

Back to the Future?

The Tradwives Movement and the New Forms of Conservative Consensus Building¹

This paper aims to explore the ‘Tradwives’ movement, a small but growing community led by a number of online mentors whose motivational support is both eloquent and prolific. As the name suggests, Traditional wives believe that a woman’s place is in the home and that men and women should embody the distinct yet complementary roles of breadwinner/homemaker.

By investigating a Corpus made up of approximately 3,500 tweets and drawing upon a hybrid methodology integrating tools from Corpus-based Discourse Analysis and SFL applied to the communicative language adopted across the Twitter platform, we will explore the array of different discourses, opinions, values, and ideologies which surround and characterize the modern day ‘Tradwife’. The wider scope of our research is also to identify, within the dynamics enacted in the context under examination, an upsurge of traditionalist if not reactionary values. We argue that the Tradwives’ social media discourses are representative of a system of values which is insidiously finding ways to spread and circulate through alternative channels therefore fuelling and propagating the alt-right ideology.

Keywords: *Tradwives, feminism, right wing nationalism, social media, microblogging, SFL*

1. Introduction

Much as we are loath to admit it, the authors’ interest in the topic of Traditional wives (henceforth Tradwives) did not stem from in-depth scholarly research, but rather from idle curiosity concerning a recent TikTok video in which an American mother, only known as ‘Michelle from North Carolina’, now residing in the UK, took it upon herself to demonstrate how to make a ‘true British cup of tea’. As the resulting beverage had little to do with what is commonly known as tea, be it British or otherwise, the recording received a good deal of attention from the press and from social media. One person in particular, Alena Kate Pettitt, was exceptionally piqued by the presumption that British tea could in any way be associated with the micro-waved potion produced by Michelle, and promptly proceeded to make a YouTube video entitled “How to make a proper British cup of tea, and tea etiquette” in which she clarifies that “making a proper cup of tea is an important element of our lifestyle in England”.² This was our first encounter with the main British exponent of the Tradwives movement. Pettitt is the embodiment of all things British: she lives in a character cottage in the Cotswolds, has written two books promoting British etiquette and ladylike manners, runs a series of YouTube videos known as ‘The Darling Academy’ (a sort of finishing school for would-be British homemakers), and incessantly repeats that she wishes to return to a 1950s lifestyle in order to “harness the best of what made Britain great”.

Besides the constant reiteration of traditional British values throughout her writings and videos, with the Union Jack, Cornishware Pottery, and royal memorabilia as recurrent themes in the visual

¹ Although the authors conceived and worked on this paper collaboratively, Bruna Di Sabato is responsible for the ‘Introduction’ and ‘Discussion and Conclusive Remarks’ sections; Bronwen Hughes is responsible for the two sections entitled: ‘Methodology and Corpus’ and ‘A Critical Analysis of the Tradwives Corpus’.

² See “How to make a proper British cup of tea + tea etiquette”, *YouTube* (2020), www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kTyQh2PKUQ&ab_channel=TheDarlingAcademywithAlenaKatePettitt

imagery, Pettitt is also renowned across social media for her desire to “submit to her husband” and to “honour the natural order of gender roles”.³

The trivial manner by which we were drawn towards a social phenomenon so far removed from the mores of the country in which we reside (although echoes are to be found in the Italian Catholic world), turned into genuine curiosity when we discovered the extensive popularity of the Tradwife movement in the Anglo-Saxon world. We were therefore led to investigate such discourses; and, being more interested in observing the widespread resonance of the phenomenon rather than analysing a single public persona, we opted to turn to social media, specifically Twitter, to verify whether the Tradwife/Tradwives hashtags and streams only attracted aficionados of good housekeeping, or whether nationalism and gender submission were effectively significantly recurring themes.

As will be illustrated in the section devoted to analysis, our findings did stretch much further afield than we expected, touching upon white supremacy, virulent anti/pro-feminism, Brexit, and even male dominated activist movements present in the ‘Manosphere’⁴ such as ‘Men Go Their Own Way’ and ‘Incels’.

The global anti-gender right currently stands as a challenge to progressive forces. Indeed, it is often by cashing in on the fears of Christian fundamentalists and right-wing populists and by promoting conservative agendas in which the notion of domestic love and harmony rests upon gender essentialism, that they succeed in curtailing women’s autonomy. Such behaviour is masqueraded as a need to protect ‘the weaker sex’ from the risk of gender violence. As Graff, Kapur, and Danuta Walters state “Gender conservatism has in recent years become the lingua franca of an otherwise diverse global trend. It is what brings together right-wing activists from otherwise distant walks of life: believers and nonbelievers, nationalists and universalists, populists who demonize global capital and traditional Reagan/Thatcher-style conservatives with a neocon love for the market”.⁵ Besides illustrating the manner in which gender and sexuality stand at the heart of the global right, the three scholars also comment upon the channels employed

by right wing groups to guarantee the viral spread of their gender essentialist messages: “Global right-wing agendas also rely on a labyrinth of networks, including social media and more militant, aggressive, and misogynistic populist movements, to develop and pursue their brand of gender politics. They intervene and work with dominant gender, sexual, and cultural norms to produce a nationalist, antifeminist, gender/heteronormative, xenophobic, and antiminority majoritarianism”.⁶

Indeed, ‘our wives’ encourage considerations related to gender, sex, sexuality, race, nationality, religion, physical appearance, etc. As intersectional studies show, the ‘intersection’ among such systems of values may easily generate (or be generated by?) forms of discrimination. The media are keeping tabs on the tradwife phenomenon arguing that what “could be mistaken for a peculiar style of mommy-vlogging is a virulent strain of white nationalism”.⁷ Annie Kelly, author of a much-cited article published in the 1st June 2018 edition of *The New York Times* further states: “tradwives remain worth contemplating because they help illuminate some of the forces that drive the alt-right and where the movement might be going”.⁸ Scholars worldwide are also paying attention to the role women play in supremacist movements especially as regards the digital far right. Tradwives are in fact mentioned

³ See “Submitting to my husband like it’s 1959: Why I became a Tradwife – BBC stories”, YouTube (2020), www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwT-zYo4-OM&ab_channel=BBCStories.

⁴ The term “manosphere” is of uncertain origin though it is thought to have first appeared in a blog in 2009. It is used to identify forums and online communities dedicated to men’s interests, and gained popularity when Ian Ironwood published *The Manosphere: A New Hope for Masculinity* in 2013 (Red Pill Press).

