

German Business Students' Career Aspirations in Accounting, Taxation & Finance – The Relation to Personality Traits

Marcus Bravidor*

Jan Krüger

Thomas R. Loy

Christina Scharf

University of Bayreuth

This Version: May, 31st 2017

We analyze the interrelation between personality traits and German business students' propensity to select financial accounting, management accounting, tax accounting, or corporate finance as their major field of study, to seek a first job in one of these areas as well as their intention to pursue a professional examination in audit or tax. The study is based on a survey of 428 students from a German university. Personality traits are measured using the Big Five Inventory, commonly used in psychology and human resources. In contrast to prior studies, we differentiate between students in management, financial and tax accounting as well as finance. Our results indicate different personality traits for students interested in management accounting and corporate finance compared to those interested in financial and tax accounting. Particularly the latter exhibit higher scores in consciousness (i.e., ethical and responsible behavior) as well as lower scores in openness to experience (i.e., conservative values and judging in conventional terms) and neuroticism. However, effects are weaker for financial accounting students. With regard to the intention of a first job, financial accountants are closer to business students in general. Students interested in professional examinations display distinctive personality traits as well.

* Corresponding author. Contact details: University of Bayreuth, Department of Business, Universitätsstraße 30, 95444 Bayreuth, Germany. E-mail: marcus.bravidor@uni-bayreuth.de.

We benefited from comments by Wiebke Esdar, Rolf Uwe Fülbier, Joachim Gassen, Malte Klein, Jonathan Taylor (discussant), and Barbara E. Weißenberger as well as seminar participants at the University of Bayreuth, Humboldt-University Berlin and Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich. Mayank-Kumar Gopelwar and Daniel Mook supported us with the translation of the questionnaire, Jörg Bellmann and Ines Spanier-Simon with the technical implementation. We are especially grateful to Daniel Baier, Ricarda Bouncken, Thorsten Knauer, Reinhard Meckl, Rolf Uwe Fülbier, Klaus Schäfer and Sebastian Schanz at the University of Bayreuth for the opportunity to administer our survey during their lectures. Nikolaus Dingler, Judith Gröne, Sven Hartlieb, and Anna Mollat provided excellent research assistance. We received generous financial support from Curacon, DATEV-Stiftung Zukunft, Ebner Stolz and Genossenschaftsverband Bayern.

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1 Introduction

Accounting scholars have long been interested in the question *why* students choose to major or pursue a career in accounting. The perception of accounting, the experience in the first accounting course as well as the impact of job-related attributes like monetary compensation and prestige have been identified as potential reasons (e.g., Paolillo and Estes 1982; Tan and Laswad 2009). A second stream of research examines personality types of accounting compared to non-accounting students. Results from psychology and human resources research indicate the general interrelation of personality types/traits and academic or vocational outcomes (Rottinghaus et al. 2002; Nieken and Störmer 2010; Poropat, 2009). Prior studies in accounting exhibit that undergraduate accounting students seem to be more introverted, rely less on intuition and feeling and are more apt to decision making based on judging than perception (e.g., Wheeler 2001; Kovar et al. 2003; Swain and Olsen 2012). Put differently, prior research documents attributes typically associated with the “bean-counter” stereotype.

We build upon the notion that personal characteristics matter for job selection (Barrick et al. 2001). Our study focuses on the interrelation of personality traits and students’ decision to major or work in accounting. In particular, we are not primarily interested in the reasons to study accounting (i.e., the *why?*-question) but in the persons who do (i.e., the *who?*-question). Following Dalton et al. (2014) we do not expect accounting students to necessarily be a homogenous group. Therefore, we distinguish between students’ decisions to major or pursue a professional career (including the desire to pursue a professional examination in auditing and/or taxation) in management, financial as well as tax accounting. We add students interested in (corporate) finance as a fourth group with a potential interest in accounting. Attributable to distinctive historical traditions for each discipline, Germany is an ideal setting to study such differences. We refer to all four groups combined as FACT (Finance, Accounting, Controlling [German term for management accounting, Messner et al. (2008)], Taxation).

To examine these questions, we conducted a paper-based survey during the 2015 and 2016 summer terms. Overall, we received 1,103 analyzable questionnaires from students of one German university. The final sample consists of 428 respondents (38.8 %). To address potential biases (e.g., socially desirable responses from non-FACT students in FACT lectures), we construct two propensity score-matched samples based on demographic and academic characteristics as well as respondents’ family background. The two additional samples

encompass students majoring in at least one FACT-related sub-field (matched majors sample, n = 384) and students surveyed in non-FACT lectures (matched lectures sample, n = 112).

We measure personality traits using the *Big Five Inventory* (BFI). These personality traits are useful to predict vocational choices and hierarchical outcomes (e.g., De Fruyt and Mervielde 1997, 1999; Rubinstein, 2005). In our study, we apply a modified 37 item version of the German translation by Rammstedt and John (2005). The five personality traits are extraversion (e.g., sociable, talkative), neuroticism (e.g., anxious, depressed), agreeableness (e.g., trusting, cooperative), conscientiousness (e.g., responsible, hardworking), and openness to experience (e.g., curious, broad-minded). As our study is explorative in nature, we have no expectations regarding characteristics of the students showing interest for different fields of accounting (i.e., sub-disciplines).

With regard to the sub-disciplines, the German setting allows us to exploit some particularities. First, there is not a *single*, unified accounting profession in Germany (Vieten 1995; Hellmann et al. 2010). Separate professional examinations and regulatory bodies exist for auditing (“Wirtschaftsprüfer”) and taxation (“Steuerberater”). If differences in personality traits matter for the decision to choose accounting as an occupation, showing interest in the professional examinations already during the course of studies should be a good measure to identify highly involved students. Second, management, financial and tax accounting are separate but closely related sub-fields in the German business economics tradition (Busse von Colbe 1996). In the second half of the 20th century differences became even more pronounced. A further link with regard to some topics (e.g., valuation; fair value measurement; risk management) exists to (corporate) finance. Students usually specialize in more than one sub-discipline. Hence, overlap in groups may work against any findings.

Our results indicate that FACT students can be separated into two distinct groups. Students majoring in management accounting and corporate finance show personality traits closer to business and economics students (i.e., students with non-FACT majors). Management accounting students show significantly lower values of extraversion (i.e., more introvert personalities), corporate finance students score lower in neuroticism (i.e., calm, clear-cut, and objective personalities). Financial and tax accounting students form the second group. They also exhibit distinct characteristics: higher scores in conscientiousness (i.e., ethical and responsible behavior) as well as lower scores in openness to experience (i.e., conservative values and judging in conventional terms) and neuroticism. Results are more pronounced for students who major in tax accounting.

Repeating the analysis for students first job preferences, we report consistent results. Interestingly, the share of students with occupational aspirations in financial accounting is much higher than share of students majoring in this sub-field. Financial accounting in general, and auditing in particular, seem to be interesting “stepping stones” for a professional career. Distinct personality traits for students seeking a first job in financial accounting are, hence, less pronounced than in the prior analysis. Accordingly, the relative share of students interested in a professional examination is lower than for tax accounting. Students tend to delay the decision to seek a long-term career in auditing until they are “on the job”, whereas future tax accountants already commit during their studies. Hence, social identification is more important for tax accounting than any other related sub-field.

The observed differences diminish in the matched lectures sample which features the highest share of non-FACT students. Jointly with the low explanatory power of our multivariate analysis this suggests that personality traits alone are a weak predictor of occupational outcomes. Thus, cautious interpretation is advised.

Our study makes three major contributions. First, prior studies find that perceptions of accounting jobs differ between students interested in taxation or auditing (Dalton et al. 2014). In turn, the decision to remain in or leave the accounting profession can partly be explained through differences in personality traits (Swain and Olsen 2012). Combining both results, we are the first to examine, whether personality traits interrelate with academic and vocational interest in the different facets of accounting. We further add management accounting and (corporate) finance to the analyzed set of sub-disciplines. Second, to our best knowledge, we are the first to provide evidence on the nature and intentions of European accounting students in general, and German students in particular. Prior studies mainly focused on the U.S. (e.g., Cohen and Hanno 1993; Kovar et al. 2003; Swain and Olsen 2012; Dalton et al. 2014) as well as Hong Kong (Law and Yuen 2012), Malaysia (Said et al. 2004; Germanou et al. 2009) or New Zealand (Tan and Laswad 2009). Third, from a methodological perspective, we consider a previously unused instrument. The BFI is commonly used in human resource research for comparable studies (e.g., Borges and Savickas 2002; Rottinghaus et al. 2002), but so far has not been applied in an accounting context.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 contains a brief introduction into particularities and institutional features of the German accounting profession as well as higher education. In Section 3 we provide a short overview of the relevant literature and methodologies at the intersection of accounting and psychology. Our data gathering and sample selection procedures

are described in Section 4. Section 5 contains the results which are further discussed in Section 6. Section 7 closes with some concluding remarks.

2 German Accounting Profession

Our study focuses on Germany, Europe's largest and most populous economy, which provides a distinct setting to follow Dalton et al. (2014) and deepen our understanding of differences associated with accounting's various sub-disciplines. In contrast to Anglo-Saxon countries, there is no single, unified accounting profession. Likewise, the term "accountant" refers to a "financial statement preparer, tax accountant, bookkeeper, auditor, or cost accountant" (Hellmann et al. 2010:111) depending on his or her actual line of work. Thus, the profession comprises four major groups: (1) management accountants, (2) financial accountants, (3) tax accountants and (4) auditors. Two types of professional examinations are available for the latter two (Vieten 1995). Tax accountants have the option to become qualified tax advisors ("Steuerberater"). After the certification, tax advisors are permitted to prepare tax returns, and financial statements for tax and commercial purposes (Coenenberg et al. 1999). The certification consists of three written and one oral exam, covering topics like procedural law, value added and inheritance taxes, valuation law, income taxes, accounting and transaction tax. Two years of professional experiences prior to the examination are a prerequisite.

Auditors ("Wirtschaftsprüfer") are a distinct group within the German financial reporting landscape. They hold the exclusive right to audit and certify financial statements. In contrast, preparers of financial statements for commercial purposes do not have to be members of any professional organization or hold any specific qualification. In order to become an auditor, three (for candidates with a Master's or Diploma degree) or four years (for candidates with a Bachelor's degree) of professional experience prior to the examination are mandatory. The professional examination consists of seven written exams (two in auditing, two in applied business and economics, one in commercial law and two in tax law) and an oral exam covering all aspects. Examinees, who previously passed the qualified tax advisor examination, are exempt from the tax law exams.

