

# OPINIONS ON THE ETHICS OF TAX EVASION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE USA AND SIX LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

*Robert W. McGee*  
*Wendy Gelman*

I. Introduction .....	69
II. Review of the Literature .....	70
III. Methodology.....	74
IV. Findings .....	75
A. Gender.....	77
B. Age.....	81
C. Education .....	83
D. Religious Observance .....	87
V. Concluding Comments .....	89

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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,

---

1. See Carl Davidson, Lawrence Martin & John D. Wilson, *Tax Evasion as an Optimal Tax Device*, 86 ECON. LETTERS 285, 289 (2005); See also Rosella Levaggi & Francesco Menoncin, *A Note on Optimal Tax Evasion in the Presence of Merit Goods* (2007), <http://ssrn.com/abstract=979687>.

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,<sup>2</sup> 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<sup>3</sup> expanded on this literature review.

More recent studies were done by Benno Torgler<sup>4</sup> and McGee.<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup> surveyed the public finance literature but

---

2. Martin T. Crowe, *The Moral Obligation of Paying Just Taxes*, 84 CATH. U. AM. STUD. SACRED THEOLOGY 27, 27-77 (1944).

3. See Robert W. McGee, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of International Business Academics* 3-23 (2006), <http://ssrn.com/abstract=803964>.

4. Benno Torgler, *Tax Morale: Theory and Empirical Analysis of Tax Compliance* (2003) (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Universität Basel zur Erlangung der Würde eines Doktors der Staatswissenschaften) (on file with author).

5. Robert W. McGee, *Is Tax Evasion Unethical?* 42 U. KAN. L. REV. 411 (1994).

6. Walter Block, *The Justification of Taxation in the Public Finance Literature: An Unorthodox View*, 3 ECONOMIA DELLE SCELTE PUBBLICHE 141, 156-58 (1989); Walter Block, *Public Finance Texts Cannot Justify Government Taxation: A Critique*, 36 CAN. PUB. ADMIN. 225-62 (1993), reprinted as Walter Block, *The Justification for Taxation in the Economics Literature*, in THE ETHICS OF TAX EVASION 36, 86-88 (Robert W. McGee ed., 1998).

failed to find any adequate explanations or arguments to justify taxation. McGee<sup>7</sup> applied Lysander Spooner's<sup>8</sup> philosophy to the issue of tax evasion, which challenged the social contract theories of Hobbes,<sup>9</sup> Locke<sup>10</sup> and Rousseau.<sup>11</sup>

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.<sup>12</sup> A study of the Mormon religious literature reached the same conclusion and for the same reason.<sup>13</sup>

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.<sup>14</sup> A third Jewish study,<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> An empirical study of Mormon views<sup>17</sup> found that many Mormons were also more flexible on the issue than their religious literature would suggest.

---

7. McGee, *supra* note 5, at 430-31.

8. See, e.g., LYSANDER SPOONER, NO TREASON: THE CONSTITUTION OF NO AUTHORITY 39 (Ralph Myles Publishers 1973) (1870).

9. See THOMAS HOBBS, LEVIATHAN (1651).

10. See JOHN LOCKE, TWO TREATISES ON GOVERNMENT (1689).

11. See JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU, THE SOCIAL CONTRACT (1762).

12. Wig DeMoville, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Baha'i Perspective*, 1 J. ACCT. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 356, 356-68 (1998), *reprinted in* THE ETHICS OF TAX EVASION 230, 233-36 (Robert W. McGee ed., 1998).

13. Sheldon R. Smith & Kevin C. Kimball, *Tax Evasion and Ethics: A Perspective from Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, 1 J. ACCT. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 337, 337-48 (1998), *reprinted in* THE ETHICS OF TAX EVASION 220, 223-24 (Robert W. McGee ed., 1998).

14. Gordon Cohn, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Jewish Perspective*, 1 J. ACCT. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 109, 109-20 (1998), *reprinted in* THE ETHICS OF TAX EVASION 180, 187-88 (Robert W. McGee ed., 1998); Meir Tamari, *Ethical Issues in Tax Evasion: A Jewish Perspective*, 1 J. ACCT. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 121, 121-32 (1998), *reprinted in* THE ETHICS OF TAX EVASION 168, 176 (Robert W. McGee ed., 1998).

