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# Retention and Mental Health: College and Single Parents

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Retention and Mental Health: College and Single Parents

by

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MSW Clinical Research Paper

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Master of Social Work

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

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### **Abstract**

Literature identifies the barriers single parent students face in persisting and attaining postsecondary education; however, research is still quite limited specifically on the role conflict these students face and the direct impact role conflict has on mental health and retention. The author of this study analyzed data from a quantitative, anonymous online survey with single parent students who attend the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities and receive support services from the Student Parent HELP Center at the University. The study found a trend between role conflict and retention of single parent students; however, the finding was not significant. These findings provide valuable information for University retention policy as well as support services provided by social workers. More research is needed to further examine the issue of role conflict on student's mental health and postsecondary retention.

### **Introduction and Purpose Statement**

Nearly a quarter of all college students today, 3.9 million students, are parents, and 13 percent of all college students are single parents (Mosle and Patel, 2012; Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success, 2011; Miller, Gault, and Thorman, 2011; and Goldrick-Rab and Sorensen, 2010). Research has shown that the returns of a postsecondary education are substantial for student parents. Individual lifetime earnings for those with a high school diploma are around \$1,117,000 as compared to individuals with bachelor's degrees who earn around \$1,939,000 (Costello, 2014; Miller, Gault, and Thorman, 2011). Children of parents who have completed postsecondary education are more likely to pursue a postsecondary education as well (Costello, 2014; Miller, Gault, and Thorman, 2011). Additionally, children with more educated parents tend to have better cognitive skills and higher academic achievement. They are more likely to be born at term and with a healthy birth weight than children with less educated parents (Costello, 2014; Livingston and Cohn, 2013). Although rates of college attendance have increased substantially among unmarried parents, college completion rates are low. Amongst all students who started college in 1995, 29% attained a bachelor's degree by 2001, compared with just 5% of unmarried parents (Goldrick-Rab and Sorensen, 2010). In examining the mental health statistics of college students at large, it can be argued that student mental health may be a large factor contributing to the low college completion rates amongst single parent students.

Colleges across the country have reported large increases in enrollment (College Board, 2014). At the same time, college counseling centers have also observed an increase in the prevalence and severity of mental health issues experienced by students and an increase in the number of students taking psychotropic medications (American College Counseling Association, 2010). In a study done with the students at University of MN-Twin Cities, it was found that

antidepressants were second only to contraceptives as the most prescribed medication from the Boynton Health Service pharmacy on campus, with students spending more than \$500,000 on antidepressants in a given year (Tosto, 2005). More than 25 percent of college students have been diagnosed or treated by a professional for a mental health condition within the past year (American College Health Association, 2012). Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health conditions amongst college students. The National Alliance on Mental Illness reported more than 11 percent of college students have been diagnosed or treated for anxiety and more than 10 percent reported being diagnosed or treated for depression (NAMI, 2014).

Mental health conditions are inversely related to academic performance. In an American College Health Association report released in 2012, students cited depression and anxiety as among the top impediments to academic performance. Of the students who reported, 31 percent had felt so depressed in the past year that it was difficult to function. In addition, more than 50 percent had felt overwhelming anxiety, which impeded academic success (American College Health Association, 2012). Because of a mental health related reason, 64 percent of formerly enrolled students were no longer attending college (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2012). Mental health is a barrier affecting college students' persistence and achievement.

Although most students diagnosed with mental illness have available resources for therapeutic support and some kind of extra help in their classes, such as extended testing time and reduced course load, approximately half of the students who know how to get assistance from the campus disability resource center never access the services (McGill, 2013; Tosto, 2005). Specific barriers that exist in accessing mental health services and supports include fear of being judged, costs related to getting paperwork proving diagnosis, stigma, busy schedule, and lack of information (McGill, 2013; Gruttadaro and Crudo, 2012). Support services may be

available; however, students are not taking advantage of the services offered to them.

As the above research indicates, mental health conditions are inversely related to low completion rates. Consequently, it is important to study the specific mental health concerns of single parent students. These students are the least likely to seek out services because they have the least amount of available time (Cash, 2013; McGill, 2013; Gruttadaro & Crudo, 2012). They may also be the most affected by mental illness, such as anxiety and depression (Goldrick-Rab, Minikel-Lacocque, & Kinsley, 2011; Rowlands, 2010). In order for students to receive the services they need, it is necessary for support services to meet and address the specific mental health concerns of these students in a way that diminishes the barriers they face in accessing services. The purpose of this research is to examine the mental health concerns of single parent students and how these concerns affect their persistence in and attainment of postsecondary education. This understanding will help social workers, post secondary institutions, educators, support programs and policy makers better understand the mental health needs of the single parent student population as well as provide better services to meet student's those needs.

## **Literature Review**

### **Defining Non-traditional Students**

Beginning in 1996, Laura Horn began researching the population called non-traditional students. Over the last decade, other researchers have taken an interest in this population and have explored the many risk factors faced by this population that have created a barrier to their college persistence and attainment. Many of the researchers define non-traditional in a similar way as having one or more of the following characteristics: delayed enrollment in college, part-time attendance, not financially dependent on their parents, full-time employment, dependents other than a spouse, single parenthood, and/or failed to obtain a high school diploma (Cash,

2013; Wyatt, 2011; Rowlands, 2010; Choy, 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2002; and Horn, 1996). From these definitions, students are further defined as “minimally nontraditional (one characteristic), moderately nontraditional (2 or 3 characteristics), or highly nontraditional (4 or more characteristics)” (Cash, 2013; Rowlands, 2010; Choy, 2002; and Horn, 1996). Each nontraditional characteristic negatively affects persistence and attainment directly or inversely (Cash, 2013; Horn, 1996). Cash (2013) explored the persistence after 3 years of highly nontraditional students and found that 50% were no longer enrolled for any 4-year degree and 62% for any 2-year degree. Increasing nontraditional characteristics decreased persistence among nontraditional students. In examining attainment after four to five years of 31.3% nontraditional students overall, findings indicated that students who were only minimally nontraditional were much more likely to have earned a bachelor’s degree (42%) than were moderately or highly nontraditional students (17% and 11%) (Cash, 2013; Horn, 1996).

### **Defining Single Parent Student**

Typically speaking, a single parent student has at least four characteristics of nontraditional students. Because single parent students fit the definition of highly nontraditional students, they are at a significant greater risk of decreased persistence and attainment. Of particular interest are the student parents who identify themselves as single parents. Students who are single parents identify with more characteristics of a nontraditional student than married parents and thus experience an even greater risk of decreased persistence and attainment. Examining some of the characteristics of nontraditional students will expand upon the challenges single parent students face in staying in school and achieving their degree.



