

Daisy Hadley 404269




A campaign changing the stigmatisation of women who
dare not to bear children





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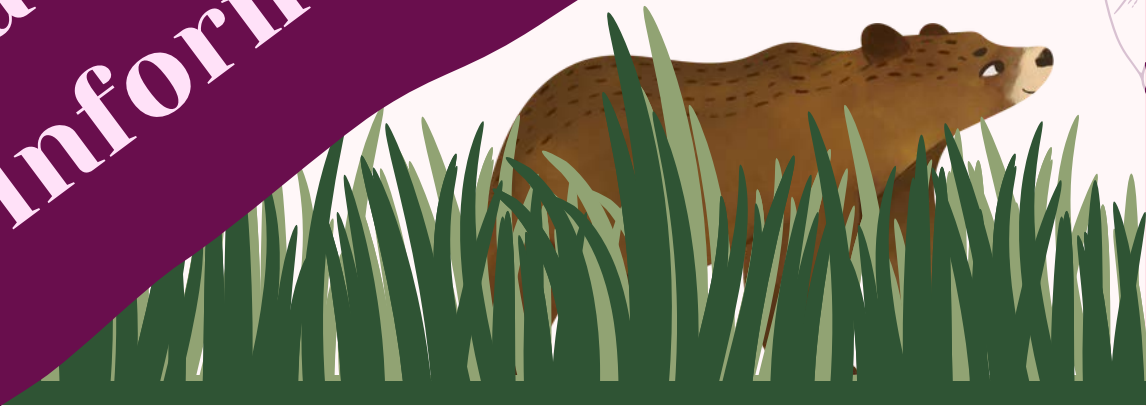
Terminology

Please note, that in responding to the current voice of voluntarily childfree women who collectively reject the categorisation 'childless' due to the symbolic power of the suffix 'less' that links the experience with a sense of loss, the term will be omitted from this campaign.

Although I acknowledge the alternative categorisation 'childfree' comes with its own loaded connotations that are equally problematic for women with children by associating their experiences with restricted lifestyles, it is, however, the most favourable of the two. What is the most suitable, and albeit most accurate term to use when referring to a voluntarily childfree woman is simply, a 'woman', but until western culture can finally abandon pronatalist ideology and adapt such into contemporary vocabulary, this research will utilise the term 'childfree'.



Background Information



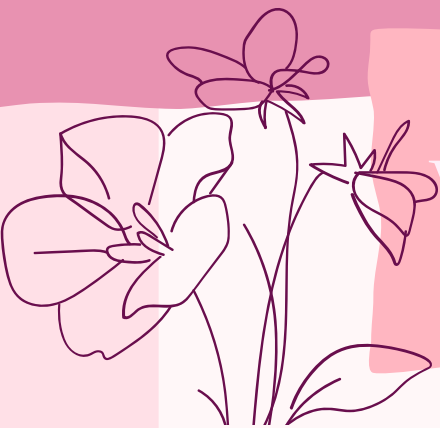
The idealisation and romanticisation of motherhood in contemporary culture has adverse effects on women who reject the expectations of femininity and chose not to have children. Voluntarily childfree women who abandon the long-standing expectation of womanhood that equates the destiny of adult femininity with childbearing are routinely stigmatised and stereotyped in popular media and contemporary culture. Intertwined with pronatalist ideology that professes 'all capable couples should have children', problematic representations are directly linked to contemporary gender debates whereby women who reject their structurally subordinate position in society of housewife and mother are pathologised. It is no secret that popular culture houses discourses that maintain dominant ideologies and the status quo that impact norms, mass understanding, social policy, and the structures of contemporary society; pronatalist ideology is not immune to this effect. As a result, voluntarily childfree women face interrogation, judgment, lower socio-economic status, poorer social support and mental health and inequality in the workplace and the medial field.

Background Information



To challenge the damning stereotypes that maintain their adversity would not only work to make the world more understanding, accepting, and welcoming of voluntarily childfree women, but work to mirror second-wave feminist agenda that seeks to dismantle traditional sex roles that dictate all women are destined to become mothers. In this campaign plan, I will be drawing on research methods such as discourse analysis, online ethnography, surveys, and content analysis to achieve a diverse and representative picture of the disparities between the representation and lived experience of voluntarily childfree women.

Academic Insights



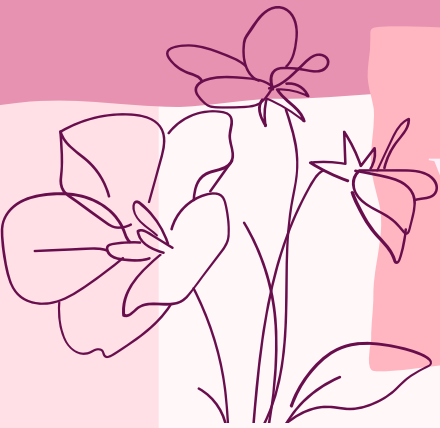
What is Motherhood?



The uncompromising gender script that regulates and maintains templates of ideal masculinity and femininity governs cultural, political, and societal ideology. Such sex roles that enfolded from biological differences between man and woman extended into modes of gender performance that, overtime, culture, religion and popular culture has determined as common sense. Although different branches of masculinity and femininity are complex and diverse, the transparent nature of motherhood that remains at the heart of feminine identity and performance is indisputable. In her seminal work on gender identity, philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1953) describes motherhood as an essential component of ideal middle-class femininity, and articulates the ways in which westernised culture equates childbirth and childrearing with the physical destiny of womanhood.

Motherhood, throughout history, has been idolised and understood as a marker of exemplary womanhood. Beth Pamela Scott (2016) describes such mythological discourses as 'the motherhood mystique' that claims womanhood sits sweetly hand-in-hand with childrearing, which gives way for an altogether more fulfilling existence as mother and caregiver.

Academic Insights



What is Motherhood?

The behaviours, demands and traits that dominate the blueprint of motherhood are routed within patriarchal ideology and ensure women dedicate every fibre of their emotional, psychological and physical being to the rearing of their offspring; an unachievable expectation that has been described as 'intensive mothering' that can only be successfully achieved when women selflessly abandon their identity in favour of 'good' neutering qualities. Such expectations are intertwined into the structures of dominant pronatalist ideologies, which are described as the 'commonly held belief that all capable couples should have children'. Connected with eugenic ideas, pronatalist ideologies drip into popular culture and social policy, and reinforces the ideal template of femininity as motherhood, and rewards those who submit to its requests. Therefore, the voluntarily rejection of motherhood and childrearing is somewhat a deeper rejection of the demands of hegemonic femininity which is stigmatized as a problematic lifestyle in contemporary culture.



Academic Insights



Childfree women in the second wave

Devoid of any influence of gender, to be childfree is defined as a 'choice to refrain from childbearing and childrearing'. Although anyone of any gender can choose to refrain from childbearing, it is heterosexual cis-gendered voluntarily childfree women that are condemned and denounced by pronatalist societies due to their withdrawal from gendered life goals that draw out the quintessential map of womanhood.

It was the rise of second wave feminism that legitimised and authorised the concept of voluntary childfree women and sought to empower those individuals. The cultural and societal shifts that occurred in a post-war climate such as access to contraception and increased educational opportunities enabled women to abandon their traditional role of house wife and mother and step into the professional world of work. Termed the 'feminine mystique' by second wave feminist writer Betty Friedan (1963), the outdated template of passive femininity failed to captivate contemporary women after the bustle of the second world-war, as they revolted against 'the problem with no name' that saw privileged women dissatisfied with their second-class status in society. The rejection of Motherhood, and its hindering qualities therefore laid the foundations for the second wave movement; because mothering exists at the heart of women's social and biological subordination, to be set free from it would be to release women from structural inequality. The gains made by second wave feminism opened doors for childfree by choice women, as the trend and subsequent media coverage gathered speed and momentum in the early 1970's; although it was far from accepted, the idea of a childfree woman by choice was not as strange as it once was.

Academic Insights

Childfree women in a Post-Feminist age

Although an accurate figure can never be achieved due to the fact a childfree by choice woman is not a fixed category such as age or race, but is a fluid experience that is structured on ever-changing opinion and choice, it is estimated that 20% of women over 40 in the UK are living childfree. In America, the rate of childfree women has grown from 10% in the 1970's, to 20% in the 2000's, and what remains evident, is that while the feminist movement shifts into a climate of post-feminism, this trend has no sign of abating soon.



The cultural understanding and personal experience of a childfree by choice women becomes much more complex in a post-feminist era. Described as the 'undoing of feminism', post-feminism in contemporary popular culture consists of what Angela McRobbie (2009) describes as a 'double entanglement' of both conservative and liberal gender ideology that intersects and clashes to cultivate paradoxical discourses. In other words, women can now be empowered, successful and overcome patriarchy, but simultaneously fall victim to structural sexism.

Academic Insights

Childfree women in a Post-Feminist age

When conservative and liberal motherhood clash:

Post-Feminist popular culture distributes a rhetoric that romanticises a return to traditional feminine pleasures such as beauty, fashion and gossip, as well as the idealisation of traditional family structures and heterosexual romance via the 'then he saved me' discourse. The mainstream media in a post-feminist era glorifies and romanticises motherhood, and, when combined with other traditional discourses, represent a mother's identity as logical. Otherwise known as 'the opt-out revolution' these ideologies were manifested in contemporary culture as privileged women traded in their new-found possibility to 'have it all' in their private and professional lives in favour of childbearing and child-rearing.

In contrast, postfeminist media culture also distributes contradictory liberal discourses of choice and freedom that enable women to navigate their own lives in a direction of their choosing. Intertwined with the expectations of neo-liberalist culture, where the shift from mass experience to individual prompts women to take responsibility for their own life, the post-feminist woman can choose what parts of femininity she accepts or rejects. But for women who reject motherhood in the climate of the post-feminist paradox, they are faced with conflicting ideologies; they are welcomed to peruse their unique path and destiny, but must accept responsibility for their successes, and failures. Yvonne Tasker and Dianna Negra (2007) note that the focus on the post-feminist quest for heterosexual romance cultivates a fear of isolation, that tempts women into the safety of traditional heterosexuality, whereby female characters in popular media pay the price for the rejection of traditional femininity and motherhood in the form loneliness. For women who voluntarily reject motherhood and the hegemonic femininity that comes with it, they are a clear manifestation of the post-feminist 'double entanglement', whereby they are both celebrated for their independence and individuality, but are feared, stigmatised and stereotyped.

Academic Insights

Discourse Analysis Film & Television

Family, and more specifically, families with children, have consistently monopolised the contemporary media landscape. Consequently, women without children, regardless of circumstance, have been frequently marginalised from view. But at the rare moments in which childfree by choice women are featured in contemporary media texts, they are stigmatised, problematised and stereotyped. Julia Moore and Patricia Geist-Martin (2013) note that it is hard to identify a specific percentage of childfree by choice characters who sit in the contemporary media landscape due to the lack of articulation and discussion of the topic; there may be a wealth of positively represented childfree by choice characters who do not articulate their choices, but what is detrimental to public understanding, is when they are labelled as such they turn into bad people with complex identities.

Television has routinely been understood by academics alike as a vehicle for transporting ideologies and representations into the consciousness of the audience. If television is a sight that houses wider societal and political perspectives, then examining examples of representations of fictional childfree by choice women can help us unpick the current cultural perception of a woman who forgoes motherhood.

