

**Topic:** Gun Companies/Military Advertising in Video Games

**Intro:** The military FPS genre is one of the most popular video game genres today. With an emphasis on gritty realism and fast-paced, competitive and rewarding warfare, the gameplay attracts many players while the graphical fidelity and popularity attracts many companies looking to advertise. Though these types of games are rated for adults, a large portion of the player population is children aged 17 and under. Due to this under-aged population, publishers and developers of these games have come under fire from people expressing concerns over allowing children to see adult imagery, or more specifically, allowing firearm companies to advertise and try to create future consumers or the military to try and create future soldiers.

**Thesis:** Gun companies and military advertising in video games is a simple business practice that benefits the companies/military, the developers and intended consumers in various ways. Ethical concerns regarding the display of such realistic and violent content to minors are already dealt with by the ESRB system. This advertising serves many positive purposes, and should be allowed to continue as is.

**Claim 1:** In an increasingly difficult political climate for weapons, using accurate portrayal of weapons in video games provides an education for players when they might not otherwise be able to learn. In the situation that one would find a discarded weapon hidden in public, a player would be able to ensure that the weapon is completely safe before carrying it to the police.

- Especially in Canada, it is very difficult to come into contact with a gun directly. This causes a majority of the population to have little to no knowledge of how a weapon works, or more importantly, how to make sure the weapon is safe or loaded. Realistic

portrayal of guns can help educate people on how to handle weapons when we are not shown them much physically. In [1], a spokesperson for Barrett states that “the gun must perform to the standards that our rifles do in the real world.”

- Realistic portrayal of weapons can also help in identifying guns that may be illegal.

**Claim 2:** The game being violent or realistic does not make it immediately detrimental. Games, even ones such as these, can be used for the benefit of certain players, especially since they are more realistic.

- [2] describes how the military uses certain simulation-type games to treat PTSD using direct imagery, this is an immense benefit to soldiers who come back with PTSD.
- For the average player, studies have shown that FPS games improve cognitive function, spatial attention and reflexes. Though some may argue that the shooter genre only increases aggression in the player base, studies show a much more beneficial effect, such as the studies in articles [3] and [4].

**Claim 3:** The advertising and licensing deals between game developers and companies is a natural part of business, while some may worry that such a partnership could tarnish the minds of impressionable children, the ESRB and the children’s parents should be making sure that they do not come into contact with imagery unless they are mature enough for it.

- The military uses war games to advertise recruitment, and the ESRB rating for those types of games are usually rated Mature, i.e [5], for people who are eighteen years of age or older, and players that age should be able to handle the imagery fine. Players that are younger are not even allowed to purchase these sorts of games on their own, and it is not

the responsibility of the gun companies or military to ensure their advertising is going to the correct demographic.

- Any parent that would complain about their children playing games rated above their age should consider the fact that their child could not get that game without their permission in the first place. [1] shows just such an example of a child aged under the rating getting around their parents to play.

### **Works Cited:**

- [1] S. Parkin. (2013, January 31<sup>st</sup>). *Shooters: How Video Games Fund Arms Manufacturers* [Online]. Available: <http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2013-02-01-shooters-how-video-games-fund-arms-manufacturers>
- [2] H. Shaban. (2013, October 10<sup>th</sup>). *Playing War: How the Military Uses Video Games* [Online]. Available: <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/10/playing-war-how-the-military-uses-video-games/280486/>
- [3] R. W. Li *et al.* (2011, August 30<sup>th</sup>). *Video-Game Play Induces Plasticity in the Visual System of Adults with Amblyopia* [Online]. Available: <http://journals.plos.org/plosbiology/article?id=10.1371/journal.pbio.1001135>
- [4] J. Rosser *et al.* (2007). *The impact of video games in surgical training* [Online]. Available: <http://www.drdouglas.org/rosser07ft.html>
- [5] *Call of Duty: Black Ops III ESRB Rating* [Online]. Available: <http://www.esrb.org/ratings/Synopsis.aspx?Certificate=34119&Title=Call+of+Duty%3a+Black+Ops+III>