15. Robert W. McGee & Gordon Cohn, *Jewish Perspectives on the Ethics of Tax Evasion*, J. of Legal, Ethical, & Reg. Issues, 11(2): 1-32 (2008), *available at* [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=929027](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=929027).

16. *Id.*

17. Robert W. McGee & Sheldon R. Smith, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: An Empirical Study of Utah Opinion*, 6-8 (Bary Univ. Andreas School of Business Working Paper Series, 2006), *available at* <http://ssrn.com/abstract=934649>.

Several philosophical studies concluded that tax evasion could be ethical in certain situations. Robert Pennock<sup>18</sup> concluded that tax evasion was ethical in cases where the country collecting the taxes was engaged in an unjust war. Alfonso Morales<sup>19</sup> regarded a man's duty to feed his family as more important than feeding the state's coffers. Gregory M.A. Gronbacher<sup>20</sup> and D. Eric Schansberg<sup>21</sup> concluded that the Catholic religious literature permits tax evasion in certain situations, a view that concurs with the Crowe<sup>22</sup> study. Gronbacher's study<sup>23</sup> of the Christian literature reached the same conclusion. Two Islamic scholars<sup>24</sup> 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<sup>25</sup> 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,<sup>26</sup> Armenia,<sup>27</sup> Bosnia & Herzegovina,<sup>28</sup>

---

18. Robert T. Pennock, *Death and Taxes: On the Justice of Conscientious War Tax Resistance*, 1 J. ACCT. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 58, 58-76 (1998), reprinted in THE ETHICS OF TAX EVASION 124, 132-42 (Robert W. McGee ed., 1998).

19. Alfonso Morales, *Income Tax Compliance and Alternative Views of Ethics and Human Nature*, 1 J. ACCT. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 380, 380-99 (1998), reprinted in THE ETHICS OF TAX EVASION 242, 244 (Robert W. McGee ed., 1998).

20. Gregory M.A. Gronbacher, *Taxation: Catholic Social Thought and Classical Liberalism*, 1 J. ACCT. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 91, 91-100 (1998), reprinted in THE ETHICS OF TAX EVASION 158, 163-64 (Robert W. McGee ed., 1998).

21. D. Eric Schansberg, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion within Biblical Christianity: Are There Limits to "Rendering Unto Caesar"?* 1 J. ACCT. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 77, 77-90 (1998), reprinted in THE ETHICS OF TAX EVASION 144, 144 (Robert W. McGee ed., 1998).

22. Crowe, *supra* note 2, at 164.

23. Gronbacher, *supra* note 20.

24. Athar Murtuza & S. M. Ghazanfar, *Taxation as a Form of Worship: Exploring the Nature of Zakat*, 1 J. ACCT. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 134, 143-61 (1998), reprinted in THE ETHICS OF TAX EVASION 190, 209 (Robert W. McGee ed., 1998).

25. Robert W. McGee, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion and Trade Protectionism from an Islamic Perspective*, 1 COMMENT. L. & PUB. POL'Y 250, 260 (1997), available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=461397>.

26. Robert W. McGee & Marcelo J. Rossi, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Law and Business Students in Argentina*, 24 (2006), <http://ssrn.com/abstract=875892>.

27. Robert W. McGee & Tatyana B. Maranjyan, *Tax Evasion in Armenia: An Empirical Study*, 12 (2006), <http://ssrn.com/abstract=869309>.

28. Robert W. McGee, Meliha Basic & Michael Tyler, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Bosnian Opinion*, 10 J. S. EUR. & BALKANS, available at [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=899609](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=899609).

China,<sup>29</sup> Germany,<sup>30</sup> Guatemala,<sup>31</sup> Hong Kong,<sup>32</sup> Macau,<sup>33</sup> Poland,<sup>34</sup> Romania,<sup>35</sup> Slovakia,<sup>36</sup> Thailand,<sup>37</sup> Ukraine,<sup>38</sup> philosophy teachers,<sup>39</sup> and international business academics<sup>40</sup> 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<sup>41</sup> study reached the same conclusion, using a different methodology.

