

## The Role of Misogyny in the 2016 Presidential Election

By Sarah Beech

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the Washington Post released a scandalous video to the public, known as the *Access Hollywood Tapes*. In these tapes, the lewd comments of the former Republican presidential nominee, Donald J. Trump, were exposed to the world. In his three-minute-long recording, Trump admitted to tv host Billy Bush that he could make sexual advancements on women because of his status as a “star.” In the tape Trump bragged, “When you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything,” including grabbing women inappropriately without their consent.<sup>1</sup> The tapes raised the perplexing issue of whether or not the widely supported GOP nominee was a sexual predator.

Trump’s remarks were described as “vulgar, egregious & impossible to justify,” from members of his own party (qtd. from Marco Rubio), and even his own wife.<sup>2</sup> The tape’s release subsequently unleashed a wave of sexual assault allegations towards Trump. He has now been accused of sexual assault by 15 women.<sup>3</sup> The mounting number of complaints against the Republican candidate begs the question: Why did Trump win? The following paper explores the role that gender and voter misogyny play in influencing support for Donald J. Trump in the 2016 presidential election.

Previous research has examined the presence of misogyny in the 2016 election.

Moreover, Harp (2018) found evidence of general cultural misogyny in the 2016 election. Her

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<sup>1</sup> “Transcript: Donald Trump’s Taped Comments About Women.” *New York Times*. Accessed November 17, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/08/us/donald-trump-tape-transcript.html>

<sup>2</sup> Wellford, Rachel. “Here’s the list of GOP responses to Trump’s vulgar comments about groping women.” *Public Broadcasting Service*. Accessed November 17, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/headline-republicans-act-trump-comments-objectifying-women>

<sup>3</sup> Crockett, Emily. “Why misogyny won.” *Vox*. Accessed December 2, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/identities/2016/11/15/13571478/trump-president-sexual-assault-sexism-misogyny-won>

analysis extended to the Hollywood Access scandal as well as BernieBros, a particularly vocal group of Bernie Sanders supporters. However, Harp primarily analyzed the ways misogyny was present in media coverage during the 2016 presidential campaign. In contrast, the current study examines how voter misogyny, as well as gender, affects the vote outcome. I attempt to understand why voters chose to support Trump, who is an openly misogynistic candidate. I attempted to explain support for Trump by examining the variables of gender and alignment with misogynist beliefs.

Attitudes by voters and politicians alike exhibited misogynistic qualities during the 2016 presidential campaign. After the onset of the *Holley Access* tape, Trump supporters have been spotted wearing buttons with “Life’s a bitch, don’t vote for one” printed across them. Some supporters even flashed signs that read “Don’t be a pussy, vote for Trump.”<sup>4</sup> The outbreak of misogynistic campaigning by Trump’s supporters leads me to inquire if there is a relationship between voter misogyny and vote preference. The following study adds to the existing body of knowledge by using misogyny as an independent variable to explore its potential effect on presidential vote outcome.

### **Misogyny: The Main Variable of Interest**

Misogyny is defined by the New Oxford American Dictionary as “the dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women.”<sup>5</sup> Misogyny can manifest in many forms, including but not limited to beliefs of male privilege, the belittling of women, and sexual objectification. Donald Trump’s profane comments, as witnessed on the leaked tapes, have led many people to conclude that he is a misogynistic person. Trump used his status as a “star” to

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<sup>4</sup> Landsbaum, Clarie. “The Most Misogynistic Gear Spotted at Trump Rallies.” *The Cut*. Accessed on November 29, 2019. <https://www.thecut.com/2016/10/the-most-misogynistic-things-people-wore-to-trump-rallies.html>

<sup>5</sup> *New Oxford American Dictionary*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press. 2010.

warrant sexual misconduct. His behavior satisfies the male privilege and objectification criteria from the misogyny definition. Additionally, his remarks in the *Hollywood Access tapes* are degrading towards women; they highlight his belief that men have unrestrained access to women's bodies. Such characteristics are notably consistent with the actions and beliefs of someone who is misogynistic. Due to Trump's consistent alignment with misogynistic attitude and behavior, it is possible that those who vote for him share the same beliefs and values. Such an idea explains why Trump won an election in the midst of a scandal that reflected horribly on his character. If American voters are also misogynistic, they may be more likely to sympathize with Trump and cast the ballot in his favor.

