Original Research Reports

The Relationship Between Political Ideology and Attitudes Toward Tax Compliance: The Case of Italian Taxpayers

Edoardo Lozza*[a], Barbara Kastlunger[b], Semira Tagliabue[c], Erich Kirchler[d]

[a] Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica, Milan, Italy. [b] Faculty of Psychology, University of Vienna, Ferdinand Porsche FernFh Vienna, Vienna, Austria. [c] Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica, Brescia, Italy. [d] Faculty of Psychology, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria.

Abstract

Research on tax behaviour or attitudes towards tax evasion has rarely taken into account the political preferences of taxpayers. The present research aimed to explore the relationship between political ideology and attitudes toward tax compliance within the "slippery slope framework" (Kirchler, Hoelzl, & Wahl, 2008). We conducted a quantitative survey ($N = 272$) and two online focus groups with self-employed taxpayers in Italy, and found significant differences between left-leaning and right-leaning taxpayers. These two groups were characterized by two different pathways that lead to greater tax compliance, and attached different meanings and values to tax behaviours. In particular, left-leaning taxpayers expressed higher levels of voluntary cooperation and showed reactance to the coercive power of authorities, whereas right-leaning taxpayers expressed higher levels of enforced tax compliance and were more averse to tax evasion with increased trust in authorities and institutions. Although further research on this topic is advisable, these results bear relevant theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords: taxation, tax attitudes, tax evasion, political ideology, "slippery slope framework"

The present paper aims to explore the relationship between tax compliance and political ideology. Several studies show that there are relationships between political ideology and economic domains, such as economic beliefs and perceptions or consumer sentiment. For instance, Allen and Ng (2000) found that political party preferences were closely related to such economic beliefs as the perception of inefficacy in an economic system or satisfaction with economic inequalities. Evans and Andersen (2006) found that lay economic perceptions were strongly conditioned by political preferences. In addition, consumer sentiment also links politics and economic issues: People who identified with political parties that were expected to win the upcoming elections tended to increase their levels of consumer confidence (Bosio, Lozza, & Novello, 2008; De Boef & Kellstedt, 2004).

Nevertheless, studies in the field of tax behaviour have paid less attention to taxpayers' political party preferences than those influences merit. Moreover, rather than considering the general attitudes of taxpayers toward taxes, the few studies taking political ideology into account have usually focused on its relationship to evaluations of specific fiscal policies, such as change in tax rates or tax reforms (Lewis, 1980; Lozza, Carrera, & Bosio, 2010; Sears, Tau, Tyler, & Allen, 1980), preferences for fiscal systems (Hasseldine & Hite, 2003; Lewis, 1978; McGowan, 2000; Roberts & Hite, 1994), and support for tax cuts (Rudolph, 2009) or for specific taxes (Hardisty, Johnson, & Weber, 2010).

There are, of course, some exceptions: Wahlund (1992) found that political party preferences in Sweden were directly related to general attitudes toward taxation and, indirectly, to tax evasion, because people affiliated with conservative parties favouring "less state, more market" showed higher levels of tax aversion and seemed to be less inclined to comply than taxpayers favouring social democratic parties. Sussman and Olivola (2011) recently showed that tax aversion in the United States seemed to be more prevalent among respondents who identified with conservative parties as compared to those who identified with liberal parties. Both studies took into account general attitudes toward taxation (or tax aversion), but did not specifically focus on concrete tax compliance.

Given that general attitudes toward taxes may be regarded as one of the antecedents of tax compliance (Kirchler, 2007), these empirical findings may also suggest a relationship between political ideology and attitudes toward tax compliance. In this paper, we provide an initial exploration of the topic by analysing the relationship between political ideology and attitudes toward tax compliance in a sample of self-employed Italian taxpayers. In the following sections, we discuss the theoretical framework (the "slippery slope framework"; Kirchler, Hoelzl, & Wahl, 2008) and the reasons why Italian self-employed taxpayers might provide an appropriate population for this study. We then present and discuss the results of a mixed-method research project. The aim of the present paper is to enrich the literature on tax compliance and political ideology, and to show how these two fields of study can be usefully integrated.

The Slippery Slope Framework

The slippery slope framework was developed as a holistic framework, summarizing existing branches of tax compliance research (Kirchler et al., 2008). The framework rests on the assumption that the socio-political culture within a society determines the route to achieve cooperation within a state. If the interaction between authorities and taxpayers is characterized by mutual trust and by a prevailing service-client approach (synergistic climate), taxpayers feel committed to the law and pay their taxes honestly and spontaneously; thus, they show voluntary tax compliance. If trust is high, taxpayers perceive a duty in fulfilling societal needs. However, in a climate of distrust and when there is a low level of respect between tax authorities and the government on one side and citizens on the other, the authorities need to stress their power to regulate the citizens' behaviour. In this case, tax compliance is promoted by external incentives, such as audits and fines.

In a nutshell, within the slippery slope framework, tax compliance may be voluntary or enforced. Voluntary compliance is assumed to be high if taxpayers trust their authorities; enforced compliance is assumed to be high if taxpayers perceive the authorities to have a high level of power. One major task of tax authorities is to set tax contributions at an appropriate level to guarantee finances for public expenditures. This might be achieved either by strengthening trust or by exerting power. In both cases, the behavioural outcomes of taxpayers result in high tax contributions. In the first case, compliance is voluntary; in the second case, it is enforced.

The concept of trust within the theoretical framework is characterized by its relational aspect (Eberl, 2003) and refers to the concept of "social trust"; thus, it is not conceived as calculative trust (i.e., the result of a rational calculation between gains and losses to maximize outcomes; Tyler, 2003). It is defined as "a general opinion of individuals and social groups that the tax authorities are benevolent and work beneficially for the common good" (Kirchler et al., 2008, p. 212). Generally, power can be defined as the capacity of coercion by authorities, where prosecution and punishments regulate tax compliance (Theory of Crime; Becker, 1968). More precisely, within the slippery slope framework, power is conceived as the taxpayers' perception of the ability of the authority to detect and punish tax fraud (Kirchler et al., 2008).

Although several studies evidence that trust in authorities is positively related to tax compliance (Richardson, 2008; Scholz & Lubell, 1998; Torgler, 2003; Torgler & Schneider, 2005), empirical evidence is not clear regarding the effect of power on compliance (Kirchler, Muehlbacher, Kastlunger, & Wahl, 2010). Harsh prosecution and heavy fines do not always increase taxpayer honesty, but they augment taxpayers' strategic behaviour and increase efforts to find other ways to exploit the law (Kastlunger, Kirchler, Mittone, & Pitters, 2009; Wahl, Kastlunger, & Kirchler, 2010). Thus, a cops-and-robbers relationship between taxpayers and authorities develops, and the power of authorities comes to be seen as being coercive.

The slippery slope framework received its name from the fact that maintaining or achieving a high level of tax compliance in a social system is like operating on a slippery slope. Trust and power are assumed to operate in a complex interaction with each other. Power can fuel trust, but it can also corrupt it: Authorities that are unable to exert power to combat tax evasion might be perceived as less trustworthy because they cannot prevent exploitation of the tax system. Moreover, in a synergistic climate of cooperation, exertion of power might not provide any surplus. It may even have the unintended effect of crowding out trust (Feld & Frey, 2002a, 2002b). Finally, in an antagonistic climate in which authorities are not trusted, power and the resulting coercion might be most effective in increasing compliance. But in this situation, taxpayers might merely find more sophisticated ways to exploit the laws and engage in legal methods of tax avoidance.

Several empirical investigations on the assumptions of the slippery slope framework showed promising results. One of the first empirical studies (Wahl et al., 2010) analysed the relationship between trust and voluntary compliance, as well as between power and enforced compliance, in both a survey and an experimental study. In subsequent studies, the relationships between the variables specified in the framework were confirmed (Muehlbacher & Kirchler, 2010) and shown to be consistent across different economic and cultural systems (Kogler, Batrancea, Nichita, Pantya, Belianin, & Kirchler, 2013; Muehlbacher, Kirchler, & Schwarzenberger, 2011). Kogler and his colleagues used a scenario planning technique to manipulate trust and perceived power in Austria, Hungary, Romania and Russia, by describing the political and tax climates in a fictitious country. Results showed that the condition of high trust led to greater voluntary tax compliance and the condition of high power to greater enforced tax compliance.

