

Sourdough Bread and A-line Dresses: How “Implicit” Tradwives Communicate Far-Right Ideologies

Elisabeth Hoekstra

University of Amsterdam

BA History

John Adams Institute - Beyond Academia Contest 2024

Word count: 3990

Introduction

Her blonde curls, hidden underneath a pearl headband, fall elegantly over her shoulders, while her flawless makeup accentuates her doll-like face. She rises from her bed in a 1950s inspired bedroom to show us, her Instagram audience, the classic yellow A-line dress she has put on. She touts her lips, sprays on some perfume, puts on some silver earrings and smiles. The video is captioned with “POV: Your husband is on the way home.”¹ The woman, American influencer Estee C. Williams, is a self-proclaimed tradwife.² Although the term “tradwife” is relatively new to the general internet public, it has been used sporadically for a few decades prior to a noticeable spike in online searches in the first part of 2020.³ As of now, the tradculture community can rightfully be called an internet subculture that connects millions of women, mostly living in the US, in their shared believe in a traditional lifestyle.⁴

The scholarly world has produced a small range of academic literature analyzing, defining and explaining the tradwife movement.⁵ This research focused mainly on the connection between tradculture and far-right online cultures, and showed how the narrative of tradition acts as a breeding ground for misogynistic and racist ideas. Although tradwives claim to only promote a traditional notion of femininity, they ignore that these ideas are based solely on ideals of femininity and masculinity that historically stem from white, Western, upper-middle-class relations. This narrative of tradition allows the movement to reproduce the ideal of whiteness without seeming racist, because it reinforces preexisting discriminatory views based on race and gender that are already present in society.⁶ However, beside ignoring the past experiences of women of color, this narrative of tradition also overlooks the fact that white women have a long history of labor as well.⁷ Proctor therefore argues that “by framing the woman’s role in the home as ‘traditional’, tradwives continue a long project of

¹Estee C. Williams (@esteecwilliams), Instagram post, February 1, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2yE90gpbrh/>.

² Once introduced, the tradwives discussed in this paper will be referred to on a first name basis to capture the personal relationship that is established between them and their online followers.

³ Proctor, “The #Tradwife Persona and the Rise of Radicalized Domesticity”, *Persona Studies* 8:2 (2023) 7-26, page 7, 8.

⁴ A. Mattheis, “TradCulture: Reproducing Whiteness and Neo-Facism through Gendered Discourse Online” in: S. Hunter and C. van der Westhuizen eds., *Routledge Handbook of Critical Studies in Whiteness* (London 2021) 91-101, page 91.

⁵ See: Mattheis, “TradCulture”; Proctor, “The #Tradwife Persona”; E. Leidig, *The Women of the Far Right: Social Media Influencers and Online Radicalization* (New York 2023); M. Zahay, “What “Real” Women Want: Alt-Right Femininity Vlogs as an Anti-Feminist Populist Aesthetic”, *Media and Communication* 10:4 (2022); Skyes and V. Hopner, ‘Tradwives: Right-Wing Social Media Influencers’, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 00:0 (2024) 1-35.

⁶ Mattheis, “TradCulture”, 91, 92.

⁷ Proctor, “The #Tradwife Persona”, page 9.

delegitimizing women's contributions in the workforce as separate and less valid than the formalized economy of male labor."⁸ This urge of tradwives to define gender roles and identities as seen in 1950s middle-class America as traditional, reminds of Hobsbawm's monumental conclusion that presumed longstanding historic traditions are in fact invented.⁹

Thus far, research on tradculture has focused on tradwives who either openly affiliate themselves with far-right movements or who explicitly share their opinions on parenting, marriage and gender roles. However, to be able to fully understand tradculture and its relationship with extreme right-wing ideologies, another large group of online content creators must be taken into account. This paper will refer to this group as the "implicit" tradwives, meaning the trad influencers who document their lives as a stay-at-home mom or wife, but who refrain from sharing their opinions on politics or a traditional lifestyle with their followers. Through the performance of a close-reading of Instagram content made by six different tradwives, this paper will show that "explicit" trad influencers – meaning the tradwives who do share their opinions online - stylistically link far-right sentiments to the broader online influencer culture through repeated aesthetic displays of the feminine self, home, and family.¹⁰ This creates the appearance of broad support as similar aesthetics are repeatedly performed by many implicit tradwives as well. Thus, this paper argues that implicit tradwives can serve as a vehicle for the dissemination of far-right ideas among a broad public because of a shared aesthetic with tradwives who do openly engage with far-right ideas.

