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# Pretty Pins and Anonymous Confessions: The Sharing of Seemingly Innocuous Content with the “Tradwife” Hashtag on Pinterest and Whisper

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## ABSTRACT

The “tradwife” movement is a conservative social movement that promotes “traditional” lifestyles. Whilst other research has studied the movement across social media, finding extremist and white supremacist content, the movement’s use of imageboards is understudied. Therefore, this exploratory research analyzed content posted with the hashtag “tradwife” on Pinterest and Whisper. While neither dataset contained overtly extremist themes, anti-feminist themes were present, with the findings suggesting that imageboards attract different communities, which curate distinct norms, vocabularies, and interpretations of the movement, and contain confusion as to what tradwife means, how it differs from being a housewife, and what feminism stands for.

## Introduction

Organized white supremacy has been growing internationally over the last decade.<sup>1</sup> This has seen a rise in traditionally male-dominated and male supremacist ideologies and movements, as well as a growth in female-oriented and -fronted movements.<sup>2</sup> The “tradwife” movement is one such movement originating in white supremacy as a means of targeting white women, and has been described as reactionary, anti-feminist, and white supremacist.<sup>3</sup> Its tenants are a belief in traditional gender roles, a reverence for “traditional” lifestyles, and the advocacy of raising white children. The tradwife movement has a strong online presence, with online platforms affording “women in extremist movements a unique opportunity to break, or push through, patriarchal gendered constraints that may hinder offline participation”,<sup>4</sup> making these important sites to study and the subject of this paper. Tradwife content reached hundreds of millions of views on TikTok in 2023<sup>5</sup> and has seen corresponding academic interest across personal blogs and vlogs, as well as both mainstream and alternative social media platforms.<sup>6</sup> While the study of online tradwife content has grown, there are still platforms that have not yet been subject to analysis. Pinterest has received previous attention,<sup>7</sup> but both Pinterest and Whisper are understudied relative to other platforms known to host this kind of content. This paper fills this gap with an exploratory study into

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content posted to Pinterest and Whisper with the hashtag “tradwife” providing a foundation for future research into tradwife content on these boards with a systematic qualitative analysis of the content marked as “tradwife” by users. It shows 1) what content is available to users who search for it, and 2) what this content contains. This paper contributes a first insight into the tradwife content on Whisper and the first systematic analysis of popular tradwife posts on Pinterest.

The tradwife movement has links to the white supremacist movement as a specifically women-led and women-targeted movement aiming to increase the number of white women radicalized toward racist causes. However, it has not remained a purely white supremacist phenomenon and there are a number of women globally who identify as tradwives without promoting or supporting white supremacist causes. Many women prefer traditional gender roles for a number of reasons and many of these do not advocate for other women to follow suit. This project is interested in white supremacist tradwife content even though tradwife content unrelated to white supremacy was found in the dataset and exists elsewhere across the internet. This paper uses the term “white supremacist” to refer to factions of the movement that specifically incorporate the desire to increase the number of white children being raised by white women with white supremacist ideologies.<sup>8,9</sup> In this paper, the term “tradwife” is used to refer to white supremacist tradwives and where this is not the case it is noted. Other authors use other terms to refer to the tradwife movement such as “alt-right,” “radical right,” and “right wing.” When citing other research, we retain the terminology used by the authors of that research. We refer to “tradwife” content throughout this paper without quotation marks for clarity of writing; however, this is not meant to normalize the term.

### ***Online Tradwife Movement***

Tradwives are considered an anti-modern movement, with the belief that it is a woman’s job to become a wife and a mother, and take the role of caregiver to their family, managing all aspects of domestic life.<sup>10</sup> In performing this role, they are expected to be fully submissive to their husband, present a feminine aesthetic, and take on stereotypical feminine traits, such as being caring and soft.<sup>11</sup> The movement has an identifiable aesthetic that embodies its anti-modern and feminine ethos that can include images reminiscent of 1850s American homesteads,<sup>12</sup> and images of the 1950s white American suburban housewife.<sup>13</sup> Naturalistic images of women in fields of wheat, implying a self-sufficient and natural lifestyle,<sup>14</sup> and raw and organic food are also part of the imaginary.<sup>15</sup> Tradwife content is not itself explicitly violent but instead embeds norms of white supremacy in soft, pastel images that depict happy families with beautiful children engaging in healthy, natural, organic living. Scholars have argued that focusing research agendas on overtly violent or supremacist content misses the instrumental role that this less extreme and even mundane content plays in normalizing extremist movements.<sup>16</sup>

Sykes and Hopner found five key commonalities of self-identified tradwives: anti-feminism, home-making, traditional gender roles, evidence of affiliation with at least one position of extreme right-wing ideology, and evidence of social media influencing.<sup>17</sup> Other research noted the importance of religion and motherhood,<sup>18</sup> as well as prejudicial attitudes toward minority communities and a rejection of LGBT+ rights

within tradwife content,<sup>19</sup> promoting a 1950s lifestyle emblematic of a time that was supposedly safer for women.<sup>20</sup> This pushes ideas of protecting normative whiteness as they refer to a time before increased migration from non-white majority countries,<sup>21</sup> as well as a time when it was less socially acceptable to be a member of the LGBT+ community. Mattheis highlights that the most prominent influencers and participants of online tradwife content are white and that those who subscribe to this way of life tend to be culturally western and Christian.<sup>22</sup> Other narratives in the movement are that feminism, the sexual revolution, and multi-culturalism are to blame for widely experienced social ills, such as high costs of living, lack of sufficient employment opportunities, and increasing social atomization, as well as social complaints that are white supremacist in their origins, such as a decline in birth rates among white populations.<sup>23</sup> The concern with a fall in the birth rates of white people forms part of the “great replacement” conspiracy theory, which sees this decline as the result of a Jewish plot to undermine the west by promoting feminism, sexual liberty, and migration from non-western countries. These factors, they believe, have been deliberately orchestrated by a Jewish cabal in order to slow the reproduction of the white race, threatening the continued existence of white people and the west.<sup>24</sup> Finally, Ebner refers to overlaps in the movement with concepts from the manosphere, such as labeling themselves with a sexual market value, marking themselves down if they are over-weight, not above average attractiveness or have had too many sexual partners.<sup>25</sup>

