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Leaving in the Past: The Role History Plays in Video Games

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LEAVING IN THE PAST: THE ROLE HISTORY PLAYS IN VIDEO GAMES

by

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(Under the Direction of Craig Roell)

ABSTRACT

How can something considered by many within academia as childish or a waste of time be potentially useful in presenting or even studying history? Not only has the video game industry grown into one of the largest forms of media in the world, but these games are also finding use as a training aid for the military and major companies, as an advertising medium, and, most importantly, as a tool for teaching. As developmental capabilities improve with new generations of graphics hardware, video games are turning towards the recreation of real-world and historical events. This drive towards realism and accuracy also brings an increase in the amount of historical research done in order to insure the accuracy of a game's content. This growing interest in historical accuracy resulted in thorough research and the use of historical advisors in order to insure that these games were constructed with an acute attention to detail. By presenting a number of games which use historical information and attempting to explain how developers are working within historical frameworks, this paper attempts to show outside observers that not only can these games garner interest by presenting history to a large number of players, but the potential exists for games which could change the way historians view particular events. In the end, the true potential of video games to affect historical study is based largely on how many teachers, professors, and other scholars are willing to look past the stigma associated with the term "video game" and work with developers to capitalize on the potential these games possess.

INDEX WORDS: History, Video Games, Media, Learning, Technology, Entertainment

LEAVING IN THE PAST: THE ROLE HISTORY PLAYS IN VIDEO GAMES

by

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INTRODUCTION: PLAYING WITH PURPOSE

September 15, 1944, squads of marines head toward the island of Peleliu in small landing crafts known as LVTs. As the LVTs approach the heavily defended beach, one of these marines catches himself staring into the sky, inspecting his surroundings, and watching his fellow soldiers while his sergeant barks orders to the rest of the squad. As the craft rocks against the waves, he notices the battle has already begun in front of him as explosions and smoke seem to hide the small island from his eyes. His sweating hands readjust their grip as the driver yells "20 seconds" over the sergeant's continuing rant, which he realizes he has completely ignored up until this point. Suddenly the LVT comes to an abrupt halt and panic sets in, another marine looks over the side of the craft yelling out that the vehicle has bottomed out on the coral surrounding the island. Within seconds, Japanese mortars have focused on this position. This once brave marine sent to annihilate every "Jap" that crosses his path comes to the bleak realization that he has become nothing more than an immobile fish in a quickly shrinking barrel. Just then, he is thrown headfirst into the water as his craft is torn apart by a nearby explosion. Countless marines fall as he struggles to collect himself. Finally, he is pulled out of the water and recognizes the droning voice of his sergeant, continuing his cadence of orders as if the entire incident never produced a single interruption in his work. The marine pauses to gather his thoughts about what just happened and how to handle his newest orders.

Normally, these actions would result in death, but today everything else pauses also. The small island battlefield lays frozen in time; no troop movement, no bullets, as if a photograph has taken its place.

This marine has never been through any training and more likely than not has no idea whether or not Peleliu is a real place. In fact, this person is not even a marine. Instead, he is one of many gamers across the world playing one of the many iterations of the best-selling *Call of Duty* video game franchise. The realization that people actually lived through something like the events of this game, without the ability to stop everything with the press of a button, may not even cross his or her mind at the time. The historical footage, maps, and story presented throughout this game may interest the player or may be easily dismissed and skipped with the press of that same button. Despite this break from the realism of the gamer's experience, a significant portion of video games produced today include realistic and historical elements within their storyline. Some of these games go so far as to use a historical event or time period as the entire basis of the game itself.

In the past, most outside observers viewed video games as a way to escape reality. Playing a video game allows the player to become a hero, sports star, or anything else they could imagine. More recently, many developers, and gamers, are moving away from fantasy and are now driven towards the creation of a realistic experience. While some games take fantastical stories and place them in actual or historical locations, others approached game development with the goal of producing a completely authentic experience, placing players in a world based on facts and historical events. This push for realism and authenticity within video games allows traditional historical studies to impact

the development of numerous titles and franchises. Today, developers are devoting time and resources to work with military advisors, historical scholars, and doing substantial amounts of research on their own to provide this realism. In order to understand the impact of historical study on the gaming industry and, in return, the potential for games to present history as a new form of media or even impact historical studies, this work will analyze the growth of the video game industry; in particular, attempts to produce historical realism in video games, the usefulness of, and problems associated with these endeavors.

Facing Controversy

The immediate problem that arises for anyone attempting to present or study video games is the overwhelmingly negative connotations that this form of media has received from the growth of the original American video game industry in the 1980s. From its earliest recognition and popularity in arcades, the concept of video gaming faced numerous accusations as a "waste of time" and causing children to become addicted, lazy, socially inept, desensitized and more prone to violent behavior. On multiple occasions gaming is even pointed out as a key contributor in the death of players or the violent acts committed by young men who enjoyed playing video games in their free time.

While most gamers play video games as a way to relax or entertain themselves during their free time, a small number of gamers, especially to this day, take their gaming

habits to incredibly unhealthy levels, as evident by the death of "video game addicts" due

to pulmonary embolisms, deep vein thrombosis, or malnutrition believed to be the result

of "gaming marathons" of 12 hours or more at a time.[1] One of the most extreme cases

involved the death of a Chinese gamer who died while playing video games in a public

internet cafe. The 30-year-old man died after supposedly playing an online game for

three days straight with little to no breaks.[2] Most video games are played with the player

remaining immobile, much like long periods of television watching or long flights, which

can also result in these same health problems. The stereotype of the addicted teenage

male gamer, who wastes an entire day in front of a television with little to no social life,

does exist, but are the exception, not the rule, when looking at the whole of the video

gaming population.[3]

Another controversial issue facing the video game industry, especially in the late

1990s, was the influence of video games on teenagers and young adults who committed

acts of violence. After numerous school shootings, such as the events at Columbine High

School or the shootings that took place in Jonesboro, Arkansas, video games became an

immediate target for news outlets and concerned parents. These young men's ability to

kill with a cold indifference and follow specific plans, which they designed in advance,

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[1] "Gamer Chris Staniforth's death blamed on DVT," *BBC News*. July 30, 2011.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-14350216. (accessed February 10, 2012)
"S Korean dies after games session," *BBC News*. August 10, 2005.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4137782.stm. (accessed February 11, 2012)
Stories such as the death of Chris Staniford from DVT after multiple 12-hour sessions or a South Korean
man named Lee who collapsed within an internet cafe after playing for almost 50 hours straight are
uncommon but still occur far too often.
[2] Associated Press, "Chinese Man Drops Dead After 3-Day Gaming Binge," September 18, 2007.
http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,297059,00.html. (accessed February 10, 2012)
[3] The demographics of gamers will be discussed later in this chapter.

was immediately paired with the fact that they enjoyed playing shooting games, such as

Doom. These games show the character from a first-person point of view, where it seems

as though the player is looking through the eyes of the protagonist who must shoot his

way through a level, usually killing everything in sight. Even worse, some games,

including the aforementioned *Doom*, which was claimed to be a favorite of the shooters

in Columbine, allow players to create their own maps and scenarios to play through. This

feature supposedly resulted in Eric Harris' creation of a scenario involving his

neighborhood, which Harris and Dylan Klebold were rumored to have used as a template

to practice their plans.[4]

Before the horrors of Columbine and Jonesboro, another incident occurred that

not only brought blame to video games for turning a teenage boy into a killer but also for

training the child to be a better shooter than most police officers. In 1997, fourteen-year-

old Michael Carneal arrived at his school in Paducah, Kentucky carrying a handgun.

Carneal approached a small prayer group, fired his gun eight times and accurately hit

eight different children, killing three and wounding five.[5] In his work, *Stop Teaching*

Our Kids to Kill, Lt. Colonel Dave Grossman pointed out that Carneal never shot a

handgun before that day but, according to Grossman, gained all the training and

experience he needed from playing violent video games.[6] Grossman claimed that

Carneal's ability to hit eight different targets in eight shots, three in the head and five in

the torso, is not only amazing for someone who has never fired a real gun before but is

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[4] Dave Grossman and Gloria Degaetano, *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV,*
Movie & Video Game Violence. (New York: Crown Publishers, 1999), 77.
[5] Ibid, 4.
[6] Ibid.

also much better than standard law enforcement officials, who, according to a study

Grossman used, average one hit in every five shots at a range of seven yards during a

shootout.[7] Of course, Grossman never mentioned the fact that Carneal's shots were taken

with his feet planted and aimed at unarmed children, while officers in a shootout must

also be concerned with return fire and thus their own safety. Grossman's idea of games

able to train young killers also gained a strong amount of credence from the use of video

game technology for supplemental military training.

The fact that video games are used, to this day, as a supplement to military

training and are now permanently linked with murders and school shootings such as these

resulted in numerous denouncements from many Senators and House Representatives,

such as Joseph Lieberman. A number of court cases were brought against gaming

companies, led by activist and now former attorney Jack Thompson. Thompson's first

lawsuit against the video game industry came while working as an attorney for three

families of the victims in Michael Carneal's case.[8] Thompson blamed Carneal's

obsession with video games, violent movies, and pornographic websites for his violent

behavior and argued that these companies should be held accountable for their role in

inspiring Carneal's actions.[9] The case, which was later dismissed, marked the beginning

of Thompson's campaign against violent video games which he referred to as "murder

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid, 110.

[9] "Media Companies Are Sued in Kentucky Shooting," *New York Times*. April 13, 1999.
http://www.nytimes.com/1999/04/13/us/media-companies-are-sued-in-kentucky-shooting.html. (accessed
January 30, 2012).

simulators."[10] Thompson filed numerous lawsuits including two multi-million dollar

suits against Rockstar Games and Take-Two Interactive (the developer and publisher of

the *Grand Theft Auto* franchise, led protests against newly released games) and actively

lobbied for, even helping draft, numerous bills against the sale of mature rated games to

minors--all of which failed.[11] Thompson was later disbarred by The Florida Bar for

misconduct after repeated offenses of harassment, professional misconduct, and making

false statements and accusations.[12]

Despite the industry's apparent victory in having Thompson's litigations

dismissed and his eventual disbarment, it is easy to see why video games received very

negative connotations throughout the years. Even during the current war in Iraq, video

games are given a share of the blame for soldiers torturing prisoners or desecrating dead

bodies. According to an article written by Susan Sontag in the *New York Times*, soldiers

videotaping these horrible acts are evidence of the increasing acceptance of brutality in

American life as evident by "the video games of killing that are a principal entertainment

of boys," resulting in her later question "can the video game 'Interrogating the Terrorists'

really be that far behind?"[13] While all wars include various travesties and improper

treatment of enemy soldiers, the evolution of media now gives the American population

[10] Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter, *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 155.
[11] Winda Benedetti, "Were video games to blame for massacre?" *msnbc.com*. April 20, 2007. http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18220228/ns/technology_and_science-games/t/were-video-games-blame-massacre/. (accessed February 1, 2012).
[12] "DISBARRED!" *GamePolitics.com*. September 25, 2008. http://www.gamepolitics.com/2008/09/25/disbarred. (accessed February 10, 2012)
[13] Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others," *New York Times*. May 23, 2004. http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm. (accessed January 25, 2012)

access to much more detail on the war being fought. The plethora of graphic content and

depictions of violence and brutality today may affect the way the newest generations of

Americans view the horrors of war and death, but to act as though there is not a long line

of history showing that certain soldiers take part in seemingly inhumane actions while

dealing with the amount of stress associated with every war is something which even she

must realize cannot be solely blamed on graphic media. While various studies on the

psychological impacts of video games produced various results, it is obvious that mature-

rated games should not be played by children and constant addictive playing, much like

those addicted to television, can seriously affect a person's health. Problems such as

these are similar to those faced by every other form of media: R-rated movies, television

channels with adult content, or music with explicit lyrics. Video games can be extremely

addictive and some even allow the player to perform violent acts, which would seem

particularly heinous in the real world. It is up to the player or, in the case of children, the

parent to control both the amount of gaming and whether or not the content is

appropriate.

Despite the negative attention that more violent games receive, the true

demographics of the video game industry may surprise many outside observers. The

latest release of industry facts from The Entertainment Software Association shows that

in 2011, the average video game player was 37 years of age and been playing for at least

12 years.[14] More than 40% of gamers are female and perhaps more surprising is that

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[14] Entertainment Software Association, "2011 Sales, Demographic and Usage Data: Essential Facts About the Computer and Video Game Industry," *TheESA.com*. May 2011. http://www.theesa.com/facts/pdfs/ESA_EF_2011.pdf. (accessed March 3, 2012). 2-4.

29% of gamers are adults age 50 and over.[15] Even more important is the growing role of

video games within the family dynamic. While 72% of American households own some

sort of video game, 45% percent of parents claim to play these games with their children

at least once a week. Moreover, 57% claim that video games are a great way for families

to spend time together.[16] Parents are also taking a more positive approach in their child's

video gaming habits as 90% claim to check the content of the games their children are

playing, while 80% of parents are also placing limits on the amount of time which

children are allowed to play.[17] These numbers show that the days of stereotyping video

games as entertainment for teenage boys and young men with an affinity for technology

are clearly over.

The expansion of video games into educational, political, and activist campaigns

helped to earn new-found respect and awareness for the industry. Programs and

conferences such as the Games and Learning Summit, which bring developers together

with educators to discuss the role of video games in education and build partnerships

between the two, are some of the earliest steps toward using video games to positively

influence those children who already enjoy playing games at home.[18] As Democratic

Florida Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz stated, "The U.S. entertainment

software industry is at the forefront of innovation and education, turning what we have

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[15] Ibid, 2-3.
[16] Ibid, 7.
[17] Ibid, 5-8.
[18] U.S. Congress. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. September 13, 2011. *Statement of Michael D. Gallagher.* (accessed at
http://www.theesa.com/newsroom/Mike_Gallagher_STEM_House_Testimony.pdf, February 2, 2012).

thought about video games on its head."[19] With the evolution of video game culture,

from its stereotypical audience of teenage males to acceptance and use by every age and

both genders, the gaming industry expanded itself into a respectable form of

entertainment media.

Evolution of a New Form of Media

In 2011, video games were a $25 billion dollar industry in the United States alone,

employing approximately 120,000 workers.[20] U.S. video game software sales totaled

$15.9 billion in 2011. By comparison, U.S. box office sales finished with $10.6 billion.[21]

Courses on video game design are now taught in over 300 colleges and universities

including the University of Southern California and the Massachusetts Institute of

Technology.[22] Video games are currently being developed and used to help teach

children, train employees, act as a training aid for soldiers, and for use as a therapeutic

aid for returning soldiers dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder.[23] As a form of

media, video games are finally taking their place next to film or television, and may soon

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[19] Entertainment Software Association, 9.

[20] U.S. Congress, House. Statement, 3.

[21] Entertainment Software Association, 11.
Motion Picture Association of America, Inc. "Theatrical Market Statistics 2011," *mpaa.org*. February 2012. http://www.mpaa.org/Resources/5bec4ac9-a95e-443b-987b-bff6fb5455a9.pdf. (accessed March 3, 2012), 2.

[22] U.S. Congress, House. Statement, 3.
Mike Snider, "USC still tops as video game design plays on more campuses," *USA Today*. March 1, 2012. http://content.usatoday.com/communities/gamehunters/post/2012/02/usc-still-tops-as-video-game-design-plays-on-more-campuses/1. (accessed March 10, 2012).

[23] U.S. Congress, House. Statement, 4-7.
Dyer-Witheford & Peuter, 99.

pass them both in terms of practical usage thanks to their ability to provide an interactive experience.

Since the 1980s, when home video game consoles first became popular in the United States, games were linked with the film industry. Popular movies such as *Death Race*, *E.T.*, and *Indiana Jones* were quickly adapted into video game form in hopes of capitalizing on their success. During these early years, games were, in most cases, only created after a movie gained box office success. More recently, games based on popular movies are becoming more frequent than not, with movies such as the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *Harry Potter* including a game alongside each film's release. These games are planned alongside the movie, usually following the same plot and including clips and bonus scenes from the movie in order to emphasis the connection between the two. The growing popularity of the video game industry also resulted in the release of new movies based on already established popular video game franchises such as *Doom*, *Resident Evil*, and *Tomb Raider*. A similar relationship between television and video games resulted in crossovers such as *Sonic the Hedgehog* cartoons and the long evolution of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* franchise from comic to television to video game and finally film. The introduction of a television channel dedicated solely to video game content, G4TV, occurred in 2002 and a nationally televised award show began in 2003.[24]

While quickly developing its own subculture of award ceremonies, including a televised award show, which seems more of a celebration with actors and musical

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[24] Daniel Sieberg, "24-hour video game channel set to launch," *CNNTech*. April 24, 2002. http://articles.cnn.com/2002-04-24/tech/video.game.channel_1_game-sales-g4-interactive-digital-software-association?_s=PM:TECH. (accessed December 30, 2011).

performances on par with an MTV award show, video games also began infiltrating more

prestigious award ceremonies. In 1998, an animated sequence from *Oddworld: Abe's*

Exoddus was nominated for an Academy Award in the Best Animated Short category;

becoming the first video game inspired nominee in Academy Awards' history.[25] In 2011,

the song "Baba Yetu" won the Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Arrangement with

Vocalists(s), becoming the first song originally composed for a video game to win a

Grammy award.[26] *Civilization IV*, the game "Baba Yetu" was originally composed for,

was released in 2005 but composer Christopher Tin also included the song in his debut

album, which released in 2009.[27] Soon after Tin won his award, the Grammy Awards

added the description of "Video Game Music" to four media awards hoping to increase

nominations for video game soundtracks to compete with film and television for visual

media awards.[28] The growing recognition for video games also resulted in the opening of

a Smithsonian exhibit, "The Art of Video Games," in March 2012. The exhibit attempts

to present video games as an artistic medium and showcase the technological growth

which helped shape the industry through the years.[29]

Video games recently became a topic for study in academia. Courses ranging

from video game design to critical analysis of video game theory are offered in

[25] Mark. J. P. Wolf, ed. *Medium of the Video Game*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 2.

[26] Laura Parker, "Civilization IV song wins Grammy Award," *Gamespot.com*. February 13, 2011. http://www.gamespot.com/news/civilization-iv-song-wins-grammy-award-6298850. (accessed February 10, 2012).

[27] Ibid.

[28] John Gaudiosi, "Video Games Added to Grammy Awards," *Business Insider*. April 11, 2011. http://articles.businessinsider.com/2011-04-11/tech/30010381_1_game-music-game-industry-dragon-age. (accessed January 25, 2012).