Both professional groups, tax advisors and auditors, are regulated by law, and are obliged to hold membership of their respective public organizations (i.e., chambers, "Kammern"). Professional organizations for "high-status professions" usually have limited self-control regarding supervision, training and professional practice (Neal and Morgan 2000). Unlike Anglo-Saxon countries (Watts and Zimmerman 1983), the regulation of tax advisors and

auditors is a combination of self- and state-regulation (Vieten 1995). Both groups enjoy full responsibility for the professional examinations. As outlined above, the prerequisites for admission to both professions are higher, more extensive and time-consuming compared to other European countries (Baker et al. 2001; Evans and Honold 2007). To accelerate the process without simultaneously lowering requirements, parts of the audit examination can be moved forward to the course of studies (§§ 8a, 13b WPO). Selected universities and polytechnics offer appropriate courses in applied business and economics as well as commercial law. All courses are subject to accreditation by the auditors' professional body ("Wirtschaftsprüferkammer"). There is no comparable facilitation for the qualified tax examination.

Besides these cases, most business economics courses in Germany are not specifically designed to meet the need of the auditing or any of the accounting professions (Coenenberg et al. 1999). Financial, tax, and management accounting were closely related but separate disciplines since the inception of business economics in Germany. One reason may have been the lack of a common theoretical underpinning. Financial accounting is considered to be the root of business economics (Busse von Colbe 1996). Attributable to the authoritative principle ("Maßgeblichkeitsprinzip"), which links financial statements for tax and commercial purposes, tax and financial accounting are closely related (Haller, 1992; Pfaff and Schröder 1996). These two sub-disciplines were "influenced and shaped by a technical-legal perspective" (Becker and Messner 2005:419). Management accounting evolved as a separate discipline in academia, education and practice since the 1950s – and nowadays even has its own name: "Controlling" (Becker and Messner 2005). The ongoing emancipation of "Controlling" was based on its divergent purpose as more of a managerial decision-aid. Regarding questions of capital budgeting and funding it partly overlaps with (corporate) finance. In contrast, financial questions of appraisal and valuation are traditionally within the scope of auditors and largely swayed by tax matters. Summing up, the sub-disciplines of management, financial, and tax accounting, as well as finance are interrelated albeit their different evolutionary paths in recent decades. Taking the two types of professional examinations into account, the particularities of German business economics tradition offer a unique setting to investigate differences within interested students.

3 Prior Literature

Students' intentions to major or work in accounting have been discussed to some extent in the accounting literature. Early studies focused especially on the timing of the decision to work in

accounting and influential job-related factors like compensation, prestige, etc. (Paolillo and Estes 1982). More recently, studies build upon the *theory of reasoned action* and the *theory of planned behavior* (Cohen and Hanno 1993; Tan and Laswad 2009; Law and Yuen 2012; Dalton et al. 2014). Both theories hypothesize that each behavior is the result of individuals' evaluation of its outcome (i.e., attitude toward the behavior) and the social pressure from peers (i.e., social norm). The theory of planned behavior adds a third component: perceived behavioral control, which is usually operationalized through individuals' assessment of the difficulty of the behavior. Both theories are well suited to answer the question *why* students want to pursue a study program or career in accounting. The *theory of reasoned action* and its successors broadened the scope of factors considered to influence study- and vocation-related decisions.

Research in psychology already went one step further and examines the underlying characteristics of a person (i.e., the *who?*-question). These personality types or traits translate into interests and vocational choices of individuals (Holland 1973). The most widely accepted model of personality traits is the *Big Five factor model* (Furnham 1996). Personality traits of the *Big Five factor model* can be measured through various instruments; most notably the *NEO-PI-R* (McCrae and Costa 1987), the *NEO-FFI* (Costa & McCrae 1992) and the *Big Five Inventory* (BFI; John et al. 1991).

As mentioned earlier, several studies in accounting use the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI; Myers 1962) instead of the *Big Five factor model*. We do not follow this approach for three reasons. First, the MBTI has less scientific evidence. It rather is a commonly used “measure in the consultancy and training” context (Furnham, 1996, p. 303). Second, the psychometric adequacy of the survey instrument is controversial (Boyle 1995; Gardner & Martinko 1996; Pittenger 1993). Third, its characteristics show disadvantages; mainly the length of the instrument and the often-used single-correct-answer scoring format (Boyle 1995).¹

Personality traits affect academic, occupational and professional decisions. As such, Rottinghaus et al. (2002) document a comparably higher explanatory power of personality traits compared to self-efficacy and vocational interests for the propensity to achieve higher academic degrees. Similarly, Nieken and Störmer (2010) provide evidence on differences in Big Five personality traits for different occupational groups in Germany. For example, managers show significantly higher scores on extraversion and lower scores on conscientiousness than manual workers. Clerks, on the other hand, exhibit a significantly lower score in conscientiousness. As mentioned before, personality traits transform into vocational

¹ The relationship between the MBTI-concept and the *Big Five factor model* is presented by Furnham (1996).

decisions. Prior studies show a considerable empirical overlap of the Big Five-measures and vocational types (De Fruyt and Mervielde 1997, 1999; Hogan and Blake 1999; Larson et al. 2002; Larson and Borgen 2002). Taken together, literature indicates a certain relation between the Big Five-personality traits (or the *who*-question) and academic as well as vocational choices. Despite its shortcomings, the MBTI sparked some research in accounting. As such, Wheeler (2001) provides an overview of 16 studies on the personality of accounting students and accountants as well as the potential influence on their performance. All but one rely on students or professionals from the United States.² He distinguishes two similarity groups. With respect to their personalities, undergraduates resemble professional accountants, whereas graduate students are more comparable to accounting faculty. Undergraduates score lower in extraversion, intuition, feeling and perceiving. Like professional accountants, they show more introvert but logical and decisive personalities. Kovar et al. (2003) confirm these results. In their eight-year longitudinal study, the personality types of students attracted in accounting programs are stable, with a tendency to less diversity and, thus, more stereotypical accounting preferences. These results also translate into job selection and progress (Swain and Olsen 2012). Future accountants are more introvert-type personalities, who gather information based on concrete experience rather than intuition. They make structured decisions rather than delaying them.

Another stream of research investigates the perceptions of accounting jobs from students' and practitioners' perspectives. Students commonly overestimate the importance of technical capabilities compared to soft skills and 'real world' experience (Usoff and Feldmann 1998). Kavanagh and Drennan (2008) exhibit comparable results for Australia. Nevertheless, students have a more positive view of the accounting profession than accounting practitioners. The perception of both groups differs regarding advancement, training, supervision, ethical standards and support in the professional exams (Carcello et al. 1991). Dalton et al. (2014) further divide the accounting jigsaw into two of its pieces: tax and audit. Their results indicate that career expectations in accounting are not homogenous. Students who pursue a career in auditing have other expectation regarding the nature and benefit of their job than students who want to work in taxes. We expect these differences in perception to be interrelated with differences in personality traits.

As already mentioned, most studies focus on the U.S. Their results are, however, subject to some limitations and not easily transferrable to other countries. Personality traits vary across

² The only exemption are Vaassen et al. (1993) who administered their study in the Netherlands.

the world (Schmitt et al. 2007). While this may be partially explained by problems translating survey instruments, cultural and socio-demographic differences alike have some effect. For instance, regarding vocational decisions in accounting, students from Hong Kong or Mainland China were mainly influenced by parental advice (Law and Yuen 2012). One potential explanation is the strong influence of Confucian norms on the Chinese society (Hofstede and Bond 1988; Hofstede 2001). For U.S. students other reference groups, such as friends, professors, and the like, are equally important (Cohen and Hanno 1993). Auyeung and Sands (1997) observe similar differences between Australian and Hong Kong/Taiwanese students at Australian universities. Deviant perceptions of accounting as a profession could provide a possible explanation. For a mixed sample of English and Malaysian students, Germanou et al. (2009) report significant differences for the perception of social and economic benefits, job security, chance of achievement and the nature of an accounting job itself. As a result, cultural differences seem to affect the career choices. To our knowledge, no study provides evidence on intentions and motivations of (Continental) European, especially German students. Our study is a first attempt at closing this gap.

4 Research Design

4.1 Measuring Personality Traits

For choosing the appropriate survey instrument to measure personality traits, we considered quality criteria as well as instrument length. The original *NEO-PI-R* with its 240 items (McCrae and Costa 1987) takes about 35 minutes to complete, and, therefore, is far too long for the given inquiry. As the 45 item *BFI* shows similar reliability as the 60 item *NEO-FFI*, we decided to use an adjusted³ version of the German⁴ language *BFI* developed by Rammstedt and John (2005) as our survey instrument.

The Big Five factor model consists of five dimensions, which are addressed through multiple positive and negative statements in the questionnaire. Each statement has to be rated on a five point Likert-scale ranging from “I fully disagree” to “I fully agree”. The dimensions are (Roccas et al. 2002; McCrae & Costa 2003):

³ Rammstedt and John (2005) offer a 45 item (BFI) and a 21 item short version (BFI-K). To circumvent timing restrictions when conducting the survey, we substituted 14 items with eight items from the shorter version (BFI-K). Thus, our final questionnaire contains 37 statements. 14 of these are coded reversely to avoid confirmation bias.

⁴ We use the English formulation of the corresponding items from John et al. (1991) in all subsequent tables. Authors own translations are marked with an asterisk (*).

- (1) *Agreeableness*: Individuals with high scores tend to be cooperative, gentle, modest, good-natured, and compliant, while people with low scores tend to be ruthless, irritable, suspicious, and inflexible.
- (2) *Conscientiousness*: People with high scores tend to be responsible, careful, organized, thorough, and scrupulous, while those with low scores tend to be disorganized, irresponsible, and unscrupulous.
- (3) *Extraversion*: People showing high scores tend to be assertive, active, talkative, and sociable, while low scores on this factor tend to go along with being reserved, retiring, and cautious.
- (4) *Neuroticism*: Individuals that show high scores tend to be insecure, angry, anxious, and, depressed, while those with low scores on *neuroticism* tend to be emotional stable, poised, and calm.
- (5) *Openness to Experience*: Individuals with high scores tend to be open-minded, imaginative, intellectual, and sensitive. Persons being down-to-earth, conventional, or insensitive tend to exhibit lower scores.

Table 1 includes a short characterization of the five traits. In a meta-analysis, Barrick and Mount (1991) identify conscientiousness and extraversion as particularly good predictors for occupational choices. *Conscientiousness* contains two facets. Dependability is being careful, thorough, responsible and organized; volitional values are hardworking, achievement-oriented, and persevering. *Extraversion* relates to managerial and sales positions, as it is being sociable, gregarious, talkative, and active. Financial accounting and auditing could relate negatively to openness and agreeableness, as professional skepticism and adherence to norms and standards is profoundly necessary. In contrast, higher scores in extraversion and openness would characterize the “business professional” stereotype.

