Opinions on the Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Comparative Study of the USA and Six Latin American Countries

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I. INTRODUCTION

Tax evasion has been in existence ever since governments started imposing taxes. There is a large body of literature in the economics and public finance arena that discusses and analyzes various aspects of tax evasion. Economists render opinions on the reasons for tax evasion and the methods and policies that governments can adopt to reduce it. There is even a theory of optimal tax evasion. Yet very few of these studies apply ethical theory in an attempt to determine when, and under what circumstances, tax evasion might be ethical or unethical.

This study does not take either of these approaches. It does not analyze tax evasion from the perspective of economics or public finance,
and it does not apply ethical theory to determine under what circumstances tax evasion might be considered ethical, although ethics is discussed. It focuses on the attitude toward tax evasion of a wide range of individuals in six Latin American countries as well as the United States. The main goals of this study are to determine general attitudes on the ethics of tax evasion and to determine whether certain demographic variables, including gender, age, level of education, or religious observance have a significant effect on attitudes toward tax evasion.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although much has been written about tax evasion from the perspective of public finance, not many studies have focused on the ethical aspects of tax evasion. One of the most comprehensive early studies on the ethics of tax evasion was done by Martin Crowe, a Catholic priest who surveyed the philosophical and religious (mostly Catholic) literature that had been written over the previous five centuries. From this review, Crowe found that three basic positions had emerged over the centuries. Tax evasion was considered to be: never ethical, always ethical, or ethical under certain facts and circumstances. Robert McGee expanded on this literature review.

More recent studies were done by Benno Torgler and McGee. The Torgler study was mostly empirical but did not examine the philosophical and ethical literature in depth. The McGee studies examined the philosophical and ethical literature but did not conduct empirical investigations.

Although very few philosophical studies on the ethics of tax evasion have been published, the existing studies span all three viewpoints. Walter Block surveyed the public finance literature but

failed to find any adequate explanations or arguments to justify taxation. McGee applied Lysander Spooner's philosophy to the issue of tax evasion, which challenged the social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. At the other end of the spectrum, a few philosophical studies concluded that tax evasion is never justified. The literature of the Baha'i religion strictly prohibits tax evasion, the main argument being that individuals have a duty to obey the laws of the country in which they live. A study of the Mormon religious literature reached the same conclusion and for the same reason.

Two philosophical studies of the ethics of tax evasion have been written from a Jewish perspective, both concluding that tax evasion is never, or almost never, ethical according to the Jewish literature. A third Jewish study, both philosophical and empirical in nature, found that although the Jewish literature was firmly against tax evasion on ethical grounds, the Jews who were surveyed were more flexible on the issue. An empirical study of Mormon views found that many Mormons were also more flexible on the issue than their religious literature would suggest.

9. See THOMAS HOBBES, LEVIATHAN (1651).
10. See JOHN LOCKE, TWO TREATISES ON GOVERNMENT (1689).
16. Id.
Several philosophical studies concluded that tax evasion could be ethical in certain situations. Robert Pennock concluded that tax evasion was ethical in cases where the country collecting the taxes was engaged in an unjust war. Alfonso Morales regarded a man’s duty to feed his family as more important than feeding the state’s coffers. Gregory M.A. Gronbacher and D. Eric Schansberg concluded that the Catholic religious literature permits tax evasion in certain situations, a view that concurs with the study. Gronbacher’s study of the Christian literature reached the same conclusion. Two Islamic scholars examined their religious literature and reported that Muslims have a duty to God to contribute to the poor. They did not address the issue of the relationship of the individual to the state and the corresponding duty to pay taxes. A survey of the Islamic business ethics literature by a non-Muslim scholar found that tax evasion can be justified in cases where the effect of the tax is to increase prices or where the tax is on income.

A few empirical studies on the ethics of tax evasion have been conducted. Studies of Argentina, Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina,
China, Germany, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Macau, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Thailand, Ukraine, philosophy teachers, and international business academics asked respondents to give their opinion on the ethics of tax evasion in various specific situations, using a 7-point Likert Scale, and all concluded that tax evasion may be ethically justified in certain situations, although some arguments were stronger than others. The Torgler study reached the same conclusion, using a different methodology.


