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Featuring interviews with the 2021-2022 IPS Military
Fellows and the Master's Thesis Corner

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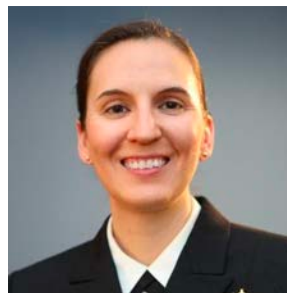
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Five Questions for Naval Fellow CDR Kimberly Manuel: Military service from one generation to another

HAILEY MCDONALD

CDR Kimberly Manuel, the 2021-2022 Navy Fellow, is a Foreign Area Officer, most recently served as the U.S. Naval Attaché in Romania and then temporarily as the Acting Defense Attaché in Lithuania. A graduate of Vanderbilt University where she received her Navy commission through ROTC, Manuel began her career as a Surface Warfare Officer and completed two sea tours in USS Pinckney (DDG 91) as the Anti-Submarine Warfare Officer and USS Ponce (LPD 15) as the Navigator.



Question 1: As a second-generation military member, did early exposure to service and the military lifestyle influence you in deciding to join the Navy? Do you feel that it would be beneficial to expose more young Americans to these principles?

CDR Manuel: My father's service definitely influenced my desire to serve in the Navy. In the simplest sense, when it came time to consider what I should do after high school, I faced the dilemma of how to pay for college and what to study that would put me on a path towards a rewarding career.

When I envisioned my future, the Navy seemed a natural fit because I had lived my entire life surrounded by it and members of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. These people are incredible. I grew up moving every three years (roughly), I went to seven different schools, which isn't even a lot compared to some military brats. But everywhere we went the military members surrounded us with camaraderie and support, making our transient lives somehow not feel so disjointed. These families recognize that no matter how different we are, we are all sharing a unique experience, coming and going all the time. We are all at different stages in life, packing to leave, just arriving, starting a career, ending it, leading following, and at some point, we've all been there. I think this attitude of empathy and compassion is what drew me to the military.

It might sound strange to think of these as characteristics of the military, but I have seen how members of the military come from all parts of the United States, and even foreign countries looking to earn citizenship, sharing this attitude that the United States is a place and idea worth sacrificing for because of all it has offered them. There is a sentiment of gratitude and hope that I enjoy being surrounded with, not to mention a no-nonsense, let's get the job done, mentality I can relate to. You can probably tell how I would answer the second part of your question from



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my statements. Yes, I think any Americans would benefit from an environment of acceptance of others, service, and hard work.

Question 2: Throughout your experience in the Navy, was there ever a time when you did not feel fully prepared to complete the assigned task or take on a specific role? If so, how did you overcome this obstacle?

CDR Manuel: I am sure there have been multiple times when I was not prepared in the Navy! To name one that stands out the most, was when I reported to my first ship to lead Sailors. I was fresh out of college and was not quite sure how four years of Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and a degree in Russian and European Studies was going to help me lead a division of 30 sailors, most of whom were older than me, and had certainly been in the Navy longer than me. It is a humbling and challenging experience that all young officers probably experience. You've had the leadership training and read the manual so to speak, but actually building a team and leading people to accomplish a mission is tough, and differs for every person and in every situation.

"Actually building a team and leading people to accomplish a mission is tough, and differs for every person and in every situation."

In my case, I tried to apply all the things I had learned in ROTC, but remind myself there were things to learn each day on the ship too. I fortunately, was blessed with not just one, but two amazing Chief Petty Officers, 'Chiefs', which if you know anything about the Navy you will know is the person to whom you go to "ask the Chief!" They were a wealth of wisdom, so I tried to learn from them, while knowing at the end of the day, I was in charge, and the tough decisions were mine. Coming into a situation eager to learn, do my best, and genuinely being interested in seeing my sailors excel, both professionally and personally was my approach, and I think my division recognized that and ultimately made us successful.