Although tradwives' definition of traditional is based on a very specific ideal of gender roles and class relations, the ideas that lay at the core of tradculture stem from a long tradition of conservative women in the United States.¹¹ These beliefs, such as the idea of motherly authority and the importance of the sanctity of the family, the depiction of traits such as kindness and selflessness as natural female virtues, or the assertion that the home is a woman's primary domain, are now reflected in tradculture, both in its ideology as well as in

⁸ Proctor, "The #Tradwife Persona", 9.

⁹ E. Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Tradition" in: E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 2012) 1-14, page 1.

¹⁰ In the context of social media, aesthetic can be defined as the coherent set of visual elements that determine the style of an online persona or brand. It also calls to mind a sense of beauty or taste that is pleasing to a large online audience.

¹¹ For more on conservative womanhood in the US see: G. Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right: The Mothers' Movement and World War II* (Chicago 1996); M. Deckman, *Tea Party Women: Mama Grizzlies, Grassroots Leaders, and the Changing Face of the American Right* (New York 2016); R. Schreiber, *Righting Feminism: Conservative Women and American Politics* (Oxford 2012); M. Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right* (New Jersey 2012); L. McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (New Jersey 2015); D. T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: a Woman's Crusade* (New Jersey 2018).

its aesthetic. In general, the tradwife aesthetic contains visual elements such as dresses, food, homey scenes, nature and children. However, within this general aesthetic, three different sub-aesthetics can be identified, namely a rural, a 1950s and a modern aesthetic.¹² To demonstrate the differences among tradwives in how they engage with far-right ideas, each chapter of this paper will discuss two tradwives who share a similar sub-aesthetic, but who engage differently with one of the three themes that I consider to be central to tradculture: family, femininity and the home.

The trad influencers discussed in this paper are chosen for several reasons. First, they are among the tradwives with the largest following worldwide, with the biggest accounts having several million and the smallest more than a hundred thousand followers. Because smaller social media accounts are inspired by, or even imitate, accounts with a larger following, researching popular tradwife accounts offers the possibility to draw conclusions on tradculture as a whole. Second, because two tradwives per sub-aesthetic will be discussed, all the tradwives in this research employ the specific visual elements that are unique for the aesthetic they embody. Together, the six tradwives represent the diversity of the tradwife aesthetic. Lastly, because each chapter will discuss an explicit and implicit tradwife, the trad influencers are selected based on whether they openly share their thoughts and opinions with their followers, or stick to only depicting their traditional lifestyle without any comment.

Although all the tradwives in this thesis also have a TikTok account with a similar following as their Instagram page, this paper will only focus on content shared on the latter social media platform because of two reasons. One, because TikTok only allows users to upload videos, not using Instagram as a source in this analysis means that it wouldn't be able to account for the many photos tradwives post, which play a significant role in the creation and representation of their aesthetic. Second, because almost all of the videos posted on TikTok are also shared on Instagram, not using TikTok as a source still allows for this research to analyze the whole body of content shared by the chosen trad influencers. Other social media platforms, such as X, Facebook and YouTube are not accounted for due to their lack of popularity among the tradculture community.

1. Family in the “back to the land” aesthetic

As her Instagram handle indicates, Sarah Wild Mothering has made her role as a mother the core identity of her online persona. A first glance at Sarah's page, followed by 187 thousand

¹² Mattheis, “TradCulture”, 93; Skyes and Hopner, ‘Tradwives: Right-Wing Social Media Influencers’, 13.

people, reveals a highly stylized depiction of a dreamy countryside life that she shares with her husband and their three young daughters. Her children, with long hair and wearing cottage-core dresses, are pictured running and dancing in fields of lush green or helping Sarah doing house-work.¹³ Although her page depicts a lifestyle filled with nature and farm work, Sarah's daughters are never pictured with dirty clothes or unbrushed hair, let alone crying or throwing a tantrum. Her page breathes a calm serenity, and depicts motherhood as a stress free and peaceful process for a woman to find her true purpose.

