The United States is often described as a melting pot of different ethnicities and religions. Americans tend to identify themselves according to these ethnic and religious lines, rather than a unified national one. After 9/11 the narrative on a unified American national identity intensified and it gladly incorporated the narrative of a television series, Band of Brothers.

Until Death do us part.

Constructing American National Identity after 9/11: Brotherhood and Masculinity in Band of Brothers (2001)

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Inhoud

Introduction

During my childhood, my interest for history mainly derived from the urge to know more and more about the Second World War. I devoured books, both fictional and non-fictional, about the Second World war. Movies like *Saving Private Ryan* and *Pearl Harbor* provided a more vivid picture, even though it was largely a fictional story. The miniseries *Band of Brothers,* produced by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks were far more realistic and they told a very intriguing story. Since my purchase of the DVD-Box I have seen the series multiple times and what interested me most about the story it told, is the bond that was forged among soldiers who (strongly) differed on educational, ethnical, political and religious grounds. 2nd Lieutenant Carwood Lipton describes this bond in his concluding contribution at the end of the tenth episode, with a quotation from Shakespeare's play *Henry V*: 'Henry V was talking to his men. He said: "From this day to the ending of the world, we in it shall be remembered. We lucky few, we band of brothers. For he who sheds his blood with me, shall be my brother."'[1] It is this bond that is so intriguing. Therefore this thesis will aim to analyze the representations of this brotherhood in the miniseries *Band of Brothers.*

In order to be able to analyze the representations of "brotherhood" in these series, we need to define the concept of "brotherhood." When we understand what "brotherhood" is, we can begin to analyze how it is precisely constructed in the televisions series *Band of Brothers* The concept of "brotherhood" that this thesis will use is connected with Ambrose's notion of the "citizen soldiers." These soldiers came from different backgrounds and different parts of the country.[2] The fact that they came from different backgrounds is an essential element, because they eventually overcame this diversity, which included ethnic and religious differences, and they became the closest comrades. Ambrose states:

> 'The result of these shared experiences was a closeness that was unknown to all outsiders. Comrades are closer than friends, closer than brothers. Their relationship is different from that of lovers. Their trust in, and knowledge of, each other is total. They got to know each other's life stories, what they did before the came into the Army, where and why they volunteered,

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[1] Erik Jendresen, Tom Hanks, John Orloff and others, *Band of Brothers*, DVD. Directed by Tom Hanks and others. (HBO, 2001)

[2] Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster 2001) 15

what they liked to eat and drink, what their capabilities were. On a night march they would hear a cough and know who it was; on a night maneuver they would see someone sneaking through the woods and know who it was from his silhouette.'[3]

 The kind of brotherhood Ambrose puts forward in this paragraph is the concept of brotherhood this thesis will use. Their connection goes deep and, like Ambrose argues, was unknown to outsiders. The representation of this brotherhood in *Band of Brothers* tries to make it understandable for outsiders and at the same time tells a specific story. Todd Migliaccio argues that the interaction between male friends is part of something bigger, namely "doing masculinity."[4] How does *Band of Brothers* represent brotherhood as "doing masculinity" and how can it be used to frame an American national identity? This thesis seeks to analyze the relation between brotherhood and masculinity and how they are made typically "American."

The analysis of these representations of brotherhood can give us an interesting perspective on post 9/11 American popular culture and post 9/11 American society. What kind of function do these representations serve and what are they trying to achieve with representing brotherhood in this way? When analyzing these representations it is important to keep in mind that these miniseries are cultural products of the commencing twenty-first century. They are products of the commencing 21st century, even though they are produced with the collaboration of the veterans and are (largely) based on their accounts of the Second World War. We need to be able to contextualize the story that is been told, but we also need to be able to understand and analyze the 'value' of these series being produced in a later generation. Something Mark A. Stoler addresses in his article "The Second World War in U.S. History and Memory." Stoler compares the movies *The Longest Day* (1962) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and claims that both films honor the men who participated in the liberation of Europe, but that the latter does so without hagiography. He states 'One can almost hear a generation saying that it will recognize and respect its parents for what they did without accepting their idealized memory of what took place – or what it meant.'[5] *Band*

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[3] Ibidem 21
[4] Todd Migliaccio, "Men's Friendships: Performances of Masculinity," Journal of Men's Studies vol .17, no 3. (Fall 2009) 227
[5] Mark A. Stoler, "The Second World War in U.S. History and Memory", Diplomatic History vol. 25,no 3. (Summer 2001) 391

of Brothers is based on the memoirs of the veterans, but is not as hagiographic as *The Longest Day* appears. *Band of Brothers* is produced in a similar mindset as *Saving Private Ryan*, since Hanks and Spielberg were executive producers in both enterprises. This would suggest that *Band of Brothers* is, like *Saving Private Ryan*, less hagiographic than for example *The Longest Day.* The veterans themselves are adamant that they are no heroes, Private Edward "Babe" Heffron states in the last episode of *Band of Brothers* that the heroes are the ones that are still buried in Europe to this day.[6] Yet they encounter young Americans who, after having seen *Band of Brothers* see them as heroes. Perhaps that has something to do with the mindset of Stephen E. Ambrose, how did he see the veterans? How do these miniseries enforce the picture of the heroic actions of the men of Easy Company, even though the veterans discourage their representation as heroes? This is important for this thesis because I will argue that their modesty and their refusal to see themselves as heroes is an important element of the 'brotherhood' that is portrayed.

In our effort to analyze these representations of brotherhood in *Band of Brothers* we need to understand the functions of both popular culture and the medium through which it was broadcasted, in these cases the television. According to M. Thomas Inge 'popular culture shows people at their best, at their most capable and creative, and in their most liberated stated. Thus the health of the society is directly reflected in the liveliness and quality of its entertainment.'[7] Tim Edensor argues that popular culture serves a national agenda. He states: 'A nationalist imperative has been to bring together different regional and ethnic differences by identifying national high cultural points as common denominators, relying on elite cultural arbiters to make these selections.'[8] This claim can be used to discuss the context in which *Band of Brothers* was produced. During a time when American national identity faded from sight,[9] *Band of Brothers* tells a story of 'ethnic' Americans overcoming their difference and forging a band of brothers. Understanding how and why these bonds are represented in these cultural displays is essential to capture the entire context. In his introduction of the Greenwood Guide, Inge compares high culture with popular culture and

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[6] Babe Heffron states this in the tenth episode, "Points", at the end of the episode when they respond to questions. The questions are not heard.
[7] M. Thomas Inge, "Introduction," in The Greenwood Guide to American Popular Culture Volume 1, ed. M. Thomas Inge and Dennis Hall (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 2002) xvii
[8] Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Every Day Life* (New York, NY: Berg 2002) 16
[9] Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We?: America's Great Debate* (London, UK: Simon & Schuster 2005) 4

in doing so provides characteristics of popular culture on both form and function. According to Inge popular culture 'is thought to be comprehensive or relevant to a large part of the population in its style and content.'[10] It also 'validates the common experience of the larger part of the population'[11] and 'we also seek in popular culture to have our attitudes and biases confirmed, to know that there are others just like us with the same thought, and to be encouraged to believe that everything will come out right in the end.'[12] Both Inge's and Edensor's definitions are very relevant to our study of *Band of Brothers*, because it helps us analyze how popular culture, like *Band of Brothers*, can be used to strengthen the national identity. That is what this thesis is trying to answer, to what extent can the narrative of *Band of Brothers* be used to strengthen American national identity?

Gary Gerstle refers to a Marine, William Manchester, and he states that his story 'reveals that combat in World War II created settings in which men could develop ties to each other stronger than any they had experienced in civilian life.'[13] Gerstle's argument is quite similar to what Ambrose argues about the brotherhood and bond that developed among the "citizen soldiers." The question remains why is this image, the intense bonding of the soldiers, so important in the narrative of *Band of Brothers*? How can it be used to enforce the idea of a national identity? In addition the representation is also part of some form of American exceptionalism, or as M. Paul Hollinger states his argument; 'World War II mirrored what was best in America, as well as what was worst. It defined who Americans were as a people and their victory over the evil forces of Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan gave them all a reason to be proud.'[14] If the image of brotherhood and masculinity functions as a mirror that shows what was best in America, and thus in Americans, it could serve as a form of collective memory that through that collectiveness can function as an instrument to frame national identity. But how is it constructed as such, and what is the function of a realistic representation and the realistic perception of the narrative within *Band of Brothers*?

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[10] M. Thomas Inge, "Introduction" in the Greenwood Guide to American Popular Culture Volume 1, xxi
[11] Ibidem
[12] Ibidem
[13] Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2001) 223
[14] M. Paul Hollinger, *War and American Popular Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenport 1999) 228

Another aspect that is very interesting, and possibly essential to address, is the representation of masculinity in the series as shaping factor of the image of the American soldier. Nancy Ehrenreich states in her article "Masculinity and American militarism" that 'Military service is one of our rites of manhood; it makes men men.'[15] Ehrenreich claims that masculinity in the American mindset are intrinsically linked with violence and war. The willingness to use force and sacrifice lives equate to masculinity and non-violent solutions were/are seen as sings of weakness and inadequate masculinity.[16] How is this masculinity represented and how are the aspects Ehrenreich relates to this views presented as parts of the forming of the brotherhood?

Ambrose writes in the foreword of his book *Band of Brothers* that Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg were interested in his book because of its scope and, more importantly, because of 'the concentration on one outstanding light infantry company and the personalities and actions of the men.'[17] He continues by claiming that the people had read enough about generals and statesmen during the Second World War. 'What they seek is the experience of the individual soldier or sailor or airmen. They want to know, what did he do? How could he have done that? They read for entertainment, of course, and enlightenment, but also, and perhaps most of all, for inspiration.'[18] The idea that the people's interest to read the personal stories of the veterans and, in the case of the television series, watch the televised versions is partially motivated to seek inspiration is an essential element of the argument that the television series serve a national agenda.

The television plays an important role in framing a national identity or representing a culture. Robert S. Alley refers to two interesting notions on the television and the message it propagates in his chapter on Television in *Handbook of American Popular Culture*. He refers to W.Y. Elliot who claimed that 'more than any other medium of communication, [television is] symbolic in its own development and trends of much that is of basic importance to American culture, and serves more than the movies to reflect that culture- even if the mirror

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[15] Nancy Ehrenreich, "Masculinity and American Militarism", Tikkun 17, no 6. (November 2002) 46
[16] Ibidem
[17] Ambrose, *Band of Brothers,* 14
[18] Ibidem

is distorted.'[19] He also refers to Eugene Glynn who argued that 'television can produce a people wider in knowledge, more alert and aware of the world, prepared to be much more actively interested in the life of their times. Television can be the great destroyer of provincialism. Television can produce a nation of people who really live in the world, not in just their own hamlets.'[20] Both seem to agree that television play an important role in framing the people and their culture, and thus in a way can frame their identity. This thesis will analyze how *Band of Brothers* fulfills this role.

This thesis will try to address the representations of brotherhood and the masculine American soldier in the miniseries *Band of Brothers*. It will try to analyze how the 'brotherhood' is represented and how it overcomes the diversities among the members of E Company and what image and message they try to convey to the viewer. The thesis question will be: 'To what extent were representations of "brotherhood" in *Band of Brothers* (2001) used to frame an American national identity, and how was it incorporated in the narrative on American national identity after 9/11? The first chapter will analyze the man behind the construction of *Band of Brothers* and its narrative, Stephen E. Ambrose. It will examine what influence Ambrose's construction of the "citizen soldier" and how Ambrose constructs this concept in the three relevant works. Finally this chapter will try to contextualize this interest in the experiences of World War II veterans, in movement that increasingly considered these men to be part of the "greatest generation." The second chapter will analyze and examine the representations of the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the characters and how they are constructed as different from the mainstream American. It will also address how this diversity is reinforced by the subtle, but nonetheless evident, tensions between the men at first. In the last section this chapter will analyze how these men are represented as overcoming their diversities through the use of the concepts of brotherhood and masculinity and how they become the "band of brothers." The last chapter of this thesis will analyze how the image and narrative on brotherhood and masculinity in *Band of Brothers* was received by the American audience and how it finally was incorporated in the bigger narrative on American national identity after the events of 9/11.

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[19] Robert S. Alley, "Television" in Handbook of American Popular Culture, ed. M. Thomas Inge (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1978) 339
[20] Ibidem

Chapter 1: Ambrose and the image of the "citizen soldier"

Stephen Edward Ambrose (1936-2002) is the historian behind the book *Band of Brothers; E Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne: From Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest*, which would be the basis for Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks' miniseries *Band of Brothers.* It is an obvious argument that Ambrose and his works have influenced the image of American identity in *Band of Brothers,* which in its turn provides an interesting perspective on post 9/11 American culture and society. In order to analyze and understand that perspective we need to analyze the contribution Ambrose and his defining work have provided to that specific perspective and therefore we need to contextualize both Ambrose and his relevant works. It will not be argued that Ambrose is solely responsible for the narrative that arose around the stories of World War II, but his contribution has been significant. During the nineties there was a development of increased 'popular' interest in the experience and stories of (world) war veterans, of which Ambrose's *Band of Brothers* and Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation* are excellent examples. This chapter will address Ambrose's contribution to this trend and will analyze the context from which it derives, which means Ambrose's background and credibility, and will address the theory he provides on the 'citizen soldier' and how this influenced the representation of 'the American soldier' in the Second World War by *Band of Brothers*.

The Man

Ambrose's *Band of Brothers* was not only a product of the veterans that were interviewed by Ambrose. Above all it is a product of Ambrose, because he chose which stories to tell and how to tell them. In doing so, Ambrose himself essentially constructed the foundation of the narrative which provided the platform for the television series *Band of Brothers.* In order to understand the narrative Ambrose helped create, we need to understand who Ambrose was, what he did and which factors influenced his thinking. This section will analyze Ambrose's (political) background and how it influenced the narrative he was about to construct surrounding the World War II veterans.

