

## **An Intersectional Exploration of Psychological Violence, Threats, and Physical Violence of Mayors in 2021**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, our focus is intersectional exploration of episodes of psychological violence, threats and physical violence experienced by U.S. mayors in 2021 in cities of 10,000 in population and above. Additionally, we concentrate on violence that is specifically gendered and raced. Overall, we find evidence that overlapping identities affect experiences of violence in meaningful ways. In our survey, women of color were the only group to have experienced heightened levels of both gendered and raced violence. Additionally, they reported higher levels of threats than their peers. Women of color and non-Hispanic white women both faced higher rates of sexualized violence than men. Non-Hispanic white women reported higher levels than their counterparts of psychological violence, and violence based on gender and appearance. In all, the only types of violence that women did not experience at significantly higher rates than men were physical violence and being called sexist or racist.

## Introduction

*“Diversity is what happens when you have representation of various groups in one place. Representation is what happens when groups that haven’t previously been included, are included. Intersectionality is what happens when we do everything through the lens of making sure that no one is left behind. More than surface-level inclusion, or merely making sure everyone is represented, intersectionality is the practice of interrogating the power dynamics and rationales of how we can be together.” (Garza, 2020)*

A growing body of comparative and Americanist research in political science has focused on violence against women in politics. Overall, this research indicates that women officeholders and candidates face more harassment, sexism, and violence than men. However, very little research concentrates on intersectional experiences of violence. As Krook and Restrepo Sanin (2016:7) assert, “...intersectionality has not yet been incorporated widely into theorizing about violence against women in politics...”.

Using an original dataset, in this paper, we offer an intersectional exploration of experiences of psychological violence, threats, and physical violence against U.S. mayors in 2021 in cities of 10,000 in population and above. Additionally, we explore specific aspects of violence that are gendered and raced. Overall, we find evidence that overlapping identities affect experiences of violence. In our survey, women of color were the only group to have experienced heightened levels of both gendered and raced violence. Additionally, they reported higher levels of threats than their peers. And women of color and non-Hispanic white women both faced higher rates of sexualized violence than men. Further, non-Hispanic white women reported higher levels than their counterparts of psychological violence, and violence based on gender and appearance. In all, the only types of violence that women did not experience at significantly higher rates than men were physical violence and being called sexist or racist.

In the following sections of the paper, we discuss definitions of violence, political violence, and violence against women and women of color in politics, present findings from the comparative and U.S. literatures on the subject, detail the specific place our research occupies in this growing research domain, define key concepts and expectations, present information about our data instrument and methodology, set forth our findings, and, finally, discuss the implications of the research and its limitations.

## Defining Violence

A substantial comparative politics literature focuses on political violence. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines political violence as “the deliberate use of power and force to achieve political goals and is characterized by both physical and psychological acts aimed at injuring or intimidating populations” (Krug et al., 2002). Scholars of political violence against women build on this concept to explore the experiences of women in mass publics, professional roles, and political roles, such as candidates and officeholders, with focus on psychological and physical violence, as illustrated below.

### **Findings from the Literature**

The literature of psychological and physical violence against women candidates and officeholders is multifocal. Some concentrates on women exclusively, often using the term violence against women in politics (VAWIP) to connote violence used to limit women's political participation (Bardall et al., 2020; IPU 2016, 2018; Krook, 2020). Some research makes comparisons between women and men to examine whether women face more violence than men (Bjørge and Silkoset, 2018; Every-Palmer et al., 2015; James et al., 2016). Other research concentrates on the intention of the violence by perpetrators (Bardall et al., 2020; Håkansson, forthcoming 2022; Piscopo and Bjarnegård, forthcoming 2022) while some explores the extent and content of the violence faced by its targets (Thomas et al., 2019; Herrick et al., 2019; Herrick and Thomas, 2021a; Herrick et al., 2022; Håkansson, 2021).

