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Quality and quantity of accounting students and the stereotypical accountant: Is there a relationship?

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Abstract

Concern regarding both quality and quantity of accounting students has been expressed in the public accounting profession. Academic researchers have also questioned the quality of accounting students. Little information appears to be available to high school students who are selecting college majors, which causes these individuals to address other sources for help in career choices. One of the sources to which these students may look is the stereotypical accountant. The stereotypical accountant's image is perpetuated in short stories, novels, plays, films, and television programs. These sources of the accountant's stereotype were surveyed in order to determine their representations of the accountant. The accountant's image as portrayed in these sources was quite negative. A study was developed based on the results of the above analysis in order to ascertain the stereotypical image of accountants currently held by

college freshmen. The accountant's stereotype held by this group was not overwhelmingly negative. However, when compared to three other occupational groups (attorney, banker, and marketing manager), the accountant was negatively rated in several aspects. This unfavorable stereotype may result in deterring higher quality students from majoring in accounting.



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