Darby argues that while not all tradwives are white supremacists, “the community’s hunger for the distinct boundaries of the past make it vulnerable to far-right messaging”,<sup>26</sup> with O’Luanaigh arguing that the tradwife movement can be used as a conduit for involvement in extremist ideologies.<sup>27</sup> The subtle and indirect nature of the discourses aims to normalize racism and misogyny, making such discourses appear more socially acceptable, and pushing an idea of what is and is not ‘natural’ gender and sexuality.<sup>28</sup> As with all extremist ideologies, there is an us-versus-them dichotomy,<sup>29</sup> with those participating in “trad” culture as the in-group, and those participating in the “modern world”, such as feminists and liberals, as the out-group.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Tradwives on Social Media***

Sykes and Hopner undertook a netnographic study (form of ethnography which explores the melding of technology and culture) into tradwives across Facebook, X, YouTube and TikTok, as well as less regulated fringe platforms Telegram, Reddit, Gab, Minds, BitChute and Rumble, arguing the importance of including the latter because more extreme tradwife content is often removed from mainstream platforms due to moderation.<sup>31</sup> The main purposes for which tradwives used social media were networking, connecting with followers, sharing content, discussing opinions and news, and engaging in personal communication. Sykes and Hopner found conservative right, alt-right and alt-light tradwives with content pushing traditional gender roles, femininity, homemaking and motherhood, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy and nationalism. They found that more regulated platforms were likely to host anti-feminist and overly feminine content, with less regulated platforms more likely to host white supremacist, nationalist ideological and political content. Sitler-Elbel researched YouTube videos, personal blogs and Instagram content that contained lighthearted, apolitical content,

such as beauty tips, as well as content regarding submission to one's husband, the importance of family and motherhood, and the use of both religion and tradition to push social and political agendas.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, tradwives in her study often followed Instagram accounts that posted white supremacist and alt-right beliefs. Finally, O'Luanaigh researched the overlap of cottagecore and tradwife content as well as the overlap of cottagecore content with white nationalist and ecofascist content on TikTok.<sup>33</sup> O'Luanaigh argues that both cottagecore and the tradwife movement seek a glorified mythical past with cottagecore venerating "rural living and agricultural life" and "trad-wifery" glorifying traditional gender roles without offering any indication of the negative aspects of a rigidly enforced gender binary. The research found overlap in the aesthetics of both types of content through modest clothing, gardening and cooking, demonstrating common values around domesticity and gendered household labor. Within the research, some of the content using the "cottagecore" hashtag and tradwife content also included overtly extremist hashtags. O'Luanaigh theorizes that this could be a deliberate attempt to push extremist content into the newsfeeds of those searching for cottagecore content. Other content within the research that used the "cottagecore" hashtag contained white nationalist iconography and slogans.

### ***Pinterest and Whisper***

Pinterest and Whisper are both understudied image-sharing platforms. Pinterest is an image-sharing and social media service that was established in 2010 and describes itself as "a visual discovery engine for finding ideas like recipes, home and style inspiration".<sup>34</sup> Pinterest posts are known as "pins" and take the form of an image linked to the account of the original poster, which can be "pinned" to users' own profile on one of their "boards." Pinterest has a large monthly user base of 518 million active users<sup>35</sup> and in 2024, 70% of its users identified themselves as women<sup>36</sup> making Pinterest a female-dominated tech platform. Pinterest attracts women partly due to its "very feminine script and interface"<sup>37</sup> and is therefore ideal for women-based movements due to the platform's feminine aesthetic and large mainstream female audience. Pinterest was chosen for this exploratory study for these reasons. Whisper is a majority male website, with 61% male users, yet it contains a body of content under the "tradwife" hashtag, making it a good comparison for gendered image-sharing behavior.<sup>38</sup> While Pinterest profiles can use real names, Whisper is known for its anonymity feature, which is the second reason why they make a good comparison. All images shared on Whisper contain text superimposed on an image background, as the purpose of Whisper was for users to share thoughts and secrets anonymously.

At the time of data collection, Pinterest community guidelines stated that they "work with subject matter experts to inform and update" their guidelines, and that they may remove, limit or block content that is false, misleading, harmful, hateful, or violent.<sup>39</sup> Within their hateful content policy, it specifically prohibits "support for white supremacy, limiting women's rights and other discriminatory ideas." Pinterest became a Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) member in 2019, marking its commitment to removing extremist content from its pages. However, compared to some of the other GIFCT members such as Facebook and X, the platform is one of the more understudied platforms. At the time of data collection, Whisper had three

broad community rules: “Don’t be mean, Don’t be Gross, and Don’t use Whisper to Break the Law”.<sup>40</sup> The “Don’t be Mean” rule covers hate speech, and “Don’t Break the Law” covers threats of violence. Beyond these rules, there was no clear counter-extremism policy and the platform is no longer active as of July 2025. The contrast in policy approaches between the two platforms offers points of comparison regarding the volume and type of tradwife content that is found on their services.

## Methodology

The understudied nature of tradwife content on imageboards requires an exploratory study. Within the social sciences, exploration is “a broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social or psychological life”.<sup>41</sup> Exploratory research produces inductively derived generalizations about the subjects being studied<sup>42</sup> (in this case tradwives using online imageboards). Once more research has been undertaken, exploratory research can move on to stages of prediction, hypothesis testing, and model-building.<sup>43</sup> Epistemologically, research methods using large digital datasets lend themselves to a positivist analysis of the data. However, this research sees the meaning of “tradwife” to the users in the dataset as something constructed through their interactions with the term. We therefore take a social constructivist approach to our analysis that sees the meaning of “tradwife” as mediated through the social spaces and human interactions where tradwife ideas are articulated. This is always done in a social context of late capitalism and structural racism and sexism, and the idea of tradwives itself has links to white supremacy which influences how users can make sense of the term. Nevertheless, there are efforts within the dataset to contest and subvert what it means to be a tradwife, making a social constructivist lens the most appropriate to make sense of this.