Comparative research on the experiences of violence against officeholders presents consistent findings of gendered experiences. These studies indicate that sexism, abuse, and violence against women parliamentarians is widespread (Biroli, 2018; Bardall et al., 2020; IPU 2016, 2018; Krook, 2020; Bjørge and Silkoset, 2018; Every-Palmer et al., 2015; James et al., 2016). Moreover, women face more negative experiences of each type, especially sexualized abuse and violence (Bardall, 2018; Bardall et al., 2020; Bjørge and Silkoset, 2018; Krook, 2020). Specific to the United States, the political science literature on the topic centers on officeholders and finds that, among mayors and state senators, psychological and physical violence are common, and that gender differences are apparent (Thomas et al., 2019; Herrick et al., 2019; Herrick and Thomas, 2021a; Herrick et al., 2022). Research investigating gender differences in candidates for state house races in 2020 finds few gender differences, however (Herrick and Thomas, 2021b). This may be because candidates are perceived differently from officeholders or because the exceptional nature of the 2020 election (heightened partisanship and the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic) make that cycle *sui generis*.

This emerging literature, particularly in the U.S., however, is not explicitly intersectional despite the importance of research attention to particularized experiences based on overlapping identities. As Kuperberg (2018:687) notes: "...intersecting axes of oppression remain peripheral to existing understandings of VAWIP [violence against women in politics]."

### **Specific Definitions of Physical and Psychological Violence**

Based on comparative literature and the emerging work on violence against U.S. candidates and officeholders and from Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) research studies (Thomas et al., 2019; Herrick et al., 2019; Herrick and Thomas, 2021a; Herrick et al., 2022; Herrick and Thomas 2021b; IPU 2016, 2018; Holm, 2020), we use the following definitions of psychological and physical violence. Physical violence is action that could harm an individual's body or their property. Psychological violence "inflicts trauma on individuals' mental state or emotional well-being" (Krook, 2020:139). Both types involve what Bjarnegård (2018) refers to as violations of personal integrity. They have also been found to harm politicians' psychological well-being and willingness to serve (see Collignon and Rudig, 2020; Herrick and Franklin, 2019; Erikson et al., 2021).

In our study, we take these conceptualizations further by examining threats separately. This is done for several reasons. First, methodologically, factor analysis indicated that they formed a separate factor. In addition, some variables related to threats differed from those related to

psychological and physical violence. Second, theoretically, threats differ from the other two types of violence. The threats we examined were threats of physical violence, yet they are similar to psychological violence in that their immediate harm is more psychological than physical. Thus, they do not fit well in either the psychological or physical violence categories. Finally, expanding our analysis this way follows the comparative theoretical and empirical literature on obstacles to women's right to full, free, and safe participation in political processes (See Holm, 2020; Bardall, 2018; IPU, 2016, 2018; Krook, 2020).

An additional focus for this research is the gendered or raced nature of violence. Bardall et al., (2020:924) argue there are three ways violence can be gendered: motives (the victim is attacked because of their gender), forms ("by exploiting the gendered roles and norms at work in each context"), and effects (would "the meanings, interpretations, and consequences ... the same if a hegemonic man had been attacked"). By extension, violence can be race-based using the same categorical considerations.

Thus, based on this growing theoretical and empirical literature, our specific conceptualizations are as follows:

- o Psychological violence involves acts likely to harm the psychological well-being of individuals by inducing fear or harm to their sense of self-worth or well-being.
- o Threats are a particular type of violence that often merge psychological and physical violence in that they threaten to but fall short of causing physical harm. Yet, they are likely to cause psychological harm.
- o Physical violence involves activities that directly harm one's physical well-being or property.
- o Gendered violence involves violence that is critical of mayors' sex or gender, or how the mayor relates to issues of gender.
- o Sexualized violence is related to gendered violence but involves violence that sexualizes the mayor by depicting the candidate in a sexual way.
- o Raced-based violence is violence critical of mayors' race or how mayors relate to issues of race.

### **Theory and Expectations**

"The concept of political intersectionality highlights the fact that women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas. The need to split one's political energies between two sometimes opposing political agendas is a dimension of intersectional disempowerment that men of color and white women seldom confront. Indeed, their specific raced and gendered experiences, although intersectional, often define as well as confine the interests of the entire group." (Crenshaw, 1990).