⁵ Agnieszka Graff et al., “Introduction: Gender and the Rise of the Global Right”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 44.3 (Spring 2019), 541-560.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 547.

⁷ Annie Kelly, “The Housewives of White Supremacy”, *The New York Times* (2018), www.nytimes.com/2018/06/01/opinion/sunday/tradwives-women-alt-right.html

⁸ *Ibid.*

by Nancy Love in a recent study published in *Frontiers in Sociology* as “the best example of alt right views on traditional sex/gender roles”.⁹

The gender-separatist and misogynist stance recurrently found in the manosphere, is not only the preserve of men, as will be illustrated: indeed, many women tweeting under the Tradwives hashtag defend men’s rights and share the desire to return to the dominance/subservience of traditional power roles and extreme notions of femininity and masculinity.¹⁰ As J. Ebner states, tradwives appear to perceive gender roles as the result of “sexual economics, a marketplace where men can gauge a woman’s sexual market value (SMV), where age, femininity, and health are the most sought-after qualities, whereas education or career prospects are of little interest”.¹¹

Investigation of the way in which ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ are discursively enacted in different manners and across different contexts and epochs is by no means novel.¹² The present study, focusing on an aspired return to traditional gender roles and the ensuing counter response, serves to underline that the battle for gender supremacy is still very much alive and scholarly research must continue to document its many evolutions. The wider scope of our research, however, is to identify, within the dynamics enacted in the context under examination, an upsurge of traditionalist if not reactionary values. We argue that the Tradwives’ social media discourses are representative of a system of values which is insidiously finding ways to spread and circulate through alternative channels. In the following pages we will illustrate the methodology employed to collect and critically analyse our corpus of Tradwives tweets in an attempt to answer the following research questions:

- How do users create and negotiate micro-blogging discourses around traditional gender roles and values? (RQ1)
- What role can hashtags play in propagating ideologies and broadening ambient affiliation? (RQ2)

2. Methodology and Corpus

In order to examine the hashtags pertaining to the Traditional Wife/Wives movement we felt the need to steer clear of excessively procrustean frameworks and opted to employ a hybrid methodology integrating tools belonging to Corpus-based Discourse Analysis with SFL applied to the investigation of the communicative language adopted across the Twitter platform.

We therefore employ a social semiotic approach which views microblogging as a social practice in which the combined metadata and metadiscursive roles of hashtags enable them to figure as meaning-making resources. The metafunctional diversification which characterizes SFL can be said to span across all linguistic strata from context – through discourse semantics and lexicogrammar – to

⁹ Nancy S. Love, “Shield Maidens, Fashy Femmes, and TradWives: Feminism, Patriarchy, and Right-Wing Populism”, *Frontiers in Sociology*, 23 (December 2020), www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2020.619572/full.

¹⁰ Clearly due to the anonymity they grant, gender identity on Twitter, like on other Social Networking Sites (SNSs), can never be thoroughly verified. When we talk about ‘women’ or ‘men’ tweeters, it is merely because we take their pronoun use and gendered discourses at face value.

¹¹ Julia Ebner, “TradWives: Joining the Female Anti-Feminists”, in *Going Dark: The Secret Social Lives of Extremists* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 27.

¹² See for example: Deborah Cameron, “Performing Gender Identity: Young Men’s Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity”, in Sally Johnson and Ulrike Hanna Meinhof, eds., *Language and Masculinity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 47-65; Jennifer Coates, “Competing Discourses of Femininity”, in Helga Kotthoff and Ruth Wodak, eds., *Communicating Gender in Context* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), 285-314; Anna Livia and Kira Hall, eds., *Queerly Phrased: Language, Gender, and Sexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Janet Holmes and Stephanie Schnurr, “Politeness, Humour and Gender in the Workplace: Negotiating Norms and Identifying Contestation”, *Journal of Politeness Research: Language, Behaviour, Culture*, 1 (2005), 121-149; Janet Holmes, *Gendered Talk at Work: Constructing Gender Identity through Workplace Discourse* (New York, Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

phonology and graphology.¹³ When focusing on tweets, the three dimensions of meaning tend to be realized via different kinds of patterning. Indeed, experiential meanings present a constituent structure, or topic, realized by a single hashtag such as #Feminism or #homemaker; textual meanings are concerned with the order in which the text within the tweet unfolds as a cohesive structure; and interpersonal meanings tend to be realized in a more prosodical manner, granting hues of evaluation to the meanings in the post or in the tag itself #Feminazi or #Iloveyman. As Kreis states, “Other than being topic-based, hashtags are now often also ‘evaluative’, thus used to ideologically express identity, beliefs and group membership”.¹⁴ In turn, these linguistic functions work together to realize the social function of enacting ambient affiliation in terms of public social relations rather than on the level of private dyadic dialogue. Indeed, Zappavigna asserts: “Microblogging as a practice creates alignments around shared quotidian experiences by conferring upon the private realm of daily experience a public audience”.¹⁵

Far from being mere discourse markers, hashtags also serve as ideological tools not only to facilitate group inclusion or exclusion, but also to emphasize a polarization of points of view, in an ongoing struggle for control in discourse. This is obviously particularly true in the field of hashtag activism where the same tags can be used by both sides of the polarized spectrum. In such cases, the two competing factions attempt to re-appropriate the other side’s slogans and hashtags in order to initially benefit from the influence they wield in their designated catchment area only to subsequently diminish it. It is in fact sometimes difficult to tell whether a pro- or an anti- orientation is being construed when the two sides exploit the same tag.

In terms of corpus-selection and corpus-building, we selected the tags connected to the seed terms ‘Traditional wife/wives’, and, at the time of writing #tradwife/#tradwives were trending. We also included the #thedarlingacademy and #aproncladhousewives as these two tags were launched by Alena Pettitt, the previously mentioned founder of the British tradwives movement. The numbers of tweets which included the latter two tags, however, turned out to be negligible.

To download the tweets an adapted version of a Python library called ‘Get Old Tweets’ was used (<https://github.com/Mottl/GetOldTweets3>) and after replacing line breaks and a number of typographical symbols in Unicode, the output was saved as an xml file.