[29] Michael Gallagher, "More Than the Art of Video Games," *HuffingtonPost.com*. March 15, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-gallagher/smithsonian-video-games_b_1347633.html. (accessed January 25, 2012).

universities across the United States. Academic studies and books on gaming include the

history of the industry, psychological studies on how games affect behavior, and the role

of gaming simulations in military training. In attempting to define video games

academically, video game theorists and researchers even devised conflicting views on

how to define a "video game" and how to characterize the gameplay experience for the

player. The two main schools of thought are known as "narratology" and "ludology."

Narratology defines video games as a storytelling medium, much like films or books, and

thus can be analyzed in a similar fashion.[30] The player's interaction with a game,

according to the idea of narratology, does nothing more than progress the game towards

its eventual conclusion. On the other hand, ludology, literally the "study of games,"

argues that video games constitute a form of "play" in which the player's interaction with

the game can change the way a particular game is understood.[31] Two gamers playing a

particular game can experience two completely different things depending on factors

such as the choices they make in the game or their skill level. The ideas of "play", as

used by many video game theorists, are based mostly around Johan Huizinga's theories

within his work, *Homo Ludens*. In his work, Huizinga argued that the act of "play" is an

important human function which is different than "ordinary life."[32] He claims the

introduction of play is based on a contest for a particular goal or the representation of a

particular event.[33]

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[30] James Newman and Barney Oram. *Teaching Videogames*. (London: British Film Institute, 2006), 100.
[31] Ibid, 99.
[32] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1955), 8.
[33] Ibid, 13.

While video games fit perfectly with Huizinga's idea of breaking from reality, it is the ability of video games to provide a representation of an event which will be argued in this paper. The ability to recreate events in popular media, such as films, provided new ways to present and understand history. The potential for games to not only recreate representations of history, like movies or television do now, but also allow players the ability to interact with these events can potentially provide new ways of studying and understanding historical events. The ability to recreate events, such as wars, and watch how they unfolded, while being able to change seemingly minute details in order to see their specific impact, is something that no other form of media can ever hope to accomplish.

Opening the Discussion

The majority of studies and writings on video games at the academic level are focused on the impact of the games on society: more specifically, children. These works, such as Lieutenant Grossman's *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill* and *Game Addiction: The Experience and the Effects* by Neils Clark and P. Shavaun Scott, approach the psychological and societal impacts of games in an attempt to understand just how much influence video games can have over the player. While Grossman's work, as noted earlier, gives an extremely negative portrait of games as training tools, Clark and Scott approach video game "addiction" from a more neutral point of view, showing the potential for games as learning tools while also pointing out the problems with

inappropriate material and addict-like behavior which can arise from children playing these games.[34]

The rise of negative implications in early discussions on video gaming brought about a number of works attempting to present video games as learning tools, a medium of entertainment like television or film, and even as a form of art. Dr. James Paul Gee's *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*, along with many of his other writings, attempted to correlate a video game's ability to challenge the player, forcing problem-solving and critical thinking, with a child's ability to learn.[35] By emphasizing the fact that children playing games want to succeed, Gee shows that children playing these games are forced to think, figure out, and eventually learn the things they need to know in order to advance. Other works, such as Ian Bogost's *Persuasive Games*, attempted to show the video game as a medium of entertainment, information, or, in the case of Bogost's work, a medium for rhetoric.[36] By showing that games are used for advertising, political propaganda, and even to promote societal awareness, Bogost and his research has constantly challenged the preconceived notions of video games as a child's plaything. More recently, "game studies" have shifted towards the relationship between video games and other industries or fields. A number of books,

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[34] Grossman & Degaetano.
Neils Clark and P. Shavaun Scott, *Game Addiction: The Experience and the Effects*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2009.)

[35] James Paul Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[36] Ian Bogost, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).

such as Ed Halter's *From Sun Tzu to Xbox*, have provided a detailed look into how the military both used and impacted the video game industry, which will be discussed later.[37]

In terms of more historical-based studies, the vast majority of writings on the video games are focused primarily on the early years of the video game industry. David Sheff's *Game Over: How Nintendo Conquered the World* (1994) was one of the first books to present the early years of American video game history; from the rise of Atari and other early American gaming companies, to the North American video game crash of 1983 and the subsequent rise of Nintendo.[38] As new studies were published, such as Steven Kent's *The Ultimate History of Video Games* (2001) and Harold Goldberg's *All Your Base Are Belong to Us* (2011), their true contributions were in advancing Sheff's original study forward through new cycles of video game consoles and the continued growth in popularity for the industry as a whole.[39]

As this work is focused on the inclusion of historical study into the video game industry, most of the video games used as examples in this paper were released in the 1990s or later; because of this, the history of the video game industry itself will be left to the writings listed above. The continued development of more advanced technological capabilities within the video game industry allows for more detailed graphics and thus more realistic-looking products. This drive towards realism in video games brought with it the desire for historical and real-world accuracy within the games being developed.

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[37] Ed Halter, *From Sun Tzu to Xbox: War and Video Games*. (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006).

[38] David Sheff, *Game Over: How Nintendo Conquered the World*. (New York: Random House Inc.,1993).

[39] Steven Kent, *The Ultimate History of Video Games*. (New York: Random House Inc., 2001). Harold Goldberg, *All Your Base Are Belong to Us: How Fifty Years of Video Games Conquered Pop Culture*. (New York: Random House Inc., 2011).

Very few, if any, video games attempt to recreate a completely authentic historical event, but the potential exists, thanks to the constant growth of processing power and graphic capabilities. Even without presenting precise history within their stories, video games can draw players into analyzing and wanting to learn more about the historical references within these games. The usefulness of games in presenting historical information is limitless thanks to the variety of ways in which these games can be played. One game may allow players to decide a country's fate over an entire century by controlling policies and foreign affairs, while another hands the player a rifle and sends him or her on a first person experience of any number of major battles in World War II. While books or films are retelling a story, games allow the user to relive or, in the case of revisionists, completely rewrite history.[40] This interactivity, along with the popularity of gaming in today's society, can draw new students into more in-depth historical research and raise interest in learning about any time period they find themselves playing through.

In discussing the scholarly importance of video games, the obvious problems that need to be faced are the negative stereotypes facing this form of media and even more importantly, why do video games matter? This opening chapter attempted to address the former by showing the growing acceptance of video games both as a form of media and as an industry. The second chapter will show the impact of video games on other industries including the military and advertising. After answering these skepticisms on the importance of the gaming industry, the third chapter will present the ways history is used within video games including the types of games being created, the steps taken by

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[40] Luke Plunkett, "Can Games Handle History?" *Kotaku.com*. April 13, 2009.
http://kotaku.com/5209313/can-games-handle-history. (accessed January 10, 2012).

developers to gather information for these games, and how developers perceive their own use of history within their products. This will be followed, in the fourth and fifth chapters, by delving into both the potential benefits and pitfalls of including historical realism in video games; from the ability to actually learn historical facts to dealing with materials that other groups may find offensive. The final chapter will focus on the potential for the use of history in games and a look at two cases in which certain games are challenging the way history and video games can relate to one another. One of which may provide the template for the next step towards historical realism and video games, and another which may completely blur the line between video game fantasy and historical study.

Before continuing, it is important to stress that this paper is not meant to argue that video games may one day become the optimum tool for teaching or understanding history. This paper's true purpose is to show that the potential exists for video games to be utilized in both presenting historical ideas and perhaps even changing the way some historians approach their own fields of study. For many people unfamiliar with video games, particularly those in positions of higher learning, video games bring up thoughts of children wasting their time by sitting in front of televisions playing *Super Mario Brothers*. What many fail to realize is that the video gaming industry now produces incredibly detailed and financed games which can cost as much as the next blockbuster films, reach an even wider audience, and keep customers enthralled in the game much longer than a two or three hour movie. The incredible popularity of video games, particularly among younger demographics, can easily act as a gateway for kids and teenagers to gain a renewed interest in historical study. If historians can use other forms

of media to help illustrate a particular time period, imagine the potential for games to not only illustrate in an interactive manner, but also provide an even better understanding by providing the player with the experience of playing a role in what is happening before them. The increasing amount of realism and historical references used in video games provide an excellent opportunity for historians to conform an increasingly popular form of media into a tool which can gather a renewed interest in history and present historical information in new ways. This work attempts to not only outline how history is already being used in the video game industry, but also show how a little more interaction between developers and historians could result in so much more.

CHAPTER 2

MORE THAN A GAME

Assuming that video games are now a viable form of media, as argued in the

opening chapter, the next question that must be addressed is how can video games reach

or impact a significant portion of the population. In terms of statistics, there were 183

million gamers playing an average of 12 hours per week in the United States alone in

2009.[41] On October 7, 2010, Blizzard reported that its best-selling online game, *World of

Warcraft*, eclipsed 12 million players worldwide.[42] One year later, *Modern Warfare 3*,

the latest installment of the *Call of Duty* franchise, held the largest entertainment media

launch in history earning $400 million in sales while selling 6.5 million units in the

United States and United Kingdom alone, breaking the record set by earlier *Call of Duty*

releases the previous two years.[43]

In countries such as China and South Korea, internet gaming gained a steady

following and even national attention. In 2009, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce was

forced to introduce new rules governing the use of virtual currency found in internet

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[41] Peter Warman, "Newzoo Games Market Report: Consumer Spending on Key Platforms and Business Models," *Newzoo*. http://corporate.newzoo.com/press/GamesMarketReport_FREE_030510.pdf. (accessed January 3, 2012)
The NPD Group, "Extreme Gamers Spend Two Full Days Per Week Playing Video Games," *NPD.com*. May 27, 2010. https://www.npd.com/press/releases/press_100527b.html, (accessed January 3, 2012).
[42] Blizzard Entertainment Press Release, "World of Warcraft Subscriber Base Reaches 12 Million Worldwide," *Blizzard.com*. October 7, 2010. http://us.blizzard.com/en-us/company/press/pressreleases.html?id=2847881. (accessed November 29, 2011).
[43] Keith Stuart, "Modern Warfare 3 Smashes Entertainment Launch Records," Guardian.co.u.k November 11, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/gamesblog/2011/nov/11/modern-warfare-3-breaks-sales-records (accessed December 3, 2011).

games and communities.[44] These rules put an end to the use of virtual currency in

obtaining real goods, which was resulting in both fraud and illegal gambling.[45] With an

internet user base of 298 million, Chinese virtual trading reached several billion yuan and

created fear among some economists of its potentially negative effect on the Chinese

financial system.[46]

In South Korea, online gaming is now a part of everyday society. In 2009, South

Korea's online gaming market alone accumulated $3.49 billion in revenues.[47] The

popularity of online gaming has resulted in the South Korean government providing

funds for the gaming sector and developing the Korean Game Industry Agency to help

develop both a high-tech industrial base and the South Korean game sector. Government

programs such as the "Long-term Promotion Plan of the Game Industry" provide

substantial investments into the gaming market, including $13.5 million in 2006.[48]

South Korea is also the first country to organize "eSports," the competitive

playing of video games in a series of tournaments and competitions, much like any other

sports league. These eSport "athletes" are sponsored by various companies, organized

into leagues, and celebrated like professional athletes. Tournaments and competitions are

televised on two channels, both of which are solely dedicated to showing and analyzing

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[44] Ministry of Commerce People's Republic of China, "China bars use of virtual money for trading in real goods," *MOFCOM.gov.cn*. June 29, 2009.
http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/newsrelease/commonnews/200906/20090606364208.html (accessed February 2, 2012).
[45] Ibid
[46] Ibid
[47] Dal Yong Jin, *Korea's Online Gaming Empire*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 3.
[48] Ibid, 53.

video game competitions.[49] These two channels alone received $203 million in advertising and even sponsored the opening of the world's first eSport stadium.[50] As Dal Yong Jin explains in his work, *Korea's Online Gaming Empire*, "professional gamers in Korea are idolized, marrying supermodels and engaging in other celebrity activities that are deemed worthy of spectacle and intrigue by the general populace."[51]

More recently, American forms of eSports, led by Major League Gaming (MLG), grew into a pro-circuit style organization with multiple tournaments throughout the United States and Canada. While American eSports have continued to grow, including features on television channels such as ESPN or MTV, video game "athletes" in American countries have yet to gain the sort of fame and adulation enjoyed by their South Korean counterparts. While gaming competitions continue to grow, a number of American companies and investors are also dedicating large amounts of time and money into developing new video games, for everything from job and military training to advertising.

<div align="center">Advertising in Games</div>

One of the most successful uses of product placement within a film also set the stage for one of the earliest uses of advertising within a video game. In 1982, Steven Spielberg's *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* appeared in theatres and became the highest

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[49] Ibid, 72.
[50] Ibid, 73.
[51] Ibid, 60.

grossing domestic film of the year.[52] In the movie, Elliot and E.T were originally

supposed to share M&Ms but this was later changed to Reese's Pieces after Mars

Incorporated declined the use of their product in the film.[53] Sales of Reese's Pieces

immediately rose approximately 70% thanks to the incredible success of the film.[54]

During this same time period, Atari began creating an *E.T.* video game which also

included the friendly alien's favorite candy as a way to recover his energy and help him

make it "home."

The first mention of an outside brand within a computer game occurred in an

"easter egg," an intentionally programmed secret, within a special version of *Lunar

Lander* developed on GT40 graphics terminals in the 1970s. In the game, a player could

land his ship outside "the only McDonalds on the moon" and order food or crash into the

McDonalds and face condemnation.[55] By the early 1980s, companies were developing

new games specifically to promote their brand known as "advergames," such as *Coca

Cola Kids* and *Kool-Aid Man*. Advertisers originally viewed games as the perfect

medium for reaching young boys who were spending an increasing amount of time

playing games instead of watching television. By placing their product within a video

game, companies could expose gamers to advertisements more often and for much longer

periods of time than a thirty-second television commercial.

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[52] "1982 Yearly Box Office Results," *BoxOfficeMojo.com*.
http://www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=192&p=.htm. (accessed November, 15, 2011)
[53] Kerry Seagrave. *Product Placement in Hollywood Films*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2004), 165.
[54] Ibid, 165.
[55] Ilya Vedrashko, "History of Advergames and In-Game Advertising," (Unpublished/Unedited draft for thesis) MIT CMS, August-September 2006. Accessed at http://www.scribd.com/doc/3001140/History-of-InGame-Advertising, 5-6.

Ian Bogost credits Jane Chen and Matthew Ringel as the first to give a true definition for the term "advergame," which they explained as "the use of interactive gaming technology to deliver embedded advertising messages to consumers."[56] One of the most successful and well-known uses of advergames was developed by Burger King. In 2006, Burger King introduced King Games, three video games involving Burger King characters entitled *PocketBike Racer*, *Big Bumpin'*, and *Sneak King*; which involved racing, bumper cars, and an adventure-setting. These games, which could be played on the Xbox or Xbox 360, were sold for $3.99 and could only be bought after ordering a value meal. Burger King went so far as to produce advertisements for these games, which were shown during prime-time television hours to help enforce the idea that these were three totally different high-quality games.[57] Within a month, Burger King announced over 2 million games sold and reported a 40% increase in profits for that quarter.[58]

A number of companies expanded on the idea of advergames and created entire websites or virtual worlds devoted to their products, which David Edery and Ethan Mollick refer to as "adverworlds."[59] One of the largest gaming companies, Electronic Arts, created their own website dedicated to easily accessible and mostly free-to-play games that are filled with advertisements for their newest major releases or any company

[56] Ian Bogost, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 152.

[57] David Edery and Ethan Mollick, *Changing the Game: How Video Games are Transforming the Future of Business*. (New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., 2009), 69.

[58] Ibid, 67.
Michael McWhertor, "Burger King Games Rival Gears of War Sales," *Kotaku.com*. December 20, 2006. http://kotaku.com/223417/burger-king-games-rival-gears-of-war-sales. (accessed December 17, 2011).

[59] Edery and Mollick, 75.

willing to pay for ad space. Disney's *Virtual Magic Kingdom* allows players to

experience a virtual simulation of their theme parks for free and even allow players to

win prizes which can be redeemed when they visit the actual park.[60] Companies not

willing to invest the time into creating their own virtual world turned to *The Sims*

franchise for their own virtual advertisements. By placing a virtual store inside one of

these worlds, advertisers can insure that players are constantly exposed to their brand,

merchandise, and information on new products. Using the *Sims* along with their other

products, Electronic Arts has signed product-placement deals with Intel and McDonald's

that are worth at least seven-figures.[61]

The evolution of technological capabilities within video games gives advertisers

and game designers new ways of using product placement. In the 1980s, games used

background representations to show their affiliation with a product, such as the *Teenage*

Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: The Arcade Game, using flyers and signs to promote Pizza Hut.

More recent games, such as *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*, allow the

gamer to see ads similar to billboards in the real world or interact with a device that looks

identical to the real thing, such as a Sony Ericsson phone. Today, video game companies

are able to exhibit greater control over the process thanks to "dynamic advertising."

With more games being played while connected to the internet, gaming

companies are able to change in-game ads depending on their agreements with companies

or new products. For example, a player may walk past a movie poster within a game for

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[60] Bogost, *Persuasive Games*, 149.

[61] Reena Jana,"Is That a Video Game -- Or an Ad?" *Bloomberg Businessweek*. January 25, 2006. http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/content/jan2006/id20060124_792815.htm. (accessed February 3, 2012)

the latest major release in theaters, but when he decides to replay the game a month later, a new movie poster will replace the former showing the next major release for that particular week. This allows video game developers to sign long-term advertising agreements with other companies and keep advertisements within their game relevant.[62]

Within the past ten years, Disney took the next logical step in promoting their brand through a video game. In 2002, a highly regarded Japanese video game publisher, Square-Enix, released a game entitled *Kingdom Hearts*. This new game combined Square's highly-regarded *Final Fantasy* franchise and characters with Disney's vast array of characters into one storyline. This mixture of two of the most popular franchises in Japan, along with Square's incredible story-telling ability, resulted in one of the most successful gaming franchises over the past decade in Japan, with over 17 million units sold and an ever increasing number of sequels.[63] The main characters of the games include an original character, Sora, fighting alongside Donald Duck and Goofy in an attempt to help King Mickey and defeat villains known as the Heartless. Throughout each game a number of Disney and *Final Fantasy* characters make cameos to either help or hinder the three travelers.

In combining the two sets of characters together, Disney not only set up its characters as legitimate heroes within the video game setting but also took them away from the more childish stereotype of the past. Nearly all *Final Fantasy* games follow the same premise: a group of destined travelers facing an evil force which must be defeated

[62] Ilya Vedrashko, "*Advertising in Computer Games*" (master's thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, September 2006), 45.

[63] Square Enix Holdings, "Businesses," *Square Enix Holdings*. http://www.square-enix.com/eng/group/index.html. (accessed December 16, 2011).

to save the world. While the storylines and events of *Kingdom Hearts* are not normally as dark or menacing as a *Final Fantasy* game, Disney characters are ultimately recast as heroes who are acceptable for older audiences to relate to instead of being strictly aimed towards young children.