---

29. Robert W. McGee & Zhiwen Guo, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Law, Business and Philosophy Students in China*, 13 (2006), <http://ssrn.com/abstract=869304>; Robert W. McGee & Carlos Noronha, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Comparative Study of Guangzhou (Southern China) and Macau Opinion* (Barry Univ. Andreas School of Business Working Paper Series 2007), available at [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1015882](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1015882); Robert W. McGee & Yuhua An, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Chinese Business and Economics Students*, 12 (2006), <http://ssrn.com/abstract=869280>.

30. Robert W. McGee, Inge Nickerson & Werner Fees, *When Is Tax Evasion Ethically Justifiable? A Survey of German Opinion*, 9 PROC. ACAD. LEGAL ETHICAL & REG. ISSUES 35, 37 (2005).

31. Robert W. McGee & Christopher Lingle, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Guatemalan Opinion*, 37 (2005), <http://ssrn.com/abstract=813288>.

32. Robert W. McGee & Y. Y. Butt, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Hong Kong Opinion*, The IABPAD Conference Proceedings, Dallas, Texas, April 24-27, 2008 (forthcoming); Robert W. McGee & Simon S. M. Ho, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Accounting, Business and Economics Students in Hong Kong* 14 (2006), <http://ssrn.com/abstract=869306>.

33. Robert W. McGee, Carlos Noronha & Michael Tyler, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Macau Opinion*, presented at the FIFTEENTH ANN. WORLD BUS. CONG. INT'L MGMT DEV. ASSN (IMDA), Sarajevo, Bosnia, June 18-21 (2006).

34. Robert W. McGee & Arkadiusz Bernal, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Business Students in Poland*, 21 (2006), <http://ssrn.com/abstract=875434>.

35. Robert W. McGee, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Romanian Business Students and Faculty* (Barry Univ. Andreas School of Business Working Paper Series 2005), available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=813345>, reprinted in ROBERT W. MCGEE & GALINA G. PREOBRAZHENSKAYA, ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL SYSTEM REFORM IN EASTERN EUROPE AND ASIA 299-334 (2006).

36. Robert W. McGee & Radoslav Tusan, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Slovak Opinion*, 19 (Barry Univ. Andreas School of Business Working Paper Series 2006), available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=932990>.

37. Robert W. McGee, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Case Study of Opinion in Thailand*, 17 (Barry Univ. Andreas School of Business Working Paper Series 2006), available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=934645>.

38. Irina Nasadyuk & Robert W. McGee, *Lessons for Emerging Tax Regimes: The Ethics of Tax Evasion in the Ukraine*, OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE, HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAM, REGIONAL SEMINAR FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING, Odessa, July 23-August 4, 2006, published in the Proceedings at 47-66.

39. Robert W. McGee, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Survey of Philosophy Teachers* (forthcoming).

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<sup>42</sup> and a study of Mexican migrant workers,<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> database to examine attitudes toward tax evasion for various subgroups. Torgler<sup>45</sup> used it in his doctoral dissertation. McGee and Sanjoy Bose<sup>46</sup> 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,<sup>47</sup> several Asian countries,<sup>48</sup> and a longitudinal study of ten transition economies,<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup> The Inglehart study asked hundreds of questions to more than 200,000 people in 81 countries.<sup>51</sup> One of those questions (“F116”) was on the ethics of tax evasion.<sup>52</sup> The question asked whether the respondent would cheat on taxes if there

---

42. Crowe, *supra* note 2.

43. Morales, *supra* note 19.

44. HUMAN BELIEFS AND VALUES: A CROSS-CULTURAL SOURCEBOOK BASED ON THE 1999-2002 VALUES SURVEYS (Ronald Inglehart et al. eds., 2004).

45. Torgler, *supra* note 4.

46. Robert W. McGee & Sanjoy Bose, *The Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Comparative Study of Australian, New Zealand and USA Opinion* 951-64 (Barry Univ. Andreas School of Business Working Paper Series 2007), available at: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=979408>.

47. Robert W. McGee, *A Survey of Vietnamese Opinion on the Ethics of Tax Evasion*, in TAXATION AND PUBLIC FINANCE IN TRANSITION AND DEVELOPING ECONOMIES 663-74 (Robert W. McGee ed. 2008).