The present study applies a qualitative thematic analysis to content posted under the “tradwife” hashtag on Pinterest and Whisper to explore the content. This project set out to understand 1) what content is available to users who search for it, and 2) what this content contains. We addressed these questions with a systematic collection of content from both platforms and a thematic content analysis of what these images contained. We then situated the content in the wider literature of the contemporary tradwife movement and the existing literature on white supremacist thought. The data for this project was collected from Pinterest and Whisper over two one-week (5 day) periods three months apart in October 2022 and January 2023. The two data collection periods allowed comparisons to be made across the collections to check for anomalies or inconsistencies in the data. As the tradwife is a growing movement and online content often reflects happenings offline,<sup>44</sup> it was possible that only collecting data during one period could have captured or reflected a state of tradwife online content that is not its normal. We made the decision to collect data across two collection periods as this provides the opportunity to compare the data collected across the two periods. As there were no differences in the content across the two periods, we assumed that the data collected reflected the true state of tradwife content on Pinterest and Whisper during late 2022 and early 2023. We collected one hundred images each day from each platform and we removed duplicates. This section discusses the specific

methodological considerations that went into this process, beginning with the search algorithms used by the platforms, then the ethical review, data collection, and methods of analysis. We used thematic content analysis to analyze the images collected and the means of creating the codes and of assessing intercoder reliability are explained. Finally, we discuss the limitations of collecting and analyzing the data in this manner.

### **Search Algorithms**

The Pinterest search engine algorithm considers domain quality, pin quality, pinner quality, and topic relevance when deciding what pins to show first in its search results. We determined domain quality by the popularity of the pins that have links to a domain. The pin quality is how popular the pin is, which is determined by number of comments and number of “likes”, with these being worth more if they come from active Pinterest users who post and interact regularly. Pinner quality refers to the number of followers a user has, and topic relevance is determined by having pins that include the search term in their hashtags or caption.<sup>45</sup> Information on how Whisper prioritizes its search results is harder to find. Due to Whisper’s anonymity, it does not collect user information that would allow for personalization of the platform’s experience.<sup>46</sup> Whisper has several ways in which users can browse posts on the platform, a *latest* list of posts, a *nearby* list of posts, and a *featured* list of posts, all of which are sorted chronologically with most recent first.<sup>47</sup> It is therefore likely, due to Whisper’s anonymity and chronological filtering of other lists, that the posts that show from a search function are also shown with most recent first, without the influence of other factors.

### **Ethics**

Ethical approval was sought from, and granted by, the Swansea University and the University of the West of Scotland ethics boards. No usernames were collected during data collection and any personally identifying information, such as personal blog addresses, that were featured in images were not included in analysis. As part of the ethical considerations, we did not include examples of the images collected in this study for two reasons. Firstly, to avoid people being able to identify Pinterest accounts using reverse image search engines. Secondly, to prevent the further dissemination of problematic content. Where appropriate, we included summaries of text and descriptions of images to illustrate points.

### **Data Collection**

The keyword “tradwife” was used to search for images on Pinterest and Whisper as this would return images that had been identified as tradwife content by the users themselves. Images were downloaded from Pinterest and Whisper *via* an open-source Python script that utilized offline, archived HTML rather than sending requests to either platform.<sup>48</sup> We collected the data in two separate periods, the first in October 2022 and the second in January 2023. Round one of data collection took place the week commencing October 17<sup>th</sup>, and round two of data collection began the week beginning January 16<sup>th</sup>. On each day of data collection, we entered the search term



“tradwife” on each platform using a browser that was not logged into a Pinterest or Whisper account and the first 100 images were collected. At the end of the five days, we removed duplicates to create a final Pinterest and Whisper image dataset. After the second round of data collection was completed in January 2023, the two datasets were combined, and duplicates were removed for a final overall dataset.

During preliminary testing of data collection, a long list of hashtags related to the tradwife movement was devised and used to collect images. However, after testing over several weeks and viewing several hundred images, it was determined that every image that contained a hashtag from the list also contained the hashtag “tradwife.” Because of this, we only used the hashtag “tradwife.” This also limited the computational power needed for data collection. This decision was further justified by this research being an exploratory study and by the researchers’ desire to capture only data that is considered by users themselves to belong to the tradwife movement or to be “tradwife.” The exploratory nature of the research meant that the research aim was to deeply understand the most obvious and deliberate tradwife content on these two platforms. Future research should look at how this manifests in more subtle ways and its relation to the overt content.

There were considerably fewer tradwife images on Whisper than Pinterest. It was possible to scroll through and view every image on Whisper with the tradwife tag at every point during the data collection periods. On Pinterest, the images loaded seemingly endlessly. Tables 1 and 2 show the number of unique images downloaded from Pinterest and Whisper on each day of data collection in October and January respectively. Table 3 shows the total number of unique images downloaded from each platform once we removed duplicates from the final dataset. The Pinterest dataset contained 74 duplicates and the Whisper dataset contained 69 duplicates.

### **Thematic Analysis**

We chose thematic analysis due to the exploratory nature of the study which analyzes images that are understudied on both of the chosen imageboards. We undertook the analysis using Braun and Clarke’s six phases of analysis.<sup>49</sup> We first reviewed the dataset in its entirety before we used the first ten images from each dataset to identify what categories of image aspect should be coded. After we agreed upon initial codes, we coded 10 images from each dataset separately. Inter-coder reliability was 0.85 for Pinterest and 0.83 for Whisper. The initial codes that we generated with descriptions can be found in table 4.