In 2004, video games officially entered the realm of politics, as political groups began creating and endorsing games to help their campaign for office.[64] That year, the GOP released *Tax Invaders*, a reprogrammed version of the arcade-classic *Space Invaders* over the internet for PC gamers.[65] In the game, players controlled George W. Bush's head, which was able to shoot projectiles at large squares showing the number $658 billion, the number of total tax increases that John Kerry was rumored to support.[66]

The use of political advertisements within mainstream video games first occurred in 2008 when presidential candidate Barack Obama paid for campaign and voting ads while running against Bush. These ads appeared across a number of Xbox 360 games whenever the system was connected to the internet. Obama's ads only targeted voters in ten "swing states" in an attempt to rally voters within the 18-34 year old male demographic.[67] By using the gamer's IP address; programmers allowed Obama's dynamic advertising to appear to those fitting the age and location requirements.[68] The ads were displayed on billboards and backgrounds within the games of those the advertisements aimed to reach, while other gamers saw a completely different

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[64]Bogost, *Persuasive Games*, 103.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid, 104.
[67] Steven Gorman, "Obama buys first video game campaign ads," *Reuters.com*. October 17, 2008. http://www.reuters.com/articles/2008/10/17/us-usa-politics-videogames-idUSTRE49EAGL20081017. (accessed November 10, 2011).
[68] Ibid.

advertisement. In total, this video game campaign cost Obama a little less than

$44,500.[69]

Video game advertisements are now as common as television commercials and

magazine ads. As the number of gamers continues to grow, organizations will continue

to invest in advertising campaigns aimed at the large numbers of gamers avoiding

television for virtual reality. The ability of video games to present visual information like

an advertisement, while also keeping the player involved and invested in the virtual

world, helps insure that gamers will not avoid advertisements like the television viewer

who, now with devices like the DVR, can fast forward and avoid commercials altogether.

It also guarantees that if a player is fully invested in playing a game, he or she will learn

and adapt to the game in order to succeed and thus actively engage new information, a

fact which the United States military began attempting to take advantage of decades ago.

Virtual Warfare

The potential for video games to draw-in new recruits and even help train them

were two prospects which the United States military quickly recognized as the popularity

of arcade games gained national attention in the 1970s. In a 1983 speech, Ronald Reagan

proclaimed that:

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[69] Brendan Sinclair, "Obama's in-game ad bill: $44.5k" *Gamespot.com*. October 29, 2008.
http://uk.gamespot.com/news/6200232.html. (accessed November 9, 2011).

> Many young people have developed incredible hand, eye, and brain coordination in playing these games. The Air Force believes these kids will be outstanding pilots should they fly our jets. The computerized radar screen in the cockpit is not unlike the computerized video screen. Watch a 12-year-old take evasive action and score multiple hits while playing Space Invaders, and you will appreciate the skills of tomorrow's pilot.[70]

In a lecture given two years earlier, General Donn A. Starry of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) argued that new soldiers "belong to a TV and technology generation" which should be trained with new technological forms of training instead of "still sitting in classrooms, still listening to lectures, still depending on books and other reading materials."[71] In fact, many recruiters began frequenting popular arcades in search of new recruits.[72] The ability of gamers to succeed in games that were also being used or considered for use as a military training aid made them ideal targets for recruitment.

In his work, *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill*, Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman argued that early military simulators were useful in conditioning soldiers to fire at targets as a "stimulus-response" in the hopes of increasing a soldier's firing rate and ability to kill without hesitation.[73] He points to the increase of firing rates from World War II, 15% to Vietnam, 95%, as proof that these simulations gave soldiers both the "skill and will" to take a life.[74] By attempting to prove that simulations can increase soldier efficiency, Grossman argued that children playing violent games similar to these could become

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[70] Ed Halter, *From Sun Tzu to Xbox: War and Video Games*. (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006), 117-118

[71] Ibid, 136-137.

[72] Ibid, 141-143.

[73] Dave Grossman and Gloria DeGaetano, *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie & Video Game Violence*, 73-74.

[74] Ibid, 74.

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efficient killing machines.[75] While his argument completely ignores numerous factors

such as advances in gun technology, the impact of the Viet Cong style of guerrilla

warfare on the American soldier's psyche, the use of body counts by the U.S. military

during the Vietnam War, and the fact that these simulations were only a small part of a

soldier's training, Grossman's argument does show that even in the earliest stages of

computer gaming, the military was attempting to create video game simulations to help

train their soldiers.

As early as 1980, the Army TRADOC began attempting to reprogram popular

games to work as training simulations. A new arcade game, Atari's *Battlezone*, had

recently released featuring a 3D representation of virtual tank battles. The game was

played by looking through a "porthole" instead of the standard video screen and used a

two-joystick system to allow easier movement. Soon after the release of *Battlezone*,

TRADOC representatives approached Atari requesting a modified version of the game

which could be used as a Bradley tank training simulator.[76] *Battlezone* designer Ed

Rotberg handled these changes himself, which included the addition of realistic ballistics,

a new H-shaped controller to replicate controls within a Bradley tank, and the change of

enemy units to look like Soviet-style tanks and helicopters.[77] Whether these modified

versions of *Battlezone* were ever used is unknown, as Atari only produced two or three

prototypes before Rotberg left Atari to form a new company.[78]

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[75] Ibid, 4-5.
[76] Halter, 130.
[77] Ibid, 132-133.
[78] Ibid, 134-135.

Today, the military lists more than twenty-three different games that have been

created or modified from existing products for use as simulators and training programs.[79]

These programs range from games such as *Ambush!*, which places the recruit in an

ambushed convoy which they must fight to survive, to training applications such as a

program to train Army physicians in anesthesiology.[80] One of the more publicized

programs developed by the army, *Tactical Iraqi*, allows the player to interact with virtual

Iraqi civilians while learning the language and culture.[81] This is done through voice

recognition and language understanding software, which changes the situation based on

the soldier's actions and orders.[82] Military advisors also unveiled plans to create virtual

"training worlds," which would act much like *The Sims* or *Second Life*, allowing military

personnel to create an avatar that could be used to meet with others, practice tactics

within virtual missions, or even discuss the culture and society in their next field of

operations with an expert in the field.[83]

The military also helps lead the video game industry into new forms of

technological capabilities such as virtual reality and haptic feedback (physical feedback

such as vibrations or resistance). In order to make their training simulators more realistic,

[79] Katie Drummond, "Army Wants Virtual Training to Really Hurt," *Wired.com*. November 16, 2011. http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/11/virtual-explosions/. (accessed February 12, 2012).
[80] David Axe, "Army Wants 'First-Person Thinker' Video Game" *Wired.com*. July 23, 2008. http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2008/07/army-wants-firs/. (accessed February 12, 2012).
  Eddie Makuch, "FBI Using Unreal Engine 3 crime scene sim" *Gamespot.com*. March 27, 2012. http://www.gamespot.com/news/fbi-using-unreal-engine-3-crime-scene-sim-6368256. (accessed April 1, 2012).
[81] Axe, "Army Wants 'First-Person Thinker' Video Game."
[82] Ibid.
Bogost, *Persuasive Games*, 48.
[83] David Axe, "Virtual World for Future Army Training," *Wired.com*. July 29, 2008. http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2008/07/mmog/. (accessed February 12, 2012).
  Drummond, "Army Wants Virtual Training To Really Hurt."

military developers turned to new equipment, such as helmets that can project a 360º virtual environment, and are researching new technology, which can simulate the physical force associated with nearby explosions or the force of being struck by a bullet.[84] The Army's ultimate goal lies in the ability to "provide a total immersive experience with three-dimensional interactive holograms that provide tactile feedback."[85] The ability to use virtual reality and create interactive environments also resulted in the development of Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy for soldiers returning from Iraq or Afghanistan and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.[86] The military use a modified version of the game *Full Spectrum Warrior* along with virtual reality technology to create *Virtual Iraq*, an experimental therapy designed to help soldiers suffering from PTSD return to the scene of their traumatic experiences in the hopes of relieving anxiety through continued exposure.[87] Physicians can change and control the simulation to insure that players are not overly exposed but are also facing a situation similar to their true experiences.[88]

The development of training simulations occurs through both private third-party contractors and partnerships between the Army-funded Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) and major gaming companies. Third-party developers such as

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[84] Army RDECOM, "12.1 Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)," *United States Army*. http://www.acq.osd.mil/osbp/sbir/solicitations/sbir20121/army121.htm (accessed February 14, 2012), A12-074.
  Drummond, "Army Wants Virtual Training to Really Hurt."
[85] Army RDECOM, A12-074.
[86] Lorin Smith, "Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy to combat PTSD," *www.army.mil*. http://www.army.mil/article/33128/. (accessed February 14, 2012).
[87] Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter. *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 97-98.
  Smith, "Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy to combat PTSD."
[88] Ibid.

VirTra Systems and Dynamic Animation Systems work with the government to create

simulations for military, law enforcement, and the U.S. Fire Administration.[89] VirTra

Systems develops simulators including: replica weapons which fire with recoil; a threat-

fire system, which sends an electric shock to simulate being struck by enemy fire; and

real-time projections on up to five screens, which can provide up to 300º of immersion.[90]

Dynamic Animation Systems developed a training program known as the Virtual

Interactive Combat Environment, VICE, which emphasizes the use of team

communication and military rules of engagement to accomplish missions that can be

modified by instructors.[91]

Despite the innovative products created by companies like these, in 1999, the

Army funded the establishment of the Institute of Creative Technologies (ICT) at the

University of Southern California with a five year, $45 million dollar investment.[92] The

ICT brought together academia, game developers, Hollywood directors, and military

analysts in order to advance the technology associated with and create new military

training simulations.[93] ICT developed a number of projects focusing on virtual reality as

an immersive learning tool while partnering with gaming companies to produce games

such as *Full Spectrum Warrior*.[94]

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[89] Examples can be seen at: http://www.d-a-s.com/content/das-programs or http://virtra.com/

[90] "Threat-Fire: Return Fire System," *VirTra.com* http://virtra.com/accessories/threat-fire-return-fire-system. (accessed March 29, 2012).
  "Recoil Kits," *VirTra.com* http://virtra.com/recoil-kits (accessed March 29, 2012).
  "Military Training," *VirTra.com* http://virtra.com/military-training (accessed March 29, 2012).

[91] "The Virtual Interactive Combat Environment," *Dynamic Animation Systems, Inc.* http://www.d-a-s.com/VICE (accessed March 29, 2012).

[92] Halter, 215.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid, 225, 234.

Full Spectrum Warrior was originally designed as a military simulation to help train soldiers developed by ICT with the help of video game developer, Pandemic Studios.[95] The game puts the player in control of two fire teams, which can be given orders, such as suppress a target or advance, in order to work together towards their objective. The game focuses on the use of basic tactics, especially the importance of covering fire, movement, and flanking positions. After its development THQ published a commercial version of game, which included improved graphics, a musical score, and an overarching narrative story.[96] The Xbox commercial version also included the military version, which could be unlocked with a special code. Despite its development alongside military personnel, some reports in 2006 stated that many training officers rarely used the game due to the lack of urban combat. Moreover, many of the game's original military designers claimed that certain Army directives were ignored during development.[97] Although the game did not meet the its original goal as a worthy training simulator, it found new use as the basis for rehabilitation programs like *Virtual Iraq* and other tactical simulations.[98]

Another avenue for military training, referred to as "first-person thinkers," seems to be taking the next logical step in training simulations. A "first-person thinker" involves simulating decision-making at the strategic level for higher ranking officers.[99] An early chat-room based version of this kind of simulation involved various officers

[95] Ibid , 227.
[96] Ibid, 234.
[97] Halter, 235.
    Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 114.
[98] Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 98.
[99] Axe, "Army Wants First-Person Thinker Video Game."

debating the appropriate actions to take during a hypothetical second Korean War, with

their final decisions being judged by a moderator.[100] Major Kyle Burley hoped to expand

this idea into an online environment, which allowed avatar versions of these officers to

enter virtual command posts and discuss the particular scenario presented to them.[101]

Burley's idea may make the discussions and arguments easier to access by leaving the

chat rooms for the more interactive world of internet gaming, but it really does not fulfill

his hopes for a strategic decision-making simulation. The true goal of a "first-person

thinker" should be to present a conflict from its conception and force the player, or

players, to make decisions and react to different scenarios. These sorts of simulations

could be created quite easily, considering the scope of grand-strategy computer games,

such as *Hearts of Iron*, which allow the player to lead a nation through World War II or,

in the case of *Europa Universalis*, control the course of a nation for multiple centuries.

 The most successful video game created by the United States Army was not a

training simulation but an advergame. On July 4, 2002, a computer game entitled

America's Army released over the internet and found near immediate success. Within

two months, 2.5 million gamers downloaded the game for free; by December 2006, the

game registered 8 million users.[102] The game was created as an attempt to increase

recruitment among the younger male demographics, the target audience for most first-

person shooters. After three months, Army spokesmen claimed that 28% of gamers who

visited americasarmy.com used the link on the main page to visit the Army's official

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Rikke Schubart et al., *War Isn't Hell, It's Entertainment: Essays on Visual Media and the Representation of Conflict*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009), 204.
 Halter, ix.

recruitment site, goarmy.com.[103] The game's initial popularity produced an average of

30,000 players logging in each day and resulted in versions of the game developed for

home consoles, arcades, and mobile platforms.[104]

America's Army is different than every other shooting game because of its

adherence to military-style set of rules. Players begin their career in boot camp and must

complete virtual basic training before gaining access to every feature in the game.

Training includes marksmanship, medical, and Special Forces, all of which are necessary

to use particular guns or kits. The game also enforces a set of rules referred to as the

Rules of Engagement (ROE), which include no friendly fire nor killing or destroying an

objective players are supposed to protect.[105] Continued violations of these ROE can

result in suspensions or permanent bans of the player's account.[106] Despite these

attempts to replicate military discipline and include realistic representations of weapons,

America's Army lacks more mature content such as blood, foul language, or any form of

graphic death despite being a game based on war. This is more likely than not a result of

the Army's desire to produce a Teen-rated game in order to avoid the stigma of more

violent Mature-rated games and, perhaps more importantly, reach potential recruits even

before they are old enough to enlist.

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[103] Wagner James Au, "Weapons of mass distraction," *Salon*. October 4, 2002.
http://www.salon.com/2002/10/04/why_we_fight/. (accessed February 8, 2012).
[104] Schubart, Virchow, White-Stanley, & Thomas, 204.
[105] America's Army, "Support Network > Frequently Asked Questions," *americasarmy.com*.
http://www.americasarmy.com/aa/support/faqs.php?t=13&z=32. (accessed February 3, 2012).
[106] Ibid.

Serious Games

In 2002, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars launched the

Serious Game Initiative as a way to bring government and industry representatives

together with gaming developers through arranged meetings, conferences, and the

creation of the Serious Games Summit.[107] This initiative hoped to bring about the

creation of "a new series of policy education, exploration, and management tools utilizing

state of the art computer game designs, technologies, and development skills."[108] This

organization resulted in the establishment of new groups, such as Games for Change,

Games2Train, and Games for Health, all of which attempted to improve or educate others

on social, employment, and healthcare issues respectively. Today, Games2Train

develops employee training games for a number of companies including American

Express, IBM, and Bank of America.[109] According to The Apply Group, more than 100

of the global Fortune 500 companies will implement games for training purposes by the

end of 2012.[110] While "serious games" were in use by the military and many education

systems long before the Serious Games Initiative, the backing of a government funded

think-tank broadened corporate e-learning into an estimated $10.6 billion-dollar industry

by 2007.[111]

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[107] Bogost, *Persuasive Games*, 55-56.
[108] Ibid, 56.
[109] U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. September 13, 2011. *Statement of Michael D. Gallagher*. (accessed at http://www.theesa.com/newsroom/Mike_Gallagher_STEM_House_Testimony.pdf, February 2, 2012), 7.
[110] Ibid, 7.
[111] Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 29.

Today, corporate training games range from teaching Canon repairmen how to fix copiers to helping ice cream scoopers practice serving perfectly sized scoops of ice cream in a timely manner.[112] As early as 1975, Owen Gaede developed a simulation for new high school teachers to help introduce the problems that may arise between dealing with students, principals, and fellow teachers.[113] His game, *Tenure*, forced the player to face situations such as another teacher holding students too long, forcing them to be late for class, and deciding the best course of action from a number of choices.[114] The player's ultimate goal is to gain a new contract to teach at the school by maintaining good relationships with students and co-workers while keeping the principal happy with their work. More recent training games are designed to help potential employees face issues in customer service or analyze marketing and stock numbers to decide how to invest or cut back on corporate funds.[115] In 2004, BBC News reported that Geneva Trading, based in Chicago, implemented video game assessments for all potential employees, which forced the player to rapidly choose which stocks to buy or sell on a number of fast moving screens.[116]

Serious games also found their way into educational use, from children preparing to enter pre-K to students at MIT. Some of the earliest games that would become popular in schools across the United States were developed by the Minnesota Educational Computing Consortium (MECC). This organization was originally created in 1973 to

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[112] Ibid.

[113] Bogost, *Persuasive Games*, 1.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 29.

[116] Tracey Logan, "Gaming helps traders score big-time," *BBC News*. October 10, 2004. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/3723922.stm. (accessed March 3, 2012).

provide computer services for schools in Minnesota only, but by the 1980s, their

programs and educational games, such as *The Oregon Trail* and *Number Munchers*, were

expanded into other states.[117] These games along with newer consumer products such as

Math Blaster and *JumpStart* became popular both in schools and for home use

throughout the 1980s and '90s. The success of these programs hinged on their ability to

draw children in and their desire to continue playing over sitting through another lesson

in a classroom. Dr. James Paul Gee argued that "good games" can facilitate learning

through principles such as interactivity, customization, and the player's investment in

succeeding.[118] By grabbing the player's attention and getting the player to actively

engage in attempting to succeed, video games are able to force the player to learn in order

to win. These ideas are employed by a number of game creators at the Massachusetts

Institute of Technology (MIT), whose Education Arcade's topics range from a simulation

of Williamsburg on the eve of the American Revolution to a game based on the concepts

of electromagnetism.[119]

  While games developed specifically for educational purposes are intended to help

teach about a specific topic, some doctors and members of academia argue that Massively

Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs) could also be useful in studying

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[117] Jessica Lussenhop, "Oregon Trail: How Three Minnesotans Forged Its Path," *Citypages.com*. January 19, 201.1 http://www.citypages.com/content/printVersion/1740595/. (accessed March 3, 2012).

[118] "James Gee on Video Games and Learning," *New Learning Online*. http://newlearningonline.com/new-learning/chapter-9-learning-communities-at-work/james-gee-on-video-games-and-learning/. (accessed March 10, 2012)

 James Paul Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

[119] "Supercharged!" *The Education Arcade*. December 20, 2005. http://educationarcade.org/supercharged. (accessed March 11, 2012).

