

# WORK-FAMILY ROLE STRAIN OF SINGLE PARENTS: THE EFFECTS OF ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY

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*Although a significant body of research exists on role conflict and role ambiguity, the relative impact of these role stressors on role strain has not been studied in single parents. Given the increasing proportion of single parent households in the labor force, we examine the effects of work-family role conflict and work-family role ambiguity on the work-family role strain of single parents. The current study fills this void in work-family conflict literature via an initial national mail survey of single parents. A second validation study via e-mail confirms the findings of the mail survey. Results indicate work-family role ambiguity to be the greater source of work-family role strain in single parents. Implications for both marketers of convenience and time-saving goods/services, and employers of single parents are presented.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the seminal work by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal (1964) on role conflict and role ambiguity in organizations, scholars have published a substantial body of theoretical and empirical research on role theory. Based on Kahn et al. (1964), Greenhaus and Beutell (1985, p. 77) defined work-family conflict as "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect." As a source of stress, work-family conflict has been related to increased health risks for employed parents (Frone, Russell and Cooper 1997), poorer performance of the parenting role, decreased productivity at work, and reduced life satisfaction (Higgins, Duxbury and Irving 1992). The potential for increased work-family conflict is even greater for single parents, since the sole parent is responsible for reconciling the competing demands of work and family life. Although researchers have studied role strain of single parents (Heath and Orthner 1999; Campbell and Moen, 1992), inadequate attention to work-family concerns of

single parents has been identified as a crucial gap in work-family research (Parasuraman and Greenhaus 2002). Given the increasing proportion of single parent households in the United States, the current study attempts to fill the gap in work-family conflict research on single parents.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Single Parenthood

In the last two decades, American families have gone through major changes that exert dramatic influences on family life. Due to increased divorce rates, single parent families with children under 18 accounted for 28 percent--23 percent single mothers, 5 percent single fathers--of the family households in 1999 (Paulin and Lee 2002). In 2000 (the date of the most recent complete U.S. Census data), there were 10 million single mothers and 2 million single fathers (Gardyn 2002). During the 1990s, single parent families grew nearly five times faster than the number of married couples with children (Steil 2001) and this trend has continued into the 2000s (Jayson 2005). Consequently, single parents could become a profitable segment for marketers of convenience foods and time-saving goods.

### Work-Family Role Strain

Prior research has established that job strain can have detrimental effects on the mental and physical health of employees (Bacharach, Bamberger and Sonnenstuhl 2002; Gunsalely 2002; Spector, Chen and O'Connell 2000; Kahn and Byosiore 1992; Schaubroeck, Cotton and Jennings 1989), which can cost organizations billions of dollars in lost productivity, employee absenteeism, and disability claims (Xie and Schaubroeck 2001). Goode (1960, p. 485) defined role strain as "difficulty in meeting given role demands." The demands of work and family roles have been found to put single mothers at high risk of strain and decreased physical and emotional well-being (Burden 1986). Researchers have identified single parenthood as a primary source of stress (Voydanoff and Donnelly 1998) and called for early identification of work and family-related sources of stress for single mothers and single fathers (Heath and Orthner 1999). Meta-analytic results have confirmed a negative relationship between work-family conflict and job and life satisfaction (Kossek and Ozeki 1998).

While reviewing the sources of conflict between work and family roles, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985, p. 82) proposed, "self-perceptions of role requirements are significant sources of pressures within a given domain." Thus, the expectations of single parents regarding how to fulfill their multiple role obligations will guide their behaviors. Within the work and/or family domain, discrepancies between single parents' self-expectations and others' expectations regarding role behaviors can produce work-family role strain (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Kahn et al. 1964).

According to the scarcity approach to human energy (Marks 1977), the personal resources of time, energy, and attention are finite. Resources spent on the work role generally cannot be devoted to the family role and vice-versa (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). Thus, the competing demands of work and family roles may produce role strain in single parents.