40. McGee, supra note 3, at 38.

41. Torgler, supra note 4.
The aforementioned McGee et al. studies found that tax evasion is more likely to be viewed as justifiable if: the tax system is perceived as being unfair, the government abuses human rights, tax funds wind up in the pockets of corrupt politicians, tax rates are too high, or there is inability to pay. This finding corresponds closely with Catholic theological literature on the topic and a study of Mexican migrant workers, both of which conclude that support for tax evasion is weak where individuals get something in return for their money.

A few studies have utilized the Ronald Inglehart et. al. database to examine attitudes toward tax evasion for various subgroups. Torgler used it in his doctoral dissertation. McGee and Sanjoy Bose used it to compare attitudes of sample populations in Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. The database was also used for studies of Vietnam, several Asian countries, and a longitudinal study of ten transition economies, which all found that there is some support for tax evasion, but that support is weak.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study in part used data that was compiled in a much larger and comprehensive study by Inglehart et al. The Inglehart study asked hundreds of questions to more than 200,000 people in 81 countries. One of those questions ("F116") was on the ethics of tax evasion. The question asked whether the respondent would cheat on taxes if there

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42. Crowe, supra note 2.
43. Morales, supra note 19.
45. Torgler, supra note 4.
50. HUMAN BELIEFS AND VALUES, supra note 44.
51. See id. at vii-xiv, 401-06.
52. Id. at F116, xii.

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were an opportunity to do so. Responses were tallied using a ten-point Likert scale where 1 represented “never justifiable” and 10 represented “always justifiable.”

Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico and Venezuela were the Latin American countries chosen for examination because they were the only Latin American countries for which Inglehart et al. gathered data. The United States was also chosen for comparison purposes.

One criticism that might be made of the Inglehart et al.’s methodology is that the data was gathered in face-to-face interviews. Data gathered in this manner may not be highly representative of the real views of the people being interviewed, since there may be a tendency to give the interviewer the response that is expected, deemed to be moral, or least embarrassing. A better approach would have been to collect the data anonymously. However, the Inglehart et al. study is widely respected and face-to-face interviewing is an accepted research methodology. Furthermore, several studies of tax evasion using the Inglehart et al. data have been published, making it possible to compare results. The present study fills a gap in the literature by examining data from Latin American countries.

IV. FINDINGS

If one were to summarize the findings of the present study in a single sentence, it would be that there is some support for tax evasion but that support is weak and varies by country, gender, and age, but not by level of education and only occasionally by religious observance.

Table 1 lists the sample sizes and overall mean scores for each country. All of the mean scores were well below 2.5 which, on a scale of 1 to 10, indicate that there is not much support for evading taxes even when there is a possibility of doing so. This could be for a variety of reasons, including the threat of possible punishment and the perceived notion that there is some moral duty, either to God, to the state, or to some segment of the taxpaying community. The Inglehart et al. study did not ask for reasons for the various responses, so one can only speculate about the reasons for the responses, although several studies have addressed this issue and found that all of these reasons have been given from time to time as reasons for not evading taxes.

53. Id.
54. See id. at 400.
Table 1
Sample Size and Overall Mean Scores
(1 = never justifiable; 10 = always justifiable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1270</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1177</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1447</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>1473</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1198</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>1194</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8465</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 1 compares the mean scores graphically and assembles them from lowest (never justifiable) to highest (always justifiable). The chart clearly shows that, although the mean scores are different, they are all rather low compared to the highest possible score of 10. Venezuelans were most likely to believe that tax evasion is never justifiable. Mexicans were most likely to view tax evasion as justifiable, although a mean score of only 2.31 indicates that there is not much support for this proposition even in Mexico.
A. Gender

Numerous studies have compared male and female attitudes and opinions on a variety of ethical issues. Some studies have concluded that females are more ethical than males, while at least one other study has come to the opposite conclusion. A third group of studies found no statistical difference between male and female attitudes.

A few studies have explored male and female attitudes toward the ethics of tax evasion. Women were found to be more strongly opposed than men to tax evasion in studies of Guatemala, Hong Kong, Hubei,


60. McGee & Butt, supra note 32.
China,61 Orthodox Jews,62 Spain,63 Thailand,64 international business professors,65 and U.S. business students in Utah.66 Men were found to be slightly more opposed to tax evasion in a study of Romania67 and significantly more opposed to tax evasion in a study of Slovakia.68

In studies of Argentina,69 Beijing, China,70 Guangzhou, China,71 Hong Kong,72 Macau,73 Poland,74 and Ukraine,75 the views of men and women on the ethics of tax evasion showed no real difference.

