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'I'm the Wifeiest Wife Material that there is': Mainstreaming Alt-Right Femininities through Reality TV

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how the tradwife, an Alt-Right version of femininity, is becoming increasingly popularised throughout contemporary media texts. Specifically, a thematic analysis of a recent season of the finding-love reality TV programme – *Married At First Sight (MAFS) Australia* – is undertaken to interrogate the ways in which a tradwife participant is showcased and promoted to a mainstream audience. Such exposure to tradwife ideologies to a wide-reaching audience is concerning. This article will explore these concerns as well as the deeper implications of mainstreaming extreme versions of femininity that are associated with the Alt-Right's promotion of misogynistic, antifeminist and White nationalist ideologies.

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Introduction

Today's gendered landscape is polarised. On the one hand, the Global North is experiencing a gender revolution, which is contributing to a growing acceptance and normalisation of different gendered and sexual identities. On the other hand, today's far-right movements are promoting ultra-traditional gendered ideologies throughout social media and other popular media texts. From a feminist perspective, this is troubling: misogynistic and anti-feminist principles are embedded within these far-right versions of gendered being. This article specifically explores how far-right versions of femininity – especially from the Alt-Right – are becoming more mainstreamed throughout popular media genres like reality TV. In order to interrogate how this is occurring, a recent season of the finding-love reality TV programme *Married At First Sight Australia* will be analysed, with specific focus on how the show promotes one particular manifestation of Alt-Right femininity: the tradwife. This article will explore how this coverage plays into the wider Alt-Right agenda and questions the ethics of popular TV showcasing a form of femininity that has associations with misogynistic, anti-feminist and White nationalist political ideologies.

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Positioning Tradwives

A tradwife is a woman whose approach to wifehood and motherhood is 'ultra-traditional' (Scott and Day 2026, 716). The term has gained notoriety via the emergence of social media influencers identifying themselves as tradwives on platforms like YouTube, TikTok and Instagram (for example: Llanera 2023; Tebaldi 2023). In one way, tradwives return to a traditional version of domesticity seen in the 1950s. They tend not to work outside of the home (unless, of course, it is monetising their social media following – see Llanera 2023, 163), and instead dedicate their lives to domestic work, like preparing food, cleaning, mending clothes, child-rearing and child-raising; they do this principally to support their breadwinner husband. Another way that tradwives perform domesticity is through a return to pioneering sensibilities. For example, some tradwives also promote living off the land, preparing and making food from scratch as well as making and mending their family's clothes. Aesthetically, tradwives also look the part: they tend to either style themselves in 1950s-style dresses or wear pioneering long skirts and antiquated aprons.

Tradwives are, therefore, 'ideological agents' (Sykes and Hopner 2024, 455). They promote a version of femininity that is subservient to men (Bower 2025; Llanera 2023; Tebaldi 2023, 2024). In doing so, most position themselves as anti-feminist, overtly blaming feminists (Banet-Weiser and Kay 2026, 450) for undermining notions of a 'pure nation, tradition and family' (Tebaldi 2023, 15). As Tebaldi (2023, 22) writes, many tradwives see themselves as a 'protector' of a traditional order of things, defending society from 'all progressive movements from feminism to trans rights, welfare to racial equality'. In this sense, tradwives cease to be '"just" a housewife', but also 'a mother of the nation, a symbol, a nurturer, and a protector' (Tebaldi 2023, 31).

The Alt-Right

Scholars are unanimous in their assessment of tradwives' association with and promotion of far-right politics (Bower 2025; Del Campo 2023; Llanera 2023; Lundquist and Adams 2023; Scott and Day 2026; Sykes and Hopner 2024; Tebaldi 2023; Weis 2023; Zahay 2022). While Sykes and Hopner (2024) argue that tradwives can be positioned at different parts of the far-right continuum, a greater number of researchers focus specifically on tradwives' association with the gender- and race-based ideologies of the Alt-Right (Bower 2025; Llanera 2023; Lundquist and Adams 2023; Tebaldi 2023; Weis 2023; Zahay 2022). For this article, therefore, the Alt-Right's ideological foundation underpinning the tradwife will be presumed.

The Alt-Right can be traced back to 'a small group of well-educated white men' who convened to discuss a new *alternative right* movement in America (Hartzell 2018, 16). Their ideologies would eventually reach more mainstream audiences in 2010, with the launch of *AlternativeRight.com*, an online magazine-style platform positioning the Alternative Right as a critic of the 'Republican Party's perceived acquiescence to the political left's push towards multiculturalism, equality, and affirmative diversity' (Hartzell 2018, 19). The Alt-Right emerged from this online mainstreaming, reaching 'white folks' who may not have actively sought out such racist ideologies, but who would ultimately be receptive to them (Hartzell 2018, 20). To-date, the Alt-Right is largely an online movement (Malmgren 2017, 9; see also Moffitt 2024, 907; Reid and Valasik 2020, 94). As Malmgren (2017, 9) explains, the movement is

> an anonymous army of trolls, a new generation of internet racists who have pushed a nihilistic movement into the public eye with a mix of shock tactics, targeted harassment, outright calls to violence, and a saavy understanding of social media.

