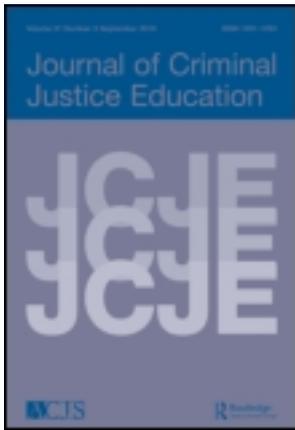


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"The Wire," William Julius Wilson, and the Three Sobotkas: Conceptually Integrating "Season 2: The Port" into a Macro-Level Undergraduate Communities and Crime Course

Ralph B. Taylor and Jillian L. Eidson

A challenge in any undergraduate communities and crime course is helping students understand how macro-level context affects the lives of individuals. This article describes one approach based on three characters in Season 2 ("The Port") of "The Wire." A multi-layered framework is outlined which prominently features William Julius Wilson's unemployment thesis. Data sources for illustrating how different parts of the model apply to the surrounding region and neighborhoods close to the port are noted. The narrative arcs for three central characters in Season 2 are described and each is connected to Wilson's thesis. Even though in-class screening time was limited, students' written work and questionnaire responses suggested that the material clarified key concepts. The approach described here is just one approach of the many which are feasible for a macro-level communities and crime course, or for integrating "The Wire" into criminal justice or criminology courses.

This article addresses two intersecting pedagogical themes: the challenge of illustrating theoretical linkages and their relevance in a large, undergraduate communities and crime course; and how to tap the instructional potential of Season 2 ("The Port") of David Simon's five-season HBO series "The Wire" (TWS2). The approach described here has the following features: it develops a multi-layered conceptual framework that relies substantially on Wilson's (1996) systemic unemployment model; it focuses on three key characters in TWS2 who illustrate the model in different ways; it works on competencies acquisition by asking students to interpret quantitative data about crime and structural conditions; it devotes limited in-class screening time to showing episodes; and it asks students to integrate the conceptual framework, quantitative data, and key choices made by one of the three characters from the series, in a short writing assignment.

After outlining key features of the approach, students' reactions to the materials in their papers and in questionnaire responses are both described. This paper seeks to make the case that TWS2 has substantial pedagogical value for a course of this type. Of course, it is also true that a focus on another season of "The Wire," or on all five seasons, also can be a powerful teaching tool for a course of this type. As will be seen below, "The Wire" already has been used in a number of different ways in college courses.

Why "The Wire"? In a Communities and Crime Course?

Many criminology or criminal justice programs offer courses addressing meso-level crime dynamics at the city or community levels. Various these courses might be called ecology of crime, communities and crime, geographies of crime and justice, urban crime patterns, or something closely related. Although the labels may vary, the broad conceptual questions are the same. What structural and cultural features at the community level, or higher, connect to offending rates, delinquency rates, victimization rates, or various reported crime rates, and why?

In teaching courses like the above, the instructor has two meta-choices: sociological holism, or methodological individualism. With the former, the students are asked to consider the "sociological holist view [that] social structure operates mechanically and naturalistically over the heads of individual actors" (Porpora, 1989, p. 198). Here, macro-level inputs → macro-level outputs. Messner and Rosenfeld's (2000) *Crime and the American Dream* text typifies this approach. The focus is on helping undergraduates grasp structural dynamics and their implications for both individuals and society.

This approach has its pedagogical challenges. One is that with a macro_{inputs} → macro_{outputs} approach, criminal justice or criminology students easily stray into breezy generalities about "the unemployed" or "inner city neighborhoods," but simultaneously have difficulty translating those concepts and dynamics into specific forces on specific individuals.¹

The other choice is methodological individualism (Coleman, 1990; Liska, 1990). Here, the instructor explains how the macro-level dynamics are undergirded by macro_{inputs} → micro_{inputs} → micro_{outputs} → macro_{outputs} connections. The first part of this, how context affects individuals (macro_{inputs} → micro_{inputs}), is theoretically crucial. A lack of clear description by criminological theory generally about how these macro → micro dynamics operate (Wikstrom, 2004) contributes to the challenge of clear explanation.

The first author, following this second approach, has seen undergraduates struggle to grasp these macro → micro connections. Students often revert to simplified, individual-level stimulus-response models: "If someone has to feed his family, and can't get a job, of course he's going to do what he's got to do, and rob or sell drugs."

1. Students with more background in sociology may fare better.

Consequently, in a course where community crime or offending rates were the outcomes of interest, TWS2 was considered as a pedagogical vehicle to address these difficulties. It was hoped that if situated in the proper theoretical frame, it might help students grasp these crucial macro→micro theoretical connections, or, at least, help students understand the individual-level implications of social forces “operating over the heads of individual actors.”

Organization

The next section provides background on the content covered in “The Wire” itself, and the ways it has been used in college courses. Then, a multilayered conceptual framework for understanding communities and crime is described. Next, three key characters in Season 2 who illustrate these conceptual dynamics in different ways are described, and key episodes noted. Ways each narrative arc connects with a central portion of the theoretical frame are highlighted. Brief excerpts from student papers, and responses to anonymous questionnaires, suggest students were able to see how these characters illustrated key theoretical points. A closing comment advocates for careful assessments of criminology or criminal justice courses using this material, and acknowledges the limitations of this approach.

“The Wire”

Brief Background

The current work reports on the use of Season 2, “The Port,” of “The Wire,” HBO’s sprawling Dickensian (Klein, 2009) five-season crime drama set in Baltimore City (MD) (Alvarez, 2009; HBO, 2011; Potter & Marshall, 2010).² The series contextualizes and updates the narrative of teen DeAndre McCullough and fellow West Baltimore friends and relatives, described earlier by Simon and Burns (1997) in their year-long factual narrative and subsequent six-part 2000 HBO mini-series “The Corner.” In “The Wire,” the canvas is expanded to US cities, the global economy, and public policy but most of the action still takes place in Baltimore City.

It is clear from Simon’s own comments that “The Wire” was intended to address broad, structural themes related to crime and American urban society.

Slate: If you had to sum up what The Wire is about, what would it be?

