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**Wandering the World without Leaving Your Chair:  
Crossing Borders Through eSports**

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in  
International Studies.

By

Caitlin Robertson

Under the mentorship of Dr. Darin H. Van Tassell.

**ABSTRACT**

There is a deafening roar as a point is scored. Millions of people from all over the world watch their teams with bated breaths. This is a scene that any sports fan might recognize. As the world is getting increasingly more globalized and interconnected technology is making it easier than ever to connect to one another across borders. In my research I will be looking at how the emerging medium of eSports is becoming a way for players all around the world to connect through a competition which is easily accessible to all. I will be focusing on an online game called *League of Legends*. In this paper I tell the story of six common *league of Legends* players. Their stories show that there are international relations through *League of Legends*, and that there is a “nation” that is created by the people who play this game.

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
Literature Review	5
What is <i>League of Legends</i> ?	7
The Ranking System	10
eSports and <i>League of Legends</i>	12
The Voices of the Players	14
Common Experience	20
An International Bond	22
Conclusion	24
Works Cited	26
Appendix	28

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## Introduction

“That gank was amazing,” Jevone exclaimed, “I can’t believe how much that jungle was roaming, and that juke was so good!”<sup>1</sup> To any *League of Legends* player, this sentence is easy to understand, but other non-players may share the same sentiment as Jevone’s classmate, “Are you even speaking English?” As the world continues to grow smaller through technology, many new mediums of communication and interaction are emerging. Most of the general forms of communication lie with social media such as Facebook, or international calling aids like Skype. However, these social media hubs are not the only way people interact through technology. A new medium has been on the rise: eSports. Massive tournaments are held for these eSports, and many loyal fans are willing to fly halfway around the world in order to attend them. These events are, at their core, extremely international, and they are growing rapidly.

For my research I will be looking at the online game *League of Legends*. My intentions for this paper are twofold. First, I will ascertain whether or not common players have interactions with people from other countries through *League of Legends*, and I will seek to determine how meaningful those interactions are. Second, I wish to look into the existence of a *League of Legends* community. *League of Legends* is an international eSport, and, in a lot of cases, this means that its players are separated by vast distances. The players congregate for the major tournaments, but after the major events, what is there to connect them? In this paper I redefine nationalism in the context of this new medium. There is a new nation, the *League of Legends* nation.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an excerpt from an interview I conducted with Jevone Lawrence via Skype. For the full interview please refer to the appendix.

## Literature Review

In order to understand the importance of eSports, it is first important to understand how they relate to more conventional sports. What is sport? According to Claus Tiedemann, the definition of a sport is “a cultural field of activity in which human beings voluntarily go into a relation to other people with the conscious intention to develop their abilities and accomplishments-particularly in the area of skilled motion-and to compare themselves with these other people according to rules put self or adopted without damaging them or themselves deliberately.”<sup>2</sup>



*Figure 1: Professional League team SamsungWhite. Photo credit to OGNGlobal*

Curiously, eSports can already be defined within this structure. However, the main difference between sports and eSports is also made apparent by this definition; the existence of skilled motion. In eSports the need for physicality is relatively nonexistent. This lack of physical motion causes many people to debate about whether or not eSports

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<sup>2</sup> Tiedemann, Claus. "Sport (and Culture of Human Motion) for Historians. An Approach to Precise the Central Term(s)."

can really be considered a “sport”. However, this lack of physical motion is where the differences end. These eSport events, and even the games themselves, are designed in a way that is very reminiscent of sports. Both sports and eSports provide an environment for players to show their skill with the medium, while providing heated entertainment for their viewers.<sup>3</sup> Similarly there are also “professional” players in eSports. Taylor discusses the existence of these pro-gamers, especially in regards to South Korea. These players tend to have a very large fan-base, and in some cases it is comparable to that of sports stars. Along with the fan-base, these pros often have sponsorship from major companies.<sup>4</sup>

In regular sports, there is a lot of research in regards to the effect that sports have on strengthening the nationalism that exists in countries. This is an approach Goig uses while exploring Spanish football.<sup>5</sup> This approach can also be viewed when looking at a spread of German pride after their most recent world cup victory. While this is true, I argue that this sense of nationalism also exists between eSport players regardless of their country of origin. This *League of Legends* nation exists outside of borders. In international studies a nation can exist regardless of borders. The main characteristics of a nation are: race, ethnicity, language, and culture. In international sports there is definitely a common experience that they share, but there is also a global language of sport that is shared by both the players and the fans.

