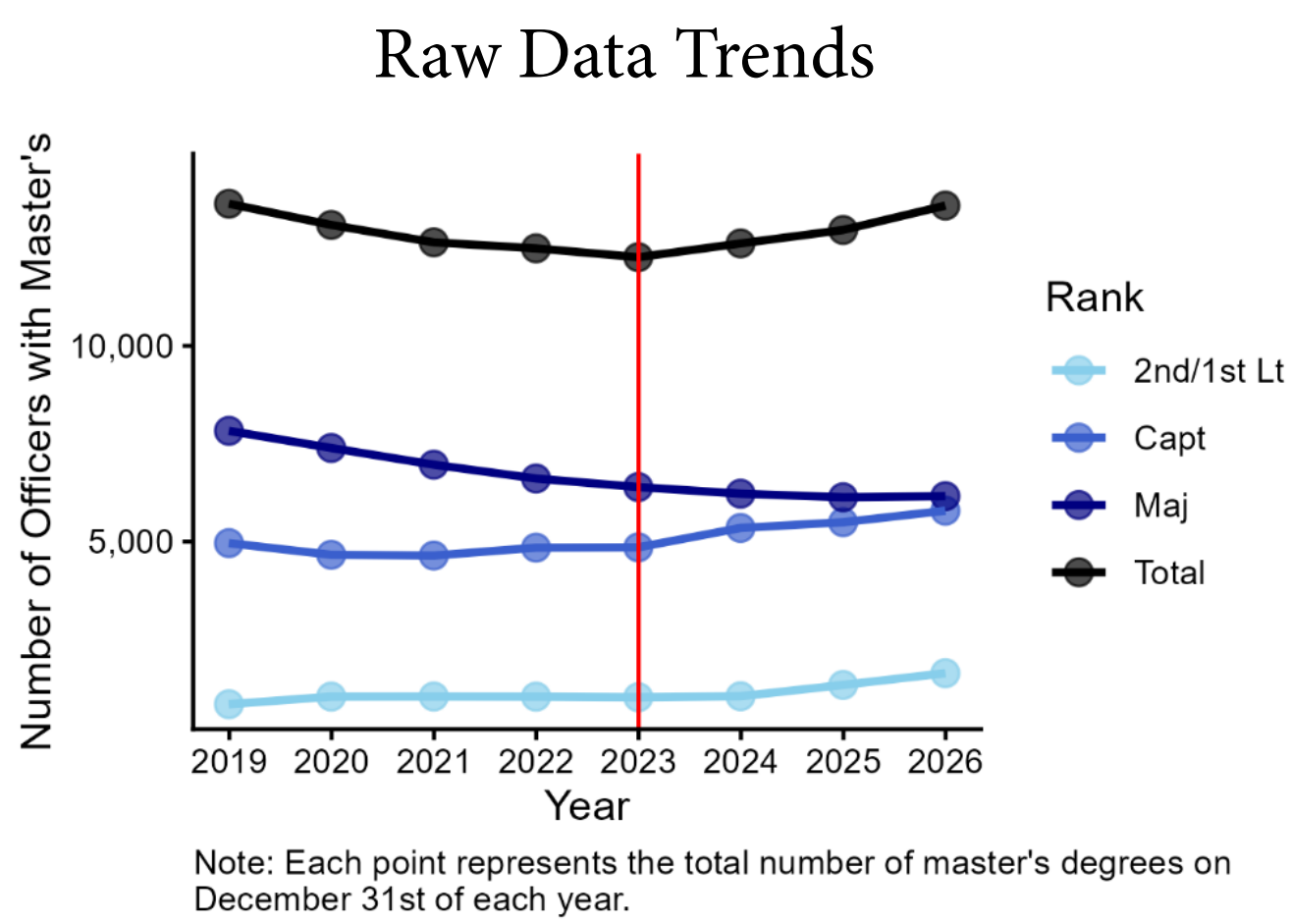


Abstract

In December of 2022, the Air Force announced that it would unmask education information at O-4/O-5 promotion boards. This ended an eight-year period in which this info was masked. This was done to create an officer corps prepared for great power competition. I examine the effectiveness of this policy using Air Force personnel data from 2018 to 2025 of individual officers between second lieutenant and major. I develop an ordinary least squares and linear probability model to examine the correlation between the 2022 unmasking policy and three degree seeking behaviors for officers. Specifically, I examine the effect the policy had on seeking a master’s degree and, conditional on earning a degree, the type of degree earned and the quality of the institution where it was earned. I find that while the policy may not have been effective at getting more officers to earn a master’s degree, it did push those who did seek them to get better quality education that is more in line with the Air Force strategy for great power competition.

Methods



Balance Table of Education Achievement for Captains and Majors

Variable	Before Policy Effective	After Policy Effective	Difference	P-value
Male	0.802 (0.398)	0.754 (0.431)	-0.049	<0.001***
White	0.776 (0.417)	0.731 (0.444)	-0.045	<0.001***
Hispanic	0.089 (0.285)	0.118 (0.323)	0.029	<0.001***
Master's	0.721 (0.449)	0.681 (0.466)	-0.040	<0.001***
Top 50 Fields of Study	0.625 (0.484)	0.646 (0.478)	0.021	0.005**
STEM Degree	0.194 (0.395)	0.201 (0.401)	0.008	0.221
Business Degree	0.201 (0.401)	0.200 (0.400)	-0.001	0.846
Military Studies	0.115 (0.320)	0.144 (0.351)	0.029	<0.001***
Other Top 50 Degree	0.114 (0.318)	0.100 (0.301)	-0.014	0.003**
N (Observations)	18877	5219		

Note: Sample compares all education achievements for Captains and Majors before and after the policy. The sample excludes achievements earned in the year 2020.

- Created cross-sectional data of all second lieutenants through majors from 2018-2025 from HAF/A1XD
- Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Linear Probability Model (LPM)
- Measured policy effect on
 - Earning a master’s degree
 - Earning a degree in the top fifty fields of study, conditional on earning a master’s degree
 - earning a degree from a for-profit school, conditional on earning a master’s degree

$$Masters_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1After2022_i + \beta_2Male_i + \beta_3White_i + \beta_4Hispanic_i + \beta_5Rated_i + \beta_6Corps_i + \beta_7Space_i + \epsilon_i$$

Results & Impact

- I found no correlation between the 2022 masking and earning a master’s degree, and found that, conditional on earing a master’s degree, there was a positive correlation between the policy and earning a degree from the top fifty fields of study, and a negative correlation between the policy and earning a degree from a for-profit institution
- the policy may not have been effective at getting more officers to earn a master’s degree, it did push those who did seek them to get better quality degrees that were more in line with the Air Force strategy for great power competition

Future Research

- Examine the effect of the fields of study on proton outcomes based on when in the cycle a promotion selectee puts on the next rank
- Examine the effect that masking policies have on the retention of officers with advanced academic degrees
- Examine the effect that masking policies has on TA usage for officers