

A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Instagram Account of a Tradwife

By

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how Instagram tradwife content constructs love through aesthetics of submission, dependence, and self-erasure. The research explores how tradwife discourse on Instagram aestheticizes and circulates ideals of control, coercion, and emotional violence as love. Drawing on Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) and visual analysis, the study analyzes 62 reels and captions posted by white tradwife influencer Aria Lewis between January 2 and March 30, 2024. Interpretation is guided by Foucault's theory of power, Butler's theory of performativity, and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, which helps trace how submission is produced and made desirable through discourse, embodiment, and visual style. Seven themes structure the findings. They are economic dependence as love, domestic servitude as devotion, illness and failure, spiritualized patriarchy and courtship, aestheticized modesty and historical femininity, scripted femininity, and tradwife discourse as harmless choice. Unequal power is softened through religious language, gratitude, nostalgia, humour, and routine-based formats that frame women's accommodation, emotional containment, and one-income reliance as moral, safe, and chosen. Rather than showing overt conflict, the account builds a romantic common sense in which hierarchy appears as peace and protection. This creates vulnerability because women's security depends on a husband's kindness. The thesis locates coercive control not only in private couple dynamics but also in cultural and digital infrastructures that teach followers what love should look like. It also contributes to tradwife scholarship by focusing on a young woman in a pre-motherhood phase and the scripts she circulates to younger audiences.

Keywords: Instagram, tradwife discourse, feminist critical discourse analysis, coercion, influencer culture

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Romantic love is often positioned as essential to a meaningful life and as a key marker of personal fulfillment (e.g., Naeimi & Impett, 2025). Yet feminist scholarship has long argued that dominant cultural scripts of heterosexual romance can be structured by gendered power, inviting women, more often than men, to equate love with endurance, accommodation, and self-erasure (e.g., Firestone, 1970; Giddens, 1992; Illouz, 2012). For women and girls, sacrifice of identity and personal goals is often portrayed as necessary for sustaining romantic relationships (Venegas et al., 2025). Women and girls come to believe in such love because they grow up witnessing how self-sacrificing women are praised, while those who prioritize their own needs are judged as “bad” or “selfish.” In many patriarchal contexts, the figure of the “good woman” is constructed through respectability and relational duty. She prioritizes family harmony, tolerates inequity, and minimizes her own needs to preserve the relationship (Kandiyoti, 1988; Radhakrishnan, 2009; Twamley & Sidharth, 2019). For example, in my own childhood, I remember my mother and other women in our neighborhood disapproving of a woman who worked outside her home, calling her “yeh gandi aurat hai” (she is perceived as sexually immoral) and warning us, “iski beti ke saath mat khela karo, ye achhi aurat nahi hai, bigad jaoge uske saath kheloge toh” (don’t play with her daughter, she isn’t a good woman, you’ll be spoiled if you mix with her). These gendered ideals are reinforced for cis-heteronormative women in patriarchal contexts across societies worldwide, where family, peers, media, and cultural norms collectively emphasize that a “good woman” should prioritize her partner and family above her own ambitions. While many women do maintain careers and independence, these societal pressures may encourage some to compromise their autonomy, emotional well-being, and personal goals in order to sustain romantic relationships (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2023). But if women are sacrificing themselves, do

they hold less power in their relationships? If women are expected to give up on their careers, autonomy, emotional-wellbeing, and even their identities in order to sustain romantic relationships, are they then also vulnerable to violence and abuse (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2023)?

This matters for understanding gender-based violence (GBV) and intimate partner violence (IPV), particularly forms that do not rely on physical assault. Coercive control describes ongoing patterns of domination that constrain a partner's liberty through isolation, intimidation, surveillance, and micromanagement of everyday life (Stark & Hester, 2019; Stark, 2007). Growing up as a woman in a patriarchal society, I have encountered gender-based violence in many forms, including IPV. Cultural messages about romantic relationships confused me. I was not sure what is genuinely loving behavior and what is controlling or harmful behavior. For instance, saying "I need to know where you are at because I care" may not be genuine care but an act of control.

From an early age, I was conditioned to believe that a woman's worth lies in her ability to endure and prioritize men's needs over her own. I learned that, as a woman, I should always keep my voice lowered and that preserving relationships requires tolerating men's violent behaviors and entitlement. I internalized that my femininity (being a good woman) was in being silent, putting others' needs above my own, and always expressing understanding of men's abusive behaviour. I was raised in India where such ideas are common. For instance, Nivedita Menon, in her (2007) book *Sexualities*, argues how women in rural Gujarat internalize the belief that they are responsible for enduring physical violence from their husbands. They excuse their husbands' violent behaviour as a consequence of their husbands' hard work to earn money. It was a common saying in my neighbourhood (often by my mother and grandmother as well) "bhagwan ne aurat ko sehanshakti di hai kyunki ek aurat hi ghar ko bchae rakh sakti hai," meaning "god

has provided tolerance to women so that she can save the relationships”. I was taught, explicitly and implicitly, that love meant sacrifice, and that unconditional support and endurance were the marks of a good woman. I received these lessons in my home, at school, and perhaps most vividly, in the media (e.g., *Kyuki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, a popular early-2000s Indian television drama by Ekta Kapoor that glorified the ideal self-sacrificing daughter-in-law and wife). I consumed Bollywood films and television shows in the 1990s that portrayed women as passive caregivers. In these shows, women protagonists would bear the emotional burdens of men and families with quiet resilience. The same films showed men as flawed but redeemable and women’s forgiveness as a path to harmony. I internalized these narratives as blueprints for living.

Gender is not something we are, but something we do, repeatedly and ritualistically, in accordance with the expectations of society (Butler, 1990). Over time, what we do can start to feel like who we are because repetition shapes subjectivity and makes performance feel like identity. These performances become so ingrained that they feel natural. In my case, I married and performed the role of the understanding partner. As time passed, this performance took away my agency (Emond et al., 2023). I made decisions based on what I believed I was supposed to do, not on what was right for me. I excused emotional abuse because I believed that’s what love looked like. I stayed silent in the face of control and coercion because I was told by the media, by society, and by family that men were under pressure and women should be supportive (Rollero & De Piccoli, 2020). Now, when I look back, I realize these were not acts of love but they were acts of survival which I performed within a gendered script shaped by forces far beyond my control. I left my marriage, moved to Canada, and found myself still surrounded by images of feminine self-sacrifice.

Power does not operate only through brute force; rather it moves through norms, discourse and ideology (Foucault, 1977). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes how surveillance and discipline produce “docile bodies,” meaning that individuals conform, not because they are forced to but because they believe it is right to do so. While Foucault makes a point of disciplinary mechanisms, Marshall McLuhan (1964) stresses that the medium itself forms how these ideas are transmitted and understood. In the context of my study, Instagram, as a medium, amplifies and aestheticizes gendered scripts of love and control that demonstrates the power of media in configuring perceptions of relationships.

I now see how the discourse of romantic love has been molded by media, religion, family, and culture, and how media has functioned as a kind of disciplinary force in my life. Ideas like “love conquers all” can lead women to blame themselves, forgive violence, and view controlling behaviors as loving (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Lelaurain et al., 2021). Mainstream ideas of love taught me that love must endure pain, control is care, remaining sweet brings harmony, and submission is a virtue. Coercive control in intimate relationships becomes invisible when social norms legitimize male dominance. In such contexts, controlling behavior is often perceived as normal (Alfaro-Urquiola et al., 2025). While as a young girl I learned harmful lessons through traditional media like Bollywood films and TV shows, young girls and women in North America today are exposed to similar ideologies through social media platforms like Instagram (Piccoli et al., 2021). Such media are extremely powerful and persuasive because of their ease of access and constant presence (Friedman et al., 2022). Much content on Instagram promotes traditional gender roles and submission to husbands as a virtue. It reflects a rebranding of patriarchal norms (Devos et al., 2022). This rebranding matters because overt patriarchy is less socially acceptable today, so similar gender hierarchies are reframed as personal choice,

empowerment, and lifestyle. These influencers present aesthetically curated content that equates femininity with sacrifice and submission (Roberti, 2022). Such norms may put women at risk of losing their autonomy (Sahebi, 2022). Such ideals are visible within the “tradwife” movement, a growing online subculture in North America and beyond where women publicly embrace traditional gender roles as a form of identity and aspiration. The movement emphasizes domesticity, obedience to husbands, and rejection of feminist ideals, while presenting these practices not as patriarchal constraints but empowering choices (Bower, 2024; Deem, 2023).

However, underlying this narrative of “choice” is a religious ideology that frames these gender roles as part of God’s natural order, with men and women fulfilling the roles that God intended for them. In Aria’s content, this is articulated through conservative Christianity but appeals to divinely ordained gender hierarchy also appear in other religious traditions, including Hinduism. In this way, the movement presents submission and domesticity as divine duty and moral virtue as well as personal preferences. This framing also works as gender ideology. It treats binary gender difference as natural and fixed. It frames heterosexual marriage as the proper social unit. Anti-gender scholarship shows that these claims often intensify when gender diversity becomes more visible and when feminist politics challenge male authority (Graff & Korolczuk, 2021; Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018). In this context, appeals to “God-given” roles work as reassurance. They promise stability and moral clarity in a moment when gender is increasingly contested (Butler, 2024). The tradwife movement rebrands patriarchal scripts through digital aesthetics. The movement frames submission as a lifestyle that is socially aspirational (Proctor, 2022). However, not all viewers consume this content uncritically. Some women may critique the content or see it as ironic and resist the submission and traditional gender roles (Sykes, 2024).

My lived experiences with IPV and my growing academic understanding of gender and power made me curious to know, how do these narratives on social media contribute to intimate partner dynamics? And how do intimate partner dynamics shape what people seek out, share, and normalize on social media? In what ways do the language and imagery used by influencers romanticize control and normalize emotional abuse? And how do these portrayals make it difficult for women to name or resist coercion in their relationships? To address these questions, I pose my research question as: In what ways does Instagram's tradwife discourse aestheticize and circulate ideals of control, coercion, and emotional violence as forms of love?

In my study, I focus on a single, highly visible tradwife Instagram account of a self-identifying tradwife, Aria Lewis (@mrsarialewis). Studying a widely followed influencer matters because Instagram's attention economy and algorithmic circulation can amplify a narrow set of gendered ideals and make them feel like common sense when those ideals are packaged through warm visuals, short-form storytelling, and "relatable" intimacy (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Leaver et al., 2020; Papacharissi, 2015). Aria Lewis is a married, white North American tradwife influencer who did not have children at the time of posting, which makes her account useful for examining how domestic wifehood is framed as godly and desirable even before motherhood is realized. It is important to note here that Aria is a white woman. She doesn't mention race, which renders her privilege invisible and taken for granted. This matters because tradwife aesthetics often draw on a nostalgic image of the ideal American family that is coded as white and middle-class, and whiteness can function as an unmarked norm that makes the discourse appear natural and universally desirable (Bower, 2024; Sykes & Hopner, 2024). Because my case study focuses on a white Instagram influencer, it captures a particular version of tradwife respectability, and future research could examine how tradwife discourse shifts across racialized contexts. By

focusing on her posts, I investigate how ideas about love, sacrifice, obedience, and femininity are constructed and circulated through both visual elements, such as setting, aesthetic, camera angles, and body language, and linguistic elements, including word choice, tone, and repetition. This case allows me to examine how cultural norms around love and gender are internalized and lived (Butler, 1990).

To answer my research question, I analyze Instagram content through feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) and feminist media analysis. The intensified debates around gender politics, reproductive rights, and conservative family values during the 2024 U.S. election year make 2024 a significant political context for my inquiry. These debates were prominent on Instagram during that period, shaping public discourse in ways that continued to influence conversations around gender, family, and reproductive rights beyond the election year (Kirzinger et al., 2024; McClain et al., 2021). By situating my analysis in this politically charged moment, I examine how tradwife discourse circulates in relation to broader social anxieties and contests over gender and morality. This methodological framework allows me to examine not only what is being said and shown, but also how these messages operate to normalize gendered power and make control appear as love. In my study, I try to understand how these messages draw on cultural ideals, become desirable, and conceal power under the guise of love and care. Discourse is not merely about language, but also about regimes of truth; it is about what a society accepts as normal (Foucault, 1980). These regimes are produced and maintained through repeated, normalized practices, through media, relationships, and institutions. Similarly, the repetition of gendered behaviors constructs the illusion of stable identity (Butler, 1990). Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence also helps explain how domination can be misrecognized as normal and internalized through everyday expectations of femininity and partnership (Bourdieu, 2001).

When women repeatedly enact submission and make sacrifices, they are also performing a role. In doing so, they participate in the production and reinforcement of gendered truths (Günter et al., 2023).

Following Lazar's (2007) formulation of FCDA, I treat gender as a central analytic category and approach tradwife discourse as a site where patriarchal power is reproduced through seemingly ordinary and loving narratives. My analysis is also grounded in poststructural feminist theory, drawing on Foucault's attention to discourse/power and Butler's theorization of performativity to examine how love becomes a discursive technology that makes unequal relations feel natural and desirable.

While there is extensive literature on IPV as a behavioral and criminal issue, less attention has been paid to how emotional abuse and coercion are discursively constructed as desirable and even romantic (per Stark, 2018; McLindon et al., 2025). Emotional abuse is often hidden under the language of love, making it harder to name and challenge (Lelaurain et al., 2021) Yet naming is crucial. As feminist theorists have long argued, what cannot be named cannot be resisted (Ahmed, 2024). By examining a single Instagram account through discourse analysis, my study addresses these gaps and contributes to a more precise understanding of how social media mediates power, gender, and intimacy.

This project is both personal to me and also urgently political. My intent is to expose how everyday digital content, while seemingly harmless, holds more than just entertainment. As Butler (1990) asserts, gender is a norm that governs intelligibility. By "intelligibility," Butler means that gender norms determine which identities and behaviors are seen as socially recognizable, "normal," or worthy of belonging. Those who do not conform to these norms often become unintelligible, or outside the boundaries of what dominant cultural norms and

institutions treat as legitimate. These norms determine what counts as acceptable. And power is most effective when it is invisible (Foucault, 1977). By analyzing digital discourse, I hope to contribute to a broader understanding of how Instagram actively contributes to romantic ideals in ways that can perpetuate harm.

Across the analysis, I identified seven recurring discursive patterns that show how control, coercion, and emotional violence can be re-signified as love within tradwife aesthetics. The seven themes are as follows, economic dependence as love; domestic servitude as devotion; illness and failure; spiritualized patriarchy and courtship; aestheticized modesty and historical femininity; scripted femininity; and tradwife discourse as harmless choice. These themes demonstrate how Instagram's visual warmth, trend formats, and influencer narration can normalize unequal power relations by placing them in aspirational stories of devotion and feminine virtue.

My argument is not meant to suggest that Aria Lewis's husband is abusive, nor that I can make claims about the reality of her private marriage based only on what is shown online. However, my concern is with the discourse itself and with the way self-erasure is framed as loving and desirable. Even when this dynamic is presented as safe, that safety remains conditional. A woman is secure only so long as her husband continues to be kind, which leaves her in a vulnerable position. What interests me is that the language and relationship ideals being defended here can make that vulnerability look natural, beautiful, loving and even virtuous. In doing so, they can also mask or normalize much more harmful forms of control and abuse than what is visible in Aria's content.

The chapters that follow build my argument in stages. In Chapter 2, I review the literature on GBV, IPV, coercive control, romantic love, media power, and tradwife discourse. I do this to

position my study within these overlapping bodies of scholarship and to clarify the gap that my analysis addresses. In Chapter 3, I outline my study's methodology, methods and explain the use of feminist critical discourse analysis. In Chapter 4, I present the data and the seven themes that emerged from the analysis. In Chapter 5, I discuss the findings in relation to the literature and theoretical framework. In Chapter 6, I conclude the thesis by summarizing the central arguments and reflecting on the broader implications of the study suggesting directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, I review the most relevant literature on gender-based violence (GBV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) to situate my study within broader debates about power, control, and the social construction of love. I examine how structural inequalities (e.g., Bourdieu, 2001; Fraser, 2013; hooks, 2000; Kalokhe et al., 2016; Walby, 1989) and patriarchal norms (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Nussbaum, 2000; Oakley, 1976; Stark, 2007) underpin GBV globally, with a focus on gendered expectations (e.g., Gilligan, 1977; Hochschild & Machung, 1989) that normalize coercion (e.g., Crossman & Hardesty, 2018; Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2007) and emotional harm (e.g., Dichter, et al., 2018; Effiong et al., 2022; Herman, 2015; Lohmann et al., 2024; Walker, 2009) within intimate relationships. I explore how cultural scripts of love and care perpetuate unequal power relations across heterosexual contexts by drawing on feminist and sociological frameworks. I build my arguments using Michel Foucault's theory of power and Judith Butler's theory of performativity. These cultural scripts often position women as the primary givers of emotional labor and care which naturalizes sacrifice and selflessness as proof of love and femininity (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Oakley, 1976). As bell hooks (2000) argues, dominant ideals of love frequently mask control and dependency within patriarchal contexts, while Gilligan's (1977) work illustrates how expectations of care are often gendered. My focus is on coercive control as a pervasive yet often invisible form of IPV which is sustained through everyday practices and normative discourses. With this, I also highlight how Instagram influences and circulates these dynamics by aestheticizing devotion and reframing controlling behaviors as desirable forms of intimacy. By synthesizing empirical and theoretical insights, I establish a conceptual foundation for analyzing

how Instagram reproduces and legitimizes unequal power relations in the name of love.

Gender Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global social problem built upon structural inequalities and patriarchal power relations that disproportionately affects women, girls, and gender-diverse people across cultural and national contexts (Merry, 2011; Sabharwal, 2023; UNHCR, n.d.; World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). The World Health Organization (2021) estimates that nearly one in three women worldwide has experienced some form of physical or sexual violence in her lifetime, most often at the hands of an intimate partner. Such prevalence marks the systemic nature of GBV, which, as Sabharwal (2023) argues, is sustained by authoritarian patriarchal structures (e.g., Chacko, 2020; Kaul, 2021; Kinnvall, 2019; Peters, 2018; Torri, 2020) that normalize male dominance and female subjugation within both public and private spheres. This structural entrenchment has implications for women's lives. Nussbaum (2000) puts a spotlight on how GBV undermines women's human capabilities by restricting their ability to live lives they have reason to value, thereby compromising their dignity, health, and freedom.