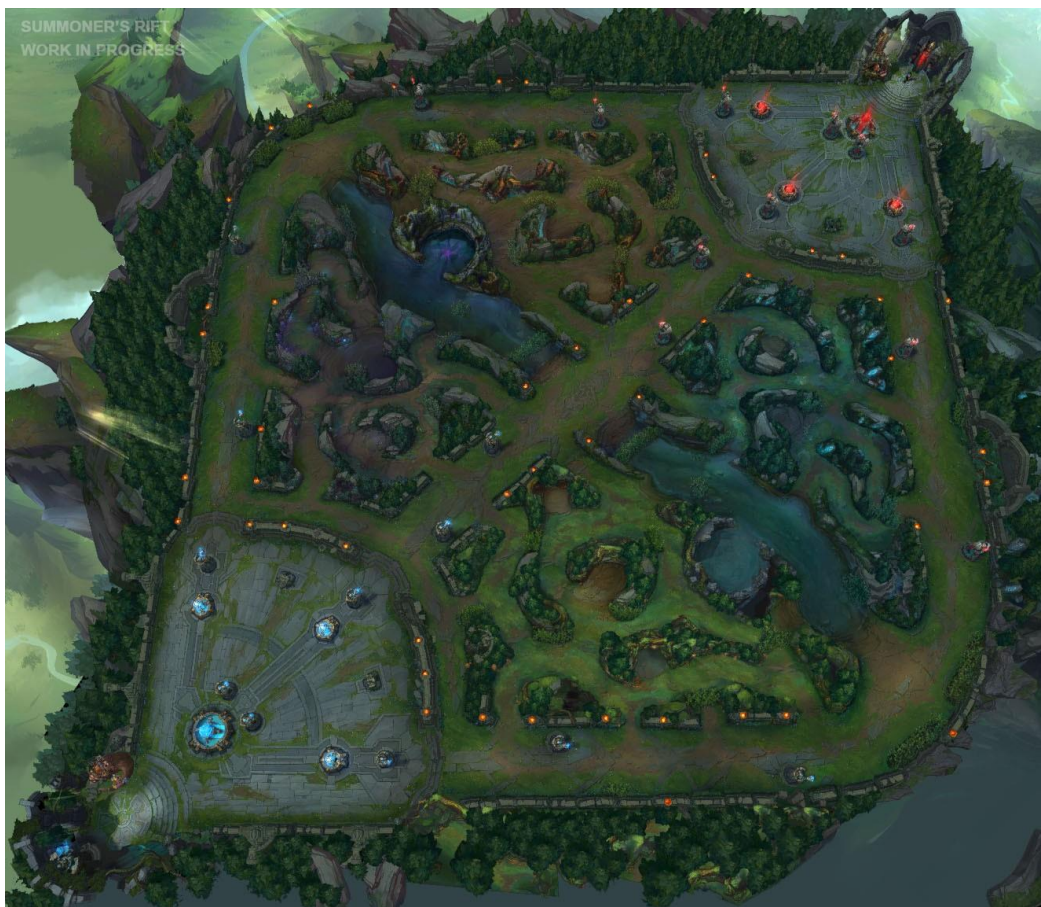
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<sup>3</sup> Hewitt, Elliot. "Will ESports Ever Become Widely Accepted as Official Sports and How Will They Affect the Way We Entertain Ourselves If They Do?"

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, T.L. Raising The Stakes: E-Sports and The Professionalization of Computer Gaming.

<sup>5</sup> For more information see: Goig, Ramón Llopis. "Identity, Nation-State And Football In Spain. The Evolution Of Nationalist Feelings In Spanish Football."

## What is League of Legends?



*Figure 2: The current arena in which 5v5 League of Legends is played. Photo Credit to Riot Games*

League of Legends is one of the most popular videogames in the world. In 2011 it was recorded that the game was played by over tens of millions of players for more than one billion hours each month.<sup>6</sup> It is a free online game made by the company Riot Games.<sup>7</sup> In this game two teams of five players face off against each other. The goal for both teams is to battle their way into the base of the opposing team. In order to attain this goal, they have to work together with their teammates in order to take objectives. There are three main “lanes” where the majority of the play takes place, and in each lane there

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<sup>6</sup> Ferrari, Simon. “From Generative to Conventional Play: MOBA and League of Legends.”

<sup>7</sup> The information in this section can be found on the League of Legends Website. (Riot, Games. “New Players Guide.” League of Legends.)



are turrets that deal damage to enemy players while also serving as protectors of the base. The three lanes are referred to by their positions on the map: top lane, bottom lane, and mid lane. Aside from these three lanes, the other areas of the map where gameplay takes place are the two team bases, the river, and the jungle. The two team bases are on opposite corners of the map from each other: linked by the lanes and jungle. The jungle is the area on either side of the three main lanes, and the river runs diagonally through the map connecting the three lanes. Each part of the map is important to gameplay.



*Figure 3: Minions spawning at the beginning of the game. Screenshot taken by Caitlin Robertson*

For each of these lanes, there are specific positions that are filled by each of the five players. In order to fill these positions, players pick different champions at the start of the game; the champion they choose decides what position they play. Sometimes these positions vary based on what each player wants to do, but in most games they

default to five main positions<sup>8</sup>: Attack Damage Carry (ADC), Support, Mid laner, Top laner, and Jungler. The ADC and support on both teams go bottom lane. The ADC is a ranged character who deals a lot of damage, but has low defense. The job of the ADC is to obtain more power by farming. Farming is the act of gaining experience and gold, which comes from the minions. The minions spawn in waves in each respective base at the beginning of the game. The minions travel straight down each lane until they hit the opposing minion wave. They then attack each other until the opposing minion wave is gone. Each player can use these minions to push the lane in order to get closer to the enemy base.



