

Impact of official photos on officer promotion board outcomes: Findings from a multi-year action research study

## Research Method: "A/B" Testing

#### Step 01

Run two identical promotion boards, one with photos, one without.



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#### Step 02

Record votes given to files by board members when photos ARE present.



Record votes given to those same files by board members when photos are NOT present.





#### Step 04

Measure the change in file scores with and without photos present.

### Key Findings









PROMOTION PROBABILITY







Board members vote same race & gender files **more favorably** when a photo is present.



Removing photos **increases promotion equity** and process
efficiency.

Board composition compounds this

unconscious bias.



Findings **confirmed** in actual board data (2017 - 2018).

Photos also **reduce** board precision and **increase** board process time / cost.





**Impact:** Women & minority officers are **3-4% less likely** to be promoted.

# ACTION: Offical photos were removed from <u>all</u> Army selection boards on August 1, 2020.

This research has been internally peer reviewed and is being prepared for external peer review and academic publication. Findings are consistent with other economic research that found strong correlations between race, gender, and decision making resume callbacks (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004), NBA penalty decisions (Price & Wolfers, 2010), tenure decisions (Bagues, Sylos-Labini & Zinovyeava, 2017), AirBnB rental pricing (Edelman, Lucas & Svirsky, 2017), and jury decisions (Anwar, Bayer & Hjalmarsson, 2017). https://oema.army.mil