This effortless mothering can also be found on the page of Hannah Neeleman, aka Ballerina Farm. With almost 10 million followers on Instagram, Hannah is by far the most followed tradwife on social media. She and her husband Daniel live on a farm in Utah with their eight kids, where they hoard cattle and operate a business selling beef, pork, baked goods and homewares nationwide.¹⁴ Although raising eight kids and owning a cattle farm might be overwhelming, Hannah's account paints a wholesome and peaceful picture. Most of her posts are cooking videos in which she shows her followers how to make sour-dough bread or ice cream from scratch, more often than not while holding a baby on her arm.¹⁵ Other posts feature her kids doing farm work, churning butter or making cheese, all with big smiles on their faces.¹⁶ The farm is depicted as a family affair, with all the kids happily contributing. Not shown are the farm workers Hannah and her husband employ, nor the teacher that is hired to homeschool the kids.¹⁷

Sarah and Hannah both employ the same rural aesthetic. They each depict life on a farm as peaceful and fulfilling, and show their families living in perfect harmony with each other and the nature around them. For example, a recent video shows Sarah running through a field with her daughters, with the caption: "You will never convince me a career is more important than staying home with them." The video is accompanied by a long caption in

¹³ Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, May 16, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C7AbowQSEoN/?img_index=1; Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, April 11, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C5mu3AvppQ2/>; Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, February 6, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C2_nVb2pJ_c/; Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, October 21, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cyo8EpiVDRY/>.

¹⁴ Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram page, <https://www.instagram.com/ballerinafarm/>; Our Story. Retrieved May 20, 2024 from <https://ballerinafarm.com/pages/about-us>.

¹⁵ Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, November 11, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CzfoCyPuxTo/>; Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, April 22, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C6CtU39uFPi/>.

¹⁶ Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, June 1, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C7r97WROFiP/>; Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, May 8, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C6uOuXDOiJo/>; Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, March 24, 2024 <https://www.instagram.com/p/C480aC1PT0L/>.

¹⁷ M. M. Kircher (2024). She Gave Birth Two Weeks Ago. Now She's in a Beauty Pageant. Retrieved May 20, 2024 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/30/style/ballerina-farm-mrs-world-hannah-neeleman.html>.

which she explains why being a mother and homemaker should be a woman's top priority.¹⁸ Another post is dedicated to explaining to her followers why she has chosen to homeschool her kids. The video contains shots of her daughters drawing on a picnic blanket in the grass, reading a book under a tree, swimming in a river, and playing with animals. The video is captioned with: "Why would you put a kid behind a desk when the sun is out? [...] Why wouldn't they put us in something more inspiring? Because it's a program to keep us controlled."¹⁹ She does not explain who "they" and "us" are, but her caption is reminiscent of the anti-government rhetoric that conservative women have been using for decades to speak up on the importance of the protection of the sanctity of the family. Besides that, homeschooling has always been favored by far-right movements as a way to defy prevailing social and cultural standards.²⁰

Just like Sarah, Hannah's posts often feature her children, but she does not share her opinions on motherhood and parenting like Sarah does. Although she is not out-spoken about these topics, her content nevertheless does tell a story about family and motherhood. A recent video captioned with "The farm kitchen on a Saturday night" shows the family all gathered around the giant kitchen table, doing schoolwork, playing or helping sorting and packaging eggs, while two large batches of sourdough bread dough are resting on the counter.²¹ It shows a family living together in perfect harmony, with a loving mother who makes her family homemade bread. There is no stress or clutter, there are no tears or tantrums, only wholesome moments and the making of happy memories.

