



SHADES OF OTHERHOOD

Marketing to women without children

Women today play a dynamic role in our society—one that is increasingly untethered to traditional roles and tropes—but those dynamics are not always reflected and celebrated by our culture.

Nearly 20 years ago, Candace Bushnell brought us the iconic single woman: Carrie Bradshaw. She wore fabulous clothes and spent frivolously. On the topic of saving for retirement, Carrie told her friends: “I like to see my money hanging in my closet.” Nothing illustrated this more than when it came time to purchase an apartment and Carrie realizes she squandered the \$40,000 she needed for a down payment on shoes. Hardly seen without a pink cosmopolitan in her hand, the single, childless woman, as depicted by Carrie, is carefree, doesn’t have a maternal bone in her body, and spends her time gallivanting from one trendy restaurant to the next. Her stove, Carrie says, is for storage. The driving force in her life, her *raison d’être*, is finding a man.

While Carrie’s life makes for great television, the reality of today’s single woman without children is much different than what was portrayed in the early aughts on “Sex and the City.” “What kind of successful, smart 30-somethings doesn’t understand how a bank account works?” a recent popular essay on Elle.com, by a single woman asked. Today, the Carries of the world are much more put together and

less adrift in matters associated with adulthood such as managing finances and dealing with children. Circa 2014, the “Sex and the City” set would now be part of a wise-to-the-world demographic of women that author Melanie Notkin has smartly catalogued the “Otherhood,” also the title of her new non-fiction book.

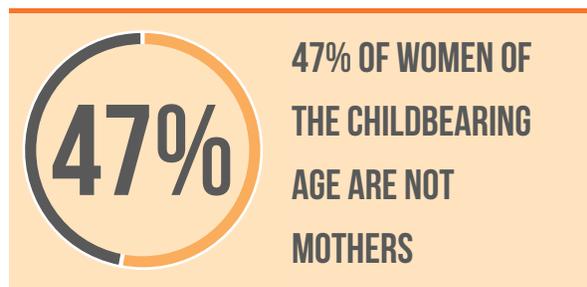
We here at DeVries Global were fascinated by the insights revealed in Notkin’s book and set out in partnership with her—as an expert in this demographic—to look at these women through a quantitative lens. In our landmark study, “Shades of Otherhood” we define the non-mom as single and never married, living with a partner or a same-sex partner, married, separated, divorced, or widowed with no children.

THE REALITY OF TODAY’S SINGLE WOMAN WITHOUT CHILDREN IS MUCH DIFFERENT THAN WHAT WAS PORTRAYED IN THE EARLY AUGHTS ON “SEX AND THE CITY”



Whatever her exact situation is, the DeVries Global study set out to put our finger on the pulse of the non-mom segment. “This is a diverse and complex cohort that has finally found its time to shine,” said Michael De Cicco, Senior Director of Research and Analytics at DeVries Global, who designed and led analysis of the “Shades of Otherhood” study.

When we talk about “Shades of Otherhood,” we are referring to the 47 percent of women of the childbearing age that are not mothers. When you look between the ages of 20 to 44, the group totals 19 million or one-third of women, an unprecedented number¹. Not so long ago one in 10 women ended their child-bearing years childless; now that number has doubled and 20 percent of women end their childbearing age without kids². Our “Shades of Otherhood” study brings to life the behaviors and beliefs that drive and influence this important cohort. What we’ve found is that **she’s smart, savvy, and discerning in all aspects of her life.**



To start, the Otherhood looks relatively little like the stereotypes that have reigned in popular culture. Take, for example, the meme of the single, childless woman as clueless and hapless when it comes to children. Maya Rudolph played single and childless Ava Alexandra on the NBC show “Up All Night.” Ava holds her best friend’s baby like a sack of potatoes. Yet many childless women today, as Notkin poignantly illustrates, have deep and rich relationships with their nieces, nephews, and godchildren—the inspiration for Notkin’s lifestyle brand, SavvyAuntie.com.

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Women of the Otherhood may not have children either because the precarious timing of romance didn’t work out for them or because they decided motherhood just wasn’t their path. They might be same-sex couples who couldn’t adopt and now that window has closed. They might be heterosexual couples who decided they wanted something else out of life, childfree by choice. They might be single by choice, having left a marriage voluntarily and are now single again in their forties or fifties. Regardless of the reason (or reasons), marketers and brands—who have traditionally been more mom-focused—should be paying attention to this growing block of consumers.

