

“What we, and others, often fail to realise is the depth and reach of our loss: that not only will we never have children but we will never have a family. We will never watch them grow up, never throw children’s birthday parties, never get a chance to heal the wounds of our own childhood by doing things differently with our children. We’ll never be grandmothers and never give the gift of grandchildren to our parents. We’ll never be the mother of our partner’s children and hold that precious place in their heart. We’ll never stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our siblings and watch our children play together. We’ll never be part of the community of mothers, never be considered a ‘real’ woman. And when we die, there is no one to take our lifetime’s learnings onto the next generation.” [Jody Day, 2014]



walk in our shoes

you are a good mom

To the mom who's breastfeeding: Way to go! It really is an amazing gift to give your baby, for any amount of time that you can manage! You're a good mom.

To the mom who's formula feeding: Isn't science amazing? To think there was a time when a baby with a mother who couldn't produce enough would suffer, but now? Better living through chemistry! You're a good mom.

To the cloth diapering mom: Fluffy bums are the cutest, and so friendly on the bank account. You're a good mom.

To the disposable diapering mom: Damn those things hold a lot, and it's excellent to not worry about leakage and laundry! You're a good mom.

To the mom who stays home: I can imagine it isn't easy doing what you do, but to spend those precious years with your babies must be amazing. You're a good mom.

To the mom who works: It's wonderful that you're sticking to your career, you're a positive role model for your children in so many ways, it's fantastic. You're a good mom.

To the mom who had to feed her kids from the drive thru all week because you're too worn out to cook or go grocery shopping: You're feeding your kids, and hey, I bet they aren't complaining! Sometimes sanity can indeed be found in a red box with a big yellow M on it. You're a good mom.

To the mom who gave her kids a homecooked breakfast lunch and dinner for the past week: Excellent! Good nutrition is important, and they're learning to enjoy healthy foods at an early age, a boost for the rest of their lives. You're a good mom.

To the mom with the kids who are sitting quietly and using their manners in the fancy restaurant: Kudos, it takes a lot to maintain order with children in a place where they can't run around. You're a good mom.

To the mom with the toddler having a meltdown in the cereal aisle: they always seem to pick the most embarrassing places to lose their minds don't they? We've all been through it. You're a good mom.

To the moms who judge other moms for ANY of the above? Glass houses, friend. Glass houses. - Author Unknown

www.familylifeintv.com

'I've finally accepted I might never be a mum': Kylie Minogue opens up about her recent split and how she's realised she can't have everything

- Kylie recently split from her boyfriend and manager and is starting afresh
- She says that she's come to terms with the fact she may never be a mother
- She is busier than ever with her role on the voice and her album release

Mother

[muhth-er] -noun

1. One person who does the work of twenty. For free.

(See also 'perfect', 'love', 'saint')

Source: Pinterest, 2014

"Until one becomes a mother, no one can ever tell you what it will feel like to love someone else so deeply and profoundly that you will rejoice when they rejoice, ache when they ache, feel what they feel--even without ever speaking a word."
-Jennifer Quinn

3MomsTips.com

THE MOST PRECIOUS JEWELS
YOU'LL EVER HAVE AROUND
YOUR NECK ARE THE ARMS OF
YOUR CHILDREN.



Smart Mom
PHOTO BY YUSHI ISHIKAWA

**BEING A MOTHER
IS LEARNING ABOUT
STRENGTHS YOU
DIDN'T KNOW
YOU HAD,
AND DEALING
WITH FEARS
YOU DIDN'T
KNOW EXISTED.**
-LINDA WOOTEN



You know you're
a mum when
your kisses have
magical, healing
properties.



Interpretation

My interpretation module researched design as a solution to cultural and emotional divisions between parents and those who are childless through any circumstance.

Research

I am childless not by choice and member of a group called 'Gateway Women' which was formed to act as a global voice, resource and support for childless women. I have first hand experience of some of the issues raised in Susannah Moore's article published in 'The Guardian' in January 2014. She opens the piece with the observation that "At the moment it's looking as if a quarter of women born in the 1970s will be childless. Whether we call this childless or childfree depends on a whole set of narratives that are procreating rapidly but are really divisive attempts to isolate women instead of uniting us.