Simon: Thematically, it’s about the very simple idea that, in this Postmodern world of ours, human beings—all of us—are worth less. We’re worth less every day, despite the fact that some of us are achieving more and

2. One episode in Season 5 is (ironically?) titled “The Dickensian Aspects.” Templeton, a reporter at the local paper, is encouraged by his editors to write about “the Dickensian aspects” of homelessness. See Klein (2009).

more. It's the triumph of capitalism . . . Whether you're a corner boy in West Baltimore, or a cop who knows his beat, or an Eastern European brought here for sex, your life is worth less. It's the triumph of capitalism over human value. This country has embraced the idea that this is a viable domestic policy. It is. It's viable for the few. (O'Rourke, 2006)

[Simon:] Every single moment on the planet, from here on out, human beings are worth less. We are in a post-industrial age. We don't need as many of us as we once did. So, if the first season was about devaluing the cops who knew their beats and the corner boys slinging drugs, then the second was about devaluing the longshoremen and their labor. (Talbot, 2007, p. 150)

Each season of "The Wire" explored a specific theme. Crime was seen both through the eyes of the criminals and the police. Season 1 described a police investigation of a West Baltimore drug crew that got unplugged because the money trail led to powerful politicians. Season 2 was about unemployment and de-unionization at the Port of Baltimore on the city's east side. Season 3 returned to West Baltimore chronicling both a mayoral race and efforts by a district commander to treat drugs as a public health problem rather than a criminal justice problem. Season 4 followed a former police officer into a city middle school in West Baltimore and centered on the lives of four male students. Season 5 portrayed the stresses on the local daily newspaper.

"The Wire" Goes to College

The approach to "The Wire" described here is just one of many. College instructors in a variety of disciplines have used the "The Wire's" episodes to illustrate core concepts while providing students with grippingly realistic illustrations of course subject matter. Appendix A lists over two dozen courses which focus on the series. Many more courses may use "The Wire" for illustration but not organize around it.

In sociology, William Julius Wilson, whose conceptual frame is pivotal to the approach taken here and which is outlined further below, saw a unique opportunity to use the show in his classroom to engage his students: "The show captures a reality that corroborates points I make in my work, such as the transformation of the inner city" (Massari, 2010). Thus, Harvard University, Wilson's institution, was one of the first academic settings to use the series for instructional purposes.

Institutions of higher education throughout the USA and in other countries followed suit and quickly embraced the show as a learning tool (Bennett, 2010; Moore, 2009). Courses centered on "The Wire" are offered in a wide array of academic departments including sociology, African-American studies, and film studies as well as public health, rhetoric, philosophy, and business.

Accompanying the range of disciplinary approaches to "The Wire" in college courses is a range in themes highlighted. Commonly explored themes include economic, cultural, social, and political forces that shape urban interactions,

inequality, and other contemporary societal ills such as drug use and violence. Some instructors, however, have used the episodes to encourage discussion about more diverse topics such as responsibility, public health, illegal economies, how the law works, and the discretion of authority figures. To explore these areas, courses have picked apart plot lines and characters central to certain seasons. For example, West Virginia University's sociology course "Cities and Urban Life" followed the show's third and fourth seasons to explore community decline and its connection to the failure of social institutions such as "schools, police and the media" (Woldoff, 2011, p. 1). Some classes required students to view the entire series (Gumbhir, 2011).

Finally, courses using "The Wire" have applied a range of conceptual orientations to guide students' approach to the content. English and film studies courses regularly have approached "The Wire" as a contemporary masterpiece detailing social, ethical, and political realities in a manner similar to Dickens, Balzac, and Sophocles (University of Alberta, n.d.; Williams, 2010). Criminal justice and sociology instructors linked the show to prominent scholarly frameworks of Wilson (1996), Anderson (2000), Venkatesh (1997, 2008) and the show's creator David Simon (Simon & Burns, 1997). Law courses have employed episodes as a lens for viewing and debating controversial legal issues. One public health course taught at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, where the show was filmed, used episodes to set the stage for a series of guest lectures from area policy-makers (De Nike, 2010; Walker, 2010).

There seem to be few limits to how "The Wire" can be used to organize college courses in numerous disciplines. Nevertheless, to these authors' knowledge, despite "The Wire's" widespread adoption in college/university courses, systematic evaluations of its pedagogical value have not yet appeared.

Season 2

The conceptual and content approach taken here focused solely on TWS2. When David Simon was asked about TWS2 he responded: "One of our five themes was the death of work and the death of the union-era middle class. So, we thought, do we go to the port? Do we go to GM? Do we go to Beth [lehem] Steel?" (O'Rourke, 2006).

Ultimately, in part because of the cooperation offered by the Maryland Port Authority, executive producers David Simon, Robert F. Colesberry, and co-executive producer Ed Burns settled on depicting the plight of dock workers for Season 2. The opening Season 2 episode (14) introduced key characters and themes to be followed during the season.

Conceptual Framing

In a university-level criminal justice or criminology course, students require exposure to a theoretical model if they are to place what they see in "The

Wire” episodes within a broader conceptual or policy context. In the communities and crime course described here, a three part, multilayered framework was developed with accompanying readings and exercises over the course of the semester. The framework provided ways for students to organize connections seen between macro-level aspects of structure and culture, and the attitudes and behaviors of key individuals seen in various clips.

The framework has three concentric rings: the international crime context; changes in US metropolitan areas in the later half of the twentieth century; and neighborhood impacts of chronic under- or unemployment. Each of these elements of the framework is sketched below. Because the course in question placed a heavy emphasis on competencies acquisition, students applied key conceptual ideas from each ring of the framework to tabular or graphical or geographic data display.

International

Season 2’s lead murder, the floater picked up by McNulty in the first episode of the season and later connected to the 12 dead prostitutes discovered in a shipping container on the docks, also in the same episode, invoked the international crime context. The responsible criminal organizations, including “The Greek” and his affiliates, were responsible not only for human trafficking but also drug running and other smuggling, thereby contributing in multiple ways to the crime-related miseries in Baltimore and elsewhere in the USA.

In the class, since the trafficked women were from Ukraine, students read about international human trafficking in Eastern Europe (Hughes & Denisova, 2003) and Moldova (Finnegan, 2008). These articles portray the organizational dynamics of trafficking, including the roles of law enforcement, as well as the motivations and expectations of those trafficked.

To graphically portray international economic and violence differences associated with the trafficking of women, students constructed a bivariate scatterplot linking country-level per capita income and murder rates using Rosling’s (2011) “Gapminder World.” In these data, high violence and low income levels of Eastern European countries like Moldova, referenced in the Finnegan (2008) article, stand out in contrast to conditions in more economically developed countries. Students reflected in a short paper on the economic and violence differentials between Moldova and the USA and the implications for international human trafficking.

Domestic Part I: Metropolitan Areas

Students can understand better what is happening in urban neighborhoods experiencing chronically high unemployment at the beginning of the twenty-first century if they consider those locations in the context of changes in metropolitan areas in the USA starting in the early part of the twentieth

century. For conceptual framing, just a few pages from McKenzie's (1933/1967, pp. 3-7, 54-58, 173-190) seminal work on metropolitan communities were used. He carefully described how changing transportation networks, space requirements, and land economics all contributed to the deconcentration of manufacturing jobs, and thus the centrifugal movement of metropolitan populations. Implications for increasing unemployment and poverty in the city compared to the surrounding counties were described.