*Figure 4: Opposing minions clash in mid lane. Screenshot taken by Caitlin Robertson*

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<sup>8</sup> The following Position summaries taken from an interview I conducted with Sam. For the full interview please refer to the appendix.

The job of the support is to ensure the livelihood of the ADC. They are, for all intents and purposes, the ADC's bodyguard. The Mid, or middle lander, is the character who goes to the center lane of the map. In contrast to the "lane" players, the Jungler wanders throughout the map. They begin the game in the jungle to build strength, much like the other characters do in regards to lanes. When they build up more strength they wander through the lanes to help their allies. In each game the players do their best to build up strength in order to destroy the base of the opposing team.

All of the teams in *League of Legends* can consist of any combination of strangers and friends. Playing Solo means that you are playing a team game with four complete strangers. There are servers, provided by Riot games, which host the games that are played. These servers are divided into different regions, but it is possible to change servers and log into any region. Changing servers is something that is often done when the servers in a particular region are broken, or when people want to play with friends from other countries. Because of this ability to switch servers, it is possible to play with people from all around the world.

### **The Ranking System**

In *League of Legends* there is a game type called "ranked mode."<sup>9</sup> In ranked mode, players can be ranked in order to play against others of their own strength. When the player first plays ranked, they must first play ten placement matches. These matches determine their starting rank for the season. The starting rank is determined both by how many placement matches they won, and their ranking from the previous season. After the

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<sup>9</sup>For more information see ("Ranked Leagues") <<http://na.leagueoflegends.com/en/competitive/ranked-leagues>>.

player is put at their starting rank, they can then play more games to advance. There are six level groupings called Tiers. From highest to lowest the Tiers are: Challenger, Diamond, Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze. Each of these Tiers, with the exception of



Figure 5: The different tiers and divisions in the ranked league system

challenger, are further broken down into individual divisions. These divisions are numbered with roman numerals 1-5 with 1 being the highest, and 5 being the bottom of the division. When a player reaches the top of the division by winning ranked games they have the opportunity for advancement. They must get 100 “league points” in their division for this to occur. For example: if a player that is ranked in Bronze II gains the necessary points the player will trigger the promotional matches needed to rise up in division from Bronze II to Bronze I. The player will have to win a best-of-three division



series to move up. However, the promotion process would occur a little differently if the player was in Bronze I. For a tier promotion the player must play best-of-five promotion matches. This system is how teams and players get into the upper level tournaments.

### **eSports and League of Legends**

There is a deafening roar as a point is scored. Millions of people from all over the world watch the match with bated breaths, with each person willing their favorite team to win. When thinking of video games this is not the first image that comes to mind, but this was indeed the scene at the 2014 *League of Legends* world championships. It was



*Figure 6: The stadium during the 2014 championship. Photo Credit: Riot Games*

reported that 27 million people watched the 2014 *League of Legends* World Championships. This number is smaller than the 32 million who watched the championships in 2013, but the number of people viewing at one time rose from 8.7 million in 2013, to 11.2 million in 2014. While this number may seem a paltry sum when compared to events such as the World Series, which averages 13.2 million viewers each

day, it is a number that boosted it to be *the most watched eSports event of 2014*.<sup>10</sup> There is an upward trend for eSports that is staggering. It's not just the number of people in this event that is impressive; the makeup of the teams and venues shed a new light on this competition that speaks to international connectedness.

There were sixteen teams total that participated in the Season four championships. Each of these teams hailed from a different corner of the world. North America, China, Europe, and Korea each had three teams that participated. Two of the teams hailed from Brazil, and the other three teams came from Taiwan, South East Asia, and Turkey.<sup>11</sup> The teams themselves are not only international because of where they are based, but also because of their membership. Each team is made up of members from their region, but in a lot of these cases, the team composition includes a lot of different countries. This difference in nationalities is especially true for the European Team Alliance. Alliance is a team that is composed of members from many different countries in the European Union. These teams that compete in these events are very similar to sports stars in the United States. They have both sponsorship and fans. In some cases, the fan base of pro-leaguers outshine that of their conventional sport counterparts.

This tournament is extremely international in nature. It is not only the teams themselves but also the venues that encompass international elements. Riot Games hosted the 2014 Championships in Singapore, Taipei, and South Korea.<sup>12</sup> In the previous season

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<sup>10</sup> Lingle, Samuel. "27 Million People Watched the League of Legends World Championships."

<sup>11</sup> Curry, David. "League of Legends: Season 4 Worlds' Teams."

<sup>12</sup> Curry, David. "League of Legends: Season 4 Worlds' Teams."

the tournament was held at the Staples Center in California, and next year the Championship is going to be held in various locations in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Voices of the Players**

In order to find out more about the experience regular players have with *League of Legends* I interviewed six players. All of the players reported playing with people from other countries, many of the players expressed being close to a “community” in *League of Legends*, and all identified common terms that they believed non-players wouldn’t be able to comprehend. These players are: David, Sam, Micah, Jevone, Stephen, and Chris. These are their stories.

