

Louisiana State University

LSU Scholarly Repository

Honors Theses

Ogden Honors College

5-2021

Exploring the Electoral Impact of Sexual Scandal on Four Recent Political Candidates: Cal Cunningham, Donald Trump, David Vitter, and Bill Clinton

Madeline McKenzie Connelly

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.lsu.edu/honors_etd



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Connelly, Madeline McKenzie, "Exploring the Electoral Impact of Sexual Scandal on Four Recent Political Candidates: Cal Cunningham, Donald Trump, David Vitter, and Bill Clinton" (2021). *Honors Theses*. 290. https://repository.lsu.edu/honors_etd/290

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Ogden Honors College at LSU Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact ir@lsu.edu.

**Exploring the Electoral Impact of Sexual Scandal on Four Recent Political Candidates: Cal
Cunningham, Donald Trump, David Vitter, and Bill Clinton**

By

MADELINE MCKENZIE CONNELLY

Undergraduate Honors Thesis Under the Direction of Dr. Jas M. Sullivan

Political Science Program

Submitted to the Louisiana State University Honors College in Partial Fulfillment of The College
Honors Program.

May 2021

Louisiana State University

& Agricultural and Mechanical College Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Cal Cunningham (NC)	5
Donald Trump (POTUS 2017-2021)	9
David Vitter (LA)	15
Bill Clinton POTUS (1993-2001)	20
Discussion	24
Ingredients of a Scandal.....	24
Why Did The Candidates Win or Lose Their Elections?.....	31
Conclusion	55
References	56

Introduction

The purpose of this work is to determine any identifiable patterns that may have caused the differing levels of success of political candidates who faced allegations of sexual scandal during their campaigns. Through the examination of the political campaigns of Bill Clinton's 1992 Presidential campaign, Donald Trump's 2016 Presidential campaign, Cal Cunningham's 2020 senatorial campaign, and David Vitter's 2015 gubernatorial campaign, I hope to find some reasoning for why their campaigns found political victory or defeat, and why voters might view the sexual scandals of certain political candidates differently than others.

Figure 1: Chart of Candidates and their Campaign Characteristics

Candidate	Outcome of Election	Type of Election	Party Affiliation
Bill Clinton	Win	National	DEM
Donald Trump	Win	National	REP
Cal Cunningham	Loss	State	DEM
David Vitter	Loss	State	REP

The candidates I have chosen each experienced some sort of sexual scandal during their time in office before impeachment, during their campaigns leading up to an election, or at some point in their political careers while actively running to retain their offices. Two Presidential and two state-level elections beg the question of why some who engage in sexual scandals are relatively unscathed, and for others, it ruins their political careers.

Bill Clinton faced allegations of sexual misconduct during multiple gubernatorial and presidential campaigns. He, however, did not lose any elections as a result of these indiscretions and was able to retain his position as President of the United States. Donald Trump was entangled in sexual scandals leading up to his victorious election to the office of President of the United States in 2016. These Presidential candidates were not from the same political party - Trump was a Republican and Clinton was a Democrat. Interestingly, Trump won his election against the wife of President Clinton, Hillary Clinton. This raises questions about why Clinton was victorious while his wife, who was not actively engaged in either sexual scandal but may have been involved in Bill Clinton's cover-up and media mitigation, was not.

Conversely, David Vitter and Cal Cunningham ran for "state-level" elections and were not successful. Cal Cunningham ran as a Democrat for the United States Senate in North Carolina in 2020 but was defeated because of the revelation of an affair leading up to the election. David Vitter's story, while running for Governor of Louisiana in 2015, is perhaps the most unique of all the political figures discussed. The public exposure of his political scandal was while he was in office as a United States Senator representing the state of Louisiana. Vitter was able to remain in office and continue winning elections for that seat. However, when he ran years later in the Louisiana Gubernatorial race, he lost by a huge margin to Democratic candidate John Bel Edwards.

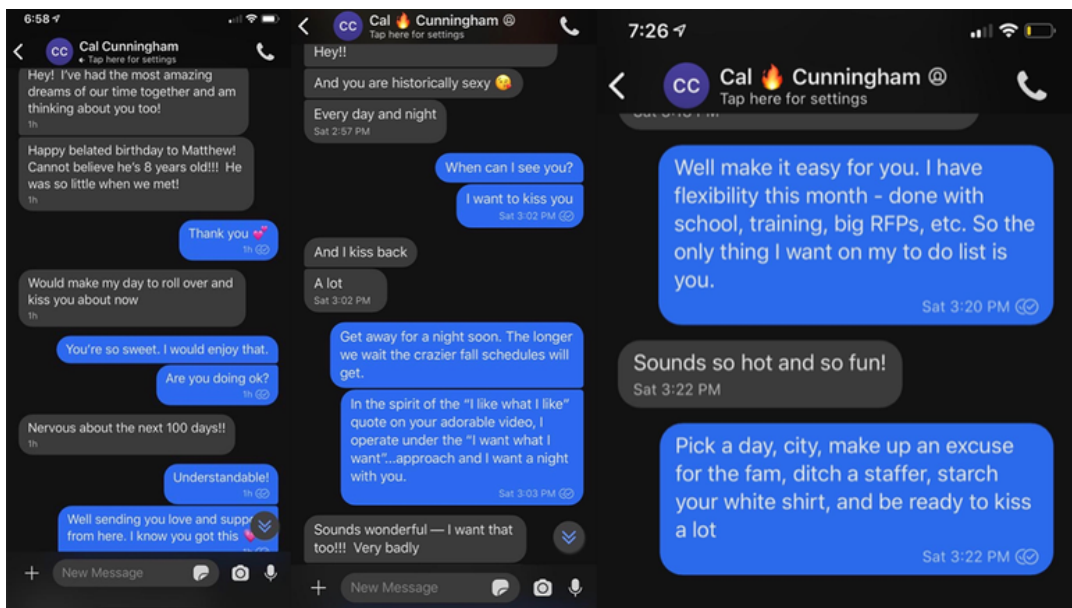
Throughout the length of my thesis, I hope to find some answers as to why certain candidates won or lost their respective elections. For each case, I will provide a short background, the scandal the candidate was involved in, and their immediate response to the scandal. Following the introduction and background to each case, I will include a discussion explaining why each of these candidates either won or lost the election, the similarities and

differences in each of the cases, and how these situations constitute varying degrees of sexual scandal.

Cal Cunningham (NC)

Cal Cunningham started his career as a lawyer earning his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.¹ At 27, he became one of the youngest state senators in North Carolina and served one term in that role from 2001 to 2003. He enlisted in the United States following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and is currently a lieutenant colonel in the reserves.²

Cal Cunningham's entanglement with scandal began when he decided to run for United States Senator in North Carolina in the 2020 election. Reports surfaced of an extramarital affair between Cunningham and a California woman through the disclosure of sexually explicit text messages.



¹ “Meet Cal.” *Cal Cunningham, Democrat for U.S. Senate*, www.californc.com/meet-cal/.

² “Meet Cal.” *Cal Cunningham, Democrat for U.S. Senate*, www.californc.com/meet-cal/.

³ Board, Editorial. “Explain Yourself, Cal Cunningham.” *Charlotte Observer*, 6 Oct. 2020, www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/editorials/article246256640.html.

These text messages are rather tame and even juvenile in nature. It shows the intimate connection between Cunningham and his mistress, and the clear existence of an extramarital sexual relationship. The revelation of this affair was very out of character for the persona Cunningham was portraying to the North Carolinian electorate and his base of supporters. He tried to make himself appear to be an honorable veteran and family man who valued honesty and hard-work in political leadership. Furthermore, the woman he chose to have the affair with had one of the biggest systems of support for his campaign - the United States soldiers and veterans with voting privileges in North Carolina - turn their backs on him for breaking one of the fundamental rules of the United States Military Code of Justice.

The woman with whom he engaged in the affair, as just mentioned, was public relations strategist from California Arlene Guzman Todd. She is married to Jeremy Todd, also an officer in the United States Army. There is not substantial information regarding her background or current situation, as almost all of the concrete information or personal social media accounts have been scrubbed. The involvement of Ms. Guzman Todd with Cunningham and the nature of their conversations and intimate encounters have “undercut the image [Cunningham] has carefully crafted, as a man of integrity who serves in the Army Reserve. Consequently,[Republican incumbent Thomas] Tillis and the Senate Leadership Fund, a super PAC affiliated with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, quickly launched television ads attacking Cunningham for his indiscretion after reports of text messages indicated he engaged in a sexual relationship with public relations strategist Arlene Guzman Todd.”⁴

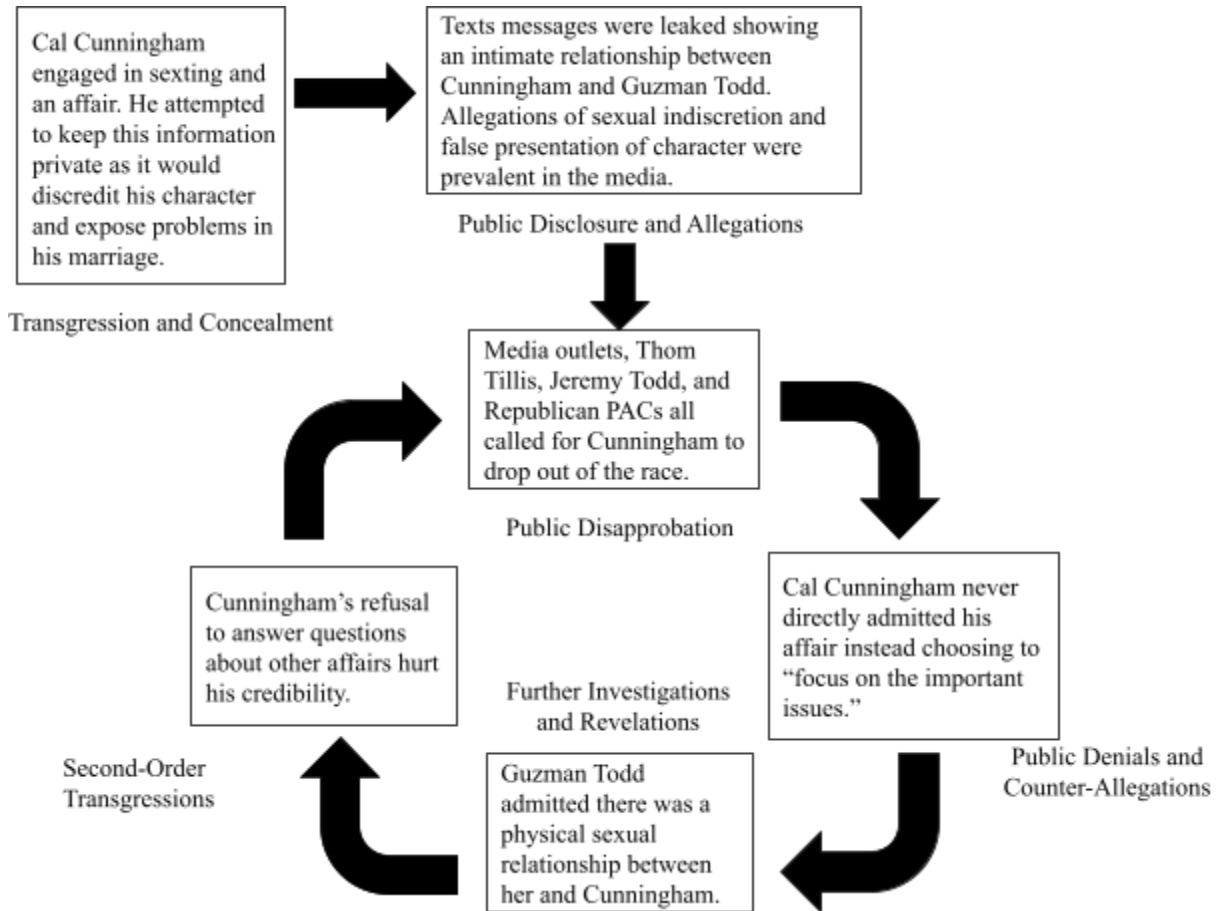
⁴ Rogers, Alex, and Manu Raju. “North Carolina Democrat's Sex Scandal Renews GOP Hopes of Keeping Majority despite Trump's Drag on the Ticket.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 9 Oct. 2020, www.cnn.com/2020/10/09/politics/north-carolina-senate-race-cal-cunningham-thom-tillis/index.html.