Question 3: According to Brave men and timid women? A review of the gender differences in fear and anxiety by Carmen P. McLean and Emily R. Anderson, "Compared to men, women are more likely to overestimate the probability of danger, to expect harm, and to anticipate poor coping ability." The Department of Defense Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2012-2017 notes

An all-volunteer force must represent the country it defends. We will strengthen our commitment to the values of diversity and inclusivity, and continue to treat each other with dignity and respect. We benefit immensely from the different perspectives, and linguistic and cultural skills of all Americans.

As a whole, do you feel it is advantageous to have females in a wider range of roles in the military, such as on submarines?

CDR Manuel: Honestly, I have a tough time with gender questions, probably diversity questions too. I think I tend not to notice – regarding gender, sometimes I haven't noticed I was the only

woman in a room until someone pointed it out. In recent years, I have had a couple of tours with the Department of State, and I have been struck by the fact that I look up and am surrounded by women, and that feels pretty good too. My experience has been that I was always treated as simply one of the team. If anything, as a junior officer, male commanders seemed to expect more from the females regarding maturity. I am fortunate to have worked for some pretty good bosses, who were simultaneously challenging me and advocating for me.

As for the study -- the Department of Defense Diversity policy -- I think sometimes we focus too much on the things that make us different. We certainly need to be willing to pull military members from all the population, otherwise we limit our capabilities. However, I think embracing diversity is more than just looking for people who fit into a certain category and drawing from their ranks, it's about accepting the people around you without caveat and harnessing all the skills and ideas that they can contribute. In the military you have a group of people who come from all backgrounds and types, but they have all come together in one purpose, and they each have something to contribute. The team is stronger when its members have an attitude that recognizes that each individual has value and something to add. Ultimately, if members don't treat each other with respect and take advantage of all that talent then the team will never reach its potential. Attitude makes the difference.

Question 4: General Robert Barrow, 27th Commandant of the Marine Corps, said the following in his 1991 speech before Congress:

I know in some circles, it's very popular to ridicule something called male bonding. But it's real, and one has to have experienced it to understand it ... And that would be shattered. That would be destroyed. If you want to make a combat unit ineffective, assign them women to it. It's a destructive proposition.... problems that result from such situation [women in combat]...sexual harassment, fraternization, favoritism, resentment, male backlash, all of these things would be an insurmountable problem to deal with."

The Marine Corps Integration Plan - Summary: "Findings from the physiological assessment of GCEITF males and females conducted by the University of Pittsburgh's Neuromuscular Research Laboratory include:

- Body composition: Males averaged 178 lbs., with 20% body fat: females averaged 142 lbs., with 24% body fat
- Aerobic Capacity (V02Max): Females had 10% lower capacity; the female top 10th percentile overlaps with bottom 50th percentile of males
- Within the research at the Infantry Training Battalion, females undergoing that entry level training were injured at more than six times the rate of their male counterparts."

Given these concepts, as well as other factors, do you feel it is advantageous to have females in physically combative roles in the military?

CDR Manuel: Some people don't like to hear that men and women are different. But we just are. But then again so is every individual person. I read a book a few years ago called, "Ashley's War," which is the story of the first team of female soldiers who served alongside Special Operations teams on the battlefield in Afghanistan. I mention the book because it's the incredible story of a group of women who were more physically capable than most men I know, but could not at the time serve in the Special Forces. Instead of looking at all the things that they weren't able

to do, they had a level of dedication to duty that pushed them through arduous training and allowed them to play a critical role in building relationships with Afghan women because they could go places and do things that male soldiers could not. They helped change the tide of the war, and Ashley White, for whom the book bears its name, died in combat making a difference by contributing to the U.S. military in a way only she could. As I mentioned previously, I think that each person who joins the military has something to contribute, in whatever capacity it leads them.

Question 5: In your opinion, are there still unequal opportunity levels for men and women in the military?

CDR Manuel: Yes, but I think that is true for every person. There are a thousand choices and timings that take our career paths to different places and levels. For a while now, I have been unplugged from “Big Navy,” as we would call the affiliation with a standard U.S. Navy command or organization, so I don’t know the current statistics, but clearly, the military in general is a male dominated profession, and I think men tend to have longer careers for a variety of reasons. In my experience, I think the Navy tries pretty hard to promote based on merit, because ultimately it recognizes, having great service members and leaders is what makes our military the best.