

My Daughter Plays Like a Trad Wife

Having just one almost two-year-old girl, I am a relative newcomer to the world of little girls. My first two children were boys who were drawn towards roadworks, train tracks and diggers. Hence my little girl has a wide range of vehicles to choose from. Yet, unlike either of my boys, she insists on playing with her “babies”, putting pretend fruit and vegetables in anything that will do as an oven, and going on numerous pretend “shopping” trips with a bag slung over her shoulder (this was any old paper bag she could find until, noticing the interest, I gave her her own bag).

So far, she’s looking suspiciously like a #TradWife, and her early interests seem to lend credence to the argument that *some* women, at least, are innately at home, at home.

While there is much criticism of a new trend towards women celebrating a life in the home, Irish journalist Eilis O’Hanlon wrote [a rather sympathetic account of the trend](#) in an Irish newspaper, stating that it may be that women who embrace a life in the home have found the key to being happy:

More and more women have to go to work just to put a roof over their family’s heads – and, having done so, then need to pay for childcare, the average full-time cost of which now stands at €184 per week, rising to more than €200 in Dublin and neighbouring counties – even though, after all that, they’re no better off in many ways than women decades ago.

Are we all any happier as a result of working harder? Studies would suggest not. Despite thinking that the Ireland of old must have been a terrible place altogether, every indicator suggests that people back then were more content, less anxious. That includes women, who had much less freedom back

in the day and so ought to have been thoroughly wretched and angry, according to received wisdom.

The tradwives are just saying they want something different in their lives. It's not hard to see the appeal.

If you are not familiar with the #TradWife trend, Alena Kate Pettitt has largely been its champion and you can see an interview with her [here](#) in which she explains her choice to be a homemaker.

Pettitt thinks feminism is about choices, not restrictions. Hence, she believes that being a traditional wife whose key role is maintaining a family home should remain a valid choice for girls. Yet, she has endured being laughed at all her life because being a homemaker really was what she always wanted to do. But she did have a successful career at one stage and experience has told her it is what truly makes her most happy and content. She's not saying that being a homemaker is the only way – just a way that works really well for her and should remain a valid and respected choice.

O'Hanlon knocks down the movement's critics as being rather hypocritical (perhaps evidence of underlying agendas):

It's bizarre that we live in a world that is cool with all sorts of non-conformist lifestyles – non-monogamous, polyamorous, hippie commune, whatever you like – but as soon as someone says they want to live in a traditional, two-parent-plus-kids household, in which she stays at home and cooks the dinner and he goes to the office every morning, suddenly it's a problem.

In a way, the tradwives have tuned in, turned on, and dropped out, and found a way to be authentically themselves, which is the holy grail of modern identity politics. They're just not given credit for it because they choose to express what they feel in words that make their critics uncomfortable.

I think it's wonderful that there are movements to better respect women's true choices, rather than forcing them to feel that they have to be everything to everyone. It isn't about keeping women out of the workforce if that's where they want to be; it's about not barring them from the home – and actually celebrating the women who make the choice to be homemakers as performing a really necessary, valid and important societal role. Not least because they are bringing up the next generation in a time when countries the world over are worried about ultra-low birthrates.

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