THE BLACK IMAGE IN THE WHITE MIND:
EDUCATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF MEDIA RACISM

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ABSTRACT

Sheldon A. Lanier: The Black Image in the White Mind: Educational
Consequences of Media Racism
(Under the direction of Kathleen Brown)

In the United States of America, Black male students often face a cultural disconnect

when entering classrooms today. As a result, outcomes for these students, including academic

ones, are both alarming and reprehensible. It is conceivable that a link exists between the

exposure to negative racial portrayals of Black males in the media, teachers' perceptions of their

Black male students, and the negative treatments of Black males that result. These perceptions

are important when examining how they can affect school policies and practices institutionally.

Given the multitude of structures that help shape the negative outcomes of Black males in this

country, mixed methods on both quantitative and qualitative inquiry were used to explore and

examine the following questions: 1) How are Black males portrayed in the HBO original series,

The Wire? 2) Do these portrayals reify (or, not) stereotypes of Black males in the United States?

3) How might these portrayals cultivate White female teachers' perceptions and subsequent

treatment of Black male students?

The Wire was used as the media content sample due to the vast amount of Black male

actors in lead or prominent recurring roles. Data collection involved a cultivation analysis of

first-order and second-order effects that occurred as a result of racial stereotype portrayal. The

data were analyzed through the conceptual framework of Gerbner's Cultivation Theory. This

theory refers to the broad reach of television media and how exposure to negative imagery

influences perceptions and beliefs of society and often validates and mainstreams long held

gender and race-based stereotypes about people of color, specifically Black males (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Bilandzic, 2006; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Hetsroni, 2012; Jamison & Romer, 2014; Monk-Turner et al., 2010; Oliver, 2003; Parrott & Parrott, 2015; Potter, 2014; Torres, 2015).

The research of Mastro and Greenberg (2010), Monk-Turner, et al. (2010), Khanna and Harris (2015), and Parrott and Parrott (2015) established a framework necessary for conducting a media content analysis. The results of this study indicate that historical racial stereotypes/caricatures of African American males were consistently portrayed throughout the entire series. The results also indicate that students exhibiting similar characteristics as characters in the series would likely influence perceptions (negatively) of teachers, ultimately affecting school policies and practices institutionally. Negative teacher perceptions could, and often do, lead to a lack of academic growth and achievement, a disproportionate amount of referrals for discipline and special education, the absence of teacher-student relationships, and an overall detrimental impact on the schooling experience of Black males. This study adds to the body of research on negative racial media portrayals of African American males in the United States and concludes by urging educational leaders to provide necessary professional learning to equip teachers to recognize their biases, how they impact the achievement of Black male students, and to utilize culturally responsive teaching strategies to reach their males of color. Further implications also include providing counter narratives to combat institutional racism within schools, creating a culture and climate conducive for nurturing Black male students, and using a critical race tenant to challenge dominant ideology that claims to be color-blind in curriculum and instruction.

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PROLOGUE

On April 4th, 2016, Zeba Blay, a writer for "Black Voices," a section of the Huffington Post, wrote an article in response to the backlash over a Gap Kids print ad. The article reported that many took to social media to express outrage over the ad that featured four girls in various poses. Consumers noted that the only Black female featured in the advertisement was used as an armrest by a taller White girl. The article noted that many stated the Black girl was used as a token and "the White girl's prop." The article states that many Black consumers expressed concern that the ad served as yet another example of media racism and an example of how the media continues to dehumanize and belittle people of color. The Huffington Post reported similar controversy five years earlier when Dove soap ran a television media blitz promoting the brand's Visible Care body wash. The television ad features three women standing in front of "before and after" images. The "before" image features what appears to be dry, cracked skin. The "after" image features smooth skin with no visible cracks or dryness. Three women are standing in front of the images in the following order, from left to right: Black (before), Latina (middle), and White (after). The ad seems to relay the message to viewers that if you use Dove, you will not only relieve your dry skin, your skin will become cleaner and gradually get lighter before finally turning White as a result.

The underlying messages are what made this television ad so controversial. If you apply the messages of these ads to the premise of cultural conditioning, society has been conditioned to associate skin color and to racialize cultural signifiers along a good-bad/Black-White spectrum. These ads serve as examples of how the media can cultivate certain beliefs and affirm

stereotypes of people of color. This issue is exacerbated when examining the racial stereotypes portrayed of Black males in the media. Throughout history, the Black male has been cast as violent, devious, and dangerous as the media often leaves its viewers with negative associations of Black males in poverty, as street corner drug dealers, and as criminals. Individuals seek television media for the purpose of entertainment and to seek information and news, unaware of its influence. Negative associations in the media are often exaggerated while limiting positive associations, allowing viewers to cultivate negative attitudes, influencing perceptions, and beliefs without any counter narratives to challenge such ideas. What compounds this problem is the way in which negative stereotypes and racial caricatures depicted in television reaffirm negative racial ideals and in turn, affect outcomes of Black males.

In the United States of America, Black males have significantly worse outcomes on every indicator more so than any other subgroup. This is particularly true of academic outcomes for Black male students as they face a cultural disconnect when entering in classrooms everyday. It is conceivablwe that there is a link between the exposure to racial negative portrayals of Black males in the media, teachers' perceptions of Black males, and the negative treatments of Black males that result. These perceptions are important when examining how they can affect school policies and practices institutionally. Negative treatment by educators can lead to a lack of academic growth and achievement, disproportionality in discipline and special education referrals, the absence of teacher-student relationships and positive interactions, and affect the overall schooling experience of Black males.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There is an ideology that emerged in our post-Civil Rights society that has become accepted doctrine among Whites: the idea that racism is a non-issue and that institutional racism does not exist (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Entman, 1990). Therefore, there are no limitations for Black student, particularly Black male, achievement. This belief is reinforced by the representation of Black journalists, athletes, actors, and actresses on the small and big screen. On November 4, 2008, this ideology was, again, reinforced with the election of America's first Black President, giving the perception that we as Americans are now living in a post-racial society (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Smith & Brown, 2014). To some, it was the realization of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's iconic "I Have a Dream" speech. However, researchers (Agosto, 2014; Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Diuguid & Rivers, 2012; Irby, 2014; Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Love, 2014; Martin, 2008; Omi & Winant, 2008; Page, 1997; Smith & Brown, 2014; White, 2010) believe racism and racial inequalities are alive and well and are undeniable components in all facets of our society. As "much as Jim Crow racism served as the glue for defending racial oppression in the past, color-blind racism provides the ideological armor for the 'new racism' regime" (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011, p. 191).

Although Jim Crow is a "thing of the past" and the majority of Americans vehemently castigate blatant acts of racism, Black Americans, particularly Black males, remain disadvantaged compared to Whites/White men (Agosto, 2014; Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Diuguid & Rivers, 2012; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Martin,

2008; Omi & Winant, 2008; Page, 1997). According to Allen (2015), Black males often face challenges finding, maintaining, and keeping their employment. The researcher also states Black males experience income disparities as compared to their White counterparts and notes this is regardless of social class status. "Black men are treated exceedingly different in the judicial system, as evidenced by disproportional arrests, convictions and jail sentences, as well as harsher sentences than White males for the same offense" (Allen, 2015, p. 210).

Much is said in regard to racial prejudice, acts of discrimination, and societal disadvantages (Hastie & Rimmington, 2014). However, one must place a critical lens in examining how advantage based on race and privilege for Whites has lead to systemic racism and inequalities for Black Americans. "Race and racism, while defined in numerous ways, is undeniable. It is woven through every facet of our history and is currently both visible and invisible on many levels" (White, 2010, p. 143). White privilege is also undeniable and is an unspoken phenomenon that is rarely seen or acknowledged by those who possess it. This "ignorance is bliss" notion grants those who possess privilege the power to ignore the fact that others do not have it and are denied access to rights, power, and equality in our society (Hastie & Rimmington, 2014). White privilege acknowledges that White culture is the dominant culture and what society would classify as normal. It allows Whites to ignore the everyday life experiences of those of different races/cultures. It allows the "denial of the importance of race and the existence of racism to evaluating race and racism as the most potent political and social force in the history of the United States" (White, 2010, p. 142). It also makes positive representations of Whites, within the media, readily accessible for viewers and readers to associate White with how good citizens of our society should act and look like (Beaudoin &

Thorson, 2006; Bogle, 2013; Diuguid & Rivers, 2000; Entman, 1990; Entman & Gross, 2008; Hastie & Rimmington, 2014; Moore & Ratchford, 2007).

Background

There are a multitude of structures that help shape the life experiences of Black males in America. The long, standing legacy of White racism is reinforced everyday through the common belief in America that there is one single way all Americans should live, look, and behave in society. Individuals not living up to these widely viewed, common standards are subject to denial of equal opportunity, academic and instructional opportunities, and isolation from society (Moore & Ratchford, 2007). In our society, individuals seek various forms of media to gain access to information and news on a regular basis. However, they are unaware how this specific medium is influencing their opinions of groups of people. "The mass media (TV, print, and cinema) has historically functioned and currently operates to maintain a system of White supremacy" (Hawkins, 1998, p. 7). The media often limits its positive portrayals of Blacks and exacerbates its negative portrayals in comparison to Whites (Allen, 2015; Duiguid & Rivers, 2000; Hawkins, 1998; Knight, 2015; Marin, 2008).