48. Robert W. McGee, *Ethics and Tax Evasion in Asia*, 5 ICFAI J. PUB. FIN. 21 (2007), reprinted in BUSINESS ETHICS: A 360 DEGREE APPRAISAL (forthcoming), available at [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=934644](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=934644).

49. Robert W. McGee, *Trends in the Ethics of Tax Evasion: An Empirical Study of 10 Transition Economies*, in TAXATION AND PUBLIC FINANCE IN TRANSITION AND DEVELOPING ECONOMIES 119-36 (Robert W. McGee ed. 2008).

50. HUMAN BELIEFS AND VALUES, *supra* note 44.

51. *See id.* at vii-xiv, 401-06.

52. *Id.* at F116, xii.

were an opportunity to do so.<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup> 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<sup>55</sup> 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.

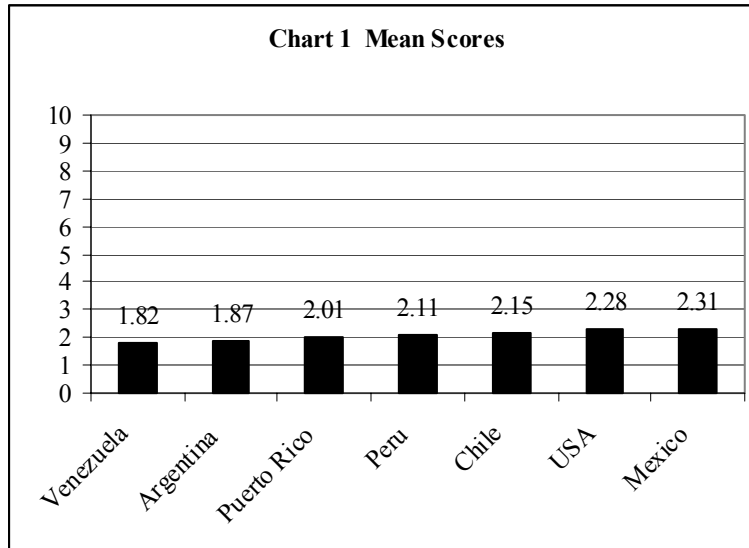
55. *See* Robert W. McGee, *Three Views on the Ethics of Tax Evasion*, 67 J. BUS. ETHICS 15, 23-24 (2006); McGee & Cohn, *supra* note 15.

Table 1  
Sample Size and Overall Mean Scores  
(1 = never justifiable; 10 = always justifiable)

	Sample Size	Mean Score
Argentina	1270	1.87
Chile	1177	2.15
Mexico	1447	2.31
Peru	1473	2.11
Puerto Rico	706	2.01
USA	1198	2.28
Venezuela	1194	1.82
Total	8465	

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,<sup>56</sup> while at least one other study has come to the opposite conclusion.<sup>57</sup> A third group of studies found no statistical difference between male and female attitudes.<sup>58</sup>

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,<sup>59</sup> Hong Kong,<sup>60</sup> Hubei,

56. Leslie M. Dawson, *Ethical Differences Between Men and Women in the Sales Profession*, 16 J. BUS. ETHICS 1143, 1147-50 (1997); Durwood Ruegger & Ernest W. King, *A Study of the Effect of Age and Gender upon Student Business Ethics*, 11 J. BUS. ETHICS 179, 184-85 (1992); William A. Weeks, et al., *The Effects of Gender and Career Stage on Ethical Judgment*, 20 J. BUS. ETHICS 301, 310 (1999).

57. John H. Barnett & Marvin J. Karson, *Personal Values and Business Decisions: An Exploratory Investigation*, 6 J. BUS. ETHICS 371, 381 (1987).

58. Robert Loo, *Are Women More Ethical Than Men? Findings from Three Independent Studies*, 18 WOMEN MGMT. REV. 169, 176 (2003); Barry Z. Posner & Warren H. Schmidt, *Values and the American Manager: An Update*, 26 CAL. MGMT. REV. 202, 212 (1984); Keith G. Stanga & Richard A. Turpen, *Ethical Judgments on Selected Accounting Issues: An Empirical Study*, 10 J. BUS. ETHICS 739, 746 (1991).