**Table 1.** Number of images collected from pinterest and whisper during round 1 of data collection.

Date	Pinterest unique images	Whisper unique images
October 17th 2022	100	100
October 18th 2022	26	1
October 19th 2022	33	0
October 20th 2022	13	0
October 21st 2022	2	0
Total	174	101



**Table 2.** Number of images collected from pinterest and whisper during round 2 of data collection.

Date	Pinterest unique images	Whisper unique images
January 16th 2023	100	100
January 17th 2023	19	0
January 18th 2023	72	0
January 19th 2023	21	1
January 20th 2023	6	0
Total	218	101

**Table 3.** Total unique images in the final dataset.

	Pinterest unique images	Whisper unique images
January	174	101
October	218	101
Total unique	318	133

**Table 4.** Initial generated codes and descriptions.

Generated code	Description
Ideological expression	The expression of following a particular ideology and what that ideology was. This included critiques of an ideology.
Desires expressed	Expressing a tradwife-related desire; for example, to be or to have a tradwife
Visual appearance of subjects	There were sub codes for race, hair, and any other features deemed relevant based on existing literature into traditional lifestyles. For example, conventional presentation of masculinity and femininity, such as strong muscular men and slim women
Clothing	Clothing style. Examples include 1950s style of clothing or modern white and beige bohemian clothing
Relations of subjects	The relationship between the subjects in the image
What was happening in the image	The main focus or activities occurring in the image
Aesthetic	An overall visual style; for example, a cottagecore aesthetic.
Color Scheme	Overarching color scheme of image; for example, pastels
Lighting	The use of lighting; for example, natural lighting or artificial lighting
Image type	What type of image was posted; for example, photo, meme, cartoon, drawing
Use of text	The text included within the image. This included recording esoteric language and “how-to” instructional guides.

Due to the different types of images on Pinterest and Whisper, with all Whispers containing text and only some of the pins containing text, it was clearer on Whisper if an image explicitly supported or endorsed tradwife ideology or desires than it was on Pinterest. This was because many Whispers would state the view, whereas many pins were simply pictures of food or clothing without any identifiable ideological attributes beyond the use of the hashtag “tradwife”.

This next stages were reviewing, naming and defining themes. While both platforms contained a small number of anti-feminist and anti-neoliberal content, which was deemed an important theme, there were also other themes that were more prominent on one platform than the other: motherhood and home-making on Pinterest; and LGBT+, tradwife critiques, and esoteric language on Whisper. The themes on Pinterest were more visual in nature, whereas the heavy presence of text in the Whisper images resulted in the Whisper themes being both visual and textual in nature.

## Limitations

The Pinterest recommendation algorithm means that popular images are shown first in search results, rather than the most recent images. Whisper images are shown chronologically. This means that several of the same Pinterest images are downloaded several times across the days of data collection, and although we removed all duplicates, this does mean that the dataset is not representative of ongoing tradwife posting on Pinterest. An ideal way to collect data would have been to download 100 of the images posted that day to the site, but this was not possible. However, these initial findings still offer meaningful insights into tradwife activity on both platforms, which we hope, will act as a springboard for further research.

## Findings

### Pinterest

While all of the 318 Pinterest images that were collected and analyzed were posted with the hashtag “tradwife”, only 3.8% images contained any further indication beyond this hashtag that the content was aimed specifically at the tradwife movement. These images contained text referring specifically to at least one of the following narratives: being a tradwife, having home-making as a woman’s only responsibility, and being anti-feminist and against paid work/a career-obsessed world. One of these images specifically accuses feminism of being a government scam to increase the tax intake and influence the way in which children are raised, with another image coining traditional home-makers as today’s rebels. Of the remaining 306 images with the hashtag “tradwife”, many contain subtle themes commonly seen in the more lighthearted and apolitical tradwife content found in existing literature,<sup>50</sup> and do not contain any overtly extremist themes or iconography, meaning they would likely appeal to many women outside of the tradwife movement.

The most prominent theme on Pinterest was motherhood content (23.9%) with images containing children, pregnant women, baby name ideas and nursey décor. All of the images were meticulously curated to portray only happy and aesthetically pleasing moments. Children were typically in their infant stages and always portrayed as well-dressed, cute, and well-behaved. Where the images were taken in the home, the home was always clean and organized. None of the images portrayed any kind of challenges or difficulties that can be faced in motherhood. The next most prominent theme is home-making (22.3%). This content included home organization, cleaning, laundry, cooking or baking, and entertaining. These images were mainly based in kitchens and dining areas and again only showed the tidiest, most aesthetically pleasing and organized homes. Almost 4% of the images in the dataset contained either links, guides, or charts of the “How-to” nature. For example, how to organize your chores for the week. The next most common theme related to slow and sustainable living (7.9%) which included images of growing food, as well as gardening and spending time in nature, and could be seen as part of the “cottagecore” aesthetic found in O’Luanaigh’s research.<sup>51</sup> Finally, 7.2% of the images portrayed wedding-related content. While religion was a theme found in existing literature,<sup>52</sup> it was not a significant theme in this dataset.

A number of aesthetics were found: cottagecore (19.8%); traditional (1950s) (17.6%); and stereotypical femininity (6.6%). The cottagecore aesthetic conveyed aspects of tradition whilst romanticizing an anti-modern and agricultural life.<sup>53</sup> These images tended to be based in nature, gardens or in the kitchen, or showing clothes of a modest nature. The traditional aesthetic drew from traditional aspects of homemaking and childrearing in the 1950s, largely presented through clothing and kitchen activities. Finally, stereotypical femininity was presented through love heart shaped items and pastel colors.<sup>54</sup> There were some images in the dataset (8.8%) where it was entirely unclear why the image would be accompanied by the hashtag “tradwife” as there were no clear indicators as to why it would relate to “traditional life.”

Of the images that contained adults (61.6%), the majority (97.4%) contained adults that were white and presented as conventionally masculine men or feminine women. The remaining images (2.6%) included people of color or people that did not present as conventionally masculine men or feminine women. Only 1.3% of the images included LGBT+ themes, with all other romantic and family representations presenting as heterosexual. A small number of images (5.3%) were healthy food and fitness-oriented suggesting that an important part of being a tradwife is staying in good physical shape. The most popular clothing type within the dataset were modern white/beige bohemian clothing (24.2%) which may be thought to symbolize purity, innocence, and femininity. The second most popular clothing type was traditional 1950s style clothing (18.2%). The only unexpected type of clothing was sexually provocative or revealing clothing (4.7%). This style is out of line with an ideology and lifestyle that distinctly advocates for modest and traditional dress.

