualized assistance through services or funding in an effort to thwart any risks identified.

Summary

The background of this study was focused on the necessity of educators to identify the needs of students both at home and in the classroom. Due to a decline in the nation's economy leading to budget cuts in education, administrators must search for areas to fund that provide the most impact (Cox, Weiler, & Cornelius, 2013). Since educating students with special needs can cost more than twice that of students in regular

education, it is important to allocate funding to best meet the academic needs of those in special education (NEA, 2015).

The study's framework was based on the work of Cherlin (2010) and his idea the traditional two-parent family provides children with a greater opportunity for success during developmental and school years. Cherlin (2010) found multiple marriages, divorce, cohabitation, and other disturbances within a non-intact family lead to higher rates of academic and behavior concerns. This study revolved around determining if students from single-parent families are at higher risk for special education eligibility, and if so, what concerns are seen that impact the educational success of the students.

This study addressed the necessity to look at what is and is not working in the school setting and what, if any, outside factors impact the academic success of students. The significance of this study is based upon the need to determine family environment and educational placement in relation to educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

A mixed-method design was chosen for this study. Quantitative data were gained through spreadsheets completed by educators responsible for special education data and with access to regular education data. The spreadsheets were analyzed and data entered into Excel to produce scatterplots and determine correlation. Qualitative data were gathered from the same educators via interview questions. The interview answers were reviewed for similarities and diversity.

Although individual districts showed inconsistent positive and negative correlations, the combined data revealed a weak positive correlation between single-

parent special education students and single-parent regular education students. The correlation between two-parent special education students and two-parent regular education students was stronger, but still a weak positive.

Appendix A

Interview Questions for Special Education Coordinators

1) How involved are single parents in school functions, for example parent/teacher conferences? How involved are parents of a two-parent home in school functions, for example parent/teacher conferences?
2) How engaged are students from single-parent homes in academic activities? How engaged are students from two-parent homes in academic activities? Do you perceive students from single-parent homes or two-parent homes tend to be more distracted during tasks? Why?
3) Do students from single-parent homes or students from two-parent homes tend to struggle more with understanding new concepts? What are your perceptions as to the reason?
4) What is the most common factor for students from single-parent homes placed in special education? What is the most common factor for students from two-parent homes placed in special education?
5) What is the most common classroom disruption among students in special education from single-parent homes? What is the most common classroom disruption among students in special education from two-parent homes?
6) What is the most common category of special education eligibility for students from single-parent homes? What is the most common category of special education eligibility for students from two-parent homes?
7) Are there other comments you would like to make?

*Single parents are defined as parents not married to the biological father or mother of the student.

**Married parents and two-parent homes are considered as either biological or adoptive parents of the students living in the home together.

Appendix B

Spreadsheet

	Single-parent Special Ed	Two-parent Special Ed	Single-parent Regular Ed	Two-parent Regular Ed
Kindergarten				
1st Grade				
2nd Grade				
3rd Grade				
4th Grade				
5th Grade				
6th Grade				
7th Grade				
8th Grade				

_____District_____ SCHOOL YEAR

Appendix C

LINDENWOOD

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

DATE:	January 17, 2017
TO:	Melissa Cook
FROM:	Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board
STUDY TITLE:	[979211-2] An Examination of the Proportion of Special Education Students in Single Parent Homes in Comparison to Regular Education Students in Similar Households
IRB REFERENCE #:	
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Amendment/Modification
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	January 17, 2017
EXPIRATION DATE:	November 16, 2017
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this research project. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of November 16, 2017.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

If you have any questions, please contact Michael Leary at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

If you have any questions, please send them to IRB@lindenwood.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board's records.

Appendix D

Letter of Introduction

Dear _____,

Good day! My name is Melissa (Missy) Cook. I am a graduate student in the School of Education at Lindenwood University. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study designed to examine the relationship between single-parent and two-parent homes and educational placement.

As a participant, you will be asked to participate in a phone interview and complete a student data collection spreadsheet. Student data will be gathered from student rosters. The requested data will not include student names or identifying information.

There will be no compensation or anticipated risks to participants in this study. The questions and data collection are simple, and your confidentiality will be assured. All participants and their responses will be completely anonymous.

If you would like to participate in this research study, please read the Informed Consent that is attached and review the interview questions. If you agree to participate in this study, please complete the student data collection spreadsheet and respond with a convenient time to conduct the phone interview.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [redacted] or by phone at [redacted].

Thank you for your consideration,
Melissa Cook

Appendix E

Informed Consent

LINDENWOOD

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

An Examination of the Relationship Between Single-Parent and Two-Parent Homes and Educational Placement

Principal Investigator _Melissa Cook_____
Telephone: [redacted] E-mail: [redacted]

Participant_____ Contact info _____

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1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Melissa Cook under the guidance of Dr. Shelly Fransen. The purpose of this research is to examine the proportion of students in special education in comparison to regular education students in similar family and household environments.

2. a) Your participation will involve:
   - Responding to interview questions via phone. The interview session will be audio recorded for accuracy.
   - Completing a spreadsheet, sent via electronic mail, with the number of students in your school district in each of the categories provided for the 2013/14, 2014/15, and 2015/16 school years.

   b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 15-20 minutes for the interview and 15-20 minutes to complete the spreadsheet.

   Six to 10 special education coordinators from 10 school districts will be involved in this research.

3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about student educational placement and may help society.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Melissa Cook, [redacted] or the Supervising Faculty, Shelly Fransen, [redacted]. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost, at mabbott@lindenwood.edu or 636-949-4912.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____	_____
Participant's Signature Date	Participant's Printed Name
_____	_____
Signature of Principal Investigator Date	Investigator Printed Name

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Vita

Melissa M. Cook attended College of the Ozarks for her undergraduate degree and Lindenwood University for her master's and specialist's degrees. She obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology in 1992, Master's degree in 2007, and Specialist's degree in 2010. Melissa started her career in education with the Tri-Lakes Co-op in 2000 as an early childhood special education teacher. In 2004, Melissa started working half time as a special education process coordinator for Taneyville School District while continuing to work half-time for Tri-Lakes Co-op. In 2007, Melissa began full time at Taneyville School District where she has expanded her experiences in multiple positions as special education teacher, special education process coordinator, speech implementer, and counselor. Melissa has been a member of Missouri Council of Administrators of Special Education and Missouri School Counselors Association and is an active member of Alpha Psi Chapter, Delta State Missouri, Delta Kappa Gamma International.