 "Revolution," *The Education Arcade*. August 11, 2008. http://educationarcade.org/node/357. (accessed March 10, 2012).

incidents such as epidemic diseases. MMORPGs are games that allow large numbers of

players to inhabit a virtual world and interact with one another. The idea of using these

games as test cases originated from the so-called "Corrupted Blood Incident" in *World of*

Warcraft, one of the most popular games ever released. In an update to the game, the

developers added a new raid including a final boss named Hakkar the Soulflayer who

could cast a spell called "Corrupted Blood." This spell acts like a curse, which slowly

drains the player's life and can be spread to other players nearby; but because raids are

done in controlled environments known as "instances," the spell would be removed from

players before entering the rest of the world. A glitch in the game allowed the Corrupted

Blood spell to continue to infect player's companions even when taken outside of the

raid. Soon after the update, the spell spread like a plague throughout the main world

infecting and killing large portions of the population, resulting in what many called an

epidemic, which ultimately resulted in a hard reset of the servers. Throughout the

"epidemic," players exhibited many of the same reactions as scientists believe would

occur in the real world. A few examples included healers offering to help those who

were infected while large numbers avoided major population centers. The actions of

players and how the disease spread throughout the game gave a few researchers the idea

to use these types of games as models for infectious diseases.[120]

    Outside of education, both military and academic, serious games also found a role

in political criticism and activist movements. In 2005, mtvU announced the Darfur

[120] Ran Balicer, "Modeling Infectious Diseases Dissemination Through Online Role-Playing Games," *Epidemiology* 18, no. 2 (2005-10-05): 260–261.
  Kyle Orland, "GFH: The Real Life Lessons of *WoW*'s Corrupted Blood," *Gamasutra.com*. May 20, 2008. http://www.gamasutra.com/php-bin/news_index.php?story=18571. (accessed February 5, 2012).

Digital Activist Contest which asked university students to design a game which could be used as an advocacy tool to gain more attention on the genocide involved in the Darfur conflict.[121] The winning submission, entitled *Darfur is Dying*, was designed by a group of students led by Susan Ruiz at the University of Southern California.[122] In the game, the player controls a Darfurian refugee who must travel outside of his village to gather water from a well while avoiding Janjaweed militia. If the player is caught, the game displays a message informing the fate of the player's character as well as the numerous real-life Sudanese the militia is taking. After foraging for water, the game switches to a view of a village with numerous stories of the crisis in Darfur, which can be accessed by rolling the player's mouse over a small question mark. The purpose of this part of the game is to keep the camp functioning for seven days by retrieving water and allocating the retrieved water between crops, the water supply, and creating bricks to rebuild the town after raids.

Games such as *Darfur is Dying* and *Hush*, a game designed around the Rwandan genocide, which forces the player to attempt to keep a crying child quiet in order to avoid being discovered by Hutu militia, are samples of "activist games."[123] These games range from raising awareness of human genocide, criticizing business practices ala *The McDonald's Game*, to antiwar games such as the perfectly titled, *Antiwargame*.[124] Gonzalo Frasca created his own website, newsgaming.com, to host games that he calls to

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[121] Darfur is Dying, "About the Game," *mtvU.com*. http://www.darfurisdying.com/aboutgame.html. (accessed March 9, 2012).

[122] Ian Bogost, *How To Do Things With Videogames*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 18.

[123] "Featured Better Game Contest Winner! Hush," *values@play*. http://www.bettergamecontest.org/?q=node/74. (accessed March 10, 2012).

[124] Bogost, *Persuasive Games*, 29-31 82-83.

as a mixture of video games and political cartoons.[125] The first of these games,

September 12, shows a city filled with buildings, civilians, and terrorists. The player is

able to direct missile strikes against the town with the implied hope of killing the

terrorists. Unfortunately, many of these strikes will also kill innocent civilians. This

results in other civilians mourning the dead followed by a conversion of more civilians

into terrorists. The game is a never-ending simulation which is impossible to win or lose;

its purpose is to show the problems with counter-terrorist warfare and its impact on

innocent civilians.[126]

Video games are now being used in many ways that early naysayers could never

have imagined. As the capabilities of games continue to grow, more and more industries

will find new ways to use them. The fact that games can be used as an educational

device, training tool, or social platform shows that the potential is there for video games

to help teach, study, or even present historical information. The use of history as a source

of information and inspiration in video game development has occurred for decades.

More recently, history has become the entire basis for long-running franchises. As games

continue to focus on realism and the ability to create detailed environments continues to

evolve, the potential for fully detailed historical recreations is coming closer to reality.

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[125] Ibid, 86.
[126] Ibid, 87.

CHAPTER 3

REINVENTING THE PAST

"They always forget to leave in the past."[127] These words, taken from an interview with Cliff Bleszinski, were spoken about games attempting to depict the future without leaving any sign of the past. Bleszinski, the design director for Epic Games, argued that most games featuring a futuristic setting act as if "the entire world would just explode and be rebuilt in this kind of super-futuristic style. I still see old cars from the '30s and '40s around, right next to things that look like they're from the year 2000. It's that mix that makes things interesting."[128] Although Bleszinski's discussion is referencing the development of *Gears of War*, a game which takes place on an all-too-familiar looking fantasy world known as Sera, he wanted artists working on the game to create a cityscape based on a "hybrid of Washington D.C. and London."[129]

The idea of keeping futuristic or fantasy themes tied together with historical overtones is now commonplace in many best-selling video game franchises. Popular developers such as Square-Enix or Bioware, whose games are usually fantasy oriented or science fiction, use historical works as a way to create lore or themes within their games. In his book, *Extra Lives*, Tom Bissell mentions during a tour of Bioware, a large library filled with books ranging from Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* to *The Complete*

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[127] Tom Bissell, *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), 57.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.

Idiot's Guide to World Religions.[130] While historical and real world information can

provide the potential basis or inspiration for newly created characters or stories, it can

also be used as a pre-built setting for new stories.

Historical research impacts a variety of video game genres ranging from games

based on entirely fictional storylines to incredibly detailed historical simulations. While

the practical uses of games based completely on historical references are more obvious,

some of the most popular yet fantastical video game franchises are still using history to

shape their storylines and, as a result, giving players a reason to think about the influence

of historical events on both the fictional world they are playing in and the world around

them. The uses of various resources, such as historical references and advisors, allow

developers to gather the information necessary to present a believable experience.

Intertwining History and Fantasy

By setting their games in a real world replica, developers are able to implement

their stories into real life locations or even divert the way things actually happened and

create their own timeline. Games, such as *Turning Point: Fall of Liberty* and *Resistance:

The Fall of Man*, involve substantial shifts in the historical timeline of the years leading

up to or during World War II. *Turning Point* counterfactually portrays World War II

without Winston Churchill, who is killed when hit by a cab in New York City, an event

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[130] Ibid, 108.

that actually occurred although Churchill survived. In the game, Hitler's Germany

defeats Great Britain and Russia in the war, while Japan and Italy also achieve success

and new empires, thanks in large part to the United States neutrality and isolationist

policies. After consolidating their new gains, Germany and Japan launch a two-sided

invasion of the United States, leaving the game's main character, a construction worker

from New York, to fight off the invading German army.

The *Resistance* franchise takes the idea of changing history a step farther by

placing an alien invasion of Russia, followed by the world, during the early twentieth

century. The game's storyline features a number of small divergences from the actual

history in order to set the stage for certain events. For example, the War of 1898 never

occurs after Spain grants Cuban independence in the face of the U.S. military threat and

the Bolshevik Revolution is crushed by Tsar Mikhail, who, unlike his historical

counterpart, accepts his role as Emperor of Russia after his brother, Nicholas II, abdicated

the throne. Continued isolationist policies keep The United States out of the First World

War, but it still occurs with nearly identical results. After the Bolshevik Revolution is

put to rest, Russia isolates itself from the world and is quickly overrun by the mysterious

Chimera, an alien race bent on destruction. By alternating two major historical events,

developers are able to change the way the world looks without relying simply on the

science fictional fantasy, that they introduce later in the game. Russian fears of social

unrest and uprisings, especially from outside influences, lead to the complete closing of

Russian borders to the outside world. This isolation gives the Chimeran force time to

grow into an unstoppable juggernaut while the rest of the world is given little information

about anything inside of Russian territory. American isolationist policies, within the

game's revised historical framework, become increasingly popular after avoiding the Spanish-American War which in turn, keeps the United States from interfering in European affairs until the entire continent is overrun by the alien Chimera. By simply revising two pieces of history, the developers are able to present an alternate, but entirely plausible version of historical events. Despite the fact that the entire series is built around a fictional alien invasion, the *Resistance* franchise emphasizes the impact a particular point in history can have on the entire world and by doing so, can challenge players to understand the effects of history on later generations.

Another set of games, the *Fallout* franchise, places itself in the late twenty-first century of a world in which resource shortages result in wars and rioting across the globe, culminating in a "Great War" between China and the United States, which results in nuclear holocaust. In *Fallout 3*, the player assumes the role of a young man or woman in an underground nuclear shelter known as Vault 101. After going through events like the character's birth and tenth birthday, the player eventually leaves the vault and enters an area known as the Capital Wasteland. This area is mostly barren and includes random settlements of nuclear survivors but there is also one major city, which gives the wasteland its name, Washington D.C. This re-creation of Washington D.C. includes numerous landmarks such as the Washington and Lincoln Monuments. These landmarks are focal points in the story. By including these landmarks, the developers are able to use

the historical significance of Washington D.C. to help players identify with the horrors of nuclear war on a location they can recognize or even visit.[131]

One series of games that uses a historical setting for an entirely new story is the *Assassin's Creed* franchise. These games place the player in a fictional struggle between two secret societies, the Knights Templar and the Assassins. While these two sides are based on historical groups, the game places these two sides in a fictitious struggle that predates the Crusades, even the birth of Jesus, as Templars attempted to create a New World Order, which they could control through force while the Assassins opposed them by killing Templar-backed leaders. While the games' stories are completely fictional, the settings of these games are well-known locations and times throughout history. These locations range from the Middle East during the Third Crusade, Renaissance Italy and Constantinople, and the American Revolution.

The *Assassin's Creed* series are known for their attempt to recreate the historical locations and periods they occur in. Designers tried to mimic the architectural style, including numerous landmarks, and weaved many historical figures into the plot of these games. By providing actual historical figures, such as Robert de Sable or Rodrigo Borgia, as the targets for assassination, the game took some liberties in changing their deaths to fit the story. Despite this, the fact that many of the game's characters are based on real historical figures and actual historical events are recreated for the player to witness, such as Washington's troops in Valley Forge or Cesare Borgia's battle and

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[131] Mike Musgrove, "Fallout 3, Starring Washington, D.C." *The Washington Post*. October 26, 2008. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/25/AR2008102500047.html?sid=ST2008102700714. (accessed March 10, 2012).

ultimate death in Viana, Spain, this allows the game to provide plenty of information that may help raise the player's awareness of many historical figures and events.[132]   Famous buildings and other locations are included in every game and their historical relevance are explained through small windows of information when the player first discovers a new location.

Playing The Past

While many game developers found new ways to intertwine history and fantastical stories, games covering actual historical events also became more commonplace, thanks to the growing desire for realism in video games. During the 1990s and 2000s, the number of games placing the player in the middle of historical conflicts increased drastically with the success of games like *Medal of Honor*, *Call of Duty*, and *Civilization*. While there are certainly exceptions, most historical-based video games, and the most well-known, either place the player in the middle of a particular conflict at the ground level or at the head of an army or nation deciding everything from military strategy to political choices.

Looking at war from a bottom-up perspective, franchises like *Medal of Honor* and *Call of Duty* released some of the best-selling first-person shooters on the market, the

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[132] Matt Miller, "Liberty and Death: Assassin's Creed III," *GameInformer*, 228 (April 2012), 39-50. *Assassin's Creed III* has yet to be released but stated in an interview that players would witness Washington in Valley Forge and the Great Fire of New York among other things.

majority of which are based in World War II. These games allow the player to look through the eyes of a soldier as he must shoot, throw grenades, hide behind cover, and anything else that it takes to survive and complete any number of objectives. Of course, as a game, players are usually able to take hits and recover a few seconds later and single-handedly take on large numbers of troops, but this all takes place in recreated battles that actually occurred. With the sheer amount of World War II-based games that are produced, nearly every major battle can be found recreated in one game or another, from storming the beaches of Normandy to the assault on Shuri Castle. Many of the more popular shooting games tend to come off much like a standard war film as heroes overcome incredible odds to perform heroic acts throughout the war. The jump from heroic films to heroic video games is not surprising when considering Steven Spielberg proposed the concept for the original *Medal of Honor*, which became the first historically-based World War II first-person shooter game after working on his movie *Saving Private Ryan*.[133]

The *Brothers in Arms* series attempted to change this regular formula of military shooters in which the player alone can achieve nearly superhero like feats. Most of the games mentioned earlier leave the player in an unknown squad with no true identification and squad members who do nothing more than fill space while waiting for the player to do all the work. By contrast, the *Brothers in Arms* franchise placed the focus not only on

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[133] "Electronic Arts to Release DreamWorks Interactive's Medal of Honor, the First World War II-inspired Game for the PlayStation," *Business Wire*. March 18, 1999.
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0EIN/is_1999_March_18/ai_54139670/. (accessed January 15, 2012).

creating realistic landscapes or weapons, like nearly every other military-based game, but also on the player being part of an actual unit and utilizing their squad. Gamers are given control of a squad leader in the 101st Airborne Division's 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment during their D-day drop and Operation Market Garden. These games force players to use their squad, for suppressing enemy units and flanking maneuvers, in order to advance by limiting ammunition for the single soldier and making accurate firing much more difficult.[134] These attempts at a more realistic and historical product resulted in the History Channel's endorsement of these games and the creation of a two-hour special dedicated to the story of the 101st Airborne, 502nd Parachute Infantry entitled "Brothers in Arms," which used footage from the game to show recreations of the actions and battles experienced by these regiments.[135]

The History Channel also partnered with video game developers in creating a number of games ranging from the Civil War to the Crusades. *History Channel: The Civil War - A Nation Divided* puts the player in the role of either a Union or Confederate soldier while playing through a number of different battles from the Civil War. The game's campaign does not follow any sort of progression and each battle is presented as its own story, instead of attempting to implement one overarching narrative.[136] A sequel entitled *Civil War: Secret Missions* allowed gamers to play through Civil War missions

[134] EODTech, "Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway: Good Enough to be a Training Aid?" *OffDutyGamers.com*. January 02, 2010. http://www.offdutygamers.com/2010/01/brothers-in-arms-hell%E2%80%99s-highway-good-enough-to-be-a-training-aid/. (accessed January 16, 2012).
[135] Gearbox Software Press, "Brothers in Arms History Channel Special," *GearboxSoftware.com*. December 1, 2005. http://www.gearboxsoftware.com/press/brothers-in-arms-history-channel-special/. (accessed January 16, 2012).
[136] John Callaham, "Civil War: A Nation Divided Interview," *FiringSquad.com*. October 20, 2006. http://www.firingsquad.com/games/history_channel_civil_war_interview/. (accessed January 29, 2012).

of scouting and sabotage, such as The Great Train Raid of 1861. Other games bearing the History Channel logo include aerial combat simulators, such as *Battle of Britain 1940*, and strategy games, such as *Great Battles of Rome*.

Strategy games provide the perfect platform for recreating historical events from a top-down point of view. These games allow players to control units, armies, or even nations through the course of a battle, war, or over centuries while attempting to understand the impact of the decisions they were forced to make. These games range from turn-based strategy, *Civilization*, to real-time strategy games, *Age of Empires*, to grand strategy games such as *Hearts of Iron* or *Europa Universalis*. Turn-based games, as the name suggests, are games in which players take turns, while real-time games allow players to act simultaneously. *Civilization* allows players to pick from a number of civilizations, ranging from the Aztecs to the Japanese, and attempt to build an empire by managing exploration, economics, and technological development. All civilizations begin with only a settler or a small settlement and must grow from the Stone Age to the Space Age while attempting to become the dominant civilization through war, diplomacy, or economic power. This can be achieved through researching new technology, creating armies, building "World Wonders," negotiating with other leaders, and many other actions. The fact that these games do not follow any actual historical timeline results in the ability for a German civilization to create a pyramid like those found in ancient Egypt or any other number of strange combinations of historical pairings. Nevertheless, some educators use the *Civilization* games to help teach basic concepts, a method which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Age of Empires features many similarities to *Civilization*, such as the growth of civilizations and attempting to achieve domination over others. As a real-time strategy, the game relies much more on the creation of armies as the only way to win by eliminating the other players' settlements and units. To gather necessary resources, players must use units known as villagers to hunt, forage, or mine in order to gain the capital needed to employ armies and expand both technologically and territorially. The fact that all players are taking action simultaneously, unlike a turn-based game like *Civilization*, forces successful gamers to rely on quick decision making and managing of resources in order to advance and outgrow other competitors. While both *Civilization* and *Age of Empires* include special abilities and units depending on the specific civilization such as Russian Cossacks, *Age of Empires* also allows the player to play through historical campaigns such as Saladin's defense against the Crusades or William Wallace's uprising.

Some strategy games include a combination of turn-based and real-time gameplay, which allows players to play through historic conflicts on both the strategic and tactical levels. The *Total War* series sets players in control of a particular clan or state, which they lead to success as an empire. Players must control political, economic, and social factors during a turn-based style of gameplay like *Civilization*. Once an army is sent to battle, the player is then able to control his army in a real-time battle, which forces the player to rely on tactics and formations to defeat opposing units. The newest iteration in the series, *Total War: Shogun 2*, allows the player to lead one of the many clans during the Sengoku period fighting to gain control of Japan. By using both military power and diplomatic ingenuity, players can work their way towards making any clan

become the leading group within Japan. While the game may not always result in the powerful Oda clan led by Nobunaga and the eventual Tokugawa Shogunate, the way in which the game presents the complexity of diplomatic relations between the Sengoku-era clans and their struggle for power helps to emphasize the chaos which marked this time in Japan.

Strategy games such as *Civilization*, *Age of Empires*, and *Total War* give players control over particular societies or groups throughout history. All three games force the player to consider the problems a fledgling empire or nation-state face during their push for power and stability. Although *Civilization* and *Age of Empires* do not tend to focus on specific historical events as strongly as the *Total War* series, they do introduce gamers to the kinds of ideas presented by scholars such as Jared Diamond in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. As Kurt Squire showed in his dissertation, which will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter, players hoping to succeed in a game of *Civilization* must quickly realize the importance of resources and natural barriers.

