

#sendwine: An Analysis of Motherhood, Alcohol Use and #winemom Culture on Instagram

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ABSTRACT: Popular culture has recently seen the emergence of the so-called comical *wine mom* persona, particularly on social media sites such as Instagram. Given the increasing use of alcohol amongst women and the emergence of alcohol as a tool for women and mothers to assert agency and gender equity, a critical analysis of wine mom culture warrants attention. Forty Instagram posts associated with the #winemom hashtag were selected using theoretical sampling and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. The central objective was to use a postfeminist lens to critically explore how wine mom culture is part of the consumption, (re)production and (re)configuration of the ideologies of 'good' and 'bad' motherhood occurring in online gendered spaces. The findings demonstrated the ubiquity of wine mom culture and its contribution to normalized images and meanings of 'liberated motherhood' that may have problematic sociocultural and health implications related to women's alcohol consumption.

KEYWORDS: Alcohol, motherhood, Instagram, winemom, postfeminism

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Introduction

Becoming a mother marks a significant transition in an individual's life that includes personal, social and biological changes. Culture, rather than biology, tells us what it means to be a mother, what behaviours are appropriate or inappropriate for mothers, and how motherhood shapes who women should become.¹ Motherhood is socially constructed and conveys a range of expected behaviours based on cultural values and norms which create expectations for what constitutes a 'good mother' and/or a 'liberated mother'.² Hays first described the concept of 'intensive mothering' which included 3 key beliefs: (1) that women continue to be the primary, central caregivers of their children; (2) that mothers should provide over-the top time and energy on their children; and (3) that motherhood separates 'mothering' from professional paid work.³ Collectively, these principles of 'intensive mothering' continue to situate 'good' mothers as those who represent the ideal mother as all-caring and self-sacrificing.^{3,4} These ideals stress that women are best suited for childcare and should focus their time and energy around the needs of the family; however, they may also 'liberate' themselves from the domestic ideals of motherhood through leisure time and forms of self-care without guilt.⁵

Gendered cultural depictions of motherhood have also contributed to an often taken for granted standard for what constitutes being a 'good' versus a 'bad' mother.^{2,6} Media portrayals of motherhood use a variety of tropes, which are easily identified character types constructed using several layers of contextual meaning, to help reaffirm what women's roles as mothers should look like.⁷ These portrayals of mothers frame the 'good

mother' as women who dedicate their lives to their children, forfeiting any other identities, or those who simultaneously juggle the demands of a full-time career while being a doting mother.^{2,6} As this trope suggests, motherhood is a performative role that has associated practices,¹ and women who want to fulfil this role are expected to have learned, through social conditioning and cultural discourses, these behaviours.

Portrayals of the 'bad' mothers exist to contrast the socially constructed meanings of 'good' mother portrayals. These mothers include the 'good enough' mother who does the perceived bare minimum to ensure the survival of her child and who may use alcohol and/or other drugs⁸ or the 'slummy mummy' who is characterized by symbols associated with poverty including tattoos, piercings and inappropriate clothing.⁹ By classifying mothers as either 'good' or 'bad', women have access to easily identifiable stereotypes that can be used as a standard for measuring themselves and other mothers against.² The consequence of dichotomizing mothers this way is that unrealistic and unattainable expectations are placed on women, reinforcing the myth of motherhood.

Women, alcohol and motherhood

One of the contested behaviours associated with being considered a good mother or a bad mother, while also being associated with the performance of 'liberated motherhood', is whether women should drink alcohol while 'being a mom'.¹⁰ Some media representations portray mothers who consume a glass of wine while parenting as 'irresponsible and selfish, while



suggesting that “good” mothers would never be tempted by alcohol.¹¹ However, alcohol has increasingly revealed itself as an important cultural symbol of how women can be liberated by (re)creating a positive identity that embraces them as both individuals and mothers who remain connected to their previously held identities as young (childless) women.¹² The consumption of alcohol may be one strategy used by women to come to terms with their role as new mothers and their identity development during this transition.¹² Alcohol consumption may also be used to establish and communicate the ability to maintain agency while fulfilling the performance of the mother role. Regardless of the intentions of these women who consume alcohol, previous research on the media portrayals of alcohol consumption by women has identified that media portrayals of ‘drinking mothers’ are problematic and have established a ‘crisis. . . wherein children are consistently put in danger by their drunken mothers’.¹⁰

