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Abstract

This chapter examines the recruitment, work and identity of community managers in online games. Community management has emerged as a new occupational role in the past decade with the rise of networked games. They play a core intermediary function between game players and game developers which can be conceptualised as a form of creative and emotional labour. Drawing upon an analysis of job advertisements and face to face interviews Kerr argues that the location of these jobs is shaped by existing labour mobility and geo-linguistic markets, while recruitment practices, working conditions and working practices are shaped by gendered and heteronormative norms. Recruiters target gamers in order to convert informal forms of social and cultural capital into relatively low paid, precarious and largely invisible forms of work.

Introduction

This chapter explores the work of online community managers (CMs) in the digital games industry. This occupation has emerged in the past decade with the emergence of games like *World of Warcraft* and *Minecraft* which are played online. These workers play an important intermediary role between game players and game developers although in many cases this work is offshored and largely invisible. CMs can be conceptualised as a new form of virtual work given that the workers are dependant on, and work through networked digital technologies, and they support the creation and circulation of content by developers and users. This form of work also requires emotional labour (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008) and the performance of a self which while variously mediated,

must be carefully displayed and performed. As such online community managers provide a useful case through which to explore new forms of virtual work and in particular the influence of material structures and practices on the virtual workplace and worker identities.

This chapter builds upon previous research on the games industry and community managers to reflect in more detail on how four factors, namely mobility, recruitment practices, working conditions and working practices act to reinforce pre-existing gendered, raced and heteronormative production cultures in the wider games industry. In what follows I firstly introduce the games industry as a cultural industry and present information on occupational roles, salary and working cultures throughout the industry. I then examine community management (CM) roles more specifically, including their geographical location; the qualifications, knowledge and skills sought in job advertisements; and the precariousness and emotional challenges of the work as reported by interviewees. I conclude by reflecting on CM as a new form of virtual work that displays many similarities with other forms of global virtual work, but demands very particular forms of informal knowledge and skills.

The Games industry as cultural and creative industry

I conceptualise the games industry as a cultural industry, and it fits within the widely used, but highly criticised, concept of the creative industry. The industry labels itself as an entertainment software industry or a creative/cultural industry depending on the political and economic necessities of the local context (Kerr, 2013). The industry combines occupational roles from the media, communications, software and information technology industry to develop commodified forms of games and play. Since the first commercial games were released in the early 1970s the industry has grown to become a multi-billion dollar industry with software sales largely in the most affluent western industrialised nations. Software/content production networks are largely located in the

US/Canada, Europe, China and Japan while hardware production networks are involved in shipping minerals and materials from some of the poorest locations in the world to the lowest cost labour production sites (Nichols, 2014). Digital distribution and networked forms of play are increasingly common today and this shift to digital distribution platforms and networks is creating the need for new professional occupational roles like community managers.

Game work can be conceptualised as a subset of broader types of digital work and is a form of work which is directly or indirectly concerned with symbol creation (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). The occupational roles of those who develop games, from high end games to free to play applications, share the characteristics of other cultural workers – from artists, designers and programmers to those working in marketing, community support, production and quality assurance. In addition to these formal paid positions there are new roles generated for users – in everything from content development to community management. For most players these roles have no financial recompense. Some develop services and expertise to sell to other players, such as cheating services, (De Paoli and Kerr, 2010) or create their own online channels on YouTube or Twitch with associated advertising revenue deals. Finally, we have examples of player-workers like gold farmers who harvest rewards in-game to sell on to other players (Nakamura, 2013). All of these are forms of work associated with global games and they highlight the range of paid and unpaid labour, which contributes to the ongoing production of commercial games.

As in other industries, there is a hierarchy of professional occupations in this industry and this hierarchy is related to experience, skillset, location and sex. A recent salary survey by the online industry magazine Gamasutra (2014) give some insights into the North American industry and table 1 summarises the findings in relation to salary and sex. The top three occupations by salary are business and management, audio and programmers. However, the more technical roles of audio, programming and animation are the most dominated by men. Business and management and production saw the highest percentages of females employed, but these percentages remained low. When the data was analysed by location, those located in California were paid a premium. This salary survey did not include CMs as an occupational role. More open ended questions found that

the key challenges noted by respondents were “long work hours, job instability, ... and cultural issues such as sexism” (Gamasutra, 2014: :1).

Table 1: Games Industry Salary Survey, 2014.

