

employed mothers as bearing ultimate responsibility for their children's well-being; "problems" associated with paid childcare; and contradictions between a market-based definition of "care" and the ideology of "care."

Life After Baby: From Professional Woman to Beginner Parent

Wynn McClenahan Burkett
Berkeley: Wildcat Canyon Press, 2000

Reviewed by Amanda Putnam

Wynn McClenahan Burkett's *Life After Baby: From Professional Woman to Beginner Parent* shares exploits and anecdotes of real mothers. No simplified version of motherhood, Burkett's text offers authentic stories of mothers who are "primarily over thirty, college educated, and had worked for several years before becoming mothers" (6). Burkett reveals the diversity within the sometimes seemingly static category of American motherhood.

Having experienced the rewards of a "mothers' group" which she founded, Burkett hopes to create through these narratives a mother's group in print to support all new mothers. As a new mother, Burkett remembers feeling "most comforted . . . by other mothers" and she soon realized that "sharing stories with other moms" helped her feel that she "was not alone" (5). Burkett seeks to expand the concept of motherhood through the varied experiences gathered in her book, and she intends that *Life After Baby* "will be a little like having a conversation with a group of trusted girlfriends" (5).

Chapters focus on a broad range of issues, including pregnancy; early motherhood; changes in relationships with one's partner and extended family members; family size; community support; differences in mothering sons and daughters; employment outside the home; and the spiritual side of mothering. Each chapter begins with a quotation from Erma Bombeck, followed by introductory comments by Burkett. The stories dominate, however, as mothers "speak" for themselves. Cohesion is supplied by Burkett's summaries and transitions that frame the stories. Burkett explains that she did not "set out to draw conclusions and wrap them up in a neat little package. Motherhood is messy in that way. We all experience things a little bit differently, and yet we have much to learn from each other" (6). Burkett reminds readers that mothers make important decisions that bear on their own lives and the lives of their children, and that they hold the credentials as well as the right and privilege to do so.