Thus, traditional theories dictate that single parents are likely to experience role strain. However, recent studies have challenged the notion that engagement in work and family roles is depleting (Rothbard 2001). Based on Marks's (1977) expansion approach to human energy and Sieber's (1974) theory of role accumulation, Rothbard (2001, p. 661) outlined the enrichment perspective where "the quality of the role experience determines whether participation in a role enhances or detracts from functioning." O'Neil and Greenberger (1994, p. 108) found that high commitments to both work and parenting roles are not associated with significantly greater role strain and concluded that "time and energy constraints may not be the determining factor in individuals' reported level of role strain." Empirical studies have documented the benefits of occupying multiple roles (Greenhaus and Powell 2006; Kirchmeyer 1992; Pietromonaco, Manis and Frohardt-Lane 1986). Thus, we cannot assume that multiple role demands on single parents will always result in work-family role strain.

### Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

Role conflict and role ambiguity have been found to influence job related outcomes such as job stress and performance (Netemeyer, Brashear-Alejandro and Boles 2004), job satisfaction (Bettencourt and Brown 2003; Boles, Wood and Johnson 2003), job burnout (Bhanugopan and Fish 2006), work-family conflict (Foley and Hang-Yue 2005), and turnover intentions (Hang-Yue, Foley and Loi 2005). House and Rizzo (1972, p. 479) distinguished between role conflict and role ambiguity by operationalizing role conflict in terms of "congruency-incongruency" or "compatibility-incompatibility" between "(a) the respondent's standards or values and defined role behavior, (b) the time, resources, or capabilities of the focal person and defined role behavior, (c) several roles the respondent must fill, and (d) various organizational inputs from policies, rules, or cues from related persons." In contrast, role ambiguity is operationalized in terms of "deficiencies" in

“(a) the existence or clarity of behavioral requirements serving to define role behavior, and (b) the predictability of the outcome of one’s behavior” (House and Rizzo 1972, p. 479).

Single parents are likely to perceive role conflict and role ambiguity while reconciling the demands of work and family life. However, the consequences of incompatibility of role demands (role conflict) and lack of clarity in role expectations (role ambiguity) may be different. Although the literature on role dynamics have emphasized that, as a predictor of organizational outcomes, role ambiguity is more important than role conflict (Tubre and Collins 2000; Jackson and Schuler 1985; House and Rizzo 1972; Rizzo, House and Lirtzman 1970), these effects have not been studied in single parents. With the growing representation of single parents in the workforce, knowledge regarding the effects of work-family role conflict and ambiguity on strain of single parents should be valuable to academicians and practitioners.

### HYPOTHESES

Single parents are expected to perceive role conflict caused by difficulties in the allocation of time, energy, or other resources between the responsibilities of work and family life. Although the alternatives of work and family are unlikely to be intrinsically conflictual (Komarovsky 1976), external role pressures and role salience are likely to affect the direction of interference between work and family roles (Greenhaus and Powell 2003). Past research has found support for the positive effects of role conflict on strain (Burden 1986; Katz and Piotrkowski 1983; Miles 1976). Formally stated:

*Hypothesis 1:* Work-family role conflict is positively related to role strain for single parents.

Komarovsky (1976, p. 228) conceptualized ambiguity as a confusion requiring “guessing the normative expectations of the role partner

or experiencing mental conflict between alternative possibilities.” Single parents may not know what is expected of them to fulfill the work and family roles satisfactorily. The values single parents hold regarding role requirements of work and family domains may have implications for role strain (Carlson and Kacmar 2000). Lack of clarity about behavioral expectations of roles has been related to increased tension and anxiety (Van Sell, Brief and Schuler 1981), and meta-analytic results have confirmed the negative effect of role ambiguity on commitment, involvement, and satisfaction (Fisher and Gitelson 1983). Therefore, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 2:* Work-family role ambiguity is positively related to role strain for single parents.