This is not just happening for women either. All kinds of people may be unhappy or ambivalent about their childlessness, but find few spaces in which to express this.

Certainly my generation tetchily struggled to have it all, and many of us failed in the end to manage the perfect work/children/relationship fantasy. Watching younger generations, I can see how that has manoeuvred them into retro lifestyles that are still baffling to me. Some want to get engaged, which I thought was the province only of daft 14-year-olds and public toilets. They want flash weddings and to procreate only with "the one". Thus the bucketlist required for motherhood is as fixed as it ever was. If they are not partnered up, or forced to confront the reality of taking a few years out just when they are on the up, job-wise, they may begin to understand all that hoo-ha about maternity leave, equal pay, pensions and family-friendly policies."

Moore concludes her commentary with the following "Having kids gives meaning to lives, but this is not the only way to have a meaningful and wonderful life. As a mother I am more than happy to speak up for those who are childless by circumstance or choice. I trust they would do the same for me. As hard as people may work to split us into antagonistic groups, the fact remains that we really are in all this together. If it takes a village to raise a child then it is worth saying that those who reproduce and those who don't do not live in separate villages. We are, in fact, next-door neighbours." [Moore, The Guardian, Jan 2014]

Empathy is rare in daily life. Contextual research shows that celebrations such as Christmas are presented as a time for family and partnership. Famous people without children are challenged.

50 ways not to be a mother

"Although many people who don't know our story may imagine that we either actively chose not to have children or couldn't have them due to infertility, there are many ways to end up childless without actively choosing it:

1. Being single and unable to find a suitable relationship.
2. Being ignorant about your fertility and not realising that after 35 it's half what it was at 25, and that by the time we're 40 we have only a very small number of viable eggs left. The age that many women think they need to worry about is 40, when in fact it's much younger.
3. Not meeting a partner until past childbearing years.
4. Never meeting a suitable partner.
5. Thinking that we don't want children because of our own difficult childhoods, before realising too late that we were not condemned to repeat this with our own children.

Responses to Bibi Lynch

latenightreader, 31 March 2012

Whilst I'm sorry for your perceived loss, the avenue to being someone's "mother" is far from shut. What is wrong with adoption? Just because a child doesn't come from your womb doesn't mean it needs love any less, or you are any less it's "mum". Being quite a pessimistic person I've always had adoption as more likely than having my own child and now I'm reaching the age where people do that sort of thing and I do have a partner I love to bits, I think I'd still rather adopt and give a child out there without a family all that I can offer it. You sound like you have a lot of love out there to give, why not give it and become someone's mum if childlessness is devastating you so?

MarloManners, 31 March 2012

I get really angry when people just wheel out the glib response of 'Why don't you just adopt?' It's not like popping to Sainsbury's or getting a new house. I am sick of people (morons) who have no idea what they are talking about telling me I should adopt or have IVF. Like I never thought of tried to do these things.

I was told very early on that I couldn't have kids so I applied to adopt - and got turned down as a contracted a serious, but not life threatening, illness that was treated and completely cured after a year. After I married my husband and I tried to adopt together - again we got turned down because he was too old, and I wasn't far off their arbitrary cut off point.

Kittylove, 31 March 2012

I can't express how much I respect you for writing this article, Bibi. It's made me cry floods of tears for you, me, and every person who desperately wants to fulfil their biological impulse to have a child of their own and has found that they can't. We are alienated by a world to whom this function comes so easily that they can't understand the all-obliterating pain that comes from not being able to do so. The vicious attacks on you in the comments are evidence of that. Is it any wonder infertility makes you bitter?

Being a parent is the norm, so much so that parents forget to realise or express how lucky and grateful they are that they get to experience it. Perhaps if they did, it wouldn't be such a bitter pill to swallow for those of us who would give anything to be up in the night feeding a baby or trying to sort out childcare.

Infertility has been measured to have a similar level of stress to cancer or heart disease. Imagine living with that every day of your life, in a world where everything is about parents, children and families.

latethink, 31 March 2012

Well I'm sick of her moaning that she can't have children, when I have children I wish I did not have. Come on! Where is her compassion?

JDEldrich, 31 March 2012

Here's a concept. Stop complaining--adopt or foster--those kids badly need you.