One of the most pervasive and debilitating forms of GBV is intimate partner violence, which encompasses physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological abuse within romantic relationships (Government of Canada, 2025; Hailes & Goodman, 2025; WHO, 2021). Stark (2007) contends that IPV should not be understood as a series of isolated incidents of violence but as patterns of domination and entrapment embedded in everyday practices. Building on this, Hailes and Goodman (2025) demonstrate how coercive tactics such as gaslighting and surveillance often go unnoticed in legal systems that privilege evidence of physical harm over emotional harm. Although IPV affects individuals across gender identities, women are disproportionately impacted due to prevailing social scripts that link femininity with passivity

and relational endurance (Gilligan, 1977; Gopalakrishnan et al., 2023; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Mitra, 2013; Oakley, 1976; Patwary & Esha, 2025).

The persistence of IPV is further reinforced by socialization processes that normalize unequal power dynamics within intimate relationships. Within heteronormative frameworks of love and partnership, women are frequently positioned as primary caregivers whose emotional labor, sacrifice, and endurance are taken as markers of devotion (Gilligan, 1977; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Oakley, 1976). Gilligan (1977) explains that girls are typically taught moral frameworks that prioritize relational harmony over personal autonomy, encouraging self-erasure in the name of love. Complementing this, Hochschild and Machung's (1989) notion of the "second shift" illustrates how women disproportionately shoulder caregiving responsibilities, both physical and emotional, alongside paid labor, further embedding gendered inequities within intimate partnerships. Together, these cultural scripts construct women's value in terms of their emotional availability and relational endurance, thereby legitimizing structures of subordination that sustain patterns of IPV.

Gendered cultural expectations not only normalize women's disproportionate labor in relationships but also obscure more insidious forms of violence, such as coercive control. Despite its severity, coercive control often remains less visible and less well understood than physical violence, thereby receiving limited recognition in both policy and practice (Crenshaw, 1991; Crossman & Hardesty, 2018; Stark, 2018). Stark (2018) contends that control, surveillance, and isolation are central to IPV and are designed to strip women of their autonomy and sense of self. Building on Stark's argument that control, surveillance, and isolation are central to IPV, Crossman and Hardesty (2018) note that control becomes coercive when it systematically restricts a partner's freedom, often under the guise of care or concern. Such

dynamics are further entrenched by cultural narratives that celebrate women's self-sacrifice and endurance in romance, making coercive control difficult for both victims and observers to identify as abuse (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Hansen-Osborne, 2023; Johnson et al., 2014).

Coercive control also operates through the management of economic resources, where restricting access to money, or positioning one partner as the sole provider, can become mechanisms of entrapment (Stark, 2007, 2018). This matters because cultural ideals of heterosexual "provider" masculinity and "supportive" femininity can make financial dependence appear romantic or morally virtuous, instead of risky. Feminist scholarship on the gendered organization of family life demonstrates how women's unpaid reproductive labour is frequently moralized as love and material vulnerability is treated as a natural feature of "traditional" arrangements (Fraser, 2013; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Oakley, 1976; Walby, 1989). In this way, unequal resource access can be discursively stabilized through the same love scripts that normalize sacrifice and makes it harder to recognize when "care" becomes coercion (Ahmed, 2024; Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2018).

The invisibility of coercive control is further reinforced by patriarchal love scripts that idealize women's self-erasure in intimate relationships. Ahmed (2024) argues that patriarchal love scripts teach women to disappear into relationships, framing submission as a moral and emotional virtue. In a similar vein, hooks (2000) critiques the cultural weaponization of love, contending that narratives equating love with sacrifice obscure the reality that "Love and abuse cannot coexist" (p. 20). Together, these insights highlight that IPV is not sustained solely through physical acts but also through emotional and cultural norms that position women as responsible for the health and longevity of romantic relationships, even at great personal cost.

Power and Gender

In this section, I highlight how power emerges as a central force underpinning IPV. Although often obscured by romantic ideals, power manifests through relational imbalances, emotional coercion, and internalized expectations of sacrifice. Recognizing IPV as a gendered exercise of power sets the stage for deeper theoretical engagements with how control is embedded in social norms and discourses. I expand upon this theme by drawing on Foucault's theory of power. Building on both Foucault and the understanding of IPV as a gendered enactment of power, theorists such as Butler (1990) and Bourdieu (2001) show how power is reproduced through the performative reinforcement of gender roles that naturalize male dominance and female subordination. Walby (1989) further outlines how patriarchy institutionalizes these dynamics across societal structures, from the family to the state.

Foucault (1978) conceptualizes power as dispersed, relational, and productive instead of solely repressive. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) shows how, through practices such as hierarchical observation, detailed examination, and the creation of norms that individuals internalize, power operates by producing "docile bodies" that regulate their own behavior. While Foucault does not explicitly theorize gendered power, the analysis of disciplinary mechanisms which he developed through historical examples of prisons, schools, and military institutions, illuminates how systems of surveillance and self-monitoring regulate subjects' conduct and sensibilities (Bartky, 1990; Foucault, 1977; McNay, 1992).

Applied to intimate contexts, these mechanisms can help us understand how social expectations around relationships and emotional conduct are internalized (Gilligan, 1977; Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Just as prisoners internalize surveillance and conform to disciplinary norms, individuals in romantic relationships may internalize societal prescriptions of

emotional labor, caregiving, and relational obligation, subtly regulating themselves and others in ways that sustain power asymmetries. In contemporary society, these dynamics are intensified by digital technologies and social media, which enable constant visibility, tracking, and comparison, effectively extending disciplinary mechanisms into private and relational spheres (Chambers, 2013; Emond et al., 2023; Leaver et al., 2020).

Butler (1990) foregrounds the performative construction of gender, showing how repeated enactments of socially prescribed behaviors render certain forms of control. Their emphasis on repetition is useful for analyzing how gendered power becomes ordinary through routine practices and “micro-performances” of everyday life. Feminine identity is stabilized through visible symbolism (dress, softness, deference) as well as through temporal and affective discipline, for instance, maintaining “peace,” anticipating needs, and regulating one’s tone, energy, and body in ways that make service feel natural (Butler, 1990; Bartky, 1990; Hochschild & Machung, 1989). In other words, patriarchal power is reproduced when women come to monitor themselves against an internalized ideal of the “good wife,” interpreting exhaustion, mess, anger, or resistance as personal failure rather than as evidence of unequal relations (Bourdieu, 2001; Foucault, 1977; Hochschild & Machung, 1989). This discipline is often framed as self-improvement and choice. Neoliberal femininity frequently asks women to optimize themselves into being calm and agreeable. These are the qualities that appear empowering while still functioning as gendered constraint (Gill, 2007; Scharff, 2016). The consequences of these intersecting power dynamics are material and also epistemic, eroding women’s self-conceptions and silencing their experiences of harm (Ahmed, 2024; Fraser, 2013; Gergen, 2011). Extending this analysis of power as both discursively and performatively enacted (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1977), it becomes evident that forms of emotional violence are not merely tolerated but often

celebrated within dominant romantic ideologies. This recognition necessitates closer scrutiny of the cultural, political, and technological structures that sustain and legitimize such narratives. Before turning to feminist media studies, it is important to situate these dynamics within the broader context of digital intimacy. The following section outlines how scholars have theorized intimate relationships in digital contexts, providing the conceptual foundation for understanding Instagram as a key site of cultural production.

Theorizing Intimate Relationships in Digital Contexts

Building upon the foundational understanding of gendered power dynamics, scholars have highlighted the importance of examining how digital platforms mediate intimate relationships (Chambers, 2013; Illouz, 2007; Papacharissi, 2010). The advent of social media has transformed traditional notions of intimacy, introducing new forms of connection, communication, and surveillance within romantic partnerships. Scholars (e.g., Chambers, 2013; Illouz, 2007; Jansson, 2015; Papacharissi, 2015) have conceptualized this transformation through terms like "mediated intimacy" and "digital co-presence." Licoppe (2004) reconceptualizes co-presence as mediated intimacy, emphasizing how digital platforms facilitate a sense of closeness despite physical separation. Similarly, Couldry and Hepp (2016) discuss how communication technologies have become integral to intimate relationships, highlighting the performative aspects of digital interactions. These frameworks suggest that digital platforms are not mere tools for communication but active participants in constructing and maintaining intimate connections. More specifically, digital platforms help produce intimacy by enabling continuous contact, ambient awareness, public displays of couplehood, and mutual monitoring: partners can signal care through messaging, story views, likes, and comments, while also curating how the relationship appears to others and checking each other's availability, responsiveness, and online

interactions (Licoppe, 2004; Couldry & Hepp, 2016; Senft, 2008; Marwick, 2013). These forms of mediated intimacy are also pedagogical: users do not only witness intimate performances online, but may learn, compare, and sometimes emulate relational scripts through repetition, aesthetic appeal, and social feedback, so that certain ways of loving, caring, and presenting couplehood come to feel desirable and normal (Leaver et al., 2020; Marwick, 2013; Taba et al., 2020).

The concept of "impression management" is particularly relevant in this context. It owes its origins to Goffman (1959), who, in his dramaturgical model, describes how individuals actively "perform" roles in social interactions, much like actors on a social stage, presenting themselves in ways that influence how others perceive them and strategically managing the impressions they make. Drawing from Goffman for analysis of online spaces, Senft (2008) discusses how individuals curate their online personas to present idealized versions of themselves, a practice that extends to romantic relationships on platforms like Instagram. This curation can create pressures to conform to certain relational ideals, potentially leading to the normalization of behaviors that may be coercive or controlling. Furthermore, the performative nature of online interactions, as discussed by Marwick (2013), underscores how individuals enact and reinforce gendered scripts through their digital behaviors. On Instagram, these performances can influence how partners relate to each other and perceive acceptable behaviors within their relationships.

The digital mediation of intimacy through platforms like Instagram introduces complex dynamics that reshape romantic relationships (Chambers, 2013; Couldry & Hepp, 2016; Jansson, 2015). These platforms facilitate communication while subtly influencing expectations, behaviors, and power structures within intimate partnerships. Understanding these dynamics is

crucial for analyzing how Instagram may present control, coercion, and emotional violence as forms of love. Building on these conceptual frameworks, I examine next how Instagram content produced by self-identified tradwives represents and normalizes these gendered power dynamics, often framing control, coercion, and emotional labor as expressions of love.

Media, Power and Feminist Media Studies

Building on analyses of IPV as an expression of male power, media can be understood as important sites for the construction and circulation of authority within intimate relationships, when that authority is framed as protection and care (van Zoonen, 1994; Dutton & Goodman, 2005). The media are not the passive channels of information. They influence attitudes, actions, and the construction of social norms (McLuhan, 1964). As McLuhan (1964, p. 144) famously put it, “the medium is the message,” meaning that the form of communication shapes how audiences engage with information, independently of specific content. In the context of Instagram, the platform itself emphasizes visual presentation, curated aesthetics, and social validation through likes and comments. These structural features of the medium influence how users perceive and perform relational ideals, even as the platform hosts diverse narratives (Leaver et al., 2020; Marwick, 2013; Duffy & Hund, 2019), including both tradwife and counter-tradwife content. In this sense, Instagram as a medium facilitates the circulation and aestheticization of relationship norms, shaping the cultural understanding of love and intimacy (Caldeira et al., 2020; Mendelson & Smith, 2024).

Extending this analysis, feminist media scholars emphasize that media representations do not simply reflect social realities but actively participate in their construction (Le et al., 2025; van Zoonen, 1994). Platforms like Instagram facilitate the repetition and amplification of cultural scripts that normalize coercive behaviors under the guise of romance or care (Caldeira et al.,

2020; Mendelson & Smith, 2024). Mulvey's (1975) theory of the male gaze remains relevant here. She argued that mainstream cinema was structured around a masculine perspective, positioning women as spectacles to be looked at and consumed for visual pleasure. Instagram reproduces this logic by curating and circulating highly aestheticized performances of femininity, positioning women as objects of consumption while rewarding such displays through likes, shares, and algorithmic amplification (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Through these logics, control, jealousy, or emotional restriction can be reframed as aspirational forms of intimacy.

Importantly, however, Instagram complicates Mulvey's (1975) framework of the male gaze. Whereas cinema tends to position women as passive objects of a patriarchal gaze, social media gives the appearance of self-styling, where women produce and curate their own representations. This apparent control can be damaging because images are framed as self-generated, the standards they reproduce seem voluntary, natural, or even empowering, when in fact they remain influenced by algorithmic logics, cultural expectations, and gendered economies of visibility (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Duffy & Hund, 2015). In this sense, women may appear to "make these standards for themselves," but their participation often reflects the internalization of dominant norms rather than liberation from them. Instagram therefore exemplifies a shift from externally imposed objectification to a more insidious form of self-regulation and surveillance, echoing Foucault's (1977) analysis of disciplinary power, where subjects learn to police themselves in accordance with normalized expectations.

Instagram's design and platform features also shape how relationship norms circulate. Short-form video formats encourage condensed, repeatable "how-to" storytelling such as routines, checklists, what works the best for happiness and day-in-the-life sequences that translate ideology into doable habits which makes gendered discipline appear simple and

attractive (Leaver et al., 2020). This is important because of the persuasive force of such content. The warmth, calm, humour, and “good vibes” can make unequal relational dynamics feel safe and desirable and can encourage viewers to interpret endurance and self-surveillance as emotionally mature forms of love (Calder-Dawe et al., 2024; Papacharissi, 2015; Ylöstalo, 2024). For feminist critical discourse analysis, this emphasizes that power operates not only through discourse as text but through platformed repetition and affective circulation, where aesthetic coherence and emotional tone help stabilize norms as common sense (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Duffy & Hund, 2019).

In digital environments such as Instagram, disciplinary dynamics operate through algorithmic visibility, everyday surveillance, and feedback mechanisms such as likes, comments, shares, and recommendation systems, which subtly regulate behavior and amplify culturally celebrated ideals of romance and relational success (Taylor & Choi, 2023). Mulvey’s (1975) distinction between voyeurism (pleasure in watching) and fetishistic scopophilia (pleasure in idealizing women’s bodies as objects) also resonates here. Instagram simultaneously enables voyeuristic surveillance, as partners monitor each other’s activity, and fetishistic idealization, as curated images of devotion or domesticity are elevated as reassuring and desirable (Emond et al., 2023; Mulvey, 1975; Taba et al., 2020).

At the same time, these dynamics are not uncontested. Scholarship on feminist media and digital cultures highlights how users exercise agency in online spaces, negotiating, resisting, or reinterpreting dominant narratives (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Salamon & Saunders, 2024). For instance, some users critically engage with content that aestheticizes submission, control, or relational endurance, either by producing counter-narratives or by publicly critiquing such portrayals through practices like feminist carousels, graphic reframing, and resistance to

performative visibility (Caldeira, 2024; Wiens & MacDonald, 2024). Feminist digital activism exemplifies such potential, as campaigns, hashtags, and online communities mobilize to challenge prescriptive norms around romance, gender, and emotional labor (B. K. & Jiang, 2024; Yin & Zhang, 2024). These subversive practices not only contest the legitimacy of coercive relational scripts but also create spaces for alternative imaginaries of intimacy and mutual respect (Ylöstalo, 2024).

Feminist analyses reveal that while platforms such as Instagram often perpetuate dominant norms, they also offer spaces for resistance, depending on how users engage with and contest prevailing narratives (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Le et al., 2025). Instagram illustrates these dynamics by turning intimate partner behaviors into aestheticized performances (Taba et al., 2020). Influencers and content creators, including the “tradwife” accounts examined in my research, curate narratives of submission, care, and control in ways that appear aspirational and morally sanctioned (Sykes & Hopner, 2024). At the same time, tradwife content is often framed as a form of resistance, but not resistance to patriarchy itself. Rather it is presented as a refusal of modern dating culture, liberal feminism, and neoliberal expectations that women should be endlessly self-managing, economically independent, and professionally high-achieving (Gill, 2007; Proctor, 2022; Scharff, 2016; Sykes, 2024). In Foucauldian terms, this shows how resistance is power, even while it can also restore patriarchal authority through a different set of norms that frame submission as peace, protection, and choice (Foucault, 1978). Feminist media studies highlight how such content normalizes gendered expectations, rendering emotional and relational coercion socially acceptable, desirable, or even virtuous (Calder-Dawe et al., 2024; McRobbie et al., 2007). As Mulvey (1975) reminds us, visual media not only display women but also structure the very conditions of looking. Instagram extends this mechanism into a

participatory and algorithmic environment where the performance of intimacy becomes both spectacle and commodity.

By situating Instagram within frameworks of media power, feminist critique, and Foucauldian theory, this chapter underscores that control and coercion in intimate relationships are not solely interpersonal phenomena. Instead, they are mediated, culturally reinforced, and aestheticized, but also at times resisted, demonstrating the central role of digital platforms in both reproducing and challenging patterns of intimate partner violence. This analysis provides a critical foundational framework for the discourse analysis conducted in my study, linking micro-level interactions to broader sociocultural and technological structures. Building on these insights, it becomes crucial to examine how these media logics play out in specific online communities. In what follows, I will build on the discussion of Instagram's role in shaping relational norms as the "tradwife" movement provides an illustrative example. Tradwife accounts exemplify how Instagram's participatory and algorithmic structures transform cultural scripts of intimacy into aspirational lifestyles by blending personal branding with gender norms and discourses that carry ideological claims about femininity, family, and moral order. The following section traces the current discourse surrounding tradwives, situating it within wider debates about gender, intimacy, and mediated power.

Current Discourse on Tradwife

The traditional wife movement, better known as "tradwife", is an online trend and lifestyle that has recently risen in popularity on social media and elsewhere. It glamorizes domesticity, femininity, and traditional heteronormative family roles, while valorizing whiteness and promoting a nostalgic vision of the "ideal" American family that aligns with anti-diversity, anti-feminist, and anti-queer ideologies. Not all tradwife influencers name these politics openly

(Proctor, 2022; Sykes & Hopner, 2024). However, the ideal being promoted depends on strict boundaries around gender, sexuality, and belonging (Proctor, 2022; Stotzer & Nelson, 2025). It treats heterosexual marriage, binary gender, and male headship as natural and morally correct (Sykes & Hopner, 2024). This is why it often bristles against feminism (Stotzer & Nelson, 2025). Feminism legitimizes women's autonomy and challenges men's authority within marriage (Stotzer & Nelson, 2025).

Tradwife culture also pushes back against queer and trans politics (Graff & Korolczuk, 2021; Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018). These politics contest the gender binary and expand what counts as legitimate family (Graff & Korolczuk, 2021; Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018). It can also align with anti-diversity politics because the nostalgic image of the ideal family is often coded as white and tied to national identity (Bower, 2024; Tebaldi, 2023). The recent visibility of feminist, anti-racist, and queer movements helps explain why this discourse intensifies now (Graff & Korolczuk, 2021; Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018).