Since the power of authorities is a multifaceted concept (Turner, 2005; see also French & Raven, 1960; Raven, Schwarzwald, & Koslowsky, 1998), an extended version of the slippery slope framework (Gangl, Hofmann, Pollai, & Kirchler, 2012; Kastlunger, Lozza, Kirchler, & Schabmann, 2013) differentiates between coercive and legitimate power. Punishing those who do not comply with the law and supporting or rewarding those who cooperate is necessary to maintain the credibility and trustworthiness of the state. This positive aspect of power can be defined as legitimate power (namely, the correct, legitimized and effective regulation of behaviour; Tyler, 2006), which is

positively correlated with trust. The other aspect of power can be defined as coercive power, which is negatively related to trust. Based on this distinction, the multifaceted aspects of power were studied by Kastlunger et al. (2013) in a path model on the slippery slope framework (see Figure 1) in Italy. The model assumes, in line with the original version of the framework (Kirchler et al., 2008), that trust influence voluntary compliance, whereas the coercive aspect of power influences enforced compliance. In addition, the legitimate aspect of power depends on trust as well as coercive power and is assumed to influence both voluntary and enforced compliance.
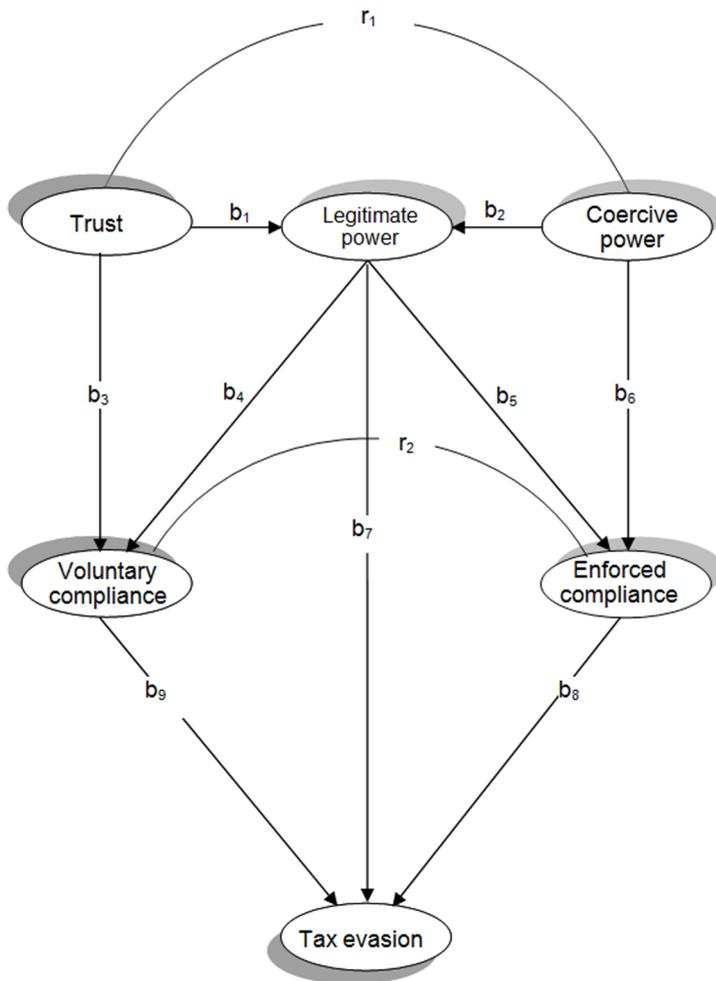

Figure 1. Structure of the extended version of the slippery slope framework (Kastlunger et al., 2013)

In research on the slippery slope framework, considering political ideology adds a further dimension. We discussed in the Introduction that several studies linked political ideology to support for specific tax policies or to general attitudes toward taxation. Those findings suggest also to explore the relationship between political ideology and attitudes toward tax compliance. For instance, we expect that people favouring right-wing parties will be more responsive to enforced tax compliance because they have been reported to be more tax-averse (Sussman & Olivola, 2011). On the contrary, people who identify with left-wing parties might express higher levels of voluntary cooperation (voluntary tax compliance) because of their more positive attitude towards taxation (Wahlund, 1992).

Studying the relationship between political ideology and tax compliance might be theoretically relevant and help to better understand the different pathways toward tax compliance within the slippery slope framework.

Tax Compliance and Politics Among Self-Employed Italian Taxpayers

Italy is an interesting location for the present exploration, for at least two reasons. First, from a fiscal perspective, Italy ranks second only to Greece in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) statistics on shadow economy and tax evasion in western countries (Feld & Schneider, 2010). Moreover, for the past 20 years, Italian voters have witnessed an increasing polarization of the political situation (Alt & Lassen, 2006): a continuous clash with little possibility of compromise between right-wing parties, which have always promoted "less tax" policies, and those on the left, which have traditionally favoured increased government involvement in economic and social life.[i]

Regarding the population under scrutiny, we have good reasons to focus on self-employed taxpayers. Self-employed taxpayers have increased opportunities to evade taxes (Kirchler, 2007) in general and in the Italian fiscal system in particular, because they file their income themselves whereas taxes of employees are retained and transferred by their employers to the tax office. Consequently, studying attitudes toward tax compliance within this particular group of taxpayers might be relevant both theoretically and pragmatically.

The Current Research

Based on these premises, our research question was whether and how there is a relationship between political ideology and attitudes toward tax compliance. For an exploratory question such as this, a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods is appropriate (Creswell, 2009; Morse & Niehaus, 2009). In particular, we designed a research study in two phases: First, in a quantitative approach, we aimed at surveying and measuring the relationship between political ideology and attitudes toward tax compliance under the assumptions of the slippery slope framework; the second, qualitative approach aimed to deepen and clarify the quantitative results. Qualitative research is a flexible research lens that helps to give voice to the "insider"/participant perspective and subjective experience, which is in contrast to the "external"/researcher-driven point of view produced by quantitative methods (Hennik, 2008; Temple & Edwards, 2002). In this regard, our qualitative study aimed to better understand and define the different meanings attached to tax compliance among left- and right-leaning taxpayers.

Study 1

Method

Participants

272 Italian self-employed or entrepreneurial taxpayers (67% male) who expressed a political preference were studied. Participants were, on average, 44.6 years of age (SD = 12.0) and were selected from an initial sample of 356 people. We excluded participants who did not state a clear political preference (missing: n = 54; centre: n = 19) and those who indicated being a blue- or white-collar worker (n = 11), as these are taxed at source and are therefore not comparable to self-employed taxpayers.

Procedures and Materials

Data were collected in 2010, via self-administered questionnaires, to guarantee anonymity of respondents. Participants were recruited through e-mail addresses provided by the local Chambers of Commerce and by a market research institute. The questionnaire used the Italian version of the tax compliance inventory TAX-I (Kirchler & Wahl, 2010), including the three additional scales assessing trust in authorities, coercive power, and legitimate power of tax authorities (Berti, Kastlunger, & Kirchler, in press; Kastlunger et al., 2013; the full inventory can be found in Appendix A).

Descriptives and correlations between the scales are shown in Table 1. All scales showed good reliability, and inter-correlations were in line with theoretical assumptions.

Table 1

TAX-I Scales, Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's alpha and Inter-Scale Correlations (N = 272)

				Correlations					
SCALE	M	SD	Alpha	Evasion	Enforced tax compliance	Voluntary tax compliance	Legitimate power	Coercive power	Trust
Evasion	4.1	2.3	.84	-					
Enforced tax compliance	5.1	2.3	.88	.18	-				
Voluntary tax compliance	6.4	1.8	.86	-.35	-.20	-			
Legitimate power	3.6	2.0	.91	-.12	.34	.08	-		
Coercive power	5.4	2.2	.86	.16	.31	-.09	.21	-	
Trust	3.7	1.9	.90	-.16	-.02	.26	.48	-.25	-

Note. Correlations equal to or above .15 are significant at $p < .05$. Likert-like scales ranged from 1 (low) to 9 (high).

In the final section of the questionnaire, we asked respondents to answer socio-demographic questions, including an item measuring political ideology (left-right self-placement; Inglehart & Klingemann, 1976) on five levels (left, centre-left, centre, centre-right, and right). This question enabled us to build the two subsamples identifying, respectively, as left-leaning (*n* = 108) and right-leaning (n = 164).[ii] Table 2 gives detailed information about socio-demographics for the two subgroups.