While the Alt-Right can be divided on a range of issues, which can lead to a lack of 'meaningful ideological conformity' (Hawley 2018, 10; see also Malmgren 2017, 10), their extreme race-based ideologies lay the 'foundation' (Hawley 2018, 10) of the movement (see also Hartzell 2018, 11; Malmgren 2017, 9–10). To be more specific, Alt-Right supporters tend to adopt a White nationalist view of race: 'a desire for a white ethnostate' (Hawley 2018, 16) that is coupled with an intense patriotic rhetoric (Hartzell 2018, 11; Hawley 2018, 16–17). This can take an even more specific form of American nationalism, which in turn has been an important recruitment strategy for the movement, whereby members of the Alt-Right 'merge their racial views with the imagery of American patriotism' (Hawley 2018, 17).

The Alt-Right is also unified by promoting traditional gender roles in society. As Koulouris (2018, 754) explains, within Alt-Right ideologies 'the hierarchical position of the genders – male/subject, female/object – is taken as natural – that is to say, biologically determined – and as such axiomatic. Any deviation from this norm warrants contempt, ridicule, and threats of violence'. Here, the tradwife emerges as a popular way for women to perform wifehood. A dominant feature of this traditionalism is seen in tradwives being subservient and submissive to their husband (Bower 2025; Llanera 2023; Tebaldi 2023, 2024). This promotion of traditional gender roles goes further to encompass both anti-feminist and misogynistic ideologies, yet as Hawley (2018, 15) explains, there is a continuum of misogyny that is found throughout the movement:

> You can find voices in the Alt-Right with views on women that are similar to mainstream conservative views. They may prefer traditional gender roles but do not object to women being involved in politics … But there is an element of the Alt-Right that genuinely despises women and wants them to have no part in politics.

Therefore, those at the more tolerant side of the continuum strategically see White women as important agents: having high-profile women promoting the Alt-Right is good for recruitment, as it makes the movement appear 'less threatening and … more normal' (Hawley 2018, 15). What has emerged is a renewed 'feminine identity' broadly across the Alt-Right landscape, which defines 'proper women' (feminine mothers) against 'improper women' (feminist, masculine, untraditional women) (Kisyova, Veilleux-Lepage, and Vanessa 2022, 45).

A key way Alt-Right women can do this is via social media. YouTube, TikTok and Instagram are powerful media for Alt-Right women influencers. Among them is a strong line of tradwives who promote Alt-Right ideologies. Prominent Alt-Right tradwife influencers include Lacey Lynn, Bre Faucheux, Dissident Mama (Tebaldi 2023, 16), Lana Lokteff (Llanera 2023, 158) and Ayla Stewart (Llanera 2023, 158). These social media influencers offer a gateway for non-Alt-Right supporters to become exposed to the ideologies of the movement. As Zahay (2022, 170) notes, 'viewers who seek out these channels for clothing or hair styling tips leave with another kind of styling: populist messaging that frames feminism as an elitist threat to the "real" femininity of everyday women'. Therefore, the Alt-Right's politics on White identity and femininity become filtered to social media users often through a benign aesthetic of the tradwife lifestyle, which is frequently

packaged as returning to a seemingly simpler time where domesticity is romanticised (Zahay 2022, 170). However, there are also White nationalist reasons for recruiting White women into the movement. As Llanera (2023, 159–160) explains:

> White women are needed for the continuation of the white race … the control of white women is thus an underlying concern for all white racist groups, since the autonomy of women diminishes white men's access to their bodies and impedes white procreation.

Tradwife influencers, therefore, play an integral role in bringing more women into the Alt-Right.

Hegemonic Femininity

These Alt-Right versions of femininity that tradwives promote are now becoming more widespread within the broader workings of gender in society. A useful way to make sense of this is by looking at how hegemonic femininity has been defined (Schippers 2007) and redefined in light of the popularisation of far-right movements like the Alt-Right (Johnson, Montiel-McCann, and Lampropoulou 2025; Montiel-McCann 2023, 2026; Pettersson, Payotte, and Sakki 2023; Pieters and Trottier 2024; Scott and Day 2026).[1]

Hegemonic femininity is a term coined by Mimi Schippers (2007) in her wider assessment of the system of gender hegemony. Responding to Raewyn Connell's (2005) theorising of hegemonic masculinity, Schippers (2007) published an influential critique that reformed how hegemonic masculinity is understood through a theorising of *gender hegemony*. Gender hegemony is a system that configures different gendered identities via ordered arrangements based on privilege and legitimacy. The most privileged and exalted identity within this system is hegemonic masculinity, which, for Schippers (2007, 91), is embodied by men who exhibit the following qualities: 'physical strength, the ability to use interpersonal violence in the face of conflict, and authority'. These qualities are engrained so deeply within the foundations of hegemonic masculinity that they 'guarantee men's legitimate dominance over women' (Schippers 2007, 91). However, this is dependent on this version of masculinity being 'symbolically paired with a complementary and inferior quality attached to [a version of] femininity' (Schippers 2007, 91).