When collecting the tweets we further inserted the following specifications: only tweets in English, gathered in a period stretching from the 15th of March 2018 until the 15th of March 2020. We established the starting date for our collection by keeping an eye on the spread of the movement. 2018 was a significant year for the tradwife wave and although interest shown by social media towards the movement had begun some years previously, it is in the last couple of years that signs of a possible exploitation of this phenomenon by right wing ideologists has become marked with an avowed nostalgia for a past in which gender norms were firmly dependent upon biological masculinity and femininity.

After removing the duplicates, 3,288 tweets were collected with the following breakdown:

- #aproncladarmy: 8
- #tradwife: 2826
- #tradwives: 452
- #thedarlingacademy: 2

¹³ Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen, *Lexicogrammatical Cartography: English Systems* (Tokyo: International Language Sciences Publishers, 1995).

¹⁴ Ramona Kreis “#refugeesnotwelcome: Anti-refugee discourse on Twitter”, *Discourse & Communication*, 11.5 (2017), 498-514.

¹⁵ Michele Zappavigna, “CoffeeTweets: bonding around the bean on Twitter”, in Philip Seargeant and Caroline Tagg, eds., *The Language of Social Media* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 140.

The corpus as a whole presents 94,005 tokens and 73,148 types, and when preparing it for investigation, the most time-consuming task pertained to the investigation of the aggregated hashtags that accompanied the tradwife/wives tags lending extra meaning and extra bonding power to each tweet by further expanding the circle of ambient affiliation. Indeed, it was often only by tabling these additional tags that we were able to observe the pernicious stepping-stone itinerary wending from innocuous traditional topics and values to ideological and gender-oriented discourses.

When investigating the posts belonging to the TRADWIVES corpora, we initially identified the two generic macro-categories ‘in favour of traditional values’/ ‘against traditional values’, and subsequently through close examination of all the tweets, we pinpointed 5 sub/micro-categories which bring the pro/anti positions to the fore around a number of aggregate topics.

For the sake of linear analysis, we chose to entitle the 5 categories as follows:

- Intersectional activism
- Gender: dominance vs oppression
- Feminism: Choice and Femininity vs Regression
- Toxic jezebels vs the younger cow
- Nationalist sentiment #MAGA, #Brexit, and the #Tradwife nightmare

In the section which follows, we will illustrate and comment upon our findings.

3. A Critical analysis of the TRADWIVES Corpus

Linguistics, like many other scholarly disciplines, now possesses well-honed tools to decipher the ideational metafunction of meaning-making. Conversely, the interpersonal dimension, which allows users to build and maintain power and solidarity through the adoption of stance and identity, often remains less well-understood.

In recent years SFL theory has focused on the ‘coupling’ of evaluation with other kinds of linguistic meanings as a way of bringing out the values construed in the process of affiliation.¹⁶ In our research, the term ‘coupling’ refers to the manner in which ideational meaning co-patterns with interpersonal meaning in the Twitter microposts to create an evaluative stance. The interesting aspect of the #tradwife/#tradwives tags is that, unlike ambifunctional tags such as #Trumpsucks or #Ilovecats, where the ideational/interpersonal co-patterning is evident, they do not in fact present any inscribed *a priori* interpersonal evaluation, as both the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘wife/wives’, and their combination within the hashtag, are devoid of objective evaluative colouring. It is only when they are adopted by either the pro- or anti- tradwife factions that they are intra-textually charged with inscribed or invoked attitudinal meaning ready to be conveyed to those already belonging to the affiliative community or to prospective members through “multiparty, temporarily fluid and highly intertextual conversations”.¹⁷

For the sake of clarity and ease of classification, when providing examples of the 5 categories that illustrate the positions taken up by the pro/anti tradwife activists, we will in each case begin by examining the ‘pro’ tradwife tweets, and then move on to the ‘anti’ ones.¹⁸

¹⁶ Zappavigna et al., “Syndromes of Meaning: Exploring Patterned Coupling in a NSW Youth Justice Conference”, in Ahmar Mahboob and Naomi K. Knight, eds., *Questioning Linguistics* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 103-117.

¹⁷ Zappavigna, “Ambient Affiliation: a linguistic perspective on Twitter”, *Journal of New Media and Society*, 13.5 (2011), 790.

¹⁸ Any inaccurate spelling/syntax/verb forms or generally unconventional language features contained in the reported tweets are all authentic. The authors have not modified the excerpts in any way.

3.1 *Intersectional activism*

3.1.1 *Pro-Tradwives*

[1] Look up #tradwife on twitter! You'll find a bunch of lonesome lefty childless feminist cat ladies losing there shit over it. Any woman that decide to become a housewife and feel extremely content about it should post pictures of there happy lives, just to rub it in there feminist faces. #nohardfeminism #mychoice #genderroles

[2] My goal is to make our country better for everyone by getting rid of #TheseGays, encouraging more women to follow the #TradWife model, working toward better pay for men (the true bread-winners), putting the immigrants in their place, and making life easier for Christians. #Tradwives #TradRevolution #MAGA

[3] Hey qanon, I made you some milk and cookies #Tradwife #traditionalgenderroles #ibelonginthekitchen #makeachoice

As can be seen in the excerpts above, hashtags are syntactically flexible and “in terms of the information flow of a text they can occupy an initial, integrated and culminative position”.¹⁹ As for the experiential meaning, hashtags can also take up the ‘participant’, ‘process’ or ‘circumstance’ role in a clause and, as is evident in the first 2 tweets listed above, #tradwife [1] and #TheseGays [2] both occupy participant positions. Furthermore, in terms of interpersonal functions, hashtags can realize all the speech functions: indeed, in the 3 tweets listed above we have a number of statements, for instance #nohardfeminism [1], #ibelonginthekitchen [3] and commands, such as #makeachoice [3]. In these cases, as Zappavigna states: “the function of these interpersonally orientated tags has little to do with aggregating posts into searchable sets, and much more to do with adopting particular attitudinal dispositions, involved in enacting different kinds of identities”.²⁰

It is evident that an analysis of every single discriminatory discourse interpellated by the pro- or anti- tradwife factions would take us well beyond the scope of this study. However, quoting Zappavigna once more, it is worth remembering that “any act of communing is also an act of construing the self (as a textual persona)”,²¹ and the aggregate tags that each tweeter attaches to their post not only expand its affiliative remit but also serve to build up increasingly stratified identities.