Three images (0.9%) on Pinterest disrupted the anti-feminist, anti-queer tradwife ideology by portraying a tradwife who was bisexual and/or lesbian and/or trans. Two images (0.6%) on Pinterest that showed a woman wearing the colors of the bisexual flag holding or kissing another woman, who in one picture was wearing a trans pride pin. A third image showed a cartoon of a woman talking to a tradwife asking where the two blonde guys are (referring to the men who are regularly depicted as being romantically involved with the tradwife in this meme). The tradwife responds that they don’t need them and kiss. Another image shows a cartoon of a woman holding the woman from the tradwife meme telling her that it is ok to take a break from working so hard to take care of the kids. This image is in reference to a widely known antifeminist image on the internet that shows a “modern woman” and a “happy wife”, listing the ways that the “modern woman” is unhappy with her life and that the “happy wife” finds her life fulfilling. This image posted on Pinterest shows that original meme in the background, and then shows the two women from it as in a relationship, with the modern woman appreciating all the work the housewife does to maintain family and home. The image is saying that feminism, being queer, and being a homemaker are not incompatible and actually work well together. The lesbian, bisexual and/or trans posts in the Pinterest dataset are subverting the heterosexual, cisgender norms of the tradwife movement to show that being a homemaker is not incompatible with liberal values or being LGBT+. They take discursive terrain from the white supremacist movement by showing that wearing pastel colors, being a homemaker, or even the image of the tradwife meme is not synonymous with white supremacy. This opens up

space for further confrontations with far-right groups over the meanings of social symbols and if they are inherently far right.

### **Whisper**

All 133 images in the Whisper dataset contained the hashtag “tradwife” as well as text within the image that provided more context. Only one image in the Whisper dataset did not include the word tradwife within the text. Unlike Pinterest, neither home-making nor motherhood were prominent themes with only 12% of images referencing home-making duties and only 3% of images relating to motherhood. None of the images portrayed growing their own food or gardening, nor were any of the images of the “How-to” instructional/advice nature. Similar to Pinterest, there was little mention of religion in the dataset. Instead, many images expressed (through text) the desire either to be a tradwife (34.6%) or to have a tradwife (15.8%) (with 2.3% of images expressing that they were already a good tradwife/girlfriend). Anti-feminist or anti-neoliberal narratives were expressed in 3.8% of the images. This took the form of arguing that feminism prevented the posters from living their best lives, being anti-feminist and not caring what anyone else thinks of that, and also being stuck in a “neoliberal hell”.

The majority of adults presented in the images were white and conventionally masculine men or feminine women (89.5%). The other adults shown were described in the text within the content as being Black, Arab, Latina or Asian adults, and 10.5% of the images contained LGBT+ themes. Traditional 1950s style clothing (16.5%), modern white/beige bohemian clothing (8.3%) and sexually provocative (7.5%) clothing categories were also found in the Whisper dataset. However, there were two categories that emerged in this dataset that were not in the Pinterest dataset. Specifically, these showcased gothic, emo or scene clothing (6.8%) and fashionable clothing (5.3%), the latter is clothing from recent popular fashion trends. The most popular aesthetic on Whisper was the stereotypical femininity (24.8%). Traditional (16.5%) and cottagecore (8.4%) aesthetics were present also. Within the cottagecore content was an image that expressed desire to have a tradwife and an off-grid cabin to raise a family in, and another image arguing that you are not a true tradwife unless you give up technology. There was also a small percentage of wedding-related content (4.5%).

Some images (6.7%) on Whisper fell under the theme of “negative perceptions of tradwifery” which included images that expressed not understanding why wanting to be a tradwife is seen by others as something negative, why this content would be shadow banned,<sup>55</sup> why no one else wants to be a tradwife, why a tradwife is so hard to find, as well as expressing sadness over losing friends because they want to be a tradwife. It is unclear whether the users behind those images are aware of the links that the movement can have to white supremacy. Two images referred to both feminism and tradwives; one expressed the desire to be both and the other expressed the desire to be with a woman who is both. There were also a small number of images that contained text that suggested that the appeal to be a tradwife was because they want to be taken care of by their partner, or the appeal of wanting a tradwife was because they want to find a woman to take care of. Mattheis writes about the gendered roles in which men find purpose in offering women protection in an exchange of

gendered complementarity.<sup>56</sup> However, whilst Mattheis discusses the gift of civilization from male partners and protection from males of ethnic minorities, the images in the present dataset with text referencing these ideas were more materialistic in nature. For example, 6.0% of the images included luxury lifestyles, with one image expressing desire to be a “gold digger”, and other images expressing desire to be an older man’s tradwife, wanting to take care of a tradwife, or wanting a “sexy” tradwife.

Nine percent of the images were overtly sexual in a manner inconsistent with “traditional” tradwife aesthetics. The images contained text that was more sexual or implied exaggerated sexuality through the combination of text and image. Seven Whisper images (5.2%) expressed sexual deviancy through kink, the remaining five (3.8%) were unusually sexual for tradwife content. Three Whisper images expressed the desire to specifically be Patrick Bateman’s tradwife (the protagonist of *American Psycho*, portrayed by Christian Bale). Two images expressed the desire to have a tradwife to engage in kink or bondage play with. The unusually sexualized Whisper posts included one post asking for a “filthy tradwife”, and another with a sexually provocative image overlaid with text inviting people to ask the poster anything about her aspirations to be a tradwife. Two images in the Whisper dataset stated that they were 19 years old, and one image specified that they were looking for an 18-year-old tradwife.

Nine percent of the posts expressed some distain for the tradwife ideology, two stated that the ideology is a “dom-sub fantasy” or a “misogyny kink”, and two implied that only toxic men want to be with a woman who wants to be a tradwife. Others expressed that the tradwife lifestyle was undesirable or would result in unhappiness in other ways, with one user describing aspiring tradwives as “miserable weirdos”. Almost 4% expressed general distain for tradwives and the tradwife lifestyle, with one image implying that not having a tradwife brings peace. One image made an argument that if women are to be expected to go back to “traditional” gender roles for a tradwife lifestyle, then the same should be expected of the man in the relationship, such as conscription or working jobs stereotypical for men in the 1950s, such as mining. The final narrative within these images implied a lack of support for the cottagecore tradwife, arguing that they are trying to be “alternative.” One image said that they can “log off now” that they have gone to the woods, showing distain for the anti-modern narratives that are pushed whilst using modern technology to do so. Overall, there were a wide range of dissenting voices in the dataset and people appear to be using the Whisper format, more than the Pinterest format, to discuss what it is to be a tradwife.