#### **David<sup>14</sup>**

David is not your average *League of Legends* player. He may be ranked in upper silver, but he is always analyzing his matches in an attempt to figure out how he can improve. He has been playing this game for three years.

#### ***Friends Near and Far***

David and his friend live very far away from each other. She is in England, while he is in the United States. They wanted to find something that would allow them to nourish their friendship over such a long distance. That something was *League of Legends*. While they didn’t meet through the game itself, it was very important to their friendship. David had already known how to play the game. She learned how to play it in

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<sup>13</sup> Staff. "League of Legends Season 3 World Championships to Be Held at Staples Center." Gera, Emily. "League of Legends World Championships Will Be Held in Europe This Year."

<sup>14</sup> Based on my interview with David. The full transcription can be found in the appendix.

order to interact with him. For David, League is a tool he uses to foster international friendships.

### *A competition for all*

As a sociology major, *League of Legends* holds a particular interest for David. The ranked system provides an interesting dynamic for normal players. Since it is the same system that allows the pros to become pros, even “regular” players can become a part of the greats. He defines *League of Legends* as an “easily accessible competition for all”. It is a competition that is accessible to anyone regardless of the physical fitness. All that is needed is a computer and an internet connection.

### **Sam<sup>15</sup>**

Sam often plays *League of Legends* in her free time. It is one of her favorite games. Unlike most of the other interviewees, Sam doesn’t play ranked. She feels like there is too much pressure to succeed, which makes it less fun for her. She has identified that she doesn’t feel as close to the community as a whole due to her lack of ranked play, but she does feel connected in a smaller scale. In each game she feels connected to the people she is working with.

### *Slang*

Same believes that there are many words in the “Language” of *League of Legends*. She refers to these as slang. She identifies the different positions, and strategic terms. She discusses at length the main points of her favorite position to play, the support. It is the job of the support to protect the ADC. This makes the support very important.

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<sup>15</sup> Based on my interview with Sam. The full transcription can be found in the appendix.



Sam also brought up the differences between Laning and Teaming up. Laning is the early phase in the game where all of the players are separate. Teaming up is the late phase of the game where all the players, who have been gaining power separately all game, come together in order to defeat the other team.

### **Micah<sup>16</sup>**

Micah has played this game for seven years. He has seen it grow in many ways. He has been ranked in every season of *League of Legends*. His current rank is Silver II. Micah enjoys playing regular games with friends, and he enjoys the challenge ranked play presents to him. He often watches the League Championship Series.

#### ***International Experience***

Unlike many *League of Legends* players, Micah made the decision to change to a different regional server. He went to the European server for a while; there he played with people from many different countries. In order to play on that server he had something to overcome, the language barrier. It made it hard to play at first, but eventually he settled into a system of using pings, the games internal notification system, become a kind of common language. Micah believes that the regional separation of the servers makes it difficult to play with Europeans, or others from countries outside of the North American region difficult.

#### ***A sport?***

Micah believes that professional *League of Legends* counts as a sport. It has all of the same trademarks of one: professional players, giant tournaments, and even a trophy

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<sup>16</sup> Based on my interview with Micah. The full transcription can be found in the appendix.

for the winning team. He feels like the community surrounding *League of Legends* has grown a lot. He feels that, with its current size, it's impossible for everyone to interact with everyone else. It is a lot different from how small it was when he began playing. He says he's watched the tournaments transform from a couple of people in a room with computers to the giant international tournaments of today.

### **Jevone<sup>17</sup>**

Jevone has had a very interesting experience with *League of Legends*. He has been ranked as high as Silver V, but he has also been stuck in the Bronze for quite some time. Bronze division is often referred to as a horrible place where good players get stuck on bad teams and are unable to get out. While this may be true, Jevone has always persevered, and has been able to climb his way into silver. Jevone is active with the game. He plays many matches, especially ranked, in order to get better. He also watches the League Championship Series often, and participates in a fantasy league.

### ***The Language of the Game***

One day Jevone was sitting in class. It was just like any other day, nothing special. His friend walked in, and the two of them started conversing on about a game of *League of Legends* that they had played. After a bit of time passed, the person in front of them turned around with a quizzical expression. After another second he asked if they were speaking English. There are many terms that are specific to this game. It is very similar to other sports this way. It is very difficult for someone who isn't a part of *League of Legends* to understand a conversation between two *League of Legends* players. It is

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<sup>17</sup> Based on my interview with Jevone. The full transcription can be found in the appendix.

similar to a person new to soccer not understanding what off-side means. Jevone noted quite a few words that he thought would be difficult for non-players to understand. A lot of these terms had to do with basic strategy in the game. The idea of lane control is basic information for most players. The act of allowing your minions to push forward, or to let the opposing teams minions push forward is very key to playing the game. There are even more basic basics that most players don't even think about. These basics are the lane positions. It is something that is just understood by most players. Two players go bottom lane, one goes mid, one stays in the jungle, and the remaining player goes top lane. It's just the basics, but someone unfamiliar to the game wouldn't understand that. The lack of knowledge positions is something that is seen in new players quite often.