Recently, popular culture has seen the emergence of the (meant to be) comical trope of the *wine mom*, described as ‘a middle-aged female (usually a mother) who enjoys drinking a refined, complex red or white wine . . . with her other middle-aged female friends’.¹³ Although the wine mom identity has been discussed and contested in media forms such as online parenting magazines and personal blogs,^{14,15} the concept has received limited academic interest.¹⁶ Of particular interest is the use of #winemom as a cultural term on social media, intended to ascribe and promote meanings and practices associated with white, middle class values. Therefore, this phenomenon warrants critical exploration using qualitative methods, especially in light of the growing evidence suggesting that there is increasing use of alcohol amongst women in North America,^{17,18} and that this use is becoming normalized among women as a form of stress release and empowerment.¹⁹ Given that alcohol is ‘no ordinary commodity’,²⁰ with serious health and social consequences, health critics have identified that it is important to stop *romanticizing* portrayals of alcohol use.²¹

Mothers as consumers

The concept of the ‘good mother’ has also been long intertwined with the notion of being a ‘good consumer’, whereby a ‘good mother’ is a woman who buys the right products to promote good health and reduces the risk of bringing harm to her family.²² Corporations and enterprising small businesses have a longstanding history of capitalizing on this population to market goods and services by promoting an image of being a good mother. As such, products (eg, matching mother/child t-shirts, wine glasses) that *celebrate* the hard work of mothers and promote their membership in the #winemom culture have also become opportunities within online spaces for profit and marketing products that announce a mother’s membership in a group that aligns with white, middle class values.^{19,23} This #winemom culture has enabled mompreneurs, women who are balancing the roles of business owner and parent, to create

an online persona that can be used on social media sites to provide one-stop-shops that sell products while allowing women to partake in an online community of like-minded individuals with the shared experience of motherhood.²³ The creation of these online communities has allowed wine companies (amongst other companies) to market to women without seeming too obvious or obnoxious.²³ As the author of one *New York Times* article pointed out, winemakers are now giving the same gendered treatment to wine as to what was observed in the 1970s for men and beer – an opportunity to relax and unwind after a difficult day.²⁴ This subtle infiltration into these communities has merited the recent criticism that these companies are ‘pinkening’ the alcohol industry by targeting women as desirable consumers.¹⁹

Theoretical positioning

Gill²⁵ suggested that the term *postfeminist sensibility* be used to respond to the complex changes in the way that feminism was being used and represented. Gill²⁵ proposed that postfeminism needed to be considered a critical object rather than an analytical perspective, and as an empirical means to analyse popular culture. By conceptualizing postfeminism this way, Gill²⁶ (p. 613) identified that postfeminism is a ‘critical analytical term that refers to empirical regularities or patterns in contemporary cultural life’ and can be used to understand how postfeminism is created, expressed and circulated, as well as how it is received and reproduced.

Gill²⁵ also identified that postfeminist cultural representations tend to be composed of several themes including the focus on women’s bodies, individualism, choice and empowerment and self-surveillance and discipline. In this way, postfeminism is intimately tied to neoliberalism and the ways that it increasingly constructs individuals as rational actors in the creation of hegemonic standards by which cultural representations can be explored and analysed. As we explore in the current study, #winemom culture on Instagram represents many of these postfeminist themes, namely: the emphasis on individualism, choice and empowerment; self-surveillance and discipline; and the makeover paradigm.

The first theme of postfeminism is the focus on individualism, choice and empowerment, while simultaneously eradicating political and cultural influences. Decisions are freely made by women and they have become symbolic of women’s empowerment and overcoming issues traditionally associated with social movements. The second theme of postfeminism is self-surveillance and discipline, which focuses on the increased extensiveness and intensity of self-monitoring that women must endure to maintain appearances (both physical and behavioural). This scrutiny includes ensuring that they present themselves well in their everyday lives, but also that women keep their lives open for ongoing surveillance and remediation from other women. The final relevant postfeminist theme is the relationship between the makeover paradigm and

consumerism and commodification. Intensely related to the first 2 themes, Gill²⁵ identified that if a woman detects a part of her life is flawed, it is amenable to change, provided that they emulate the right guru, purchase the right products and/or engage in the right behaviours. Using these postfeminism themes, we critically analysed the gendered meanings surrounding motherhood and alcohol use on Instagram within #winemom culture to understand how women construct their online identities as mothers who drink.

