

The purpose of this article is to provide evidence that a selection-socialization effect is present in the accounting profession. This selection socialization effect results in the hiring higher proportions of accountants with a certain type of cognitive style, the ST (Sensing/Thinking) cognitive style. There is particular attention to this research because the ST cognitive style is associated with low levels of ethical reasoning.

The research method utilizes various outside research studies to point out that first, accounting graduates possess lower levels of ethical reasoning than the average of all other accounting graduates in general, and liberal art students in particular. Second, cited research points out that older and educated people have higher levels of ethical reasoning than younger and less educated people. In contrast to this other accounting studies indicate that older and more experienced audit managers possess lower levels of ethical reasoning than the younger less experienced audit seniors. Hence, they argue that the audit managers are attracting individuals like themselves in a selection socialization mechanism, promoting a lower level of ethical reasoning and in the accountants they recruit. Further research methods are various literatures utilized to describe the background of ethical reasoning and cognitive style, which then leads into the study's three hypothesis. Hypothesis one states that there is equal ethical reasoning between female recruits and male recruits. Hypothesis two states the dominant cognitive style among staff accountants is ST (staff accountants have predominately low levels of ethical reasoning). Hypothesis three states the characteristics of cognitive style expected level of moral reasoning's order from lowest to highest is SF, ST, NF and NT. The subjects for the study were chosen from the Big 5 firms. Out of 190 packets distributed 91 were returned. The subjects were not chosen at random but were chosen by the firms coordinating partner. The focus was on

staff accountants who just recently had joined the firm in order to focus on selection socialization.

The article concludes that there is a selection process among accounting firms that recruit females and males of similar ethical reasoning into the profession (hypothesis one). Consistent with hypothesis two the dominant cognitive style was ST. Hypothesis three is also upheld. In general the conclusion is that male and females with predominately low levels of ethical reasoning are recruited by firms for staff accounting positions.

I think that this article offers some powerful evidence as to why unethical decision making may be taking place in the large global accounting firms. This study does not mean that all recruits are unethical though, as it points out that only 50% of accounting students and practicing accountants are of type ST cognitive thinkers. I think that selection socialization can exist in some aspects of public accounting. For example, hiring managers looking for recruits who are company men/women and go the extra mile for the client fee at the expense of their independence as was the case with accountants at Arthur Anderson. I think that accountants have certain characteristics as indicated in the article. For example, the ST characteristic includes individuals who conform to laws and codes of conduct, which can certainly describe a CPA. STs are also categorized as those who are observant and ordering; filing and recalling; sequencing and categorizing. These traits can definitely be found in accountants. Based on the characteristics mentioned in this article I think that the technical demands for many positions in accounting, especially staff accounting are the driving force in encouraging these characteristics. I think it would be very difficult to change the technical demands of a staff accounting position as it would mean changing the nature in which accounting is conducted. I don't think it should

change but rather a more thorough means of investigating an individual's cognitive type could be conducted during the recruiting stage to determine if they possess the necessary traits to be a highly ethical individual. Perhaps even reinforcing the ethical requirements to license as a CPA with programs that address this issue could help solve the problem.

I think that public accounting can benefit from these findings because they can show firms that it is necessary to be more proactive in screening cognitive types of those that they recruit. Since this study infers that 50% of accounting students and practicing accountants are of type ST cognitive thinkers firms should be wary of this when considering whom to select for their accounting and audit staff in order to avoid risk of an audit failure.