Grand-strategy games force the players into the role of a supreme commander or leader of a nation. Games such as *Hearts of Iron* give players control of one nation during World War II, which can join with the Allies, Axis, or Comintern. Players work towards winning the war by setting everything from military strategy to political and economic directives. While *Hearts of Iron III* gives the freedom of choosing one of more than 50 countries and controlling their actions through World War II, *Europa Universalis* III, which is also created by developer Paradox Interactive, allows players to pick from more than 300 countries and lead their nation for over 400 years. The *Europa Universalis* series allows players to make complex decisions on everything from

economic policies to diplomatic relations, such as royal marriages or alliances. Changes

in the historical framework can result in numerous oddities such as Sweden becoming a

global superpower or Irish colonialism into India. While creating world powers through

shifts in the historical timeline may be entertaining, most of these types of games also

include a scenario editor which allows players to recreate specific points in history and

actively engage with a resource which can display how the smallest change may have

completely changed the way a war was fought or an empire's rise or fall took place.

Experimenting with these games can help those unfamiliar with the history of the times

they are playing through to understand the importance of particular events such as the

declining morale of French troops during the First World War or the benefits of

exploration and imperialism for European nations. By playing these sorts of video

games, players are constantly exposed to how the world's nations were divided during

whatever time period they choose to play and more importantly, how even the smallest

decisions could completely change the way the world worked.

Recreating History

In an article written for the Gamasutra.com, a website dedicated to all aspects of

video game development, Bruce Shelley claimed that, "realism and historical information

are resources or props we use to add interest, story, and character to the problems we are

posing for the player. That is not to say that realism and historic fact have no importance,

they are just not the highest priority."[137] Shelley worked as a designer on many

successful historical-based strategy games including both the original *Civilization* and

Age of Empires video games. Nearly all of the best known video game franchises

including historical references follow Shelley's idea perfectly. Games that take place in

World War II are hoping to capitalize on both the history buff's passion for the period

and the common consumer who, when looking at war games, can immediately recognize

certain aspects of World War II. According to Shelley, having players who already know

something about the theme of a game allows player to "have some preconceived notions

of what should be going on and thus have some ideas about how to play."[138]

Another key factor in the growth of video games based in actual history is

ironically the growth of more advanced technology. The graphic capabilities today are

nearly life-like, leaving gamers expecting games to feel as realistic as possible. Players

reliving a war want the weapons to look and act like they would during a 13th century

Crusade, for example, or the Vietnam War. Games in the *Red Orchestra* series, along

with very few others, not only bring together a realistic setting, such as the Eastern Front

of World War II with replicas of tanks and weapons from that time, but also present

players with a much more realistic experience of war. Players are not given information

common in other games such as the number of bullets held or crosshairs on the screen to

help aim. Bullets to vital areas can kill the player in one hit while other wounds must be

bandaged for risk of bleeding to death. Needless to say, the *Red Orchestra* series makes

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[137] Bruce Shelley, "Guidelines for Developing Successful Games," *Gamasutra.com*, August 15, 2001. http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/131450/guidelines_for_developing_.php?page=3. (accessed February 3, 2012).
[138] Mark H. Walker, *Games That Sell*. (Plano, TX: Wordware Publishing, Inc., 2003), 178.

extreme heroism much less likely and attempting to just survive, much like real war, all the more likely. Games are now also including convincing digital replicas of city landmarks, which players would expect to see in certain cities, such as *Crysis 2*'s use of Wall Street and Times Square in New York.[139]

The idea of using history to aid in game development resulted in a number of best-selling, multi-million-dollar franchises. The growth of franchises like *Medal of Honor*, *Total War*, and *Civilization* made historical-based games more common than ever as others attempted to capitalize on their success, resulting in a push into previously unused historical material. The release of the original *Medal of Honor* in 1999 launched the beginning of numerous World War II games including the first *Call of Duty*, whose last three iterations each set the record for the largest entertainment launch in the world each of the last three years.[140] As these games are becoming more popular, developers are turning to more in-depth research in order to help create as accurate of an historical background or setting for their games as possible. While some developers, such as Bruce Shelley, have argued that too much historical research can alienate the common consumer by presenting too much information and feeling like "a history lesson," most developers are now extensively researching everything from the layout of historic battlefields to the way diplomacy and trading impacted the rise and fall of empires.[141] The idea that "the best reference materials are often found in the children's section because this is the level of historic interest for most of the gaming public" and "extensive,

[139] Annette Gonzalez, "Reimagining History," *Game Informer*. 221 (September 2011), 38.
[140] Keith Stuart, "Modern Warfare 3 smashes entertainment launch records," *theguardian.com*. November 11, 2011. http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/gamesblog/2011/nov/11/modern-warfare-3-breaks-sales-records. (accessed January 10, 2012).
[141] Walker, 178-179.

detailed research is not necessary or even a good idea for most entertainment products,"
as Shelley stated during an interview, is now a thing of the past. Some developers now
rely on professional historical studies and expert consultants to insure everything is
designed correctly down to the seemingly most minor and insignificant details.[142]

Most large-scale historical grand-strategy games always dedicated large portions
of their developmental costs to historical research. The majority of developers using
basic historical information allow staff members to do this research while games focused
on specific historical events seek out experts in the field and dedicate teams whose sole
purpose is historical research. Paradox Interactive, the makers of games like *Europa
Universalis*, *Hearts of Iron*, and *Crusader Kings*, spent years researching political,
economic, and military histories for countless countries in order to present players with
the actual situation that a country, state, or leader faced during the time-period
represented in their games. This research allows the designers to create formulas to
determine the relative strength of a particular nation or introduce historical leaders and
events as a particular year passes in the game. For example, players wanting to expand
their influence while using Portugal in a game of *Europa Universalis* face the daunting
task of dealing with Castille and Aragon or, following Portugal's actual footsteps, putting
most of their efforts into naval trade and exploration during the 15th century. According
to Norm Koger, the lead designer for Talonsoft's *Operational Art of War*, historical
research for these games can assume large portions of their development budget

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[142] Walker, 179.

including thousands of dollars a year.[143] The original *Operational Art of War* allowed the player to experience different scenarios replaying wars ranging from 1939-1955, which includes the beginning of World War II to the entirety of the Korean War. The latest iteration, *Operational Art of War III*, provides scenarios for nearly every war since the beginning of the 20th century, from World War I to modern day.

In-depth, accurate historical research is not surprising in large-scale war games, which are nearly all marketed for the niche of history and war buffs. These games are expected to be as close to historical authenticity as possible, but their developers are not the only ones spending months or even years researching these topics. Gamers with an interest in history also fill developers' official forums with discussions on the historical accuracy of a particular game even before it is ever released. Developers like Slitherine Software realized that not only do these diehard fans keep developers honest but they can also become a source of new ideas for further expansions.[144]

The success of historical strategy games like *Civilization* in the 1990s, along with the growth of real-time strategy games such as *Command & Conquer* and *Warcraft*, led to the creation of the first game in the *Total War* series by The Creative Assembly. The original game, *Shogun: Total War*, placed players in control of one of the many daimyos in Japan during the Sengoku period in an attempt to become the ruling shogun over all of

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[143] Thomas J. Willmuth, "The Study of Military History Through Commercial War Games: A Look At Operation Crusader With the Operational Art of War" (master's thesis, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2001), 65. http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA397321 (accessed January 30, 2012).

[144] Mike Bowden, "The History Channel: Great Battles of the Middle Ages Interview," *StrategyInformer.com*.
http://www.strategyinformer.com/ps3/historychannelgreatbattlesofthemiddleages/interviews.html. (accessed February 3, 2012).

Japan. As mentioned earlier, this involved a turn-based portion that allowed the player to move armies and negotiate trade, among other things, and a real-time portion which allowed the player to actively control his army's tactics in a battle. This series has since moved on to cover the creation of the Roman Empire and the Napoleonic Wars, but the latest iteration, *Total War: Shogun 2*, revisits the Sengoku period with updated graphics, more in-depth knowledge of clans and soldiers, and new forms of warfare including naval and improved castle sieges.

In developing the game, members of The Creative Assembly spent years researching characters and stories from the period and months gathering resources, including photographs of Japan's landscapes and topographical data of battlefields accurate to the period.[145] Researchers read numerous studies on the period including: *The Art of the Edo Period*, *The History of Japanese Armor*, and *The Japanese Art of War: Understanding the Culture of Strategy*, and watched Japanese films set during the time period, such as *Seven Samurai* and *Kagemusha*.[146] In order to incorporate Japanese art-style successfully, Creative Assembly artists studied Japanese *ukiyo-e* ink and woodblock techniques for more than a year.[147] The team even spoke with the current head of the Tokugawa family to learn the family's history and studied the financial history of the time, which included first-hand accounts of payments made by leaders in order to supply

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[145] Gonzalez, 36.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Mike Fahey, "Shogun 2 Total War: The Difference A Decade Makes," *Kotaku.com*. June 19, 2010. http://kotaku.com/5567555/shogun-2-total-war-the-difference-a-decade-makes. (accessed February 3, 2012).

their armies.[148] Moreover, the game's researchers gained insight from a professional

historical advisor specializing on samurai warfare, Stephen Turnbull.

Turnbull has published numerous studies on early Japanese military history

including, *The Samurai: A Military History*. He worked with The Creative Assembly on

the original *Shogun: Total War* and served again as a consultant for their return to the

Sengoku-era. For the latter, Turnbull suggested ideas from newer studies that were

published since the original game was released, including more detailed knowledge of

army organization and the use of female warriors.[149] Turnbull also provided developers

with actual armor from the period to study and informed them of siege and naval tactics

as they historically occurred. According to Turnbull, naval battles played a very minor

role during the period and were fought more like land-battles with spears, muskets,

swords, and bombs.[150] This is projected into the game as naval warfare involves

projectiles like arrows and gunfire, boarding techniques, and hand-to-hand fighting rather

than the cannons and broadsides featured in European naval engagements of the time.

Although games like the *Total War* series show an incredible level or research

and attention to detail, these games are obviously still not able to perfectly recreate an

exact historical setting. For example, in order to make *Shogun 2: Total War* more

appealing and easier to balance in terms of gameplay, the game includes a number of

samurai units using swords. In battle, the overwhelming majority of samurai during the

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[148] Gonzalez, 36.

[149] Dr. Stephen Turnbull, interview by Mark O'Connell, "Total War: Shogun 2 Podcast," *youtube.com*. March 28, 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnmZgYc8wJw. (accessed February 8, 2012)

[150] Peter Parrish, "Dr. Stephen Turnbull, Shogun 2 Total War Interview," *incgamers.com*. September 13, 2010. http://www.incgamers.com/Interviews/295/dr-stephen-turnbull-shogun-2-total-war-interview. (accessed February 8, 2012).

Sengoku era used either bows or spears in battle and kept a sword as a secondary, and nearly, last resort weapon. The inclusion of samurai units with swords appeals to the preconceived notion of samurai swordsmen shown throughout popular media today. This also allows the game to have a third unit of samurai, along with bow and spear wielders, which allowed developers to include a "rock-paper-scissor" type battle mechanic into the game. Despite minor inaccuracies such as this, the level of research and attention to detail that the developers accomplished allow players, although mostly acting out alternate histories, the ability to immerse themselves into a highly detailed recreation of 16th century Japan.

This sort of attention to detail has also been utilized by developers of non-strategic games, such as war-based shooters and even fictional games placed in historical settings. Games like *Call of Duty*, *Medal of Honor*, and *Brothers in Arms* place the gamer into historical environments like World War II through the eyes of one soldier. The push towards providing a more realistic experience has driven developers of these games to study everything from battle and terrain maps to the type of a bullet a specific weapon fires. In order to include as much detail as possible when recreating these battles, designers now conduct research, visit war sites, interview veterans, and consult military advisors.

One of the best known military advisors in Hollywood, Dale Dye, also became one of the first military advisors to work with a video game. Dye has worked as both an advisor and actor in Hollywood, working on projects such as *Platoon*, *Band of Brothers*, and *The Pacific*. After working with Steven Spielberg on *Saving Private Ryan*, Dye

agreed to work with Spielberg and Electronic Arts in creating the first *Medal of Honor*.[151]

Due to the designer's work in researching the topic, Dye served more as a "reality check"

for particular parts of the game and suggesting small tweaks to insure the games provided

an authentic experience.[152] Although he originally felt skeptical towards the idea of

working on a video game, Dye eventually found that games, which attempt to stay

authentic to the history, can "show respect that is deserved by those who served." He

even introduced the game to other veterans.[153] Today, the Medal of Honor Society of

America actually endorses the *Medal of Honor* video game franchise.

Another advisor, John Antal, now works for Gearbox Software as a full-time

military and historical director. Antal retired from the U.S. Army as a colonel after thirty

years and leads the research process for the *Brothers in Arms* franchise. Once the

developers decided to focus on the story of the 101st Airborne Division, he interviewed

veterans of the unit, traveled to the battlefields in Europe, and provided designers with

information on military tactics and weaponry of that period.[154]

The *Call of Duty* franchise, which has recently become one of the most successful

series of video games in the history of the industry, also used a historical and military

advisor, Hank Keirsey, since its original conception. Keirsey served in the Army for

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[151] Will Tuttle, "Dale Dye Interview," *Gamespy.com*. June 2, 2005. http://ps2.gamespy.com/playstation-2/medal-of-honor-st-nazaire/621891p1.html, (accessed February 13, 2012), 1.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid, 1-3.

[154] Dean Takahashi, "John Antal on making a video game, novel, and history book all at once," *venturebeat.com*. May 28, 2008. http://venturebeat.com/2008/05/28/an-interview-with-john-antal-on-making-a-video-game-novel-and-history-book-all-at-once/. (accessed February 13, 2012).

twenty-four years and taught military history at West Point.[155] Unlike Antal, Keirsey

does not do the research, which is mostly done by the developers, but acts more as a fact

checker and guide to military tactics, much like Dye.[156] According to Keirsey, it was the

drive of the designers and developers to be as accurate and knowledgeable as possible

that initially impressed him and convinced him to work with this franchise. In an

interview, he specifically recalls the first time he spoke with the weapons animator for

the game and was asked, "Does a magazine revolve clockwise or counterclockwise?"[157]

He also admits numerous times that he attempted to correct developers on historical

details, such as the existence of a Scottish regiment within the Canadian military, which

ironically resulted in his being proven wrong when they were able to present him with

research on a branch of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders fighting within a

Canadian outfit during the war.[158] He notes that the incredible attention to detail

exhibited by the artists working on the game also helped him during a business trip to

Normandy. While teaching military style leadership to business executives in Normandy,

Keirsay was asked to point out Leonard Lomell's path up the hill at Pointe du Hoc and

the location of the artillery he destroyed.[159] Although Keirsay knew little to nothing

about Lomell, he did remember that *Call of Duty 2* included the assault on Pointe du Hoc

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[155] Andy Eddy, "Call of Duty 4's Hank Keirsey Interview," *Teamxbox.com*. October 17, 2007. http://interviews.teamxbox.com/xbox/2075/Call-of-Duty-4s-Hank-Keirsey-Interview/p1/. (accessed February 14, 2012), 1.

[156] James Day, "Call of Duty: Black Ops tips from the top," *Metro.co.uk*. November 26, 2010. http://www.metro.co.uk/tech/848556-call-of-dutys-hank-keirsey-my-black-ops-tips. (accessed February 14, 2012).

[157] Ibid.

[158] Patrick Joynt, "Tough Talk with Mr. Keirsey: COD3's military advisor on the true meaning of heroism," *1up.com*. July 7, 2006. http://www.1up.com/features/tough-talk-keirsey?pager.offset=0. (accessed February 14, 2012), 1.

[159] Eddy, 2.

and allowed players to reenact Lomell's feat. By remembering the events within the game, Keirsay was able to trace Lomell's actions for his audience based on the recreation within the game.[160]

Keirsey's ability to recall information from an in-game creation of a real battle of World War II helps illustrate the potential of these games to provide, at the very least, a certain level of familiarity with a historical topic. Outside of the actual gameplay, many games also include historical information through mission briefings and videos to help tie certain missions together. Games like *Medal of Honor* and *Call of Duty* provide video from World War II-era footage, photography, and tactical appraisals such as troop movements or statistics during a particular campaign. These games use these resources in order to explain the major events of the war and the impact of the missions which players are taking part-in between episodes of gameplay. Even fictional games set in historic settings, like the *Assassin's Creed* games are able to provide historical information during play.

The *Assassin's Creed* franchise uses recreations of digital landmarks in cities like Constantinople and Venice to help set the stage as players travel throughout historical versions of these cities. For players walking through a digital recreation of early 16th century Constantinople, seeing well-known landmarks of the time like the Hagia Sophia and Galata Tower, helps the player feel immersed in the world. As players discover these landmarks, they can also access a small history of each location, which details its creation and changes throughout history. In order to create these locations, designers travelled to

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[160] Ibid, 2.

the cities and researched the history of both the city and these landmarks. During the

second and third iterations of this franchise, the player travels through Renaissance Italy

and must deal with the conspiracies of Pope Sixtus IV, the Borgia family, and Pope

Alexander VI. For a better understanding of the Papal conspiracies during this time, the

developers turned to Marcello Simonetta, a scholar of Italian history and literature.

Simonetta helped designers weave actual events such as the Pazzi conspiracy, the attack

on Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, into the framework of the fictional assassin, who in

the game comes to the aid of Lorenzo de' Medici and helps him escape.[161] Simonetta

also worked to keep historical inaccuracies from appearing in the game, the largest of

which involved removing plans to include the Swiss Guard, which was not hired to

protect the Pope until three years after the events depicted in the game.[162]

As games continue to become larger and more in-depth projects, developers must

continue to put more effort into accurate historical information within their games. This

trend can, both purposely and inadvertently, expose gamers to more historical

information and thus further historical study. Historical advisors, like John Antal and

Marcello Simonetta, believe that gamers who play through these games are gaining some

knowledge just by experiencing a world recreated with such attention to detail.

Today, many video games on the market include some sort of historical reference.

While the best-selling games tend to lean away from strict historical accuracy in favor of

[161] Jeremy Hsu, "A Renaissance Scholar Helps Build Virtual Rome," *Livescience.com*. November 12, 2010. http://www.livescience.com/8945-renaissance-scholar-helps-build-virtual-rome.html. (accessed February 17, 2012).
[162] Gamerlive.tv, "Assassin's Creed Brotherhood Exclusive Rome Preview Interview with Historian Marcello Simonetta," *youtube.com*. November 13, 2010. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lIX9IB-1YzE. (accessed February 17, 2012).

playability and ease of access for any and all players, even the most minor inclusion of a

particular historical element, such as *Assassin's Creed*'s historical backdrop, are

constantly exposing gamers to historical information and challenging them to actively

think about it in order to succeed. With best-selling franchises like *Call of Duty* or

Assassin's Creed, the ability to garner interest by actively engaging players in historical

settings provides the perfect starting point for further study where, instead of being

overwhelmed by new information, they can recognize and compare the historical

narrative with their experience of reenacting many of the major events.

