

## Summary of Paper: [Diversity and the Evaluation of Talent in the Accounting Profession: The Enigma of Merit](#)

### **What is this Study About?**

This study investigates how the concept of "merit" is understood and applied within accounting firms and its impact on diversity efforts. The researchers explore the dual nature of merit, encompassing both technical competencies and cultural notions of social fit, and how these interpretations influence performance evaluations and career progression.

### **What are the major findings of the study?**

Results reveal that the traditional understanding of merit in accounting firms often favors individuals who fit the existing elite group's profile. This dual aspect of merit, including both technical skills and cultural compatibility, tends to perpetuate inequality by valuing those who align with established norms over those from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, this narrow interpretation of merit can hinder diversity efforts, as it influences how work is allocated, how individuals are socialized within the firm, and how promotion and evaluation practices are conducted.

### **Why is the study important?**

It illuminates the unintended consequences of current meritocratic practices on diversity efforts within accounting firms. By revealing how deep-seated beliefs about merit can perpetuate exclusion, the study provides a crucial understanding of why diversity initiatives may be slow to effect change. This insight is vital for regulators, firms, and stakeholders aiming to create more inclusive workplaces. The findings suggest that rethinking and broadening the concept of merit, alongside more transparent work allocation and evaluation processes, can help accelerate the career progression of underrepresented groups, thus enhancing both recruitment and retention efforts.