Intersectional theory and empiricism foreground marginalized and overlapping identities that are frequently overlooked when studying particular populations. Although political research rarely focuses on voters or candidates or officeholders as large, homogenous groups, too many studies still concentrate on women or men without investigating within group differences. Although distinctive experiences among women result in some advantages, more often than not,

disadvantages accompany those who were and are historically excluded or marginalized in politics (Crenshaw, 1990; McCall, 2005; Hancock, 2007, 2016; Bedolla, 2007; Junn and Brown, 2008; Smooth, 2011, 2013; Hardy-Fanta et al., 2016; Gershon et al., 2019; Swain and Lien, 2017; Reingold et al., 2020). It is those disadvantages that connect intersectionality theory to research on psychological violence, physical violence, and threats among officeholders. Prior research, cited above, shows women and men officeholders have different experiences of violence. The focus here, then, is how gender and race interact to create disparate experiences for women of color, men of color, non-Hispanic white women, and non-Hispanic white men mayors. In short, just as women generally experience more violence because they disrupt the status quo of men's domination of political power (Herrick et al., 2019), women of color are likely to experience more violence because they disrupt the status quo of non-Hispanic white male domination of political power. Regardless of whether the effect of disrupting the gendered and race-based status quo is additive or exponential, we expect women of color to experience more of these types of behaviors than their colleagues.

Based on this body of work, we expect that women of color mayors will have reported the highest rates of most types of violence (psychological violence, physical violence, threats, race-based violence - except being called a racist -- gender-specific violence - except being called a sexist, -- and sexualized violence). We also expect that non-Hispanic white male mayors will have experienced the least of most types of violence except having been called sexist and racist. Non-Hispanic white women are expected to follow women of color in their levels of reported psychological violence, physical violence, threats, gendered violence, and sexualized violence, and non-Hispanic white men in their levels of having been called sexist or racist. Finally, men of color are likely to follow women of color in their levels of violence related to race.

If some or all of these expectations withstand analysis, questions of race and gender-based differential costs of holding office arise. These include the possibility of limiting the pool of diverse candidates from running for office and/or increase the pool of current officeholders who shorten their service. If so, the effects on democratic representation and the benefits available from representational diversity will be forfeited (see Dovi, 2002; Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1995; Pitkin, 1967; Young, 2000).

### **Research Design**

To test our expectations, in the fall of 2021, we conducted a survey of all mayors of cities with populations of 10,000 and above. The survey was mixed mode with an internet and mail version (Dillman, 2007). Contacts with mayors included: (1) an emailed pre-letter; (2) a letter with the survey; (3) a postcard reminder; (4) another letter with the survey; and (5) an email with a link to the survey. The first contact was made September 27, 2021, and the last November 29, 2021. Of the 3,151 mayors contacted, 971 responded for a 30.8% response rate. The rate is larger than those of many recent studies of officeholders (Hanania 2017; Nownes and Freeman 2019; Purtle et al. 2019; Thomas et al., 2019; Herrick, et al., 2022; Herrick and Thomas, 2021a).

Nevertheless, we checked for the representativeness of the respondents on several traits of the full population.<sup>1</sup> Although many of correlations between responding and these variables were

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<sup>1</sup> To decrease bias in responses, we asked respondents about specific incidences of violence. We also indicated that we wanted mayors to respond regardless of whether or not they had had any of these experiences. That mayors of

statistically significant, they were substantively small. The correlations were as follows: population  $r = -.05$  ( $p = .01$ ); sex  $r = .03$  ( $p = .12$ ); Midwest  $r = .09$  ( $p = .00$ ); South  $r = -.04$  ( $p = .02$ ); Northeast  $r = -.05$  ( $p = .01$ ); and West  $r = .00$  ( $p = .97$ ).

### Dependent Variables:

To measure violence against mayors, we start with dependent variables pertaining to psychological violence, threats, and physical violence in terms of both levels of violence and content of violence as follows:

*Levels of violence:* To measure levels of violence against mayors, respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they experienced thirteen different behaviors: harassment, disrespectful content about themselves on social media, disrespectful content about them in traditional media, was disrespected at a public meeting, was disrespected at a private meeting with a constituent, received threat(s) of death, beating, abduction or similar actions, received threat(s) of rape or other sexual assault, someone in their family received threat(s) of beating, abduction or similar act, someone in their family received threat(s) of rape or other sexual assault, someone tried to physically harm them, their property was harmed, they were physically harmed, and they were harmed enough to require medical care. Specifically, mayors were asked to indicate if they experienced each of these: never, less than monthly, 1-2 times a month, 3-4 times a month or more than 4 times a month.