Ambrose was born in 1936 and he grew up in Whitewater, Wisconsin where his father was the M.D.[21] Ambrose argued that, World War II had dominated his life during grade school, because his father served as navy doctor in the Pacific and his mother worked alongside German prisoners of war (POW's). He also states that he and his brothers went to the movies regularly, not for the movies but for the news from the theatres of War. When the boys played games they played 'war': the 'Japs' vs. the Marines and the GI's vs. the 'Krauts.'[22] What is perhaps most interesting, is the way Ambrose refers to the veterans in his biography.

> 'I was ten years when the war ended. I thought the returning veterans were giants who saved the world from barbarism. I still think so. I remain a hero worshipper. Over the decades I have interviewed thousands of veterans. It is a privilege to hear their stories, then write them up.'[23]

This representations reveals two interesting notions that need to be taken into consideration when analyzing Ambrose's narrative. First, is the fact that Ambrose himself declares that he is and remains to be a hero worshipper. This combined with the fact that Ambrose considers it to be a privilege to interview the veterans and document their stories, should alert us that Ambrose's works on veterans and the Second World War might show a tendency to become hagiographic. Second is his claim that he has interviewed thousands of veterans and has documented their stories. Whether this is an exaggeration is not the issue, what is important to be aware of, is the fact that Ambrose has interviewed a significant number of veterans and that he only selected a certain amount to tell the story he wanted to tell. We therefore need to be continuously aware of the fact he chose these stories for a reason, because they fit in the narrative Ambrose wanted to tell. This is important because it could present a rather selective image, rather than an actual image of how it really was. By ignoring some essential elements, which Ambrose might consider to be irrelevant or not "catchy" enough, he might undermine the representativeness of the image and narrative.

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[21] Stephen E. Ambrose, "Stephen E. Ambrose," Ambrose and Ambrose, Inc. http://classic-web.archive.org/web/20040218033249/http://www.stephenambrose.com/bio.html Accessed 19th of May 2013
[22] Stephen E. Ambrose, *Victors: Eisenhower and his boys, the men of WWII* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster 1998) Introduction
[23] Stephen E. Ambrose, "Stephen E. Ambrose," Ambrose and Ambrose, Inc. http://classic-web.archive.org/web/20040218033249/http://www.stephenambrose.com/bio4.html Accessed 19th of May 2013

Another element of Ambrose's life that needs to be analyzed to understand the context in which the narrative of *Band of Brothers* was created, is his association with Eisenhower. In his biography Ambrose states that he wrote the biography on Eisenhower, because Eisenhower himself approached him after having read his biography on Henry Halleck, Lincoln's Chief of Staff.[24] However, Richard Rayner is highly critical of this story, Rayner states, quoting correspondence from Ambrose to Eisenhower, that Ambrose himself had contacted Eisenhower and not the other way around. He adds that Ambrose only met with Eisenhower on a few occasions of a total of five hours, while Ambrose himself claims to have had several meetings with Eisenhower from hours at an end.[25] This is not defining for the narrative Ambrose created, but it is an essential element nonetheless because Ambrose's academic career has become hotly debated ever since he became a popular historian with the release of the television series *Band of Brothers*. Despite the discussion on Ambrose's credibility, the association with Eisenhower is an essential factor in the narrative because he claims in his biography that his association with Eisenhower is one of the main reasons Ambrose started writing WWII books.[26] In his book *Victors: Eisenhower and his boys, the men of WWII* Ambrose states:

'The older I get , the more of his successors as generals and presidents I see, the more I appreciate General and President Eisenhower´s leadership. And the more I realize that the key to his success as a leader of men was his insistence on teamwork and his devotion to democracy.´[27]

What is crucial in this statement is the value Ambrose attributes to teamwork. He clearly agitates against individualism, and his emphasis on teamwork is clearly discernible in his book *Band of Brothers* where their ´brotherhood´ allows for a highly efficient cooperation. The reference made by Alan Brinkley in "The Best Man", a review on Ambrose's book *Nixon: The Education of A Politician 1913-1962,* underlines Ambrose's admiration of Eisenhower.

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[24] Stephen E. Ambrose, "Stephen E. Ambrose," Ambrose and Ambrose, Inc. http://classic-web.archive.org/web/20040218033249/http://www.stephenambrose.com/bio3.html
Accessed 19th of May 2013

[25] Richard Rayner, "Channeling Ike", *The New Yorker*, http://www.newyorker.com/talk/2010/04/26/100426ta_talk_rayner accessed 20th of May

[26] Stephen E. Ambrose, "Stephen E. Ambrose," Ambrose and Ambrose, Inc. http://classic-web.archive.org/web/20040218033249/http://www.stephenambrose.com/bio.html
Accessed 20th of May 2013

[27] Ambrose, *The Victors*, Introduction

Brinkley cites a part of the introduction of Ambrose's biography on Eisenhower which shows the Ambrose's admiration of Eisenhower, and Brinkley states that such a quote cannot be found in Ambrose's biography on Nixon.[28] This admiration of Eisenhower is closely connected to Ambrose's admiration of the veterans, because Ambrose argues that these veterans fought under the leadership of Eisenhower to save the world from barbarism and preserve its democracy.

Ambrose's inadequacy concerning the Eisenhower biography has already been mentioned before. His apparent exaggerations concerning the amount of interviews he had with Eisenhower and how long they took are not the only inadequacies according to critics. Jim Newton wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that: 'The exemplary librarians and archivists at the library (the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas red.) – the guardians of Eisenhower's legacy- warned me that checking Ambrose would not be easy. As they well knew, and I quickly discovered, Ambrose's shorthand made references difficult to confirm, and many telling passages lacked any footnotes at all.'[29] Failing to provide consistent and valid annotation is a grave mistake for a historian, and rightfully allows his findings to be questioned, and as we will see this potentially could have a negative impact on Ambrose's reputation, which could undermine the effectiveness of the narrative the television series and the book present.

 This failure to provide adequate sources is not restricted to Eisenhower's biography according to critics. Questions about the credibility of Ambrose's works started with his book *The Wild Blue*, of which Ambrose himself already acknowledged he had borrowed from other authors. Critics found out that he had borrowed more liberally than Ambrose himself had said and according to David D. Kirkpatrick from the *New York Times*: 'Professional historians, however, said that the damage had already been done to Mr. Ambrose's reputation. Others have unearthed more limited but similar examples from his biography of

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[28] Alan Brinkley, "The Best Man," The New York Review of Books*,* http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1987/jul/16/the-best-man/ accessed the 20th of May 2013
[29] Jim Newton, "Books and Ideas: Stephen Ambrose's troubling Eisenhower record," Los Angeles Times http://articles.latimes.com/2010/may/09/entertainment/la-ca-stephen-ambrose-20100509 accessed 20th of May 2013

Nixon and his book *Crazy Horse and Custer*.'[30] It is the damage Ambrose's reputation suffers that should concern us. If he has made similar errors in writing his book *Band of Brothers*, we should question the validity of the series and its narrative to a certain extent as well. Simply because, as we will see, the realism and "truthfulness" of the narrative Ambrose provides is essential in our analyzing how this narrative was used to frame a national identity. However, several veterans who played a key role in the story of *Band of Brothers*, like Major Richard "Dick" Winters, speak highly of Ambrose. Winters refers to Ambrose as 'the most important historian of our time.'[31] He also claims that: 'Each of us was grateful that Ambrose did such a masterful job in telling our story in his own inimitable style.'[32] Perhaps the veterans are not the most objective sources to measure Ambrose's credibility in its entirety. However, Winters refers to *Band of Brothers*, the story of the veterans, and by celebrating Ambrose's effort in telling their story they confirm its credibility, reality and "truthfulness," thus securing a part of the effectiveness of the narrative in its attempt to frame a national identity.

In addressing and analyzing the narrative in which *Band of Brothers* and *The Pacific* we need to be aware what influenced Ambrose in helping construct that narrative. Important to be aware of in this respect are two things. First, he sees the veterans, led by Eisenhower, as heroes who saved the world from barbarism and preserved democracy. This 'heroic' approach towards the veterans and their "heroisms" could have resulted in a more 'glorious' account than it actually was. The second is the way Ambrose values teamwork over individualism, which is essential for our analysis of the workings of brotherhood and their representations in the television series *Band of Brothers* because teamwork is an essential element of that brotherhood and its efficiency. Another element that is essential for our analysis of the narrative Ambrose presents, is that he and some of his earlier works were criticized by fellow historians. The critics questioned the credibility and validity of works like *Crazy Horse and Custer* and *The Wild Blue*. Similar criticisms on *Band of Brothers* could have negative effects on the narrative the book and the television series present. However, the

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[30] David D. Kirkpatrick, "As Historian's fame grows, so do Questions on Methods," The New York Times http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/11/us/as-historian-s-fame-grows-so-do-questions-on-methods.html?src=pm accessed the 20th of May 2013
[31] Richard D. Winters and Cole C. Kingseed, *Beyond Band of Brothers: the War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters* (New York, NY: The Pinguin Group) 263
[32] Ibidem 265

veterans of E Company praise Ambrose for what he has done and telling their story, thus anchoring the credibility and reality of the story told by *Band of Brothers*.

The Works

This section will focus on the works Ambrose has written which are essential works in his concept of the citizen soldier, which began with his book *Band of Brothers.* The plan of Ambrose was to do a book on D-Day after he finishing the last volume on President Nixon. His aim was to have the book about D-Day published on the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day, June 6th 1944. According to Ambrose there was too much years between the two books and that gap needed filling. In 1988 Ambrose had come in contact with the veterans of Easy Company, 506th PIR, 101st Airborne for a D-Day project. It was Maj. Richard Winters who proposed to Ambrose to write a book on the history of Easy. That idea appealed to Ambrose because it would not only fill the gap, but it would also provide another perspective on D-Day than he had gotten during his research for *Pegasus Bridge*.[33] Thus, to a certain degree *Band of Brothers* was part of the research for his book *D-Day, June 6 1944: The Battle for the Normandy Beaches*. In both books Ambrose's beginning notion on 'citizen soldiers' could already be discerned, and that would eventually lead to his book *Citizen Soldier,* which is a kind of commemoration of the citizen soldiers by telling their stories*.* This concept is essential for the representation of the American soldier in the television series *Band of Brothers* and *The Pacific*. But what does the 'citizen soldier' actually entail and why was it so important according to Ambrose?

Band of Brothers was the first one of the three books this thesis uses, hence it is the first book we can see the construction of Ambrose's citizen soldier. But How does he construct of define the citizen soldier in the first book? The most telling statement concerning the citizen soldier is the following:

'The men of Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, U.S. Army, came from different backgrounds, different parts of the country. They were farmers and coal miners, mountain men and sons of the Deep South. Some were desperately poor, others

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[33] Ambrose, *Band of Brothers* 309-310

from the middle class. Only one was from the Old Army, only a few came from the National Guard or Reserves. They were citizen soldiers.'[34]

This is the first paragraph of the first chapter in Ambrose's *Band of Brothers* and it already reveals two important elements that constitutes the 'citizen soldier,' its diversity. Diversity is an key factor, it suggests that the soldiers are to a certain extent a reflection of the American society. I say to a certain extent, because these groups , with the Easy Company of the 506th PIR, 101st Airborne as an example, existed only out of white men. Non-whites were grouped together; African Americans together in one group, Native Americans together in another etc. Their exclusion is an important factor that needs to be taken into account, but without the presence of African Americans, the groups were diverse nonetheless featuring most (if not all) white ethnicities. Another important element is the fact that the most of them were draftees, with no prior connection to the Army. Those who joined the Airborne Division volunteered because they wanted to belong and fight with the best.[35] In *Band of Brothers* Ambrose starts constructing the notion of the citizen soldiers, and he defines them as a diverse group of men, from all over America who volunteered to join the Army.

Ambrose develops the notion of 'citizen soldier' further in his book *D-Day*, giving other traits of what he considers the 'citizen soldier' that was so important to the American war effort. He states that:

> 'The U.S. Army's infantry divisions were not elite, by definition, but they had some outstanding characteristics. Although they were made up, primarily, of conscripted troops, there was a vast difference between American draftees and their German counterparts (not to mention the *Ost* battalions). The American Selective Service System was just that, selective. One-third of the men called to service were rejected after physical examinations, making the average draftee brighter, healthier and better educated than the average American.'[36]

This is a very interesting notion on the American soldier in the Second World War, and therefore it adds to the argument that these troops could not be seen as a valid representation of the American society. This is a very interesting notion that should be taken

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[34] Ibidem 15
[35] Ibidem 16
[36] Stephen E. Ambrose, *D-Day June 6, 1944: The Battle for the Normandy Beaches* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster 1994) 48

into account and will be further discussed in the chapter that analyzes the representations of brotherhood in *Band of Brothers.*

Another element that is presented as a part of the 'citizen soldier' by Ambrose is associated with Ambrose's claim that: 'At the end of 1943 the U.S. Army was the greenest army in the world. Of the nearly fifty infantry, armored and airborne divisions selected for participation in the campaign in northwest Europe, only two – the 1st Infantry and the 82nd Airborne- had been in combat.'[37] The relevance of this 'greenness' to the notion of the 'citizen soldier' is presented by his quote of Sgt. Carwood Lipton, also a member of Easy Company, who stated that: 'I took chances on D-Day I would have never taken later in the war.'[38] Ambrose combines this with a theory of Paul Fussell, successful author of *The Great War and Modern Memory,* on men in combat. Fussell claims that men in combat go through three stages in combat: two of realization and one of perception.