#### **Research Inquiry and Hypothesis:**

The following research attempts to analyze how misogyny relates to electoral support for Donald J. Trump. The dependent measure is the misogyny scale used in the ANES 2016 dataset. Specifically, the following research examines whether those who score high on the misogyny scale are more likely to vote for Trump (as opposed to Hillary R. Clinton) in the 2016 presidential election.

In my primary hypothesis, I believe that survey respondents who have high scores on the misogyny scale will be more likely to vote for Trump than those who have low scores on the misogyny scale. This hypothesis is based on the theory that, in the wake of scandals like the *Access Hollywood tapes*, individuals who are misogynistic are more likely to vote for candidates that exhibit the same misogynistic qualities. Trump's remarks likely reinforced the attitudes of people who share similar "sexist" or even "patriarchal" tendencies. Following this logic, I predict that individuals who are not misogynistic are more likely to vote for Hillary Clinton.

The following study also examines the role of gender on vote choice in the 2016 presidential election. Such an analysis is warranted since gender has been known to mediate party differences in vote outcomes and other political behavior. Research by Barnes and Cassese (2016) reveals that gender gaps exist within political parties for public policy preferences.<sup>6</sup> They found that gender differences are larger in the Republican Party than in the Democratic Party. Within the Republican party, gender differences in political behavior are attributed to differences in attitudes towards gender-based inequality. Thus, studying the effects of gender on vote choice for an openly misogynistic candidate is necessary to address why Trump received such immense support. Moreover, this study adds to past literature by analyzing the variable of gender in a new way; my study inquires how a variable like gender effects voting preferences in an election filled with sexist and highly demeaning remarks against women.

**Secondary hypothesis:**

- Males will be more likely to vote for Donald Trump than Females in the 2016 presidential election (and Females will be more likely to vote for Hillary than males).

The aforementioned theories are important to study since previous research fails to address how a specific character attribute like misogyny is predictive of vote choice. Additionally, a majority of the research and public opinion polling that has been conducted since the *Access Hollywood tapes* incident has fixated on Republican attitudes towards Trump. The following study looks at overall support for Trump from a survey sample gathered by the ANES. Departing from previous literature, belief systems and their potential effect on the vote are

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<sup>6</sup> Barnes, Tiffany D., and Erin C. Cassese. "American Party Women: A Look at the Gender Gap within Parties." *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 70, no. 1, Mar. 2017, pp. 127–141, doi:10.1177/1065912916675738.

analyzed. My study addresses how the public as a whole chooses to support, or to not support Donald Trump, based on gender and attitudinal factors.

### **The Study: Methodology**

All data in the study was used from the American National Election Study (ANES) 2016 dataset. The researchers responsible for the ANES (2016) contained a surveyed a sample of 4,271 respondents in the pre-election survey and 3,649 in the post-election survey. The respondents were over the age of 18, and came from all 50 states. These respondents were asked a series of questions about their values, belief systems, public policy preferences, and voting behavior in the 2016 General Election. Additionally, the survey responses came from online and in-person surveys, overseen by ANES staff.<sup>7</sup>

The following study focused on two main variables: 1) Misogyny and 2) support for Donald J. Trump. Misogyny, the independent variable, was operationalized by looking at the misogyny scores found on the scale from the ANES 2016 dataset. Support for Trump, the dependent variable, was operationalized by looking at vote choice in the 2016 general election.

