

Walker, Becky, University of Wollongong, Australia

Deliberative Democracy and Feminism in Lesbian Fan Fiction Communities

Flame wars (arguments) in online groups are one of the ways that the dominant values and norms of the group are exposed to debate and deliberation. There was a flame war in the official fan fiction group for US television series *The L Word* (Showtime 2004-2009) over the representation of child abuse in a fan fiction scene submitted by a heterosexual man. Many of the posts in this flame war were from people who identified as lesbian and/or feminist. This flame war exposed a diversity of positions over censorship, and over the best strategies for raising awareness of issues of child abuse. The flame war also highlighted tensions in the fan fiction community over the presence of men, and the ability of men to write 'authentic' representations of lesbian lives.