

# TRADWIFE



# TRAGEDY





## What is a tradwife?

1

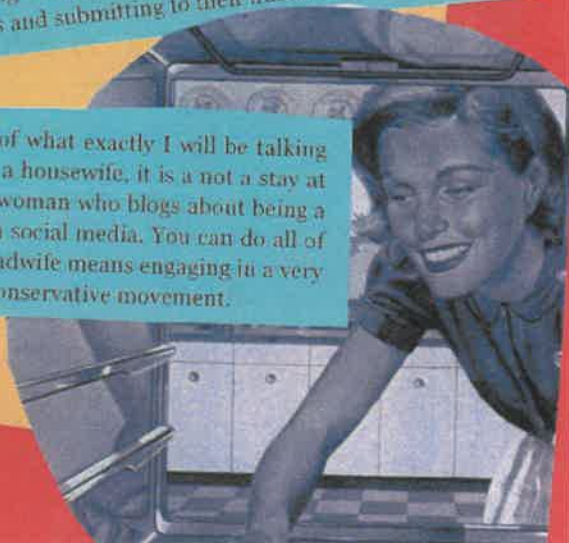
She's a mother, she's the girl next door, she's a right wing pundit, she's a homemaker, she's a shield maiden to white supremacy, she's an antifeminist, she's a debt free virgin without tattoos, she's a beacon of femininity, she's a Christian, she's a throwback to the 1950s, she's a servant, she's a role model, she's a godly woman, she's a wife.

She is the Tradwife.

Tradwives as we know them now first came onto the scene in the late 2010s and in the past 5 years have exploded in popularity with the rise of tradwife influencers (more on that later) on social media.

Tradwife is short for traditional housewife and they're pretty much exactly what they sound like. These women champion the virtues of behaving like the ideal woman. Which to them means ultra strict gender roles. Rejecting progressive feminist ideas, leaving careers to focus on home making and child rearing, advocating for traditional (conservative) values and submitting to their husbands.

I want to make a quick distinction of what exactly I will be talking about in this zine. A tradwife is not a housewife, it is not a stay at home mom. A tradwife is also not a woman who blogs about being a housewife or a stay at home mom on social media. You can do all of this and not be a tradwife. To be a tradwife means engaging in a very specific politically and ideologically conservative movement.





I am personally obsessed with Tradwives. I watch the content, I read the think pieces, and I watch the video essays dissecting it all. It's difficult for me to place exactly why tradwife content holds such an appeal for me, a feminist trans woman who is exclusively attracted to other queer women. Sure, a lot of it is simply just the typical sort of hate watching that sustains a lot of this sort of right-wing content. But I think it goes deeper than that. Maybe it's a sense of superiority that I get. That unlike these women, I'm only ever in emotionally equal, egalitarian queer relationships, and that I would never give up my autonomy to patriarchal men like this. Maybe I just like making fun of problematic right-wing pundits. But I also think, as well as all of these things, I do understand these women. I am so beaten by capitalism. I grew up poor, I've worked multiple jobs, I've been a full time student, I've sacrificed my free time, my romantic life, and my physical health to the capitalist machine and still have nothing to show for it. I have no high paying salary, no stable housing, and no savings. The fantasy that tradwife influencers peddle is appealing to me in some small way.


But despite that, there's something else. Some lingering darkness beneath this suburban cottagecore dream. Is the tradwife movement really just an innocent trend, no more harmful than your average mommy blogger? Or is there some danger to them?



## The proto tradwives

3

This concept of womanhood didn't spring up from nowhere. The tradwife is a resurgence of older ideas, ranging from conservative politics to paganism.



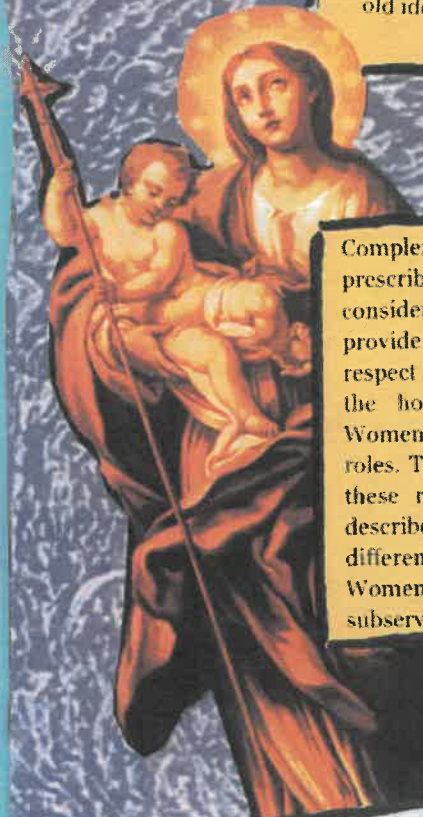
One of the most obvious inspirations comes from 1950s American ideas around femininity and the nuclear family. While this is obviously an aesthetic I enjoy, the actual functional aspects of this culture that we look fondly coexisted with and in fact relied upon massive racial inequality, extreme homophobia, and widespread exploitation of women. The traditional marriages at this time stripped all autonomy from women, punished deviance from the norm and generally resulted in married women at this time reporting dramatically lower rates of mental health. According to one study at the time, "married women have higher rates of mental disorder than married men, and in most cases the preponderance of women is substantial"

According to that same study, Never married or formerly married men have higher rates of mental illness than currently married men. Generally women in this period reported less marriage satisfaction at this time than men.