> 'Considering the possibility of a severe wound or death, the average soldier's first rationalization is: "It *can't* happen to me. I am too clever/agile/well-trained/good-looking/beloved/tightly laced, etc." The second rationalization is: "It *can* happen to me, and I'd better be more careful. I can avoid the danger by watching more prudently were I take cover/dig in/expose my position by firing my weapon/keep alert at all times, etc." Finally, the realization is "it *is going to* happen to me and only my not being there is going to prevent it.'[39]

This theory is essential in Ambrose's concept of the 'citizen soldier' and in setting them apart from their German counterparts. The German army had been in war and seen combat ever since they invaded Poland in 1939. The U.S. Army's encounter with combat, apart from the 1st Infantry and the 82nd Airborne, was on June 6, 1944. According to Ambrose this 'greenness' is an important factor in the 'citizen soldier' and thus it could be argued Ambrose sees it as a contributing factor to their success on the fields of combat. Throughout his book *D-day*, the notion of the citizen soldiers becomes more polished and more detailed. He adds the "greenness" of the men compared to their German counterparts and the fact that they were selected by the ASSS , making them brighter and healthier etc. as their fellow Americans, to the defining characteristics of the citizen soldiers.

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[37] Ibidem
[38] Ibidem
[39] Ibidem 49

Ambrose's book *Citizen Soldiers* is the final work that is relevant to this thesis research. It is more a chronological story, compiled of the personal experiences and stories of the veterans of the campaign in northwest Europe, rather than 'a treatise linking the products of American society (those citizen soldiers) to how the U.S. Army fought in northwest Europe and how successfully it accomplished its objectives.'[40] Ambrose tells the stories of these veterans and by doing so, honors their sacrifice for and contribution to the preservation of democracy. In the epilogue of the book it becomes entirely clear what the citizen soldier entails for Ambrose. Citizen soldiers are the men who left their families and public life to take up arms to defend the world from dictatorships and to preserve democracy. They are also the men, save for the ones who sacrificed their lives, who returned and built modern America.

> 'They had learned to work together in the armed services in World War II. They had seen enough destruction; they wanted to construct. They built the interstate highway system, the St. Lawrence Seaway, the suburbs (so scorned by the sociologists, so successful with the people) and more. They had seen enough killing; they wanted to save lives. They licked polio and made other revolutionary advances in medicine. They had learned in the armed forces the virtue of solid organization and teamwork, and the value of individual initiative, inventiveness and responsibility. They developed the modern corporation while inaugurating revolutionary advances in science and technology, education and public policy.'[41]

With this statement Ambrose argues that the citizen soldiers were not only the ones who fought and sacrificed during the war, but they also were responsible for the construction of the United States that became so advanced, powerful and wealthy. This is crucial for the understanding of the narrative in which these books is set, because Ambrose clearly suggests that the Americans owe these veterans more than only the victory in the Second World War.

The concept of citizen soldiers is so important to Ambrose because, to him, they are a special 'breed' of soldiers, responsible for the victory in the Second World War and for building modern America. They are in his eyes, and in the eyes of thousands of others, the

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[40] Raymond E. Franck Jr., "Book review *Citizen Soldiers*," Armed Forces and Society 25 no 3. (1999) page 529
[41] Stephen E. Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers: The US Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge and the Surrender of Germany*(New York, NY: Simon and Schuster 1997) Epilogue

greatest generation. Ambrose defines them throughout the discussed books *Band of Brothers, D-Day* and *Citizen Soldiers*. There are a couple of important elements that are characteristic to the citizen soldiers. First, they have different background and come from different parts of the country. Second, they were drafted from public life, leaving that life behind only to return to it after the war, if they had not given the ultimate sacrifice in the fight for the preservation of democracy. Third, they were strictly selected by the American Selective Service System (ASSS), making them brighter, healthier and more educated than the average American, and, perhaps, their German counterparts. Fourth, they were green and inexperienced, which was beneficial according to Ambrose because they felt invincible in the beginning, and became more and more careful through experience. Lastly, the ones who survived the war, returned and helped built modern America aided by their experiences in the armed services. It can be concluded that Ambrose sees the citizen soldiers as a special "breed" of soldiers, and that the circumstances created them as such. They did great things for America and he tries to paint a picture, that inspires and teaches the current day Americans about the virtues of duty and brotherhood as something that unites them.

The Legacy

The narrative of which Ambrose's books are a part of, is not uniquely Ambrose's narrative. During the nineties of the twentieth century the interest for, what was considered to be, the "Greatest Generation" began to rise. Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation* (1998) and Robert Sobel's *The Great Boom 1950-2000: How a Generation of Americans created the World's Most Prosperous Society* (2000) are only two examples of the rest of that narrative. Understanding what the Greatest Generation is and how the (renewed) interest in this generation came into being is essential for our understanding the narrative in which *Band of Brothers* is produced. In this section I will address the definitions of the Greatest Generation that are present, including Ambrose's definition and I will try to answer how this impulse of renewed interest came to be.

In one of the last paragraphs of his epilogue for *Citizen Soldiers*, Ambrose discusses the motivation of the GIs, but that paragraph is also very telling about what he sees as the "greatest generation." Ambrose states, 'In general, when assessing the motivation of the GIs, there is agreement that patriotism or idealism had little if anything to do with it. The GIs

fought because they had to. What held them together was not country and flag, but unit cohesion. And yet there is something more. Although the GIs were and are embarrassed to talk about the cause they fought for, they were the children of democracy, and they did more to help spread democracy around the world than any other generation in history. At the core, the American citizen soldiers knew the difference between right and wrong, and they didn't want to live in a world where wrong prevailed. So they fought and won, and we all of us, living and yet to be born, must be ever profoundly grateful.'[42] Ambrose clearly values their fight for democracy and that combined with the fact that they built modern America, is the reason he considers them to be the "greatest generation" and that the other generations owe them a debt. The problem with this assessment is that Ambrose suggests that all the veterans were involved, which is unfunded and overstated, but he also suggests that their success was only fueled by their wartime experiences. Suzanne Mettler nuances this in her book *Soldiers to Citizens: The GI Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* in which she argues that the GI Bill was one of several social policies that allowed the "greatest generation" to become that generation. She states that, 'The greatest generation has continued to flourish in tandem with social policies built on these reciprocal obligations between citizens and government.'[43] This is an important element, their contribution to building modern America, despite the fact that it is not featured in the series.. Because Mettler's nuance shows that there is more to their story than their effort and contribution during the war, which allowed them to become the greatest generation. When analyzing the story, narrative and perspective provided by *Band of Brothers*, we also need to be aware of the story they do not tell and why they do not tell it.

Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation* is a similar to Ambrose's *Citizen Soldiers* telling the stories of veterans, to honor their contribution and sacrifice in the war. In his chapter "Generations" he talks about what kind of debt these Americans owe that generation. He argues that this generation were children from the Depression, who 'had learned to accept a future that played out one day at a time.'[44] That generation 'answered the call to help save the world from the two most powerful and ruthless military machines ever assembled, instruments of

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[42] Ibidem

[43] Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The GI Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press 2005) 167

[44] Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York, NY: Random House 1998) Generations

conquest in the hands of fascists maniacs.'[45] Like Ambrose, Brokaw also acknowledges what that generation had done after the war, 'When the war was over, the men and women who had been involved, in uniform and civilian capacities, joined in joyous and short-lived celebrations, then immediately began the task of rebuilding their lives and the world they wanted.'[46] However Brokaw does not glorify them entirely, he also mentions the negative of that generation: 'They weren't perfect. They made mistakes. They allowed McCarthyism and racism to go unchallenged for too long.'[47] This statement might be a generalization of Brokaw, but his assessment has some validity and needs to be taken into account. Like Mettler's nuance, Brokaw's assessment of the "greatest generation" needs to be considered as essential in understanding which story is told by *Band of Brothers* and what the function is of its representation of the American soldiers during World War II.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the persona of Steven Ambrose to understand the narrative he created with his works, which eventually led to the miniseries of *Band of Brothers* and the greater narrative Ambrose's narrative has belonged to. There are several conclusions that are important and they are divided in his opinion on the veterans, his credibility, his theory on the citizen soldier and the concept of the "greatest generation."

Concerning his opinion on the veterans, it is crucial to be aware of the fact that he grew up during the Second World War and that he was nine or ten years old when he saw them return. He considered them to be 'giants who saved the world from barbarism' and as heroes. Another significant factor is seen in the way he describes and refers to Eisenhower, the commander of the allied forces during the Second World War. In his approach on and discussion of Eisenhower, the value Ambrose attaches to teamwork over individualism becomes clearly discernible. His heroic approach towards the veterans and his emphasis on teamwork are clearly discernible in both the book and television series *Band of Brothers*. As we will see are they will have an important influence on the narrative and image that is constructed by the series.

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[45] Ibidem
[46] Ibidem
[47] Ibidem

Ambrose's credibility has been frequently questioned after the publication of his book *The Wild Blue*. Ever since critics and professional historians have looked into Ambrose's works and have found numerous other questionable parts in his books. Despite the fact that this credibility needs to be considered and taken into account, the veterans Ambrose interviewed for *Band of Brothers* have a very high esteem and claim to owe him a debt for the way Ambrose told their story. Although this does not solve the questionability of Ambrose's entire credibility, it should suffice for the main work that is essential for this thesis, *Band of Brothers*. More importantly, it is essential in the perspective of realism. If Ambrose had added a lot of fiction, or had interviewed veterans he actually briefly spoke, the credibility and the validity of the image presented by *Band of Brothers* could be questioned. But through the acknowledgment and honor Ambrose receives from the veterans, underline the "reality" of the image and events presented and thus enable it to be employed as an image to frame national identity.

The notion on the 'citizen soldier' is also very relevant for our understanding of the representation American soldier and their brotherhood in the television series addressed by this thesis. The 'citizen soldier' has a few, according to Ambrose, defining characteristics. First, they reflected a certain diversity. Second, they were drafted which meant that they were taken from their public lives and placed into the war effort. Third, they were strictly selected which made them "better" than the average American, and perhaps also better than their German counterparts. Fourth, they were 'green' and inexperienced, which gave them, according to Ambrose, a certain advantage over their more seasoned German counterparts. Lastly, the ones who survived the war, returned and helped built the modern, thriving America. These men deserve all the honor and respect according to Ambrose, and they should be an inspiration for the current day Americans. They need to relate to it, and identify it, so that they could unite against present day challenges of the American people.

Most American agree, that World War II generation was the "greatest generation." Fighters for freedom and democracy, who fought for freedom and democracy and eventually built modern America. Ambrose honors and glorifies them blindly, and his works a part of a greater narrative of a renewed interest in that specific generation. All contributors honor and respect the deeds of that generation, but some nuance their statements by providing additional factors that allowed them to become the "greatest generations" or by also

addressing the imperfect side of that generation. But that narrative, like Ambrose's context and the notion of citizen soldier are essential for the analysis of representations of the American soldier and brotherhood in the television series *Band of Brothers* and *The Pacific.*

Chapter 2: Becoming Brothers, USA represent

This chapter will use the basis of Ambrose's concept of the "citizen soldiers," namely that the citizen soldiers had different ethnic, religious and regional backgrounds. David Reynolds claims in his book *America: Empire of Liberty* that 'most GIs probably went home with a new sense of American superiority compared with the rest of world. And also, quite probably, with a keener sense of being American.'[48] But it did not start out as such according to Reynolds because at first the awareness of the regional and ethnic difference, as described by Ambrose as part of the citizen soldier, was enhanced because of the location of most of the camps in the South and their first encounter with the "other" ethnicities in their platoons. 'But when serving overseas the ethnic and sectional diversity was gradually subsumed into the larger sense of being American. Similarities seemed more significant than differences when compared to the alien values of Europe or Asia.'[49] This chapter will focus on the representation of this increasing sense of being American and thus the representation of the soldiers overcoming their ethnic and religious differences in *Band of Brothers*. This chapter will argue that the narrative of *Band of Brothers* intentionally pays some attention to the ethnic and religious backgrounds of those characters that do not belong to the White Anglo Saxon Protestant (WASP) group in American society. It will also address the represented regional and educational differences among these 'citizen soldiers' and will try to analyze how these differences are used in the concept of brotherhood. It will be argued that by actively representing these different backgrounds and tensions between the different minorities, the narrative of *Band of Brothers* succeeds in telling its story about one national American identity, through its use of brotherhood and masculinity. But how are these different backgrounds precisely represented and what is the function of representing these tensions? In the first section the representations of the ethnic and religious backgrounds will be analyzed. How are they constructed and why are they constructed like that? The second section will analyze how tensions between these different groups are portrayed and it will try to contextualize them. The last section will analyze how the concept

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[48] David Reynolds, *America: Empire of Liberty* (New York, NY: Penguin Group 2010) 369
[49] Ibidem

of brotherhood is employed to represent the "citizen soldiers" overcoming their different backgrounds and developing a keener sense of being American.

Constructing the Other

One important element of the citizen soldier, according to Ambrose, was that the citizen soldier came from different backgrounds and different parts of the country. How does *Band of Brothers* portray this diversity? Gary Gerstle states in his book *American Crucible* that the United States Army was segregated, which leads to his use of the phrase "racialized army" when he refers to the US army. He argues that 'the key image of this racialized army was that of the multicultural platoon, a unit made up of Protestants, Catholics, Jews, southerners, westerners and easterners, all of whom were white.'[50] J. David Slocum presents an argument about the function of that image. He argues that 'the melting pot platoon has been a narrative device, well-suited to the needs of moviemakers to strike a balance between the exigencies of storytelling focusing on individuals and the imperative to represent the values and stake of American society in films about the nation going to war.'[51] Both authors refer to an image that is created by portraying the multicultural or melting plot platoon, which in this case is not a platoon but a company. This section will analyze how that image is constructed in *Band of Brothers* through the representations of the different ethnic and religious backgrounds of the company members, and how these different backgrounds influence their interaction with the others at first.

