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AN EXAMINATION INTO THE ABILITY OF

COOPERATIVE MULTIPLAYER COMPUTER GAMES

AS A MEANS TO FACILITATE GROUP COHESION

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In contrast to the necessary expansiveness of my thesis, I have chosen to err on the side of brevity regarding extending my sincere gratitude to those who have made this thesis possible.

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ABSTRACT

From an organisational perspective, the potential benefits of enhancing workplace cohesion are many, amongst which an increase in employee performance would be the most tangible and possibly the most desirable. The primary aim of the present research was to explore the capacity to increase levels of cohesion, and therefore facilitate team building, through the use of cooperative multiplayer computer gaming (CMCG). Study 1, involving 26 male and 23 female university students, required participants to play two, twenty minute, games of the commercially available computer game QUAKE™ as teams of 3 or of 4, against an equal number of computer generated artificial intelligence opposition. The interpersonal attraction and task focus facets of Cohesion, as well as Stress and Mood State, were measured using self-report questionnaires at both the pre- and post-test stages of the experiment. Results supported the prediction that exposing individuals to a computer game of a cooperative and interdependent nature would increase self-rated levels of cohesion, on both the interpersonal attraction and task focus sub-scales. Study 2 aimed to expand upon the findings of study 1, increasing the generalisability of the study 1 findings by surveying existing teams engaging in CMCG via the Internet. Those surveyed were individuals who currently played the Team Fortress module of QUAKE™, and who belonged to a Team Fortress Clan – the CMCG equivalent of a social sporting team. Individuals playing QUAKE™ via the Internet were found to be as cohesed with their team members as were the laboratory participants after the CMCG intervention. Further, important group dynamic factors evident in Team Fortress Clans, such as success being linked with higher levels of cohesion, were consistent with literary considerations regarding conventional, non-CMCG teams. Additional research exploration is required regarding the utility of CMCG, however, the present research indicates that such an exploration is warranted and should produce positive and practical results.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

ABBEVIATIONS

CM   Computer Mediated

CMCG   Cooperative Multiplayer Computer Gaming

CTF   Capture the Flag QUAKE™ module

FtF   Face-to-Face

Html   Hyper Text Machine Language

LAN   Local Area Network

TF   Team Fortress QUAKE™ module