[Table 1]

[Table 2]

We employ a slightly modified version of the BFI, as discussed above. Therefore, to assess the factorial validity of the combined measure, we repeat the steps from Rammstedt and John (2005). First, we conduct a principal component analysis with subsequent varimax rotation for all 37 items. As expected, the eigenvalues decline sharply after the fifth factor.⁵ These five factors explain 47.9 % of variance in the sample. Second, we run an additional principal

⁵ Eigenvalues for Factor 1: 5.47; Factor 2: 4.01; Factor 3: 3.35; Factor 4: 2.87; Factor 5: 2.03; Factor 6: 1.37; Factor 7: 1.25 (other results not tabulated).

component analysis for five factors with subsequent varimax rotation. Table 2 shows the resulting unique simple structure. All items, except for item #35, have their highest loading on the expected factors. We do not observe any side loadings above 0.3. However, the loadings are much lower than those reported by Rammstedt and John (2005). Since the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy is 0.8054, we have no concerns regarding the internal consistency of the instrument.

[Table 3]

We compute mean values for each of the five personality traits over the single items assigned to each factor. If one or more of the values for a certain trait is missing, we drop the trait for this observation. The other four traits are still computed, given that there are no missing values (Schmitt et al. 2007). Mean values and the standard deviations for the single items as well as the five traits are shown in Table 3. Cronbach's alpha for the *extraversion* (E), *conscientiousness* (C), *neuroticism* (N), *openness to experience* (O), and *agreeableness* (A) scores are 0.867, 0.770, 0.800, 0.812, and 0.804. Values higher than 0.8 (0.7) suggest high (sufficient) reliability (Peterson 1994). The reported values suggest a mostly good fit of the instrument. Other studies report similar results (Rubinstein 2005; Schmitt et al. 2007). Mean values for the five personality traits are qualitatively comparable to prior studies, too. A more detailed discussion can be found in section 5.1.

4.2 Data Collection

We administered a paper-based survey at the beginning of the 2015 summer term at one German university. To assure a reasonable number of students interested in accounting, we deliberately chose seven foundational and advanced courses in corporate finance, as well as management and financial accounting. More specifically, the survey has been administered in four undergraduate (two foundational, two specialized) and three graduate (all specialized) courses in business administration. To obtain a control sample of students who are less prone to finance and accounting, we additionally surveyed students in two undergraduate and three graduate courses in international management and marketing at the end of the 2016 summer term. Since we surveyed each student at one point in time, we cannot draw any causal inferences. Yet, as our research questions are explorative in nature, and aim to provide first evidence on the general characteristics and the intention to study or work in accounting, a causal link is not necessary.

The major advantage of a paper-based survey is the high response rate.⁶ Potential non-response bias is minimized (Sax et al. 2003). However, students' decisions to study at a certain university or in a certain program, especially at the graduate level, is most likely the result of a structured process rather than coincidence. We would expect similar intentions and characteristics between students. Socialization at the university could reinforce this effect. Furthermore, prior research shows that experience and success in the first accounting course influence the decision to specialize or work in accounting (Tan and Laswad 2009). All those factors are university-specific. We mitigate this concerns by limiting our sample to students from one university. Therefore, prior course of studies, experiences and socialization should be comparable. However, the narrow sampling approach comes at the cost of a potentially limited generalizability of the results.

4.3 Sampling Procedure

We use three distinct samples to mitigate these generalizability concerns. The first sample contains all observations with complete data for the subsequent analysis and matching procedures. Our initial sample consists of 1,103 returned questionnaires. We drop all observations from students in programs that finish with degrees other than Bachelor and Master, e.g., teaching/education or legal studies, which typically culminate in a state examination ("Staatsexamen"). This way, we achieve more homogenous group in terms of students' curriculum and incentives. Excluding certain groups of students from the analysis may reduce the variance in our sample and would, hence, work against any findings. However, as shown in section 5.1 the sample still covers the different facets and modes of business and economics education.⁷ Furthermore, we drop all observations with missing data on demographic, academic and family background, career preferences as well as personality traits.⁸ Table 4 contains a detailed breakdown of the sample selection process. Our first sample consists of 428 observations.

[Table 4]

⁶ In our case, the actual response rate is slightly below 100 % because a very small number of students returned blank questionnaires or refused to participate.

⁷ Approximately 70 % of the German auditors have a business and/or economics background (Wirtschaftsprüferkammer 2017). Hence, the sample covers the single most important academic discipline with regard to the entry qualification for (future) auditors.

⁸ Even though imputation is a commonly used method to handle missing survey data and address a potential non-response bias (Kalton 1983), we did not rely on any such methods since we assume that our sample size is still sufficient and inferences drawn without imputation are inherently stronger.

The second and the third samples are specifically designed to address potential biases in our initial sampling approach. We use propensity score matching (PSM) to construct two samples which contain a similar number of students from the treatment (FACT majors or surveyed in a FACT lecture, respectively) and control group (non-FACT majors or survey in a non-FACT lecture, respectively). PSM was originally developed to reliably analyze the effect of new drugs by comparing treatment and control groups in pharmaceutical trials (Stürmer et al. 2006). In recent years, PSM has been introduced to many other disciplines as it allows to draw causal inferences from quasi-experimental settings (Gassen 2014; Ittner 2014; Shipman et al. 2017). However, we are not primarily interested in determining a possible direction of our results (i.e., approaching a quasi-causal link) but in mitigating systematic differences between the groups of respondents in our sample. In a first step, we estimate a propensity score for each respondent. The underlying logit regressions are elaborated in more detail below. We use a broad set of covariates to achieve a robust and reliable matching without risking over-identification (Caliendo and Kopeinig 2008). In the second step, we employ nearest-neighbor matching (without replacement) based on the propensity score to assign each respondent from the treatment group to her closest “twin” from the control group.

Matching FACT and non-FACT students (matched majors sample): As described above, we mainly administered the survey in courses covering accounting and finance. Most of the courses were not mandatory. Therefore, students who willingly choose to participate in these courses may have an increased interest in an accounting or finance career in general, as well as the professional examinations in particular. Since we are not only interested in whether personality traits differ between FACT and non-FACT students but if they affect vocational outcomes (i.e., starting a career in accounting or finance as well pursuing the professional examinations), we match students, who major in financial accounting, management accounting, tax accounting or finance, with another student who is not a FACT major but similar in her demographic, academic and family background as well as her personality traits. We add personality traits to isolate the marginal effects on vocational choices. If personality traits had an effect, similar students – regardless of their major – should, ceteris paribus, be interested in similar occupations. To address this questions, we use the following logit regression to match students:

$$\begin{aligned}
 FACT_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot Field_i + \beta_2 \cdot Bachelor_i + \beta_3 \cdot Abroad_i + \beta_4 \cdot SchoolGrade_i \quad (1) \\
 & + \beta_5 \cdot ParEducation_i + \beta_6 \cdot ParAccounting_i \\
 & + \beta_7 \cdot TrainBusiness_i + \beta_8 \cdot TrainOth_i + \beta_9 \cdot Female_i \\
 & + \beta_{10} \cdot Age_i + \beta_{11} \cdot German_i + \sum \beta_j \cdot Personality_{i,j} + \varepsilon
 \end{aligned}$$

FACT is a binary variable taking the value “1” if a student majors in at least one of the FACT subjects (i.e., financial accounting, management accounting, tax accounting, and finance). *Field* is a categorical variable indicating the program of study (business & management, economics, industrial engineering, health economics, sports economics, other). The first set of covariates deals with the respondents’ academic backgrounds. *Bachelor* is a binary variable taking the value of “1” if a student is enrolled in an undergraduate program, and “0” for graduate students. *Abroad* is a binary variable taking the value of “1” if the student stayed in a foreign country for a longer period of time (e.g., semester or internship abroad). *SchoolGrade* is a students’ final grade at school. High school grades are a good predictor for academic aptitude (Groves et al. 2006).⁹ Parents have a strong influence on their children’s vocational choice (Schulenberg et al. 1984). This effect is especially pronounced in Asian countries (Law and Yuen 2012), but also observable in the West (e.g., for the U.S., Cohen and Hanno 1993). *ParEducation* is a binary variable indicating whether the at least one of the parents holds an academic degree (value “1”), or “0” otherwise. *ParAccounting* is a binary variable taking the value “1” if at least one of the parents works in tax accounting or auditing. *TrainBusiness* and *TrainOth* are binary variables taking the value “1” if the respondent finished a commercial or any other vocational training before commencing undergraduate studies, respectively. Prior research has shown that men and women differ in their vocational decisions and personality traits (Rubinstein 2005). Such differences relate to job attributes (income, leisure time, working in team, etc.) under consideration and the values placed on them in the decision process (Konrad et al. 2000). Hence, these may directly affect the decision to major or work in accounting or related disciplines. *Female* takes the value “1” if the student is female, and “0” otherwise. *Age* is a numerical variable representing the age of the respondent in years. *German* takes the value “1” if the respondent is a German native and “0” for any other nationality. The final set of variables (*Personality*) are the BFI-personality traits as described in section 4.1.

Matching students from FACT and non-FACT lectures (matched lectures sample): Primarily administering the survey in accounting and finance lectures yields another potential disadvantage. Students could be inclined to answer in favor of the subject in question and bias the results upwards, i.e. state a higher likelihood to pursue a career in accounting or finance as well as a professional examination than they actually do. This so called *social desirability bias* is well documented. It particularly occurs when asked about socially sensitive or personal issues (Grimm 2011, Paulhus 1991). Even though it is more likely in personal interviews than in (more

⁹ This variable is “reversely coded” since “1” is the best, and “5” the worst grade in the German education system.

anonymous) surveys (Kreuter et al. 2008), we use a second propensity score matching procedure to control for the contingent bias. As outlined above, we administered a second round of the survey in courses in subjects other than finance and accounting (i.e., non-FACT courses). We match each of the respondents from the non-FACT courses with its nearest neighbor in the FACT courses population using the following logit regression:

$$\begin{aligned}
 OtherCourse_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot Field_i + \beta_2 \cdot Bachelor_i + \beta_3 \cdot Abroad_i & (2) \\
 & + \beta_4 \cdot SchoolGrade_i + \beta_5 \cdot ParEducation_i + \beta_6 \cdot ParAccounting_i \\
 & + \beta_7 \cdot TrainBusiness_i + \beta_8 \cdot TrainOth_i + \beta_9 \cdot Female_i \\
 & + \beta_{10} \cdot Age_i + \beta_{11} \cdot German_i + \sum \beta_j \cdot Major_{i,j} + \epsilon
 \end{aligned}$$

Variables are defined as outlined above. The single notable difference to equation (1) is the substitution of the personality traits for the students' majors. *Major* is an array of indicator variables taking the value of "1" if a student indicated to have chosen this major, and "0" otherwise. Relying on students' majors instead of personality traits allows us to identify whether students with the same interests, and presumptively similar career aspirations, provide different answers depending on the course in which they were asked. If the *social desirability bias* is not an issue, we should not find any significant difference between students in the treatment (Non-FACT courses) and control (FACT courses) group. Put differently, students answer should be coherent independent of the course.

