

A Test of the Selection-Socialization Theory in Moral Reasoning of CPAs in Industry Practice

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ABSTRACT: This paper investigates the Selection-Socialization Theory (SST) and its related Inverted-U Phenomenon (IUP) in the moral reasoning of Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) in industry and public practice. This is an extension of the literature that has primarily focused on CPAs in public practice and has reported mixed results. We do not find significant differences in moral reasoning (as measured by the P-score of the Defining Issues Test) between various professional ranks of practicing accountants. This result suggests an absence of SST or IUP in promotions of CPAs to higher ranks in industry or public practice. Investigation of control variables indicates that gender and ethical training do not have significant effects on the P-score. However, as expected, CPAs with graduate degrees have higher P-scores than those with only an undergraduate degree, and politically moderate or liberal CPAs score higher than conservatives.

Keywords: moral development; DIT; selection-socialization; Inverted-U.

Data Availability: Please contact the authors.

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INTRODUCTION

A number of studies (e.g., Ponemon 1988, 1992a, 1993; Lampe and Finn 1992; Jeffrey and Weatherholt 1996; Louwers, Ponemon, and Radtke 1997; Bay and Greenberg 2001; Scofield et al. 2004) have investigated the relation between Selection-Socialization Theory (SST) and/or the Inverted-U Phenomenon (IUP) in moral reasoning of Certified Public Accountants (CPAs). This literature has been primarily focused on CPAs in public practice and has produced mixed results.¹

We extend this literature to CPAs in industry practice and also provide additional evidence for CPAs in public practice. Specifically, we investigate the effects of professional rank and a number of control variables (e.g., gender, education, political orientation) on moral reasoning of CPAs in industry and public practice. According to the Person-organization Fit Theory, individuals are more satisfied and committed to their jobs when the characteristics of the organization are compatible with their personal characteristics (Kristof 1996). Thus, individuals “select themselves into and out of organizations” based on “their judgment of the congruence between the characteristics of the organization and their own characteristics” (Van Vianen 2000, 115). This theory suggests the possibility of differences between CPAs in industry and public practice, but it does not indicate directional differences. Thus, we do not present directional hypotheses for the differences in moral reasoning between CPAs in industry and public practice.

We use the Defining Issues Test (DIT) to measure moral reasoning of CPAs. Developed by Rest (1979), the DIT is a generic instrument to measure Kohlberg's (1958, 1984) Cognitive Developmental Theory of Moral Reasoning.² According to this theory, moral development occurs in six stages in a step-by-step upward progression from lower stages of self-interest, to middle stages of law abidance and then to higher stages of adherence to universal principles of justice and human rights.³ We use the full version of the DIT to collect data on CPAs' moral reasoning.⁴ It produces the Principled Score (P-score), which represents an individual's preference for Kohlberg's high stages of principled moral reasoning.⁵ The literature suggests that moral reasoning is positively and significantly associated with the capacity to engage in moral behavior (Thoma 1986; Rest et al. 1999).⁶ Thus, higher levels of moral reasoning are desirable for professionals such as CPAs. However, as reported in Table 1, the average P-score for practicing accountants

¹ For example, while Ponemon (1992a) finds evidence of SST on moral reasoning of CPAs in public practice, Scofield et al. (2004) do not.

² Other generic instruments are Kohlberg's (1981) Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) and Reidenbach and Robin's (1990) Multidimensional Ethics Scale (MES). Due to a number of deficiencies (e.g., subjectivity and inefficiency), these scales have not become widely accepted in the literature.

³ Detailed reviews of this theory are available in the literature (e.g., Rest 1994; Rest et al. 1999).

⁴ The full version of the DIT has six moral dilemmas; each of which has 12 statements (justifications) for a total of 72 questions. The original DIT is now shortened into an instrument called DIT-2 (Rest and Narvaez, 1998). We use the original long form DIT in our study because it has been used in numerous studies with high validity and reliability scores over a long period of time. While the new DIT-2 is shorter, has clearer instructions, purges fewer subjects for bogus data, and is slightly more powerful on validity criteria, the scores in DIT-1 and DIT-2 are actually highly correlated (Center for the Study of Ethical Development 2004). Due to the novelty of DIT-2, most accounting studies have used the original DIT (either the short form or the long form). However, in an attempt to avoid the limitation of one or the other, some recent studies have used both the DIT-1 and the DIT-2 (e.g., Bailey et al. 2005) in their investigation.