59. McGee & Lingle, *supra* note 31, at 35.

60. McGee & Butt, *supra* note 32.

China,<sup>61</sup> Orthodox Jews,<sup>62</sup> Spain,<sup>63</sup> Thailand,<sup>64</sup> international business professors,<sup>65</sup> and U.S. business students in Utah.<sup>66</sup> Men were found to be slightly more opposed to tax evasion in a study of Romania<sup>67</sup> and significantly more opposed to tax evasion in a study of Slovakia.<sup>68</sup>

In studies of Argentina,<sup>69</sup> Beijing, China,<sup>70</sup> Guangzhou, China,<sup>71</sup> Hong Kong,<sup>72</sup> Macau,<sup>73</sup> Poland,<sup>74</sup> and Ukraine,<sup>75</sup> 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,<sup>76</sup> although the religious literature of Judaism,<sup>77</sup> the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,<sup>78</sup> and the Baha'i religion<sup>79</sup> 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.

---

61. McGee & Guo, *supra* note 29, at 8-9.

62. McGee & Cohn, *supra* note 15.

63. James Alm & Benno Torgler, *Presentation on Estimating the Determinants of Tax Morale Before the National Tax Association – Tax Institute of America* (2004), in MINUTES at 269, 271-73.

64. McGee, *supra* note 37, at 13-14.

65. McGee, *supra* note 3, at 37.

66. McGee & Smith, *supra* note 17, at 16.

67. McGee, *supra* note 35, at 19.

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. DeMolive, *supra* note 12.

Table 2  
Gender Mean Scores  
(1 = never justifiable; 10 = always justifiable)

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

\* 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.

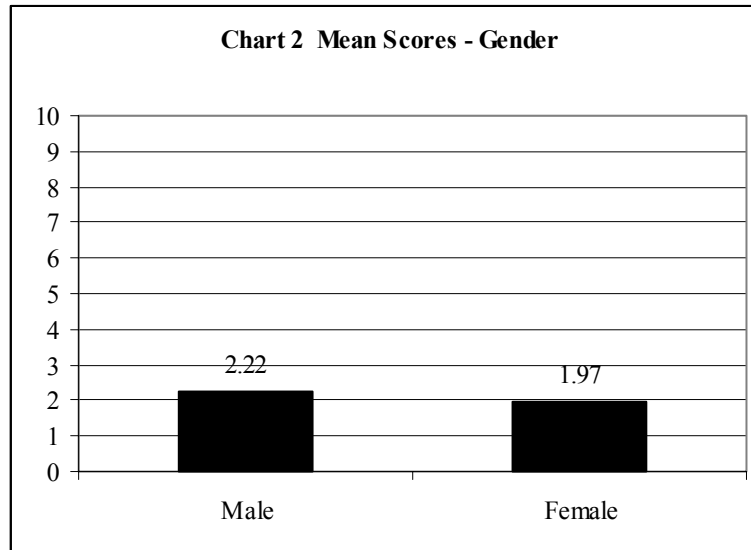
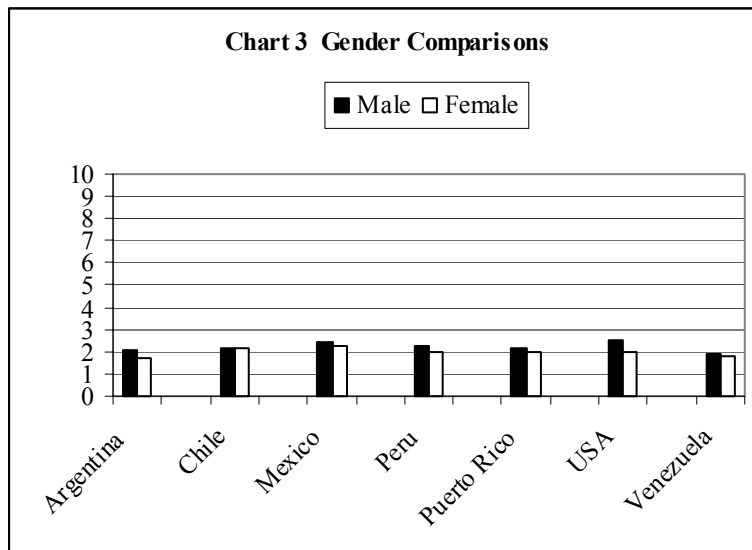


Chart 3 shows the gender comparisons for each country. Again, there is not much difference in the larger scheme of things, although the difference in the United States is the most pronounced.