Instagram as a cultural site of exploration

With over 500 million active users and 95 million posts, Instagram is one of the most popular forms of visual social media in the world.^{27,28} Users must use images, short videos and words, or brief statements (known as hashtags) to construct a post. While Instagram has been portrayed in popular media as vapid and narcissistic, scholars have realized that this platform is a naturally occurring form of data offering insight into current examples of self-narration and representation.²⁹

It has been suggested that Instagram is ‘best understood in terms of the multiplicity of cultures’,²⁷ with continued appeal for younger peoples. Relevant to both women of childbearing age and to wine companies marketing to them, 13.9% of Instagram’s global active users are women between the ages of 18 and 24, and more than half of the global Instagram population worldwide is 34 years of age or younger.³⁰ Regardless of the growing popularity of Instagram among women of childbearing age, research has focused heavily on the marketing impacts of influencers and less on its role in the social construction of identity. Research in this area has been limited compared to other social media platforms and more traditional mediums.^{27,28}

Given the proliferation of alcohol consumption by women of childbearing age and the increasing prevalence of social media, particularly Instagram content that endorses alcohol consumption by women, it is important to understand the role that these posts may play in shaping the way that alcohol is consumed by this age group and how alcohol consumption as part of motherhood is socially constructed.⁹ Instagram provides both a personal and public space for individuals to construct their identity in ways that reproduce and/or resist contemporary portrayals,³¹ and women wanting to use alcohol consumption in a way that reproduces and/or resists contemporary portrayals of mothering is not an exception. In turn, companies may capitalize on and reinforce the portrayals of individuals who are skilled at crafting an image (known as influencers) to sell consumer products and to create associations between their brand and desirable portrayals.³²

Purpose and research questions

The purpose of the current study was to understand how wine mom culture is part of the consumption, (re)production and

(re)configuration of the ideologies of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ motherhood occurring in online spaces. Specifically, we explored the representations of wine mom culture on Instagram using the themes associated with Gill’s postfeminist sensibility to understand the socially constructed meanings embedded within the posts.²⁵ The research was guided by following questions: (1) How are images, words and phrases concerning *wine moms* used on Instagram to construct cultural meanings of motherhood and alcohol? and (2) What are the implications of the identified meanings for women’s health?

Methods

Data collection

Instagram posts covering a 2-year timespan (2018–2020) and using the hashtags #winemom (60 098 posts), #sendwine (52 557 posts), #mommyjuice (45 713 posts) and #youcansip-withus (34 201 posts) were initially reviewed by all authors to establish what types of posts and content were related to #winemom culture on Instagram. After this initial review, 2 categories of posts were generated that were deemed conceptually similar based on the repetition of the types of images, texts and messaging – moms with and/or consuming wine without children and moms with wine and/or consuming wine in the presence of children. Given the breadth of available content and conceptual overlap with other hashtags, and the purpose of our study to explore wine mom culture, images bearing the hashtag #winemom were chosen for final data collection and analysis.

Because our study examined the detailed content and associated meanings of posts (eg, images, comments and interactions by users and selected hashtag), we focused on a representative theoretical sample of images and posts in order to explore depth and interpretation of meaning.³³ Therefore, 40 images were included in the final sample for analysis, which included 20 posts involving moms alone with wine and 20 posts involving moms with wine and children.

Ethical considerations

Aligned with the need for researchers to be more clear and upfront about the ethical practices and challenges of using social media data, we followed a number of guidelines recommended for the use of Instagram in research to ensure ethical conduct in the current study.^{28,34,35} Data in this study are discussed only in an aggregated way and reflect contextual understandings of #winemom culture within this Instagram space.^{35,36} Steps were also taken to ensure anonymity, such as not linking our analysis to any one individual post and not using Instagram account handles. The content of the posts are described, but we do not use the data in a visual way (ie, there is no sharing of the images or the posts themselves). Additionally, during data analysis, we analysed patterns of meaning within and between content, not attributing our analyses to any one individual or content creator.