To start our analysis we first need to separate the "mainstream" Americans from the minorities. When doing so, the first thing that comes forward after having analyzed all ten episodes of the series, is that the WASP American is not explicitly portrayed as such, in contrast to the ethnic characters. But why are the ethnic representations absent in the narrative of *Band of Brothers* and, more importantly, does it serve a particular function? Characters like Charles E. Grant, Lynn "Buck" Compton, Darrell "Shifty" Powers and John "Pee Wee" Martin are featured in most episodes, however their ethnic and/or religious backgrounds are not presented or constructed. It is even more remarkable when you

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[50] Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible,* 204
[51] J. David Slocum, "Introduction" in Hollywood and War: The Film Reader, ed. J. David Slocum (New York, NY: Routledge 2006) 9

consider the fact that of all of the Point of View (POV) characters only Eugene "Doc" Roe and Richard "Dick" Winters are portrayed with a part of their ethnic and/or religious backgrounds in one of the episodes. In addition it is remarkable that of all POV characters, only Roe seems to be the only non-WASP character. In episode six, "Bastogne", Roe talks to the Belgian nurse Renee in French and he tells her he is from Louisiana and he that he is part Cajun. The Cajun people are descended from the Acadians, who were expulsed from their territories by the British in 1755. According to John Tracy Ellis the Cajun have remained solidly Roman Catholic like their Acadian ancestors.[52] The POV characters have a specific role in the series, because the episodes are either narrated by them or a specific story of their personal experiences is featured in that episode. The exclusion of non-WASP characters, with the exception of Roe, as POV characters is peculiar. It could be explained that they function as the channel towards the "mainstream" white American who is the recipient of the image of the multicultural or melting pot company and their "ascension" into one American identity, and thus the mainstream. The only reason for not portraying the ethnic and religious background of the WASP characters, with the exception of Winters, which may seem plausible at the moment, is the fact that these individuals already belonged to the ruling WASP narrative. When that narrative expands into a more inclusive one, like the one provided by *Band of Brothers*, they do not need to be distinctively portrayed because they are already included. To be more certain we first need to analyze how and why the characters with a "deviant", or not yet included, ethnic and/or religious background are constructed and portrayed.

The "mainstream" Americans are not ethnically or religiously constructed. But how and when are the minorities constructed as such in *Band of Brothers*? Gary Gerstle claims that Hollywood, more than any single institution during the Second World War, spread the image of the GIs who 'could preserve their ethnic, religious and regional backgrounds while dedicating themselves to America.'[53] He refers to several films, like *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943) and *Objective Burma* (1945), which used an early scene 'to establish the diverse backgrounds

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[52] John Tracy Ellis, "Foreword," in *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States,* by James Hennessey, S.J. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 1981) vii
[53] Gerstle, *American Crucible,* 204

of platoon or crew members.'[54] *Band of Brothers* does something similar, although it does so in the earlier episodes rather than the earlier scenes. Except for the ethnic and/or religious background of Roe, all the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the characters belonging to ethnic and religious minorities are constructed and portrayed in the earlier episodes. Some characters are established more explicitly as others, through verbal confirmation, or through gestures that refer to, for example, their Catholic background. The first ethnic characters that are explicitly established are Frank Perconte and Bill Guarnere in the first episode, "Currahee." While eating spaghetti, Perconte tells another private that it is not spaghetti, but 'Army noodles with ketchup.' Guarnere responds by saying that Perconte does not have to eat it. Perconte replies to him: 'Ohh Gonorrhea. As a fellow Italian, you should know that calling this spaghetti is a mortal sin.'[55] Perconte labels himself and Guarnere as a Italian by referring to a shared cultural product, spaghetti, which apparently is not what they are eating at that time. Although this verbal confirmation might seem to be a feeble reference to their Italian background, it is an actual establishment of their ethnicities that allows us to perceive them as such. The second ethnic character, Joseph Liebgott, is represented in the in the first episode as well. During the crossing of the Atlantic Guarnere talks about Sobel 'being a son of Abraham', to which Liebgott responds 'what did you say?' and Guarnere replies 'he is a Jew.' Liebgott than states: I am a Jew. [56] Whether Liebgott truly was a Jew is unclear, because that claim is being questioned after the release of *Band of Brothers* by Marcus Brotherton who claimed Liebgott was Catholic.[57] The third ethnic character, Donald Malarkey, is clearly established in episode three, "Carentan." In the midst of the assault on Carentan, Warren "Skip" Muck directs Malarkey's attention to a, apparently Irish, Catholic priest who is preforming the Last Sacrament on dying soldiers while the bullets fly around his head. Malarkey says to Muck, 'Crazy fools the Irish,' and Muck responds 'You should know,'[58] with which he clearly establishes the ethnic background of the character Malarkey. The ethnicities of these characters is also reinforced, like the other members of these ethnicities, through the physical appearance of the actors who play the characters, or by physical

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[54] Ibidem 205

[55] Frank Perconte and William Guarnere in *Band of Brothers*, DVD 1, episode 1 "Currahee"

[56] Joseph Liebgott and William Guarnere in *Band of Brothers*, DVD 1, episode 1 "Currahee"

[57] Marcus Brotherton, *A Company of Heroes: Personal Memories of the Real Band of Brothers and the Legacy the Left Us* (New York, NY: The Penguin Group 2010) Ch. 10

[58] Warren Muck and Donald Malarkey in *Band of Brothers*, DVD 2, episode 3 "Carentan"

stereotypes used to refer to these characters. Perconte and Guarnere are portrayed by dark-haired actors with a darker skin complexity, suggesting a link to the Mediterranean background of Southern Europeans, and Malarkey is played by a red-haired actor and red hair is commonly associated with the Irish. The physical appearance of the Liebgott is not specifically Jewish, however Guarnere does use a "physical" stereotype about Jews in his encounter with Liebgott in the *USS Samaria*. After Liebgott tells him he is Jewish, Guarnere responds 'congratulations, get your nose out of my face.' The nose is a typical stereotype that was and still is being used to refer to Jews, with most Jews having distinctive noses. With the establishments of these characters ethnic backgrounds, *Band of Brothers* succeeds in showing the presence of the three ethnicities which have not, for a long time in American history, belonged to the 'white American race' while they were white compared to Native Americans and African Americans. By showing that these ethnicities fought for America and that they became brothers of each other and of the WASP soldiers, they represented their inclusion as true Americans.

Ethnicity is not the only thing that is vividly constructed as a part of the men's diversity. Religious characteristics are used as well, and these are mainly Catholic. How do does the series employ these characteristics, and why are they mainly Catholic? Henessey argues that 'for the Catholic community in the United States, World War II was another in a series of rites of passage.'[59] This is also evident in *Band of Brothers*, which depicts Catholic rituals and symbols on numerous occasions throughout the series. Nearly all depictions of the company members' religiosity is constructed through a Catholic ritual or symbol. Some of the depictions feature members praying with a rosary, like Guarnere, Warren "Skip" Muck and Alex Penkala. Others are seen performing the *signum crucis,* like Joe Toye after his prayer. Of the rituals that are depicted throughout the series, the Last Sacrament is the most evident. It is performed on several occasions in the episodes three and six, "Carentan" and "Bastogne." In the episode "Bastogne" there is also representation of a Mass presided by a Latin speaking priest, before the company departs on a combat patrol. Several of the already "known" Catholic members of the company attend, confirming their Catholicism but Edward "Babe" Heffron and Ralph Spina are also attending Mass, which hints at or suggests their

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[59] James Hennessey, S.J., *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 1981) 280

Catholic background. Through these depictions of Catholicism, several "important" characters in the television series are established as belonging to a minority, which had been considered to be a threat to the independent freemen of America to the Nativist movement for a considerable time.[60] James T. Fisher argues in his book *Catholics in America* that 'in the 1940s and the 1950s, Hollywood offered many positive depictions of Catholic life in America.'[61] *Band of Brothers* does not necessarily depict Catholicism in a positive light, but through its frequent depictions and its active inclusion in the narrative, it normalizes Catholicism as something American. However, as we will see in *Band of Brothers* Catholic members, Guarnere especially, play a significant role in the representations of tensions between the different groups within the company in the earlier episodes.

The absence of Native Americans and African Americans is also very obvious. All the characters presented in the series belong to, what was at the time seen as, the "white race." The absence of these groups is questionable, because it can be argued that they are excluded from the image of American and that not presenting them could confirm the privileged nature of the American "whites." Gerstle argues in his book that the image presented in World War II movies was indeed racist, thus it can be assumed that the same thing can be said of the image presented by *Band of Brothers*. However he does state that they were not self-consciously racist, and that some evidence suggests that black youth also tried to emulate the image of heroism in the 1950s and 1960s.[62] The image presented by *Band of Brothers*, cannot be called self-consciously racist. The story and image they present is representative of the story, because it remains realistic, adding an African American character would be a false representation of how it had actually been. Representing Liebgott as Jewish, while he most likely was not, is far less "unreal" than adding an African American, because Jews were part of the racialized Army in World War II. The representation of Easy Company in *Band of Brothers*, stands for the late twentieth century perception of the American nation which included African Americans to a far greater degree than during the World War II. The series does not confirm "whiteness" as the only thing as American, but it tries to channel the reality through its representation of inclusive "brotherhood."

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[60] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1998) 69-70
[61] James T. Fisher, *Catholics in* America (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2000) 130
[62] Gerstle, 236

The important conclusion that can be drawn from analyzing the construction of these ethnic and religious backgrounds is that the narrative of *Band of Brothers* intentionally constructs the ethnicities that differ from what was considered to be the mainstream American at the beginning of the Second World War. The characters belonging to ethnic minorities, like Liebgott, Guarnere and Malarkey, are explicitly referred to as Jew, Italian and Irish respectively. These three were the important minorities formerly excluded from the "white American identity." The same is with the difference in religion, Catholicism is portrayed on numerous occasions while the Protestant characters are not defined as Protestant, with the exception of Richard Winters. The religious aspect of Liebgott's Jewishness is also not portrayed, but that is perhaps because of the questionability of the claim whether Liebgott was Jewish. The absence of African Americans or Native Americans is not intentional, because they represent the reality of a company in an army that was racialized at that time. The next section will analyze the representations of tensions between these groups and will try to contextualize them.

Stirring the Melting Pot

This section will analyze the representations of tension between the ethnic and religious groups. Predominantly these tensions are between Catholics and Jews, Catholics and Protestants and Italians and Irish. These tensions are mainly represented through the use of stereotypes and sometimes a fight. Another tension that will be addressed is the tension between those who had had the opportunity to attend college, a privilege for mainly WASPs, prior to the War and those who did not had that opportunity. This tension is important because education was one form of privilege the "mainstream" Americans had over the minorities. In this specific case tension implies a non-violent unease between the two groups, with an exception, and especially the awareness of the difference. Together with the analysis this section will try to contextualize the tensions that are portrayed.

The first tension is between the Catholic and Jews in the company, which is portrayed with the already mentioned interaction between Guarnere and Liebgott. When Guarnere refers to Sobel as a Jew in a negative way, 'That prick is a son of Abraham,' Liebgott takes offense because he is a Jew, in the television series at least, and they start fighting. In Ambrose's book *Band of Brothers*, Guarnere and Heffron's book *Brothers in Battle, Best of Friends* and

in Richard Winters' book *Beyond Band of Brothers*, there is no mention of this incident between Guarnere and Liebgott. Not only does that raise the question about Liebgott's Jewishness, but it more over raises the question why this specific incident was put in the television series. First of all, this incident constructs the presence of Jews in the notion of the developing bond between these different groups in the bigger entity of Americanness, which is important because they needed to be included in the narrative. But the more important reason is because the incident provides a perspective on how the relations between Jews and Catholics were prior to the Second World War. Anti-Semitism had been strong in American society during the 1930s, according to Deborah Dash Moore 'Conflict between Jews and Catholics erupted on the streets of Brooklyn and the Bronx in the 1930s.'[63] However she identifies the Irish Catholics as the main source of Anti-Semitism in the 1930s, while the incident portrayed in *Band of Brothers* is between a Jew and an Italian Catholic. The purpose of the portrayal remains the same, representing the tension between Jews and Catholics prior to, so that the developing "brotherhood" can be better understood as the vehicle of creating one American identity. Which is best evident in another argument of Moore: 'Now military service was reconfiguring "us." Jews had to live with Catholics around the clock; not to mention southern Protestants. Many Jews held their own unpleasant stereotypes about Catholics and rural Southerners and would have to earn to suppress or change their attitudes.'[64] The same argument can be made for the other minorities and those who belonged to the "mainstream" Americans, that the tensions were there in the beginning but that living and fighting together forged bonds that overcame those differences.

The second tension is between Catholics and Protestants, represented by Guarnere and Winters respectively. Unlike the first, this tensions is present in one of the books, namely the book of Guarnere himself. In the book he states that he thought that Winters was a Quacker and that was a bad thing because according to him Quackers did not believe in violence and they were fighting a war. Added to that was the fact that Winters did not drink, he did not

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[63] Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2004) 68
[64] Ibidem

smoke and he did not curse. He was clean.[65] In the book the tension is less hostile than in the series. In the series in the second episode *"Day of Days"*, a group with Guarnere in it and led by Winters hears a group of Germans approaching, they lay down an ambush and Winters orders to wait for his mark. Guarnere defies that order and starts shooting when the Germans are in sight, and afterwards he is reprimanded by Winters. The Guarnere in the series is appalled, and clearly loathes the fact that he is lectured by someone who does not even drink.[66] The issue of not drinking, is to my belief, explicitly emphasized. This is especially clear in the resolve of the incident between Guarnere and Winters. At the end of the second episode, Winters joins a group in a truck, among which Guarnere, and is offered a bottle of liquor. Guarnere tells the one offering the bottle that 'lieutenant don't drink,' under the credo 'a first time for everything' Winters takes a swig and offers it to Guarnere stating 'don't you think Guarnere?'[67] Guarnere agrees and when Winters starts walking away, he returns and says 'Guarnere, I'm not a quacker,' and walks away. The sharing the drink is a part of easing the tension, and from that moment one Guarnere respects and accepts Winters as their Commanding Officer (CO). Winters is not explicitly confirmed as a Protestant, but Guarnere's "suspicion" and Gerstle's claim that platoon and company commanders were usually Protestant.[68] This specific tension, and especially its resolution, could therefore be seen as a representation of reconciliation and acceptance of the two groups accepting each other and a first step to the ethnic and religious boundary crossing concept of "brotherhood."