### ***A Sport?***

Jevone has had experience internationally with *League of Legends*. He fondly recounted a time he got yelled at in French during the course of a game. He has played quite often with people from other countries, and is even friends with some of them. He believes that the international experience of regular games only goes so far. The regional servers hamper this some. In order to play with people from other regions, you have to switch servers. This is something he doesn't do, so he only plays with the internationals who make the choice to switch to his server.

He is very connected to the *League of Legends* community, and expresses his awe at its size. He watches the League Championship series often, but he doesn't think it quite counts as a sport. He believes eSport is a separate term. He is an avid viewer of conventional sports, and he thinks *League of Legends* can't be considered a sport without the movement it implies.

## Stephen<sup>18</sup>

Stephen is one of the highest ranked people I interviewed. He plays *League of Legend* a lot, and is ranked in Gold IV.

### *Bonding*

Stephen has a friend from Canada who he plays with regularly. They have played many games, and talk about *League of Legends* outside of the game. Aside from that Stephen has had experience with people from other countries on his server. He had difficulties understanding them because of the language barrier. Similarly to Micah, Stephen also ended up using pings as a common language.

Interestingly, Stephen brought up a new way the community bonds, through conventions. In some of the larger conventions, such as DragonCon, many players gather and dress up as their favorite characters from the game. They get together and talk about strategy, and other aspects of the game. Sometimes RIOT even makes an appearance, and holds a forum. Stephen believes that this is a very good way to interact with the community as it engenders a lot of common ground. Stephen especially likes being able to meet with the developers through conventions.

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<sup>18</sup> Based on my interview with Stephen. The full transcription can be found in the appendix.

## Chris<sup>19</sup>

Chris is another player who doesn't much care for ranked play. He only plays ranked when in a team setting, and he is ranked in bronze in team ranked.

### *Interactions without borders*

Chris has met many people from different countries through *League of Legends*. He reported to often having people from parts of South America show up on his server. Chris has friends from Canada and the Caribbean that he has met through *League of Legends*. He often enjoys talking about champion builds, and in game tactics with these friends.

Chris is a big proponent of the community in *League of Legends*. He feels very close to the community when he is playing *League of Legends*. He also feels very close to it when he is watching the League championship series with his friends, and talking about the game over skype.

### **Common Experience**

The pro-players in *League of Legends* have a lot of international experience through things such as international competitions, but I wanted to see how or if this "international experience" existed for other players. These players ranged from being unranked at the lowest to gold IV on the higher end of the spectrum. I asked for their ranks both past and present in order to have a tangible measure of their skill and, to some degree, their involvement with the game. Silver is the rank usually awarded to the general

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<sup>19</sup> Based on my interview with Chris. The full transcription can be found in the appendix.

pool of players, and any rank higher than that is considered better than average. The majority of the interviewees have been ranked silver or higher.

When asked about their interactions with foreigners, all of the players reported to having played *League of Legends* with people from countries other than their own. While all of these players agreed that they had interacted with someone internationally while playing this game each person professed to have a different experience. David, Sam, and Chris all reported to having meaningful relations, “I’ve become good friends with a few people I’ve interacted with in different countries, and I’ve gotten to know different cultures and traditions through speaking to them before, during, and after games,” Sam reported.<sup>20</sup> Chris had similar sentiments; in his interview, he mentioned that he greatly enjoyed talking to his friends in Canada and the Caribbean about strategy. Similarly, David mentioned having a friend he played often with in the United Kingdom. He said the game provided a good medium through which to keep in touch, even over such a vast distance. On the other end of that spectrum: Stephen, Jevone and Micah were more lackluster about their experiences. Jevone felt that any international components of the game were somewhat “optional” saying that, “It’s international if you want to do it.” He stated that he prefers not to actively attempt to find people from other countries. In contrast, Micah admitted to switching to the European Servers for a time. Micah and Stephen both conveyed that they had difficulties with the Language barrier that existed in some of their interactions. The language barrier could potentially be a reason that they felt their contact was not as meaningful.

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<sup>20</sup> An excerpt from my interview with Sam. Please see the Appendix for the full interview.

One common recurrence in all of these interviews was the region-based servers. In *League of Legends* the servers are separated into different regional areas. These regions include: North America, Latin America, Brazil, and others. While it is possible to switch to different region servers, it may not be popular. Chris and other interviewees expressed their belief that their interactions with those outside of Northern America were very limited. Chris felt like it was less of a “worldwide” experience. He believes that, because of the regional separation, he only plays with people from, “His corner of the world.”