From the responses, we created three dependent variables:

- o *Psychological violence:* The first five items on the list above were added together (harassment, disrespectful content about themselves on social media, disrespectful content about them in traditional media, being disrespected at a public meeting, being disrespected at a private meeting with a constituent). The index range was 0-20 with a mean of 5.29 and a standard deviation of 3.69. The Alpha was .80.
- o *Threats:* To measure the level of threat mayors faced, we added four items together from the list above (received threat(s) of beating, abduction, or similar act, of rape or other sexual assault, someone in their family received threat(s) of beating, abduction or similar act, and someone in their family received threat(s) of rape or other sexual assault). The range was 0-12 with a mean of .36, a standard deviation of .80, and an Alpha of .52.<sup>2</sup>
- o *Physical Violence:* To measure levels of physical violence, we added the last four items from the list above (someone tried to physically harm mayors, their property was harmed, they were physically harmed, and they were harmed enough to require medical care). The resultant range was 0-4 with a mean of .22, a standard deviation of .58, and an Alpha of .47.<sup>3</sup>

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large cities were less likely to have responded, yet experienced the highest rates of violence, offers some evidence that levels of violence experienced by mayors did not bias the results.

<sup>2</sup> Although this Alpha is somewhat low, we decided to include this measure. Factor analysis indicated that threats differed from the other indicators of psychological violence. The factor analysis indicated that threats against the mayor and threats against the mayor's family created two separate factors. However, 93% of the mayors scored a 0 on the threats against family index. The results for the combined threat scale are similar to the scale of threats against mayors.

<sup>3</sup> Since the data were skewed toward 0 and the Alpha was low, we dichotomized the variable. With the variable dichotomized, the same variables had significant relationships with physical violence.

*Content of violence:* We asked respondents to indicate how frequently the actions noted earlier took specific forms as explicated below. To measure sexualized violence, we asked respondents if the violence:

- o Depicted them in a sexual way
- o Made inappropriate sexual comments about them or advances toward mayors
- o Were touched inappropriately in a sexual way.

The sexual violence variable ranged from 0-10, with a mean of .35, a standard deviation of 1.09, and an Alpha of .73.

To measure non-sexual gendered content, we use three separate questions:

- o Mentioned appearance of mayors (range was 1-5; mean = 1.48; sd = .85).
- o Directly criticized mayor because of their sex or gender (range was 1-5; mean = 1.29; sd = .73).
- o Were called a sexist (range = 1-5; mean = 1.17; sd = .52).

To measure race-based content, we used two separate questions:

- o Directly criticized mayor due to their race (range = 1-5; mean = 1.28; sd = .60)
- o Mayor was called a racist (range = 1-5; mean = 1.48; sd = .84).

Since only mayors who experienced violence could have “violence content”, we limited the analyses concerning content to mayors who experienced it.

**Independent Variables:** The key independent variables in our models are those addressing race and/or gender. To measure these variables, we asked respondents: “What is your gender?” and “What is your race? Please list all that apply and indicate if you are Hispanic/Latinx.”<sup>4</sup> We then classified mayors as either a non-Hispanic white (no other race) man, a non-Hispanic white (no other race) woman, a woman of color, or a man of color. There were 634 non-Hispanic white men (65.3%), 201 non-Hispanic white women (20.7), 95 men of color (10.3%), and 35 women of color (3.8%). These numbers do not allow us to examine differences among individual minority groups, e.g. to compare African American women to Latinas. Nor can we ascertain how well these percentages resemble the population of mayors in cities over 10,000 as this type of information is unavailable.

**Control variables:** To help eliminate the possibility of spurious relationships and alternative explanations of our dependent variable findings, we controlled for several factors. First, we controlled for three personal traits of mayors (age, party identification and ideology)<sup>5</sup>. Second,

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<sup>4</sup> For mayors who did not answer the race and sex questions, we searched city webpages and other internet sites, and based codes on photos and names.

<sup>5</sup> Age was measured by taking the year each mayor was born - as reported on the survey (if missing, we used mean substitution) and subtracting it from 2021. Party identification came from the following question in the survey: “What is your party identification? If you hold a nonpartisan office, indicate the party you are more likely to identify with. Check the appropriate box. Democrat, Independent, Republican or Other.” Other was coded as nonpartisan. Ideology was based on the following question: “When it comes to politics, how do you usually think of yourself? Check the appropriate box. Very Conservative, Conservative, Moderate, Liberal or Very Liberal.” This variable was recoded to measure ideologies at either end of the scale by coding very liberal and very conservative as 1 and all others as 0. We also tried controlling for previous political experience, but it was not significantly related to levels of violence.