The third tension is based on an interaction between Guarnere and Malarkey, however this does not explicitly imply a tension between Italians and Irish. The interaction is defined by the use of a common prejudicial "nickname" Guarnere uses when he swears at Malarkey, who has just returned from the middle of the crossfire in his attempt to obtain a Luger, Guarnere shouts "Stupid Mick!" In *The Irish in Prison: A Tighter Nick for 'The Micks´* the authors claim that 'the main traits of this ascription seem to be stupidity, drunkenness,

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[65] Bill Guarnere, Edward Heffron and Robyn Post, *Broeders in de strijd: Het fascinerende verhaal van twee leden van de Band of Brothers*, translated by Vincent van der Linden (Amsterdam, NL: De Boekerij 2008) pag 70. In Dutch it reads: *Hij was Quacker. Quackers geloven niet in geweld. Winters dronk niet en hij rookte niet. Hij vloekte nooit. Hij was brandschoon.*
[66] William Guarnere to Joseph Toye in *Band of Brothers*, DVD 1, episode 2 "Day of Days"
[67] Richard Winters to William Guarnere in *Band of Brothers,* DVD 1, episode 2 "Day of Days"
[68] Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 205

violence and Catholicism.'[69] Although Guarnere clearly uses it to mean to imply the stupidity of Malarkey, and he does not use it to be condescending about Catholicism, his use of this phrase connects to a history of Irish Americans who were considered to be violent, lazy and heavy drinkers.'[70] This ascription is an illustration of a long Irish American history in which they were considered to be inferior American whites, the use of this ascription is just an addition to the establishment of "difference" in the narrative of *Band of Brothers.*

The last tension that is represented is one of a kind of uneasiness, with a sometimes negative character. This tension revolves around the difference in higher education, because 'prior to the war, advanced education had been restricted predominantly to the privileged, especially to white, native-born, elite Protestants.'[71] On two occasions the difference between those who have had the privilege to attend college and those who have not becomes apparent. David Kenyon Webster is one of the characters that is presented as having gone to college. When they approach the city of Nuenen, he shares the knowledge that Vincent van Gogh was born in Nuenen. Roy W. Cobb response with a condescending 'So what?' and Donald Hoobler says 'Sure do teach you useful stuff at college.' Cobb also addresses Webster several times in the eight episode, "Last Episode", in a condescending manner as "college" or "professor". The impact of this condescension and friction about Webster's college experience, is seen in episode nine "Why We Fight." When Liebgott questions Webster about his future plans, which hints at the bonding of the men, Webster tells that he first is going to finish college. Liebgott is surprised and teases him about it, but Webster snaps: 'So the fuck what?'[72] Another character who is portrayed as having gone to college is Lynn "Buck" Compton. In episode six, while he sits in the OP (observation post) with Guarnere and Heffron, he tells them that they now know how the Romans felt when they were awaiting the Goths and Visigoths who were going to burn the shit out of Rome. Guarnere and Heffron have no clue about what Compton is talking about, Guarnere responds 'Is that so?' and Heffron inquires whether there were a lot of cheerleaders at Compton's college. These representations of this difference between the ethnic minorities

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[69] John Borland, Roy D. King, and Kathleen McDermott, "The Irish in Prison: A Tighter Nick for 'the Micks'," The British Journal of Sociology Vol 46. No 3. (Sep 1995) 387

[70] Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (New York, NY: Back Bay Books 2008) 141

[71] Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens*, 11

[72] David Webster to Joseph Liebgott in *Band of Brothers*, DVD 5, episode 9 "Why We Fight"

and the privileged WASPs, provides the context of the impact of the privileges of the WASPs and of what minorities were deprived of. After the war the GI Bill 'broadened educational opportunity to veterans who were Jewish or Catholic, African-American and immigrants, as well as to those whose families had struggled in the American working class for generations.'[73] As we will see, the concept of "brotherhood" will also acts as vehicle that overcame the educational rift that was between these groups, and their contribution to the war would eventually provide the same opportunities to the minorities as the WASPs had had for generations.

The representations of these tensions serves the purpose to 'teach' the viewer about the history of the 'American.' They provide a historical context as to how the different ethnic and religious groups were seen by the others and how they interacted prior to the Second World War. Knowing how different they were, and understanding the tensions that existed between the group is necessary for our analysis of the image of the American national identity that *Band of Brothers* attempts to frame through its narrative of "brotherhood."

Brothers

As we have seen, *Band of Brothers* uses "ethnic" profiling as a way to construct the "ethnic" American. It employs the different group of "ethnic" Americans, the interactions with each other and the tensions between these different groups to provide the historical context for its narrative of one national, "American", identity. The question now remains, how does this narrative succeed in constructing and representing the image of the diverse, yet "united" American? The short answer is through representations of masculinity and, perhaps most important in this narrative, brotherhood. J. David Slocum argues in his "General Introduction: Seeing through American War Cinema" of *Hollywood and War: The Film Reader*, that 'the motivations of protagonists and others range from the personal to the social, from the pursuit of excitement or heroism, duty, faith and revenge, to love, friendship, camaraderie and belonging.'[74] As we will see in *Band of Brothers*, the latter three, and to an extent the latter four, are applicable. Not only is "brotherhood" represented as the cement of their group identity, through their shared past, victories and hardships, but it

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[73] Ibidem
[74] Slocum, "Introduction" in Hollywood and War: The Film Reader, 8

is also constructed and portrayed as the essential part of their motivation for their actions. Combat motivation, breakdown, rescue and sacrifice are interesting concepts in the employment of masculinity and brotherhood in *Band of Brothers*' narrative of "Americanness" or American identity. This section will analyze how the narrative of *Band of Brothers* uses representations of masculinity, combat motivation, breakdown, rescue and sacrifice to construct the concept of "brotherhood" that goes beyond ethnicity.

First we need to understand the relation between masculinity and military service, so that we can understand its representation in *Band of Brothers* and its function in the portrayal of the developing "brotherhood." 'Military service is one of our rites of manhood; it makes men, men.'[75] With this claim Ehrenreich successfully frames masculinity in itself as a kind of brotherhood. Ambrose observes something similar 'the language was foul. These nineteen- and twenty-year old enlisted men, free from the restraints of home and culture, thrown together in an all-male society, coming from all over America, used words as one form of bonding. … The language made these boys turning into men feel though and, more important, insiders, members of a group.'[76] Foul language is overly present in *Band of Brothers*, although it is sanitized in to numerous amounts of "goddamns", "Jesus Christs" and "frikkings." These representations of swearing underline the process of the "boys" becoming men, as a part of their brotherhood. In her article, Ehrenreich provides many characteristics of masculinity in American war narratives. A "real" man cannot be fearful, indecisive, conciliatory or weak, nor does he cry. He is willing to use force or to sacrifice the life of one's own country's citizens and he does not surrender.[77] The *Band of Brothers* narrative employs some of these characteristics in its pursuit to construct the image of "brotherhood" as a vehicle for a national identity. However it also is not afraid to use the portrayal of moments that would be concerned feminine in most American war narratives, to enforce the notion of brotherhood. The most powerful depictions of the men's brotherhood and unity in relation to their "masculinity" is portrayed through the use of "surrender" and "rescue." It can be seen in their opinion about the German demand for their "honorable surrender" at Bastogne, about General McAuliffe's response "Nuts" to the

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[75] Nancy Ehrenreich , "Masculinity and American Militarism," 46
[76] Ambrose , *Band of Brothers,* 20
[77] Ehrenreich, 46

German commander, and their adamant rejection of the narrative about Patton coming to their rescue. In the scene where we see Colonel Sink telling the men about the German demand for surrender the men are astonished yet determined. When Sink tells them how McAuliffe responded, "To the German Commander, Nuts!", the men are portrayed as laughing and cheering "Nuts."[78] The impact of this image needs to be put into context. The men of the 101st Airborne had been surrounded by Germans and were frequently under fire and they were heavily undersupplied; they were low on ammunition, food and medical supplies. Despite all this, they refused to leave the line, and their buddies, any longer than necessary, which is shown by Alex Penkala's determination that he is not going to the aid station although he is wounded in episode six, and the thought of surrender was appalling. This portrayal constructs the men as united in their commitment, not only to do their duty, but to their buddies. It confirms the image of the "fearless" men as Americans united; we do not give up and we do not abandon our brothers, no matter how bad the circumstances are.

The image of their unity and masculinity is even more confirmed by the portrayal of the company's attitude, or the division's attitude for that matter, toward the narrative of Patton coming to the rescue of the surrounded 101st. According to the text shown at the end of the sixth episode, all the men adamantly denied and continue to deny that they ever needed rescuing. The determination and commitment is already illustrated by what Winters says at the end of episode five when they are entering Bastogne and someone of the Army tells him they are going to be surrounded. Winters responds to him 'we are paratroopers, we are supposed to be surrounded.' It is even confirmed more evidently when Joe Toye is being interviewed by a camera man, and he says 'we did not need to be f***ing rescued.'[79] The fact that the men so adamantly denied and continue to deny that they needed to be rescued is a significant portrayal of their unison and their brotherhood, not only because the suggestion of the men needing rescue suggests that they had not done a good job as a paratrooper. But more importantly because the narrative of rescue is one of the man, the rescuer, and the woman, the rescued. Brenda M. Boyle illustrates this perspective with a claim in her article "Rescuing Masculinity: Captivity, Rescue and Gender in American war narratives." She states that the masculine men rescuing the feminine women is

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[78] Colonel Sink to the men of Easy, in *Band of Brothers*, DVD 3, episode 6 "Bastogne"
[79] Joseph Toye to Army Camera man, in *Band of Brothers,* DVD 4, episode 7 "Breaking Point"

preponderantly featured in American war texts because many Americans want to see the male equals masculine equals heroic equation in the war stories.[80] The fact that the men of the 101st did actually adamantly deny that they needed to be rescued is less relevant than the image its portrayal constructs. It features their denial to be feminized or to be considered to be weak. With it, it represents the soldiers as one brotherhood; bound by their shared experience at Bastogne, by their unwillingness to yield, their commitment to duty and each other and their determination as a unit. What is important to realize is that this feeling revolves around the concept of rescue, if it was about Patton coming to the aid to the 101st Division it would have created a less powerful image and it would have portrayed the "aided" on an equal level as the "aiders." This is best illustrated by a moment in episode four, "Replacements." This is a moment that could be interpreted as "rescue", but that is not how this moment is portrayed or represented. The first moment is when the men retreat from Nuenen and Compton gets shot in the ass, and falls down unable to go forward. Malarkey does not have to give a second thought about leaving him behind, which is not an option for Malarkey. However Compton is too heavy for them to carry, so he runs back to the village and kicks down the door of a shed and enlists the help of Guarnere and Muck. They are not rescuing Compton, who does not want their help because he fears that will get them killed, they are helping him fall back. The difference may seem small, but it is not. Instead of the image of two more "masculine" and "better" soldier who aid the wounded, and thus "lesser" soldier, an image is constructed of brothers helping each other out.

Other representations of "brotherhood" in *Band of Brothers* can be seen in the motivations of the actions of the men of Easy Company in combat and in preparation of combat. These representations range from apologies for getting wounded and going Absent Without Leave (AWOL) to rejoin the company to the commitment to sacrifice themselves for the others and the honoring of the men who, in their eyes, had not received the honor they deserved. Simon Wessely argues that 'the ability to identify with a group and the past history of such identification are probably the most important components of good motivation.'[81] This is also evident in *Band of Brothers*. Several men are portrayed as having gone AWOL so that

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[80] Brenda M. Boyle, "Rescuing Masculinity: Captivity, Rescue and Gender in American War Narratives," the Journal of American Culture Vol. 34 No. 2 (June 2011) 150

[81] Simon Wessely, "Twentieth-Century Theories on Combat Motivation and Breakdown," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 41, No.2 (April 2006) 278

they would not be reassigned to another unit. A unit that would be full of men they did not know, did not share anything with and of whom they doubted whether they could trust their lives with. Popeye Wynn, who we already see apologizing for getting wounded in the ass in episode two 'Sorry Sir. I goofed.'[82], returns shortly before the company departs for Operation Market Garden. He has gone AWOL because if he did not rejoin them he would be reassigned to another unit, something he does not want. Wynn tells Lipton about his encounter with Captain Sobel, their cruel training officer, who finds him after he had gone AWOL. Sobel had told him he should consider himself lucky because he could sit the jump out, and Popeye replied 'I do not want that' and Sobel offered him a ride to reunite him with the company. [83]Through portraying Wynn's apology, his determination to jump with the company and his dedication to his brothers the narrative emphasizes the need for and the importance of the entire group identity, rather than a segmented one. In the series we see others going AWOL as well, like Guarnere who returns right before the company departs for Bastogne and Toye who returns from the aid station while he still is wounded on the same day he will lose his leg in an artillery barrage.

The significance of this commitment, through going AWOL and refusing to leave the line, to their brothers is established more firmly the eighth episode, "Last Patrol." In this episode, from the perspective of David Kenyon Webster, we see Webster return to the company. He had gotten wounded in October during Market Garden and he returns to the company in January, when they are in Hagenau. He had been wounded two months prior to his return and while he had been enjoying the relative comforts in the hospital and in rehab, the men had been through hell during the campaign in Belgium. He receives a rather cold welcome from the guys because his injury had been relatively minor and he had not gone AWOL, they are portrayed as if they feel betrayed and abandoned by Webster. He says to them that he could not go AWOL because of rehabilitation, and they remind him that others have managed, so they wonder why he could not. The uneasiness and tension between the men who had been at Bastogne on the one hand and Webster on the other is short lived, but it underlines the importance and significance of not leaving the company behind and the men's motivation to fight for and with each other. This illustrates that the portrayal of

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[82] Popeye Wynn to Richard Winters, in *Band of Brothers*, DVD 1, Episode 2 "Day of Days"
[83] Popeye Wynn to Carwood Lipton, in *Band of Brothers,* DVD 2, Episode 4 "Replacements"

combat motivation plays an instrumental role in the construction and representation of the concept of "brotherhood."

