

The impact of family influences



Both Wes Moores were given opportunities at one point in the book, but the author Wes took full advantage of his positive opportunities and his exposure to education. The other Wes wasted opportunities and is sitting in a prison cell right now, partly because of his brother Tony's influence. The other Wes has negative family influences that pushed him in the opposite direction. Positive opportunities family members provided them exposed the differences between the author Wes and the other Wes Moore.

Family is a big contributor to opportunity in the Author Wes Moore says, about people leading him in the right direction "...I found myself surrounded by people—starting with my mom, grandparents, uncles, and aunts, and leading to a string of wonderful role models and mentors—who kept pushing me [...] to see the boundless possibilities of the wider world and the unexplored possibilities within myself." The author Wes Moore has a strong support system from his family giving him more opportunities leading to his success. According to the book *Growing Up In Poverty: Findings From Young Lives*, "Cognitive achievement is further related to parental education, and in three of the countries to maternal psychosocial 'skills.'" The author Wes had a mother who had opportunities for higher education and it gave opportunities. The other Wes Moore lacked this support.

Family context and background influences the author Wes says, "We make decisions based on what we see in that limited world and follow the only models available." This explains how family helped him choose to take advantage of his opportunities. When the author Wes Moore decides to not play basketball in college, he made that decision based on the influence of his uncle. He had two opportunities at the time, but choosing education had

a more positive outcome. According to *Growing Up In Poverty: Findings From Young Lives*, “ Beyond outcomes such as educational achievement, recently there has been conceptual discussion and empirical research on the social opportunities children have and how these are related to their individual and family backgrounds.” His uncle trying to push him towards the education caused author Wes to gain more opportunities and skills. The other Wes lacked any type of role model or anyone pushing him in the right direction; led him into a world with fewer opportunities and even danger. The other Wes did not have social skills whenever the boy punched him because he automatically went and got a weapon. Whenever author Wes was in the situation with the people throwing rocks at him, he handled it in a poise and calm way. Having these social skills gave the author Wes gave him an advantage.

Believing you are a product of your environment diminishes hope and opportunities of mental growth. The other Wes buys into his belief that he is a product of his environment. When other Wes was talking to author Wes in the prison he said, “ From everything you told me, both of us did some pretty wrong stuff when we were younger. And both of us had second chances. But if the situation or the context where you make the decisions don’t change, then second chances don’t meant too much, huh?” The other Wes is a product of his environment and did not have much support compared to the author Wes meaning he had fewer opportunities. He is saying even if he made a different choice the other Wes still could not have received a different outcome. In the book *Growing Up In Poverty: Findings From Young Lives*, For children growing up in poverty, “ Children’s life chances in

education, health, and well-being are closely bound up with, and shaped by, the situation of their households, and their socio-cultural environment, as well as the unequal distribution of power, wealth, and opportunities in societies.” The other Wes had gone through so much adversity his choices were defined on him knowing nothing good was coming out of his decisions anyway. When the other Wes has opportunities presented to him he believed his decisions would not change his current circumstance.

There were Educational opportunities presented to the parents as well. When the other Wes Moores mother lost her opportunity to go to college “ Mary realized the letter effectively closed the door on her college aspirations. She had already completed sixteen hours of college credits and would get no closer toward graduation.” It was an opportunity that was taken from her to finish her education. So, the other Wes didn’t finish high school because his mother quit college. This was another opportunity the other Wes wasted because of his lack of support. Since he did not have anyone to look up to, he started wasting his education opportunities. Constantly going in and out of jail, the other Wes never finished high school. In *Growing Up In Poverty: Finding From Young Lives*, we find evidence that both parental SES and the mother’s psychosocial skills are positively associated with children’s cognitive and psychosocial skills across all countries, and that the mother’s psychosocial skills can partly explain the link between parental SES and the child’s psychosocial skills.” If his mother didn’t quit school and found another way to pay for it, the other Wes would have had a role model to look up to, and he would have had more opportunities given to him like the Author Wes Moore did. The successful author Wes Moore was given more possibilities

than the other Wes because Wes' family mainly, his mother, was naturally a big contributor to his opportunities. His mother gave him a better education by sending author Wes to private school. She may have known to do this based on her having completed her own education. His uncle told him to focus more on education than basketball. Wes' mother made the best choice by sending him to military school instilling discipline and hard work into him.

Both of the Wes Moores had opportunities, but one had role models and family to support and mold his decision making. In order for the other Wes not to waste opportunities he would have to see people doing the right things like the author did so he could know what was right and wrong. The other Wes wasted opportunities, not only because he is a product of his environment, but he had nobody to see doing the right things. If his brother Tony wasn't a hypocrite and sold drugs telling his brother not to sell them. Tony doing the opposite of what he was preaching to his brother, the other Wes sold drugs anyway. The author Wes has so much support from his family and friends they steered in him not only the direction of success, but in every opportunity to get the right outcome.