Kerensky, 31 March 2012

I am sure all these women love their children very much. It is perfectly reasonable to discuss ones problems even if one has a generally happy life - obviously there is always someone worse off and that applies to you as much as them. You should take your own advice and stop moaning.

doctorbidston, 31 March 2012

This article could be about an I-Pad.

My friend has one, and complains when it's hard to get it to work or having to get it fixed. But they don't realise how lucky they are to have one at all, when I can't get one.

Kids are like I-Pads that not everyone can have, for strange genetic reasons that seem unfair.

Except, actually, you don't 'own' kids

Origination

Helen Mirren, Kylie Minogue and Jennifer Aniston are arguably as famous for not being mothers as they are for acting or music.

Social media presents challenges. Over generous pregnancy updates on platforms such as Facebook can force childless people to leave vital communication spaces and isolating themselves. The examples shown on page 2 form the proposal for the first presentation. This is the promotion of parenthood and the life to which we should aspire.

If 30,000 women are seeking IVF treatment annually, the sector is worth £500million but 70% of treatments fail, should there also be a voice that provides a space that shows an alternative view? A view that helps one in ten couples who struggle to conceive. A resource that could help one in five women who will remain childless through circumstance for life, put across their thoughts? Words which can be shared to explain why 'just adopt' is not a simple process, and can be open to all genders?

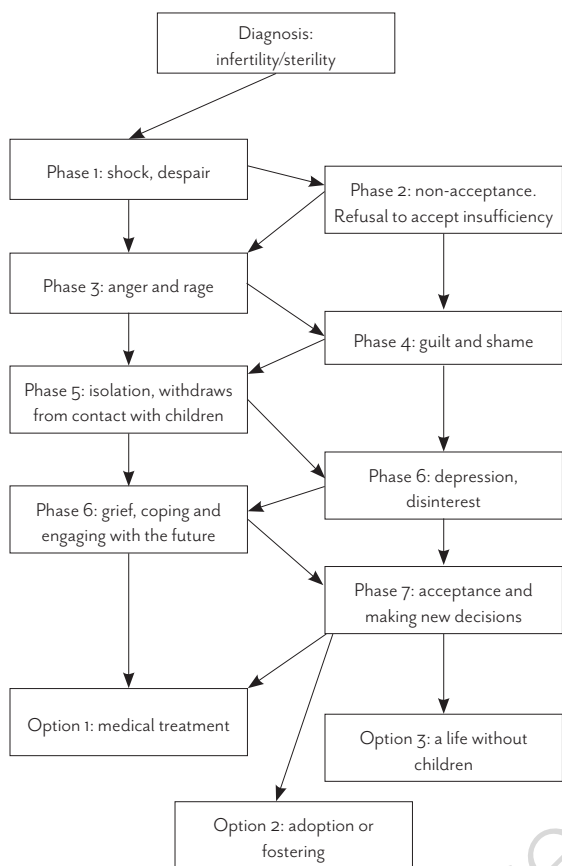
My proposal was to use design to provide a social solution.

In my research on this topic, groups that discuss these childlessness are private and divided into gender with the majority aimed at women when men are equally as affected. I was unable to find any central resource for self reflection that could be openly shared. Gateway Women is also a private, paid resource.

