

# FAMILY UNIONS AND FAMILY TYPES

Form 5 – Term 1

Ann Maureen Samm-Regis

# FAMILY UNIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN

- Various Caribbean family types developed as a result of our historical past (colonialism, African slavery and East Indian indentureship)
  1. The Legal Union
  2. The Common-law Union
  3. The Visiting Union (Friending)

# THE LEGAL UNION

1. Formal marriage (religious and/or legal ceremony) where marriage contract is signed in the presence of a Christian Pastor/Priest/Reverend, Hindu Pundit, Muslim Imam, or Justice of the Peace.
2. Parties must be 18 years or older or must have parental consent if younger.

# THE COMMON-LAW UNION

1. Living together without being legally married
2. Lacks binding strength in times of stress
3. Children considered “illegitimate” and both women and children may have no legal claim to any inheritance (T&T law allows claims to be made)

# THE VISITING UNION

In this relationship there is **no permanent father figure**. The man visits the woman at intervals. The **loose ties** in this type of union often break and a woman may find herself going through this stage more than once in her lifetime. It is not unusual to find that another child is produced with each new union. This pattern is called **serial monogamy**.

# THE VISITING UNION

1. Woman lives without a permanent spouse.
2. Father almost permanently absent (visits from time to time) so mother wields the authority in the household.
3. Children are considered illegitimate.

# CARIBBEAN FAMILY TYPES

# CARIBBEAN FAMILY TYPES

1. Nuclear family
2. Extended family
3. Single-parent family
4. Reorganized / reconstituted family
5. Sibling household





# NUCLEAR FAMILY

- A family consisting of a father, a mother and their unmarried children, living together in one household. Parents may be married or unmarried (“common-law” marriage/ **consensual union** or **common-law union**).
- Very common in the Caribbean and in modern, industrial societies.

# NUCLEAR FAMILY

- If there is a problem between husband and wife, they may find little consolation or comfort within the family itself. This may lead to a family break-up. The victims will be the children.
- There is **greater independence in child-care and home management**
- A sense of **individualism and insularity** can develop in the nuclear family where the goals and needs of the family are seen as solely important. The general good of society is hardly considered.



# Advantages

- **Strength and Stability:** Two parent families, whether married or not, tend to be more stable than a single parent or multi-generational family. The child has **both male and female role models** who can demonstrate a loving, caring and supportive relationship for their children. This will translate into future success by teaching children how to seek out positive relationships and interact well with others. Children will also benefit from watching partners work together to solve problems, delegate household responsibilities and support one another through positive and negative issues.

# Advantages

- **Financial Stability Equals More Opportunity:**  
Many nuclear families have enough economic stability to provide children with luxuries and opportunities in life. Children may be able to attend dance, gymnastics, music or other types of classes, especially if both partners work outside the home.

Children who are provided with these types of opportunities are more likely do better academically and socially, as well as develop confidence and time management skills.

# Advantages

- **Autonomy:**

The parents are completely in control of how their children are to be raised. There are no extended family members to interfere.

- **Very close-knit relationship:**

The nuclear family unit does provide a closeness that many single parent or multi-generational families cannot. The **smaller family size allows for individualized attention towards partners and children, creating lifelong bonds.**

# Disadvantages

- **Close-Knit or Isolated?** The nuclear family unit does provide a closeness that many single parent or multi-generational families cannot. The smaller family size allows for individualized attention towards partners and children, creating lifelong bonds. **However, the nuclear family unit can also isolate people from other relatives and relationships. This can break down the extended family unit, which can be beneficial in hard times.** Grandparents, aunts and uncles should have a place within a family, but the nuclear family does not always create one for them.

# Disadvantages

- No extended support system:
  - to assist in the resolution of conflicts.
  - **To assist with baby-sitting and childcare.** May have to hire a baby-sitter to watch the children since there are no extended family members available to help out.