CHAPTER 4

PLAYING WITH THE IDEA OF LEARNING

Most children, teenagers, and young adults, growing up in the "Internet Age" are exposed to media nearly every hour of every day. From television to computers to cell phones, today's youth grow up dealing with technological media. Many children are as tech savvy by the age of 12 as any IT professional 15 to 20 years ago. They are also constantly exposed to video games ranging from *Angry Birds* on their iPhone to the newest iteration of *Halo* to come out on the Xbox 360. The ability to introduce information using games is constantly studied and improved upon in the hopes of engaging the mind of a student who is disinterested in school or a young employee who needs to learn how to perform a job. Many students who are failing classes in school because of their inability to engage with the material are the same teenagers who sit at home mastering every aspect of their new favorite game. Most of the workers involved in developing serious games or acting as historical advisors of more popular titles realize that games may be the best way to connect to an increasingly technology-based society. By actively working towards the goal of becoming a better player, these gamers are actively learning, a fact which serious game designers are attempting to capitalize on.

Like movies, video games are able to expose the player to historical events and themes but should not be taken as actual fact. Although films like *Glory* were able to bring more attention to topics like African-American units in the Civil War, most of its characters were fabricated and introduced as runaway slaves, while the true regiment the movie is based upon was made up of free blacks from Northern states. By making the

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unit consist of escaped slaves, the movie's plot develops more meaning as viewers see a time of extreme racism bearing witness to an incredible act of courage by those who were discriminated against. As Mark Carnes argued in his work on the movie industry's use of history, *Past Imperfect*, viewers should regard the use of history in popular media "as an invitation for further exploration."[163] This argument should extend to all forms of media due to nearly every publisher aiming more for profits than incredibly detailed and factual history. This does not mean that even the most popular games, which take numerous liberties with actual historical narratives, should be deemed as completely useless. Players who enjoy games that include any sort of historical setting, even those with a completely fantastical approach, may be drawn towards learning more about these things. Games such as the *Dynasty Warriors* franchise, which includes historic Chinese figures from the Three Kingdoms Era instilled with superhuman abilities allowing them to fight large armies singlehandedly, can lead to new historical interests due to the simple fact that these men actually existed. As Stephen Turnbull, a prominent historian of medieval Japan and advisor for both *Total War* entries, which take place in Japan, points out, many of his students claimed their interest in taking his courses on Japanese history or religion originated from their experience within video games.[164]

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[163] Mark C. Carnes, *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 10.

[164] Peter Parrish, "Dr. Stephen Turnbull, Shogun 2 Total War Interview," *incgamers.com* September 13, 2010. http://www.incgamers.com/Interviews/295/dr-stephen-turnbull-shogun-2-total-war-interview. (accessed February 1, 2012).

In his dissertation, "Replaying History," Dr. Kurt Squire studied the effectiveness of using *Civilization III* to help teach history in both a ninth-grade social studies class and as a part of an afterschool program.[165] The *Civilization* franchise, as noted earlier, places the player in control of a fledgling civilization with only a few settlers which the player must expand into an empire, progressing through various technological "ages" until becoming a modern world power. The player chooses a civilization to control, based on real world groups such as the Greeks or Zulus; but their locations can vary due to maps, which do not usually resemble an actual map of the world. This problem can be fixed thanks to an included scenario editor, which allows players to construct their own maps, resulting in a number of player-created, geographically accurate maps downloadable by other players. Squire's study involved teaching students how to play the game, placing them in realistic scenarios based upon their civilization, and holding discussions after gameplay to discuss both the game and the problems they encountered.[166]

Squire noticed that students quickly picked up the importance of the various resources needed to advance their civilizations and thus the need for trade and war.[167] Although the game does not follow any sort of historical timeline, it does provide a simulation of the "geographic and materialist processes" that helped shape human history. This mirrors Jared Diamond's study, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, on the

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[165] Kurt Squire, "Open-Ended Video Games: A Model for Developing Learning for the Interactive Age," in *The Ecology of Games: Connecting Youth, Games, and Learning*, edited by Katie Salen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010). 180.
[166] Ibid, 180-185.
[167] Ibid, 180-185.

environmental differences that allowed Eurasian, and later just European, civilizations to

become the dominant empires of the world. According to Diamond, factors such as

geography, diseases, and the availability of proper flora and fauna for domestication

allowed these civilizations to develop into agricultural and eventually industrial powers

before others. During a game of *Civilization*, players with access to a greater number of

resources early on, through either their starting location or their ability to quickly capture

key locations, will more likely than not develop much faster than a player isolated on an

island or mountainous region with limited resources.

Squire's students started to understand the importance of geographic location,

such as the availability of naval routes or isolation from other civilizations, on their

ability to develop faster.[168] Students began to note that while starting away from other

civilizations or being isolated by mountains that acted as a barrier from military action, it

also left them far behind other players who were free to trade or conquer new areas and

thus gain more resources.[169] The importance of resources allowed the students, according

to Squire, to better understand the reasons behind European imperialism and colonialism

during lessons on these topics in class.[170] What surprised Squire during this study was

the amount of students who began recreating historical events on their own and actively

comparing them to the actual histories.[171] Many students also began researching the

[168] Ibid, 183.
[169] Ibid, 183-184.
[170] Ibid, 182-192.
[171] Ibid, 180.

civilizations they enjoyed playing as to learn new strategies and understand how these

groups actually handled trade policies or war in order to replicate their true identities.[172]

Squire's work provides a solid template for introducing historical simulations into

schools. While his work focused on using a more popular mass-marketed video game,

other groups, such as MIT's "Education Arcade," are also introducing "targeted games"

for educational purposes.[173] These games are developed to help teach specific lessons in

any subject, including history. *Revolution*, a game developed as part of MIT's

educational workshop, places the student in Williamsburg, Virginia on the eve of the

American Revolution.[174] Players assume the role of one of many different characters in

the town, ranging from a runaway slave attempting to avoid pursuing militia, to a local

patriot attempting to avoid the outbreak of violence.[175] This game attempts to show the

impact of the coming revolution on ordinary people and their everyday lives. The

ultimate goal is to help students understand that these times involved much more than the

fiery rhetoric of patriots pushing the colonies toward revolution.[176]

Roland Morris, a history professor at Ball State University, created the idea for a

targeted game to be used in Indiana elementary schools after realizing that elementary

children were taught little to nothing about the only major action to take place in Indiana

[172] Ibid, 181-185.
[173] Ibid, 169.
[174] The Education Arcade, "Revolution," *EducationArcade.com* August 11, 2008.
http://www.educationarcade.org/node/357. (accessed February 10, 2012).
[175] The Education Arcade, "Plots," *EducationArcade.com* November 15, 2005.
http://www.educationarcade.org/node/118. (accessed February 10, 2012).
[176] "Revolution"

during the Civil War, John Morgan's raid.[177] Confederate Brigadier General John

Morgan led his raid into Indiana and Ohio in the hopes of terrorizing Northern states

while also attempting to divert troops from the Federal forces in the Gettysburg and

Vicksburg Campaigns. Morgan's raid looted its way through southern Indiana while

avoiding any major skirmishes with Federal forces, eventually ending up in Ohio where

he was later captured. Morris, along with computer science professor Paul Gestwicki,

developed the game with the help of their students during independent studies.[178] The

game puts students in charge of General Morgan and allows them to determine their own

path through Indiana and delegate their men's actions upon entering a new town.

Students can order their men to steal horses or supplies, impede the pursuing Union

troops, or raise Northern fears within the state by burning the town. The ultimate goal of

the game is to raise your reputation, based on your ability to strike fear into Federal

towns, and escape Indiana by crossing the border into Ohio.[179] Although the game

provides little actual historical information to students who may play the game, the

designers hope that exposing these children to the raid through their game, and the brief

historical background provided in text before the game begins, will "raise specific

questions that the student might ask about the game and the role they're playing as this

Confederate soldier who's invading Indiana."[180]

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[177] Tonya Roscarlo, "Ball State Students Create Historical Video Game," *convergemag.com* June 20, 2011.
http://www.convergemag.com/college-career/Ball-State-Students-Create-Historical-Video-Game.html.
(accessed February 11, 2012).
[178] Ibid.
[179] The game is free to download and play from their website.
https://sites.google.com/site/morgansraidgame/home
[180] Roscarlo, "Ball State"

While these games and studies are targeted at school-age children, even history

professors at the highest level are surprised by the potential of video games to present

historical information. Niall Ferguson works as an economic historian at Harvard

University and also served as the editor of *Virtual History*, a book of counterfactual

hypotheses.[181] Ferguson was approached by Muzzy Lane, an independent game studio,

with a game they were developing entitled *Making History*.[182] The game allows players

to control nearly any nation in the world during the events of World War II and attempt

to reenact or change their role in the war. Ferguson tested the game with one of his own

theories on World War II, the idea that if Great Britain and France went to war with

Germany after the invasion of Czechoslovakia instead of sticking with appeasement

policies, Germany would not be prepared for war and thus fold under their combined

might.[183] Ferguson took control of England within the game and, as he planned, declared

war on Germany in 1938 after the invasion of Czechoslovakia.[184] According to

Ferguson, his plan quickly deteriorated when France refused to join in this initial attack,

leaving his expeditionary force to be crushed by the German war-machine.[185] Ironically,

his 13 year-old son later attempted the same scenario and succeeded in manufacturing

Ferguson's desired outcome by first strengthening diplomatic and economic bonds

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[181] Niall Ferguson, "Books," *NiallFerguson.com*.
http://www.niallferguson.com/site/FERG/Templates/General.aspx?pageid=16&cc=GB. (accessed March 1, 2012).
   Clive Thompson, "Why a Famous Counterfactual Historian Loves Making History With Games," *Wired.com*, May 21, 2007.
http://www.wired.com/gaming/virtualworlds/commentary/games/2007/05/gamefrontiers_0521. (accessed March 1, 2012).
[182] Thompson.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.

between the two nations, France and Great Britain. By forming an even more cohesive

alliance with France, his son practically forced France to join in the attack and thus put an

end to German aggression before the war fully escalated.[186] Ferguson became so

impressed with the design of the game that he partnered with Muzzy Lane as an advisor

for their next game in the series.[187] The *Making History* franchise was released for both

commercial sales and educational purposes, with the developers offering the game for

free to any schools wishing to implement the game into its curriculum.[188]

History for the Masses

In terms of commercially successful games, the *Assassin's Creed* franchise

sparked some of the most interesting resurgences of popular interest in a number of

historical time periods. As described in the last chapter, these games place the player in

historical settings with re-creations of actual individuals from that period. These attempts

at historical authenticity went so far that the re-creation of Rome for *Assassin's Creed:*

Brotherhood was accomplished by importing Leonardo Bufalini's plan of Rome, the first

printed map created of the city, into the game.[189] Since the initial release of the first

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[186] Ibid.

[187] Ibid.

[188] Muzzy Lane, "Muzzy Lane Offers its Award-Winning History Game Free to Schools," *Muzzylane.com* April 4, 2012. http://muzzylane.com/news/article/232. (accessed April 10, 2012).

[189] Jessica Maier, "Mapping Past and Present: Leonardo Bufalini's Plan of Rome (1551)," *Imago Mundi* 59, no. 1, (2007):1.
  Katy Meyers, "Lessons From Assassins Creed for Constructing Educational Games," *PlaythePast* October 25, 2011. http://www.playthepast.org/?p=2077. (accessed January 23, 2012).

Assassin's Creed, numerous forums and articles contemplated, and continue to discuss to

this day, the historical accuracy of the environment created within these games.[190]

Players study every aspect, from the actual events and characters of the time to the exact

styles of architecture that the buildings should include.[191] This constant debate between

players, and their newfound attraction to studying a particular period in time, originated

with one video game whose storyline is entirely fabricated. The idea of intermingling

fantasy and historical facts into a fantastical conspiracy of unseen forces resulted in

numerous news articles questioning whether or not this sort of game is the perfect model

to inspire players to learn more.[192] By weaving so much history into their stories, the

developers, perhaps unknowingly, garnered renewed interest in the study of these time

periods simply by challenging players with slightly altered versions of the past.

While *Assassin's Creed* created a new wave of interest in its topics with a more

subtle approach, the History Channel and the *Brothers in Arms* franchise were using

video games to present history in a number of new ways. With the release of *Brothers in

Arms: Hell's Highway*, John Antal, an advisor and employee of Gearbox Software,

decided to also release a novel and historic work covering the same material.[193] All three

works covered the 101st Airborne Division over a ten-day period during Operation

Market Garden. Antal's books included photos taken from actual gameplay to help

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[190] Meyers, "Lessons."

[191] Ibid.

[192] Ibid.

[193] Dean Takahashi, "John Antal on making a video game, novel, and history book all at once," *Venturebeat.com*, May 28, 2008. http://venturebeat.com/2008/05/28/an-interview-with-john-antal-on-making-a-video-game-novel-and-history-book-all-at-once/. (accessed February 5, 2012).

illustrate actual events during their operation.[194] While both the novel and game placed

the consumer in the shoes of a single soldier, Sgt. Matt Baker, the "history book"

provided a detailed account of the entire operation based on after action reports and

interviews with surviving veterans.[195] The idea to publish a game with two companion

books, although an obvious marketing ploy, does provide the chance for players wanting

to learn more about the events within the game to know exactly where to go to find

accurate information.

In 2004, the History Channel announced a new television series, *Decisive Battles*,

which used footage from video games to provide graphical representations of many well-

known historic battles. The show analyzed thirteen battles during its first season, all of

which were visually recreated using the game, *Rome: Total War,* to present military

formations, armor, and eventually the chaos of battle.[196] The game's engine allowed the

show to shift from an aerial view of the entire battlefield and troop placements to a unit

by unit look at formations and equipment without full recreations using actors and

numerous cameras.[197] The producers of the show were given access to a modified

version of the game, which allowed them to tweak different scenarios necessary for the

show, but the fact that the game's level of detail allowed producers to analyze the types

of armor worn or tactics used says a great deal about the amount of work and effort the

developers at Creative Assembly put into making the game as accurate as possible. The

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[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Steve Butts, "History Channel's Decisive Battles," *ign.com*, July 21, 2004.
http://pc.ign.com/articles/532/532411p1.html. (accessed February 2, 2012).
[197] Ibid.

show ran for only one season, thirteen episodes, but still displayed on national television how well strategic video games like the *Total War* series can illustrate recreations of actual events for study.

In 2004, Kuma Reality Games introduced their own program, which allowed players to play through numerous scenarios based on the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, these games, bundled together under the name *Kuma\War*, present nearly 100 different scenarios for gamers to play through, including the assault that resulted in Osama bin Laden's death.[198] *Kuma\War* presents the information surrounding a particular mission through quasi-newscasts detailing the situation and how the actual events unfolded. Players are then given a string of information ranging from tactical essays written by military veterans, a rundown of the weapons available, and a detailed chronology of each major point in the battle.[199] For example, the first mission released by Kuma developers focused on the July 2003 attack that killed Saddam Hussein's sons, Uday and Qusay.[200] After running a fictional newscast detailing the situation facing the marines and information on the marine's goals and potential problems, the player is given the choice of assaulting from range and killing the two men as it actually occurred, or attempting to capture them alive by assaulting the compound with Special Forces. After completing a mission, players are presented with links to news reports and government releases on the event which can be used to learn more. The creators point out that these games allow players to experience present-day history in a unique way and use the

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[198] These games can be accessed at their website, http://www.kumawar.com/.
[199] Halter, 239-243.
[200] Ian Bogost, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Video Games* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 127.

resources the program provides to learn about the events taking place in their own lifetime.[201]

Appeasing the Majority

For those looking to gain any form of historical knowledge from some of the more popular franchises on the market, these gamers must first realize that every game that is commercially released focuses on one main goal, sales. While games focusing on smaller markets, such as strategic simulations, realize that historical accuracy is expected within the genre, developers attempting to create a product for mass sales, like a *Call of Duty* or *Total War* game, are focused primarily on producing a fun and entertaining experience.

This mindset extends to every form of media. The majority of consumers who go to a movie or play a video game are more interested in seeing how many different ways the hero can destroy the villains than seeing an exact historical recreation. As movie director and screenwriter John Sayles so eloquently stated during a conversation with historian Eric Foner, "if historical accuracy were the thing people went to the movies for, historians would be the vice presidents of studios. Every studio would have two or three historians."[202] The same viewpoint applies to most major video game studios and keeps even the most historically based games, like *Total War*, from including too many details.

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[201] Ibid, 128. Halter, 270.
[202] Carnes, 22.

While avoiding too much historical detail keeps developers from isolating or confusing the multitude of gamers who just want something to play, these games must also avoid numerous other pitfalls when presenting their own subjective view of history, such as presenting completely false information or possibly offending specific groups of people.

Despite the fact that many major companies focus themselves primarily on sales and producing an enjoyable experience, with or without historical accuracy, this does not change the fact that many of the best-selling franchises on the market today include an acute attention to detail in terms of realism and historical setting. The growing interest in video games among nearly all demographics are allowing members of academia such as Dr. Squire and Dr. Ferguson to experiment with the idea of using the popularity of this new medium to introduce historical concepts.

CHAPTER 5

MAKING A 'GAME' OUT OF IT

The use of realistic events within video game narratives allows the developers to

create games which are easier for players to immerse themselves within. Unlike a

completely original story in a fantasy world, a player leading a knight through the

crusades or a samurai through feudal Japan can recognize certain aspects of the world,

other characters, and the on-going events around them. Unfortunately, games focused on

particular historical events must also deal with the fact that not every action taken by, for

example, a soldier in World War II, would be considered entertaining to the average

gamer. Add to that the fact that every hero the player controls must also face a villain,

which most "Western" games tend to portray as Nazi, Russian, Asian, or Arabic. The

inclusion of a certain nationality or race as a villain and thus a target for gamers can raise

significant problems and, in some cases, bring about the development of new games,

which reverse the roles against "Western" civilizations, the United States in particular.

Due to the fact that nearly any game that delves into historical events could possibly

offend any number of populations, it is easy to see just how problematic creating a game

based on historical events can become.

"War is 98 percent boredom and two percent sheer terror."[203] Hank Keirsey's explanation of war would surprise most of the newest generation of children and teenagers who grew up watching virtual war on their televisions or playing them at home on the newest video game. As Keirsey explains, "We try to capture the two percent terror part. We focus on the three to four hours of combat [real soldiers] get in a month."[204] The glorification of war began long before the technological advances of today. Some of the earliest "classics" of literature are the stories of great warriors such as Achilles in Homer's *Iliad*. The memoirs of soldiers throughout nearly every war include the desire to fight before the war ends out of fear that they will never be able to prove themselves.[205] While many movies and games today help highlight the intense cruelty and suffering involved in war, they also tend to glorify it in new ways.