Both Sarah and Hannah depict motherhood as an easy and fulfilling role for a woman, but on one condition: she has to be the primary caretaker and homemaker. All the wholesome family content the two share tells a story, namely that staying at home and being a full-time mom results in happy and healthy kids and a stress-free life. By sharing her thoughts in combination with aesthetically pleasing visual content, Sarah makes her page attractive for a broad audience who may not share her opinions, but do like her photos and videos. Hannah doesn't need to explicitly explain to her followers that they should be stay-at-home moms or homeschool their kids like Sarah does in her captions, because her photos and videos are persuasive enough as it is. Furthermore, because Hannah's account is so accessible, it can

¹⁸ Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, June 3, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C7uuspvS0IL/>.

¹⁹ Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, December, 28 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/C1X_thSSQ0D/.

²⁰ Leidig, *The Women of the Far Right*, 99.

²¹ Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, March 4, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C4FUOwQubBq/>.

serve as a stepping stone to more ideological outspoken tradwife accounts, while simultaneously contributing to the popularity of the tradwife movement as a whole.

2. Femininity in the “1950s nostalgia” aesthetic

The iconic image of the well-groomed, cheery, petticoat wearing housewife came into being in the post-war era, when women returned from the workforce to stay home and take care of the family.²² Decades later, this image has found its way to social media, in the form of Estee C. Williams. Estee, who looks like she came straight out of a 1950s fashion advertisement, has a clear picture of what defines femininity. A video titled “6 tips to attract a masculine provider man” is dedicated to telling her female followers what they should look and act like in order to attract a decent husband. According to Estee, men are attracted to feminine women, and thus women looking to get married should go out of their way to be as feminine as possible.²³ In another video with the title “Big Sister Advice”, Estee encourages her followers to wear dresses, because as Estee explains, “survey after survey shows men prefer dresses over pants.” She continues: “However, if you’re sitting there thinking, why would I care what a man thinks? You might want to reevaluate that mindset, especially if you’re married or wish to be married.”²⁴

As her content reveals, Estee’s idea of masculinity is based on a man’s abilities to provide, and her notion of femininity is inextricably linked with what she thinks men find attractive. Appealing to men is a major topic on Estee’s account, as according to her, this is the key to becoming a tradwife and to sustain a traditional marriage. The latter is especially important, because Estee believes that in a healthy relationship, a woman should subject to her husband and give up all economic independence.²⁵ Some of the comments below her posts point to the danger of such an arrangement, as it can launch a woman into economic despair in case her husband wants to separate. However, Estee argues that women have a responsibility in preventing this scenario, by making sure their husbands remain attracted to

²² Deckman, *Tea Party Women*, 106.

²³ Estee C. Williams (@esteeccwilliams), Instagram post, December 27, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C1Xt2G1pdIP/>.

²⁴ Estee C. Williams (@esteeccwilliams), Instagram post, April 4, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C5UODwfJmRJ/>.

²⁵ Estee C. Williams (@esteeccwilliams), Instagram post, December 2, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C1Xt2G1pdIP/>; Estee C. Williams (@esteeccwilliams), Instagram post, December 21, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C1F61-cp7iQ/>; Estee C. Williams (@esteeccwilliams), Instagram post, April 28, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CrjnmDMJQBh/>.

them. She provides the example, with her videos in which she shows her followers her routine of putting on make-up and a nice dress before her partner comes home from work.²⁶

Just like Estee, Alexia Delarosa - who shares snippets of her life as a stay-at-home mom and cooking fanatic with her 630 thousand followers on Instagram - is always pictured wearing long, classic dresses. Wearing a full face of perfect make-up and an elegant hairstyle, she moves slowly and ethereally through her house, which is decorated like a slightly modern take on a 1950s suburban upper-middle-class home. More striking than her wardrobe or home decor, is Alexia's facial expression. Every photo and video of her features the same soft smile and almost-closed eyes, which has become her signature trade mark. Whether she is mixing the ingredients for her home-made fruit loops or tearing cardboard apart to make her own paper, the smile never leaves her face.²⁷