Results and Discussion

As seen in Table 2, the left-leaning and right-leaning participants had similar socio-demographic profiles, except for education, which aligns with the generally-acknowledged profile of Italian voters (where right-wing voters tend to be less educated; Caciagli & Corbetta, 2003). However, there also seemed to be age differences in the 41-50 and over 50 years categories. Therefore, in the following analyses, we controlled for education and age as covariates.[iii]

A multivariate analysis of covariance, with political ideology as the independent variable, education and age as covariates, and the TAX-I scales as dependent variables, was conducted to assess differences in tax compliance attitudes by political ideology. Results (see Table 3) revealed several differences between the two groups, $F(6, 254) = 7.376$, $p < .001$. In particular, right-leaning participants scored higher on the scales of coercive power, legitimate power, and enforced tax compliance. On the other hand, left-leaning participants expressed higher levels of voluntary tax compliance. No significant differences between the two groups were found on the trust and tax evasion scales. The fact that no significant differences were found between the two groups in terms of intention

Table 2

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Total Sample and Left- and Right-Wing Taxpayers

	Total (%) *N* = 272	Left (%) *n* = 108	Right (%) *n* = 164
Gender		χ^2(1, *n* = 267) = 0.01; *p* = .99	
Female	33.5	33.3	33.5
Male	66.5	66.7	66.5
Age groups		χ^2(3, *n* = 263) = 7.13; *p* = .07	
≤ 30 years	14.1	12.4	14.9
31-40 years	27.4	27.6	27.3
41-50 years	26.0	19.1	30.4
> 50 years	32.7	40.9	27.4
Average	44.57	45.79	43.75
Education		χ^2(1, *n* = 272) = 15.48, *p* < .001	
Low level	56.3	41.7	65.9
High level (University)	43.8	58.3	34.1
Net annual income		χ^2(3, *n* = 249) = 5.38; *p* = .15	
≤ 20,000 €	26.5	21.1	30.3
20,001 - 40,000 €	38.9	46.1	33.8
40.001 - 60,000 €	13.7	17.3	11.1
≥ 60,001 €	20.9	15.5	24.8

to reduce taxes illegally (tax evasion scale) may suggest two slightly different models of tax compliance that, via different pathways, lead to the same result in terms of evasion intention.

Table 3

TAX-I Scores for the Two Political-Ideology Groups

	Means (standard deviations) without inclusion of covariates		Estimated marginal means (standard errors) after inclusion of the covariates		
	Left	**Right**	**Left**	**Right**	***p***
Evasion	4.07 (2.33)	4.18 (2.69)	4.08 (.23)	4.09 (.18)	.701
Enforced tax compliance	4.45 (2.28)	5.53 (2.20)	4.54 (.22)	5.41 (.18)	<.01
Voluntary tax compliance	6.86 (1.67)	6.14 (1.90)	6.83 (.18)	6.25 (.14)	<.01
Legitimate power	2.86 (1.52)	4.18 (2.11)	2.91 (.19)	4.09 (.15)	<.001
Coercive power	4.77 (2.19)	5.90 (2.04)	4.83 (.21)	5.85 (.17)	<.001
Trust	3.53 (1.83)	3.84 (1.96)	3.50 (.19)	3.87 (.16)	.187

To investigate the hypothesis of two different models, one for each political ideology, we first tested whether respondents belonging to the different groups (left/centre-left vs. right/centre-right) interpreted the items of the scales similarly (measurement invariance). We then examined whether the causal paths within the slippery slope framework (see Figure 1) were equal in the two groups (structural invariance). The software AMOS 18 (Arbuckle, 2009) was used to perform all the two-group structural equation modelling analyses. Maximum likelihood estimation was used, and model fits were evaluated by the following indices: χ^2, RMSEA, and CFI. Constrained and unconstrained models were compared through $\Delta\chi^2$ (see Byrne, 2010).

Results provided support for the full measurement invariance of all scales, except one. The exception was the voluntary tax compliance scale, in which three items had significantly different factor loadings between the political-ideology groups. Thus, the factor loadings of those three items were unconstrained, allowing them to be different in the two groups (i.e., partial invariance of the scale; Byrne, Shavelson, & Muthén, 1989).[iv]

The constrained structural model proved not to be invariant, showing significant differences in the causal paths between the two groups (Table 4).[v] Figure 2 shows the two structural models, both based on the general model tested by Kastlunger et al. (2013), in which the structural paths were free to be different. Indeed, two different pathways were found that similarly explain tax compliance for different political allegiances.

Table 4

Multi-Group Structural Model Comparing Right-Wing and Left-Wing Groups of Taxpayers

Model	χ^2 (*p*)	df	RMSEA (90% confidence interval)	CFI	$\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf)
Model – unconstrained	1279.682 (*p* < 0.001)	774	.049 (.044-.054)	.907	
Measurement model – invariant measurement weights	1307.197 (*p* < 0.001)	795	.049 (.044-.054)	.906	27.515 (21); *p* = .154
Structural model – invariant structural weights	1455.743 (*p* < 0.001)	837	.052 (.048-.057)	.886	178.318 (66); *p* <. 001

In particular, the differences in the structural paths between the two groups lay in the final part of the model, mainly in the antecedents of tax evasion: Among the right-wing participants, only the relation between voluntary tax compliance and tax evasion was significant (namely, negative), whereas the left-wing participants showed a significant (and, consistent with previous empirical evidence, positive; see Kastlunger et al., 2013; Wahl et al., 2010) relationship only between enforced tax compliance and tax evasion.

Another divergence was found in the legitimate power/voluntary tax compliance relationships. In fact, this relationship was negative among left-leaning participants, but not significant (*p* = .232) among the right-leaning participants. Therefore, when tax authorities are perceived as able to detect and punish tax evasion (legitimate power), people favouring left parties seem to decrease their voluntary cooperation, whereas taxpayers favouring right parties do not change their voluntary compliance. This variation will be discussed further in the last section of this paper.

On the other hand, the distal (upper) part of the model was similar among the two groups.[vi] This corroborates the theoretical strength of the model: namely, that the relationships between trust and legitimate power, as well as between coercive power and legitimate power, were positive, whereas trust was negatively related to coercive power. In other words, among both subsamples, trust and coercive power influenced taxpayers' perceptions of the efficacy of the power of the authorities. On the other hand, if power is perceived as coercive and arbitrary, it is negatively related to trust. Furthermore, for both groups, coercive power and legitimate power led to increased enforced compliance, and trust led to increased voluntary tax compliance.

On the whole, these results support the hypothesis that two different pathways can lead to the same level of attitude toward tax evasion. In other words, with left-wing taxpayers, who already have a high level of voluntary tax compliance, tax authorities should be careful in exerting their power because an antagonistic climate might lead to less compliance. In contrast, among right-wing taxpayers, it seems to be relevant to enhance their voluntary co-
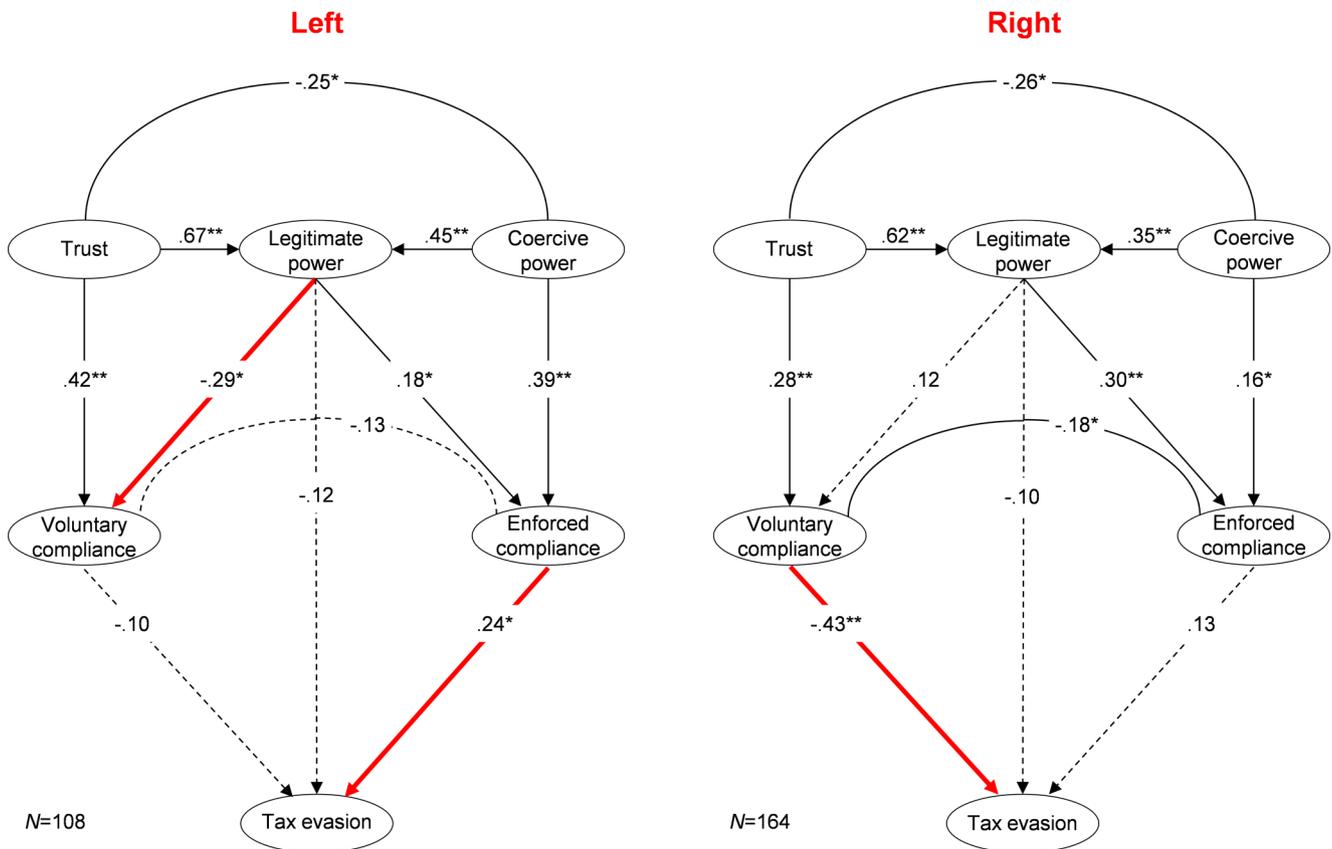
Figure 2. Structural equation models for subsamples by political ideology (only latent variables are displayed)

Note. Numbers represent standardized path coefficients (and correlations, in the case of the relation between trust and coercive power).

operation through increasing their trust in tax authorities and institutions. The following qualitative research will help to more fully explicate these differences.