**Low Income and High Financial Need.** Nearly a quarter of the postsecondary students in the United States, or 3.9 million students, are parents and half or 1.9 million of these students are single parents (Miller, Gault, and Thorman, 2011). Of the students who are single parents 78% are heads of low-income families (Schumacher, 2013; Miller, Gault, and Thorman, 2011; Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success, 2011). This means that 1.5 million single parents who are students have incomes less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the federal poverty threshold for a three-person household in 2014 is \$19,970 (2014 Poverty Guidelines). Further exploration into their income level found that 62% of single parent students compared to 20% of students without children and 18% of married student parents have an expected family contribution (EFC) of zero, which means that the federal government considers them to be unable to contribute financially to their educational expenses (Miller, 2012).

As a result of their inability to financially contribute to their educational expenses, single parent students rely heavily on financial aid in the forms of loans and grants. In fact, single parent students are more reliant on student loans than are other students, possessing between 20 to 30 percent more student debt one year after graduation than other students (Miller, 2012). However, single parent students have much higher unmet financial need than do other students. Analyses of the 2007-2008 Postsecondary Student Aid Survey conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that unmet financial need for college was much larger for single parents (\$5,507) in comparison to the amount of unmet need for students without children (\$3,156) and married parents (\$2,904) (Costello, 2014). Unmet financial need is a significant reason single parent students decide to drop out of school. In fact, the report of single parent students conducted by Miller, Gault and Thorman (2011) found that 55% of single parents say

that a lack of finances are likely or very likely to cause them to withdraw. Due to high unmet financial need, single student parents are more likely than traditional students to drop out of school. And sadly, this also means that single parent students are more likely than traditional students to possess student debt without the benefit of a postsecondary degree.

**Full-time Employment.** Single parent students' low income alone creates a barrier, but in addition their income affects their need to work while going to school. Without income to cover basic living expenses, single parent students will most likely have to work more to cover direct and indirect college costs, which could undermine their academic success (Schumacher, 2013; Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success, 2011; Miller, Gault, and Thorman, 2011; Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010; and Choy, 2002). Single parent students have the difficult task of balancing working 35 hours or more per week in addition to caregiving and school responsibilities. In fact, in a comparison of moderately non-traditional students to traditional students, 37% of moderately non-traditional students considered themselves primarily employees compared to 3% of traditional students (Schumacher, 2013; and Choy, 2002). Students who have a high financial need do not have a choice to work compared to other students and often work comes before school. Financial constraints can force single parent students to interrupt their studies in order to increase their work hours, which consequently compromise the quality of their educational experiences (Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010). The dire need for financial resources and to make ends meet comes at a cost, since single parent students increase their work hours at the expense of their studies.

**Care for Dependents.** With so many parents attempting to balance work, school, studying and family demands, childcare is an absolute requirement for single parent students to

be able to pursue postsecondary education. Yet, one of the greatest challenges faced by parents pursuing postsecondary education is obtaining affordable, high-quality childcare since the need for childcare is much greater than the supply of on-campus childcare (Miller, Gault, & Thorman, 2011). Both single (56%) and married (68%) parents say they spend a great deal of time caring for dependents; however, in comparing students who are not parents only 5% report spending 30 hours or more a week on caretaking (Schumacher, 2013; and Miller, Gault, & Thorman, 2011). Childcare as a resource for student parents is particularly important for single parents, especially because the responsibility for dependent care has been found to cause 42% of single parents to withdraw from school compared to 23% of non-parents (Miller, Gault, and Thorman, 2011). A report by The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) found that only 17 percent of postsecondary institutions around the country offer child care to students on campus (Costello, 2014). The report also found that, on average, waiting lists were 85 percent the size of a center's enrollment and six months to a year long (Costello, 2014). These findings affirm the notion that the need for childcare is not met by the supply of available childcare. However, the result of this imbalance is detrimental to the persistence of single parent students. In a survey of parents utilizing childcare services at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, over 70% of respondents said that childcare services are necessary for them to remain enrolled (Miller, Gault, & Thorman, 2011). Thus, without obtaining affordable and high-quality childcare, single parent students are at increased risk of withdrawing from school.

**First Generation and Lack of Academic Preparation.** Single parent students in particular are likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds or situations, such as being more likely to have low income, consequently qualifying them for need-based financial aid and in need for child care assistance (Center for Law and Social Policy, 2011). In addition to these

significant challenges single, parent students tend to be first generation college students and lag behind those students without children because of limited academic preparation and basic literacy skills (Foster, Stawn, & Duke Benefield, 2011; Miller, 2010; Goldrick-Rab & Sorenson; Fike & Fike, 2008; Murphy & Hicks, 2006). Studies have shown that first generation students have poor pre-college preparation, lower career aspirations, lack of family support, lack of faculty and peer support, fear of the college environment, poor study skills or habits and unrealistic expectations about success (Murphy & Hicks, 2006). Chen and Carroll (2005) found that first generation students had high expectations for degree attainment; however, only 24% actually attained a bachelor's degree (Murphy & Hicks, 2006).

Much of the reason for low degree attainment is associated with single parent students' lack of academic preparation. Upon arriving at postsecondary institutions, student parents are more likely than non-parents to have SAT Verbal scores of less than 400 or equivalent ACT scores and to have taken fewer than four years of high school English classes. (Miller, 2010; and Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010). Data from the 2008 National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey, administered by the U.S. Department of Education reveals that 34% of single parent students scored less than 400 on the SAT Verbal section, which is more than twice the proportion of students without children (Miller, 2010). Indicators show that basic literacy skills of student parents lag behind those of students without children. As a result, they are much more likely to require at least some form of developmental education prior to beginning their postsecondary education. Basic skills courses are traditionally focused on reading, writing, and math (Foster, Strawn & Duke-Benfield, 2011; Miller, 2010; Goldrick-Rab & Sorensen, 2010; Fike & Fike, 2008). Foster, Strawn and Duke-Benfield (2011) explain that these tasks may not seem immediately relevant to students who return to education with career goals; however, these

tasks are essential building blocks for further education and training. Additional research supports this notion. Fike and Fike (2008) found that students who lack basic academic skills, especially in mathematics and writing, had more difficulty coping with a typical caseload. Without basic skills courses students are at increased risk of not completing their degree. Estimates revealed that two million students drop out of college annually in the absence of developmental education (Fike & Fike, 2008). Basic skills courses are essential for single parent students who enter school without the necessary academic preparation. If single parent students do not receive the necessary developmental education that they need, they are at an increased risk of dropping out.