⁵ For a detailed review of the literature on the DIT see Rest et al. (1999). These authors report that in over 20 years of study, the DIT has had high reliability scores as it has produced Cronbach alpha indexes in the 0.70 s to 0.80 s. However, samples drawn from homogenous subjects such as accountants may lower Cronbach's alpha (Bernardi 1995, 16).

⁶ The cognitive developmental theory of moral judgment is not accepted as a universal theory with respect to its effects on moral behavior. For example, Haidt (2001) argues that moral reasoning does not cause moral judgment; rather, moral reasoning is usually a post hoc construction, generated after a judgment has already been reached. Haidt (2001) proposes the social intuitionist model as an alternative to the rationalist model of moral reasoning. This model emphasizes the importance of social and cultural influences on moral reasoning.

TABLE 1
Mean DIT P-Scores from Selected Studies of Accounting Practitioners

Author(s)	Sample	Group Studied	P-Score
Armstrong (1987)	174	Practicing CPAs	38.06 ^a
Ponemon and Gabhart (1990)	119	National firm managers and partners	32.60
Ponemon and Glazer (1990)	43	Accounting alumni	43.58
Arnold and Ponemon (1991)	106	Internal auditors	38.53
Ponemon (1992a)	180	AICPA members	38.06
Ponemon (1992b)	88	Staff level auditors	38.74
Ponemon (1993)	61	International firm audit managers	36.21
Shaub (1994)	207	Big six firm auditors	41.29
Etherington and Schulting (1995)	76	Canadian CMAs	43.50
Sweeney (1995)	314	Regional and national firm auditors	42.80
Etherington and Hill (1998)	468	CMAs in industry	39.30
Hill et al. (1998)	241	U.S. and Irish small firm practitioners	35.78 ^a
Massey (2002)	71	Entry level (proxy) and experienced auditors	33.30
Abdolmohammadi et al. (2003)	90	International firm staff level accountants	44.16
Thorne et al. (2003)	363	U.S. CPAs and Canadian CMAs	38.30
Warming-Rasmussen and Windsor	174	Audit firm managers in Denmark	35.48
Total	<u>2,982</u>		
Range			32.60–44.16
Weighted average			38.94

^a Weighted average of means.

over the period of 1987–2003 is only 38.94 (range: 32.60–44.16). This average does not compare favorably with national averages reported by Rest (1994, 14) that indicate a P-score of 40.00 for “adults in general.”⁷ Scofield et al. (2004) also find that average P-scores of partners in law firms (P-score = 45.37) is significantly (t-statistic = 3.15, $p < 0.002$) higher than that of partners in accounting firms (P-score = 39.09).

Prior studies have used Selection-Socialization Theory (SST) to explain low P-scores of professional accountants. SST occurs when individuals with certain attributes are recruited and assimilated in a profession (Blank 1984). The management literature indicates that individuals with attributes similar to superiors in organizations, who exert control over the promotion process (e.g., partners in accounting firms), often get promoted at the expense of those not so similar (*cf.*, Colarelli et al. 1987; Fisher et al. 1987). A number of studies that document the P-scores of professional accountants at various ranks (see Table 1) report low P-scores (in some cases, par-

⁷ The averages reported by Rest (1994, 14) are dated. However, we did not find a more recent reference for comparison.

ticularly at higher ranks) and attribute the low scores to SST in public accounting. For example, Ponemon's (1992a) average of 38.74 for members of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants over a two-year period was lower than the 40.00 for "adults in general" per Rest (1994, 14). However, more recent papers (e.g., Scofield et al. 2004) did not find significant differences in the P-score between professional ranks.

An issue related to SST is an observation in the literature of an Inverted-U Phenomenon (IUP) in moral reasoning of CPAs in public practice. Ponemon (1988) first reported this finding in his dissertation and then proceeded to report his results in a few papers (Ponemon 1992a; Ponemon and Gabhart 1990; Ponemon and Gabhart 1993) that provided further explanation for the phenomenon. Table 2 and Figure 1 present the initial results from Ponemon (1988). As shown in the table and figure, the P-score of seniors of 39.7 is significantly lower than that of managers (P-score = 45.5). However, the senior managers' P-score of 37.3 indicates that managers with lower P-scores may have been promoted to the senior manager rank. The partners' average P-score of 30.9 provides a further drop in moral reasoning as evidence of promotion of those with low P-scores to the rank of partner. From the low-high-low pattern of average P-scores in Table 2 (i.e., an inverted-U), Ponemon (1988) suggested the existence of IUP in the moral reasoning of accountants in public practice. However, this conclusion was challenged by Bernardi and Arnold (1997), whose results are also presented in Table 2 and Figure 1. Specifically, Bernardi and Arnold (1997) observed no significant mean score differences between the ranks, with one exception where data from one of the firms investigated was consistent with that of Ponemon's (1988) IUP results.⁸ A later longitudinal study by Bernardi and Arnold (2004) further challenged the generalizeability of IUP in accounting.