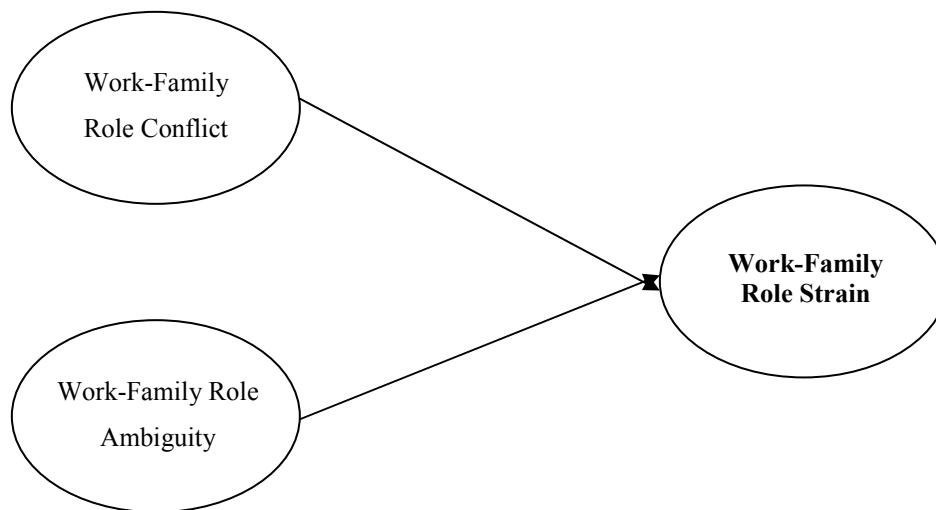
Our hypothesized relationships are illustrated in Figure 1.

### METHOD

#### Measures

The scale items used in the current study are listed in the Appendix. Based on Komarovsky (1976), Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981) developed a scale that includes items measuring work-family role conflict between normative phenomena, and work-family role ambiguity about norms. According to Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981, p. 231), Komarovsky’s (1976) scale is “a comprehensive conceptualization, broad enough to encompass role strains emerging from structural work and family demands on both men and women.” This scale has been widely used to measure work-family conflict (Parise 2002; Senécal, Vallerand and Guay 2001; Higgins, Duxbury and Johnson 2000; Thomas and Ganster 1995; Warren and Johnson 1995; Higgins, Duxbury and Lee 1994; Campbell and Moen 1992; Higgins, Duxbury and Irving 1992; Duxbury and Higgins 1991; Googins and Burden 1987; Burden 1986). The items capturing the constructs of work-family role conflict and work-family role ambiguity in this study were adapted from Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981). These should adequately

**FIGURE 1**  
**Model of Work-Family Role Strain for Single Parents**



capture feelings of discomfort or tension of single parents who are facing difficulty in meeting role demands (Goode 1960). Furthermore, in order to specifically address role ambiguity of single parents, an item was added to the role ambiguity scale assessing knowledge of responsibilities as a single parent.

The items measuring the construct of work-family role strain were adapted from (Greenberger 1989). Researchers have used this scale to measure the construct of work-family role strain (O'Neil and Greenberger 1994; Greenberger and O'Neil 1990).

#### **Data Collection**

The respondents in this study were a national random sample of single parents. This single parent status could be the result of divorce, separation, death of a spouse, or never married. The data collection involved two phases, an initial survey via traditional post and a validation study via the Internet.

In the first phase, a marketing research firm mailed 4,000 questionnaires to a national random sample of single parents. Fifty percent of the out-going mail was addressed to single mothers and the remaining 50 percent to single

fathers. Respondents were selected from all states in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. A personalized cover letter requesting that the subjects participate in the study was mailed along with the questionnaire. A prepaid business reply envelope was also provided for the return of the completed questionnaire.

A total of 188 participants returned the completed questionnaire. Each returned questionnaire was reviewed for completeness, and questionnaires that contained missing responses for the variables critical to the study were dropped from data analysis. This procedure resulted in the elimination of 34 questionnaires, resulting in 154 usable responses, for a 4.05 percent response rate. A comparison of early and late respondents yielded no significant differences relevant to the study, suggesting that nonresponse bias was not a problem (Armstrong and Overton 1977).

In the second phase (validation study), the same questionnaire was first e-mailed to 12,000 single parents--80 percent addressed to single mothers and 20 percent to single fathers--in all states in U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. These percentage proportions were chosen because 80 percent of single parent families are headed by a single mother (Paulin and Lee 2002). A total of 230 recipients responded.

Two of these responses were not usable, thus providing us 228 usable responses.

