

CRIMINAL JUSTICE and the **MEDIA:**

THE WIRE

Baltimore Sun reporter David Simon gained national notoriety for creating the critically acclaimed HBO show *The Wire*. Depicting the lives of those working in the drug trade in the west end of Baltimore, as well as the sometimes-questionable efforts of law enforcement to respond to illicit drugs, the television show bore an uncanny resemblance to reality. In testimony before a congressional committee, Michael Steele, the lieutenant governor of Maryland, commented, "The HBO cable drama 'The Wire' is tantamount to a reality television program in certain parts of our cities." A Maryland congressman, Elijah Cummings, offered a similar observation, stating, "Witness intimidation in Baltimore City is not dreamt up by producers

of HBO's critically acclaimed drama 'The Wire.' The threat is real—and the reality is horrific."

The Wire became a part of the political landscape and brought to light discussions about poverty, disorganization, and safety. In terms of concentric zone theory, the neighborhood featured in *The Wire* is most comparable to the zone of transition. Comparing the neighborhood in *The Wire* to more recent versions of social disorganization theory, one would note that the lack of informal social control efforts, the weak social ties, and the high degree of poverty found in the neighborhood contribute to offending.