Both the accounts of Estee and Alexia depict a romanticized version of a 1950s household. However, whereas Estee's account explicitly reinforces sexist stereotypes and promotes female economic dependence, Alexia encourages women to find a lifestyle that works best for them.²⁸ Last April, Alexia shared a post on Instagram in which she explicitly distances herself from the term tradwife, and encourages her followers to choose whatever lifestyle and family dynamic works best for them. At the same time, Alexia acknowledges the fact that she shares many similarities with tradwives, as she and her husband take on traditional gender roles, and her hobbies and lifestyle "align with the way tradwives typically portray themselves here online."²⁹

This is especially reflected in the way both Estee and Alexia engage with the theme femininity. Both embody the image of the 1950s housewife: a white woman that wears dresses and make-up, moves elegantly and smiles all the time. Both explicitly as well as through her visual content, Estee argues that this image is the definition of a feminine woman. Unlike Estee, Alexia doesn't explicitly encourage her female followers to take on traditional gender roles or to act more feminine, but through its attractive force, her content does communicate a similar message. It shows a woman who, because of her traditional lifestyle, always looks flawless and is never not cheery, even when cooking or taking care of her

²⁶ Estee C. Williams (@esteecwilliams), Instagram post, May 25, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Csq5BtiLAsX/>; Estee C. Williams (@esteecwilliams), Instagram post, April 1, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2yE90gpbrh/>.

²⁷ Alexia Delarosa (@lex.delarosa), Instagram post, January 30, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2tCU79LC4n/>; Alexia Delarosa (@lex.delarosa), Instagram post, June 2, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C7smInTxshG/>.

²⁸ Alexia Delarosa (@lex.delarosa), Instagram post, April 5, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C5WuW2Er3Dv/>.

²⁹ Ibid.

children. Following from Estee's view on marriage, Alexia is able to live this lifestyle because her femininity attracted a husband who is able to take all financial responsibilities out of her hands. In other words, both Alexia and Estee present a certain image of femininity as the key to an admirable life, filled with date nights and home-made crayons³⁰. Because Alexia refrains from explicitly encouraging others to follow a traditional lifestyle, she is able to cater to a large audience of more than half a million followers. However, by using the same attractive 1950s aesthetic, Alexia's page is linked to tradwives like Estee, who are far more outspoken. Therefore, to those attracted to 1950s fashion or home decor, Alexia's page acts as the first step into tradculture, which can eventually lead followers to tradwives who employ a far more extreme rhetoric, while simultaneously communicating these ideas herself through repeated visual elements that present a certain admirable image of femininity.

3. Home in the “modern wife” aesthetic

In comparison to the other discussed frameworks, the modern wife aesthetic is harder to define. The tradwives who employ this aesthetic are modern in the sense that they don't grow their own food or wear 1950s inspired dresses. They live in contemporary houses with a trendy interior, while their natural make-up and fashionable clothing contributes to their youthful appearance. It's this modernity that makes these tradwives appeal to a broad group of followers, and they serve as an example for women who might feel like a traditional lifestyle is only fitted for those who long for past times.

A first glimpse at her Instagram account reveals that Gretchen Adler embodies this modern wife aesthetic. Her videos are mostly set in her shiny kitchen, with high-tech equipment and white marble countertops. Gretchen's wears short, colorful dresses or jeans with a top, and her make-up is natural while her hair falls casually over her shoulders. Based on this first impression it may come as a surprise that Gretchen holds some strong traditional views on gender roles. In March of this year, she shared a video with her 429 thousand followers titled “Women do belong in the kitchen”, in which she explains why it should be a woman's top priority to provide “real” food for her family.³¹ Gretchen considers herself to be an expert on the relationship between food and health, despite not being a trained dietician nor having enjoyed any related education. Her Instagram page is dedicated to spreading her self-

³⁰ Estee C. Williams (@esteeccwilliams), Instagram post, April 28, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C6SB8H1OqfA/>; Alexia Delarosa (@lex.delarosa), Instagram post, June 2, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C7smInTxshG/>.

