



COMMUNITY  
MANAGEMENT  
SUMMIT

# 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

Kimberly Witten, "Sociolinguistic Variation and Enregisterment in an Online Community of Practice: A Case Study of MetaFilter.com" (PhD diss., University of York, 2014).

# 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

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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
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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>
  - Demographics: Kimberly Witten, "Sociolinguistic Variation and Enregisterment in an Online Community of Practice: A Case Study of MetaFilter.com" (PhD diss., University of York, 2014).
- "Where's My Cut?: On Unpaid Emotional Labor" The Toast, July 2015  
<http://the-toast.net/2015/07/13/emotional-labor/>
- "Wages Against Housework", Silvia Federici, April 1975  
<https://caringlabor.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/federici-wages-against-housework.pdf>
- The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling, Arlie Russell Hochschild, January 1983





Q&A

Thanks for coming!