# EXTENDED FAMILY

## (multi-generation household)

- Three or more generations of a family living together under the same roof or in a family compound having close and continuous contact with one another.
- May consist of several married siblings, their spouses and offspring, together with grandparents and other relatives.
- Tends to form around the **woman**, whether or not she has a partner. The grandchildren in the home are usually the daughter's children since the son's children may be with their maternal grandmother.





# EXTENDED FAMILY (multi-generation household)

- The parents of the children may be absent from the household through migration, or the formation of new households with a different partner. This type of family may also contain nieces, nephews, godchildren and grandnieces and grandnephews.



# EXTENDED FAMILY

(multi-generation household)

- **Continuity:** The individual member is provided with a secure environment. The death or absence of a parent causes a rearrangement of duties rather than family breakdown.
- **Care of the elderly:** The old, disabled and sick are regarded as a family responsibility.



# EXTENDED FAMILY

(multi-generation household)

- The **cultural traditions are handed down more easily** through direct contact with older members of the family.
- **Conflict** may arise between members of the extended family.
- **Lack of privacy**



# SINGLE PARENT FAMILY

- Consists of one parent living with, and being responsible for the upbringing of the children



# SINGLE-PARENT FAMILY

May result from:

- **Death** of one of the parents
- **Separation** of the partners through conflict, desertion or abandonment, migration, legal separation
- **Divorce**
- **Migration**
- **Deliberate choice**
  - Some mothers do not want to (or cannot) marry the father of their child and thus bring it up themselves
  - Some women want children and believe they can rear them on their own as effectively as two parents
  - Occasionally single women (rarely men) adopt children



[makinglemonade.com](http://makinglemonade.com)

# SINGLE-PARENT FAMILY

- There are some single-parent families that are stable and function effectively in which the children are well-adjusted, but the following problems can sometimes arise:
  - Possible absence of love and affection of both parents
  - Neglect / inadequate supervision/latch-key children
  - Children may develop anxiety and stress because of the financial and emotional burden placed on one parent
  - Health, education and recreation may suffer
  - Children may be over-indulged or over-protected



# REORGANISED / RECONSTITUTED OR STEP-FAMILY

- **A family in which at least one of the adults is a step-parent.**



# REORGANISED / RECONSTITUTED OR STEP-FAMILY

- Formed when one or both of the spouses may have had an earlier relationship that ended through death of a partner, divorce or separation.
- One spouse or both spouses may bring children from former relationships into the new family.
- In such a family, children may have many half-sisters and half-brothers.





# REORGANISED/RECONSTITUTED/BLENDED OR STEP-FAMILY

## **ADVANTAGES**

- Greater financial stability
- Ensures two parents
- Step-siblings (eliminates loneliness)

# REORGANISED/RECONSTITUTED/BLENDED OR STEP-FAMILY

## **DISADVANTAGES**

- Children from different backgrounds may have varying views of appropriate behaviour within the family.
- Cooperative relations between divorced individuals are sometimes strained when one or both remarries – this may affect the children.
- The biological parent living elsewhere can have a powerful influence over the child or children.
- Favouritism might be an issue.

# SIBLING HOUSEHOLD

- This is a household where both parents are absent from the home. Older brothers/sisters take care of the younger ones and the siblings live together with no parents
- Some of the siblings may be adults. However, there is an increasing incidence of the siblings being under the age of 18.
- Characterized by financial deprivation.



# SIBLING HOUSEHOLD



## Advantages

- Without older siblings taking responsibility for them younger ones may be sent to an orphanage or group home
- Children will receive personalised care, love and attention which might not be possible in a group home
- Children benefit from remaining in a familiar environment with family members.

## Disadvantages

- Financial deprivation – older sibling(s) income may be inadequate to meet the needs of the family
- Juvenile delinquency - younger siblings may not respect the older one(s)
- Inexperience disciplining children
- Inadequate supervision as siblings may have to work multiple jobs
- Depression (children miss parents)

Activity: pg. 14 # 3, 5, 6  
CHOTOLAL CHOOSES A WIFE