The survey asked individuals if they voted for Trump or Clinton, and their answers were coded in the following manner, based on the following question: Did the surveyor vote for Trump? A score of 0 indicated “No,” meaning the surveyor voted for Clinton. A score of 100 indicated “Yes,” meaning the surveyor voted for Trump. In order to code the independent variable, misogyny, the I collapsed the misogyny variable’s levels from four into two, in order to create a 2x2 cross-tabulation table. I coded “1” to mean “Lo” on the misogyny scale. The “Lo” variable consisted of the surveyors who rated “low” and “midlow” on the misogyny scale. I

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew DeBell, Michelle Amsbary, Vanessa Meldener, Shelley Brock, and Natalya Maisel. “Methodology Report for the ANES 2016 Time Series Study,” Palo Alto, CA, and Ann Arbor, MI: Stanford University and the University of Michigan, 2018. Accessed on November 17, 2019. [https://electionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/anes\\_timeseries\\_2016\\_methodology\\_report.pdf](https://electionstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/anes_timeseries_2016_methodology_report.pdf)

coded “2” to mean “Hi” on the misogyny scale. The “Hi” category was comprised of surveyors who rated themselves as “midhigh” and “high” on the misogyny scale.

Although the main variable of interest in the study is misogyny score, another variable will be discussed in the preceding sections. Additionally, the chi-square test is used to test the independence between the variables studied (i.e., is there a relationship between the two variables?). To further study the nature of the relationship, the Cramér’s V test was used to test the associative strength between the two variables studied. Chi-square and Cramér’s V were used in this paper since only categorical variables from 1 survey population were analyzed. The results from these statistical tests are described below.

### **The Study: Results**

A 2 x 2 contingency table was created to discover a potential relationship between vote choice and misogyny. The following results can be seen in Table 1.

#### **[Table 1: Is Misogyny Related to Vote Choice?]**

Table 1 reveals a significant relationship between misogyny and vote choice;  $X^2(1, N = 2551) = 179.25, p = .05, V = 0.27$ . The two variables, vote choice and misogyny, are *not* independent of each other. According to Table 1, voting preference differed for levels of surveyor misogyny. Overall, the results from Table 1 illuminate the predictive power of misogynistic attitudes on voting preferences. However, Cramer’s V reveals that misogyny only had a *weak to moderate* effect on voting preference in the 2016 general election. Although there is a significant relationship between vote choice and misogyny, the strength of the relationship is on the weaker end of the spectrum. The table results also reveal that the observed relationship between misogyny and vote choice was in the expected direction. It appears that those who rate

“Hi” on misogyny are more likely to vote for Trump, and those who rate “Lo” on the misogyny scale are more likely to vote for Clinton, affirming the primary hypothesis.

Aside from misogyny, I also examined another independent variable and its effect on vote choice in the 2016 election—gender. Are females more likely to vote for Hillary, as opposed to Trump? Are males more likely to vote for Trump, as opposed to Hillary? Studying the possible effects of gender on vote choice will allow me to address the following question: Do gender and vote choice have a relationship (i.e., do the two variables covary)? The results from table 1 show that misogyny and vote preference in the 2016 presidential election covary. Additionally, by adding a third variable as a possible explanation for the election outcome, I will address other questions. I will test to see if the original relationship between gender and vote choice is spurious by asking: when gender is controlled for, does the observed relationship between misogyny and vote choice still exist?

I created a 2x2 cross tabulation table to examine if there is a relationship between gender and vote choice. My hypothesis stated that women will be more supportive of Hillary than men will be. This hypothesis is based on the theory that women can empathize with alleged victims of sexual assault and will be more likely to vote against candidates like Trump, who endorsed unwanted sexual contact with women. The results can be seen in Table 2.

*Note: For the gender variable, Male was coded as 0 and Female was coded as 1.*

**[Table 2: Is Gender Related to Vote Choice]**

The data from Table 2 reveals that there is a relationship between gender and vote choice in the 2016 General election;  $X^2(1, N = 2579) = 20.40, p = .05, V = -0.09$ . The two variables, vote choice and gender, are *not* independent of each other. Gender and vote choice covary. The data reveals that the observed relationship between gender and vote choice is in the expected

direction. It appears that male respondents are more likely to vote for Trump, and female respondents are more likely to vote for Clinton, affirming the secondary hypothesis. The negative value of  $V$  reflects this Lo-Hi, Hi-Lo relationship, given that females were coded as 1, males = 0, Trump voters = 100, and Clinton voters = 0. Although this significant relationship exists, Cramer's  $V$  indicates that misogyny had a *weak* effect on voting preference in the 2016 general election. Thus, gender relates to voting preference, but the strength of this relationship is minimal at best. Such an analysis leads the essay to examine the three variables mentioned—misogyny, gender, and vote choice--at a deeper level (via a bysort analysis).

