The Changing Definitions of Family

It is not unusual for people to think of a family in its basic form as a mother and a father and the child or children they conceive together. But there is no universal definition of the family. Scholars have established that the “normative” definition in most societies is “at least one parent and one child,” but this definition goes on to say that a child does not have to be genetically related to the parent, and “children conceived through artificial insemination or a surrogate mother” count (Munro and Munro 553).

Families are, indeed, being formed by an increasing number of nontraditional methods. Women turn to assisted reproductive technologies (ART), such as in vitro fertilization (IVF) or egg banking to have children in unconventional ways. Comedian Tig Notaro survived breast cancer and couldn’t conceive using IVF, yet now expects a baby with her partner via a surrogate pregnancy (Warner 76). Other women take eggs and freeze them until they’re later ready to start a family, despite large financial expense; “Egg freezing costs $5,000 to 15,000 per egg retrieval cycle...[plus] egg banks charge $500 to 800 for a year of cryopreservation” (Ikemoto). It’s been argued that the new families formed through ART “tend to be stronger and more highly functioning than naturally conceived ones, because the parents are so motivated to have children, and so gratified once they arrive” (Mundy 99). These new paths to parenthood help people who want children, but can’t conceive them, to limit the stress that may strain their personal relationships with one another and with outside family and co-workers (Peterson et al. 1128). As assisted reproductive technology becomes more successful and more common than ever, we must consider how it affects community and workplace norms.
Works Cited