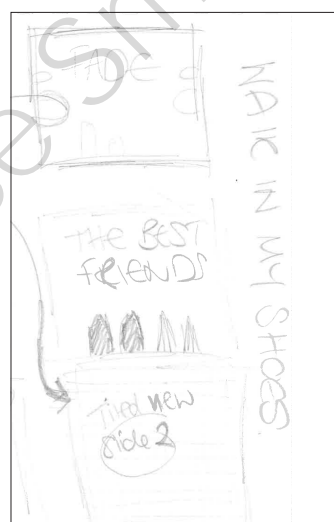
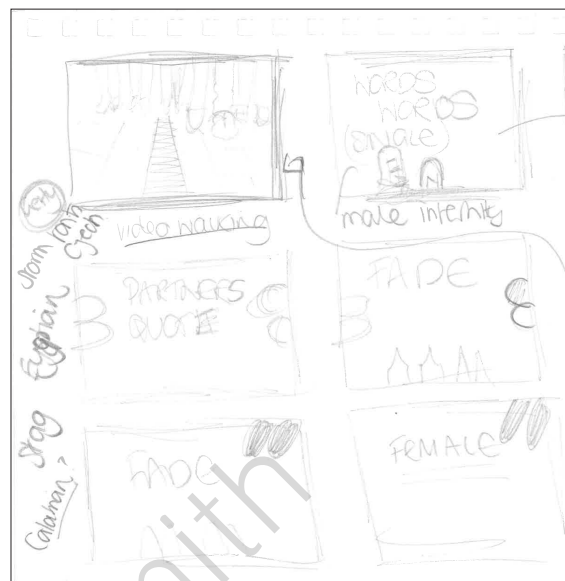
Bibi Lynch adopts an accusatory tone in an article which references the 'retro lifestyles' that Moore refers to. One in 5 couples will be childless through infertility or complications, a minority that can be easily sounded out by parents, yet Lynch pulls no punches and presumably seeks no empathy; "I am sick of reading about mums feeling desolate, how hard motherhood is, and how some women can't quite cope if the perfect child in their womb has a penis. Seriously? The joy around Victoria Beckham having a girl after three boys was as ridiculous as her heels...Yes, her life making frocks in LA with David and three gorgeous boys must have been torture before."

That love is the key, isn't it? The reason I'm so upset – and the reason mums should be so grateful. We're told the love between mother and child is the most beautiful, fulfilling emotion in the world – the feeling that finally makes sense of our existence. I don't know because I haven't experienced it – but if the agony of knowing I won't have it is any yardstick, then I would change every decision I ever made that led me to this horrible place.

6. Being unable to afford to have a child on our own, and being unwilling to rely on the state and therefore risk bringing a child into a life of poverty.
7. Spending our 30s healing childhood wounds in therapy, and then finding it too late to start a family.
8. Coming into recovery from addiction issues right at the end of our fertile years.
9. Being with a partner who says they want children later... but the time is never right for them.
10. Being in an emotionally abusive relationship that destroyed our confidence and so we left it too long to leave, recover and find a suitable partner with whom to have children.
11. Not making motherhood a priority and somehow expecting it to 'just happen' one day.
12. Waiting for our partner to come round to the idea of having a family, only to find out that they've decided they don't want children.
13. Infertility issues of our own.

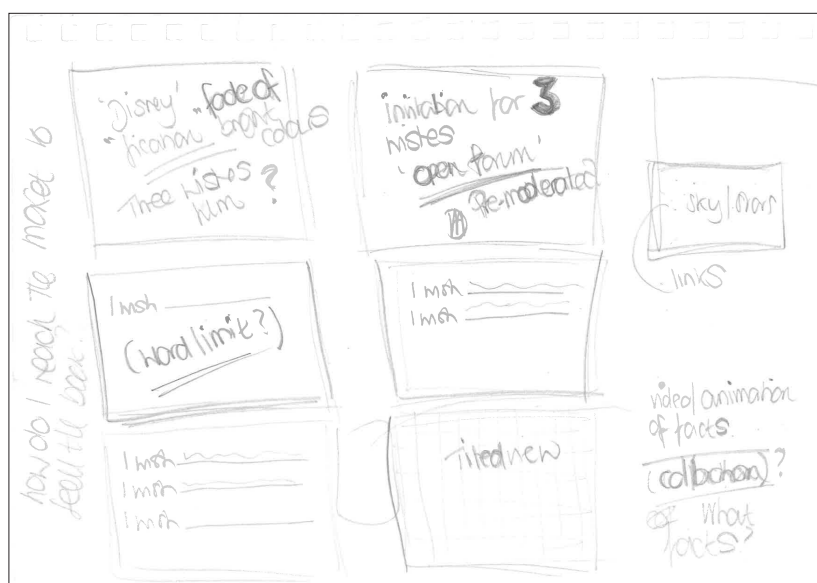


(Onnen-Isemann, 2014 cited in Onnen-Isemann, 2014, p.12). There is no pathway for women after life without children.