Most gamers enjoy the idea of grabbing their rifle and tearing through a division of Nazis or Imperial Japanese, but would quickly lose interest if their game even remotely resembled the true nature of a soldier's experience. A soldier spends most of his time, during any war, surviving horrible conditions and nervously waiting for the next engagement, instead of the constant, intense firefighting that characterizes nearly every

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[203] 1UP Staff, "Take This Job!: Military Advisor," *1up.com* November 2007. http://www.1up.com/features/videogame-jobs-guide-job-nov. (accessed February 3, 2012).
[204] Ibid.
[205] In particular: E.B. Sledge's memoir describes failing officer training to make sure he is able to fight with the marines before the Second World War ended or Caputo's desire to fight in Vietnam due in large part to ideas of American heroism.
E. B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa*. (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1981).
Phillip Caputo, *A Rumor of War*. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1977).

new game year after year. While some of these games attempt to capture the realistic

pressure of opposing gunfire by presenting players with more realistic injuries, it is

difficult to think of a game that presents the moral and emotional effects of war on the

soldier comparable to films such as *Platoon*. Nevertheless, as newer games like the

Bioshock series are beginning to show, the potential for games to present players with

moral dilemmas within a game's environment does exist. *Bioshock* presents a failed

underwater utopia littered with multiple references to the ideas of Ayn Rand, in which

players eventually face the decision to either save a group of children known as the

"Little Sisters" or to use them in order to gain more power.[206]

Games must also find ways to bypass the stigma that comes with the term "video

game." While recreating the wars against Nazi Germany, and to a somewhat lesser

extent the Vietcong, is now commonplace within games, attempting to work on more

recent or controversial topics can still lead to public outcry and protest against a game's

development. In 2007, *Sombras de Guerra*, which translates to *Shadows of War*, a game

based on the Spanish Civil War from 1936-1939, faced this exact dilemma. The game,

developed by Legend Studios, allows players to choose to fight for either the Nationalist

or Republican forces and either re-create or change the outcome of the war. While the

events of the game took place nearly 70 years ago, Franco's rule lasted until his death in

the 1970s. Attempts to remove public references and monuments of Franco continued

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[206] Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*. (New York: Random House, 1957).

even after the game was released.[207] Many families and journalists quickly denounced

the game even before its release, such as journalist Manuel Contreras, who claimed that

the game "will trivialize the drama of the civil war and dissipate its legacy of horror."[208]

Nevertheless, one of the head developers for the game stated his hopes that it could be

used to gain the interest of the younger generation within the Spanish population "who

don't know much about the war.[209] The game includes documentary footage of the war

collected from BBC and Spanish archives as well as a timeline to help players

contextualize the events of the war.[210] Probably as much due to controversy as the

creation of an enjoyable game, an expansion to the game was later developed and

released after the initial game sold more than 60,000 copies in less than one year.[211]

Uncomfortable Materials

When dealing with history or attempting to re-create realistic settings, developers

must always consider whether or not to include controversial or easily offensive topics.

The inclusion of any form of religious content or depictions of horrific events, such as

natural disasters, can attract public outcries of insensitivity and even the delay or

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[207] Victoria Burnett, "Video game about Spanish Civil War inflames bitter national debate," *New York Times* November 22, 2007. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/22/world/europe/22iht-22spain.8439092.html. (accessed February 4, 2012)

[208] Ibid.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Noticias EFE, "Amplían el videojuego sobre la Guerra Civil tras vender más de 60.000 copias," *Hoytecnologia.com* October 13, 2008. http://www.hoytecnologia.com/noticias/Amplian-videojuego-sobre-Guerra/79272. (accessed February 4, 2012).

cancellation of a particular game. Even the most original and seemingly harmless games must be cautious when dealing with these "touchy" subjects, as evident by the delay of Sony's *LittleBigPlanet*. *LittleBigPlanet* is a platforming game including a small puppet-like character known as Sackboy or Sackgirl, which allows players to design their own levels and share them with friends. The game faced a short delay right before its official release after developers learned that one of the songs included on the soundtrack within the game included two lines from the Quran. The mixing of popular music and the words of the Quran is considered offensive by many Muslims, which resulted in Sony's replacement of the game's discs with new versions that did not include the song.[212]

Games hoping to show the historical relevance of religion are approaching the subject in different ways. Both the *Civilization* and *Total War* strategy franchises mentioned earlier include religion as a way to shape the events within the game. *Civilization IV* was the first game in the series to include various religions and giving them some sort of impact on the actual gameplay. The game includes seven religions, such as Christianity and Buddhism, which can be spread into new lands using missionaries and thus benefit or harm relations between various powers. Leaders of similar religions are more apt to positive negotiations while differing religions can result in distrustful opponents. The inherent differences in religious ideology or effects on the population are nearly non-existent, as the game's manual points out, "all religions in the game have the same effects. . . we do not mean to imply that these religions are more

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[212] Ben Kuchera, "LittleBigPlanet delayed over Qur'an quotes in soundtrack," *arstechnica.com* October 17, 2008. http://arstechnica.com/gaming/2008/10/littlebigplanet-delayed-over-quran-quotes-in-soundtrack/ (accessed January 20, 2012).

important, better, or worse than any other religions."[213] The only true differences in the religions presented by *Civilization IV* lie in the requirements for obtaining each particular religion, such as meditation for Buddhism.

The *Total War* series, which tends to focus more on actual historical timelines than the "create-your-own-history" feel of *Civilization*, includes religion in a number of its titles as well. Depending on the time period of the game, players may deal with the attempts of missionaries to convert their Japanese subjects in the *Shogun* titles or face the consequences of opposing Papal rule within the *Medieval: Total War* games. Throughout all of these games, religion deals with keeping a population content and loyal, ranging from the civil unrest caused by Christianity in Japan to dealing with the Spanish Inquisition in Europe and possible excommunication during medieval times. Both games set within Medieval Europe place the most emphasis on religion due to the political power of the Pope and the impact of the Crusades during this era. A player choosing to control a Catholic nation must insure that the population continues to exhibit devotion to the faith by answering Papal calls to participate in the various Crusades. Populations shifting away from religion towards heresy can face trials from the Inquisition while a complete disregard of Catholic duties can result in excommunication, leaving the player open to attacks from any of its Catholic neighbors. In games like these, religions serve as a political and social tool while attempting to avoid dealing with the symbolism and doctrine, which helps avoid outcry from religious groups.

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[213] Trevor Owens, "Playing with World Religion: What Religion Means in Civ IV," *playthepast.org*. February 16, 2012. http://www.playthepast.org/?p=2295 (accessed March 5, 2012).

Dealing with the symbolism of religion and churches, especially against the backdrop of violence as Sony attempted to do in *Resistance: Fall of Man*, can result in religious leaders speaking out against a particular game or even threatening legal action. In 2007, the Church of England threatened legal action against Sony for including a digital recreation of the Manchester Cathedral in the original *Resistance* video game.[214] During the game, players must fight their way through the inside of a digital reconstructed version of the cathedral against various alien, referred to as Chimeran, creatures using any number of rifles, grenades, etc. Church officials viewed the representation of a shootout in Manchester Cathedral, paired with Manchester's ongoing problems of gun violence, as "highly irresponsible" and an improper use of the cathedral's likeness without obtaining the permission to do so.[215] Ian Bogost, a video game designer and researcher, argued that the game's use of the cathedral provided the perfect setting within the game.[216] The churches history of survival throughout various attacks such as the English Civil War, World War II, and the IRA's bombing in 1996 makes it the perfect bastion of hope for survival and reason to continue fighting more so than a simple attempt to place a peaceful, holy cathedral against the horrors of a seemingly hopeless alien invasion.[217] While Sony did offer an apology, they refused to

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[214] Ian Bogost, *How to Do Things with Videogames* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 24.
[215] BBC News, "Cathedral row over video war game," *BBC News Online*, June 9, 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/manchester/6736809.stm (accessed January 24, 2012).
[216] Bogost, 27-29.
[217] Ibid, 29.

remove the digital cathedral from the game. The controversial publicity helped garner

increasing interest in the game within the United Kingdom.[218]

The use of controversial topics and the disdain associated with making a "game"

out of offensive or tragic material is a continuous problem for video game developers.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, numerous games were delayed or edited to remove

terroristic, potentially offensive storylines. Microsoft's *Flight Simulator* removed the

World Trade Center towers from the game's virtual New York in order to avoid giving

players the ability to accidentally, or even purposely, recreate the attacks.[219] After the

2011 earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan and caused major problems within

nuclear reactors in Fukushima, many Japanese companies chose to delay their products

due to the disaster's effects on everyday life in Japan. Games such as *Motorstorm:*

Apocalypse and *Yakuza: Of the End* were delayed in Japan for their depictions of

disasters and apocalyptic material, while *Zettai Zetsumei Toshi 4* (known as *Disaster*

Report 4 in the United States), which forced the player to survive and escape a city

devastated by a major earthquake, was cancelled outright due to its similarities to the

actual disaster.[220]

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[218] Its ranking in sales in the UK Market can be tracked on sites such as Chart Tracks. http://www.chart-track.co.uk/index.jsp?c=p%2Fsoftware%2Fuk%2Farchive%2Findex_test.jsp&ct=110016&arch=t&lyr=2007&year=2007&week=24 .

[219] Ian Bogost, *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 238.
    Clarissa Douglas, "Terrorist Attacks Change Video Games," *ABC News* October 2, 2001. http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/story?id=98254&page=1. (accessed February 3, 2012).

[220] Winda Benedetti, "Companies delay, cancel apocalyptic video games," *IN-GAME on msnbc.com* http://www.ingame.msnbc.msn.com/technology/ingame/companies-delay-cancel-apocalyptic-video-games-124472 (accessed February 2, 2012).

Although many game creators are trying to toe-the-line between provocative yet appropriate material for their games, a number of games and mods, games or new content developed using a pre-existing game's engine, found on the internet are purposely offensive. After the shootings at Columbine and Virginia Tech, games were created allowing players to assume the role of the killers and reenact their plans. The creator of *Super Columbine Massacre RPG* presents his game as a different way to think about the shooting and offers a social critique on video games and media, while Ryan Lambourn, the creator of *V-Tech Rampage*, admits he created the game to "make people angry," which he did numerous times with other tastelessly designed games."[221] Yet another developer, Kinematic, a mod in 2003 entitled *9-11 Survivor*.[222] The game puts the player in control of a person trapped within one of the towers after the planes crashed into the building. The purpose of the game is to escape the burning towers before becoming trapped by fire or debris, resulting in a choice of burning to death inside the buildings or jumping from a window to your imminent death. The idea of "playing" a game like these examples resulted in numerous media analysts, politicians, and family members of the deceased denouncing these games. Ironically, the increased press coverage helped *Super Columbine Massacre RPG* gain at least 400,000 downloads by players curious to see what the uproar was all about.[223]

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[221] Patrick Dugan, "Soapbox: Why You Owe the Columbine RPG," *gamasutra.com*, March 13, 2007. http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/1699/soapbox_why_you_owe_the_columbine_.php (accessed March 1, 2012), 1.
   News24.com, "Fury over Virginia Tech 'game'," *News24.com* May 17, 2007. http://www.news24.com/News24/World/News/0,,2-10-1462_2114698,00.html. (accessed March 1, 2012).
[222] Bogost, *Persuasive*, 126.
[223] Dugan, "Soapbox," 1.

While there are plenty homebrewed games released over the internet hoping to garner attention through explicit or inappropriate material, there are also numerous occasions where best-selling franchises push the boundaries of what some may consider appropriate material within video games. Games such as *Grand Theft Auto* attracted an incredible amount of negative media attention for their inclusion of prostitutes and the ability to kill any number of characters from civilians, cops, or prostitutes, allowing the player to reclaim his or her money.

In terms of realism in games that represent historical wars, developers must deal with the always evolving ability to show new levels of graphic brutality and much more realistic villains. Anyone playing a game set in World War II can instantly recognize the Nazi or Imperial Japanese symbolism, thus knowing exactly who they are targeting, shooting, even sometimes mercilessly executing. Some of these games, such as *Call of Duty: World at War*, take the brutality of war a step further. The game's developers attempted to show the ruthlessness of the Eastern and Pacific theaters of World War II. During the game, players controlling American troops in the Pacific face suicidal banzai charges with bayonets and explosives. While playing the Russian campaign, players can watch or participate in the execution of wounded and surrendering German soldiers while other Russian soldiers cheer and applaud their deaths. While such brutalities of soldiers during the war are given increasingly more graphic re-creations, there has been little to no public outrage. Whether this is because these sorts of actions actually occur during war or not is unclear, but the reality that Nazis provide the perfect villains for any story based within World War II must certainly help. When games focus on fighting more

recent wars, the role of the villain and thus the target of a player's aggression can become much more problematic and potentially offensive to other races and nationalities.

Today, many of the more popular Western war games, which present futuristic or fictional storylines, include distinctly Arabic or Russian antagonists. One of the best-selling series of all time, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*, presents an ultranationalist Russian regime's attack on the United States. Despite portraying Russians as villains and various rumors of a ban on the second iteration of the series in Russia, these games are available to Russian gamers with only one mission edited out of the second games in the series, a level which allows the player to participate in a terrorist attack on a Russian airport.[224] Many Arab nations, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) hold stricter censorship laws on videogames and other forms of media, banning games that depict sexual situations, sacrilegious material, such as *The Darksiders* depiction of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, or violence against Muslims.[225]

Games designed in tandem with the American military, such as *America's Army* or *Full Spectrum Warrior*, show fictional or purposely vague, yet obviously Arabic, villains in their games. While these games avoid specific nationalities or countries to categorize their villains in order to avoid consideration as highly offensive, many Arabic

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[224] Nick Cowen, "Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 not banned in Russia, says Activision," *Telegraph.co.uk*, November 17, 2009 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/video-games/6588218/Call-Of-Duty-Modern-Warfare-2-not-banned-in-Russia-says-Activision.html. (accessed January 3, 2012).

[225] Michael Johnson, "Heavy Rain: Banned in the United Arab Emirates," *GamerSyndrome*, February 22, 2010. http://gamersyndrome.com/2010/video-games/heavy-rain-banned-in-the-united-arab-emirates/. (accessed January 3, 2012).

James Batchelor, "UAE: Darksiders banned," *MCV.com*, January 7, 2010. http://www.mcvuk.com/news/read/uae-darksiders-banned. (accessed January 3, 2012).

developers, like Radwan Qasmiyya, look at these new forms of "militainment" as little

more than propaganda to prepare the next wave of marines for invading foreign lands.[226]

Aiming at a Target

In 2011, news of a video game being developed in China, with the backing of the

People's Liberation Army, resulted in news stories from more and more media outlets as

they noticed that the game not only resembled *America's Army* in play style, government-

funding, and potential use as a recruitment tool, but also the fact that the opponent, which

virtual Chinese soldiers trained to fight, seemed distinctly American.[227] The game, which

translates to *Glorious Mission* in English, provides basic and advanced in-game training

before setting newly prepared Chinese soldiers into war against their seemingly

American counterparts-- much like *America's Army*'s portrayal of Middle-Eastern

enemies.[228] The opposing forces in the game were quickly categorized as American

military by outside observers due to the similarity in equipment and uniforms between

these virtual soldiers and American armed forces. While many media outlets questioned

the appropriateness of the game's targets and potential for instilling an anti-American

[226] Ed Halter, *From Sun Tzu to Xbox: War and Video Games* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006), 284.

[227] David Axe, "Gamers Target U.S. Troops in Chinese Military "Shooter,'" *Wired.com*. May 17, 2011. http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/05/gamers-target-u-s-troops-in-chinese-military-shooter/. (accessed February 10, 2012).

[228] Ibid.

feeling among younger would-be soldiers, many reporters also pointed out the clear

similarities between the two games.[229]

Ironically, *Glorious Mission* was not the first game to turn the tables on the

United States or a U.S. backed coalition, nor was it the first to be viewed with this sort of

hypocritical disdain by Western media. In 2003, Hezbollah released their own

militaristic shooter entitled *Special Force*. The game allows players to assume the role of

a member of the group and participate in missions based on events during the Israeli

invasion of Southern Lebanon in the 1980s. The game plays much like other American-

made shooting games, a fact which led professor Alexander Galloway to point out that

the game felt like little more than a simple role-reversal.[230] In training and actual

missions, players enter firing ranges with targets portraying former Israeli Prime Minister

Ariel Sharon, and are rewarded after missions for killing Israelis with points and access

to new weapons.[231] Many Western media outlets condemned the game as yet another one

of "Hezbollah's elaborate propaganda efforts" and instilling anti-Western and particularly

anti-Israeli feelings among younger Arabs.[232]

While both Hezbollah and the American Army created games in the hopes of

gaining the support and eventual membership of younger generations, the enemy within

Special Force is made clearly visible. Israelis are referred to as "Zionists," while games

like *America's Army* give no definitive mention to the nationality of their opposing

[229] Ibid.

[230] Alexander R. Galloway, "Social Realism in Gaming," *Game Studies* 7, no.1 (November 2004) http://www.gamestudies.org/0401/galloway/ (accessed February 10, 2012).

[231] Edited by Rikke Schubart, Fabian Virchow, Debra White-Stanley, and Tanja Thomas *War Isn't Hell, It's Entertainment: Essays on Visual Media and the Representation of Conflict* Jefferson NC. McFarland & Company Inc., 2009, 218-220.

[232] Ibid, 219 & 225.

forces, although it is fairly easy to discern as the stereotypical image of a Middle-Eastern

terrorist. By leaving out a specific target, Army developers were hoping to avoid

offending any particular country or nationality, thus not alienating a particular

demographic of Arab-Americans. The targeting of Israelis in *Special Force* is not only

expected in a game made by Hezbollah, a point that most outside observers use in their

protests of the game, but is also completely necessary, a point which very few ever

mention. Because the game is based on events during the 1982 Lebanon War, thus the

opponents for virtual Hezbollah members within the game must be Israeli. Removing

Israelis as the opposition in a virtual recreation of this war makes as much sense as a

game based on the Vietnam War made by a Vietnamese developer without the United

States or France as an enemy. The problem only arises due to the ongoing struggle and

hatred within the Middle East; games depicting Israelis or Middle Eastern Arabs as

enemies are constantly judged as little more than propaganda against the opposing side.