As racism continues to reinvent/recreate itself in our modern society, public opinion and perceptions of Black males (by the media) continue to hinder their life chances of advancement (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006; Diuguid & Rivers, 2012; Martin, 2008; Page, 1997). The media plays an important role in maintaining these perceptions as they possess significant power and influence over their audience, given that television often acts as a means for people to observe the world around them. The media helps foster a "racial climate, a public perception (of Black males), cultural stereotypes of race deeply situated in American culture" (White, 2010, p. 154), resulting in negative perceptions. These negative portrayals/perceptions and various other forms

of racism (i.e. systemic, structural, and institutional) provide a foundation for understanding the racial inequity people of color face on a day-to-day basis (Golash Boza, 2013).

The image of Black men is constructed by the majority culture, portrayed through television, film, news media, reality television, and music videos, and is rooted in racial defiance (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014). Negative portrayals of violence, brutes, criminality, etc. continue to foster traditional racist attitudes of Whites, influence public opinions, and ideals in a post-Civil Rights era. These representations of "blackness" begin to permeate into our society, becoming socially accepted as the norm while perpetuating misunderstandings, among races and of Black males. Negative images of Black males that consistently appear on screen leave the impression to consumers that anyone and everyone, with the exception of Whites, is guilty.

It is entirely conceivable that the aforementioned barriers Black men face as a result of these negative portrayals parallel their experiences within our schools (Allen, 2015). According to Love (2010), Whites are often taught that discussing race, racism, and the oppression of individuals of marginalized groups is to reveal racism. The researcher further claims that this sets a precedence in the classroom where students barely understand the meaning of race and experience discomfort as a result of being exposed to it. "Some of the responses by Black males to such poor economic and social opportunities are then used as powerful forms of Black masculine representation, as media discourse and sensationalization often contribute to the negative imagery of Black men as deviant, irresponsible, and uneducable. It follows that this discourse and popular ideas of Black male deviancy spill over into the schools, influencing how Black boys are perceived and treated by others" (Allen, 2015, p. 211). Equally as important are the teacher perceptions that shape classroom instructional practices and influence discipline

policies and procedures within the classroom and school environment. Such instructional and institutional behaviors by educators can affect school policies and practices leading to discipline disproportionalities, a lack of academic growth, proficiency, and achievement, the absence of teacher-student relationships, and the overall schooling experience of Black males as a whole. Over sixty years after the historic Brown v. Board of Education decision, school systems all over the United States continue to fail Black students (in particular Black males), "a legacy left behind by racist laws that forbade and then restricted their education with Jim Crow practices" (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014, p. 6).

Problem Statement

Too often the plight of Black males is perceived as a cultural problem that relies (solely) on the shoulders of the Black community to address. However, this plight reflects our larger society that equality has yet to be reached (Allen, 2015). Schools operate everyday as places where the realities of race, racism, and how both play a role in the achievement of African Americans, go completely undiscussed. Despite increasingly diverse demographics/backgrounds of students in our classrooms, colleges and universities continue to prepare teachers to teach "primary English speaking White students who come from middle class, two-parent heterosexual, Protestant Christian homes" (Juarez & Hayes, 2015, p. 318).

Black students all across this nation enter classrooms where they are faced with a cultural disconnect with their teachers; this directly impacts student-learning achievement (Love, 2014). There are an abundance of research studies that document the struggle of black males in public schools in the United States (Allen, 2015; Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Duncan, 2002; Emdin, 2012; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Lloyd, 2005; Moore & Ratchford, 2007; Ponds, 2013, Reynolds, 2010). The research suggests that marginalizing the schooling experience of Blacks is a normal aspect of our education

structure and that caricatures in the media have real world affects on Black males and place them in positions of vulnerability (Love, 2014). Teacher perceptions, "dumbing down" curriculum, a lack of acceleration and proper remediation, and having low expectations of academic potential all play a significant role in Black male academic achievement (Allen, 2015). This is not a problem that is isolated to just teachers and administrators. Counselors can also effect the outcomes of students of color, specifically, Black males, when acting as gatekeepers for their students by either allowing or denying access to opportunities for educational advancement (Allen & White-Smith, 2014).

Racial discrimination continues to plague the schooling experiences of Black males in schools and various other public settings where they are often viewed as violent, dangerous, and threatening (Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015). By the time Black boys reach the age appropriate to begin kindergarten, they are viewed as grown men, capable of threatening behaviors, criminal activity, oppositional, and often labeled as unteachable (Love, 2014) and "for many Black male students the classroom can be a volatile space where the teacher-student relationship can be antagonistic" (Allen, 2015, p. 224).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to provide a critical lens in examining how the negative caricatures of Black males in the media potentially allow teachers to view some of their Black male students as unintelligent, resistant to authority, disrespectful, and violent. To accomplish this task, a cultivation analysis was conducted to examine first-order and second-order effects that occur as a result of racial stereotype portrayal in the HBO original series, *The Wire*. The goal of this study was to explore and examine the likely/potential effects of racial stereotypes portrayed and to predict whether or not viewers of *The Wire* are more likely to

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perceive and treat Black males negatively in ways that reflect the media images portrayed and stereotypes gleaned as a result of watching the series.

Major Research Questions

It is critical to thoroughly examine controversial media caricatures to decode the hidden meanings behind these images, the influence they could or could not have over the formation of their audiences' implicit biases, and how the implications of their meaning might or might not cultivate teachers' perceptions and subsequent treatment of their Black male students. The major research questions for the study were: 1) How are Black males portrayed in the HBO original series, *The Wire*? 2) Do these portrayals reify (or, not) stereotypes of Black males in the United States? 3) How might these portrayals cultivate teachers' perceptions and subsequent treatment of Black male students?

Rationale for the Study

Researchers (Martin, 2008; Miller, 1998; Oliver, 2003) suggest that Whites develop negative stereotypes about Black males when dependent upon television and film to learn about them. Research also suggests that marginalizing the schooling experience of Blacks is a normal aspect of our education structure and that caricatures in the media have real world affects on Black males and place them in positions of vulnerability (Love, 2014). While there are an abundance of research studies that document the struggles of black males in public schools in the United States (Duncan, 2002; Emdin, 2012; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Lloyd, 2005; Moore & Ratchford, 2007; Ponds, 2013, Reynolds, 2010), the interconnectedness of the interactions and relationships teachers have with their students and what actually occurs in the classroom instructionally are typically viewed separately, not examined as part of larger institutional factors that shape the learning experiences of Black males (Banks & Esposito, 2003). "Many questions still remain regarding how these

popular culture images influence practice in addition to the ways in which they are consumed" (Freedman, 1999, p. 81) by teachers.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is derived from media studies and legitimizes the notion that exposure to negative imagery influences the audiences' attitudes and beliefs. This is the central tenet of Cultivation Theory. Referencing Cultivation Theory, Monk-Turner et al. (2010) and Potter (2014) posit that television reaches a broad audience over a long period of time, making it a very powerful medium. Researchers (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Bilandzic, 2006; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Hetsroni, 2012; Jamison & Romer, 2014; Monk-Turner et al., 2010; Oliver, 2003; Parrott & Parrott, 2015; Potter, 2014; Torres, 2015) state that Cultivation Theory reveals that exposure to imagery influences perceptions and beliefs of society and often validate and mainstream long held gender and race-based stereotypes about groups of individuals. I posited that this conceptual framework would provide a critical lens of which to explore and examine the intersectionality of media exposure and the life experiences of students of color, particularly Black males, how these life experiences position Black males in public schools, and the disparities they experience as a result. Cultivation Theory does not imply that every teacher is intentionally harming Black males. However, it does suggest that the consumption of negative media imagery is part of the human experience and, "therefore, represents points of potential connection between those relating an experience and those who hear and interpret such accounts" (Dutro & Kantor, 2011, p. 140).

Cultivation Theory developed out of communication research by Gerbner and Gross in 1976 (Jamison & Romer, 2014). Concerned with violent content in television media and how that would create fear of other people with audiences, Gerbner and Gross posited that television media created a false sense of reality (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Bilandzic, 2006;

Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Hetsroni, 2012; Jamison & Romer, 2014; Lett, DiPietro, & Johnson, 2004; Monk-Turner et al., 2010; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Oliver, 2003; Parrott & Parrott, 2015; Potter, 1991; Potter, 2014; Schnauber & Meltzer, 2016; Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011; Torres, 2015). Potter (2014) explains that Gerbner was interested in whether or not media could influence the entire media landscape through its messages. His approach consisted of an analysis of three components: "the media institutions, the mass-produced messages, and their cultivated effect on large aggregates" (p. 1016). The media, according to Banks and Esposito (2003), perpetuates stereotypes by "portraying the subject in specific and frequently stereotypical ways. Television shows are often couched in dominant ideologies of racism, classism, heterosexism, and patriarchy" (p. 236). Therefore, the representations the media projects on screen are important to examine because of how viewers "digest" what they have seen and try to make meaning as a result (Banks & Esposito, 2003).

The results of negative imagery often spill over into schools, potentially influencing teacher perceptions. It is these perceptions that can then potentially shape classroom instructional practices, affect academic achievement and learning, and influence discipline policies and procedures within the classroom and school environment. Such "management and control" behaviors (suspensions, zero tolerance policies) by educators can affect school policies and practices leading to discipline disproportionalities (Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Kinsler, 2011; Skiba, 2011), a lack of academic growth, proficiency, and achievement due to less rigorous standards and poor instruction by the least qualified teachers, (Allen, 2015, Khanna & Harris, 2015; Parks & Kennedy, 2007), the absence of teacher-student relationships and lower expectation (Duncan, 2002; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Juarez &

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Hayes, 2015; Moore & Ratchford, 2007), and the overall schooling experience of Black males as a whole (Allen, 2015; Allen & White-Smith, 2014).