### **Role Conflict of Single Parent Students**

As a result of the above characteristics, single parent students must fulfill and balance three main roles: parent, employee and student. Role conflict is defined as simultaneous, incompatible demands from two or more sources that require an either/or choice (Rowlands, 2010). For example, single parent students have to choose which role demand to fulfill: student, employee or parent. These individuals experience role conflict in deciding which role demand to fulfill. A common struggle involves choosing to spend time either with children, sleeping, working, being in class, or studying. Because of the difficulty in choosing what role to fulfill, single student parents were much less likely to earn a degree within 5 years of beginning their postsecondary education, and far more likely to have left school without returning than their traditional counterparts (Goldrick-Rab, Minikel-Lacocque, & Kinsley, 2011; Rowlands, 2010; Choy, 2002; and Horn, 1996). For example, among undergraduates with a bachelor's degree objective, less than one-third (31 percent) of nontraditional students had attained a degree within 5 years, compared with more than half (54 percent) of traditional students (Horn, 1996). With

regard to timing of departure, single parent students (38%) were twice as likely to leave school in their first year than traditional students (16%) (Horn, 1996). Role conflict increases a student's time in school as well as the likelihood that they will drop out after the first year.

Single parent students who work full time have family and work responsibilities competing with school for their time, energy, and financial resources. Difficulty obtaining child care and class schedules that do not mesh with work schedules are just two of the barriers that nontraditional students may encounter (Choy, 2002). Since the need for childcare is much greater than the supply of on-campus childcare, single parent students are more likely to be unable to balance work, school, and family demands. Miller, Gault, and Thorman (2011) found that 42% of single parent students say that it's likely or very likely that they might need to withdraw due to responsibilities for dependent care. Single parent students who remain in school devote eight to ten hours per day to their children and five hours in class and studying; however, as a result they compensate by devoting less time to other activities, such as sleep (Goldrick-Rab, Minikel-Lacocque, & Kinsley, 2011). Single parent students at a four-year college slept 5.9 hours each night compared to 7.7 hours among non-parents (Goldrick-Rab, Minikel-Lacocque, & Kinsley, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, about a third of single parent students work full time, defined as 35 hours per week (Schumacher, 2013; and Choy, 2002). The sacrifices single parent students make have indirect affects on academic performance via physical and mental health. As a result of role conflict, student parents were found to experience stress and anxiety (Goldrick-Rab, Minikel-Lacocque, & Kinsley, 2011; and Rowlands, 2010). Consequently, if the role conflict is too difficult for single parent students to handle, the student role is frequently eliminated (Rowlands, 2010).

**Gap in the Research**

The available literature identified the barriers single parent students face in persisting and attaining postsecondary education. There is limited research specifically on the role conflict these students face and the impact on mental health, and consequently persistence and attainment of postsecondary degrees. The single parent student population is a unique subgroup and calls for more independent research to better understand the specific issues that they face. This paper aims to answer the research question: how does the role conflict experienced by single parent students impact both mental health and retention in postsecondary education?

**Conceptual Framework (Role Theory)**

Role theory seeks to explain behavior as action taken in accordance with agreed-upon rules of behavior for persons occupying given positions (Schrive, 2011; Dale & Smith, 2012). Each of these positions entails a role, which is a set of functions performed by the person for the group. A person's role is defined by expectations that specify how he or she should perform (Ashford & LeCroy, 2013; Schriver, 2011; Dale & Smith, 2012). For single parent students, they fulfill their roles as parent, employee, and student. As a parent, they are to nurture and care for their children. They are to meet their children's daily needs, such as waking their children up, preparing them for the day, making food, giving them a bath, and tucking them in at night. As an employee, they are to complete assigned tasks in a timely manner and often work collectively as a team member. As a student, they are to prepare for classes by reading and completing assignments prior to class, attend and actively participate in class. They must earn a specified grade to obtain credit.

Through their performance of social roles, people achieve a sense of self-worth and belonging (Ashford & LeCroy, 2013; Dale & Smith, 2012). When people fail to locate

themselves correctly in their social environment by fulfilling their roles, disappointment with self can occur (Ashford & LeCroy, 2013; Dale & Smith 2012; Schriver, 2011). Single parent students may find themselves responding negatively when asking themselves, “How well am I doing as a parent, student and employee?” This discrepancy is defined as role conflict. Role conflict refers to the dissonance that an individual experiences regarding their competing roles (Dale & Smith 2012; Schriver, 2011). Single parent students are likely to experience role conflict, for example when given a large reading assignment, have errands to run, and dinner to be made, while meeting their children’s needs. In addition, they may have hours of work competing for their time. In addition, individuals who receive public assistance are likely to have benefit reductions if work requirements are not met (Blum and Awad, 2002).

It is important to note that in June 2014, a new bill in Minnesota titled HF 2458 was passed to amend the work requirements under Minnesota Family Investment Plan (MFIP). Under the amendment, recipients of MFIP are now able to count postsecondary education as a work requirement. They may also receive public assistance for four years, while attending postsecondary education. Previously, this was true for the first year only. On the contrary, it is still difficult for a single parent student to juggle his or her roles because at some point it happens: the kids are sick, there is a deadline at work, and a term paper is due at 5:00 pm. The roles of parent, employee, and student all have expectations, and the individual may not meet them all.

Single parent students experience conflict due to the demands of school, work and home life with children. Such conflicts are not easily resolved. In most instances, resolution requires a compromise between what individuals would prefer, ideally, and what is possible (Schriver, 2011; Dale & Smith, 2012). When a person is not doing well in a role, that person will make



adaptations (Ashford & LeCroy, 2013). Role loss is often the adaption. Role loss refers to the involuntary loss of a core role that is a significant part of a person's self-concept (Dale & Smith, 2012). The termination of a core role has significant implications for a person's well being. Individuals must complete a renewed self- assessment by examining the significant loss of role and the impact of that loss on remaining roles. It is important to study the role conflict of single parent students, the impact role conflict has on single parent students' self-concept, and whether or not role loss will be the appropriate adaption in response to role conflict.

### **Program Description**

This research will work with The Student Parent HELP Center (SPHC) at the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities to recruit individuals for the survey portion. SPHC was established at the University of Minnesota in 1967 as an academic support program for low-income undergraduate students entering the University of Minnesota. The Center later evolved into a program serving primarily low-income students with children who attend the University. SPHC provides limited child care assistance, counseling and advocacy, academic and program planning, mentoring, and coaching, resource and referral services, and weekly parent support groups. The Center's centrally located campus facilities include a student parent lounge, a child friendly play area, a computer lab, and a designated study area. Student parents at the college have full access to the University's comprehensive health clinic including a women's specialty clinic.

According to Susan Warfield, Director of the Center, exposure to a college campus can be the first step toward breaking down the financial, cultural, and academic barriers that can bar the door to college entry for low-income parents. Spending time on campus can make college less intimidating and more accessible for single parent students who face the dual challenge of

parenting and coming from groups typically underrepresented in higher education (Costello, 2014).

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

This study addresses the question, “how does the role conflict experienced by single parent students impact both their mental health and retention of their postsecondary education?” It was designed using quantitative exploratory research methods. The researcher distributed an anonymous online survey used to analyze the research question. After the researcher received approval from the IRB, The Student Parent HELP Center at the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities sent an email including a link to the survey to single parent students who receive their services. The anonymous survey was used to gain a better understanding of single parent students from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities community and their thoughts regarding role conflict and the affect it has on their mental health, as well as retention.