Tweet [1] in favour of the traditional wife role also intersectionally and critically calls into play feminists by listing all the stereotypical negative characteristics commonly attributed to them (they are unmarried, childless and consequently ‘lonesome’; they treat cats as substitutive objects of devotion ‘cat ladies’; they are hysterical and unable to control their anger ‘losing their shit’). The aggregated tags coherently contest feminism #nohardfeminism, praise gender differentiation #genderroles, and touch upon the issue of free choice, #mychoice, as a fundamental factor when selecting a given affiliation. The question of Choice or Fourth Wave feminism will be taken up when we analyse the third micro-category in our corpus.

The intersectional nature of excerpt [2] upholds the values of white, American right-wing, heterosexual, Christian men. From the point of view of the textual metafunction it is interesting to note the way in which #TheseGays and #TradWife are smoothly integrated into the cohesive structure of the post. The use of the deictic plural reference ‘these’ in the #TheseGays tweet, suggests a categorization mechanism through which the ‘gay category’ is anaphorically referred to through in-

¹⁹ Zappavigna, *Searchable Talk: Hashtags and Social Media Metadiscourse* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 31.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

group underlying discourses where such individuals are already negatively connoted. In much the same way, the phrase ‘putting the immigrants in their place’ suggests that the prospective/existent affiliative audience is already well-aware of the ‘rightful place’ in question. These linguistic strategies are widely adopted to create polarized discourses whereby out-groups are rhetorically created in opposition to the speaker/writer’s in-group, and the affiliative bonds which result from communing around the ideational/attitudinal coupling of a given hashtag “make up the value sets of our communities and culture”.²²

The third ‘in favour’ tweet is once more intersectional in nature in that it humorously brings together the mysterious figure of ‘Q’, head of the anonymous fringe organization ‘Qanon’ which claims that a conspiracy of left-wing, Satan-worshipping child molesters is currently plotting to overturn President Trump, and the submissive Tradwives whose role is to nourish their men while submitting to them. Two aspects of this particular tweet are interesting: the first is the covert or ‘invoked’²³ nature of the afforded attitude which does not exhibit any indicators that evaluation is in fact taking place, and is difficult to spot for those who do not possess the ideological values of the tradwife/right-wing community. As Doran states: “By virtue of its implicitness, this evaluative language is often difficult to see if it has not already been learnt. But this also gives it much of its power, by being only accessible to particular communities, it often invokes large networks of values relatively efficiently”.²⁴ The second interesting aspect is intrinsically connected to the first: in terms of intra or co-textual relationships, the aggregate hashtags #traditionalgenderroles, #ibelonginthekitchen and #makeachoice supply the “evaluative metacommentary”²⁵ lacking in the post itself. Thus, those in favour of the tradwives ideology can capture the initial underlying appeal of the post, only to have their impressions confirmed by the hashtags which follow.

3.1.2 Anti-Tradwives

[4] #tradwives is a Stormfront push that they're trying to normalize. They envision a whites only, female submissive community where women give birth to as many babies of European heritage as poss to propagate their despicable supremacist beliefs. Shun them -They're epitome

[5] I see a lot of #tradwife stuff doing the rounds. Just a heads up: “Tradwife” as a term has a lot more baggage behind it than staying home to take care of the domestic sphere. It's a dangerous rebranding of Kinder, Küche, Kirche with strong anti-migrant and homophobic undertones.

[6] Beware, the traditional wife movement seems to loosely unite a diverse group of crazy #tradwife Russia bots Right wing Europeans Conservative Christians Incels Nazis Trump people Antivaxers Home schoolers Brexiters The racists old folk Ladies who bake cakes

The many tweets that condemn the Tradwives movement, of which the above are merely a small sample, are as intersectional as those in favour. However, whereas the ‘in favour’ posts integrate or aggregate a number of kindred hashtags to expand their affiliative network, either directly or via the recommendation algorithms, the ‘against’ grouping, in the main, simply lists the categories they

²² Naomi K. Knight, “Wrinkling Complexity: Concepts of Identity and Affiliation in Humor”, in Monika Bednarek and James R. Martin, eds., *New Discourse on Language: Functional Perspectives on Multimodality, Identity, and Affiliation* (London: Continuum, 2010), 43.

²³ James R. Martin and Peter R. R. White, *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

²⁴ Yaegan J. Doran, “Seeing Values: Axiology and Affording Attitude in Australia’s ‘invasion’”, in James R. Martin et al., eds., *Accessing Academic Discourse: Systemic Functional Linguistics and Legitimation Code Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 162.

²⁵ Zappavigna, *Searchable Talk*, 66.

believe partake in a common right-wing ideology: from ‘Involuntary Celibates’ to ‘Ladies who bake cakes’ [6]. It is also worth noticing that the underlying braggadocio employed by the pro-‘Tradwifers’ is replaced by the cautious, almost fearful tone, employed in excerpts [4], [5] and [6] all three of which contain a warning: ‘Shun them’ [4], ‘heads up’ [5], ‘Beware’ [6].

3.2 *Gender: dominance vs oppression*

3.2.1 *In favour of dominance*

[7] Good morning! If youre reading this, youre ALIVE! Which means God has blessed you with another day, use it to the fullest by blessing others. Ladies, use it to bring beauty to your family, community and world. Smile, be kind, be submissive #tradwives Men, lead your families, forge ahead #genderroles #loveyourman

[8] I am a SAHM. People regularly think Im crazy for wanting to stay home and care for my family. It is the most important work, I need to be protected, I need an Alpha male. #SAHM #Tradwife #thisisthefuture

[9] Women, cultivate your mind so when your husband comes home from a long day you can talk to him about something other than the kids. Read news headlines, read a book on a topic that interests him. If needed, watch sports with him. You might like it too #tradwives #happymarriage

The three tweets in favour of gender dominance all trace a clear demarcation between dominant alpha males who protect their families and ‘forge ahead’ [7], and submissive wives happy to be stay-at-home-mothers (SAHM) and submit to their men [8]. The connection created in excerpt [7] between traditional Christian values and traditional gender roles is unsurprising and the post is strongly reminiscent of the 10th book of the New Testament where the Epistle to the Ephesians similarly states: “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord ... as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything”.²⁶ Again in this case the aggregate hashtags #genderroles and #loveyourman serve as an intra-textual metacommentary to augment the attitude inscribed in the post.