Students completed a short competencies assignment in which they used the *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics* to gather robbery data, and joined that with 2000 data on unemployment for Baltimore City and surrounding counties in metropolitan areas throughout the state. They reflected on what the differentials illustrated about connections between community structure and crime. Additional data sources for instructors willing to engage in the necessary data preparation include using either SimplyMap (<http://www.geographicresearch.com/simplifymap/>), or the 1970-2000 "Neighborhood Change Database" census tract-level file (Tatian, 2002) available from Geolytics.com, or the 1990 or 2000 census using the census website factfinder.census.gov.

Domestic Part II: Urban Neighborhoods and Wilson

In order to grasp the wider structural and cultural factors that drive modern urban crime rates, students read Chapters 2 and 3 of Wilson's (1996) *When Work Disappears*. Others already have connected this work with "The Wire" (Chaddha & Wilson, in press; Warren, in press), but not with an exclusive focus on Season 2.

Wilson's (1996) Chapter 2 described structural changes taking place in African-American neighborhoods in urban cores of large cities from the 1960s through the 1990s. Key topics introduced include de-industrialization and the decline of manufacturing, de-unionization, increasing income inequality, the rise of the low-paying urban service economy, spatial de-concentration of good-paying manufacturing jobs for those with less than a college education, the rise of persistent high unemployment rates, depopulation, institutional de-investment, and increasing poverty due to these changes along with selective outmigration.

Chapter 3 described the accompanying and subsequent cultural changes, i.e. shifts in attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors which Wilson (1996, p. 52) calls "ghetto-related" behaviors. These can, in part, be seen as "adaptations to ... persistent joblessness" (Wilson, 1996, p. 53). Adaptations include the rise of involvement in informal and illegal economies, the rise of drug activities which both deepen and reflect increasing problems of social organization in these neighborhoods, decreasing attachment to the formal and legal economies, increasing attachment to the illegal economy, and eroding views about personal efficacy. These shifts are not "unrelated to the broader structure of opportunities and constraints that have evolved over time" (Wilson, 1996,

p. 55). In other words, the effects on communities, households and individuals are, to a significant extent, linked to the broader structural shifts.³

Some students found it challenging to grasp that these structural changes led to cultural changes which in turn led to increased crime and criminal involvement. Many oversimplified Wilson's sophisticated argument. For example, one student wrote "it is only through severe desperation that Nick is willing to resort to crime to feed his family." It is not surprising that students find the connections between structure, culture, and crime outcomes hard to grasp. Scholars themselves, including Wilson (2010), present the relationship between structure and culture as social forces in different ways (Warren, in press). The pedagogical implication is that considerable time needs to be spent with the students working on these materials.

"Placing" structural and crime changes and relevant Baltimore neighborhoods

It is emphasized to students that TWS2, like the other seasons, attempted to depict an actual place: the port and surrounding neighborhoods in Baltimore. To help students see how the structural conditions in those locations, except for race, matched the structural conditions described by Wilson, two in-class competency exercises were used.

In the first, city-level data on the percentage of employed persons working in manufacturing jobs in 1970, 1980, and 1990 were presented for Baltimore City and other nearby or comparably sized cities.⁴ This gave students practice interpreting clustered bar charts. "In Baltimore [City], manufacturing jobs as a percentage of all employment dropped precipitously, from about 26% in 1970 to about 18% in 1980, to about 12% in 1990. Philadelphia, Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis and Milwaukee all saw comparably large percentage dips over the two decades" (Taylor, 2001, p. 32).

Given that the key recent structural shift of declining manufacturing jobs took place in Baltimore City in the 1970s (Taylor, 2001, p. 34), a second exercise illustrated how these changes played out in specific Baltimore City neighborhoods located near the Port of Baltimore. This exercise used a Baltimore neighborhood crime and demographics ICPSR (Interuniversity Consortium for Social and Political Research) file (Taylor, 1999).⁵ Working in small groups, students received a 1970 and 1980 profile for one neighborhood, and were asked to highlight the structural changes that aligned with the changes described by

3. If time permits, the instructor can introduce Wilson's de-industrialization thesis by describing Lane's industrialization thesis linking increasing industrialization in the USA from the mid-1800s through about 1950 with declining murder rates (Lane, 1997, 1999).

4. These data were compiled from the County and City Data Book for various years. These are available from ICPSR. For example, the link to the file for the 1972 data book is: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/61>.

5. The specific neighborhoods designated as "port" neighborhoods in this exercise were, going counterclockwise: Broening Manor, Hudson-Highlandtown, Canton, South Baltimore, Locust Point, Brooklyn, and Curtis Bay. A case also could be made for including St Helena and Bayview/15th Street in this set as well.

Wilson. Almost all the port neighborhoods demonstrated sizable: depopulation, decline in the percent employed in skilled or blue-collar occupations, increases in poverty, and increases in unemployment.

The two structural change exercises were followed by a third in-class exercise focusing on crime changes. The competency strengthened was interpreting and comparing trend charts. The same Baltimore neighborhood crime and demographics ICPSR file (Taylor, 1999) provided changes in crime rates. Because the port neighborhoods in 1970 were all over 90% white, they were contrasted with other white neighborhoods in the city, through the 1970s and 1980s. For some violent crimes, like aggravated assault, it was clear that the loss of manufacturing jobs tracked increasing crime rates (see Figure 1). Students discussed possible dynamics.

In short, these three in-class exercises highlighted the connection between the individuals and communities depicted in TWS2, and actual conditions. The latter were captured with ecological structural data at the city and neighborhood levels over time focusing on the features central to Wilson's model, and ecological crime data at the neighborhood level over time.