It is important to note, that although these are *contemporary* television texts, they are, in 2023, relatively dated. However, these remain the most up-to-date representations, as a marginalisation of such characters has become somewhat more prominent in the 2020's as they remain the most current mainstream portrayals of voluntarily childfree women.



Take Samantha Jones/Kim Cattrall from *Sex in the City* (1998-2004), a woman who actively verbalises her desire to abstain from motherhood and enjoys a rich and exciting lifestyle in its place. But Samantha falls into the oh-so-common stereotype that constructs childfree by choice women as somewhat nasty people, devoid of empathy and compassion. She is known to be the most sharped tongued out of the four leading ladies and is frequently unapologetically cold to her peers and fellow sexual partners. Her sassy personality makes her voluntarily childfree status more palatable to the audience, who accept she is not fit for motherhood due to her frightening retreat from neutering qualities. Instead, she focuses on herself and selfishly indulges in an expensive lifestyle and enjoys a string of sexual partners, all for her pleasure. Here, the trope that pits voluntarily childfree women as irresponsible, reckless and unfulfilled individuals who seek excessive pleasure in other avenues of their lives (in this case it is Samantha's sex life) to fill a child-like hole in their identity is at play here.

Academic Insights

Discourse Analysis Film & Television



Coherent with Maryanne Dever and Lise Saugeres' (2004) examination of the childfree by choice woman as often represented as middle-class workaholics, high achieving doctor Christina Yang/Sandra Oh in ABC's *Greys Anatomy* (2006-2021) is another rare occasion in which a fictional childfree character appears in mainstream television. Once again, a childfree by choice women exhausts another areas of their life in replication of neutering her offspring. Although she leads a successful career, and unashamedly declares her voluntarily childfree status, she is a manifestation of the stereotype that concludes such women are cold and unloving; she can be blunt, sometimes rude, and has a substandard bedside manner. What is even more problematic, is how her storyline showcases not one, but two abortions, of which when dealt with and concluded, her character is shipped off to Zurich where she supposedly lives out her childfree life outside of the screen; when her potential motherhood has been exhausted, her character is no longer valuable and is removed.



A more positive representation of a childfree by choice woman is brought to life by Fiona Gallagher/Anne-Marie Duff in sitcom *Shameless* (2004-2013). An aspect of her character that is not inflamed, debated, or challenged within the narrative, her childfree identity is accepted by her boyfriend and never brought up again. Despite Moore and Geist-Martin's (2013) conclusion that voluntarily childfree women are represented as deeply unloving, Fiona is gentle in other areas as she cares for and nurtures her motherless siblings which makes her childfree status more palatable for the audience, and it is this that makes her exempt from negative troupes. Fiona represents a small proportion of fictitious childfree by choice women who are devoid of unpleasant personalities. However, despite such positivity, it is Fiona's backstory that undermines her choice to be childfree; living with the emotional baggage from her mother's departure from the family, her own lack of a mothering figure in her own life taps into the 'individual perfection' discourse often identified in such characters. Her choice is framed by a character flaw and is underpinned by her trauma.

Academic Insights

Discourse Analysis

Film & Television

While childfree by choice women are stereotyped, stigmatised or marginalised altogether, mothers, and indeed, families are idolised and romanticised in popular media. Both film and television routinely feature pregnancy and childbirth as the narrative climax, or rather, the happily ever after that ties up all the loose ends, otherwise known as the 'Disney syndrome'. LuLu Le Vay (2019) notes that popular television texts consistently disperses the ideology that dictates motherhood to be the only path for women that permits them to be 'truly fulfilled', and as a result, voluntarily childfree by choice women in popular media fail to be celebrated and romanticised. Popular culture continues to ignore narratives that overthrow the ideal template of western femininity and the status quo.

Think the Bridget Jones trilogy, that ends with the birth of her son and her eventual 'happy-ever-after'



Or Bride Wars, that sees the two principal friends declare their pregnancy simultaneously at the films end.



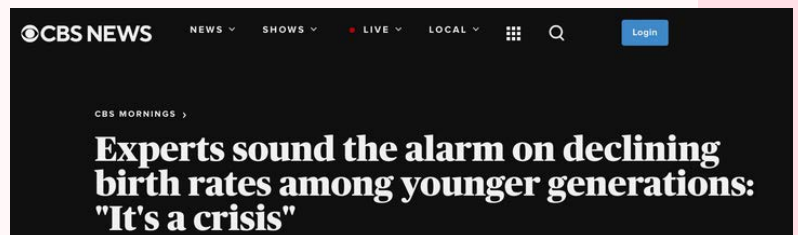
Not forgetting Notting Hill's final frame.

Academic Insights

Discourse Analysis

The Press

Pronatalist ideology, as well as harmful stereotypes about voluntarily childfree women infiltrate the press, tabloids, and British newspapers. The press distributes pronatalist ideology through inciting moral panic regarding falling birth rates, by framing the forgoing of childbirth as an unsettling trend that threatens the existence of the human race. Framed in terms of loss rather than gains achieved by women who do not have children, the press routinely draw attention to the fact childbirth rates are low as opposed to the growth in childfree by choice women. Seminal work by media theorist Stuart Hall (1973) states that language functions far beyond its surface-level meaning, and can be a vehicle for encoding messages and ideologies. With this in mind, language that describes the decline as 'jaw-dropping' and 'alarming' encodes and communicates a sense of fear and anticipation around the figures that works to blame and represent voluntarily childfree women as dangerous.



The British press also distribute pronatalist ideology by instigating and circulating pregnancy rumours. As Betty-Despoina Kaklamanidou (2018) already points out, pronatalist discourse is a central dominant topic in celebrity culture, and the frequent debates, questioning and curiosity that follow the path of a childfree women in the spotlight are ones that ultimately construct pregnancy as an ideal. In addition, such emphasis on the childfree celebrity is an articulation of Dever and Saugeres' (2004) argument, that states that voluntarily childfree women are frequently viewed as 'objects of curiosity'; the press continue to dissect and inspect their personal lives in search for motivations behind the departure from their biological destiny.

ENTERTAINMENT

Is Scarlett Moffatt Pregnant? Are The Rumors True?

Showbiz > Celebrity

MAYBE BABY Is Emma Watson pregnant?

NEWS

Is Taylor Swift Pregnant?

By Palvisha Qasim October 21, 2022

Discourse Analysis

The Press

In contrast, for those celebrities who subscribe to motherhood, the British press are not shy in their praise and warm wishes. Pregnant celebrities are often described as 'glowing' and 'blossoming' which cultivates motherhood as not only the ideal, but as an attractive phase of womanhood. What becomes evident in the analysis of celebrity mothers and non-mothers is that they are not collectively representative as a cohort of 'women', but are pitted against one another, with the latter being the least-fortunate and lacking of the two.

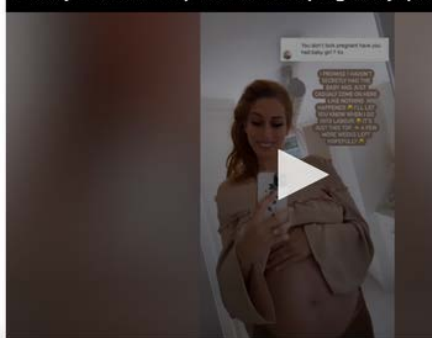
'Glowing' Stacey Solomon celebrates 37 weeks as fans attempt to guess baby's due date

STACEY SOLOMON looked glowing while cradling her growing baby bump as she celebrated 37 weeks of being pregnant with her first daughter and fourth child.

By JESSICA WILLIAMS
07:01, Wed, Sep 15, 2021



Stacey Solomon responds to fan's pregnancy que



Pregnant Olivia Bowen glowing as she cradles baby bump in colourful mini dress

Former Love Island star Olivia Bowen has shown off her blossoming baby bump in recent months, following the announcement that she and husband Alex Bowen are expecting their first child together

PREGNANT CHRISSY TEIGEN SHOWS OFF HER BLOSSOMING BABY BUMP IN GLOWING MIRROR SELFIES

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Discourse Analysis

KEY FINDINGS

- Voluntarily childfree women in popular culture are represented as bad people, workaholics, or emotionally unstable.
- Voluntarily childfree women are objects of curiosity.
- Pregnancy and motherhood is romanticised within popular culture.

Academic Insights

Online Ethnography

Although voluntarily childfree women have always existed, it is the affordances of digital culture that draws groups and voices together, as online communities offer up valuable spaces that empower audiences to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences. After exploring a range of online material, from discussion forums to blogs, what becomes clear is that the identity of a childfree by choice women is questioned by various members of society. Women explain the ways in which they are quizzed and interrogated, and in the process often made to feel that their choice is somewhat a regretful one that those who ask regard as a tragedy. In turn, those women who are subject to personal analysis become hyper aware of their stigmatisation, which has adverse effects on their self-confidence.

u/softrevolution_

So, I'm planning to be out for 6-8 weeks this winter for a hysterectomy (I'll post the victory when the organs are safely removed, thanks). In preparation for this, I let my new co-worker know what was going on. I've been open with the entire office about this and to a (wo)man, they've been thrilled for me. One look at my face and you can tell how excited I am.

And this absolute child decides it's some tragedy. "Oh no! Why?"

Well, I don't want to be pregnant, and I don't want an abortion, sooo...

"Look, women were made to have babies. Everyone should have at least one."

How do you handle judgement or stigma about being childfree by choice?

On most occasions, I don't feel the need to engage with people who offer their opinions as to why I've decided to be child free as most of the time I find it's like arguing with a brick wall. I do find it upsetting when people think I'm mean or somehow uncaring because I don't want children. I am still a loving and caring person; I enjoy nothing more than spoiling and caring for my friends or relatives' children. I sometimes feel I need to justify to people I'm not an evil old witch, as silly as that sounds!

Costacoffeeplease · 06/01/2018 10:07

You just need to look at some of the posts on this thread to see why the 'song and dance'. We continually have to defend our position because people feel sorry for us, worry about us, patronise us, think we'll regret it when we're old and past it 😊

[Add message](#) [Save](#) [Share](#) [Report](#) [Bookmark](#) [...](#)

u/IDoWhatIWantSorry

I am at 26 F and am so tired of holiday dinners and get-togethers. The older I get the more people keep pushing me to get a significant other and pushing the children agenda on me! I am okay with having no kids. I really am not comfortable with the idea of pregnancy, the more people I know who go through it and talk about all the negatives, the more assured I am in my decision of no kids

Can you explain how unsolicited opinions on your decision to be childfree by choice can make you feel?

The opinions that people offer about my decision to be childfree often make me feel as though I'm doing something wrong. Like I'm a woman so if I don't have children what else am I expected to do? My own personal experience with people like this is to generally shut the conversation down if I feel they are being rude but I do understand that some people are generally curious because they couldn't imagine a life without children. My general rule is that if someone doesn't bring up their plans regarding children then you shouldn't ask because you don't know what is going on behind closed doors.

I have had a lot of rude comments made to me over the years, some by people I hardly knew. Told I was not normal, asked why I got married if I didn't want children, told I would be lonely when old etc etc. Thought that was all over but I now I get asked a lot if I have grandchildren and when I say no that often starts the questions of why I don't have children.

Posted by
u/xtiz84

I decided to go back to school for my doctorate. I've found it very interesting that most of my friends and family have been supportive and encouraging. However, some, generally those who have always told me that 'I'd change my mind', haven't told me congratulations or acknowledged my achievements at all. They have literally moved on in conversations like I hadn't even said anything. It really hurts my heart that they can't just be happy for me.

