

**David E. Rohall, Morten G. Ender & Michael D. Matthews** (eds.), *Inclusion in the American Military: A Force for Diversity*, Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books, 2017, 219 p.

*Reviewed by Lonella K. Streit*

This edited volume is both a book of the times and for the times. That is, while US-based civil-military relations literature has always discussed diverse forces to one extent or another, the topics outlined here reflect a more modern approach – an attempt to address all forms of (social) diversity from physical aspects including race or sex and gender to the more internal such as religion. On the whole, the book accomplishes its goal, engaging in detailed discussions of various forms of diversity within the US armed forces, and as explicitly stated, “*provid[ing] more targeted efforts for the unique groups that exist in service*” (p.206) for future research.

The book is divided into two parts, which, while perhaps useful to some, seems unnecessary, especially given the contrast of religious diversity being thrown into part two along with sex, gender, and sexuality. Certainly, the introduction and concluding chapter frame the other material well, offering both summaries and insight into the topics of diversity and military organization. The editors outline the relevance of the material to practical application within the military setting and for students of the military. Two crucial components of these framing chapters include the theoretical context for understanding why diversity matters to the US military, and their discussion of intersectionality, the latter of which is discussed in more depth below.

Each chapter provides a different approach to examining the population under consideration. JooHee Han’s chapter on African-Americans provides a concise history and literature review of black experience with the military and institutional racism within the organization. Karin De Angelis’ “Rising Minority” is a statistically focused chapter analyzing trends and experiences of Hispanics and Latinx. Deenesh Sohani’s “Fighting to Belong” provides a brief but fairly comprehensive legal-focused history of a rarely studied group within the military – Asian-Americans. William Meadows’ chapter expands on the experience of indigenous people in and with the US armed forces, the lack of previous exploration of the topic, and acknowledges the military’s complicity in micro-aggressions towards these members ; for example, the military codenaming Osama Bin Laden “Geronimo,” the name of a man many indigenous peoples view as worthy of respect (p.102).

Part II, examining minority statuses beyond race and ethnicity, begins with Janice Laurence’s chapter on “Women and the US Military”, which outlines the history of female participation in it, representation thereof, and barriers servicewomen have faced to this day.

Importantly, she provides a discussion of the environment women must operate in when they serve, including a culture that perpetuates sexual harassment and assault.

The Laurence chapter is followed by David G. Smith and Karin De Angelis' "Lesbian and Gay Service Members and Their Families", wherein they provide a cursory history of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) members in the service as well as a more detailed examination of the effect of a heterosexist culture on these service members and their families. They explicitly address the fact that LGB social support can be difficult to form or find in light of deployments and transfers as each move means individuals and families may face possible hostile attitudes and stereotypes in ways that heterosexual individuals do not. Judith Rosenstein's "The Integration of Trans People into the Military" is a thorough discussion of the popular arguments for and against trans people openly serving in the military. While discussion of policy is slim, this is forgivable because of the comparatively little policy that does exist, and the ongoing changes under President Trump's administration. Perhaps Rosenstein's most important contribution is the section on language – it is likely that people picking up this book will not have come across an explanation of appropriate terminology including pronoun use, and that "trans" is not a noun.

Finally, Michelle Sandhoff's "Religious Diversity in the US Armed Forces" broadens the scope of the book by examining a less discussed form of diversity. What at first could feel like a laundry list of religious symbols and rituals is bolstered by a discussion of legal cases and historical or comparative examples of accommodations and the issue of chaplains being provided for minority faith service members.

In comparison to other books on diversity in the military, there are two significant positives to this text. The first is its broad scope. As author William Meadows notes, research on Native Americans/ indigenous populations serving within the US military is rare. This chapter is a critical part of this volume for that reason. The inclusion of Asian-Americans, trans service members, Hispanics, and the discussion of religion within the military context serve to move this volume beyond others in terms of depth and breadth of diverse populations included.

The second significant contribution this text makes is its desire to be intersectional, which is reflected throughout the text from the book cover featuring women of color in military dress to the concluding chapter written by the editors. Examples of books that include both a military perspective and the word "intersectionality" are so rare as to be nearly non-existent. In this way, the editors are to be applauded for their intent. As an edited collection, the range of disciplines, perspectives, information, and populations discussed are extensive and far more comprehensive than the majority of texts.

Despite this, there is some room for improvement in its stated goal of inclusion and intersectionality. With the exception of the chapter on women, women tend to appear only as a

subpopulation in final paragraphs with little to no discussion of the experiences of LGB Asian Americans, black trans women, Muslim black men, or other intersecting identities. In some cases, no doubt, statistical information is slim or nonexistent ; however, for a text that purports to adopt an intersectional approach, it still in many ways centres on the “norm”.