Gene: Psychology TED talk
 Stats 1: 6 GP
 1: 10 not by choice
 How can design influence empathy?
 Pin interest: lots of evidence of parenting - asocial change - supermarket + real life not
 imagine being that if you had lost a pregnancy or told you could not have children?
 Design, good or bad has power
 yet I saw nothing in the Pinterest pages for childlessness that said this makes me angry. No trace yet from the emotional research and collection of images is there.
 I showed this piece to the woman who gave me the the real comments and she said it left emotional to have these words in print. Imagine the power of this project become a bridge to between the climate of pain and children not by choice.
 2-10/11

Notes on content



Early animation sketches

Collaboration

I've had people I love die in front of me, but even that horror doesn't compare. This rips you (and your future) apart because, as my friend who has been through this said, as I wept over her once again: "You won't heal – because this is deep in you. What you're supposed to do. What's inside us to do. What we're born to do. And you didn't do it." [Lynch, The Guardian, 2012]

In 2014 a video for 'The World's Toughest Job' was the focus of a viral campaign [Youtube, 2014]. The advertised job was for a mother, again polarising the division between the childless woman and the parent. Lynch responds to the concept of parenthood as a job - "Mums are the luckiest people on earth. Yes, I don't have the difficulty of combining child-rearing and a career (which could be seen as having the best of both worlds?) But do you really think I'll be on my deathbed whispering "Remember me" to the boss who gave me a promotion because I worked 24/7 for her?" [Lynch, The Guardian, March 2014]

In response to an enquiry about childlessness on an online forum, I was asked by a parent if 'I would wish to have someone walk in front of me to push the prams aside'. The resources to give an eloquent response with subjective comments were not available. This demonstrated to me first-hand that the reason most childlessness groups are closed to aid self preservation. Articles like Lynch seek to divide and offer no resources or support for those affected by the comments this journalism attracts.

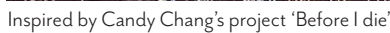
I concluded that the product of the collaboration had to be reflective to encourage meaningful content, moderated to protect the welfare of those contributing and positive to inspire parents to support their friends who were not parents themselves. To bridge a gap and share an emotional journey, and not pitch parents against childlessness.

Designing an answer

I considered researching an exploration of the anthropology and perception of childlessness in history as an investigation into society reactions. There is extensive research but collating this is time consuming and indicated a historic project rather than design, dictatorial over education and inspiration.

I began my collaboration with Gateway Women. Gateway's descriptive is "We may not be mothers but we're here, we care, we count and we rock". The group comprises 553 paid members globally in a private Google based space with 2,400 people in the Facebook group, all of whom are childless through circumstance.

14. Infertility issues of our partner.
15. Infertility issues of both partners.
16. Miscarriage and early term loss.
17. Still birth, cot death, early infancy mortality.
18. Being with a partner who has had a vasectomy and for whom the reversal doesn't work.
19. Coming out of a convent or seclusion because we want to have children, only to be unable to find a partner or to afford to do it on our own.
20. Finding out that the person you'd been in a relationship with for the last few years is already married with children.
21. Adopting a child and then finding that although everyone now thinks you're 'a mother', you still feel 'childless' and guilty.
22. Staying in a relationship that you don't feel comfortable bringing children into.
23. Trying to conceive for several years only to find out that due to a surgical error a contraceptive coil that should have been removed is still in place.



Berenice Howard-Smith 1328297/1

Due to privacy rules, I cannot share comments directly but the responses on the type of media included 'if a book is to contain inspiring stories I would want to access it easily at low points' [Anon, Gateway, Oct 2014]. Would a board game or app be easier to share? We dismissed these as being inappropriate platform for the sensitive topic 'whilst we term inappropriate comments as bingos, it's not a game and shouldn't be seen as such,' [Anon, Gateway, Oct 2014].

I concluded that a website was the more appropriate way to share information. The design for this was guided by the following points:

- A flexible space that allowed for growth
- Men and women should feel this site is about all sexes. The audience may perceive certain colours as gender bias
- Legibility of typography
- A website that is not a website, the focus is on the words and the images to create a emotional response that challenges the viewer.

