

Topic: Gun Companies/Military Advertising in Video Games

Thesis: Gun companies and military advertising in video games is a simple business practice that lends benefits to the companies/military, the developers and certain consumers. Ethical concerns regarding the display of such realistic and violent content to minors is already dealt with as much as possible using the ESRB system. This advertising serves many positive purposes, and is of no ethical concern and should be allowed to continue as it 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.
- 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.

- 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.

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 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.

Resources:

1. <http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2013-02-01-shooters-how-video-games-fund-arms-manufacturers> [Interview with Barrett about presentation in games]

2. <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/10/playing-war-how-the-military-uses-video-games/280486/> [A reference for how the military uses games for recruitment, training and treatment of PTSD]
3. <http://www.polygon.com/2013/1/30/3932876/research-playing-first-person-shooters-improves-learning-abilities-cognitive-function> [Trash article, but contains multiple references to studies done with FPS games, claim 2.]