we controlled for several city traits (strong mayor systems, party divisions, whether politicians in the city get along, city population size, median age, median household income, and racial diversity).<sup>6</sup> Third, we controlled for political culture using Elazar's (1966) classifications: moralistic (reference group), traditionalistic and individualistic. Finally, to account for the effects of both politically divisive times and the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, we used measures of former-President Trump's rhetoric, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement activities, and COVID-19. We used ACLED data to determine whether each city had protests related to BLM or COVID-19.<sup>7</sup> To control for the effects of President Trump's rhetoric, we used the percent of vote Trump received in 2016.<sup>8</sup>

Given possible bias of differential response rates by state, we used mixed effect models. Depending on the range of the dependent variable, we used regression, ordered logit, and logit.<sup>9</sup>

## Findings

*General patterns:* Our data reveal that mayors reported extensive exposure to violence in 2021. Among all mayors, 94.5 percent faced psychological violence, 24.2 percent reported threats, and 15.8 percent suffered physical violence. Among women mayors, 95.8 experienced psychological violence, 33.1 percent received threats, and 19.1 percent reported physical violence. In comparison, men mayors reported slightly less violence than women: 94.2 percent reported psychological violence, 21.4 faced threats, and 14.7 percent reported physical violence. Among non-Hispanic white mayors, 94.3 percent experienced psychological violence, 23.0 percent received threats, and 15.1 percent reported physical violence. Among mayors of color, 96.2 percent experienced psychological violence, 32.3 percent received threats, and 20.8 percent experienced physical violence. The discussion below focuses on intersectional experiences of violence among women and men of color and non-Hispanic white women and men mayors.

*Levels of violence:* The intersectional expectations posited at the start of this paper are partially confirmed by our findings for level and content of violence as follows. First, for psychological

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We also tried controlling for previous political experience, but that variable was not significantly related to levels of violence.

<sup>6</sup> Measures of strong mayor systems, party divisions, and whether politicians get along came from the survey ("How would you describe your city's politics? Check all that apply." "The people are pretty evenly divided in their partisanship"; "The politicians work well together even if they are of different parties"; and "The city has a "strong mayor" (veto power and/or makes appointments without approval from council/board).") Median age, median household income, and racial diversity were based on census data as reported on [datausa.io](https://datausa.io). Racial diversity was coded 1 if the population of the city is less than 50% of any of the following (white, black, Hispanic, or Asian). Population data came from [census.gov/quickfacts](https://census.gov/quickfacts). We used the log of the population.

<sup>7</sup> We used keyword search to identify these events. The words were: Black Lives Matter, COVID-19, masks, and vaccines. These data came from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED) found at this URL: <https://acleddata.com/#/dashboard>. We also developed other measures for the effects of BLM. The first was the number of non-Hispanic white people killed by police who were unarmed (*Washington Post* dataset at <https://github.com/washingtonpost/data-police-shootings>). The second measure was state laws pertaining to COVID-19 at <https://wallethub.com/edu/most-aggressive-states-against-coronavirus/72307>). These final two measures were not used since they did not have statistically significant relationships with violence against mayors.

<sup>8</sup> These data are the percentage vote in the county and come from [datausa.io](https://datausa.io). We also created a variable for whether a city had protests related to then-President Trump but chose not to include it in the model because its association with violence was quite weak.

<sup>9</sup> We checked for multicollinearity, but it was not an issue with the findings.

violence, non-Hispanic white women reported the highest levels of violence. However, there were no statistically significant differences between men and women of color and non-Hispanic white men. On the other hand, women of color reported the highest rates of threats followed closely by non-Hispanic white women. And men of color and white non-Hispanic men experienced similar levels of threats to each other. Finally, our model showed similar rates of physical violence across all four groups of mayors.

Table 1 about here

To explore possible explanations for the results pertaining to women and men of color in comparison to white non-Hispanic women and men, we considered the effects of mayors of color who represent majority-minority cities. We found that the average woman of color served a city that is 39.4% white compared to 40.7% for men of color, 68.1% for non-Hispanic white women, and 72.4% for non-Hispanic white men. We do not have enough cases to perform a thorough analysis of the relationship between percentage of white residents and rates of violence for mayors of color by gender. However, the correlations between percentage of cities that are white, and the levels of violence were not statistically significant for either women of color or men of color, except that, the larger the white population, the more threats men of color received ( $r = .18$ ,  $p = .09$ ). In contrast, for non-Hispanic white women and men mayors, the larger the percentage of white residents, the less physical violence they experienced (for women, the  $r = .16$ ;  $p = .02$ ; for men the  $r = -.07$ ,  $p = .07$ ). More research is clearly needed to fully understand the effects of city racial composition on intersectional variation in violence against mayors.