Occupational Role	Average Salary US\$	Percentage Male
Business & Management	101,572	79%
Audio	95,682	91%
Programmers & Engineers	93,251	95%
Producers	82,286	78%
Artists & Animators	74,349	91%
Designers	73,864	87%
QA testers	54,833	88%

Source: Gamasutra (2014)

Research conducted in the UK in the same year found that £32,000 (\$46,736.63) was the average developer salary in the UK, and £37,104 (\$56,572.47) was the average globally (Chapple, 2015). Salaries in and near London were the highest in the UK, and studio heads, producers, audio and programmers topped the list with the highest salaries. Academic research in North American and Europe provide more context than these industry surveys and suggest that the industry’s working practices and predominantly male workforce discourages, or in some cases is hostile to female, non-white and minority workers (de Peuter and Dyer-Witthford, 2005; Kerr, 2011; Consalvo, 2011). This lack of workplace diversity is reflected in research on enrolment and participation in domestic game culture, public events and game content and the highly contextual meanings of being a gamer (Thornham, 2008; Shaw, 2012; Taylor et al., 2009). Some online game cultures have been found to have highly gendered, raced and heteronormative cultures (Jenson and de Castell, 2015; Gray, 2012). It is within this context that we must understand the development of community management as an occupation.

Community management and Mobility – Mobile Work and Mobile Workers

Community management (CM) is rarely mentioned in games industry reports or policy documents that detail the technology and creative roles available in the games industry. It is also not a recognised area of professional or academic study in most third level institutions. In many industry led surveys the role remains invisible and it only came to the attention of this author when conducting her own survey of the games industry in Ireland in 2009 (Kerr and Cawley, 2012). In that survey we found that much of the employment in the games industry in Ireland was in CM and support functions, rather than in core content creation and programming roles. In addition, many of these jobs had been offshored from companies in North American or Asia. We found that while the employment of women in CM was low (at below 15%), it was higher than in other occupational areas in the Irish games industry. Further, this area employed a significant number of mobile migrant workers who were citizens of Germany, the UK and countries in Eastern Europe. The key reasons identified by respondents for companies to locate CM roles in Ireland were a combination of local favourable financial and tax incentives, and European labour mobility.

In the past few years the author has continued to explore these roles and has collaborated with colleagues to examine the language used in 75 international job advertisements for CMs in the top 15 game companies by revenue globally, (Kerr and Kelleher, 2015). We sourced our CM advertisements from English language industry websites and company websites. The sample includes including Activision-Blizzard, Riot, Electronic Arts, Bioware, Zenimax, Square Enix and Sony, and developing Asian companies moving into North American and European markets like Webzen. In addition, I conducted interviews with fifteen games industry employees, including six CMs in Ireland. I recruited the CMs through local gatekeepers and to date I have interviewed three men and three women, aged from 20-39 years.

When we analysed our sample of CM job advertisements a clear spatial pattern emerged. This is despite the fact that these positions are in an unregulated industry and in occupations that are not subject to preferential visa programmes. In our sample CM positions were available across 13

countries and in major cities including San Francisco, Berlin, Helsinki, Dublin, Bucharest, Mosco, Seoul and Taipei. This pattern of spatialisation deviates from commercial content moderation (CCM) work in other digital media industries which is often outsourced to low cost labour locations like the Philippines and Morocco. In our sample many of the locations had relatively high costs of living. The CM jobs in games were not locating purely on the basis of labour cost or cost of living, but rather a combination of state financial supports, proximity to market and proximity, or access to, a suitably skilled labour force were combining to shape where they are locating.

The patterns that emerge in the digital games industry point to highly regionalised transnational game markets structured by geo-linguistic boundaries. English is the lingua franca of the industry, and in many multinational companies the only language in common between workers. Companies like Activision-Blizzard advertise for positions in North America, Europe and Asia, while Riot is mostly advertising in North and South America, and Europe. Interviews confirmed that community managers often moved country to work with a particular company and on a particular game – regardless of where the company was located. Mobility is thus a key feature of this industry at a number of levels. Not only are community management jobs offshored or outsourced, but the workers must also be mobile. Most of the CMs interviewed were in relationships, but only one had children or other caring responsibilities. As we will shortly see, the locational preferences of companies and the skills that they required, serve to reinforce the necessity for worker mobility.

The Recruitment of Community and Passion

‘Blizzard Entertainment is seeking a manager passionate about the gaming industry, player communities, communication, and social media. They will oversee the design and execution of community engagement programs, manage a team focused on the player community, and lead the editorial direction of content to be published via our social media outlets, blogs, and forums.’ [Activision-Blizzard, California, USA].