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¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, June 2010. Table 2. Children Ever Born per 1,000 Women, Percent Childless, and Women Who Had a Child in the Last Year by Race, Hispanic Origin, Nativity Status, Marital Status, and Age: June 2010

² “Childlessness Up Among All Women; Down Among Women with Advanced Degrees.” Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (June 25, 2010) <http://www.pewsocialtrends>.

The tide is slowly turning in terms of putting the Otherhood more on the map. Compiling the “Lean In Collection for Getty Images,” a library of images devoted to the powerful depiction of women that launched earlier this year, Jessica Bennett, a curator of the Collection, said one of the driving ideas was to make the images of women ambiguous as to their life choices. This effort has sought to capture shades of the Otherhood, busting stereotypes and reflecting the new reality in today’s visual media. “The 30-something, tattooed woman holding a young girl could be the aunt; you can’t make any assumptions today,” said Bennett, who is 32 and single.

**THE NARRATIVE OF MEET SOMEONE,
FALL IN LOVE, AND HAVE A BABY IS
BEING ENTIRELY REWRITTEN—AND THE
ENDING IS HARDLY TRAGIC**

There is no “normal” for women today. The narrative of meet someone, fall in love, and have a baby is being entirely rewritten—and the ending is hardly tragic. Women of the Otherhood are living happily ever after; it just looks different than it did for their mothers and grandmothers, and often from their own expectations of how their lives would turn out.

But they are leading rich, full lives, finding meaning and purpose through other outlets. “We are happy. We are not sad, lonely, desperate women,” Notkin, a 40-something single woman herself, writes about the Otherhood. (The subtitle of her book is unquestionably upbeat about the Otherhood’s prospects: “Modern Women Finding a New Kind of Happiness.”) Furthermore, they are thriving career-wise and investing in themselves and their future. There’s no waiting around for Prince Charming to pay their bills or rescue them. Furthermore, they are satisfied with their lives. Case in point: 80 percent of non-moms say they could lead a happy life without kids.

To quote Bob Dylan, “The Times They Are A-Changin.” In the 1950s, 75 percent of households contained a married couple, compared to 50 percent today. Twenty-seven percent of households are comprised of those living alone³. “People are getting married later. Some aren’t marrying at all. When they do it, it could be two men, two women, or a man and a woman. In some ways, marketing hasn’t caught up with the times,” said Adrianna G. Bevilaqua, Managing Director of Planning at DeVries Global. “It’s our hope that this research will shed a much needed light on how women are really living today.”



³U.S. Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey, March and Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 2013 and earlier.” released November 2013 and U.S. Census Bureau, “America’s Families and Living Arrangements: 2012,” issued August 2013.

Notkin refers to what she calls “a collective case of mom-opia – the myopia of seeing the world through mother-colored glasses, seeing motherhood as the only the only normal, natural way to be.” From magazine covers featuring the next Hollywood baby bump to a vast number of advertising campaigns targeted to moms and families, other women are often left out. Now it’s time for the conversation to follow where the demographics are trending: women fall into more than the two narrow categories of wife and mother.

RESEARCH & INSIGHTS

To help start jumpstart this dialogue, DeVries Global partnered with a leading survey company to ask 1,000 moms and 1,000 non-moms across America, from small towns to big cities, lifestyle questions to throw into sharp relief their similarities and differences. The average age of the moms was 37-years-old and 31-years-old for the non-moms. We wanted to get a better sense of how the Otherhood thinks, shops for groceries and beauty products, uses the Internet, eats, drinks, buys clothes, and travels. To dig deep, our online survey comprised more than 300 questions to unpack two central ones: What does the Otherhood look like across America? And how do we understand what makes them tick to build better products and more effectively market to them?

Our study revealed she is a with-it and wise woman who has enormous untapped potential as a consumer and influencer. One key thread we saw among our insights: discernment is how the Otherhood woman approaches everything in her life, from dating to what shampoo to buy. Often typecast with the more pejorative description of “too picky,” our research reveals something more nuanced: the ability to judge well. Here’s what else we learned:

1. SHE’S A SAVVY AND CONNECTED WOMAN.

Women of the Otherhood are thriving career-wise and investing in themselves and their future. In our study, we found that 75 percent of women without children had some college education or above, compared to 67 percent of women with kids.

Additionally, 37 percent have a Bachelor Degree or higher while almost 10 percent have an advanced or professional degree.