*B. Age*

A study by Durwood Ruegger and Ernest W. King<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup> But Ronald Sims et al.<sup>82</sup> found that older students had fewer qualms about pirating software than did younger students.

Emin Babakus et al.<sup>83</sup> 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.<sup>84</sup> Age generally did not matter for Hong Kong consumers, except in the case of stealing towels from hotels and blankets from aircrafts.<sup>85</sup> 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.<sup>86</sup>

Table 3 summarizes the mean scores by age for the present study. The Inglehart et al.<sup>87</sup> (2004) data separated the groups into three age categories.

---

80. Ruegger & King, *supra* note 56, at 184.

81. *Id.*

82. Ronald R. Sims, Hsing K. Cheng & Hildy Teegen, *Toward a Profile of Student Software Pirates*, 15 J. BUS. ETHICS 839, 844 (1996).

83. Emin Babakus, et al., *Reactions to Unethical Consumer Behavior Across Six Countries*, 21 J. CONSUMER MARKETING 254, 257-58 (2004).

84. *Id.* at 259.

85. *Id.*

86. *Id.*

87. HUMAN BELIEFS AND VALUES, *supra* note 44.

**Table 3**  
**Age Mean Scores**  
 (1 = never justifiable; 10 = always justifiable)

	16-29	30-49	50+
Argentina	2.15	1.84	1.65
Chile	2.23	2.15	2.08
Mexico	2.51	2.39	1.88
Peru	2.12	2.19	1.92
Puerto Rico	2.58	2.18	1.63
USA	2.73	2.26	1.90
Venezuela	1.86	1.76	1.85
Averages	2.25	2.13	1.84

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.

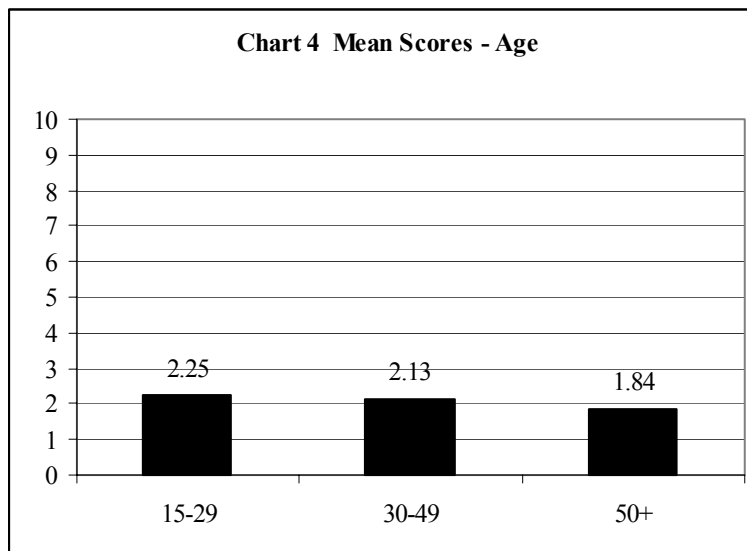


Table 4 shows the p values for each age group and each country. The decline in mean scores is significant in 10 of 21 cases. The most significant declines are in the cases of Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the United States, where the differences are significant for all three comparisons. There was not a significant 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

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

\* Significant at 1% level

\*\* Significant at 5% level

\*\*\* Significant at 10% level

### C. Education

The Inglehart et al. study<sup>88</sup> also grouped responses by level of education. The categories for education were compiled as follows:

---

88. *Id.*

Lower

Inadequately completed elementary education, or  
Completed (compulsory) elementary education, or  
(Compulsory) elementary education and basic vocational  
qualification

Middle

Secondary, intermediate vocational qualification, or  
Secondary, intermediate qualification, or  
Full secondary, maturity level certificate

Upper

Higher education – lower-level tertiary certificate, or  
Higher education – upper-level tertiary certificate

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<sup>89</sup> 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<sup>90</sup> found that the most educated group was significantly less opposed to tax evasion.

