



Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, K., Allen, N., and Birch, S. (2014) *No sex scandals please, we're French: French attitudes towards politicians' public and private conduct*. *West European Politics*, 37 (5). pp. 867-885. ISSN 0140-2382

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Deposited on: 21 August 2014

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**No sex scandals please, we're French:
French attitudes towards politicians' public and private conduct**

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ABSTRACT: The notion of distinct 'public' and 'private' spheres underpins much normative and practical engagement with political misconduct. What is less clear is whether citizens draw distinctions between misdemeanours in the 'public' and 'private' spheres, and whether they judge these in systematically different ways. This paper draws on original survey data to explore French attitudes to political misconduct. France is a country where citizens are often said to be particularly relaxed about politicians' private affairs, but there has been little empirical evidence for this proposition. Our findings demonstrate that French citizens draw a clear distinction between politicians' public and private transgressions, and are more tolerant of the latter. Our findings further demonstrate that attitudes toward public and private conduct have a differential impact on other political attitudes including trust in politicians and perceptions of misconduct.

Introduction

In the universe of political misconduct, some types of behaviour seem to have a greater moral weight than others. Of particular consequence in modern liberal democracies is the distinction between misbehaviour in the public and private spheres. Thus certain departures by politicians from socially-acceptable standards, such as extra-marital affairs or the imaginative use of mobile-phone cameras to take and transmit intimate photographs, are sometimes seen to involve 'private' misdemeanours that do not necessarily affect their performance in their official roles (Peters and Welch, 1989). Conversely, there are other 'public' forms of misconduct, such as the misuse of official allowances or acceptance of bribes, that conflate politicians' private interests with their public office (Nye, 1967). Misconduct that falls into the second camp is generally held to be more significant on normative grounds. For this reason, such misconduct also tends to preoccupy official ethics regulators, whose remits generally exclude politicians' private transgressions. What is less clear, however, is the extent to which citizens draw distinctions between public and private misdemeanours in this way; if so, where they draw the line between the two; and whether the nature of politicians' conduct systematically affects what the public considers acceptable.

France is a particularly interesting case in this respect because the French public is famously tolerant of politicians' private misdemeanours (Bornstein, 1990; Frears, 1988; Kuhn, 2004; Kuhn, 2007). French politics have been afflicted by party finance and other 'public' scandals since the 1980s. The most recent examples include the ongoing Bettencourt affair over illegal party finance and a string of scandals over politicians' tax evasion.¹ Yet, until recently, there had been surprisingly few sex scandals of the sort witnessed in the United States in the 1990s and 2000s. This tendency was attributed not to a lack of suitable material but rather to the proverbial French respect of politicians' right to privacy. However, there has so far been little empirical evidence to support the supposition that French citizens draw a clear distinction between politicians' 'public' and 'private' conduct. And even if this is true, it is not clear where they draw the line between private transgressions and public misconduct, and how such distinct perceptions affect broader political attitudes.

Beyond shedding light on France's national 'ethical culture', answering such questions also has a wider significance in the face of current concerns about levels of political trust across the liberal democratic world (Hetherington 2005; Norris 2011). Citizens in Europe and North America appear to be increasingly exercised by the integrity and conduct of their politicians. While political trust is partly a reflection of individuals' political, partisan and ideological judgements, it is generally accepted that low levels of trust are also at least partially a result of disillusionment with politicians' perceived standards of conduct (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003; Maier, 2011). Whenever reports emerge of elected representatives abusing their official allowances, embezzling funds, or mixing business interest and public duties, citizens are thought to become more cynical not just about the politicians in question but also potentially about political institutions and the entire political class. But politicians' private conduct is also a matter of extensive media coverage, and it is quite possible that press or internet stories of politicians' sexual exploits, drunken exuberance, plagiarised doctoral degrees or other private foibles, weaken at least some citizens' confidence in their elected fitness for office.

Using original survey data that was collected in France in January 2013, this paper addresses some of these questions by painting a detailed picture of French attitudes towards politicians' conduct. The next section introduces the origins and different facets of the public/private distinction. The following section explores the French case in fuller detail. After the survey-based approach is outlined, the fourth section presents the results, which clearly indicate that French perceptions of politicians' wrongdoing are based on sharp public/private distinction that, in turn, influences many other political attitudes.

The public and the private in political thought and practice

The distinction between what is public and what is private is 'one of the "grand dichotomies" of Western thought' (Weintraub, 1997: 1). People talk of the public and private sectors, for example, public and private law, or public and private interests. The distinction between public and household affairs can be traced as far back as Aristotle's *Politics*, but the modern separation of a public, or political, sphere which is seen as distinct from the private sphere

arose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Influenced by classical republican thought, natural rights philosophers such as John Locke wished to carve out a public realm that was distinct from the personal whims of rulers, whilst simultaneously protecting the citizens' private life from unwanted state intrusion (Horwitz, 1982). In one commentator's words, 'For classical republicans, 'the public was the realm where disinterested, rational, virtuous men should serve the common good, joining together as equals; the private was the family and sexual relations, governed by hierarchy, emotions and personal interests.' (Clark, 2004: 11).

Modern theorists such as Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas conceived of a public space of deliberation and political action where individuals come together and take on a public function (Weintraub, 1997). As a key feature of the modern distinction, the actual persons holding public office are separated from official functions and institutions as such. Thus, politicians are supposed to pursue the public interest, whatever it may be, and not their interests as private persons. When this distinction is blurred and politicians pursue their private interests whilst in public office, this behaviour is typically defined as corrupt (Warren, 2004).