Academic Insights

Online Ethnography

When examining the experiences of voluntarily childfree women, what is most surprising, is the fact that it is women who are the most common interrogators and stereotype spreaders. Cohesive with Jennifer Neal and Zachary Neal's (2022) conclusion that women are most likely to view childfree by choice women as cold and unfeminine, women compare voluntarily childfree women's decisions to their own, with even one woman reporting her mother called her 'selfish' after verbalising her desire to not have children. The stereotype that constructs the childfree by choice women as one who is not only lacking in femininity, but a life that is worth living, trickles down into the mass understanding of such women. Voluntarily childfree women report how other women interpret their lifestyle as a tragic and conclude that their wish to remain childfree is a drastic articulation of a retreat from ideal womanhood and femininity.

EmpressOfTheSpartacusOceans · 06/01/2018 18:46

I may get blasted for this but! I find it odd to not want children.

NataliaOsipova · 06/01/2018 17:43

Why should anyone feel sorry for me, for not having something I don't want?

I'll stick my neck out a bit here. I think it's a little like someone saying that they don't want to fall in love. That's a perfectly rational statement; you may say you don't wish to be vulnerable to heartbreak, you don't want to depend emotionally on another person etc. But it's something that's almost impossible to understand in the abstract and unless you've experienced it yourself. I feel like that about having children. I look at other people and their children and it often leaves me cold; I'm not a "kiddy person" and I don't generally find children very appealing. But the feelings I have for my own children are so strong and the reality of having them has been wonderful - because they are mine. And I could never, ever have known that in advance and without actually doing it myself.

I am a mother myself, and I do think it to be a little sad that they won't know the feeling of loving and being loved by a child, however I trust that they have of course considered this deeply, and therefore should not be judged at all.

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Academic Insights

Online Ethnography

What popular media, and indeed the structures of pronatalist society insist on, is categorising women into mothers and non-mothers. But what an analysis of online materials points to, is the idea that voluntarily childfree women do not fall neatly into categories of 'mothers' and 'non-mothers' but whose stance on motherhood is simply part of their existence, and not something that needs to be labelled. Women report they feel their decision is just 'as it is'; something that was never debated or decided on, and therefore does not require a label.

Vitalogy · 07/01/2018 07:22

I don't get this "feeling sorry" or "respect", it's just "as it is" for me.

[Add message](#) [Save](#) [Share](#) [Report](#) [Bookmark](#) [...](#)

Costacoffeeplease · 06/01/2018 09:37

And please don't waste your time worrying about us

[Add message](#) [Save](#) [Share](#)

I don't have children, but I'd never refer to myself as "childless." I'm not lacking or "less" because I don't have a baby. Yet sometimes I'm made to feel like it's a big gaping hole in my life because of the way motherhood is depicted as the pinnacle of the female experience. Some women might prefer to be "childfree", but only if that's an active choice. I don't want to be described as either, at the moment I'm simply a person who doesn't have children. I don't want my experience framed through the lens of motherhood. The language we choose to use is powerful, and the subtext that lies underneath those two words: "**remain childless**" is that having a family is the ultimate goal in life. And to only include women in that conversation is extremely problematic.

Trills · 06/01/2018 17:28

being so sure of themselves and making such a life changing decision.

It's more of a life-not-changing decision.

A life-staying-the-same decision, if you will.

StopTheRoundabout · 06/01/2018 14:56

I don't see the need to brand/say 'childless by choice'. Before DH and I had children, if asked, we would say we didn't have children. You either had children or you didn't. Everyone has gone so PC now that we need to make up non-existent titles to make a point. Does anyone actually care if other people have children or not? Once they can provide for their children and give them a happy and safe upbringing, it really doesn't matter. There are bigger issues in the world IMO.

[Add message](#) [Save](#) [Share](#) [Report](#) [Bookmark](#) [...](#)

Academic Insights

Online Ethnography

As pronatalist ideology and mediated representations continues to persuade public opinion, voluntarily childfree women are subject to social, political, and economical inequalities. In an academic study of the mental and physical health of voluntarily childfree women in Australia, Graham et.al (2011) identified that such women suffer poorer wellbeing than women of the same age who are mothers. They established that childfree by choice women suffer from more emotional distress, have a lower socio-economic status, and poorer social support and mental health as a result from negative stigmatization. An analysis of conversations on discussion forums reveals such to be true, as women describe the ways in which they are excluded from social events, face strenuous circumstances in the workplace, and are denied medical treatment.

Posted by
[u/stackofsanddollars](#)

I used to lie about having a kid when I worked hourly gigs. Better scheduling, holidays off, and my god did that kid get sick often and require my attention at home. I'm sure one day I'll bump into someone from that time I won't recognize, and they'll ask me about...well fuck I don't remember the name I gave him. That should be funny.

Posted by
[u/Primary-Lion-6088](#)

My partner 42M and I 42F have been together for over 5 years, and we live together, but we are unmarried and childfree. In the past we've experienced this kind of treatment a few times, including one time recently when we were basically put in a curtained-off section of the living room at a large college reunion type house party because we were the only couple there that didn't have/bring kids. I admit I have a chip on my shoulder about it

 **Respectfully Childfree**
Jenny Aiken Callison · 22 Oct 2021

So a couple days ago I posted about the cost of my upcoming surgery (tubal removal, ablation and iud removal) and the crazy costs associated with it. Thanks everyone for your help and advice. Things have changed since that post. I decided to just get a new IUD then if I hit my deductible in the next 5 years I will have the surgery at no extra cost. Well... as they were removing my IUD it broke and now part of the IUD is embedded in my uterus. So embedded that the doctor said my only option is a hysterectomy. Which is going to be more expensive than my original surgery with longer time off of work and 6 week of no sex or strenuous activity. I'm so frustrated that my insurance wont pick up the bill now that it's a required medical procedure rather than an elective surgery. My insurance will cover 100% the removal of my IUD but this isn't considered a removal it is a hysterectomy so it's not covered. I have to meet my deductible before they pick up any of the bill. I'm beyond frustrated.

Posted by
[u/bobzburgerzlu](#)

At pretty much all of my various retail jobs where the store wasn't closed for the holidays and everyone had to pick what holidays to work, I've always heard, "but so and so has kids so it's not fair for them to work" I have a family as well that I would like to enjoy this holiday with. Nobody should have to work a holiday period but how is that fair? It's such an annoying thing to hear

 **Respectfully Childfree**
Charrise Davy · 11 Feb 2019

I went to see my doctor a few months ago for my regular check-up, and to talk to her about my sterilisation options. I've wanted to be sterilised since I was about 16, but I figured I'd wait until I was at least 20 because no doctor would obviously do it at that age. I'm 22 now, and this was the first time I was investigating my options.

Now, I have a number of chronic medical issues, and she has been my doctor since I was about 10, so she has my entire medical history of these. She is also somewhat of a family friend.

The first thing she did when the word "sterilisation" left my lips was clutch her pearls and say, "I need a minute to process this," before briefly pacing in the other room. Then she came back and said, "Do you, by any chance, mean sterilisation as in, boiling stuff, like, for the current cholera outbreak in the country?" 😂😂😂😂😂😂 I, of course, say no. She says, "Well, I had to hope..."

 **Respectfully Childfree**
Group member · 20 Nov

Why does everything in a woman's life - including health issues - have to be all about motherhood and/or pregnancy?

Every time I had an emergency and was in pain, some nurse or doctor had to comment sth like "if you think this is painful, what are you going to do when you give birth?"

More than once, a doctor suggested having children or getting pregnant as a "cure" for chronic health issues (such as allergies or endometriosis)

But my favourite: "If you had children you wouldn't be able to focus on yourself so much" (i.e. wouldn't have time to seek help for my health issues and just suffer in silence like a good girl).

Even when I got diagnosed with several things that severely impact my quality of life, somehow all doctors care about is my ability to get pregnant and how my illnesses could affect my future children.

Like ... How about my personal health and wellbeing? Why is that treated like an afterthought?

I don't even feel like I can openly admit that I don't want children because I'm worried that I might be seen as less important and less worthy of treatment.

Academic Insights

Online Ethnography

In her analysis of gender identity of voluntarily childfree women, [Rosemary Gillespie \(2003\)](#) concludes that the majority of such women decide on such a lifestyle as a symbolic rejection of the strenuous behaviours and activities expected of mothers. But for women today, their motivations are far more complex, and indeed more selfless than Gillespie suggests. Online women express a diverse range of motives; they are propelled by the post-feminist discourse of individualism as they aim to maintain their own sense of self and current romantic relationships. Other motivations include [financial worries](#), a dedication to their career, environmental concerns, and worries about the effects children will have on their [mental health](#).

For some women, they are motivated by the fact they are preoccupied with nurturing in other avenues of their lives. Pouring all their caring qualities into contemporary issues such as global warming, or poverty, some women channel the so-called 'gap' in their lives into something positive. In addition, some voluntarily childfree women are satisfied by mothering children that are not their own, and some are simply motivated by the fact they dislike children; any choice is valid and worthy of respect.

[u/scarletwitching](#)

I just wanted to share because it's been a pretty easy recovery, and I'm finally starting to feel genuine relief.

I'm 28 and live in a very red state where abortion is now 100% illegal with no exceptions. I have bipolar disorder, ADHD and general anxiety in addition to chronic [migraines](#), so just the thought of getting pregnant and having kids gives me actual fear.

Re: 10 reasons why i don't want children

by [misa84](#) • Thu Jun 30, 2016 2:06 pm

I agree with all those points, and also I'm extremely scared of pregnancy and giving birth. It seems like something so bizarre and traumatic to go through tbh. Besides, if you are prone to it you'll probably get post-partum depression/anxiety/etc. All these things sound like it's just all not worth it. Yeah I've heard people say that it's been all worth it for their children but I've also seen people say that they regret having children.

Re: 10 reasons why i don't want children

by [Idontknow](#) • Mon Jul 04, 2016 1:04 pm

I'm kind of glad this thread exists. I've been on and off having this discussion with my boyfriend. I'm 21 and I have always had horrendous periods, like the kind where I am unable to leave my bed for two days because the cramping is so bad. Awhile back, I passed a decidual cast and it was honestly so extremely painful. I feel like I've been in enough pain my entire life to not voluntarily put myself through the most painful experience a woman can go through physically. My mom always says I'll regret it and I can't deprive myself of having a child, but I don't see why it's forced and expected of people. I am really happy just living as I am with my boyfriend doing our own thing. I love kids, but I don't think I'd love having my own kid.

Another reason is because I already suffer from depression, anxiety, OCD, and PTSD. The depression/anxiety/OCD were all inherited from my mom. I don't resent her for giving them to me, but it's enough that I really don't want to put another human through this. I would strongly consider adopting, but with my genes, I don't want to just birth a child that doesn't even have a chance mentally haha.

[lilacqueen](#) wrote:

I'm 28 and I totally agree with you, I really can't stand the idea of me being a mother.

The main reason I don't want kids is the same reason you mentioned in point 3: losing yourself. A lot of my friends already have children and when I look at them I feel scared because I see that they lost their own "life", everything is about their kids and I can't have any conversation with them unless it's about babies and children.

And I'm not really a kids person. I don't think all the babies are cute and sometimes I hope that airplanes have a separated area only for parents and their kids because I can't stand having a crying children near me.

