

A Social Cause Divided: Exploration of Intra-Movement Conflict in Online Spaces**Katharine Hodgdon**

While social media is useful in igniting social movements, like Arab Spring and #BlackLivesMatter, it is also the foundation for hate groups, dissension between groups, and Internet trolls. It is as easy to dismantle a social cause movement, as it is to create one, even if the intention is to create chaos. With more organizations and groups using social media to promote their cause, it is imperative for intra-movement groups to stick together. However, when conflicts arise between intra-movement groups, it is often impossible to control, with the social cause taking a backseat to dissension.

This study analyzes the conflict between indie game developer Zoe Quinn and The Fine Young Capitalists who claim to support minority representation in media. The conflict is associated with the #GamerGate movement. Analysis of intra-movement conflict is unique because while there is significant research between inter-movement conflicts, minimal research investigating intra-movement conflicts is explored. Research on this topic is hard to produce because conflicts within movements end quickly or silenced all together, for dissension shows a lack of credibility in the movement's rhetoric and values (Moufahim, Reedy, & Humphreys, 2015). Researching these conflicts may help to understand why they continue even if it means forgoing their social cause.

The data set is a collection of Twitter statuses and replies, situated in the intra-movement conflict. The set was analyzed using coordinate management of meaning (CMM), which theorizes communication as a process, creating and managing social reality (Pearce, 2005). CMM observes the social realities of individuals, the constructs a person may or may not know, and the interaction of individuals when applying these

constructs (Pearce & Rossi, 1984).

Results show intra-movement conflict is about face-saving, where parties attempt to maintain a good self-image in conflict (Ury & Linsky, 1986). While both Zoe Quinn and The Fine Young Capitalists identify as radical feminists, neither of the groups try to bolster the feminist cause. Clarification of intent was a prevalent theme through the series of tweets analyzed, but ultimately, tweets focused on face-saving rather than fighting for the social cause.

These results propose two implications on face-saving and intra-movement conflict. First, the situational context of the conflict effects intractability in groups. #GamerGate's choice to "weaponize" TFYC's game jam to prove the movement was not misogynistic against women, and to humiliate Quinn is what solidified the argument as an intractable, intra-movement conflict. TFYC's choice to collaborate with #GamerGate, serves to widen the divide, and make the conflict less likely to be tractable. Second, the conflict between TFYC and Quinn has become a moral conflict on the values of feminism and activism. Moral Conflict Theory (Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997) examines how groups, which support the same cause, could differ so greatly in symbols and rhetoric, they become engaged in conflict with each other, rather than working together against the opposition. Future research should look into the organizational practices of TFYC, and editorials by Zoe Quinn, to see how the opposing groups interpret similar symbols differently.

References

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