To be sure, there are many overlaps between public and private practices and resources (Wolfe, 1997; Allen and Birch, 2011). Feminists in particular have rejected a distinction that designated love, the family and the home as private and relegated women to this domestic sphere, while denying them any influence over the public sphere and the political. Moreover, the feminist rallying cry 'the personal is political' drew attention to the fact that the private sphere and all its implications for gender roles and power relationships should also be the subject of political debate (Holmes, 2000). Part of the feminist backlash led to a more critical - and more public - examination of sexual relationships, including those of public figures and politicians (Holmes, 2000: 308).

Thus, since the 1970s, many aspects of politicians' lives such as their finances, their health or their family life, have gradually become subject to greater public scrutiny than those of ordinary citizens (Cooper and Whittle, 2009). It is sometimes argued that this scrutiny is

necessary to defend the public interest. Accordingly, if a politician commits an illegal act under the cover of privacy, for example, then journalists have a right to investigate, and public prosecutors have a duty to take action (Cooper and Whittle, 2009).

However, commentators are divided over just how far this scrutiny can go in the name of the public interest. For example, two journalists have argued that 'If, in an investigation, links are shown to exist between the public and the private, then the latter is a legitimate area of inquiry by the news media.' (Cooper and Whittle, 2009: 76-77). For example, a politician who is unwell may be unable to discharge his or her formal duties. Conversely, sex scandals that have no link to the politician's public role, are not seen as a legitimate area of inquiry. Such scandals can all too easily be manipulated for political ends, to slander a political opponent or to distract from more important political issues (Clark, 2004: 3).

Conversely, others have argued that citizens are entitled to as much information as possible about political candidates to enable them to judge whether someone is fit for office (Elliot, 1995; Galston, 1999). Accordingly, politicians must show moral as well as political leadership. By lying about an aspect of their private lives, for example, they may erode citizens' trust not just in individual politicians but also in political institutions more generally (Bok, 1999). It has also been argued that politicians' 'private' behaviour tells us much about their character and that, therefore, citizens have a right to find out about this behaviour (Galston, 1999: 1201). Thus, media exposure of politicians' hypocrisy - as when an adulterous politician reprimands another for a lack of family values - can be seen as legitimate (Cooper and Whittle, 2009; Allen, 1999).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that citizens in many Western democracies care more about politicians' public wrongdoing than about their family or love lives. For example, the 1998 Lewinsky affair, probably the most famous sex scandal in American politics, suggested that Americans' judgments of politicians are not easily influenced by such scandals: as more and more sordid claims were made about Bill Clinton's affair with his intern, his job performance ratings remained stubbornly high and even increased at one point. Commentators explained

this apparent inconsistency by arguing that the American public considered the President's actions to be his own private business and that they were quite distinct from his performance in office (Miller, 1999; Shah et al., 2002; Zaller, 1998), though other factors such as a thriving economy also worked in the President's favour.

Similarly, a survey conducted in the UK every other year since 2004 asks respondents to name the most important criteria of conduct for MPs. The results indicate that respondents prioritise criteria that relate mostly to politicians' conduct in office such as truth-telling, dedication to doing a good job for the public, or making sure public money is used wisely. Consistently more than a third of respondents, and sometimes more than half, identify these as important. 'Setting a good example in their private lives' always comes in tenth, or last, place, though the percentage of respondents who felt this was the most important criterion doubled from six in previous years to twelve in 2010 (CSPL, 2011: 21). These figures suggest that citizens are willing to draw a line between politicians' private and public lives.

However, some private and public misdemeanours overlap, and it is not clear where citizens draw the line between what is public and private, and between what is acceptable practice and what is not. What, for example, would people make of a politician seducing a person who is dependent on him? Most people would probably disapprove of a politician who uses her influence to help out a family member, but what about a friend or a constituent? Are politicians entitled to lie to the public in order to protect a secret such as their sexuality or their deteriorating health?

No sex scandals please, we're French

France makes for an excellent case to examine popular perceptions of the distinction between public and private. The French Fifth Republic has certainly had its share of public scandals, or 'political corruption' (Fay, 1995b; Williams, 1970; Mény, 1997). These have largely revolved around questionable party finance (Mény, 1996; Pujas and Rhodes, 1999;

Ruggiero, 1996), but concerns have also been raised over favouritism and clientelism (Chiche et al., 2010), tax fraud and embezzlement (Shields, 2006).

Several laws have been passed to prevent corruption (Fay, 1995b), but they seem to have had little effect. One commentator even speaks of 'a corruption so institutionalised as to have become almost unremarkable' (Shields, 2006: 123). So urgent was the sense of crisis that François Hollande was elected as President in 2012 on the promise that he would create an 'exemplary Republic'.

While public corruption scandals abound, there have until recently been few sex scandals in France. The French public is said to be tolerant of politicians' private but not of their public wrongdoing (Frears, 1988; Bornstein, 1990). By 2013, there had been hardly any scandals over politicians' extramarital affairs or other forms of private misdemeanour. Probably the most famous example is that of François Mitterrand, French President between 1981 and 1995. Mitterrand was a well-known womaniser who had a daughter with his long-standing mistress, both of whom lived in a flat in the Élysée Palace. While this was known to the French media, the press maintained a 'coalition of silence' (Pujas and Rhodes, 1999: 56) around this aspect of his private life and focused on Mitterrand's public functions instead (Kuhn 2004). There are many other examples, but suffice it to say that many French politicians, and especially male politicians, have had adulterous relationships and pride themselves on their virility (Deloire and Dubois, 2006; Sciolino, 2011).

There are several reasons for this pronounced public/private divide in French political culture. First, the 1970 'law to reinforce the guarantee of individual rights of citizens' gives every citizen a legally enforceable right to respect of their private lives (Kuhn, 2007: 27). Second, France does not have a tabloid press that would make disclosure of politicians' private lives its main mission. In fact, the so-called *journalisme de révérence* (Halimi, 2005) was often complicit in hushing up politicians' private affairs. Scholars have argued that the media were either under direct government control or self-censoring in their reporting practices (Frears, 1988; Kuhn, 2007). Finally, there is a taboo against voyeurism that leads to an elevated

tolerance among the French of politicians' private lives. As one commentator put it, there is an 'unwillingness on the part of the public to regard certain aspects of politicians' private lives - such as sexual orientation, marital status or religious practice - as relevant criteria for the evaluation of their fitness to hold public office.' (Kuhn, 2007: 185-6).