In tweet [8] the stay-at-home-mother employs an interesting mechanism to evade accountability and raise support for her views: rather than specifically blaming the anti-tradwife or feminist communities for criticising her traditional values, she employs the generic ‘people’ and states “People regularly think Im crazy for wanting to stay home”. In a seminal article, Anita Pomerantz drew attention to the manner in which ‘extreme case formulations’ (ECFs) are commonly employed in discourse. ECFs are descriptions or assessments that deploy ‘extreme’ expressions such as: every, everyone, people, all, none, best, least, always, perfectly, brand new and absolutely, commonly used in contexts in which an individual feels a need to pre-empt or defend him/herself against possible accusations or criticisms. “Interactants use extreme-case formulations when they anticipate or expect their co-interactants to undermine their claims and when they are in adversarial situations”.²⁷

In turn, excerpt [9] is striking for the pedagogical tone it assumes, reminiscent of a 1950s ‘good wife’ guide. In this post the male/female roles and duties are seen as entirely natural, and the fact that a tradwife may also derive pleasure from indulging her husband’s interests ‘you might like it too’ is considered relatively inconsequential. The ideational/interpersonal coupling provided by the aggregate #happymarriage tag serves to supply the invoked attitude that is not inscribed in the body of the post.

²⁶ *The New International Version of the Holy Bible*, Ephesians 5 (Colorado Springs: International Bible Society, 1973), 22-33.

²⁷ Anita Pomerantz, “Extreme Case Formulations: A Way of Legitimizing Claims”, *Human Studies*, 9 (1986), 222.

3.2.2 Against gender oppression

[10] I read stuff about #tradwives and want to say Under His Eye

[11] Also doormat. Dont forget the being a doormat, talked down to as an inferior species, and never truly being respected part. #tradwife #tradLife

[12] But apparently the happy hubby makes an effort too “When I get up to answer the door to greet him he has flowers” Oh the excitement of a #Tradwife #tradwives #feminismisbliss #britanniadoesntrule

The writer of tweet number 10 relies on the ability of the ambient audience to capture both the intertextual and interdiscursive implications present in the post. From an intertextual point of view, the ‘Under his Eye’ phrase clearly refers to Margaret Atwood’s novel and ensuing televised series, *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Interdiscursively, however, the connection established between the Tradwife movement and the dystopian novel foregrounds all the shared negative discourses and values (male supremacy, enforced submissiveness, absence of free will) that the two have in common.

Social media texts are necessarily rooted in heteroglossic meaning and, due to the ambient environment, posts always enter into a relation with other posts in the same stream although without any need for direct dialogical interaction. Wesch employed the phrase ‘context collapse’²⁸ when referring to the impossibility for Social Networking Site users to attune to the parameters of a given context because the audience is largely unknown.

In excerpt [11], the tweeter appears to join an ongoing conversation in which there is clear topic continuity around the anti-tradwives subject-matter. The rhetorical effect created is twofold, on the one hand it points to the fact that the tradwife values are considered so negative as to warrant not just one isolated post, but a thriving, ongoing, conversational activity; on the other, the use of ‘also’, ‘don’t forget’ and ‘part’ all contribute to the idea that the negative aspects mentioned in this particular post are merely an addendum to far more detrimental features that have already been mentioned elsewhere. The #tradwife tag located in culminative position serves to supply cataphoric reference and focus to the attitude expressed in the post; whereas the #tradlife tag, in terms of co-textual relations, serves to augment said attitude by expanding it from the restricted context of the ‘wives’ to the more widespread ‘lives’.

Thanks to their function as metadata, hashtags also allow “the user to track in real-time unfolding discourse about a specific event or issue”.²⁹ Having read the many posts written by Alena Pettitt, the instigator of the British tradwives movement, it was relatively simple for the authors to identify the quote in tweet [12] as a phrase the Cotswolds’ housewife pronounced in early 2020. Based on Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia and dialogism, it may be useful here to briefly engage with the engagement resource located within the appraisal system network and which enables readers to evaluate how external voices are integrated into texts; in tweet [12], the author acknowledges the alternative voice and values introduced by the reported phrase through a process of “extra-vocalization” which incorporates external voices into a text through explicit or indirect quotation.³⁰ A closer look at the excerpt, however, reveals a number of discordant lexico-grammatical features which

²⁸ Michael Wesch, “YouTube and You: Experiences of Self-Awareness in the Context Collapse of the Recording Webcam”, *Explorations in Media Ecology*, 8.2 (2009), 23.

²⁹ Zappavigna, “Searchable talk: the linguistic functions of hashtags”, *Social Semiotics*, 25.3 (2015), 278.

³⁰ Peter R. R. White, “Extended Reality, Proto-Nouns and the Vernacular: Distinguishing the Technological from the Scientific”, in James R. Martin and Robert Veel, eds., *Reading Science: Critical and Functional Perspectives on Discourses of Science* (London: Routledge, 1998), 272.

contradict a bland integration of external viewpoints: the contrastive use of ‘but’ as a discourse opener, the use of ‘apparently’ to express doubt and scepticism, and the sarcasm inherent to the phrases ‘happy hubby’ and ‘oh the excitement’ clearly signal the value position with which the reader is being aligned. In Martin and White’s words: “In such cases the monoglossia of the attitudinal assessment over-rides the heteroglossia of the attribution to present the speaker/writer as categorically aligned with a given value position”.³¹ Again, as we have seen in previous cases, the two hashtags #Tradwife and #Tradwives serve to augment the negative attitude inscribed in the post by figuring as the participants against whom the sarcasm is directed. The last two tags in tweet [12], #feminismisbliss and #britanniadoesnrule, despite their culminative position, serve a fundamental role in the textual organization of the post: by heteroglossically positioning these ideational/interpersonal couplings in a contrastive relationship to the #Tradwife couplings, the author succeeds in evoking the putative values at the heart of the tradwife movement (anti-feminism, nationalism) and subsequently manipulating them by inscribing positive attitude. This complex mechanism is known as ‘finessing’ and is concerned with “meaning-making processes by which the speaker/writer negotiates relationships of alignment/disalignment with regard to the various value positions referenced by the text and hence vis-à-vis the socially-constituted communities of shared attitude and belief associated with those positions”.³²