In anti-gender politics, these shifts are framed as threats to children and social order, which recasts hierarchy as protection and makes traditional womanhood appear urgent and restorative (Graff & Korolczuk, 2021; Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018). Although the idea of the tradwife has been around for many years, it did not gain mainstream visibility until 2020, when influencer Alena Pettit discussed her lifestyle in a BBC interview, framing it as centered on traditional gender roles where she prioritizes her husband's comfort and embraces a 1950s-inspired model of marriage (Sykes, & Hopner, 2024). This framing responds to a perceived threat to the gender order that tradwife discourse treats as natural and morally correct. It suggests that feminism unsettles male authority and reframes domestic dependence as a problem rather than a virtue. It also suggests that queer visibility and gender diversity blur or erase the binary

model of men and women that this discourse often presents as God's design. In this context, the tradwife ideal is offered as a corrective that restores clear roles and re-secures heterosexual marriage as moral stability (Bower, 2024; Proctor, 2022; Stotzer & Nelson, 2025).

The movement represents both a cultural phenomenon and, in many contemporary formations, a right-wing political project (e.g., Brady, 2025; Harmon, 2025; Sykes & Hopner, 2024; Stotzer & Nelson, 2025;), framing women's household labor, aesthetic choices, and submission to their husbands as morally correct, authentic, fulfilling, and aspirational. (Sykes & Hopner, 2024; Harmon, 2025). Its recent surge does not come out of thin air. It follows the mid 2010s to early 2020s, a period in which feminist, anti-racist, and queer movements became visible in public and on social media, making white cisheteronormativity more openly contestable and sharpening the conditions for backlash (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Graff & Korolczuk, 2021; Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018). Backlash is not only disagreement. It is also a struggle over power and over which social arrangements can be treated as natural (Mansbridge & Shames, 2008). In platform culture, backlash can circulate as lifestyle content rather than explicit political messaging (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Proctor, 2022; Zahay, 2022; Watkin & Frenguelli, 2025). Soft aesthetics, nostalgia, and the rhetoric of "choice" can make reactionary gender scripts feel soothing and apolitical (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Proctor, 2022; Zahay, 2022). Research that tracks tradwife hashtags across platforms shows that anti-feminist themes are common even when posts appear innocuous, and that the label can link to spaces where white nationalist meanings are more explicit (Tebaldi, 2023; Watkin & Frenguelli, 2025). These conditions help explain why the tradwife trend gains traction now, and why it travels so easily within influencer economies (Duffy & Hund, 2019; Richards et al., 2025).

The tradwife movement and its' effects span various right-wing communities, religious,

and national identities. However, common themes re-emerge, for instance, a strict adherence to traditional gender roles, rejection of the woman's independence and career ambitions, and the promotion of a certain old school aesthetic that represents their belonging within the subculture (Sykes & Hopner, 2024; Zahay, 2022). This “old-school aesthetic” is not merely decorative; it functions as a visual technology through which gender norms become emotionally appealing and morally resonant. Scholarship on nostalgic online femininity highlights how homesteading imagery and vintage styling can produce a sense of “timeless” authenticity and moral calm and make hierarchical gender arrangements feel natural rather than political (Allen et al., 2025; Lewis, 2014). In this framing, modesty and historically coded femininity can be experienced as comfort, artistry, or “softness,” even as they reproduce boundaries around women’s bodies and social roles (Allen et al., 2025; Lewis, 2014; Zahay, 2022).

These aesthetic cues also align with analyses of how digital visual culture can operate as ideological persuasion without overt political labeling, where affective beauty and familiarity help normalize re-traditionalization (Zahay, 2022). The movement can be understood as a reaction to broader social and cultural shifts, including feminist gains, increasing gender equality, and diversification of family forms, which some tradwives perceive as threatening (Allen et al., 2025; Bower, 2024; Stotzer & Nelson, 2025; Sykes & Hopner, 2024). By embracing nostalgic, idealized visions of domesticity and heteronormativity, tradwives assert a sense of stability, moral clarity, and cultural belonging in response to these changes.

Sykes and Hopner (2024) note that the tradwife subculture offers both emotional and social rewards to these women, such as a support network and a continuous echo chamber of ideological reinforcement to counter the outside voices and pressures from modern, Eurocentric societies. This support is also visible throughout the social media where women can be found

performing and sharing heavily curated and filtered representations of the dream stay-at-home wife bliss by performing their versions of homemaking, cooking, child rearing and often small, home-based entrepreneurship (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Duffy & Hund, 2015; Sykes, 2024; Sykes & Hopner, 2024). As Isabel Sykes (2024) observes in the #stayathomegirlfriend trend on TikTok, these performances often romanticize domestic labor as leisure and self-care, while simultaneously requiring intensive content creation, marketing, and engagement with follower communities. In effect, tradwives and related influencers participate in a paradoxical economy of labor. They reject formal work yet monetize domesticity and digital presence which reflects what Banet-Weiser (2018) and Duffy and Hund (2015) describe as the neoliberalization of femininity, where entrepreneurial selfhood and affective labor merge.

Brady (2025) also connects this natalist landscape to influencer culture through the figure of the “tradmom/tradwife” aesthetic. In discussing the homestead influencer Hannah Neeleman (@Ballerinafarm), Brady (2025) describes how prolific, white motherhood is performed through serene affect, feminized domestic labour, and nostalgic homesteading imagery (including prairie dresses and agrarian settings), while pronatalist meanings are not stated outright but remain implicit. The analytic value for tradwife discourse lies in Brady’s (2025) argument that such content becomes politically consequential when it circulates alongside broader pronatalist signs. It helps normalize a narrow vision of “good” womanhood and “good” family life while implicitly constructing an “undesirable other” (e.g., mothers who work outside the home, childfree women by choice, queer or disabled parents, and racialized migrants). This framework aligns closely with how tradwife Instagram content can aestheticize and moralize gendered dependence and domestic confinement, so that hierarchy appears normal and emotionally and morally preferable (Brady, 2025; Harmon, 2025; Richards et al., 2025).

Alongside aesthetic nostalgia, many tradwife formations rely on explicit moral or spiritual framing that casts gender hierarchy as loving “design.” Harmon’s (2025) analysis of Christian #tradwives emphasize how religious language can sanctify male headship and female submission as protective and virtuous; this shifts patriarchal authority from a negotiable social arrangement to a moral obligation. Related research suggests that religiosity and sexual double standards can intersect with coercive relational norms and make control more easily interpreted as care and commitment (Alfaro-Urquiola et al., 2025). At the same time, some influencers present these arrangements through a postfeminist rhetoric of personal choice and authenticity which positions patriarchal roles as “what works,” a lifestyle preference, or even empowerment (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Duffy & Hund, 2019; Gill, 2007; Scharff, 2016). This approach can deflect structural critique while still circulating normative scripts (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Gill, 2007; Scharff, 2016).

Within platform economies, where relatability and authenticity are key to visibility, this personalized framing becomes a powerful discursive shield, the ideology is softened into “just my life,” even as it travels widely as a template (Duffy & Hund, 2019). Recent journalistic reporting frames tradwife content as part of a broader “womanosphere,” an anti-feminist media ecosystem targeting women that repackages rightwing messaging through lifestyle genres, including homemaking and “traditional roles” (Silman, 2025). In related reporting on far-right cultural normalization, tradwives are cited as an example of how ideological roots can become obscured as the aesthetic spreads while still promoting anti-feminist nostalgia that aligns with far-right aims (Kassam, 2025). A further example is the rise of “Maga mom” media that presents itself as soft “family values” content while explicitly offering instruction on becoming a politically sanctioned wife/mother that blends wellness and morality with political alignment

(Sherman, 2025).

The intersection of race, religion, and normative femininity is central to understanding the movement. Harmon's (2025) analysis of Christian #tradwives highlight how white women constitute the demographic and symbolic majority, positioning whiteness as an epistemological and aesthetic standard for what it means to be a "proper" tradwife. Black and mixed-race women, even when participating in the movement, often emulate these white templates to be recognized as legitimate within the subculture. Harmon's (2025) sample includes Black and mixed-race creators on Instagram such as Katelyn Clarice (@gemsandpearlswithlove) and Solie White (@solieolie). In White's posts, anti-feminist messaging appears alongside familiar tradwife aesthetics such as from-scratch domestic labor and European pastoral imagery, including a post that places her message over a pastoral painting of a white mother and child. This example helps show how whiteness can remain the aesthetic reference point, even when the influencer is not white. Harmon (2025) emphasizes that this dynamic illustrates the role of race and silence in reproducing hegemonic norms, revealing the epistemic work tradwives perform in maintaining whiteness as the default cultural frame. Such insights underscore that the tradwife movement is not merely a lifestyle choice but also a structured ideological system that naturalizes gender, racial, and religious hierarchies through affective, embodied, and rhetorical means.

Zahay (2022) similarly shows that alt-right femininity vlogs use a "populist aesthetic" to make anti-feminist, nationalist, and heteronormative ideologies feel familiar and emotionally appealing through subtle visual and rhetorical cues. Journalistic accounts of far-right tradwives reinforce this point by showing how curated domesticity and submission can advance racialized agendas, positioning women's reproductive and marital roles as central to the preservation of

whiteness and traditional hierarchies (Norris, 2023). Together, these studies indicate that aestheticized femininity, domestic labor, and submission can operate as ideological tools rather than merely personal or cultural expressions.

The literature I have highlighted points to three dynamics in contemporary tradwife discourse. First, domesticity and submission are simultaneously aestheticized, politicized, and monetized through online performances of homemaking and femininity (Sykes & Hopner, 2024). Second, race, religion, and socio-political alignment shape which forms of womanhood are recognized as legitimate within the subculture (Brady, 2025; Harmon, 2025). Third, digital platforms intensify these norms through visibility, circulation, and algorithmic reinforcement (Zahay, 2022).

Brady's (2025) analysis of contemporary U.S. natalist discourse provides an important political backdrop for understanding why tradwife femininity and domesticity carry such high moral and affective stakes online. Brady (2025) argues that contemporary natalist discourse constructs "mother citizens" in binary opposition to "outsider/others," and that pro- and anti-natalism are mobilized toward population management across cultural and political sites. Within this framework, prolific white motherhood is encouraged as a duty to an imagined national community, while those positioned as "others" are discursively constructed as imagined internal and external threats to the nation. Brady (2025) shows that these binaries construct the "selfless mother citizen" in opposition to figures such as childfree women by choice, migrants, trans people, and disabled people. This oppositional structure clarifies how motherhood and femininity can function as disciplinary signs and not merely personal identities. Brady's (2025) work therefore supports the argument that "traditional" gender roles function as culturally powerful sign systems that distinguish ideal or worthy mothers and citizens from undesirable

others.

My study extends Brady's (2025) framework by examining a tradwife account that is not yet organized around motherhood, but already presents a godly, marriage-centered template for domestic life. While Brady (2025) focuses primarily on natalist discourse organized around motherhood and mother-citizenship, Aria Lewis's (@mrsarialewis) account shows how submission, homemaking, modesty, and one-income dependence are framed as desirable and achievable even before children are present. In this sense, the account offers a pre-maternal template for the kind of "potential motherhood" Brady (2025) identifies as central to natalist discourse. This makes the discourse relevant to younger women imagining future marriage, as well as to women in early marriage, before children are present, for whom tradwife life is presented as an aspirational foundation rather than only a maternal identity.

This extension of Brady's (2025) work is important as existing research has largely focused on high-profile influencers, prominent mothers, or explicitly maternal and pronatalist forms of tradwife discourse. As a result, less attention has been paid to pre-motherhood tradwife discourse, where domestic wifehood is framed as godly, good, and achievable even before motherhood is realized. The role of Instagram specifically in shaping intimate partner dynamics through curated discourses of love, control, and coercion also remains underexamined. While existing studies illuminate the ideological and aesthetic dimensions of tradwife culture, they pay less attention to its affective and intimate dimensions, particularly how emotional labor, coercion, dependency, and notions of love are mobilized to normalize patriarchal relations. This gap is significant because tradwife content often operationalizes patriarchal norms through mundane domestic routines, economic narratives of one-income dependence and moral duty, and spiritual or aesthetic frames such as modesty, nostalgia, and "God's design," all of which make

hierarchy feel loving and safe. Although children are absent from the account examined in my thesis, motherhood remains an implicit horizon of this heteronormative, marriage-centered tradwife ideal, assumed to be the natural and desirable extension of wifedom even when deferred, unrealized, or not yet publicly present (Brady, 2025; Sykes & Hopner, 2024).

Addressing these gaps is central to understanding how Instagram mediates power, gender, and intimacy, and provides the rationale for examining a single account through discourse analysis in my study.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed literature on gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, coercive control, feminist theories of power, feminist media studies and digital intimacy. I have also examined how cultural scripts of love and sacrifice are reproduced and contested in online spaces such as Instagram. Despite these insights, a gap remains in understanding how Instagram specifically aestheticizes and normalizes coercion and control as desirable forms of love. This gap provides the foundation for my methodology in the next chapter, where I outline how I analyzed Instagram content through feminist critical discourse analysis, visual analysis, and feminist media studies.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the research design, data sampling, data collection process, and analytical strategy that guided my study. To examine how intimate partner dynamics in heteronormative relationships are constructed and communicated through Instagram tradwife content, I adopted a qualitative methodology that allowed for close and contextual interpretation of meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). My project is designed as a qualitative single-case study of one Instagram tradwife account. I used Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis and visual analysis to examine how narratives of submission, obedience, and devotion are constructed and circulated on Instagram (Fairclough, 2010; Lazar, 2007). I was interested in how these discourses frame emotional labor, self-erasure, silence, and loss of agency as forms of love.

Research Design and Rationale

The language used around me throughout my life and the visuals I consumed were never just harmless or neutral. I am referring to a discourse of romanticized feminine self-sacrifice and submission, in which care, patience, emotional endurance, and accommodation to male authority are framed as proof of love and as markers of being a “good” woman or partner (Gilligan, 1977; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; hooks, 2000). This discourse subtly conditioned me and influenced the decisions I made in my intimate relationship. This personal experience encouraged my curiosity to understand how language and imagery work together to form discourse in the context of intimate partner relationships. As I proceeded with my inquiry, I built a clearer understanding of the importance of asking my question precisely and narrowing the focus (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). With this understanding, I posed my research question asking: In what ways does Instagram’s tradwife discourse aestheticize and circulate ideals of control,

coercion, and emotional violence as forms of love?

I analyzed Instagram content to explore how language and visuals express power and contribute to the normalization of gendered power relations in heteronormative relationships. In light of meaning-making and discourse, a qualitative research design proved to be an appropriate choice since it provided the interpretive depth my study required (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A qualitative framework enabled the collection of rich descriptive data in the form of words and images and supported an in-depth interpretation of the meanings carried within them through discourse analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Conscious of the subtle layers of language and meaning, the qualitative approach fit the subject matter of my research. Although research on intimate partner violence (IPV), coercive control, and feminist media theory is extensive, little is known about how Instagram shapes intimate partner dynamics by reframing control, coercion, and emotional violence as love (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Crossman & Hardesty, 2018; Salamon & Saunders, 2024; Stark, 2007). This gap strengthened the rationale for my project, which situated social media as a central site of discursive construction. My project is structured as a qualitative single-case study of one Instagram tradwife account. A case study design is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth analysis of a bounded case within its specific social and platform context. In my study, the bounded case is one account on one platform during a defined period of content production (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design makes it possible to examine closely how discourse, visual style, and platform affordances work together in one concrete instance, while Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis and visual analysis provide the analytic tools for examining how submission, care, and control are constructed as forms of love.

Because Instagram posts combine textual captions with images chosen for their content, I focused on the manner in which words and visuals come together to generate meaning. I

analyzed the selected Instagram content in a North American cultural context. Considering my focus on context and my aim to examine how discourse operates through both language and visuals, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emerged as a relevant method for my inquiry (Fairclough, 2010; Lazar, 2007). CDA is an interdisciplinary approach that examines the ways language both reflects and shapes social structures, ideologies, and power relations (Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 2001). It considers discourse not merely as text or speech, but as a social practice embedded within cultural, political, and institutional contexts (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). By analyzing linguistic choices, visual elements, and communicative patterns, CDA helped me examine how power is reproduced, contested, and negotiated in everyday interactions (Fairclough, 2010; Lazar, 2007). CDA helped me to examine how language and imagery on Instagram construct social realities and maintain power relations (Fairclough, 2010). This approach enabled me to investigate how emotional violence and control are masked as love by tracing rhetorical patterns and thematic framing (Lazar, 2007; van Dijk, 2015). On Instagram, where people often share perfect versions of love, CDA provided a way to dig under the surface using thematic analysis and close examination of visual cues (Rose, 2022).

I employed Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) to examine how gender ideologies that entrench power asymmetries become 'common sense' in particular communities and discourse contexts, and how they may be challenged. FCDA focuses on social justice and transformation, aiming to demystify and challenge discourses that continue to buttress gendered social orders (Lazar, 2007). This perspective was crucial for analyzing how Instagram content may perpetuate or challenge traditional gender roles and power dynamics within intimate relationships.

Furthermore, I conducted visual analysis to examine how setting, composition, clothing,

color, gesture, and domestic symbolism contributed to the construction of meaning. Visual analysis is a method for systematic testing the ways the media represents women and their role in society (Schroeder, 2006). This method allowed me to interpret how visual elements work together to build intimacy, obedience, modesty, domestic labor, and feminine virtue. In practice, I approached visual analysis in three steps. First, I produced a descriptive inventory for each reel, noting setting, camera framing, clothing, gesture, domestic objects, colour palette, editing pace, facial expression, and on-screen text (Rose, 2022). Second, I interpreted how these elements worked together symbolically and affectively, asking how specific visual combinations made intimacy, obedience, modesty, or domestic labour feel warm, virtuous, or desirable (Rose, 2022; Schroeder, 2006). Third, I read these visual patterns alongside the caption, audio, and my FCDA framework to examine what kind of gendered subject, relationship ideal, or power relation the reel normalized (Lazar, 2007; Rose, 2022). For example, a reel showing an 1890s-style dress, apron, kitchen labour, and warm domestic framing was not coded simply as “domestic imagery”; I interpreted it as visual work that aestheticized historical femininity, modesty, and service as pleasurable and morally meaningful. I paid close attention to recurring affective and aesthetic cues such as warmth, nostalgia, humour, and the rhetoric of personal choice. While race and political alignment were not the main focus of my analysis, religious language was central where it defined ideas of headship, submission, courtship, and moral authority.