Significance of the Study

Exploring and examining how negative media portrayals might cultivate teachers' perceptions and subsequent treatment of their Black male students is rather new research (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014). Using *The Wire* as the television media source was significant because it was credited as one of the few shows ever created that primarily told the stories of Black men (Ault, 2012). "Black men are stereotypically represented as either sexual threats or emasculated; representations that *The Wire* takes much care to counter in its panoply of interesting, complex Black male characters" (Ault, 2012, p. 390). The series focused on the various aspects of Baltimore's relentless pursuit of two drug kingpins and the city's war on drug trafficking while examining the interconnectedness of poverty, gentrification, city politics, education, and the media. It is important to note that critics of *The Wire* praised the series for having more Black male actors in major roles than any other show on television during its run (Brock, 2009; Kinder, 2008). It was also hailed as one of the best shows ever produced for network television (Atcho, 2011, Brock, 2009; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Kinder, 2008; Tyree, 2008; Trier, 2010). *The Wire* was one example of similar shows within the same genre such as the following: *CSI*, *NYPD Blue*, *Law & Order*, *Castle*, *Blue Bloods*, *The Closer*, *Criminal Minds*, *The Blacklist*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, *NCIS: New Orleans*, and *Ray Donovan*. Parrott and Parrott (2015), in their discussion of gender and race-based stereotypes perpetuated by the media, found that the amount of television media consumed (in hours) by viewers equals 11 years over a 60 year live span; that is 11 years of cultural conditioning. As a result, the researchers stress the need to thoroughly examine the "implicit and explicit messages" (p. 70) expressed by the media. This study was also significant when considering how media cultivates

attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, judgments, and values about gender and race-based stereotypes, as well as, the interconnectedness of students of color, their daily interactions with teachers, and their schooling experiences. Given that the majority of Black males are taught by a predominately White female teaching force (Allen, 2015), Black students all across this nation often enter classrooms where they are faced with a cultural disconnect with their teachers; this directly impacts student-learning and achievement (Love, 2014). Cross cultural relationships between teachers and students present special challenges in the classroom-learning environment.

Limitations

Given the topic and nature of the study, I, as the sole researcher, had to remain completely neutral to protect the credibility of the study. Being the sole researcher and coder presented a limitation regarding validity as Macnamara (2005) explains two or more coders should be used to ensure maximum reliability. Though Cultivation Theory reveals that exposure could influence perceptions and beliefs of society and often validate long held gender and race-based stereotypes about groups of individuals, it does not address "the nuances of Black culture, the history of racial oppression, or the ongoing use of racial stereotyping in contemporary Black life, social and economic mobility and stagnation" (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014, p, 370). A final limitation related to the wide range of accessibility to a premium channel's original series. (A premium channel is one that does not come with a basic subscription to cable.) *The Wire* was and is widely hailed as one of the best television shows ever produced (Atcho, 2011, Brock, 2009; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Kinder, 2008; Tyree, 2008; Trier, 2010). However, the show aired on HBO, limiting the amount of people that were able to access the series. Though the entire series is available on HBO-On Demand and HBO-GO, a subscription to HBO is necessary to access the program.

Definition of Terms

- Abstract Liberalism – framing race-related issues under the guise of liberalism (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011).

- Achievement Gap – the disparity of academic measures, set forth by each state, between groups of students. These groups are typically Black/African American, Hispanic, and low socioeconomic, as compared to, White/Caucasian students.

- Black – a collective descriptor representing anyone with African descent regardless of national origin (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014).

- Color-blind racism – collective expressions of White racial dominance and racial discrimination that is subtle, apparently nonracial, and institutionalized (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 2001; Winant, 2015).

- Counter-Story – a story used as a tool for exposing racial privilege while "voicing" the experiences not often told by people of color (Allen & White-Smith, 2014).

- Critical Race Theory – an examination of the intersectionality of race with various other identities and how race and racism impact educational theory, academic gatekeeping, policy, and instructional and discipline practices as a means of further marginalizing minority students.

- Cultivation Theory – a term used to describe the correlation between the effects of long-term exposure negative portrayals, in all forms of media, and the validation of negative stereotypes of people of color.

- Cultural Racism – using biology as a means of justifying racial inequities due to the cultural practices of people of color (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011).

- EOG (End – of – Grade) Test – common summative assessments given by the state of North Carolina designed to measure student performance on grade – level goals and objectives.

- Interest Convergence – the merging of the interests of White people and racial justice.

- Media – a means of mass communication, i.e. television, newspapers, and magazines, that influence people's opinions, thoughts, beliefs, and actions.

- Minority/Minorities – a collective descriptor representing anyone non-White regardless of national origin.

- Out of School Suspension – a form of student discipline that prohibits students from participating in school activities and entering school grounds for a length of time under ten days.

- Race – a divisive social construct, created by Whites during colonial expansion, as a means of assigning themselves rights and power while using themselves as the model for humanity (Racial Equity Institute, 2015).

- Racial Identity – the racial background a person most identifies with.

- Racial Realism – a term created by Dr. Derrick Bell that describes "the permanence of the subordinate status for Black Americans, and by extension the persistence of White supremacy, in establishing law and other social policy" (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015, p. 214).

- Racism – one group having the power to carry out systemic discrimination through the major institutions of society (Racial Equity Institute, 2015).

- School–to–Prison Pipeline – a phenomenon in which school disciplinary policies such as out of school suspension, expulsion, detention, and alternative placement programs,

alienate African American males from the learning process within the classroom and academic attainment, toward the criminal justice system (Darensbourg, Perez, and Blake (2010).

- Social Cognition – how individuals store, process, and apply information about others based on media influences.

- Stereotypes – beliefs and attitudes based on membership of a particular group that inform specific behaviors and prejudices (Parrott & Parrott, 2015; Torres, 2015).

- White – a collective descriptor representing anyone with European descent regardless of national origin.

- White Gaze – viewing the world through the White lens with undertones or blatant racist views, attitudes, beliefs, and actions; White fear of Black people (George Yancy, 2008)

- Whiteness – historical and social construction of being White in America; social status, privilege, and power associated with being White.

- White Messiah – a collective descriptor representing a White person who acts as a savior, liberator, or rescuer of Blacks from desolate circumstances.

- White Privilege – unearned benefits given to Whites (McIntoch, 1988; Strmic-Pawl, 2014) granting access to power.

- White Supremacy – systematic and systemic ways in which those that are considered White benefit from the racial social order of society and, as a result, how this social order oppresses people of color (Strmic-Pawl, 2014).

- Zero Tolerance Policies – policies that contain predetermined consequences that are typically viewed as punitive, severe, and ineffective (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010).

Conclusion

The image of Black men is constructed by the majority culture, portrayed through television, film, news media, reality television, and music videos, and is rooted in racial defiance (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014). The media plays an important role in maintaining negative portrayals and perceptions of Black males as they possess significant power and influence over their audience, given that television often acts as a means for people to observe the world around them. It is these perceptions and portrayals that potentially allow racial discrimination to continue to plague the schooling experiences of Black males in schools and various other public settings where they are often viewed as violent, dangerous, and threatening (Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015), limiting their access to a quality instruction, academic rigor and excellence, and the chance at academic achievement. In Chapter Two, I presented a review of the literature, which undergirded my research study into the portrayals of Black males in the HBO original series, *The Wire*. Chapter Two examined and explored existing research on the historical and social construction of race and racism in America, the formation of racial stereotypes of Black males, the history of these caricatures in the media, the effects these racial stereotypes have on Black males' development of self, how they are portrayed in the media, "how limited representations often reflect long-held stereotypes" (Khana & Harris, 2015, p. 39) of Black males in our society, and Black male students' subsequent treatment in the classroom.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

To fully understand the legacy of racism and Whiteness, one must examine the origins of this country and examine the colonization of Virginia in the early 1600s (Pope-Davis & Liu, 1998). The following section will focus on the social construction of race and "Whiteness" in America and the "implications of both as intervening structural barriers in societal interaction patterns and in formal and informal social organization in American society" (Guess, 2006, p. 650). This section will also outline the early days of American exploration and examine the development of institutional racism. It is imperative that one understands the social construction of racism, how it has become institutionalized, how it effects the lives of African Americans daily (Golash-Boza, 2013), and how it trickles down into every institution, every facet of this nation (media, schools) and the educational outcomes of Blacks/Black males.

Social Construction of Racism

The origin and history of race and racism is significant because it reveals the idea that race is a fairly new construct that emerged well after explorers inhabited America and came in contact with one another (Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Winant, 2015). The origins of race stem from a combination of events in history involving settlers coming to the new world, conquering the Native Americans, and the importation of African slaves for labor (Guess, 2006). However, when colonial exploration and expansion first began, the concept of race was non-existent (Winant, 2015). The more immigration that took place, the more co–mingling (dating, marriage, reproduction) among the different groups of people took place as well.

