

“I Love It Here, It Makes Me Hopeful for My Future”: Queer Motherhood on YouTube

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Abstract

The term ‘momfluencer’ might conjure up images of straight white women exploiting their own children for fame and money, but is there queer possibility to be found in this genre? Informed by queer theory, my paper examines how representations of queer motherhood on YouTube offer new possibilities to queer viewers. I perform a discourse analysis of two YouTube channels, Rose and Rosie and Jessica Kellgren-Fozard, analyzing their YouTube videos and viewer comments to understand what these representations mean to viewers. These YouTube channels exist against the backdrop of heteronormative and traditionally gendered momfluencers online. The representations of queer motherhood that they offer present new possibilities to queer viewers: they create a queer utopia that enables young queer viewers to imagine new futures for themselves; they offer practical advice about navigating heteronormative institutions to new and prospective queer parents; and they enact queer realness by sharing stories of discrimination and resilience, creating a space of belonging and support. At the same time, these powerful queer possibilities are limited. The genre of motherhood content involves conforming to ideals of a heteronormative, neoliberal, nuclear family. By using YouTube as the channel for their self-representation, these YouTuber’s antinormative potential is also constrained by the capitalistic platform. More broadly, the neoliberal context that invites these women to commodify their motherhood is at tension with queer antinormative politics. As a result, the antinormative potential of these representations is always at tension with the normative context in and through which they operate.

Keywords: sharenting, children, social media, influencer, LGBTQ