The news of his involvement in the affair caused severe discontent across the country and state, as leading up to this race there was significant speculation that North Carolina may be the state that holds the key to turning the U.S. Senate from a Republican majority to a Democratic majority. The results of the election were tight, despite initial predictions being that Cunningham would win by a comfortable margin and would still likely win after the news of his affair emerged. However, this was not the case. Republican incumbent Thom Tillis won re-election in a tight race. Tillis secured 48.7% of the vote with 2,665,598 votes to Cunningham's 46.9% of the vote and a total of 2,569,965 votes cast in his favor.⁵ Though it seemed "Trump's unpopularity...[gave] Democrats a growing number of opportunities to take back the Senate, [and] the North Carolina race...[was] viewed as one of their best pickup chance," the news of Cunningham's sexual scandal was too much to overcome and ultimately North Carolina was not an overall race deciding state for the Senate.⁶ The Democratic National Convention ended up not needing a state they so highly prioritized throughout the election cycle in order to win a majority in the Senate, and Cal Cunningham became an unnecessary tool in their arsenal for the 2020 Election. Unfortunately for him, it seems his political and army careers may be over as a result of his indiscretions.

⁵ NBC News. "North Carolina Senate Election Results 2020: Live Results and Polls." *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 26 Feb. 2021, www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-elections/north-carolina-senate-results.

⁶ Rogers, Alex, and Manu Raju. "North Carolina Democrat's Sex Scandal Renews GOP Hopes of Keeping Majority despite Trump's Drag on the Ticket." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 9 Oct. 2020, www.cnn.com/2020/10/09/politics/north-carolina-senate-race-cal-cunningham-thom-tillis/index.html.

Figure 2: Chart of Steps of Scandal in Relation to Cal Cunningham's Case



Donald Trump (POTUS 2017-2021)

Donald J. Trump was born in 1946 in New York, New York. His father was a real estate developer who used federal loans to build his properties for less than the price he quoted and then kept the profits for himself.⁷ Trump started his path towards following in his father's footsteps at a very young age. At the age of 13, Donald Trump left home to attend the

New York Military Academy (1959–64), a private boarding school...[then] Fordham University in the Bronx (1964–66); and the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance and Commerce (1966–68), where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in economics. In 1968, during the Vietnam War, he secured a diagnosis of bone spurs, which qualified him for a medical exemption from the military draft (he had earlier received four draft deferments for education). Upon his graduation Trump began working full-time for his father's business, helping to manage its holdings of rental housing, then estimated at between 10,000 and 22,000 units. In 1974 he became president of a conglomeration of Trump-owned corporations and partnerships, which he later named the Trump Organization.⁸

Before he entered politics, the first scandal levied against the Trump Organization under the direction of Donald was the joint suit by the Department of Justice against Donald Trump, his father Fred, and the Trump Organization in 1973 for violations of the Fair Housing Act on the

⁷ Duignan, Brian. "Donald Trump". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 Jan. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Donald-Trump>. Accessed 3 March 2021.

⁸ Duignan, Brian. "Donald Trump". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 Jan. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Donald-Trump>. Accessed 3 March 2021.

basis of racial discrimination.⁹ These types of scandals would continue throughout Mr. Trump's career, but this one in particular haunted Mr. Trump because of the severe and legitimate accusations of racial discrimination in his housing developments all over the country.

There are several examples of extramarital affairs throughout Trump's life. The first of which was with his second wife Marla Maples whom he began having an affair with while married to first wife Ivana in 1990. News of the affair broke in 1990 in an article titled "Best Sex I've Ever Had" published in the New York Post shared details given by Maples' friend who "not only confirmed the affair but gave us an inside scoop of why the actress fell so hard for the mogul. Wife Ivana was furious as Maples replaced her as Trump's new eye candy. Maples was even his date at the April 2, 1990, grand opening of his Taj Mahal resort in Atlantic City, as broken-hearted Ivana stayed home with the kids" and the two soon divorced in 1991.¹⁰ Marla Maples was an actress on the TV show "Dallas" whom Trump met at a party in 1989. The two began an illicit affair which broke in the aforementioned article and Trump soon after ended his marriage to Ivana. The couple had daughter Tiffany in 1993 and married shortly after, but Maples' marriage to Trump ended with them filing for divorce in 1997.¹¹

⁹ "Decades-Old Housing Discrimination Case Plagues Donald Trump." *NPR*, NPR, 30 Sept. 2016, www.npr.org/2016/09/29/495955920/donald-trump-plagued-by-decades-old-housing-discrimination-case.

¹⁰ New York Post. "Marla & The 'Best' Boast." *PressReader.com - Your Favorite Newspapers and Magazines.*, 22 Jan. 2017, www.pressreader.com/usa/new-york-post/20170122/282634622326860.

¹¹ Taylor, Kate. "Porn Star Stormy Daniels Is Taking a Victory Lap after Michael Cohen's Guilty Plea. Here's a Timeline of Trump's Many Marriages and Rumored Affairs." *Business Insider*, Business Insider, 25 Aug. 2018, www.businessinsider.com/trump-melania-stormy-daniels-affairs-marriages-timeline-2018-3#trump-wasnt-single-for-long-in-1998-he-met-model-melania-knauss-the-pair-married-in-january-2005-8.

This was not the only instance in Trump's many relationships. In 1998, just months after filing for divorce from second wife Marla Maples, Trump began dating supermodel Melania Knauss. The two married in 2005, the same year an archived Access Hollywood tape was filmed which would not be released to the public until October 8, 2016.¹² In the video, he explains how he does not ask for consent when making moves on women he finds attractive.

Once the bus was in place, Mr. Trump and [Access Hollywood's former anchor, Billy] Bush, the last two on the bus, waited to exit as Mr. Trump then made the following comments to Bush about the soap opera star, who was standing outside the bus, waiting to welcome Mr. Trump to the set.

"I gotta use some Tic-Tacs just in case I start kissing her," he said, at the time, before exiting the bus. "You know I'm automatically attracted to beautiful— I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. And when you're a star they let you do it. You can do anything," Trump said.

"Whatever you want," Bush responded.

"Grab them by the p***y. ... Do anything," he said.¹³

A pattern was emerging of sexual infidelity within Trump's marriages and predatory behavior.

Though Trump dismissed the conversation and his comments as "locker room banter," women

¹² Access Hollywood Staff. "Access Hollywood Archival Footage Reveals Vulgar Trump Comments From 2005: Access Online." *Access Hollywood*, Access Hollywood, 8 Oct. 2016, accessonlinefrontprod.ao.apps.nbcuni.com/articles/access-hollywood-archival-footage-reveals-vulgar-trump-comments-2005.

¹³ Access Hollywood Staff. "Access Hollywood Archival Footage Reveals Vulgar Trump Comments From 2005: Access Online." *Access Hollywood*, Access Hollywood, 8 Oct. 2016, accessonlinefrontprod.ao.apps.nbcuni.com/articles/access-hollywood-archival-footage-reveals-vulgar-trump-comments-2005.

victimized Trump would come forward to share their stories of how the Presidential nominee assaulted them and committed acts of sexual indiscretion throughout his lifetime.¹⁴

Following one of the Presidential debates where Trump emphatically denied acting out the things he described in his *Access Hollywood* interview above, three women came forward to describe how Trump had done the very things he described - kissing and genital contact without consent. The first of which was Jessica Leeds' encounter with Mr. Trump in the early 1980s during his marriage to Ivana Trump.

More than three decades ago, when she was a traveling businesswoman at a paper company, Ms. Leeds said, she sat beside Mr. Trump in the first-class cabin of a flight to New York. They had never met before.

About 45 minutes after takeoff, she recalled, Mr. Trump lifted the armrest and began to touch her.

According to Ms. Leeds, Mr. Trump grabbed her breasts and tried to put his hand up her skirt.

He was like an octopus," she said. "His hands were everywhere."

She fled to the back of the plane. "It was an assault," she said.¹⁵

¹⁴ Access Hollywood Staff. "Access Hollywood Archival Footage Reveals Vulgar Trump Comments From 2005: Access Online." *Access Hollywood*, Access Hollywood, 8 Oct. 2016, accessonlinefrontprod.ao.apps.nbcuni.com/articles/access-hollywood-archival-footage-reveals-vulgar-trump-comments-2005.

¹⁵ Twohey, Megan, and Michael Barbaro. "Two Women Say Donald Trump Touched Them Inappropriately." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 12 Oct. 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/10/13/us/politics/donald-trump-women.html.

Leeds told the story to several close confidantes, but did not feel the need to tell her story publicly until she saw the Presidential nominee clearly lying to the American public.

Rachel Crooks was a receptionist working for Bayrock Group, a real estate investment firm, based in Trump Tower in New York in 2005.¹⁶ Trump approached her and kissed her on the mouth without permission. On the experience, Leeds commented that the exchange “‘didn’t feel like an accident’, she said. It felt like a violation. ‘It was so inappropriate,’ Ms. Crooks recalled in an interview. ‘I was so upset that he thought I was so insignificant that he could do that.’”¹⁷ Trump married his third wife Melania in 2005, and this would not be the allegation of sexual misconduct and infidelity during his marriage.

During the time when Trump owned the Miss Universe and USA Organizations, numerous contestants came forward to detail their experiences with sexual assault and harrassment by Trump.¹⁸ One contestant, former Miss Utah USA Temple Taggart, described her experiences with Trump and the instances of non-consensual kissing. Taggart alleged “Mr. Trump kissed her on the mouth more than once when she was a 21-year-old pageant contestant” in the Miss USA Organization.¹⁹ These were not the only women to allege misconduct by Mr.

¹⁶ Twohey, Megan, and Michael Barbaro. “Two Women Say Donald Trump Touched Them Inappropriately.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 12 Oct. 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/10/13/us/politics/donald-trump-women.html.

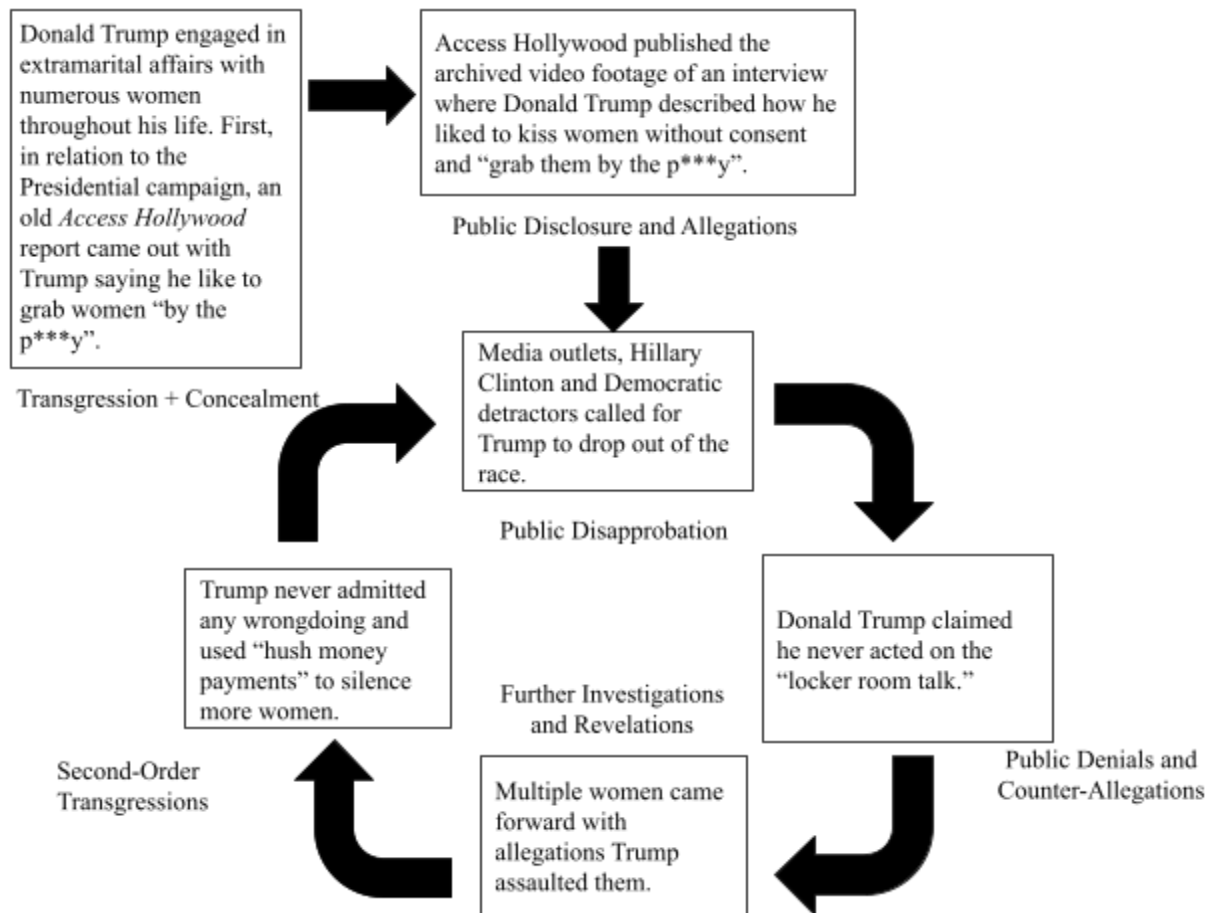
¹⁷ Twohey, Megan, and Michael Barbaro. “Two Women Say Donald Trump Touched Them Inappropriately.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 12 Oct. 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/10/13/us/politics/donald-trump-women.html.