³¹ Gretchen Adler (@gretchy), Instagram post, March 16, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C4lxvjCvOep/>.

taught knowledge and convincing her followers, especially mothers, to ditch overprocessed foods and to make everything from scratch. Although Gretchen often acknowledges that her extensive recipes are time-consuming, she simultaneously shames women who do choose the convenience of store-bought products. According to her, it is a woman's responsibility to stay home and cook, instead of pursuing a career outside of the house.

Gretchen shares her love for homemade food with Nara Smith. On her Instagram page with 4 million followers, the 23-year-old Nara shares videos of her cooking in her spotless kitchen, while wearing the most beautiful designer clothes. Her page shows a young woman who, although she and her husband got three young kids together, always looks extremely put together while also finding the time to cook extensively. Most of Nara's videos start with a voice-over saying that either her husband or her kids requested a certain snack, such as marshmallows, Oreo's or cereal, after which she proceeds to show the long process of making said snack.³² However, in contrast to Gretchen, Nora does not openly shame women who do not make food from scratch nor does she share her views on traditional gender roles. At the same time, by using the same visual elements – nice clothes, a shiny kitchen, home-made food - Gretchen and Nora communicate a similar message, namely that women should stay at home.

Lack of home-made, healthy food is an important driver of mom-guilt, especially when confronted with women who do seem to find the time to cook. Nora's photos and videos show that by staying home, it is possible for a woman to take good care of her kids by providing them with home-made meals. Although Nora doesn't explicitly share her opinions, the comments below her posts prove that many followers feel like they fall short as a woman by watching her content. Gretchen taps into these sentiments by explicitly condemning women who serve their family store-brought food, using their guilt to persuade them to stay home.

At the same time, there is also a connection between this focus on "real" food and far-right movements, and especially to white nationalism. The "Carnivore Diet" and "Ancestral Diet", with a focus on consuming many animal-based products such as liver, bone broth and raw dairy, are popular in online far-right communities. The diets are promoted as a means to increase muscle production, thereby improving male masculinity, and are said to promote female fertility. The diets are therefore viewed as a necessary tool for strengthening the white

³² Nara Smith (@naraaziza), Instagram post, March 11, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C4YKb3auZPw/>;
Nara Smith (@naraaziza), Instagram post, February 26, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C30PnZwx18-/>;
Nara Smith (@naraaziza), Instagram post, January 31, 2024 <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2xRP67LmZW/>.

race and to increase white birth rates.³³ Gretchen does not openly affiliate herself with the far-right, but among her most popular posts are her “What I eat in a Day” videos, in which she promotes the Ancestral Diet. In the videos, Gretchen explains that she used to eat vegan for years, but now eats a lot of meat and dairy, as it contributes to optimal fertility and hormone health. The videos are accompanied by captions in which she promotes “ancestral supplements”, which helps “to prepare my body for pregnancy”.³⁴ And although Nora refrains from sharing her opinion on her traditional lifestyle at all, her modern wife aesthetic and love for cooking links her to Gretchen. Thus, women who are using Instagram to search for recipes or who are addicted to Nora’s cooking videos may easily stumble across far more extreme content, as promoted by tradwives like Gretchen, where recipes for pies and cereal are accompanied by a far-right aftertaste.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to show that because of the powerful ability of images to communicate political messages, tradwives facilitate the dissemination of extreme right-wing ideologies even when they refrain from sharing their opinions on their lifestyle with their online audience. This group of trad influencers, which this paper referred to as implicit tradwives, contribute to the propagation of far-right ideas because they use the same attractive online aesthetics as the tradwives who do engage with these ideas employ. It showed that without explicitly mentioning it, the implicit tradwives’ aesthetic presentations communicate a convincing message, namely that the role of wife and mother is the only natural and fulfilling role for women, that femininity means appealing and subjecting to men, and that gender roles based on a white, Western ideal are the only path to a happy life. Because they refrain from openly propagating these ideas, the implicit tradwives offer an attractive alternative to the more extreme tradwife accounts, therefore appealing to a large online audience. At the same time, because they share similar aesthetic displays of the family, femininity and the home with more extreme trad influencers, the implicit tradwives communicate far-right ideas through imagery themselves, as well as introduce their followers to more ideological outspoken tradwives through association.