### **An International bond**

What is a nation? For this research I use Benedict Anderson’s definition of a nation as being an “Imagined Community” He states that it is imagined because it is impossible that all of the members will meet every other member. A nation is a socially constructed community that is created by people who feel they are a part of a certain group.<sup>21</sup> Under the structure of this definition, I theorize that it is precisely this sort of nation exists between the players of *League of Legends*. The players I interviewed all stated that they feel like there is a greater, international community for *League of Legends*. Jevone went as far as to say that, “We have a pretty big community, and it spans the entire world!”<sup>22</sup>

One of the things that unites the *League of Legends* nation is the championship tournament. Players watch and connect through it; some even going as far as to travel the world to experience the event in person. In this regard it is very similar to the more

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<sup>21</sup> Benedict, Anderson. "Introduction." *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*

<sup>22</sup> Quote taken from an interview with Jevone Lawrence. Please refer to the appendix for the full interview.

conventional sports. In many sports, international or otherwise, there is also a creation of a temporary nation. We gather to cheer on the teams that are our favorites, and we feel more connected to the other fans rooting for the same team. This phenomenon can be observed very easily in one place: a university. For example, I am a student at Georgia Southern University. During games all of the fans get very riled up. There are specific sections where the fans cheering on the eagles sit, and a different section for the away team. We take pride in our victories, and mourn our defeats as one entity. In this case the term is defined as exactly what it is because: *We are the Eagle Nation*. The *Eagle Nation* doesn't stop as soon as we leave the football field. It exists in other sports, and even academics. It is not a stretch to say this same phenomenon occurs at other Universities as well.

Another characteristic of many nations is a shared language. I would also argue that the players of *League of Legends* have a shared "language" There are many different terms that exist which are specific to *League of Legends*. In my interviews many of the players related many common words that they believe people would misunderstand, or that they've had experience with people misunderstanding. There were four main categories of words that the players listed: Positions, Lanes, Strategic terms, and other. The positions listed, and the lanes of play were both listed in the introduction. The strategic terms showed up were: Ganking, and lane control; just to name a few. Ganking is the strategy in *League of Legends* where players come together in order to take objectives. Lane control has different meanings, and terms in and of itself. The idea of "pushing a lane", or "stalling a lane" are the opposite ideas where pushing means to advance the minions, and stalling means to stop the advance of the enemy teams



minions.<sup>23</sup> The interviewees mentioned the names of specific characters in the game, the names of items, and the names of abilities as more terms that, when coupled with the game terms, really turn a conversation about *League of Legends* into another language.

### Conclusion

While the regional servers may impede international relations through *League of Legends*, it appears that many people still have interactions across borders through the game. There will always be people like Micah who are willing to go that extra step to have a new experience. It seems that many people are more likely to use the game as a way to interact with international friends; in contrast to meeting them on the game. While this was the case for a lot of my interviewees, Chris mentioned that he had met, and had good interactions with people from different countries, even going so far as to talk often outside of the game. Through my research I have determined that it is very possible for people to have, and keep, meaningful relations across borders through *League of Legends*.

My second question was also answered. What connects many of these *League of Legends* players, regardless of borders, is a sort of nation. It is the kind of nation that may exist more in short flashes, but which exists nonetheless. The “nation of *League of Legends*” is bound together by connections between friends and strangers who are both near and far. These players get brought together for large events where they have the opportunity to form more bonds in the community. Players also share a kind of common

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<sup>23</sup> Information taken from interviews done by Caitlin Robertson. Please refer to the appendix for the full interviews.

“language” that is based on terms and strategies in the game. It is necessary to understand this language to become a part of the nation that is *League of Legends*.

This paper only breaks the surface of this topic. It represents only a few of the voices of *League of Legends* players. For future research, it would be necessary to take more interviews in order to be more representative of the size of the community. It would also greatly improve upon this research if more interviews were taken from people from other countries. What are their experiences with *League of Legends*? Is their experience different from *League of Legends* players in the United States? There are many questions still to be answered.

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## **Appendix**

### **Transcription Summary from David:**

The interviewee did not wish his name to be included in this research. For the purposes of this study he is referred to as David.

David has been playing League of Legends for three years. He is a player who plays ranked League of Legends often. He has been previously ranked with his range being from low Bronze to as high as Silver I. He admitted that he got to the end of the silver I division, but failed the last of his promotional matches. This kept him from being promoted to Gold V.

After being asked about his interactions with people from other countries through the game he stated that he believes that he has played with people from Brazil in the past. He also has a friend who he didn't meet through the game, but that they used the game as a means of communication to further their friendship. This friend lives in England, and she learned to play League in order to interact with him more. He believes that it is a good medium through which to stay connected to friends.

David believes that there is a fairly large Community in League of Legends. He believes it can be defined as, "Huge and vastly growing". He says that while this community is large, and that he often feels close to it; it can also be toxic to itself. He believes the reason for this is because there are people--like in many other online places--who take the anonymity of the game to mean that they can do whatever they want without repercussions. This makes even more sense when you consider the fact that League is a team game where you're expecting a bunch of strangers to come together to

complete a common goal. This means that when things go wrong people can get very accusatory. Riot is always working to make the game a better place for everyone so he believes this will improve. He feels the most connected to this community when he is looking at new champions or discussing new skins or tactics with people. He believes that buying or gifting skins is another way people relate to the community.