However, recent events raised question marks about the public/private distinction in French political culture. Probably the main focusing event was the 2011 'DSK affair' in which IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who had also been billed as a favourite in the 2012 presidential elections, was charged with sexual assault of a hotel maid and arrested in New York. Even before the affair, Strauss-Kahn had had a reputation as a serial womaniser who would happily seduce women working for him or journalists interviewing him, and who would not easily take no for an answer. However, the fact that a politician might attempt rape came as a shock. The scandal provoked a public debate over whether the cult of privacy was enabling politicians not just to sleep around but also to abuse their power over others in a criminal fashion. Indeed, once the topic had been broached, France was hit by a flood of sexual harassment claims, often dating back years. Even after the charges against Strauss-Kahn were dropped, the DSK case 'changed the political and legal landscape, which could influence how France deals with cases of sexual harassment in the future.' (Saguy, 2012: 90).²

A changing media landscape is the second reason to suspect that the sharp public/private distinction might be eroding. Investigative journalism has flourished, though it has focused more on public forms of misdemeanour such as the misuse of party funds (Chalaby, 2004; Pujas and Rhodes, 1999; Kuhn, 2004). At the same time, politicians increasingly use other media outlets such as popular magazines or talk shows to construct a certain image of themselves as private persons (Kuhn, 2004; Kuhn, 2007; Neveu, 2005). Faced with increasing pressures on politicians to reveal aspects of their private lives such as their financial standing, the leader of the National Assembly Claude Bartolone went so far as to call France's a 'paparazzi democracy' (Le Figaro, 2013).

Against this shifting background, it is worth examining perceptions of politicians' conduct in some depth. The next section introduces the survey instruments used to this end, while the section that follows presents a snapshot of French public opinion.

Methodological approach

In order to explore French attitudes towards their politicians' conduct, an online survey was conducted among French adults in January 2013 as part of the French Co-operative Campaign Analysis Project (FCCAP). The survey included a range of vignettes designed to determine where the French draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on the part of their politicians. The question they were asked read: 'How acceptable would you rate the following behaviour? Please give your answer on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means 'totally acceptable' and 10 means 'totally unacceptable'?

- a) A member of the National Assembly uses parliamentary facilities while raising donations for his party.
- b) A senator recommends an out-of-work friend for a government job.³
- c) A minister awards a government contract to a campaign contributor without considering other contractors.
- d) A senator makes repeated attempts to stop a public prosecutor investigating a friend's business activities.
- e) A presidential candidate lies repeatedly when asked in public about his sexuality.
- f) A member of the National Assembly seduces his intern.
- g) A minister uses a government-owned aircraft to fly down to the Riviera with his wife for a weekend break.
- h) A senator tells the editor of a national tabloid that he will support an official inquiry into the tabloid's reporting practices if the newspaper prints details of his chronic illness.
- i) A senator is married and has an affair with another man/woman.'

The final scenario, 'affair', came in two variants. Half the respondents were presented with the scenario 'A male senator [*un sénateur*] is married and has an affair with another woman', while the other half were presented with the scenario 'A female senator [*une sénatrice*] is married and has an affair with another man.' Some of these forms of wrongdoing were designed to reflect clear 'public' wrongdoing. For example, using public facilities to raise campaign funds, awarding public contracts to campaign contributors or interfering with judicial authorities' investigations clearly involve an abuse of office or political influence. Other forms of behaviour, such as recommending a friend for a government job, using state resources such as a government aircraft or exerting influence over the press are all in the grey zone that involves an abuse of public office for private ends (Heidenheimer, 1970). Others were designed to indicate transgressions of a 'private' nature involving politicians' sex lives or health. It should also be noted that these scenarios differ in terms of their legality. 'Public prosecutor', 'campaign contributor', 'Riviera' and 'tabloid' are all illegal in France. 'Parliamentary facilities' is a borderline case. Conversely, 'government job', 'intern', 'sexuality' and 'affair' may strike many as dishonest but are not technically illegal.

Vignettes such as these have long been used in survey research because they are a useful tool to make abstract concepts more real for survey respondents (Alexander and Becker, 1978; Finch, 1987). They permit comparison of people's responses to different scenarios. At the same time, one has to bear in mind that survey responses are not only shaped by respondents' ethical judgments but also by the choice and wording of scenarios (Converse and Presser, 1986). The contextual information contained in scenarios will shape how different respondents understand and react to them (Frohlich and Oppenheimer, 2000). By presenting people with a variety of different situations, we have gone some way toward mitigating such contextual effects.

Additionally, recent events and how they were reported in the media are likely to have an influence on people's ethical judgments (Zaller, 1992; Zaller, 1998). At the time the survey was carried out, corruption was high on the agenda in France. As mentioned above, the 2012 presidential election was fought at least partially over corruption, and winning candidate

François Hollande ran on a 'cleaner politics' platform that promised an 'exemplary' or 'irreproachable' republic. Hollande therefore raised some eyebrows when he nominated Jean-Marc Ayrault, who had in 1997 been fined and given a suspended jail sentence for favouritism, as Prime Minister (Duvert, 2012). Hollande also appointed a 'commission on the moralisation of political life' headed by former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin.