Maybe in the future I will regret not having a children but, like you said, we can always adopt.

1. I honestly believe that having a child will lead to our divorce.

This might be a bit harsh, but think about it. I am a software developer and project manager on 3 projects. That means that my job is quite stressful, I often work over time and I get angry quite often especially if I'm tired. My husband is a marketing consultant in an IT company. His job is to plan events, parties, conferences, he has to travel a bit and so on. Everyday after we get out of work we go together to the gym. That means that the most earlier we get home everyday is at 7 P.M. This if we don't go out and meet some of our friends. How could a child fit into this life? We would have to give up going to the gym everyday, meet our friends more rarely. On the long run this would only make us unhappy. We love going to the gym because it makes us happy and lets us unwind after a long day. So we would give up the only thing that relaxes us for a child who will only bring us more stress and would only make us more tired and unhappy. You can imagine that in the long run we would get cranky.. maybe fight more often if we didn't have that outlet to unwind.

2. A child ruins the sex life.

We don't have sex as often as we both would like, that maybe because at the end of the day we are sometimes so tired that we go to sleep as soon as our head hits the pillow. But a child will ruin even the one we have. All our friends who have babies and children have slept with them for at least the child's first year. How can you have sex with a baby in your bed? We have some friends who have 2 children. One 3 year old and one is 1 year old and all four of them sleep in the same bed. How can you do that to yourself??

3. You lose yourself

This is somewhat related to the first one. We as individuals have hobbies and things we like to do in our spare time. Mine is going to the gym, playing video games, reading, travelling, taking pictures and videos and editing them. I feel that a child would interfere with all of them. That would make me not be anymore. How can my husband then love me if I will not be anymore? And how can I love him then if this happens to him? I get that you adapt and grow. However... I feel like it's too much. So many of our friends with children, especially the women, have changed so much that you can't have a conversation with them if it doesn't involve babies. I don't want to become that woman.

Quora

Search for questions, people, and topics

[Sakshi Pingale](#)

Software Engineer | Traveller | Foodie - Apr 27

1.I was a single child for the first 10 years of my life. I never wanted a sibling thinking that my parents' love towards me would get divided. I hated the children of guests who visited us and wouldn't allow them to enter our house. I even cried very badly when I came to know that my mother is pregnant again. I could never love my sister wholeheartedly (I still don't) and used to nag and sort of hate her initially. I would get scared even at the mere thought of having another sibling.

2.I do not have motherly instinct in me. I don't find kids cute and absolutely hate holding or playing with them. For a fact I know that I would be a terrible mother. I would badly beat my child if it asked too many questions or couldn't understand my instructions or interrupted me in my chores. I might also have ended up into postpartum depression.

3.I love my freedom and don't want to spend my weekends doing my child's school activities, checking its books, teaching it, dropping it to English tuition, Maths tuition, summer camp friend's birthday party etc. I would rather spend my weekend just lying on bed, watching some nice movie, shopping, partying with my friends.

4.Cost of raising to child properly in this competition driven world is very high. I would rather spend that money going on trips with my husband, upgrading my home, saving for early retirement, buying myself expensive gifts, etc.

5.I have a kick ass career and do not want to compromise on it even a bit. I want to explore more opportunities and not leave any on site offers, big projects just because there is a child at home who needs my attention.

6.I like to take out time for nurturing my hobbies like cooking, baking, reading, home management and classical music. I want to explore some other career options as well. I do not intend to spend that time, money and energy on a kid.

Posted by [uljiniccheesecake](#) 16 days ago

466 Recently childfree

[BANT](#)

I'm 16 and recently decided to become childfree. I told my mom and she absolutely flipped out on me.

My reasons: -I want to travel around the world and kids will definitely not allow me to do that -I hate the idea of going through pregnancy and giving birth. It's dangerous and not to mention I could die doing so. -Why do I have to bring more people into this already messed up world? It's pretty illogical. -Childcare or just anything regarding kids is expensive. Why waste all these money on kids when I can spend them travelling instead. -Looking at all my uncles and aunts who have three or so kids, it looks like kids are just stressful and age you really quick. -I'm not suitable to become a mother. I don't want a child to grow up with a bad mother.

Mom's reasons: -You have to take risks in life. -You're selfish (to who?) honestly woman 😡 -You can still travel with kids (they are unnecessary baggage imo) -You will need someone to take care of you when you're old and sick (what?) -Your children will be your best friends (from my experience as your kid, I disagree)

She demands that I give her 2 grandchildren before she dies. She offers to care for them, but it's easier said than done considering my mom recently admitted that she hates children. Sorry for the long post. I just needed to rant.

Edit: Thanks for all your replies! I realised that keeping quiet about being childfree to my mom is the way to go for the time being. Grateful for this!!!

81 Comments Share Save Hide Report 96% Upvoted



Online Ethnography **KEY FINDINGS**

- The choices of voluntarily childfree women are questioned and debated
- Women are most likely to ask judgmental questions
- Voluntarily childfree women don't wish to be labelled as such
- Inequality does exist for such women, and in many forms
- Voluntarily childfree women are motivated by various diverse reasons

Academic Insights

Survey

After conducting a survey that was answered by 26 voluntarily childfree women, it became evident that pronatalist discourses and the stigmatization of childfree women continues to infiltrate contemporary culture.

In a question that asked respondents to describe a successful woman, many answers drew on the ability to balance family and career; an articulation of the discourse that insists children are a sign of perfection and a successful subscription to the post-feminist 'have it all' discourse in the contemporary woman's life.



Can you describe a woman without children in three words?
24 responses
independent, driven, limitless
Not sure on this one - I feel every woman is different
Powerful, independent, career driven
Happy, powerful, brave
free, brave, inspiring
powerful, strong & stress-free
Strong, independent, happy
Richer, free, committed
Strong, independent, self assured
Independent, self assured, comfortable
Assured, independent, normal
Worthy, free, judged
Determined, unafraid, strong
Independent. Strong. Brave. (I'm annoyed I think brave. But I do. It's so expected of us)
Independent, worthy and strong
free, happy and content
independent, self-aware, assertive
Strong, independent and free
Still a woman
I find this question really hard to answer in three words. As everyone women is different and will not have children for different reasons.
Independent, motivated, happy
Brave, powerful, inspirational

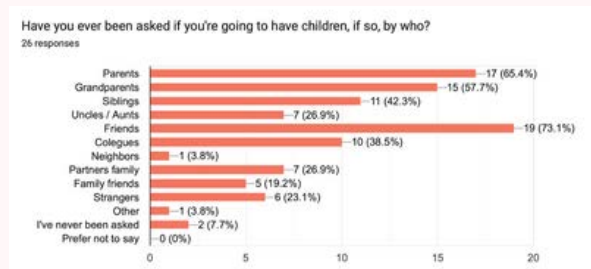
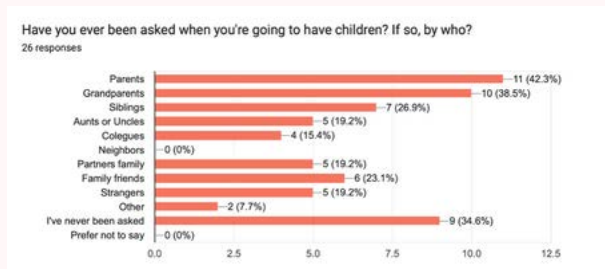
What do you think makes a woman successful today?
26 responses
independent and self sufficient
Confidence and happiness, someone who is living for themselves
Independence from me; working hard on their career; motherhood (it is not an expectation but most who do choose to be mothers work really hard)
Being independent
being able to juggle a career and family
I think success is subjective. A woman being in control, being confident and being healthy and happy mark success I think. Money of course is a factor but not the be all and end all.
Money
Confidence, friendliness, assertiveness, passion and drive
A women that has achieved her goals in life whilst maintaining a happy relationship with herself, and others around her
Doing what THEY want to do
Having a good sense of 'self'. Having a healthy relationship with yourself, friends and partners.
"Successful women" immediately conjures up images of women in business suits, being corporate and bossing men about in an office (like Sandra Bullock in The Proposal) This is almost certainly a very patriarchal image in itself though, because it means I am defining "success" as making money and shouting, being outside the home, earning money (all of which are traditionally ways that men have been assessed on their success). As a result, we are holding women to standards of "success" that are not realistic because fewer women are "in their element" so-to-speak when in that kind of traditionally male dominated areas. I would therefore like to retract my earlier statement and say that a "successful woman" is one that feels they have achieved in an area important to them, whether that be raising kids or moving to a new town or learning to drive or designing a brilliant building or winning a race. A woman who has achieved.
Doing something that makes her feel great, whatever that is. Staying true to her emotions.
Their job
Being able to juggle life and family
Independence - living life truly as you want without having to submit to anyone else's idea of what makes someone successful.
Anything she can put her mind to - can be her job, but also just herself in general and being happy
I think a woman is successful when she feels happy and content with herself- happy in their job etc. society often views successful woman as high paying corporate job with a family



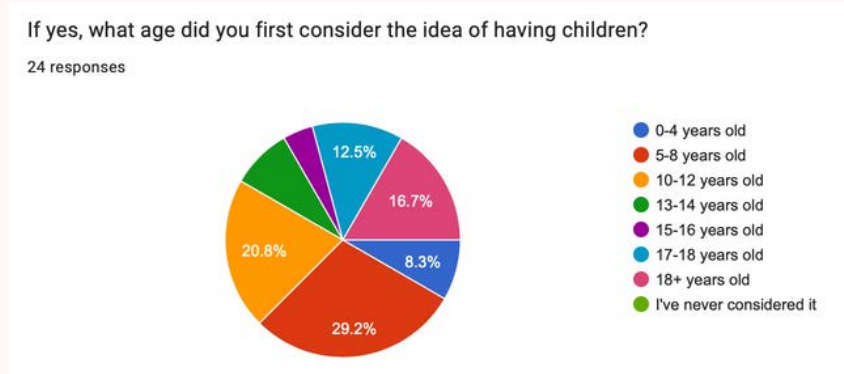
In another question, respondents drew similarities between voluntarily childfree women and bravery, revealing that such women are not only aware of the ongoing stigmatization, but have internalised such problematic discourses that construct them as pathological and abnormal.

Academic Insights

Survey



Expanding on my earlier findings that conclude women are most likely to interrogate voluntarily childfree women, the respondents identified that parents, grandparents, and friends are the most likely to ask judgemental questions. Although Neal and Neal (2022) conclude that older demographics are the most likely to do so, my results point to the fact anyone of any age can distribute pronatalist ideologies, but they are most likely to be people close to the woman in question. Although respondent's report such questions appear in relaxed, informal settings, they highlight the emotional distress such interrogation caused.



Just under 30% of respondent's reported that they began considering motherhood between the ages of 5 and 8, and just over 20% between ages during the ages of 10-12. In total, 58.3% of respondents were under the age of 12 when they began contemplating their future as a mother, pointing to the conclusion that motherhood and the expectations of traditional femininity are learnt at an early age. Moreover, a survey by Rebecca Feasey in 2019 identified that popular media and its maternal discourses not only teaches children about motherhood, but its ideal attributes and circumstances. For example, the teenage respondents reported that they saw themselves becoming mothers after securing a high-paid job, disposable income, long-term partner and fully paid off mortgage; attributes that are romanticised and spotlighted by popular media but ignore very real implications such as infertility or pregnancy loss.