Finding a theme

The project required a name for the url. A brainstorming resulted in a short list of:

- Bridging the gap
- Walk in my shoes
- Walk in our shoes

I chose **walkinourshoes.org.uk** to portray a shared journey. It's a phrase that is echo the collaborative elements of the project. To walk in the same shoes portrays a joint experience that has no end.

I found inspiration in the design of a website www.warsawrising.eu which uses striking photography to depict a historical yet social event that affected many people. The parallels between design and messages are powerful and the design neutral. I investigated the methodology behind the site and learned that it took 3 years to collaborate and build. The site is heavily interactive with bilingual catalogue (German-English) to accompany the site and an exhibition.

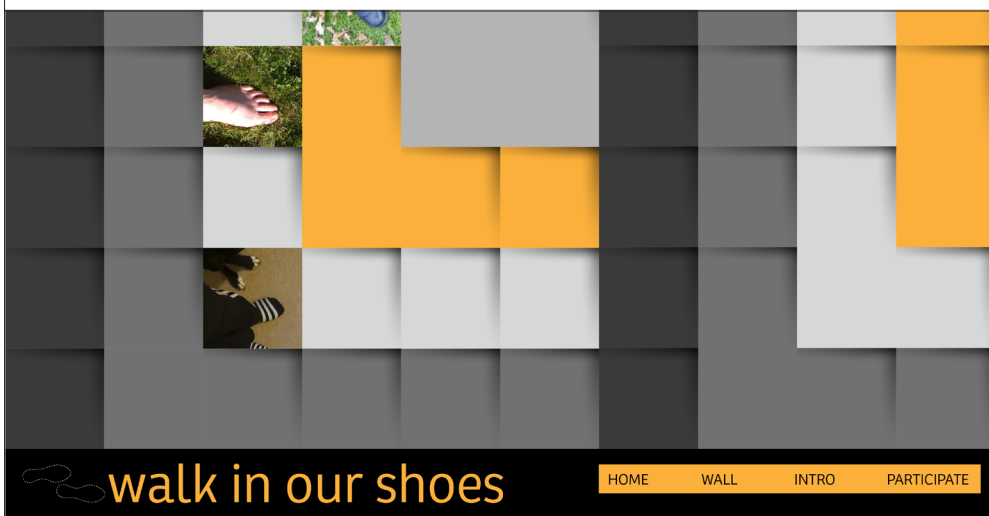
24. Being widowed.
25. Being born without a fully developed reproductive system.
26. Sexual orientation leading to relationship breakdown.
27. Not feeling comfortable having IVF.
28. Being unable to afford fertility treatments.
29. Not being able to afford to continue fertility treatments.
30. Being denied fertility treatments.
31. Our partner or ourselves being ill during our fertile years.
32. Caring for a sick, elderly, disabled or vulnerable family member during our fertile years.
33. Parenting younger siblings in our mother's place and so believing that we'd 'had enough of mothering' only to realise too late that we would like to have children of our own.
34. Losing a key relationship because of family disapproval on religious, cultural, class, financial or other grounds, and then not meeting another partner in time to start a family.



Overcomplicated logo which introduced another theme (dance steps) and imbalanced typography



Simplified logo but the menu dominates this design



Digital wall that I plan to develop into a border less scroll left to right, reflecting the theme of an endless journey

Penultimate website sketches, researching menu and site layout

I researched campaigns on personal issues to find a popular approach. Avon UK launched a 'Wall of Silence' photo campaign to show objections to domestic abuse. Candy Chang's 'Before I die' allows a community to share deeply personal hopes in a safe and confidential space. The Women's Aid 'Real Man' campaign asks for contributors to sign a pledge and buy a t-shirt, then load a photo of themselves wearing it. As shown by an ice bucket viral campaign on social media, photographic participation can link to platforms such as Instagram and Flickr. Ethically contributors may not wish to share their own face but feet are anonymous, link to walking and our feet can be naked or dressed in shoes that reflect the mood of the writers and are visually appealing. The concept of shared pairs of text and photos reflected the title and would prompt the delivery of both elements.