The analysis presented here will explore the extent of French respondents' intolerance of these different forms of behaviour. In particular, it will determine where they draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Differences between respondents can be explained through personal convictions. The way that respondents view ordinary people's conduct, or what one might call 'personal ethics', should also have an affect on how they perceive politicians' wrongdoing: 'It stands to reason that those whose own personal ethics are more stringent might have higher expectations of their representatives.' (Allen and Birch, 2011: 105). For the same reason, one might expect more religious people to be less tolerant of politicians' misbehaviour.

Some control variables must also be included. Previous studies have suggested that demographic factors such as education, age, gender, income and party identification have an influence on ethical judgments (Bowler and Karp, 2004). Accordingly, one would expect those with a higher socio-economic status, measured in terms of education and income, to be more tolerant of favouritism and self-interested actions than those of a lower socio-economic status (Johnston, 1986; Redlawsk and McCann, 2005; Davis et al., 2004; Cautrès and Chiche, 2010). Studies have also shown that women tend to be less tolerant of politicians' misbehaviour (Swamy et al., 2001; Allen and Birch, 2011; Dollar et al., 1999). Intolerance also tends to increase as respondents' age increases (Davis et al., 2004; Allen and Birch, 2011; Aldrich and Kage, 2003). Moreover, identification with government parties (in this case the Socialist Party (PS) and the centre-right Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP)) has been found to increase tolerance to politicians' misbehaviour (CSPL, 2011; Bowler and Karp, 2004; Mayer, 2010).

After examining the likely reasons for individuals' intolerance of politicians' behaviour, the next section proceeds to analyse its possible effects. Above all, it has been argued that perceptions of politicians' misdemeanour can lead to reduced trust in democracy and political institutions as well as diminished faith in politicians (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003; Bowler and Karp, 2004; Fay, 1995a; Maier, 2011). We examine three dependent variables: trust in politicians, perceptions of French politicians' conduct, and intention to vote in an election. It would be worthwhile to examine how these attitudes are affected by differential perceptions of 'private' and 'public' misdemeanour. It is, of course, always difficult to determine causal direction in observational research. It seems plausible that a general underlying tolerance of politicians' different misdemeanours influences more specific attitudes such as perceptions of actual politicians' conduct, rather than vice versa. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind when inspecting the regression results that this reasoned assumption cannot be proven on the basis of the data.

Findings

Table 1 displays some basic descriptive statistics for each of the nine scenarios. In each case, the mean lies above the midpoint of five, suggesting that respondents found all of these practices highly unacceptable. There is an important pattern, however. The top five scenarios all involve some form of abuse of public office or influence, and they all have a mean score exceeding 7. The bottom four scenarios provoked the least indignation, with mean scores between 5.3 and 6.9. They are also the scenarios that illustrate some form of private misdemeanour on the part of politicians. The fact that private scenarios are consistently seen as less severe than the more public ones confirms the long-standing supposition that French citizens are far more concerned about politicians abusing office than they are about these politicians' private lives. Standard deviations are higher for the private scenarios, which means that respondents disagreed over how acceptable these were.

The scenario that was split into two versions - 'A senator has an affair with another man/woman.' - was also the one that French respondents found least objectionable. There is

a small difference in means between the answers of those respondents who were confronted with the scenario for a male senator (5.54) and a female senator (5.04). The difference in means of 0.5 is small but significant. In other words, respondents were more tolerant of a female senator having an extramarital affair than of a male senator. This is somewhat unexpected in light of feminist criticism of the public/private distinction and given the respect accorded to virility in French politics. It is possible that a backlash against this very virility resulted from the DSK scandal. But regardless of the version of the scenario, male respondents were more tolerant than female ones of a senator having an extramarital affair.

Table 1 about here

Table 1 also displays the loadings on two factors that emerged from a principal components analysis. This suggests that there is one clear dimension which one might call 'intolerance of public misdemeanour' (i.e. abuse of office and influence) made up of 'Riviera', 'public prosecutor', 'campaign contributor', 'parliamentary facilities' and 'government job'. The second dimension is less clear-cut, including scenarios that involve politicians' health, their sexual orientation and their love lives. Even so, if the ambiguous 'tabloid' scenario is excluded, 'intern', 'sexuality' and 'affair' constitute an 'intolerance of sexual misdemeanour' dimension.⁴ These two factors together explain 59% of the variance. The distinctiveness of the two dimensions suggests that French respondents draw a clear distinction between politicians' public and private wrongdoing and not between legal and illegal behaviour or between different beneficiaries from politicians' misconduct.

Based on these factors, two ten-point scales were created, the first from the first five items in Table 1 ($\alpha = 0.84$), the second from 'intern', 'sexuality' and 'affair' ($\alpha = 0.66$). A higher score on both scales means a greater intolerance of either public or sexual misdemeanour. The mean intolerance score in respect of politicians' public misdemeanour is 8.16 with a standard deviation of 1.79. The mean intolerance of politicians' sexual misdemeanour is 5.95,

with a standard deviation of 2.32. The correlation between the two scales is a fairly low 0.32. All this confirms previous hypotheses about French public opinion: that the French disapprove of politicians abusing their office or influence more and more unanimously than they disapprove of politicians' sexual misdemeanour.

What factors account for the extent to which French citizens perceive politicians' misdemeanour as unacceptable? Demographic factors such as age or education, might have an impact. Moreover, people who identify with one of the two mainstream parties tend to be more tolerant of politicians' misbehaviour. Above all, it seems likely that people's personal morals have an influence over their ethical judgments about politicians. For this reason, a composite measure of personal ethics was created from people's acceptance of three forms of behaviour: claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled; avoiding a fare on public transport; and telling a lie if it is in your interest.⁵ Respondents' religiosity was also included as a potentially influential factor.

Table 2 presents the influences of these diverse factors on intolerance of politicians' public and sexual misdemeanours. The table shows that age increases intolerance of both forms of misdemeanour. But while being unemployed increases intolerance of public misdemeanours, it has no impact on intolerance of sexual misdemeanour. Conversely, a higher level of education tends to make people more tolerant of politicians' sexual misbehaviour. Neither gender nor income had any statistically significant impact.