The first twelve years (after the colony was founded/established) were chronicled in the *Journals of the Virginia House of Burgesses* (Zinn, 2003). Within this document, it describes the limited amount of food available for the settlers that first arrived. As more people made the journey to Virginia, the amount of food began to dwindle tremendously. Early settlers were forced to explore the land and hunt for nuts and berries. As a result, Virginians were starving, struggling to survive, and in desperate need of labor to plant and harvest. They knew they could not enslave the Indians because "they were outnumbered, and while with superior firearms, they could massacre Indians, but they would face massacre in return. They could not capture them and keep them enslaved; the Indians were tough, resourceful, defiant, and at home" (Zinn, 2003, p. 2). This put them at a terrible disadvantage yet, they knew they needed skilled labor. Before the construction of the White race in America, powerful English colonists in Virginia began separating individuals of African descent from those of European descent, especially among the poorest people, as early as 1619 (Racial Equity Institute, 2015; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Zinn, 2003). The first Africans were kidnapped and brought to Virginia at a time when the colony was desperate for labor. Africans were brought to the New World socially and intellectually inferior to Whites and enslaved even after the practice (of slavery) was outlawed in Europe. Though the institution of slavery (in the colonies) would not be established for several more decades, importing Black Africans had been going on for as long as 50 years prior in South America and the Caribbean (Zinn, 2003).

Whites and Africans were both in servitude. However, it is believed that the Africans were treated differently and were actually enslaved unlike the White workers that were classified as "servants" (Zinn, 2003). Poor Whites no longer thought it was beneficial to align themselves with others within the same social class. As such, it was in their best interest to cling to the small

privileges given to them because they were White and in the majority (Racial Equity Institute, 2015). Black Africans were the ideal choice of labor because they were unfamiliar with the land, not natives (e.g. Indians), and were not accustomed to European culture (Zinn, 2003). European travelers were impressed with how "advanced" African kingdoms were and knew the inhabitants of this land would be good for planting and harvesting; hence, the development of the economy of the colony. The colony had been founded on the premise of freedom and equality for all. However, Christians had to categorize slaves as nonhumans/three-fifths of a human in order to justify their enslavement (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Even though many White Christians believed that the practices of enslaving Africans seemed unjust, they were still able to reconcile their feelings and categorize slavery as "uplifting and domesticating" (Winant, 2015, p. 317). They thought, "such obviously primitive and backward people cannot be afforded human status" (Winant, 2015, p. 317). This reasoning would allow the colony to grow and prosper on the backs of slaves and unpaid slave labor. America was hungry for power and was anxious to establish itself as an independent nation having separated from England. The "founding fathers" set out to accomplish all of the things they felt other sovereign nations did, for example, setting up an economic base, citizenry, developing relationships with other nations for the purpose of trade, and developing a social order to determine who and what group would be at the top and who would be at the bottom.

Colonists had selected African people to be permanent slave labor. Out of this decision grew a need to categorize human beings by their differences. In 1680, the Virginia House of Burgesses began to debate what constituted being a White man for the sole purpose of determining who exactly would have access to power, property, citizenship, and all the rights and privileges that came with this distinction in the colony (Racial Equity Institute, 2015). At first,

they determined that a "White man" was defined as one with no Negro or Indian (Native American) blood. However, there was a problem with this definition. Years earlier, in 1613, John Rolfe married and had children with Pocahontas who was Native American (Indian). Though they were bi–racial, they were wealthy landowners and possessed a lot of power. In order to keep their wealth and power in the new White regime, the House of Burgesses amended the definition of White to be one with no Negro or Indian blood except for the male descendants of John Rolfe and Pocahontas. This set up a process in which (for centuries) courts have looked upon blood as a type of property, with Whites holding the ultimate prize (Sharfstein, 2003). Given that Whites were the property owners, figuratively and literally, they had the right to discriminate against non-Whites, which formed a legal hierarchy/infrastructure, based on race, and of inequality, in society (Sharfstein, 2003). As such, "race developed as a highly practical political technology of oppression and resistance" (Winant, 2015, p. 317). America was the first nation to separate individuals based on their "race" while Europeans, Africans, Asians were separated (in their native countries) by class.

This one act gave self–designated White people the power to construct and define the White race as they saw fit (Racial Equity Institute, 2015). The results of this act are still felt and continue in present day (Guess, 2006; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Winant, 2015; Zinn, 2003). The ideals of White supremacy are what the "founders" of this nation used to build up systems of inequities that established a Black/White paradigm. These ideals encompassed the values the founders wanted to preserve. As such, they were incorporated into the laws of the land. The social construction of race, a concept that has no basis in biology (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollack, 2014; Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014; Omi & Winant, 2008; Pope-Davis & Liu, 1998; Sharfstein, 2003; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; White, 2010), has continued throughout

the history of the United States and has been an intricate, crucial piece in economic development, the creation and structure of power and wealth, and the exploitation of those not considered White, particularly Blacks (Racial Equity Institute, 2015; Sharfstein, 2003; Winant, 2015).

Race is an ideology, a social construct that can be defined as a classification of human beings that was created for the sole purpose of assigning wealth, power, and maintaining access to such power, access, and privilege (Hughes, 2007; Pope-Davis & Liu, 1998; Racial Equity Institute, 2015). In terms of race in North America, there are several beliefs that make up the social characteristics of race: 1) "They hold that races are naturally unequal and therefore must be ranked hierarchically (inequality is fundamental to all racial systems)." (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 20); 2) There is an assumption that differences among races are so profound that they are inevitably unalterable. These two beliefs are used in the justification of (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). However, the pursuit of classifying everyone of African descent posed a problem as the "one-drop rule had the broad potential to be destabilizing for the White South. If no one's racial status was secure without an exhaustive genealogy, the governmental apparatus of segregation and white supremacy would be perpetually threatening to Whites" (Sharfstein, 2003, p. 1476).

Institutional Racism

The constitution was created for the benefit of White male land-owners in their continued quest to own land and gain wealth (Strmic-Pawl, 2014). "Members of the White race are set forth in history as the standard, and this depiction is most often accompanied by the phantom of maleness. Historically, when Whiteness and maleness are fused, they are viewed as the highest ideal of colonialism, the master, conqueror, and ruler" (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014, p. 8). As America continued to grow and expand on the backs of African slave labor, so, too, did the classification of White, the hierarchy of status based on race, and social and institutional power. A White supremacy system was established and continues to this day as "the

single most important criterion of status…the racial distinction between Black and White" (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 20). This set the stage for the creation of more racialized policies as the rules of social order that governed Black Africans' and White indentured servants' day-to-day routines were known and observed (Guess, 2006). These practices became institutionalized and also determined their separation. Slavery was extremely profitable for slave masters and the economy began to grow as more and more colonies were established. Zinn (2003) explained that, as African slaves continued to arrive, more of their African heritage was destroyed, creating "sambos and helpless dependents" (p. 7). This was the first Black male caricature documented and a prominent racial stereotype that still plagues Black males through media imagery. "Like many of the racial stereotypes that remain embedded in our consciousness, the notion of the dangerous Black male grew directly out of slavery and its aftermath" (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollack, 2014, p. 2).

Virginia established slave codes, or "Pig Laws," to punish slaves that attempted to run away and pass as free men. Pig Laws allowed Whites to punish slaves, even dismember and/or murder them, and claim possession of a new slave if caught hiding, lurking, and killing animals (hogs) for food. In particular, Black men were heavily sought after like chattel for more labor–intensive tasks. Slave owners saw Black men as a way to maintain a wholesome, quality labor supply, power, and wealth within the White race. According to Zinn (2003):

> The system was psychological and physical at the same time. The slaves were taught discipline, were impressed again and again with the idea of their own inferiority to "know their place," to see Blackness as a sign of subordination, to be awed by the power of the master, to merge their interests with the master's, destroying their own individual needs. To accomplish this there was the discipline of hard labor, the breakup of the slave family, the lulling effects of religion (which sometimes led to "great mischief," as one slave holder reported), the creation of disunity among slaves by separating them into field slaves and or privileged house slaves, and finally the power of law and the immediate power of the overseer to invoke whipping, burning, mutilation, and death (p. 8).

The slave codes of the 17th century made it virtually impossible for any slave, particularly, Black male slaves, to retain any since of normalcy in their daily lives (Carter, et. al, 2014). Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollack (2014), in their discussion of race and Black males, point to history when discussing the dangerous Black male frame. In their research, the authors reference the slave revolts of the 19th century and point out that slave masters "spread the notion" (p. 2) that Black males attempting to flee plantations were only interested in hunting down and raping White women. (This was the creation of the racial stereotype of the "brute nigger.") Without any evidence that such a crime had been committed, Pennsylvania passed a law that Black men would be castrated or put to death if such a crime were committed. The authors note that this law helped cement the idea that Black men were a threat to society. As a result, more than 2,000 Black men were lynched between 1889 and 1918 for non-violent offenses.

This next section examined the rise of Black male racial caricatures and stereotypes (portrayed in the media) that were "created" as a result of the social construction of race, Whiteness, and White supremacy. This section also described caricatures/ethnic notions explored in the research. I focused on both the evolution and the progression of Black male stereotypes for two reasons: first, because of the consistent dehumanization, criminalization, and institutional consequences that result for Black males that I argued are rooted in our nation's racist history; second, as previously stated, researchers (Martin, 2008; Miller, 1998; Oliver, 2003) have suggested that Whites develop negative stereotypes about Black males when dependent upon negative imagery depicted on television.