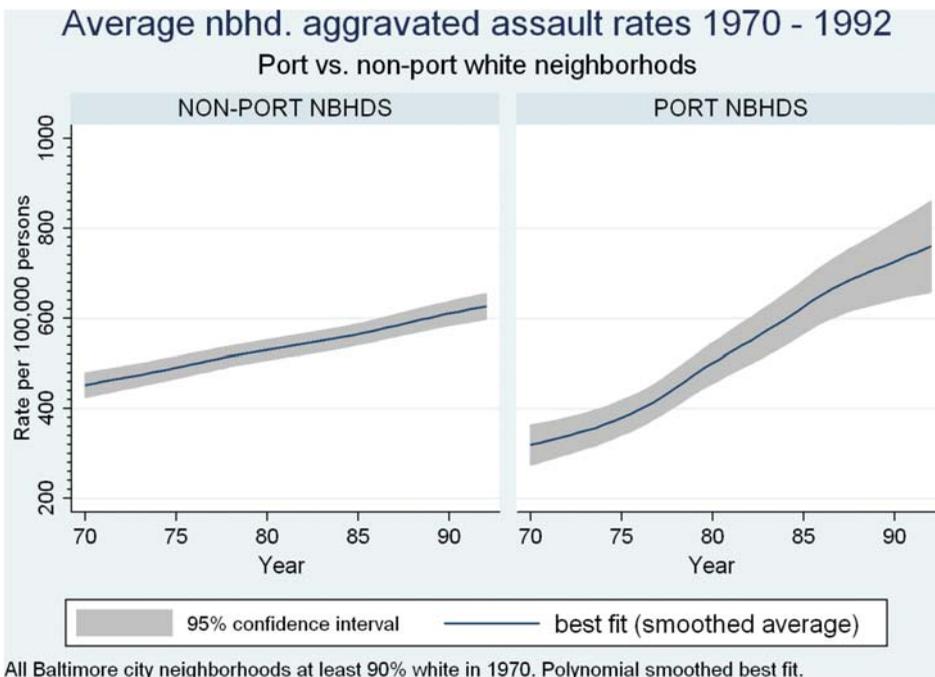


Figure 1 Aggravated assault rates per 100,000 persons, Baltimore neighborhood data (Taylor, 1999), 1970-1992. Port neighborhoods included Broening Manor, Brooklyn, Canton, Curtis Bay, Hudson-Highlandtown, Locust Point, and South Baltimore. Non-port neighborhoods included all other Baltimore City neighborhoods that were at least 90% white in 1970. Downtown excluded. Weighted (by square root of neighborhood population) averages shown for each group of neighborhoods after polynomial smoothing.

Wilson's model and the race question

Students, especially those steeped in "The Wire" before the course began, quickly raised the race question. Does race explain variation in urban community crime rates? If so, *should* we apply a theory developed in poor African-American urban neighborhoods (Wilson's study) to poor urban white neighborhoods (Season 2 Baltimore City white port neighborhoods)? Although key events involving African-American series leads continue throughout the season, the central thread involves whites living in white neighborhoods and working mostly with other whites.

So students asked: If Wilson (1996) was describing what was happening in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s in urban African-American neighborhoods, what was the relevance of this to the white characters in Season 2, and East Baltimore's predominantly white neighborhoods near the Port of Baltimore in the 2000s? Our answer, in the context of course learning goals, was fourfold.

First, poverty in core cities of metropolitan areas encompassed almost 70% of core city populations by 1990 (Massey, 1996), and continued to make urban inroads. Does race still matter? Certainly, especially given higher incarceration rates of urban African-American men as compared to urban white men (Western & Pettit, 2005), and continued patterns of urban hyper segregation (Massey, 1996). But unemployment and associated poverty problems are now adversely affecting larger numbers of predominantly white urban neighborhoods as well. As trends in de-industrialization, de-unionization, increasing technology dependence and the offshoring of many types of jobs continue, blue collar urban core predominantly white neighborhoods were experiencing in the first decades of the twenty-first century what urban core African-American neighborhoods were experiencing 30 years earlier.

Second, recent communities and crime scholarship strongly supported the view that economics make race less relevant at the community level, at least for explaining violent crime. Peterson and Krivo (2010), analyzing violent crime rates at the tract level in close to 100 US cities, found that race differentials in crime became non-significant once economic indicators for target community, surrounding crime, and surrounding economic conditions were all taken into account.

Third, the series itself painted parallels between the victimized African-American workers in the drug trade and the victimized white workers at the port. "In many ways, the experiences of the dock workers parallel those of the black poor depicted in 'The Wire', as both groups struggle with the disappearance of work in the formal economy" (Chaddha & Wilson, in press, p. 16).

Finally, as Simon himself admitted, there are "limits to empathy in this country" (O'Rourke, 2006). In short, white audiences are only going to care so much about African-American communities and characters. Wilson (1996, pp. 201-204) has made a similar point about whites' support for programs intended to improve the position of disadvantaged African-Americans.

In a mixed-race undergraduate classroom, the focus on the three white Sobotka characters in Season 2 may facilitate the engagement of non-African-American students. Of course the focus on three whites also could present a barrier to the engagement of non-white students, even though the parallel plight of African-American characters at the port (Coxson, Ott), beyond the port, and depictions of white dealers like Frog adopting African-American language and styles, all underscore similarities in the urban afflictions experienced. It is about social inequality and class (Wilson, 1996, p. 209), not about race.

Key Characters, Arcs, and Scenes

This section provides a brief overview of the narrative arc for each of the three key dock workers. Note: spoiler alert. It then explains in more detail how each arc connects in different ways to Wilson's (1996) unemployment thesis.

Frank Sobotka

Frank Sobotka is a stevedore, from a family of stevedores, currently heading up the union local for both checkers and stevedores (Alvarez, 2009, pp. 129-136). The character was based in part on Baltimore's "headstrong waterfront union boss" (Alvarez, 2009, p. 129). In order to expand jobs at the port, Sobotka is pushing initiatives with state legislators in Annapolis: reviving the grain pier before developers put condos on it, dredging the main harbor channel, and dredging the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, all in the hopes of getting more ships in and thus more jobs for his union (episode 14). To fund his legislative hopes, and to assist economically pressed union members and their widows, Frank is smuggling for "The Greek," a local affiliate of an international crime syndicate. Frank arranges for key containers to disappear in the stacks on the docks, avoid customs, and be driven out of the port unexamined. Dead young women show up in an un-claimed container put aside for "The Greek" (episode 14). For this and other reasons, a police investigation of Frank is launched.

Some key scenes include the following: (1) In the opening episode (episode 14), the first time we see Frank he is explaining to coworkers why his legislative initiatives are the only way to "save the beleaguered port and the union" (Alvarez, 2009, p. 138). (2) Frank's temper flares (episode 18) when Bunk serves grand jury subpoenas on him and other union members. (3) Sobotka and Nat attend a briefing about automation of port operations in Rotterdam (episode 20). (4) Later, Frank meets with his lobbyist Bruce DiBiagio (episode 20, dialog starts at 37:16) and vents his frustration about automation. "My kid'll be lucky if he's even punchin' numbers five years from now." (5) Frank, after being arrested (episode 24, dialog starts at 13:51), when told by the Feds that if he gives them information it would help him and his union replies: "For twenty-five years we've been dyin' slow down there [...] and now you want to help us?"

Nick Sobotka

Nick, Frank's nephew clearly transitions during the season from flagging commitment to the legal economy of work as a longshoreman to working full time in the illegal drug-based economy. Even though Frank Sobotka is proud Nick is continuing the family stevedoring tradition, Nick is financially stressed the first time we see him (episode 14) rather than proud. Nick's low seniority means few work days. He and his girlfriend, Aimee, who works as a hairdresser, have a toddler but cannot live together under one roof. Aimee would like them to have their own place and get married (episode 16).