We use moral reasoning data from a sample of 273 CPAs for our investigation. The sample is selected from a cross section of CPAs of varying ranks from industry (n = 114) and public (n = 159) practice. Thus, the sample allows us to provide evidence on CPAs in industry as well as those in public accounting, which is an extension of prior studies. We do not find any evidence of significant differences by professional rank in the P-scores of CPAs in industry or public practice. These findings, in turn, are contrary to the existence of the SST and IUP in the P-scores of CPAs. The results provide additional support for Bernardi and Arnold (2004) and Scofield et al. (2004), which challenge the existence of the SST and IUP in public accounting.

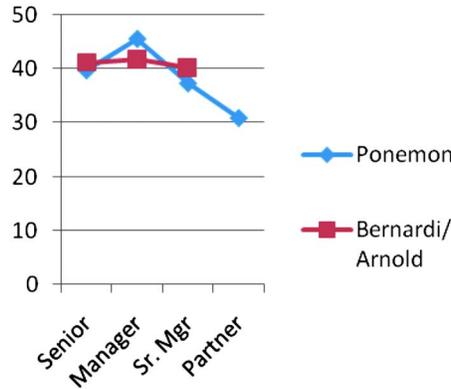
We include a number of control variables, suggested in the literature, in our multivariate analysis and find no significant association between gender and ethical training on CPAs' P-score.

TABLE 2
DIT P-Scores of Accountants in Public Practice by Their Professional Rank

		Professional Rank				
		1	2	3	4	5
Study		Seniors	Managers	Senior Managers	Partners	Total
Ponemon (1988)	P-Score	39.7	45.5	37.3	30.9	37.1
	(n)	(16)	(17)	(12)	(30)	(75)
Bernardi and Arnold (1997)	P-Score	41.1	41.7	40.1	NA	41.1
	(n)	(342)	(90)	(62)		(494)

⁸ Due to the confidential nature of the data, it is not clear if this firm was also the firm investigated by Ponemon (1988).

FIGURE 1
DIT P-Scores of Accountants in Public Practice by Their Professional Rank



However, as expected, we find a significance relation for education level and political orientation. Specifically, CPAs with a graduate degree have higher P-scores than those with only an undergraduate degree. Regarding political orientation, we find that self-proclaimed liberals and moderates score significantly higher on the P-score than conservative CPAs.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. The research method is described next and then the results are presented. Last, concluding remarks are offered.

RESEARCH METHOD

Data were collected from CPAs in Georgia. Participation in the study was approved by the state’s society of CPAs for one hour of continuing professional education (CPE). We distributed 582 questionnaire packets and received 314 completed packets for a response rate of 54 percent, of whom 114 identified themselves as practicing in industry while 159 identified their practice as public, for a total of 273 participants.⁹ The research packet included an introductory letter, which provided instructions and assured participants of confidentiality, the long-form DIT instrument, a CPE credit form, a letter from the state society that explained the CPE credit requirements, a demographic questionnaire, and a prepaid business reply envelope.

RESULTS

Descriptive Findings

Table 3 provides descriptive statistics by industry versus public practice on the data of interest in this study. We classified the CPAs into three professional rank categories: junior/senior, manager, and CFO/controller (industry practice) or owner/partner (public practice). Panel A in Table 3 provides the mean P-score by professional rank. Overall, CPAs in industry had a mean P-score of

⁹ We asked participants to identify themselves as CPAs in industry or public practice. We also had categories for CPAs in education (n = 9) and government (n = 10). However, the number of responses for these categories was too small for meaningful analysis. In addition, 22 of the 314 respondents did not provide data on their area of practice. Thus, our analysis is based on a total of 273 responses.