The narrative of "brotherhood" also employs vivid representations of the opposite of combat motivation, combat breakdown. Why is it essential to analyze the representations of combat breakdown in the narrative of "brotherhood"? Because, contrary to general assumption, combat breakdown provides a very interesting perspective on the commitment of the soldier with a "breakdown" to his fellow soldiers. In the case of *Band of Brothers* it also is used as a counterpart of the idea that breakdown would be something feminine, by presenting it as a vulnerability that "normalizes" the hero on the screen. This is associated with what Ehrenreich refers to as the "boys don't cry" socialization in American war narratives,[84] the suggestion that men who cry are feminine rather than masculine. *Band of Brothers* portrays some of the men, like Compton and Blithe, who cry as a part of their breakdown or after they are wounded, showing their vulnerability and their sacrifice. Concerning combat breakdown Wessely poses the argument that 'if soldiers fought for the primary group, then, the argument goes, soldiers ceased to fight when the primary group failed them.'[85] *Band of Brothers*' portrayals breakdown can be interpreted as providing a different perspective. The best example for this is the breakdown of Compton in episode seven, which is fittingly titled "Breaking Point." In this episode we see Compton trying to come to the aid of Guarnere, who is helping a wounded Toye, and in his attempt to reach them he sees them being hit by artillery fire. After managing to get up, we see Compton visibly breaking apart at the sight of his heavily wounded friends, dropping his gun and his helmet and shouting for a medic with a voice thick of emotion and teary eyes. He is moved from the line to the aid station, where we see him lying on a trencher staring blankly ahead, and he cannot stand to listen to Malarkey who is reading him a letter his family send to Compton. In this case the primary has not failed Compton, rather Compton is represented as breaking down because he seemingly feels he has failed his friends within the primary group, and breaks down because of his failure. Blithe is portrayed breaking down in the third episode, contracting a case of "hysterical blindness" and when Winters visits him in the aid

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[84] Ehrenreich , 45
[85] Wessely, 278

station he apologizes 'I didn't want to let anyone down.'[86] Thus the narrative of *Band of Brothers* succeeds in framing something that is considered to be the opposite of masculinity, combat breakdown, into an essential component of their commitment to each other, an argument that is used to illustrate the tight bond men of diverse backgrounds had succeeded in forging. Carwood Lipton establishes the image that is central in this section, that breaking down does not make anyone a lesser soldier or brother when he refers to Compton's breakdown 'nobody thought any lesser of him for it.'[87]

The last element in *Band of Brothers'* narrative of "brotherhood" that this thesis will analyze and discuss is the use of nicknames. Many, but not all, characters in *Band of Brothers* are referred to with nicknames. Some are less imaginative than the others, for example Carwood Lipton is often referred to as "Lip." The nicknames function as some kind of identity, the use of nicknames has become a group habit and thus it is a relevant focus for the analysis of their brotherhood. However the series does not provide motives for using the nicknames nor does it explain why some of the men have the nicknames they have. But that it is a significant element in their group dynamics, that much is clear. Especially when we analyze the sixth episode and Roe's refusal to use any of the nicknames. Why he does not use them, that remains unclear, but the men care that he is not using them. In the sixth episode Heffron gets irritated when Roe does not use his nickname but his last name, which is Babe. 'You know my name, why don't you use it?' Roe responds with Heffron's first name, Edward. 'Edward? Are you serious? Only the goddamn nuns call me Edward.' [88]A couple of scenes later, when Roe joins Compton, Guarnere and Heffron in the OP (observation point) he addresses them with their last names. Guarnere says, after Roe has left, 'Never calls anyone by their nickname' and Heffron responds to Guarnere that Roe had once called him Edward. Compton is surprised and asks Heffron, 'your first name is Edward?'[89] These interactions illustrate and represent the use of nicknames as a part of their bonding and thus as an element of their "brotherhood." The men are represented as feeling offended by the fact that Roe does not use their nicknames, as if he is not part of the group. When he finally does

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[86] Albert Blithe to Richard Winters, in *Band of Brothers*, DVD 2, Episode 3 "Carentan"
[87] Carwood Lipton as narrator, in *Band of Brothers*, DVD 4, Episode 7 "Breaking Point"
[88] Edward "Babe" Heffron to Eugene Roe, in *Band of Brothers*, DVD 3, Episode 6 "Bastogne"
[89] Lynn Compton to Guarnere and Heffron, in *Band of Brothers*, DVD 3, Episode 6 "Bastogne"

use Heffron's nickname, "Babe" is relieved and happy and with it Roe has become a part of the group, of the brotherhood.

The narrative of *Band of Brothers* frames and illustrates the concept of brotherhood through depictions of masculinity, combat motivation, combat breakdown, rescue and sacrifice. We see a group of men bonding through the use of foul language and the use of nicknames as a part of their group identity. A group that was immensely diverse considering their ethnic and religious backgrounds. However, combat and training bonds them together and forges the brotherhood necessary in the narrative on framing one national, American identity. The men go AWOL, refuse to leave the line even though they are wounded and aid each other because of their commitment to each other and the fact that they do not want to fail their brothers. We see them break down because they feel they have failed their friends, their brothers while the rest does not think any less of them despite their breakdown. We see them represented as not willing to yield, not needing to be rescued as a part of their masculinity and their toughness, but we also see them cry and that does not diminish the image that is created of them. Rather it shows their vulnerability, normalizes them which makes it easier to allow the viewer to relate to them. We see them bond, closing the gaps of ethnic and religious difference that divided the United States prior to the Second World War and with it provide a powerful image to a United States that is becoming increasingly divided once more with people identifying themselves moreover along ethnic, rather than national, lines.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to explain and analyze the different ethnicities present in Easy Company during their actions in the European Theatre of War. In the first section it tried to analyze how the narrative of *Band of Brothers* constructed the citizen soldiers from different backgrounds. Who were constructed as belonging to a specific ethnic or religious background and why were they represented like that. The second section tried to analyze how the representations of tensions between these different groups was used to contextualize how these groups interacted with each other prior to the war, and to underline that they were not "united as Americans." The last section analyzed how the

series employed concepts like masculinity, rescue and sacrifice to underline the developing "brotherhood" that is instrumental in its image of American national identity.

In the first section we have seen that the narrative of *Band of Brothers* has deliberately depicted the ethnic and religious backgrounds of those characters who differed from what was seen as the WASP American. Guarnere and Perconte were verbally constructed as Italians when they discusses the spaghetti of the Army, Liebgott identifies himself as Jew when he confronts Guarnere in the *USS Samaria*, and Muck verbally identifies Malarkey as Irish. These characters are also constructed as belonging to that specific ethnicity through the physical appearances of the actors. The Italians are played by actors with darker eyes, hair and skin complexity, suggesting a Mediterranean background, and Malarkey and Heffron are played by red headed actors which suggests Irish roots. The characters who seem to belong to the WASP Americans are not explicitly constructed as such, and as we have seen the POV characters seem to be all WASP's, except for Roe. Something similar occurs in the representation of religion, because the narrative of *Band of Brothers* only seems to depict Catholic symbols and rituals. We see men pray with rosaries and preform a *signum crucis* after ending their prayer. We also see men attend Mass led by a priest, or priests perform the Last Sacrament to dying soldiers. From this we can conclude that the narrative of *Band of Brothers* intentionally underlines the diversities among these soldiers, stressing their different identities. The POV characters are most likely only WASP Americans because at that time they were already seen as American. Seeing the story and the image of this melting pot company through their perspective allows the viewer to relate to incorporating those groups that were not fully considered to be Americans at the time. Looking through their eyes allows the viewer to understand that if from the point of view of the "privileged" group the "others" were eventually incorporated in the American identity, they should be receptive to incorporating groups they define as others into the American identity as well.

In the second section we have discusses the representations of tensions among the different ethnic and religious groups in the company. We concluded that these representations serve to contextualize what American identity entailed and how the American society was divided before World War II. We see Catholics, represented by Guarnere, quarrel with Jews, represented by Liebgott. We see Catholics, again represented by Guarnere, quarrel with

privileged Protestants, represented by Winters. We also see some friction between Irish and Italians, through the use of stereotypes like "Stupid Mick" which tied into the perception on Irish Americans as lazy, stupid drunkards. There is also tension between the lower class members, most of different ethnic and religious backgrounds than the WASP, and the "privileged" WASP's who went to college. Despite the fact that these tensions are not seriously volatile or abundantly present, the tensions represented in the narrative allows the viewer to understand that at the beginning this group was divided, and did not consider themselves to be equal to the others. By illustrating these tensions, the image of their eventual brotherhood and the fact that they identify themselves with each other and that they do consider themselves to be equal to the others, becomes far more powerful.

In the last section we see the men bond together through shared experiences and hardships. Through the employment of concepts of masculinity, rescue, sacrifices and nicknames the brotherhood as a representation of their shared American identity becomes more vivid. We see the men's dedication to each other and their dedication to their country and their duty. We see a group that was divided in different groups, becoming one. Their dedication is depicted in the men going AWOL, while still not being fully recovered, to rejoin their brothers, we see them breakdown when they feel they failed their brothers, we see them feeling abandoned when a member does not go AWOL or when another member refuses to use the nicknames of the others. We see them bond, closing the gaps of ethnic and religious difference that divided the United States prior to the Second World War and with it provide a powerful image to a United States that is becoming increasingly divided once more with people identifying themselves moreover along ethnic, rather than national, lines.

It can be concluded that through depicting the different backgrounds of the members of Easy company and through illustrating the tensions that existed among these groups, the narrative of *Band of Brothers* succeeds in depicting the image of American identity prior to the Second World War as some form of melting pot. Members identified themselves along ethnic and religious lines rather than national ones, differentiating them from other Americans. But the narrative of *Band of Brothers* goes beyond that and it employs several concepts of masculinity, rescue, breakdown etc., to illustrate how these men overcame their differences and how they created one group identity. That group identity is the core of the

image and message *Band of Brothers* tries to transfer to the viewers, that they are all Americans, dedicated to their country, freedom, and above all, their brethren.

Chapter 3: Becoming a post-9/11 narrative

Tim Edensor believes that popular culture has a nationalist agenda. He argues that ''A nationalist imperative has been to bring together different regional and ethnic differences by identifying national high cultural points as common denominators, relying on elite cultural arbiters to make these selections.'[90] This is a very interesting perception on popular culture and this chapter will focus on that specific function of *Band of Brothers*. To what extent is the narrative of *Band of Brothers* part of a nationalist agenda? Crucial in this analysis is to take into consideration that it premiered on national television on the 9th of September 2011. A mere two days before the tragedy of 9/11, an event which proved to function as a catalyst for reshaping the American identity. This chapter will analyze reviews, both professional and non-professional, published shortly after the premier and 9/11 to understand the impact and influence of *Band of Brothers*' narrative of brotherhood, masculinity and, as we will see in this chapter, heroism. To what extent was the narrative of *Band of Brothers* a part of the bigger narrative of one American national identity and how was it perceived by the American people? According to Inge popular culture 'is thought to be comprehensive or relevant to a large part of the population in its style and content.'[91] This chapter will also try to analyze whether the narrative was seen as relevant by the majority of the Americans, especially in the light of the events of 9/11. Finally this chapter will try to answer to what extent the narrative of *Band of Brothers* could be seen as an instrument for the framing of American national identity after 9/11.

Receiving End

As we have seen, television can be used to transfer specific messages, images or ideas to the audience. Slocum argues that 'in war cinema the group onscreen may range from a squad to the platoon to the combined military services, but it usually somehow stands in for the American nation.'[92] Easy Company seems to fit to this description, but this company as a representation is the product of the producers and in order to be truly a representation of the American nation it is also depended on the interpretation of the viewer. *Band of*

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[90] Edensor, 16S
[91] Inge, xvii
[92] Slocum, "Introduction" in Hollywood and War: The Film Reader, 10

Brothers illustrates the diversity of the men in Easy Company prior to World War II in and how they overcame this diversity through the bonding process that accompanied their participation in World War II. The image and message presented by *Band of Brothers* might be representative of the American nation as a unity, transcending ethnic and religious diversities, but the interpretation of the viewer determines its success and thus it is necessary to analyze whether the viewer is receptive to the specific image presented in *Band of Brothers.* This section will analyze the reception of *Band of Brothers* by examining the, professional and amateur, reviews. The reason why this section will address this review is because a positive reception might indicate to what extent the image that is provided by *Band of Brothers* is being perceived as realistic. Public media is not singularly conclusive, but it provides an interesting perspective on the public opinion concerning *Band of Brothers,* and thus in how realistic they perceive it to be. Once we can comprehend and understand how *Band of Brothers* was received by the American public, we can begin analyzing why the narrative and image produced by *Band of Brothers* was incorporated into the bigger narratives on American identity after 9/11 and on the "War on Terrorism." What is interesting about analyzing the reviews, and also what is problematic about it, is the fact that some of the reviews were written shortly before 9/11 and some shortly after 9/11. Although that can shed an interesting light on the change in American narrative, the two need to be treated as two separate things but as connected and intertwined at the same time.