Data Source and Sampling

For the analysis, I selected one public Instagram account owned and managed by 24-year old Aria Lewis, a U.S.-based influencer who identifies as a tradwife and lives in Missouri, US. At the time of the sampled posts in 2024, she presented herself as a married woman committed to traditional gender roles and did not yet have children. I chose Aria’s account because it met my

study's criteria which is that she is North American, had 136k followers as of September 14, 2025 and produced content consistently throughout 2024. As of March 7, 2026, her follower count was approximately 135k. I report follower counts only to indicate account visibility, and they can fluctuate over time. While she is currently a mother, the posts analyzed are limited to the year before she had children. Focusing on a childless tradwife account allowed me to focus on her content reflecting domesticity and gendered submission without the added complexity of parental discourse.

I used a purposive sampling strategy to identify Aria Lewis as a suitable influencer (Patton, 2002). At the time of final account retrieval, she had produced 305 posts during 2024, consisting of carousels, and short-form reels. Although I initially planned to analyze posts from the full 2024 calendar year, early data collection and coding revealed substantial repetition in both message and form. Reels repeatedly returned to the same kinds of domestic routines, relationship scripts, aesthetic choices, and moral framings, with relatively little new variation after the first three months. For that reason, I used the principle of data saturation to delimit the final corpus, stopping data collection when additional content was no longer yielding substantially new thematic patterns (Guest et al., 2006; Saunders et al., 2018). The final dataset of 62 reels were posted between January 02, 2024 and March 30, 2024, all met sampling criteria. This allowed for depth of analysis while still capturing a politically charged moment shaped by debates around gender, family, and conservative values during the 2024 U.S. election year (Kirzinger et al., 2024; McClain et al., 2021).

I deliberately chose Instagram over other platforms because of its design. Instagram promotes content that is quick and aesthetically appealing. People prefer such content because they can consume it within a few seconds. The emphasis on aesthetic appeal and quick

consumption makes the users absorb emotionally charged and value-laden messages without critical reflection (Leaver et al., 2020). The nature of short videos (e.g., reels) and curated imagery makes the platform powerful for ideological transmission. This made Instagram an ideal site for exploring how control and emotional coercion can be framed as desirable and loving.

Data Collection

I collected the data by manually archiving the selected reels from Aria Lewis's Instagram account in Instagram's save feature and later in a spreadsheet. For each reel, I recorded the posting date, caption text, on-screen text, hashtags where relevant, visible audio, key visual setting, and preliminary analytic notes. I also documented recurring relationship messages, representations of power or dependence, and notable affective or aesthetic cues. Where relevant, I also noted humour, disclaimers about personal choice or non-influence, and monetization cues such as affiliate links, discount codes, or other references to creator income, because these features formed part of the discourse being analyzed. The spreadsheet served as both an archive of the dataset and the primary organizational tool for the coding process.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data through iterative, manual coding rather than through NVivo or another software package. After repeatedly viewing each reel and reviewing the associated caption and notes, I coded the data in a spreadsheet by identifying recurring messages, visual motifs, affective cues, and representations of power, dependence, service, and submission. For example, when a reel framed wifely obedience, deference to male leadership, or cheerful accommodation as desirable, I coded it under submission; when a reel framed cooking, tidying, lunch preparation, or anticipatory care as proof of love, I coded it under domestic servitude as devotion. I used colour coding within the spreadsheet to group reels that conveyed similar kinds

of meanings or repeated comparable domestic, relational, or aesthetic scripts. This process allowed me to move from initial descriptive coding to broader thematic clustering (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

Alongside descriptive coding, I kept analytic notes in the spreadsheet in the columns on key message/narrative and representation of power/control. These notes served as reflexive memos through which I examined how my feminist standpoint and positionality shaped what I noticed, prioritized, and interpreted in the data. In feminist methodology, reflexivity names the practice of making visible how the researcher's social location, political commitments, and interpretive lens enter the production of knowledge rather than treating analysis as neutral or detached (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Lazar, 2007). These memos helped me distinguish between interpretation and theme development throughout the analysis.

Theme development was guided by repetition and comparison across the dataset. As I reviewed the spreadsheet, I grouped together reels that repeated similar messages, for example, those framing one-income dependence as intimacy, those presenting domestic labour as proof of love, or those teaching submission through routines and checklists. I then refined these clusters by comparing their textual, visual, and affective features and named each theme according to the central discursive logic that organized the grouped content. By following this process, I found seven themes as follows: economic dependence as love; domestic servitude as devotion; illness and failure; spiritualized patriarchy and courtship; aestheticized modesty and historical femininity; scripted femininity; and tradwife discourse as harmless choice. Although not every reel is quoted in the thesis, all 62 reels informed the coding process and the development of the themes.

As a single case study, focusing one Instagram account privileged depth over breadth. It

allowed me to trace how relational control is aestheticized as love and how Instagram mediates those intimate scripts through repetition and warmth (Patton, 2002).

Ethical Considerations

Although I analyzed publicly available data, ethical research practice requires careful consideration of the dignity of content creators. Because the data I collected is publicly available, I used the name of the Instagram account holder and quoted directly from the content. My intention was not to critique an individual woman, but to interrogate the broader discursive structures that shape how love and power are understood in contemporary culture. I approached the data with reflexivity, acknowledging my positionality as a researcher who is interpreting texts from a feminist critical lens (Finlay, 2002; Lazar, 2007; Rose, 2022).

Limitations and Future Research

My study is limited by its focus on one, married, childless tradwife influencer and on a relatively narrow sample of Instagram reels from January 02, 2024 to March 30, 2024. While this focus provided analytical clarity, it did not capture the full range of tradwife discourse across platforms, regions, religious traditions, or stages of motherhood. I also did not examine audience reception systematically, so my study cannot show how followers interpret, resist, or reproduce the discourse. Furthermore, the interpretive nature of discourse analysis means that findings are subjective and context-dependent and are not generalizable. Despite these limitations, I believe this approach has yielded important insights into how social media normalizes and aestheticizes power imbalances in intimate relationships.

These limitations also define the scope of my study and point to directions for future research. By focusing on one highly visible North American tradwife account and a pre-motherhood phase of content production, my project offers an in-depth account of how

Instagram reels can aestheticize control, dependence, and submission as love. This focus allows for close analysis of discourse, but it also means that as a single-case study, the findings are not intended as a comprehensive portrait of the tradwife movement as a whole, but as an in-depth analysis of one bounded case.

Future research could move beyond high-profile influencers to examine how ordinary participants and smaller accounts engage, adapt, or resist tradwife discourse in everyday digital practice. It would also be valuable to compare pre-motherhood and maternal tradwife content, to study audience reception through comments or interviews, and to explore how these discourses travel across platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and Pinterest. Future research could also examine how intersectional factors such as race, religion, and class shape the production, visibility, and reception of tradwife discourse across different digital spaces. It would also be valuable to explore how algorithms influence the circulation and reach of this content, and how monetization practices such as sponsorships, affiliate links, subscriptions, and other income-generating strategies help sustain tradwife discourse as both a cultural performance and a profitable digital practice. Such work would help clarify how tradwife discourse is sustained and transformed in wider digital culture.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the methodological framework that guided my study. Using a qualitative design, I employed Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) together with visual analysis to examine how Instagram content constructs intimate partner dynamics. By focusing on the account of Aria Lewis, a North American tradwife influencer, I analyzed a saturated sample of reels posted between January 02, 2024 and March 30, 2024 to examine how language and imagery aestheticize dependence and submission as forms of love. By grounding the study in

feminist media research and IPV scholarship, this approach positioned Instagram as a discursive site where coercion can be reframed as devotion and where digital aesthetics participate in normalizing gendered power relations in intimate relationships. In the next chapter, I present the findings of the analysis.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

In this chapter, I analyze the content posted by Aria Lewis on her Instagram account between January 2 and March 30, 2024 to examine how ideals of love are discursively constructed. I employ a feminist critical discourse analysis informed by Foucault (1977) and Butler (1990) to explore how gendered practices such as economic dependence, domestic labour, submission, and aestheticized femininity are framed as intimacy and virtue rather than as constraint. Across the dataset, control and unequal power relations are softened through religious language, gratitude, nostalgia, and visual warmth. Emotional risk, bodily discipline, and precarity are re-signified as moral strength and marital devotion. Rather than appearing as coercive, these dynamics are presented as chosen and spiritually meaningful. I identify seven themes for the analysis which are economic dependence as love; domestic servitude as devotion; illness and failure; spiritualized patriarchy and courtship; aestheticized modesty and historical femininity; scripted femininity; and tradwife discourse as harmless choice. The themes below reveal how this discourse normalizes inequality by embedding it within narratives of love and faith. This analysis draws on the full corpus of 62 reels and their captions, but for space I discuss only selected examples that most clearly illustrate each theme.

Theme 1: Economic dependence as love

“Economic dependence as love” refers to the discursive pattern in which Aria frames reliance on a male breadwinner not merely as a pragmatic or frugal choice, but as a moral and

emotional virtue, as evidence of intimacy, trust, and a ‘good’ marriage. The language of risk, scarcity, and provision is couched in gratitude, contentment, and admiration for her husband, so that accepting economic dependence appears as an emotionally rich and morally superior choice. All quotations from Aria’s reels and captions are reproduced verbatim, including spelling and grammatical errors.

In the reel posted on January 2, 2024, this theme appears when she narrates her husband quitting his job and starting a business while insisting she “wasn't scared about the finances” because they had already “learned the ins and outs of living on one income, one not very large income.” She recalls living on “a \$30 week grocery budget” and says, “we would be able to dial back our expenses, cut out things we didn't need and live on much less,” presenting frugality as evidence of love and resilience. Her reassurance that “it's winter time and the business is slow but I'm still not worried about it because I know we can maximize every single cent we have and will be just fine” links her calm to his risky decision, turning composure into a wifely virtue. When she concludes that “having your income cut can't be scary” if you know how to “live on less,” and sells a guide in \$27 based on years when she was “making no money at all and we were living on one income,” dependence on his small wage becomes the basis of her current authority.

The reel posted on January 4, 2024, extends the theme of economic dependence as love by valuing small, supplemental female income rather than independence. She calls the video “a slightly more realistic one for this trend,” contrasting her modest earnings with others who claim to make “hundreds of thousands” from simple content. She says that “most of us content creators who are making money are posting higher quality content that takes longer to make” and “trying to create valuable digital products, and in general bring value to people's lives,” suggesting that

the worth of her work lies in service more than in money. Because Instagram “does not monetize” and she has “only been able to bring in money via my Patreon” (a subscription platform where followers pay monthly to support creators) and affiliates, she stresses that it is “all about value” and not big numbers, normalizing a role where she adds “a little” income and a lot of care.

In the reel posted on January 20, 2024, Aria continues to narrate early marriage finances through a scarcity-and-faith storyline and explains that when they married during Covid, her husband’s hours were cut significantly and that they were living on a low, single income while she had no earnings during a major transition. She describes budgeting as extremely tight by including a very small weekly grocery allowance (the full quoted wording and figure are already provided earlier in this theme, under the January 2 reel). She presents her emotional steadiness as evidence of relational maturity. Rather than framing this period as vulnerability, she frames it as proof that love is demonstrated through calm endurance, frugality, and trust during instability.

The reel posted on January 27, 2024, crystallizes the ideal by connecting the dream of being a stay-at-home wife to male provision and attitude. She reassures viewers that “if you're not sure you can live on one income, I'm here to tell you that it's probably possible” because “we started out on \$30k and we made it work.” She repeats that she wrote her guide “about what we learned on one income” so others can “know that it's possible for you too,” listing “grocery strategies,” “cutting down expenses in ways you probably haven't thought about,” and “optimizing your savings and paying off debt.” The on-screen text, “If you want to be a stay-at-home wife or mom, you don't need a rich man. Just a man who values your role and takes providing seriously”, condenses the theme into one formula that love is a husband who “takes

providing seriously.” She adds “I’ve loved every minute of being a stay-at-home wife,” attaching dependence to joy.

The February 21, 2024, reel reinforces this logic by glorifying husbands’ sacrificial work so that women can remain at home. She opens with “They do so much for us,” then cites that “men with families work more and make more money, while women with families work less,” asking “I wonder why that is?” to imply a natural division. She says, “I’m extra thankful for my husband who took the leap last fall to start his own business,” calling it “such a scary thing to do” yet adding that “we thank God for every check.” Stressing that “If my husband has a sick day he doesn't get paid. He doesn't get 2 weeks of PTO [paid time off],” and that he works “from sun up past sun down” with his chainsaws, she presents his risk and overwork as devotion. The on-screen text, “Shoutout to all the husbands out there working long days so we can stay home, bake breads, tend to our gardens, & make our house a home,” linking her ability to “stay home” and inhabit the tradwife aesthetic directly to his labour.

The reel posted on February 23, 2024, constructs “economic dependence as love” by casting her former career as both achievement and insurance that underwrites her present dependence. She jokes about “spend[ing] 6 years of life building a career only to burn out and become a stay at home wife at the age of 21,” but reassures viewers that “EVERYTHING happens for a reason” and that the “knowledge and experience” she gained are “priceless,” especially because she “would pick [wedding photography] back up to support [her]self” if “my husband died.” Skills and employability are framed as a contingency plan rather than a route to autonomy, so the ideal remains a husband-funded domestic life. Even her gratitude, saying, “I will forever be grateful for God leading me down that path, as well as the support from my family, friends, and my dear husband who learned how to second shoot for me and drove me all

across the country,” folds her past independence back into a narrative of male and divine provision.

The reel posted on February 24, 2024, makes dependence explicit by insisting that her stay-at-home status rests on accepting a “low average income” and “making a lot of sacrifices,” while maintaining that “it’s worth it, for me at least.” She tells viewers, “we don’t have money,” that her husband “started his own business recently,” and they are still “living on a low average income,” but presents this as a price gladly paid so she can remain at home, even suggesting “maybe leave your job” too. The on-screen list, “taking one small vacation a year, living in a small, old house, making all our food from scratch, driving 20 years old car, 30mo date nights [Driving a 20-year-old car signals austerity. 30mo date nights refers to a thirty-dollar-per-month date night budget.], being hours from any major city, my husband working 70 hour weeks, budgeting every penny, going to the library,” presents austerity, his overwork, and strict budgeting as the infrastructure of the tradwife life. When she reassures viewers that “if you’re like me, staying home is more valuable to you than working... it is possible!” and promotes her guide of “things we learned on one income” alongside their budget template, dependence is framed not only as emotionally worthwhile but as an instructional and monetized lifestyle. The reel makes one-income wifedom look desirable, while the guide and template package it into practical lessons that followers can buy and attempt to reproduce.

The reel posted on February 27, 2024, softens economic dependence through an aesthetic of pampered passivity by celebrating that she is a “passenger princess for life” because her husband does all the driving. She recalls him driving her “15 hours one way to VA” to surprise a friend, and to weddings “15–24 hours away,” concluding “How thankful I am for him and all the little things he does for me,” so that his control over mobility such as, owning the car, doing the

driving, deciding the routes, is narrated as tender service. Her dependence on his labour and skills (he drives; she rides) is framed as a romantic perk that confirms his role as protector and facilitator.

The reel posted on February 29, 2024, returns to the financial side of dependence by insisting her social media earnings are “not a full time income” and mocking the assumption that “influencers with 100k followers” must “make lots of money.” She discloses that “What I made in February as a content creator with 102K followers” is “257.37” and then adds, “So now you know. And if you think a few hundred is a full time income, let me know what planet you’re from so I can move there cause inflation on this one is getting bad! 🤔”. The joke minimizes her online earnings and, by extension, frames her digital labour as supplemental rather than as serious, independent income. While she resists fantasies of influencer wealth, the effect is to cement a hierarchy where her “tiny” income is morally purified as honest and realistic, while “real” provision is implicitly outsourced to her husband’s offline work.

The reel posted on March 8, 2024, condenses the theme into a single line of text, “POV [Point of View] Your husband works so you can stay home and make cookies on a rainy Thursday afternoon,” over footage of her baking in the kitchen. His waged labour is presented as the condition for her ability to “stay home,” while the return he receives is framed in soft, affective terms like, “You bet he gets some cookies when he gets home.” Her baking becomes a playful return on his investment, so that dependence appears as a sweet exchange.

The reel posted on March 13, 2024, addresses anxieties about this asymmetry directly, only to reframe them as irrational and unfaithful. She mocks commenters who warn that her husband might “cheatleave” because she is “dependent on him,” and does not “work a full time job,” or dresses modestly, and insists instead that she has “support,” “skills that can be

monetized,” and that “God is with me and would provide, just as He always has.” Rather than acknowledging the structural risks of having no independent income, she casts worry itself as the problem. She says, “I am not going to waste my life being anxious about tomorrow,” and affirms that she will “rejoice in His provision, take my marriage seriously, love my husband well, and be grateful.” Economic dependence is justified through spiritual assurance and trust in his “commitment.”

The reel posted on March 16, 2024, recenters his continuous labour as the engine of their shared life, while visually keeping her in the domestic frame. She contrasts what “the internet thinks” her husband does is lounge while she serves him, with what he “actually does” after work, that is, he “gets up before the sun to read his Bible,” “spends hours doing hard labor” clearing land and felling trees, then comes home to tend animals, garden, fix equipment, and “maintain our cars,” all so they “can have the life we dream of living later.” Her brief appearance pouring him a drink on the couch is marked as a misperception, while the real story is his relentless productivity.

Across these reels, “economic dependence as love” operates on both sides of the relationship. On his side, “taking providing seriously,” working “from sun up past sun down,” and taking financial risks for the family are cast as ultimate love languages. On her side, being “not worried” when he quits, surviving on an extremely small weekly grocery budget, putting all her income into shared savings, and finding joy in being a “stay-at-home wife” are framed as loving responses that prove her faith in him and in God. Rather than naming structural precarity or unequal access to income as problems, the discourse turns them into sites where love, faith, and feminine virtue are displayed, so that economic dependence becomes something to which to

aspire. Overall, the discourse frames financial dependence as proof of trust and moral wifhood, so vulnerability is recast as an aspirational form of love.

Theme 2: Domestic Servitude as Devotion

This is the theme in which repetitive, gendered housework and care work are framed as the primary way Aria loves well, rather than as labour that could be shared, paid, or contested. Across the reels posted on January 5 and 23, and February 6, 8, 13, and 21 in 2024, Aria repeatedly positions cooking, cleaning, planning, and organizing around her husband's schedule and comfort as joyful, meaningful, and almost sacred duties. Devotion is not only an emotion; it is measured by how early she wakes up, how often she cooks his favourite meals, how smoothly the household runs, and how little complaint appears on the camera. In this framing, orienting her time, energy, and body toward serving the home and her husband become evidence of loving and successful wifhood.