TABLE 3
Descriptive Statistics

Panel A: Dependant Variable (P-Score) by Explanatory Variable (Professional Rank)

Rank	Practice		t-statistic (Significance)
	Industry	Public	
Junior/Senior	36.84 (13.83)	34.30 (13.91)	-0.553 (0.583)
Manager	33.54 (9.67)	33.17 (13.18)	-0.098 (0.923)
Owner/Partner	32.55 (12.17)	32.69 (11.33)	0.074 (0.941)
CFO/Controller	33.34 (11.69)	33.04 (11.94)	-0.199 (0.842)
Total			
F-Statistic (Significance)	0.734 (0.483)	0.221 (0.802)	

Panel B: Control Variables

Variable		Industry	Public	Total
Gender	Female	49 (43.0%)	60 (37.7%)	109 (39.9%)
	Male	65 (57.0%)	99 (62.3%)	164 (60.1%)
Total		114 (100.0%)	159 (100.0%)	273 (100.0%)*
	Pearson χ^2 (p)		0.762 (0.383)	
Education	Undergrad	74 (64.9%)	107 (67.3%)	18 (66.3%)
	Graduate	40 (35.1%)	52 (32.7%)	92 (33.7%)
Total		114 (100.0%)	159 (100.0%)	273 (100.0%) ^a
	Pearson χ^2 (p)		0.169 (0.681)	
Ethics Training	No	30 (26.3%)	57 (35.8%)	87 (31.9%)
	Yes	84 (73.7%)	102 (64.2%)	186 (68.1%)
Total		114 (100.0%)	159 (100.0%)	273 (100.0%)
	Pearson χ^2 (p)		7.779 (0.095)*	
Ethics Course	No	83 (74.1%)	122 (77.2%)	205 (75.9%)
	Yes	29 (25.9%)	3 (22.8%)	65 (24.1%)
Total		112 (100.0%)	158 (100.0%)	270 (100.0%) ^a
	Pearson χ^2 (p)		0.762 (0.383)	

(continued on next page)

Panel B: Control Variables

Variable		Industry	Public	Total
Political Orientation	Liberal	9 (8.7%)	14 (9.6%)	23 (9.2%)
	Moderate	46 (44.2%)	43 (29.7%)	89 (35.8%)
	Conservative	49 (47.1%)	88 (60.7%)	137 (55.0%)
Total		104 (100.0%)	145 (100.0%)	249 (100.0%)*
Pearson χ^2 (p)		5.694 (0.058)*		

*, ** Two-tailed significance at the 0.10 or lower level and 0.01 or lower level, respectively.

^a Differences due to missing data.

33.34 compared with 33.04 for CPAs in public practice, where the difference is not significant. Thus, the descriptive statistics do not show evidence of SST or IUP in CPAs' moral reasoning scores in industry or public practice.

Panel B in Table 3 presents descriptive data on demographic variables. The gender data in Table 3 indicate that while there is some variation by practice area, overall 60.1 percent were males. Also, while 66.3 percent of the respondents reported to have an undergraduate degree, 33.7 percent had graduate degrees from colleges and universities and there were no significant differences by practice area. Regarding ethics training, overall, 68.1 percent of the participants had some ethics training on the job. However, CPAs in industry reported more (73.7 percent) ethics training than those in public practice (64.2 percent). These data are statistically different at a $p = 0.095$ (Pearson $\chi^2 = 7.779$). Regarding ethics courses in college, only 24.1 percent of all CPAs reported to have had at least one course on ethics, and there is no significant difference between those in industry practice and those in public practice.

Political orientation is the last item in Table 3, Panel B. A majority (55 percent) of the 249 participants who answered this question classified themselves as politically conservative, with the remainder classifying themselves as moderate (35.8 percent) or liberal (9.2 percent). There are some differences between CPAs in industry and public practices at $p = 0.058$ (Pearson $\chi^2 = 5.694$). Specifically, while 60.7 percent of CPAs in public practice classified themselves as conservative, 47.1 of those in industry did so. The opposite was true for those who classified themselves as moderate (44.2 percent of CPAs in industry versus 29.7 percent of CPAs in public practice). The liberal classification is less than 10 percent for those in industry (8.7 percent) or public practice (9.6 percent).

Multivariate Model

P-score is the dependent variable in our study. The main independent variables are professional rank and industry versus public practice. As mentioned earlier, we use a three-level variable for professional rank. The classification scheme allows us to form a single variable for both industry and public practice, even though there is some divergence in professional rank between the two. The second explanatory variable is a dummy variable coded as 1 if the CPA works in industry, and 0 otherwise.

We include political orientation as a control variable because early literature (e.g., Emler et al. 1983) has reported that conservatism is inversely related to moral reasoning. In accounting, while

Sweeney (1995), Etherington and Hill (1998), and Thorne et al. (2003) report results in support of an inverse relation between conservatism and moral reasoning, Bailey et al. (2005) report only a small effect for CPAs in public practice.