The excerpt above gives an example of the language used in the CM advertisements and an analysis of our corpus of advertisements revealed some clear patterns in language use. Firstly, the most prevalent term across all the ads was community. This occurred 800 times, much more frequently than the next four most frequent terms including social (263), player (252), games (243), team (213)

and experience (203). In addition to co-located instances with management, advertisements mentioned working with the player community, the game community and community volunteers as well as driving community engagement. Community brings with it a range of positive connotations about group identity and group knowledge even if it is not comparable to traditional concepts of community. Instead its use serves to illustrate forms of ‘virtual togetherness’ (Bakardjieva, 2003) and alternative spaces in which to build forms of social capital (Steinkuehler and Williams, 2006).

Figure 1 Tag Cloud based on frequency of words across all advertisements



The term ‘social’ is often co-located with ‘social media’ pointing to the importance of digital tools. Both ‘online communities’ and ‘social media’ point to the commodification and mediation of social relationships and the appropriation of the positive values usually associated with these terms. These also connect to the next most frequent term, ‘team’. So sociability is deployed both through digital forms of communication as well as in face to face situations with fellow employees, and intermittently at conventions where community managers meet face to face with players. These community management advertisements appear to signal a much broader role than content moderation or customer support.

Analysing the skills required for these positions raised another clear pattern with both cultural and gaming knowledge emerging as core skills. In relation to ‘skills’ the most frequently used terms were passion (66), gaming knowledge (50), communication skills (34) and English (32). When we looked at ‘other skills’ in more detail one term stood out – passion. This term occurs with much greater frequency than communication skills or indeed language skills. Recent research has noted the relationship between passion and work in the creative industries and how passion is sometimes used to justify a range of problematic working conditions (McRobbie, 2010). It also points to the increasingly blurred boundary between free labour done during one’s leisure time and new forms of work. In online games highly skilled and ranked players can be conceived of as co-producers of the game experience and players with informal knowledge, reputation and capital in particular games are valued by producers. In these job advertisements passion is presented as a core skill, a requirement to work in these positions, while important data about salary, benefits and working conditions are often absent. Passion for a particular game hails gamers with a specific contextual identity, as Shaw (2013) has argued.

Figure 2 Tag Cloud of frequency of other skills



Previous work has extended the conceptualisation of cultural capital to include what might be called gaming capital (Consalvo, 2007), and these advertisements seem to signal that they are offering an

opportunity for fans and others to cash in their gaming capital. It is an opportunity for those who have been engaged in unpaid gaming labour, or playbour (Kücklich, 2005), to become involved in waged emotional and creative labour. Previous time and financial investment in gameplay, game production and game knowledge can yield paid employment. Interviewees spoke of the potential suitability for this type of work of extremely active fans who were prolific YouTubers with lots of followers. Here we can draw upon the conceptualisation of different forms of capital by Bourdieu (1994), in particular his conceptualisation of cultural capital. Nohl et al. (2014) use the term 'cultural credit' to refer to the recognition given by employers to the cultural capital possessed by those on the threshold of employment, and which can then be turned into economic capital when recognised and/or rewarded in the labour market.

Passion as an embodied form of cultural capital can also be deployed in work to demonstrate commitment to both game players and employers. Passion was discussed in our face-to-face interviews and interviewees talked about fostering the passion of game players and working in the games industry because they were passionate about games. If absent however, or perceived to be absent, it clearly excludes those who do not see themselves as passionate game players. What becomes clear therefore is that experience in community management in informal or formal settings, and domain knowledge of games generally, or of the particular game to be supported more specifically, is clearly signalled as important in these job advertisements. Informal qualifications, knowledge and competencies are sought in these job advertisements. However this means that if a gameworld is gendered, or already hostile to diversity, this will limit the available pool of passionate players available for recruitment and reinforce existing gendered cultures. It also means that passionate players are less likely to critique in-game culture.

All our interviewees had third level qualifications from their country of origin and were examples of well-educated migrants working in a high tech industry. However, our analysis of job advertisements and our interviews found that this work did not rely upon formalised knowledge. Interviewees

suggested that formal qualifications were becoming less important and that forms of tacit, informal and domain specific knowledge were more important. Most of these competencies required cultural socialisation, and personal time and monetary investment in game playing. Interviewees explained that working in one's native language meant that a worker could exploit tacit knowledge to work fast and understand the cultural nuances of context specific communications for particular language markets.

