

The Meritocracy Debate

Sociology

The case for merit-based allocation, and the sociological case against it.

The case for

- Talent matched to demanding roles
- Rewards effort rather than birth
- Open competition, formal rules
- Mobility as the legitimating promise
- Credentials as a check on nepotism

The case against

- Merit is measured by the advantaged
- Preparation is bought, not distributed
- Justifies inequality it did not create
- Failure becomes a personal verdict
- Young coined it as a satire, in 1958

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

The sociological question is not whether merit exists but who defines it and what its recognition then licenses.

Educational reference. Michael Young's *The Rise of the Meritocracy* was written as a dystopia, not a proposal.