

◇ Chapter 3
Family Characteristics

Enrichment Activities

CREATIVE IDEAS TO BENEFIT EVERYONE

Because of the changes in the structure of the family in the past fifty years, creators of new products and services have to appeal to a much more diverse marketplace. Imagine being an inventor, designer, business owner, architect, or community planner in the twenty-first century. What product or service could you create that would be appealing to a variety of family units? Begin by thinking about today's common products and whom they are designed to benefit. Then stretch your creative imagination to envision fun, learning, comfort, and ease with products that will serve many different family units.

For example, what if neighborhoods were designed so that smaller homes for single people were built beside larger homes for big families? This way, people of different ages and lifestyles could live in the same neighborhood! Children who didn't live near their own grandparents could have substitute grandparents. Single people would still be able to talk and play with children. Shared community buildings could give everyone a place to socialize, make art or music together, and borrow items like garden tools or bicycles.

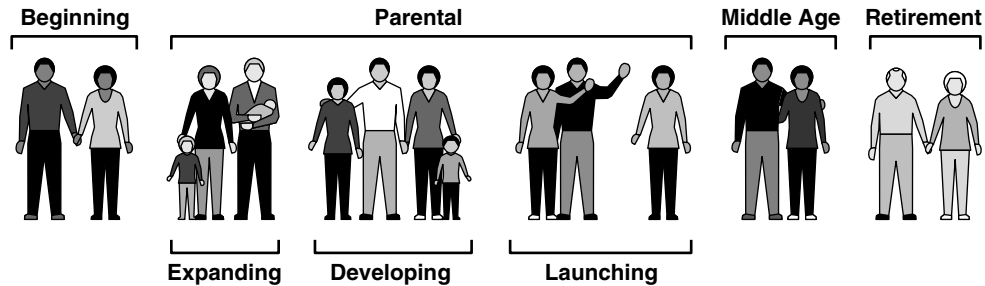
Directions: Complete the chart below by describing a creative idea in each category and identifying whom it serves.

Category	My Creative Idea	Who Is Served?
Parks		
Transportation		
Child Care		
Schools		
Grocery Stores		
Restaurants		
Banks		
Fitness Centers		
Can you think of a new idea that doesn't fit into any of the above categories? Describe it here. <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		

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STAGES OF THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE



What do you think of when you think of a “family”? No single image seems to fit the always-changing, always-growing definition of what makes up a family in society today.

The idea of the family life cycle is a way of looking at families and individual family members in order to see their changing concerns and challenges during the course of their lifetimes. Over the years, many different variations of the family life cycle have been used. The simplest life cycle consisted of just two stages — the expanding stage and the contracting stage. The most complex contained twenty-four different categories.

The concept of the family life cycle was created by Evelyn M. Duvall, a human development specialist, in the early 1950s at the University of Chicago. Duvall’s original cycle included eight stages. She divided the parental stage into five child-rearing stages based on the age of the family’s oldest child.

Duvall recognized that in real life there were many overlaps and exceptions to the family life cycle. For the most part, however, her concept fit the assumptions about family life of that time: people would marry, have children, and stay together while their children repeated the cycle. Actually, this “traditional” family — the working father and stay-at-home mother with children in school — existed in large numbers only briefly, just after World War II, when women who had worked during the war gave up their jobs for marriage and a family. Even then, this pattern primarily fit only white, middle-class society.

Today fewer than one-third of all families fit this traditional family description. Although values related to families have not changed, family patterns have. The family patterns common today include childless couples, single parents, and blended families. Also, people are remaining single, grandparents are raising grandchildren, and people are living longer.

Although Duvall recognized that there would be variations to the family pattern she proposed, those variations have become the rule rather than the exception. One thing, however, seems certain: people will always need families, whatever the form, to fulfill their many physical and emotional needs.

Focus In

1. How many families do you know that fit the definition of a “traditional” family as defined in this article?
2. What do you think has caused the number of “traditional” families to decline?
3. How have television families changed to represent the diversity found in U.S. families? Do you think this is good, bad, or perhaps both?