In a second e-mail wave, the 230 addresses that responded were removed from the list of 12,000 and 11,770 e-mail questionnaires were sent. This time, 156 responded. Three of the 156 responses were unusable providing 153 usable responses. Thus, the two waves of e-mails generated 381 usable responses, and a response rate of 3.18 percent. A comparison of early and late respondents yielded no significant differences relevant to the study, suggesting that nonresponse bias was not a problem (Armstrong and Overton 1977).

### **Demographics**

A comparison of the two phases of data collection indicated no statistically significant differences between the two groups in terms of demographics. Approximately 79 percent of the respondents in the mail survey were single females. More than half of the respondents earned less than \$30,000 annually. On average, they were 37 years old and had completed 13.6 years of schooling. Forty-six percent of the respondents had one child and 39 percent of the respondents had two children living at home. Finally, they worked, on average, 36 hours per week.

The demographic profile of the respondents of the validation study (e-mail survey) was comparable to that of the initial mail survey. Eighty-three percent of the respondents of the e-mail survey were single females. More than half of them earned less than \$30,000 annually. On average, they were 38 years old and completed 13.7 years of schooling. Also, 47.5 percent of the respondents had one child and 29.7 percent had two children living at home. The average employment of these respondents was 41.5 hours per week.

Furthermore, the demographic make-up of our respondents, despite some minor differences, compared well against the general population of single parents in the United States, according to the 2000 census (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

For instance, 81 percent of the general single parent population was female, the median annual income was slightly less than \$30,000, 56 percent had one child, 30 percent had two children, etc. Therefore, despite a seemingly low response rate, not only was there internal consistency of the demographic make-up of each data collection (traditional post and e-mail), there was external consistency with the general population of single parents in the United States.

## **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

### **Psychometric Assessment of Measures**

We assessed the convergent and discriminant validity of work-family role conflict, work-family role ambiguity, and work-family role strain by performing a confirmatory factor analysis with the mail survey dataset using LISREL 8.53. The covariance matrix of the 15 items shown in the Appendix was used as the input matrix, and all items were specified to load on their respective factor. The initial fit of the three factor measurement model was unsatisfactory ( $\chi^2 = 236.22$  for 87 d.f., Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.83, Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) = 0.77, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.10). Although the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was acceptable (0.95), an inspection of the standardized residuals indicated that the fit can be improved by respecifying the measurement model. Based on the standardized residuals and modification indices, one item measuring work-family role conflict, and two items measuring work-family role strain were deleted from the measurement model. The respecified measurement model fit the data very well ( $\chi^2 = 54.78$  for 51 d.f.,  $p = 0.33$ , GFI = 0.94, AGFI = 0.92, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.02). Table 1 displays the standardized path coefficients ( $\lambda$ ) of the manifest indicators, the composite reliabilities, and the average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent construct in the measurement model. The correlation matrix with means and standard deviations of all the final indicators are provided in Table 2.

**TABLE 1**  
**Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Measurement Model (Mail Survey)**

| Constructs and Indicators                                                     | $\lambda$ (t-value) | AVE <sup>a</sup> | Composite Reliability |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Work-Family Role Conflict (RC)</b>                                         |                     | 0.58             | 0.81                  |
| 1. I do not have a good balance between my job and my family time.            | 0.81 (10.79)        |                  |                       |
| 2. My time off from work does not match other family members' schedules well. | 0.73 (9.43)         |                  |                       |
| 3. I never seem to find enough time for the children.                         | 0.75 (9.78)         |                  |                       |
| <b>Work-Family Role Ambiguity (RA)</b>                                        |                     | 0.49             | 0.74                  |
| 1. I worry that other people at work think my family interferes with my job.  | 0.76 (10.12)        |                  |                       |
| 2. I worry whether I should work less and spend more time with my children.   | 0.74 (9.76)         |                  |                       |
| 3. I know what my responsibilities are as a single parent.                    | 0.58 (7.16)         |                  |                       |
| <b>Work-Family Role Strain (RS)</b>                                           |                     | 0.57             | 0.89                  |
| 1. I feel pulled in too many directions.                                      | 0.72 (9.97)         |                  |                       |
| 2. Responsibilities at home are putting me under some strain.                 | 0.86 (12.95)        |                  |                       |
| 3. Responsibilities at work are putting me under some strain.                 | 0.83 (12.30)        |                  |                       |
| 4. I let things go around the house because I have too much to do.            | 0.65 (8.76)         |                  |                       |
| 5. When I am relaxing I feel guilty about the things I might be doing.        | 0.68 (9.23)         |                  |                       |
| 6. I feel burned out.                                                         | 0.77 (11.02)        |                  |                       |
| <sup>a</sup> AVE = Average Variance Extracted                                 |                     |                  |                       |