Furthermore, any posts that were deleted or made private during the data collection and analysis period were removed from the sample and excluded from analysis.²⁸ As recommended by Olteanu et al³⁷ consideration was also given to the potential biases embedded within this data, including the different ways users engage online (ie, creating, sharing, observing), and how the data may represent a very specific view or type of user.²⁸

Reflexive thematic analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was used to answer the research questions as it offers 'robust processes for identifying patterns, and interpreting them, in a number of different ways'³⁸ (p. 192). Using RTA thus allowed us to combine analytic choices aligned with social constructionism and a postfeminist sensibility whereby *wine moms* and associated meanings generated on Instagram were viewed as the product of individual, social and cultural discourses, which interact to create particular meanings concerning mother identities in relation to alcohol consumption. The researchers engaged with the data on 2 levels in an inductive/data driven way: a semantic focus (ie, words, phrases were coded as explicitly stated and/or images described as they appeared); and a 'latent focus' (ie, analysis was developed around coding implicit meanings of semantic meanings).³⁸

To accomplish the semantic and latent levels of analysis, the 6 phases of RTA were done by the authors in a recursive manner. To familiarize themselves and code the data, all authors reviewed the Instagram posts twice while making notes about what they observed by using the previously identified hashtags associated with wine moms. After a discussion involving all authors, semantic and latent coding was conducted by labelling data segments in relation to the research questions. Themes were iteratively developed and refined as the authors worked together to organize and revise codes into a table that made clear the finalized themes represented in the data. During this process, the authors acted as critical friends who challenged each other's construction of knowledge³⁹ and were able to explore and construct multiple interpretations. In addition, all authors engaged in a constant comparison process to ensure that the analysis 'fit well' across the data and into a coherent, compelling story related to the research questions.⁴⁰

Results and Discussion

The findings of the RTA are organized around a central theme, *consumption of wine to be a 'modern mother'*. Two interdependent thematic threads were identified as feeding into this central theme: (1) wine for social belonging and socially acceptable self-care; and (2) the commodification of the wine mom.

Consumption of wine to be a 'modern mother'

Within the #winemom space on Instagram, alcohol use (and specifically wine use) was presented as a way to work out the

contradictions (ie, 'good' vs 'bad') of motherhood. Drinking wine within #winemom culture was also shown to be a way to demonstrate resistance to the traditional expectations of motherhood by negating these expectations via the consumption of wine, with descriptions such as 'wine mom' or 'mommy juice'. These (meant to be) cute and funny descriptions were ways to remove the feelings of shame or stress associated with being 'bad' or 'naughty' even if it was just for an afternoon, evening or another designated time (eg, 'Wine Wednesday'). Embedded within each of these descriptions were tasks, such as childcare and/or domestic duties, or parallels with children's behaviours that parodied this task in the context of motherhood. Examples included descriptions such as 'mommy's sippy cup' and 'wine o'clock', visual parallels between items such as boxed wine and a child's juice box, or specific times of the day like mealtimes or school-pick up.

Lang¹¹ identified that these rhetorical devices are used as ways to encourage women to construct their identities in accordance with social norms that are appropriate for 'good' mothers in contrast to 'bad' mothers. By normalizing these 'bad' behaviours using contrast (ie, wine box, juice box) and association (ie, connected to mealtimes), women can feel like they are still upholding the traditional expectations of 'good' mothers while resisting the stigma and discrimination faced by 'bad' mothers who are usually associated with nontraditional families, teenage mothers, career mothers who work and thus 'neglect' their children, or mothers who stay home and 'smother' their children. In creating parallels between alcohol consumption and roles or tasks traditionally associated with motherhood, mothers are afforded the opportunity to be 'bad' for a time and then return to their 'good' motherhood responsibilities such as household management and childcare, demonstrating their ability to be 'responsible' wine drinkers and to re-conform to the long upheld ideals of 'good' motherhood. Therefore, the 'modern mother' can embrace both 'good' and 'bad' behaviours, while ultimately fulfilling the entrenched expectations of motherhood. Wine is the solution that enables women to succeed with these challenges.

