For my PA 706 Final Project, I analyzed California’s parole release decisions for FY 2018-2019, when 3,188 parole consideration hearings were held.

Independent variables:
1. gender of parole applicant
2. gender of presiding commissioner
3. type of parole hearing

Dependent variables:
1. whether parole was granted or denied
2. when parole was denied, the length of the parole deferral period

I used bivariate frequency and percentage distributions, as well as the chi-square test, to consider 2x3 = 6 hypotheses. Significant results were found for 5 of the 6 hypotheses.

As expected, the parole grant rate was greater:
1. for youthful offenders
2. for female parole applicants
3. with female presiding commissioners

Also as expected, when parole was denied, a minimum deferral was more likely:
1. for female parole applicants
2. with female presiding commissioners

Contrary to expectations, I found that, when parole is denied, youthful offenders were not more likely than their older counterparts to receive a minimum parole deferral period.

The results concerning the impact of the gender of the parole applicant on parole outcome were surprising in light of prior research. The results concerning the impact of the gender of the presiding commissioner represent a fresh contribution to the literature.

If the findings regarding the impact of the gender of the presiding commissioner are confirmed in future studies, the implication for policy is that higher parole grant rates can be achieved by appointing more female commissioners—an outcome that future governors may or may not wish to see realized.