Media Portrayal – The Caricatures/Racial Stereotypes

The Uncle Tom. The nation was first introduced to "Uncle Tom" in Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery novel, <u>Uncle Tom's Cabin</u> in 1852. Theatrical adaptations/productions soon followed based on the novel and soon garnered the reputation of "turning Uncle Tom, the heroic

Christian martyr of Stow's novel, into the submissive race traitor his name connotes today" (Spingarn, 2012, p. 203). The year of 1903 began the portrayal of Black males on the wide screen. The movie industry was in its beginning stages when *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was made. A white actor in blackface initially played the title character "Uncle Tom." The representation of the tom is used to 'remind Blacks that they need only to obey their White 'masters' to solve their problems" (Torres, 2015, p. 293). Bogle (2013) states that the "Tom" remains faithful to their master regardless of the way they are treated, rendering him a hero to some White viewers. One of the most iconic iterations of the "Tom" was portrayed by Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, along side Shirley Temple, in *The Littlest Rebel* (Bogle, 2013). Within the movie, Robinson played the part of Temple's guardian, Uncle Billy, and was her favorite of the household slaves. One afternoon, during her birthday party, the Yankee soldiers invaded the plantation. When Shirley's mother passed and father was captured and taken hostage in the north, Uncle Billy complied with Shirley's requests to protect her at all cost and rescue her father. Bogle (2013) states "the Robinson figure was obviously the familiar contented slave, distinguished, however, because he was congenial, confident, and very, very cool" (p. 50).

Several other characters began to arise as a result of the "Uncle Tom" including the coon, the mulatto, the mammy, and the buck (Bogle, 2013; Ethnic Notions, 1987). The intent was not to cause grave harm to Blacks; it was, however, meant to entertain audiences. The harmful effect of these caricatures/ethnic notions was the popularization of Black stereotypes that existed, and still exists, in our society as seen on reality television shows like *Flavor of Love* and *I Love New York*.

The Black Buffoon/Coon/Pickaninny/Sambo. T.D. Rice was the first prominent white male comedian that performed in Black face. Rice became known as an "Ethiopian Delineator" after he observed an African American male cripple performing an exaggerated version of "Jim Crow," a dance that was created by slaves on the plantation. The church outlawed dancing and defined it as any movement that required a person to cross their feet. Slaves found a way to perform without breaking the law. The image Rice portrayed became a reality to those living in America (at the time) that had never seen an African American before. The image of Jim Crow would eventually evolve into the Sambo in the early 1900s (Ethnic Notions, 1987). As such, Whites were bombarded with images of happy slaves and the Sambo gave the perception that slaves were content with their existence (Hawkins, 1998). The Sambo would often avoid the task at hand in favor of living a "care free" life, full of contentment, through dance and song, serving his slave master. The Sambo depicted the African American male as an older, bearded, grey haired gentleman that would laugh profusely while playing an instrument, shining shoes, or performing normal labor expected of Blacks at the time. Given these characteristics, the Sambo was an embraceable caricature because it presented the Black male as dependent upon its master, posing no threat to White Supremacy (Hawkins, 1998).

African Americans were compared to the European standard that society portrayed as normal, beautiful, and acceptable. Images of African Americans were often shown with white bulging eyes, top and bottom lips that resembled a human liver, and kink hair standing erect on top of the head, resembling a fright wig (Bogle, 2013; Ethnic Notions, 1987). Cartoons perpetuated these images and depicted African American lineage from Africa, known as the dark, anti–civilized continent, as savages. The Coon and Black Buffoon appeared shortly after the Uncle Tom in 1904. Two variants of the Coon branched off into the Pickaninny and the Uncle

Remus. The Pickaninny was the representation of a Black child with big eyes that popped out and whose hair stood on end (Bogle, 2013; Ethnic Notions, 1987). The Pickaninny was/is commonly known as Buckwheat, a comedic character that was portrayed by Eddie Murphy in the early years of *Saturday Night Live*. Thomas Alva Edison was the first producer to bring the Pickaninny to the big screen when he created *Ten Pickaninnies* in 1904.

When a newer version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was created/produced in 1927, Topsy was the representation of the Pickaninny used solely as an object of amusement and comic relief. Bogle (2013) reports that the coon became the most degrading of all caricatures of Blacks stating "the pure coon emerged as no account niggers, those unreliable, crazy, lazy, subhuman creatures good for nothing more than eating watermelons, stealing chickens, shooting crap, or butchering the English language" (p. 8). Emancipation saw the start of Black migration in the early 1900s. Blacks began to move into cities across the country, as well as migrate north, disturbing the social order for Whites and threatening the status quo in America. As a result, a new caricature of the Urban Coon was created. Dice, razor blades, and gambling were stereotypes belonging to the latest caricature, shaping impressionable minds to be acceptable and comical. While it was obvious Blacks did not appear the way they were portrayed in art, cartoons, and figurines during the Jim Crow era, when the audience was subjected to these images over a long span of time, Blacks began to look and act as they were portrayed in the eye of the beholder. These images have shaped feelings about race over time and are appealing to their target audiences. Examples of the modern depictions of the buffoon would be the character of JJ from *Good Times*, Detective James Steven Carter in the CBS series, *Rush Hour*, and Detective James Carter from the *Rush Hour* movie franchise, played by Chris Tucker.

The Brutal Black Buck/Brute Nigger. *The Birth of a Nation* was a huge

multidimensional, unprecedented movie of its time. Produced in 1915 by D. W. Griffith, *The*

Birth of a Nation took place in Piedmont, South Carolina, and revolved around the fictional

family, the Cameron's. The film portrays Whites in power and Blacks happily working in the

fields, entertaining their masters, and conducting their house work with no complaints. All is in

order until the Civil War. The South is taken over by Negro raiders, "unleashing the sadism and

bestiality innate in the negro, turning the once congenial darkies into renegades and using them

to crush the White South under the hell of the Black South" (Bogle, 2013, p. 12). The film

depicts Black men as sloppy drunks, lustful rapists, and barbaric brutes. This caricature posed a

direct threat to White Supremacy because it portrayed the Black male as an animalistic, untamed,

sexual savage controlled by its sexual urges (Hawkins, 1998).

Just when all hope is lost, a group of White Southern men, dressed in all white wearing

white hoods, ride into the South, fight and defeat the Negro raiders, and restore order to the

South. These men become the symbol of White honor, White glory, and the heroes of White

women. These men become known as the Ku Klux Klan and the *"Birth of a Nation"* occurs.

Bogle (2013) suggests Griffith played on the myth that every Black man lusted after White

women and used this imagery to rile up his audience and draw them (emotionally) into his film.

His portrayal of the brutal Black buck made the attraction to White women animalistic with

Black men foaming at the mouth and stiffening their bodies at the mere sight of a White woman,

suggesting they were so aroused as to almost be brought to full climax. Coincidentally, during

the desegregation movement, newspapers reported the fears of Whites as it related to Black male,

masculine bodies. Specifically, Whites were concerned about Black males challenging White

males' way of life and having sex with White women (Irby, 2014). According to Hawkins (1998),

the Sambo and the Brutal Black Buck/Brute Nigger were used to justify slavery and the need for slavery, as well as, justify the treatment of slaves, the need to keep them in their place, and, ultimately, their lynching. This portrayal aroused hatred that still lingers regarding Black men to date. What has to be remembered is that, in present day, the media delivers the same product wrapped in new packaging, meaning, the same caricatures portrayed in the early 1900s are still being mass produced in today's news stories, movies, and both scripted and reality television shows such as the CW's *The Originals*, ABC's *Mistresses*, OWN's *Tyler Perry's If Loving You is Wrong*, and ABC's *Happy Endings*. Given the context of these caricatures portrayed in the media, it is important to remember the media possesses significant power over viewers, maintaining and perpetuating popular misconceptions of Black males (Martin, 2008) and that the United States of American is a nation that has its history deeply rooted in racism. It is a nation that has enslaved Blacks longer than being an emancipated nation under God.

Race and Brown v Board of Education

When the landmark decision of Brown v Board of Education forced legal integration, social scientists in the United States believed that the increase in contact with people of differing races and ethnicities would make it virtually impossible to hold on to racial and ethnic stereotypes (Carter, et. al., 2014). The authors state that social scientists believed that mindsets could be changed despite centuries of social segregation and negative stereotypes passed down from generation to generation. Equally important to note is the idea that race applies to Whites just as much as it does to ethnic and racial minorities (Hughes, 2007). Hughes (2007) states that American history must recognize how various immigrant groups were classified as White over time. The author urges individuals "not to dismiss the historical importance of race, but rather to 'confront White privilege' by revealing how its social construction has had 'all-too-real consequences for the distribution of wealth, prestige, and opportunity'" (p. 205).

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Guess (2006), in her discussion of the social construction of race, explores the differences in what she identifies as racism by intent and racism by consequence. The author reveals that racism by intent manifests itself through individual acts of racial prejudice towards those that are not White. Racism by consequence is based on historical events that have developed into inferiority over other races. It permeates through discriminatory behaviors and facilitates the development of social practices that become institutionalized. The author suggests that once racism has reached the institutional level, White Americans may not recognize that is exists. "Racism by consequence then is reflected in differential educational opportunities, economic differentials between Whites and non-Whites, residential segregation, health care access, and death rate differentials between Whites and non-Whites" (p. 652).

