

# Forced Fatherhood

The debate over abortion rights almost always focuses on women. Conservatives tend to argue that abortion is unjustified, while liberals often contend that women have a right to privacy and to control their own bodies. But what about the men who caused the women to become pregnant? Prospective fathers are frequently absent from these discussions.

Because of this omission, some men feel forced into fatherhood. If a pregnant woman decides that she wants to have the child, then she is able to do so, even if the man does not want the child. In some cases, he is then expected to pay child support. In short, it seems as if women have options men don't: women can choose to abort or carry a fetus to term regardless of men's wishes. It seems only fair, the argument continues, that in the latter case, men should not have to pay child support for an unwanted child.<sup>1</sup>

Those who argue that men ought to be held responsible for child support, however, point to historical and current gender inequalities that affect income and job opportunities. Furthermore, some women's rights advocates contend that even though the father may be forced to pay child support, he is not obligated to raise the child, a responsibility that falls to the mother and is much more burdensome than paying child support. In this view, paying child support is the least a father can do. Even when a father does so, gender inequalities remain. If men were no longer forced to pay child support, this would only serve to make gender inequalities even worse.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Is it ethical for men to be held financially responsible for children they did not want while women have the ability to get an abortion?
2. Should gender inequalities affect forced fatherhood?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/12/is-forced-fatherhood-fair/>

