

Ethics of Online Cheating: From Chess to Esports and Back

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In this presentation we provide a comparative analysis of cheating in two competitive online games, chess and *League of Legends* (Riot Games, 2009). We approach the phenomena from two perspectives:

- 1) By comparing their widespread methods of cheating in terms of technology, and
- 2) By comparing their players' attitudes and motivations in terms of cheating ethics.

Through the first approach we show how the demands of online games determine their methods of cheating (cf. Kücklich 2004; Sicart 2005; Consalvo 2007). In chess, which can be considered a game of strategy with no physical challenges, cheating happens almost solely via the use of third-party programs that help players in their calculation of optimal moves in relation to time constraints (e.g. Friedel 2001; Barnes & Hernandez-Castro 2015). In *League of Legends*, a real-time team MOBA with a large variety of skill factors from strategic choice-making to kinesthetic avatar manipulation and social teamwork, the most common means of cheating include sabotaging enemy team members' internet connections (DDoS) and facilitating one's own in-game actions by penetrating the code (hacks and scripts) (cf. Blackburn et al 2013; Carter & Gibbs 2013). Our comparative study concludes by uncovering how the two games also share some of their key cheating methods: employing false accounts and troll-playing (losing intentionally). This, we argue, is a result of both online games using an *Elo*-based ranking system.

Through the second approach we show how the attitudes and motivations for cheating differ in our two case studies. This part relies on the large empirical material that we managed to acquire from a) the administrators and players of Chess.com and b) the discussion boards and players of *League of Legends*. The material implies that while in both communities cheating is considered unethical, in chess the discussion is more about

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“cheaters being dishonest” whereas in *League of Legends* “cheaters are unskilled.” In both games, however, cheating seems to be identifiable through solitary players as well as manifold communities that play not only to beat other players, but also to develop programs that are unbeatable; in other words, to beat the system.

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