As Table 1 indicates, the AVE for each construct was equal to or exceeded 0.50. In addition, the t-values of each of the 12 path coefficients were significant (greater than 1.96), thereby establishing the convergent validity of the model (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). The AVE for each construct was greater than the squared correlation between each pair of constructs. Thus, the discriminant validity of the latent constructs was established (Fornell and Larcker 1981). In addition, the correlation between each pair of constructs was constrained to 1.0 and the  $\chi^2$  for the constrained model was compared to that of the unconstrained model. For all such comparisons, the  $\Delta \chi^2_{(1)}$  was greater than 3.84, thereby confirming the discriminant validity of the measurement model (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). The coefficient  $\alpha$  values for work-family role conflict (0.80), work-family role ambiguity (0.73), and work-family

role strain (0.88) met the recommended standards (Nunnally 1978).

### Hypotheses Tests

We tested the research hypotheses by examining the significance of the path coefficients of a structural model of work-family role conflict and work-family role ambiguity as predictors of work-family role strain. Table 3 presents the standardized path coefficients generated by LISREL 8.53.

As Table 3 indicates, Hypothesis 1 was not supported since the effect of work-family role conflict on work-family role strain was not significant ( $\gamma = -0.04$ ,  $t = -0.40$ ). However, work-family role ambiguity had a significant positive effect on work-family role strain ( $\gamma = 0.81$ ,  $t = 6.50$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was

**TABLE 2**  
**Correlation Matrices**

| Survey   | Item | RC1    | RC2    | RC3    | RA1    | RA2    | RA3    | RS1    | RS2    | RS3    | RS4    | RS5    | RS6  |
|----------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| Mail     | RC1  | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RC2  | 0.61** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RC3  | 0.62** | 0.49** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RA1  | 0.29** | 0.35** | 0.38** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RA2  | 0.25** | 0.31** | 0.37** | 0.59** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RA3  | 0.22** | 0.29** | 0.27** | 0.40** | 0.42** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RS1  | 0.29** | 0.23** | 0.33** | 0.44** | 0.37** | 0.34** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RS2  | 0.21** | 0.28** | 0.29** | 0.46** | 0.44** | 0.40** | 0.66** | 1.00   |        |        |        |      |
|          | RS3  | 0.20*  | 0.26** | 0.27** | 0.53** | 0.52** | 0.41** | 0.56** | 0.73** | 1.00   |        |        |      |
|          | RS4  | 0.18*  | 0.23** | 0.24** | 0.42** | 0.42** | 0.45** | 0.44** | 0.50** | 0.54** | 1.00   |        |      |
|          | RS5  | 0.18*  | 0.28** | 0.25** | 0.42** | 0.41** | 0.33** | 0.48** | 0.54** | 0.59** | 0.49** | 1.00   |      |
|          | RS6  | 0.22** | 0.30** | 0.27** | 0.45** | 0.43** | 0.41** | 0.55** | 0.70** | 0.59** | 0.53** | 0.50** | 1.00 |
|          |      |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
| Mean     |      | 3.73   | 3.48   | 3.61   | 2.43   | 3.48   | 4.40   | 4.25   | 4.49   | 4.31   | 4.33   | 4.37   | 4.47 |
| Std.dev. |      | 1.74   | 1.78   | 1.65   | 1.64   | 1.69   | 1.35   | 1.79   | 1.66   | 1.91   | 1.81   | 1.86   | 1.87 |
| e-Mail   | RC1  | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RC2  | 0.60** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RC3  | 0.61** | 0.60** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RA1  | 0.35** | 0.31** | 0.47** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RA2  | 0.49** | 0.44** | 0.58** | 0.53** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RA3  | 0.29** | 0.25** | 0.41** | 0.40** | 0.46** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RS1  | 0.24** | 0.22** | 0.34** | 0.35** | 0.34** | 0.45** | 1.00   |        |        |        |        |      |
|          | RS2  | 0.26** | 0.25** | 0.38** | 0.35** | 0.38** | 0.44** | 0.64** | 1.00   |        |        |        |      |
|          | RS3  | 0.34** | 0.28** | 0.41** | 0.42** | 0.45** | 0.35** | 0.47** | 0.55** | 1.00   |        |        |      |
|          | RS4  | 0.17** | 0.12*  | 0.30** | 0.32** | 0.25** | 0.35** | 0.47** | 0.44** | 0.45** | 1.00   |        |      |
|          | RS5  | 0.19** | 0.16** | 0.28** | 0.29** | 0.27** | 0.30** | 0.47** | 0.48** | 0.39** | 0.51** | 1.00   |      |
|          | RS6  | 0.28** | 0.26** | 0.33** | 0.25** | 0.33** | 0.42** | 0.59** | 0.63** | 0.50** | 0.47** | 0.56** | 1.00 |
|          |      |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |      |
| Mean     |      | 3.85   | 3.69   | 4.05   | 2.82   | 3.90   | 4.64   | 4.77   | 4.99   | 4.83   | 4.72   | 5.01   | 5.00 |
| Std.dev. |      | 1.58   | 1.66   | 1.65   | 1.73   | 1.69   | 1.22   | 1.71   | 1.59   | 1.68   | 1.67   | 1.76   | 1.65 |

