



# Will You Be Mother?: Women Who Choose to Say No

*Jane Bartlett*

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Women are taught from the earliest moments of life that motherhood, along with marriage to a man, is a natural state to which they should aspire. From dollplay as a child to nagging questions of when am I going to become a grandparent as one gets older, the societal pressure to procreate is constant and intense. What then, of women who choose not to have children or are unable to have children? How do they respond to a society and to families that view them as selfish, incomplete, and less than women? In *Will You Be Mother?* Jane Bartlett interviews fifty women who, for various reasons, have not had children. We hear from women who have chosen to be sterilized in their twenties, others who can never say never but postpone childbearing because of acute ambivalence, women in their sixties who have chosen to never have children and are happy with that choice, and infertile women who have had no choice. They speak of how their own childhoods shaped their decision and, while expressing their frustration at the pressures placed upon them, also exhibit an unequivocal sense of freedom. *Will You Be Mother?* is a diverse exploration of the personal and public implications of the pressure society puts on women to have children, and a challenging critique of the prevalent belief that motherhood is a natural state for women.

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