Results to the survey:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EyZAF0FI1ap6OOS8Lij6Ga-MKSzbWrwXbf4dgSAm4k/edit?usp=sharing>



Survey **KEY FINDINGS**

- Women understand the gendered expectations of motherhood from an early age.
- Judgmental questions appear in informal settings, but cause significant emotional distress to voluntarily childfree women.
- Parents, grandparents and friends are most likely to ask childfree by choice women about their motivations.
- Women are motivated by a number of reasons not to have children

Academic Insights

Content Analysis



During a trip to Waterstones Book Store, I examined the 218 books available in the children's picture book section.

0 books featured childfree women who **expressed** that they were childfree by choice.

4 books (1.83%) featured female characters who were not mothers. These included; *'The Bookshop Cat'* (2021) by Cindy Wume, *'Weirdo'* (2021) by Zadie Smith and Nick Laird, and two editions of *'Winnie and Wilbur'* (1987-present) by Valerie Thomas and Korky Paul.

The narrative of the latter; *Winnie and Wilbur*, features the story of witch Winnie who lives with her black cat Wilbur. Although she lives happily, her identity of a witch and the gloomy, gothic imagery that dominates the illustrations frames her character as one who is devoid of brightness and is undeniably wicked.

'Weirdo' by Zadie Smith and Nick Laird tells the story of Kim's beloved pet hamster, who, on its birthday, is strapped to balloons and floats elegantly out the window into the flat of Emily, a woman who, we can only assume, is without children. She befriends the hamster and reflects on her past as a dancer as she feeds him macaroons before returning him to Kim. Although Emily makes no direct remarks on motherhood whilst reflecting on her past, and appears infectiously happy despite mentioning children, she is ultimately a secondary character who only features in a mere 6 pages and disappears from the narrative altogether after the hamster returns to its (nuclear) family.

In the same vein, *'The Bookshop Cat'* by Cindy Wume opens with a more worthwhile representation of a childfree woman. The pop-art illustration hinders the reader's ability to pin-point character's ages, but it can be assumed that character Violet is within childbearing age due to the fact of her inheriting and running her own bookshop independently. She is inviting, bubbly, and most importantly fulfilled by her career in her bookshop, until one day, a black cat steals her thunder. Pushed into the shadows, the narrative switches its focus from Violet to the bookshop cat, who seemingly comes to help with the running of the shop but captures the attention of customers with its quick-wit and charm. Once again, the woman without children is a subsidiary character who dissolves into the background of the narrative to make way for more traditionally 'child friendly' characters.



Academic Insights

Content Analysis



On the flip side, 121 books out of the 218 (55.5%) featured mothers, both as primary and secondary characters. Both human, and anthropomorphised into animal form, fictitious mothers are warm characters who comfort their children, offer advice, and even save the day. The stark disparities between mothers and non-mothers in children's paperback literature is crystal clear; women who express that they are childfree by choice are non-existent, so-much-so that when a woman appears who is devoid from motherhood, readers can only assume that she is without children as her circumstances are never touched on. We are yet to see a woman in children's literature that proudly expresses she is childfree by choice, yet alone see one who is represented positively and accurately.



In aid of increasing the probability of locating a positive representation of a childfree by choice woman in children's literature, I reduced my sample size, and examined a collection of works that have been labelled as showcasing 'families of all kinds'. Featuring a diverse range of family structures from same sex to single parent, what remains excluded from 100% of the sample, is a family of any gender identity, ethnicity, or sexual orientation without children. Despite claiming to educate the young reader on the diverse and complex nature of families in the 21st century, each book sits comfortably in pronatalist ideology, that renders children as a marker of a family unit. John Storey (2018) notes that ideology can be cultivated through a combination of what is both there, and what is missing, and with this in mind, in a text that is supposedly educating the reader on welcoming family diversity, the omission of childfree families implies that they are worthy of social subordination and exclusion. Here, pronatalist discourse not only plays the role in dictating motherhood as the ideal template of femininity, but prohibits couples without children from being labelled as a collective 'family unit'; a family, according to pronatalism, is only so when children are present.

14 CHILDREN'S BOOKS ABOUT FAMILIES OF ALL KINDS!

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Pinterest](#) < 364 SHARES

Do your children see their family reflected in the pages of a favorite picture book? I hope they do, but if not, maybe one of these children's books about families will help!



Content Analysis **KEY FINDINGS**

- Voluntarily childfree women are not represented in children's picture book literature
- Families without children are not regarded as what contemporary culture understands as a family

A U D I E N C E

With 58.3% of my survey respondent's identifying that they began considering motherhood under the age of 12, and paired with the fact children begin understanding gender roles in early childhood, my campaign's primary audience will be aimed at Key Stage 1 children aged between 4 and 8. The materials will be targeted to different stages of the age range to ensure the messages and objectives are implanted and maintained within the consciousness of the audience through texts that are both informative and entertaining. Social learning theory insists that behaviours, ideas and attitudes are learnt through observation and imitation, therefore, to cultivate a campaign with positive role models and more accurate representations of voluntarily childfree women will help children to internalise such as truth. The campaign will be most effective when aimed at children to ensure that the problematic stereotypes and understandings of childfree by choice women are extinguished at an early age and prevented from spreading, making way for a more accepting generation of tomorrow that accepts that a family without children is still a family.



A U D I E N C E

When aiming media material at children, it is important to consider the inevitable secondary audience of parents who may consume the text with their children. Whilst considering my research findings, that identify parents and grandparents are most likely to interrogate and question voluntarily childfree women, a secondary audience of parents, and more specifically mothers, ensures my campaign also reaches the other end of the problem. In response to Neal's (2022) academic conclusion that states women are most likely to distribute negative stereotypes, targeting mothers ensures those individuals who have internalised pronatalist ideology are reached. By producing material that is appealing to both parents and children, as well as cultivating more detailed and mature texts that enrich the mother's understanding of the topic, I will ensure the campaign terminates pronatalist discourse and the gender script that enables them by stopping parents from projecting them onto their own children or grandchildren in the future.

Objectives

**To dismantle
negative stereotypes
surrounding
voluntarily childfree
women**

To educate
audiences on
how such
women deal
with
questions /
judgment, and
how it makes
them feel.

**To articulate the
motivations of voluntarily
childfree women**

**Celebrate
their choice
to reject
motherhood**

To use the affordances
of digital media to
prompt new
perspectives and
transform the ways in
which children
understand femininity.

Competitor matrix

				
Formal Tone	✓	✓	✓	
Informal Tone				✓
Stories of real women	✓	✓	✓	
Fictional stories				✓
Targeted at children				✓
Targeted at adults	✓	✓	✓	
Targeted at both adults and children				
Educational resources for children				✓
Social Media Content	✓	✓		
Blogs	✓		✓	
Merchandise	✓			

Competitor matrix

What is evident after analysing comparable organisations is that there remains a significant gap in the social campaign industry that does not feature fictional stories of voluntarily childfree women aimed at both children and parents. I will aim for a blend of formal and informal tone throughout my campaign, with the latter being dispensed within materials aimed at children. The material aimed at parents will therefore lean on a formal tone but will, in order to ensure children and the transformation of their perceptions of voluntarily childfree women are at the heart of the campaign, be injected with moments of playfulness and informality to ensure an overall cohesiveness. In addition, there is yet to be a campaign regarding voluntarily childfree women that works to both educate and entertain its audience, which, when being aimed at children, is crucial in securing their engagement and long-term recollection.

Persona Profile

Persona Profile #1



Bio
Six year old Isabelle is an older sister to two younger brothers. She enjoys creative subjects at school such as english, art and drama and enrolls in extra-curricula activities such as dance and gymnastics. She loves roll playing games at break and lunch time with her friends and is always pleased to be cast as 'mum' in mummies and daddies games. She also loves reading and can often be found drawing and expanding on the world of the story she has just read, as well as nagging her parents for matching merchandise. She can often be mistaken as bossy due to her can-do attitude, but is ultimately a kind child who is easy to make friends with.

Name: Isabelle Kelly
Age: 6
Location: Stroud
Personality: Extroverted
Favorite film: Sing!

Brands



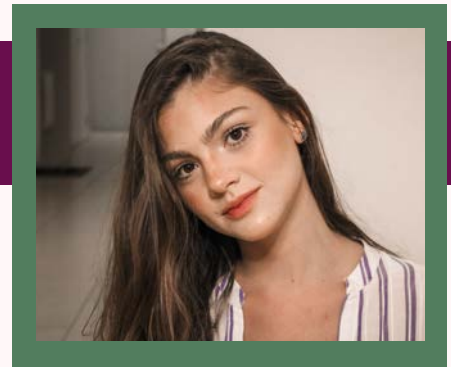
Goals

- To read as many books as possible
- To bag her dream part in the school play
- To one day be a mother

Frustrations

- She is frustrated when she sees bullying
- She becomes irritated when her casting at break-time role play is not a domestic or pretty one such as princess or mother

Persona Profile #2



Bio
Samantha is a single mum of two, working part-time as a nurse. When she's not working, she values time with her children; taking them to the park, reading and baking with them. As a single mother in the current cost of living crisis, family activities are often low-cost and can be re-used. She is a giving person; she supports local charities and donates at school fundraising events. She values children's texts that have an educational value, and that contribute to making the world a more inclusive and friendlier place for all. She identifies with left-wing, liberal political ideology and regards herself as a fair person. She is somewhat introverted, but will tap into extroverted qualities when she stands up for something she believes in.

Name: Samantha Castle
Age: 30
Occupation: Nurse
Relationship Status: Single

Brands



Goals

- Raising her children to be kind
- To continue to thrive in her career
- To grow old and have grandchildren

Frustrations

- The traditional and binary curriculum her children are enrolled on
- Segregation and the exclusion of different social groups
- Global warming



Platforms

-  **Story Book**
-  **Youtube Short videos**
-  **Facebook**
-  **Posters**
-  **Blogs**
-  **Merchandise / Toys**
-  **Certificates**
-  **Drama lesson plans**
-  **Trailer**



Book

Call to action:
Change your thinking

It has been identified that literature and storytelling has direct impact on young children's understanding of gender performance and sex roles. With this in mind, a picture book is a suitable place to house progressive ideologies that welcome and romanticise the lives of childfree by choice women. Children are innately visual learners, and it's reliance on picture format will enable the reader to transfer the ideas and messages encoded in the language into reality. However, to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all audiences, the story will be made available in audio book format. The story will tell the journey of a bear who rejects motherhood and faces judgment from her fellow woodland animals until hibernation season hits, and she welcomes them into her cave as they begin to realise she is warm, kind and fulfilled. Children mirror the behaviours captured in books, and with this in mind, by ensuring the woodland animals realise their wrong judgment will instill the message within children that to interrogate or question voluntarily childfree women is morally wrong. Humans are known to see themselves in the face of animals, but also draw a degree of distance between them, therefore, by anthropomorphising the characters aids children's understanding of real world issues in alternative realities; housing the issue through animals makes the story-world and its characters easier to understand and more enjoyable. The visual format of the text that will feature bright illustrations and vivid scenery will secure the curiosity of the children reading and ensure the characters live in their memory. The story will be read in schools in order to secure concentration within the audience.

An ethical template

Anita L. Allen identifies possible attributes of a role model that the principal bear character will adhere to.