High levels of personal morality, as one might expect, lead to higher intolerance of politicians' public misbehaviour, but they have no effect on intolerance of politicians' sexual misdemeanours. A paradoxical finding is that greater religiosity makes people *more* tolerant of politicians' abuse of office, while simultaneously making them *less* tolerant of politicians' sexual transgressions. Finally, and confirming previous research, identification with the UMP or the Socialist Party increases people's tolerance of abuse of public office, though more so in the case of the UMP. Conversely, party identification does not have any effect on intolerance of politicians' sexual misdemeanours.

Table 2 about here

Complex attitudes like intolerance of different forms of misdemeanour can only be partially explained by means of demographic factors. But these results are nevertheless puzzling. Age emerges as the only factor that has a consistent influence on both intolerance scores. Interesting discrepancies include, above all, the negative influence of party identification on intolerance of public, but not sexual, misdemeanours. Moreover, the impact of religiosity is positive on intolerance of public but negative on intolerance of sexual misdemeanours. All in all, this suggests that respondents see these forms of misdemeanour as two very different things, and that very different factors are at work in influencing attitudes towards them. Thus, personal morality and age have the strongest impact on intolerance of politicians' public misdemeanours, while religiosity and education are the variables with the strongest influence on intolerance of sexual misdemeanours (standardised coefficients not shown).

Greater intolerance of politicians' wrongdoing can also have an effect on trust in government. To obtain a suitable measure of trust, our respondents were asked 'Overall, how would you rate the standards of honesty and integrity of elected politicians in France today?' Responses were measured in five categories here coded from 1 ('very low') to 5 ('very high'). On the whole, respondents were inclined to express low levels of trust, with only 12.8 per cent rating standards of honesty and integrity 'high' or 'very high' and over 60 per cent rating them 'low' or 'very low'.⁶ Table 3 displays the estimates of the resulting cumulative probit model.

Table 3 about here

The table shows that only intolerance of public misdemeanours, education and identification with the Socialist Party have any significant effect on trust in politicians. Identification with the

PS and higher levels of education are positively associated with a higher level of trust. Conversely, a higher intolerance of public misdemeanours tends to go with a lower level of trust in French politicians. Thus, for every additional point on the 0-10 intolerance scale, there is a 0.179 decrease in the coefficient. As the probit is difficult to interpret, Table 4 displays the predicted probabilities of giving a certain response to the question for different 'types' of individuals.

Table 4 about here

The table shows that the probabilities do not vary much depending on people's age, sex or education. The categories into which respondents are generally most likely to fall are lower trust categories 1 and 2, followed by 3. Thus, a 'typical individual' -- i.e. a 45-year old woman who has a technical BAC, does not identify with any party and is not unemployed, who scores 8 on intolerance of public and 6 on intolerance of sexual misdemeanour and who is influenced by religion to some extent -- has a 67% chance of expressing low or very low levels of trust. The one 'type' of person who is more likely than the others to express higher levels of trust is the 25-year old female PS identifier with a general BAC who is not unemployed. This is largely due to the positive impact of identification with the PS rather than any of the other variables.

Graph 1 displays the impact of different levels of intolerance of politicians' public misdemeanour on the likelihood of expressing different levels of trust, holding all the other variables constant at their mean or, for the dichotomous variables, their median value. The graph suggests that the likelihood of judging politicians' standards to be 'very low' or 'low' increases as intolerance of public misbehaviour increases. Conversely, those who are less intolerant of such misdemeanours are also more likely to deem standards to be 'high' or 'very high'. These findings are in line with expectations, as is the finding that respondents with an intermediate level of tolerance are most likely to consider standards 'neither high nor low'.

Graph 1 about here

Intolerance of politicians' misconduct is also likely to influence perceptions of specific misdemeanours of French politicians. Respondents were asked how much of a problem different forms of behaviour by elected politicians constituted in France today: not giving straight answers to questions; accepting bribes; misusing official expenses and allowances; making promises they know they can't keep. Of these, misusing official expenses and allowances and making promises they know they can't keep were seen as the greatest problems, with means on a 0-10 scale of 8.26 and 8.24 respectively. Conversely, not giving straight answers to questions (7.18) and accepting bribes (7.96) were seen as less, though still sufficiently, problematic.

These perceptions are likely affected by people's intolerance of politicians' public and sexual misdemeanours. Just as trust in politicians' ethical standards *decreases* with growing intolerance of public misconduct, as Table 3 has shown, such intolerance can be expected to *increase* perceptions of certain forms of misbehaviour as being problematic. In particular, one would expect people who are more intolerant of such behaviour to think that these kinds of behaviour are more of a problem. Table 5 displays the effects of intolerance of public and private misdemeanours, religiosity, personal morality and various demographics on perceptions of French politicians' conduct.

Table 5 about here

None of the forms of behaviour covered here are 'private' wrongdoing scenarios (though 'straight answers' and 'promises' are not obviously examples of politicians abusing their office

and influence either). Thus, it is not surprising that intolerance of sexual misdemeanours has no influence on perceptions of any of the forms of behaviour. Conversely, intolerance of public misconduct has an effect on perceptions of all forms of wrongdoing: the more a respondent disapproves of politicians' public wrongdoing, the more of a problem he or she will deem politicians' misdemeanours in France today. It appears that intolerance makes people more sensitive to politicians' wrongdoing and more inclined to describe it as a problem.

Personal morality likewise has a positive influence. All else being equal, the higher a respondent's ethical standards, the more of a problem he or she will consider these forms of behaviour in contemporary France. Conversely, more religious people are no more or less inclined to consider these practices to be a problem.