This pairing to hegemonic masculinity is what Schippers (2007, 94) terms hegemonic femininity: 'the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women'. Hegemonically feminine qualities include passivity, subservience to men and physical weakness.

Hegemonic femininity plays two key roles in ensuring the stabilisation of gender hegemony. One, its position within the system of gender hegemony enables the dominance and ascendancy of hegemonic masculinity; this is because of the pairing and legitimacy hegemonic femininity gives to hegemonic masculinity. Two, its position also serves to regulate other femininities that threaten gender hegemony by casting these femininities as defective and contaminating (Schippers 2007, 94–97).

Scholars have explored how the popularisation of far-right movements, in general, has 'updated' (Montiel-McCann 2026, 71) how hegemonic femininity is defined within the social world (see also Johnson, Montiel McCann, and Lampropoulou 2025; Montiel-McCann 2023, 2026; Pettersson, Payotte, and Sakki 2023; Pieters and Trottier 2024;

Scott and Day 2026). The far-right's privileging of whiteness has become a way in which hegemonic femininity takes form today. Herein lies a complicated web of counter-ideologies that maintain both White women's hierarchy amongst other non-White women whilst also ensuring that all women continue to be subordinated by White men within the broader system of gender hegemony. Montiel-McCann (2023, 2964) explains this dynamic: 'As patriarchy intersect with white supremacist capitalism, hegemonic femininity is consequently heteronormative, white, non-disabled, materially privileged and cisgender'. Therefore, 'women whose gender practices complement hegemonic masculinity and thus accept and uphold (White supremacist capitalist) patriarchy are rewarded with the power to marginalize and subordinate other women (such as women of color), and indeed, some men' (Montiel-McCann 2026, 60).

With specific focus on the Alt-Right, tradwives are a convincing example of how this far-right movement is redefining hegemonic femininity (Bower 2025; Llanera 2023; Lundquist and Adams 2023; Tebaldi 2023; Weis 2023; Zahay 2022). As Scott and Day (2026, 721) explain, 'the emphasis on biblical submissiveness, heteronormativity, and womanhood demonstrates the significance of hegemonic femininity in maintaining male dominance, male hegemony'. However, while tradwives are defined by subjugation, primarily in their relationships with White men, they see themselves as 'superior to everyone else' (Llanera 2023, 159–160; Lundquist and Adams 2023, 107). This belief also aligns with how hegemonic femininity is currently being 'updated' (Montiel-McCann 2026, 71), while also adhering to Schippers (2007, 94) theorising of this form of femininity: 'there is … an ascendancy of hegemonic femininity over other femininities to serve the interests of the gender order and male domination'. It is important to note, though, that while this feminine performance of wifehood looks extreme, women's subservience and compliance to men is of course not new and sits at the core of any version of hegemonic femininity (Schippers 2007, 94).

Analysing Reality TV

This article extends this growing body of scholarship on the changing nature of hegemonic femininity embedded in the tradwife by exploring how a recent season of the popular finding-love TV show – *Married at First Sight Australia* – promoted this extreme domestic lifestyle. While the Alt-Right was not discussed openly within the season, nor was the term 'tradwife' uttered throughout the episodes, the gendered politics associated with this version of hegemonic femininity were showcased at length.

Married At First Sight (MAFS) is a global finding-love reality TV franchise. It first aired in Denmark in 2013. More than ten years on, it is now produced across a number of countries in the Global North, ranging from the US, UK/Europe and Australasia. *MAFS Australia* is produced by Endemol Shine Australia and filmed mostly in Sydney (where couples live in purpose-acquired apartments) and is widely thought of as one of the franchise's most popular iterations. *MAFS Australia* has all the hallmark features of Reality TV. Episodes are heavily edited and consist of three narrative features: scenes are shot capturing participants' daily lives and interactions. There are also individual interviews to camera and voiceovers peppered throughout each episode. Within the MAFS format, these are mostly from the participants but can also include expert narratives and/or family and friend narratives (especially during the Wedding footage as well as footage from 'Friend and Family' and 'Homestay' weeks).

Each week, couples complete tasks set by the experts, attend the infamous couples Dinner Party and then attend the Commitment Ceremony. The experts facilitate the Commitment Ceremonies, where couples are invited to share how their week has been and to reveal whether they will 'stay' for another week or 'leave' the relationship. If both decide to leave, they then exit the programme. If one decides to stay and the other decides to leave, they stay an extra week to see if they can salvage the relationship. Couples who remain together for the eight weeks then proceed to Final Vows. Final Vows are ceremonies where couples reveal whether they want to continue the relationship outside of the experiment: what is often termed 'the real world'.