### **Sample and Recruitment Process**

The research utilized a convenient sample of single parent undergraduate students at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities who receive services from The Student Parent HELP Center (SPHC). The anonymous survey used was an online survey that took between 10 and 20 minutes to complete. After the researcher received IRB approval, SPHC assisted in the recruitment process through a written permission letter (See Appendix A). Additionally, SPHC recruited students by sending an email including a link. Single parent students were specifically targeted and informed, through the recruitment script, of the survey and how to complete it (See Appendix D). Inclusion criteria for the sample included individuals who are single parents, enrolled at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and receive services from the SPHC.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The researcher did not identify any known risks or benefits to participation in the study, and participation was entirely voluntary. Participants had the right to refuse without any consequences to their relationship with The Student Parent HELP Center, The University of MN-Twin Cities, St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas. Subjects were invited to answer all, some, or none of the questions. An Informed Consent form was designed to ensure ethical standards were met in the administration and reporting of findings. Those who chose to participate acknowledged their consent after reading the Informed Consent. All necessary background information, procedures, risks and benefits of participating in the study, confidentiality, voluntary nature of the study, and contact information if questions arose were provided in the Informed Consent form (See Appendix B). To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the data obtained was not linked to participants. The surveys were online and anonymous and the participants' identities were kept confidential. The researcher stored all files in a locked location and destroyed all the research records and data after the study was completed on May 20, 2015.

**Data Collection Instrument and Analysis**

An anonymous online survey was used to analyze the research question (See Appendix C). The survey was created and administered through Qualtrics, an online survey program provided by St. Catherine University. The survey incorporated four data collection instruments. These included a self-esteem screening tool: State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES) by Heatherton and Polivy (1991), a depression screening tool: Self-Rating Depression Scale (SRDS) by W.W. Zung (1965), an anxiety screening tool: Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (SRAS) by W.W. Zung (1971), as well as the researchers own set of questions. After data collection was completed, the researcher

used SPSS version 21 to conduct a statistical analysis to determine significance of the relationship between variables.

The SSES was used to measure each participant's self-esteem at a given point in time. This scale is comprised of two scales, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale of 1965 and the Janis and Field Survey of 1959. Heatherton and Polivy (1991) developed a better manipulation check of temporary self-esteem effects. They discovered that the distinction between mood and self-esteem is far from trivial and that the use of the SSES may aid in their understanding of the true effects of changes in self-evaluations on thoughts, feelings, and behavior. The SSES is a 20-item scale. The 20 items are subdivided into 3 components of self-esteem: performance self-esteem, social self-esteem, and appearance self-esteem. All items are answered using a 5-point likert type scale (1= not at all, 2= a little bit, 3= somewhat, 4= very much, 5= extremely).

The SRDS was used to measure the depression status of an individual (Zung, 1965). Zung of Duke University wanted to assess the level of depression for patients diagnosed with depressive disorder. The SRDS is a short self-administered survey. There are 20 items on the scale that rate the four common characteristics of depression: the pervasive effect, the physiological equivalents, other disturbances, and psychomotor activities. There are ten positively worded and ten negatively worded questions. Each question is scored on a scale of 1-4 (a little of the time, some of the time, good part of the time, most of the time). The scores range from 25-100: Normal Range (25-49), Mildly Depressed (50-59), Moderately Depressed (60-69), and Severely Depressed (70 and above).

The SRAS was used to measure the anxiety of an individual in terms of severity (Zung, 1971). Zung wanted to assess the level of anxiety for patients diagnosed with anxiety disorder. The SRAS is a survey of only 20 statements. Each one is a positive or negative statement that

relates to symptoms of anxiety. Each question is scored on a scale of 1-4 (a little of the time, some of the time, good part of the time, most of the time). The scores range from 20 to 80: Normal Range (20-44), Mild to Moderate Anxiety Levels (45-59), Marked to Severe Anxiety Levels (60-74), and Extreme Anxiety Levels (75-80). Due to its simplicity, the SRAS is widely used in psychiatry (Zung, 1971). It is not considered a replacement for a professional diagnosis, but has been proven to be internally reliable in many studies, and continues to be used in clinical settings (Zung, 1971).

The questions developed by the researcher of this study focused on the participants' demographics (eg., income level, work, childcare, academic preparation), roles, support services received, and persistence in postsecondary education. A total of 35 questions were developed.

## Findings

The Student Parent Help Center initially sent surveys to over 150 students who receive their services. Thirty-five surveys were opened and completed. Participants were able to skip a question if they liked.

### Descriptive Statistics

#### Nontraditional Student Characteristics of Survey Participants

Participants were asked a number of questions regarding characteristics pertaining to nontraditional students. Characteristics included relationship status, dependents other than a spouse, part-time student, delayed enrollment, independent on taxes, full-time employment, and obtained GED. The characteristics were each assigned a point and the type of non-traditional student for each participant was then calculated from the sum of the characteristics (see Table 1). Of the 35 surveys completed, 48.6% (n=17) of the respondents were single parents who are parenting alone, 17.1% (n=6) had a partner, 14.3% (n=5) were legally married, and 20.0% (n=7)

were divorced. Of the respondents, 97.1% (n=34) reported having dependents other than a spouse. Around half of the participants (51.4%, and n= 18) reported part-time student status. It was found that 65.7% (n=23) of the respondents reported that their enrollment in college was delayed, which meant that they started college after the age of 18 years. Of the participants, 88.6% (n=31) were independent on their taxes. Being a full-time employee was reported by 14.3% (n=5) of the respondents reported being full-time employees. Lastly, 8.6% (n=3) of respondents reported obtaining their GED. The type of nontraditional student was determined based on the following characteristics: single parent, dependents other than spouse, part time student, delayed enrollment, independent on taxes, and obtained GED.

Based on either two or three reported characteristics, 51.4% (n=17) of participants were considered moderately nontraditional students. Based on four or more reported characteristics, 48.6% (n=18) of respondents were considered highly nontraditional students. No students were found to be minimally nontraditional.

Table 1

*Nontraditional Student Characteristics of Survey Participants (N = 35)*

	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Relationship Status</b>		
Single (parenting alone)	17	48.6
Partner	6	17.1
Legally married	5	14.3
Divorced	7	20.0
<b>Dependents other than a spouse</b>	34	97.1
<b>Part-time Student</b>	18	51.4
<b>Delayed Enrollment</b>	23	65.7
<b>Independent on Taxes</b>	31	88.6
<b>Full-time employees</b>	5	14.3
<b>Obtained GED</b>	3	8.6
<b>Type of Non-Traditional Student (# of characteristics)</b>		
Moderately Nontraditional (2-3)		
2	5	14.3
3	11	31.4
Total	16	45.7
Highly Nontraditional (4+)		
4	9	25.7
5	8	22.9
6	2	5.7
Total	19	54.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Self-Rating Depression Scale (SRDS) Scores

The SRDS was used to measure the depression of participants (see Table 2). SRDS scores of participants were calculated by adding their total score on the questionnaire. Most people with depression score between 50 and 69. The participants' scores ranged from 32 to 63, with an averaged (mean) score of 44.92.