Table 2 shows the results of the present study, based on gender. Male scores were higher for all six countries, indicating that men are less opposed to evading taxes than are women. However, Wilcoxon tests found the differences to be significant only in three cases – Argentina, Peru and the United States.

It would be premature to conclude from these findings that women are more ethical than men, however. In order to reach that conclusion one must begin with the premise that tax evasion is unethical, which might not be the case. The various studies cited above have shown that a significant portion of various populations believe that tax evasion is morally justified in certain cases. Some of the religious literature also supports this view,76 although the religious literature of Judaism,77 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,78 and the Baha’i religion79 do not. All that one may conclude from the present findings is that women tend to be more opposed to evading taxes than are men in Argentina, Peru, and the United States.

64. McGee, supra note 37, at 13-14.
65. McGee, supra note 3, at 37.
68. McGee & Tusan, supra note 36, at 11.
69. McGee & Rossi, supra note 26, at 18.
70. McGee & An, supra note 29, at 10-11.
71. McGee & Noronha, supra note 29.
72. McGee & Ho, supra note 32, at 9.
73. McGee, Noronha, & Tyler, supra note 33.
74. McGee & Bernal, supra note 34, at 14.
75. Nasadyuk & McGee, supra note 38.
76. Crowe, supra note 2, at 164; Gronbacher, supra note 20; McGee, supra note 5; McGee, supra note 25; Pennock, supra note 18; Schansberg, supra note 21.
77. Cohn, supra note 14; Tamari, supra note 14.
78. Smith & Kimball, supra note 13.
79. DeMoville, supra note 12.
### Table 2

**Gender Mean Scores**  
(1 = never justifiable; 10 = always justifiable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Combined</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Score Larger by</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.009961 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.9168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.02508 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.6006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.599e-06 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.9465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Averages</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.09</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.22</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.97</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 1% level  
** Significant at 5% level

Chart 2 shows the overall mean scores graphically. The graph clearly shows that, although men are more likely to evade taxes if they have an opportunity to do so, neither group is very likely to evade taxes.
Chart 3 shows the gender comparisons for each country. Again, there is not much difference in the larger scheme of things, although the difference in the United States is the most pronounced.
B. Age

A study by Durwood Ruegger and Ernest W. King\textsuperscript{80} found that people become more ethical as they get older. Their study divided respondents into the following four groups: 21 or less, 22-30, 31-40 and 40 plus.\textsuperscript{81} But Ronald Sims et al.\textsuperscript{82} found that older students had fewer qualms about pirating software than did younger students.

Emin Babakus et al.\textsuperscript{83} also found that age made a difference, but what difference age makes sometimes depends on culture. Younger people from the UK, United States, and France tend to be less ethical consumers than do older people from these countries, whereas younger Austrians tend to be more ethical consumers than their elders.\textsuperscript{84} Age generally did not matter for Hong Kong consumers, except in the case of stealing towels from hotels and blankets from aircrafts.\textsuperscript{85} Younger people tended to be less tolerant of these kinds of activities than did their elder Hong Kong consumers. Brunei consumers showed mixed results. In some cases younger people were more ethical whereas in other cases older people were more ethical.\textsuperscript{86}