[Table 5]

Table 5 shows the results of the logit regressions for the estimation of the propensity scores for the matched majors and matched lectures samples. In both models, *Field* has a significant negative relation to the treatment effect. Due to the coding of the categorical variable, business & management, the program of study with most students in our sample, has an assigned value of "1" which explains the result. The significant negative coefficient for *Bachelor* in the matched lectures sample is a result of surveying approach since most of the non-FACT lectures were in the master program. Overall, both models explain a reasonable portion of the variance (14.6 % and 27.9 % for the matched majors and matched lectures sample, respectively). The area under the RoC is above 0.5 for both models, rejecting the notion that the predictive results for the dependent variable are mere coincidence.

[Table 6]

Table 6 provides mean values of the covariates in the propensity score regressions and their respective differences for the matched and unmatched samples. For the matched majors sample

(Panel A), some significant post-matching differences remain. This result is attributable to the relatively small size of control group (236 non-FACT students) compared to the treatment group (192 FACT students) which hampers the likelihood of particularly good fits. However, the magnitude of differences for all and the level of significance for all but one covariate indicates a good matching performance overall. In contrast, we do not observe any remaining significant differences for the matched lectures sample (Panel B).

Finally, some noteworthy observations: FACT students are less likely to go abroad, are older, mostly male and exhibit a higher share of international students. In contrast to the prior literature, we find a significant positive coefficient for *ParAccounting* in the matched lectures sample. This indicates that students, whose parents work in tax advisory or auditing, are more likely to participate in non-FACT lectures. For accountants it appears that she's sometimes not a chip off the old block.

5 Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 7, Panel A shows the distribution of the demographic, academic, and family background variables across the three samples. In general, the full (column 1) and the matched majors sample (column 2) are comparable. Roughly a quarter of the students are studying in the master program and a little less than a third have been studying or working abroad for a significant amount of time. Slightly more than half have at least one parent with an academic degree. In combination with the higher share of students with prior vocational training (commercial or other), one can assume that a reasonable share of the students are “educational climbers” (i.e., being the first in their family to obtain an academic degree). Most notably, the share of students whose parents work in accounting is higher in the matched lectures sample than in the two other specifications. This is surprising given the much lower share of FACT students in this sample (Panel D). Students possibly try to emancipate from their parents by choosing a different occupational path. We observe no notable differences regarding gender, nationality or age of the students in the three samples. Overall, the results exhibit rather slightly different characteristics for students in FACT and non-FACT courses.

[Table 7]

A look at the BFI-personality traits leads to a similar conclusion. Mean values for agreeableness (3.6), extraversion (3.5) and consciousness (3.7) are virtually identical for all three groups

(Panel B). Once again, the matched lectures sample shows two notable deviations as students in this sample, on average, score higher in neuroticism and marginally lower in openness to experience.

The distribution of courses and major fields of study (Panel C and D, respectively) exhibit that differences in demographic, academic and family background as well as personality traits are related to different major fields of study but not to the courses. Regarding the latter, the share of business & management constitute approx. 70 % of all three samples.

However, FACT students represent only 27.7 % in the matched lectures sample¹⁰ as opposed to 44.9 % and 50 % for the full and matched majors sample, respectively. Within the FACT field, management accounting and corporate finance are the most common majors. This is especially pronounced in the matched lectures sample. Financial and tax accounting as well as auditing follow on the next ranks, but with a notable gap in the matched lectures sample. Since you can choose multiple fields of studies (majors), the popularity of different FACT sub-fields varies with students' overall focus of study. More technical sub-fields like financial and tax accounting are common and popular within the FACT field, but students with major fields of study outside FACT seem to prefer less rules-based subjects like management accounting and corporate finance. Hence, any inferences heavily rely on the subgroup of students surveyed. As with our focus on career aspirations in accounting and finance, the full sample and major matched sample, which are (nearly) equally split between (non-)FACT students, are the more appropriate choices for subsequent analyses. Overall, the results indicate a slight relation between personality traits and the major field of study, which are possibly related to differences in demographic, academic and family backgrounds.

5.2 Studying FACT

In the first analysis, we investigate whether students who chose FACT or any of its sub-fields as their major field of study show personality traits, which are different from those of students in other majors. Table 8 shows the mean values for the BFI-personality traits for students majoring in FACT compared to all non-FACT students as well as students in the FACT sub-fields compared to students in all other fields (FACT and non-FACT). FACT students (Panel A) show significantly lower values for agreeableness, extraversion and openness to experience. These results seems to be primarily driven by students majoring in financial and tax accounting

¹⁰ Students majoring in FACT (surveyed in non-FACT lectures) are also included in this sample, as are non-FACT students taking a single course in FACT. Incidentally, some FACT courses prove to be quite popular with non-FACT students, skewing the proportion of (non-)FACT students in the matched lectures sample.

who tend to be very similar and exhibit differences to the control group. Differences are most pronounced for tax accounting students (Panel D) who show significantly lower levels of extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience as well as higher values for conscientiousness. Financial accounting students show similar traits. Even though, extraversion is not significant in their case. In contrast, the personality traits of students majoring in management accounting or corporate finance are not significantly different from those of students in other majors. This finding confirms our prior notion. Management accounting and corporate finance attract students from other sub-disciplines in business & management whereas financial and tax accounting are chosen by a more distinct group of students.

[Table 8]

To further analyze the relation between choice of major field of study and personality traits, we run logistic regressions for FACT and its sub-fields on BFI-personality traits, separately:

$$Major = \beta_0 + \sum Personality + \varepsilon \quad (3)$$

with *Major* being a binary variable taking the value “1” if a student chooses FACT or any of its sub-fields as a major. *Personality* represents the individual mean values for the BFI-personality traits. Results for the sub-fields (columns) and the three samples (Panels) are shown in Table 9. For the full sample (Panel A) they are consistent with results from the univariate analysis presented above. However, the magnitude is smaller for financial and management accounting where only two (instead of three) or none (instead one) personality traits show a significant relation to the choice of the major. Neuroticism shows the most consistent pattern as it is significantly negative related to the probability of majoring in a FACT sub-field in all but one (management accounting) specifications. Focusing on the sub-fields, the personality traits identified before show a significant relation to tax accounting. However, the magnitude is rather small. For example, a one unit increase (which is roughly one standard deviation, Table 3) in extraversion lowers the probability to major in tax accounting by 5.8 %. The area under the RoC curve of above 0.5 indicates that the predictive power of the model is not sheer coincidence. Explanatory power, however, is limited (Pseudo-R² below 15 % for all specifications) indicating that the decision to choose a certain major is mainly driven by other factors than personality traits.

[Table 9]

As expected, results get weaker in the matched majors (Panel B) and matched lectures samples (Panel C). In the matched majors sample, students were matched on demographic, academic

and family background as well as their personality traits. Hence, we would not expect to find any effect of personality traits since each student that majors in FACT is balanced by another student, with similar personality traits, who does not major in FACT. Surprisingly, the results obtained for tax accounting and corporate finance remain significant with comparable coefficients as before, indicating a very robust relation between distinct combinations of personality traits and these two sub-fields. The slightly significant negative relation with openness for experience for tax accounting and neuroticism for corporate finance can be observed in the matched lectures sample (Panel C), as well. Other significant relations than the slightly significant negative coefficient for consciousness in column 1 cannot be observed. This result emphasizes the importance of sample selection for the survey. As shown before, the sample carries only a small share of FACT students. The FACT students included are mainly majoring in management accountants and corporate finance. But these are the exact two FACT majors with the least differences in personality traits – most likely due to their relative popularity with non-FACT students.

5.3 Career Aspirations

[Table 10]

In our second analysis, we investigate whether and to which extent students are interested in pursuing a first job in any FACT-related sub-field and whether this decision relates to a distinct set of personality traits. Table 10 (Panel A) exhibits the absolute number and relative share of students interested in starting their career in any FACT-related area. For all three samples, the share of students interested in such a first job (FACT, 55.4 % for the matched lectures sample to 67.4 % for the matched majors sample) is higher than the share of FACT students documented in the previous analyses. Put differently, these jobs are attractive to a reasonable share of non-FACT students, too. Of particular note is the interest in financial accounting / auditing in the matched lectures sample which is nearly four-times as high as the share of students in the respective major fields of study (Panel D of Table 7). Besides that, management accounting is the most popular vocational choice by students (between 33.0 and 37.8 %), followed by financial accounting / auditing (21.4 to 35.3 %), corporate finance (17.0 to 25.0 %), and tax accounting / advisory (8.0 to 14.6 %).

[Table 11]

Observing different patterns for the choices of the major field of study and first job could also transfer to differences in personality traits. Table 11 shows the respective mean values for the

BFI-personality traits of the group of students interested in first job in a FACT-related area (Group = 1) and those who are not (Group = 0). Students generally interested in any FACT-related first job score significantly lower in agreeableness, extraversion, and openness to experience. Compared to the study choice, results become more pronounced for students interested in a first job in management accounting and corporate finance. For management accounting, in addition to the lower score in extraversion, we observe a lower value for openness to experience. Students interested in a first job in corporate finance show significantly lower scores in agreeableness and neuroticism. The latter confirms the finding from the studying choices (Table 8). As noted before, the interest in first job in financial accounting / auditing is much higher than that in the respective major field of study. This increase is mainly driven by students with divergent characteristics. Students who would like to start their professional careers in financial accounting / auditing display significantly lower values for extraversion. The difference is three-times as high as for the studying choice. The significant result for openness to experience is comparable to the previous one. Differences in consciousness and neuroticism, which were significant before, are near zero at hand. The increased interest in financial accounting / auditing – compared to the studying choice – led to a partial adjustment towards students with “average” personality types observable for business & management in general. In contrast, we do not find such an effect for the closely related sub-field of tax accounting. Signs, coefficients and in most cases even the significance levels remain as reported before. We further investigate this difference in the next step.

