Emotional Labor and Diversity

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Communities Managed:

- **Patrice Pike** (Austin folk rock musician)
- **Ncsoft** (Lineage 1 and 2, Auto Assault, Dungeon Runners, Exteel)
- **EA/Mythic** (Ultima Online)
- **Webwars/Electric Bat Studios** (Weblings, Webwars)
- **Undead Labs** (Moonrise)
- **Metafilter**
Metafilter

- Founded in 1999
- 12k+ active monthly users
- 16k+ comments per week
- 24/7 coverage
  - 5 full-time, 2 part-time staff
Demographics

● Average age: 36

● Gender balance: 51% male, 43% female (4% other, 2% declined to state)
  ● This is a noticeable change from the 2010 data: 63% male, 35% female, 2% other/declined to state

Emotional Labor

- Emotional labor is the work done to keep relationships and groups running smoothly
  - Often gendered (“women’s work”)
  - Usually expected of marginalized people
  - Online, it usually involves not reacting to provocation, justifying your argument or your existence
The Troll Who Is Not a Troll

- Sincerity + tone-deafness = trouble
  - This kind of person:
    - Says unpopular things, or popular things badly
    - Cannot predict the response of his audience
    - Miscommunicates, mischaracterizes, misunderstands
Ban Him! And Better Ideas

• “Don’t feed the troll”
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- “Don’t feed the troll”
- Offer a private channel
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- “Don’t feed the troll”
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- Provide communication guidelines
  - Forbidden words
  - “I” Statements
  - Separate from nemeses
The Tone Argument

- “You’re emotional, therefore your argument is invalid.”
- Variants:
  - “That’s not a problem for me, so it’s not a problem.”
  - “Lern 2 play”
  - “Play a real class (be in a real guild, etc)”
Cleanse the debuffs!

- “Focus on the idea, not the person.”
  - Effective, time-consuming, often impractical
  - Often a better policy statement than an implementation
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- Negative comments vs. Negative Space
  - Easier to explain and moderate
  - Less burden on the original poster
The Flipside: The Angry User

- Justifiably angry users are tricky
  - The rules of discourse don’t change
    *but*
  - They need to feel heard
  - If the cause is in your community, fix it!
Conclusion

- Emotional labor is work, and if the work is too hard, people won’t participate
- Marginalized folks do more baseline EL
- Removing the biggest EL burdens will make it easier for *everyone*
- Removing specific burdens is necessary but insufficient
Resources

- Metafilter: http://www.metafilter.com


- The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling, Arlie Russell Hochschild, January 1983
Q&A

Thanks for coming!