A symbol of special achievement

Youtube Short Videos

Coherent with the specifications of transmedia that demand each text to contribute a unique perspective to the same story-world, the short youtube videos will be an extension of the storybook narrative that will explore the bear's journey in more detail. With the 2020/21 Ofcom report identifying 96% of children aged 5-11 independently use video sharing platforms, Youtube is an appropriate platform to house material that children can independently search for and consume. The videos will feature an array of characters that question the motivations of the bear. Her motivations will mirror my research findings but be adapted to fit the woodland world. For example, some women are motivated by environmental reasons, of which the bear will express the ways in which she is worried the river is being filled with plastic so she spends her time clearing the waste and, in turn, caring for her habitat. The short videos will be told through still images with narrators reading the dialogue that will be projected on screen in order to make the material accessible for all children. Rhyme will also heavily feature throughout the videos, with one repetitive chorus that sums up the themes of the text to ensure the overall message is not lost. Children are known to effectively memorise and recall rhyme easily, and this will ensure the message remains within the consciousness of the audience long after the video has ended.

Call to action:
Learn more



Posters

Posters will support the campaign and advertise the texts in schools and libraries. 94% of parents regard libraries as 'very important', and due to the context effect, by distributing my campaign material in this learning environment will help parents equate the texts with important educational value. In the same vein, posters will also be distributed on bus stops to compare and align the campaign with other engaging film and television texts to secure down the entertaining purpose of the material. Reading for pleasure is in drastic decline in children, and by signifying the text's similarities with other popular children's mediums will prevent children from switching off from the campaign due to its educational purpose.

Call to action: Find out more

Call to action:
Empathise and
connect with
such women

Drama Lesson Plans



Drama and performance has the unique ability to deepen children's understanding of characters and stories by awarding them with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the world of the character. It is drama's particular affordances that require a deep emotional connection between actor and character that prompts feelings of empathy and understanding that makes it a suitable vehicle for educating children on the thoughts, feelings and emotions of voluntarily childfree women. In addition, drama and performance opens up new perspectives for it's participants, and with this in mind, the lesson will focus on drawing the student's attention to the various motivations and benefits behind a voluntarily childfree women in order to extinguish the dominant pronatalist perspective that plagues popular media. The drama workshop will be an extension of the foundational book text and direct the participants to take on the role of different characters in the form of hot seating, script work, mime, freeze frames, thought tracking and improvisation

Call to action:
Continue your
journey
through our
campaign!

Certificates



In a digital age, parents and specifically mothers, are engaging in the trend of 'sharenting' that sees the sharing of positive moments of children's upbringing on social media platforms. Parents consistently use social media as a vehicle to spread their child's achievements within their online communities, therefore, each child who participates in the drama workshops will be rewarded with a unique certificate. Such will increase the audience reach of the campaign, as parents who share the campaign will be willingly distributing the material to fellow parents. In addition, children respond more positively, and find it easier to remain engaged with topics that they receive praise about, and therefore the certificates will ensure the audience have a positive relationship with the campaign.





Trailer

A trailer will house and summarise the key messages and ideologies of the campaign and be aimed at mothers. 65% of mothers use social media to investigate brands and organisations, and to distribute the trailer on networks such as Facebook and Youtube will provide mothers with the opportunity to succinctly understand the goals of the campaign without sifting through hoards of material. With this in mind, the trailer will aim to run for under a minute, as to satisfy the audience demands of mothers that request the material is both simple and uncomplicated. With children and their interactions with the campaign material at the heart of the trailer's narrative, the focus on real children and their responses to the idea of what a 'family' should look like will create a trailer that is not only promoting the campaign but is of ideological value; an aspect that is important to contemporary mothers within marketing material.

Call to action: come and explore our materials



facebook

Facebook is the most popular social network among mothers; with 81% of them using the network daily. Due to the platforms informational structure and focus on text, it is the most suitable platform to distribute the messages of the campaign through posts that expand on its goals and objectives in order to provide the parents with the feeling they truly know the motivations behind the material. In a world where parents are protective of their children and what they consume, these posts will soothe their concerns and build a relationship of trust between parent and text. With 66% of mothers turning to social networks in order to understand brands and their products, Facebook is a suitable platform to inform and educate the audience on the campaigns goals. After securing parental interest, the posts will direct them to merchandise and toys that can be used as a marker of brand loyalty that the ideologies and messages of the campaign are transposed onto.

Call to action: Learn more

**Call to
action:
Spread
the word**

Merchandise / Toys

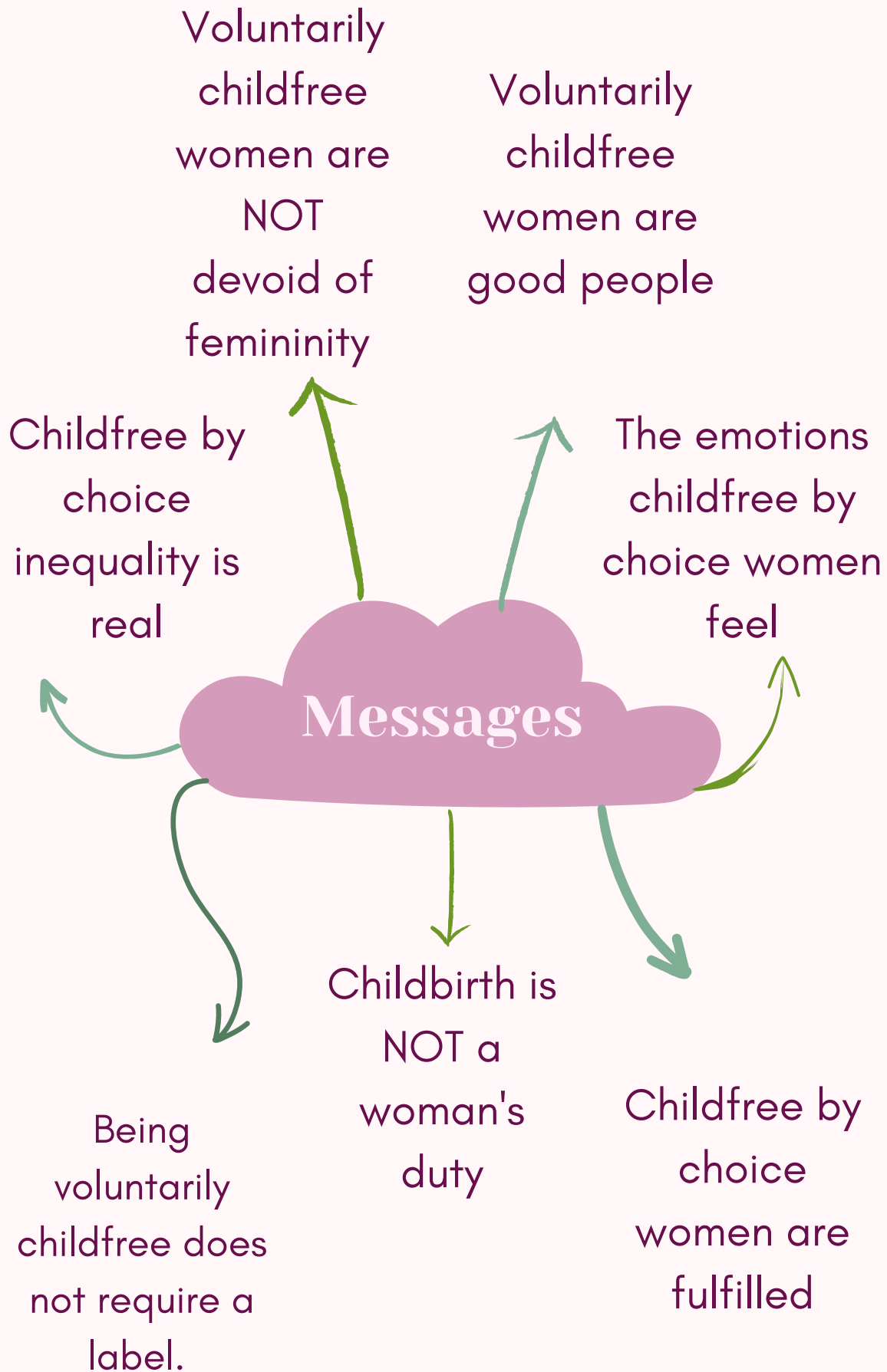
Merchandise is known to have positive effects on consumer loyalty and has the ability to prompt longer brand resonance with the consumer. Therefore, my campaign will utilise merchandise aimed at both mothers and children.

For mothers, the purpose of the merchandise will enable them to transfer the values and messages of the brand onto their identity; mothers who regard themselves as forward-thinking, the merchandise is an excellent opportunity for them to visually articulate this. The merchandise will be composed of items that have 'high usability and perceived value' such as water bottles and tote bags in order to appeal to the consumer in a cost-of-living crisis, where products that are essential and necessary are more likely to entice the audience. It is important to bear in mind that although the children's merchandise will be consumed primarily by them, the financial investment will be completed by the parents, and therefore their own audience needs must be incorporated into the products. The children's merchandise will be devoid of unnecessary plastic, which in a world where parents are placing value on sustainable toys will appeal to the secondary audience. The merchandise will be functional, featuring products such as pencil cases, t-shirts and customisable rucksacks. Children are known to form deep emotional and empathetic relationships with their toys and in order to extend their connection with the principal character and therefore their understanding of voluntarily childfree women, toys will ensure such continues outside of the walls of the campaign. The toys will consist of soft plush toys in the form of characters featured in the picture book as well as building block sets. Parents are known to draw positive associations with LEGO and its creative attributes, and therefore will be more likely to invest in the product. The sets will feature scenes from the story and will allow children to control, build and transfer the positive conclusions drawn in the narrative into their own reality.