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

supported. As the fit indices indicate (see Table 3), the structural model fit the data very well.

### Validation Study

The 381 responses generated by two waves of e-mail surveys were used to validate the findings of the mail survey. A structural model of work-family role conflict and work-family role ambiguity as predictors of work-family role strain was analyzed using LISREL 8.53. The standardized path coefficients ( $\lambda$ ) of the manifest indicators, the composite reliabilities, and the AVE for each latent construct in the measurement model were similar to that of the first study (see Table 1). Hypothesis 1 was not supported since the effect of work-family role conflict on work-family role strain was not significant ( $\gamma = -0.11$ ,  $t = -0.86$ ). However, work-family role ambiguity had a significant positive effect on work-family role strain ( $\gamma = 0.77$ ,  $t = 5.68$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported (see Table 3). The fit indices of the model were satisfactory. The coefficient  $\alpha$  values for work-family role conflict (0.82), work-family role ambiguity (0.72), and work-family role strain (0.86) met the recommended standards (Nunnally 1978).

### DISCUSSION

Although a limitation of this study is the low response rate, nonetheless, the results of our study underscore the significance of work-family role ambiguity as a role stressor of single parents, as work-family role ambiguity had a significantly positive effect on work-family role strain. This has implications for both marketers of convenience and time-saving goods/services, and employers of single parents.

For employers, the relative importance of role ambiguity over role conflict in explaining role strain is consistent with past research on role stress in organizations (e.g., Fisher and Gitelson 1983; Schuler 1980; House and Rizzo 1972; Rizzo, House and Lirtzman 1970). This implies that single parents are no different from

other employees when it comes to reasons why role strain is experienced. However, this does underscore the necessity for thorough job analysis in order to produce specific job descriptions detailing employee responsibilities and tasks for his or her job role within the organization. Also, human resource policies that reduce or eliminate work role ambiguity should have a positive effect on the performance of employees. Employers should ensure that employees know their rights, duties, and responsibilities, know how to fulfill these duties and responsibilities, and know the consequences of their role performance to self, others, and the organization (Kahn et al. 1964). In this way, employees—whether single, married, a dual parent, or a single parent—can “carry out their work role assignments in a dependable fashion” (Katz 1964, p. 132). This can serve to eliminate work related role ambiguity and, in turn, reduce work related role strain.