[Table 12]

Financial accounting and auditing both primarily deal with financial statements for commercial purposes whereas tax accounting and advisory are directed towards tax filings and financial statements for tax purposes. So far, we structured the analysis following this functional dichotomy. Another way to structure these activities is whether they are “build” or “bought”. That is, financial and tax accounting services are usually performed in-house whereas auditing and tax advisory services are performed by an external third party. Since in-house and external jobs differ with regard to their organizational structure (for particularities of professional service firms, e.g., Norderflycht 2016) and work arrangement (e.g., increased business travel for employees in auditing), these may attract different kinds of personalities. To further test corroborate notion, Table 12 exhibits personality trait differences for students interested in a first job in financial accounting versus auditing (Panel A), as well as tax accounting versus tax advisory (Panel B). Students eyeing a future in auditing exhibit a significantly lower level of agreeableness than their fellow students who like to do commercial work in-house. For taxes,

consciousness is more pronounced for students who prefer to work in tax advisory rather than tax accounting. Students who prefer to work in professional service firms also show notably – although not significantly – lower levels of neuroticism.

[Table 13]

To further substantiate differences in personality traits for students who prefer to start their careers in professional service firms, we run an ordered logit regression with students' preferences as the dependent and personality traits as independent variables:

$$Start = \sum \alpha + \beta_1 \cdot FACT + \beta_2 \cdot OthCourse + \sum Personality + \varepsilon \quad (4)$$

Start is an ordinal variable indicating the preference with values ranging from “very unlikely” (1) to “very likely” (5). *FACT* and *OthCourse* are indicator variables for students majoring in a FACT-related sub-field or surveyed in a non-FACT lecture, respectively. *Personality* is a vector of the individual mean values for the BFI-personality traits. Descriptive statistics for the dependent variable *Start* are provided in Table 10 (Panel B). As observed before, results for the full and matched major sample are very similar with students showing a mean preference of 3.48 and 3.52 (out of 5, SD: 1.11), respectively. Students in the matched lectures sample show a lower preference (mean: 3.17, SD: 0.99) consistent with a lower share of students interested in a first job in accounting, auditing or tax advisory. Results for the ordered logit regression are reported in Table 13. Students majoring in at least one FACT-related sub-field (*FACT*) show a significantly higher preference in all three samples. Given the different studying choices, one would assume a negative effect for students surveyed in non-FACT lectures. However, *OthCourse* has the predicted sign but is insignificant in all three models. The significantly negative coefficient for agreeableness, neuroticism, and (partly) openness to experience are consistent with prior results obtained from our univariate tests. Interestingly, agreeableness was only significant for students interested in a first job in corporate finance but not for financial, management or tax accounting. We did, however, observe a significantly lower level of agreeableness for students starting a career in auditing as opposed to in-house financial reporting. This supports the notion that differences in personality traits do not only relate to functional but also organizational forms of aspired occupation. As before, the results are not confirmed in the matched lectures sample. Students in non-FACT courses, who share similar majors and – indirectly – personality traits, may have other desires for their job. In line with the, once again, low explanatory power of personality traits in our model (Pseudo-R² below 8

% in all specifications), the same subjective characteristics do not necessarily lead to the same vocational outcome.

5.4 Professional Examinations

[Table 16]

In our third analysis, we investigate whether and to which extent students are interested in pursuing a professional examination in audit or tax advisory and whether this intention relates to distinct personality traits. Table 16 (Panel A) presents the share of students interested in pursuing the auditor, certified tax advisor or both examinations for the three samples. We observe similar patterns. That is, results for the full and matched sample are roughly comparable. 13.1 % (14.3 %) of the students in the full (matched major) sample express high or very high intention to pursue any examination. The certified tax advisory certification is slightly more popular than the auditor examination (10.0 % vs. 9.1 % for the full sample). This result corresponds to a higher number of entrants in the tax advisor examination (Bundesteuerberaterkammer 2016; Wirtschaftsprüferkammer 2017). However, the interest in the auditor examination is higher than expected.¹¹ For the matched majors sample, the comparably low interest in the professional examinations is not surprising given the career preferences of students in non-FACT lectures laid out above.

[Table 15]

Students with intent to pursue a professional examination show significantly lower scores in extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience as well as higher values in consciousness (Panel A of Table 15). This pattern is similar to the one observed for students who choose to major in tax accounting or consider to pick up a first job in this sub-field. Interestingly, students who intend to pursue a certified tax advisory examination (Panel C) show less pronounced differences. Whereas neuroticism is no longer significant for future tax advisors (0.20), the difference is nearly twice the size (0.38) for students intending to pursue an auditor examination. They also score lower values for openness to experience, even though slightly less than students prospective tax advisors. *Consciousness* reveals an inverse picture: higher values and stronger significance for the future auditors. Directly comparing both groups (Panel D)

¹¹ Our sample includes 14 students who participate in program to move up parts of the audit examination to the course of studies (§ 13b WPO). Of these, 13 (92.9 %) want to pursue the audit, and 10 (71.4 %) the tax examination, respectively.

reinforces prior findings. Albeit, the differences are not significant, the 0.49 neuroticism score for auditors is “economically” meaningful.

To examine the joint relation of the personality traits on the preference to pursue a professional examination in tax or audit, we ran the following ordered logit regression which is comparable to equation (4) in section 5.4:

$$Examination = \sum \alpha + \beta_1 \cdot FACT + \beta_2 \cdot OthCourse + \sum Personality + \varepsilon \quad (5)$$

Examination is a ordinal variable indicating the preference for either the audit or certified tax advisor examination with values ranging from “very unlikely” (1) to “very likely” (5). *FACT* and *OthCourse* are indicator variables for students majoring in a FACT-related sub-field or surveyed in a non-FACT lecture, respectively. *Personality* are the individual mean values for the BFI-personality traits. Descriptive statistics for dependent variables are provided in Table 14 (Panels B and C). Overall interest in the professional examination is remote and virtually identical for the auditor and tax examination (mean: 1.72 out of 5, SD: 1.07 and 1.15 for the full sample). More than 50 % of the students indicated that it is “very unlikely” that they pursue the professional examinations (even more than 75 % of the students in the matched lectures sample regarding the auditor examination).

[Table 16]

Table 16 shows the results from the ordered logit regression for the audit (Panel A) and the tax examination (Panel B). The sample size is slightly reduced due to so some missing information about preferences. Overall, the results indicate a negligible relation between the preference for the professional examinations and personality traits. Most notably, neuroticism is negatively related to the preference for the audit examination which is constituent with our prior findings. Students who major in at least one FACT-related subject are significantly more likely to have a high preference for any examination (except for the audit examination in match lectures sample). In contrast, students surveyed in non-FACT lectures have a significantly lower preference.

6 Discussion and Limitations

Our results for German accounting students add further support to prior findings with respect to personality traits of accounting students (Wheeler 2011; Kovar et al. 2003; Swain and Olsen 2012).

Students who choose to major in a FACT-related sub-field show some distinct deviations from non-FACT students. Lower scores in agreeableness and extraversion relate to a skeptical but introvert personality. The decreased levels for openness to experience point to conservative persons who are uncomfortable with complexities. However, there are notable differences between the sub-fields: (1) Students majoring in corporate finance and management accounting do, for the larger part, not share these traits. Whereas students in corporate finance do at least share the lower values in neuroticism, students majoring in management accounting do not show significantly different levels for any trait. Yet, their below-average score for agreeableness indicates skeptical but more risk-prone personalities. Put differently, these two groups of students are closer to other students in business, management and economics. (2) In contrast, students majoring in financial and tax accounting exhibit largely similar personality traits. Comparable to FACT students as a whole, they show lower values in openness to experience. The indicated conservative and conventional personality is enriched by productive, responsible and ethical behavior (i.e., higher levels of consciousness) as well as calm and objective decision-making.

The observed personality does translate into aspirations for a first job. Tax accounting students' curiosity for the job seems to be driven by an interest in the technical aspects of the field – attributable to their more introvert personalities. What looks like good news from employers' point of view at first sight could become less favorable in the long-term. Particularly larger firms appoint young professionals to more technical, but less complex and rather repetitive tasks, which require profound but no expert knowledge. To advance their careers, employees need to develop other skills like leadership, customer acquisition and relationship management. Tax accounting students' personality traits indicate that this transition could prove to be very challenging. This conclusion has practical implications for students, employers and the overall tax profession, alike. Students need to be aware of the (long-term) requirements for career advancement. Future tax accountants will have to live up beyond the mere technical and regulatory aspects of the field. Kornberger et al. (2011) show that audit firms heavily focus on customer acquisition and relation skills in their partnership promotion decision. Technical experts have smaller chances to rise to leadership positions. Given the close interrelation with auditing in Germany, this notion can most likely be transferred to tax accounting, as well. However, most certified tax advisors are self-employed.¹² Yet, this likewise requires technical as well as office and client management skills. Anecdotal evidence suggests that tax advisors

¹² Approximately 70 % of German certified tax advisors are self-employed (Bundessteuerberaterkammer 2016).

willing to sell their office (e.g., for retirement) struggle to find buyers. One potential explanation is the outlined problem to attract job starters who show the necessary knowledge and the required personality (Boerger 2016).

Interestingly, our results indicate a different pattern for students seeking a first job in financial reporting or auditing. The differences in personality traits observed for the studying choice partly diminish with regard to first job aspirations in this field. The higher number of students interested in a career, as compared to the number of students majoring, in financial accounting may explain this finding. As observed for corporate finance and management accounting, increased interest translates into personality traits closer to “average” business, management and economics students. Put differently, the group of students interested in a first job in financial accounting is more diverse than for tax accounting. Audit firms and the audit profession in general face better odds to hire talent. Subsequently, they have the chance to create long-term interest in careers in auditing as well as the professional examinations. This may be partly attributable to the idea of auditing as a “stepping stone” or “qualification job”. In particular, the “Big Four” audit firms advertised starting a career in auditing as a chance to get to know a broad set of industries and technical skills necessary to take care of the accounting and finance function in other companies. This idea seems to appeal even to students outside the FACT-related sub-fields.

Our results for the intention to pursue a professional examination provide further evidence for this notion. The share of students who are highly or very highly interested in an auditing or tax examination is nearly identical; but the group of students majoring in tax accounting or having intentions for a first job in this field is lower than for financial accounting. Selecting oneself into a group towards one has a positive image and shares common attitudes is, hence, more pronounced for tax accounting (Tajfel and Turner 1986). However, students with high or very high interest in any of the two professional examinations share some common personality traits: higher scores in consciousness and lower scores in openness to experience, indicating responsible and ethical behavior but conservative values and conventional judgement. Students interested in the auditor examination additionally score lower in neuroticism (calm, objective) and those interested in the tax examination lower in extraversion (introvert, submissive). Most notably we find no significant effect for agreeableness where lower values would indicate a more skeptical personality. A trait particularly desirable for auditors. Professional standards require auditors to exercise “professional skepticism” that is “[a]n attitude that includes a questioning mind, being alert to conditions which may indicate possible misstatement due to error or fraud, and a critical assessment of audit evidence” (ISA 200). However, this result does

not imply that students interested in auditing (or the respective examination) are not skeptical but they are not more, or less, skeptical than other (business) students. Adequate trainings at the university and firm level may compensate this effect (Hurt 2010). Since students interested in financial and tax accounting tend to judge in conventional terms and are less open-minded towards complexities and change, it seems reasonable to develop and foster such values at early stages in addition to technical training they already receive.