"Men who are married are happy because someone is being their mommy. And men who are not married are incels."



Julia Hava  
(She/Her)



As well as this, modern tradwife pulls a lot from the very old idea of Christian Complementarianism.

Complementarianism is the belief that the bible prescribes clear roles for men and women. A husband is considered to have the God-given responsibility to provide for, protect, and lead his family. A wife is to respect her husband, and serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. Women also cannot hold many professional or clerical roles. The more polite complementarians will insist that these roles are of equal status. The phrase used to describe this is "ontologically equal, functionally different" however the end result is always the same. Women are restricted in their choices and made subservient to the men in their life.

"People dispute the idea that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity, that serves as a defining element of the human being. They deny their nature and decide that it is not something previously given to them, but that they make it for themselves."




**Pope Benedict XVI**  
(he/him)




## The social media tradwife pipeline.

"Tradwives serve a great purpose, they're typically skilled social media influencers who use the algorithm to their advantage, they avoid posting anything that might get them deplatformed but are masters at outrage farming. On platforms like Tiktok and Meta, tradwives promote their beliefs while still maintaining a palatable, desirable and attainable veneer of femininity and aesthetics."



Shanspeare  
(They/Them)

The majority of the tradwife movement exists online, on spaces like Tiktok, instagram or youtube. Even the most inoffensive of tradwife content is inherently conservative. They personify a rejection of change and, as discussed, embrace the aesthetics and ideals of American Christianity and 1950s whiteness.




"While most followers of this campaign are not adamant supporters of alt-right politics. The desire for a specific tradition is intrinsically preferential and exclusive, and subtly supports these white supremacist agendas."

Frankie Sittler Eibel  
(She/Her)

Many articles like to use specific language to paint all tradwives as exclusively made up by the most vocal and obvious white supremacists such as the Guardian article "Meet the 'TradWives' who hate feminism and adore Trump," which states that "They abhor feminism, hate anyone LGBT, decry the disintegration of gender binaries and rail against anyone non-white. The Stepford Wives go bitterly political."

These broad stroke generalizations not only oversimplify a complex issue, they also dangerously undersell the effectiveness of the Tradwife pipeline. If every tradwife was a raving obvious bigot, they wouldn't be nearly as good at radicalizing women.



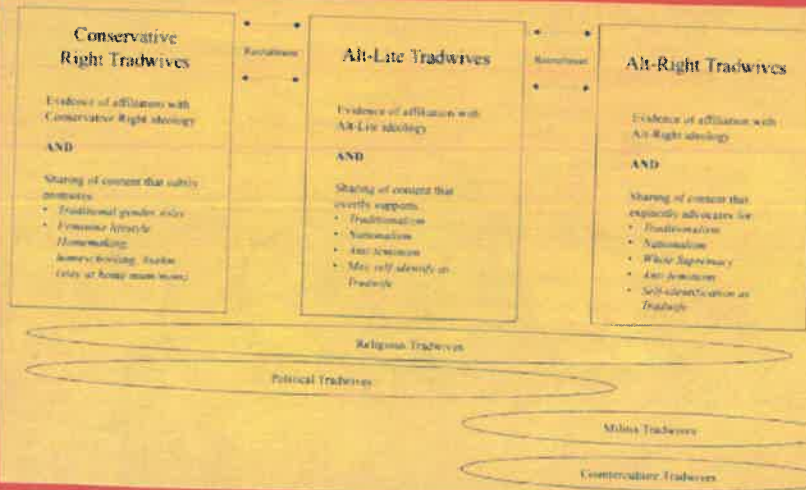
"Tradwives construct a 'hyper feminine aesthetic' in order to 'mask the authoritarianism of their ideology'"

Nancy S. Love  
(She/Her)

## The tradwife and white supremacy



Tradwife influencers can vary greatly. There are the more mildly conservative more aestheticized tradwives, the religious evangelist tradwives, alt-right counterculture tradwives and even militia tradwives who combine their content with pro-gun ideology. This way women can start by consuming the less visibly extreme tradwife content, before the algorithm slowly suggests them more and more extreme content. In her thesis statement, "More Than a Housewife: Tradwives, The Influencers of Far Right Extremism" Sophia Sykes shares a graph illustrating the Tradwife Pipeline in depth





I should also bring up the fact that while the tradwife movement has its links to white supremacy, there is a growing subset of black women on social media who are embracing a similar lifestyle. It should be noted that for the most part these women do not identify as tradwives, instead using terms like #blackhousewife, Traditional marriage, Biblical marriage or submissive womanhood.