Precarity and Flexibility

Emerging from autonomist Marxist literature the concept of *precarité*, or precariousness, is one way of conceptualising the conditions of labour under post-fordist production regimes. The concept highlights new forms of working relations across the economy more generally and new forms of 'flexibility' in working arrangements including seasonal, temporary, sub-contract, freelance and flexible working arrangements. It is useful both as a term which highlights the existence and normalisation of a certain set of working practices, and in addition new forms of struggle and solidarity across sectors and classes (Gill and Pratt, 2008). For O'Carroll (2015) there are three key aspects of flexibility in contemporary forms of work: flexible working time/hours, the flexible organisation of working time, and flexible careers and contracts. For her, contemporary work, particularly in the high tech industries, is characterised by its unpredictability and uncertainty along these three dimensions.

Certainly we found examples of flexible work in our research to date. While interviewees spoke of working a 'normal' working week, it became evident in our attempts to organise meetings and our eventual conversations that what constituted normal was very varied. We have found examples of flexibility in terms of working hours (working beyond the standard European or Irish working week, 'crunch' periods of extremely long working hours including pre and post product launches, server updates and service updates) and the organisation of working time (working evenings, weekends,

shifts, being 'on-call'). Many of my interviewees were working for publishers that were based either in North America or in Asia and as such staff had to schedule key meetings around the working day in those countries – either eight hours ahead or behind Ireland. Christmas is a peak time for the games industry and community managers are usually working long hours at this time of year. Crunch periods can last for months, in some cases up to six months. Working hours in pre and post launch can reach over 80 hours per week. Again working hours tended to vary by company, time of year and service lifecycle.

So usually at Christmas we don't get to spend our holidays, so the biggest time of the year for game developers is definitely the Christmas market. So from September on don't expect too much to be at home. (Int. 15, male, aged 39)

Employment contracts are harder to assess and interviewees were reluctant to discuss them, but in general interviewees told us that they were hired on permanent contracts. However, their employment biographies involved multiple projects, in multiple countries and in multiple companies despite the relatively short duration of their careers. Some of their moves were by choice, but many were due to buy-outs, redundancy or service closures. Interviewees spoke about company restructuring by project, region and market; game community closures and company closures. Thus a permanent contract is no guarantee of stability. In the Irish context these jobs are hailed by industrial development agencies as high tech jobs in a high technology industry but little attention is paid to the quality and longevity of the jobs. Newspaper reports would suggest that outsourced community management work through agencies have very precarious contracts that can be terminated with little notice (Cunningham, 2014).

There are few international recruitment media for community management jobs and this proved a challenge methodologically for this project. It became clear in the face to face interviews that recruitment can be quite informal and when employees lost a job they often relied on informal social networks to seek further employment. Many interviewees were part of closed *Linked in*

groups online and in some of the major cities like London there were informal meet ups and soccer games to connect with other community managers. However, an ability to network in the evenings and to play sports are key to participating in these informal networks. None of my interviewees were part of a formal representative organisation, union or group and thus virtual and informal networks were crucial to finding out about further employment opportunities. They were not linked into worker alliances either within their own sector, or with other sectors. Thus if new occupational roles like community management are recruiting from existing gaming subcultures, placing a premium on passion for games and gaming knowledge, and relying on informal socialisation and networking, it is likely that these will reinforce rather than challenge existing workforce patterns.

Despite the flexibility demanded in working hours and the organisation of work, financial remuneration for community managers and related positions is on the lower end of the industry scale. The latest UK based industry survey in 2015 found that the average salary in their games industry had dropped to £29,000 although the average community manager salary had increased to £24,250, which at the time of writing converts to €33,525 and is somewhat higher than in Ireland. This survey also noted a salary gap between males and females of almost £6,000. Only one of the 75 job advertisements analysed gave details on salary. Similarly most interviewees were unwilling to talk about their salary. Those who were willing to discuss salary suggested that entry level salaries in Ireland are relatively low at €20-25,000, despite the relatively high cost of living in Dublin. Four advertisements listed benefits. These benefits did not include share capital or bonuses, as other occupational categories in this industry can avail of, but rather health insurance, massages and laundry.