It is important to recognize that not all women are afforded the same privilege of consuming alcohol and being a #winemom. Analysis of the images presented on Instagram revealed that who can be a 'wine mom' is tied to race, class, gender and sexuality.²⁵ For example, almost all of the women in the #winemom posts were white, young and cisgendered. They were engaged in activities traditionally associated with middle class leisure activities (eg, lounging in the bathtub). The absence of diverse representations of the #winemom may advertently or inadvertently reinforce who can consume alcohol responsibly as a coping mechanism while maintaining their role as a mother.

Women also used descriptors such as 'hot mess' alongside #winemom in posts and images to describe themselves because their houses were 'dirty', the 'dishes had piled up', or the

laundry was 'on the floor'. Despite their written claims about the state of their homes or the lack of personal time, visual inspection of these posts revealed clean and well organized homes, and women who were well kempt (eg, styled and coloured hair, wearing cosmetics, wearing clean, nice clothes, accessorized outfits with jewellery, etc.). Ultimately, for the women participating in #winemom culture, alcohol was presented as the saviour that allowed them to cope with their domestic duties. In essence, being associated with the #winemom hashtag enabled them to be aligned with the supermom who gets all things done.^{2,41}

Consistent with the self-surveillance and discipline theme of postfeminism, the #winemom trope has provided women with the opportunity to see and be seen.²⁵ Through these #winemom presentations, women make seen the challenges associated with the ideal of being a perfect mother by taking the 'hot mess' out of the shadows and presenting it (in a controlled, explicit construction) on Instagram. However, these presentations remain complicated, as they still reinforce women's participation in domestic roles and responsibilities and provide little challenge to participants in #winemom culture for alcohol consumption as a means to make it happen. Women often report that they feel intense pressure to perform motherhood perfectly, both in online and offline spaces,⁴¹ which may influence the carefully crafted presentations of how wine facilitates succeeding as a modern mother.

The Instagram posts also align with the work of Killingsworth,¹² who documented the empowerment expressed by young mothers in relation to their alcohol use where women discussed their consumption as a means to take back their pre-child identity and to assert their equality and independence in contrast to their (male) partners. The women who were posting images using the #winemom hashtag were also presenting a similar view of empowerment, whereby their alcohol use makes them confident and re-asserts their identity within gendered spaces.²⁵ The 2 thematic threads further presented here describe how the different meanings for women's wine consumption and their particular version of femininity exhibited on Instagram support current discourses regarding women's consumption of, and relationship to, wine.

Wine for social belonging and socially acceptable self-care. Digital media, including mobile apps, social media, content-sharing platforms, mommyblogs and online discussion forums have been identified as very important opportunities for mothers to connect and access social support to make informed choices about parenting, particularly during pregnancy and early motherhood.⁴²⁻⁴⁴ These platforms have been reported as being helpful and reassuring by alleviating mothers' feelings of social isolation, uncertainty and a heightened sense of responsibility,⁴⁴ as well as influencing mothers' views of parenting and giving voice to their experiences and anxieties.^{45,46} These platforms provide women with an opportunity to establish, and maintain, social connections and intimate relationships with other

mothers who may be experiencing the same challenges and to engage in collaborative environments that influence the social constructions of motherhood.⁴²

Within the analysed Instagram posts, wine was used as a way to connect with like-minded women to generate a sense of being in this together and of bonding over wine. For example, one image used to sell a product featured an image of 4 mothers sitting in a driveway consuming wine to celebrate their children heading back to school at the end of summer. The way in which wine is presented in this context is problematic as it partly normalizes binge drinking; however, it also exposes an important social connection that women want and need. The comments on this back to school image demonstrated that women using Instagram and the #winemoms hashtag desire a shared sense of community and social belonging. Many women commenting on the images expressed frustrations about their life, including one mother who sarcastically noted that it was 'cool' that her child did not want to eat all of their meal, so she was left eating their half-eaten leftovers paired with her wine. The comments and likes from other women indicated that there was a clear sense that other women 'get it' and shared in the poster's moments of irritation. These gendered portrayals of alcohol use are consistent with other research findings indicating that women tend to consume alcohol, and wine in particular, to relax and socialize with friends.⁴⁷ The #winemom culture on Instagram appears to represent one way that women are able to connect with one another in an online, as opposed to offline, space, facilitating this much-needed social bonding.