¹⁸ Taylor, Kate. “Porn Star Stormy Daniels Is Taking a Victory Lap after Michael Cohen's Guilty Plea. Here's a Timeline of Trump's Many Marriages and Rumored Affairs.” *Business Insider*, Business Insider, 25 Aug. 2018, www.businessinsider.com/trump-melania-stormy-daniels-affairs-marriages-timeline-2018-3#trump-wasnt-single-for-long-in-1998-he-met-model-melania-knauss-the-pair-married-in-january-2005-8.

¹⁹ Twohey, Megan, and Michael Barbaro. “Two Women Say Donald Trump Touched Them Inappropriately.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 12 Oct. 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/10/13/us/politics/donald-trump-women.html.

Trump. Many more ultimately came forward after the Presidential election, some which landed some of Trump’s associates in federal prison due to second-order transgressions dealing with illegal use of campaign finances. However, those allegations did not come out until after Trump won the 2016 Presidential election, and ultimately did not play a role in his electoral victory.

Figure 3: Chart of Steps of Scandal in Relation to Donald Trump’s Case



David Vitter (LA)

David Vitter was a U.S. Senator from 2005 to 2017. He represented the state of Louisiana and was originally from New Orleans. He attended prestigious universities--attaining degrees from Harvard, Oxford, and Tulane University. Throughout his academic career “he received a bachelor’s degree (1983) from Harvard University; a bachelor’s degree (1985) in economics and history from the University of Oxford, which he attended on a Rhodes scholarship; and a doctorate (1988) in jurisprudence from Tulane University. Vitter subsequently worked in private practice, specializing in business law, and during that time he married Wendy Baldwin; the couple later had four children.”²⁰ Vitter eventually became politically involved in Louisiana politics by gaining a seat in the Louisiana House of Representatives in 1991. He won a special election in 1999 for a U.S. House of Representatives seat in “the One Hundred Sixth Congress by special election, to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of United States Representative Robert L. Livingston, Jr.” after the revelation of his involvement in an extramarital affair.²¹ In 2004 he was elected to the United States Senate amid allegations he had utilized a New Orleans prostitution service. He denied the allegations, there was no concrete proof, and he ended up winning the election serving in that office from 2005-2017.

However, he became entangled in a sexual scandal through the disclosure of a Washington D.C. prostitution ring’s client list. His name was on the list along with several other high-profile figures in American politics.

²⁰ “David Vitter.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/biography/David-Vitter.

²¹ “VITTER, David.” *US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives*, [history.house.gov/People/Listing/V/VITTER,-David-\(V000127\)/](http://history.house.gov/People/Listing/V/VITTER,-David-(V000127)/).

Deborah Jeane Palfrey ran a DC-area escort service for several years, before getting caught by the police. As part of her legal defense, Palfrey's lawyers said they would expose the service's client list -- not by releasing a list of names, but by releasing phone records. One of those numbers, we now know, was traced back to Louisiana's right-wing Republican senator, David Vitter, who ran on a "family values" platform.²²

Deborah Jeane Palfrey ran a prostitution service and Vitter's involvement with the service directly contradicted his steadfastly conservative, family values first platform. Palfrey was investigated before the disclosure of select clients of her firm, Pamela Martin and Associates. Through the investigation, Palfrey was ultimately charged, and "a federal jury in Washington found Ms. Palfrey guilty on April 15 of running a prostitution service that catered to powerful figures including Senator David Vitter, Republican of Louisiana. She was convicted of money laundering, using the mail for illegal purposes, and racketeering. Ms. Palfrey had denied that her escort service had been involved in prostitution."²³ Despite her claims, Vitter admitted to his involvement in the prostitution service.

Born in Pennsylvania, she ran many similar ventures in other states, including a prior conviction for running a prostitution service in California. She subsequently fled to Montana and was captured near the United States - Canada border. This pattern of running from threats of jail time and fear of incarceration may have foreshadowed the untimely end of her life. In her

²² Benen, Steve. "Years Later, the 'D.C. Madam' Scandal Is Relevant Once More." *MSNBC*, NBCUniversal News Group, 1 Oct. 2020, www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/years-later-the-dc-madam-scandal-relevant-once-more-msna823936.

²³ The Associated Press. "D.C. Madam' Is Found Dead, Apparently in a Suicide (Published 2008)." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 2 May 2008, www.nytimes.com/2008/05/02/washington/02madam.html.

mother's shed, fifty-two-year-old Deborah Palfrey hung herself. Before her death in Tarpon Springs, Florida she "vowed that she would never go to prison. When she disclosed telephone records last year that revealed the identity of some of her clients, she told ABC: 'I'm sure as heck not going to be going to federal prison for one day, let alone four to eight years, because I'm shy about bringing in the deputy secretary of whatever. Not for a second. I'll bring every last one of them in if necessary'" and ultimately would choose to die over facing the consequences for what she saw as ultimately non-threatening actions.²⁴

Ultimately, the case exposed the hypocrisy of many conservative politicians, not just David Vitter. However, his name is the one that is most associated with this scandal. Conversely, some journalists are critical of the treatment of Palfrey by authorities and find other subjects more interesting in this case.

If there was anything beneficial to emerge from this tragedy, it was the exposure of at least one government-employed man whose hypocrisy underscored his baleful influence on public policy. [Randall] Tobias, former head of the United States Agency for International Development and Global AIDS coordinator, was one of the many men whose phone numbers appeared in the 46-pound list that Palfrey released to the media following her indictment. Tobias refused to fund programs that assisted prostitutes and encouraged abstinence over condom usage in the prevention of AIDS. Tobias was forced to resign over the revelations, and it's beneficial to humanity that a proponent of such stupid policies is now away from a station where he could do so much harm. Yet, unlike the woman who

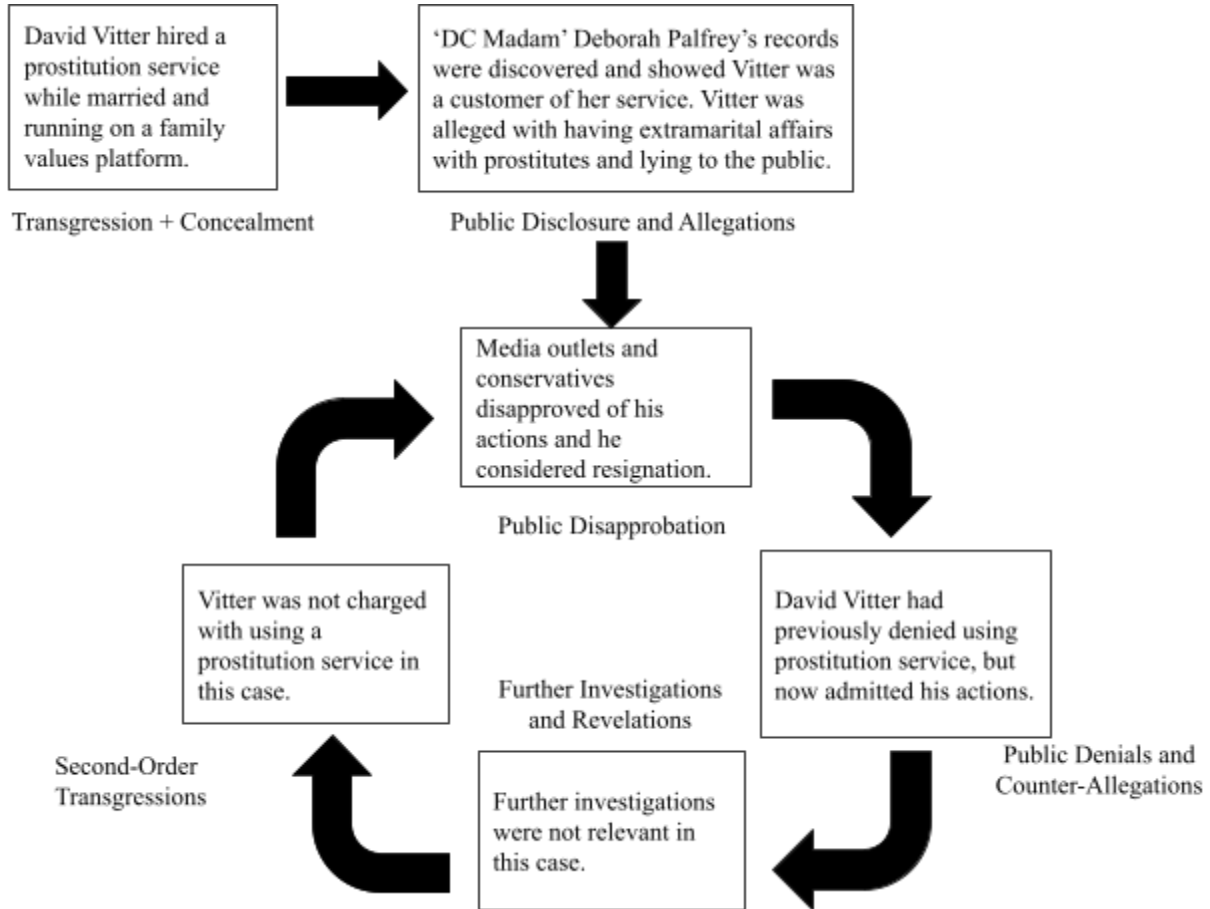
²⁴ The Associated Press. "D.C. Madam' Is Found Dead, Apparently in a Suicide (Published 2008)." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 2 May 2008, www.nytimes.com/2008/05/02/washington/02madam.html.

provided him with the “massages” he sought, he lives to see another day and has never faced the threat of prosecution. Today, he serves as head of the Indianapolis Airport Authority.²⁵

Randall Tobias is just one of the many politicians shown to be hypocritical and callous in his personal life despite outward proclamations of staunch beliefs in maintaining wholesome, conservative family values. His refusal to provide to the very women who he regularly associated with showed his true nature of wanting to keep these types of women silent and oppressed. He also contradictorily preached abstinence and did not encourage condom use for the prevention of infectious, potentially life-threatening sexually transmitted diseases like HIV and AIDS. This suggests an even more selfish, careless aspect of his integrity and character that would prompt such heavy public outrage and would necessitate his removal from that office. Clearly incompetent to hold his position, Tobias provides an excellent example of how character assessments are still relevant in deciding a candidate’s fitness for office.

²⁵ Kirchick, James. “The Tragedy of Deborah Jeane Palfrey.” *POLITICO*, 15 May 2008, www.politico.com/story/2008/05/the-tragedy-of-deborah-jeane-palfrey-010348.

Figure 4: Chart of Steps of Scandal in Relation to David Vitter's Case



Bill Clinton (POTUS 1993-2001)

Bill Clinton was born in Hope, Arkansas in 1946. He had political aspirations from a young age and always sought to achieve great things in politics and leave a memorable legacy. He attended Georgetown University where he served as student president and interned for Senator Fulbright, an Arkansas Democrat.²⁶ He served as the Attorney General of Arkansas 1976-1978 and then Governor of Arkansas from 1978-1980 and, after losing his first re-election, regained the seat from 1982 until he ran for President of the United States in 1992.²⁷ Though Clinton experienced much pushback to many of his Democratic policies, he achieved great economic success with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which garnered him impressive approval ratings.

Bill Clinton's story of sexual scandal begins with a 1992 accusation of a 12-year extramarital affair involving the Presidential nominee and Gennifer Flowers. Gennifer Flowers was a former reporter and cabaret dancer in Arkansas. During the 1992 Presidential election season,

[r]ight before the New Hampshire primary, a supermarket tabloid called *The Star* broke a story about Gennifer Flowers, who worked for the state of Arkansas and had been a cabaret dancer. Flowers said she had engaged in a 12-year sexual relationship with Clinton. The two had met in the 1970s when she was a local reporter.

²⁶ Bill Clinton". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 Aug. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bill-Clinton>.

²⁷ Bill Clinton". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 Aug. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bill-Clinton>.

The story was based on legal documents from a lawsuit that a former state employee had filed against Clinton in which he claimed that the governor had used state resources for a series of affairs.²⁸

Clinton addressed these allegations through a television interview where he denied the multiple years affair.²⁹ Flowers attempted to sue for defamation and libel because of the character assassination performed by the Clinton campaign and the Clintons themselves. Interestingly, the story broke in 1990 when Clinton was governor of Arkansas, but the story ultimately did not break outside the small gossip circles of Little Rock when “Larry Nichols, a disgruntled former state employee in Little Rock, started a personal vendetta against Clinton and brought a damages suit against him, claiming that the governor had used state funds and resources to further his extra-marital affairs. In the deposition, Nichols named Gennifer as one of six women with whom Clinton had had relationships.”³⁰ Though this did not make national news at the time, when added with additional evidence and Gennifer Flowers’ confession, *The Star* January 1992 article “My 12 Year Affair with Bill Clinton” was able to shed some light on Clinton’s infidelity.