A comparative study of Australia, New Zealand, and the United States<sup>91</sup> 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.

---

89. Robert W. McGee & Michael Tyler, *Tax Evasion and Ethics: A Demographic Study of 33 Countries* 15 (2006), available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=940505>.

90. McGee, *supra* note 47.

91. McGee & Bose, *supra* note 46, at 8.



**Table 5**  
**Education Mean Scores**  
 (1 = never justifiable; 10 = always justifiable)

	Lower	Middle	Upper
Argentina	1.87	1.90	1.78
Chile	2.27	2.04	2.19
Mexico	2.19	2.53	2.14
Peru	2.10	2.14	2.08
Puerto Rico	1.45	1.91	2.16
USA	2.43	2.34	2.17
Venezuela	1.93	1.84	1.63
Averages	2.08	2.11	2.07

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.

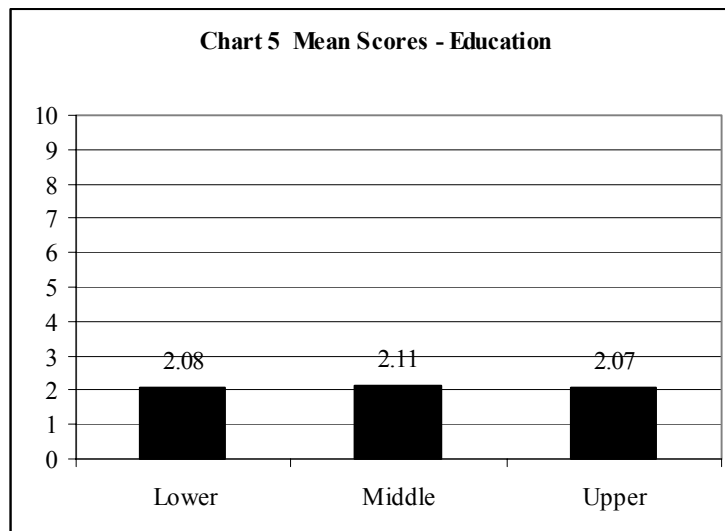


Chart 6 shows the differences in mean score by country. As can be seen, the patterns are different. Whereas the overall trend is downward, indicating a lower likelihood of cheating on taxes as the level of education increases, those in the middle education group are sometimes more likely to cheat than 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.

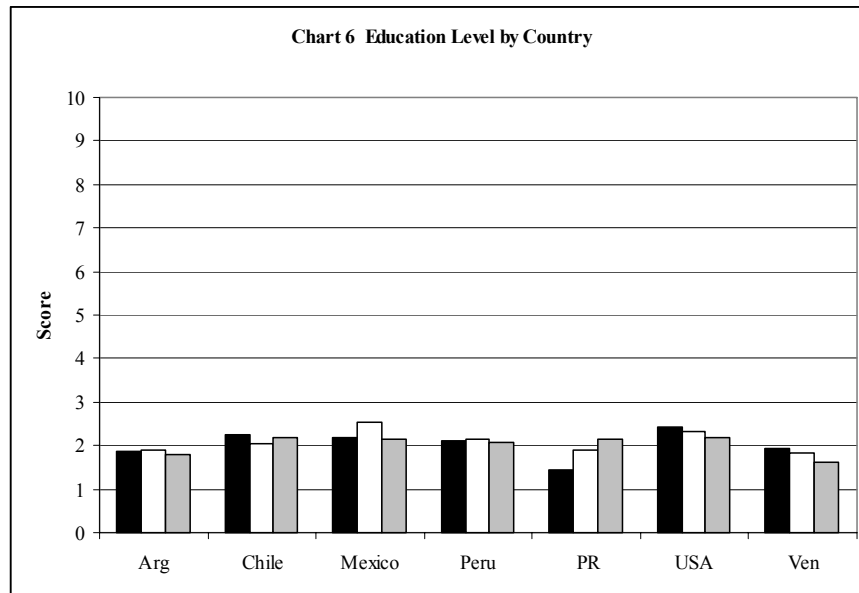


Table 6 shows the p values for each country. The only case where education plays a significant factor is when one compares the lower to middle educational level groups for Mexico. In all other cases the differences in mean scores are not significant.