Another control variable included in our model is gender. A review of the ethics literature (e.g., Thoma 1986) indicates an effect, albeit small, for women scoring higher in the P-score than men. Some accounting studies (e.g., St. Pierre et al. 1990; Shaub 1994) show significant effects of gender on moral reasoning while other studies (e.g., Ponemon 1992a; Abdolmohammadi et al. 2003) do not.

The next control variable included in our model is education (i.e., graduate versus undergraduate). The moral reasoning literature (e.g., Rest 1979) suggests that education should be included as a control variable with an expectation that those possessing a graduate degree will have higher P-scores than those with only an undergraduate degree.¹⁰ A related variable to education is ethical training. The literature (e.g., Massey and Thorne 2006) suggests that college ethics courses and on-the-job ethics training should improve one's moral reasoning. In a review of the ethics literature, Jones et al. (2003) advocate the inclusion of ethics training in future research. Thus, we include ethics training on the job (yes/no) and ethics courses in college (yes/no) as control variables in our model.

Based on the foregoing discussion, we specify the following linear model:

$$P\text{-Score} = \alpha + \beta_1\text{Rank} + \beta_2\text{Ind/Pub} + \beta_3\text{Gender} + \beta_4\text{Education} + \beta_5\text{Eth.Training} \\ + \beta_6\text{Eth.Course} + \beta_7\text{Cons/Mod-Lib} + \beta_8\text{Lib/Mod-Cons} + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

where:

- P-score* = moral reasoning as measured by the DIT P-score;
- Rank* = 1 (junior/senior), 2 (manager), 3 (partner or equivalent);
- Ind/Pub* = CPAs in industry practice = 1, in public practice = 0;
- Gender* = 1 if female, 0 if male;
- Education* = 1 if graduate, 0 if undergraduate;
- Eth.Training* = 1 if any hours of training on the job, 0 otherwise;
- Eth.Course* = 1 if any ethics course in college, 0 otherwise;
- Cons/Mod-Lib* = 1 if conservative, 0 if liberal or moderate;
- Lib/Mod-Cons* = 1 if liberal, 0 if moderate or conservative; and
- ε = error term.

Main Results

The multivariate Model (1) is tested using the ordinary least square (OLS) regression. To check for the possibility of multicollinearity between independent variables, we first performed a correlation analysis between these variables. None of the correlation coefficients reached the critical level of 0.50, alleviating potential concerns.

The results of the OLS regression are summarized in Table 4. The model is highly significant (F-statistic = 4.107, $p < 0.001$) and produces an adjusted R² of 9.1 percent. Also reported in Table

¹⁰ Age can also be included as a control variable because the cognitive developmental theory of ethics suggests a positive association between moral reasoning and both age and education (Kohlberg 1979; Rest 1979, 1994). However, the literature also indicates that moral reasoning tends to increase at each higher level of education through college and then levels off and stays constant after college (Rest 1979). We found age to be highly correlated with professional rank (Pearson = 0.525, $p < 0.001$) and experience (Pearson = 0.761, $p < 0.001$). Thus, we exclude age as a control variable.

TABLE 4
Multivariate Analysis

$$P\text{-Score} = \alpha + \beta_1\text{Rank} + \beta_2\text{Ind/Pub} + \beta_3\text{Gender} + \beta_4\text{Education} + \beta_5\text{Eth.Training} + \beta_6\text{Eth.Course} + \beta_7\text{Cons/Mod-Lib} + \beta_8\text{Lib/Mod-Cons} + \varepsilon$$

Model	Standard Beta	t-statistic	Significance
Constant		7.290	0.000
Professional Rank	-0.053	-0.805	0.422
Industry versus Public	0.013	0.211	0.833
Gender	0.064	0.958	0.339
Grad/Undergrad	0.117	1.917	0.056
Eth.Training	-0.005	-0.075	0.940
Eth.Course	0.051	0.811	0.418
Cons/Mod-Lib	-0.150	-2.276	0.024
Lib/Mod-Cons	0.196	3.003	0.003
F-Statistic	4.107		
Significance	<0.001		
R ²	12.1% (Adj. 9.1%)		

Variable Definitions:

- P-Score* = moral reasoning as measured by the DIT P-score;
- Rank* = 1 (junior/senior), 2 (manager), 3 (partner or equivalent);
- Ind/Pub* = CPAs in industry practice = 1, in public practice = 0;
- Gender* = 1 if female, 0 if male;
- Education* = 1 if graduate, 0 if undergraduate;
- Eth.Training* = 1 if any hours of training on the job, 0 otherwise;
- Eth.Course* = 1 if any ethics course in college, 0 otherwise;
- Cons/Mod-Lib* = 1 if conservative, 0 if liberal or moderate;
- Lib/Mod-Cons* = 1 if liberal, 0 if moderate or conservative; and
- ε = error term.

