



Misconceptions: Unmarried Motherhood and the Ontario Children of Unmarried Parents Act, 1921-1969 (Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History)

Lori Chambers

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In 1921, despite the passing of legislation intended to ease the consequences of illegitimacy for children (Children of Unmarried Parents Act), reformers in Ontario made no effort to improve the status of unwed mothers. Furthermore, the reforms that were passed served as models for legislation in other provinces and even in some American states, institutionalizing, in essence, the prejudices evident throughout. Until now, historians have not sufficiently studied these measures, resulting in the marginalization of unwed mothers as historical subjects. In *Misconceptions*, Lori Chambers seeks to redress this oversight.

By way of analysis and careful critique, Chambers shows that the solutions to unwed pregnancy promoted in the reforms of 1921 were themselves based upon misconceptions. The book also explores the experiences of unwed mothers who were subjected to the legislation of the time, thus shedding an invaluable light on these formerly ignored subjects. Ultimately, *Misconceptions* argues that child welfare measures which simultaneously seek to rescue children and punish errant women will not, and cannot, succeed in alleviating child or maternal poverty.

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