The reel posted on January 5, 2024, offers one of the clearest examples because she explicitly ties sacrifice of sleep and time to love. She says, "most of the time I have leftovers for my husband to take for lunch, but sometimes I don't," and describes a morning when she cooked for him. She said, "I didn't want him to go to work empty handed and he was going to be 45 minutes from home so he couldn't come home for lunch, so I got up early and made cheeseburger soup for him to have for lunch!" Here the devotion is not just that she cooks; it is that she reorganizes her entire morning and bodily comfort (waking early, cooking at 6 a.m.) so that he does not face a temporary discomfort at work. She says, "I love caring for my husband this way. It makes me so happy to send him off with a warm, nutritious meal, and welcome him home with one," explicitly naming these repetitive tasks as the source of her happiness and identity. By adding that her "mom's love language was food" and it "rubbed off," she also

naturalizes this pattern intergenerationally. Women's emotional expression appears to be feeding others and not expecting reciprocal care in the domestic sphere. In visual terms, the reel's "warm lighting," "apron," and "home-cooked food" aestheticize the scene so that the viewer sees a cozy, loving kitchen rather than the early-morning unpaid labour.

Similarly, the reel posted on January 23, 2024, frames cooking as a recurring devotional act directed at his preferences. She introduces the recipe by declaring, "This is my husband's favorite! I make this meal pretty regularly and he LOVES it," foregrounding his taste as the reason the dish exists and is repeated. The detailed instructions, for instance her saying, "Trim fat off the meat and chop into small bite-sized pieces... Fry the rice until slightly brown, then make a well and scramble eggs... Mix well and enjoy!", underscore the time and effort involved. The closing line, "Serve with a kiss 😊," explicitly fuses domestic labour and romantic affection. The meal is not just food, it is a love offering that culminates in physical intimacy. The problem is not that she is cooking for her husband; the issue is why is it always for him and not even once for herself, which captures how the devotion here is one-directional and normalized as the correct orientation of a wife's culinary work. The "kitchen scene" visually reinforces that the kitchen is her stage, her site of service, and the place where her devotion is constantly performed.

The theme, "Domestic Servitude as Devotion" is also present indirectly when she talks about optimizing or intensifying domestic labour under constraints, which deepens the sense of servitude as a moral project. For instance, the February 8, 2024, reel advises, "Pro tip: Clean while you cook," and in the caption she says "This tip has saved me so much time! It might seem kind of basic but honestly once I swapped out scrolling my phone for doing dishes while food was cooking, it made a huge difference!" Here devotion is not simply doing the work; it is doing the work more efficiently, squeezing household tasks into every available moment. Swapping

“scrolling my phone” for “doing dishes” is presented as a small triumph while illustrating a broader injunction to self-discipline that any spare time should be turned into productive domestic effort. The kitchen setting once again anchors her identity, and the upbeat framing suggests that constantly doubling up chores is clever, even pleasurable.

The February 13, 2024, reel extends the theme from individual acts (one lunch, one favourite meal) to an entire everyday rhythm. She presents “Monday morning in my life as a traditional wife,” showing herself “cooking, going out in the car, and coming back home to do more chores.” The caption, “Hello friends! I am back from my vacation and decided to make this morning in my life video since it's consistently a fave! Enjoy!” invites viewers into a routine where domestic busyness is the content and the main appeal for viewers. The soundscape of “original sound of dishes and car,” alongside visuals of “Kitchen, living room, car,” shows how her day moves between spaces while remaining centered on domestic tasks. Devotion in this reel is not just a special gesture; it is the constant, background work of making meals, cleaning, and running errands, framed as both ordinary and satisfying. By tagging herself as “a traditional wife” in the text overlay, she links this pattern of servitude directly to a larger identity and the ideology that a good tradwife is busy with home and her devotion shows in the smoothness of the morning routine.

Even reels in which she acknowledges difficulty or failure still reinforce devotion as the standard. In the reel posted on February 6, 2024, she called herself “a failure of a housewife” because she “couldn't do chores on time” but also adds “it's okay,” offering “just some encouragement if you've been feeling the same. It's hard but it will get better.” The emotional tone is gentle and reassuring, but the bar remains clear: a good wife keeps up with chores and falling behind provokes self-blame and requires comfort. The visuals, such as, “Kitchen, doing

dishes”, place this confession in the scene of work itself, visually reaffirming that the core site of her moral struggle is housework. Devotion is measured against the volume and timeliness of chores; when illness or exhaustion interferes (as in January 10 and February 2, where chronic illness shapes her capacity), she still stresses managing “to get dinner and do some dishes” or making food “in bulk” to keep up. These strategies present care for the home and husband as non-negotiable obligations that persist even when her health is compromised and supersede care for herself.

In the reel posted on February 24, 2024, she counters assumptions that stay-at-home wives are wealthy by putting emphasis on limited financial resources of tradwives and referring back to the same austerity checklist (quoted under Economic Dependence as Love), while visuals show her quietly pouring soup or juice into jars in the kitchen. The everyday grind of cooking from scratch and accommodating her husband’s long workweeks is thereby aestheticized as a voluntary set of sacrifices she happily undertakes so that she can remain at home, turning the repetitive, exhausting work of cooking and frugality into proof that she is devoted enough to deserve the tradwife life.

The reel posted on February 28, 2024, further privatizes this labor by framing the empty house as her dream scenario. She answers accusations of boredom with the caption that, as an introvert with “sensory overload,” “being alone in a quiet house is a dream,” while the video shows her calmly kneading dough in the kitchen. Even as she concedes that future children will disrupt the quiet, she promises to “work to cultivate a home that has peace and comfort all the same,” re-coding domestic work as the medium through which she curates atmosphere, regulates affect, and manages sensory environments for others.

The March 7, 2024, reel gives a compressed timetable of this devotion by walking viewers through a “5:30–9:30 pm” evening routine. She begins cooking at 5:30 p.m., collects eggs and does outdoor chores at 6:15, welcomes her husband home and shares a brief moment on the couch, then returns to “shifting some food from the frying pan to a bowl,” loading the dishwasher, and finally relaxing and reading before cleaning her face and going to bed. Visually, he moves in and out of the frame, kissing her on arrival, playing games, holding the cat, while she remains in the same dress and apron, cooking, plating, cleaning, and resetting the house, so that domestic labor forms the spine of the evening while affection and leisure are squeezed into its margins. The routine is narrated as cozy and ordinary, but the structure makes clear that her time, movements, and even clothing are organized around service. The apron stays on until the chores are done and devotion is measured not in grand gestures but in hours of continuous cooking and tidying that are framed as contented normality.

On March 15, 2024, domestic servitude appears as both effective practice and monetizable niche when she promotes her “favorite laundry soap company” through a sponsored reel that presents laundry as a beloved ritual. The caption, “POV laundry is now your favorite task because you found a non-toxic detergent that makes your clothes smell amazing” overlays footage of her hanging clothes on a line, smiling, and mentioning sale codes and discounts; the labor of washing and hanging laundry becomes pleasurable and aesthetic and even the ad reinforces that her “favorite task” is a domestic chore.

March 16, 2024, reel also illustrates domestic servitude as a quiet marker of devotion. The reel opens with a familiar service tableau, Aria preparing and bringing her husband a drink while he rests, before shifting into footage that emphasizes his physically demanding work and ongoing maintenance of their property. Although the narrative positioning functions as a rebuttal

to a perceived online stereotype about unequal labor, the visual grammar still locates her primarily within the home and him primarily outside which sustains a gendered spatial division in which his labor builds and maintains the homestead while hers attends to comfort and care. Domestic service remains framed as the appropriate feminine counterpart to masculine exertion and is folded into a romantic logic of shared aspiration (for the reel's fuller provision, see the analysis of March 16 reel under Economic Dependence as Love).

Finally, the March 19, 2024 reel crystallizes the theme in a straightforward caption, "Make supper for my hardworking husband with me," as she prepares "roast chicken, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes and homemade bread," plates it neatly, and serves it to him as he waits at the table. He is shown "waiting on the dining table for the food and doing nothing," while she moves around the kitchen in an apron, marinating, cooking, plating, and then delivering the meal, yet the entire sequence is narrated as satisfying and "Yum!" rather than as demanding or unequal. Dinner becomes a devotional ritual in which his status as "hardworking husband" justifies his passivity in the scene, and her unpaid labor, framed as a heartfelt gift, naturalizes a structure where she serves and he receives, completing the pattern across these reels in which domestic servitude is consistently aestheticized as a serene, grateful, and even sponsored calling.

Taken together, these reels construct a coherent thematic cluster. Domestic servitude in the kitchen and in the rhythms of daily chores is narrated as the primary language of love. Getting up early to cook so he is not "empty handed," repeatedly making "my husband's favorite" meal, timing cleaning so there is no idle scrolling, and feeling like a failure in the housewife role when chores slip all show how her bodily discipline and time-management are moralized. Her devotion is visible not only in what she feels but also in how tirelessly she serves. The visuals of warm kitchens, aprons, vintage aesthetics, and calm narration work to aestheticize

this servitude, making an unequal division of labour appear beautiful, intentional, and spiritually or emotionally fulfilling. Across the content, love is framed as ongoing service which makes domestic labour and self-discipline the key indicators of good wifhood.

Theme 3: Illness and Failure

Aria frames chronic illness, exhaustion, and reduced capacity through a lens of personal inadequacy, apology, and self-discipline, rather than as a structural problem of gendered expectations. Illness is real and named, but instead of loosening the tradwife ideal, it becomes another test of her worth as a homemaker and wife. “Failure” language shows how deeply she has internalized a standard of constant domestic productivity and availability, so that any disruption, no matter how legitimate, threatens her sense of being a “good” wife.

In the chronic-illness reels (such as reels posted on January 10 & 24, 2024), she foregrounds symptoms and constraints but still emphasizes what she manages to do. In the reel posted on January 10, 2024, she states that she is a “chronically ill homemaker”. She stresses that when her health “flares up” and she has “no energy,” she often looks like she is lying on the couch, reading, or playing with the cat. Yet she adds that she still tries to maintain a minimal domestic baseline, such as preparing dinner and getting some essential cleanup done, even during flare-ups (full quotation under Domestic servitude as devotion). In the reel posted on January 23, 2024, she acknowledges illness by listing nausea, pain, exhaustion, and heart palpitations but the narrative quickly turns to productivity. Even when barely functioning, she still expects herself to cook and clean. The justification in the January 10, 2024 reel, is “that’s one of the reasons why we stay home” and reframes being housebound not just as necessity, but as an almost moral rationale for the tradwife arrangement. She presents illness as a reason to remain in the domestic sphere while the domestic ideal ensures she continues to labour there.

Her defensive tone toward outsiders reveals how illness and failure intersect (January 24, 2024). In the reel posted on January 24, 2024, in which she responds to accusations that “chronic illness is just an excuse to be lazy,” she lists a long inventory of symptoms, such as “cramps so bad”, she states that she “can’t stand, migraines, utter exhaustion for no reason, brain fog, racing heart, chest pain”, to prove that what she is experiencing is real. The need to defend herself at all shows how much cultural pressure exists around productivity and work, especially for women whose labour is not waged. At the same time, she does not challenge the underlying assumption that being home must be justified; instead, she invites viewers to “keep your friends with invisible illnesses in your thoughts and prayers,” emphasizing empathy and spiritual support but leaving intact the idea that a “good” sick wife is one who explains and reassures others that she is not lazy.

Direct “failure” language makes the internalized standard even clearer. In the reel posted on February 6, 2024, she offers encouragement about not being a perfect housewife while recounting that she described herself as having failed in the housewife role because she could not keep up with chores on schedule, and she reassures viewers that it will improve with time (quotation under Domestic servitude as devotion). Yet the very fact that missed chores equate to “failure” shows how tightly her sense of self is tied to domestic performance. Illness or low energy are not allowed to simply reduce output; they must be wrestled into a narrative where she is temporarily failing but striving to improve, so that the ideal, unflagging domestic devotion, remains intact. The emotional work here is intense. She has to comfort herself and her viewers, while never fully letting go of the impossible standard that generated the feeling of failure in the first place.

Illness also becomes an occasion for further self-optimization rather than for renegotiating roles. For instance, in reels about bulk cooking during flare-ups, she says, “making meals in large batches is one of my top tips” because it “saved me so much,” even though she is visibly “tired and drained” (February 2, 2024). The message is that a good sick wife finds hacks and efficiencies so that domestic service continues smoothly despite her symptoms. Read alongside Aria’s illness narratives, the February 8, 2024 reel, functions less as a neutral “household tip” and more as a disciplinary logic for how a wife should manage time and the body. As discussed earlier under Domestic servitude as devotion, she promotes multitasking in the kitchen, turning moments that could be rest or downtime into additional domestic output. In the illness/failure frame, the significance is that this optimization discourse helps produce the conditions under which being unwell becomes experienced as falling short. If the ideal wife is expected to compress chores into every spare minute, then fatigue, pain, or limited capacity is easily interpreted not as a legitimate limit but as a personal deficit. The solution offered is not renegotiation of expectations or shared redistribution of labor, but intensified self-management that makes “failure” a moral category that attaches to the woman when her body cannot sustain constant productivity.

In the March 1, 2024 reel, illness is explicitly linked to the end of her photography career, but the narrative still treats burnout and “health just disintegrated” as a personal turning point rather than a systemic failure of labour conditions or gendered expectations. She describes starting a career at 15, “travel[ing] thousands of miles around the US, shooting weddings” with her husband, and finally quitting “about a year and a half ago” because “it became way too much stress and my health just disintegrated,” yet this is framed as something she is “so thankful” for because of the experience and skills gained. Illness here justifies the pivot into full-time

homemaking without questioning why she had to absorb the cost of overwork in her own body; instead, she presents herself as the one who made a wise choice, transforming the collapse of her health into evidence of resilience and gratitude rather than a sign that the demands placed on her were unsustainable.

The February 23, 2024 reel, pushes this further by explicitly naming burnout and the pivot from building a career to becoming a stay-at-home wife in early adulthood, while still wrapping it in self-deprecating humour and providential meaning (the full burnout wording already quoted under Economic Dependence as Love). She notes that “the stress was awful and my health has never been the same,” but reframes the outcome as worthwhile because it produced knowledge and employable skills that could function as a contingency plan if her husband could no longer provide. Failure (burnout and long-term health impacts) is smoothed over by a testimony-style logic in which suffering leads to wisdom and deeper reliance on God and marriage, keeping the tradwife arrangement intact.

The March 23, 2024 reel, implicitly reframes illness as something that homemaking can heal or at least soothe, rather than as a condition that should disrupt the basic script. Looking back at “21-year-old me scared to leave her career to be a homemaker,” she admits that “leaving my job was one of the best things that happened to me” because she has been able to “take the rest I need to recover from my chronic illnesses,” alongside “pursu[ing] whatever interests I want” and “mak[ing] food from scratch.” Rest and recovery are thus imagined inside the same domestic framework that still expects productivity, cooking from scratch, curating a “little life,” so that illness becomes part of the justification for full-time homemaking, not a reason to challenge the assumption that she alone must adapt her body, schedule, and aspirations to make the tradwife ideal workable.

What holds these pieces together is the tight coupling of moral value, health, and housework. When she is productive despite being sick; cooking dinner, doing dishes, bulk prepping, she is not only coping, she is succeeding at being a loving, devoted wife. When she falls behind, she feels like “a failure” and must publicly talk herself and her audience back into feeling “it’s okay.” The structure of expectation never really shifts. The house should be maintained, meals should be cooked, and her primary responsibility is to adjust herself, through tips, hacks, and emotional regulation to make that happen. Illness is not allowed to disrupt the tradwife ideal; instead, the ideal reshapes illness into something that must be managed privately so that domestic servitude can continue.

This is where the subtle emotional violence of the discourse shows most clearly. On the surface, these reels are about vulnerability and encouragement. She appears open about pain and fatigue, and she reaches out to other chronically ill women in solidarity. But underneath, the message is that even when your body is failing you, you are still obligated to hold the home together, to justify your presence there, and to feel guilty when you can’t keep up. “Failure” is tied to individual shortcomings in meeting the housewife ideal and not to structural ableism or rigid gender roles. In that sense, the theme of “Illness & Failure” reveals how the tradwife discourse turns women’s suffering inward, transforming structural constraints into personal tests of faith, discipline, and devotion.

Theme 4: Spiritualized Patriarchy and Courtship

This is the pattern in which male headship, female submission, and tightly controlled romantic scripts are framed as God’s loving design and as the safest, wisest way for women to love. Rather than presenting hierarchy or courtship rules as purely cultural choices, Aria’s reels repeatedly ground them in divine intention and moral responsibility which makes critiquing the

structure start to look like questioning God. Spiritual language softens and sanctifies unequal power relations, while courtship stories normalize early, supervised, marriage-focused relationships as ideal.

In defining a “traditional wife,” in the reel posted on January 3, 2024, Aria explicitly grounds the identity in Christian theology rather than in personal preference or lifestyle choice. She says that as traditional wives, they “seek to follow God's design for the family,” “respect our husbands as the main breadwinner and the head of the home,” and see their own roles as “the help meet,” with homes and families as their “priority.” She also stresses that “we believe God designed men and women with completely separate sets of abilities, talents, and roles” and that they are “not interchangeable but complementary.” This language does two things at once. One is that it naturalizes patriarchy as “design,” not as human decision, and the other is that it wraps male authority and female domesticity in a positive spiritual vocabulary of complementarity, calling, and obedience to God. She presents submission as alignment with divine order.

Courtship reels extend this logic into relationship scripts. For example, when she describes their own courtship in the reel posted on February 3, 2024, she emphasizes that it was “intentional,” that the end goal was marriage, and that this is “how it was for us” as Christians. She contrasts “casual dating” with “intentional dating” where marriage is the expected outcome, noting that “this is what most Christians do,” and adds that she’s not “condemning dating” but simply sharing what “worked out great” for them. The effect is to make an early, highly structured path to marriage appear both normative within her faith community and personally successful. The religious frame, for instance, courtship as a way to honour God and guard purity, turns tighter controls over young women’s romantic and sexual lives into signs of wisdom and care rather than constraints on autonomy.