Racism has been able to thrive for over 400 years because it continues to reinvent itself (Guess, 2006; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Omi & Winant, 2008; Racial Equity Institute, 2015; Smith & Brown, 2014). The Trayvon Martin shooting of 2012, the killings of Akai Gurley, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and Michael Brown in 2014, and the killings of Philando Castile, Keith Lamont Scott, Terence Crutcher, and Alton Sterling in 2016, are all reminders that institutional racism is alive and well in the United States and within democratic institutions across the country resulting in racist policies (Guess, 2006). They also serve as reminders that the lives of Black males are undervalued in this nation (Knight, 2015). "Conscious or unconscious, acknowledged or denied, the racial organization of everyday life is omnipresent: where we live, the work we do, what we eat and what we wear, the language we speak and the idioms we use, the television programs we watch; in short, nearly every aspect of our everyday lives is shaped in crucial ways by race" (Omi & Winant, 2008, p. 1568). This idea was explored further in the next section.

Modern Day Media Portrayals of Black Males

Throughout the history of television and film, there have been several remarkable performances of Black actors, actresses, and filmmakers that have contributed to the context of American media. Though some of the works have not been met with astounding critical praise, some of the most important have been those that left their audiences exploring issues, themes, cultural symbols, signs, and concepts that hit so close to home, they provoked thought and sparked a dialogue (Bogle, 2013). News and entertainment stories, that are seen and heard daily by viewers, can strongly influence public opinion, news, television and film. As a result, they facilitate the growth of a culture that is conducive to shaping individual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of whom Black males are, how they behave, and how they are to be treated (Agosto, 2014). The first section below offered background on the social construction of racism in the media, how the media "paints a picture" of Black males, and how these images and the beliefs cultivated as a result, affect their daily life struggles.

Post *Brown v Board of Education* and within the Civil Rights movement, there began a criticism of the portrayal of Blacks in America, particularly in the way of media and text representation (Hughes, 2007). Blacks were primarily left out of the history of the nation and, when there was mention of Blacks, "they were portrayed (Blacks) in such a way as to 'reinforce all the old Negro stereotypes' of childlike caricatures or social problems ill-prepared for the demands of citizenship" (Hughes, 2007, p. 202). The Kerner Commission was established in the late 1960s by President Lyndon B. Johnson in an attempt to correct the missteps of the media's coverage of race relations in America (Diuguid & Rivers, 2000). Officially known as the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, the task force pointed out that media coverage was biased in that it viewed news worthy events through a White male lens. As a result, images representing people of color in the news, magazines, radio, and television were

(often) distorted and exaggerated. At the same time, the Cultural Indicators Project was established in 1967. According to Morgan and Shanahan (2010), this project began "conducting annual message system analysis of prime-time broadcast programming in 1967. The goal was to track the most stable, pervasive, and recurrent images in network television content, in terms of the portrayal in violence, gender roles, race and ethnicity, occupations, and many other topics and aspects of life" (p. 339). These were two of the first cultivation studies that took place before George Gerbner, considered the founder of Cultivation Theory, began his work. The representation of Black culture as a whole continues to be a distorted one as Blacks, particularly Black males, are often portrayed as deviant members of society. The media is responsible for using stereotypes to define Blacks and images that are modern day holDovers from slavery.

Visual Texts and Representations. The 1970s and 1980s saw a rise in television programming, with all Black ensemble cast members (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015), such as *Sanford and Son, The Jeffersons, Good Times, What's Happening, Amen,* and *227*. However, racial stereotypes ran rampant within the Black male characters. Two examples of this are the characters of JJ and James Evans, Sr. in *Good Times*. In her discussion of *Good Times* and *The Cosby Show*, Hopkins (2012) cites the work of Rountree (2011), who states JJ was "arguably a stereotypical buffoon" (p. 961) and cites James Evans, Sr. as being a strong father whose power lied in his brute strength, often appearing angry, out of control and explosive (Brute). The most notable shows of the 1980s are *The Cosby Show* and *A Different World* in which Blacks were portrayed as upper middle class, college educated, and extremely successful in careers such as medicine, law, engineering, and corporate business executives (Hopkins, 2012). These two shows introduced audiences to Black authors and musicians, Black actors and actresses, and showcased Black art and dance. They were also critical vehicles in introducing HBCUs

(Historically Black College Universities) and historically Black fraternities and sororities to the majority audiences. Critics of the shows argued that it was not an accurate depiction of the Black family because of its portrayal of a Black male doctor and a Black female lawyer as working professionals that were financially stable (Hopkins, 2012). Hopkins (2012) states that critics painted the "authentic" Black experience as one where the family is based out of the projects (*Good Times*), speaks with "Black dialect," and typically portrayed some type of violence or gang/drug/alcohol activity. The author also states that critics believed The Cosby Show created a false narrative that Blacks had achieved the American dream, overcome racism and discrimination, and entered the middle class mainstream. *The Cosby Show* and *A Different World* were extremely popular among all audiences because it presented a counter narrative to the racial stereotypes popularized in television media. After their departure, Blacks and their roles in television reverted back to situation comedies, e.g., *In Living Color, Martin, The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, Family Matters, Hangin' with Mr. Cooper, Living Single,* and rarely were there characters of color in dramas or written as regular cast members, that appeared on NBC, CBS, and ABC (Khamma & Harris, 2015; Monk-Turner et. al, 2010). Black characters are still written into programs and depicted in reality television shows where representative stereotypes like the brute, athlete, and buck are still present, e.g., *Cops, The Game, Oz, The Wire, Treme, Ballers, Power, Empire*. "This form of 'entertainment' is one in which Black and Latino men are the 'villains,' White men are the 'heroes,' and police use of force is a natural and needed means of 'resorting justice'" (Oliver, 2003, p. 8). Television and film personify how media provides audiences with a fabricated view of reality through the misrepresentations of Black males, real or imaginary, through shows such as *I Love New York, Flavor of Love, For the Love of Ray J, From G's to Gents,* and *Snoop Dogg's Father Hood*.

Many Americans are familiar with the many visceral caricatures and stereotypes targeted towards Black males. These images are readily distributed to the public through local and national news, film, television (scripted and reality), music videos, and other various forms of media. As these images make their way into people's homes, they have the potential to influence personal opinions, ideas, and racial attitudes towards Blacks, particularly Black males. It is critical to thoroughly examine these controversial images to decode the hidden meanings behind these images, the influence they have over the formation of their audiences' implicit biases, and how the implications of their meaning can be challenged and overturned (Attwood, 2012; Trier, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). If left unchallenged, "society runs the risk of making race invisible in the public consciousness" (Smith & Brown, 2014, p. 168).

Positive associations with Black males are often limited to professional athletes, musicians, entertainers, and comedic actors; however, they lack the depth and variety of range that the media represents as a White cultural norm (Diuguid & Rivers, 2000; Hawkins, 1998). For example, Black males (as portrayed in the media) excelling in sports, only, depicts physical achievement, perpetuating images that are not relatable and tangible for many Black male children (Hawkins, 1998). These caricatures also suggest Black males' success is only limited to those options. Instead, criminality, poverty, over sexed brutes, and the street corner thug are characteristics that are overemphasized as a true dominant fixture of Black male culture (Bogle, 2013; Hawkins, 1998). "This sort of situation is manifest in a variety of settings, including store clerks who keep a particularly keen eye on African American male customers who are targeted as potential shoplifters, and White women who clutch their pocketbooks more closely when in the presence of Black men" (Oliver, 2003, p. 3). When analyzing mainstream media, (i.e., news coverage, film, television sitcoms, rap, etc.), Blacks are often typecast as gangsters, drug

addicts/dealers, buffoons, and delinquents. "These images can foster the already accepted stereotypes of African Americans within majority culture. But they also continue to create caricatures of the Black experience reducing African Americans from whole beings to an image, behavior, or a sound bite plastered across the TV screen" (Martin, 2008, p. 340).

What begins to form is a link between the media portrayals of Black males and public opinion of members of this subgroup (Allen, 2015; Gray, 1986; Hawkins, 1998; Knight, 2015; Martin, 2008; Miller, 1998; Oliver, 2003). In other words, unless viewers have personal experience with Black males and/or have Black males within their social circle to challenge these portrayals, the media becomes one of their primary forms of education thus having a great impact on shaping beliefs and attitudes of Black males (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Martin, 2008; Monk-Turner et. al, 2010, Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011; Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). (If you continue to tell the same lie, eventually people begin to believe it as true.) According to Bilandzic (2006), viewers will often try and interpret television media content in order to make sense of what they have seen. "If the content pertains to actual experiences or concerns, a viewer may perceive television content as close" (p. 336), meaning, the viewer has had a similar experience and can relate to a character, storyline, or certain events as presented. Bilandzic (2006) defines this as a viewer's relevant structure. For example, if a storyline contains drug dealing and shootings, someone living in a neighborhood with a high crime rate will be able to relate to that versus a television viewer living in a neighborhood deemed safe. "The viewer's relevant structures are prompted by matching television content" (Bilandzic, 2006, p. 337), which influence first-order effects. "Once activated, the relevance structures are used to interpret the content" (Bilandzic, 2006, p. 337), which influence second-order effects. (First-order and second-order effects will be defined and discussed later in the

literature review.) Bilandzic (2006) and Morgan and Shanahan (2010) note that various types of media content can prompt relevance structures, including fear. Given that the majority of citizens report that their knowledge of crime and criminals is a result of the media (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014; Oliver, 2003), the result of such caricatures and misrepresentations lead to the following: a general antipathy/animosity towards Black males, distorted views on violence and crime, a lack of association with Black males, and a lack of empathy for and understanding of the plight of Black males (Bogle, 2013; Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010; Gray, 1986; Miller, 1998; Page, 1997).