Finally, our model offers some insight into other factors that may explain differential experiences of levels of violence. As has been the case in other U.S. and comparative research on violence against women officeholders and candidates, age and party of mayors was associated with levels of violence. All else, equal, younger mayors and Democrats experienced more violence than older mayors and Republican mayors (Thomas et al, 2019; Herrick et al, 2019). Second, city variables affected levels of violence. Consistent with previous research on U.S. officeholders, mayors in strong mayoral systems reported more violence than their counterparts (Thomas et al, 2019; Herrick et al, 2019). The implication is that the more powerful a mayor, the more constituents hold them accountable for positions, policy, and outcomes. Additionally, population size, partisan divisions, how well politicians get along, and community wealth were statistically significantly related to levels of violence against mayors. Mayors of cities that are larger, more evenly divided, where the politicians do not get along well, and where there are lesser levels of wealth reported higher rates of violence than their counterparts. Mayors in cities with BLM protests experienced more threats than others, and those with COVID-19 protests reported more physical violence.

*Content of violence:* We find more support for our expectations concerning the content of violence. First, women of color mayors reported the highest levels of violence critical of their race followed by men of color mayors. Both groups experienced significantly higher rates than non-Hispanic white men. Further, women of color mayors and white non-Hispanic women reported statistically significant high levels of sexualized violence and episodes that were critical of their sex. Neither was true for men mayors of color. Non-Hispanic white women comprised the only group that differed from non-Hispanic white men with respect to criticism for their

appearance. Non-Hispanic white men reported the highest levels of any group measured for episodes in which mayors were called sexists.

Table 2 about here

Our results suggest that some contextual factors were related to the content of violence. As has been true in this study and previous studies of violence against US officeholders, younger mayors were more likely to have reported raced and gendered violence than their colleagues. Mayors in strong mayoral systems were more likely to be called sexist, to have their race criticized, and to be criticized for their appearance. With respect to political culture, mayors in moralistic cultures reported the lowest rates of sexualized violence whereas those in traditionalistic cultures were the least likely to be called sexist. Mayors in larger and less wealthy cities reported more raced and gendered violence. In cities in which leaders were reported to get along, mayors reported less sexualized violence although they were more likely to be called sexist. Finally, support for former-President Trump was associated with lower levels of mayors being called racist.

### **Discussion: Intersectional Patterns**

In this paper, our focus has been an intersectional exploration of episodes of psychological violence, threats, and physical violence experienced by U.S. mayors in 2021 in cities of 10,000 in population and above. Additionally, we focus on violence that is gendered and raced. Overall, although not all expectations based on prior research and intersectional theory were confirmed, we find much evidence that overlapping identities affect experiences of violence. In our survey, women of color were the only group to have experienced heightened levels of both gendered and raced violence. Additionally, they reported higher levels of threats than their peers. And women of color and non-Hispanic white women both faced higher rates of sexualized violence than men. Further, non-Hispanic white women were distinctive in that they reported higher levels than their counterparts of psychological violence, and violence based on gender and appearance. In all, the only types of violence that women did not experience at significantly higher rates than men were physical violence and being called sexist or racist. With respect to being called sexist non-Hispanic white men stand out for the levels of violence they reported.

### **Strengths and Limitations of Our Research**

In addition to illuminating the results of this study of U.S. mayors, it is important to note limitations. A first set of limitations pertains to response rates and patterns. Although the response rate to our survey was quite a bit higher than other recent surveys of U.S. officeholders, that does not guarantee representativeness, especially for within group variations among mayors. This is a particular concern as minority women may be especially likely to encounter violence (IPU, 2016; Kuperberg 2018). Second, it is possible that self-selection bias could have skewed the results. More mayors or groups of mayors who experienced violence than did not may have responded—or the reverse. These are common issues with survey research that future researchers might mitigate by exploring the same questions with complementary methodologies. Another set of limitations pertains to the scope of violence toward officeholders and their gendered/raced nature. We did not examine violence against officeholders from colleagues—other officeholders -- staff, the media, or lobbyists—which would address theories of gendered or raced-based institutional challenges. We did not explore issues of economic

violence or semiotic/symbolic violence. Finally, because we surveyed officeholders, we know little about the perpetrators of violence. In all, this research is an important step toward increasing empirical evidence of intersectional experiences of psychological and physical violence among mayors. More work is needed to deepen our knowledge of differences in types, amounts, and correlates of these behaviors.