These are women, particularly those who are single, with extensive social networks. As Eric Klinenberg, a professor of sociology at New York University and author of *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone*, pointed out last year in *The New York Times*, “Compared with their married counterparts, single people are more likely to spend time with friends and neighbors, go to restaurants and attend art classes and lectures.

**WOMEN OF THE OTHERHOOD ARE
THRIVING CAREER-WISE AND INVESTING
IN THEMSELVES AND THEIR FUTURE**

There is much research suggesting that single people get out more—and not only the younger ones.” They have, as Klinenberg points out, more free time than their coupled counterparts⁴. In our research, we found these women have a large social network, with on average more than 1,500 friends and followers across social media platforms. Her average total weekly spend across social is a whopping 28 hours per week engaging on them. While her hours compare closely to moms, some of the key differences are in her habits: she is using Facebook less and is more likely to experiment with some influential platforms like Pinterest.

2. SHE HAS PURSE POWER, BUT IS NOT EXACTLY CARRIE BRADSHAW.

The Otherhood is outspending mom per person, per household. Across beauty, personal care and household products, she is spending nearly the same amount as mom except she is buying for herself or for herself plus one, while mom is buying for a household. What does that look like?

WOMEN WITHOUT KIDS SPEND ON AVERAGE 35 PERCENT MORE PER PERSON PER MONTH ON GROCERIES THAN MOMS

She isn't microwaving a frozen dinner every night. Women without kids spend on average 35 percent more per person per month on groceries

than moms, that's \$175 a month on groceries versus the \$259 that a mom spends on feeding a family. Broken down per person, non-moms are spending approximately \$87.50 per person, compared to moms who spend \$65 per person for a household of four.

Just like a mom with two kids would, women of the Otherhood are cooking and shopping. Still, many advertisements for food products showcase a family around the dinner table. Food is another opening for brands and marketers to connect with the Otherhood. She isn't waiting for her “real life”—the one with a white picket fence and a family—to begin domesticating. The image of the single woman with expired milk and two non-fat yogurts in her refrigerator is fast becoming an outdated cliché.

Additionally, women of the Otherhood spend on average nearly twice as much as moms on beauty- and hair-related products per person per month, spending a total of almost \$1,200 per year. They are also more likely than moms to shop in a drugstore versus a big box retailer like Wal-Mart or Target.

Regardless of where they fall on the Otherhood continuum (married, single, divorced, etc.), they are not blowing their disposal income only on clothes and shoes. She's a discerning shopper whose spending is on par with a mom.

SHE'S A DISCERNING SHOPPER WHOSE SPENDING IS ON PAR WITH A MOM

⁴U.S. Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey, March and Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 2013 and earlier.” released November 2013 and U.S. Census Bureau, “America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2012,” issued August 2013.

Women of the Otherhood look for value and are financially responsible. One-third of non-moms have a monthly budget for apparel and accessories, and she is just as likely to use coupons as a mom. She is slightly more likely than moms to compare online when searching for a new product. Her fashion taste leans more towards specialty retailers such as Banana Republic, Ann Taylor, and White House Black Market, all stylish and reasonably-priced brands.

3. SHE'S HAS TIME FOR LEISURE (AND APPRECIATES THAT FREEDOM).

For women of the Otherhood, 59 percent of whom are single, travel is a passion point, and because of her independent lifestyle, she can travel further from home and spend more time away.

**TRAVEL IS A PASSION POINT, SHE CAN
TRAVEL FURTHER FROM HOME AND
SPEND MORE TIME AWAY**

There's a wide opening here for brands and marketers, particularly in the travel space, to emphasize how much autonomy and spontaneity the life of the Otherhood affords, whether it's last-minute travel or longer vacations. Keep in mind that women of the Otherhood spend 60 percent

more days abroad per year than moms. Also, members of the Otherhood that are in a relationship or married spend more than twice as much time away with their partner than mom. While couples with kids spend on average three nights away on vacations together, the Otherhood racks up on average eight days away when she retreats with her partner. Marketers should be drawing attention to all the doors she's left open and the freedom her life gives her to explore new places—that's her calling card.

4. HER TOP PRIORITIES: CAREER AND LOVE.

Even though the time-honored ordering of adulthood has typically been "first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes baby," women of the Otherhood are not insisting that this must be their path forward. When asked to identify their own top priorities, career success and finding love led the pack. Love, though, does not mean getting married; they rank marriage and having kids well behind finding love.