Taken together, our results support the observation by Dalton et al. (2014) that accounting students are not a homogenous group. Further analysis of the differences and their causes for the three sub-disciplines provide a fruitful area for future research.

Attributable to its exploratory nature, our study is subject to some limitations. First, our sample is based on data from one university. Socialization and the effect of deliberate choice of the university could induce structural differences between the students in our sample and the population of (business, management, and economics) students in Germany. However, our approach is in line with other studies, which mainly focused on one university (e.g., Swain and Olsen 2012). To our knowledge, no further studies or official statistics on the characteristics or major choices of German (business economics) students exist, which would allow us to cross-check our sample. Hence, the generalizability of our results remains an open issue. Second, results are based on a single survey and not a repeated panel-like methodology. There is a strong argument that personality traits shape occupational and academic decisions (Ham et al. 2009; Nieken and Störmer 2010) but we are cautious about the causality of our results. Nevertheless, personality traits themselves tend to be time-invariant, at least in the short run (Cobb-Clark and Schurer 2012). Third, the actual validity of the personality constructs employed, especially conscientiousness and extraversion, is potentially underestimated from self-assessment (Mount et al. 1998). Additionally, possible age effects affect our results (McGrae and Costa 2003). Fourth, the observed differences diminish in the matched lectures students which features the highest share of non-FACT students. In conformity with the low explanatory power of our multivariate analysis this suggests that personality traits alone are a weak predictor of occupational outcomes. Students with similar traits obviously choose different jobs. Even though the reported differences are statistically significant, the magnitude of the differences is rather small (around one fifth to one fourth of a standard deviation), attributable to our rather homogenous sample, i.e. business, management, and economics students from one German university.

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Table 1:
Characteristics related to the Big Five Personality Traits

<i>Lower Scores</i>	<i>Higher Scores</i>	<i>Lower Scores</i>	<i>Higher Scores</i>
Agreeableness		Conscientiousness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical, sceptical • Shows condescending behaviour • Tries to push limits • Expresses hostility directly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical, sceptical • Shows condescending behaviour • Tries to push limits • Expresses hostility directly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eroticizes situations • Unable to delay gratification • Self-indulgent • Engages in fantasy, daydreams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaves ethically • Dependable, responsible • Productive • Has high aspiration levels
Extraversion		Neuroticism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotionally bland • Avoids close relationship • Overcontrol of impulses • Submissive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talkative • Gregarious • Socially poised • Behaves assertively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calm, relaxed • Satisfied with self • Clear-cut personality • Prides self on objectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sympathetic, considerate • Warm, Compassionate • Arouses liking • Behaves in a giving away
Openness to experience			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favours conservative values • Judges in conventional terms • Uncomfortable with complexities • Moralistic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favours conservative values • Judges in conventional terms • Uncomfortable with complexities • Moralistic 		

Source: McCrae and Costa (2003); Ham et al. (2009)

Table 2:
Principal Component Analysis for the Big Five Personality Traits

	E	C	N	O	A	
Extraversion (E)						
6	Is reserved	0.46	0.01	-0.04	-0.05	0.00
16	Generates a lot of enthusiasm	0.36	-0.02	0.01	0.07	0.00
21	Tends to be quiet	0.47	0.02	0.01	-0.02	-0.04
36	Is outgoing, sociable	0.44	-0.06	0.00	0.00	0.08
Conscientiousness (C)						
3	Does a thorough job	0.00	0.35	0.00	-0.02	-0.01
8	Can be somewhat careless	-0.06	0.39	0.05	-0.02	0.06
13	Is a reliable worker	-0.07	0.37	0.02	0.03	0.01
18	Tends to be disorganized	-0.04	0.32	0.07	-0.04	0.02
23	Tends to be lazy	0.15	0.33	0.04	-0.06	0.03
28	Perseveres until the task is finished	-0.04	0.24	-0.09	0.08	-0.06
33	Does things efficiently	0.09	0.24	-0.06	0.04	-0.01
38	Makes plans and follows through with them	0.13	0.26	-0.03	0.04	-0.11
43	Is easily distracted	0.01	0.30	-0.12	-0.01	-0.01
Neuroticism (N)						
4	Is depressed, blue	-0.03	-0.01	0.45	0.03	-0.06
9	Is relaxed, handles stress well	0.08	0.04	0.47	-0.07	0.03
19	Worries a lot	-0.01	0.02	0.48	0.03	0.01
39	Gets nervous easily	-0.12	-0.07	0.38	0.02	0.04
Openness to Experience (O)						
5	Is original, comes up with new ideas	0.10	-0.01	-0.08	0.29	-0.02
10	Is curious about many different things	0.11	0.09	-0.03	0.23	0.01
15	Is ingenious, a deep thinker	0.02	0.02	0.16	0.27	0.00
20	Has an active imagination	0.05	-0.02	0.02	0.34	0.01
25	Is inventive	0.08	-0.04	-0.08	0.32	-0.04
30	Values artistic, aesthetic experiences	-0.09	0.02	0.05	0.39	0.04
35	Prefers work that is routine	0.00	-0.02	-0.17	0.09	-0.07
40	Likes to reflect, play with ideas	0.08	-0.05	-0.01	0.28	-0.11
41	Has few artistic interests	-0.11	0.02	0.02	0.39	0.03
44	Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature	-0.12	-0.07	-0.04	0.32	-0.01

Table 2:
continued

	E	C	N	O	A	
Agreeableness (A)						
2	Tends to find fault with others	-0.16	-0.01	-0.12	-0.03	0.30
7	Is helpful and unselfish with others	0.05	0.02	0.07	0.10	0.29
12	Starts quarrels with others	-0.13	0.12	-0.11	0.05	0.27
17	Has a forgiving nature	0.02	-0.12	-0.16	-0.01	0.26
22	Is generally trusting	0.11	-0.14	0.01	-0.02	0.29
27	Can be cold and aloof	0.05	-0.03	0.03	-0.10	0.34
32	Is considerate and kind to almost everyone	0.12	0.06	0.15	0.11	0.34
37	Is sometimes rude to others	-0.01	0.02	0.02	-0.07	0.39
42	Likes to cooperate with others	0.03	-0.04	0.00	0.06	0.27
45	Have trouble with others*	-0.06	0.11	-0.07	0.05	0.31

Table 3:
Mean values and Standard deviations as well as the reliability measures for the Big Five personality traits

	Mean	SD	α
Extraversion			
6	3.47	1.09	
16	3.66	0.84	
21	3.67	1.22	
36	3.67	0.91	
<i>Mean</i>	<i>3.62</i>	<i>1.01</i>	<i>0.867</i>
Conscientiousness			
3	4.08	0.68	
8	3.74	0.94	
13	4.24	0.70	
18	3.65	1.05	
23	3.44	1.02	
28	3.56	0.93	
33	3.76	0.76	
38	3.81	0.81	
43	3.33	0.87	
<i>Mean</i>	<i>3.73</i>	<i>0.86</i>	<i>0.770</i>
Neuroticism			
4	2.79	0.99	
9	3.08	1.02	
19	3.20	1.10	
39	2.84	0.96	
<i>Mean</i>	<i>2.98</i>	<i>1.02</i>	<i>0.800</i>
Openness to Experience			
5	3.19	0.93	
10	3.92	0.89	
15	3.71	0.98	
20	3.56	0.92	
25	3.11	0.85	
30	3.16	1.16	
35	2.61	1.02	
40	3.11	1.07	
41	3.24	1.18	
44	2.77	1.08	
<i>Mean</i>	<i>3.24</i>	<i>1.01</i>	<i>0.812</i>
Agreeableness			
2	3.21	0.89	
7	3.86	0.67	
12	4.43	0.70	
17	3.50	1.03	
22	3.33	1.05	
27	2.59	1.07	
32	3.93	0.77	
37	2.97	1.10	
42	3.80	0.90	
45	4.50	0.69	
<i>Mean</i>	<i>3.61</i>	<i>0.89</i>	<i>0.804</i>

Table 4:
Sample Selection Process

Returned questionnaires	1,103
./ Study degrees other than Bachelor and Master	-88
./ Missing data on demographic, academic and family background	-448
./ Missing data on career preferences	-81
./ Missing data on personality traits	-58
= Final Sample	428

Table 5:
Results of the Propensity Score Matching-Regressions

The table shows the Logit regression results for the estimation of the propensity scores for the matched majors (dependent variable: *FACT*, i.e. student majors at least in one of the following subjects: financial accounting, management accounting, tax accounting and finance) and matched lectures (dependent variable: *OtherCourse*, i.e. survey was administered in a lecture outside the *FACT* field). All other variables are explained in the text. *Field* denotes the inclusion of an array of binary variables for the respondents' selected majors. t-values in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1 %, 5 %, and 10 % level, respectively.

	Matched majors	Matched lectures
Field	-0.073 *** (-4.841)	-0.057 ** (-2.373)
Bachelor	0.071 (0.389)	-1.248 *** (-4.479)
Abroad	-0.388 *** (-2.614)	-0.134 (-0.631)
SchoolGrade	-0.053 (-0.346)	0.330 (1.450)
ParEducation	-0.088 (-0.638)	0.547 ** (2.524)
ParAccounting	0.166 (1.040)	0.402 * (1.788)
TrainBusiness	-0.077 (-0.309)	0.024 (0.057)
TrainOth	-0.235 (-0.747)	0.082 (0.179)
Female	-0.444 *** (-2.936)	0.086 (0.428)
Age	0.116 *** (2.905)	-0.098 (-1.519)
German	-1.457 ** (-2.299)	-0.629 (-0.830)
Agreeableness	-0.091 (-0.706)	
Extraversion	-0.098 (-1.111)	
Conscientiousness	0.222 (1.622)	
Neuroticism	-0.096 (-1.047)	
Openness to Experience	-0.198 * (-1.761)	
constant	0.144 (0.107)	1.835 (1.192)
Majors	Not included	Includud
No. obs.	428	428
Pseudo-R ²	0.146	0.279
Area under RoC Curve	0.747	0.852

Table 6:

Means and Test of Differences for the Covariates in the Propensity Score Matching Regressions in the unmatched and matched samples

This table shows the mean values of the covariates used in the propensity score matching regressions. Unmatched denotes the initial sample before matching, matched the final sample after the estimation of the propensity score and nearest neighbor-matching. Binary treatment variable indicated in the headlines of the panels. All variables are defined as described in the text. Significance levels were estimated using t-tests and Mann-Whitney U test for continuous and binary variables in the unmatched samples, respectively, as well as paired t-tests and Wilcoxon sign ranked tests for continuous and binary variables in the matched samples. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1 %, 5 %, and 10 % level, respectively. *Field* and *Majors* (in Panel B) are not tabulated.