Partly in response to this pressure, Nick goes along with Zig's plan to boost a container of digital cameras, which they then fence to Double G, who is part of "The Greek's" syndicate. Vondas, "The Greek's" lieutenant, who met Nick because Nick would sometimes pick up container numbers from him, likes Nick and helps him out when Zig gets in trouble. Nick and Zig steal some chemicals for Eton, working with Vondas. They offer to pay Nick in heroin. Nick starts dealing. He tells Aimee he has come into some money through back pay and legitimate work, and puts down money on furniture for a place. When police close in on all the drug targets and the syndicate starts to shut down, Nick's basement stash of money and heroin in his parents' house is discovered. He is arrested, but agrees to tell what he knows for witness protection. Nick and Aimee and their daughter get a place of their own at the end, but it is an out of town motel room where law enforcement stashes them.

Key scenes include the following: (1) Nick is getting his hair cut by Aimee. She complains that they need to figure out where they are going (episode 16). She makes it clear they need more money and they should get married and live under one roof. "Otherwise, I gotta rethink stuff." (2) Nick and Zig are walking away from the docks, not having gotten a work assignment that day (episode 16: dialog starts at 20:43). Nick complains "I can't keep waking' up in the morning not knowing if I'm gonna get paid ... I got a kid right? ... Fuck if I even could [get married] without no pot to piss in!" Zig suggests "if it's money that you're worried about" they should go in on a dope package. Nick reacts angrily. (3) When Frank learns about the stolen container of cameras, he confronts Nick and demands their return (episode 17, opening scene). Nick already has fenced them. Nick complains "I'm on my ass Uncle Frank." It also is clear here that Nick misunderstands the reasons why Frank is smuggling containers to raise money. (4) When Nick is getting paid for delivering three trucks of chemicals to Eton and Vondas, he takes his payment "half in cash, half in dope" (episode 19). He has moved fully into the illegal drug economy. (5) And Nick, unlike Zig, knows how to work it (episode 20) as shown when he confronts Frog, the corner boy who shorted Zig and created all the trouble for Zig in the first place. He applies his "IBS Local 47" credentials: its members "don't work without no fuckin' contract." Alvarez (2009, pp. 168-169) comments about this scene: "When an elder resident looks at him from inside her

screen door, Nicky is suddenly made aware that he is no longer a longshoreman, but a drug dealer.” (6) When his father, mother, girlfriend, and neighbors learn that as well following the raid on his house (episode 24), his new identity is firmly established.

Zig Sobotka

Season 2 pivots emotionally on four murders, excluding “The Greek’s” murder of the seaman. (1) McNulty discovers a dead floater later linked to the dead trafficked prostitutes (episode 14). (2) D’Angelo (episode 19) is murdered in prison at the orders of “his uncle’s most trusted lieutenant, Stringer Bell” (Alvarez, 2009, p. 162). (3) Zig shoots Double G when the latter shorts him on a stolen auto shipment (episode 23). (4) Frank is murdered by the crime syndicate (episode 25). Double G’s murder is emotionally resonant because viewers have seen, step by step, how Zig got to the store on the day of the shooting with a gun in his hand.

“Partly based on a South Baltimore legend named Pinky Bannon” (Alvarez, 2009, p. 131), Zig does not fit in at the docks where he is a member of the checkers union and his father has gotten him some hours. In the first episode (episode 14), Zig is unable to locate a rush container in the stacks. He has failed in a previous dealing attempt with White Mike. In an effort to help himself and Nick earn some money, he engineers a heist of 400 digital cameras, later fenced to Double G. Zig returns to drug dealing, but gets double crossed by his own street people, and ends up in serious trouble with east side drug dealer Cheese, which Nick and Sergei, an associate of “The Greek”, help resolve. Zig is smart, as shown by his background research on the cameras he and Nick boost, his ability to research the chemicals requested by Eton, and his ingenious plan for boosting cars.

But despite his smarts, Zig is reckless. He drinks a lot; probably uses drugs; exhibits (repeatedly, given coworkers’ reaction) his member in the bar; throws money out the window; foolishly flaunts a \$2000 leather coat bought with his proceeds from the boosted cameras in front of his fellow checkers; and is always happy with days off, even though cousin Nick reminds him “days off is the fuckin’ point Zig” (episode 16, dialog starts at 20:38).

Zig also does not fit in at the docks because he both lacks common sense about people, and is not a physically imposing presence. When a series of run-ins and practical jokes between heavyweight co-worker Maui and Zig end up with Zig marooned atop a stack of containers with no ladder (episode 21), Zig ends up blaming his co-workers rather than his own shortsightedness: “‘You motherfuckers gave me bad advice!’ he screams at his baiters” (Alvarez, 2009, p. 172).

In short, as shown repeatedly, Zig is neither macho enough nor street-smart enough for the blue-collar world he inhabits. These traits are on display when Cheese threatens him and steals his car; when Zig sets a \$100 bill on fire “in a bar full of working stiffs” (episode 19, dialog starts at 44:19); and when Zig takes on Maui.

After Nick pushes Zig out of the dealing business, Zig's self-respect takes a hit. It takes another hit when Nick does well as a dealer, and generously offers to split the returns with him. And it takes a final hit when Double G double crosses him.

Key scenes include: (1) Of course the one where Zig shoots Double G (episode 23). (2) In the same episode you also see Zig orchestrating the boosting of the new cars, happy with his ingenuity and audacity, and blasting the radio. (3) Episode 18 opens with "Zig, playing drug dealer in his organically incompetent way" (Alvarez, 2009, p. 149), getting burned by his own people, threatened by Cheese, and carjacked. Zig reacts squeamishly to the threatening baseball bat and reports when slammed against his car that it hurts. He clearly does not have the required "corner boy masculinity" (Peterson, 2009). (4) When Eton and Vondas offer Nick payment for the chemicals in dope, Zig strongly urges Nick to take it (episode 19). Nick makes a different decision and tells Zig to butt out. (5) Later, Zig spurns the money Nick splits with him from the drug sales (episode 21 dialog starting at 24:41). "I'll play the game for myself," he tells Nick. (6) "Hell-bent on proving himself a player in some kind of game" (Alvarez, 2009, p. 183), Zig sets up the stolen car deal with Double G (episode 22).

Three Arcs and Wilson

These three characters provide contrasting vantage points on how Wilson's thesis links structural and cultural context with the work and non-work lives of individuals in urban neighborhoods where blue collar work formerly predominated. Nick most clearly illustrates in a compressed time frame the shift suggested by Wilson's thesis. He transitions from an under-employed port worker still committed to the legal economy to a full-time drug dealer committed to the illegal economy. He complains early in the season, starting with his first scene, about the stresses of too little work. He voices frustration that his chronic underemployment prevents him from forming a household under one roof with his girlfriend and their daughter. In the scene at the hair salon where she works, Aimee makes it clear that they need to do better economically otherwise she and her daughter will leave, which they do symbolically at the end of the scene as they walk away. Although he is not certain he wants to move to the next stage of getting married, Nick complains to Zig that he cannot even *think* about it given his financial straits.