Study 2

To deepen and further elucidate the different meanings that the two groups of participants attached to attitudes toward tax compliance, and to better understand the results of the previous quantitative phase, we conducted a qualitative study following the theoretical approach of focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005; Muecke, 1994). This approach is useful when the aim is to comprehend cultural meanings, values, beliefs, implicit norms and behaviours of a target population for a topic that is very specific and circumscribed, such as tax compliance.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Since tax compliance may be viewed as a sensitive topic because non-payment represents illegal behaviour and has potentially negative consequences (fines at a personal level and missed contribution to public resources at the collective level), we chose to use online focus groups, namely in the form of a bulletin board (Bosio, Graffigna,

& Lozza, 2008). Bulletin boards are virtual forums where participants can interact without having to be online at the same time (asynchronous communication) as they write their messages and read others' over periods of time that can vary from four days to several months. This technique is well suited to exploring sensitive topics because the anonymity granted to participants permits a higher degree of disclosure (a face-to-face approach, on the other hand, tends to increase the tendency to deceive and the influence of social desirability, which are both common features of research on sensitive topics; Graffigna & Bosio, 2006). In addition, the asynchronous communication form of a bulletin board, as opposed to other forms of online focus groups, allows respondents to take part in the discussion whenever they wish, which may also enhance disclosure.

We conducted two online focus groups, lasting five days each. One hosted left- and centre-left-leaning taxpayers and one right- and centre-right-leaning, randomly recruited from the participants of Study 1. Participants were invited until 15 persons per group accepted to take part. The majority of the participants were male, with ages ranging from 23 to 61 years. We proposed that, during the five days, elicited by some projective stimuli (vignettes representing the behaviour of different taxpayers; see Porr et al., 2011), participants discuss different topics related to tax compliance, and move toward their personal experiences and assessments of the fiscal system and tax authorities. The vignettes and the interview guide are available in Appendix B. Data were collected during April and May 2011, resulting in two transcripts of 92 (left-leaning group) and 76 (right-leaning group) comments, with 12,118 and 9,937 words respectively.

Data Analyses

The verbatim transcript of the online focus groups was analysed following two methods: a qualitative thematic analysis (Silverman, 2006), conducted by two independent coders, and a CAQDAS lexical analysis using the software T-lab 6.1 (Gilardi & Lozza, 2009; Graffigna, 2009).

The *qualitative thematic analysis* consisted of several readings of the transcripts and a more detailed, step-by-step coding of the texts to detect and describe the main analytical themes therein and their interconnections. In our study, two researchers conducted the analysis through parallel blind coding of all transcripts. Following the suggestions of Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers (2002), we adopted an independent co-coding approach to ensure the rigor of the analytical process.

The *software-based content analysis* using T-lab 6.1 allowed a lexicographic analysis of how different groups discussed the themes. T-lab bases its analysis on context units (CU) and lexical units (LU). CUs are variables that the researcher chooses when organizing and classifying the corpus of textual data. In the case of this research, two variables were chosen: (a) political ideology, distinguishing verbal material provided by right- and left-wing taxpayers; and (b) topic, dividing the entire corpus into four macrocodes that correspond to the theme under discussion (trust, power, public expenditures and the fiscal system). LUs are words that are considered in the graphic forms they assume in the text or ascribed to dictionary headwords or semantic classes (e.g., working = work). The software produces matrices that represent relationships between the units of analysis (CU and LU). In the matrices, frequency numbers indicate occurrences or co-occurrences of the phenomena in question. The lexicographic analysis may help to corroborate and systematize the results deriving from the qualitative thematic analysis, while the latter may contribute to enrich and deepen the former.

Results and Discussion

Qualitative thematic analysis showed that the two groups of taxpayers shared some common views and attitudes toward tax compliance, along with particular differences. Overall, participants complained about the Italian fiscal system, expressing low levels of trust, mainly because of two reasons: power "abuse" exerted by tax authorities (*"authorities exert their power abusing taxpayers' fear … in an illegitimate way"*[vii]) and inefficient fiscal expenditures (labelled as a "*waste of citizens' resources*"). These results confirm and allow us to explain some of the findings of the quantitative study, such as the low levels of trust and the positive relation between the power pathway of tax compliance and the attitude towards tax evasion (see Figure 2 again).

Furthermore, considering political ideology, the two groups showed specific differences in their discussions on the following levels: (1) the group "climate", (2) the topics discussed more frequently, and (3) attitude toward tax behaviours.

First, with respect to the climate, left-leaning participants expressed more involvement and interpersonal participation with the topic, because they felt tax compliance to be a "big deal". On the contrary, right-leaning taxpayers showed more distance from the topic under discussion and tended to interact less with the other participants, as if they considered tax compliance to be a "private" topic and difficult to share with others.

Second, the two groups responded in very different ways regarding topics: left-leaning participants tended to discuss ideological and abstract themes, considering taxpayers in general and their duties and rights (the following are prototypical sentences: "*Taxpayers should pay their taxes to contribute to the common good*"; "*The reason to pay taxes is simply to be citizens*"; "*It is essential that every taxpayer perceives the importance of his behaviour*"), whereas right-wing taxpayers maintained the discussion on a concrete and practical level, without going beyond their own experience to generalize, and often considering public services and public expenditures as the very reason for paying taxes ("*I pay taxes to have infrastructure and services*").

Third, regarding attitudes toward tax behaviours, left-wing participants tended to condemn fiscal evasion, mainly because of its consequences at the collective level (again considering concepts like common goods), and strongly considered payment of taxes as a social and civic duty. On the other hand, right-wing participants showed more indulgence toward tax evasion, justifying (without endorsing) it on the basis of the inefficiency of public services ("*My money is wasted*"; "*There is not a return of services*"). Furthermore, they tended to focus on consequences of tax evasion at a personal rather than collective level, that is, on audits and fines that a tax evader may encounter. To right-wing participants, in particular, paying taxes appeared to be a sort of "trade-off" between the citizen and the state, where the former buys the services that the latter provides ("*The actual reason I pay taxes is to obtain services I can use*"), resulting in a discourse on the topic of public expenditures being more relevant and central.

These findings were confirmed in the lexical analysis that was conducted in parallel. Specificities analyses (Lancia, 2004) (see Table 5) show that left-wing participants used words such as "taxpayer" and "fiscal system" more often, indicating that they were talking at a general and abstract level; "evading" and "evasion", confirming that they seemed to be more inclined to discuss the topic; and "civic" or "contributing", suggesting their consideration of tax behaviours as social and civic duties. On the other hand, right-wing participants more often used words such as "paying" (taxes as an exchange) for "services" such as "infrastructure" and tended to complain more about "fiscal pressure", confirming their specific perspective of fiscal behaviours as a trade-off between taxes and public expenditures.

Table 5

Specificities Analysis

Semantic units	χ^2	Subtotal	Total
Left-wing participants			
Taxpayer	12.03	36	45
Fiscal system	10.72	30	37
Evading	6.71	18	22
Evader	6.65	22	28
Civic	5.12	9	10
Contributing	5.12	9	10
Right-wing participants			
Paying	12.23	73	119
Services	9.47	43	67
Fiscal pressure	9.12	10	11
Infrastructure	7.96	9	10
Spilling (money)	7.18	12	15

Note. A specificities analysis refers to the most typical semantic units (overused semantic units) in a text subset (here: the transcripts from the right-leaning and left-leaning participants). The analysis underlines semantic features that differentiate a text subset from the rest of the corpus. The chi-square test defines the significance of an analysis outcome. The table reports semantic units with statistically significant results, together with their corresponding chi-square values, the occurrences of semantic units in the considered variable level, and the occurrences of the same semantic units in the whole corpus of data.