## Discussion

The images in the Pinterest dataset largely portrayed the physical appearance, responsibilities, and aesthetics that have been found in existing research into tradwife content on other platforms.<sup>57</sup> Motherhood and home-making themes largely dominated, with a mix of traditional, cottagecore and stereotypically feminine aesthetics throughout. The representations within the content were predominantly white heterosexual couples and families, with masculine men and feminine women, all of which would be considered to be attractive and physically fit which was found to be important in Ebner’s interviews with tradwives.<sup>58</sup> Whilst there were not any overtly extremist identifiers in

the content that would break any of the platforms content moderation policies, there were subtle attempts at pushing hegemonic femininity and gendered labor which could play a useful role for the movement. Campion discusses that many women in such movements not only repackage and promote radical right theories online, but also present themselves in a way that shows the desired gendered identity that is deemed worthy of imitation.<sup>59</sup> This could be seen in the Pinterest dataset with the curated utopian images that fail to acknowledge the vulnerabilities and challenges that women may face in the movement, packaged in pastel colors, with attractive families and how-to guides. This will likely appeal to many who may not realize that the hashtag belongs to more than just an aesthetic. This is particularly so because the Pinterest images lacked the additional text that the Whisper images contained, making it very easy for users to engage with the content without knowing what the hashtag relates to. Overall, the majority of the content was mainstream and could be both useful and appealing to those outside of the tradwife movement for many reasons.

Whisper contained only a small portion of images that were focused on home making, with an even smaller focus on motherhood, both of which are prioritized as the highest duties of tradwives aside from submission to their husband. In addition to this, gothic clothing, sexually provocative clothing, confusion as to why wanting to be a tradwife is seen negatively, and LGBT+ desires are all unexpected finds in tradwife content on this platform.

### ***LGBT+ Tradwives***

The images in the dataset showing queer interpretations of the tradwife lifestyle pose questions as to what the tradwife movement means for those who engage in it. Are the queer posters expressing a desire to assimilate into heterosexual, cisgender society, or are they expressing a desire to be able to enter a far right space as queer people? It is possible that not all the queer posters are aware of the white supremacist meaning behind tradwife, in the same way that many posters may not be aware of the meaning and are simply repeating a phrase that they have understood to mean “stay at home wife with a breadwinner husband.” One LGBT+ post was clearly far right, expressing the desire for a feminine man to be a “based” “authright” tradwife. “Authright” is short for “authoritarian right-wing”, a cluster of ideologies that believes in a strong authoritarian state mixed with right-wing social politics. “Based” is a word now associated with far left as well as far right politics that originated in right-wing online spaces. It is used sincerely or ironically to express when one agrees with something and therefore context is always needed to understand what the poster is trying to say. As the rest of the text is far right, it can be assumed that “based” has its right-wing meaning. This post, from Whisper, is therefore showing a far right and homosexual tradwife desire. There were no posts on Pinterest that could be inferred to be posted by gay or bisexual men, possibly reflecting the difference in user base of the two platforms as Pinterest is women-dominated, as well as the difference in types of posts the two encourage, with Whisper encouraging the disclosure of secrets. A far right, LGBT+ tradwife post shows the variety of individuals attracted to the ideology. This is unsurprising as the tradwife movement was created to provide far right men with submissive far right women who would carry their children and tend their home. It

follows that some far right homosexual men would also find this prospect appealing if they could replace a tradwife with a trad husband. Seven posts (5.3%) purported to be from trans users who wanted to be tradwives, and two posts (1.5%) were from users who said they wanted tradwives who were trans. As above, the desire to be a “trans tradwife” could come from a desire to assimilate to heterosexual, cisgender culture through “passing” as a cis woman in a straight relationship. One post claimed that the poster wanted to be a trans tradwife but that “the tradwife community hates us[,]” showing an awareness that the tradwife community is one seemingly exclusively comprised of cisgender people and is cis-centric in its ideology. The tradwife lifestyle is clearly pulling from a diverse pool of individuals, some of whom may not know the full ideology behind the tradwife movement and may instead be attracted to the aesthetic, being a housewife, or the relationship stability that the movement promises.

LGBT+ positive politics are not unheard of in far right movements and many far right movements incorporate positive LGBT+ sentiments in their rhetoric, sometimes in the form of homonationalism. Homonationalism is the belief that one’s culture or nation is superior because it supports LGBT+ rights.<sup>60</sup> This rhetoric is often seen in Islamophobic groups that argue that western culture is incompatible with Islam because it believes Islam to be a homophobic religion.<sup>61</sup> For these groups, LGBT+ rights are not something they genuinely support but something that they lever as a political wedge in an attempt to divide progressive groups and LGBT+ people from Muslims and other racialized communities. This division around LGBT+ rights is also seen within LGBT+ people on the political right. In a 2022 analysis of r/RightWingLGBT, a subreddit for right-wing LGBT people, Dickey et al. found that the members of the subreddit resolved the tension around embodying both an LGBT identity and a right-wing–far right ideological position by creating a new out-group of ‘degenerate, liberal, non-binary queers’ to position themselves against. By positioning themselves with a version of an LGBT identity that can assimilate into heterosexual, cisgender society – by living in a nuclear family unit, holding conformist job titles, and dressing in line with mainstream gender presentations – they are able to promote the “right” way of doing queerness and align themselves with other far right actors, against the left and liberals.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Tradwife Critiques***

On both Pinterest and Whisper, users posted using the hashtag “tradwife” to criticize the tradwife ideology. These posts argued that living as a tradwife is a kink lifestyle or that aspiring to be a tradwife will attract dangerous men leading to a life of unhappiness. While this does not appear in the existing academic literature, this is a view that is frequently expressed online.<sup>63</sup> The gender dynamic that is seen in the white supremacist tradwife ideology and lifestyle is also seen in a number of kink lifestyles such as taken-in-hand that involve 24/7 submission and dominance.<sup>64</sup> The tradwife lifestyle may bare an aesthetic resemblance to these 24/7 bondage lifestyles, but there are clear differences between them. Many who participate in BDSM do so with a feminist awareness. Feminism has a long and complicated relationship with BDSM,<sup>65</sup> but a large portion of the discourse around BDSM is feminist and much of the discussion around BDSM by practitioners involves feminist critique and analysis.<sup>66</sup> While



it has been argued in the online critique of tradwives, as well as this dataset, that tradwives are participating in a kink lifestyle without them realizing it, this argument is an unhelpful blurring of the lines between self-aware sex acts, and actions that may bare them an aesthetic resemblance. While it may well be that some tradwives are attracted to the tradwife lifestyle *because* it enables them to partake in a 24/7 bondage roleplay, treating all women as if this is the case offers too simple an explanation, as it treats all women as the same, ignores their agency, and neglects the very real differences between consensual 24/7 BDSM and tradwife ideology. It is also possible that some tradwives are self-consciously engaging in a lifestyle that they find erotic, but by promoting it online in tradwife spaces and with the hashtag “tradwife”, instead of in kink and bondage forums, they are clearly aligning the way they embody their lifestyle with that of tradwives and not of kinksters.