In short, Nick illustrates the dilemma voiced by many of the inner city residents quoted by Wilson (1996, Chapter 3) who are willing to work in the legal economy, but just cannot earn enough, and at the same time see those around them making substantial money by participating in illegal economies. In Nick's case, the illegal economies include both widespread drug dealing in surrounding neighborhoods, a long-standing history of larceny at the port (episode 17, opening scene), and his uncle's involvement in smuggling, albeit the latter is misunderstood by Nick. These activities and attitudes toward them are part of

Nick's culture. And, following the process of adaptation to circumstances described by Wilson (1996), Nick likewise adapts. He shifts from living in straitened circumstances with an allegiance to the legal economy and a disdain for drug dealers; to larceny of digital cameras then chemicals; to being a drug dealer sitting in a new truck saying "money is cheap" (episode 21).

Whereas Nick encapsulates in one narrative the broader adaptations in response to economic distress described by Wilson (1996), Frank's narrative is contrasting. It provides a different perspective on Wilson's thesis because it starts at a different point, and Frank's motivations are different.

At the beginning of the season, Frank is already collaborating with "The Greek's" crime syndicate. But his motivations are broader than Nick's. In essence, Frank realizes that the part of the legal economy, port work, which is his cultural heritage and should be his family's and friends' future, is dying. He is devoted both "to family and to community" (Lucasi, 2009, p. 144). After he sees a presentation on computerization at the port of Rotterdam (episode 20), he denounces a future which is just "Robots! Piers full of robots!" His collaboration with criminals is oriented largely to raising funds to legally lobby influential state politicians who could approve funding for port improvement initiatives.

In short, Frank's collaboration with "The Greek's" crime syndicate, started before the first scene in TWS2, represents criminal involvement that is both structurally driven, i.e. he seeks to preserve good blue collar jobs for men with only a high school education or less; and culturally emergent, i.e. larceny at the port, and involvement of port union leadership with organized crime, both have a history (Block, 1982). So in this broad sense, Frank's situation depicted as the season opens matches Wilson's (1996) broad framework.

But Frank's narrative also has a second resonance with Wilson's (1996) model that is more dynamic and unfolds during TWS2. As Frank straddles both the legal and the illegal economies, and uses the latter as a means to improve the former, the consequences of his criminal collaboration become increasingly grave. Women die. Police harass union members and those members are later subpoenaed. A wiretap targets his phone. And Zig murders. Repeatedly, Frank tries to terminate his relationship with the syndicate as his awareness of the collaboration costs grows. But each time, skillfully nudged by Vondas, and increasingly desperate to achieve his political goals, he resumes the partnership. Here is just one example.

When the investigation of Frank's union intensifies, he tells Vondas (episode 18) that he is "out" even after a doubling of the fees is offered. He is unwilling to continue to put his union in jeopardy. But Vondas tells Nick the fee for smuggling each container is tripled, and that he (Vondas) and Frank have worked everything out. Later, Nick takes the numbers for the to-be smuggled containers back to Frank. This key scene (episode 18, dialog starts at 55:00) opens with several shots of large machines moving cargo. When humans do emerge, Frank and Ott are happy because everyone is working that day, the humans seem almost insignificant amidst the machinery and stacks of containers.

Nick (giving the card with container numbers on it to Frank): "Is Horse working the Willamena today?"

Frank (looking at the card): "I told that motherfucker we were done! I told him!"

Nick (confused): "He said he talked to you. He said it's triple rate for every can."

Frank (confused): "Triple?" (Frank pauses, looks at card and folds it slowly, looks left, looks right, sighs, then shouts to a worker behind Nick) "Call Horse in the tower and tell him he's working the Willamena." (To Nick) "It's now or never for us. I got no choice."

Nick (disapprovingly but patient): "Today we got ships Uncle Frank. Today ... the writing's on the fuckin' wall."

Frank (sticking the folded card to Nick's chest, angrily): "Fuck the wall." (Frank turns and walks away, almost lost again amidst stacks of containers and machines moving cargo as the camera pulls back.)

In sum, the second resonance between Wilson's (1996) thesis and Frank's narrative, one that unfolds during TWS2, is that he *seeks to end but ends up resuming* his criminal involvement, even as his awareness deepens of the dire consequences emerging from it. He does this because he is so desperate to reverse exactly the structural changes described by Wilson (1996). Frank sees friends and family members in his community being savaged by the loss of port jobs, quintessential blue collar jobs for males with only a high school education, and "It breaks my [his] heart that there's no future for the Sobotkas on the waterfront" (episode 18). Every time he tries to end the criminal partnership, this grim realization draws him back.

Zig, like his father Frank, already is committed to the illegal economy at the beginning of TWS2. But, unlike his father who operates successfully in both the legal and illegal economies, Zig is competent in neither.

Vondas suspects Zig uses drugs. It is an open question whether Zig is psychologically unbalanced—the Greek chorus of older men in the bar is always telling him "Boy, you're not right!"—or just a reckless, lazy incompetent.

That question aside, there can be no doubt that Zig is intelligent. He can web search, and his car theft plan is simple, brilliant, and successful.

Zig's narrative arc during TWS2 highlights the adverse psychological consequences experienced by a smart young man who is fit neither for the poorly paying, boring, dead end blue collar jobs available in an era when "job ladders" have "eroded" (Wilson, 1996, p. 25), nor for the illegal drug economy. As the season progresses, Zig realizes he can no longer do the dock work, or the street selling, and seeks alternate activities which will bring him respect.

Students who choose to link Zig to Wilson's thesis are encouraged to consider various possible perspectives. (1) Is Zig an example of the frustration

experienced by young men in a blue collar culture where meaningful and decent paying work is disappearing, and who have the intelligence but neither the resources nor the encouragement to get more schooling so they can move up to a better paying technical job? (2) Or, alternatively, is Zig a counter-example to Wilson's thesis, someone who would not do well even in a job environment where blue collar work paid well, provided ample hours, and offered long-term advancement?

In short, each of the three Sobotkas illustrate Wilson's (1996) thesis in different ways, their personal narratives capturing different facets of the structural and cultural dynamics Wilson presents. Nick, initially with considerable reluctance, shifts allegiances from the legal to the illegal economy to stabilize a newly forming household. Frank, already straddling these two economies at the beginning of the season, seeks to detach himself from the illegal economy as his awareness of the consequences linked to his involvement deepens. But he is pulled back into collaborating with criminals in order to fund his increasingly desperate efforts to create legal port jobs and preserve the cultural heritage of his community, friends, and family. Zig, fit neither for the legal economy of port work nor the illegal economy of street dealing, becomes increasingly obsessed with gaining respect from others through different means. Alternatively, Zig given his psychological makeup, could be considered a counter-example to Wilson's thesis.