Forming the Dataset

The dataset for this article included all episodes of *MAFS Australia* Season 12 that showcased one of the participants, Lauren. While Lauren did not explicitly call herself a 'tradwife' – nor was any utterance of the term 'tradwife' made throughout this season by the show's narrator, other participants or the experts – her beliefs around traditional femininity, domesticity and service to one's husband strongly resembled a range of ways in which tradwives define themselves. In episodes one and two, Lauren marries Eliot – a groom she was matched with due to his embodiment of ultra-traditional hegemonic masculinity. However, Eliot left the relationship after three days, citing that Lauren and he were incompatible. In an unexpected move for *MAFS Australia*, the production team invited Lauren (and Eliot) back to remarry later in the season. This time, Lauren marries Clint. This article, therefore, examines all episodes relating to Lauren's storyline. As many other couples are showcased in these episodes, only the scenes directly related to Lauren were transcribed. These transcriptions were then analysed to make sense of how this extreme version of femininity – and the surrounding endorsements of gender hegemony – was popularised within this season.

Using Reality TV as data for analysing social phenomena is a contentious topic. Unlike its name suggests, this genre cannot be seen as an accurate portrayal of material reality. The heavy use of editing and scripting leads to a form of media realism that is fictitious in many ways. With this said, though, scholars (e.g. Allen and Mendick 2013; Graves and Kwan 2012; Hunt 2008; Kavka and Turner 2004; Mast 2016; Vogels 2022; Wood, Skeggs, and Thumin 2008) argue that Reality TV nonetheless does offer audiences 'representations of everyday, ordinary life that have both elements of authenticity and reality' (Vogels 2022, 209). For this reason, analysing Reality TV texts like *MAFS Australia* can gauge insights into current gender politics that play out within the social world as well as shedding light on how social and political ideologies become popularised.

Method

The approach used for this critique sits within the now well-established tradition of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2022). A compelling feature of reflexive thematic analysis is its attention to the 'subjective, situated, aware and questioning researcher' (Braun and Clarke 2022, 5). My reading of texts like *MAFS Australia* is deeply rooted in my positionality as a feminist qualitative researcher: the codes and themes that I assigned to my dataset were informed by my feminist standpoint epistemology.

As an epistemology, standpoint feminism 'call[s] attention to women's lived experiences of oppression as the starting point for building knowledge' (Hesse-Biber 2012, 11). As already outlined, I am heavily informed by Schippers's (2007) theorising of gender hegemony as a way to explain this oppression. I largely read this season of *MAFS Australia* through this lens.

As outlined, my dataset for this article included transcripts as well as some visual scene descriptions of the 12th season of *MAFS Australia*. I wrote out the transcriptions myself, as I watched the applicable scenes. This enabled me to immerse myself in the data from this early stage. Once I had my data set, I then began the coding stage of my analysis. My initial coding for this project simply looked like *notes in the margins*. This initial coding was carried out deductively: my established epistemological leanings influenced how I coded the transcripts. Then, a second more inductive coding process took place, which lent heavily on new literature I was sourcing. Brown and Mondon's (2021) and Gillespie's (2026) theorising of how the far-right is mainstreamed in media gave more depth to my coding of the transcripts. Once all of my coding was completed, I looked for 'clusters of meaning' (Braun and Clarke 2022, 97). I did this manually and slowly, sitting with the transcripts and my code notes. Along with other qualitative researchers doing similar analytical work, I purposefully do this without the assistance of Generative AI (for example: Jowsey et al. 2025), or other Qualitative Data Analysis Software (for example: Braun and Clarke 2022, 66–67). For me, this is an important step in preserving the human-centric process of critical thinking in the data analysis stage of research. Four key themes emerged: articulation, endorsement, denigration of the feminine Other and sites of resistance.

Mainstreaming Tradwives

Making sense of the recent mainstreaming of far-right politics, like those that sit within the Alt-Right, is a contentious topic within the political and social sciences. Some scholars argue that far-right movements have become mainstreamed recently (that is, over the last decade) due to a range of media agenda-setting strategies (for example: Brown and Mondon 2021; Brown, Mondon, and Winter 2023). Brown and Mondon (2021, 290) argue that media coverage of the far-right has 'facilitated [its] legitimisation' through a variety of techniques. For example, coverage of far-right politics uses 'priming and framing' (Brown and Mondon 2021, 283) techniques that package the ideology as available and consumable for media audiences. This then leads to an 'amplification' (Brown and Mondon 2021, 288) of far-right politics within mainstream media. Another example is journalists engaging in 'euphemisation' (Brown and Mondon 2021, 285) when describing the far-right that 'replace more accurate and derogatory qualifiers'. However, other scholars argue that seeing far-right politics as suddenly becoming part of mainstream agendas is overly simplistic. As Liam Gillespie (2026, 226) maintains:

> When it is deployed uncritically, the mainstreaming explanation for the rise or return of the far-right can work to subtly posit an anterior scene, or priori state of affairs, when the far right was not already proximate to the centre.