	Unmatched						Matched					
	Treatment = 0		Treatment = 1		Difference		Treatment = 0		Treatment = 1		Difference	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	Δ	Sig.	n	Mean	n	Mean	Δ	Sig.
Panel A: matched majors sample (Treatment: <i>FACT</i>)												
Bachelor	236	0.78	192	0.69	-0.09	***	192	0.74	192	0.69	-0.05	
Abroad	236	0.37	192	0.26	-0.11	**	192	0.32	192	0.26	-0.06	
SchoolGrade	236	2.12	192	2.12	0.00		192	2.13	192	2.12	-0.01	
ParEducation	236	0.59	192	0.57	-0.02		192	0.58	192	0.57	-0.01	
ParAccounting	236	0.19	192	0.23	0.04		192	0.22	192	0.23	0.01	
TrainBusiness	236	0.07	192	0.15	0.08	***	192	0.08	192	0.15	0.07	*
TrainOth	236	0.06	192	0.05	-0.01		192	0.06	192	0.05	-0.01	
Female	236	0.57	192	0.38	-0.19	***	192	0.52	192	0.38	-0.14	***
Age	236	22.24	192	23.03	0.79	***	192	22.46	192	23.03	0.57	**
German	236	1.00	192	0.96	-0.04	**	192	0.99	192	0.96	-0.03	**
Agreeableness	236	3.65	192	3.55	-0.10	**	192	3.61	192	3.55	-0.06	
Extraversion	236	3.65	192	3.42	-0.23	***	192	3.56	192	3.42	-0.14	
Conscientiousness	236	3.70	192	3.78	0.08		192	3.71	192	3.78	0.07	
Neuroticism	236	2.89	192	2.77	-0.12		192	2.85	192	2.77	-0.08	
Openness to Experience	236	3.26	192	3.12	-0.14	**	192	3.21	192	3.12	-0.09	

Table 6:
continued

	Unmatched						Matched					
	Treatment = 0		Treatment = 1		Difference		Treatment = 0		Treatment = 1		Difference	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	Δ	Sig.	n	Mean	n	Mean	Δ	Sig.
Panel B: matched lectures sample (Treatment: <i>OthCourse</i>)												
Bachelor	372	0.77	56	0.52	-0.25	***	56	0.59	56	0.52	-0.07	
Abroad	372	0.31	56	0.39	0.08		56	0.36	56	0.39	0.03	
SchoolGrade	372	2.11	56	2.16	0.05		56	2.21	56	2.16	-0.05	
ParEducation	372	0.56	56	0.73	0.17	**	56	0.79	56	0.73	-0.06	
ParAccounting	372	0.20	56	0.27	0.07		56	0.30	56	0.27	-0.03	
TrainBusiness	372	0.11	56	0.07	-0.04		56	0.04	56	0.07	0.03	
TrainOth	372	0.05	56	0.05	0.00		56	0.05	56	0.05	0.00	
Female	372	0.48	56	0.54	0.06		56	0.55	56	0.54	-0.01	
Age	372	22.59	56	22.63	0.04		56	22.48	56	22.63	0.15	
German	372	0.98	56	0.96	-0.02		56	0.98	56	0.96	-0.02	

Table 7:
Descriptive Statistics

	Full Sample		Matched Majors		Matched Lectures	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Panel A: Academic, Demographic and Family Background						
Program						
Bachelor	316	73.8	275	71.6	62	55.4
Master	112	26.2	109	28.4	50	44.6
Abroad						
Yes	137	32.0	112	29.2	42	37.5
No	291	68.0	272	70.8	70	62.5
School Grade						
very good (≥ 1 ; < 1.5)	35	8.2	31	8.1	7	6.3
good (≥ 1.5 ; < 2.5)	291	68.0	262	68.2	73	65.2
sufficient (≥ 2.5 ; < 3.5)	102	28.8	91	23.7	32	28.5
ParEducation						
Yes	250	58.4	221	57.6	85	75.9
No	178	41.6	163	42.4	27	24.1
ParAccounting						
Yes	91	21.3	88	22.9	32	28.6
No	337	78.7	296	77.1	80	71.4
TrainBusiness						
Yes	44	10.3	44	11.45	6	5.4
No	384	89.7	340	88.5	106	94.6
TrainOth						
Yes	23	5.4	21	5.5	6	5.4
No	405	94.6	363	94.5	106	94.6
Gender						
Female	207	48.4	172	44.8	61	54.5
Male	221	51.6	212	55.2	51	45.5
Age						
Mean		22.6		22.7		22.6
Nationality						
German	420	98.1	376	97.9	109	97.3
Other	8	1.9	8	2.1	3	2.7
Panel B: Personality Traits (Mean values)						
Agreeableness		3.6		3.6		3.6
Extraversion		3.5		3.5		3.5
Conscientiousness		3.7		3.7		3.7
Neuroticism		2.8		2.8		3.1
Openness to Experience		3.2		3.2		3.1
Panel C: Course of Study						
Business & Management	272	63.6	264	68.8	78	69.6
Economics	15	3.5	15	3.9	9	8
Industrial Engineering	25	5.8	24	6.3	7	6.3
Health Economics	24	5.6	17	4.4	3	2.7
Sports Economics	67	15.7	47	12.2	10	8.9
Other	25	5.8	17	4.4	5	4.5

Table 7:
continued

	Full Sample		Matched Majors		Matched Lectures	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Panel D: Major Fields of Study						
Auditing	33	7.7	33	8.6	4	3.6
Financial Accounting	86	20.1	86	22.4	2	1.8
Management Accounting	98	22.9	98	25.5	19	17.0
Tax Accounting	66	15.4	66	17.2	6	5.4
Corporate Finance	94	22.0	94	24.5	9	8.0
<i>FACT</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>44.9</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>50.0</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>27.7</i>
Entrepreneurship	17	4.0	16	4.2	0	0.0
Innovation Management	42	9.8	35	9.1	8	7.1
International Management	102	23.8	92	24.0	42	37.5
Marketing	109	25.5	93	24.2	37	33.0
Organizational Theory	33	7.7	30	7.8	9	8.0
Human Resources	78	18.2	67	17.4	17	15.2
Operations Management & Logistics	64	15.0	59	15.4	18	16.1
Statistics / Econometrics	5	1.2	5	1.3	3	2.7
Strategic Management	70	16.4	63	16.4	14	12.5
Information Management	23	5.4	23	6.0	8	7.1
Education / Psychology / Sociology	22	5.1	16	4.2	9	8.0
Business Law	14	3.3	13	3.4	2	1.8
Other	51	11.9	44	11.5	18	16.1
Management	2	0.5	2	0.5	2	1.8
Microeconomics	2	0.5	2	0.5	0	0.0
Macroeconomics	6	1.4	6	1.6	2	1.8
CSR / Sustainability / Ecology / Ethics	6	1.4	4	1.0	0	0.0
Services	11	2.6	10	2.6	7	6.3
Sport and Health	11	2.6	8	2.1	2	1.8

Table 8:
Big Five Personality Traits for FACT and Non-FACT Students

	Group = 0		Group = 1		Difference	
	n	Mean	n	Mean		
Panel A: FACT						
Agreeableness	236	3.66	192	3.55	0.11	**
Extraversion	236	3.65	192	3.42	0.23	***
Consciousness	236	3.70	192	3.78	-0.08	
Neuroticism	236	2.89	192	2.77	0.12	
Openness to Experience	236	3.26	192	3.12	0.14	**
Panel B: Financial Accounting						
Agreeableness	342	3.62	86	3.55	0.08	
Extraversion	342	3.56	86	3.47	0.09	
Consciousness	342	3.70	86	3.86	-0.16	**
Neuroticism	342	2.88	86	2.67	0.21	**
Openness to Experience	342	3.22	86	3.09	0.13	*
Panel C: Management Accounting						
Agreeableness	330	3.60	98	3.63	-0.03	
Extraversion	330	3.59	98	3.40	0.19	*
Consciousness	330	3.73	98	3.77	-0.04	
Neuroticism	330	2.83	98	2.87	-0.04	
Openness to Experience	330	3.22	98	3.11	0.11	
Panel D: Tax Accounting						
Agreeableness	362	3.62	66	3.54	0.08	
Extraversion	362	3.60	66	3.26	0.34	***
Consciousness	362	3.70	66	3.91	-0.21	***
Neuroticism	362	2.87	66	2.66	0.21	*
Openness to Experience	362	3.23	66	3.01	0.22	***
Panel E: Corporate Finance						
Agreeableness	334	3.62	94	3.57	0.05	
Extraversion	334	3.55	94	3.51	0.04	
Consciousness	334	3.72	94	3.80	-0.09	
Neuroticism	334	2.90	94	2.62	0.28	***
Openness to Experience	334	3.18	94	3.24	-0.05	

Table 9:
Logit Regressions for the Choice of Major Fields of Study

The table shows the results of following ordered logit regression:

$$Major = \beta_0 + \sum Personality + \varepsilon$$

Major is a binary variable taking the value “1” if the respondent has chosen the major field study denoted in the column heading and “0” otherwise. All other variables are defined as described in the text. Coefficients are marginal effects. z-Statistics not reported. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1 %, 5 %, and 10 % level, respectively.

