The Pursuit Of Self
Her Brain 3.0

Her Brain is Refinery29’s annual proprietary insights and thought leadership series dedicated to exploring the lives of millennial-minded women.

In 2014, we explored how millennials are a generation of “Empowered, Not Entitled” individuals, challenging media-instilled stereotypes.

In 2015, we found how millennials are a “Driven, Not Distracted” group who use technology unlike any previous generation.

This year, we delved into the thoughts and behaviors of women who are owning their timelines. We took an intimate and introspective look at what it means to define a woman’s path as it pertains to motherhood, the life-changing decisions surrounding it, and the lifelong impact of those decisions.

Methodology:

- Large-scale proprietary research survey, covering the U.S. and U.K.
- **Sample Size:** 3,000 women, ages 18 to 49; included both child-free women and women who are mothers
- **Qualitative:** Four focus groups in the U.K. and U.S.; 24 in-depth ethnographic interviews
- **Quantitative:** Large-scale online quantitative survey
- **Research Timeframe:** March – May 2016
- **Research Partners:** LRWTonic and Latitude
We found that women have been sold a specific brand of motherhood by the media before they have even had the chance to decide if motherhood is going to be part of their future or what it would be like for them. The idea of what it means to be or not be a mom is changing and women are now defining it in their own terms. Refinery29 aims to shine a light on the challenges today’s women are facing and give them the tools to define their own path. Let’s get rid of labels.

Nearly 60% of child-free women say that women are seen as selfish if they put their career above everything else. Do women have cultural icons they can look up to that reflect the complexities of their own lives, goals, and pursuits?

When we asked women whom they looked up to in entertainment (and the media), they had a difficult time naming someone.

In fact, 75% of the women named Claire Underwood (from Netflix series *House of Cards*) as the cultural icon they would like more representation of. This was a particularly surprising finding, especially since publications like *Psychology Today* have said Claire “may have narcissistic personality disorder and is capable of traumatizing those around her.”

As for women wanting to see more Claire-like characters, this could be because she embodies traits they most want to see in females: strength, intelligence, poise, confidence, and an ability to know exactly what she wants as well as the focus to get it.

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**Key Findings**

We found that women have been sold a specific brand of motherhood by the media before they have even had the chance to decide if motherhood is going to be part of their future or what it would be like for them. The idea of what it means to be or not be a mom is changing and women are now defining it in their own terms. Refinery29 aims to shine a light on the challenges today’s women are facing and give them the tools to define their own path. Let’s get rid of labels.

When did having children become a must-do? Has it always been inevitable?

Women have many reasons for not prioritizing motherhood, including having other goals they want to achieve, needing more time to themselves, and wanting to focus on their careers and/or lives.

When asked to select important life goals, “having my first child” was 16th out of the 20 options provided, yet only half of the women felt that they could forge a path that was best suited for them (as opposed to the path they felt society expected of them).

Nearly half of women find it problematic that they are spoken to as if motherhood is an inevitable “when” and not an “if.”
The R29 iLab is a workshop designed to inspire disruptive thinking tailored to your brand’s challenges by leveraging R29’s proprietary data and insights gathered from over 10+ years of speaking to millennial women daily. The workshop will employ unique talent from different fields, countries, and backgrounds (both internal and external) to help facilitate innovative and creative solutions.

The Challenge For Brands

Speaking to women with a singular point of view on motherhood has made it difficult for brands to connect with them in a meaningful way.

Refinery29 can help your brand decode the experience of the millennial mom and see how a woman's community and environment shape the way she lives, parents, and purchases — now and in the future.

Introducing R29 iLab
Potential Workshop Themes

The New Path(s) To Motherhood

• How broken media and advertising portrayals of parenting prevent brands from making meaningful connections with moms

• How the many paths to motherhood are changing motherhood itself and, in turn, creating a need for updated messaging that acknowledges the nuances those various paths create

Identity

• How brands can help millennial-minded women feel celebrated, no matter what avenues they take in life

• How brands can help women navigate the endless (and often conflicting) sources of information on parenthood

Having It All

• How different millennial-minded moms manage their priorities

• How the “have-it-all” concept can lead to polarization and judgment

• Who women and moms look to as role models (the new influencers in their worlds)

R29 will deliver a comprehensive strategy and roadmap recommendation for the future of your brand based on the creative solutions designed in the workshop.

To schedule the full research presentation and/or an R29 iLab workshop, please reach out to HerBrain@refinery29.com.

Refinery29 — helping brands win with women.

Her Brain 2016.