Table 3 summarizes the mean scores by age for the present study. The Inglehart et al.\textsuperscript{87} (2004) data separated the groups into three age categories.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Age Group & Mean Score 1 & Mean Score 2 & Mean Score 3 & Mean Score 4 \\
\hline
21 or less & 3.2 & 3.5 & 3.8 & 4.0 \\
22-30 & 3.4 & 3.7 & 4.0 & 4.2 \\
31-40 & 3.6 & 3.9 & 4.1 & 4.3 \\
40 plus & 3.8 & 4.1 & 4.3 & 4.5 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Mean Scores by Age Group}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{80} Ruegger & King, supra note 56, at 184.
\textsuperscript{81} Id.
\textsuperscript{84} Id. at 259.
\textsuperscript{85} Id.
\textsuperscript{86} Id.
\textsuperscript{87} HUMAN BELIEFS AND VALUES, supra note 44.
Table 3
Age Mean Scores
(1 = never justifiable; 10 = always justifiable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Chile</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Peru</th>
<th>Puerto Rico</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
<th>Averages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-29</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 4 shows the overall mean scores for each age group graphically. As can be seen, the mean score declines as people get older, indicating that people are less likely to evade taxes as they become older.
Table 4 shows the p values for each age group and each country. The decline in mean scores is significant in 10 of 21 cases. The most significant declines are in the cases of Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the United States, where the differences are significant for all three comparisons. There was not a significant correlation between age and mean scores for Chile, Peru, and Venezuela. The difference in mean scores was significant for Argentina only when comparing the youngest and oldest age group.

Table 4
P Values - Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>15-29 vs. 30-49</th>
<th>15-29 vs. 50+</th>
<th>30-49 vs. 50+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>0.1447</td>
<td>0.003738*</td>
<td>0.1215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>0.4679</td>
<td>0.434</td>
<td>0.9201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>0.04093**</td>
<td>8.226e-05*</td>
<td>0.03695**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>0.8909</td>
<td>0.1637</td>
<td>0.2125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>0.08486***</td>
<td>0.0007522*</td>
<td>0.08219**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>0.009714*</td>
<td>6.327e-06*</td>
<td>0.0136**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>0.7893</td>
<td>0.9197</td>
<td>0.7494</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 1% level
** Significant at 5% level
*** Significant at 10% level

C. Education

The Inglehart et al. study also grouped responses by level of education. The categories for education were compiled as follows:

88. Id.
At least three other studies have examined the relationship between the level of education and attitudes toward tax evasion using the Inglehart et al. data. A study of 33 countries found the differences between the middle and upper groups were insignificant. However, the lower group was significantly more opposed to tax evasion than were the middle and upper level group. A study of Vietnamese opinion found that the most educated group was significantly less opposed to tax evasion.

A comparative study of Australia, New Zealand, and the United States found no relationship between education level and mean scores for the United States sample but a significant difference for the Australia and New Zealand samples. What is most interesting about this study was that there was less opposition to tax evasion for the Australian and New Zealand samples as the level of education increased.

Table 5 shows the mean scores for education for the present study.

90. McGee, supra note 47.
91. McGee & Bose, supra note 46, at 8.
Table 5
Education Mean Scores
(1 = never justifiable; 10 = always justifiable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 5 shows the overall mean scores for each education level graphically. As can be seen, the score rises slightly when one moves from the lower to the middle education level, then declines slightly when one moves from the middle to the upper education level, indicating that people in the middle education category tend to be somewhat more likely to evade taxes if they have an opportunity than for the other two groups.
Chart 6 shows the differences in mean score by country. As can be seen, the patterns are different. Whereas the overall trend is downward, indicating a lower likelihood of cheating on taxes as the level of education increases, those in the middle education group are sometimes more likely to cheat than people in the lower and upper groups and sometimes less likely. The exception to the general pattern is Puerto Rico. People in that country tend to become more likely to evade taxes as they become better educated.

Table 6 shows the p values for each country. The only case where education plays a significant factor is when one compares the lower to middle educational level groups for Mexico. In all other cases the differences in mean scores are not significant.
Table 6
P Values - Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lower vs. Lower</th>
<th>Lower vs. Middle</th>
<th>Middle vs. Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>0.4043</td>
<td>0.964</td>
<td>0.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>0.8269</td>
<td>0.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>0.02068**</td>
<td>0.3359</td>
<td>0.5395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>0.7954</td>
<td>0.5851</td>
<td>0.7239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>0.4009</td>
<td>0.2047</td>
<td>0.5645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>0.9917</td>
<td>0.8209</td>
<td>0.7971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>0.7424</td>
<td>0.3061</td>
<td>0.3808</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 1% level
** Significant at 5% level

D. Religious Observance

The Inglehart et al. data also gave separate breakdowns by religious affiliation and religious observance. The present study makes comparisons based on religious observance. Table 7 shows the mean scores for each category of religious observance, which is based on the frequency of attendance at religious services. The categories are as follows:

