Redneckaissance: Honey Boo Boo, Tumblr, and the Stereotype of Poor White Trash

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Abstract

Tumblr is an understudied social media site with a young, progressive, and queer user base of content creators. This study examines Tumblr posts about Honey Boo Boo to understand the nature of Tumblr and the way a convergent culture that includes non-viewers negotiates a television show dependent on stereotypes. Discourses around authenticity, LGBTQ issues, and body acceptance resist the negative white trash connotations of the show, but this resistance is embedded in stereotypes around race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography. The result is a continuum in which users negotiate what the show means in how they use that show to communicate about other issues based on which axes of power they resist and uphold. This gives insight on how online culture serves to reflect hegemonies without necessarily undermining them, how Tumblr memes serve to define the values of the site, and how an individual television show is co-opted into the online language of memes.