Two posts from Whisper accused the tradwife lifestyle of being a kink. One stated that it is “dom-sub fantasy” and another implied that dominating attractive women activates a “tradwife and misogyny kink” with the way the text appears implying that both liking tradwives and treating women in a misogynistic way can be kinks for people. Two posts in the Whisper dataset expressed the belief that being a tradwife and advertising yourself to potential husbands as a submissive housekeeper will attract exploitative and abusive men. These two images are commenting on what they see as an inherent dynamic in tradwife relationships where if women deliberately seek out a man to serve, and men deliberately seek out a woman to serve them, there will be inevitable character flaws with the man involved. These posts analyze the tradwife lifestyle but from an individualized perspective of the personal flaws of the people in tradwife relationships, rather than the ideology to which tradwives subscribe and promote.

### ***Esoteric Language***

Images in the Whisper dataset contained esoteric language, which would only be meaningful to those familiar with the specific internet contexts in which it evolved. The authors, as researchers of the online far right, initially struggled with parts of the language in this dataset. Esoteric language is common in right wing extremist (RWE) movements, particularly in memes<sup>67</sup> and is not specific to trad movement or any other sub-genre of RWE. Memetic language is constantly evolving, with influences from vastly disparate areas of the internet as well as offline influences from viral videos. Much has already been written about the irony and metaphors embedded within RWE content and how problematic this is for content moderation, both human and automated.<sup>68</sup> The type of images in this dataset with esoteric language require in-depth knowledge of RWE language, and sub-genres within this. Compounding this issue is that the text is often only interpretable when viewed alongside the image it is posted with. One post with esoteric language using words such as “poggers,” as well as being impenetrable to those not familiar with the language, shows the image of a kitten sleeping peacefully with a soft toy. This, combined with the text, implies that not having a “poggers” tradwife brings peace, meaning that the user does not want a tradwife. Some Whisper posts are near impenetrable when text and image are combined, because the images and text seem to not relate to each other in any way. A

post collected in January showing professional photographs of the stages of a baking recipe for cookie milk cups combined with the text referring to “Ye24” and “raw milk” is one of these. Ye24 refers to the potential presidential campaign of Ye (formerly Kanye West) in 2024. In December 2022, a month prior to data collection for this image, Ye had released a line of merchandise for this presidential run with the logo bearing an almost identical resemblance to a pair of swastikas. Raw milk is also associated with “granola Nazis”, Nazis who value raw, organic food and a natural lifestyle as a way to promote white virility and folk vitality. It is not clear from the post if the user is promoting or mocking the ideology, but the Nazi symbolism is clear to those familiar with the culture.

### ***Anti-Feminism and Anti-Neoliberalism***

Posters in the dataset did discuss feminism, either musing on their desires to be tradwives, disparaging the movement, or interjecting into the antifeminist ideology of tradwives. Feminist voices in the dataset addressed a consistent feminist critique of the tradwife ideology: namely, that many feminists do not believe that it is anti-feminist to be a stay-at-home wife and mother. Tradwives attempt to appeal to disenfranchised women who feel alienated through their roles as workers in the economy outside the home, as well as unpaid wives and mothers inside the home. The tradwives’ far right interpretation of why this situation has arisen is that feminism has persuaded women that “liberation” is found by having a career and that “having it all” (a family and a career) is empowering for women. A major flaw with this analysis is that a great deal of feminist theory has never argued this. As far back as 1909, Alexandra Kollontai argued that women’s liberation is a question of liberation of all people from the chains of capitalism.<sup>69</sup> Kollontai would not have seen the modern woman working both outside and inside the home as that liberation. Indeed, modern feminists have analyzed and critiqued the “dual burden” of women who take on paid and unpaid work, arguing that these women are exploited both inside the home and out.<sup>70</sup> And more recently still, the “girlboss” feminism has been criticized by feminists as a commodification of women’s rights, allowing the movement to be subsumed by consumer capitalism to promote individualist, pro-capitalist behavior at the expense of women collectively.<sup>71</sup>

Also worth noting is that a critique of alienation experienced under capitalism is originally a left-wing position.<sup>72</sup> The life that tradwives and the far right are unhappy with is one that has been analyzed and critiqued from a left-wing perspective before them, and that the issues that they are identifying are felt by a vast range of people, particularly those in the lower classes and people of color.<sup>73</sup> Yet where left-wing feminists have identified patriarchy and capitalism as routes of these problems that can be overcome with collective effort to change underlying economic structures, the far right blames feminism and a decline in white birth rates. Tebaldi argues that, overall, RWE movements have made gender “a symbol for all the unfairness experienced in the neoliberal social order, from economic deprivation to social isolation or a loss of male supremacism[.]”<sup>74</sup> This belief is exemplified in the Pinterest post showing a Tiktok screenshot of a woman telling the camera that feminism is a government scam created to receive more tax income and educate children in a state-approved curriculum.