7



**Kayla McGugan**  
(She/Her)

"I think it's important that we, as Black women, embrace a position within our homes that we were not afforded for so long. Black women were forced to work outside their home and incentivized by the U.S. government to remain unmarried. Disproportionate incarceration rates for Black men forced many Black women to raise children alone, and the list goes on."

"The idea that Black women should aspire to traditional marriage as a way out of capitalist exhaustion is a deeply flawed one, as these are the same systems that excluded us, and now this feels like another means to control us. Our inclusion is also a tool of control, as traditional marriages are also dependent on capitalism and are institutions that can harm Black women."



**Nylah Burton**  
(she/her)

The nature of "traditional marriage" amongst black women is very different compared to their tradwife counterparts, with differing origins and motivations, but it is still contentious.

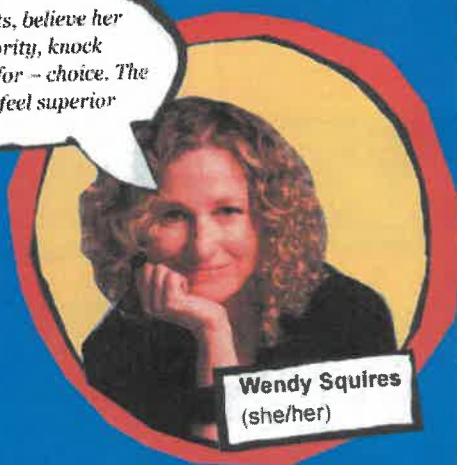
As a white woman, I am not the person to explain or judge these dynamics. But it is important to bring up. For further information I recommend reading Nylah Burtons Refinery29 article "Black Tradwives Aim To Escape Burnout Through Marriage"

So what's the big deal?



So what's the problem? Many defenders of the tradwife movement reference the idea of choice feminism. The idea that first and second wave feminists worked so hard in order to give women the right to choose. If some of them choose to stay at home and submit to their husband why shouldn't they? That's their right. Maybe all of the think pieces, reaction videos, angry comments and even this zine itself are all just a bunch of spiteful, man hating feminists being mean to these poor women because we think all women should act exactly like us. Shave your head and go to work and get gay married.

*if a sister wants to bake up a storm, iron his shirts, believe her place is in the home and actively parent as a priority, knock yourself out. This is what we have been fighting for – choice. The last thing we need as women is for some of us to feel superior and judgmental of others.*




**Wendy Squires**  
(she/her)


I think this is an oversimplification.








I can relate to the urge to be a tradwife. While I'm a lesbian and I can't quite get my head around the idea of wanting to submit to a man, I often find myself wishing I could just marry a successful woman and stay home to raise children. It's an attractive idea, especially as labour conditions worsen and costs of living rise. But it is not a realistic solution.



"Our brains, in times of precarity, crave simple solutions. But often, those comforting, simple solutions are just placeholders for the reality, which is that the problem is actually systemic and institutional."

**Bridget Todd**  
(She/Her)



When I daydream about getting to stay home raising children, I'm not wishing for some return to a mythical conception of family values. I'm wishing for universal basic income. Tradwives are pitching women domestic subjugation when the real solution is economic freedom.

## Dangers Of The Tradwife



As well as the misguidedness of the tradwife movement, its links to white supremacy, and the deceptive marketing present in their social media. There's also the problem that the relationship model they champion breeds abusive dynamics the way a mass grave breeds maggots. Tradwife influencers are not transparent about the dangers their lifestyle poses to women.



As an example, I want to reference the power and control circle. The Power and Control Wheel is a tool created by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, MN and used by the National Domestic Violence Hotline to track patterns of domestic abuse as well as illustrating common tactic abusers use to keep survivors in abusive relationships.





The tenants of the Tradwife movement unambiguously intersects with the wheel in three categories; Using economic abuse, using male privilege, and using isolation. (It also arguably intersects with other sections in many cases, but those similarities are less blatantly obvious.)

When you submit to a man, when you quit your job, when you devote yourself to your family at the expense of outside relationships, you lose nearly all the defenses against or escape from domestic abuse. If all the finances are controlled by a man and you ever try to leave him you may be left with no money and a lengthy gap in your resume. Were there more social safety nets in society that protected single mothers then this lifestyle would have fewer risks, but as it stands the tradwife lifestyle is not a safe possibility for the majority of women.

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# A ZINE BY

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