

Identity is Dialogical: The Naturalization of Immigrants in American Military¹

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In the following article I reflect on how the identities, understood as ethnicity/race, of three immigrant soldiers influenced their naturalization process while serving in the American military. In line with Taylor's (1994) assertion that identity is dialogically constructed, I will show how these immigrants' identities were impacted by the way in which they understood themselves, as well as by how they are seen (and addressed) by others. Unlike Taylor, who discusses normatively the importance of recognition and the implications of non or misrecognizing one's identity, I take a grounded perspective. Thus, through the stories of three immigrant soldiers: Lily, Alexa and Vikrant, I nuance how the process of (mis)recognition takes different and specific contours, depending on one's ethnicity/ race. Based on in-depth qualitative research conducted over four years with three participants from Romania, South America and India who served in the Army and Air force Reserve, I argue that while their military experience propelled their naturalization, it did not succeed in obliterating hierarchies of ethnicity/ race similar to the ones found in the civilian experience of American migrants (Alba and Nee 1997; Portes and Rumbault 1990 and 2001).

Keywords: *immigration, military, identity, recognition, dialogical, ethnicity, race*

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