Moreover, we conducted a multiple correspondence analysis (Lancia, 2004) on the semantic units produced by focus groups.[viii] The analysis yielded two dimensions that divide the data according to political ideology (horizontal axis, explained inertia = 0.27) and the focus of discussions (vertical axis, explained inertia = 0.25). The results (see Figure 3) helped to corroborate and explain findings from the quantitative study. In fact, left-wing taxpayers were shown to be associated with abstract considerations on the fiscal system and tended to discuss the power of tax authorities (perceived as "huge", "accusing" and subject to "error") more frequently, which corroborates their responsiveness to the power dimension of the slippery slope framework that emerged from the structural equation analysis. On the other hand, right-wing taxpayers were more concerned with discourses of trust (again, as in the quantitative study) and of public expenditures (i.e., the exchange of "taxes for services"). On the right side of the map, a notable finding is the close association between trust and public expenditures: Words like "healthcare", "education", and "services" emerged around "trust" (both the single word and the thematic code), suggesting that trust in authorities might be closely related not only to the interaction climate, as assumed by the slippery slope framework, but also to the evaluation of public services.
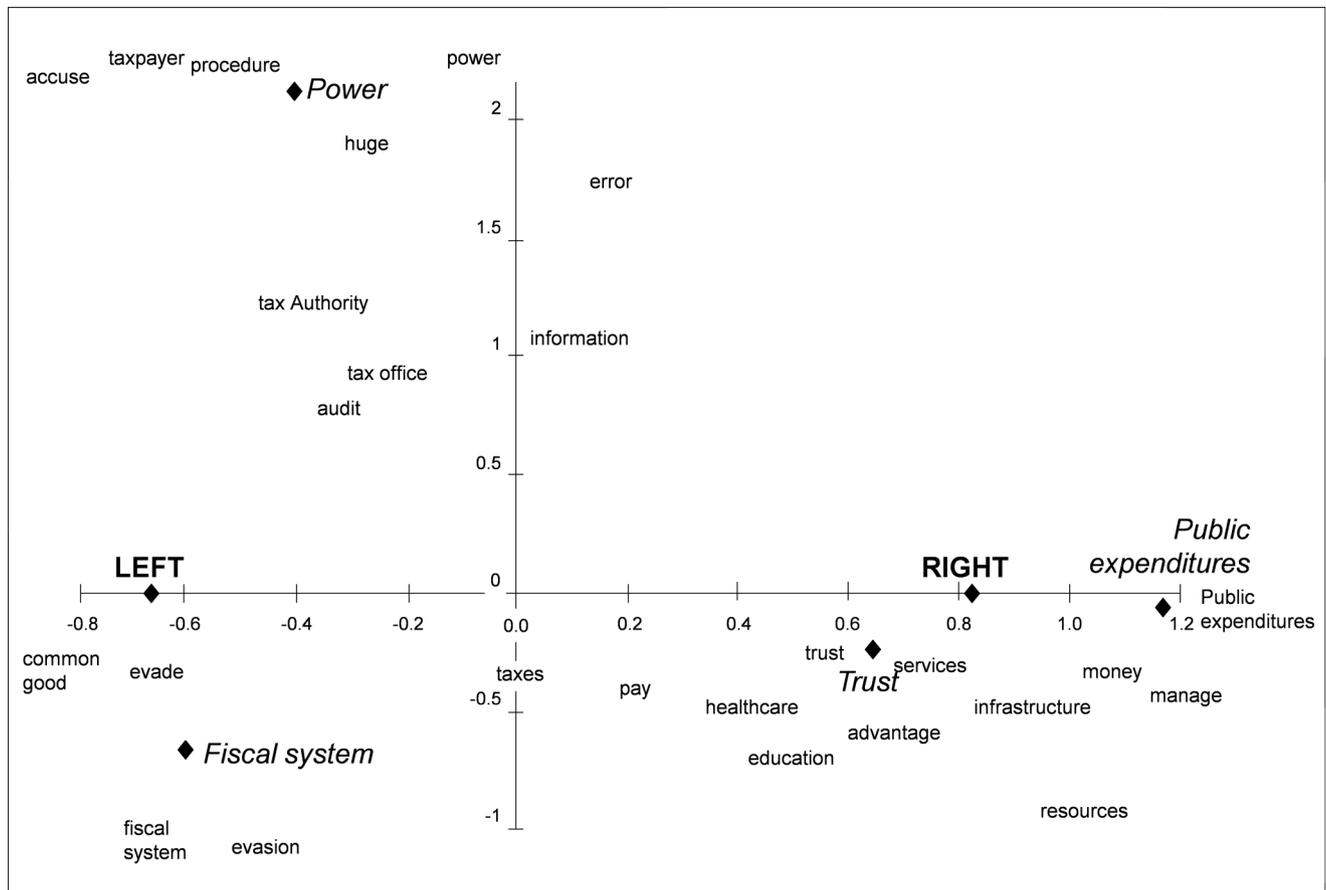
Figure 3. Two-dimensional solution of multiple correspondence analysis. The map shows the positions and association between the variables (in capital bold: political preferences, in italics: the thematic code) and the semantic units. For further explanations, see Note viii.

Discussion

The aim of the present paper was to explore the relationship between political ideology and attitudes toward tax compliance among self-employed taxpayers in Italy within the context of the slippery slope framework (Kastlunger et al., 2013; Kirchler et al., 2008). Results from both studies, integrating quantitative and qualitative findings, suggest that people with different political ideologies approach tax compliance and tax evasion in very specific ways.

Left-wing taxpayers, in particular, express higher levels of voluntary cooperation and seem more inclined to consider tax compliance a civic duty, pointing out the collective consequences of tax evasion. On the other hand, they also seem to be more sensitive to the power of tax authorities, because it was this pathway of the slippery slope framework, rather than the one deriving from trust, that influenced tax compliance significantly. Moreover, the qualitative study confirmed this influence, showing that "power" and its excess, in terms of "oppressive deterrence", was a topic specifically associated with left-wing taxpayers. Right-wing taxpayers, on the other hand, expressed a greater perception of the power of authorities (both legitimate and coercive) and, in line with the assumptions of the slippery slope framework, a higher level of enforced tax compliance. Their lower voluntary compliance is

consistent with previous studies' findings that people who identified with conservative parties tend to show higher levels of tax aversion (e.g., Sussman & Olivola, 2011). Nevertheless, they were more responsive to the trust domain and to its link with the taxes/public expenditure trade-off.

Although exploratory, these results have theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, the present study enriches previous literature on the slippery slope framework, confirming the existence of two different pathways that lead to tax compliance and hinting at a potential link between trust and evaluations of public expenditures. In the original framework (Kirchler et al., 2008) and its developments (Kastlunger et al., 2013; Muehlbacher & Kirchler, 2010; Wahl et al., 2010), trust is mainly dependent on the type of interaction between tax authorities and taxpayers, along with their commitment to the society in which they live (see also Feld & Frey, 2007). The present findings suggest that the evaluation by taxpayers of the way public resources are managed might be another antecedent of their trust in fiscal authorities, and consequently of their voluntary cooperation. Since this suggestion comes from the qualitative study, however, this point needs to be tested in future research.

From a practical perspective, implications of these findings support a responsive regulation approach, which suggests that the authorities should act in correspondence to the beliefs and attitudes of the taxpayers to increase their cooperation (Braithwaite, 2003). More specifically, tax authorities may use different methods and strategies to enhance tax compliance, responding to the beliefs and attitudes of taxpayers based on their political preferences. Among left-wing taxpayers, who show higher levels of voluntary cooperation, authorities should be careful when auditing and fining taxpayers to avoid creating an antagonistic climate, because these individuals are more sensitive to the power dimension, a strong display of which might decrease their cooperation. For this group a "service and client" approach may be more effective to increase the level of tax compliance, whereas excessive deterrence might backfire. Among right-wing taxpayers, on the other hand, it could be relevant to find ways to increase their voluntary cooperation by increasing their trust and paying attention to the perception of the way public expenditures are managed.

Obviously fiscal authorities cannot know the political ideology of a single taxpayer. Nevertheless, at least in the context of this study (i.e., Italy), the relationship between specific occupational categories and political preferences are well known, as are regional differences in political ideology (Caciagli & Corbetta, 2003). In this regard, tax authorities may segment different groups of taxpayers and approach them in different ways, based on those well-known variables (residence, occupation, etc.) as proxies of their political ideology.