Other mothers also created content to complain about their motherly responsibilities, often coupled with a (meant to be) humorous riff on their children 'whining' while they were 'wine-ing'. The hashtag #winemom has created a cultural space that allows women to form a community that enabled reinforcing feedback that mothers remained 'good mothers' and were not descending into 'bad' mother territory. Other mothers also used their accounts and posts to provide inspirational advice to other women that told one another to 'stop doubting' themselves and that they 'can do anything [they] put their mind to'. However, other women did use the platform to create content that demonstrated that despite the sense of community, these women often felt a sense of isolation, aloneness, stress, anger and frustration. As one mother remarked, she was home alone with her child and was 'just done momming'. These examples link to Gill's postfeminist theme of surveillance, wherein mothers can put these concerns (eg, perception that they are behaving in a 'bad' way) into an online, gendered space to self-monitor themselves, as well as to receive feedback and reinforcement from others in terms of their performance of motherhood duties (eg, they are trying hard enough and deserve a break).²⁵

Many of the posts with the hashtag #winemom suggested that many of these women were experiencing poor mental health and were looking for alternative ways to cope, either through alcohol consumption or community, and were hidden

behind self-presentations using humour. For example, one mother joked about taking a bath and not using it as an opportunity to kill oneself: 'don't drown yourself - it might seem like a good idea, but it's generally frowned upon'. As an alternative, it was suggested that a more appropriate response was to 'pull out a nice bottle of Rosé'. The associated hashtags with this post identified the use of wine in this context as a means of taking a break and engaging in self-care. In another post, another mother noted that after the week she was having, she was 'probably gonna drink the box. . .', again using humour to deflect from the situation she was in that necessitated her feeling that she needed an entire box of wine to cope and manage her responsibilities. Finally, a third post captured a woman looking into an empty bottle of wine like a telescope with a caption that read: 'The answers may not lie at the bottom of a bottle of wine, but you should at least check. Hoping this bottle tells me how I am going to complete my to-do list this week'. Again, wine was featured as an important tool for completing domestic responsibilities. Considered together, these examples indicate that women often feel overwhelmed by their domestic and motherly responsibilities and wine represents an effective means to cope. Alcohol, and in particular wine, is suggested as being the solution to the difficult questions or challenges in their lives, or make tackling the long to-do list bearable.

The narrative associated with the posts on Instagram suggests that women do not feel it is reasonable to expect them to complete all domestic duties^{2,6} and as such are coping through alcohol consumption and unity with others in wine mom culture on Instagram. These presentations highlight how women are feeling unable to cope or succeed, as barely getting by, and as continually struggling to manage their own mental health, and problematically frame alcohol as the solution.

Canadian and American researchers have indicated that more than 40% of female drinkers report consuming alcohol at least once a week or within the past month^{17,48} and that 20% of female drinkers engage in risky alcohol consumption on at least a monthly basis.^{48,49} These rates of consumption are particularly alarming given wine is being marketed and used by women as support for mental and physical health without an implicit understanding of what is not being addressed in these images and posts (ie, women's feelings of anxiety, stress and depression).

Mental health literature has aptly identified that alcohol should not be used as a means for coping and that the stigma and shame associated with alcohol use may result in more self-medication and drinking to self-soothe, as well as an avoidance tactic for accessing appropriate supports that may be helpful for both women and their children.^{50,51} As others have drawn attention to in popular media (eg, parent magazines), the problem with the cultural perception of the wine mom is that it hides or masks problematic drinking.⁵² These perceptions remains embedded in traditional, stereotypical and stigmatizing views about which 'types' of women drink at risky levels, posing a threat to their children, community and society,^{53,54}

and prevent women from accessing the needed supports to address these concerns. Participation in wine mom culture on social media (including Instagram) may further perpetuate these 'taken for granted' truths by presenting alcohol consumption as an empowered personal choice and minimizing women's alcohol consumption as (meant to be) funny posts that reinforce the message that women's drinking is not a problem, but rather an amusing pastime to cope with the demands of womanhood and motherhood.^{25,52} However, posts that make light of serious mental health concerns, such as suicidal ideation, provide examples of the real, entrenched and complex challenges and trauma that women may be experiencing and that cannot be easily resolved, warranting interventions that include critical gender-, harm reduction- and trauma-informed approaches.⁵⁵ These posts reflect real issues that women experience in our society that deserve more attention than jokes on social media.