When comparing the Cramer's  $V$  values for Tables 1 and 2, one can see that the relationship between misogyny and vote choice ( $V = 0.27$ ) is stronger than the relationship between gender and vote choice ( $V = -0.09$ ). Thus, the predictive power of misogyny is greater than that of gender in determining who individuals will vote for. Such results confirm the idea that misogyny and vote choice is the primary relationship of focus in the current study.

Given the above findings, the study desires to further explain the factors that affect the choice to support (or not support) Donald J. Trump in the election. While the beginning analysis affirms the relationship between misogynistic thinking and voting patterns, its conclusions are limited at best. The following study tests the spuriousness of the relationship between vote choice and misogyny level by controlling for the effects of gender.

#### **Results for Bysort tables:**

**[Table 3: Male Population: Is Misogyny Related to Vote Choice?]**

**[Table 4: Female Population: Is Misogyny Related to Vote Choice?]**

Tables 3 and 4 reveal that, when controlling for males and females, the effect of misogyny on vote choice still exists. According to Tables 3 and 4, a significant relationship

between misogyny and vote choice still when gender is controlled for. The data reveals that, among the male survey respondents, a significant relationship between vote choice and misogyny exists;  $X^2(1, N = 1166) = 61.49, p = .05, V = .23$ . The data also reveals that, among the female survey population, there is a significant relationship between vote choice and misogyny;  $X^2(1, N = 1367) = 104.91, p = .05, V = .28$ . This relationship was in the expected direction for both tables, when the male and female genders were controlled for. Those individuals who rate “Hi” on the misogyny scale are more likely to vote for Trump than those who rate “Lo” on the misogyny scale. Those who rate “Lo” on the misogyny scale are more likely to vote for Clinton than those who rate “Hi” on the misogyny scale.

In conclusion, the proposed effects of misogyny on vote choice still exist when the third variable of gender is controlled for. The above data supports the idea that the observed relationship between misogyny and vote choice is not spurious (i.e., the relationship is not due to rival explanations like gender). Because the relationship between misogyny and vote choice withstands the test of spuriousness, it becomes more accurate to assert that X caused Y (or that misogynistic beliefs are responsible for the election of Donald J. Trump). I have already demonstrated that X covaries with Y in Table 1. The bysort tables (Tables 3 and 4) lend additional support for the idea that Y is not the result of other third variables, like gender. However, it is important to note that there are a variety of factors that can play a hand in impacting voting patterns, aside from the variables discussed in the present study.

Furthermore, studying the effect size (Cramer’s V) for the relationship between vote choice and misogyny reveals a slightly stronger relationship between the two variables for the female population ( $V = 0.28$ ) than for the male populations ( $V = 0.23$ ) (refer to Tables 3 and 4). From this data, one can infer that misogyny has a greater effect on an individual’s vote choice if

the person is a female. Thus, the strength of the relationship between misogyny and vote choice depends on the gender of the voter. These results mean that being a woman increases the likelihood that being misogynistic will influence the person to vote for Trump. The effect that high misogyny has on inducing electoral support for Trump is slightly amplified for women than it is for men (based on the difference in effect sizes—Cramer’s  $V$ —from Tables 3 and 4).

The following essay ends with an analysis of gender, misogyny, and vote choice based on data from a controlled mean comparison table. Table 5 examines the means of vote choice (0 = individual voted for Hillary, 100 = individual voted for Trump) among different levels of the two independent variables studied; gender and misogyny score.

**[Table 5, A Summary Table: How does Vote Choice Differ Among Gender and Misogyny?]**

In table 5, the mean vote in each of the cells represent percentages of the respondents who voted for Trump that fall into each combination of the variables studied (gender and misogyny). The numbers can be thought of as percentages since 0 was coded as a vote for Hillary and 100 was coded as a vote for Trump (referring to vote choice, the dependent variable).