These practical implications might be useful, both for fiscal and political authorities, for trying to promote taxpayer compliance. However, the fact that the same policies may meet differential responses among different groups of taxpayers enhances one of the basic assumptions of the slippery slope framework: that maintaining or achieving a high level of tax compliance in a social system is like operating on a slippery slope, because of the complex interaction of trust and power. Moreover, we did not include a measure of legal forms of non-compliant tax behaviours (i.e., tax avoidance) in the analysis. This could account for some results, such as the fact that right-wing taxpayers (compared to the left-wing participants) expressed lower levels of voluntary compliance, but there were no differences on the Tax Evasion scale. In this regard, we might guess that, because of their higher levels of enforced compliance, right-wing taxpayers might be more inclined to avoid taxes by legal means, following Kirchler and Wahl's (2010) assumption that "when trust is low, but authorities' power to effectively audit and sanction wrong behaviour is strong" (p. 333), so when voluntary compliance is low and enforced compliance is high, "taxpayers intend to reduce their taxes within the legal range of the law and engage in tax avoidance, but are deterred from

illegal reductions" (p. 333). However, further research on this topic is advisable, so that every form of non-compliance, both legal and illegal, is considered when analysing the relationship with political ideology.

Limitations

Finally, we want to point out some limitations of the present study. First, the exploratory nature of the study prevents us from drawing conclusion about causality. Further research is needed to better understand the directionality of this relationship: Do political preferences affect fiscal attitudes, or, to the contrary, do taxpayers' attitudes influence their political preferences? A key question might be whether both variables are jointly determined or mediated by some more fundamental underlying phenomenon, such as values (e.g., Schwartz, Caprara, & Vecchione, 2010) or moral foundations.

As an example, the differences in attitude toward tax compliance for political ideology might be interpreted with Haidt and Graham's (2007) findings on different moral intuitions for different political preferences. These authors suggested that there are five psychological systems that provide the foundations for different moralities, and that political liberals (i.e., the left-leaning participants in our study) have moral intuitions based primarily on two of the five (harm/care and fairness/reciprocity), whereas the morality of conservatives (here: the right-leaning participants) relies on the entire set of five foundations (including in-group/loyalty, authority/respect and purity/sanctity). The present findings about the relationship between political ideology and tax compliance seem to be consistent with Haidt and Graham's perspective. The fact that left-wing taxpayers expressed higher levels of voluntary cooperation and an increased tendency to discuss the fiscal system and its equity might be associated with the relevance they attach to distributive justice (i.e., fairness/reciprocity), whereas their sensitivity to the power domain (both legitimate and coercive power tended to decrease their compliance) might be due to their concerns for procedural and retributive justice (i.e., harm/care). On the other hand, the higher levels of power and enforced tax compliance expressed by right-wing taxpayers may be interpreted in terms of their wider range of moral foundations, including respect for authorities and loyalty to the (national) in-group. Further studies are needed to deepen the analysis of these relationships by integrating moral values (or other psychological variables associated to political orientation, such as anxiety, dogmatism or openness to experience; see Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003) into the research design.

Another limitation relates to the fact that both studies relied on self-reported measures of a sensitive topic (tax evasion), so that respondents might be afraid of revealing their actual intention and behaviour. Nevertheless, self-report measures are a well-established method in empirical research on tax compliance (Kirchler, 2007) and, in their presentation on the TAX-I used in the present study, Kirchler and Wahl (2010) argued that the problem of social desirability may be reduced by using indirect techniques, such as fictitious cases for assessing tax evasion (see the Tax Evasion scale in Appendix A).

Further limitations relate to the generalizability of the results. In the political domain, ideologies, and even labels, can vary enormously across countries. As an example, "liberal" relates to conservatives in Italy, but the Democratic Party in the United States. As a consequence, our results are limited to the Italian political context. Future studies should assess the relationship between political ideology and tax compliance in different political contexts.

Conclusions

Our findings suggest that the political ideology of taxpayers is associated with different attitudes toward tax compliance: On the left side of the ideological continuum, we found higher levels of voluntary tax compliance and

more sensitivity to the power of tax authorities (which, when perceived as excessive, might decrease cooperation); on the right side, taxpayers showed higher levels of enforced cooperation and were more inclined to comply when trust in authorities is higher, mainly on the basis of their assessment of how public expenditures are managed.

These results need further investigation. Nevertheless, they provide useful and innovative insights, both theoretically and practically. Further research may do well to take into account political ideology when studying taxpaying behaviours and attitudes.

Notes

i) This was the case at least until the end of 2011 when the budget debt forced all main parties to support the new coalition Government, led by Prime Minister Mario Monti. We carried out the data collection of the empirical section of this paper just before this change, when conservative parties were in charge.

ii) The distribution frequencies were: left 53; centre-left 55; centre 19; centre-right 100; right 64. In line with the polarization of the Italian political system at the time of data collection, we excluded the few subjects (n = 19) who chose the centre position from the analysis. In addition, when we compared left vs. centre-left mean levels on the TAX-I scales, no significant differences were found; furthermore, comparing right vs. centre-right mean levels, in only one scale (enforced tax compliance) the difference was significant. As a consequence, we considered these four categories as two homogenous groups.

iii) We further checked for the age differences between the left-leaning and right-leaning participants and found that the variance of age in the two groups was homogeneous and that there was no significant mean difference in age. Moreover, results did not differ if age was controlled as a continuous variable or as dummy-coded classes.

iv) The items that were not invariant in the two groups are the following (see Appendix): VT5, VT7, and VT8. The factor loading of item VT5 was higher in the left/centre-left group than in the right/centre-right group, whereas the factor loadings of VT7 and VT8 were higher in the right/centre-right group than in the left/centre-left one.

v) We also tested the invariance of the model for age and education. In both cases, the unconstrained and constrained measurement and structural models were invariant (the $\Delta\chi^2$ comparisons were not significant).

vi) The invariance of those paths was confirmed by a two-group invariant model ($\Delta\chi^2 (27) = 32.732$, $p = .206$) in which all the structural paths were constrained to be equal with the exception of the following: voluntary tax compliance to tax evasion, enforced tax compliance to tax evasion, and legitimate power to voluntary tax compliance. This indicates that the significance and strength of the causal relations among variables was equal in both groups with the exceptions indicated above.

vii) Translation from Italian provided by the authors.

viii) This analysis describes the relationship between semantic units and the variable that divides the corpus (in our case, participants' political affiliation and thematic codes). Outcomes consist of a matrix reporting semantic units in the rows and variable levels in columns. Correspondence analysis casts light on the relations between content and political affiliation. In other words, this analysis allows a graphic representation of specific contents (semantic units), similarities and differences among left vs. right party taxpayers and among different topics under discussion (trust, power, etc.).

Funding

Competing Interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Acknowledgments

References

Allen, M. W., & Ng, S. H. (2000). Self-interest, economic beliefs, and political party preference in New Zealand. *Political Psychology, 21*(2), 323-345. doi:10.1111/0162-895X.00190

Alt, J. E., & Lassen, D. D. (2006). Transparency, political polarization, and political budget cycles in OECD countries. *American Journal of Political Science, 50*(3), 530-550. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00200.x

Arbuckle, J. L. (2009). *Amos: User's guide*. Spring House, PA: AMOS Development Corporation.

Becker, G. S. (1968). Crime and punishment: An economic approach. *Journal of Political Economy, 76*, 169-217. doi:10.1086/259394

Berti, C., Kastlunger, B., & Kirchler, E. (in press). La china scivolosa del comportamento fiscale: un contributo alla costruzione di uno strumento per la ricerca sulla compliance [The slippery slope of tax behavior: A contribution to the construction of a TAX Compliance Inventory]. *Giornale Italiano di Psicologia*.

Bosio, A. C., Graffigna, G., & Lozza, E. (2008). Towards a "theory of technique" for online focus groups. In T. Hansson (Ed.), *Handbook of digital information technologies: Innovations, methods and ethical issues* (pp. 192-212). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Bosio, A. C., Lozza, E., & Novello, D. (2008). (How) does politics affect consumer sentiment? In U. Collesei & J.-C. Andreani (Eds.), *Proceedings of the VII International Congress Marketing Trends* (pp. 101-119). Venezia, Italy: Università Ca' Foscari Venezia.

Braithwaite, V. (2003). Dancing with tax authorities: Motivational postures and non-compliant actions. In V. Braithwaite (Ed.), *Taxing democracy: Understanding tax avoidance and tax evasion* (pp. 15-40). Aldershot, United Kingdom: Ashgate.

Byrne, B. M. (2010). *Structural equation modeling with AMOS. Basic concepts, applications, and programming* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Byrne, B. M., Shavelson, R. J., & Muthén, B. (1989). Testing for the equivalence of factor covariance and mean structures: The issue of partial measurement invariance. *Psychological Bulletin, 105*, 456-466. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.105.3.456

Caciagli, M., & Corbetta, P. (2003). *Le ragioni dell'elettore* [The reasons of voters]. Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

De Boef, S., & Kellstedt, P. M. (2004). The political (and economic) origins of consumer confidence. *American Journal of Political Science, 48*(4), 633-649. doi:10.1111/j.0092-5853.2004.00092.x

Eberl, D. (2003). *Vertrauen und Management* [Trust and Management]. Stuttgart, Germany: Schaeffer–Poeschel.