In many cases, the authors fail to consider intersectional experiences or statistics until the concluding paragraphs, causing the intersectional component to feel like an afterthought, rather than driving the shape of the research. One example is the statistic presented that women make 79 cents to every man’s dollar. The oversimplification of the statistic fails to note that black, Latino, and other racial and ethnic minority men make less than a white man’s dollar or that black women and Latina women make even less money to a white man’s dollar than a white woman does (PEW<sup>1</sup> research in 2016 showed that black women only earn 65 cents on the dollar, Hispanic women earning 58 cents).

A secondary issue of this is some of the book’s language use. While likely the authors are attempting to be as “objective” as possible, some of the language decisions fail to take in preferred terms, or acknowledge the full spectrum of terminology within these minority groups : for example, the repeated use of “gay” and “homosexual” can facilitate bisexual (and those who fall under the bi umbrella) erasure, even when the authors include the “B” in the acronym. The introductory chapter at one point states, “*some men identify as women and vice versa, reflecting the idea of transgender*” (p.4). While most readers will comprehend what the authors mean, the awkward language suggests the need for a re-read of Rosenstein. Similarly, the book appears to cater for certain sensitivities by referring to the “homosexual lifestyle”, a phrase that centres discussion on choice – as though choosing who one finds attractive romantically and/or sexually is as simplistic as deciding between the suburbs or the city – and beliefs that people should want to be straight (which in turn feeds arguments for conversion therapy).

The military is often touted as a leader in diversity initiatives given its history of desegregating before (most of) civilian society. Yet, other academics such as Mario L. Barnes<sup>2</sup> have refuted this as part myth, part a convenient social construction, because policy does not equate to (effective) implementation. Desegregation may have officially occurred in the military in the 1950’s but as JooHee Han points out in Chapter 2 (“African-Americans in the US Military”), racial tensions between blacks and whites in the military have not entirely been resolved and institutional racism is still a powerful force.

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<sup>1</sup> Eileen Patten, “Racial, Gender Wage Gaps Persist in US Despite Some Progress”, Pew Research Center, Washington, DC, July 1, 2016 : <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/01/racial-gender-wage-gaps-persist-in-u-s-despite-some-progress/> (January 15, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Mario L. Barnes, “‘But Some of [Them] Are Brave’: Identity Performance, the Military, and the Dangers of an Integration Success Story”, *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy*, vol.14, n°2, 2007, pp.693-748.

Regarding the success of diversity within the military, an argument the editors put forward is, “*if diversity initiatives cannot be successful in the military, it will be difficult to develop and implement them in any other organization*” (p.2); furthermore “*if the military organization cannot positively manage diversity (...), it is going to be almost impossible to do it in a democracy in which multiple views collide...*” (p.6). While in many ways, this can be true, the editors do not present comparative evidence for this claim from either other federal bureaucracies or private organizations. Insights from the military’s experience, successes and failures, in implementing diversity initiatives and programmes are certainly helpful to other organizations attempting to do the same. But likewise, other organizations that have managed more holistic – more *intersectional* – diversity management should inform the military and research on military diversity in turn. Such phrasing on the part of the editors also erases the complicity of top leaders in perpetuating discrimination within military culture, by suggesting that the hierarchical nature of the military should result in absolute obedience but ignoring that many commanders and even the top officials in the Pentagon suffer from bias themselves and thus cannot or will not instill values of inclusion within their immediate environment. The inconsistency between formal and informal policies has long been a flaw in the military’s management of diversity.

This book serves multiple uses. It certainly could be used within training courses for military members, including within their research or as a supplement for service members to read and analyze. Additionally, it is a useful text for non-academic lovers of all things military, whether policy, strategy, or history. The volume is accessible to such an audience. The statistics presented do not require courses in advanced quantitative methodology to understand and even when authors such as Deenesh Sohoni in his chapter on Asian-Americans focus on historical laws and policies, it is an efficient read, neither too bogged down in court case text nor requiring a law degree to understand.

Perhaps where this book can be most successfully utilized, though, is within the classroom. The text is filled with enough subtopics and excellent research to be useful for an introductory class in civil-military relations, critical military studies, politics, or other classes that touch on issues of diversity and management. Certainly, the authors provide enough history and sources for a student to craft a research paper on any of the subjects within, using the chapter as a starting point. While the book feels geared more towards an undergraduate level course, I also believe this text would be helpful in introductory topics courses at the graduate level, particularly within fields that do not tend to focus on diversity or inequities. In this sense, the content within can be used as a primer for graduate students to begin introducing race, sexuality, gender, etc. to their research.

Overall, this edited volume brings a fresh perspective to the issue of diversity and the contemporary US military. Each author not only contributes to the discussion of a particular

group within the organization, but also a multitude of methods and perspectives to examine, critique, and compliment the military on its policies and history. This is certainly a useful and timely text, one that should be utilized by military and academics alike in an effort to continue to create a cohesive and effective fighting force that is reflective of the United States as a whole.

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