This article takes a middle ground position. Scholars have pointed to a growing popularisation of far-right movements, in general, and how this has in turn 'updated' the

parameters of hegemonic femininity (Montiel-McCann 2026, 71; see also Johnson, Montiel McCann, and Lampropoulou 2025; Montiel-McCann 2023, 2026; Pettersson, Payotte, and Sakki 2023; Pieters and Trottier 2024; Scott and Day 2026). The showcasing of the tradwife identity in popular media texts like *MAFS Australia* suggests that there is a growing popularising specifically of the Alt-Right occurring, which one could argue is providing these extreme politics more mainstream airtime. Yet, in keeping with Gillespie's (2026) critique, gender hegemony has been a stable fixture of society for centuries (Vogels 2023). While not always promoting such extreme versions of hegemonic femininity, gender hegemony has always complemented any gendered ideology that promotes the subservience of women to men (Schippers 2007). So, both extreme (Alt-Right tradwife qualities) and less extreme versions of hegemonic femininity find a place within the stable fixture of gender hegemony. This article is most concerned, however, with the growing mediated visibility of these more extreme versions of hegemonic femininity (Montiel-McCann 2026, 71), like the tradwife. The following analysis, therefore, will look at recent mainstreaming techniques at play within this recent season of *MAFS Australia*. In particular, these mainstreaming effects – or 'facilitated legitimisation' (Brown and Mondon 2021, 290) – are seen in how tradwife values are given space to be articulated, how experts endorse these values and how the denigration of less desirable femininities is mobilised for a wider audience.

Articulation

This season of *MAFS Australia* provided ample space for the tradwife lifestyle to be articulated. This articulation involved a key 'priming and framing' (Brown and Mondon 2021, 283) technique that enabled this Alt-Right version of femininity to be defined, without needing to explicitly mention the term 'tradwife'. In episode one, Lauren introduces herself with the following narrative:

> Lauren (II[2]): I think I was definitely born in the wrong era. I really wish I was born in the 1920s where gender roles were so prominent. Men could be men and women could be women. I think instinctively where I'm happiness and where I think lots of women are happiest is in their feminine, being the homemaker and like the caretaker … so that when he comes home from, you know, most likely running a very successful business; it's like a peaceful environment. You know, don't be nagging your husband; don't be asking them to do mundane things like unpack the dishwasher and take the bins out. That's what I think.

Then later in the first episode, she shares the following:

> Lauren (11): I'm like the wifeiest wife material that there is, what makes me happiest is serving my partner, so as long as I find them masculine, I want to serve them like in every possible way.

Within these narratives, the classic hallmarks of the tradwife are defined. Probably the most definitive moment that speaks to Alt-Right ideologies within the tradwife identity is when Lauren speaks of serving her partner. Lauren articulates that a wife should be focussed solely on homemaking: caring for her husband and children and undertaking all domestic tasks. Lauren curiously defines these tasks as mundane, which implies that men are above such practices. This promotion of subservience provides an overarching

connection to how the tradwife, ideologically, performs femininity, which too speaks directly to Alt-Right ideologies of gender (Bower 2025; Llanera 2023; Tebaldi 2023, 2024). This version of wifehood is also defined by Lauren as an instinctive version of femininity, which speaks to how the Alt-Right views gender as 'natural … biologically determined' (Koulouris 2018, 754). To further this, Lauren's wording suggests that being a homemaker and domestic servant is the *right* way to be feminine and a woman (Kisyova, Veilleux-Lepage, and Vanessa 2022, 45) and then quantifies this by arguing that 'lots of women are happiest' in this gendered performance. Lauren's preferred version of wifehood is also defined by the now popular understanding of the tradwife as a nostalgic approach to homemaking. This type of domesticity is from a time-gone-by era – when 'men could be men and women could be women'.

The (first) husband matched with Lauren is Eliot. Eliot's thoughts on gender roles are complementary to Lauren's. Speaking to one of the experts, Eliot shares the following opinion:

> Eliot: I want that whole 1950s nuclear family. You know dad comes in with a briefcase, hangs his hat on the wall and has got the kids run up to him, and wife's in an apron, in charge of the household.

Eliot's traditional version of hegemonic masculinity is 'symbolically paired' (Schippers 2007, 91) with Lauren's extreme version of femininity. It is similarly antiquated and based on men working outside of the home while women take care of domestic duties. Eliot's promotion of this version of masculinity appears to be in perfect partnership with Lauren's extreme feminine embodiment legitimacy and vice versa. Eliot also visually evokes the tradwife: 'in an apron, in charge of the household'. This visual articulation further defines this extreme version of femininity for the audience.

This 'complementarity' (Schippers 2007, 90) of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity is further articulated during their wedding vows.

> Lauren: My friends will tell you that I was born in the wrong era with my old-world values. The kind of partnership I'm hoping for is one of a traditional nature. I admire a time when courting was talking on the phone, flowers on a first date, opening of car doors. The era of real chivalry. I hope for a partner with class, pride and who is innately masculine, driven to provide and protect. Please don't try to clean up after dinner or help with the laundry. Everything in the home is my domain and your time to rest after a long day.
>
> Eliot: I stand before you today ready to embark of a journey with you, calm but curious where that journey might take us. I can be stubborn and set in my ways and old fashioned. Always thinking men should be men and women be women. I seek the sort of steady love I saw in my grandparents, forged through a lifetime of hand-written notes, cups of tea together, sunsets and date nights. You'll gain husband who is strong willed and principled, and most importantly, a safe anchoring presence for you to be your authentic feminine self.