	FACT	Financial Accounting	Management Accounting	Tax Accounting	Corporate Finance
Panel A: Full Sample					
Agreeableness	-0.093 **	-0.050	0.021	-0.035	-0.028
Consciousness	0.076 *	0.070 *	0.032	0.099 ***	0.033
Neuroticism	-0.063 **	-0.053 **	0.000	-0.048 **	-0.073 ***
Extraversion	-0.078 ***	-0.026	-0.039	-0.058 ***	-0.036
Openness to Experience	-0.071 *	-0.039	-0.034	-0.064 **	0.027
N	428	428	428	428	428
Pseudo-R ²	0.038	0.028	0.012	0.082	0.027
Area under RoC curve	0.635	0.619	0.573	0.701	0.605
Panel B: Matched Majors Sample					
Agreeableness	-0.064	-0.039	0.047	-0.031	-0.011
Consciousness	0.063	0.068	0.023	0.104 ***	0.026
Neuroticism	-0.040	-0.045	0.017	-0.046 **	-0.066 **
Extraversion	-0.051	-0.012	-0.025	-0.055 **	-0.023
Openness to Experience	-0.051	-0.030	-0.021	-0.064 *	0.043
n	384	384	384	384	384
Pseudo-R ²	0.017	0.017	0.008	0.065	0.020
Area under RoC curve	0.591	0.591	0.561	0.677	0.593

Table 9:
continued

	FACT	Financial Accounting	Management Accounting	Tax Accounting	Corporate Finance
Panel C: Match Lectures Sample					
Agreeableness	-0.098	0.028	-0.031	0.032	-0.051
Consciousness	-0.010	-0.039	0.074	0.015	-0.058
Neuroticism	-0.000	-0.013	0.024	0.015	-0.060 *
Extraversion	-0.090 *	-0.034	-0.051	-0.001	-0.024
Openness to Experience	-0.054	-0.002	-0.026	-0.078 *	-0.043
n	112	112	112	112	112
Pseudo-R ²	0.049	0.100	0.041	0.121	0.132
Area under RoC curve	0.644	0.783	0.664	0.763	0.747

Table 10:
Interest in and Preferences for a First Job in FACT-related areas

Panel A: First Job (multiple answers allowed)						
	Full Sample		Matched Majors		Matched Lectures	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
<i>FACT</i>	273	63.8	259	67.4	62	55.4
Financial Accounting	106	24.8	104	27.1	14	12.5
Auditing	95	22.2	91	23.7	17	15.2
Financial Accounting / Auditing	151	35.3	145	37.8	24	21.4
Management Accounting	148	34.6	141	36.7	37	33.0
Tax Accounting	47	11.0	45	11.7	9	8.0
Tax Advisory	56	13.1	56	14.6	9	8.0
Tax Accounting / Advisory	72	16.8	70	18.2	13	11.6
Corporate Finance	107	25.0	103	26.8	19	17.0
Panel B: Preference to work in an Auditing, Tax Advisory or Consulting Firm						
	n	Mean	SD	1. Q	Med	2. Q
Full Sample	428	3.48	1.11	3.00	3.00	5.00
Matched Majors	384	3.52	1.11	3.00	3.00	5.00
Matched Lectures	112	3.17	.99	2.00	3.00	4.00

Table 11:
Big Five Personality Traits and Interest for a First Job in FACT-related areas

	Group = no		Group = yes		Difference	
	n	Mean	n	Mean		
Panel A: FACT						
Agreeableness	155	3.68	273	3.57	0.11	**
Extraversion	155	3.72	273	3.45	0.27	***
Consciousness	155	3.70	273	3.75	-0.05	
Neuroticism	155	2.88	273	2.81	0.07	
Openness to Experience	155	3.31	273	3.13	0.17	***
Panel B: Financial Accounting / Auditing						
Agreeableness	277	3.63	151	3.56	0.07	
Extraversion	277	3.60	151	3.44	0.17	*
Consciousness	277	3.73	151	3.74	0.00	
Neuroticism	277	2.88	151	2.76	0.12	
Openness to Experience	277	3.25	151	3.10	0.15	**
Panel C: Management Accounting						
Agreeableness	280	3.61	148	3.61	0.00	
Extraversion	280	3.64	148	3.37	0.27	***
Consciousness	280	3.72	148	3.77	-0.05	
Neuroticism	280	2.85	148	2.82	0.04	
Openness to Experience	280	3.26	148	3.08	0.18	***
Panel D: Tax Accounting / Advisory						
Agreeableness	356	3.62	72	3.56	0.05	
Extraversion	356	3.59	72	3.30	0.30	***
Consciousness	356	3.71	72	3.85	-0.14	**
Neuroticism	356	2.87	72	2.69	0.18	*
Openness to Experience	356	3.25	72	2.94	0.31	***
Panel E: Corporate Finance						
Agreeableness	321	3.64	107	3.51	0.14	**
Extraversion	321	3.53	107	3.59	-0.06	
Consciousness	321	3.72	107	3.77	-0.05	
Neuroticism	321	2.90	107	2.65	0.25	***
Openness to Experience	321	3.17	107	3.28	-0.11	

Table 12:
Differences in Big Five Personality Traits for Inhouse and External Jobs

	Inhouse		External		Difference	
	n	Mean	n	Mean		
Panel A: Financial Accounting (Inhouse) / Auditing (External)						
Agreeableness	56	3.67	95	3.50	0.17	**
Extraversion	56	3.46	95	3.42	0.04	
Conscientiousness	56	3.67	95	3.78	-0.10	
Neuroticism	56	2.89	95	2.69	0.21	
Openness to Experience	56	3.05	95	3.12	-0.07	
Panel B: Tax Accounting (Inhouse) / Advisory (External)						
Agreeableness	16	3.60	56	3.55	0.05	
Extraversion	16	3.27	56	3.31	-0.04	
Conscientiousness	16	3.52	56	3.95	-0.43	***
Neuroticism	16	2.81	56	2.65	0.16	
Openness to Experience	16	2.99	56	2.93	0.06	

Table 13:*Preference for a First Job in an Accounting, Auditing, Tax Advisory or Consulting Firm*

The table shows the results of following ordered logit regression:

$$Start = \sum \alpha + \beta_1 \cdot FACT + \beta_2 \cdot OthCourse + \sum Personality + \varepsilon$$

Start is an ordinal variable indicating the respondent's preference to start her career in an auditing, tax advisory or consulting firm rated on a scale from 1 ("very unlikely") to 5 ("very likely"). All other variables are defined as described in the text. Coefficients are odds ratios. z-Statistics not reported. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1 %, 5 %, and 10 % level, respectively.

	Full Sample	Matched Major	Matched Lectures
FACT	1.190 ***	1.252 ***	1.207 ***
OthCourse	-0.364	-0.351	-0.146
Agreeableness	-0.526 ***	-0.513 ***	-0.502
Consciousness	0.265	0.266	-0.037
Neuroticism	-0.320 ***	-0.381 ***	-0.292
Extraversion	-0.135	-0.161	-0.086
Openness to Experience	-0.268 *	-0.240	-0.253
Constant 1	-4.109 ***	-4.219 ***	-4.817 **
Constant 2	-2.315 **	-2.363 *	-2.595
Constant 3	-1.526	-1.585	-1.788
n	428	384	112
Pseudo-R ²	0.069	0.072	0.054

Table 14:
Intentions to Pursue a Professional Examination

Panel A: Interest in Pursuing a Professional Examination						
	Full Sample		Matched Majors		Matched Lectures	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Auditor	39	9.1	38	9.9	3	2.7
Tax Advisor	43	10.0	42	10.9	6	5.4
Any	56	13.1	55	14.3	8	7.1

Panel B: Preference to Pursue the Auditor Examination						
	n	Mean	SD	1. Q	Med	3. Q
Full Sample	424	1.72	1.07	1.00	1.00	2.00
Matched Majors	381	1.77	1.09	1.00	1.00	2.00
Matched Lectures	112	1.47	0.83	1.00	1.00	1.00

Panel B: Preference to Pursue the Tax Advisor Examination						
	n	Mean	SD	1. Q	Med	3. Q
Full Sample	424	1.72	1.15	1.00	1.00	2.00
Matched Majors	381	1.78	1.18	1.00	1.00	2.00
Matched Lectures	111	1.46	0.92	1.00	1.00	2.00

Table 15:
Big Five Personality Traits and the Intention to Pursue a Professional Examination

	Group = 0		Group = 1		Difference	
	n	Mean	n	Mean		
Panel A: Any						
Agreeableness	372	3.61	56	3.56	0.05	
Extraversion	372	3.58	56	3.33	0.25	**
Conscientiousness	372	3.71	56	3.92	-0.21	***
Neuroticism	372	2.88	56	2.57	0.31	***
Openness to Experience	372	3.22	56	3.03	0.19	**
Panel B: Auditor						
Agreeableness	389	3.61	39	3.54	0.07	
Extraversion	389	3.56	39	3.38	0.18	
Conscientiousness	389	3.71	39	3.98	-0.27	***
Neuroticism	389	2.87	39	2.49	0.38	***
Openness to Experience	389	3.21	39	3.02	0.19	*
Panel C: Tax Advisor						
Agreeableness	385	3.61	43	3.62	-0.01	
Extraversion	385	3.57	43	3.28	0.30	**
Conscientiousness	385	3.72	43	3.90	-0.19	**
Neuroticism	385	2.86	43	2.66	0.20	
Openness to Experience	385	3.22	43	2.97	0.26	**
Panel D: Tax Advisor (Group = 0) / Auditor (Group = 1)						
Agreeableness	17	3.61	13	3.39	0.22	
Extraversion	17	3.22	13	3.50	-0.28	
Conscientiousness	17	3.77	13	3.96	-0.18	
Neuroticism	17	2.74	13	2.25	0.49	
Openness to Experience	17	3.07	13	3.26	-0.20	

Table 16:
Preference for Pursuing a Professional Examination

The table shows the results of following ordered logit regression:

$$Examination = \sum \alpha + \beta_1 \cdot FACT + \beta_2 \cdot OthCourse + \sum Personality + \varepsilon$$

Examination is either the auditor (Panel A) or tax advisor examination (Panel B) rated on a scale from 1 (“very unlikely”) to 5 (“very likely”). All other variables are defined as described in the text. Coefficients are odds ratios. z-Statistic not reported. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1 %, 5 %, and 10 % level, respectively.

	Full Sample	Matched Major	Matched Lectures
Panel A: Audit Examination			
FACT	1.156 ***	1.053 ***	0.802
OthCourse	-1.108 ***	-1.291 ***	-1.429 ***
Agreeableness	-0.242	-0.281	-0.302
Consciousness	0.149	0.140	-0.698
Neuroticism	-0.291 **	-0.257 *	-0.130
Extraversion	-0.114	-0.071	0.229
Openness to Experience	0.018	-0.047	0.802
Constant 1	-0.591	-0.836	0.038
Constant 2	0.200	-0.031	-2.554
Constant 3	1.535	1.265	-1.742
Constant 4	2.909 **	2.642 *	0.270
n	424	381	112
Pseudo-R ²	0.063	0.060	0.080
Panel B: Tax Examination			
FACT	1.459 ***	1.364 ***	1.405 ***
OthCourse	-0.926 **	-1.092 ***	-1.100 **
Agreeableness	-0.297	-0.311	0.174
Consciousness	0.270	0.238	-0.618
Neuroticism	-0.137	-0.104	0.004
Extraversion	-0.049	-0.019	0.439
Openness to Experience	-0.204	-0.267	-0.712 *
Constant 1	-0.108	-0.364	-1.286
Constant 2	0.708	0.423	-0.265
Constant 3	1.849	1.557	0.986
Constant 4	2.508 *	2.218	1.566
n	424	381	111
Pseudo-R ²	0.080	0.073	0.094