As of a March 2002 NBC News interview with Matt Lauer, Ms. Flowers was suing Hillary Clinton and two former advisers for defamation. When asked what is to gain through the suit, Flowers responded “Well, you know, what is a reputation worth? What is your integrity

²⁸ Zelizer, Julian. “Bill Clinton's Nearly Forgotten 1992 Sex Scandal.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 6 Apr. 2016, www.cnn.com/2016/04/06/opinions/zelizer-presidential-election-campaign-scandals-bill-clinton.

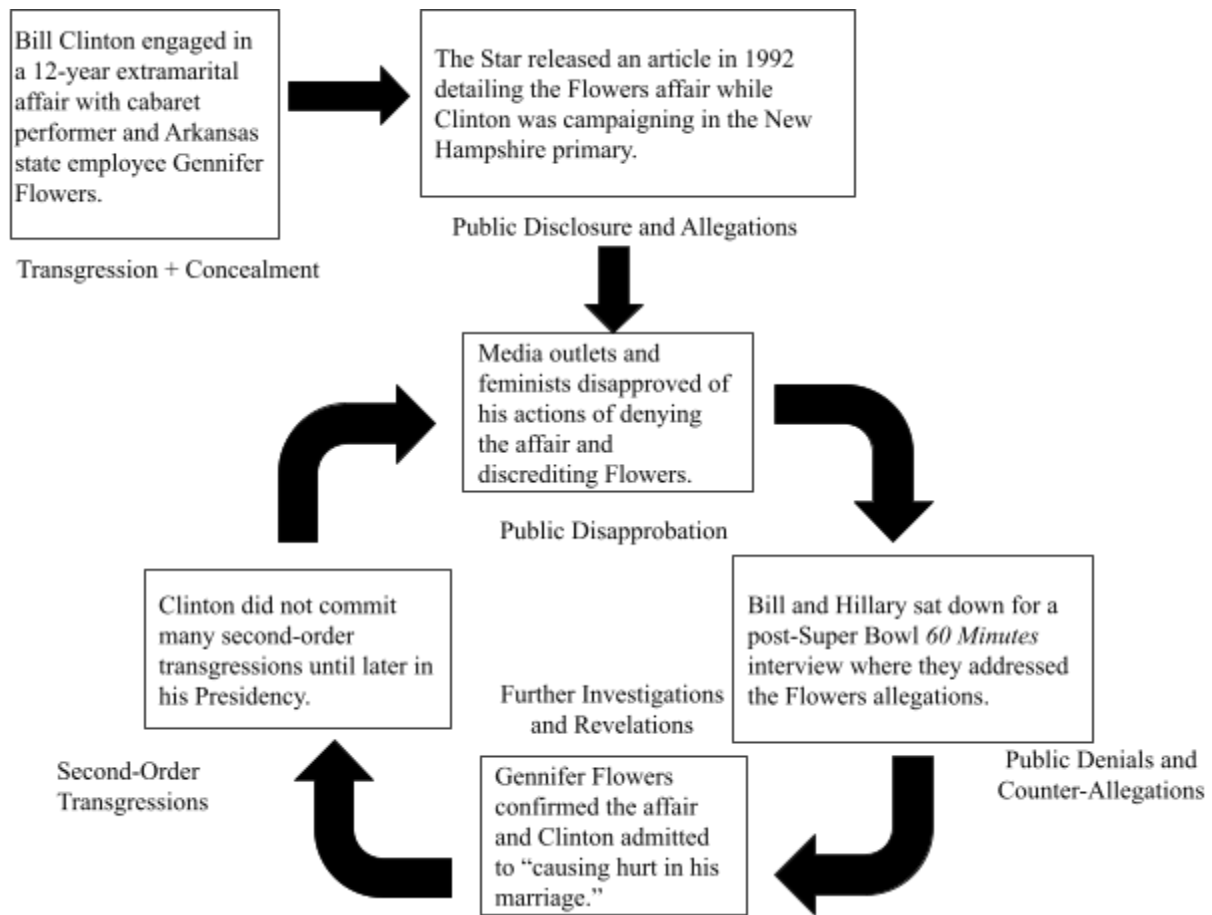
²⁹ Zelizer, Julian. “Bill Clinton's Nearly Forgotten 1992 Sex Scandal.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 6 Apr. 2016, www.cnn.com/2016/04/06/opinions/zelizer-presidential-election-campaign-scandals-bill-clinton.

³⁰ AMANDA MITCHISON. "The FIRST mistress". *The Age (Melbourne, Australia)*, February 12, 1994 Saturday. advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4P8H-NV70-TXN5-S105-00000-00&context=1516831.

worth? I believe that I should have my day in court to prove that--that I wasn't lying. They continue to call me a liar, even though Bill [Clinton] has made a partial admission of the relationship. So, you know, I--I would like to establish that once and for all."³¹ Clinton did not make an admission of the relationship until his grand jury testimony in 1998 leading into the 1999 Clinton Impeachment Trials. He would deny the affair and any sexual activity between the two for six years and two Presidential elections. Clinton went on to secure the 1992 Democratic Presidential nomination despite the *Star* article and Flowers' confession of the affair, and then the Presidency against incumbent George W. Bush.

³¹ "Gennifer Flowers discusses Bill Clinton and her life today". *NBC News Transcripts*, March 8, 2002 Friday.
advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:459H-4WS0-000S-71MK-00000-00&context=1516831.

Figure 5: Chart of Steps of Scandal in Relation to Bill Clinton's Case



Discussion

Ingredients of a Scandal

Cal Cunningham's sexual scandal was what most likely led to his election defeat in the North Carolina senatorial race. It met all of the factors for being a political-sexual scandal and caused his supporters to question his character and leadership abilities. His engagement in sexting and a physical act of sexual indiscretion violated the moral code in American society that set expectations for a man not to cheat on his wife if they are in a committed, monogamous relationship. Second, there was an element of secrecy in that Cunningham refused to ever address questions concerning the possibility of other affairs, and never outwardly admitted his involvement in the affair with Mrs. Guzman Todd. It was clear he and his campaign wanted that information to remain as confidential and unimportant to the election as possible. Third, many people disapprove of cheating in any form. Though they might condone it in their politicians in some circumstances and deem it a private matter to be dealt with by the family, they still disapprove and would not want it to affect their immediate social circles. His opponent Thom Tillis was quick to express his disapproval as well as many news outlets and numerous supporters. However, the most vocal critic was the husband of Mrs. Arlene Guzman Todd, army veteran Jeremy Todd. Todd called for Cunningham to drop out of the race and face punishment under United States military law.

Todd stated "If elected, I can only imagine how misplaced his judgment would be for the people he's charged to represent. I firmly believe Mr. Cunningham should drop out of the Senate race and ask that his behavior and actions be reviewed under the Uniform Code of Military

Justice.”³² Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, it is illegal for a man to cheat on his wife. While this matter is currently under investigation, if it is determined he was on active duty when any of the sexually inappropriate activities took place, he could face punishment. This constitutes all of the elements of scandal and illustrates how, for Mr. Cunningham, he could face more consequences than the average cheating politician. (See Figure 2)

Donald Trump’s sexual scandal is sufficiently serious for a number of reasons. First, an extramarital affair transgresses a moral code, but it is considered even more serious when there are allegations of sexual assault and misconduct. There is an implied moral code in American society, particularly among Conservatives who supported Trump, that a man should not cheat on his wife, and a man should not force himself upon a woman. This type of betrayal is not just betrayal in the marriage, but betrayal of family values. However, because of Trump’s idolization as a populist hero, there was a relative dismissal of this violation of the moral code in favor of diminishing the character of the women who were speaking out, much like in the Clinton case. Because Trump engaged in affairs with women who waited decades to come forward with their allegations, they were given less credence.

Second, the adamant denials and belittling of his accusers’ characters constitutes an element of concealment and secrecy. The contradictory statements made by Trump made them accounts less credible in the public eye. Eventually, it would come out that Trump silenced additional women whom he had consensual extramarital affairs with beyond just Marla Maples. Trump paid these women off through Non-Disclosure and “catch and kill” agreements. The

³² Valerie Edwards For Dailymail.com Associated Press. "He should drop out of the Senate race and face military justice': Husband of woman who had affair with North Carolina hopeful and reservist Cal Cunningham hits out - as Army launches investigation into him". *MailOnline*, October 8, 2020 Thursday. [advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6116-1CW1-DY4H-K3DP-00000-00&context=1516831](https://advance.lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6116-1CW1-DY4H-K3DP-00000-00&context=1516831).

payments made for signing these agreements show an element of coercion in order to keep information relating to the extramarital affairs out of the public eye.

Third, similar to the first point, many of the conservative voters who supported Mr. Trump in the 2016 US Presidential election would disapprove of these actions as they contradict traditional family and Christian values. Because there must be an element of public disapproval, there were supporters who did not approve of the affairs, nor the forcible acts of sexual violence and sexually violent commentary. The minimization of Trump's comments to Billy Bush in the unarchived 2005 *Access Hollywood* interview as just "locker room talk" with no supplementary action to back it up would later be refuted by many and wane Trump's believability in the many denials.

Fourth, non-participants in the press, politics, and many media outlets expressed their disapproval by denouncing the actions of Trump regarding his lewd comments and sexual assaults in numerous media outlets on both sides of the political spectrum. The disclosure of this information damaged the reputation of Trump, but did little to sway the support of Trumpists and those who believed in his Populist movement. (See Figure 3)

There are many components that come together to illustrate how the David Vitter case constitutes a political sex scandal. First, there must be a transgression of a society's or culture's moral code. The use of a paid prostitution service and the resulting engagement in an extramarital affair transgresses this moral code. It furthermore transgresses Vitter's own proclaimed morals as his conservative approach to heterosexual, traditional family values dictated much of his political involvement and voting patterns throughout his career. The disclosure of this information through the release of the phone records and the identification of

Mr. Vitter's identity would move this phase into the "scandal proper". So, the act itself and the initial transgression would be part of the "pre-scandal" phase of a mediated scandal.

Second, there must be an element of concealment or secrecy. Clearly, Mr. Vitter did not want this information to be made public as it could irreparably damage his career and marriage. The use of a phone record-only identification policy within Palfrey's service of Pamela Martin and Associates proves this element of discretion is necessary and desired by all clients and customers. Additionally, the earlier accusations of Vitter's involvement in the New Orleans prostitution service and his quick and adamant denial further prove his motivations in keeping any sort of morally undesirable activities hidden from public view and potential media dissemination.

Third, there must be a societal or community disapproval of the moral transgression. Many of the conservative voters who supported Vitter in his first Senatorial special election in 2007 would disapprove of his use of the prostitution service and resultant extramarital affairs as they contradict traditional family and Christian values. This is even more important as his predecessor stepped down as a result of allegations of adultery. His own allegations of adultery exaggerated the level of personal hypocrisy and set a precedent that he resign as well. However, this ended up not coming to fruition as expected. When he admitted guilt for the events at a press conference, he moved the scandal into the culmination phase of a mediated scandal. The culmination requires "an admission of guilt, a resignation, a sacking, and/or a criminal prosecution, but it can also result in a collapse of the case against the individual(s) concerned and the dissipation of the scandal."³³

³³ Thompson, John B. *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age*. Polity Press, 2008.

Fourth, non-participants must express their disapproval by denouncing the actions of Vitter. This was seen in the media by journalists like James Kirchick who condemned Vitter and the Senate ethics committee because “a week after Palfrey’s suicide, the Senate ethics committee decided not to launch an investigation into his use of the escort service. The consequences of his adultery are a matter for him and his wife, but something is seriously awry with our system of justice when Blanche Palfrey wakes up to find her daughter swinging from the rafters of a toolshed and Wendy Vitter wakes up to find her husband pontificating from the well of the United States Senate” thus illustrating journalists’ and citizens’ frustration over Vitter’s ability to stay in office and reap the benefits of being a powerful United States Senator.³⁴

Finally, the disclosure of the information usually damages the reputation of the actor involved, but this element is not necessary in order for the case to be categorized as a scandal. Though the disclosure of this information did not initially prove reputationally fatal, it ultimately proved to be the death of Vitter’s 2015 Louisiana gubernatorial campaign. David Vitter was hypocritical in the values he claimed to hold and the deceit proved to be too great of a character flaw for the Louisiana electorate - thus ending his career. The retelling of the scandal like that seen in the smear advertisements run during the gubernatorial race could constitute the final phase of a mediated scandal, the aftermath.³⁵ (See Figure 4)

Sexual scandals are scandals whose transgression of the moral norm is done through societally disapproved sexual activities. Sexual scandals like Vitter’s “involve the transgression of sexual norms and codes; they are characterized by struggles over symbolic power and resources, which can, in turn, have serious consequences for the capacity to exercise political

³⁴ Kirchick, James. “The Tragedy of Deborah Jeane Palfrey.” *POLITICO*, 15 May 2008, www.politico.com/story/2008/05/the-tragedy-of-deborah-jeane-palfrey-010348.