Table 2

*Self-Rating Depression Scale (SRDS) Scores*

<b>Depression Scale Score</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>	<b><u>%</u></b>
32	1	3.8
33	1	3.8
34	1	3.8
35	1	3.8
37	1	3.8
39	2	7.7
40	1	3.8
41	1	3.8
42	1	3.8
43	1	3.8
44	2	7.7
46	1	3.8
48	3	11.5
49	3	11.5
51	1	3.8
53	2	7.7
54	2	7.7
63	1	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (SRAS) Scores

The SRAS score was used to measure the anxiety of participants (see Table 3). SRAS scores of participants were calculated by adding their total score on the questionnaire. A score total of 36 and over suggests the need for further medical assessment of Generalized Anxiety Disorder. The participants' scores ranged from 28 to 53, with an averaged (mean) score of 35.62.



Table 3

*Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (SRAS) Scores*

<b>Anxiety Scale Score</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
28	3	11.5
29	1	3.8
30	2	7.7
31	2	7.7
33	1	3.8
34	4	15.4
35	4	15.4
36	1	3.8
38	2	7.7
39	1	3.8
41	1	3.8
42	1	3.8
43	1	3.8
52	1	3.8
53	1	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Doing Well Balancing Roles

The Likert scale question, “How are you doing balancing your roles?” was used to measure the role conflict of participants (see Table 4). Participants were able to respond to five answer options of strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly agree, 9.7% (n=3) of the participants answered that they strongly disagree 19.4% (n=6) chose disagree, 12.9% (n=4) chose neither agree nor disagree, 58.1% (n=18) chose agree, and 0% (n=0) chose strongly agree, out of 31 participants.

Table 4

*Doing Well Balancing Roles*

<b>Doing Well Balancing Roles</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly Disagree	3	9.7
Disagree	6	19.4
Neither Agree nor Disagree	4	12.9
Agree	18	58.1
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Likelihood of Dropping Out This Year

The Likert scale question, “What is the likelihood that you will have to drop out of school this year?” was used to measure potential “student” role loss for participants (see Table 4). Participants were able to respond to five answer options of very unlikely, unlikely, undecided, likely, or very unlikely, 59.4% (n=19) of the participants answered that they were very unlikely 21.9% (n=7) chose unlikely, 12.5% (n=4) chose undecided, 3.1% (n=1) chose likely, and 3.1% (n=1) chose very likely, out of 32 participants.

Table 5

*Likelihood of Dropping out this year*

Likelihood of dropping out this year	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Very unlikely	19	59.4
Unlikely	7	21.9
Undecided	4	12.5
Likely	1	3.1
Very Likely	1	3.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Inferential Statistics

#### Role Conflict and Mental Health

Cross tabulations with chi square were used to determine associations between doing well balancing roles and depression scale scores. The majority of participants agreed that they were doing well balancing roles with the majority of depression scale scores over 44. With a p-value of .299, which is greater than .05, it is indicated that there was no significant association between doing well at balancing roles and depression scale score.

Cross tabulations with chi square were used to determine associations between doing well balancing roles and anxiety scale scores. The majority of participants agreed to doing well balancing roles with the majority of anxiety scale scores between 28 and 38. There was no

significant association between doing well at balancing their roles and the anxiety scale score ( $p = .122$ ).

### Role Conflict and Retention

Cross tabulations were used to determine associations between doing well balancing roles and the likelihood of dropping out this year. The majority of participants agreed to doing well balancing roles with the majority of participants believing the likelihood of dropping out of school during the study year and would be very unlikely. There was a slight trend in students doing well at balancing their roles and the likelihood of dropping out of school this year, however this was not significant ( $p=.055$ ).

### Retention and Number of Characteristics of a Nontraditional Student

Cross tabulations were used to determine associations between number of characteristics of a nontraditional student and retention. The majority of participants stated that it is very unlikely that they will have to drop out of school this year with a mixed distribution of number of characteristics of a nontraditional student. There was a slight trend in students responding to the likelihood of dropping out of school this year and number of characteristics of a nontraditional student, however this was not significant ( $p=.072$ ).

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine if the role conflict of single parent students affected participants' mental health and retention in postsecondary education.

### Role Conflict and Mental Health

Previous research reveals that as a result of role conflict, students experience stress and anxiety (Goldrick-Rab, Minikel-Lacocque, & Kinsley, 2011; and Rowlands, 2010). Contrary these findings, the current study did not find a statistically significant impact between role

conflict and mental health. Additionally within the research literature reviewed, it was found that depression and anxiety were among the top impediments to student academic success. For example, the American College Health Association (2012) found that 31 percent of student parent subjects in their study had felt so depressed in the previous year that it was difficult to function and more than 50 percent had felt overwhelming anxiety, making it hard to succeed academically. Consistent with literature, this study found a significant amount of participants with high levels of depression and anxiety. Of the participants who completed the depression scale, the study found that 23.0% (n = 6) of participants scored above 50. Within the depression scale scores, most people with a depression score between 50 and 69. In examining the participants anxiety scale scores, it was found that 38.1% (n=9) of participants scored above 36 on the anxiety scale, a score that revealed the need for further medical assessment of Generalized Anxiety Disorder. However, because the sample size was small and participants were able to skip over the depression and anxiety scale scores, more research is needed to test these findings in order to fully understand the scope of the issue.

### Role Conflict and Retention

Previous research indicates that single parent students are far more likely to leave school due to the difficulty in choosing which role to fulfill (Goldrick-Rab, Minikel-Lacocque, & Kinsley, 2011; Rowlands, 2010; Choy, 2002; and Horn, 1996). Consistent with previous research, this study showed a trend among some participants by reporting the likelihood of leaving school due to role conflict; however, this trend was not significant. In Horn's earlier study conducted in 1996, it was found that single parent students (38%) were more than twice as likely to leave school in their first year than were 16% of traditional students. This study was not consistent with Horn's research, in that 59.4% (n=19) of participants stated that it would be very

unlikely that they would have to leave school during the current year. However, it is important to note that the participants of this study were beyond their first year of college. Additional research should thus be conducted with only first year students to determine the consistency of Horn's research.