4 are the standardized betas for the independent variables, associated t-statistics, and p-values. The coefficient of professional rank is not significant at conventional levels, indicating that the P-scores of professionals of varying rank are not significantly different. Thus, there is no evidence of SST or IUP in the model. We also find no significance for the variable industry versus public, which indicates that P-scores do not differ between CPAs in industry and public practice.

Variables with significant effects in Table 4 are education and political orientation. Specifically, as expected, we find CPAs with graduate degrees to have higher P-scores than those with only an undergraduate degree (t-statistic = 1.917, p = 0.056). Also, with a standardized beta of -0.150, conservatives score lower in their P-scores than moderates and liberals (t-statistic = -2.276, p = 0.024). Conversely, liberals score significantly higher in their P-scores than moder-

ates and conservatives (t-statistic = 3.003, $p = 0.003$). None of the other variables (gender, ethics training, and college ethics course) is statistically significant in the model.¹¹

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study we investigate the Selection-Socialization Theory and the Inverted-U Phenomenon in moral reasoning of CPAs in industry practice. We also provide additional data for CPAs in public practice, where prior studies have reported mixed results. Using the Defining Issues Test (DIT) to measure moral reasoning, we find no significant differences in the P-scores of CPAs in industry and public practice and no effect for professional rank. Thus, we find no evidence of selection-socialization or the Inverted-U Phenomenon for CPAs in either industry or public practice.

Related to this issue is an interesting observation in our broader sample of CPAs that contained a limited number of responses from CPAs in government ($n = 10$), education ($n = 9$), and 22 others, who did not indicate their area of practice. While our study is limited to CPAs in industry and public practice, we noted that CPAs in government had the highest mean P-score (41.83) of all subsamples. However, this subsample is too small to make strong generalizations. Future research may benefit from an investigation of whether CPAs with higher levels of moral reasoning self-select into jobs in government. Is it possible that accountants with higher levels of moral reasoning choose what they may perceive as more socially attuned or idealistic employment such as government or nonprofit?

The size of the CPA firms from which our CPAs in public practice were drawn is mostly on the smaller side. This is because the CPAs who attend state society continuing professional education (CPE) meetings do not tend to be from the larger firms that often have in-house CPE programs. Specifically, of the 154 CPAs in public practice, 82.47 percent were employed in firms with 10 or fewer CPAs. It is possible that selection-socialization takes place differently for smaller firms in that the ranks in small CPA firms may be somewhat less distinct than they are in larger national/international firms. We compared the P-scores of those in small (10 or less professionals) with those in large (11 or more professionals) and found no significant differences. A confounding issue here is that many of the CPAs in small practice may have had experience in Big-N firms. However, we did not have data to investigate this possibility. Future research may want to consider collecting and analyzing such data.

Investigation of control variables indicated that while gender and on-the-job ethics training or a college course on ethics do not have significant effects on the P-score, education and political orientation do. Specifically, CPAs with graduate degrees have higher P-scores than those with only undergraduate degrees. Regarding political orientation, liberals score higher than moderates and conservatives, while conservatives score lower than moderates and liberals.

Finally, while the focus of our study is on the principled moral reasoning scores of CPAs, some studies (e.g., Massey 2002, Thorne et al. 2003) have suggested that despite low moral reasoning scores, CPAs' context-specific ethical judgment/behavior may not suffer. Since the focus of our paper is on generic moral reasoning as measured by the DIT P-score, we cannot address

¹¹ The findings reported here are quite robust. We replaced professional rank with age and ran Model (1). The results were essentially the same. We also replaced professional rank with years since licensing (as a surrogate for experience) and found the results of Model (1) to stay the same. Finally, since there is some divergence in professional rank classification between industry and public practices, we also coded professional rank into a binary variable (high level versus low level) and ran the model. The results were essentially the same because there were no effects for professional rank and the results for other variables did not change.

CPAs' context-specific moral judgment or behavior. Future studies may be needed to investigate whether the results of our study might be different if context-specific instruments are used for measurement of moral reasoning.

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