### **Conclusion**

The research study makes clear that intersectional research on psychological violence, threats, and physical violence among mayors with a focus on gender and raced-based measures is important. Overlapping identities, especially officeholders from marginalized groups, affect how mayors experience their public, and professional worlds. The implications of these findings are serious. When women of color are attacked because of their race, and women face sexualized violence and harassment, they may be discouraged from running for or staying in office. Even if they decide to enter politics or stay in politics, the personal costs of their service are higher than for other groups of mayors. Additionally, when mayors are attacked for being female or of a minority race/ethnicity or both, voters' perceptions of their value as officeholders may decline and, thereby, making it more difficult for women of color and non-Hispanic white women to win elective office. Further, it is only when democracies whose representatives "Look like America" can they be seen as fully legitimate. And only when democracies are diverse can they provide a full array of symbolic, process, and policy benefits (see Dovi, 2002; Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1995; Pitkin, 1967; Young, 2000).

Finally, as discussed above, this research is only the first step necessary to understand the scope and depth of experiences of mayors. Our survey data are not sufficient to distinguish among groups of women and men mayors of color. Nor are they sufficient to understand the effects that other overlapping identities such as class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and levels of disability. We hope this study opens the door to new, methodologically diverse research into the full range of intersectional complexity of those who represent us at each level of government.

**Table 1: Intersectional Differences in Levels of Violence**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Psychological violence</b>	<b>Threats</b>	<b>Physical violence</b>
<b>White women</b>	1.08 (.27)***	.663(.20)***	.24 (.22)
<b>Women of color</b>	-.18 (.57)	.82 (.41)**	.03 (.48)
<b>Men of color</b>	.21 (.37)	.40 (.27)	.21 (.31)
<b>Age</b>	-.08 (.01)***	-.05 (.01)***	-.02 (.01)**
<b>Democrat</b>	.98 (.26)***	.35 (.20)*	.25 (.23)
<b>Nonpartisan/ others Independents/</b>	.48 (.28)*	.19 (.23)	-.08 (.28)
<b>Extreme ideology</b>	.01 (.45)	-.58 (.39)	-.01 (.38)
<b>Evenly divided city</b>	.63 (.22)***	.30 (.16)*	-.07 (.20)
<b>Politicians work well together in city</b>	-1.07 (.22)***	-.20 (.17)	-.68 (.19)***
<b>Strong mayor system</b>	1.61 (.28)***	.40 (.20)**	.61 (.22)***
<b>Population (logged)</b>	.80 (.15)***	.30 (.11)***	.06 (.13)
<b>Median age of city</b>	.02 (.02)	.01 (.01)	.00 (.02)
<b>Median income of city</b>	-.01 (.00)**	-.00 (.00)	-.01 (.00)**
<b>Racial diversity of city</b>	.00 (.34)	-.156 (.27)	.52 (.28)*
<b>Traditional political culture</b>	-.16 (.28)	-.22 (.23)	-.15 (.26)
<b>Individualistic political culture</b>	.18 (.26)	-.13 (.23)	.16 (.23)
<b>Trump vote</b>	.00 (.01)	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
<b>ACLEDBLM</b>	.61 (.47)	.88 (.30)***	.23 (.36)
<b>ACLEDCOVID</b>	.11 (.32)	.25 (.23)	.53(.26)**
<b>Constant/cut 1</b>	1.03 (2.02)	2.44 (1.55)	.32 (1.74)
<b>Cut 2</b>		3.92 (1.55)	1.87 (1.75)
<b>Cut 3</b>		5.6.0 (1.57)	3.13 (1.76)
<b>Wald chi 2</b>	321.44***	123.77***	69.00***
<b>Var(cons)</b>	.00 (.00)	.05 (.07)	.00 (.00)
<b>Var(Residual)</b>	10.23 (.46)		
<b>N</b>	970	970	970

\* < .10 \*\* < .05 \*\*\* < .01

Numbers in parenthesis are standard errors.