Commodification of the 'wine mom'. Some women posting content on Instagram also identified themselves as 'wine educators' and 'winepreneurs', that 'got' the struggles of motherhood and wanted to ensure that women were provided with a quality wine product to take the edge off being a parent. For example, one woman posted an image of her offering bottles of white and red wine from her immaculate kitchen with the caption, 'I see you momma, Dishes piled in the sink. There isn't a single room that you could call 'clean'. . . I can't wait to pour you a glass. Red or white?' Researchers have described that wine companies have identified women as desirable consumers and have engaged in several marketing practices (eg, feminine labels) to attract them as consumers.^{17,56} Using mompreneurs on Instagram to sell alcohol may represent the latest trend in wine marketing given the few regulations on Instagram regarding the promotion of alcohol. Instagram only stipulates that content must respect local laws regarding age of consumption.⁵⁷

Other images and content focused on projecting a lifestyle associated with wine consumption. Many content creators used the hashtag #winemom to craft textual and visual narratives that promoted the image of being a 'supermom'. Several of the content creators listed travel, fashion, home décor and fitness amongst their interests, which reinforced the idea that they have both the time and economic means for the lifestyle they are creating. Other content creators exhibited pictures of themselves and their children touring wineries or wearing high fashion with a well-kept appearance. Many products were also developed and advertised by these content creators to cultivate their public image as a wine mom, including wine glasses, t-shirts and other products with sayings like 'when they whine, I wine'. For example, one image featured a tea towel with the saying, 'Alexa, bring me wine' hanging prominently in front of a kitchen sink. The text accompanying the image stated, '. . . bring me some wine!!! After this week, I'm probably gonna drink a box. . .'.

Part of this projected lifestyle also included women's visual representations of themselves as part of their healthy, fit, trend-setting and marketable wine mom image. For example, all of the images showing the women's full bodies included women who appeared to be thin or of normal weight. Other images also included only visuals of women's upper bodies (ie, from the chest up), which may reflect strategic choices by women to self-surveil and monitor their own postings. As Gill identifies, postfeminist media culture includes principles of self-surveillance and discipline and endorses a 'makeover paradigm' that dictates how women are expected to perform femininity.²⁵ These performances include women's self-monitoring of grooming, posture and manners to ensure that they align with upper-class, able-bodied, white ideals. Furthermore, these ideals reinforce women's attitudes about the normative requirements of women's body size, shape, attire, home and engagement with 'self-indulgent' or self-care activities.²⁵ Women participating in wine mom culture may feel the need to hide the perceived inadequacies of their lives as mothers and women, given the unrealistic expectations to which mothers are held, coupled with fatphobia and weight stigma perpetuated in today's society.^{58,59} These examples of self-surveillance may reflect an additional added layer of complexity as part of the taken for granted identity of a 'wine mom', which includes not only specific expectations of women as mothers, but also expectations of what mothers must look like. Not only must women surveil and manage their homes and families to ensure that they are keeping up appearances, so too must they also ensure that their physical appearance is an outward representation of their vigilance to be healthy and thin.

Women as wine consumers are also extremely important to the global wine market and, as such, these products become symbols of membership in this group of consumers. Previous scholars have suggested that the wine industry has played an important role in the evolving relationship between class formation and social capital. For example, Overton and Murray identified that wine has remained one of the icons of Western consumerism and affluence.⁶⁰ Successful mothers are increasingly portrayed as being self-sufficient with solutions to all problems including marital duties, domestic labour and child-care thanks to access to private economic assets.⁴⁶

Increasingly, businesses are also using social media platforms (including Instagram) to market their products.⁶¹ Similar to print advertising, companies have found social media to be an effective tool for soliciting and maintaining a loyal customer base by selling a branded image associated with their product. Social media influencers, who have cultivated an online persona and a strong fanbase for their opinions and/or expertise, are steadily being used by companies to market products from an ordinary consumer perspective and to create a brand.⁶¹ The alcohol industry has strategically, and explicitly, targeted young women (eg, women of childbearing age) as a market for consumption, with the 'Instagrammability of pink drinks' becoming

a new method by which alcohol is marketed to women.⁶² Problematically, recent evidence also suggests that girls as young as 13 are directly exposed to this alcohol marketing on social media, particularly Instagram,⁶³ and that these images frequently depict alcohol in a positive social context.³¹