3.3 (Anti)feminism

3.3.1 Upholding ‘choice’ and ‘femininity’

Some years ago, a number of scholars³³ began to claim that we had now entered a ‘postfeminist’ era due to the superannuated nature of the feminist issues still being championed, and the ongoing manipulation and commodification of feminist discourses exploited to promote women’s empowerment for commercial ends. Others, consider that the rise of antifeminism on SNSs and other participatory communities and the ensuing struggle to defend feminist values, point to the fact that the anti/pro-feminism debate is still very much alive today.³⁴

As Lawrence and Ringrose assert: “It is arguably the immediacy and connectivity of the Internet that have enabled this shift from “third-wave” to “fourth-wave” feminism. Social media sites allow users to interact and create spaces for discussion and what has led to a “call-out” culture, in which problematic behaviour such as misogyny can be identified, “called out”, and challenged”.³⁵ They further add: “Indeed, social media sites are so integral to the idea of a new era of feminism that research has positioned them as the birthplace of the fourth wave”.³⁶

³¹ Martin and White, *The Language of Evaluation*, 116.

³² Ibid., 95.

³³ See for example: Ofra Koffman and Rosalind Gill, “‘I Matter and so Does She’: Girl Power, (Post)feminism and the Girl Effect”, in David Buckingham et al., eds., *Youth Cultures in the Age of Global Media. Studies in Childhood and Youth* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 242-257; Rosalind Gill and Ana Sofia Elias, “Awaken your incredible’: Love your Body Discourses and Postfeminist Contradictions”, *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 10.2 (June 2014), 179-188.

³⁴ See for example: Ealasaid Munro, “Feminism: A Fourth Wave?”, *Political Insight*, 4.2 (2013), 22-25; Rosalind Gill, “Post-postfeminism?: New Feminist Visibilities in Postfeminist Times”, *Feminist Media Studies*, 16.4 (2016), 610-630; Debbie Ging, “Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere”, *Men and Masculinities*, 22.4 (2017), 638-657.

³⁵ Emilie Lawrence and Jessica Ringrose, “@notofeminism, #feministsareugly, and Misandry Memes: How Social Media Feminist Humor Is Calling out Antifeminism”, in Jessalynn Keller and Maureen E. Ryan, eds., *Emergent Feminisms: Complicating a Postfeminist Media Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 215.

³⁶ Ibid., 217.

Besides the ineradicable connection to social media, fourth wave feminism is also often referred to as ‘choice feminism’ due to the belief that today women’s authentic agency and empowerment necessarily stem from an ability to make their own choices, whether big or small.

In two of the excerpts which follow [13] [14], it is against what they perceive as the incoherence and hypocrisy of feminists that the Tradwives rebel, claiming that the scope of operable and acceptable ‘choices’ cannot exclude the desire to stay at home, thus by extension, tradwives qualify as feminists. Excerpt [13] once more calls out the inconsistency pertaining to the feminists’ selective choices and the ‘#IAmSoSickOf(Lies)’ tag serves as a popular, and often humorous, phrasal template meme on the Twitter platform customarily completed in many different ways: lies, drinking, commercials, men, taxes; its position as header of the post will doubtless serve to widen the Tradwife catchment area. Tweet [14], by anaphorically using the pronoun ‘she’ and the demonstrative adjective ‘this’ appears to call a specific interlocutor into play, although it does not draw upon the @ convention for broadcast messages. Although we are unable to provide any factual backing for this statement, the authors believe that the ‘she’ in question again refers to Alena Pettitt and to her much-criticised ‘submitting to my husband like it’s 1959’ tweet published at the beginning of 2020. Three aspects are of interest here: the previously mentioned anaphorical use of ‘she’ which points to the assumed widespread ambient participation in the ‘Tradwives’ discourse; the implicit nature of the provoked attitude expressed through the metaphor ‘froth at the mouth’ which denotes the mad/rabid traits often attributed to (hysterical) feminists; and lastly, the #makewomengreatagain, once again a phrasal template, which exploits the #MAGA (Make America Great Again) structure in order to reap the benefits of the association between the two affiliated ambient communities.

The second two tweets in the foursome that follows focus on the femininity versus feminism duality, the second main area of conflict dividing anti- from pro- feminists as the two terms embody the true essence of womanhood for the opposing factions. Tweets [15] and [16] both propagate the stereotypical image of feminists as sad, ugly (or at least unfeminine), and alone. The cliché is further enhanced by a number of well-selected lexical oppositions: in [15] ‘beautiful thing’ and ‘feast of femininity’ contrast with ‘sad existence’ and ‘threatened’; in [16] the #notofeminism in culminative position precludes feminists from being ‘true’ women, who are loved and protected by their men.

[13] #IAmSoSickOfLies First, #Feminist want self-empowered women, but then recoil in horror, if the choice is to stay at home #Tradwife

[14] Hasnt she got the right to choose this lifestyle if she wants? Why does it make you froth at the mouth? Interesting. I thought choice feminism was about women wanting to do whatever they want. She wants to be a #TradWife - shell have a long and successful marriage. #makewomengreatagain

[15] Yes. Yes. Being a #Tradwife is a beautiful thing a feast of femininity and it's only a reflection of their own sad existence that feminists could feel threatened by it #femininenotfeminist

[16] Just to confirm for the confused ones - a TRUE woman is one who embraces her femininity, nurtures & cares for her household, respects & allows her Man to lead #tradwife sums it up #notofeminism

3.3.2 Regression

[17] Ive no idea where the hashtag #tradwife comes from but it is so backward its North Korean #feminism #empoweringwomen

[18] the #tradwife movement is an insult to the advancement of women and is NOT something we should be promoting as a society. Theres a reason 1959 is in the past #genderequality #feminism

[19] This reinforcement of #tradwives ideology is based on specifying what kinds of choices and roles women are restricted to. And by almost every margin seen, it's used to reinforce White Supremacy. #getoutofthehouse #strongwomen #feminism

In their many posts, the anti-tradwife feminist tweeters underline the anachronistic, regressive nature of the Tradwife movement: in tweet [17] it is compared to the totalitarian state of North Korea where women's (and not only) freedom, rights and overall development are severely curtailed; in [18] the intertextual reference is once again to Alena Pettitt's post 'submit like it's 1959' which we have previously had occasion to mention. Post [19] is particularly interesting as, in critiquing the notion of restricted choice, the pro-feminism tweeter is in fact employing a reverse image structure of the tradwife argumentation: whereas, according to the tradwives, the feminists exclude the stay-at-home option from the array of possible choices a woman can make, the tradwives, from the feminist point of view, restrict a woman's choice exclusively to that very same option.