Evans, G., & Andersen, R. (2006). The political conditioning of economic perceptions. *The Journal of Politics, 68*(1), 194-207. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00380.x

Feld, L. P., & Frey, B. S. (2002a). *The tax authority and the taxpayer: Exploratory analysis* (IEW Working Paper iewwp098). Zurich, Switzerland: Institute for Empirical Research in Economics, University of Zurich.

Feld, L. P., & Frey, B. S. (2002b). *Trust breeds trust: How taxpayers are treated* (IEW Working Paper iewwp098). Zurich, Switzerland: Institute for Empirical Research in Economics, University of Zurich.

Feld, L. P., & Frey, B. S. (2007). Tax compliance as the result of a psychological tax contract: The role of incentives and responsive regulation. *Law & Policy, 29*(1), 102-120. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9930.2007.00248.x

Feld, L. P., & Schneider, F. (2010). Survey on the shadow economy and undeclared earnings in OECD countries. *German Economic Review, 11*, 109-149. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0475.2010.00509.x

French, J. P. R., Jr., & Raven, B. (1960). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright & A. Zander (Eds.), *Group dynamics* (pp. 607-623). New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Gangl, K., Hofmann, E. B., Pollai, M., & Kirchler, E. (2012). *Dynamics of power and trust in the 'slippery slope framework' and its impact on the tax climate*. Retrieved from http://ssrn.com/abstract=2024946.

Gilardi, S., & Lozza, E. (2009). Inquiry-based learning and undergraduates' professional identity development: Assessment of a field research-based course. *Innovative Higher Education, 34*(4), 245-256. doi:10.1007/s10755-009-9109-0

Graffigna, G. (2009). *Interpersonal exchanges about HIV/AIDS through different media: A cross-cultural comparison*. Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag.

Graffigna, G., & Bosio, A. C. (2006). The influence of setting in findings produced in qualitative health research: A comparison between face-to-face and online discussion groups about HIV/AIDS. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(3), 55-76. Retrieved from http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/index

Haidt, J., & Graham, J. (2007). When morality opposes justice: Conservatives have moral intuitions that liberals may not recognize. *Social Justice Research, 20*(1), 98-116. doi:10.1007/s11211-007-0034-z

Hardisty, D. J., Johnson, E. J., & Weber, E. U. (2010). A dirty word or a dirty world? Attribute framing, political affiliation, and query theory. *Psychological Science, 21*(1), 86-92. doi:10.1177/0956797609355572

Hasseldine, J., & Hite, P. A. (2003). The effects of attribute framing and political party affiliation on taxpayer preferences. *eJournal of Tax Research, 1*(1), 5-18.

Hennik, M. M. (2008). Language and communication in cross-cultural qualitative research. In P. Limputtong (Ed.), *Doing cross-cultural research* (pp. 21-33). London, United Kingdom: Springer.

Inglehart, R., & Klingemann, H.-D. (1976). Party identification, ideological preference and the left-right dimension among Western mass publics. In I. Budge, I. Crewe, & D. Farlie (Eds.), *Party identification and beyond: Representations of voting and party competition* (pp. 243-273). London, United Kingdom: Wiley.

Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Kruglanski, A. W., & Sulloway, F. J. (2003). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin, 129*, 339-375. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.129.3.339

Kastlunger, B., Kirchler, E., Mittone, L., & Pitters, J. (2009). Sequences of audits, tax compliance, and taxpaying strategies. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 30*, 405-418. doi:10.1016/j.joep.2008.10.004

Kastlunger, B., Lozza, E., Kirchler, E., & Schabmann, A. (2013). Powerful authorities and trusting citizens: The slippery slope framework and tax compliance in Italy. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 34*, 36-45. doi:10.1016/j.joep.2012.11.007

Kirchler, E. (2007). *The economic psychology of tax behaviour*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Kirchler, E., Hoelzl, E., & Wahl, I. (2008). Enforced versus voluntary tax compliance: The "slippery slope" framework. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 29*(2), 210-225. doi:10.1016/j.joep.2007.05.004

Kirchler, E., Muehlbacher, S., Kastlunger, B., & Wahl, I. (2010). Why pay taxes? A review of tax compliance decisions. In J. Alm, J. Martinez-Vazquez, & B. Torgler (Eds.), *Developing alternative frameworks for explaining tax compliance* (pp. 15–31). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Kirchler, E., & Wahl, I. (2010). Tax compliance inventory TAX-I: Designing an inventory for surveys of tax compliance. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 31*, 331-346. doi:10.1016/j.joep.2010.01.002

Knoblauch, H. (2005). Focused ethnography. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung, 6*(3), Article 44. Retrieved from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/20/44.

Kogler, C., Batrancea, L., Nichita, A., Pantya, J., Belianin, A., & Kirchler, E. (2013). Trust and power as determinants of tax compliance: Testing the assumptions of the slippery slope framework in Austria, Hungary, Romania and Russia. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 34*, 169-180. doi:10.1016/j.joep.2012.09.010

Lancia, F. (2004). *Strumenti per l'analisi dei testi* [Tools for text analysis]. Milan, Italy: FrancoAngeli.

Lewis, A. (1978). Perceptions of tax rates. *British Tax Review, 6*, 358-366.

Lewis, A. (1980). Attitudes to public expenditure and their relationship to voting preferences. *Political Studies, 28*(2), 284-292. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.1980.tb01251.x

Lozza, E., Carrera, S., & Bosio, A. C. (2010). Perceptions and outcomes of a fiscal bonus: Framing effects on evaluations and usage intentions. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 31*(3), 400-404. doi:10.1016/j.joep.2010.01.008

McGowan, J.R. (2000). The effect of political affiliation on taxpayers' attitudes toward alternative tax systems. *Journal of American Taxation Association, 22*(1), 111-128. doi:10.2308/jata.2000.22.1.111

Morse, J.M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(2), 13-22. Retrieved from http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/index

Morse, J., & Niehaus, L. (2009). *Mixed method design: Principles and procedures*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Muecke, M. A. (1994). On the evaluation of ethnographies. In J. Morse (Ed.), *Critical issues in qualitative research methods* (pp. 187-209). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Muehlbacher, S., & Kirchler, E. (2010). Tax compliance by trust and power of authorities. *International Economic Journal, 24*, 607-610. doi:10.1080/10168737.2010.526005

Muehlbacher, S., Kirchler, E., & Schwarzenberger, H. (2011). Voluntary versus enforced compliance: Empirical evidence for the "slippery slope" framework. *European Journal of Law and Economics, 32*, 89-97. doi:10.1007/s10657-011-9236-9

Porr, C., Mayan, M., Graffigna, G., Wall, S., & Vieira, E. R. (2011). The evocative power of projective techniques for the elicitation of meaning. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 10*(1), 30-41. Retrieved from http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/index

Raven, B. H., Schwarzwald, J., & Koslowsky, M. (1998). Conceptualizing and measuring a power/interaction model of interpersonal influence. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 28*, 307-332. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.1998.tb01708.x

Richardson, G. (2008). The relationship between culture and tax evasion across countries: Additional evidence and extensions. *Journal of International Accounting, Auditing & Taxation, 17*, 67-78. doi:10.1016/j.intaccaudtax.2008.07.002

Roberts, M. L., & Hite, P. A. (1994). Progressive taxation, fairness and compliance. *Law & Policy, 16*, 27-48. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9930.1994.tb00115.x

Rudolph, T. J. (2009). Political trust, ideology, and public support for tax cuts. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 73*(1), 144-158. doi:10.1093/poq/nfp012

Scholz, J. T., & Lubell, M. (1998). Trust and taxpaying: Testing the heuristic approach to collective action. *American Journal of Political Science, 42*, 398-417. doi:10.2307/2991764

Schwartz, S. H., Caprara, G. V., & Vecchione, M. (2010). Basic personal values, core political values, and voting: A longitudinal analysis. *Political Psychology, 31*, 421-452. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2010.00764.x

Sears, D.O., Tau, R. R., Tyler, T. R., & Allen, H. M., Jr. (1980). Self-interest vs. symbolic politics in policy attitudes and presidential voting. *The American Political Science Review, 74*(3), 670-684. doi:10.2307/1958149

Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text, and interaction.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sussman, A. B., & Olivola, C. Y. (2011). Axe the tax: Taxes are disliked more than equivalent costs [Supplemental material]. *JMR, Journal of Marketing Research, 48*, (Suppl.), S91-S101. doi:10.1509/jmkr.48.SPL.S91

Temple, B., & Edwards, R. (2002). Interpreters/translators and cross-language research: Reflexivity and border crossing. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(2), 1-12. Retrieved from https://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/article/viewArticle/4602

Torgler, B. (2003). Tax morale, rule-governed behaviour and trust. *Constitutional Political Economy, 14*(2), 119-140. doi:10.1023/A:1023643622283

Torgler, B., & Schneider, F. (2005). Attitudes towards paying taxes in Austria: An empirical analysis. *Empirica, 32*, 231-250. doi:10.1007/s10663-004-8328-y

Turner, J. C. (2005). Explaining the nature of power: A three-process theory. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 35*(1), 1-22. doi:10.1002/ejsp.244

Tyler, T.R. (2003). Trust within organisations. *Personnel Review, 32*(5), 556-568. doi:10.1108/00483480310488333

Tyler, T.R. (2006). Psychological perspectives on legitimacy and legitimation. *Annual Review of Psychology, 57*, 375-400. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.57.102904.190038

Wahl, I., Kastlunger, B., & Kirchler, E. (2010). Trust in authorities and power to enforce tax compliance: An empirical analysis of the "slippery slope framework.". *Law & Policy, 32*, 383-406. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9930.2010.00327.x

Wahlund, R. (1992). Tax changes and economic behavior: The case of tax evasion. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 13*, 657-677. doi:10.1016/0167-4870(92)90017-2

Appendices

Appendix A

Items are provided for Tax Evasion, Voluntary Tax Compliance, Enforced Tax Compliance, Legitimate Power, and Coercive Power in both the Italian and English versions.