When asked about the League Championship Series he expressed that, while he doesn't watch it religiously, he knows a lot of the main players and keeps track of the overall picture. He finds it very interesting because he is a sociology major. He thinks it's crazy to compare the small room the first tournament was held in to the tournaments of today; tens of thousands of people attended the last tournament, which was held in Korea.

There are many different terms that he stated as being central to League. He believes that a lot of these terms are very difficult for non-players to understand. Some of the terms that readily came to mind were all of the abbreviations for various things; for example drag for the strategic objective of Dragon. He said that these kind of abbreviations could seem like speaking a different language even for people who understand their meanings. Some other things that came to mind were the different positions: ADC, Mid, Top, Support, and Jungler. Along with the positions was also the name for their lanes: Top, Mid, Bot, and jungle (Blue and otherwise). A lot of the positions, and the names of the areas on the map are also abbreviated by players. The names of items, the difference between AP and AD (ability power, and attack damage), different tactics and strategies such as invading or ganking were others that he mentioned.

He believes that one of the main reasons that League of Legends has reached such levels of popularity is because it is a game, and contest that is easily accessible to all. It is

something that can be played by anyone with access to a computer and a stable internet connection.

### **Transcription Summary from Sam**

The interviewee did not want her last name to be a part of this study so I'm using only her first name.

Sam is an avid player of League of Legends. She hasn't been playing as long as some of the others I've interviewed, but it is one of her favorite things to do. While she loves playing League she doesn't fancy ranked. She believes that there is too much pressure to succeed, and that that pressure makes the game unenjoyable for her.

She believes that League of Legends is a game that can be used to interact with people from other countries, and she has experience with it. She reveals that, "I've been able to play games with people in other countries." She expounds that, although this is true, she believes it's not entirely worldwide due to the server differences. She believes she's only really played with people in the North American Server. When asked what her interactions with people from other countries were like she replied, "I've become good friends with a few people I've interacted with in different countries, and I've gotten to know different cultures and traditions through speaking to them before, during, and after games."

In regards to the League of Legends community Sam believes that one exists with its own form of slang, strategy, and communication. She doesn't feel like she is a part of the competitive gaming section of the community due to her dislike of ranked play, but

she feels like she is a part of the community when she's playing with strangers working toward a common goal. Even if that goal is just the defeat of the opposing team.

As she stated earlier on in the interview, Sam believes that there is a lot of slang that unites the people in the community. Pinging, the idea of warning players of danger or objectives on the mini-map, is one term she brings up. Another is the idea of Ganking, which she explains is a strategy involving a surprise attack by a teammate. She also brings up the different strategic positions, and defines them. ADC or "Attack Damage Carry" is a ranged character who deals a lot of damage, but has low defense. Mid is a character who goes to the center lane of the map. Jungler is a character who mostly stays in the forested area of the map, not going into the lanes until later on. Support is a character who helps keep the ADC alive while also acting as a bodyguard. Top is the character who goes to the top lane of the map. Past the positions she also goes on to define three other main ideas in League. The idea of Laning phase vs. teaming up. These are two strategies for early game and late game respectively. The former is the idea of staying in your lane during early game in order to gain individual strength, and the latter is the tactic of the entire team grouping to overpower opponents. Farming is the idea of getting as much experience, and gold as possible by focusing on defeating minions. These minions are characters that appear consistently, and are controlled by a fixed computer code. The final term she had was Bots- short for robots, who are characters with set patterns who are controlled by the computer.

### **Transcription Summary from Micah Cleveland**

Micah has been playing league for seven years. He started his journey with this game during the tail end of the beta testing. He's been ranked every season, and played



ranked especially often during the first season. Silver II is the highest rank he has ever attained in the ranked system, and it is the rank he is for the current season.

Micah believes that the capacity for international interaction this game has is limited by the division of the servers. The servers people log into the play League of Legends are split based on regions: North American, European, Latin America, etc. He believes this makes it harder to play with people from other countries. Though he states this is an issue he concedes that he has also logged into the European servers before, and ran into a lot of people from there. He has also attested to South Americans being on the North American server from time to time. When asked what this interaction was like, Micah stated that the differences in languages often caused difficulties in communication during the game. He said that they made up for this somewhat by the extra use of pings in their games. Micah brought up a game he played with Germans as an example. He said they had a full conversation just by using the ping system.

Micah agrees that there is a large community in league of legends, but it is a community he doesn't feel very close to anymore. When the game first began he felt very close to the community because there were a lot fewer people playing the game at that time. Now there are significantly more people playing the game then when it was coming out of Beta. This makes it harder to feel connected to the community when there is almost no way to interact with everyone in it. While he may not feel entirely connected to the community he is involved in it. He states that he does feel more connected to the community when he plays in the PBE or public beta environment. The PBE is an area for players to go and play test new features of the game. He also mentions that he watches

the League Championship Series almost religiously. He has a fantasy league in the LCS which has made him very interested in how it turns out this year.