3.4 Toxic jezebels versus the younger cow

3.4.1 Toxic Jezebels

A further category which opposes the pro- and anti-tradwives centres on the relationship between tradwives and men. Whereas previously we investigated dominance versus submission, this micro-category focuses on the benefits that men acquire from entering into a relationship with a tradwife and, conversely, on the lack of benefits that the tradwives reap from such relationships. In the pro-tradwife tweets which follow it is the domestic, submissive, housebound qualities of stay-at-home-wives that are praised, and the excerpts all appear to be expressed with a man's point of view in mind although, as we have already had occasion to mention, it is impossible to ascertain the gender identity of Twitter users with any degree of conviction.

In excerpt [20] the support expressed for 'the boys' is supplemented by the aggregated tags: '#antifeminism', which merely serves to oppositionally highlight the values shunned by tradwife enthusiasts, and #MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way), an online community of gender separatists located within the manosphere of anti-feminist websites, who advocate total dissociation from women. Their manifesto proclaims: "Men Going Their Own Way is a statement of self-ownership, where the modern man preserves and protects his own sovereignty above all else. It is the manifestation of one word: "No", thus ejecting silly preconceptions and cultural definitions of what a "man" is. Looking to no one else for social cues. Refusing to bow, serve and kneel for the opportunity to be treated like a disposable utility".³⁷ The submissive nature of the tradwives stands as a perfect corollary for men who do not wish to kowtow to dominant women.

Tweet [21] introduces an interesting structure in terms of textual organisation with the initial statement presenting the general prescriptive anti-feminist theme, reinforced by the deontic 'must', followed by a rhematic structure in which the inclusive 'we'/'our', directly address the ambient male

³⁷ Men Going Their Own Way, www.mgtow.com/.

community; and the aggregate tags once more serve to reinforce the anti-feminist message. Excerpt [22] again adopts a prescriptive tone, though this time the imperatives are addressed to the mothers of the tradwife seekers. Here, the intertextual reference in the aggregate tags is to Megan Markle regularly accused by online trolls of being a narcissistic gold digger (#megain/#narcissisticabuse) and the reason for which Prince Harry decided to exit the Royal Family (#Megxit). From an interdiscursive point of view, Markle's detractors accuse her of being both a strong-willed feminist and a rather loose woman out to lure wealthy men (toxic jezebel) and thus the antithesis of the submissive, morally-upstanding tradwives they wish to find.

[20] #Tradwife a lady after my own heart. Let's hear it for the boys! #antifeminism
#MGTOW

[21] men must refrain from marrying a feminist or an employee woman. We have to look for a #Tradwife that we can trust in to keep the house and devote herself to raising our children = guarantee success in family relations for centuries, as well as creating job opportunities for men #nofeminism #traditionalgenderroles

[22] For mothers, raise your sons to have standards and boundaries, so they are not snared by feminists and toxic jezebels #Tradwife #narcissisticabuse #megain #Megxit

3.4.2 *The younger cow*

The anti-tradwife posts to be found in this micro-category, all focus on the expendable position that women occupy after having devoted their lives to men. The interesting aspect of the three tweets that follow is the switch of the chosen addressee and the accompanying change of tenor and mode. In tweet [23] while intertextually referring back to the statement 'your husband should always come first' (again, most probably with reference to one of Alena Pettitt's numerous externalizations), the author directly bombards the tradwives with a series of questions that recall spontaneous dialogue. In this manner an equal-footing relationship is established in which, although the language is crude ('dumps', 'younger cow'), the underlying sentiment appears to be one of sympathy and solidarity. The 'younger cow' expression stands as a form of invoked attitude provoked through metaphor, where the term 'cow', although not flattering, evokes a 'giving' animal with sacrificial virtues. Excerpt [24] appears to counter an underlying defensive statement uttered by the man who will 'trade in' his tradwife at a later point. This is an interesting mechanism since through pre-emptive denial of the right to speak, by 'silencing' the accused party's initial (understated) self-justificatory statement, the tweeter is able to minimize the strength of said statement and reinforce the strength and validity of his/her own accusatory arguments. Whereas tweet [23] expresses amazed sympathy for the tradwives' naivety and [24] blames men for the dire consequences that the tradwife will have to suffer, excerpt [25] returns once more to the concept of 'choice' and responsibility for the consequences of one's actions. By listing a series of positive adjectives and noun phrases — 'sharp-suited', 'intellectually stimulating' and 'female executive'— the author of the tweet implies that as the tradwife has chosen to be a sloppy, boring, housewife, she has also chosen to be betrayed. The #getoutofthehouse tag in culminative position is therefore a strongly-expressed order rather than an encouraging exhortation.

[23] OMG OMG! Cant believe this #tradwives your husband should always come first? And what will you do when he dumps you for a younger cow? Have you got a plan B?

[24] Until you trade her with a younger woman in later life and your #tradwife's pension will be fucked up and she will have to start working at Tesco by the age of 50.

[25] Its her choice after all if he runs away with some sharp-suited, intellectually stimulating female executive, nobodyll be a bit surprised. #tradwife #tradwives #getoutofthehouse

3.5 Nationalist sentiment #MAGA, #Brexit and the #Tradwife nightmare

As can be seen in the four tweets that follow, the connection between the tradwife movement and national unity is recognized by both those in favour and those against. The causal link, however, differs in the two categories. In the ‘pro’ excerpts [26] and [27] it is by upholding the movement that Britain [26] and America [27] will thrive. In [26] the repeated use of the inclusive adjective ‘our’ serves to reinforce the nationalistic in-group sentiment and to charge the ideational hashtag #TrueBrit, open to contextual modification, with positive interpersonal sentiment. In [27], the link between tradwives and right-wing traditional values is brought to the fore by the aggregated tags in culminative position: the homeschool moms defend their childrens’ education against the invasive power of the state, and the #ServeYourFamilyServeYourCountry and #Make America Great Again tags are good examples of the right-wing rhetoric that fuels the passions of activists bent on restoring ‘traditional family values’ to the centre of American life.