ID	Italian	English
Tax evasion*		
TE3	Una cliente ha pagato in contanti e Lei non ha emesso la fattura. Potrebbe omettere intenzionalmente questo guadagno nella sua dichiarazione dei redditi. Quanto è probabile che decida di non dichiarare questo guadagno?	A customer paid in cash and did not require an invoice. You could intentionally omit this income on your income tax return. How likely is it that you would omit this income?
TE4	Lei ha comprato privatamente una parte della Sua merce. Più tardi potrebbe rivendere questa merce ad un cliente abituale e nascondere il guadagno ottenuto nella sua dichiarazione dei redditi. Quanto è probabile che ometta questo guadagno nella dichiarazione dei redditi?	You bought some of your goods privately. You could resell those goods later to established customers and omit the profit from this sale on your income tax return. How likely would you be to omit the profit from this sale on your income tax return?
TE5	Lei potrebbe dichiarare intenzionalmente le fatture di cene con i Suoi amici come cene di lavoro. Quanto è probabile che dichiari queste spese come cene di lavoro?	You could intentionally declare restaurant bills for meals you had with your friends as business meals. How likely would you be to declare those restaurant bills as business meals?
TE7	Lei è stato all'estero per incontrare dei parenti e ha avuto anche un breve colloquio con un Suo fornitore. Lei potrebbe dichiarare come spese di lavoro i costi dell'albergo e del ristorante, dove aveva invitato i Suoi parenti. Quanto è probabile che dichiari queste spese come spese di lavoro?	You have been abroad to meet relatives and to have a short meeting with one of your suppliers. Regardless of this, you could declare your expenses for the hotel and for the meals that you invited your relatives to, as business travel and a business meal. How likely would you be to declare your expenses as business travel or a business meal?
TE9	Poco tempo fa Lei ha lavorato in un progetto con un'azienda di una sua conoscente. Potrebbe ora omettere questo guadagno aggiuntivo nella dichiarazione dei redditi. Quanto è probabile che non lo indichi nella Sua dichiarazione dei redditi?	Recently, you took part in a project with an acquaintance's company. Now you could conceal this taxable additional income on your income tax return. How likely is it that you would conceal this additional income?
Enforced compliance*		
	Se pago le mie tasse regolarmente, lo faccio …	When I pay my taxes as required by the regulations, I do so
ETC2	… perchè ci sono molti controlli fiscali.	… because a great many tax audits are carried out.
ETC4	… perchè il fisco controlla spesso.	… because the tax office often carries out audits.
ETC5	… perchè so che verrò controllato.	… because I know that I will be audited.
ETC6	… perchè l'evasione fiscale viene punita molto severamente.	… because the punishments for tax evasion are very severe.
ETC7	… perchè non ne so abbastanza su come si possano evadere le tasse in modo da non essere "beccato".	… because I do not know exactly how to evade taxes without attracting attention.
Voluntary compliance*		
	Se pago le mie tasse regolarmente, lo faccio …	When I pay my taxes as required by the regulations, I do so
VTC3	… perchè per me è sottinteso.	… because, to me, it's obvious that this is what you do
VTC5	… per sostenere lo Stato e gli altri cittadini.	… to support the state and other citizens.
VTC6	… perchè contribuisco volentieri al bene di tutti.	… because I like to contribute to everyone's good.
VTC7	… perchè per me è completamente naturale.	… because, for me, it's the natural thing to do
VTC8	… perchè lo considero un mio dovere come cittadino.	… because I regard it as my duty as a citizen
Legitimate power**		
ELP1	L'evasione fiscale viene scoperta in un'alta percentuale dei casi.	Tax evasion is detected in a high percentage of the cases.
ELP2	Il fisco combatte in modo efficiente la criminalità fiscale.	Tax authorities combat tax crimes in an efficient way.
ELP3	L'evasione fiscale viene scoperta facilmente.	Tax evasion is likely to be detected.
ELP4	Gli uffici fiscali fanno controlli molto spesso e in profondità.	Tax authorities control frequently and profoundly.

ID	Italian	English
ELP5	Il fisco scopre in base alla sua conoscenza e capacità quasi ogni evasione fiscale.	Due to their knowledge and competence, tax authorities are able to detect every act of tax evasion.
Coercive power**		
CP1	Il fisco mira soprattutto a punire.	Tax authorities primarily aim to punish.
CP2	Il fisco cerca a lungo nei documenti dei contribuenti fino a quando non trova qualcosa.	Tax authorities investigate as long as they find something.
CP3	Il fisco interviene troppo energicamente.	Tax authorities' interventions are too severe.
CP5	Il fisco nutre sentimenti ostili verso i contribuenti.	Tax authorities nurture hostile feelings towards taxpayers.
CP6	Il fisco interpreta le norme fiscali in modo tale che venga punito il maggior numero di contribuenti.	Tax authorities interpret tax laws in order to punish the highest number of taxpayers.
Trust**		
TR2	Il fisco si comporta con correttezza con i cittadini.	Tax authorities are treating citizens correctly.
TR3	Il governo sostiene i suoi cittadini.	The government supports its citizens.
TR5	Il fisco tratta i contribuenti con rispetto.	Tax authorities are treating citizens in a respectful manner.
TR7	Il fisco sembra affidabile.	Tax authorities seem reliable.
TR8	Il fisco è degno di fiducia.	Tax authorities are trustworthy.

*Scales from Kirchler and Wahl (2010)

**Scales from Kastlunger et al. (2013)

Response scales ranged from very unlikely (1) to very likely (9) for the tax-evasion scale (TE) and from complete disagreement (1) to complete agreement (9) for the other scales.

Appendix B

Summary of the discussion guide (including the vignettes provided at the beginning of the discussion) used for the on-line focus groups (translation from Italian provided by the authors)

Introduction/Welcome message:

Welcome, everybody, and thank you for your participation in this on-line discussion.

We are researchers from Università Cattolica of Milan and the present forum aims to gather your opinions on the Italian fiscal system.

Every day, we will provide some arguments to discuss; each participant has a nickname that will allow you to post you messages anonymously. *(…Technical instructions following…)*

Day 1

We would like to start by considering the following two situations, which we ask you to read carefully and comment on:

"Mr. X is going to fill his tax return. Last year he was selected for an audit by the Guardia di Finanza (Italian fiscal Authority) and they could not find anything wrong. Despite the probability of another audit being low, he is not inclined to omit any earnings from the present year's tax return."

"Mr. Y provides high discounts to clients who do not ask him for any receipt. In the 10 years, since he began this activity, he has never been audited by tax authorities. Despite the probability of being audited, sooner or later, he is not inclined to modify his behaviour (omitting a good share of his earnings in tax returns)."

For your comments, we ask you to consider the following:

- What reasons motivate the two characters? Why do they act so differently?

- What consequences do you expect for the two? What do you wish them?

- How do you evaluate their behaviour?

- With which of the two are you more inclined to identify? Why?

Day 2

More general discussion on the Italian fiscal system

- Positive and negative features

- The opinion on the topic by general Italian citizens and their behaviour

- Reasons to be tax-compliant or not, within the Italian fiscal system

Day 3

Focus on trust in fiscal system:

- What is the meaning of trust in the fiscal system?

- Your position? Based on what reasons?

- What direct experiences influenced your position?

Day 4

Focus on power of fiscal authorities

- What is the meaning of power in the fiscal system?

- When and how do fiscal authorities exert their power?

- What direct experiences influenced your position?

Day 5

Deeper exploration of topics that emerged in the previous days (i.e.: fiscal expenditures, public services, etc.) was discussed.