This spiritual framing is also present when she recounts their age-gap marriage in the reel posted on January 25, 2024. In the reel about “controversial things” in their relationship, she lists that her “husband is the leader of the home and the main breadwinner,” that “cooking & cleaning is my responsibility as a wife,” and that “we married at 18 and 24,” right alongside claims that they “never fight,” “never go to bed angry,” and “treat each other with love, kindness, understanding and respect.” By placing hierarchy (leader/follower, breadwinner/homemaker) and age gap in the same list as kindness and mutual respect, she casts these unequal structures as part of a loving, successful Christian marriage. The language of “controversial” acknowledges outside critique, but the reel’s tone and content resolve that controversy by presenting their arrangement as uniquely peaceful and blessed, implicitly validating the underlying patriarchal model.

Submission is explicitly spiritualized as well in the reel posted on February 1, 2024. When followers ask whether she really “submits” to her husband, she responds cheerfully that “that's how it's done over here” and quickly adds that it’s “not one-sided” because he “treats me like a queen.” The casual, joking tone (“yes, and?”) makes submission seem unremarkable and even glamorous, while the claim that he loves her deeply provides spiritual and emotional cover for the power imbalance. The idea is that because he is loving and godly, his headship is safe and her submission is a joy, not a threat. Critique of patriarchy is thus reframed as misunderstanding the mutual love and Christian ethos of their home.

Aria also uses spiritual language to broaden the script beyond marriage and motherhood while still keeping women inside a conservative frame. In the reel posted on January 18, 2024, to “Christian ladies” about purpose, she critiques conservative church culture for acting like single women or childless wives are in a “waiting season” and reminds viewers that women’s ultimate

purpose is to “glorify and enjoy” God, not simply to marry and have children. At first glance, such a reminder loosens the traditional script, offering comfort to women who don’t fit it. Yet the solution is still a deeply religious one. She puts it as, maximize time in “ministry” and in “God’s Word,” seek to “become more like Him,” and treat your current state as where “God has put you... for a reason.” Patriarchal structures around gender and authority remain untouched; what shifts is the emphasis within them. Spiritual fulfilment replaces family fulfilment as the primary goal, but the ultimate authority is still divine and mediated through a conservative Christian worldview.

Her modesty reel posted on February 17, 2024, shows a similar negotiation. She insists that “all of these outfits are modest,” that she is “personally convicted” about what she wears and has a “clean and right heart before the Lord,” and that others may be “convicted differently” and will “give an account” for their own choices. She rejects rigid, man-made modesty rules and legalism by invoking Jesus’ critique of the Pharisees, yet she keeps modesty as a spiritual duty between the woman and God. The underlying assumption is that women’s bodies and clothing are matters of moral and religious concern, subject to divine judgement. Spiritual language again mediates control. Even when she pushes back against extra rules, she reinforces the idea that godly womanhood includes self-policing of dress, in line with her understanding of scripture.

In the reel posted on March 14, 2024, “Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship” is distilled into a didactic lesson about biblical submission, where she moves from personal anecdote into prescriptive language about how wives “should” behave. She explains that “submission is God’s design” and then translates that into everyday rules that wives should “curb [their] sassy attitude,” “say yes when he wants [their] time,” and “ask his opinion first” so that he can “lead as Christ leads the church,” explicitly mapping the marital hierarchy onto the Christ–church model

from conservative Christian teaching. The relational asymmetry, he leads, she yields, is thus presented as obedience to scripture, with tone and examples softening the content. Small behavioural tweaks (less “sass,” more yes, more deferring) are presented as sweet, practical ways to honour God, making resistance to male headship look like spiritual immaturity rather than a legitimate political or ethical disagreement.

The March 29, 2024 reel, intensifies the providential framing of their relationship by narrating early, supervised, marriage-focused courtship as something God orchestrated rather than as simply chosen. She recounts that “God brought us together at 17/18 through family courtship,” emphasizing that it was “His perfect timing for purity and purpose,” and describes family involvement and strict boundaries as part of how God “protected” them and guided them toward marriage. Youth, close monitoring, and the rapid movement from courtship to wedding are thereby sanctified as evidence of divine care. What might look like constraint (limited dating freedom, heavy parental oversight, early binding commitments) is recast as God’s tailored plan for their holiness and happiness. In this way, the courtship script is not just a cultural or denominational preference; it becomes a story of providence, where obeying family and church norms around romance is equated with obeying God and where the resulting hierarchical marriage is celebrated as spiritually superior precisely because it followed that path.

Courtship, modesty, and submission thus work together as practices through which spiritualized patriarchy is lived. Courtship limits physical intimacy and channels relationships toward early marriage; modesty regulates the body; submission structures household authority. All three are often justified through different reels. She presents courtship and submissions as ways of “following God’s design,” “honouring Him,” or seeking a “clean and right heart before the Lord.” Stories of God “bringing” the couple together frame the relationship as providential

rather than merely personal. Expressions of gratitude that she gets to “do life with him” further reinforce this divine framing. That providential framing makes their specific hierarchical arrangement feel not only chosen but divinely endorsed.

At the same time, she often insists that she is “not speaking for every woman,” that her “word is not the gospel truth,” and that she is “just sharing” what she believes and has observed. These disclaimers present her version of patriarchy and courtship as one harmless option among many, even as the repeated pairing of faithfulness to God with male headship and traditional courtship encourages viewers to see this option as especially pure and blessed. In other words, spiritualized patriarchy in her reels does not shout “every woman must submit”; it calmly narrates a world in which loving God, being a good Christian woman, and embracing male leadership and courtship scripts are tightly braided together.

This theme shows that control and hierarchy do not appear as crude commands or overt coercion. Instead, they come wrapped in language of divine design, purpose, conviction, and love. Courtship rules and male headship are presented as ways of protecting women, drawing them closer to God, and building stable families. Because they are spiritualized, these structures become harder to criticize. The disagreement looks like theological error or bitterness rather than a legitimate concern about gendered power. The discourse thereby turns patriarchy into a sacred lifestyle and young women into faithful participants in a script that promises safety and holiness in exchange for obedience and submission.

Theme 5: Aestheticized Modesty and Historical Femininity

In this theme, Aria uses clothing, styling, and visual references to past eras to make a particular kind of modest, feminized body look beautiful, cozy, and morally superior. Rather than modesty appearing as a restriction or burden, it is framed as a creative, pleasurable practice;

rather than historical gender norms appearing oppressive, they are presented through charming, cinematic images of skirts in the snow, 1890s-style dresses in the kitchen, and time-travel fantasies. This aesthetic work is crucial to the tradwife discourse because it makes the embodied rules feel desirable.

A recurring element is the insistence that modest, skirt-based dressing is both practical and joyful, not a constraint. In the reel posted on January 11, 2024, she shows her daily activities on the snowy homestead and announces, “It’s just daily life on the homestead. And I do it all in skirts,” immediately pairing hard, outdoor labour, and cold weather with flowing, feminine clothing. She adds that there is “nothing wrong with pants” and that she owns and sometimes wears them but insists she does not “see skirts as impractical” and finds them “warmer and prettier than jeans,” which lets her reframe what might look like a restrictive dress code as rational and aesthetically pleasing. The visuals of “outside scene in snow, wearing skirt in snow” show a body that is both active and gracefully covered, making the modest form appear not only normal but enviable.

The “get ready with me for church” reel posted on January 16, 2024, deepens this association by presenting winter skirt layering as a style hack. She responds to questions about staying warm in skirts in the cold by cheerfully explaining that they are “way easier and so much more comfortable than pants” because “skirts tend to trap warm air and are so nice for layering.” When she jokes that layering with pants turns legs into “immovable sausages,” she injects humor to devalue trousers and elevate skirts. The process of putting on lined tights, petticoats, and a dress becomes a ritual of beautification and problem-solving. Viewers see her “aesthetically getting dressed” for church at “-2 degrees and snowy,” so that modest dress appears both stylish

and cleverly practical, interwoven with religious participation. The underlying norm that women should wear skirts to church is not argued but it is made to feel natural and even smart.

Historical references take this further by linking her style to earlier, more openly patriarchal eras, but in a playful, romanticized way. In the reel posted on February 22, 2024, she jokes that “dressing like the '90s is back in... but I thought 1890s, not 1990s,” she appears in a traditional dress with an apron while cooking in the kitchen. The joke sets her apart from mainstream fashion trends and aligns her instead with a nostalgic, imagined past. By laughing at the anachronism, she avoids sounding dogmatic; yet the image of a woman in an 1890s-style dress doing domestic work reinforces a visual continuity between historical domestic femininity and her current tradwife identity.

The time-travel fantasy reel makes this link explicit. In the reel posted on January 26, 2024, she says she has been “dreaming of falling through time” all her life and does not “want to stay, just visit for a while,” then adds, “I do not dress for men. I dress so that if I accidentally fall through time, I might be able to blend in a little bit.” Here, modest, historically inspired clothing is framed as a whimsical, romantic readiness for time travel, not as compliance with contemporary modesty codes. Dressing in ways that would “blend in” in past centuries, eras with even more rigid gender and domestic expectations is positioned as adventurous and independent (“I do not dress for men”) even though the aesthetic aligns her body with those earlier norms. Fantasy and humour allow her to celebrate historical femininity while disavowing that she is doing it for male approval.

Her modesty explainer reel also gives modest dressing a theological and aesthetic depth. In the reel posted on February 17, 2024, she frames modesty through “personal conviction” and accountability before God, while rejecting legalism and extra “man-made” rules (full quotes

from this reel are under Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship). In this way, she rejects additional, harsher rules (such as absolute bans on pants) while firmly keeping modesty within a spiritual frame. The outfits themselves range from traditional dresses to slightly more modern pieces, but the unifying thread is coverage, softness, and a feminine contour. Modesty becomes a personal, God-facing art form, not a set of ugly or joyless constraints.

Even when she experiments briefly with less “feminine” contemporary fashion, the narrative returns to the superiority of her usual aesthetic. In the reel posted on January 17, 2024, she stages “modern” attire as a deliberate experiment and then frames her bodily discomfort and aesthetic dissatisfaction as evidence that this look does not fit who she really is. Through this discontent, she revolves back toward historically inspired dress as the “right” direction. The discursive function in this theme is that the body’s discomfort is enlisted as proof that the modern styling is uneasy and inauthentic, while historical/modest styling has been associated with comfort, identity, and “rightness.”

Across these reels, modesty and historical femininity are never presented only as rules. They are always attached to pleasure, creativity, and romance, such as, swirling skirts in the snow, layering for warmth, singing while cleaning in an apron, imagining oneself slipping back into another century, and “blending in.” This aesthetic work is politically significant. By making modest dress and old-fashioned femininity look beautiful, comfortable, clever, and spiritually meaningful, the content disarms potential resistance to the underlying norms. Skirts over pants, covered shoulders over exposed skin, and domestic spaces over public ones become not just acceptable but aspirational.

At the same time, the “I do not dress for men” line and the emphasis on “personal conviction” give viewers a language of autonomy to describe practices that are shaped by

conservative Christian and tradwife subcultures. The message is that she dresses this way because she loves it, because it feels right before God, and because it fits her personality and that others are free to find their own modest path. Yet the consistent pairing of beauty, authenticity, spirituality, and historical femininity in her feeds suggests that these are not neutral stylistic preferences; they are part of a larger discourse that encourages women to inhabit older, more submissive gender scripts while feeling that they have chosen these scripts freely. In this sense, “aestheticized modesty and historical femininity” is not just about clothes. It is the visual and emotional glue that holds the tradwife ideal together, making gendered boundaries around the body and the home look like art, fantasy, and devotion rather than constraint.

Theme 6: Scripted Femininity

This theme captures how Aria performs womanhood as a rehearsed tradwife archetype which is an idealized version of femininity built through repeated gestures, choreographed routines, checklist-like declarations, and recognizable aesthetic cues such as aprons, bows, twirls, “cozy” domestic interiors. Across these reels, femininity has been presented as something performed correctly. Femininity is seen as a set of learned behaviors that become legible as “authentic” when repeated with enough consistency. The performances are framed as joyful and natural, and they are delivered through a tone of whimsy, gratitude, and invitation (“POV,” [Point of View] “with me”), so that following the script appears as emotional safety and proof of a good marriage.

The reel posted on January 9, 2024, crystallizes this script through Aria’s defense of her “childish” twirling and bows. Responding to criticism, she frames these gestures as evidence of relational safety, explaining that “when we are with someone who makes us feel safe, I think that brings out the inner child in us. I don’t have to guard myself around my husband. I can just be

me, and that makes little girl me so happy.” The baby-giggle audio and the kitchen-garden-living room montage intensify the effect. Safety is visualized as a kind of regression into playfulness, and femininity is staged as cute, light, and unburdened. The implication is that the right kind of heterosexual love produces this version of womanhood, a kind where girlishness becomes a desirable state and where being “unguarded” is expressed through childlike performance that is simultaneously intimate and camera-ready. This also functions as a subtle form of control because it rewards softness and compliance and discourages disobedience, challenge, or resistance.

A different mode of scripting appears in the reel posted on January 25, 2024. This reel presents marriage as a compact, list-based “template” of what a “good” relationship looks like. What matters for scripted femininity is how the list format converts hierarchical arrangements into a practical checklist (discussed earlier under Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship). Gender roles (male leadership and primary provision; female domestic responsibility) and emotional expectations (harmony maintenance, conflict resolution) are delivered as simple “facts” that the viewer can adopt as standards. The confident and cheeky tone, and bullet-point format, neutralize critique by making the script sound obvious and even playful which invites audiences to measure their own relationships against it while keeping the underlying hierarchy intact.

Similarly, the reel posted on January 27, 2024, functions as an instructional script for the stay-at-home wife ideal (Previously discussed under Economic dependence as love, the emphasis here is on narration rather than finances). The reel teaches viewers how to speak about one-income life in a particular way. In this reel, Aria narrates dependence as feasible and gratifying, so that the stay-at-home role appears to be a recognizable feminine aspiration. The script is reinforced through motivational reassurance and testimonial logic (what “worked for us” can

work for you), turning a structurally vulnerable position into a personal identity anchored in optimism and discipline.

The “routine” form becomes one of the most visible mechanisms of scripted femininity in the February–March posts. The reel posted on February 15, 2024, presents a daily sequence which includes waking early, tidying, and preparing his lunch, as the method through which the home is kept “peaceful.” The montage presentation makes repetitive chores look smooth and effortless which transforms domestic labor into a feminine rhythm that appears natural and not learned. Rather than framing peace as mutual emotional work, the reel positions peace as something produced through her early rising and productivity. Femininity is therefore performed through appearance as well as through temporal discipline which maintains that the “good wife” begins the day already moving, already producing order.

The reel posted on March 7, 2024, extends this choreography into an evening routine organized around his arrival and comfort. The sequence structures her labor: cooking, setting the table, lighting candles, before shifting into closeness afterward. This setup stages intimacy as the outcome of correct domestic preparation. The timing matters discursively. His schedule anchors the household tempo and her domestic work is positioned as anticipatory care that makes his return smooth and rewarding. Here scripted femininity operates as both labor and performance.

Alongside routine discipline, Aria scripts femininity through a slowed domestic tempo and historical nostalgia. The reel posted on February 17, 2024, depicts an “ideal day” as tradwife through slow mornings, apron imagery, baking, and reading by a window, framing homebound serenity as virtuous and desirable. The pace contrasts implicitly with masculine “hustle” outside the domestic frame. Her calm becomes meaningful precisely because it is positioned against his work-world. The reel posted on March 12, 2024, reinforces this aesthetic scripting through

“period drama” femininity, using choice rhetoric (“I want to”) to make the performance appear purely personal. Yet the repeated nostalgia through historic silhouettes, curated softness, and domestic interiority, works like a visual shorthand for “proper” femininity that makes tradition feel charming and aspirational. The reel posted on March 30, 2024, compresses such femininity into identity branding by listing age and roles (tradwife/homesteader) alongside aesthetic tags such as bows, skirts, baking, and “Little House” nostalgia, making femininity a recognizable bundle of signs that audiences can read and replicate.

Another layer of scripting appears through explicit trait lists and micro-performances of deference. The reel posted on February 21, 2024, compiles a “tradwife traits” checklist, such as sweet voice, modest dressing, submission, and prioritizing home over career, offering femininity as an instructional playbook. The list format makes patriarchal expectations appear like discrete “traits” rather than social demands, and it encourages a self-monitoring orientation where viewers can check themselves against the ideal. This is evident in the reel posted on February 27, 2024, where Aria uses a “POV” framing to perform the “passenger princess” role. He drives, she sits pretty. She presents it as playful pampering, the scene normalizes grateful non-agency as a feminine posture. She demonstrates it as her role is to be cared for and carried along. In these reels, deference and dependence are made cute and desirable, and the script is delivered in a casual, trend-friendly language that lowers viewers’ defenses and makes imitation easier.

The theme becomes most explicit where wifely behavior is broken into replicable rules. The reel posted on March 14, 2024 (analyzed earlier under Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship), teaches submission through micro-practices like attitude management and prioritizing his requests for time. For scripted femininity, the key point is that submission is offered as a learnable routine, something the wife can rehearse and self-police through small actions. The reel

posted on March 19, 2024 (discussed earlier under Domestic servitude as devotion), also operates pedagogically through its invitational “with me” framing, turning gendered cooking into a shared aspirational performance. In both cases, the audience is positioned not simply as spectators but as learners. The posts teach viewers how to embody tradwife femininity through repeatable scripts of service, tone, and deference.

Finally, Aria also provides defensive scripts that protect the tradwife identity from critique. The reel posted on March 28, 2024, frames homemaking as purposeful rather than lazy and she positions the role as values-driven and morally serious. This defense functions as part of the script because it supplies followers with language to respond to social judgment. The tradwife identity is not only performed through domestic labor but also narrated through self-justification that frames sacrifice as empowerment. The reel posted on March 29, 2024, further scripts an ideal life-course through an origin story that celebrates early, family-mediated courtship and expresses gratitude for avoiding “adult dating.” Even when framed as personal testimony, the message functions prescriptively by treating supervised, early marriage as safer and more legitimate than modern dating independence.

Across these posts, scripted femininity operates as both a personal performance and a communal tutorial. On Aria’s side, routines matched to his schedule, childlike gestures coded as safety, and aesthetic nostalgia produce a consistent tradwife persona. On the audience’s side, lists, “POV” framings, and invitational formats turn that persona into an imitable template. The discourse frames disciplined gender performance as authenticity so that “doing femininity correctly” becomes legible as happiness, protection, and marital success.

