

A Hope in the UNSEEN

RON SUSKIND

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A Sociological Perspective

German sociologist Max Weber described the economic opportunities one has as a result of being born into any given social class as “life-chances.” What are the life-chances of someone born into poverty? The middle class? The upper class? What would attending a school with old or antiquated computer equipment (or no equipment) do to one’s life-chances?

1. African American women make up approximately 65 percent of all single-parent households. What impact do you think that has on the life-chances of the children of those households?
2. African American women make approximately 35 cents less per dollar than white males doing the same job. What impact would this have on the opportunity for their children to succeed in school?
3. Some would argue that the life-chances presented to them are only a small option of what success an individual can achieve. Do you agree or disagree with this sentiment?
4. Some would argue that programs such as affirmative action and Head Start are merely handouts to minorities and/or poor people. As such, these affirmative action programs make some people dependent on these programs and create what sociologists call the “cycle of poverty.” Do you agree or disagree with these sentiments?
5. Sociologists argue that the number one indicator of educational success or achievement is familial involvement. After reading “A Hope in the Unseen,” discuss Cedric’s familial involvement and compare it to your own educational upbringing.