Within these vows, nostalgia again plays a significant role in how Eliot and Lauren view marriage. Words and phrases such as 'old-world values', 'traditional', 'chivalry', 'old-fashioned', 'courting' and writing 'handwritten notes' act as euphemisms (Brown and Mondon 2021, 285), which hide deeper, misogynistic ideologies behind the Alt-Right's connection to this form of wifehood. These ideologies, within this context, principally

involve women as needing to be subservient and submissive to their husbands (Bower 2025; Llanera 2023; Tebaldi 2023, 2024).

Their vows also articulate, once again, a seemingly natural state for women and men to embody, again obscuring how these extreme versions of gender roles in marriage are constructed, politically by movements like the Alt-Right (Koulouris 2018, 754). Men are 'innately masculine' and should be strong-willed, principled, protectors and a safe anchor, which implies that women, in turn, should be 'authentically feminine', which, when complementing this version of hegemonic masculinity, looks like being weak-willed, vulnerable and in need of protecting (Schippers 2007, 91). The core of gender hegemony is, therefore, stabilised and legitimised during these vows.

Tradwife ideologies are also articulated visually when the audience is introduced to Lauren in episode one. Lauren explains her beliefs on marriage, while the accompanying mise-en-scene portrays romanticism and nostalgia: Lauren is shot in a white, minimalist, pristine kitchen, where she is baking and surrounded by an ultra-domestic feminine setting of fresh flowers and soft furnishings. Everything is white or in cream tones. She is wearing a simple dress, reminiscent of the 1950s. These visual displays 'stylistically suture alt-right anti-feminism' (Zahay 2022, 170) by detracting from the concerning aspects of being a tradwife: i.e. subservience to men and the misogynistic treatment of women.

Endorsement

Expert endorsement of Lauren and Eliot's gendered politics adds another powerful layer to how Alt-Right ideologies go through processes of 'priming and framing' (Brown and Mondon 2021, 283) within *MAFS Australia*. The following narrative encapsulates the experts' approach to discussing the ideological matching of Eliot and Lauren.

Alessandra:	It's almost miraculous that Lauren happened to sign up for the experiment this year that Eliot's in the mix because their values really do align very very well.
Mel and John:	Hmmm (in agreement)
Mel:	As do their expectations and beliefs about relationships.
Alessandra:	Yes nods
Mel:	You know they both see gender roles in relationships in a very traditional way, and its pretty rare that we come across a man and a woman who both want that
John:	Yeh, you know I think with these two we are very fortunate, you know. In Eliot, he wants to lead and essentially make decisions and take charge and Lauren, by her own admission, really wants someone to protect her and to look after things

Alessandra and Mel smiling and nodding

John: So in some strange way we've got a very compatible match

While only a short exchange, this narrative normalises Alt-Right femininities, aiding in the mainstreaming of this gendered ideology. None of the experts raise any concerns about Lauren and Eliot's views on how gender should be performed within (hetero)romantic relationships, and in fact, they seemed pleasantly surprised that such a match was able to be made. This pleasant surprise could speak to the seemingly rare, nostalgic nature

of such a union. This is problematic: John Aiken (Relationship Expert), Mel Schilling (Dating and Relationship Coach), and Alessandra Rampolla (Clinical Sexologist) are all professionals in the romantic relationship industry. Audiences may, therefore, look to these experts for validation as to what constitutes a healthy romantic relationship. Giving consent to extreme ideologies of gender roles offers audiences an uncritical professional endorsement of women's subjugation to men.

The experts' use of phrases like 'seeing gender roles in a traditional way' and 'their values do align very very well', which obscures 'more accurate and derogatory qualifiers' (Brown and Mondon 2021, 285) relating to misogynistic elements of such Alt-Right views on gendered roles. For example, 'traditional' is arguably a euphemism for *submissiveness*, and 'values' is missing qualifiers like *misogynistic*. The experts then go on to praise the match of Eliot and Lauren: it is a match that is 'rare', 'miraculous' and one that the experts feel 'fortunate'. Together, the unwavering positivity for this union is alarming in its support of women's subservience in the home.

Denigration of the Feminine Other

'Priming and framing' (Brown and Mondon 2021, 283) of Alt-Right versions of femininity can also be found in this season of *MAFS Australia* via Lauren's disparagement of male and pariah femininities – a key function of hegemonic femininity (Schippers 2007, 94–97). Here, another hallmark of the tradwife is defined: while they are subservient to their husbands, they position others as inferior to them (Llanera 2023, 159–160; Lundquist and Adams 2023, 107). Early in episodes one and two, Lauren calls men who cannot handle her approach to domesticity 'pussies', a popular slur used to persecute men who appear to embody male femininities (Schippers 2007, 96). She also ridicules other brides throughout this season for lacking class and decorum, labelling them with 'pariah' (Schippers 2007, 95) terms like 'bogans'. Here, 'bogan' is a slur given to a woman who is seen to be overly masculine – outspoken, uncouth, not demure. This directly positions Lauren as a 'proper' woman and the other wives as 'improper' (Kisyova, Veilleux-Lepage, and Vanessa 2022, 45), a key feature of how Alt-Right women position themselves in relation to other (non-tradwife) women.