Theme 7: Tradwife Discourse as Harmless Choice

In this pattern, Aria presents her views as merely personal preferences that do not affect other women, even as she promotes a highly structured and hierarchical model of gender and family. The discourse constantly softens its own political stakes. She frames patriarchy and submission as individual lifestyle decisions, religious convictions, or aesthetic tastes that others are free to reject, so criticism appears overblown or unfair. In this way, the content presents itself as innocuous storytelling rather than as participation in a wider ideological project about gender, work, and power.

One key strategy is explicit denial of broader impact, such as in the reel posted on February 15, 2024. When she responds to accusations that her content is “putting women back in the '50s,” she laughs it off and claims that “not a single action or word I say can put women back in the '50s, I'm sorry but that's ridiculous 😂.” She describes it as “ridiculous” that anyone would think her posts have this power, recasting political critique as a misunderstanding or exaggeration. By positioning herself as one small, individual voice who is “just” talking about her own choices, she disavows the cumulative influence of highly aestheticized, widely circulated content that normalizes traditional gender roles. The line that she is accused of “spreading my ‘cult mentality’, even though I am pretty sure I've never told you what to do, just shared my own life choices” reinforces this individualizing frame. She is not instructing or prescribing, only narrating, even though the account is full of tips, advice, and scripts for how to be a “traditional wife.”

The same move appears when she defines “tradwife” itself in the reel posted on January 3, 2024. In the caption, she explores how varied tradwives are. She writes, “some of us wear prairie style clothes, some 1950s, others just modern clothes,” some homestead, others live in the

city, and some rely “100%” on a husband’s income while others work. This list constructs the identity as flexible and inclusive, which helps deflect accusations of rigidity or coercion. Yet she then anchors the label in firm hierarchy by describing tradwife identity as grounded in faith-based family “design,” with husbands positioned as leaders/providers and wives positioned as helpmates whose primary sphere is the home (the full hierarchy/headship quotations from this reel already quoted under Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship). By surrounding these hard lines with language of diversity and personal conviction, she presents submission and male headship as one valid path among many, even as she frames them as divinely ordained. The discourse thus appears harmlessly pluralistic while reinforcing a specific patriarchal template.

Disclaimers about “not speaking” for everyone function similarly in the reels posted on January 3, 2024 and February 3, 2024. In both reels, she frames her content as personal and informational. She is presenting her own marriage model (intentional, marriage-oriented courtship within a Christian framework) as what worked well for them, while reiterating that she does not speak for every woman or relationship (full quotations from these reels are already quoted under Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship). These disclaimers work to neutralize the perception that she is actively promoting a framework that can limit young women’s autonomy by family involvement, intentional dating toward marriage, strict boundaries, even while the storytelling repeatedly affirms its success, implicitly recommending it.

Humour is another important resource in Aria’s content. In the reel posted on February 15, 2024, she jokes about being accused of putting women back in the ’50s or of spreading a “cult mentality,” critique is pre-emptively ridiculed. Laughing at critics (“that’s ridiculous 😂”) and treating online backlash as just “life on the internet 😂” make feminist or secular concerns look overly serious, joyless, or irrational. The effect is that viewers are nudged to identify with

her light-heartedness and to see the tradwife model as fun and ironic, rather than as something that might have real consequences for women who adopt it or for the broader cultural conversation about gender roles. The aesthetic of the cozy kitchen in this reel amplifies these effects. The visual softness and domestic backdrop disarm viewers and make the underlying hierarchy feel benign.

Finally, she blends the rhetoric of choice with narratives of calling and design across several reels. On one hand, she frames her lifestyle as chosen. She describes tradwife roles, courtship, and modesty as decisions she and her husband made and as personal convictions for which she alone is accountable before God. On the other hand, she repeatedly invokes divine design and fixed gender roles, treating husband-led household authority as a faith-based truth rather than merely an optional preference (wording is quoted under Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship). The tension allows her to say, in effect, that this is both my personal choice and the way things are meant to be. The discourse therefore looks harmlessly individualistic on the surface, but it legitimizes and romanticizes structures (male headship, female submission, domestic confinement) that reach beyond individual preference.

Conclusion

Across these themes, Aria Lewis's content constructs a coherent tradwife discourse in which economic dependence, domestic servitude, spiritualized patriarchy, illness management, and scripted femininity are framed as love, safety, and virtue rather than as relations of constraint. Control and unequal power are softened through religious language, aesthetic warmth, and narratives of choice, making hierarchy appear natural and freely chosen. Together, the themes show how patriarchy is normalized through everyday performances of devotion,

gratitude, and self-discipline. The next chapter situates these findings within existing feminist and critical scholarship on gender, power, and digital culture.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter answers my research question which asks: in what ways does Instagram's tradwife discourse aestheticize and circulate ideals of control, coercion, and emotional violence as forms of love? Using feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) (Lazar, 2007) and a poststructural feminist approach to power and subject formation (Bourdieu, 2001; Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1977), I analyze how Aria Lewis's Instagram reels construct love through narratives of submission, dependence, and gendered self-regulation. In keeping with critical discourse analysis, I treat Instagram posts as social practice, meaning that they are situated texts where language and imagery both reflect and reproduce power relations (Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 2015). I also attend to Instagram specific features such as reels, captions, trend audio, and short form routines that shape how intimate ideals become repeatable and persuasive (Leaver et al., 2020). In this chapter, I draw directly on the dataset and thematic write-up I developed in my findings and align the emerging themes with existing theoretical and empirical literature.

A key analytic commitment of FCDA is that gendered power does not only operate through overt force; it also operates through what becomes "common sense," especially in intimate life (Lazar, 2007). This is the power of hegemonic ideology because it makes inequality feel natural, moral, and even loving. This is central to my reading of Aria's content. Her account rarely depicts explicit interpersonal conflict. Instead, it repeatedly produces a romantic common sense in which asymmetry is coded as peace, obedience as virtue, and women's endurance as maturity. In other words, the account aestheticizes economic dependence, time dependence, moralized submission, and the management of women's feelings and bodies for relational stability, the conditions under which coercive control is most likely to appear normal (Crossman

& Hardesty, 2018; Stark, 2007). Bourdieu helps clarify why this romantic common sense can feel self-evident. Symbolic violence is power that works through misrecognition. Inequality can feel natural, normal, and even chosen (Bourdieu, 2001). In Aria's reels, dependence and submission are framed as peace and moral maturity, which makes hierarchy harder to name and harder to refuse.

Because my project is grounded through a poststructural feminist lens, I also approach these posts as subject-forming. Gender is not simply represented; it is produced through repeated scripts that teach women what to do, how to feel, and how to interpret unequal dynamics as love (Butler, 1990). Following Foucault (1977), I read Aria's reels as part of a broader disciplinary field in which intimate norms are circulated through everyday social media. In the context of her reels, the good wife becomes intelligible only through practices of surveillance, self-correction, and moral narration. I write this chapter reflexively, aware that my own lived experiences with patriarchal love scripts shape what I notice and why it matters (Ahmed, 2024). My goal is not to shame individual women online, but to illuminate how aesthetically pleasing digital content can carry ideological force when it speaks in the language of care, faith, and choice.

Bourdieu also emphasizes that power is reproduced through habitus, which refers to learned and embodied dispositions that shape what feels normal and possible (Bourdieu, 2001). In my dataset, repeated cues about frugality, modesty, cheerfulness, and deference do not only communicate an idea. They train a sensibility. Over time, a good wife can come to feel like the one who needs less, smiles more, and adapts faster. These dispositions can make refusal feel selfish or unfeminine, even when compliance carries significant emotional and material costs, including financial dependence and reduced practical freedom (Nussbaum, 2000; Stark, 2007). On Instagram, Aria's repeated performances of cheerful deference, domestic busyness, modest

femininity, and gratitude for male provision can also become socially rewarding. The account frames domestic endurance and feminine self-restraint as wholesome and morally admirable. That recognition can function as symbolic value within platform culture, where visibility and self-branding reward polished authenticity (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Duffy & Hund, 2019). In this sense, the discourse is reproduced not only through belief. It is reproduced through affirmation, circulation, and monetization.

My analysis is not a claim about Aria's private marriage, nor is it an assessment of her husband's behavior. The object of my analysis is discourse. It is about what her posts make visible and desirable, what they render thinkable, and what they obscure. This distinction matters because coercive control often depends on cultural narratives that minimize harm and reframe domination as romance (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2018). My focus, then, is on how Instagram's tradwife discourse can circulate "loving" ideals that align with control and emotional harm, even when delivered through soft visuals.

Theme 1: Economic Dependence as Love

One of the consistent ways Aria's discourse makes control appear loving is through the romanticization of financial dependence. Across multiple reels, the breadwinner/homemaker arrangement is presented not as a power asymmetry but as a morally superior form of trust. In January 2, 2024 reel, Aria narrates her husband quitting his job to start a business. She acknowledges the decision is scary, but her story pivots to calm certainty. She says she "wasn't scared about the finances," because they already knew how to "live on less." The emotional work of the Reel is subtle. The risk is reframed as romance and her acceptance is framed as wifely strength.

This pattern matches with coercive control scholarship, which emphasizes that domination can be sustained through everyday entrapments, including economic dependence and restricted options (Stark, 2007). Crossman and Hardesty (2018) note that control becomes coercive when it systematically limits freedom while being framed as care. Aria's content repeatedly presents a one-income arrangement as the foundation of "real" love. In January 27, 2024, she reassures viewers that they do not need "a rich man," only "a man who values your role and takes providing seriously." Here, love is redefined as male provision and female reliance; the woman's legitimacy depends on the man's valuation of her domestic role.

Aria also stabilizes dependence through her rhetoric. She presents austerity as virtue and desire as moral weakness. Reading through Foucault's (1977) account of disciplinary power, budgeting becomes a technique of the self through which women learn to govern fear, consumption, and aspiration in service of a marital ideal. This is where love begins to resemble coercion. Her content demonstrates that the acceptable life is one that fits inside the provider's income and the wife's capacity to endure. In Nussbaum's (2000) terms, such arrangements can constrain women's capabilities and practical freedom even when framed as chosen.

A final layer is the platformed economy underlying the "one-income" ideal. Aria sells guides, shares advice, and frames content creation as a "cottage industry" (March 6, 2024), echoing scholarship showing that tradwife and adjacent influencers often reject formal paid work while monetizing domesticity online (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Duffy & Hund, 2019; Sykes & Hopner, 2024). This matters because the influencer economy can make dependence look scalable and safe, turning feminine discipline into a commodity followers can purchase and imitate.

Theme 2: Domestic Servitude as Devotion

On one hand, Aria narrates economic dependence as trust, and on the other hand she narrates domestic labor as romance. Aria repeatedly performed “Love” as service, specifically cooking, cleaning, and daily routine-making. She presents these acts of service as both fulfilling and naturally feminine. On January 5, 2024, Aria wakes at 6 a.m. to cook for her husband before he leaves for work, while she emphasizes how she likes sending him with a “warm, nutritious meal” and greeting him home with one. On January 23, 2024, the framing seems explicitly intimate. She makes her husband’s “favorite” fried rice and ends with a flirtatious, “Serve with a kiss 😊.” The kiss is symbolic: labor appears as love and love becomes labor.

This discourse aligns with feminist accounts of how women’s care work becomes a moral requirement within heterosexual love scripts (Gilligan, 1977; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Oakley, 1976). Using Hochschild and Machung’s (1989) “second shift,” I interpret how unpaid domestic work is normalized as “just what love looks like.” On Instagram, however, the second shift becomes spectacular. The home is staged, edited, and aestheticized. In Illouz’s (2007) terms, emotion becomes a social and economic resource and the account turns domestic devotion into a consumable affective product.

Aria also teaches followers to intensify domestic labor through self-discipline. On February 8, 2024, she encourages viewers to “clean while you cook,” replacing “scrolling my phone” with “doing dishes as food simmers.” On the surface, this advice seems neutral. However, a discursive examination reveals that it trains women to view rest as laziness and constant productivity as moral worth (Calder-Dawe et al., 2024). When labor is framed as love, refusal can be recorded as a failure of care.

Theme 3: Illness and Failure

The third theme reveals how the tradwife ideal handles bodily limits. Aria narrates her illness through apology and renewed commitment. Not even once does she question the unrealistic expectations of a wife to always serve and perform. Several reels position Aria as a “chronically ill homemaker” describing migraines, nausea, pain, and fatigue. Yet the dominant narrative is not “I deserve rest”; it is “I still manage.” In the reel posted on February 6, 2024, Aria describes feeling like “a failure of a housewife” because chores were not completed “on time.” Even when she offers reassurance to followers, the baseline assumption remains that a “good wife” should complete domestic obligations and falling short requires explanation.

This is discursively significant because emotional violence can be normalized through self-blame and internalized discipline. Stark (2007) emphasizes that coercive control often works by dissolving autonomy and selfhood through everyday constraints. Aria’s illness narratives do not represent a controlling partner, but they repeatedly position domestic performance as the measure of worth. Read through Butler (1990), the “good wife” is not an inner essence but a repeated performance; illness threatens the repetition, so the subject is pressured (internally and culturally) to repair the performance through guilt, recommitment, and “better” self-management.

These posts also reveal the contradictions surrounding women’s unpaid labor. Aria responds to accusations that chronic illness is “an excuse to be lazy,” listing symptoms to prove legitimacy (e.g., January 24). The need to justify being at home demonstrates how patriarchal culture simultaneously demands women’s care work and devalues it as non-work (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Oakley, 1976). In FCDA terms, the discourse produces a feminine subject who must continuously demonstrate moral worth through endurance (Lazar, 2007).

Theme 4: Spiritualized Patriarchy and Courtship

The explicit regime of truth on Aria's account appears to be the spiritualization of gender hierarchy. Many reels posted by Aria define tradwife identity through Christian patriarchy which is God's design for family, male headship, and female submission. In the reel posted on January 3, 2024, Aria describes tradwives as women who "follow God's design," "respect our husbands as the head of the home," and see themselves as "help meets." This language tends to transform hierarchy into harmony by framing roles as "complementary." Yet complementarity can operate as ideological softening. It may make unequal power appear natural, loving, and morally necessary (Walby, 1989).

Aria's posts about courtship further normalize regulation as protection. Courtship is presented as safer than "modern dating." Aria's content on courtship focuses on intention, purity, and oversight (e.g., January 31; March 29). In IPV scholarship, control is often disguised as care using phrases such as, "I'm protecting you," "I'm leading you," "this is for your good" (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2018). When these logics are placed within faith, critical scrutiny is often softened because the discourse is no longer simply personal preference; it is a moral obligation.

This dynamic becomes crystal clear in Aria's reel on submission (March 14, 2024). She explains submission through micro-practices like curbing a "sassy attitude," giving him her time when he asks for it, and seeking his opinion first so he can "lead." These are everyday techniques of gender governance (Foucault, 1977; Lazar, 2007). They resemble what Foucault (1977) describes as disciplinary power, where subjects internalize norms and regulate their own conduct. In this discourse, emotional containment (being agreeable, non-confrontational, deferential) is framed as love and spirituality, even though it also restricts women's expressive and relational autonomy.

This model of spiritualized patriarchy and submission is dangerous even when the husband appears loving, because the safety and happiness being promised are conditional and not structural. That promised safety and happiness depend on his continued kindness and self-restraint, while the woman is already taught to accommodate and silence herself in the name of love and faith. Such danger does not mean that Aria's husband is abusive. Rather, the danger lies in the model itself. It creates vulnerability by making unequal power feel normal and godly, and it can mask or soften much more serious forms of control than what is visible in her content.

Theme 5: Aestheticized Modesty and Historical Femininity

Alongside explicitly religious messaging, Aria's account teaches an aesthetic of "proper" femininity through clothing, modesty, and historical nostalgia. Skirts, aprons, and headscarves function as visual shorthand for virtue and belonging. In the reel posted on January 26, 2024, Aria jokes that she dresses so that if she "accidentally fall[s] through time," she could "blend in." The humor may make nostalgia feel innocent, but it also romanticizes eras more tightly structured by patriarchal gender norms, which risks turning constraint into whimsy.

In February 17, 2024 reel, Aria frames modesty as not "a set of rules," showing multiple outfits including jeans as modest. However, she blends modesty in religious accountability. She states that she is "personally convicted" and claims to have "a clean and right heart before the Lord." The appearance of flexibility therefore remains within a structure where women's bodies are moral projects, and where women bear responsibility for managing visibility. Feminist media studies remind us that the gaze is not just an external look; it is also internalized as self-monitoring (Mulvey, 1975; van Zoonen, 1994). The tradwife aesthetic thus works as a disciplinary technology. It teaches women to become legible as virtuous through controlled presentation.

Theme 6: Scripted Femininity

A central emotional strategy of Aria's account is to render submission more than just acceptable. She displays submission as cute, playful, and emotionally safe. Across multiple reels, she performs a highly stylized femininity in acts of twirling, wearing bows, soft speaking, "cozy" routines, and a childlike "inner girl" aesthetic. In January 9, 2024 reel, in the caption, she responds to critics who call her twirling "childish" by reframing it as evidence of relational safety as when you are with someone who makes you feel safe, it "brings out the inner child," and she does not have to "guard" herself around her husband.

From a poststructural feminist lens, this is a powerful re-signification. Instead of framing adult autonomy as safety, the discourse frames dependency as safety (Lazar, 2007). This matters for understanding how coercive control can be aestheticized. Control can feel comforting when it is packaged as protection and when women are socialized to equate care with being guided, contained, and managed (Gilligan, 1977; Stark, 2018). In Foucauldian terms, the performance of softness and cheerfulness can be read as disciplinary work. These affective norms regulate what women can say and how they can feel without breaking the "peaceful wife" script (Foucault, 1977).

Instagram's format strengthens this pedagogy (Marwick, 2013; van Dijk, 2015). Many reels posted by Aria, invite followers into intimacy through "POV," "with me," and routine-based tutorials which may create mediated intimacy and performative selfhood (Chambers, 2013; Goffman, 1959; Marwick, 2013; Senft, 2008). The viewer is not only watching how a relationship unfolds but she is being taught how to perform one. Through likes, comments, and algorithmic circulation, this script gains legitimacy as an aspirational norm (Leaver et al., 2020; Taylor & Choi, 2023).

Theme 7: Tradwife Discourse as Harmless Choice

Aria frequently anticipates critique and neutralizes it through a discourse of harmless choice. She frames tradwife identity as inclusive (“you can work,” “you can wear pants,” “you can buy your bread”) and insists she is not telling other women what to do (e.g., February 15, 20224; March 6, 2024). This rhetoric is characteristic of postfeminist media culture, where traditional gender norms are rebranded as individual empowerment and lifestyle (Gill, 2007; McRobbie et al., 2007). The phrase “it’s just my choice” functions as inoculation. This phrase converts structural critique into a misunderstanding of personal freedom.

