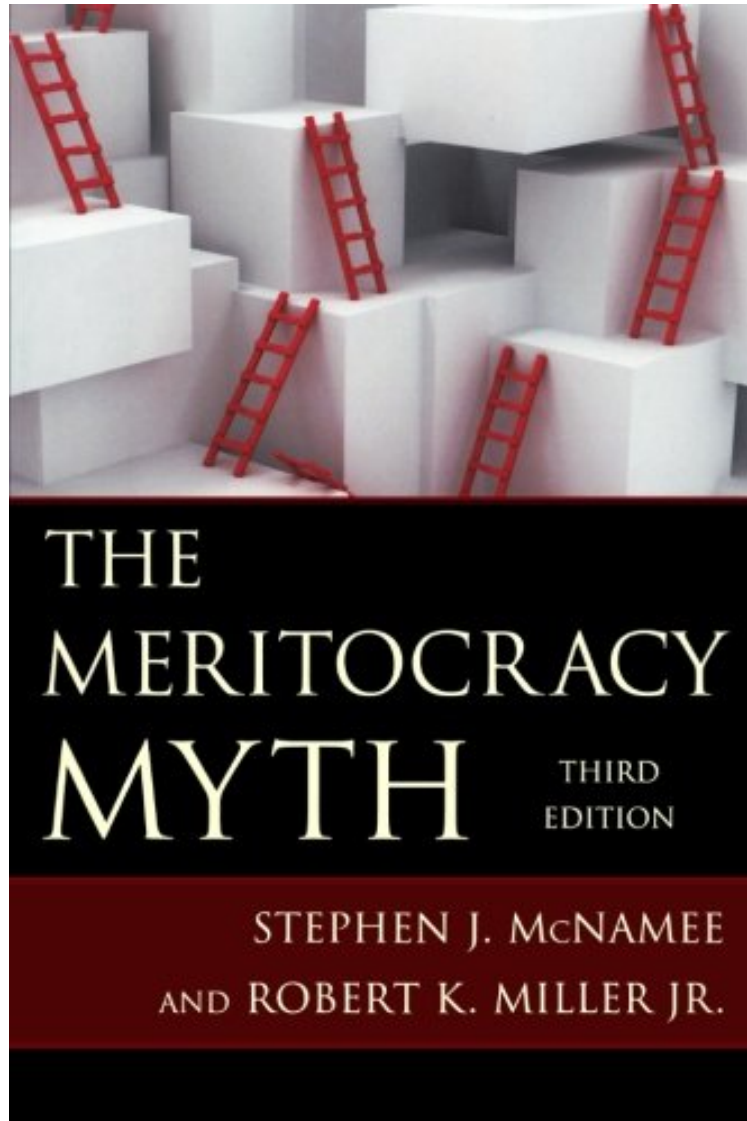


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## The Meritocracy Myth

*Stephen J. McNamee, Robert K. Miller Jr.*  
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**Stephen J. McNamee, Robert K. Miller Jr. : The Meritocracy Myth** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Meritocracy Myth:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. in some cases personal failings and bad choices have put people at a disadvantageBy Binnie1This is an eye-opening read. There is an informative and quite interesting explanation about the origins of the American Dream in chapter one. The rest of the chapters expose the widely-held lie that personal failings and a culture of poverty are the only reasons for others' lack of success. Yes, in some cases personal failings and bad choices have put people at a disadvantage. Merit is a very important factor and it cannot be disregarded, but

the author does an amazing job of showing how other factors contribute to advantages that simply are not merit-based. I watched a segment this morning on CBS Morning News with the author of, *Chaos Monkeys*. One of the first statements he made referenced the fact that you cannot believe the success in Silicon Valley is all merit-based. I highly recommend the purchase of *The Meritocracy Myth*. It is informative and easy read. The second recommendation is the book, *Pedigree*. It is a must-read, too. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Honest and definitive account. By tapehead/2 If you are only going to read one sociology book in your life, this should be it. If you still have illusions about meritocracy it will help you understand what is going on before it is too late. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Thought provoking book, that is timely for this period ... By Caryl J Hallberg Thought provoking book, that is timely for this period of American history. Has me thinking about ideologies in a brand new way. Well written and interesting.

*The Meritocracy Myth* challenges the widely held American belief in meritocracy—that people get out of the system what they put into it based on individual merit. The third edition has been revised and streamlined, with fresh examples and updated statistical information throughout. Chapters eight and nine have been combined into a comprehensive chapter about discrimination as a non-merit barrier to upward mobility. The book also features a new section on “The Great Recession.” *The Meritocracy Myth* examines talent, attitude, work ethic, and character as elements of merit, and evaluates the effect of non-merit factors such as social status, race, heritage, and wealth on meritocracy. A compelling book on an often-overlooked topic, *The Meritocracy Myth* has become a classroom classic to introduce students to this provocative topic.

*The Meritocracy Myth* exposes the deceptive American rhetoric that hard work, talent and virtue are all that is necessary to make it to the top. With inequalities at the core of sociology, *The Meritocracy Myth* makes a valuable contribution to the field by closely examining the contributing mechanisms that perpetuate class disparities. For sociology students, reading *The Meritocracy Myth* is a great application of important sociological concepts and theories to explain how all of our lives are influenced by socio-economic class arrangements. The third edition is as relevant as ever in highlighting the importance of cultural myths that justify the exceedingly inequitable distribution of wealth in our modern society. (Beth Davison, Appalachian State University) In the land of opportunity, hard work and playing by the rules pays off and merit is rewarded by success. The wide-awake sociology of McNamee and Miller shines the bright light of reality on the myth to show that birth counts more and education less, and while luck is important, no one can count on it and those who play by the rules often benefit least. (Paul Durrenberger, emeritus professor of anthropology, Pennsylvania State University) McNamee and Miller explain that meritocracy is a myth and that there is no substitute for starting in advance of others in life, and that being female or a minority definitely makes you start behind. In this third edition, they lay out proof while streamlining their narrative. They examine the origins of the American dream, analyze the case for a merit-based system, and discuss the issue of inheritance (the “silver spoon”). They then go into the truth: social and cultural capital, education and mobility, and the luck factor count more than simply hard work. They describe other factors, such as the decline of self-employment and the ascent of corporations, racism, and sexism. They close with the observation that meritocracy is growing more and more into being a myth as inequality grows in the twenty-first century. (Book News, Inc.) Revised and updated third edition presents a challenge to the widely held American belief in meritocracy and considers the effect of nonmerit factors such as social status, race, heritage, and wealth of upward mobility. Discusses the American dream... racism, sexism, and other forms of inequality, and growing inequality in the twenty-first century. (Journal of Economic Literature) About the Author Stephen J. McNamee is interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. He is the recipient of the University of North Carolina Wilmington Distinguished Faculty Scholar Award, The University of North Carolina Wilmington Distinguished Teaching Professorship Award, and the University of North Carolina System Board of Governors Teaching Award. Robert K. Miller, Jr. (1948–2015) was professor emeritus of sociology at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. He published widely on the topic of social and economic inequality and was coeditor with Stephen J. McNamee of *Inheritance and Wealth in America*.