Table 5 summarizes the results from both of the bysort tables (Tables 3 and 4). One can observe the effect that misogyny has on vote choice when controlling for gender (based on looking at each column of the gender categories—male and female). When controlling for gender, Table 5 reveals that most HI misogyny respondents voted for Trump but not most LO scoring respondents. Thus, vote choice differs for levels of misogyny. From the male population, 39.92% of those who rated “LO” on misogyny voted for Trump and 62.97% of those who rated HI on misogyny voted for Trump. When looking only at men, HI misogyny respondents are more supportive of Trump when voting than LO misogyny respondents are. Additionally, from

the female population, 33.14% of those who rated “LO” on misogyny voted for Trump and 61.46% of those who rated HI on misogyny voted for Trump. When looking only at females, HI misogyny respondents are more supportive of Trump when voting than LO misogyny respondents are. Thus, misogyny appears to have an effect on voting preferences when gender is controlled for.

One can observe the minimal effect that gender has on vote choice when controlling for misogyny (based on looking at each row of the misogyny categories—LO and HI). From the LO scoring population, 39.92% of the males voted for Trump and 33.14% of the females voted for Trump. When looking only at only at the LO misogyny respondents, Males are only slightly more supportive of Trump than Females are; the differences in voting based on gender appears to be less extreme than the differences in voting based on misogyny scores. Additionally, from the HI scoring population on the misogyny scale, 62.97% of the males voted for Trump and 61.46% of the females voted for Trump. When looking only at the HI misogyny respondents, Males are hardly any more supportive of Trump than females are. Thus, gender appears to have a negligible effect on voting preferences when differences in misogyny are controlled for.

The above results paint a rather interesting picture; the effect of misogyny on support for DJT withstands the test of spuriousness (as discussed in Tables 3 and 4). However, there appears to be a negligible effect of gender on voting preferences when misogyny is eliminated as a potential cause of voter support. There does not appear to be a major difference in the percentages of respondents who voted for Trump (or mean vote scores) when gender is controlled for. Such an analysis reveals that misogyny is the true variable of interest when addressing the original research question: What affects voter support for Donald J. Trump in the

2016 election? It appears that misogyny is a better explanation for the vote outcome than gender is.

However, the above explanation is not as simple as to say that X affects Y (or that participant misogyny level affects the vote). Based on further analysis of Table 5, I found that gender (a third variable) plays a role in mediating the observed relationship between X (misogyny) and Y (vote choice). That is, gender affects the extent to which misogyny affects the vote outcome, demonstrating an interactive relationship between the three variables studied.

An interactive relationship between misogyny, vote outcome, and the control variable—gender, can be observed from Table 5. According to Table 5, the difference in mean vote score among the misogyny levels is larger for females (28.32) than for males (23.05). Such data indicates that misogyny has a stronger effect on vote choice when the respondents are female, compared to when they are male. This conclusion can be further supported when looking back to the effect sizes from the bysort tables (Tables 3 and 4). It appeared that the relationship between misogyny and voting preferences was stronger for the female respondents ( $V = 0.28$ ) than the male respondents ( $V = 0.23$ ). From these results, one can infer that misogyny is a more powerful predictor of vote choice when someone is female than when someone is male.

Thus, when someone is female and HI on misogyny, she is likely to vote for Trump. When someone is male and HI on misogyny, he is also likely to vote for Trump (but the strength of the relationship, or the predictive power of misogyny on vote choice is weaker for males than females). Thus, gender enhances our understanding of the relationship between misogynistic beliefs and vote outcome. Having knowledge of a voter's gender allows us to be very confident in predicting who women will vote for, based on their misogyny levels. With that being said, females who score LO on misogyny are likely to vote for Hillary. Moreover, males who score

LO on misogyny are likely to vote for Hillary (but the effect of misogyny on shaping vote preferences is weaker for the male population).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