Table 6  
P Values - Education

	Lower vs. Middle	Lower vs. Upper	Middle vs. Upper
Argentina	0.4043	0.964	0.588
Chile	0.135	0.8269	0.337
Mexico	0.02068**	0.3359	0.5395
Peru	0.7954	0.5851	0.7239
Puerto Rico	0.4009	0.2047	0.5645
USA	0.9917	0.8209	0.7971
Venezuela	0.7424	0.3061	0.3808

\* Significant at 1% level

\*\* Significant at 5% level

#### *D. Religious Observance*

The Inglehart et al.<sup>92</sup> data also gave separate breakdowns by religious affiliation and religious observance.<sup>93</sup> 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)

	MOW	OW	OM	OSH	OY	LO	NPN
Argentina	1.58	1.66	1.64	1.76	1.88	1.87	2.26
Chile	2.20	2.15	2.20	1.88	2.42	1.95	2.07
Mexico	2.17	2.22	2.25	2.61	2.22	2.68	2.75
Peru	1.85	2.02	2.12	2.28	2.50	2.38	2.29
Puerto Rico	1.58	1.96	1.95	2.53	2.76	2.40	2.50
USA	1.76	1.94	2.49	2.54	2.97	2.34	2.74
Venezuela	1.82	1.77	1.75	1.82	1.84	1.76	2.02
Averages	1.85	2.01	2.06	2.20	2.31	2.06	2.31

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.

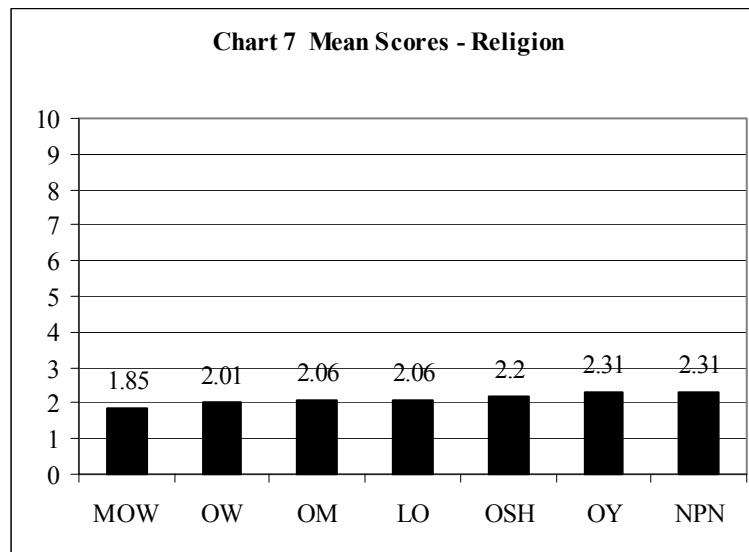


Table 8 shows the p values for certain intergroup comparisons. In general, the mean differences are not significant. However, people in

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

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

\* 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,<sup>94</sup> and this view was supported by a study of Mexican migrant workers.<sup>95</sup>

Culture also plays a role. Geert Hofstede<sup>96</sup> 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<sup>97</sup> looked at culture from the perspectives of high and low context and compared monochronic cultures to polychronic 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.<sup>98</sup>

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.

96. Geert Hofstede, *Motivation, Leadership, and Organizational: Do American Theories Apply Abroad?* 10 *ORG. DYNAMICS* 42, 43 (1980); *See* GEERT HOFSTEDÉ, *CULTURES AND ORGANIZATIONS: SOFTWARE OF THE MIND* 23-173 (1991); *See also* GEERT HOFSTEDÉ, *CULTURES AND ORGANIZATIONS, SOFTWARE OF THE MIND: INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR SURVIVAL* (1994); Geert Hofstede, *Management Scientists are Human*, 40 *MGMT SCI.* 4, 5-11 (1994).

97. *See, e.g.*, EDWARD T. HALL, *THE SILENT LANGUAGE* 37, 58 (1959); EDWARD T. HALL, *THE HIDDEN DIMENSION* 173 (1966); *See also* EDWARD T. HALL, *BEYOND CULTURE* (1976).

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.

