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The Hard-Working-Class: An American Evolution of the Middle Class Mom

April 2013

Amidst conversation around class wars and progress (or lack) of economic recovery, everyone seems focused on the plight of the middle class and how best to solve the problems they face – particularly the “struggling” middle. But there is a disparity between the political lip-service paid to the struggling middle class and really understanding who they are – particularly the moms at eye of the storm. Over the past year, C-K realized there was an opportunity to better understand this often overlooked and miss understood segment that is growing rapidly, with huge implications for many of our clients. What we found was a savvy and influential group that doesn’t even see themselves as part of the traditional class definitions.

Meet the Hard-Working-Class.

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“I am not the working class. I am the Hard-Working-Class. I’m above the poverty line, working over 60 hours a week to keep my family above water.”



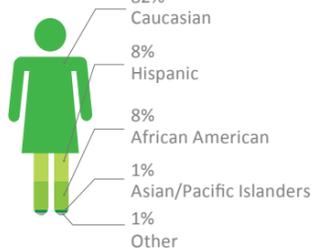
Identify with being in the middle class.



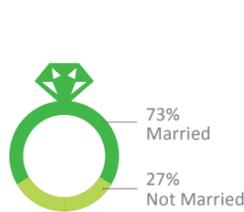
Identify themselves with a new class called the “Hard-Working-Class.”

Demographics

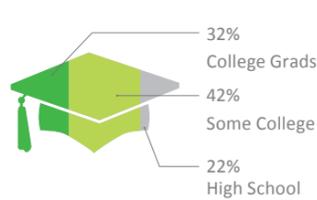
Ethnicity



Marital Status



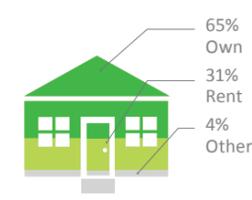
Education



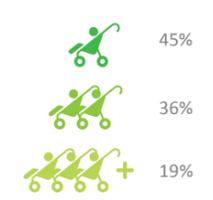
Employment



Home Ownership



Number of Children



Her Orbit of Influence

Based on responses from the women we spoke with, C-K charted the Hard-Working-Class mom’s “Orbit of Influence” when it comes to making ends meet.

The bigger the circle, the bigger the influence. The darker the circle color, the more frequent the interactions. Not surprisingly, technology plays a key role.



Points of Pride and Pain



“Knowing how to shop sales and maximize coupons”

“Making sure we always have birthday parties”

“Keeping kids in their sports/hobbies”

“Saving for my home”

“Knowing when generics are just as good”



“Can’t buy organics”

“Saying ‘put it back’ to my kids in the store all the time”

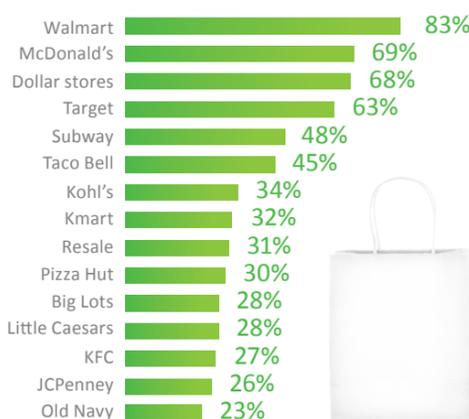
“I feel so old for my age”

“Band-aiding everything”

“No health insurance”

“Having to reach out for help”

Where They Buy



Life as a Balancing Act



More

Work Budgets Coupons Generics

Less

Sleep Cable Haircuts Fresh Foods Travel

More “Home” Less “Out”

Cooking Reading Family Time Creativity Dining Girls’ Nights Movies Old Friends Shopping

L.E.S.S.

This resilient, resourceful consumer is highly adept in the art of making ends meet, earning a master’s degree in “making it work.”

C-K distills some of her key survival strategies into lessons in how to do more with L.E.S.S.

Marketers, take note.

LIVE

Community Karma

Her community is a survival network. Since 72% share coupons and deals with family and friends, she relies on it for swapping deals, sharing items, child-care support and feeding her family—and they rely on her.

Markers of Normalcy

We found a greater resistance to sacrifice their favorite “affordable” tried-and-true brands: 53% said they continue to buy certain brand names to maintain some sense of normalcy.

EAT

Ingredients vs. Recipe

Hard-Working-Class moms base meal decisions on the ingredients in the pantry or what’s on sale: 87% make an effort to plan meals around ingredients they already have in the house.

Food Stretching

The Hard-Working-Class knows how to make ends meet through food: 88% said they buy food that “stretches” across meals. Pasta, rice, noodles and ground beef are staples, as they are both filling and versatile.

SPEND

Hibernating Mid-cycle

Just like bears, the Hard-Working-Class consumer instinctively knows when to wait out tough weather. When necessary, 91% say they stay home and make do with what they have until payday.

Recycling Their Money

These families are leveraging every coupon, sale and special offer they can to make ends meet. In fact, 89% said they use coupons whenever they can.

SHOP

Cart Segmentation

As a brand, it’s not just enough to make it in the cart—it’s where in the cart are you placed. 42% place less important items in the back of the cart to easily remove if over budget.

Over-Purchase Prevention

Perimeter shopping and selective aisle shopping helps these women avoid over-purchasing: 60% skip certain aisles to avoid impulse buys.

Note: Unless otherwise stated, findings are from C-K proprietary qualitative and quantitative research conducted throughout 2012. More specifically, we spoke to moms with kids in the household who have HHI between \$30,000 and \$50,000 and who are not on government assistance.