These results illustrate a promising finding for the implications of Table 1, which initially examined the simple relationship between misogyny and vote choice among the total survey population. The data from Table 1 revealed a potential relationship that researchers can further study; the effects of misogynistic thinking on voting outcome, and subsequently, election outcomes. I found that those who are higher on the scale of misogyny are more likely to vote for Donald J. Trump, a candidate who is infamous for his misogynistic behavior. Tables 3 and 4 confirmed that the relationship between misogyny and vote choice withstands the test of spuriousness. This means that the relationship between misogyny and vote choice is still observed when gender, third variable, is controlled for. These results support the idea that the observed relationship between vote choice and misogyny is not due to alternative causes (reference bysort analysis in Tables 3, 4).

Further analysis from the controlled mean comparison table (Table 5) reveal that the relationship between gender and the vote is not maintained when other factors are eliminated—like differences in misogynistic beliefs. However, I found that gender is important for studying the effects that misogyny has on vote choice. The data from Table 5 revealed complex relationships between the three variables addressed in this study. Moreover, table 5 revealed that a mediating variable controlled the extent to which misogyny affected vote choice in the 2016 presidential election. In conclusion, gender appeared to control how strong of an impact misogyny had on support for Donald J. Trump.

The implications of the above findings highlight the importance of attitudinal differences in predicting vote choice. Generally, those who favor misogynistic beliefs are more likely to vote for the candidate who espoused misogynistic qualities throughout the campaign, Donald J. Trump. Such findings support the primary hypothesis of the study. Likewise, individuals who do not share Trump's misogynistic beliefs are more likely to vote for the alternative candidate, Hillary R. Clinton. It is not a surprise that those who disagree with misogynistic beliefs are not as likely to vote for the candidate who brags about "grabbing" women without their consent.

### References

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### Key for Tables 1-4

Key
<i>frequency</i>
<i>column percentage</i>

**Table 1: Is Misogyny Related to Vote Choice?**

Vote for Trump in 2016? (0/100)	Misogyny: 2 categories		Total
	1	2	
0	893 64.38	440 37.80	1,333 52.25
100	494 35.62	724 62.20	1,218 47.75
Total	1,387 100.00	1,164 100.00	2,551 100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 179.2530 Pr = 0.000  
Cramér's V = 0.2651

**[Table 2: Is Gender Related to Vote Choice]**

Vote for Trump in 2016? (0/100)	Is R female? (v161342)		Total
	Male	Female	
0	559 47.21	783 56.13	1,342 52.04
100	625 52.79	612 43.87	1,237 47.96
Total	1,184 100.00	1,395 100.00	2,579 100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 20.3992 Pr = 0.000

Cramér's V = -0.0889

*Note for Table 2: Gender was treated as a dummy variable in the ANES 2016 dataset. Thus, the data in the following analysis is restricted to those who identified as only Males or Females, without taking into account other gender orientations.*

### Results for Bysort tables:

**Table 3: Male Population: Is Misogyny Related to Vote Choice?**

Vote for Trump in 2016? (0/100)	Misogony: 2 categories		Total
	1	2	
0	316 60.08	237 37.03	553 47.43
100	210 39.92	403 62.97	613 52.57
Total	526 100.00	640 100.00	1,166 100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 61.4928 Pr = 0.000

Cramér's V = 0.2296

**Table 4: Female Population: Is Misogyny Related to Vote Choice**

Vote for Trump in 2016? (0/100)	Misogony: 2 categories		Total
	1	2	
0	567 66.86	200 38.54	767 56.11
100	281 33.14	319 61.46	600 43.89
Total	848 100.00	519 100.00	1,367 100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 104.9068 Pr = 0.000  
Cramér's V = 0.2770

**Table 5, A Summary Table: How does Vote Choice Differ Among Gender and Misogyny?**

Means of Vote for Trump in 2016? (0/100)

Misogony: 2 categories	Is R female? (v161342)		Total
	Male	Female	
1	39.923954	33.136792	35.73508
2	62.96875	61.464355	62.295082
Total	52.572899	43.891734	47.88788