### **Retention and Number of Characteristics of a Nontraditional Student**

Previous studies have found that each nontraditional characteristic negatively affects retention (Cash, 2013; Rowlands, 2010; Choy, 2002; and Horn, 1996). Cash (2013) explored the persistence of highly nontraditional students, after 3 years, and found that 50% were no longer enrolled in any 4-year degree and 62% in any 2-year degree. Within the current study, 100% (n=35) of the participants were considered nontraditional students, two or three characteristics, and of them, 54.3% (n=19) were highly nontraditional, four or more characteristics. This study showed a trend among some participants who reported the likelihood of leaving school due to an increase in characteristics of a nontraditional student; however this trend was not significant. Thus, additional research would need to be conducted to further explore the trend between retention and the number of characteristics of a nontraditional student.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

There are a few strengths and limitations in this research study. Limitations of this study include that all findings came from one university, and subjects were selected using a convenience sample. Therefore, applicability to all single parent students is limited. It is important to note that the students were asked to complete the survey during their winter break, a time a part from schoolwork and class. This is a limitation of the study since students often experience less stress in terms of their role as a student during a time of break from school. This study addressed self-perceptions of single student parents. Subjects may have answered some of

the questions regarding persistence related to their level of hope. A comparison of students' academic and financial records would provide more concrete evidence of a student's perception compared to the facts of their academic progress and financial barriers to retention. Additionally, several items could have been deleted from the survey to decrease the length and time to complete the survey. These items contained interesting topics to examine with the sample; however, these items were not directly linked to the research question, such as the self-esteem scale. By cutting out unnecessary items from the survey, an increase in sample size may have occurred due to a smaller estimated time to complete the survey. The strengths of this study include a large sample size from which to draw and increased participation due to the connection with the Student Parent HELP Center (SPHC).

### **Implications for Clinical Social Work Practice**

Often society examines individuals in terms of their resilience and rarely, if ever, examines their mental health. In general, it is almost expected of people to occupy multiple roles and to complete the necessary tasks within those roles regardless of the level of stress or amount of time available to them. This research revealed that most student parent participants' perceptions at the time of the study were that they were able to balance their roles well; however, as the trend found between role conflict and retention indicates, some students are dropping out of school because of their role conflict. If university administrators and social workers fail to acknowledge this trend, an increase in role conflict may occur and students will not be able to balance their roles and consequently have to drop out of school. It is vital for University retention policy to reflect the pressing needs of students to gain access to support services that can diminish their anxiety and stress in order to support them and to balance multiple roles.

**Implications for Social Work Research**

Future researchers will be faced with trying to conduct research with students. It is challenging to conduct research both during the term and during school breaks since both are busy and difficult times for student parents. Additionally, single parent students are not often involved with support programs on campus because of their busy schedules and thus researchers may only be able to access participants who are seeking help through specialized services, catching only a fraction of a potential sample. Since students who actively seek help have been found to have better retention, more research should be conducted to understand the students who do not receive support services and why they do not access/receive those services.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, a trend may exist between role conflict and retention of single parent students in a four-year college setting; however, these findings were not significant. This is important to consider in terms of retention policies in the future. Social workers need to be available to support students in their multiple roles, particularly regarding their levels of stress, depression and anxiety. Additionally, future research should be conducted to further examine the issue of role conflict on students' mental health and college retention.

Overall this research shed light on the fact that college campuses need to provide more support services to single parents. Overall, campuses have neglected students who occupy multiple roles and how this impacts their college retention and degree completion. University administrators need to support single student parents, those who hold multiple roles and who our society often neglect and assume can balance, at times, competing roles on their own. However, this research has shown a trend that indicates a pressing need to provide support services for these students to stay in school since some students drop out of school because of the role conflict that they experience.

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**Appendix A: Approval Letters****Program Approval Letter**

(The Parent HELP Center at the University of MN-Twin Cities)

## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*Twin Cities Campus**Student Parent HELP Center  
Office for Student Affairs**Appleby Hall Rm 24  
128 Pleasant St SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455**Office: 612-626-6015  
Fax: 612-626-9867  
<http://www.sphc.umn.edu/>  
Email: [sphc@umn.edu](mailto:sphc@umn.edu)*

Dear Ms. Lindsey Landgraf,

This letter is provided as confirmation of the University of Minnesota, Student Parent HELP Center's (SPHC) agreement to participate in your masters these related study "*The Impact of Role Conflict on Single Parent Students' Mental Health and Their Persistence and Achievement of Post Secondary Education*". As program director for the Student Parent HELP Center I am able to provide approval for our engagement with this project as stipulated in the body of this letter. Additionally, we have verified through email communication you have provided that all appropriate IRB permissions have been granted, and that our own University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (U of MN-TC) IRB has determined their human subjects and any further approval is not required given the fact that your project will be submitted through your own St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas IRB. The SPHC has been cleared to participate at our own discretion without further approval, as long as you forward the St. Catherine University IRB approval to both Jeff Perkey at the U of MN-TC IRB and myself when received. No work with the SPHC can begin until that IRB approval verification has been received.

The SPHC agrees to participate in the following ways: the SPHC will be allowing sending out recruitment notifications and survey information to all U of M-TC undergraduate student parents currently registered with our program. It is our understanding that no individual or identifiable student information will be released for the purposes of this project and that all surveys completed by SPHC registered students will be anonymous. Student participation is completely voluntary and we have therefor determined this project to be of minimal risk to our students and program, but of significant value to the larger field of student parent research and service delivery. The SPHC program director and author of this letter has read and approved the research proposal named above, and expects all procedures outlined in that proposal to be followed. We have also agreed that all results of data gathered from this project will be shared with the SPHC, as we feel it could be of tremendous value in our future work with students.

The SPHC program director has also agreed to sit on the thesis committee for this project and has already begun reviewing documents and scheduling meetings as required.

Sincerely



Susan Warfield, MSW, LICSW

Program Director

University of Minnesota, Student Parent HELP Center

October 17, 2014

**Driven to Discover<sup>SM</sup>**

**Institutional Approval Email**  
(The University of MN-Twin Cities IRB)

☆ Jp <perke001@umn.edu>

September 9, 2014 2:55 PM

To: Lindsey L. Landgraf

Re: IRB Approval Questions

[Inbox - land4995@stthomas.edu](#) 1



Hi Lindsey,

The UMN IRB only reviews human subjects research conducted by UMN faculty, staff, and students not conducted using them as subjects. The St. Catherine University IRB review would be sufficient. You need permission from the Student Parent Help Center but that would be the only UMN permission you would need.