³⁵ Thompson, John B. *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age*. Polity Press, 2008.

power; whether they involve legal infringements varies from one case to the next.”³⁶ This case of course did involve a legal infringement through the criminalization of prostitution service like Palfrey’s service. But, the senate decided not to pursue prosecution for Vitter through the ethics committee likely because they thought the reputational damage would serve as sufficient punishment.

When Vitter ran for the “more important” office of Louisiana governor, he subjected himself to credibility tests unlike those he had to go through as an incumbent for an office deemed “less important” by the Louisiana electorate. When running for a new office, “sexual-political scandals can also serve as credibility tests for actual or aspiring political leaders. In particular social-historical contexts, they can be used as and may be seen as, occasions when the character and trustworthiness of an individual are under scrutiny. And it is perhaps not surprising that when individuals’ lives are subjected to intensive scrutiny of this kind, many emerge with some unseemly blemishes on their names” and those blemishes often highlight what a politician may do with power and privacy to conduct affairs away from public knowledge.³⁷

All of these factors together make for a comprehensive understanding of why the Vitter case unfolded the way it did. As a political sex scandal, it is a fascinating case study of how the electorate of a given populace might prioritize when they care about personal indiscretions and it is not always a pressing issue for that group. A sexual scandal may not end one person’s political career if they remain in their role of “little importance” but, when seeking to move into a role of a perceived “greater importance” to that electorate, it may be the final nail in the coffin for one’s

³⁶ Thompson, John B. *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age*. Polity Press, 2008.

³⁷ Thompson, John B. *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age*. Polity Press, 2008.

political career. This is the case with Vitter. It is unfortunate to see that not everyone suffers the consequences of one event equally, but it is the court of public opinion that ultimately decides the fate of the actors who involve themselves in these types of scandals and morally disapproved activities.

It is fairly obvious given the examples above how Bill Clinton's entanglements in sexual scandal sufficiently meet the characteristics required to be considered a scandal. As established, cheating on your wife breaks the implicit moral code. To engage in numerous affairs and be categorized as a "womanizer" by the media only exacerbates the immoral actions of engaging in an extramarital affair. There were numerous attempts to conceal the nature of Clinton's relationship with Gennifer Flowers. First, Bill and Hillary Clinton sat down with *60 Minutes* to address the rumors and downplay Bill Clinton's involvement with Ms. Flowers. There were numerous attempts to discredit Flowers and demean her profession as a cabaret performer, therefore making her seem like an untrustworthy detractor of Clinton's presidency.

Many news publications at the time called into question Clinton's ability to serve as President and not use his office for sexual gratification once these two instances were widely reported in the media. Though the affairs were a large part of the public's problem with Clinton's behavior, most did not care about Clinton's consensual affair with Flowers and did not believe her to be a credible witness against President Clinton. (See Figure 5)

Why Did Candidates Win or Lose Their Respective Cases?

News of Cal Cunningham’s sexual indiscretions broke less than a month before election day. In fact, almost 10% of votes had already been cast through absentee, early, or mail-in voting at that point. The COVID-19 Pandemic further contributed to the “late breaking effect” of the news, which may have proven to be even more pivotal in a year where there was not such early voting taking place due to social distancing and mail-in voting conditions. On October 9, 2020, CNN reported that:

More than 420,000 North Carolinians have already voted, according to the US Elections Project maintained by University of Florida political science professor Michael McDonald, potentially limiting some impact of the late-breaking scandal. But that's still just a fraction of the more than 4.6 million cast in the 2016 Senate election.

Matt Case, a clinical mental health counselor in Chapel Hill, said he sent in his ballot for Cunningham three weeks ago.

‘Does this dampen my enthusiasm for him as a leader? Most definitely,’ said Case, who also supported Cunningham's opponent Erica Smith in the Democratic primary. ‘But given the binary choice we have, he is clearly the right choice in this moment. Hopefully he will win — and we will have a better alternative next time around.’³⁸

³⁸ Rogers, Alex, and Manu Raju. “North Carolina Democrat's Sex Scandal Renews GOP Hopes of Keeping Majority despite Trump's Drag on the Ticket.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 9 Oct. 2020, www.cnn.com/2020/10/09/politics/north-carolina-senate-race-cal-cunningham-thom-tillis/index.html.

The deep divide in political ideology is one of the things cited by many for continuing to vote for Trump when it was discovered he paid off numerous women through non-disclosure agreements to prevent the public from finding out about his extramarital indiscretions. The same thing can be seen here with North Carolina, a notorious “swing state”. In the 2016 Presidential Election where Trump was victorious, he won that state by 3.6 points. Senator Tillis won by 1.6 points in 2014. In that election, Tillis beat the previous Democratic incumbent. Independent candidate Richard Gusler, a Raleigh attorney, stated his continued support for Cunningham despite his affair. Gusler told CNN he was "not happy about what Cal Cunningham did recently at all...But, I have a hard time understanding how any Trump supporter could be giving him a hard time about sex texting when the President of the United States (had) unprotected sex with a porn star, and then paid her off to keep her mouth shut.”³⁹

Despite all outward appearances, the sexual indiscretions of all the candidates who came before him had an impact on Cunningham’s own performance in his campaign and the 2020 senatorial race. There was a clear expectation for response expected by many that Cunningham and many others failed to follow. This would be an admission of the scandal, honest communication with the media and electorate, and a willingness to continue working despite the revelation. Based on several descriptions of what some voters wanted to hear from Cunningham, it seems the best example of this was President Clinton. Clinton admitted he had caused “hurt in his marriage,” agreed to a sit down interview nearly immediately after the news broke, and did not shy away from questions about the affair. Were they always true? That is not something the

³⁹ Rogers, Alex, and Manu Raju. “North Carolina Democrat's Sex Scandal Renews GOP Hopes of Keeping Majority despite Trump's Drag on the Ticket.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 9 Oct. 2020, www.cnn.com/2020/10/09/politics/north-carolina-senate-race-cal-cunningham-thom-tillis/index.html.

public can know with absolute certainty. But, he addressed the situation in a sit-down conversation rather than making a single statement and then avoiding the topic for the remainder of his campaign. Numerous media outlets reported that during an October 9, 2020 press conference, Cunningham avoided the topic of other extramarital sexual relationships four times.⁴⁰ In fact he never openly acknowledged engaging in extramarital, physical sexual relations with any women. It was his mistress Arlene Guzman Todd who admitted to meeting in person twice, with the second meeting resulting in sexual relations between the two.

Besides the lack of acknowledgement from Cunningham, it seems another misstep in the handling of this situation by his campaign was the quick pivot to attack senatorial opponent Thom Tillis in policy and the Tillis campaign's inability to respect Cunningham's request for privacy for he and his family during this time. While in an ideal situation one might want to deal with such a scandal privately, one cannot do that when less than a month out from election day. By turning to attack Tillis and his team, it did nothing to divert negative attention away from Cunningham, but continued to undermine his carefully crafted character that many concerned citizens that were interviewed described. Cunningham ran a campaign on the back of his exceptional reputation and "heart for North Carolinians." The scandal was the first thing to undermine that. His refusal to answer basic questions further eroded this construction of character, and now the turn to attack his opponent showed once again that he may not be the man whom he attempted to convince voters he was, and thus may not be trustworthy in office. In

⁴⁰ Leslie, Laura, and Matthew Burns. *Asked Four Times Whether There Are More Affairs Not Yet Known, CUNNINGHAM Declined to Say Yes or No*. 9 Oct. 2020, www.wral.com/asked-four-times-whether-there-are-more-affairs-not-yet-known-cunningham-declined-to-say-yes-or-no/19328515/.

many cases, scandals and elections are a “credibility trial period” for candidates. Through all of these actions, Cunningham’s score on the pseudo credibility test continued to depreciate.

Despite many reports that Cunningham looked likely to win the election from the beginning, this historically is not the case for political candidates who challenge incumbents. Professor Gautam Gowrisankaran at Washington University in St. Louis conducted a study that looked at historical election data from 1914 to 2004 and found that “Since 1914, incumbent U.S. senators running for reelection have won about 78 percent of the time...This is sometimes referred to as an incumbency advantage. We seek to explain the causes of the incumbency advantage, using data on the outcomes of Senate elections since 1914” and examine three potential factors in elections that lead to incumbent Senators winning more often.⁴¹ The factors - tenure, selection, and challenger quality - all pointed to incumbents typically having high favorability with voters because of familiarity, likability, and the comfortability of maintaining the status quo even though change might be better in the long run. With only 22% odds before any of the 2020 election’s factors were taken into account, perhaps it would have been better for the media to not have predicted the victory for Democrats in North Carolina so publicly. Though the race in North Carolina was tight, it was the culmination of many credibility test failures that killed Cunningham’s campaign and will likely prevent him from ever holding public office in the future.

President Bill Clinton was able to recover from the allegations of a 12-year-long extramarital affair due to a number of reasons and mitigating actions taken by the Clintons back in 1992. In combination with both Bill and Hillary’s statements made to *60 Minutes* to placate

⁴¹ Duggan, Eileen P. “Why Do Incumbent Senators Win?” *The Source*, Washington University in St. Louis, 22 Sept. 2004, source.wustl.edu/2004/09/why-do-incumbent-senators-win/.

the American people, it was in large thanks to “a relatively weak Democratic candidate pool and the public's focus on economic issues, Clinton was able to contain the damage caused by the Flowers frenzy and his presidential ship stayed afloat.”⁴²

The biggest assets Donald Trump had leading up to his bid for the Presidency in the 2016 Presidential Election were his populist ‘cult of personality’ and another scandal ridden opponent. A ‘cult of personality’ is commonly associated with dictators in Russian or Chinese history and is a concentration of all of the state’s power

in a single charismatic leader within a totalitarian state and the near deification of that leader in state propaganda. Totalitarian regimes use the state-controlled mass media to cultivate a larger-than-life public image of the leader through unquestioning flattery and praise...Leaders are lauded for their extraordinary courage, knowledge, wisdom, or any other superhuman quality necessary for legitimating the totalitarian regime. The cult of personality serves to sustain such a regime in power, discourage open criticism, and justify whatever political twists and turns it may decide to take. Among the more infamous and pervasive cults of personality in the twentieth century were those surrounding Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Francisco Franco, Chiang Kaishek, Ho Chi Minh, Kim Il Sung, Juan and Evita Peron, Pol Pot, Augusto Pinochet, Kim Jong Il, and Saddam Hussein.⁴³

⁴² “Bill Clinton and Gennifer Flowers - 1992 (Special Report: Clinton Accused).” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 1998, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/clinton/frenzy/clinton.htm.

⁴³ “Personality, Cult of” International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. *Encyclopedia.com*, www.encyclopedia.com/history/modern-europe/russian-soviet-and-cis-history/cult-personality.

Though in its most fundamental context a ‘cult of personality’ applies to a totalitarian regime, it has also been applied to American Presidents George Washington and Ronald Reagan in a more mocking and hyperbolic sense. Many claimed that, while not state controlled, GOP controlled Fox News made Trump into a dictator with access to an unchecked propaganda pipeline straight to the American people. In a publication by the University of Utah, the author claims “Fox News has become the mouthpiece of an administration that repeatedly demonstrates how little they value free speech and free press. Fox News does not hold the administration accountable for harmful policies. Instead, their hosts continue to perpetuate the image of Trump as the savior of the country. Fox News is single-handedly creating a cult of personality that, left unchecked, can lead to the first authoritarian regime in US history” and the downfall of true American democracy.⁴⁴

This cult of personality, aided by the continued support of Fox News began when Trump was campaigning for the 2016 Presidential Election and forming a conservative populist movement. Leading up to the news breaking about his involvement in numerous extramarital affairs and allegations of sexual misconduct, he was appealing to states in the rust belt who were tired of Democratic politics ruining their manufacturing industries and job prospects in the name of overseas cooperation in trade and reduced effects on climate change. Trump offered an alternative for these poor, white, working class individuals. He offered somewhere to place the blame and tangible solutions to fix the problems they were facing in job loss. One author writes that Trump and his campaign advisor Bannon were some of the only people in the entire political arena who understood the anxieties of the Midwest and the Rust Belt. Clinton’s overconfidence

⁴⁴ "Alvarado: Fox News is Creating a Trump Cult of Personality". *The Daily Utah Chronicle: University of Utah*, August 2, 2018 Thursday. advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5SY3-7KW1-JBSN-3196-00000-00&context=1516831.

in their campaign's success led her to go to major Republican states leading up to the election to try and "pad the win" ignoring those she felt were certainly voting for her on Election night.

