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A Pathetic Excuse For Manhood — A Really Bad Argument

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Matt Dubay wants to level the playing field between men and women when it comes to having babies — unwanted babies, that is. This sad excuse for manhood from Michigan wants a male equivalent to *Roe v. Wade* — a determination that men should not have to pay child support for children they do not want to be born.

Of course, this is what happens when sex is separated from marriage. Once sex is treated as autonomous, everything that follows inevitably becomes a matter of endless moral and legal negotiation. Just blame the sexual revolution. *The Boston Globe's* Jeff Jacoby makes this case in a not-to-be-missed editorial column. Some choice excerpts:

Real men — good men — take responsibility for the children they father. If they get a woman pregnant, they do the right thing: They stand by her. They support their child. They don't try to weasel out of a situation they co-authored. They shoulder the obligations of fatherhood, even if they hadn't planned on becoming a father. Once upon a time, men confronted with news of an unintended pregnancy knew what was expected of them. Often they married the woman who was carrying their child; for those tempted to behave irresponsibly, society devised the shotgun wedding. Women, too, knew what was expected of them. They tended to be very careful about sex. If they didn't always wait until they were married, they waited for a relationship that seemed to be marriage-bound.

It wasn't a perfect system, and it didn't guarantee perfect happiness, but on the whole it was realistic: It recognized that sex has consequences. It bound men to the women they impregnated and made sure that children had dads as well as moms.

But the old code was swept away by the Sexual Revolution. With the Pill and easy abortion came the illusion of sex without consequences. Pregnancy could be avoided or readily undone. Men didn't have to marry women they impregnated; women didn't have to reserve themselves for men who were committed or whose intentions were honorable. With the devaluation of sex came the devaluation of fatherhood. Men got used to the idea of sex without strings. So did women, many of who also got used to the idea of motherhood without husbands. Government helped, too, mandating welfare benefits for unmarried moms, and child-support checks from "deadbeat dads." With the incentives for marriage weaker than ever, more and more children were born out of wedlock. In 1950, just 4 percent of births were to unmarried mothers. By 1980, the rate was more than 18 percent. It stands today at nearly 36 percent. All this is bad enough. Comes now Matt Dubay with a proposal to make things worse.

Then:

Does Dubay have a point? Of course. Contemporary American society does send very mixed messages about sex and the sexes. For women, the decision to have sex is the first of a series of choices, including the choice to abort a pregnancy - or, if she prefers, to give birth and collect child support from the father. For men, legal choices end with the decision to have sex. If conception takes place, he can be forced to accept the abortion of a baby he wants - or to spend at least the next 18 years turning over a chunk of his income to support a child he didn't want.

All true. But it is also true that predatory males have done enormous damage to American society, and the last thing our culture needs is one more way for men to escape accountability for the children they father. Dubay wants more than the freedom to be sexually reckless - he wants that freedom to be constitutionally guaranteed. Truly he is a child of his time, passionate on the subject of rights and eager to duck responsibility.

The culture used to send a clear message to men in Dubai's position: Marry the mother and be a father to your child. Today it tells him: Just write a monthly check. Soon — if this lawsuit succeeds — it won't say even that. The result will not be a fairer, more equal society. It will be a society with even more abortion, even more exploitation of women, even more of the destructiveness and instability caused by fatherlessness.

And, in some ways saddest of all, even more people like Matt Dubay: a boy who never learned how to be a real man.

Well said, indeed.

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