The choice move is ideologically consequential. Walby (1989) emphasizes that patriarchy is structural; it is embedded in institutions and norms, not only in individual relationships. Yet when hierarchy is framed as personal preference, feminist critique can be repositioned as intolerance. The choice frame reproduces neoliberal logics of self-branding and entrepreneurial subjectivity (Scharff, 2016). Aria’s account repeatedly presents domesticity as both morally pure and commercially valuable. By describing content creation as “a modern form of cottage industry,” she frames the tradwife role not only as virtuous, but also as something that can be successfully monetized within platform culture (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Duffy & Hund, 2019).

Synthesis: How Tradwife Discourse Aestheticizes Control as Love

Across themes, the account’s central discursive achievement appears to make inequality feel warm. “Control” is aestheticized through provision (he provides, therefore he leads), “coercion” is softened through design (God ordered it, therefore it is loving), and “emotional violence” is made difficult to name through self-blame and disciplined affect (a good wife does not complain; she optimizes, smiles, and tries again). In Stark’s (2007) terms, this is not the

depiction of isolated incidents but the normalization of patterned conditions that can enable domination while remaining culturally legible as love.

This multimodal form matters. Visual warmth, nostalgic styling, and soothing domestic soundscapes make the discourse feel safe. This supports McLuhan's (1964) argument that the medium shapes the meaning. Instagram's emphasis on short-form aesthetic pleasure encourages affective consumption rather than slow critique. These reels circulate through affective resonance and belonging (Papacharissi, 2015). The "tradwife" becomes aspirational not because she argues with data, but because she stages a world where hierarchy feels like comfort.

Across the dataset, three cross-cutting strategies are visible. First, positivity/gratitude as emotional governance (Calder-Dawe et al., 2024); second, nostalgia as depoliticization ("vibes" as politics) (Proctor, 2022; Zahay, 2022); and third, choice-talk as inoculation ("just my choice") (Gill, 2007; McRobbie et al., 2007).

From an FCDA perspective, what is most concerning is how the discourse relocates risk onto women while calling that relocation love. Economic risk is managed through women's austerity. Domestic exhaustion is managed through women's optimization. Bodily limits are managed through women's guilt and resilience. Moral accountability is managed through women's modesty. In each case, the solution is not shared power but better feminine performance. That is how control becomes romantic. It is not imposed as force rather it is invited as virtue. In Bourdieusian terms, this invitation is symbolic violence. It asks women to participate in their own limitation while reading that limitation as virtue and love (Bourdieu, 2001). The effect is that inequality becomes harder to name because it is felt as personal character and moral choice rather than as power.

Implications

These findings contribute to three conversations in my literature review. First, they support IPV scholarship arguing that coercive control is sustained through everyday norms and cultural scripts, not only through visible violence (Crossman & Hardesty, 2018; Stark, 2007, 2018). Tradwife discourse can normalize dependency, obedience, and self-erasure as “healthy love,” making it harder to name harm when similar dynamics appear in real relationships (Lelaurain et al., 2021; Rollero & De Piccoli, 2020).

Second, the findings extend feminist media studies by showing how Instagram’s visual logics package patriarchy as comfort and beauty (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Caldeira et al., 2020; van Zoonen, 1994). The account demonstrates how women’s self-styling can look like agency while still reproducing normative femininity, an “authenticity bind” in which self-presentation is framed as free choice even when it tracks dominant ideals (Duffy & Hund, 2019).

Third, the analysis matters for feminist pedagogy and digital literacy. If, as Ahmed (2024) argues, what cannot be named cannot be resisted, then recognizing the discursive disguises of coercion is essential. Educators and advocates might use this kind of analysis to teach how love is narrated in digital culture. The narration does not appear to police women’s personal lives, but to build interpretive tools for distinguishing care from control, and intimacy from entitlement (hooks, 2000; Stark, 2018).

Limitations and Future Directions

Future research could compare multiple tradwife accounts, including smaller and less visible creators, and examine how the discourse shifts across longer timelines and across pre-motherhood and maternal content. It would also be valuable to study audience reception more directly, to trace how recommendation systems shape the circulation of this content, and to examine how monetization affects its visibility and credibility within platform culture. Future

work could also explore counter-discourses and feminist resistance practices on Instagram, while extending the analysis through closer attention to race, religion, and class, given that tradwife legitimacy is often shaped by whiteness and other intersecting forms of power (Caldeira, 2024; Harmon, 2025; Wiens & MacDonald, 2024).

Conclusion

Aria Lewis's Instagram Reels construct a tradwife discourse in which love is repeatedly defined through dependence, service, submission, and disciplined femininity. Through spiritualized language, nostalgic aesthetics, and the rhetoric of personal choice, this discourse circulates a romantic ideal where gender hierarchy feels safe, moral, and desirable. From a feminist critical discourse perspective, the significance of these findings is not that they reveal a hidden truth about one influencer's marriage, but that they show how Instagram can make control look like love, precisely by making it look beautiful, voluntary, and ordinary.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

To answer my research question: in what ways does Instagram's tradwife discourse aestheticize and circulate ideals of control, coercion, and emotional violence as forms of love?, I conducted a feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) of Aria Lewis's Instagram reels and captions, reading language and visuals together through a poststructural feminist lens. For the analysis, I focused on content posted between January and March 2024. I selected this period because Aria's messaging became saturated through repetition and minor aesthetic variation which allowed me to trace patterns in how love is narrated, visualized, and made desirable.

Drawing on poststructural feminist theory, I approached the account as a site where power operates not only through overt force, but also productively by shaping what comes to feel normal and desirable (Foucault, 1978). Butler's (1990) account of performativity helped foreground repetition. The tradwife is stabilized through recurring routines and gestures that come to read as natural femininity.

Across the dataset, my central finding is that control is most persuasive when it does not look like control. Instead of explicit coercion, Aria's discourse reframes unequal arrangements as safety, peace, and relational maturity. During the analysis I found seven themes that map the key mechanisms of this reframing: economic dependence as love; domestic servitude as devotion; illness and failure as tests of virtue; spiritualized patriarchy and courtship; aestheticized modesty and historical femininity; scripted femininity; and tradwife discourse as harmless choice. Taken together, these themes describe a coherent common sense of heterosexual love in which women's self-limitation is treated as proof of devotion.

The discourse aestheticizes coercion through warmth, nostalgia, humor, and moral language. Economic precarity is narrated as faith and gratitude and not vulnerability; domestic

labor is romanticized as the primary language of love; and illness is shown as a prompt for further self-optimization rather than renegotiation of expectations. These patterns resonate with coercive control scholarship, which emphasizes that domination is often cumulative and embedded in ordinary practices that restrict autonomy while appearing caring (Crossman & Hardesty, 2018; Stark, 2007). In Aria's reels, emotional violence is normalized through the moralization of endurance. The reels imply a good wife anticipates needs, suppresses complaints, and treats exhaustion as personal failure.

Religious and aesthetic discourses intensify this normalization by making hierarchy feel divinely protective and aesthetically pleasurable. Spiritualized patriarchy frames male headship and submission as God's safest design, while modesty and historical femininity render embodied restriction charming and aspirational. Skirts, aprons, and period drama nostalgia do ideological work. They translate patriarchal structure into a comforting atmosphere that reduces the visibility of what is being surrendered (autonomy, financial access, time, bodily rest). The account does not only say submission is loving but it makes submission feel like home.

Instagram's platform dynamics are part of how these meanings travel. As discussed in the literature review, Instagram rewards highly aestheticized performances of femininity through economies of visibility and algorithmic amplification by encouraging self-surveillance and making normative constraints appear self-chosen (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Duffy & Hund, 2015; Taylor & Choi, 2023). While I did not measure audience reception, she has 135k followers, such a context suggests that high-circulation tradwife content can contribute to broader cultural expectations of love by repeatedly presenting controlling norms as romantic success.

Aria often insists her content cannot influence broader gender politics and frames critique as exaggerated. This functions as a coy rationalization of her choices and of the reels that express

them. Yet disavowing influence protects the ideology from challenge, positioning patriarchy as a harmless choice while circulating a clear relational template. Scholarship on romantic love myths supports the concern that cultural narratives can legitimize controlling behavior as devotion and make coercion harder to name (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2023; Lelaurain et al., 2021). In this sense, tradwife discourse may contribute to the social conditions under which emotional violence becomes culturally intelligible as love.

A key contribution of my inquiry is therefore conceptual. I locate coercive control not only in private couple dynamics but also in the cultural infrastructures that teach people what love should look like. By showing how hierarchy is softened through aesthetics, spirituality, and positivity, my project makes visible the discursive mechanisms through which harmful norms become pleasurable and difficult to refuse. A further contribution of my project is its focus on a young tradwife influencer in a pre-motherhood phase of content production. Existing research has more often focused on prominent mothers or on explicitly maternal and pronatalist forms of tradwife discourse. By examining a younger woman whose content is organized around marriage rather than motherhood, my study shows how submission, dependence, homemaking, and spiritualized gender hierarchy are normalized even before children are present. This matters because it shows that tradwife discourse is not only organized around motherhood. In Aria Lewis's account, submission, dependence, and domestic wifery are framed as desirable within a pre-motherhood, marriage-centered lifestyle, which makes this discourse also relevant to women in early marriage and to younger women imagining future domestic life.

Practically, the findings point to the need for feminist media literacy that treats influencer relationship advice as ideology, and for IPV education that includes subtle forms of emotional harm such as self-erasure, isolation, and compulsory endurance, and not only physical violence

(Herman, 2015; Stark, 2018). At the same time, in the literature review, I also highlight that Instagram is not only a site of reproduction but also a site of resistance, where feminist creators contest these scripts through critique and counter-storytelling (Caldeira, 2024; Salamon & Saunders, 2024).

However, my project has limitations. It analyzed one account for a limited period, and discourse analysis produces context-dependent interpretation in place of statistical generalization. I also did not include systematic reception analysis (e.g., interviews, demographic study, or large-scale comment coding), so claims about impact are framed as implications and not empirical outcomes. I believe future research could extend this work through (1) comparative FCDA across multiple tradwife accounts to map variation across religion and race (Deem, 2023; Proctor, 2022; Sykes & Hopner, 2024); (2) reception studies examining how viewers interpret and negotiate these scripts; and (3) platform-focused research on how recommendation systems and monetization shape the visibility of tradwife discourse relative to feminist counter-narratives and digital resistance (Caldeira, 2024; Salamon & Saunders, 2024).

In sum, my thesis is an effort to show that Instagram tradwife discourse can circulate coercive and emotionally violent ideals most effectively through aesthetics of softness, such as cozy domestic imagery, moralized gratitude, religious reassurance, and the rhetoric of personal choice. Within this framework, unequal power does not appear as threat but as love. Naming this process matters because it makes visible what the discourse works to conceal, that devotion, submission, and endurance are not neutral lifestyle preferences, but practices through which gendered power is normalized, beautified, romanticized, and made difficult to refuse.

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Appendix A

Instagram Reels Included in the Dataset

Table A1

Reels Included in the Dataset

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
1	Jan 2, 2024	Economic dependence as love	Husband quits job and budgeting guide	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1mZE3-rVDW/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
2	Jan 3, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship; Tradwife discourse as harmless choice;	Defining tradwife and male headship	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1pFL3drxgy/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
3	Jan 4, 2024	Economic dependence as love	Small creator income and virtue	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1rqUS-rft2/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
4	Jan 5, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion	Early lunch preparation for husband	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1uacbtrS_g/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
5	Jan 6, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion	Country goose kitchen aesthetic	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1w5EVcrZVE/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
6	Jan 9, 2024	Scripted femininity	Twirling, affection, and girlish happiness	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C14sK7-LJJ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
7	Jan 10, 2024	Domestic Servitude as Devotion; Illness and failure	Chronically ill homemaker day in the life	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C17NSKVr1Da/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
8	Jan 11, 2024	Aestheticized modesty and historical femininity	Snowy daily life and homestead routine in skirts	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C19fffSrRo1/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
9	Jan 13, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship	Leader, protector, lover montage	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2Cv-ksr9Dv/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
10	Jan 16, 2024	Aestheticized modesty and historical femininity	Dressing for church in winter skirts	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2KgSpQL7m6/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
11	Jan 17, 2024	Aestheticized modesty and historical femininity	Modern outfit experiment and discomfort	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2NDZjorImG/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
12	January 18, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship	Christian women's purpose beyond motherhood	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2P6C72rTy4/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
13	Jan 19, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship	Becoming Mrs. Lewis proposal story	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2SU8XErpPJ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
14	Jan 20, 2024	Economic dependence as love	One income scarcity and sarcasm	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2VHaNJrKEw/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
15	Jan 23, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion; Illness and failure	Cooking his favorite meal	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2cdY8OLpdg/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
16	Jan 24, 2024	Illness and failure	Defending chronic illness against laziness claims	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2e65V_rsKI/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
17	Jan 25, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship; Scripted Femininity	Age gap relationship and “perfect” marriage	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2h_WQvRRIr/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
18	Jan 26, 2024	Aestheticized modesty and historical femininity	Time travel fantasy and historical femininity	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2kP9OsLHee/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
19	Jan 27, 2024	Economic dependence as love; Scripted Femininity	Stay at home wife ideal and vulnerability	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2my2IVroTN/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
20	Jan 30, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion	Kitchen renovation and “he does this”	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2up8KtLw7F/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
21	Jan 31, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship	Courtship, intention, and marriage goal	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2xO_vWlvnw/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
22	Feb 1, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship	Cheerful explanation of submission	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2zrS5fpH-G/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
23	Feb 2, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion; Illness and failure	Chronic illness and bulk cooking	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C22QGrYRIOB/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
24	Feb 3, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship; Tradwife discourse as harmless choice	Intentional dating versus casual dating	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2405qPxTg8/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
25	Feb 5, 2024	Illness and failure	Prefrontal cortex marriage joke	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C29-dheJTsY/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
26	Feb 6, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion; Illness and failure	“Failure of a housewife” reassurance	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3AqIRDpvZz/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
27	Feb 7, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship	Courtship advice and practical tips	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3DO9VypfMl/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
28	Feb 8, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion; Illness and failure	Clean while you cook homemaking tip	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3FzzJ-pBG7/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
29	Feb 13, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion	Monday routine as traditional wife	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3SiczhsSb1/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
30	Feb 14, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion	Passenger princess, rehearsal ride. Showing husbands care in his act of giving her a ride.	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3VLwomMSKr/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
31	Feb 15, 2024	Scripted femininity; Tradwife discourse as harmless choice	Response to “back to the ’50s” criticism	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3Xqjh1seZZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
32	Feb 16, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship	Falling in love without touching	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3aPJEurwHl/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
33	Feb 17, 2024	Aestheticized modesty and historical femininity; Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship; Scripted femininity	Modesty, protection, and witness	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3c4d1pMVeo/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
34	Feb 20, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion	Fly on the wall cleaning	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3kh_iEsDWI/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
35	Feb 21, 2024	Economic dependence as love; Scripted femininity	Thanking husbands for working long days	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3nM9ows4fL/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
36	Feb 22, 2024	Aestheticized modesty and historical femininity	1890s dress and historical styling	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3ptZx2s0cr/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
37	Feb 23, 2024	Economic dependence as love; Illness and failure	Photography burnout and staying home	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3sexPWtK1u/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
38	Feb 24, 2024	Economic dependence as love; Domestic servitude as devotion	One income sacrifices and budgeting	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3u8L5DLGvw/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
39	Feb 27, 2024	Economic dependence as love; Scripted femininity	Passenger princess gratitude	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C32nd_SrrGI/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
40	Feb 28, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion	Being at home as peaceful, not boring	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C35O7-cLdaY/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
41	Feb 29, 2024	Economic dependence as love	Content creator income is not full time	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C37ycjirCqZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
42	Mar 1, 2024	Illness and failure	Photography career, illness, and quitting	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3-Pe_YpL1n/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
43	Mar 5, 2024	Aestheticized modesty and historical femininity	Little House on the Prairie vibes	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4IuzacLKV/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
44	Mar 6, 2024	Economic dependence as love; Tradwife discourse as harmless choice	Being traditional as a way of living	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4LPVwbrJAY/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
45	Mar 7, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion; Scripted femininity	Evening tradwife routine	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4N0IwYrvm2/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==
46	Mar 8, 2024	Economic dependence as love	Husband works so she can stay home	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4QYuxcrDBY/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
47	Mar 9, 2024	Aestheticized modesty and historical femininity	Bun and headscarf tutorial	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4S7NYpL9Nu/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
48	Mar 12, 2024	Scripted Femininity	Traditional dress as personal choice	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4amzrKr8RB/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
49	Mar 13, 2024	Economic dependence as love	Dismissing fears about dependence	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4dMpttL2e5/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
50	Mar 14, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship; Scripted femininity	Biblical submission lesson	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4f16sor-Xi/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
51	Mar 15, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion	Detergent promotion and domestic labor	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4iaPZ5LaPO/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
52	Mar 16, 2024	Economic dependence as love; Domestic servitude as devotion	Service contrasted with his physical work	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4IAD8Yr8QR/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
53	Mar 19, 2024	Domestic servitude as devotion; Scripted femininity	Making supper for hardworking husband	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4svq3nr4o1/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
54	Mar 20, 2024	Tradwife discourse as harmless choice	Unsupervised ice cream and sleepovers	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4vPoPMrq1x/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
55	Mar 21, 2024	Economic dependence as love	Marriage change and growing closer	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4x2u8oLMCr/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
56	Mar 22, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship	GRWM satire of toxic tradwives	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C40X0nZr2gF/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
57	Mar 23, 2024	Illness and failure	Fear of homemaking and faith	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C43Epa0rOIY/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
58	Mar 26, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship	Modesty as dignity and royalty	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4-mTYPrDdW/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
59	Mar 27, 2024	Economic dependence as love	FreePrints promotion and family memories	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5BvW74x3ow/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
60	Mar 28, 2024	Scripted femininity	Homemaking as purposeful choice	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5DyoSNL2hJ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
61	Mar 29, 2024	Spiritualized patriarchy and courtship; Scripted femininity	Early marriage and supervised courtship	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5GWwywr2Uu/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

S.no	Date posted	Theme	Short content label	Reel URL
62	Mar 30, 2024	Scripted femininity	Self introduction and identity branding	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5I8yzfryDF/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFiZA==

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