³³ C. Tebaldi, “Granola Nazis and the great reset: Enregistering, Circulating and Regimenting Nature on the Far Right”, *Language Culture and Society* 5:1 (2023) 9-42, pages 9-13.

³⁴ Gretchen Adler (@gretchy), Instagram post, May 23, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C7UyKPPSjXw/> ; Gretchen Adler (@gretchy), Instagram post, May 14, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C67eNLOpMjH/> ; Gretchen Adler (@gretchy), Instagram post, May 3, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C6hPzJkyFLg/>.

In a time where far-right ideologies are becoming increasingly mainstream and the influence of social media on virtually every aspect of life has reached unprecedented heights, research into the tradwife community contributes to a better understanding of both the far-right's popularity as well as of the workings of digital imagery in political messaging.³⁵ As the coming of the internet has accelerated the spread of extreme right-wing ideas and mainstreams far-right ideologies, conspiracy theories and distrust in institutions, research like this paper are of value for understanding these dangerous developments, in order to cope with this new political reality and to come up with approaches to counter the far-right, both on and offline.³⁶ To be able to properly deal with this new political climate, scholars and policymakers alike must understand how visual media helps to disseminate misogynistic, racist, and anti-government ideas. Because, as this research has shown, even the picture of a homemade sourdough bread can contain a convincing political message.

³⁵ Winter and A. Mondon, *Reactionary Democracy: How Racism and the Populist Far Right Became Mainstream* (New York 2020) 2.

³⁶ A. Marwick, B. Clancy and K. Furl, "Far-Right Online Radicalization: A Review of the Literature", *The Bulletin of Technology & Public Life* (Chapel Hill 2022) 2.

References

- Critchlow, D. T., *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: a Woman's Crusade* (New Jersey 2018).
- Deckman, M., *Tea Party Women: Mama Grizzlies, Grassroots Leaders, and the Changing Face of the American Right* (New York 2016).
- Hobsbawm, E., "Introduction: Inventing Tradition" in: E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 2012) 1-14.
- Jeansonne, G., *Women of the Far Right: The Mothers' Movement and World War II* (Chicago 1996).
- Kircher, M. M., (2024). She Gave Birth Two Weeks Ago. Now She's in a Beauty Pageant. Retrieved May 20, 2024 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/30/style/ballerina-farm-mrs-world-hannah-neeleman.html>.
- Leidig, E., *The Women of the Far Right: Social Media Influencers and Online Radicalization* (New York 2023).
- Marwick, A., B. Clancy and K. Furl, "Far-Right Online Radicalization: A Review of the Literature", *The Bulletin of Technology & Public Life* (Chapel Hill 2022).
- Mattheis, A., "TradCulture: Reproducing whiteness and neo-fascism through gendered discourse online" in: S. Hunter and C. van der Westhuizen eds., *Routledge Handbook of Critical Studies in Whiteness* (London 2021) 91-101.
- McGirr, L., *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (New Jersey 2015).
- McNeal S., (2024). Why Does Ballerina Farm Make Moms So Mad? Retrieved May 20, 2024 from <https://www.glamour.com/story/why-does-ballerina-farm-make-moms-so-mad>.
- Madigan N., (2023). Who is Lex Delarosa and is she trolling us all? Retrieved June 16, 2024 from <https://www.mamamia.com.au/who-is-lex-delarosa/>.
- Proctor, D., "The #Tradwife Persona and the Rise of Radicalized Domesticity", *Persona Studies* 8:2 (2023) 7-26.
- Schreiber, R., *Righting Feminism: Conservative Women and American Politics* (Oxford 2012).
- Skyes S. and V. Hopner, "Tradwives: Right-Wing Social Media Influencers", *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 00:0 (2024) 1-35.
- Tebaldi, C., "Granola Nazis and the great reset: Enregistering, Circulating and Regimenting Nature on the Far Right", *Language Culture and Society* 5:1 (2023) 9-42.
- Winter, A., and A. Mondon, *Reactionary Democracy: How Racism and the Populist Far Right Became Mainstream* (New York 2020).

