The media that I will be analyzing is a video game known as Defense of the Ancients 2, or more commonly referred to as Dota 2 which is the legal name of the franchise. The original DotA was a community creation that pioneered the current hit genre known as the MOBA. Eventually, the popular mod garnered enough attention and players to warrant official acquisition and intellectual property recognition by the Valve Corporation, who continues to own and maintain the title. Since its official release to Valve’s online store, Steam, in summer of 2013, Dota 2 has maintained a strong position as one of the most actively played video games among titles available on Steam and indeed all video games released to this day. At the time of writing, the game currently serves 600,000 unique players per day (Valve Inc. 2020). The game is one of teamwork and strategy, where a single weak link can lead to failure and one talented player can bring everyone to victory. Communication is of utmost importance when one wants to succeed in the game, which leads to the peculiar cases of unfriendly intercultural interaction that most players, including myself, are guilty of participating in and reinforcing at some point. It is specifically this emergent behavior that I will be discussing.

When players arrive in the game, they are assigned a to a team of four other players and will be competing against another team of five players. These 10 players in total are all selected in a queued order from the pool of players waiting to play in a given region of the world, such as Eastern US, Western Europe, or Indonesia. The progression and competitive atmosphere of the game is very intense because failure to see the game through, either due to a poor internet connection or flat-out leaving the game – termed “abandoning,” is considered a loss by the game’s global ranking system and results in harsher penalties than just a decrease in prestige. This means that once 10 players join a game, they are not able to leave without making a personal sacrifice of their investment to game. These games can last as little as 15 minutes, but some have gone on as long as 5 hours(dotavru 2019); though there is no strict upper limit to game length. These 10 players stay in close social proximity this entire time due to text and voice chat over the game client. Because communication is so critical, the presence of communication barriers results in tension, sometimes explosive, between affected players. The most common communication barrier is the language barrier. It is expected for a game of Dota 2 to host players from different language regions in the same match, and even on the same team. This inability to communicate results in emergent prejudice and discrimination between players in real time. **Prejudice** is a predisposed attitude towards a population based on perceived stereotypes, while **discrimination** is action taken against individuals of those groups in the context of prejudice (Ferris and Stein 2016).The most well-known and widely recognized language-based ethnic conflicts that occur in the game are Broadly South American vs. Peruvian, North American vs. South American, Western European vs. Eastern European, and Chinese vs. Filipino. Note: these identifiers denote language and dialect regions that commonly overlap during player selection, not necessarily races or ethnicity.

On a macroscopic scale, one finds that those belonging to one group in a conflict region are consistently the agents of discord in the dynamic. Generally, it is Chinese-speaking players that exemplify prejudice against Filipino, Romance/Gaulic language speakers that initiate against Slavic language speakers, etc. The pattern is that players whose languages are native to wealthier regions are more often the aggressors, while players whose languages are associated with poorer regions are the ones who are attempting to play “outside of their means.” In a way, this allows us to apply **conflict theory**, which argues that resources are not distributed evenly among individuals and groups, and that specifically this distribution is weighted to the benefit of more powerful entities (Ferris and Stein 2016). In this case, the resource which conduces a struggle is network bandwidth upon which to play the game. These poorer regions do, in fact, have their own servers to play on, created with the intent of consolidating like-speaking players to avoid the observed conflict. However, it has been stated by players from these regions that these server clusters are not enough for the larger number of players. In this way, more of the valuable network space is being gatekept by players from wealthier regions, while the rest are left to make the decision of playing in a region with hostile peers versus playing with a disadvantaged internet connection.

# Works Cited

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**Media Link:**

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