MOW – more than once a week
OW – once a week
OM – once a month
OSH – only on special holydays
OY – once a year
LO – less often
NPN – never or practically never

92. HUMAN BELIEFS AND VALUES, supra note 44.
93. Id. at F024, F028.
Table 7
Religious Mean Scores
(1 = never justifiable; 10 = always justifiable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MOW</th>
<th>OW</th>
<th>OM</th>
<th>OSH</th>
<th>OY</th>
<th>LO</th>
<th>NPN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.22</td>
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<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.22</td>
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<td>Peru</td>
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<td>2.02</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
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<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
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<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.75</td>
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<td>2.02</td>
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<td>Averages</td>
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<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.31</td>
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</table>

Chart 7 shows the mean scores for each category graphically. There seems to be a direct correlation between the frequency of attendance and the attitude toward cheating on taxes where there is an opportunity to do so. People who attend services less frequently are more likely to cheat on taxes if they have a chance.

Chart 7 Mean Scores - Religion

Table 8 shows the p values for certain intergroup comparisons. In general, the mean differences are not significant. However, people in
Peru and the United States who attend services once a month are significantly more likely to evade taxes than people who attend services more than once a week. People in the United States who never or practically never attend services are also more likely to cheat on their taxes than are people who attend services more than once a week.

Table 8
P Values – Religious Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MOW vs. OM</th>
<th>MOW vs. NPN</th>
<th>OM vs. NPN</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>0.6071</td>
<td>0.9353</td>
<td>0.5259</td>
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<td>Chile</td>
<td>0.4371</td>
<td>0.6329</td>
<td>0.1438</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>0.6291</td>
<td>0.8407</td>
<td>0.5662</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>0.06756***</td>
<td>0.1808</td>
<td>0.779</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>0.4829</td>
<td>0.868</td>
<td>0.4686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>0.07596***</td>
<td>0.006809*</td>
<td>0.3732</td>
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<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>0.8658</td>
<td>0.7201</td>
<td>0.6985</td>
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</table>

* Significant at 1% level
** Significant at 5% level
*** Significant at 10% level

V. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

There are many explanations for why the attitudes toward cheating on taxes may differ (or not) by country. Some possible partial explanations are the influence certain demographics such as gender, age, education level, and religious practice play in shaping one's opinions. The political system of the country where one lives is another. Income level, which is not examined in the present study, also probably plays a role. It is reasonable to expect that people who earn more money tend to feel exploited if they are forced to pay a higher percentage of their marginal income in taxes than are people at lower income levels. The wealthier classes might resent being forced to pay relatively high tax rates, and this resentment may cause them to view cheating on taxes
more favorably than individuals who receive benefits in exchange for their tax contributions.

People at the lower end of the economic spectrum might also resent paying taxes but for entirely different reasons. Rather than feeling exploited compared to other income groups, they may feel that they have little or no moral obligation to pay because of inability. This reason was one of the dominant arguments to justify tax evasion in the Catholic literature, and this view was supported by a study of Mexican migrant workers.

Culture also plays a role. Geert Hofstede examined power distance, collectivism versus individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term orientation as factors that affect a wide range of attitudes and behaviors. Edward T. Hall looked at culture from the perspectives of high and low context and compared monochromic cultures to polychromic cultures. All of these factors play a role, although it is not always clear what that role is, and a number of factors interact, making it difficult, if not impossible, to determine which factors play a dominant role.

The findings of the present study indicate that some people will cheat on taxes if they have an opportunity, but that many will not. Results vary by country, gender, age and somewhat by religious observance. Level of education does not play a role for the Latin American countries included in the present study or for the United States, although a study of attitudes in Australia and New Zealand found that as people become more educated, they tend to be less averse to tax evasion. Since there is a positive correlation between level of education and income level, we may tentatively conclude that as Australians and New Zealanders become wealthier they have a stronger tendency to evade taxes, but one cannot reach the same conclusion for the wealthier

94. Crowe, supra note 2.
95. Morales, supra note 19.
98. *The Silent Language*, supra note 97, at 58; *The Hidden Dimension*, supra note 97, at 173; *see Beyond Culture*, supra note 97.
classes in Latin American countries, since education level had no significant effect on tax evasion attitude.