Adnan Salim, the general manager of Syrian game developer, Dar al-Fikr, argues

that his games, *Under Ash* and its sequel *Under Siege*, are meant as a "call to justice,

realizing truth, preventing wrongdoing and aggression."[233] In these games, players

assume the role of Ahmed, a young Arab who joins the opposition against Israeli

occupation, beginning with throwing rocks at checkpoints to completing missions with

rifles. The events of the second game in the series, *Under Siege*, take place during the

Second Intifada, beginning with Baruch Goldstein's massacre of Muslims praying at the

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[233] M. Adnan Salim, "Our Message," Under Ash, http://www.underash.net/emessage.htm (accessed February 20, 2012).

Ibrahim Mosque.[234] Many of the head developers of these games claim that the missions are more like "quasi-documentaries" than a simple game. According to the game's designers, the events depicted within the games were reconstructed using official United Nations records of the events, with videos and text used to present the history of an event before the player starts a new level of the game.[235] The games were designed to be fairly difficult, with bullets killing the player relatively fast, and ending without a heroic, grand victory. Instead, the games end without providing an end to the war because the struggle between Palestinians and Israelis continue to this day.

In 2001, the original release of *Under Ash* sold out in the Middle East after only one week, with 10,000 units sold. The game's design and capabilities seem dated when compared to more modern Western games of that time, but Middle Easterners quickly turned to a game that allowed them to finally fight against Israeli forces instead of killing the cookie-cutter "Arab terrorist" of Western games. In interviews with Palestinian youth, Dr. Helga Tawil-Souri, a professor of Media, Culture, and Communication with a focus in the Middle East at New York University, noted that many were just happy to finally be able to see their point of view being show on the game in front of them.[236] The ability to be the "hero" against Israelis held a profound impact on a nine-year old and his friends once they began playing these games. One of the boys, interviewed elaborated on his own pretended version of "Israeli vs Palestinian."[237] Much like American children's

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[234] Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter, *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism And Video Games* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 119.
[235] Schubert, et al., 218-219.
[236] Ibid, 217-222.
[237] Ibid, 220-221.

"Cowboys and Indians," the young boy claimed that originally they all wanted to pretend to be Israelis, because they "always won."[238] The idea of a Palestinian fighter winning never seemed to occur to him until after playing these games, which he credits.[239]

Different regions will almost always disagree with their depictions of certain events, especially ones based around war. Video game developers know that players want to "get revenge" or "get the bad guy," and so will continue to depict villains based on current conflicts. While it is easy to avoid issues of morality or political correctness by using historical villains such as Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler, games showing struggles between groups that are still opposed today can result in, what Alexander Galloway calls, "social realism in gaming."[240] Young men who experience the everyday tensions between Israelis and Palestinians such as checkpoints, homes being demolished, terrorist attacks, are playing games like *Under Ash* or *Under Siege* with a personal investment. Galloway mentions that a new form of realism for games may exist when players are truly invested in the struggle depicted in a game long before they ever turn the game on.[241] As he explains, Americans playing a game like *Special Force* are not likely to have the same experience as a young man in Lebanon who can relate his life to the story of the game.[242] While the ability to depict current events or struggles can come with accusations of insensitivity or even propagandist motives, the player's ability to fully immerse within a storyline allows game designers to not only entertain the player

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[238] Ibid, 220-221.
[239] Ibid, 220-221.
[240] Galloway
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.

but also perhaps impact the way he or she thinks about a particular situation. One can

only imagine an Israeli child's reaction to a game like *Under Siege*, but the possibility for

both sides to relive and witness the struggle through the eyes of their enemy--an Israeli

playing as a Palestinian and vice-versa--may hold the potential to help younger

generations find some sort of common ground.

CHAPTER 6

THE POTENTIAL FOR HISTORY IN THE FUTURE

The growing popularity and acceptance of video games opens the door for the

potential use of games for much more than entertainment. With the creation of a

Smithsonian exhibit to present video games as art and the scholarly research being done

on the industry, video games are finally gaining recognition as more than a child's

plaything. The use of games within schools to help facilitate learning is a great tool for

educators facing a growing number of technologically driven youth, but the idea of

designing a gaming simulation of historical events that can be studied and help produce

new ways for scholars to look at information is both possible and potentially already

happening today. Students who play games with any sort of historical framework

included in the design, such as the *Civilization* franchise, are not always presented with

any sort of in-depth historical lessons. Even so, players interested in *Civilization* are

learning the ideas behind diplomacy and, more likely than not, gaining interest in their

favorite "civilization" to control. Playing through a game in the *Assassin's Creed* series

or the latest recreation of World War II in games like *Call of Duty* may seem completely

useless in terms of learning anything other than button-mashing reflexes, but players of

these types of games are also constantly exposed to well-researched recreations of

historical landscapes or events. While this may not be as historically thought-provoking

as reading E.B. Sledge's memoir, *With the Old Breed*, or even playing through a scenario

within *Making History*, these more commercially-driven games are able to reach vast

numbers of players and potentially providing them with a new interest in learning about a particular subject.

Graphic technology continues to grow at a rapid pace and carries the ability to add new content to existing games, which in turn opens new doors for presenting information through the gaming medium. Today, graphical innovations constantly allow developers to improve their games, with each new release in a series providing updated visuals and more features than the last. This also gives games the chance to grow with the ever-changing world of historical scholarship. A perfect example of this can be found in *Shogun 2: Total War* and its historical advisor, Stephen Turnbull. Turnbull originally worked with The Creative Assembly on creating the first *Shogun: Total War* which released in 2000. In 2011, *Shogun 2* released with improved graphics and more in-depth control over the player's clan of choice. The second game's inclusion of the *ukiyo* art style, incredibly detailed landscapes with indigenous fauna and flora, and more detailed warfare, including new types of soldiers and naval warfare, are all part of what Turnbull himself described as "an upgrade."[243] With the advent of the internet and downloadable patches, video games no longer need a new edition or sequel to introduce new information or scenarios. As new information comes to light and new histories are written, a game built around a historical period could just as easily be modified through downloadable content, which would allow players to see the differences brought about by this change.

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[243] Dr. Stephen Turnbull, interview by Mark O' Connell, "Total War: Shogun 2 Podcast," March 28, 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnmZgYc8wJw. (accessed February 8, 2012)

Museums, as defined by the London-based Museums Association, are "institutions that collect, safeguard, and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society."[244] They store relics of old civilizations, information from wars, and act as a place for both learning and remembrance of the past. Future generations are able to see the past and the evidence of the stories they read about in history books. A certain sense of awe, respect, or even emotional attachment can be felt by anyone seeing the past of human history and the importance of the past on today.

What does this have to do with a video game? Imagine playing through a game that shows the world and the human race on the brink of destruction, like the *Halo* series. If these wars really occurred, how would future generations remember this war, or more importantly, how would they remember your hero? With the upcoming release of *Halo 3* in 2007, a series of advertisements tackled these exact questions with the "Believe" campaign and the fictional "Museum of Humanity." These ads featured fake interviews with "war veterans" discussing everything from enemy weaponry exhibits to a description of a giant diorama depicting one of the many struggles between the United Nations Space Command and the alien Covenant during the Battle for Earth. The interviewed "veterans" give stirring accounts of survival and the heroism of Master Chief John-117, the role which the player assumes in nearly every *Halo* game. The "Believe"

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[244] "Frequently Asked Questions," *MuseumsAssociation.org*
http://www.museumsassociation.org/about/frequently-asked-questions

ad campaign won multiple top-honor advertising awards, including the top award at the International Andy Awards.

While *Halo 3's* "Believe" advertising campaign was based on an entirely fictional concept, the ideas of virtual video game museums and detailed fictional histories of video game series all exist today. The growth of the internet and open-source information hubs such as *Wikipedia* resulted in many of these sorts of websites, which trace entire franchises from the beginning of their "lore" to its conclusion or perceived next step a new game may take. While series like *Resistance* or *Assassin's Creed* even have their own wiki-pages, with timelines detailing every trace of history and slight deviation from actual events, the possibility for a virtual museum, or at the very least a well-maintained wiki-page, for a series of games based on historical events could be helpful in providing even more information to players who enjoy the game. The ability to link games with the actual historical events they are based on, and show the similarities and differences between them, can make information much easier for gamers to find and also help the transition from video game to actual historical interest or knowledge.

Documentaries and Video Games: Six Days Too Many

In May 2012, the National Archives and Records Administration, along with the National Film Preservation Foundation, began screening a fully restored version of John

Huston's 1946 movie, *Let There Be Light*.[245] This film was the last in a trilogy created

by Huston during his time with the US Army, which covered World War II, all of which

found controversy with their releases. While Huston's *Report from the Aleutians* faced

trouble for showing the monotony of war, as did the *Battle of San Pietro* for showing the

harsh reality of death, both films were eventually released or used by the army during the

war years. The final movie, *Let There Be Light*, was both edited and completely censored

from release until 1980 due to its depiction of war veterans dealing with what we now

refer to as post-traumatic stress.[246] As film director John Sayles elaborated in an

interview:

> Look at any World War II film made between 1940 and 1948 or 1949.
> The movie industry worked very much hand and glove with the government to the
> point that, when John Huston made a documentary showing very, very accurately
> what fighting was like, he couldn't screen it because people felt like it was a little
> too raw.[247]

Huston's movie trilogy, especially *Let There Be Light*, were showing families and

potential future soldiers the realities of war and the toll it would have on returning

veterans. *Let There Be Light*, if released back then, would have brought to a crashing halt

the idea of triumphant soldiers returning home to their families and back to living a

normal life.

    While Huston's ideas of using film to show the effects of war were ahead of his

time, Hollywood directors today are now tackling the cold realities and emotional effects

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245 "National Archives Leads Restoration of John Huston's *Let There Be Light*," *National Archives*. May
24, 2012. http://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2012/nr12-115.html. (accessed May 28, 2012).
246 Ibid.
247 Mark C. Carnes, *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies* (New York: Henry Holt and
Company, 1995), 23.

of war in critically acclaimed films such as *The Hurt Locker*. It is still almost unheard of, and perhaps still considered taboo, to see a film released using real documentary footage of war and death like Huston, but these sorts of images and videos are now shown through news stations. Yet the realities of war versus the "warrior myth" are now common topics for news outlets, television shows, and films. Unfortunately, an attempt to create a video game based on these sorts of realities was not met with the same sort of acceptance. In fact, the publicity surrounding a certain game became so negative that the game's publisher backed out completely, leaving the game in a seemingly permanent state of stasis.

Six Days in Fallujah was first announced in April 2009 as a game that would attempt to recreate one of the most intense periods of fighting during the Iraq war, the Second Battle of Fallujah.[248] The game's developer, Atomic Games, worked on numerous war-games in the past, but this latest project soon became the main focus for the company and president Peter Tamte. The idea behind *Six Days in Fallujah* came from the numerous military advisors which Atomic worked with developing their previous games.[249] A number of the soldiers were being deployed to fight in the Iraq War, many of whom found themselves in Fallujah during Operation Phantom Fury.[250] The returning soldiers began working with Tamte and the developers at Atomic on the

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[248] Xav de Matos, "Status update: Six Days in Fallujah, with Atomic Games president Peter Tamte," *Joystiq.com*. March 31, 2010. http://www.joystiq.com/2010/03/31/status-update-six-days-in-fallujah-with-atomic-games-president/. (accessed March 26, 2012).

[249] "The Battle Over the Battle of Fallujah," *The Daily Beast*. June 5, 2009. http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2009/06/05/the-battle-over-the-battle-of-fallujah.html. (accessed March 26, 2012)

[250] Ibid.

idea of creating a game based around their own experiences.[251] The experiences of

marines such as Eddie Garcia during their time in Iraq formed the basis for what would

become *Six Days in Fallujah*.[252]

In working with these marines and their actual stories and diaries, Tamte decided

to do something no war game ever attempted before, creating a documentary-like

experience through the recreation of the actual events experienced by these marines.

Instead of playing as a random soldier, the game would give players the chance to fill the

role of actual living marines, retelling their own experiences through a virtual recreation.

Even as outside observers began questioning the appropriateness of creating a video

game based on an actual battle that took place just a few years ago, Tamte pushed for a

strict storyline which literally covered only the six days of time, which his marine

advisors actually fought through.[253] The push for realism led to a detailed, accurate

timeline of events throughout the city and the use of as much real world tactics,

photographs, and information as possible to create a virtual world as close to the real

world Fallujah as possible.[254]

The game's announcement in April 2009 brought excitement from gamers hoping

to finally see a game tackle a nearly 100% factual account of an event like the battle in

Fallujah. Unfortunately for Tamte, it also raised numerous red flags for outside observers

who did not agree with this vision. Organizations, such as Gold Star Families Speak Out,

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[251] Ibid.

[252] Jamin Brophy-Warren, "Iraq, the Videogame," *The Wall Street Journal*. April 6, 2009.
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123902404583292727.html. (accessed March 27, 2012)

[253] Ibid.

[254] Ibid.

began attacking what Tamte himself described as an attempt to honor marines as an attempt to "minimize the reality of an ongoing war and at the same time profit off the deaths of people close to us by making it entertaining."[255] Those involved with the development of the game approached numerous family members of fallen soldiers, such as Tracy Miller, whose son died during the battle, to talk about their project and gauge their reaction.[256] Miller, who claimed that she believed her son would have enjoyed playing the game, told *Newsweek* in an interview that "any game about the battle would be distasteful" and that it was "probably impossible not to offend people with the game."[257]

The idea of showing a full and accurate recreation of real war in something referred to as a "game" struck a nerve with a large number of the families of fallen soldiers. Despite this, Atomic Games refused to fictionalize their story and create "yet another shooter"; the game was meant to honor the soldiers they worked with and both the developers and the soldiers hoped to keep it that way.[258] Tamte did note in interviews after the game's announcement that gameplay would limit the player's interaction by never identifying fallen soldiers or allow the shooting of civilians.[259] He also expressed the desire to show players how actual events transpired before they were

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[255] *The Daily Beast*
[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid.
[258] de Matos
[259] Ibid., *The Daily Beast*

allowed to play through a particular mission.[260] This game, according to Tamte, was an

attempt to do something that never done before, create a video game that would act more

as an "interactive recreation" than a traditional "video game."[261]

Unfortunately for Tamte, the game's publisher and financial backer, Konami,

wanted absolutely nothing to do with this sort of negative backlash from the American

media, so they dropped the game three weeks after its initial announcement.[262] Without

funding, the game was left incomplete as Tamte quickly searched for a new publishing

partner. While rumors of a few different companies' interest in the project surfaced, an

agreement never came to fruition and the company was forced to cut its staff due to a

lack of funding.[263] Despite these problems, a number of soldiers, including marines

who fought or are still fighting in the Iraq War, have voiced their support of the project

by sending letters to Atomic Games begging them to stick with the project and finish the

game.[264]

The ideas behind *Six Days in Fallujah* give us a perfect example of the potential

that video games have in presenting something in a completely different, new way.

While no one outside of those who worked on the game can be sure how close the game

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[260] de Matos

[261] Stephany Nunneley, "Atomic: Six Days in Fallujah is 'not complete,'" *vg247.com*. March 31, 2010. http://www.vg247.com/2010/03/31/atomic-six-days-in-fallujah-is-not-complete/ (accessed March 30, 2012).

[262] Patrick Garratt, "Report: Konami drop Six Days in Fallujah," *vg247.com*. April 27, 2009. http://www.vg247.com/2009/04/27/report-konami-drop-six-days-in-fallujah/ (accessed March 26, 2012).

[263] Brad Nicholson, "Atomic Games forced to 'reduce the size' of its staff," *Destructoid*. August 6, 2010. http://www.destructoid.com/atomic-games-forced-to-reduce-the-size-of-its-staff-143074.phtml (accessed March 29, 2012).

[264] Alex Pham, "Six Days in Fallujah video game partly resurrected as Breach," *Los Angeles Times*. March 30, 2010. http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2010/03/six-days-in-fallujah-game-breach-atomic-games.html. (accessed March 30, 2012).

approached a realistic recreation, the simple fact that someone could reproduce an event and not only show outside observers what happened like films or television, but allow them to revisit or question the importance of particular actions could completely change the way people think. A program like *Kuma/War* can show players what realistically happened and then place them in a simulation of the same situation, allowing them to experience the effect of slight differences or implore the same sort of thinking in order to recreate the same results. The problems that faced *Six Days in Fallujah* were two-fold; first, the recreation of actual people and names in a conflict still happening leaves trauma for this who experienced any form of loss; and second, the idea that "playing a game" cannot possibly attribute the sort of respect and care needed for a serious event such as war or the memory of fallen soldiers. The majority of the population's sense of the word "video game" as nothing more than a recreational activity to cure boredom will always bring skepticism to any attempts to focus on a more serious topic.

CONCLUSION
Creating Something More Than a 'Game'

In order for outside observers to fully realize the potential of video games to

impact a significant portion of the population, they must be introduced to both the

overwhelming popularity of the industry and the ways in which other organizations use

them. After seeing evidence of this rise in popularity, the acceptance of video games as a

form of media, and their adoption as training or teaching aides, readers of this study will

recognize and hopefully capitalize on the potential of these games to present or modify

their own fields of study. In terms of historical study, the drive for realism and accurate

recreation within video games resulted in numerous games based in historical time

periods or covering any number of past events. While some of these games give only the

slightest mention to their historical inspirations and avoid strict accuracy, many others

attempt to present a virtual world as highly detailed and accurately created as possible in

the hopes of replicating a specific period in time. In some ways, the potential for games

which can teach or change the way players think about historical events is already being

realized with games like *Making History*, which is freely available for schools and

already implemented into more than 150 schools' curriculums.[265] As teachers and

historians attempt to find new ways to present their information, constant technological

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[265] Matthew Philips, "Your Grandfather's War," *Newsweek*. December 27, 2007.
http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2007/12/27/your-grandfather-s-war.html (accessed October 2, 2012).
"Muzzy Lanes Offers its Award-Winning History Game Free to Schools," *MuzzyLane*. April 4, 2012.
http://muzzylane.com/news/article/232 (accessed October 5, 2012).

growth allows the potential for video game representations of history to also be constantly improving.

While games continue to grow closer to acceptance and perhaps eventually the sort of acclaim which certain films receive today, the potential exists for games to go beyond any other form of media. As Warren Spector expressed in a statement for *GameInformer* magazine:

> Games are unique among all media, among all art forms. We are not novels. We are not movies. We aren't television. We shouldn't try to be like that. We can do things that no other medium in human history has ever been able to do. We have to focus our energy on those things, the things that make us unique."[266]

The video game industry has already shown the ability to win awards in art, advertising, and cinematic films. The potential for games to reshape the way humans view history, philosophy, or even think about the spread of disease is already being explored. Moving forward, the real question that needs to be asked is not, "can video games truly cover serious topics like other forms of media?" but, "when will the rest of the population look past the word 'game'?"

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[266] "Overheard at GDC," *GameInformer*, 229 (May 2012), 15.

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