Demographic factors have a negligible and inconsistent influence across scenarios. Age has a small positive impact in two cases. The unemployed are particularly likely to denounce politicians who make promises they know they cannot keep, bringing to mind the unrealistic promises of growth and jobs that left and right governments alike had to break in the past (Shields, 2006). Identification with the Socialist Party has a negative influence on perceptions of three of these forms of behaviour as being problematic. In other words, PS supporters are more tolerant of politicians not giving straight answers, misusing official expenses, or making false promises (or perceive these to be less of a problem) than people who do not identify with the PS.

Finally, respondents were asked, how likely is it that they would vote if there were a general election the next day. Responses were recorded on a 0-10 scale, where 0 meant 'very unlikely' and 10 meant 'very unlikely'. Table 6 displays the results.

Table 6 about here

The table shows that people who are more intolerant of politicians' public misdemeanours are also more determined to vote than those who are more tolerant. Intolerance of sexual misdemeanours has no statistically significant effect. A higher level of personal morality, age and a higher level of education all tend to increase willingness to cast one's vote. Not surprisingly, identification with one of the two largest parties has the strongest effect in increasing people's willingness to vote, presumably to support those parties at the ballot box (standardised coefficients not shown). Those who are unemployed, conversely, are generally less willing to cast their vote.

Together with Table 3 and Table 5, this shows that intolerance of politicians' public misconduct has a consistent effect of. Higher levels of intolerance produce less trust, a greater inclination to see certain misbehaviours on the part of politicians as a problem, and a greater willingness to vote in an election. Far from leading to disillusionment and apathy, therefore, intolerance of politicians' public misdemeanours heightens what one might call people's political alertness. Conversely, intolerance of their sexual misdemeanours has no discernible effect on other political attitudes.

Conclusion

The public/private divide is one of the building blocks of Western democracies, and it appears that this distinction also applies to politicians' conduct. In France -- the country that has in the past been proverbially respectful of politicians' private lives -- citizens still draw a clear distinction between politicians' abuse of office and influence, on the one hand, and their sex lives on the other.

To be sure, the fact that French citizens object to politicians abusing their office and influence more than they do of politicians' sex lives may simply be a reflection of the nature of recent political scandals in France. With the exception of the DSK case, these scandals have largely been about illicit party finance and favouritism. Furthermore, the French are by no means tolerant of politicians' sexual misdemeanours; they are simply more intolerant of public forms

of misbehaviour. Nevertheless, the fact that French politicians' public transgressions are subject to far greater scrutiny than their private lives - welcome though many of them doubtless find this - does create an enabling environment for certain borderline forms of abuse, such as the use of state premises to house a mistress or powerful politicians demanding sex from their subordinates.

Due to a lack of pre-existing data, it was unfortunately not possible to draw comparisons over time in order to determine the possible effect of the DSK scandal or the growing willingness among some politicians to expose different aspects of their private lives. Even so, this paper has clearly shown that French citizens consistently disapprove of their politicians' public misdemeanours more than they do of their sexual activities. At an individual level, a greater intolerance of politicians' public wrongdoing also influences perceptions of politicians' conduct and trust in their ethical standards. On the contrary, intolerance of politicians' sexual misconduct has no such effect.

France may be a particularly important case, but there are reasons to believe that citizens of other countries may draw a similar distinction between politicians' public roles and private life. Bill Clinton's job performance ratings at the height of the Lewinsky scandal, for example, have been explained by reference to Americans' respect for the President's private sphere. The question remains whether public opinion would be quite as clear-cut as it is in France. Cross-national comparison that could help to establish just how exceptional French attitudes are, would be a worthwhile avenue of future research.

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Tables

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and factor loadings of politicians' morality scenarios

	Mean	SD	F1	F2
A minister uses a government-owned aircraft to fly down to the Riviera with his wife for a weekend break.	8.87	1.99	.819	.231
A senator makes repeated attempts to stop a public prosecutor investigating a friend's business activities.	8.70	2.09	.857	.206
A minister awards a government contract to a campaign contributor without considering other contractors.	8.22	2.21	.880	.230
A member of the National Assembly uses parliamentary facilities (premises, fax, telephone) while raising donations for his party.	7.64	2.52	.725	.265
A senator recommends an out-of-work friend for a government job.	7.23	2.63	.679	.315
A member of the National Assembly seduces his intern.	6.89	2.73	.425	.707
A senator tells the editor of a national tabloid that he will support an official inquiry into the tabloid's reporting practices if the newspaper prints details of his chronic illness.	6.77	3.09	.395	.500
A presidential candidate lies repeatedly when asked in public about his sexuality.	5.66	3.26	.242	.780
A senator has an affair with another woman/man.	5.30	2.97	.060	.797

Extraction method: Principal components analysis with direct oblimin rotation.

Table 2: Influences on intolerance of politicians' misdemeanours

	Public misdemeanours		Sexual misdemeanours	
	B	SE	B	SE
Ethics				
Religiosity	-0.179	0.070	0.346	0.098
Personal morality	0.068	0.011	-0.019	0.016
Demographics				
Age	0.023	0.005	0.014	0.006
Male	0.103	0.137	-0.227	0.193
Education	0.014	0.029	-0.102	0.041
Income	0.002	0.035	-0.034	0.049
Unemployed	0.466	0.226	0.262	0.316
Party identification				
UMP	-0.414	0.178	-0.171	0.250
PS	-0.311	0.155	-0.261	0.218
C	7.818	0.399	6.188	0.557
Adj. R ²		0.140		0.035