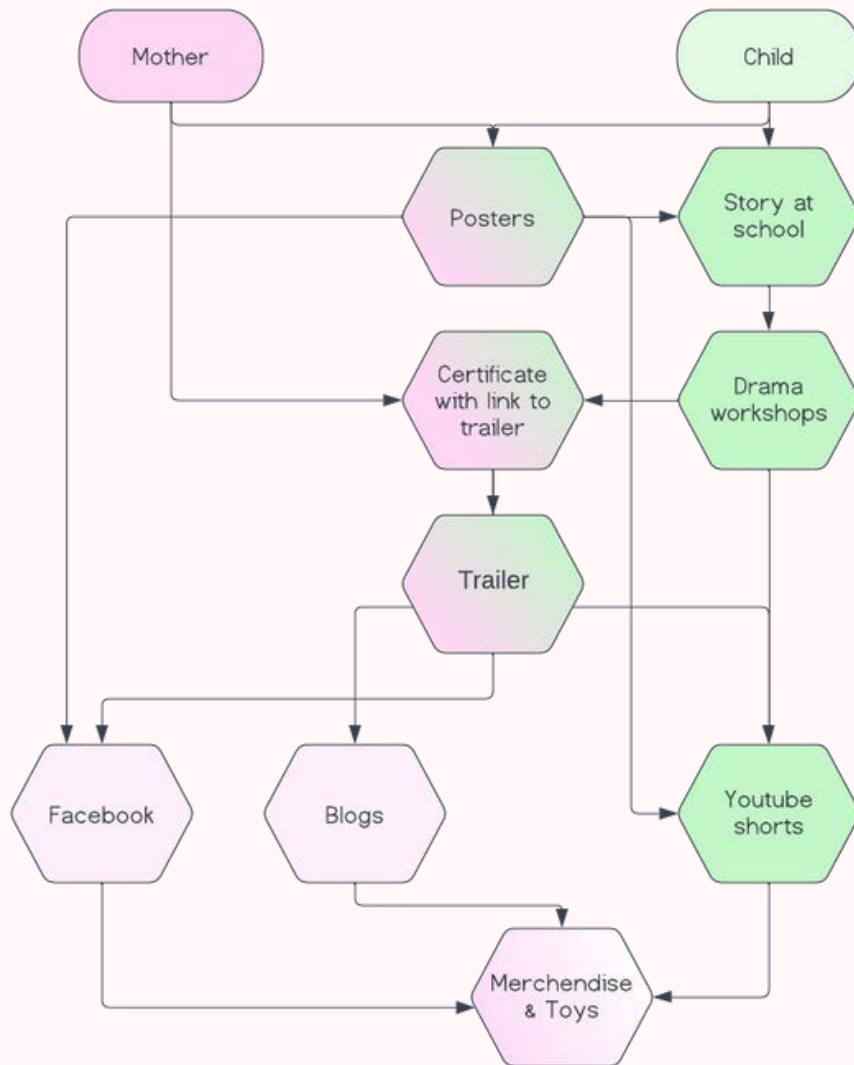
Blogs

With 90% of blog readers sitting between the ages of 18-50, an age of which women are most likely to have young children, blogs are a suitable sight to house more specific content aimed at mothers. The blogs will dive more deeply into the realities of voluntarily childfree women which may be unsuitable for young audiences. By informing women of examples of how childfree by choice women face structural inequality, as well as recalling stories of judgment faced by such women, the content will work to convince the audience of the importance and relevance of the campaign's objectives. In addition, by educating mothers on the diverse and negative stigmatisation such women face, the blogs work to alter the cultural trend that sees women with children as the most likely individuals to question voluntarily childfree women. 70% of contemporary consumers are more likely to trust promotion in the format of a blogs over adverts, and this way, the blogs will act as both educational and promotional material. 70% of web-users state that they enjoy learning about a brand through blog content, and with this in mind, the blog posts and stories of real women will be linked neatly to the brand's objectives. This way, for the 73% of blog readers who prefer to skim the text, the information will be clearly displayed as to ensure the overall messages are not ignored. However, in order to secure engagement as best as possible, the blogs will not exceed more than 7 minutes to read in total which will sit well with the busy lives of mothers in 2023.

**Call to
action:
Learn
more**

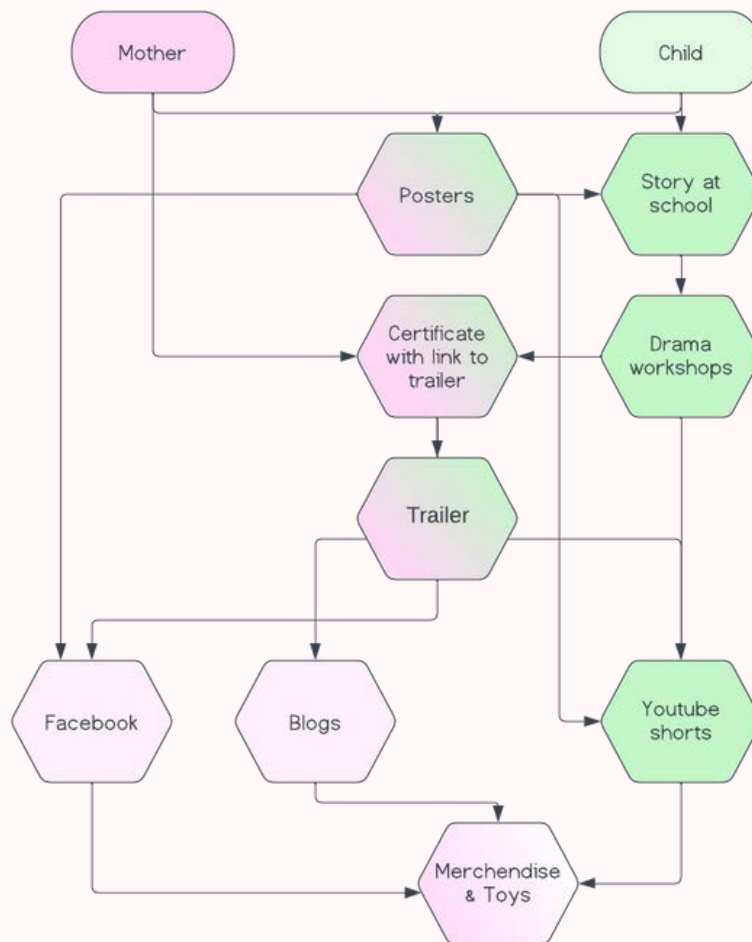


User journey and time → line



For children, the user journey is composed of a somewhat linear narrative that introduces them to the campaign through the storybook and supporting drama workshops. At this point the child takes a certificate home to their parents/mother that directs their attention towards the trailer, youtube shorts, and supporting merchandise.

User journey and time → line



For mothers, the user journey is more complex. Cohesive with [Henry Jenkins' \(2008\) description of transmedia material](#), the campaign consists with a diverse range of entry points that can all be understood as stand alone materials that call to action for an increased understanding and the abolishment of negative stereotypes surrounding voluntarily childfree women. For some mothers, they will enter the campaign at the point their child hands them their certificate with a link or QR code to the trailer that sends them in the direction of Facebook and Blog material. Others will see posters or run into Facebook posts that are shared by fellow mothers. The user journey therefore lends itself to an [aquarium storytelling format](#), whereby the user can enter the text at any point and chose which direction they head in. No matter what point the audience enters the campaign, they will always finish their journey by coming into contact with merchandise and toys. This way the audience have explored and consumed enough material to build positive feelings around before deciding to invest money and continue their affiliations with the campaign.



Branding

Brand Values

In today's digital climate, audiences are known to consume the brand value over the use value of the text. In other words, audiences utilise products based on what ideological values they stand for, rather than their physical function. With this in mind, my campaign's brand values will revolve around kindness, inclusion, and creative exploration. For parents who are raising their children in a culture of competitiveness and comparison, the brand can be utilised and transposed into a marker of their social identity; one that can put them above other parents.

Slogan

'Not all bears want cubs'

The slogan will be utilised by material that will be seen by both the primary audience of children, and the secondary audience of mothers. An extension of the bear character that is the crux of the campaign, the slogan is succinct and captures the topic in no more than five words ensuring its memorability. This works in-line with Justin Wyatt's ideas on 'high concept' marketing, whereby a text can be summarised in a single striking phrase.

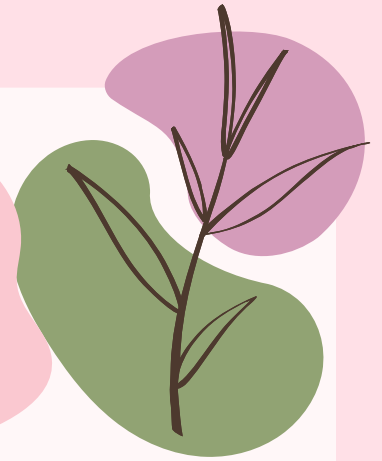
Tagline

'A campaign changing the stigmatisation of women who dare not to bear children'

The tagline will be used on all artefacts that are aimed at the mother demographic. The use of puns and word play is reflective of the campaigns witty and informal tone that is fun, informal and does not take itself too seriously



Branding



Colours



The colour pallet of the campaign will feature various shades of muted pinks and green, both implemented for their unique symbolic value. Although the abolishment of gender roles remains at the heart of this campaign, to utilise culturally gendered colours can aid the messages and objectives of the brand. Pink is symbolic of femininity, and to utilise the colour to represent voluntarily childfree women works to correct the stereotype that deems such women as unfeminine. In addition, green is symbolic of nature and the environment, which deconstructs the stereotype of such women that deems them unnatural and abnormal.

Illustration style

The images and illustrations will take cartoon form due to its popularity within children. Although they will be colourful, they will not be surrealist in form, in order for children to understand the messages as legitimate and effortlessly transport the ideologies housed within the text into their own realities. The images will draw stylistic similarities with other classical British texts, such as *The Gruffalo* (1999), illustrated by Axel Scheffler, in order to position the campaign in the same category of literature that is trusted and respected by parents alike. Animation is regarded as a suitable space to house progressive ideological discourses, and for a topic that is still contested and debated, a friendly animation format can soothe the heated opinions surrounding it.



Fonts

The campaign will utilise two fonts;

Yeseva One

and

Glacial Indifference



Yeseva One will be used for titles and important information. Its smooth curves are gentle on the eye and appears friendly to the reader. The feet on the letters make the overall word appear grand and important which cultivates a sense of reliability and heritage.

For Glacial Indifference, the font is easy to read for children of all ages, devoid of complicated cursive handwriting. The shape of the font is strong and modern, a neat summary of what a voluntarily childfree woman is.



Logo Development

🐾
🐾 **Mummies**
🐾 **Not**
🐾 **For**
🐾 **Me**
🐾

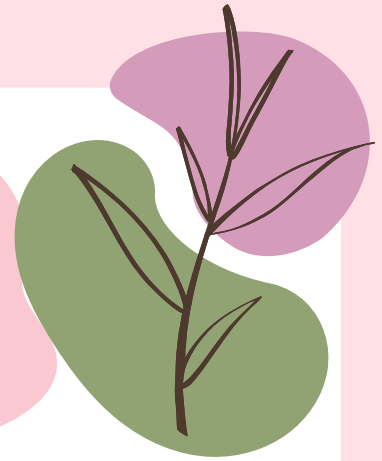
My initial logo mock up was text-focused and simplistic in form. The paw print brings a sweetness to the logo and hints towards the role animals will play in the campaign. I positioned the paw prints in an upwards direction as to suggest the character that belonged to them was moving forwards and ascending to something positive; a message reflective of the overall campaign.

After feeling unhappy with the positioning of the paw print I decided to play around with its direction and felt a circle would give the logo a more finished and polished look. In turn, placing the text in the centre would give the logo a more balanced look. I then experimented with building blocks due to their symbolic links to childhood, but concluded that they were not engaging enough for children, and that due to the colour pallet they were potentially unrecognisable.



Although I was intially keen to keep the logo simple, after experimenting I concluded that due to the campain's target audience of children, the logo should be eye-catching and unique. I therefore tried to adapt my initial idea of the paw print into something more eye-grabbing by implementing a pair of bear ears that introduce an enigma; they prompt the audience to question who they belong to, and why they are significant in this campaign.





Logo

The campaign title 'Mummy's not for me' is used to retreat from loaded terms such as 'childfree' and 'childless' that dominate a voluntarily childfree women's identity and works to meet the needs of such women who prefer not to be labeled. Equally, the term 'not for me' aims to mirror the expressions of women identified in my online ethnography who state their childfree status is simply part of their identity and existence, and does not require to be emotionally charged and unpacked any further; 'not for me' summarises the mindset of these women.