Postmedia Breaking News writes one year after Election Day,

Bannon is the biggest thing everybody missed about 2016. It's not hard to understand why. The Bannon sketched out in Devil's Bargain is an outlandish nutter who seemed to go out of his way not to appear credible. He trafficked, and still does traffic, in views about Islam...and race...and other issues that would have been disqualifying for a major political figure in an earlier era. His political ideas were drawn from such oddball sources as online gaming and apocalyptic clash-of-civilizations philosophy.⁴⁵

The Clinton campaign's underestimation of Bannon and his knowledge of the White middle class was something that ultimately swayed the campaign in Trump's direction. He was able to turn what many thought were a select few "Trumpists" into a widespread Populist movement that was defined exclusively by Trump and his erratic behaviors. He was reinventing the meaning of Populism as the movement was picking up steam and support of the GOP and Republicans at large. Another author describes even as he "vindicated populists, Trump wasn't really following their script; he was defining...what a conservative populism meant. Sometimes that involved race-baiting and bullying and lying; sometimes it involved incompetence and corruption dressed in the language of resentment; often it meant either bog-standard Republican policies or no policy at all; always it meant playing to his base rather than trying to build a potential populist

⁴⁵ "A year later, we're still trying to figure out how Trump won - biggest mistake was thinking he couldn't". *Postmedia Breaking News*, November 8, 2017 Wednesday. advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5PX4-VXC1-JDK3-90HN-00000-00&context=1516831.

majority.”⁴⁶ Trump knew it was easier to feed this underbelly of discontent rather than try to appeal to the masses and convert those who were staunchly against this “America First” ideal to vote for him.

Trump’s opponent in the 2016 race was the wife of President Bill Clinton, another subject of sexual scandal included in this work. In running for President, she was initially tied to the scandals of old and her involvement in the painting of an angry Republican Right “out to get” her husband through weaponizing the voices of women who were lying about their involvement with the President.

The “issue of her political authenticity,” University of Maryland communications professor Shawn J. Parry-Giles wrote in her 2014 book *Hillary Clinton in the News: Gender and Authenticity in American Politics*, has been a “preoccupation” of the press that has “dogged” Clinton “from 1992 onward.”

“I don’t know that Mrs. Clinton has ever fully recovered from the difficulties of the early stages of that campaign,” said Russell Riley, a professor and co-chair of the University of Virginia’s presidential oral history program.

“All these questions—Why is she so stiff? Why is she so scripted? Why is she so cautious? Why is she so secretive?—I think it all goes back to 1992,” said

Tannen, now a professor of linguistics at Georgetown.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ross Douthat. "How Trump Ate Populism". *The New York Times* , January 26, 2021 Tuesday. [advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:61VN-9BH1-JBG3-63MX-00000-00&context=1516831](https://advance.lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:61VN-9BH1-JBG3-63MX-00000-00&context=1516831).

⁴⁷ Kruse, Michael, et al. “The TV Interview That Haunts Hillary Clinton.” *POLITICO Magazine*, 23 Sept. 2016, www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/hillary-clinton-2016-60-minutes-1992-214275/.

With the rise of the #MeToo movement, this was not a strong start. Furthermore, while serving as Secretary of State under President Obama, she was a key player in the Benghazi attacks in 2012. As Secretary of State, it was her responsibility to ensure the diplomatic consulate offices that were attacked were properly equipped for safety and security measures. Despite having requests from the consulate stating additional security measures were needed, these requests were not fulfilled and one American diplomat and three American citizens were killed - the first American diplomat killed in over 30 years.⁴⁸ The blood on her hands through her inability to protect American nationals overseas was perhaps the largest of her political scandals while in office, but was not the most discussed during the 2016 race. In addition to her missteps while Secretary of State, she also had an email leak due to using an unauthorized public email server and discussing classified government information. This information was published by WikiLeaks and launched multiple investigations through the FBI as new information became available. The latest investigation was reopened just 11 days before the 2016 Presidential Election Day and placed Clinton as the sole actor to blame in creating a threat to national security.⁴⁹ So close to the election, it was truly a fight between the two Presidential nominees as to whose scandals were worse. It was Trump's allegations of sexual misconduct and confirmed cases of extramarital sexual activity vs. Hillary Clinton's email leaks and threats to national security being investigated by the FBI. Looking back on why Clinton was not victorious like her husband, " she blamed a number of things for her loss: The FBI reopening its investigation into her emails;

⁴⁸ "Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Testifies at the Hearing of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Regarding Benghazi Attack". *CNN*, January 23, 2013 Wednesday. advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:57K3-R421-JB20-G3CN-00000-00&context=1516831.

⁴⁹ Barney Henderson and David Lawler. "FBI probes newly-discovered Hillary Clinton emails 'found during investigation into Anthony Weiner's sexting' as Trump hails news 'bigger than Watergate'". *telegraph.co.uk*, October 28, 2016 Friday. advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5M23-H1G1-JCJY-G317-00000-00&context=1516831. Accessed March 11, 2021.

WikiLeaks issuing stolen emails; something she called the ‘weaponization of information’; the media; sexism and ‘misogyny.’ It was a long list...she named — and blamed — everything except herself.”⁵⁰ Truly, it was the numerous political scandals that killed Clinton’s campaign and allowed for Trump to emerge victorious despite all odds and predictions against him. Politico wrote shortly before election night in 2016 that a Clinton victory would not be as easy as many predicted because she was “struggling with unfavorable ratings that would be historically high if it weren’t for her opponent’s being even higher. There are substantive reasons, as with any politician with a long public record, but underlying them are the same frictions that came to the fore in that *60 Minutes* interview—sentiments that, fair or not, have grown only more pronounced with Clinton’s perennial, awkward and generally unsuccessful efforts to re-introduce herself, to redefine herself.”⁵¹ Democrats simply did not like Clinton’s increasingly leftist politics, and those near the center flipped their votes to Trump as his promises of economic prosperity appealed to them. Hillary Clinton’s numerous scandals strengthened a widespread perception of elitist power in the Democratic Party that drove uncertain voters into the arms of the Republican nominee. Collectively, Trump’s own Populist ‘cult of personality’, the wave of “Trumpism”, and the unlikability and untrustworthiness of Hillary Clinton all helped him to secure his electoral victory in 2016.

David Vitter is unique in that the news of his scandal did not have a negative effect on his political candidacies until he ran for a role of greater importance within his state government. He

⁵⁰ "The Real Reasons Why Hillary Clinton Lost In 2016". *Investor's Business Daily*, May 1, 2017.

advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5NFJ-FCV1-DYTD-93T6-00000-00&context=1516831.

⁵¹ Kruse, Michael, et al. “The TV Interview That Haunts Hillary Clinton.” *POLITICO Magazine*, 23 Sept. 2016, www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/hillary-clinton-2016-60-minutes-1992-214275/.

was able to serve in the Senate for many years after the disclosure of his involvement with Ms. Palfrey's prostitution and escort service. The historical success of incumbents likely helped him to retain voter loyalty in following elections and maintain his seat in office. Though the news of his involvement broke in 2007, he subsequently won re-election by a significant margin in 2010 and served in the United States Senate until he decided to run in the Louisiana gubernatorial race in 2015. The Washington Post did a thorough investigation into why this may have happened and illustrated for the reader the mindset of the Louisiana electorate in determining the political representatives. The journalists investigated why "in 2010, he won reelection to the Senate by 19 points over a sitting Democratic member of Congress... [and] why Vitter's ties to prostitutes effectively ended his political career eight years after the incident but were seen as no big deal three years after it all happened."⁵²

Several reasons were given for this seemingly illogical occurrence. The first of which were the Louisiana voters who gave much more credence to the role of the Governor rather than their federal representatives. Louisianans want to truly know who is the governor and all of their positive and negative characteristics compared to the more "figurehead" positions of Louisiana congressional and senatorial representatives. Some cited in Cillizza's article said the Governor is more of a state leader in the eyes of the electorate than a Senator.⁵³ To them, a Senator's job is to oppose the Democrats, not lead the people in any significant capacity. The Governor is more important and therefore requires a higher level of personal integrity and exceptional moral

⁵² Cillizza, Chris. "Why Did David Vitter's Prostitute Problem Kill Him in 2015 and Not in 2010?" *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 26 Apr. 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/11/23/why-did-david-vitters-prostitution-problem-kill-him-in-2015-and-not-in-2010/.

⁵³ Cillizza, Chris. "Why Did David Vitter's Prostitute Problem Kill Him in 2015 and Not in 2010?" *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 26 Apr. 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/11/23/why-did-david-vitters-prostitution-problem-kill-him-in-2015-and-not-in-2010/.

character. The Governor has more authority over daily life for Louisianans, as seen with state policy through the COVID-19 pandemic and the handling of emergency disaster relief with Hurricanes Laura and Delta in 2020. This greater amount of within the state leads to a desire for greater moral character within such a major leader.

The second reason given for Vitter's loss was that he had much more serious, significant, and highly qualified competition in the gubernatorial race than he did in any of his senatorial races. Additionally, his opponents were quick to exploit his sexual indiscretions in debates and advertisements of their own campaigns. They began the smear campaign as early as the primaries and John Bel Edwards continued to make this a primary topic of conversation until election day. The gubernatorial candidates often had more resources at their disposal and the electorate paid more attention because of their greater concern with who serves as Governor compared to who they elect to serve in the Senate.

The third reason that was given mainly revolved around Louisiana's, at that time, fierce opposition to President Obama and his extremely liberal left-wing agenda. For the senatorial race in 2010, it was an excellent time to be a Republican incumbent. Louisiana voters wanted someone who would oppose Obama's policies and be a political adversary for Democrats on Capitol Hill. The central focus on the Louisiana electorate's agenda was "reining in Obama and keeping Democrats from a 60-vote supermajority was all that mattered. And, in a federal race — as opposed to a state one — Vitter was more able to effectively make the case that he would help block Obama's agenda while his opponent — former Rep. Charlie Melancon — would rubber-stamp that agenda."⁵⁴ This prioritized retaining a red seat in the chamber over the

⁵⁴ Cillizza, Chris. "Why Did David Vitter's Prostitute Problem Kill Him in 2015 and Not in 2010?" *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 26 Apr. 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/11/23/why-did-david-vitters-prostitution-problem-kill-him-in-2015-and-not-in-2010/.

personal indiscretions of Vitter at the time. Perhaps if there was another strong Republican who could replace him as Senator, this may have played out differently. But Louisiana could depend on his anti-Obama vote and that was all that mattered to secure his victory.

The fourth and final reason given for Vitter's loss in the 2015 Louisiana Gubernatorial Race was that John Bel Edwards was still conservative enough to gain the approval of the general public going into the final runoff election. He has a pro-gun and pro-life agenda that has previously been demonstrated as one of the most strict in the nation (as evidenced by the heartbeat bill passed in May 2019). The governor signed and passed this without much hesitation that prohibited “the abortion of an unborn human being with a detectable heartbeat,” which can occur as early as six weeks into a pregnancy, before many women know they're pregnant” and which caused fierce opposition from pro-choice activists all over the nation.⁵⁵ Basically, as long as the Democratic governor behaved like most voter's ideological conception of a Louisiana first, family values conservative, he could lead the state as its Governor.

When looking further into Vitter's political career while in the Senate, he made numerous attempts at bipartisan cooperation, quite the opposite of what The Washington Post reported Louisianans look for in a congressional and senatorial representative.

Vitter subsequently gained greater visibility by championing some of the standard causes of the Republican Party while identifying as a member of the Tea Party movement. He opposed any regulations limiting the ownership of guns and was against immigration reforms offering a path to citizenship for anyone illegally residing in the United States. He publicly advocated abstinence-only sex

⁵⁵ Kelly, Caroline. “Louisiana Governor Signs 'Heartbeat' Abortion Bill into Law.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 31 May 2019, www.cnn.com/2019/05/30/politics/louisiana-governor-signs-abortion-bill/index.html.

education and supported mandatory prayer in school. In addition, he sought to limit the ability of Native Americans to open and operate gambling casinos. In 2009 he voted against the confirmation of Hillary Clinton as secretary of state, one of only two senators to do so. At the same time, he crossed the aisle to work with Democratic colleagues on numerous issues. In 2015 he and Elizabeth Warren notably cosponsored a bill that sought to make the Federal Reserve System more transparent.⁵⁶

This effort to work on issues across the party went against the desires of a staunchly conservative vote on all issues to oppose a Democratic leadership. While his primary objectives were conservative on social and cultural issues, he appeared to economically have a moderate perspective and was willing to work on efforts to create meaningful economic reform and policy. His involvement in monetary policy and working to demystify the Federal Reserve System seemed to be aimed at helping American citizens know more of what the Fed does with taxpayer money and setting fiscal policy.