Furthermore, since this study investigated family role issues, an implication of this study does apply specifically to single parents. By definition, a single parent's family role is different than that of a dual parent. Most important is that the single parent must assume the family roles of both mother and father for his or her children. Therefore, employers can provide assistance for their single parent employees that can help to alleviate family role ambiguity as a source of work-family role strain. Specifically, an employee assistance program (EAP) should have the information and support system in place to help a single parent clarify his or her family role responsibilities as a single parent (Davidson and Herlihy 1999). This could reduce family role ambiguity and the resulting family role strain.

By assisting all employees with the reduction of work role ambiguity, an organization will be eliminating a great cause of role strain in its employees. Furthermore, by encouraging single parent employees to use EAPs to ease family role ambiguity, organizations will be greatly aiding single parent employees.



**TABLE 3**  
**Structural Model Results (Standardized Path Estimates With t-values)**

| Linkages in the model                                | Hypotheses        | $\lambda_{\text{Mail}}$ | $\lambda_{\text{e-Mail}}$ |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Work-Family Role Conflict → Work-Family Role Strain  | 1                 | -0.04 (-0.40)           | -0.11 (-0.86)             |
| Work-Family Role Ambiguity → Work-Family Role Strain | 2                 | 0.81 (6.50)             | 0.77 (5.68)               |
|                                                      | Model diagnostics |                         |                           |
|                                                      | $X^2$             | 54.78                   | 149.12                    |
|                                                      | <i>df</i>         | 51                      | 51                        |
|                                                      | GFI               | 0.94                    | 0.93                      |
|                                                      | AGFI              | 0.92                    | 0.90                      |
|                                                      | Standardized RMR  | 0.04                    | 0.05                      |
|                                                      | CFI               | 0.99                    | 0.98                      |
|                                                      | PNFI              | 0.75                    | 0.74                      |
|                                                      | NNFI              | 0.99                    | 0.97                      |
|                                                      | RMSEA             | 0.02                    | 0.07                      |

Additionally, all single parent employees should be encouraged to use organizational resources such as, flextime, childcare, etc. to optimize their allocation of time in balancing the demands of work and family (Rothbard, Phillips and Dumas 2005). The resulting reduction in work-family role strain helps both employees and employers through lowered health care costs and higher employee performance (Anderson 2005; Lepine, Podsakoff and Lepine 2005).

For marketers, the reduction of role ambiguity can also be used as a promotional strategy for products/services marketed to single parents. Marketers of convenience products/services and time-saving durables can emphasize the benefits of their products to single parents by describing how the consumption of these products allows consumers (single parents) to fulfill their multiple role obligations. For instance, food retailers could provide in-store information guiding the consumer to nutritional dinner choices in order to help reduce the ambiguity of the single parent's role as nutritional provider for his or her family. However, additional research is needed to ascertain the effects of these promotional strategies on convenience consumption.

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#### **APPENDIX**

##### **Full Survey Scale Items**

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Work-Family Role Conflict <sup>a</sup> (Bohen and Viveros-Long 1981)

1. My job keeps me away from my family too much. <sup>c</sup>
2. I do not have a good balance between my job and my family time.
3. My time off from work does not match other family members' schedules well.
4. I never seem to find enough time for the children.

Work-Family Role Ambiguity <sup>a</sup> (Bohen and Viveros-Long 1981)

1. I worry that other people at work think my family interferes with my job.
2. I worry whether I should work less and spend more time with my children.
3. I know what my responsibilities are as a single parent.

Work-Family Role Strain <sup>b</sup> (Greenberger 1989)

1. I feel pulled in too many directions.
2. Responsibilities at home are putting me under some strain.

3. Responsibilities at work are putting me under some strain.
4. I let things go around the house because I have too much to do.
5. When I am relaxing I feel guilty about the things I might be doing.
6. I think I work too many hours. <sup>c</sup>
7. When I go to bed at night, my mind is often full of all the things I have to tomorrow. <sup>c</sup>
8. I feel burned out.

<sup>a</sup> Items measured on a seven point scale: Never to Always

<sup>b</sup> Items measured on a seven point scale: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

<sup>c</sup> Item deleted based on confirmatory factor analysis.