In regards to specific terms that he thinks occur only in League, He lists all of the strategic positions: Mid, Top, Jungle, Support, and ADC. He also states all of the lane positions: top lane, bottom lane, mid lane, and jungle. All of the names of the different playable characters are also hard to understand for non-players. He states that Teamfights- where the team groups to capture an objective, or fight the other team - is a term that would be difficult for a non-player to understand. Added to these he includes: The descriptions for all of the different character and item abilities, and things such as AP and AD. Pinging and MIA calls are also integral to League. While he agrees that there are many terms specific to League, he also believes that there are a lot of terms that are shared with other MOBA genera games.

### **Transcription Summary from Jevone Lawrence**

Jevone is another common League of Legends player. He plays ranked, and has been ranked up to Silver V. He's mainly been in low ELOs in regards to ranked.

Jevone believes that League of Legends has the potential to be a game where you can interact with people from all kinds of places, but that the fact that you have to ping of off a local server causes it to be divided between the different continents. He explains, however, that this can be circumvented by choosing to play on a different server. "It's international if you want to do it." he answered when asked. Most of the time his preference is to not play internationally, but it's an option for people who want to pursue it. He has played games with people from: Canada, Argentina, China, and people from all

around the US. He feels that the locations of the people he plays with don't effect the game all that much. He believes that it's the same as the stuff he'd get playing with other Americans. He recounted an incident where he got yelled at in French, using it as an example that he gets the same negative or positive types when playing games with people from his country, or with people from other countries.

Jevone is well connected to the community, and believes that it is very large. He cites the large League of Legends sub-reddit as an example of this. "We have a pretty big community, and it spans the entire world!" he states. Jevone also takes it in a more personal way, and mentions that he has a lot of friends that he keeps in contact with who can get on at any time, and play with him. Some of these friends are even from different countries. Jevone also watches the League Championship series often.

There are many different terms that he stated as being central to League. He believes that a lot of these terms are very difficult for non-players to understand. For an example, he relayed to me a time where he was sitting in class like normal. He was discussing a game he had played with a friend of his. At some point in their conversation the person in front of him turned around and asked if he was speaking English. He believes that all games have their own phrases and terms that are unique to each game. For some specific to League terms he included: the idea of stalling a lane, dragon, baron, warding, and split-pushing.

### **Transcription Summary from Stephen Helmly**

Stephen Helmly is a player of League. He plays ranked avidly, and has been ranked at Gold IV.

He believes that League of Legends is a somewhat globally played game, but thinks that the regional servers limit interactions outside of or between each server. Stephen has often played this game with a friend from Canada, but he did not meet this person through League. The only other interactions with people from different countries he could think of were people in his games who didn't speak English. While he states that there is a chance these people were from other countries, there's also a chance they are non-English speakers from the United States. He also stated that his interaction with these non-English speakers was not very meaningful because of the language barrier. For him, standard ping communications helped a lot.

This player believes that the game engenders a lot of common ground in regards to bonding the community. The main parts of this are, of course, playing the game, and interacting with the developers while at conventions, through the forums, and the use of fan creations such as artwork. Stephen doesn't feel extremely close to this community since he is shy in many social situations, but he states he feels closer to it when he gets to interact with people cosplaying as League of Legend characters in conventions such as Dragon Con. Stephen also regularly watches the League Championship Series.

There are many different terms that come to mind when Stephen is asked about them. "Gank" is the first and most obvious. Gank means to gang up, and refers to a player moving from his typical area to another in order to surprise an enemy with multiple allies. He mentions that other terms, such as "bait" and "push" seem fairly self-explanatory but refer to specific situations in game. Some others include: all champion, item, monster, and ability names.

## **Transcription Summary from Chris Siquefield**

Chis Siquefield greatly enjoys playing League of Legends. Chis doesn't really like playing solo ranked. He prefers to play team-ranked. In team-ranked players can create a team, and participate in 5v5 or 3v3 matches. He states that he's been ranked in bronze in team 3v3s before.

Chis feels that League of legends is less of a game where he can interact internationally with people, and more of a game where he can interact with people, "In his corner of the world." There are many sorts of people from the USA, Mexico, the Caribbean, and even parts of South America who can appear on his server. When asked about any personal interactions he has had with people from other countries through this game, Chris mentioned that he knows a couple of people from Canada, and the Caribbean through this game. They often talk about champion builds, or discuss tactics in regards to the game. Chis goes on to say that the interaction in-game is very objective driven. It's mainly communication for the sake of getting things done, but he has had a lot of meaningful interaction with people outside of the game

He believes that there is definitely a community in League of Legends, and that he feels very close to it when he plays League. He also feels close to it when he is watching games with people, and talking to them over skype or other communication programs. He also watches the League Championship Series off and on.

He mentions a lot of different terms specific to the game. He mentions the position related ones like the jungle. Another term he brings up is creeps. Creeps or minions are computer controlled elements of the game that can be killed for player gain.

There are a lot of terms he identifies are part of the strategy of the game. Terms such as: Pressure, objectives, and ganking. In the game you put pressure on different objectives in order to lure the other team to make certain moves. Ganking is where the team ambushes members of the opposing team in order to gain an advantage. He states that the vast majority of the terms in League don't have any recognition outside of League of Legends, and occasionally other games such as Smite and DotA.