The factors I chose to focus on that may have had an effect on the electoral results of David Vitter and Cal Cunningham primarily, but also Donald Trump and Bill Clinton to an extent, include the attractiveness of a candidate, regional relationship satisfaction, and regional attitudes towards sexual betrayal through assessment of sexual morality. First, using the methods employed by Daniel Stockemer and Rodrigo Praino in their study “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Do Attractive Politicians Get a ‘Break’ When They are Involved in Scandals,” one can assess how attractiveness plays a factor in the forgiveness or dismissiveness of the public

⁵⁶ “David Vitter.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/biography/David-Vitter.

towards a politician's indiscretions, and likelihood of re-election after a scandal.⁵⁷ For their study, they utilized first and second-year college students in Canada to rate the pictures of the candidates and assign an average "attractiveness rating" out of 10 scores.⁵⁸

A decreased level of perceived attractiveness could be one reason why Vitter and Cunningham were not able to emerge from their scandals unscathed. It is impossible to prove this concretely, but it has proven to be a factor in the past and is strongly suggested to have helped public opinion of Clinton during the years long conversations focused on sexual scandals involving the President and his consensual affair with Gennifer Flowers. Contrastingly, Donald Trump had a high level of elite status and reputation for being one of the richest men in America. Bill Clinton was commonly referred to as one of the most objectively handsome Presidents. So, in some cases, though a candidate may not be conventionally attractive, many have mocked Trump leading up to the 2016 Presidential election and throughout his term for having a tan relatively orange in appearance and an ill-fitting toupée, his wealth and level of prestige may have boosted his perceived attractiveness to some voters.

Bill Clinton was perceived as attractive by many including some of his female peers while studying at Oxford University before he was the Governor of Arkansas or the President of the United States. The female friend he made during his time at Oxford University would not comment on the nature of their relationship in specific detail, she only went so far as to describe meeting him "at Rhodes house parties. He was attractive, friendly - very friendly. And like all

⁵⁷ Stockemer, Daniel, and Rodrigo Praino. "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Do Attractive Politicians Get a 'Break' When They Are Involved in Scandals?" *Political Behavior*, vol. 41, no. 3, Sept. 2019, pp. 747–767. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1007/s11109-018-9469-1.

⁵⁸ Stockemer, Daniel, and Rodrigo Praino. "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Do Attractive Politicians Get a 'Break' When They Are Involved in Scandals?" *Political Behavior*, vol. 41, no. 3, Sept. 2019, pp. 747–767. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1007/s11109-018-9469-1.

Americans then he was really worried about Vietnam...But...I'm not a blabbermouth...I'm going to be one of the few discreet women. I think all this tittle-tattle is destructive, distracting and irrelevant...I will carry the secret to the grave."⁵⁹ Women intimately involved with Mr. Clinton throughout his life found him charming, charismatic, and attractive. Even in comparing her experience to other women Clinton had affairs with, she defends President Clinton over a woman in a similar position. This, to me, suggests an ability for Clinton to charm and manipulate the many women in his wake even long after they have finished their rendezvous. This is similar to the statements made by Marla Maples, and even further the civility between Trump and former wife Ivana. The power of these men to, in some way, hypnotize the women with whom they have affairs with is truly remarkable and goes to show how they might enchant a populace in the same way.

The second factor to be examined is the regional level of relationship satisfaction and attitude towards sexual betrayal. Though the data is relatively lacking in terms of what I would like to examine for comprehension, observable data that would be sufficient for this would be the divorce rate over time in Louisiana and North Carolina, and abortion laws that demonstrate attitudes towards sexual morality in Louisiana and North Carolina. The recent legislation passed that stated that nothing in the Louisiana constitution protected the right to abortion is one of the best examples of a harsh opinion on unplanned pregnancy resulting for sexual activity. This legislation means if *Roe v. Wade* was repealed, then Louisiana would not allow abortions within their state and could potentially criminalize it as shown in former proposed legislation in Georgia

⁵⁹ "I found Bill Clinton attractive, but I'm no Monica Lewinsky"; Did the President have a special relationship with fellow student Robyn ? WEST WRITER VOWS TO TAKE HER SECRET TO THE GRAVE". *Western Daily Press*, February 26, 1998. advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:3TXH-PTH0-00J4-92P1-00000-00&context=1516831.

and Alabama. This type of legislation shows an attitude of strict admonishment for sexual activity that could result in an unwanted pregnancy.

The same type of legislation was proposed in North Carolina, but vetoed by the Governor and unable to be overruled by the State House. This shows a greater openness to differing views on sexuality in North Carolina compared to Louisiana and other southern states with more stringent anti-abortion legislation. Using information from the Guttmacher Institute, I found current rules for obtaining an abortion in both Louisiana and North Carolina. In North Carolina the following requirements are in place to obtain an abortion:

- A patient must receive state-directed counseling that includes information designed to discourage the patient from having an abortion, and then wait 72 hours before the procedure is provided.
- Health plans offered in the state's health exchange under the Affordable Care Act can only cover abortion in cases of life endangerment, or in cases of rape or incest.
- Abortion is covered in insurance policies for public employees only in cases of life endangerment, rape or incest.
- The use of telemedicine to administer medication abortion is prohibited.
- The parent of a minor must consent before an abortion is provided.
- Public funding is available for abortion only in cases of life endangerment, rape or incest.
- A patient must undergo an ultrasound before obtaining an abortion.

- An abortion may be performed at or after viability only in cases of life endangerment or severely compromised health.
- The state prohibits abortions performed for the purpose of sex selection.
- The state requires abortion clinics to meet unnecessary and burdensome standards related to their physical plant, equipment and staffing⁶⁰

The rules for Louisiana are essentially the same. There is nearly no insurance coverage for abortion procedures or medications if it provided by the state. Additionally, the large and established Catholic presence further contributes to the negative stigma surrounding access to these types of “pro-choice” operations. The Guttmacher Institute found that in Louisiana:

- Abortion would be banned if *Roe v. Wade* were overturned.
- A patient must receive state-directed counseling that includes information designed to discourage the patient from having an abortion, and then wait 24 hours before the procedure is provided. Counseling must be provided in person and must take place before the waiting period begins, thereby necessitating two trips to the facility.
- Health plans offered in the state’s health exchange under the Affordable Care Act may not provide coverage of abortion.
- The use of telemedicine to administer medication abortion is prohibited.
- The parent of a minor must consent before an abortion is provided.

⁶⁰ “State Facts About Abortion: North Carolina.” *Guttmacher Institute*, 29 Jan. 2021, www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-north-carolina#.

- Public funding is available for abortion only in cases of life endangerment, rape or incest.
- A patient must undergo an ultrasound at least 24 hours before obtaining an abortion; the provider must show and describe the image to the patient.
- An abortion may be performed at 20 or more weeks postfertilization (22 weeks after the last menstrual period) only in cases of life or severely compromised physical health, or lethal fetal anomaly. This law is based on the assertion, which is inconsistent with scientific evidence and has been rejected by the medical community, that a fetus can feel pain at that point in pregnancy.
- The state requires abortion clinics to meet unnecessary and burdensome standards related to their physical plant, equipment and staffing⁶¹

Though abortion policy is not synonymous with public opinion on sexuality, there is also significant evidence to back up the attitudes Louisianans carry about sexuality. Louisiana public schools are not allowed to offer any form of contraceptive or educate on homosexual forms of sexual activity in sexual education classes. Additionally, in 2018 Louisiana was third in the nation for births to mothers 15-19, in 2015 was 2-3 times the national average in HIV infection and AIDS diagnoses in age demographics 13-19 and 20-24, and had the second highest rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea among ages 15-19 and first in the country for cases of primary and secondary syphilis among teens 15-19 years old.⁶² These high rates show an aptitude for early engagement in risky, unprotected sexual activity. Despite this health crisis among residents, state legislation has done almost nothing to curb these statistics because of the strong attitudes towards

⁶¹ “State Facts About Abortion: Louisiana.” *Guttmacher Institute*, 29 Jan. 2021, www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-louisiana#.

⁶² “Sexual Health Education: Lift Louisiana.” *Sexual Health Education | Lift Louisiana*, liftlouisiana.org/issues/sexual-health-education.

sexual relations outside of marriage or among non-traditional groups. North Carolina is, of course, a lessened case. Their presence in the south, but not quite the “deep south” as well as their “swing state” status where they stay fairly moderate on most issues, leads to their sexual education being more comprehensive and inclusive (including required education on how to prevent HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases) and their cases of sexually transmitted diseases decreasing over time and staying lower than other areas of the country.⁶³

What do these statistics mean for the campaigns of Vitter and Cunningham? Well, for Vitter, sexual activity outside the prescribed, very traditional mold of heterosexual marriage is a taboo in Louisiana. The lack of sex education, the high rates of sexually transmitted infections, and the harsh restrictions surrounding abortion show that Louisianans care about the sexual behaviors of their neighbors and especially their political candidates. When Vitter engaged not only in an extramarital affair, but use of prostitution services to commit adultery, it was yet another layer of unacceptable sexual indiscretion in the eyes of the Louisiana electorate. Cunningham’s sexual scandal, without the inclusion of second-order transgression, was likely not a “make or break” factor in the senatorial race. Looking at the sexual education and more lax abortion laws within the state, it is clear citizens care about sexual morality, but it is not as taboo and unsavory in North Carolina for a political figure to engage in adultery as it is for a Louisiana political figure. This is not to say sexual morality did not play a role in Cunningham’s electoral defeat, but it did not play a role to the extent that it did in David Vitter’s case.

The Advocate reported that in 2011, between the initial outbreak of scandal and when Vitter ran for Governor, the marriage and divorce rate was significantly higher for men in

⁶³ CDC. “Analysis of State Health Education Laws: North Carolina.” *CDC.gov*, www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/policy/pdf/summary_report_factsheets/North_Carolina.pdf.

Louisiana, while only the divorce rate was higher for women.⁶⁴ This suggests a slightly higher level of relationship dissatisfaction than average across the country, especially among women. Chen, Mandell, and Wolf suggest that this increased level of relationship dissatisfaction means that Louisianans will be more concerned with sexual infidelity and issues that might arise as a result of it than those in areas with higher levels of relationship satisfaction.⁶⁵ Additionally, the heightened negative attitudes regarding sexual betrayal and sexual activity outside the “traditional mold” suggest a sexual scandal would be more intensely scrutinized than in another area with less traditional, negative attitudes towards sexual betrayal.⁶⁶ This is supported by my assessment of the abortion laws and sexual health information available for Louisiana. Louisiana voters are less satisfied in their relationships, have more conservative views on sexual activity, and are less informed about safe sexual practices. These factors contribute to a harsher view on non-traditional sexual behaviors, more intense scrutiny of instances of sexual betrayal, and a taboo understanding of sexual practices outside the prescribed norm within that regional society.

Using this same metric, I examined relationship satisfaction in North Carolina to see if opinions on sexual morality may have played an additional factor in the downfall of Cal

⁶⁴ Ward, Steven. “Divorce Rate in La. above Nation's.” *The Advocate*. 2011. Retrieved February 4, 2021. (https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_317b5758-550f-58c0-96cf-001c63c938ca.html).

⁶⁵ GINA MASULLO CHEN, et al. “Political Sex Scandal News Stories and Personal Fear of Betrayal: An Online Experiment.” *Northwest Journal of Communication*, vol. 45, no. 1, Spring 2017, pp. 9–36. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=128619877&site=eds-live&scope=site.

⁶⁶ GINA MASULLO CHEN, et al. “Political Sex Scandal News Stories and Personal Fear of Betrayal: An Online Experiment.” *Northwest Journal of Communication*, vol. 45, no. 1, Spring 2017, pp. 9–36. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=128619877&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Cunningham's campaign. As seen with the examination of Louisiana's sexual satisfaction, higher levels of relationship satisfaction typically lead to a more relaxed attitude towards sexual betrayal meaning voters are less likely to have an instance of extramarital sexual indiscretion change their vote, especially to a different party. I found an interactive map on census.gov, using dates collected from the 2008 and 2018, American Community Surveys found in 2018 that the marriage rate in North Carolina was not statistically higher compared to the national average, but the divorce rate was. North Carolina ranked ninth in the country for divorces at 8.6 per 1,000 women over the age of 15 and only 36th for marriages at 15.7 per 1,000 women over the age of 15.⁶⁷ This suggests an even higher level of relationship dissatisfaction in North Carolina than in Louisiana when Vitter ran for Governor. This high amount of relationship dissatisfaction, as explained with the Louisiana case study, has proven to be tied to stronger negative feelings towards sexual betrayal like Cal Cunningham's. Even though the less harsh opinions on sexual morality were found through examination of abortion laws, sexual health information, and sexual education within the state, it seems North Carolina voters care more about the betrayal of Cunningham within his marriage rather than his acts of sexual immorality. Because he was not able to uphold his marriage vows of loyalty, then he disappointed a less satisfied electorate.

