

## **Governing the Un-Governed: Lessons Learned from the #GamerGate Controversy**

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Following heavy campaigning in October 2014 by an online movement identified by the Twitter hashtag “GamerGate,” Intel pulled its advertisements from the popular video game developer website Gamasutra, which had previously published articles critical of sexism in the video game industry. Clothed as a movement to promote ethics in video game journalism, many have contended that #GamerGate’s real crusade embodied that of reactionary conservatism directed towards women and minorities in the video game industry, evidenced by its harassment of female game developers and journalists through relentless forms of cyber violence, including death threats, rape threats, and doxxing. This ability – to create a united online force with the power to criminally abuse select individuals while simultaneously compelling an influential multinational technology company to alter its advertising strategy – highlighted the strength of this site of cyber governance that, for approximately one year, held sway over the video game community. Despite the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation obtaining confessions, no individuals were prosecuted for the online threats of rape and murder made in support of #GamerGate, at least in part as a result of the difficulties in identifying perpetrators in anonymous, online settings. Viewing #GamerGate as an associational movement, this research utilizes a socio-legal perspective to first outline the ostensible absence of enforceable legal mechanisms regulating cyber violence committed by associational movements, before turning to apply the concept of path dependency to #GamerGate’s linking of journalistic integrity and misogyny at the early stages of the movement. Against this backdrop, I argue that the regulation of #GamerGate may have occurred by external sources attacking the movement’s legitimacy during the initial phase of its campaign. Two specific institutional sources external to #GamerGate are explored as potential actors that arguably held influence to decrease #GamerGate’s legitimacy during the height of its activity: corporate advertisers and internet platforms.