Levels of pay would suggest that there is still competition for these positions and that there is a reserve pool of labour from across Europe. Indeed, some companies were known for their lengthy and exhaustive interview process. Online posts note that the interview process for CMs in Riot can take up to four weeks to recruit entry level “rioters”. Interviewees collaborated this saying the

company had a brand of recruiting that was becoming famous in the industry. When pressed for more details they said the company was looking for the right "aptitude" and "attitude" and that you had to love the particular game you would be working on (Int. 12, male, age 33). For other companies one had to be a "cool" person who could write and speak in the necessary languages and help to build a cool online social atmosphere. One's personality seemed key.

A community manager is someone who nurtures collective passion, I think. So the way you do that is not by, say, having ego issues and thinking you're some kind of rock star. The way you do that is by being the kind of guy who is going to showcase other people and who's going to help build a social atmosphere that is really cool ... You are someone who is going to create an environment that is going to make people feel good about their passion, about what they do that's linked to that passion ... So you need the right personality for this. (Int. 9, Male, aged 33)

These roles are poorly defined and rapidly changing. Performance management and progression is based on quantity of outputs but as some interviewees noted this was not very satisfactory and said nothing of the quality of the outputs or the impact on the community. In some companies CMs reported into a marketing manager, in other companies it was direct into the CEO. Senior CMs were given more management responsibility, more meetings and more reporting. Their salaries increased but again were on the lower end of the industry scale. Most could not talk about the projects, games or scale of the communities they were working with for contractual reasons. Given the requirements for linguistic and cultural competencies, an organisation of production that requires mobility, the relatively low levels of pay, the atypical hours, and the insecurity one might ask, why do these workers work in this industry?

Play and Emotional Labour

Despite the requirement for passion and the precarious nature of these positions it is clear that for my interviewees they mostly enjoyed working as a community manager and for some it was their

'dream' job. Most had been game players before they entered the industry and some described themselves as gamers who went home in the evenings and played games. Dealing directly with players, solving issues, advocating on behalf of players and writing meant that for interviewees this was seen both as a creative job. A lot of their work involved written online interactions and CMs developed different writing styles. Most of this work is mediated by computer networks but sometimes companies organised conventions so that CMs get to meet players face to face. While interviewees admitted their job could be stressful, they also felt it was much better than many other types of jobs. They said it was a fun job where you could speak about games all day to other people who possessed the same gaming knowledge. For some, the more corporate and profit driven companies appeared to lose this sense of fun.

Q – would you say that this is a good job?

A – Its' fantastic, are you kidding me? Do you know what people do for a living in general?

They work in cafes and like restaurants and they work in, your know, banks and consulting firms where people take a serious face to make you feel unworthy because you don't have a tie.

Q – What makes it a good job?

A – Being paid to hang out with people!... It is a very social job. (Int, 9, male, aged 33)

I get to work with videogames so that is a lot. That is something I really like. (Int. 14, male, aged 39)

Some companies tried to enforce socialising outside work and organised team bonding events, which some interviewees resented, but in other companies more organic socialising seemed to take place. Given that most CMs work in teams, and these teams include workers from different language and cultural backgrounds, interviewees spoke of frequent cultural celebrations and informal socialising in the evenings. Given that many of these staff had moved country to work in these companies it is hard to say to what degree having a social life depending on socialising with work colleagues. In addition, given that recruitment is relatively informal and often based on word of mouth, there may also be a degree of compulsion to network at work here.

Our markets are operated mainly by native speakers. We have German CMs, Italian, French and so on. In relation to this, we all come from different backgrounds. I think it spices up our office life – cultural celebrations, traditional dishes, nights out and above all friendships. Not only do we work together, but also we spend our free time together. (Int. 13, female, aged 30)

At the same time working as a community manager meant the performance of ‘emotional labour’. Defined by Arlie Hochschild (1983) as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display”, one can extend this to the performance of identity and personality online in the virtual workplace (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: :162). CMs frequently experienced both positive and negative emotions in their online workplace and a key aspect of the job is to manage their reactions and feelings. However, given that their role is mostly to engage with queries, complaints and disruptive behaviour much of this work involves directly engaging with negative emotions while managing one’s own emotional distance.

When senior managers and job advertisements seek the right personality it was initially unclear what they are speaking about. When prompted to explain, interviewees noted that CMs had to not take the behaviour and language of game players on forums or other social media channels too seriously. The most prevalent negative behaviours encountered online were racism, sexism and homophobia but interviewees also spoke about the need to deal with paedophilia, gold farming and technical exploits/hacking. Their role was to create a safe space for other game players and the language of policing came up on more than one occasion. If they could not manage “toxic” behaviours through direct written communication they then had to resort to temporary or permanent bans which could lead to more unpleasant feedback. In such a context performing a distinct online persona was important and part of this was both masking one’s own identity and carefully choosing one’s nickname, writing and communication style.