**Table 2: Intersectional Differences in Content of Violence**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Race criticized</b>	<b>Called racist</b>
<b>White women</b>	.27 (.26)	.30 (.20)
<b>Women of color</b>	1.69 (.41)***	-.11 (.46)
<b>Men of color</b>	1.56 (.28)***	-.12 (.29)
<b>Age</b>	-.02 (.01)*	-.03 (.01)***
<b>Democrat</b>	.23 (.265)	-.22 (.21)
<b>Extreme Ideology</b>	-.18 (.47)	.30 (.33)
<b>Nonpartisan/ others/ independents</b>	.35 (.28)	.09 (.23)
<b>Evenly divided city</b>	.29 (.21)	.03 (.17)
<b>Politicians work well together in city</b>	-.181 (.21)	-.18 (.17)
<b>Strong mayor system</b>	.50 (.24)**	.24 (.20)
<b>Population (logged)</b>	.20 (.13)	.46 (.12)***
<b>Median age of city</b>	.00 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
<b>Median income of city</b>	-.01 (.00)*	-.01 (.00)**
<b>Racial diversity of city</b>	.37 (.27)	.20 (.24)
<b>Traditional political culture</b>	.24 (.26)	.10 (.24)
<b>Individualistic political culture</b>	-.30 (.27)	.15 (.23)
<b>Trump vote</b>	-.01 (.01)	-.02 (.01)***
<b>ACLEDBLM</b>	.07 (.36)	.36 (.30)
<b>ACLEDCOVID</b>	.23 (.28)	.26 (.23)
<b>Constant/cut 1</b>	2.46 (1.82)	1.54 (1.52)
<b>Cut 2</b>	3.82 (1.83)	3.12 (1.54)
<b>Cut 3</b>	5.13 (1.84)	4.30 (1.54)
<b>Wald chi 2</b>	99.71***	95.86***
<b>Var(cons)</b>	.00 (.00)	.05 (.07)
<b>N</b>	783	782

Table 2 continued

Variable	Gender criticized	Called sexist	Sexualized violence	Mentioned appearance
White women	2.11 (.24)***	-.54 (.31)*	2.38 (.29)***	1.02 (.19)***
Women of color	1.71 (.47)***	-1.59 (1.07)	2.31 (.52)***	.07 (.47)
Men of color	-.24 (.45)	-.50 (.47)	.48 (.41)	-.10 (.31)
Age	-.05 (.01)***	-.03 (.01)***	-.07(.01)***	-.05 (.01)***
Democrat	.34 (.28)	.60 (.30)**	.36 (.31)	.41 (.21)**
Extreme Ideology	.28 (.44)	.58 (.45)	-.46 (.56)	-.06 (.38)
Nonpartisan/others/independents	.42 (.30)	.29 (.34)	.37 (.35)	.35 (.24)
Evenly divided city	.32 (.22)	.25 (.24)	-.17 (.25)	-.00 (.17)
Politicians work well together in city	-.20 (.22)	-.44 (.24)*	-.43 (.24)*	-.11 (.17)
Strong mayor system	.36 (.25)	.54 (.27)**	.44 (.29)	.59 (.20)***
Population (logged)	.47 (.15)***	.53 (.17)***	.35 (.16)**	.65 (.12)***
Median age of city	-.03 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.01 (.01)
Median income of city	-.00 (.00)	.00 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.00)***
Racial diversity of city	-.73 (.36)**	-.28 (.40)	.20 (.34)	-.25 (.26)
Traditional political culture	-.27 (.28)	-.93 (.36)**	.75 (.40)**	-.17 (.23)
Individualistic political culture	-.09 (.27)	.04 (.28)	.69 (.41)*	.11 (.21)
Trump vote	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	-.00 (.01)
ACLEED -BLM	.43 (.35)	-.13 (.44)	-.08 (.42)	.05 (.31)
ACLEED - COVID	.31 (.28)	.28 (.32)	.34 (.33)	.08 (.24)
Constant/cut 1	3.24 (1.97)	6.79 (2.32)	3.44 (2.22)	4.72 (1.59)
Cut 2	4.69 (1.98)	8.48 (2.33)	4.26 (2.23)	6.47 (1.60)
Cut 3	6.04 (2.00)	9.26 (2.34)	5.13 (2.23)	7.63 (1.61)
Wald chi 2	155.82***	54.90***	119.66***	150.02***
Var(const)	.01 (.10)	.00 (.00)	.38 (.25)	.00 (.00)
N	783	779	775	782

\* < .10 \*\* < .05 \*\*\* < .01

Numbers in parenthesis are standard errors.

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