Zahay, M., “What “Real” Women Want: Alt-Right Femininity Vlogs as an Anti-Feminist Populist Aesthetic”, *Media and Communication* 10:4 (2022) 170-179.

Primary sources

Alexia Delarosa (@lex.delarosa), Instagram post, June 2, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C7smInTxshG/>.

Alexia Delarosa (@lex.delarosa), Instagram post, May 24, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C7VJBLpPKAw/>.

Alexia Delarosa (@lex.delarosa), Instagram post, May 18, 2024,
https://www.instagram.com/p/C7GAleUL_J2/.

Alexia Delarosa (@lex.delarosa), Instagram post, April 5, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C5WuW2Er3Dv/>.

Alexia Delarosa (@lex.delarosa), Instagram post, January 30, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C2tCU79LC4n/>.

Estee C. Williams (@estecwilliams), Instagram post, April 28, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C6SB8H1OqfA/>.

Estee C. Williams (@estecwilliams), Instagram post, April 4, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C5UODwfJmRJ/>.

Estee C. Williams (@estecwilliams), Instagram post, December 27, 2023,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C1Xt2G1pdIP/>.

Estee C. Williams (@estecwilliams), Instagram post, December 21, 2023,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C1F61-cp7iQ/>.

Estee C. Williams (@estecwilliams), Instagram post, December 2, 2023,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C1Xt2G1pdIP/>.

Estee C. Williams (@estecwilliams), Instagram post, May 25, 2023,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/Csq5BtiLAsX/>.

Estee C. Williams (@estecwilliams), Instagram post, April 28, 2023,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CrjnmDMJQBh/>.

Estee C. Williams (@estecwilliams), Instagram post, April 1, 2023,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C2yE90gpbrh/>.

Gretchen Adler (@gretchy), Instagram post, May 23, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C7UyKPPsJXw/>.

Gretchen Adler (@gretchy), Instagram post, May 14, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C67eNLOpMjH/>.

Gretchen Adler (@gretchy), Instagram post, May 3, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C6hPzJkyFLg/>.

Gretchen Adler (@gretchy), Instagram post, April 2, 2024
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C5UTse8pBnE/>.

Gretchen Adler (@gretchy), Instagram post, March 16, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C4lxvjCvOep/>.

Gretchen Adler (@gretchy), Instagram post, March 12, 2024
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C4bdR3TvuDa/>.

Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram page,
<https://www.instagram.com/ballerinafarm/>.

Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, June 1, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C7r97WROFiP/>.

Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, May 8, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C6uOuXDOiJo/>.

Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, April 22, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C6CtU39uFPi/>.

Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, March 24, 2024
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C480aC1PTOL/>.

Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, March 4, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C4FUOwQubBq/>.

Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, November 14, 2023,
https://www.instagram.com/p/CznkipzOnP0/?img_index=1.

Hannah Neeleman (@ballerinafarm), Instagram post, November 11, 2023,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CzfoCyPuxTo/>.

Nara Smith (@naraaziza), Instagram post, March 11, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C4YKb3auZPw/>.

Nara Smith (@naraaziza), Instagram post, February 26, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C30PnZwx18-/>.

Nara Smith (@naraaziza), Instagram post, January 31, 2024
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C2xRP67LmZW/>.

Our Story. Retrieved May 20, 2024 from <https://ballerinafarm.com/pages/about-us>.

Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, June 3, 2024,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C7uuspvS0IL/>.

Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, May 16, 2024,

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C7BiHxpsZg/>.

Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, May 16, 2024,

https://www.instagram.com/p/C7AbowQSEoN/?img_index=1

Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, March 22, 2024

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C40QAtnpUWQ/>.

Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, February 6, 2024,

https://www.instagram.com/p/C2_nVb2pJ_c/.

Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, December, 28 2023,

https://www.instagram.com/p/C1X_thSSQ0D/.

Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, October 21, 2023,

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Cyo8EpivDRY/>.

Sarah (@sarahwildmothering), Instagram post, April 11, 2023,

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C5mu3AvppQ2/>.