Developing a website

Experiments with the layout (see Appendix) the photo on the left of the page to encourage the eye to include the photo in the visual scan of the screen. I placed the text on a rich black with scroll bars to retain a fixed pixel size. The focus is on the words and the design holds them in a pre-determined structure. I experimented with slab serif fonts to find the right typography, selecting Bree (see Appendix). Negative letter spaces aid readability with attractive cursive elements, the handwritten influence adds personality. Yellow lifts the sober text and provides a non-gender colour. I tested the colours with red and green colour blind readers and referenced the RNIB guidelines for website legibility.

I obtained quotes from website coders asking them to cost basics transitional effects. I asked them to cost from my first website page plan (see Appendix for designs and opposite.) Quotes from established sources were beyond my current budget. The solution was to extend the collaboration to a former MA student who was looking to develop his coding skills. We agreed that I would use Adobe Illustrator to create the design and mark up the coding for him to develop. The site went through three design stages on schedule (see Appendix).

Dissemination and future development

The launch of the site will take place on 30th January at a Gateway Women meeting at St Pancras. For this I have designed cards (see Appendix) and extended an open invitation to the group. Gateway Women will also load an interview onto their site for media distribution. I intend to research crowd funding to fund a collaborate with a more experienced developer to look at methods of loading secure content, effects and scrolling with a view to attracting more participants and a broader range of observations on different aspects of childlessness.

35. Medical conditions that make becoming a parent difficult.
36. Working in a single-sex dominated environment thus making it difficult to meet a suitable partner.
37. Having genetic inheritance issues of our own, or our partner's, that make us decide not to risk having children.
38. Needing to save enough money to buy a home and pay off college debts before we could afford to start a family, only for it to be too late.
39. Being with a partner who already has children and doesn't want more.
40. Being with a partner who doesn't want children at all (a childfree partner).
41. Becoming a stepmother and for it to be too painful for your partner's children to cope with you having a child.
42. Being unable to get pregnant with the eggs you froze when you were younger.
43. Being ambivalent about motherhood and realising too late that you really do want a family.

Bibliography

Cardstore, 2014. World's Toughest Job, [video] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HB3xMg3rXbY> [Accessed 1 May 2014].

Chang, C, 2011. Before I Die in Nola. Candy Chang [online] 2011. Available at: <http://candychang.com/before-i-die-in-nola/> [Accessed 15 November 2013].

Day, J, 2013. 50 ways not to be a mother. Gateway Women [online] September 2013. Available at: www.gatewaywomen.com [Accessed 30 September 2013].

Harwen, N., 2010, Women's Aid 'Real Man' [online], 2012. Available at <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/> [Accessed 1 November 2013]

Lynch, B., 2012. Comment is Free: 'Mothers stop moaning about motherhood', [online] The Guardian, 31 March, 2012. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/mar/31/mothers-stop-moaning-about-motherhood> [Accessed 31 March 2012]

Moore, S., 2014. Comment is Free: 'Having or not having children should not define or divide women', [online] The Guardian, 15 January, 2014. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/15/having-children-not-define-divide-women> [Accessed 16 January 2014]

Onnen-Isemann, Corinna. Involuntary Childless Marriages and the Effects of Reproductive Technology: The Case of Germany. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, [S.l.], v. 1, n. 1, jan. 2000. ISSN 1438-5627. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1138/2541>. Date accessed: 23 Dec. 2014.

Segatti, A., 2011, Avon UK 'Four ways to speak out [online], 2011, Available at http://www.avon.uk.com/PRSuite/c_domestic_against.page [Accessed 1 November 2013].

Ukielski, P, Dr., 2014. Warsaw Rising [online] 2014. Available at: <http://warsawrising.eu> [Accessed 1 November 2013].

44. Finding out that the man who said he wanted children had a vasectomy and hadn't told you.
45. Having a partner with addiction or mental health issues that took up both of your lives until it was too late to have children.
46. Being unable to adopt because of being single, having insufficient funds, being the wrong age or gender, being the wrong ethnicity, being disabled, not being able to afford to or being rejected for a bewildering box-checking reasons including not having a garden!
47. Finding donor egg treatments uncomfortable.
48. Finding surrogacy as an alternative to having your own baby something you don't feel comfortable with, or can't afford.
49. Having your ovaries damaged by chemotherapy and unwilling to consider egg donation.
50. Having your surrogate mother decide to keep your genetic child."

[Gateway Women, September, 2013]