DoD Directive 1320.12 requires that the instructions to promotion boards include “guidelines to ensure the board considers all eligible officers without prejudice or partiality.” The instructions are prepared by the service secretaries and included the following language at the time of this study.

ARMY

“a. The Army is firmly committed to providing equal opportunity for minority and female officers in all facets of their career development, utilization, and progression. In evaluating the records of minority and female officers, the board should consider that past personal and institutional discrimination might have disadvantaged minority and female officers. Such discrimination may manifest itself in disproportionately lower evaluation reports, assignments of lesser importance or responsibility, etc. Take these factors into consideration in evaluating these officers’ potential to make continued significant contributions to the Army.

b. The goal for this board is to achieve a percentage of minority and female selections not less than the selection rate for all officers in the promotion zone (first-time considered category). This goal is important because, to the extent that each board achieves it, the
Army at large will have a clear perception of equal opportunity and the selectees will enjoy continued career progression to the benefit of the Army.

c. Prior to adjournment, the board must review the extent to which it met this goal and explain the reasons for any failure to meet this goal in the report of officers recommended for promotion. Although the board may have met the overall selection goals for minorities and women, it will identify any situation in which minority or female selections were not comparable to the overall population in specific branches or where a particular minority-gender grouping did not fare well in comparison to the overall population. Explain such situations fully in the after-action report.”

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

Since they share a Secretariat, board instructions are the same. The Precept says:

“The board’s evaluation of women and minority officers must afford them fair and equitable consideration.”

This statement is backed up with a much longer section in the supplemental guidance to the board members:

“The Department of the Navy is dedicated to equality of treatment and opportunity for all personnel without regard to race, creed, color, gender, or national origin. Aggressive commitment to equal opportunity is critical. Invidious discrimination is not only morally wrong but it is illegal. You must not let it play a role in your deliberations or affect your consideration of individual officers.

a. As stated previously, the board’s evaluation of women and minority officers must afford them fair and equitable consideration. In evaluating the records of women and minority officers, you should be alert to the possibility that past discrimination may have placed these officers at a disadvantage in the Performance Evaluation System. In some instances, utilization policies, such as

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2 This language was subsequently modified.
the statutory and regulatory restrictions on the assignment of women, and assignment practice may have resulted in the involuntary assignment of women and minority officers outside traditional career development patterns, i.e., to equal opportunity, human resource, family service, and similar billets. These assignments, though beneficial to the interests of the Navy [Marine Corps], have produced some women and minority officers with career patterns different from officers who have been able to serve in their primary specialties. These assignments must be viewed as equally beneficial to the Navy and performance in such assignments should be given the same weight as that given to duty equally well performed by officers serving in their primary specialties.

b. Despite considerable progress in ensuring fair treatment of minority officers, these officers historically have not been promoted at rates equivalent to those of other officers. This has been more evident in the case of African Americans than other minority groups. Previous studies on equal opportunity in the military have noted that, prior to entering the Service, some minority officers have had limited interaction with a predominantly majority environment. Consequently, minority officers may take a longer time to adjust and perform to the level of their contemporaries. This may result in initially lower fitness reports at the junior officer level (through O-3) and a higher percentage of “late bloomers” when evaluating potential and in determining which eligible officers are best and fully qualified for promotion.

c. Within the charter of “best and fully qualified,” the Navy goal is to attain a minority selection rate at a minimum equal to the overall selection rate. This goal is important because the Navy benefits by ensuring the talents of minority officers are not overlooked because of the officers’ past assignments, precommissioning social background, or possibly biased fitness reports. Prior to adjournment, the board must review the extent to which the goal of equivalent selection rates has been met.”

AIR FORCE

“Your evaluation of minority and some officers must clearly afford them fair and equitable consideration. Equal opportunity for all officers is an essential element of our selection system. In your evaluation of the records of minority and women officers, you should be
particularly sensitive to the possibility that past individuals and societal attitudes, and in some instances utilization policies or practices, may have placed these officers at a disadvantage from a total career perspective. The board shall prepare for review by the Secretary and Chief of Staff, a report of minority and women officer selections as compared to the selection rates for all officers considered by the board."