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## **Breadwinning, "new" fathers and the package deal in the great recession. Paper presentation**

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# BREADWINNING, 'NEW' FATHERS, AND THE PACKAGE DEAL IN THE GREAT RECESSION

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Presented by Lisa Strohschein<sup>3</sup>

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# Conceptual framework

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- + The 'package deal' and breadwinner fathering
- + Work in the new economy

# Research questions

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How is fatherhood configured at a time when the possibilities for achieving and maintaining the 'package deal' are greatly diminished?

Specifically, what kinds of experiences do middle-income fathers have that make attaining the package deal problematic or undesirable?

How do fathers negotiate these tensions and what are the implications for the ways in which they construct and practice fathering?



# FAMILIES IN THE MIDDLE PROJECT

Middle-income  
75-125% of national  
median



\$45,000-\$90,000 USD  
\$50,000-\$110,000 CAD



# SUB-SAMPLE OF FATHERS

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- ✘ Fathers from 7 sites, N=19
- ✘ Marital status: single (1), married or cohabiting (12), divorced or separated (6)
- ✘ Sexuality: heterosexual (17), homosexual (2)
- ✘ Education: high school (5), some post-secondary (7), university degree (7)
- ✘ Paid work: employed full-time (16), unemployed (3)

# PACKAGE DEAL CONTINUUM

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# Involved fathering as intentional practice

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## Case #1: 'Matthew'

M: I worked at a soup kitchen but I never really got-- I was a part-time chaplain at a jail, but I never got paid, so we got pregnant, I'm like I should get a job.

I: So you were doing work /

M: I was doing work but I wasn't getting paid.



## ✘ Breadwinning and work in the new economy

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I: Is there anything that your employer could do to make it more or to help / /?

R: Well, they could pay me more. (chuckles) But that's, I mean, I, I, I work in social services. I've never worked there for the paycheck, so, um, that would be the only thing. If I were independently wealthy, I'd probably do pretty much what I do now anyway, just I would not worry about money at the end of the day, so. No, they're very flexible in terms of schedules and jobs and time.

## × Discourse of the new father

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I: Do you think it's more difficult to be a good parent today than it was in the past?

R: No, I, I think it's different to be a good father now than it was in the past....I know that I am much more involved in my kids' lives than my father, my father and his peers were for the most part. I wouldn't have it any other way....So on that level, I think it might be more...difficult in the fact that it used to be just easier, you'd show up, pat them on the head, do the "Father Knows Best" thing and you get to talk to them when they're 18, um, so but it's better too. Sometimes difficult isn't a bad thing it's more of a commitment.

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# Involved fathering and divorce - “It’s not obvious”

## Case #2: ‘Pete’

- + The package deal

- + Crisis – divorce



When she decided to move [to another state], I thought, no, that's it, my kids are gone, and I, I finally realized I could care less if I'm there for their birthday. It might sound bad to start, but, you know, or the, you know, the /, I want to be there when they're puking. I want to be there to help them, to watch them grow. You know, birthday stuff, yeah, it's, it's, holiday parent, I didn't want to be that. And so when I finally had the option to do it and figured I could, and started, I kind of went from a man to a blob and then got my spine back. And once I kind of went through that, it was kind of like okay, and started to say what's best for my kids, what's best for me. Hey, I'll tell you what, you know, for me, my kids being down there, party time. You know, that's not what it's about. It's about responsibilities and, uh, and things that I chose to do, and so when I finally realized I had a choice to keep them here, easy.

## ✘ Work in the new economy, breadwinning, and fathering

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R: ...so the general, providing, this kind of stuff, transportation. Um, hopefully, hopefully especially now coaching them as far as kind of how to deal with things....Um, so that's what I do for them. Rub their backs. I mean, like I say, there are some typical-- You love them, you support them, you do that. But beyond that, it's, it's cheer for them, do whatever you can to help them. That's my job, besides, besides going-

I: Your second job.

R: Yeah. Well, my first job actually. Yeah. I go to [work] and I get paid. You know, that's to support, support this, so, and it's a choice I have.

I: It's a choice you have.

R: With my kids, yeah. It was a choice I had to, to not let them go to [another state] with their mom.

# DISCUSSION

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- ✘ Disruptions to the package deal
- ✘ Policy implications



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✘ Thank you!

✘ Questions?

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