Often times the knee jerk response single women give to explain their marital status is: "I'm so focused on my career." But that doesn't mean non-moms are prioritizing their career at the exclusion of love. In fact, love and work are more

intertwined for some women than they might appear. Here's why. Some women today want their career to be on-track before they settle down. It's all part of the new ordering of adulthood for women in their twenties and thirties; they want to establish themselves professionally before tying the knot. In this way, the single woman doesn't see herself so much as a delayer—a bit of a dig—but as an empowered woman making sure, first and foremost, she can stand on her own two feet. Self-reliance is paramount for women of the Otherhood.

**SELF-RELIANCE IS PARAMOUNT FOR
WOMAN OF OTHERHOOD**

On that note, for members of the Otherhood who have been supporting themselves for most of their adult life—maybe they’ve been living on their own for twenty years—the income stream that comes from a career isn’t just a lifestyle choice but a means of survival and financial security. After all, who else is going to pay the rent? As Notkin states, “There are no career men. No one assumes men are making a choice between making a living and pursuing love, marriage and children. The takeaway here is to speak to the Otherhood in a way that highlights the importance she places on her work, but as more than a one-dimensional so-called career woman. Narrowly casting her as a “career woman” is limiting.

**FOCUS ON HER INDEPENDENCE,
STRENGTH, RESILIENCE, AND FREEDOM**

Taking these two findings in concert underscores the need for a new lexicon for talking to the Otherhood, one that doesn’t emphasize marriage and family life as the Holy Grail for women. Focus on her independence, strength, resilience, and

freedom. Consider, too, that she may be “having it all,” a term usually reserved for moms juggling a career and kids, but her “having it all” might include exciting trips, more leisure time with friends, and weekends spent volunteering. As leading psychiatrist Dr. Janet Taylor observes, “Having it all doesn’t just mean you are a working woman who is a mom, having it all means having a life that has meaning and purpose. If you are single and childless, you can still have that.”

5. SHE LOVES KIDS (EVEN IF SHE DOES NOT WANT HER OWN).

Unlike Diane Keaton’s character J.C. Wiatt, the driven Manhattan career woman in the movie “Baby Boom” who suddenly inherits a toddler but seems to have never interacted with a child before, the Otherhood embraces children. Our survey found that children play an active role in the lives of 80 percent of non-moms. Interestingly, 49 percent of those kids are nieces and nephews while 41 percent are the children of close friends, showing that she chooses to bring children into her life and become a part of theirs. It also points out that her friends are her family in many cases.

Although the children in her life are important, the Otherhood has a spectrum of feelings when asking if she wants children of her own. While aunthood is enough for some (36% of non-mom surveyed are voluntarily childless), nearly half (46%) of non-moms want to be mothers. An additional 18 percent are on the fence. Out of those who are unsure or do not want children, they cited a few themes. Giving up their freedom was the number one reason non-moms were hesitant about having children. Freedom, or their perceived sense of it, has to be emphasized with the Otherhood—because it’s what they value about their life. Additionally, 41 percent said they do not have the financial ability to support a child, 29 percent said they aren’t ready and 26 percent said they’d like to be in a partnership or marriage first.

**THE OTHERHOOD EMBRACES CHILDREN.
THEY PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE LIVES
OF 80 PERCENT OF NON-MOMS**

6. SHE'S HAPPY.

As Notkin insightfully points out in her title and throughout her narrative of *Otherhood: Modern Women Finding a New Kind of Happiness*, although the decision or circumstance around having a child is emotional and dynamic, women of the Otherhood are finding happiness, even if it looks different from the happiness they had expected for themselves or that society expects for them. From a life full of intimate friendships, love in a variety of forms, careers that bring meaning and personal lives filled with adventure and serendipity, these women are finding joy beyond the superficial tropes of “single gal in the city.”

Our research confirms Notkin's insight. We found that 80 percent of non-moms felt they could lead a happy life without children, whether or not they want children of their own. As Dr. Taylor put it in an interview about this demographic, “Womanhood is not defined by motherhood; womanhood is defined by who you are as an individual, what value do you add for others.”

TIPS FOR REACHING THE OTHERHOOD

ACKNOWLEDGE THE OTHERHOOD IN ALL OF THEIR COMPLEXITY.

Although she is portrayed in popular culture as a party girl out on the town every night looking for love, that's one of the many stereotypes about the Otherhood that needs to be rethought. For example, when it comes to socializing, moms and non-moms were pretty consistent across the board in terms of alcohol consumption—both categories are pretty moderate drinkers. By the same token, don't paint her as a workaholic career woman with no time for fun. And show her as a hero to her nieces and nephews. They are a big part of her life. She, like all women, is multi-dimensional and dynamic. Create fresh images and stories that show her life with greater authenticity and nuance.