In the ‘anti’ tweets [28] and [29], tradwives are no longer seen as the driving force behind positive national expansion, but rather as a further negative consequence of the isolationist policies implemented by Brexit and Trumpism.

[26] #TradWives are good for our people and our country #TrueBrit

[27] If you want to see a better, thriving America, promote #tradwives #homeschool moms #ServeYourFamilyServeYourCountry. #MAGA

[28] Ok so #MAGA and #Brexit most definitely led to the #TradWife nightmare

[29] #tradwife life is definitely not for me IT has scary undertones of “Make Britain Great Again”. Luckily MBGA doesn't have the same ring as #MAGA

4. Discussion and Conclusive Remarks

According to J. Daniels: “Ever since its mainstream adoption in the 1990s, the Internet has been exploited, amongst other things, by white supremacist groups as a tool to recruit and radicalize unwary individuals”.³⁸ Twenty years down the line, social media platforms, such as Reddit, YouTube, and Twitter, continue to further this practice. Although to date attention has often focused on posts, streams, or single tweets posted by men as the principal agents of online diffusion and subsequent radicalization, we feel that disregarding the role of women as active promulgators of white, supremacist and nationalistic values would in fact skew our understanding of the phenomenon as a whole.

While investigating the Twitter streams upon which this study focuses, with a view to understanding how users create and negotiate micro-blogging discourses around traditional gender roles and values (RQ 1), it soon became evident that women³⁹ were actively supporting ambient

³⁸ Jessie Daniels, *Cyber Racism: White Supremacy Online and the New Attack on Civil Rights* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 3.

³⁹ As previously mentioned, although it may appear somewhat naive to take declared gender at face value, a number of recent studies from which we have quoted (amongst others: Julia Ebner’s *Going Dark*, Kathleen Blee’s *Racism: Women in the Hate Movement*) have amply demonstrated, interviews at hand, that woman play an active role in propagating right wing values.

communications whose main focus was to re-establish traditional heterosexual/monogamist values, criticize feminism, and forward right-wing propaganda. Our analysis illustrates how, when promoting traditional gender roles in their online posts, the tradwife women assume the role of submissive wives, doting mothers or brides-to-be, striving to emulate widely promoted prelapsarian values of domesticity and compliance. In their tweets men on the other hand deploy their virility and masculinity, vow to support and safeguard their house-bound spouses and regularly uphold the value of whiteness. Such findings are in line with other investigations of women related to far right/extremist movements: in her study of interviews with women belonging to the Ku Klux Klan and Neo-Nazi groups, Kathleen Blee documents how they mould their understandings of community goals to fit their own beliefs and life experiences, and subsequently strive to “perform the wifely supportive roles that enable white Aryan men to maintain their racial vigilance”.⁴⁰

The opportunity to spread propaganda to a vast audience at practically no cost or exertion is one of the most appealing reasons for employing SNSs for indoctrination and group recruitment; and, as Koehler states: “These structural amenities ... effectiveness, cheap communication, anonymity, economical gain etc. allow for a better integration of each member into the movement arguably leading to the stabilization of the ideological commitment and the consolidation of the worldview”.⁴¹

It seems to us that the intersectional nature of the microblogging discourses under observation in this study, effectively serves to extend the Tradwives catchment area to ensnare affiliate communities. The analysis has in fact often revealed a theme/rheme pattern, with tradwife standing as theme and affiliated tags standing as rheme and charging the ideational tag with positive or negative interpersonal value depending on the interests being upheld.

Our investigation on the role hashtags play in propagating ideologies and broadening ambient affiliation (RQ 2), confirms they have the power to operate an “audience-selecting role”,⁴² indeed, as previously mentioned, posts containing a hashtag can reach audiences well beyond the catchment area of existing followers.

It must also be remembered that besides devoted hashtags and trending content, Twitter users can also be introduced to topics related to their generic sphere of interest through the recommendation algorithms which display content on the basis of users’ previous online behaviour. The recommendations present analogous accounts for the users to follow, creating networks of like-minded prosumers and content. Returning to this specific study, it is indeed by following this stepping-stone itinerary that a person interested in innocuous tips concerning, for example, British floral designs could progressively find themselves “sliding down the rabbit hole”⁴³ of traditional nationalistic values, as the term ‘British’ is granted salience by the algorithm.

As has become evident through our current research, it is often by adding ever more virulent hashtags to the initially harmless ones used as a lure, that radicalized users and activist groups can ensnare new affiliates.

To conclude, the online complex of interpersonal bonds which traverse multiple discursive regions creating communities and sub-communities and often invoking large networks of values is now very much part of our world. And those engaged in investigating discursive features have a crucial role in tracing such new forms of consensus building. We as researchers must (at least try) to survey linguistic phenomena while steering clear of any ideological influence. This is where corpus collection and

⁴⁰ Kathleen Blee, “Becoming a Racist: Women in Contemporary Ku Klux Klan and Neo-Nazi Groups”, *Gender & Society*, 10.6 (December 1996), 691.

⁴¹ Daniel Koehler, “The Radical Online: Individual Radicalization Processes and the Role of the Internet”, *Journal for Deradicalization*, 1 (December 2014), 119.

⁴² Umashanthi Pavalanathan and Jacob Eisenstein, “Audience-modulated Variation in Online Social Media”, *American Speech*, 90 (2015), 205.

⁴³ Sarah Florini, “Tweets, Tweeps, and Signifyin’: Communication and Cultural Performance on ‘Black Twitter’”, *Television & New Media*, 15.3 (March 2014), 228.

quantitative analysis play a significant role: while an objective stance is doubtless difficult to apply to such ideologically marked themes, data-driven research contributes to keeping scholars on the right track enabling them to produce objective and informative results.

To counter and challenge online extremist movements and the damage they cause, anti-discriminatory speech guidelines should be enforced on websites. Such measures will, however, only be effective if enacted in combination with educational initiatives. While we, as academics, may detect and trace social phenomena by identifying recurring linguistic traits, as educationalists we must encourage young people to hone their critical thinking skills. Against the current backdrop of dangerously shifting political dynamics, research and education may promote adequate measures to prevent the attractiveness and inclusiveness of extremist online and offline movements.

We hope the reader will now excuse us while we celebrate the end of our research by having a genuinely British cup of tea.