Table 3: Cumulative probit model of trust in politicians

	B	SE
Intolerance		
Intolerance of public misdemeanours	-0.176	0.027
Intolerance of sexual misdemeanours	-0.015	0.019
Ethics		
Religiosity	0.048	0.046
Demographics		
Age	0.002	0.003
Male	0.101	0.088
Education	0.041	0.019
Income	0.042	0.022
Unemployed	0.002	0.146
Party identification		
UMP	0.022	0.114
PS	0.462	0.100
Model fit		
Log likelihood	-845.660	
Likelihood-ratio test for proportional odds assumption	$\chi^2 = 41.08$	$p = 0.086$

Table 4: Predicted probabilities of selected individuals' levels of trust

	1 = very low	2	3	4	5 = very high
55-year old female UMP identifier with a university degree who is not unemployed	0.292	0.331	0.255	0.105	0.017
25-year old female PS identifier with a general BAC who is not unemployed	0.200	0.307	0.301	0.159	0.034
25-year old man with a technical BAC who is not unemployed and does not identify with the PS or the UMP	0.329	0.333	0.236	0.089	0.013
'Typical individual'	0.334	0.333	0.233	0.087	0.013

Note: Unless otherwise stated, all independent variables set at their mean.

Graph 1: Predicted probabilities of levels of trust by intolerance of public misdemeanour

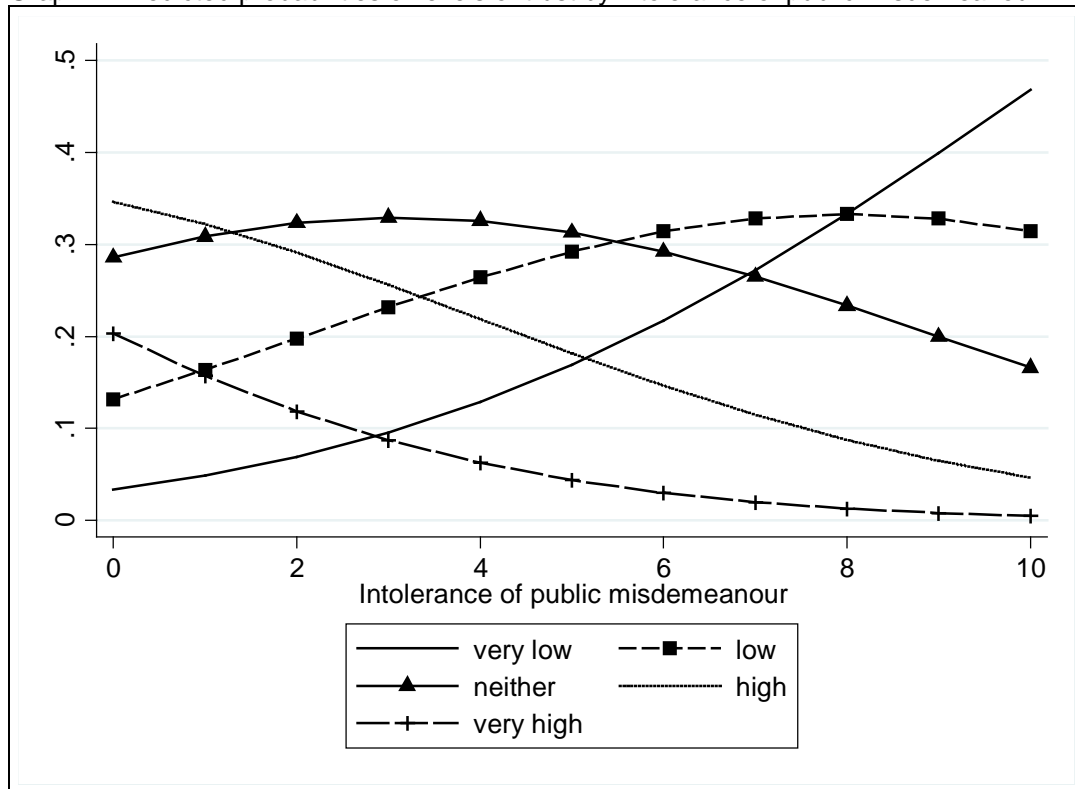


Table 5: Influences on perceptions of French politicians' conduct

	Straight answers	Bribes	Official expenses	Promises
Intolerance				
Intolerance of public misdemeanours	0.475 (0.052)	0.469 (0.055)	0.518 (0.047)	0.527 (0.043)
Intolerance of sexual misdemeanours	-0.023 (0.038)	-0.014 (0.040)	-0.001 (0.034)	0.045 (0.031)
Ethics				
Religiosity	0.004 (0.088)	-0.116 (0.094)	-0.035 (0.079)	0.056 (0.073)
Personal morality	0.029 (0.014)	0.049 (0.015)	0.041 (0.013)	0.023 (0.012)
Demographics				
Age	0.012 (0.006)	0.012 (0.006)	0.008 (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)
Male	-0.170 (0.169)	-0.103 (0.181)	-0.070 (0.153)	-0.150 (0.141)
Education	-0.035 (0.036)	0.027 (0.039)	0.007 (0.033)	-0.056 (0.030)
Income	0.015 (0.043)	-0.046 (0.045)	0.020 (0.038)	-0.035 (0.035)
Unemployed	-0.096 (0.282)	0.362 (0.301)	0.469 (0.256)	0.635 (0.236)
Party identification				
UMP	-0.130 (0.221)	-0.052 (0.237)	0.110 (0.200)	-0.155 (0.184)
PS	-0.754 (0.192)	-0.363 (0.204)	-0.429 (0.173)	-0.529 (0.160)
C	2.947 (0.514)	3.080 (0.547)	2.926 (0.465)	3.772 (0.426)
Adjusted R ²	0.217	0.200	0.278	0.311

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 6: Influences on intention to vote

	B	SE
Intolerance		
Intolerance of public misdemeanours	.179	.078
Intolerance of sexual misdemeanours	-.100	.057
Ethics		
Religiosity	-.028	.133
Personal morality	.045	.021
Demographics		
Age	.022	.009
Male	.461	.256
Education	.187	.055
Income	.045	.064
Unemployed	-.973	.430
Party identification		
UMP	1.420	.332
PS	1.088	.289
C	2.914	.771
Adj. R ²	0.138	

Appendix: Survey Methodology

The data were collected at part of the French Co-operative Campaign Analysis Project (FRCCAP) administered by Ray Duch at Nuffield College, Oxford.