These findings, in addition to those suggested by the earlier findings unique to Vitter's case, suggest that Vitter lost the gubernatorial race because of many unique cultural beliefs held by the Louisiana electorate. The citizens firmly believe in traditional family values, balanced with opposition to liberal left-wing policies on the federal level. Personal relationship dissatisfaction and widespread religious, conservative beliefs lead to a negative opinion of

⁶⁷ Bureau, U.S. Census. "How State Marriage and Divorce Rates Stack Up." *The United States Census Bureau*, 18 Aug. 2020, www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/02/how-state-marriage-and-divorce-rates-stack-up.html.

sexuality and sexual indiscretions more extreme than they might in another region. Louisianans value the role of the Governor, who has more “direct” control over day-to-day activities, over a federal representative whose purpose is to stand up for Louisiana beliefs, protect economic interests, and enforce a moral agenda whether or not that candidate lives up to it on their own. To citizens of Louisiana, a hypocrite in the House of Representatives or Senate pales in comparison to a hypocrite in the State Capitol Chambers.

Cal Cunningham ran in an area with not as many unique cultural specifications the electorate was looking for in their political candidates. Arguably, in states without strong political party voting patterns, there is often a better selection of candidates to choose from. The races are more competitive and national political bodies like the GOP and DNC pour more resources into these “battleground states” with electoral college votes and Senate seats that could determine the outcome of an election. So, while Vitter was able to coast by for the time he was a Senator, this was not the case with Cunningham. Running for the same position, the electorate scrutinized him much more closely in a race he was predicted to win nearly until Election Day.⁶⁸ Battleground states have their own culture unlike the patterns established in solid red states like Louisiana or solid blue states like New York. They have a pattern and history of competition and unpredictability. Any misstep could cost the election for a candidate. In this case, the missteps were numerous with Cunningham. Incumbent President Donald Trump (Republican) ended up winning the state’s Presidential vote by 1.3 points, Incumbent Senator Thom Tillis (Republican) won the Senatorial race over Cal Cunningham by 1.8 points, and Incumbent Governor Roy

⁶⁸ Rogers, Alex, and Manu Raju. “North Carolina Democrat’s Sex Scandal Renews GOP Hopes of Keeping Majority despite Trump’s Drag on the Ticket.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 9 Oct. 2020, www.cnn.com/2020/10/09/politics/north-carolina-senate-race-cal-cunningham-thom-tillis/index.html.

Cooper (Democrat) won the gubernatorial election by 4.5 points.⁶⁹ In this case, it seems the largest prevailing factor in the North Carolina rate was the high rate of incumbent success. It seems that the 78% of the time incumbents retained their seats proved successful once again November 2020 in North Carolina, and for Democrats who hoped to flip the Presidential and Senatorial votes, it was simply not enough to overcome the major history of incumbent successes.

⁶⁹ NBC News. “North Carolina Senate Election Results 2020: Live Results and Polls.” *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 26 Feb. 2021, www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-elections/north-carolina-senate-results.

Conclusion

All of these candidates had a unique path to Election Day. Two of the candidates, Trump and Cunningham, had late breaking scandals with different results. Trump was able to secure a Presidential victory over his other scandal ridden opponent, but Cunningham was unable to defeat the incumbent Thom Tillis in a very tight senatorial race in North Carolina. President Clinton was able to evade serious reputational harm during the elections because of his charisma and effective economic policies, but eventually had to stand before the court of public opinion and the Senate during the 1999 Impeachment Trials. David Vitter had to appeal to an audience that had a higher set of character prescriptions for the job of Governor compared to the role of Senator. Many factors came into play in each of these cases. Unlikable opponents, harsh regional attitudes about sexual betrayal, perceived levels of charisma and attractiveness, economic conditions at the time of the election, and many others all carried with them varying levels of influence in determining the outcome of the election for each candidate. Through the examination of each of these cases, it seems that the paradox of the “lesser of two evils” is usually the truest predictor of who may win an election. Of course, this measure is subjective, but it seemed to be the primary reasoning by voters for voting differently than how they were predicted to and swaying the results of an election either in favor or against the candidate in question.

References

"A year later, we're still trying to figure out how Trump won - biggest mistake was thinking he couldn't". *Postmedia Breaking News*, November 8, 2017 Wednesday.

advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5PX4-VXC1-JDK3-90HN-00000-00&context=1516831.

Access Hollywood Staff. "Access Hollywood Archival Footage Reveals Vulgar Trump

Comments From 2005: Access Online." *Access Hollywood*, Access Hollywood, 8 Oct. 2016,

accessonlinefrontprod.ao.apps.nbcuni.com/articles/access-hollywood-archival-footage-reveals-vulgar-trump-comments-2005.

"Alvarado: Fox News is Creating a Trump Cult of Personality". *The Daily Utah Chronicle: University of Utah*, August 2, 2018 Thursday.

advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5SY3-7KW1-JBSN-3196-00000-00&context=1516831.

The Associated Press. "D.C. Madam' Is Found Dead, Apparently in a Suicide (Published 2008)."

The New York Times, The New York Times, 2 May 2008,

www.nytimes.com/2008/05/02/washington/02madam.html.

Barney Henderson and David Lawler. "FBI probes newly-discovered Hillary Clinton emails

'found during investigation into Anthony Weiner's sexting' as Trump hails news 'bigger than Watergate'". *telegraph.co.uk*, October 28, 2016 Friday.

advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:
:5M23-H1G1-JCJY-G317-00000-00&context=1516831.

Benen, Steve. "Years Later, the 'D.C. Madam' Scandal Is Relevant Once More." *MSNBC*,
NBCUniversal News Group, 1 Oct. 2020,
[www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/years-later-the-dc-madam-scandal-relevant-once-
more-msna823936](http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/years-later-the-dc-madam-scandal-relevant-once-more-msna823936).

Bill Clinton". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 Aug. 2020,
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bill-Clinton>.

"Bill Clinton and Gennifer Flowers - 1992 (Special Report: Clinton Accused)." *The Washington
Post*, WP Company, 1998,
www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/clinton/frenzy/clinton.htm.

Board, Editorial. "Explain Yourself, Cal Cunningham." *Charlotte Observer*, 6 Oct. 2020,
www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/editorials/article246256640.html.

Bureau, U.S. Census. "How State Marriage and Divorce Rates Stack Up." *The United States
Census Bureau*, 18 Aug. 2020,
[www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/02/how-state-marriage-and-divorce-rates-stack-up.
html](http://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/02/how-state-marriage-and-divorce-rates-stack-up.html).

CDC. "Analysis of State Health Education Laws: North Carolina." *CDC.gov*,
www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/policy/pdf/summary_report_factsheets/North_Carolina.pdf.

Cillizza, Chris. "Why Did David Vitter's Prostitute Problem Kill Him in 2015 and Not in 2010?"

The Washington Post, WP Company, 26 Apr. 2019,

www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/11/23/why-did-david-vitters-prostitution-problem-kill-him-in-2015-and-not-in-2010/.

"David Vitter." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.,

www.britannica.com/biography/David-Vitter.

"Decades-Old Housing Discrimination Case Plagues Donald Trump." *NPR*, NPR, 30 Sept. 2016,

www.npr.org/2016/09/29/495955920/donald-trump-plagued-by-decades-old-housing-discrimination-case.

Duggan, Eileen P. "Why Do Incumbent Senators Win?" *The Source*, Washington University in

St. Louis, 22 Sept. 2004, source.wustl.edu/2004/09/why-do-incumbent-senators-win/.

Duignan, Brian. "Donald Trump". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 Jan. 2021,

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Donald-Trump>. Accessed 3 March 2021.

"Gennifer Flowers discusses Bill Clinton and her life today". *NBC News Transcripts*, March 8,

2002 Friday.

advance.lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:459H-4WS0-000S-71MK-00000-00&context=1516831.

GINA MASULLO CHEN, et al. "Political Sex Scandal News Stories and Personal Fear of

Betrayal: An Online Experiment." *Northwest Journal of Communication*, vol. 45, no. 1,

Spring 2017, pp. 9–36. *EBSCOhost*,

search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=128619877&site=eds-live&scope=site.

"I found Bill Clinton attractive, but I'm no Monica Lewinsky'; Did the President have a special relationship with fellow student Robyn ? WEST WRITER VOWS TO TAKE HER SECRET TO THE GRAVE". *Western Daily Press*, February 26, 1998.

advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:3TXH-PTH0-00J4-92P1-00000-00&context=1516831.

Kelly, Caroline. "Louisiana Governor Signs 'Heartbeat' Abortion Bill into Law." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 31 May 2019, www.cnn.com/2019/05/30/politics/louisiana-governor-signs-abortion-bill/index.html.

Kirchick, James. "The Tragedy of Deborah Jeane Palfrey." *POLITICO*, 15 May 2008, www.politico.com/story/2008/05/the-tragedy-of-deborah-jeane-palfrey-010348.

Leslie, Laura, and Matthew Burns. *Asked Four Times Whether There Are More Affairs Not Yet Known, CUNNINGHAM Declined to Say Yes or No*. 9 Oct. 2020, www.wral.com/asked-four-times-whether-there-are-more-affairs-not-yet-known-cunningham-declined-to-say-yes-or-no/19328515/.

"Meet Cal." *Cal Cunningham, Democrat for U.S. Senate*, www.californc.com/meet-cal/.

NBC News. "North Carolina Senate Election Results 2020: Live Results and Polls." *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 26 Feb. 2021, www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-elections/north-carolina-senate-results.

New York Post. "Marla & The 'Best' Boast." *PressReader.com - Your Favorite Newspapers and Magazines.*, 22 Jan. 2017,

www.pressreader.com/usa/new-york-post/20170122/282634622326860.

"Personality, Cult of" International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. *Encyclopedia.com*,

www.encyclopedia.com/history/modern-europe/russian-soviet-and-cis-history/cult-personality.

"The Real Reasons Why Hillary Clinton Lost In 2016". *Investor's Business Daily*, May 1, 2017.

advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5NFJ-FCV1-DYTD-93T6-00000-00&context=1516831.

Rogers, Alex, and Manu Raju. "North Carolina Democrat's Sex Scandal Renews GOP Hopes of Keeping Majority despite Trump's Drag on the Ticket." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 9 Oct. 2020,

www.cnn.com/2020/10/09/politics/north-carolina-senate-race-cal-cunningham-thom-tillis/index.html.

Ross Douthat. "How Trump Ate Populism". *The New York Times*, January 26, 2021 Tuesday.

advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:61VN-9BH1-JBG3-63MX-00000-00&context=1516831.

"Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Testifies at the Hearing of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Regarding Benghazi Attack". *CNN*, January 23, 2013 Wednesday.

advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:57K3-R421-JB20-G3CN-00000-00&context=1516831.

“Sexual Health Education: Lift Louisiana.” *Sexual Health Education | Lift Louisiana*,
liftlouisiana.org/issues/sexual-health-education.

“State Facts About Abortion: North Carolina.” *Guttmacher Institute*, 29 Jan. 2021,
www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-north-carolina#.

“State Facts About Abortion: Louisiana.” *Guttmacher Institute*, 29 Jan. 2021,
www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-louisiana#.

Stockemer, Daniel, and Rodrigo Praino. “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Do Attractive Politicians Get a ‘Break’ When They Are Involved in Scandals?” *Political Behavior*, vol. 41, no. 3, Sept. 2019, pp. 747–767. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1007/s11109-018-9469-1.

Taylor, Kate. “Porn Star Stormy Daniels Is Taking a Victory Lap after Michael Cohen's Guilty Plea. Here's a Timeline of Trump's Many Marriages and Rumored Affairs.” *Business Insider*, Business Insider, 25 Aug. 2018,
www.businessinsider.com/trump-melania-stormy-daniels-affairs-marriages-timeline-2018-3#trump-wasnt-single-for-long-in-1998-he-met-model-melania-knauss-the-pair-married-in-january-2005-8.

Thompson, John B. *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age*. Polity Press, 2008.

Twohey, Megan, and Michael Barbaro. “Two Women Say Donald Trump Touched Them Inappropriately.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 12 Oct. 2016,
www.nytimes.com/2016/10/13/us/politics/donald-trump-women.html.

Valerie Edwards For Dailymail.com Associated Press. "He should drop out of the Senate race and face military justice': Husband of woman who had affair with North Carolina hopeful and reservist Cal Cunningham hits out - as Army launches investigation into him". *MailOnline*, October 8, 2020 Thursday.
advance-lexis-com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6116-1CW1-DY4H-K3DP-00000-00&context=1516831.

"VITTER, David." *US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives*,
history.house.gov/People/Listing/V/VITTER,-David-(V000127)/.

Ward, Steven. "Divorce Rate in La. above Nation's." *The Advocate*. 2011. Retrieved February 4, 2021.
(https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_317b5758-550f-58c0-96cf-001c63c938ca.html).

The Washington Post. *Special Report: Clinton Accused Impeachment Trial Transcriptions*.
www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/clinton/stranscripts.htm.

Zelizer, Julian. "Bill Clinton's Nearly Forgotten 1992 Sex Scandal." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 6 Apr. 2016,
www.cnn.com/2016/04/06/opinions/zelizer-presidential-election-campaign-scandals-bill-clinton.