These decisions towards other femininities escalate later in the season, when Lauren returns to marry Clint. Two new narratives with specific reference to Clint emerge that directly speak to Lauren's promotion of the tradwife ideology. When Clint is first introduced to audiences in Episode fifteen, he states the following: 'I do like a feminine woman because for me, I can be a bit more of a protector. That probably comes natural to me'. Lauren also proclaims early on in her marriage to Clint that he was 'masculine' when he defends her honour at the Dinner Party (after Eliot tried to discredit her character in front of the other wives and husbands). However, as the episodes progress, it becomes evident that Clint is, in fact, not masculine *enough* for Lauren.

The first narrative is driven by Lauren and relates both to Clint falling short of her expectations of how a husband should act and, in turn, to her belief about the correct functions of a wife. One occasion related to the carrying out of domestic tasks:

Lauren: I need to actually do quite a bit of washing
Clint: I actually enjoy washing

Lauren: Do you?
Clint: Do you like washing?
Lauren: Yeah I think it's a girl's job
Clint: Really?
Lauren: Yeh
Clint: What are you saying? *Laughs nervously*
Lauren: I'm saying just leave the washing to me
Clint: I actually really want to do the washing
Lauren: Oh God
Lauren (II): I mean I've never met a man who wants to do washing. For me, gender roles are very important I want to look after and like serve my husband. That makes me happy so we'll see.

Lauren then goes on to explain how Clint *taking the lead* is important to her identity as a wife:

Lauren: I know that you feel like I'm like a bit of a dominant personality whereas with an alpha male I wouldn't feel that way; it kinda like softens me
Clint: Do you like to share decision making?
Lauren: I want to trust the person enough that I know that I would respect the decision and that I would be happy with their decision
Clint: Really? (sounds surprised)
Lauren: Yeah

In this exchange, Lauren admits her dominant personality, but then qualifies it with the hallmark feature of tradwife: for an 'alpha'-husband, she would submit (but she wouldn't submit to all other men – see Llanera 2023, 159–160; Lundquist and Adams 2023, 107).

This narrative of the alpha then becomes a steady storyline across these later episodes. For example, during one of the couple's weekly tasks, Lauren starts to openly question whether Clint is alpha enough.

Lauren (II): I feel like with Clint he definitely isn't an alpha male. He shaves his chest … he got a spray tan. I was like I just don't think that that's masculine … Maybe just like let your chest hair grow out let the fake tan wash off and I don't know just be really secure in your manhood

This mention of the alpha speaks directly to tradwife ideologies. As Tebaldi (2024, p. 85) explains,

> it creates not only a tradwife, but also a male hero, her perfect counterpart in the white moral order, and a feminist who represents disorder. This is not just normalization, but is a project of normalizing and advertising white supremacy as a romance.

The term alpha also speaks directly to Alt-Right ideologies of masculinity, in particular its White nationalist connection to 'Chad Nationalism', which has 'connotations with being a successful, sexually active, 'alpha' white man' (Campion and Phillips 2026, 41). The term alpha could also speak to the Manosphere; however, it is important to note that 'beta' or 'incel' men within the Manosphere feel deprived of the sex women 'freely' give to the alpha men (Miller-Idriss 2025, 108). The Manosphere is also distinct from the Alt-Right in terms of its historical and ideological routes, whilst both can be seen as 'two

sides of the same coin' (Judge and Steel 2025, 6). Therefore, this concentration on the alpha, in relation to the tradwife, is arguably more connected to core Alt-Right ideologies.

During the next commitment ceremony, one of the experts addresses the alpha narrative with both Lauren and Clint:

Alessandra:	Lauren, let's try and get a little definition from you in terms of what it means for you to have an alpha male. What does it look like?
Lauren:	I think an alpha is a leader in the relationship, someone that will organise everything and like take control of everything and like is you know very dominating. As a man, it's just something you are or you're not but like in our house, like Clint does the washing, and like I come home and my laundry is folded, whereas I feel like in what I would consider my ideal relationship it would be the other way around
Alessandra:	Okay. Is it natural Clint for you to be in a leadership role in a relationship?
Clint:	Absolutely, in a relationship for sure … Like, if we're in a relationship I'd want to be the protector the provider and looking after the family whereas the wife could look after the children and do that sort of thing. But yeah I can take the initiative and do that; I like doing that.
Alessandra:	I think the message is pretty clear that she needs you to do that
Clint:	Yeah
Alessandra:	Proactively
Clint:	Yeah

Lauren later shares the following: 'I think that Clint has traits of an alpha male so I'm willing and committed to give it another week, but I need like a very alpha male so hopefully he doesn't do any more dishes'. Now the alpha has been redefined. Clint may have traits of an alpha but what Lauren actually wants is a 'very alpha male'. During this exchange, Alt-Right gendered ideologies connected to tradwives and alpha men are legitimised in two ways. The first involves, again, giving space (Brown and Mondon 2021, 283) within this season of *MAFS Australi*a for articulating what hegemonic masculinity should look like, and that this articulation is deeply embedded in the Alt-Right tradwife version of hegemonic femininity. Lauren's utterance – 'I've never met a man who wants to do washing' – implies that a male body cannot be defined as 'a man' if it carries out domestic chores, inferring that Clint occupies a more male-feminine space. This narrative is then met, once again, with Lauren promoting the positioning of wives as servants to their husbands: the cornerstone of Alt-Right ideologies of wifehood.