The first step in the analysis of the reception of *Band of Brothers* is understanding how realistic it was perceived to be. This is essential for our understanding because it allows us to analyze the "success" of the narrative and its image presented by *Band of Brothers.* Some, like John Carman, consider it to be really realistic, others agree with the realistic nature but they also distinguish some form of "melodrama." Carman states in his review in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that 'there is no melodrama at all. In fact there are hardly any concessions to plot. No furtive wartime romances or girls they left behind.'[93] The suggestion that the presence of "wartime romances" or "girls left behind" might diminish the reality of

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[93] John Carman, "Blood Brothers/Spielberg-Hanks miniseries portrays fury of combat minus the clichés", San Francisco Chronicle, http://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/Blood-Brothers-Spielberg-Hanks-miniseries-2882225.php accessed the 5th of June 2013

the story is ridiculous. It is also untrue, because there are some references to Kitty Grogan, the girl Harry Welsh left behind and the lover of Buck Compton, who dumped him by mail which Compton received on Christmas Day. This might be melodramatic, but it also allows the establishment of a more realistic image. The viewer sees what the soldier onscreen has left behind, thus emphasizing their dedication to duty and country. So yes, others, like Ken Tucker from Entertainment Weekly, who argue that there is some melodrama present in the series,[94] are right to certain degree, but that does not diminish the reality. However, they all agree that the series is realistic, which is essential in the "success" of the narrative of *Band of Brothers,* Carman even argues that the story is real and nonfictional. Their acclaim that the series is realistic, or at least they perceive it to be, is instrumental in our understanding of its success. Because if the story is perceived to be realistic, so are its characters which makes it easier for the viewer to relate to them. The story they tell and the image they represent is automatically more realistic and becomes something the Americans can recognize themselves in and rally behind. That is essential in our understanding why the narrative of *Band of Brothers* became incorporated within bigger narratives on American identity after 9/11, because these narratives needed a realistic image to rally behind. The story of *Band of Brothers* is one of the heroic American soldier bonding with his brethren, and through a realistic portrayal it can function as a part of collective memory that helps present day Americans bond and unite in the face of a threat to the country.

The second step is looking at to what extent the narrative on unity and brotherhood is received and perceived by the American audience. Carman states in his review that there was 'no friction between the lippy Private from Brooklyn and his hayseed comrade from the Deep South. No tinny platitudes on saving democracy.'[95] This is also a very important statement by Carman, because he ignores the tensions that are illustrated between, for example, Catholics and Jews or Italian Americans and Irish Americans. Carman sees no frictions or tensions between the characters and he only refers to , perhaps expected, regional tensions between those from the urbanized North and the rural South. His choice for these regional differences is obviously related to the regional tensions that have existed

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[94] Ken Tucker, "Band of Brothers," EW.com, http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,173163_2,00.html accessed 6th of June 2013
[95] Carman, "Blood Brothers/Spielberg-Hanks miniseries portrays fury of combat minus the clichés"

ever since the American Civil War. But he ignores the tensions illustrated in *Band of Brothers* between, for example, the Catholics and the Jews and the Italians and the Irish. Whether he willingly choose to ignore it, or simply did not see them is not the most important element of not mentioning the tensions that were portrayed. In doing so he underlines the image of these men as American, rather than Italian American or Irish American, he emphasizes the narrative that they are all American no matter their different backgrounds. The unity that they represent is obviously clear to him, there are no differences. However, we concluded there are, they might be minor, but there are differences and tensions constructed within the narrative of *Band of Brothers*, the fact that Carman stresses the unity suggests the fact that he is receptive of the message of bonding and unity within the narrative of *Band of Brothers*. Carman is not the only one, Christopher McEvoy also stresses this unity through a reference to the fact that each episode was directed and written by a different team. He states that 'each writer-director team wants to send the Ambrose message of bonds built in adversity. So you are apt to get a capsule of how an outsider becomes an insider.'[96] It thus can be argued that these reviewers understand and recognize the message within the narrative of *Band of Brothers* about bonding and unity, thus granting it some form of legitimacy and acknowledging its presence.

Another important element that needs to be analyzed, is how the reviewers perceive the identification of the characters. In order to relate to the characters, and thus to the story they tell and the message the narrative tries to convey, the viewer needs to be able to identify with the characters. Some reviewers argued that they had difficulties identifying some of the characters. Tucker wrote in his review in *Entertainment Weekly* that Spielberg and Hanks attempted to combine documentary-style realism with the vivid male bonding camaraderie of older World War II films.[97] 'The result is an inevitable artistic hodgepodge: a $ 125 million project whose realism depends on conveying confusion, yet whose drama requires that we identify with precisely delineated protagonists.'[98] According to Tucker the combination between the two failed, because one cancelled the other. The confusion made it impossible to identify with the characters, and as he stated the television series and its

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[96] Christopher McEvoy, "Brother to Brother," National Review Vol. 53, No. 18, (September 17, 2001) 54
[97] Tucker, "Band of Brothers"
[98] Ibidem

narrative require identification. Personally, I had no trouble with identifying the characters, however there were others, like Carman, who voiced similar troubles. Carman states that 'matching the true faces with the actors was a chore,'[99] referring to the fact that the real veterans are seen at the beginning of the episode are only "identified" at the end of episode 10. The ability to identify the characters is an important element in the ability of the audience to relate to the characters but also to understand them and, most importantly, to identify with them and the message it tries to convey. Tucker also provides the answer to why it is so difficult; Spielberg and Hanks aimed for realism which was accompanied with confusion.[100] But the aim for realism, which is merely enforced by the chaotic portrayal of battle, is also one of the elements that allows the viewers to relate to the narrative and image of unity and brotherhood portrayed by *Band of Brothers*. It can be concluded that the reviewers once again emphasize the fact that they perceive the series to be realistic, but that it is accompanied by a chaos that provides difficulties with the identification of the characters. The ability to connect the character to the actual veteran is important to them, but does not diminish the image of unity or brotherhood.

The last element of the reception of *Band of Brothers* this section aims to analyze is how the message and the narrative of the series was acknowledged. Nicholas J. Cull argues that *'Band of Brothers* holds within it both a powerful antiwar message, but also perpetuates a potent pro-soldiering story, without a fixed morality.'[101] Cull also argues that 'the film's potential to create a message that has meaning beyond its historical context was especially evident in the political context in which the series aired.'[102] Cull, who wrote this review in October 2001, acknowledges the presence of the message of bonding and unity by referring to the incorporation of the narrative of *Band of Brothers* into the American narratives that rose up from the ashes left behind after 9/11. The presence of the message is thus acknowledged by the incorporation in other narratives, to which other reviewers like James Martin agree. This part will be addressed in the next section, but it is important to mention that the reviewers who acknowledged the useful narrative of *Band of Brothers*, being Cull, Martin and Rick

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[99] Carman "Blood Brothers/Spielberg-Hanks miniseries portray fury of combat minus the clichés"
[100] Ibidem
[101] Nicholas J. Cull, "Band of Brothers Motion Picture," American Historical Review, Vol. 107, no. 3 (June 1, 2002) 992
[102] Ibidem

Lyman, all wrote after 9/11. Thus stressing the change in perception and reception of *Band of Brothers* and its narrative that occurred after 9/11. Like the reviewers, other politically active people acknowledge the strength of the narrative and the usefulness to the narrative they were adopting.

Band of Brothers was received relatively positive, and this positive reception allows us to argue that the audience proved receptive of the narrative and that they could relate to it. Websites like Rotten Tomatoes and IMDB give high scores to the series, but since non-Americans can rate the series there as well the numbers are not entirely representative of American society as a whole. However, the reviews confirm the positive reception within the United States, granting credibility to the positive scores as well. The reviewers we discussed are positive as well, in their reviews we see them relate to the image and narrative that is put forward in the series. There are some difficulties with identifying the characters, and thus identifying and relating with them, and the main reason seems to be the chaos that accompanies the realism Spielberg and Hanks were aiming for. But in general the reviews are positive and the realism allows them to relate to the narrative, which is especially obvious in the reviews that are written after 9/11. Cull, Martin and Lyman acknowledge how the narrative is being used by the narrative after 9/11. But why are they being used and what makes the narrative so compatible to the post 9/11 narrative on American identity and the "War on Terror?"

Post 9/11 narrative on American identity

In the previous chapter we have seen how *Band of Brothers* and its narrative constructed and represented some of the characters as belonging to a different ethnic or religious minority and it also illustrates some of the tensions that existed among the different groups. Through the narrative of *Band of Brothers* we have met the diverse American citizen soldier, who bonds through training and combat and ultimately they have become a coherent and close group. Yes the series only represent the soldiers as white men, but through the use of representations of masculinity, brotherhood, heroism and sacrifice the narrative of *Band of Brothers* succeeds in telling a powerful story about commitment and dedication towards your "brothers," and above all, a story about national unity against a common foe. The latter part is relevant for this section, which will focus on the post 9/11 narrative on American

national identity. Although the series was produced before 9/11, and thus is not a product of American post 9/11 culture, its narrative is quite illustrative of the American narrative on national identity after the horrific events of 9/11. This section will therefore try to analyze to what extent the narrative of *Band of Brothers*, although not intended as such, fits in the post 9/11 narrative on American national identity.

In the introduction of the edited volume *American Multiculturalism after 9/11: Transatlantic Perspectives*, Rubin and Verheul use an interesting quote from Lynne Cheney, wife of the then Vice-President Dick Cheney, delivered in a speech a month after 9/11. They state that Lynne Cheney argued that:

> 'instead of teaching diversity and tolerance, teachers from kindergarten to top colleges and universities would do better to concentrate on the classics of world history and, most of all, the history of the American nation. The best way to understand the world in a time of national crisis, she concluded, was to read *Of Plymouth Plantation*, the writings of the Founding Fathers or the heroic accounts of American soldiers during World War II by Stephen Ambrose.'[103]

Her reference to the book of *Band of Brothers*, is quite interesting and intriguing, and her classification of the soldiers as heroes even more so. With this statement by Lynne Cheney, the wife of a conservative Republican, it is already obvious how the narrative of *Band of Brothers*, which visualizes the story Ambrose wanted to tell, already was hijacked by right wing American to advance the agenda of national identity and unity. *Band of Brothers* is of course an ideal narrative to incorporate into a bigger narrative in this particular case. Lynne Cheney's statement underlines the need for a re-emphasis on national identity, and the similar message can be seen in *Band of Brothers.* Their diversity is illustrated, their tensions are casually presented, but it is not too obvious, too diversifying or disuniting. The brotherhood the narrative represents also attacks ideas of individualism, focusing on the cooperation and dedication to their fellow Americans. Lynne Cheney's message indirectly incorporates the narrative of *Band of Brothers*, and its message on ethnic and religious boundary crossing brotherhood, in the larger American narrative of post 9/11 American identity.

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[103] Derek Rubin and Jaap Verheul, "Introduction" in American Multiculturalism after 9/11: Transatlantic Perspectives, ed. Derek Rubin and Jaap Verheul, (Amsterdam, NL: Amsterdam University Press 2011) 7

Lynne Cheney is not the only one who referenced to *Band of Brothers* in the aftermath of 9/11 as a part of her post 9/11 narrative on American identity. According to Nicholas J. Cull, *Band of Brothers* 'became a major feature of the television of culture on both sides of the Atlantic during the "War on Terrorism" in the months that followed.'[104] He underlines this argument with a reference to President George W. Bush, who addressed the 101st Airborne, to which Easy Company belonged, in October 2001. While wearing a regimental jacket Bush spoke of Tom Ridge, the Director of Homeland Security at that time, as the "kind of man he would like to share a fox hole with."[105] The fact that Bush addressed the 101st Airborne in one of their regimental jackets is already an argument of Bush's attempt to incorporate the narrative and image presented by *Band of Brothers*, and the success of the series, into his own narrative of the "War on Terror." By wearing that jacket he attempts to connect himself to the image of brotherhood, heroism and sacrifice that is central in the narrative of *Band of Brothers*. In doing so, Bush, as the face of the "War on Terror", manages to link his fight against terrorism to the fight of the World War II veterans against fascism and for the preservation of democracy. The fact that he uses the phrase "*would like* to share a fox hole with," [106] proves that he is totally oblivious to the message within the narrative of *Band of Brothers*. The men of represented in *Band of Brothers* did not "like" to be in their foxholes, but they did so nonetheless and did not want to leave their foxholes and thus the line to long. Leaving it, or not being in it, meant leaving their brothers behind. Bush did not grasp the message of the significance of their call of duty, or their dedication and commitment to their brothers. Despite all this, Bush does manage to emphasize the relation between the two "wars" and thus is able to use it in his narrative of the "War on Terror."

As response to Bush's reference to *Band of Brothers*, Cull states that 'one wonders whether the rousing allusions were to the men and events of 1944 and 1945, or to the previous night's viewing. It was a reminder, if ever one were needed, that war and its representations can never be separated.'[107] This is a very interesting statement by Cull because it could help us explain why the narrative of *Band of Brothers,* and the WW II narratives in general, were successfully integrated in the narrative of the "War on Terror." The usefulness of the image

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[104] Cull, 992
[105] Ibidem
[106] My italics, my emphasis. RB
[107] Ibidem

of the heroic and "united" American soldier from the Second World War, is best explained by two reasons. First, according to M. Paul Hollinger 'World War II mirrored what was best in America, as well what was worst. It defined who Americans were as a people and their victory over the evil forces of Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan gave them all reason to be proud.'[108] In the wake of the attack on America by an evil force, the image of the American soldier fighting for democracy and freedom can function as a powerful tool to unite the Americans against their common foe. The image of heroic American soldiers as "brothers," as seen in *Band of Brothers*, shows that the American can overcome their diversities and unite against their enemy fully committed to their American identity. The desire for unity, and thus the strength of this image in the wake of 9/11 is also seen in the quote used by Mathilde Roza in her essay "America under Attack: Unity and Division after 9/11": 'There are no African Americans. There are no Irish Americans. There are no Asian Americans. We are Americans, period. ONE NATION, ONE LANGUAGE, ONE FLAG. That is what America is about, not catering to each little diverse group, for it breeds resentment and division.'[109] This quote reveals the need for unity among some Americans, there is an evil force threatening them from the outside and they should not let their differences divide them, but their similarities as Americans should unite them. The image of the 'brotherhood' in *Band of Brothers*, showed them that they could achieve that. Second, the image reminds them that they have faced something similar before.[110] Or as Mr. Lurie stated in the article "Fewer Soldiers March Onscreen; After Attacks Filmmakers Weigh Wisdom of Military Stories" : 'We often look back on our history for comfort on the ability we've shown in the past to overcome the horrors that we are going through. We can look back at World War II and say "O.K. We did it once, and we can do it again."'[111] The image helps them remember, helps them not to despair. They have faced a violent, unexpected attack on American soil before, Pearl Harbor, and they "gloriously" returned from the war that followed, more powerful

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[108] Hollinger, 228

[109] Mathilde Roza, "America under Attack: Unity and Division after 9/11" in American Multiculturalism after 9/11: Transatlantic Perspectives, ed. Derek Rubin and Jaap Verheul (Amsterdam, NL: Amsterdam University Press 2011) 115

[110] James Martin, "Television after Sept. 11", America Magazine, http://americamagazine.org/issue/354/tv-review/television-after-sept-11 accessed 10th of June 2013

[111] Rick Lyman, "Fewer Soldiers March Onscreen: After Attacks Filmmakers Weigh Wisdom of Military Stories" New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/16/movies/fewer-soldiers-march-onscreen-after-attacks-filmmakers-weigh-wisdom-military.html accessed 10th of June 2013

than before. Thus it can be argued that the image of brotherhood and heroism presented in *Band of Brothers* was so useful and successful as a part of the narrative of the "War on Terror" because it could be used to unite Americans and bring hope, through the use of a collective memory of a moment that Americans faced a similar threat and they rose up to meet the challenge, and they won.