TAP HER INFLUENCE AND HER TASTE.

Think of the Otherhood as tastemakers. After all, they are the demographic that has the time to check out the new restaurants, hotels, spas, bars, and stores. While the typical media narrative is that motherhood is aspirational, the conversation and messaging should reflect a more balanced reality: the Otherhood lifestyle is also aspirational to moms. The busy mom who is time-pressed is looking to members of the Otherhood in their friend circle as influencers in-the-know. Their friends (mom and non-moms alike) understand, as our study corroborates, that members of the Otherhood tend to be more leaders than followers. One indication of this is that they are more likely to use emergent social platforms like Vine and Foursquare, so brands will have to go beyond Facebook to reach them and it will be worth the effort.

FIND THE WHITE SPACE.

Look for categories where the Otherhood has unmet needs. There is real opportunity to meet her needs in the food and beverage industry and in the travel industry. There is no one travel brand, hotel, air, cruise line, etc. that has won over her loyalty.



An airline seems especially well-positioned to be the first-mover here. One potential buzz-generating idea is a kid-free flight, something that would have broad appeal (even with parents looking for a break!), and would signal that a company or brand values their non-mom customers as well. Furthermore, travel is a distinguishing lifestyle feature for the Otherhood, as they tend to go away for longer periods of time than non-moms. Couples' travel is another category to focus on—non-moms spent twice as long on a couples' vacation than moms (three vs. eight days). Solo travel, a burgeoning sector of the travel industry, is also a place to connect with the Otherhood.

HONE IN ON HER HABITS.

She is purchasing cosmetics on the go, making her more of a moving target, as opposed to a mom who likely has a scheduled routine when it comes to shopping. But she is spending the same per month on beauty products and toiletries, as a mom, even though she is buying for two people (at the most), whereas a mom is buying for a family. Imagine the potential for increasing market share if the Otherhood felt like a brand or retailer was speaking to them directly. Pantene targeted the non-mom demographic, somewhat subtly but quite persuasively, with their viral ad, #ShineStrong, a cinematic video that condemned gender stereotypes, showcasing a woman alone—perhaps she was a shade of Otherhood—who is strong, assured, and confident, while highlighting double-standards of how women who exhibit these traits are viewed in comparison to men. This is the kind of content that women of the Otherhood should be hearing and seeing more regularly.

BUST LABELS & CLICHÉS.

Launch a product or campaign that specifically targets shades of Otherhood. American Express recently rolled out a new credit card the company said was aimed at the “busy mom market.” Based on our research, the campaign would portray her as more multi-faceted than merely a career woman—she's an aunt, a godmother, a friend, a volunteer, and a colleague. As opposed to mothers, to whom marketers can speak as a monolithic group, the Otherhood isn't as united in one central role in their lives. The key—and again, the challenge—will be finding messages and campaigns that can speak authentically to the varied interests and makeup of this group. “The days of simply targeting women 25-54 are over,” said Bevilaqua. “Using broad targets leads marketers to generic insights like ‘women are time-stretched.’ The reality is when we dig deeper we can hone in on what really matters to different groups of women and build services, products and campaigns that will matter to them.”

CELEBRATE WHAT SHE HAS—AND THAT STARTS WITH HER FREEDOM AND AUTONOMY.

Those are some of the defining features of the Otherhood's lifestyle. Remember, wanting to maintain her freedom was the number one reason that the majority of the Otherhood was hesitant about having children. And whether she is childfree by choice or still looking to meet the right person before becoming a mother, freedom and autonomy are part of the happiness she is experiencing right here, right now. It's a life, even with its challenges, that has so many doors and possibilities open to her. Somehow brands and marketers need to hit this point more directly when speaking to her.



Brands and marketers, however, may mistakenly use the mom archetype as an aspirational model for non-moms, ignoring the reality that parenthood, either by choice or circumstance, isn't a reality for many women these days. There's an opening here to celebrate the many wonderful things in her life, even if those don't include children of her own.

Time Magazine did it with its August 12, 2013 cover, "The Childfree Life: When having it all means not having children," that showed a young couple sunbathing on the beach without a care in the world (or a child's diaper to change). It was provocative and resonated with swaths of readers, many of whom saw themselves in that couple. Many even aspired to be them.

The Otherhood represents a powerful and influential group of women in America. Isn't it time we noticed them?