A number of voices in the dataset attempted to reconcile this tradwife misunderstanding (whether genuine or not) of feminism with the desire to be a stay-at-home wife and mother. The Pinterest cartoon showing a woman holding the woman from the tradwife Wojak meme and complementing her for the hard work she does in the home is an example of users resolving the contradiction tradwives find between feminism and being a stay-at-home wife: by showing that there is no contradiction. In this drawing, the feminist and the tradwife are either married or in another form of long-term relationship where they have children together. Another interesting point on this image is that it alludes to the tiring nature of being a full-time stay-at-home wife and mother, something not seen in the uncritical tradwife content. This image makes the point that housework is work, and demanding work at that, which deserves recognition and time off from, something that is not recognized by the images posted under the hashtag “tradwife” elsewhere in the dataset.<sup>75</sup>

There is a misconception that, because women have been confined to the role of housewife in the past and prevented from working outside the home, that it is inherently feminist to have a job and inherently antifeminist to be a homemaker. This is an oversimplification of the feminist movement but is a line of thinking that is seen both from tradwives in their criticism of feminism, and in some of the posts in the dataset. One set of voices in the dataset seemed to fall into the misconception that feminism and being a feminist is incompatible with being a homemaker, expressing that they are a radical feminist who wanted to be a tradwife. It could be that by tradwife this poster means they want to be a homemaker who takes on all the domestic labor and does not work outside the home, and not the white supremacist version of tradwife, seemingly confusing being a homemaker with being a tradwife. If this were the case then they seem to be implying that one cannot be a homemaker and a feminist, which is not true. Women can be stay at home mothers and still be feminists. It seems unlikely that the user is using tradwife in the white supremacist sense of the term as that movement is explicitly and ideologically antifeminist, without much recourse to reconcile radical feminism with the extreme right. In another image, a user wrote that they do not care if being a tradwife is antifeminist, they still want to be one. Again, it is not clear if this user is using tradwife in the white supremacist sense, or if they mean a stay-at-home wife. They are indifferent to the feminism behind their desires.

The tradwife critique of feminism poses a challenge for left-wing feminist scholars. Many Marxist or left-wing feminists would argue that feminism has been coopted by capitalism, that the “girlboss” is an individualist bastardization of a radical collective movement focused on structural change rather than individual success. Tradwives agree with Marxist feminists when they say that working for a boss is not the liberation that liberal feminists promised it would be, and they are again in agreement with Marxist feminists when they argue that working paid and unpaid labor is more exploitative than just working, unpaid, in the home. Tradwives point to the feminists who they see as arguing these things and argue that this has increased the exploitation of women, rather than alleviate it, a statement that would have them in agreement with feminists such as Fraser, Oakley, and Kollontai.<sup>76</sup> Other women who are also feeling this alienation are targeted by tradwives who offer their limited critique of the predicament of modern women in an attempt to recruit them into a movement that offers

them an easy way out: “you don’t need to have a boss *and* a husband, just a husband. And you don’t need to work *two* jobs, just one.” An understanding of the multiplicity of feminism may help susceptible users question the ideas the far and extreme right are presenting.

Crucially, critical and feminist tradwife posts are using the tradwife language and hashtag to criticize and challenge the tradwife movement. The online spaces that one is taken to when one searches for tradwife content on Pinterest and Whisper are not complete echo chambers but already have organic counternarratives present in small numbers.

## Conclusion

Previous research into online tradwife content has revealed the posting of content with subtle extremist undertones to mainstream platforms with strong content moderation policies, and more extreme political and ideological content, including white supremacist and nationalist content, being posted on less regulated platforms,<sup>77</sup> or on TikTok with the use of intersecting extremist hashtags.<sup>78</sup> Less academic attention has been given to imageboards. This research found that the tradwife hashtag is being used on both Pinterest and Whisper, but with great differences between the platforms. Pinterest has explicit policies in place that set out what content will and will not be tolerated on its services, prohibiting posts that support white supremacy, limit women’s rights and other discriminatory ideas.<sup>79</sup> The tradwife content found in this Pinterest dataset is not extremist and likely appeals to a much wider audience than just tradwives or those curious by or seeking to become a tradwife, supporting the findings of earlier research into moderated platforms. Only a very small number of anti-feminist content was found and while it subtly pushed hegemonic femininity and gendered labor, no content found was likely to violate the platform’s policies. Whilst it could be speculated that the purpose of Pinterest is only disseminating a curated and aesthetically pleasing utopian image of the movement and not particularly prominent otherwise in any recruitment strategy, this research was exploratory and cannot confirm this. More research is required to investigate what other hashtags are being used in the content in this dataset to examine whether the same intersecting hashtags are being used as was found in O’Luanaigh’s TikTok research as this would be one way to widen the potential recruitment pool, particularly given that the cottagecore aesthetic was present throughout. Overall, more attention is required to the other less studied GIFCT-membered platforms.

Whisper, serves a different purpose to Pinterest in being a place where users can anonymously disclose secrets (with text that provides greater clarity than the images on Pinterest), has more male users, and less detailed moderation policies. The content on Whisper was less typical of what one would expect from tradwife content based on existing research.<sup>80</sup> This content portrayed the tradwife lifestyle to be less modest than what the most famous tradwife influencers portray, with LGBT+ and BDSM desires expressed, as well as narratives of confusion around what is wrong with being a tradwife, desiring luxury, and esoteric language which would exclude a lot of online users from understanding the narratives in the content. The lack of focus on home-making and motherhood duties raises the question of what these users believe

to be the day-to-day activities of tradwives. This portrayal of tradwives in some of the Whisper dataset could be misleading and result in online users seeking to join the movement without fully understanding what they are entering into.

Overall, Pinterest and Whisper contained both a small number of critical and dissenting voices toward the tradwife movement, and confusion as to the difference between housewives and tradwives, and what it means to be a feminist. Neither platforms are complete echo chambers for the movement but already have organic counternarratives present in small numbers. The findings suggest that the hashtag “tradwife” is attracting different communities depending on the imageboard, curating different norms, vocabularies, and interpretations of the movement. As well as further investigations into what other hashtags are intersecting with the tradwife hashtag in this content, a greater focus is needed on the education of feminism in digital literacy efforts. The current societal and economic pressures of our heteropatriarchal society create a vulnerability that movements such as the tradwives can exploit, spreading false and misleading explanations of feminism that largely emanate from male-supremacist communities, such as the manosphere and various right-wing communities that lead users to believe that the “trad” lifestyle is the solution to the unhappiness that they are experiencing. The small volume of organic counter-speech found in the dataset could be a useful starting point for future research in thinking about strategies to improve this understanding amongst users moving forward.

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