The second legitimisation comes in the form of further expert endorsement of these extreme versions of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity. Alessandra asks Clint whether he feels he is 'masculine enough' for Lauren. Even though Clint responds affirmatively, he is further advised by Alessandra to be 'proactive' in meeting Lauren's expectations of a husband. Not only does Alessandra give space for Lauren to continue articulating what hegemonic masculinity and its 'symbolically paired' (Schippers 2007, 91) hegemonic femininity looks like, she actively encourages Clint to embody a different version of being a husband; the way of being masculine that a tradwife requires. In turn, this implies that there is no room for feminine men within this type of traditional marriage, which further cements the derogatory status of men who embody male-feminine qualities (Schippers 2007, 96). This is a concerning narrative: an expert within the field of romantic relationships is advising Clint to take on masculine qualities that support and condone a romantic partnership that is heavily associated with a form of

wifehood that is strongly embedded within Alt-Right ideologies that support misogyny, and in particular women's subservience. It should also be noted that the other two experts appear to agree with Alessandra. Arguably, this further normalises the tradwife, and in turn, the tradwife's complementary union with an authoritative husband. Once again, the tradwife's Alt-Right foundations enter the mainstream, as a legitimate and unproblematic way for people to be in romantic relationships.

Moments of (Limited) Resistance

As this latter part of the season continues, however, sites of resistance do materialise. Principally, this resistance comes from the other couples' disagreeing with Lauren's views on Clint's gendered performances. Here is a selection of comments from the other *MAFS Australia* participants:

> "I feel for the guy because his personality isn't like he's not going to bang his chest like a gorilla like that's just not how he is but it doesn't mean he doesn't have those attributes, like cut the guy some slack"
>
> "An alpha male sounds like someone who is lazy around the house"
>
> "He [Clint] seems like a lovely guy" (talking about Clint)
>
> "She [Lauren] seems really petty" (talking about Lauren)

There are complexities within these narratives. In one way, Alt-Right versions of femininity – and masculinity – are provided space to be disparaged: for instance, women who embody hegemonic femininity can be 'petty' in how they view gendered roles and men who embody hegemonic masculinity can be 'lazy' as they do not help with domestic chores. These narratives contest and arguably destabilise the extreme ideologies embedded within the alpha 'male hero … perfect counterpart' to the tradwife (Tebaldi 2024, 85).

In another way though, these narratives inadvertently further define the parameters of these extreme versions of gender. The alpha male is conflated with a gorilla and 'banging' his chest, implying that an alpha male is defined by strength, aggression and dominance, whereas Clint's more feminine approach makes him a 'lovely' and needing women to 'cut him some slack'. These comparisons arguably feminise Clint even more by implying an inherent passiveness and vulnerability within his character: he's 'lovely' and needs to be protected from Lauren.

Conclusion

While tradwives have already gained increasing popularity across social media, the promotion of this Alt-Right version of femininity within a mainstream popular reality TV text, like *MAFS Australia*, suggests that an even wider mainstreaming effect is taking place. This mainstreaming effect is fuelled by *MAFS Australia* giving space for this ideology to be articulated and endorsed as a viable way for (hetero)romantic relationships to function.

Following Gillespie's (2026) provocations, however, gender hegemony has long enjoyed a stable presence within the social world and has always been underpinned

by traditional gender roles (Schippers 2007). However, it is the popularisation of this more extreme version of femininity that is of concern and suggests a new wave of mainstreaming is occurring within the updating of gender hegemony (Montiel-McCann 2026, 71). As Zahay (2022, 170) cautions, when viewers come across the more benign aspects of tradwife lifestyles (the aesthetics and romancing of domesticity), many will be unaware that the undercurrent of such a portrayal is deeply associated with extreme misogynistic, anti-feminist and White nationalist ideologies embedded within the Alt-Right. Herein lies an ethical dilemma of popular television texts giving airtime to the more populist manifestations of the tradwife lifestyle.

Moving forward, feminist researchers need to continue interrogating popular media texts for these types of far-right endorsements. The Alt-Right is already firmly mediated; feminist scholarship needs to continue challenging the urgency of this, in particular how the movement's extreme forms of masculinity and femininity are promoted and endorsed to mainstream audiences.

Notes

1. These references do not talk specifically about the Alt-Right, but instead discuss broadly the far-right's impact on versions of femininity.
2. II stands for Individual Interview to camera conducted with the production team.

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Use of Generative AI Statement

The author used spell-check and grammar checks from the Microsoft Word functions as well as basic grammar and spell-check modification suggestions from Grammarly. Grammarly was not used to rework paragraphs or large sections of writing.

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