Recognizing that women typically make most decisions regarding household purchases, companies have sought ways to reach this audience. Companies looking to improve their reputation or to increase consumer awareness have used social media influencers and lifestyle bloggers (formerly known as mommy bloggers) as a means of positioning their products in the hands of individuals who on the surface appear to be like the consumer, but also are in the position of constructing an image of who the ideal purchaser is. More critical scholars have identified that lifestyle blogging has played an important role in constructing the neoliberal citizen who has 'greater confidence in consumption than confidence in themselves'⁶⁴ (p. 151). In this way, #winemoms has been used to create Instagram content that is marketing a product or lifestyle towards women who are mothers while simultaneously endorsing white, middle class, cisgender norms. #winemom culture on Instagram is also presented in a way that caters to women who have the time, inclination and money to purchase these products.²⁵

Summary

Notably, women's wine consumption and representation as part of wine mom culture in this space provides evidence of how women construct their own representations and provides examples of how women's wine consumption is linked to their identities as both women and mothers. The results of the current study inform our cultural understandings of modern mothering and alcohol use. Previous research has revealed evidence that contemporary media portrayals present 'White, upper-middle class wom[e]n' as being in a 'crisis' and 'teeter[ing] on the edge of sanity'¹⁰ (p. 46). Expanded discourses about motherhood and alcohol use are needed to address the privileged position of a wine mom, acknowledging the experiences of working- and lower-class mothers, mothers of colour and Indigenous mothers who are often absent from these discourses. Current discourses emphasize that the only type of motherhood worth protecting is 'in alignment with White, upper-middle class conditions'¹⁰ (p. 60). This interpretation holds true for the sociocultural constructions of the wine mom in this Instagram space where there is a continued reproduction of white, middle-upper class, neoliberal values. It is notable that only one image corresponded to a visible woman of colour, with all other images aligning with predominantly white women who present themselves as being affluent. These staged photos, posed in large houses with immaculate kitchens and linked to businesses (eg, 'branding' of wine mom culture) or other cultural influences (eg, travel), suggest that wine mom culture is entrenched in neoliberal ideologies of individualism,

choice, judgement and empowerment.²⁶ Current participation in wine mom culture remains complicit with, rather than critical of, capitalism and other systems of (classed and racialized) injustice. In this study, wine was positioned as feminized, classed and raced in a way that was presented as recreational and taking the edge off, bringing serenity and peace for women as part of routine self-care, and as being a necessary way to cope with being a modern mother. In turn, this framing largely ignores the lived realities of women who may need support to feel that alcohol consumption is not their only appropriate or socially acceptable way to navigate life and cope with motherhood. These ideals were also centred among postfeminist themes that identify neoliberal ideologies of female confidence, self-love and self-esteem, and that provide an 'acceptable face of feminism'²⁶ for mainstream media in this sociocultural space. Social media plays a profoundly influential role in constructing norms of alcohol consumption, particularly among mothers and women of childbearing age, and is a primary avenue for how women and mothers (re)produce and (re)configure their own motherhood experiences through their engagement with wine mom content on Instagram.

Conclusion

The results of this study provide a critical analysis of wine mom culture on Instagram, demonstrating its ubiquity and the construction of particular images of motherhood that may have problematic sociocultural and health consequences related to women's alcohol consumption. The risk of alcohol use on women (and children) is an important public health issue that warrants critical attention. It is important to be aware of, and challenge, when portrayals of alcohol use by mothers move from being comical to problematic, and where women may need help to reduce or stop their drinking. The results of this study highlight the meanings that are being (re)produced and circulated in social media, which influence public discourse regarding women's health and gender equity. Women are continually held to socially constructed ideals of womanhood and motherhood and are expected to engage in behaviours aligning with these ideals. The focus of this research advances our understanding of the wine mom persona and its appeal to women, and contributes to understanding how engagement with social media as a cultural space helps shape meanings and behaviours that may impact health.

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Author Contributions

KDH originally conceptualized the paper and the exploration of wine mom culture on Instagram. All authors contributed to the design, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and the writing of this manuscript.

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