Jeffery

[See More from St Thomas](#)

--

Jeffery Perkey, MLS, CIP  
Research Compliance Supervisor, Social Behavioral Sciences IRB  
[Human Research Protection Program](#)  
University of Minnesota  
direct line 612-626-5922  
front desk 612-626-5654  
[irb@umn.edu](mailto:irb@umn.edu)

**Appendix B: Consent Form****CONSENT FORM****ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS GRSW682  
RESEARCH PROJECT****The Impact of Role Conflict on Single Parent Students' Mental Health and Their  
Persistence and Achievement of Postsecondary Education**

I am conducting a study about the impact of role conflict on single parent students' mental health and their persistence and achievement of postsecondary education. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a student at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and utilize the Student Parent HELP Center. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Lindsey L Landgraf, a graduate student at the School of Social Work, Catherine University/University of St. Thomas and supervised by Dr. Pa Der Vang, Ph. D. MSW, LICSW, LCSW.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine the mental health concerns of single parent students and how these concerns affect their persistence in and attainment of postsecondary education. In particular, the research question is how does the role conflict experienced by single parent students impact both their mental health and their persistence and achievement of postsecondary education? This study began by conducting a review of past studies pertaining to barriers affecting nontraditional students, in particular single parent students, and the relationship between role conflict and the decision to drop out of postsecondary education. It was determined that if the role conflict is too difficult for single parent students, then the student role is frequently the one eliminated. However, there is limited research specifically on the role conflict these students face and the direct impact role conflict has on mental health and consequently single parent student's persistence and attainment of postsecondary degrees. Single parent students are a unique subgroup of students in postsecondary education. This research is being conducted to better understand the specific issues single parent students face.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to participate in an online anonymous questionnaire, which will take approximately 10 to 20 minutes. Your answers will contribute to the dataset of all study participants and will be statistically analyzed for significance of the relationship between role conflict, mental health and persistence and attainment of postsecondary education. The outcome of this analysis will then be compared and contrasted with previous research on the effects of role conflict on social work practice to compose a complete quantitative study.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

The study has minimal risks. You will be asked to answer questions regarding your income level, work, childcare, and academic preparation, roles, support services you receive, and your persistence in postsecondary education. In addition, questions will discuss your levels of self-esteem, anxiety and depression. If any of these topics are sensitive, please inform the researcher and you may stop your participation at any time with no repercussions. There are no direct benefits for participating in this study. An indirect benefit is a contribution to the enhancement of support services provided to single parent students.

**Confidentiality:**

The information obtained in connection with this research study will not be identified with you, the answers to the questionnaire are anonymous and the results will be kept confidential. Participants will not be identified in any written reports or publications, meaning only aggregate data will be used. The physical copies of the questionnaires will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's home and will be destroyed by May 20, 2015. The SPSS dataset will be kept on a USB device in a locked file in the researcher's home and will be destroyed by May 20, 2015.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Student Parent HELP Center, the University of MN-Twin Cities, St. Catherine University, the University of St. Thomas, or the School of Social Work. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you will not be used.

**Contacts and Questions**

My name is Lindsey Landgraf, BSW. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at land4995@stthomas.edu or 414-630-0042. My research supervisor's name is Dr. Pa Der Vang, Ph. D., MSW, LICSW, LCSW. She can be reached at pdvang@stkat.edu or at 651-690-8647. You may also contact the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board at 651-690-6204 with any questions or concerns.

**You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.**

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read or had the above information read to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Please indicate your consent to participate in this study by clicking the radio button marked "I Consent" below.



If you do not consent to participate in this study, please click the button marked “I do not consent”

---

**Signature of Study Participant**

---

**Date**

---

**Signature of Researcher**

---

**Date**

**Appendix C: Example Survey****Survey****Demographics:**

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
  - c. Other
3. How many years have you been in college? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your level in college?
  - a. Freshman
  - b. Sophomore
  - c. Junior
  - d. Senior
  - e. Grad school
5. How many credit hours are you taking this semester? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your expected year of graduation? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Are you a 1<sup>st</sup> generation college student? (You are the first in your family to go to college)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
8. Did you obtain your:
  - a. High school diploma
  - b. GED
9. Did you go to an alternative high school?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
10. Are you currently pregnant?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
11. Number of children \_\_\_\_\_
12. Of your children, how many live with you? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What are the ages of your children? \_\_\_\_\_
14. At what age did you have your first child?
  - a. Younger than 12
  - b. 12 to 14
  - c. 14 to 16
  - d. 16 to 18
  - e. 18 to 20
  - f. 20 to 22
  - g. 22 to 24
  - h. 24 and older
15. Relationship status
  - a. Single (parenting alone)
  - b. Partner

- c. Legally Married
  - d. Culturally married
  - e. Divorced
16. What is your annual income/wage level? (note: exclude financial aid)
- a. \$0 to \$1,000
  - b. \$1,000 to \$5,000
  - c. \$5,000 to \$10,000
  - d. \$15,000 to \$20,000
  - e. \$20,000 to \$25,000
  - f. \$25,000 to \$30,000
  - g. \$30,000 to \$35,000
  - h. \$35,000 to \$40,000
  - i. \$40,000 to \$45,000
  - j. \$45,000 to \$50,000
  - k. \$50,000 and above
17. Do you receive public assistance? Please check all that apply.
- a. MFIP
  - b. SNAP
  - c. Medical Assistance (MA) or MNSure
  - d. SSI
  - e. SSDI
  - f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. None
18. Are you dependent on your parent(s) for taxes? (independent = completely independent from parents/ family of origin when filing taxes)
- a. Yes
  - b. No
19. To pay for college, did you receive
- a. Grants
  - b. Loans
  - c. Scholarships
  - d. Family support
  - e. MFIP
20. How many hours a week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_
21. Are you required to be in job search
- a. Yes
  - b. No
22. What do you consider yourself more?
- a. Student
  - b. Employee
23. Do you have children in childcare and/or school?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
24. If your child is in childcare, is the childcare close to
- a. Home
  - b. School

- c. Work
- 25. Are you able to find affordable, high-quality childcare?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 26. How many hours during the week are your children in primary care with another individual? \_\_\_\_\_
- 27. Are you on the waitlist for the University’s Child Care?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 28. How long have you been on the waitlist? \_\_\_\_\_
- 29. What degree level do you hope to obtain?
  - a. Certificate
  - b. Bachelor’s Degree
  - c. Master’s Degree
  - d. Doctorate Degree
- 30. What was your score on your ACT or SAT? \_\_\_\_\_
- 31. How many English courses did you take in High School? \_\_\_\_\_
- 32. Did you take developmental courses (writing, reading, math) at the start of college?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 33. How many hours of sleep do you typically get in a night? \_\_\_\_\_

**Roles:**

- 34. Check all the roles that you fulfill:
  - a. Student
  - b. Employee
  - c. Caregiver of family members (not children)
  - d. Parent
  - e. Significant other
  - f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 35. How many hours a week do you spend in each role?
  - a. Student \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Employee \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Caregiver of family members (not children) \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Parent \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Significant other \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 36. Which role listed in question 26 is the most important to you? \_\_\_\_\_

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
37. Would you say it is easy for you to balance your roles?					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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	Disagree				Agree
38. Would you say you are doing well balancing your roles?					