I think that personality matters a lot. As I said, there are people who prefer to be the bad cop or they prefer to be the friend. (Int. 10, female, age 28)

I don't think there is a girls or boys are more fit for the job, they both can do it if they have a thick skin again, they shouldn't take things personally (Int. 11, male, age 30)

While this was a position where both males and females worked, it was clear that gender based hostility was a feature. Only the female interviewees mentioned gender related player feedback and thus we see that the gameworld was experienced differently by male and female workers. For the female staff gaming worlds can be hostile environments in a particular way. This varied with the degree to which the game itself was a hard core game or a more casual type game. This was not always a CM versus player issue as in some gameworlds players assist in the governance of the game world (Kerr et al., 2014). The interviewee below talked about everybody having a different personality online.

Q – Do you try to choose a non-gendered nickname?

A – At the beginning I did, but now I'm using always the same nickname and no, I don't see the reason of doing it. If they don't respect me then there is an issue, and it's their issue, not mine. (Int. 10, female, age 28)

While my interviewees largely presented a positive picture of their job, and were attracted to their jobs given their prior knowledge of games and gameplaying cultures, they also had to manage the collective emotions of their player communities and their own emotions on a daily basis. Diverse identities, particularly those related to gender, sexuality and race, were targets for hostility in some games and it is unclear if these workers have adequate tools and resources to manage this aspect of their work. The right personality is clearly a euphemism for an ability to deal with hostile and negative emotions without taking things too personally and an ability to perform an alternative self in these mediated spaces. Workers rely in many cases on commercial social media applications like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. to perform their workplace personalities and thus their online presence is fractured and shaped by the affordances offered on these platforms.

Conclusion

Community management is a new occupational role that is largely invisible but based on my research can be classified as cultural/creative and emotional work. It can be conceptualised as a secondary form of creative production and a new form of intermediary occupation between users and symbol creators. It is also related to digital marketing and sales and thus is clearly an important function in the success of any online service.

Despite the optimistic claims of early internet scholars that the internet provided a space for playful and empowered engagement with, and performance of, identity, what we see emerging here is that both player and worker identities are being shaped by pre-existing gender structures and cultures. This occupational role, and the wider industry in which it is based, is a relatively chilly one for non-normative game players. Given the gendered nature of public and private game cultures and the upstream gendered division of labour in core content roles, female, non-white and trans CMs face particular challenges. In my research to date I have identified both informal and more formalised mechanisms of exclusion at work in recruitment. This works firstly, through the requirement for workers to be mobile; secondly, through the primacy given in recruitment practices to prior games experience and informal knowledge; thirdly, through the flexible contracts and largely invisible work conducted by these workers and, fourthly, in the requirement for workers to manage the negative emotions they encounter in the virtual workplaces and in some cases disguise their identity. These factors operate to reinforce, replicate and reproduce existing divisions of labour and norms in the wider games industry and in some game cultures.

While those employed in the area are largely positive about their role, they all give numerous instances of negative encounters and the need to emotionally control ones engagement with players in the online environment. While people work in small language teams, it would appear that the work is highly challenging and the experiences largely individualised. Our female interviewees encountered direct harassment, but all interviewees discussed having to develop procedures to deal

with the online harassment of others. The work of community managers cannot be separated from the technical environment and users that they directly engage with but similarly they cannot be separated from the type of game that they are working on and the in-game culture.

Even if these workers wanted to contest their offline and online workplace cultures, their position in the production chain is, in the main, relatively disempowered and precarious. They are amongst the lowest paid in the games industry and often this work is outsourced to near to market locations and at a remove from the production team. They work long hours, often on shift, to service a 24 hour player community. While they see this work as fun, social and creative they have often moved country to work in these jobs and are thus deprived both of formal and informal support. In the workplace contractual conditions and the project based nature of the industry mean that there is much instability, disruption and uncertainty, and this means that employees tended to be young, mobile and without caring responsibilities. While there appear to be more women working in community management than in some other areas of the games industry, it is clear that mediation does not protect them from the more negative aspects of this role. If there is to be greater worker diversity in community management, and in the games industry more generally, more action is required around the recruitment, visibility and rights of workers in their workplace environment, both virtual and real.

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