The survey was administered online in January 2013. The sample frame was based on quotas for gender, age, education and region of residence. All the survey items were translated by native speakers of French and checked, via back-translation, by the researchers. The achieved sample was 1,073.

The survey questions (English version) and codes are as follows:

Politicians' morality scenarios: 'How acceptable would you rate the following behaviour? Please give our answer on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means 'totally acceptable' and 10 means 'totally unacceptable'?

- 1) A member of the National Assembly uses parliamentary facilities while raising donations for his party.
- 2) A senator recommends an out-of-work friend for a government job.
- 3) A minister awards a government contract to a campaign contributor without considering other contractors.
- 4) A senator makes repeated attempts to stop a public prosecutor investigating a friend's business activities.
- 5) A presidential candidate lies repeatedly when asked in public about his sexuality.
- 6) A member of the National Assembly seduces his intern.
- 7) A minister uses a government-owned aircraft to fly down to the Riviera with his wife for a weekend break.
- 8) A senator tells the editor of a national tabloid that he will support an official inquiry into the tabloid's reporting practices if the newspaper prints details of his chronic illness.
- 9) A male senator is married and has an affair with another woman./A female senator is married and has an affair with another man.'

Religiosity: 'Would you say that your religion provides some guidance, quite a bit of guidance, or a great deal of guidance in your day-to-day life?

- 0) I don't belong to a religion
- 1) Some guidance
- 2) Quite a bit of guidance
- 3) A great deal of guidance'

Personal morality: 'For each of the following actions, please say whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between. Please use the 0-10 scale, where 10 means it can always be justified and 0 means it can never be justified...

- 1) Avoiding a fare on public transport
- 2) Telling a lie if it is in your interest
- 3) Claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled'

Responses to these questions were recoded and added up to create a summative scale from 0 (lowest personal morality) to 30 (highest personal morality).

Age: age in years.

Male: coded 0 = female, 1 = male.

Education: 'What is your current education level:

- 1) No diploma
- 2) Certificat d'études primaires
- 3) Ancien brevet, BEPC
- 4) Certificat d'aptitude professionnel (CAP)
- 5) Brevet d'enseignement professionnel (BEP)

- 6) BAC d'enseignement technique
- 7) BAC d'enseignement général
- 8) BAC+2
- 9) Diplôme universitaire de l'enseignement supérieur
- 10) Grandes Ecoles / Ecole d'Ingénieurs'

Income: 'From the following income spans, could you please indicate which corresponds with the monthly net income of your household (wages, other forms of household income)?'

- 1) Less than 300 Euros
- 2) 301-500 Euros
- 3) 501-1000 Euros
- 4) 1001-1500 Euros
- 5) 1501-2000 Euros
- 6) 2001-2500 Euros
- 7) 2501-3000 Euros
- 8) 3001-4000 Euros
- 9) 4001-6000 Euros
- 10) 6001-8000 Euros
- 11) 8001+ Euros'

Unemployed: coded 0 = not unemployed, 1 = unemployed

Party identification: 'Do you generally think of yourself as a little closer to one of the parties than the others? If yes, please indicate which party.'

Responses to these questions were used to create dummy variables, where 0 = no and 1 = yes, for the Union for a Popular Movement, and the Socialist Party.

French politicians' conduct: 'How much of a problem is the following behaviour by elected politicians in France today? Please use the 0-10 scale, where 0 means it is not a problem at all and 10 means it is a very big problem.'

- 1) Not giving straight answers to questions
- 2) Accepting bribes
- 3) Misusing official expenses and allowances
- 4) Making promises they know they can't keep'

Intention to vote: 'If there were a General Election tomorrow, how likely is it that you would vote?' Responses to this question were recorded on a 0-10 scale, where 0 = very unlikely and 10 = very likely.

'Don't know' answers have been excluded as missing cases throughout.

¹ The Bettencourt affair erupted in 2010 over allegations that Liliane Bettencourt, the richest person in France, had made illegal cash donations to prominent conservative politicians, among them then President Nicolas Sarkozy.

² Authors' translation. The original French versions of these questions are available from the authors upon request.

³ This scenario is taken from Redlawsk and McCann (2005).

⁴ The two variants of the 'affair' scenario are here treated as a single scenario. Even though different respondents were asked different versions of the question and even though responses revealed a small difference in means, the assumption is that infidelity, rather than the gender of the senator, is the most important aspect of the question. To test this assumption, the sample was also split according to the variant of the scenario, and all subsequent analyses were re-run on both sub-samples and compared to each other as well as the original results. The factor, reliability and correlation analyses revealed no significant differences. However, the results from the regression analyses changed slightly. Above all, smaller sample sizes meant that some previously significant variables became insignificant.

⁵ The resulting 'personal morality' scale ranges from 0 to 30 (30 being coded as the highest degree of personality morality), with an alpha of 0.66.

⁶ The dependent variable is ordinal. Thus, ordinal regression has to be employed in order to analyse the effect of intolerance and other variables on levels of trust. This type of regression permits modelling the probability of a respondent falling into or below one of the five response categories, as compared to the higher categories (O'Connell, 2006). Score tests for the full model indicated that the proportional odds assumption was violated. In other words, the effect of all independent variables was not stable across the different response categories. Inspection of the underlying binary models suggested that this was largely due to the personal morality variable. For this reason, the variable was excluded in the ordinal model.