How to Use "The Wire" Itself in a Competencies-Based Communities and Crime Course

Because the pedagogical focus of our communities and crime course included several competencies-related goals, it was not feasible to devote large amounts of classroom time to showing and discussing TWS2. Further, given course purposes, the key features of interest in TWS2 were just a small subset of the events shown. The goal was to illustrate, using scenes highlighted above, how long-term structural unemployment affected culture—attitudes, sentiments, values, and expectations—and how the latter affected views about crime as well as criminal involvement.

The learning goal was accomplished in three ways: by engaging students with key scenes illustrating character arcs; by engaging them with data as described in the above exercises; and by their writing a short paper integrating one of these character arcs with data and Wilson's (1996) theory.

Clips, Questions, and Cold Calling in Class

After students had done the background reading (Alvarez, 2009; Wilson, 1996), and after the instructor provided a short 10 minute recap of a key character, to engage students with a character and his key scenes we proceeded as follows. The instructor distributed a question sheet with space for answers. There were

one or two questions for each clip. Then students were shown a short clip that had been placed into PowerPoint. Most clips were less than two minutes in length.⁶ After showing a scene, PowerPoint was paused, and the instructor announced that each student had 90 seconds to write an answer to one of the questions about that clip. Once his/her answer was written down, he/she could discuss it with a neighbor. When time was up, the instructor started cold calling a few students, asking them to read their answers. After 2-5 student responses, depending on the question, the instructor moved on to the next clip.

The advantage of this approach, which appears to be relatively common in language and cultural studies instruction, were several. First, students could not go into passive media-watching mode. They were looking at a scene with a question in mind. Second, because they wrote immediately after seeing the clip, they were encouraged to move into active processing faster. Third, because they knew they could be cold called, they had to write something down. And finally, when they were done they had some key notes about key scenes that they could use later for their writing assignment.

Depending on instructor purposes and course goals, the activity can be modified. If the instructor is teaching a small class and group discussions are a significant class segment, he/she can write the questions in ways that launch those conversations. Second, if a key scene is pivotal, the instructor can re-show it, and ask students to pay closer attention. For example, in episode 20, Sobotka's long conversation with his lobbyist, Bruce DiBiagio, bears repeated watching.

An Example of an Integrative Writing Assignment

Once students understood the outlines of the narrative arcs of these three characters, and had been exposed to structural data, they were asked to integrate three different components—Wilson's (1996) theory, structural data, and one character arc—and describe the relevant connections. In short, they were asked to describe how the macro→micro links in Wilson's (1996) model lead to crime outcomes.

The integration vehicle chosen here was a short paper in which students described some of the relevant structural conditions, how these shaped one of the three character arcs described above, and cross-referenced this with key points in Wilson's (1996) model.⁷ Other, less Twentieth Century and/or more collaborative integration vehicles are of course feasible. Given the complexity of the writing assignment, allowing students to submit preliminary drafts seems advisable.

Nevertheless, even at a major, urban, state-aided university such as ours, and in a large lecture course, and without the benefit of reviewed drafts, some

6. The first author is indebted to Professor Jerry H. Ratcliffe for providing patient coaching on the mechanics of these operations.

7. The original assignment and scoring rubric can be found online at: http://www.rbtaylor.net/3404_paper_3.pdf.

students were able to accomplish the integration sought. Here are excerpts just from three of the stronger papers.

... Nick helps The Greek's crime syndicate smuggle chemicals used for the processing of drugs from the shipyard. Spiros, The Greek's second-in-command, offers to pay Nick with either cash or heroin. Nick, while thinking of his limited workload as a young, inexperienced stevedore and the potential financial security for his girlfriend and daughter, responds by saying, "half in cash, half in dope" (All Prologue). The money he gained from dealing heroin would theoretically land his young family some financial stability, as he and his girlfriend planned to buy their own house ... (Student A)

Wilson describes how poverty-stricken neighborhoods still hold many of the same moral ideals as mainstream society; when in dire straits, however, a person in poverty is more likely to rationalize behavior that would otherwise be inappropriate (Wilson, 1996, p. 69). I believe this helps to explain why Nick felt it was acceptable to steal cameras. He isn't trying to become a millionaire, he just wants to move out of his parents' basement ... (Student B)

... Nick did not want to really get involved in selling drugs with his cousin Zig to make money. By taking the heroin and telling Zig that he will handle the sale of it Nick has crossed over the line that he was avoiding before ... Since all Nick's experience has to do with dock work, he really cannot get a job anywhere else ...

... Nick has to find other means so he can make money and support his family. Those other means are selling drugs. The majority of people around Nick are involved in illegal activities like smuggling or selling drugs. So when Nick starts to sell drugs it is "not only convenient but also morally appropriate (Wilson 70, 1996)" because this is the kind of behavior that he is exposed to in his neighborhood. Since all this illegal behavior is happening around him he is more likely to engage in it, which eventually he does. (Student C)

The bulk of students' papers did focus on Nick. Maybe this was because his transformation during the series was so clear-cut, and so closely aligned with the dynamics discussed by Wilson (1996). Maybe it was just because he was a young go-getter. Instructors may need to provide more interpretation for the character arcs of Frank and Zig (see above).

Students' Reactions to "The Wire"

About 11 weeks into the semester, after students had completed their integrated writing assignment, a short anonymous questionnaire was distributed in class seeking their reactions to using "The Wire" and gauging their previous exposure.

We focus first on students' perceptions of the general utility of "The Wire." In response to the statement "In general, 'The Wire' did *not* help me under-

stand key course ideas”, and using a (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) disagree slightly, (4) agree slightly, (5) agree, and (6) agree strongly response format, 66% (37/56) disagreed (mean=2.77; median=2) with this statement. Using the same agree/disagree format, in response to the statement “The concrete examples from ‘The Wire’ provided useful illustrations of key ideas discussed in the course,” 80.4% (45/56) agreed (mean=4.45; median=5). So considered broadly, students found “The Wire” content helped them access core course concerns.

When asked if “The Wire” should be used the next time the course was offered, only one student out of 56 endorsed “not use ‘The Wire’ at all.” The other options were “use ‘The Wire’ but spend less time on it in class”/“use ‘The Wire’ and spend the same amount of time on it in class”/“use ‘The Wire’ but spend more time on it in class.” More detail on these other response options appears below.

The two biggest challenges in presenting “The Wire,” aside from the demands on the instructor’s time integrating episode clips and preparing data exercises, are figuring out how to compensate for students’ varying degrees of exposure to ‘The Wire,’ and deciding how much class time to spend on showing footage.

When asked how much of “The Wire” they had viewed *prior* to starting the course, two-thirds of respondents (66.1%; 37/56) reported “I had never viewed one full episode of ‘The Wire.’”

This presemester exposure differential made “The Wire” more challenging for some students. Using the six category agree/disagree format described above, students were less likely to agree with the statement “I found ‘The Wire’ hard to follow,” the more they had watched it before the semester began ($z = -2.75$; $p < .01$ in an ordered probit model for categorical outcomes with bootstrapped standard errors).