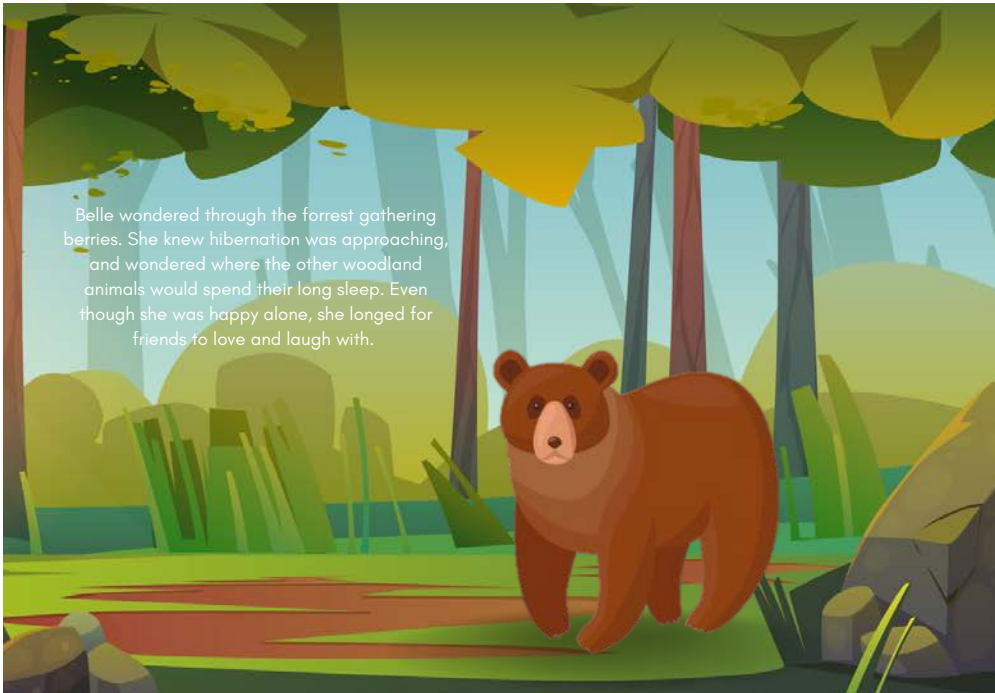
The logo is structured around a circle, which signifies wholeness and well-roundedness; traits that the campaign aims to link to voluntarily childfree women.



Because children are known to draw connections to brands that incorporate characters or mascots into their branding, the bear features at the centre of the logo, and subsequently is the face of the brand. Animals are utilised by brands to build emotional connection and solidarity, and her face transforms the brand into one that is warm, friendly, and child-orientated. For parents who have their own negative ideas about voluntarily childfree women, the animal character works to make the messages and values more palatable.

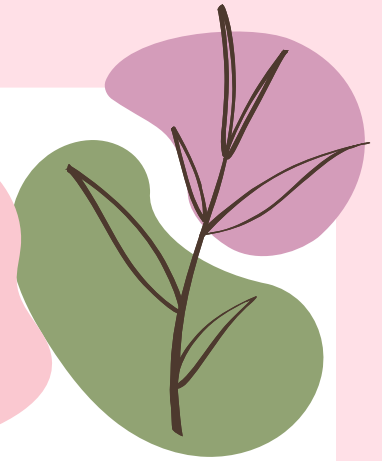
The central character, a female bear, has its own ideological purpose. In Western culture, bears are perceived as cuddly, warm, mothering creatures that is solidified by language such as 'bear hug' and 'mamma bear'. Therefore, the cultural expectation that deems bears as naturally neutering characters mirrors the neutering expectations of human femininity, and subsequently, the bear's rejection of motherhood is symbolic for a wider rejection of human motherhood. To draw upon such symbolic cultural signifiers will ensure undemanding consumption and secures the texts indented meaning.

Book Mock - Up





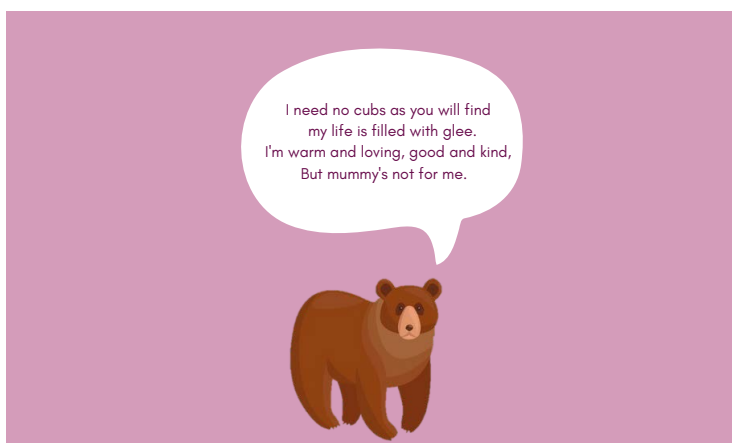
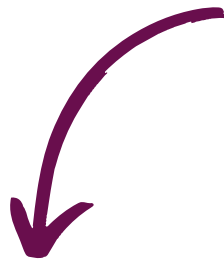
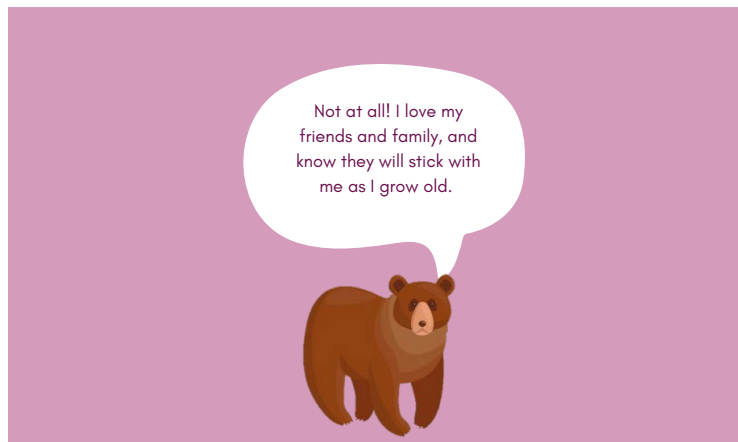
Video Mock – Up



Initially, I used the same landscaping as the book mock-ups, but concluded that simple visual format will draw the eye to the dialogue and the messages within it and distinguish the two texts.



Actors will narrate the dialogue in order to make the text accessible for children of all ages and of all reading abilities



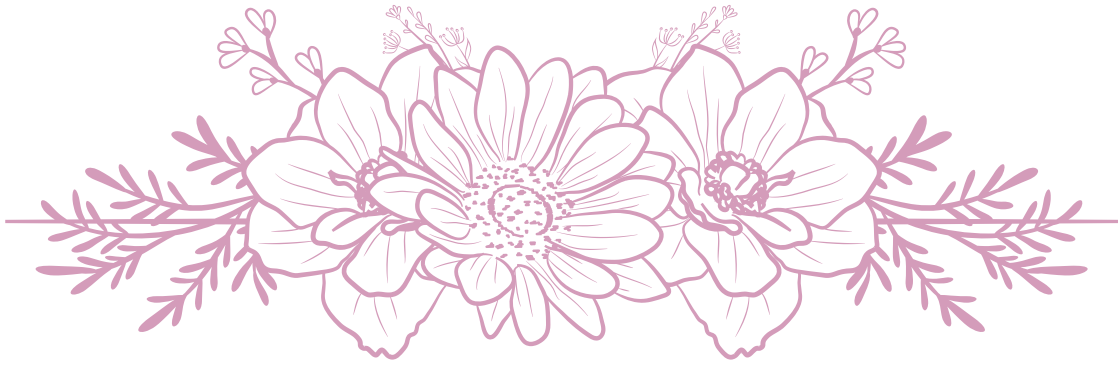
A memorable rhyming structure of ABAB will feature at the end of each video in order to neatly summarise the dialogue between two characters.

Poster Mock – Up

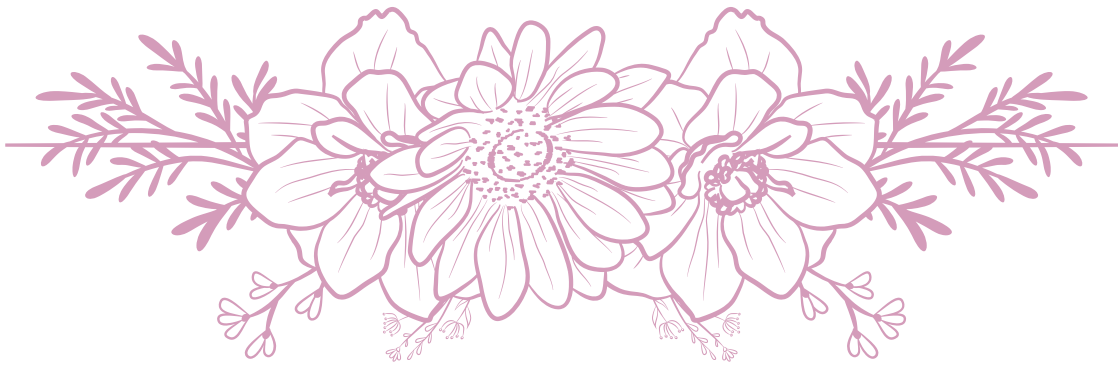


An image of a stork will be repeated throughout the campaign. An old wives-tale that is passed down through generations in western culture, storks are said to bring children to expectant mothers. Understood by adults and children alike, the symbolism of the stork will be used to both anchor down the meaning and enrich the text; instead of bringing a baby, the stalk will be pictured bringing other goods that voluntarily childfree women describe as a benefit to their lifestyle such as time and money. Although the denotation of this image is simply a stalk carrying an item, the connotation is complex and suggests that voluntarily childfree women experience other benefits that are equivalent to the excitement of a new baby.

In terms of the posters composition, the layout is symmetrically presented that features the principal character evenly balanced at the heart of the frame. Not only does such point towards her central role, the layout connotes her character to be one that is grounded, balanced and possess stability; attributes that the campaign aims to align with voluntarily childfree women. In addition, the bears direct eye-line into the eye of the audience suggests she is brave and unafraid, as well as being approachable and welcoming. With semiotic theory and Western culture in mind, the heart is understood to signify love and tenderness, not only works to represent voluntarily childfree characters as warm-hearted, but epitomises the campaign to be one that is ruled by positivity; an influential factor in parental consumer decision making.



Concluding Thoughts & Future Research



What remains clear from my research findings is that voluntarily childfree women are routinely represented as pathological and abnormal which is transported into cultural common-sense. Although problematic pronatalist discourses can infiltrate the mindset of anyone of any age, it is vital to aim my campaign at children to extinguish such ideologies at an early age and prevent them from being taken forward into adulthood in order to create a world that is kinder, accepting, and respectful of voluntarily childfree women.

With the negative understandings of such women intertwined with patriarchal and pronatalist ideologies, the reverting of problematic stereotypes is a step towards the abolishment of outdated gender roles and traditional femininity that comes with it. Future research should investigate how male counterparts are immune from, and indeed eschew pronatalist ideology within contemporary culture in order to draw comparisons between traditional templates of femininity and masculinity. In addition, future research and campaigns should draw attention to the disparities between heterosexual and homosexual women's experiences with a voluntary childfree lifestyle; lesbian women have routinely been framed as unfit mothers within popular culture, and future research should investigate how such stereotyping alters their experiences with the expectations of motherhood. And as if all this wasn't enough, research, and indeed campaigns are yet to explore the lives of transgender and non-binary people who choose to refrain from having children. What remains clear, is that pronatalist ideology is a dominant discourse within western culture, and effects different genders and sexualities in different ways, rendering the topic worthy of social campaign work.