As we have seen the post 9/11 narrative concerning a national identity in the United states and the narrative on the "War on Terror" have eagerly incorporated the image and message within the narrative of *Band of Brothers.* The unity and heroism presented in the series, or perceived by its viewers, provide an interesting and hopeful idea to rally behind as Americans. But it also serves as a part of collective memory, the Americans have faced such a challenge before and they rose up to meet it and came out more powerful than before. Thus it can be argued that the incorporation of *Band of Brothers* within these two other narratives gave it more significance and meaning. By using its narrative it immediately underlined and strengthened the message that was given, that they are American and in the face of a threat they should and could overcome their differences and become a unity. One nation, one language, one flag.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the reception of *Band of Brothers* in the American society. Important in this analysis is the realization of the unique circumstances surrounding its first airing, because two days after its premiere the terrorists attacks of 9/11 took places. As we have seen in this chapter *Band of Brothers* provided an interesting narrative that was eagerly incorporated in the bigger narratives on American national identity after 9/11 and the "War on Terror." The first section analyzed the reception by professional and amateur reviewers, and sought to find out how receptive they were to the narrative and image provided and how they responded to it. The second section analyzed how this image and narrative became incorporated in the narratives of post 9/11 and why it was so successfully adapted.

The first section concluded that the series was received relatively positive in general and that this positive reception shows that the reviewers perceived the series to be realistic. Most reviewers agreed that the series was quite realistic, it presented a shared history for Americans. With being more realistic it can be argued that it was easier to relate to and it

presented a collective memory, portraying Americans at their best. We see the reviewers accept the image presented on American identity, for Carman ignores, willingly or unknowingly, the representations of their different ethnic and religious backgrounds and the tensions that come along with it. He does not mention it, because it does not matter, they are all Americans. The realism, reviewers criticize, is also confusing make it harder to identify the characters and thus relating to them. However, as we have seen 9/11 changed that perception because it became increasingly used as a part of the post-9/11 narrative on American identity.

The second section illustrates how the narrative of *Band of Brothers* became incorporated into the narratives on American national identity after 9/11 and about the "War on Terror" by leading figures like Lynne Cheney and George W. Bush after the events of 9/11. Cheney stresses the need not to address the different cultures of the American culture, but focus on the things they share, like the heroic accounts of the veterans of World War II provided by Stephen Ambrose. George W. Bush indirectly refers to *Band of Brothers* and its narrative while addressing the 101st Airborne. He did so by wearing a 101st Airborne regimental jacket, linking himself and his fight to the veterans presented in *Band of Brothers* and their fight, and referring to the Director of Homeland security as someone he would like to share a foxhole with. In doing so Cheney and Bush incorporate and acknowledge the image and narrative of *Band of Brothers* of the heroic and "united" American soldier. That image shows the American soldier overcoming their diversities, bonding in the face of combat and being dedicated to brother, duty and country. The image became so successful because it showed Americans at their best, in the face of an evil force similar to the evil the Americans were facing after 9/11. It also provided a hopeful image, the Americans had face a similar threat before and rose to meet the challenge and emerged more powerful and united than before.

It can be concluded that the positive reception by the reviewers show that they perceived the series to be a realistic account of the heroic acts conducted by the men of Easy company. The fact that they perceived the series to be realistic is essential in our understanding of the function of the narrative and image *Band of Brothers* present on brotherhood and masculinity. If the series is perceived to be realistic it allows the audience to relate to its narrative through relating to the characters. The success of the narrative of brotherhood and masculinity, that could be used as an instrument to frame a united American identity, is not

due to the narrative itself. Its success and the fact that it got incorporated in a bigger narrative on national identity is due to the events that shortly followed the series premiere. 9/11 stressed the need of a narrative on American national identity, because the American needed to unite in the face of danger. George W. Bush eagerly incorporated the narrative on brotherhood and masculinity presented by *Band of Brothers* because it told a story on a diverse group of Americans bonding and overcoming their differences in the face of a shared enemy. It also reminded the Americans they had faced something similar before and they had risen up to meet the challenge and succeeded to emerge more united and more powerful than before. The fact that the premiere was well received by the public media and that a quite substantial amount of people watched the shows allowed its narrative on brotherhood to become an essential element of the narrative that was constructed after the events of 9/11.

Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to analyze the series *Band of Brothers* and its narrative on brotherhood and masculinity and how the series was received by the American public in order to answer the question: 'To what extent were representations of "brotherhood" in *Band of Brothers* (2001) used to frame an American national identity, and how was it incorporated in the narrative on American national identity after 9/11?' The first chapter focused on the man, Stephen E. Ambrose, and his works who has had a significant influence on the narrative that was created with *Band of Brothers*. It examines his concept of the "citizen soldiers" and how that influenced the narrative that was created with *Band of Brothers*. The second chapter analyzed how the citizen soldier was represented in *Band of Brothers*. We concluded that *Band of Brothers* mainly focused on the aspect of diversity and therefore examined how this diversity was constructed and represented in the narrative of *Band of Brothers*. In the latter part of this chapter we analyzed how the narrative employed "brotherhood" as a vehicle to promote one American national identity, representing the men overcoming their differences and becoming a "brotherhood." The last chapter analyzed the reception by American reviewers and analyzed how the narrative was incorporated into the bigger narrative after 9/11 by Lynne Cheney and George W. Bush. It concluded that through that incorporation the image and narrative of *Band of Brothers* on American identity became enforced and "successful."

The first chapter tried to analyze the man, Stephen E. Ambrose, and his works that helped construct the narrative of the "citizen soldiers". It analyzed how Ambrose constructed the concept of the "citizen soldiers" that would become a solid part of the narrative on masculinity and brotherhood as presented by *Band of Brothers*. It also addressed what elements from the background of Ambrose influenced this construction, what did he emphasize and how did it eventually influence the narrative on brotherhood. Ambrose glorified the veterans who fought in World War II, for what they did during the war and after. He believed that the American people owed them a great debt, and his works are the first step in giving them honor they have earned. He developed the notion of "citizen soldiers," men who joined the Army because duty called and they left their civilian lives behind. These men came from different backgrounds, from different parts of the country.

Most of them were not from Army life, they were brighter and stronger than the average American. They were also green, greener than their German counterparts, and through the use of Fussel's theory on rationalization Ambrose argues that this contributed to their success in the theatre of war. These men stood out, they were different and they became a tight-knitted group through their shared experiences and hardships. When they returned, they brought their experiences back home and used it to build the American society as we know it today. They were the greatest generation. Ambrose has constructed a concept of "citizen soldiers", who through their diversity are a representative of the American society. Their heroic actions were something to admire and honor, with the respect they deserved. In his rhetoric and his description we can distinguish a certain nostalgia, in that he wants to tell the stories of the veterans not only to entertain his public but also to teach them something. We can see how Ambrose values teamwork over individualism, and the message it holds is essential, Americans should work together and help each other rather than focus on their selves. They were the greatest generation, and *Band of Brothers* has become some form of hagiography with an image to rally behind. One of the strengths of this narrative is already evident early on and that is its realism, and despite criticisms on Ambrose's credibility as a historian, the story sticks. The veterans honored Ambrose in return because he had helped them tell their story, which underlines the realism but also the message. Ambrose brought the veterans in contact with Hanks and Spielberg, and the visualization of the narrative and image of *Band of Brothers* became a fact. The image of the heroic "citizen soldiers," who overcame their difference and became a band of brothers, was about to be projected to the American viewers, and was about to teach them the values of duty, honor and brotherhood.

The second chapter focused on the part of the concept of citizen soldier that was essential in the narrative of *Band of Brothers.* This chapter has analyzed how the different backgrounds of the members of Easy company were represented in this melting pot or multicultural company. This company was used in many other war movies as a representative of the American nation and this chapter analyzed how *Band of Brothers* constructed these backgrounds, and why they did it like that. It explicitly depicted the characters of different backgrounds than the characters that belonged to the WASP Americans. The POV characters were all characters, except for Eugene Roe, who belonged to what was the WASP "majority"

prior to World War II. The chapter concluded that this is most likely because if we look at the story from their perspective the message is clearer and more powerful, they are the ones who have to "include" the others into their "privileged" group of white Americans, and identify them as equals. Looking at the story from their perspective also allows the viewer to relate to the story of inclusion. The narrative of *Band of Brothers* explicitly depicted those ethnicities and religious expressions that differed from what used to be the majority "white" American, thus highlighting the fact that these groups were not included just yet. Through visual and verbal confirmation, these characters were constructed as being Italian American, Catholic or Jewish. The narrative of *Band of Brothers* also portrays the tensions that existed among these groups themselves and between these minorities and the "WASPs." It is argued that this is intentionally depicted to underline the differences between the groups and that they lacked common grounds to identify themselves with as being only American. Instead they identified themselves along ethnic and religious lines rather than national one. However, through the series we see the men bond with each other, a bonding that goes beyond the ethnic and religious lines that used to divide them. Their brotherhood is constructed through the sharing of stories, to the nicknames but above all through their dedication to each other and their unity. They do not leave each other behind, longer than necessary. The men go AWOL from the aid station, to rejoin their brethren, they frown upon those who did not go AWOL, feeling abandoned as if they are not worthy enough. They sacrifice themselves for others, but the others will not let one sacrifice himself. The men are portrayed as masculine, who do not need to be rescued, they were fine on their own. But they cried and they broke down, and that does not diminish their masculinity but underlines their commitment to each other. They broke down because they felt they failed their brethren, rather than the other way around. They have become one, they have become American rather than Italian Americans. That is the image *Band of Brothers* portrays through the concept of brotherhood, men overcoming their differences and becoming a unity that fights for freedom and democracy.

The third and final chapter analyzed how *Band of Brothers* was received and how it was eventually incorporated into the bigger narrative on American identity that rose up after the events of 9/11. The reviewers accept the image presented by the narrative of national unity in the face of danger and an evil force. They see the men as only American, despite the fact

that at the time, they were not considered as such. The realism of the series, which helps them relate and identify with it, is celebrated. While at the same time some reviewers are critical towards the realism, because its realism is confusing and chaotic, which is logical because of the fact it is combat. But the confusing aspect seems to be a problem with the identification of characters and the identifying with them. That could have affected the success of the image presented, if it were not for the event of 9/11. 9/11 caused the rise of a narrative on American identity because the American was under threat again, quite similar to the threat they faced during World War II. Lynne Cheney and George W. Bush incorporated the image of *Band of Brothers* in their narratives after 9/11. In doing so they acknowledged the existence of the image of one American identity in the narrative of *Band of Brothers*, and they empowered its message. They enhanced the function of the image as an image that united the Americans, with a shared memory and collective history. It was also a hopeful image, an image that inspired. It told the Americans that they had faced it before and that they had overcome it, and had risen out of it more powerful and united before. It honored the greatest generation that fought for democracy and freedom and afterwards rebuilt America. That image was reproduced by Cheney and Bush, to give an image for the Americans to rally behind and to unite them.

The citizen soldier and the multicultural or melting pot company that accompanies it, is the image that forwards a perspective on national identity. The television series *Band of Brothers* adapted the notion of citizen soldiers presented by Ambrose as an image the present day Americans could relate to and identify with in order to strengthen a new American national identity. The narrative constructed the different groups of Americans, to show their diversities and the tensions between the groups to underline the fragility of and division of the American society and its identity prior to World War II. But through the representations of brotherhood, the narrative constructed American national identity in formation. Providing an image to relate to for the present day Americans, who similar to the Americans before World War II identified along ethnic and religious lines rather than national ones, it attempted to provide more cohesiveness. The success of this image came, ironically enough, with the horrific aftermath of 9/11. The image of the heroic and "united" American soldier in World War II, was incorporated in the narrative on American identity after 9/11. It was incorporated because it was a successful image of Americans at their best,

fighting for freedom and democracy. It served as image to unite Americans in the face of an evil force threatening their existence. But it also provided an image of hope, they had faced it before and had overcome it, rising up more powerful and united than before. They were Americans, they fought for freedom and they were one. Differences were set aside, because they were one nation and they were under threat. The narrative of *Band of Brothers* lend itself to enforce the image of national unity through the concept of brotherhood developing among the "citizen soldiers." That image was a welcome instrument for President Bush to promote his narrative, and that of others, on the American identity to rally the Americans against the evil force that was threatening their freedom and their democracy.

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