Partly in anticipation that such differentials might surface, the instructor made available multiple copies of Season 2 discs and repeatedly encouraged students to watch them outside of class as they prepared their integrative papers. When asked “outside of class *this semester*, how many hours did you spend reviewing episodes of ‘The Wire’ on your own?” about a quarter of respondents (23.6%; 13/55) watched an hour or less; and about a fifth (21.8%; 14/55) watched more than 5 hours of episodes with the rest falling in between (mean = 4.3 h; median = 3 h).

Viewing outside of class helped students feel more oriented. Placing students in five roughly equal size groups based on the hours of “The Wire” watched during the semester showed that students were less likely to find “The Wire” hard to follow the more hours of episodes they watched outside of class ($z = -2.32$; $p < .05$ in an ordered probit model with bootstrapped standard errors).

When exposure before the semester began and exposure during the semester were considered jointly, it appeared each made “The Wire” significantly easier to follow ($z = -2.67$; $p < .01$ for presemester exposure; $z = -2.04$; $p < .05$

for exposure during the semester; results from ordered probit model with bootstrapped standard errors).

Although pre- and during-semester “The Wire” exposure differentials affected students’ self-reported difficulties decoding episodes, those differentials did not affect how they felt about “The Wire” as a vehicle for illustrating key course ideas. Responses to both items on this topic (“In general ‘The Wire’ did *not* help me understand key course ideas” and “The concrete examples from ‘The Wire’ provided useful illustrations of key ideas discussed in this course”) were not significantly affected by the exposure variables (all z s non-significant ($p > .15$) in ordered probit models with bootstrapped standard errors with both exposure variables considered jointly). It is always risky to infer from null results, of course. Nevertheless, the broader point that exposure differentials did *not* markedly alter students’ difficulties linking the material from episodes with core course concepts seems plausible. The minimal in-class screening time, coupled with the active engagement format, may have been sufficient for many.

When asked specifically about the watch/write/answer format used for viewing short clips in class, 75% (42/56) agreed with the item “I found it helpful to pause and answer a short question in class after viewing a brief clip from ‘The Wire,’” using the agree/disagree format described earlier (mean=4.2; median=5).

Nevertheless, many students thought that more time should be spent showing “The Wire” in future iterations of the class (60.7%, 34/56).

Summary, Limitations, and Closing Comment

The current work has highlighted a pedagogical challenge in a macro-level, undergraduate communities and crime course: helping students understand how macro-level structural conditions affect the life chances, views, and actions of individuals and how all of this links to criminal involvement. Careful examination of three characters from TWS2 was proposed to meet this challenge. Each blue collar character displayed different types of involvement with the two work options of the legal economy vs. the illegal economy. The examination was grounded in a multilayered framework relying substantially on Wilson’s (1996) unemployment thesis. Using careful clip selection and active viewing protocols, in-class screening time was limited. To meet course competency acquisition goals, students worked with data from the location where the series was filmed, and integrated details about key characters with data and theory in a short writing assignment. Questionnaire data suggested that, despite the limited viewing time in class, and differential student exposure to the series outside of class, students found the illustrations from the series helpful. Paper examples showed that some students succeeded in linking theory with series narrative.

Of course, the approach described here has limitations. No claim is made that the particular approach here—using Wilson’s (1996) theoretical framework and concentrating on these three selected characters from TWS2—is the *best* approach for using these materials in a communities and crime course. Other characters, other seasons of “The Wire,” and other theoretical frameworks of course are also appropriate in an undergraduate communities and crime course. The approach here is just one of many possible different ones.

Turning to a practical matter, in an era when public policy-makers and parents increasingly question the value of college education given high tuition rates (Fischer, 2011), and when we are witnessing high unemployment of college graduates compared to historical patterns, it is especially dangerous to gear an undergraduate course around a television show, no matter how critically acclaimed the latter.

Therefore, it is crucial that instructors using “The Wire” in a communities and crime course, or any other type of criminology or criminal justice course, carefully consider the following questions: (1) How much showing time is needed in class? (2) How do I provide students with a clear theoretical framework for understanding and interpreting what they see? (3) How do I underscore the realism of the series by making connections with external data? (4) How do I compensate for students’ differential exposure to the material prior to the class? And, most importantly, (5) how do I document and illustrate the pedagogical value of using this TV show, given my specific course learning goals? Answering the last question will require systematic evaluation.

There is no question that one of the most ambitious TV series ever produced can facilitate student engagement in a wide array of undergraduate courses. But demonstrable pedagogical value beyond engagement is needed. Hopefully future instructors in this field and others will carefully consider how to assess this value.

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Appendix A: "The Wire" in Academia

College/university	Department/ program	Course name (exact title)
Boston University—Metropolitan College	Urban Affairs	The City in the Media: The Sociology of HBO's The Wire
Bowdoin College	Africana Studies	"The Wire": Race, Class, Gender, and the Urban Crisis
Duke University	African & African American Studies Writing	The Wire The Wire
Emory University	Interdisciplinary Studies in Culture and Society	Watching "The Wire"
Georgetown University	Philosophy	Philosophy and The Wire
Harvard University	African and American Studies Law (Graduate)	HBO's The Wire and its Contribution to Understanding Urban Inequality Race and Justice: The Wire
Johns Hopkins University	Public Health Studies	Baltimore and "The Wire": A Focus on Major Urban Issues
Loyola University—New Orleans	Ethics	Social Justice and The Wire
Middlebury College	American Studies and Film & Media Culture	Urban America & Serial Television: Watching The Wire
Syracuse University	Television-Radio-Film	Inside HBO's America: A Case Study of The Wire
Transylvania University	Foundations of the Liberal Arts	The Wire or a (Very) Brief History of Underground Economies in 21st Century America
Tufts University	Experimental College	HBO's The Wire: TV and the American Inner City
University of Alberta	English and Film Studies	Studies in Popular Culture: Ethics and The Wire
University of California—Berkeley	Rhetoric & Film Studies	What's So Great about The Wire?
University of Houston	Rhetoric (Graduate) Law (Graduate)	World and Time: Serial Television and the case of The Wire The Wire: Crime, Law and Social Policy
University of Texas	African & African American Studies	The Wire: Inequality/City Life
University of Virginia	Media Studies	The Wire: Understanding Contemporary America Through Television at Its Best

(Continued)

Appendix A (*Continued*)

College/university	Department/ program	Course name (exact title)
	Sociology	Sociology Through TV & Film: The Wire
University of York	Sociology	The Wire as Social Science Fiction?
Washington State University—Spokane	Criminal Justice (Graduate)	Examining Urban Crime, Policing, Politics and Delinquency Through The Wire
Wellesley College	Writing	The Wire & the American City
West Virginia University	Sociology	Cities and Urban Life