39. If you had to cut out one of your roles, which one would it be? \_\_\_\_\_

**University Support Services:**

40. Check the below support services that you receive: (check as many as apply)

- a. Counseling services
- b. Campus disability services
- c. The Student Parent HELP Center
- d. University child care assistance
- e. Housing support
- f. Mentoring
- g. Academic advising and program planning
- h. Resource and referral services
- i. Other \_\_\_\_\_

41. Within the Student Parent HELP Center, what services do you participate? (in all your time of being in school)

- a. Parents Support Group
- b. Lounge and study area
- c. Computer lab
- d. Family friendly events (e.g. graduation party, family friendly homecoming party and other smaller SPHC events)
- e. Utilization of staff expertise by staff appointment or walk in
- f. Electronic newsletter
- g. Other \_\_\_\_\_

42. What has prohibited you from using the Student Parent HELP services?

- a. Lack of need
- b. Events not held when you can participate
- c. Fear of being judged
- d. Stigma
- e. Busy schedule
- f. Lack of information
- g. Transportation
- h. Other \_\_\_\_\_

43. In terms of services that provide emotional support, what stops you from receiving the services: (check as many as apply)

- a. Fear of being judged
- b. Costs related to paperwork proving diagnosis
- c. Stigma
- d. Busy schedule
- e. Lack of information
- f. Transportation
- g. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Persistence:**

	Very Likely	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
44. What is the likelihood that you will have to drop out of school <i>this year</i> ?					

	Very Likely	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
45. What is the likelihood that you will have to drop out of school <i>in the future</i> ?					

46. In your opinion, what are reasons that single parent students leave school? (check as many as apply)

- a. Financial need
- b. Need to increase work hours
- c. Responsibility to care for children
- d. Childcare services
- e. Not prepared academically
- f. Mental health concerns
- g. Physical health concerns
- h. Family issues
- i. Other \_\_\_\_\_

	Very Likely	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
47. What is the likelihood that you will come back to school after dropping out?					

**Additional Questions:**

48. What are your biggest stressors? (Please check all that apply)

- a. Economic security
- b. Losing housing
- c. Custody
- d. Divorce
- e. Public assistance

- f. Loss of external family support
  - g. Loss of job
  - h. Unexpected pregnancy
  - i. Academics
  - j. Domestic / relationship violence (physical, emotional, verbal, stalking)
  - k. Child wellness (behavioral issues, health issues, developmental concerns)
  - l. Food insecurity
  - m. Chemical use of partner or significant other
49. Do you feel you have a current issue with drugs?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
50. Do you feel you have a current issues with alcohol?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
51. Are drugs interfering with your academic success or personal life success?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
52. Is alcohol interfering with your academic success or personal life success?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
53. Are you currently diagnosed with a mental health disorder?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
54. If you feel comfortable, please note your mental health disorder \_\_\_\_\_
55. Has a history of mental health in your family affected you?
- a. Yes
  - b. No

*For the three surveys below, please answer for the role you are having the most difficulty with right now.*

- a. Parent*
- b. Employee*
- c. Student*

**State Self-Esteem Scale by Heatherton and Polivy (1991)**

These are questions designed to measure what you are thinking at this moment. There is of course, no right answer for any statement. The best answer is what you feel is true of yourself at the moment. Be sure to answer all of the items, even if you are not certain of the best answer. Again, answer these questions as they are true for you **RIGHT NOW**.

	Not At All	A Little Bit	Somewhat	Very Much	Extremely
1. I feel confident about my abilities.					
2. I am worried about whether I am regarded					

as a success or failure.					
3. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.					
4. I feel frustrated or rattled about my performance .					
5. I feel that I am having trouble understanding things that I read.					
6. I feel that others respect and admire me.					
7. I am dissatisfied with my weight.					
8. I feel self-conscious.					
9. I feel as smart as others.					
10. I feel displeased with myself.					
11. I feel good about myself.					
12. I am pleased with my appearance right now.					
13. I am worried about what other people think of me.					
14. I feel confident that I understand things.					
15. I feel inferior to others at this moment.					
16. I feel unattractive.					
17. I feel concerned about the impression I am making.					
18. I feel that I have less scholastic ability right now than others.					
19. I feel like I'm not doing well.					
20. I am worried about looking foolish.					



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**Self-Rating Depression Scale by W.W. Zung (1965)**

Please read each statement and decide how much of the time the statement describes how you have been feeling **during the past week**.

	A little of the time	Some of the time	Good part of the time	Most of the time
1. I feel downhearted and blue.				
2. Morning is when I feel I am at my best.				
3. I have crying spells or feel like it.				
4. I have trouble sleeping at night.				
5. I eat as much as I used to.				
6. I still enjoy sex.				
7. I notice that I am losing weight.				
8. I have trouble with constipation.				
9. My heart beats faster than usual.				
10. I get tired for no reason.				
11. My mind is as clear as it used to be.				
12. I find it easy to do the things I used to.				
13. I am restless and can't keep still.				
14. I feel hopeful about the future.				
15. I am more irritable than usual.				
16. I find it easy to make decisions.				
17. I feel that I am useful and needed.				
18. My life is pretty full.				
19. I feel that others				

would be better off if I were dead.				
20. I still enjoy the things I used to do.				

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### Self-Rating Anxiety Scale by W.W. Zung (1971)

Please read each one carefully and decide how much the statement describes how you have been feeling **during the past week**.

	A little of the time	Some of the time	Good part of the time	Most of the time
1. I feel more nervous and anxious than usual.				
2. I feel afraid for no reason at all.				
3. I get upset easily or feel panicky.				
4. I feel like I'm falling apart and going to pieces.				
5. I feel that everything is all right and nothing bad will happen.				
6. My arms and legs shake and tremble.				
7. I am bothered by headaches, neck and back pains.				
8. I feel weak and get tired easily.				
9. I feel calm and can sit still easily.				
10. I can feel my heart beating fast.				
11. I am bothered by dizzy spells.				
12. I have fainting spells or feel faint.				
13. I can breathe in and out easily.				

14. I get feelings of numbness and tingling in my fingers and toes.				
15. I am bothered by stomachaches or indigestion.				
16. I have to empty my bladder often.				
17. My hands are usually dry and warm.				
18. My face gets hot and blushes.				
19. I fall asleep easily and get a good night's rest.				
20. I have nightmares.				

**Appendix D: Recruitment Script**

**RECRUITMENT PROTOCOL**

**RECRUITMENT SCRIPT**

**ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS**

**GRSW682 RESEARCH PROJECT**

**The Impact of Role Conflict on Single Parent Students' Mental Health and Their Persistence and Achievement of Postsecondary Education**

My name is Lindsey Landgraf, BSW. I am a graduate student at the School of Social Work, St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas. I am conducting a study about the impact of role conflict on single parent students' mental health and their persistence and achievement of postsecondary education. I invite you to participate in this research to help me learn about the challenges you have faced when persisting and completing your degree. Would you be willing to take ten to twenty minutes to fill out a survey? Please read this consent form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.