Stereotypes develop from a variety of sources and often involve beliefs and attitudes based on membership of a particular group that inform specific behaviors and prejudices (Parrott & Parrott, 2015; Torres, 2015). Stereotypes are often related to gender and race and are often dubious and troublesome for racial minorities as they typically lead to some form of discrimination. "While stereotypes are not inherently positive or negative, the meaning assigned to them does exert respective influences on attitudes and cognitions" (Parrott & Parrott, 2015, p. 72). Parrott and Parrott (2015), in their discussion of gender and race-based stereotypes perpetuated by the media, found that the amount of television media consumed (in hours) by viewers equals 11 years over a 60 year live span; that is 11 years of cultural conditioning. "If we can recognize that the media's production of Black male imagery is one of the many White cultural practices undergirding the formation of a new world order, then we must decolonize the production and dissemination of media representations" (Page, 1997, p. 99).

The association of Black males as criminals is not a new phenomenon. There have been several tragic shootings and killings of Black people, in particular, Black men, assumed to be "armed and dangerous" that have occurred in the last several years that conger up the long

history of oppression and stereotyping Blacks have faced for over 400 years (Love, 2014; Oliver, 2003). Many of the lived realities of Black males are not only missing from media portrayals, they are often dramatized and distorted (Bogle, 2013; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Page, 1997). For example, the largest block of reporting (during the morning and nightly news) typically involves Black males as aggressors and perpetrators of violence whereas Whites are underrepresented, maintaining a second-class status for Blacks that dates from slavery to present day. As such, "crime coverage may compound Whites' fear of Blacks by showing Black criminals more than White criminals surrounded with symbols of menace" (Entman, 1990, p. 337). Therefore, it is critical to thoroughly examine both implicit and explicit messages expressed by the media. The following section describes the conceptual framework that undergirded this study and provided a lens in which the racial stereotypes and caricatures portrayed in *The Wire* were examined.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation Theory developed out of communication research by Gerbner and Gross in 1976 (Jamison & Romer, 2014). Concerned with violent content in television media and how that would create fear of other people with audiences, Gerbner and Gross posited that television media created a false sense of reality (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Bilandzic, 2006; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Hetsroni, 2012; Jamison & Romer, 2014; Lett, DiPietro, & Johnson, 2004; Monk-Turner et al., 2010; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Oliver, 2003; Parrott & Parrott, 2015; Potter, 1991; Potter, 2014; Schnauber & Meltzer, 2016; Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011; Torres, 2015). Potter (2014) explains that Gerbner was interested in whether or not media could influence the entire media landscape through its messages. His approach consisted of an analysis of three components: "the media institutions, the mass-produced messages, and their cultivated effect on large aggregates" (p. 1016). Gerbner was convinced, due

to the vast amounts of portrayals of groups of people, that media messages influence public perceptions and beliefs and cultivated individual assumptions of society. Gerbner was also quick to narrow his focus to television media arguing, "commercial television, unlike other media, presents an organically composed total world of interrelated stories (both drama and news) produced to the same set of market specifications" (Potter, 2014, p. 1018). As such, Gerbner began what Morgan and Shanahan (2010) described as a cultivation analysis. He was convinced that an "environment in which certain types of institutions with certain types of objectives create certain types of messages, tends to cultivate (support, sustain, and nourish) certain types of collective consciousness" (p. 339). According to Cultivation Theory, television media creates "an impression of a mean world that should mediate the experience of fear" (p. 32). Torres (2015) points to a study that examined an audience's perceptions of various ethnic groups as a result of heavy television consumption. The results indicated that audiences overwhelmingly perceived ethnic minorities negatively as a result of television depictions.

Categorization. Torres (2015) also cites a study that used Cultivation Theory as its framework. Given the general premise of the theory, the study used a survey after participants watched a segment of news media that portrayed a Black suspect and a White suspect. The description and details in the case were the same. The only thing that was different was the picture of the suspect. The participants were to rate the guilt of the suspect after viewing the newsreel. The results revealed that participants thought the Black suspect was guiltier. As a result of these studies, Torres posited that viewers can be trained to view a person as guilty just by the color of their skin and that heavy consumption of media has a direct impact on how Black people are perceived and then consequently treated and categorized. According to Torres (2015),

"categorization is the maximization of differences between social groups and minimization between group members, creating an 'us' versus 'them' perspective" (p. 289). (See Figure 1)

Mainstreaming. According to Parrott and Parrott (2015), "mainstreaming, in which television communicates homogenous messages that ultimately reinforce the status quo by cultivating common perspectives among heavy consumers of television" (p. 79), is a key piece of the cultivation process in which media, specifically television media, provides a broad perspective of everyday life in our society (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Bilandzic, 2006; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Hetsroni, 2012; Jamison & Romer, 2014; Monk-Turner et al., 2010; Oliver, 2003; Parrott & Parrott, 2015; Potter, 2014; Torres, 2015). The representations the media projects on screen are important to examine because of how viewers "digest" what they have seen and try to make meaning as a result (Banks & Esposito, 2003). The media, according to Banks and Esposito (2003), perpetuates stereotypes by "portraying the subject in specific and frequently stereotypical ways. Television shows are often couched in dominant ideologies of racism, classism, heterosexism, and patriarchy" (p. 236).

The results of negative imagery often spill over into schools, potentially influencing teacher perceptions. It is these perceptions that can then shape classroom practices and influence discipline policies and procedures within the classroom and school environment.
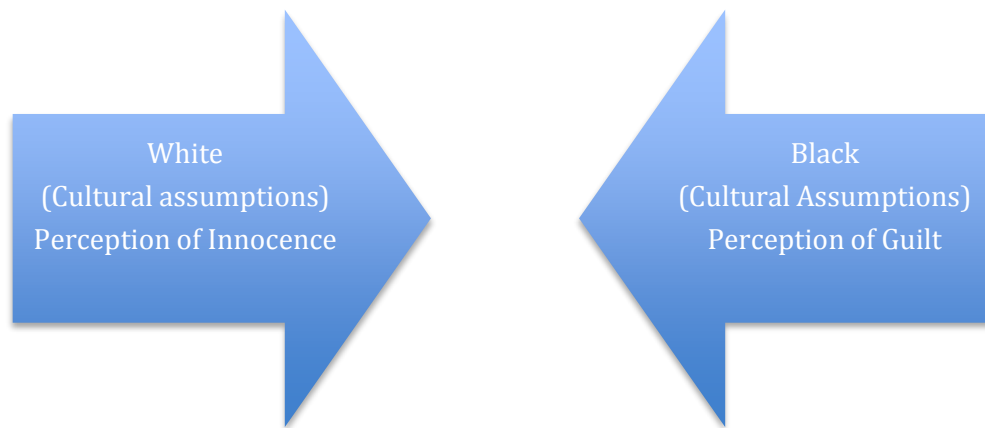
Figure 1: Categorization

Behaviors (suspensions, zero tolerance policies) by educators can also affect school policies and practices leading to discipline disproportionalities (Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Kinsler, 2011; Skiba, 2011), a lack of academic growth, proficiency, and achievement (Allen, 2015, Khanna & Harris, 2015; Parks & Kennedy, 2007), the absence of teacher-student relationships (Duncan, 2002; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Moore & Ratchford, 2007), and the overall schooling experience of Black males as a whole (Allen, 2015; Allen & White-Smith, 2014).

First-Order and Second-Order Effects. Researchers (Bilandzic, 2006; Hetsroni, 2012; Lett, DiPietro, & Johnson, 2004; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Potter, 1991; Schnauber & Meltzer, 2016; Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011) state that there are two particular cultivating effects (see Table 1) that take place and the assumption that what is depicted is the normalization of beliefs.

Table 1: Cultivation Process of First and Second Order Effects

Cultivation Process				
	Learning		**Construction**	**Result**
Facts	Television Viewing with no Prior Knowledge	→	Frequency/Probability of Racial Stereotype Portrayal	→ First Order Effects
Attitudes	Television Viewing with Preconceived attitudes and beliefs with no counter narrative	→	Racial Stereotypes portrayed on television with preconceived attitudes, values, beliefs	→ Second Order Effects

The first cultivation effect is how viewers gain information about society, i.e. demographics, characteristics, their frequency/quantitative measures, and "encoding of television information" (Bilandzic, 2006, p. 340); these are first order effects. The second cultivation effect is the relationship between television viewing and attitudes and beliefs that might result from images, racial stereotypes, caricatures, and messaging; these are second-order effects. (Hetsroni, 2012, p. 38). Second-order effects involve the viewer constructing judgments and affirming attitudes as a result of exposure/first order effects (Bilandzic, 2006; Lett, DiPietro, & Johnson, 2004; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Potter, 1991; Schnauber & Meltzer, 2016; Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011). Second-order effects are far more common (in contrast to first-order effects) because viewers encounter information in everyday situations and make spontaneous judgments as a result (Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011). Hetsroni (2012) states "cultivation proponents emphasize the consistency of the relationship between the amount of time devoted to TV viewing and estimates, evaluations, and attitudes across various topics-from overestimation of crime prevalence to embracing thin figure as the ideal body type. Researchers presume that

cultivation occurs because people encode information while they watch television, intentionally or unintentionally, and that this information is retained in their long-term memory" (p. 38).

Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, and Rindfleisch (2011), in their study of second-order cultivation effects, state that most research has mainly focused on first-order cultivation judgment which has left a gap in the research as to how television influences attitudes, beliefs, and values (second-order effects). However, researchers (Bilandzic, 2006; Hetsroni, 2012; Lett, DiPietro, & Johnson, 2004; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Potter, 1991; Schnauber & Meltzer, 2016; Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011) claim that examining the interconnectedness of first-order and second-order effects provides a better analysis of the effects of television viewing on perceptions of individual groups of people.

Potter (1991), in his discussion of the relationship between first and second order effects, broke down the cultivation process into two subprocesses; the two categories are learning (first order) and construction (second order). Learning involves the relationship between television viewing and the frequency of images. "The more a person views, the more incidental information he or she learns from television (p. 94). Construction is described as the process of using first order effects and the formation of beliefs of society. Therefore, from a cultivation perspective, racial stereotypes/caricatures are measures of second-order effects because they possess a variety of attitudes that can be internalized by media exposure and first-order effects because of the frequency of their appearance on screen. "In this sense, first-order beliefs are seen as an intervening variable in the relationship between television viewing and second-order beliefs" (Schnauber & Meltzer, 2016, p. 123).

According to Cultivation Theory, television media creates "an impression of a mean world that should mediate the experience of fear" (p. 32). To test this theory, Oliver conducted a

telephone survey in which White television viewers were asked to identify who had or would be involved in criminal behavior. They were also asked to respond to the amount of scripted and reality television police shows. The results were overwhelmingly high in terms of Whites believing Blacks would be involved in criminal behavior. It is important to remember that the media is in the business of storytelling and is responsible for the type of characters Black males will play (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006). Bilandzic (2006), in her study of the cultivation process, states that the judgments that are formed, as a result of the racial stereotypes/caricatures portrayed in television media, are not instantaneous; they are formed over a process effect. Within this process, imagery plays an important role in "transporting" the viewer into the narrative, making the experience of television viewing memorable and intense while invoking considerable influence over viewers' perceptions. Bilandzic (2006) states "recipients turn to fiction (in books, television, radio) expecting to be entertained and, consequently, do not engage in critical scrutiny" (p. 338). Continuous exposure has lead to a change in beliefs as a result of the narrative and character portrayal (Bilandzic, 2006).

Media Portrayals of Black Males

Caricatures. Caricatures, known as ethnic notions, portrayed in the media, have the potential to influence their audiences' negative perceptions (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006; Bogle, 2013; Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010; Duiguid & Rivers, 2000; Entman, 1990; Gray, 1986; Martin, 2008; Miller, 1998; Oliver, 2003; Omi & Winant, 2008; Page, 1997). Researchers (Martin, 2008; Miller, 1998; Oliver, 2003) suggest that Whites develop negative stereotypes about Black males when dependent upon television and film to learn about them; as such, the more negative images they are exposed to, the more they are likely to develop their stereotypes and beliefs (Allen, 2015; Martin, 2008; Miller, 1998), since media "focuses on their physicality and sexuality, and consistently constructs a picture of Black men as pathologically flawed, with

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strong tendencies toward criminality and violence" (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014, p. 9). Based on social cognition, people often categorize others based on a variety of demographics, race being the main characteristic, thus perceiving that everyone "placed in the same box" must possess the same characteristics (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014). Caricatures/ethnic notions pack the hardest punch when viewers have less lived realities of Black males to compare their perceptions to. If huge amounts of media consumption create inflated/farfetched attitudes and beliefs, huge amounts of distortions are created as a result. Known as Associative Priming, Oliver (2003) reveals that viewers of the media have already associated Black males with violent criminal behaviors "as part of their cognitive structure, and once this structure is in place, exposure to violent crime alone is sufficient to call this stereotype to mind and to influence subsequent judgments" (p. 10).

    Effects. Black males rely on far more experiences than their White counterparts to formulate images of themselves, as a result of the complexity and many dimensions of their lives (Martin, 2008). Given that they are members of society, they are not immune to the media and its influence as they are consumers like everyone else. As racism and racial prejudice continue to be a pervasive problem in our society, the media continues to perpetuate these negative caricatures and impact views of Blacks, particularly Black males (Diuguid & Rivers, 2000; Martin, 2008). Specifically, researchers (Diuguid & Rivers, 2000; Gray, 1995; Martin 2008; Page, 1997) suggest negative caricatures in the media influence Black cultural views and potentially affect the development (socially, emotionally) of Black males as negative stereotypes (thugs, hoods, criminals, over sexed brutes) reduce self-esteem, expectations, and outcomes. These same researchers (Diuguid & Rivers, 2000; Gray, 1995; Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014; Martin 2008; Page, 1997) also suggest Black males can internalize stereotypes and negative

caricatures and, through their words and actions, reinforce these same negative images (Allen, 2015; Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014). "While a number of social groups racialized as the 'Other' have faced dehumanizing experiences, perhaps one of the most deeply entrenched-and the most pertinent to today's discipline disparities, as well as the controversial killings across the nation headlining our media-is the corrosive stereotype of the dangerous Black male" (Carter, et. al, 2014, p. 2). Distortions in the media are also significant because of the lasting real world effects on the outcomes of Black males, particularly when their fate is based on how they are perceived by Whites. These outcomes include less attention from doctors, harsher punishment from school officials and judges (Skiba et al., 2002), and a higher likelihood of being shot and/or killed by a White police officer (Oliver, 2003) both armed and unarmed, as seen by the killings of Akai Gurley, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Trayvon Martin. Events in our country remind us of society's racial dividing lines, particularly those that involve Black males. These events can have series, if not, deadly consequences (Carter, et. al, 2014).

Adolescent development is complex in nature as individuals explore and try new facets of life, discover their sexual identity, and establish their place in the world. Black youth identity development is far more complex because they also have to discover their racial identity and what it means to be Black in America (Martin, 2008). This proves to be extremely difficult, as society has often defined (for Black youth) what it means to be Black (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006; Martin, 2008). Black youth face a barrage of negative images "which may ultimately have an impact on their development and their overall sense of who they are or who they can become" (Martin, 2008, p. 338). Adolescent Blacks, particularly Black males, acquire their sense of self largely from White society and the institutions that educate them. Additionally, young people often look to the media to examine the way they (adolescents) are depicted in order to see if they

can identify with these same images. This can prove detrimental to their development as depictions are accepted by the majority culture and, in turn, the Black culture as well. This is a characteristic of color-blind racism in which Blacks take on the stereotypes (about themselves) of the majority culture. Allen (2015) notes that Black students may begin to adopt characteristics opposite of what they perceive as a White identity. Black students may buck traditional schooling norms such as studying in a library, active class participation, completion of assignments, and behavioral expectations for fear of being perceived as acting White.

Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011), in their discussion of color-blind racism, suggest Blacks subscribe to an ideology that blames themselves for racial inequalities. The researchers conducted a study of 211 Black college students from the Midwest and West Coast and a vast number of those surveyed exhibited color-blind attitudes and placed blame on the Black community for the lack of equality and opportunity in America. Additionally, they believed in a "hierarchical system of inferior and superior social groups and have internalized racial stereotypes about Blacks" (p. 196). The color-blind perspectives and beliefs of Blacks contribute to their oppression and their lack of support for structural changes that could open pathways of advancement and achievement.

Given the absence of positive images depicted in the media, adolescent Black males are lead to believe their race is not as valued as the majority race (Martin, 2008; Oliver, 2003; Smith & Brown, 2014). "With the extensive viewing of media, in particular TV, by African American youth, there may be a greater chance of these images decreasing self esteem, increasing their identification with the negative attitudes, and eventual or possible disruption of their racial identity" (Martin, 2008, p. 339). In contrast, when these images are produced by Black sources, their impact can be just as strong, if not, worse. The ideology of the aggressive Black brute, the

criminal, etc. can be rejected when it comes from the outside. However, when it is presented from within, the impact can be detrimental to Black males' self-development.

Stereotype Threat. "Stereotype threat" is a potential implication of constant and continued exposure to negative portrayals of Blacks/Black males. Stereotype threat can be described as the fear that a person will confirm (through actions) existing stereotypes of a group of which they identify with (Martin, 2008; Schmader et al., 2008). It is the assumption of researchers (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Bilandzic, 2006; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Hetsroni, 2012; Jamison & Romer, 2014; Lett, DiPietro, & Johnson, 2004; Monk-Turner et al., 2010; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Oliver, 2003; Parrott & Parrott, 2015; Potter, 1991; Potter, 2014; Schnauber & Meltzer, 2016; Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011; Torres, 2015) that long term exposure and consistent inundation of negative images will cultivate the belief that the stereotype is, not only true but, manifest into their actualization (Martin, 2008; Schmader et. al., 2008). Stereotype threat has the potential to lead to emotional distress, affecting academics and athletics. It can also reduce performance on tests, limit proficiency, and deter academic achievement.

Racialization. Similar to stereotype threat is the concept of racialization. Researchers Ispa-Landa & Conwell (2015) introduce racialization and define this phenomenon as the categorization of individuals and the acquisition of racial identities and characteristics. They point to a study that was conducted in which middle/working class residents of a neighborhood referred to their neighborhood as "White" because of the characteristics associated with it. The researchers suggest by doing so, they automatically racialize a neighborhood deemed "Black" as lower class, dirty, and disorderly. They posit the same reasoning occurs in schools as they point to another study in which Black girls, attending an elite prep school, referred to their school as

"White." "For these girls, the school's social world reflected the customary tastes, styles of interaction, and assumptions of a 'White' world. Because race relations involve power and hierarchy, these Black students were forced to negotiate their positions as outsiders who represented difference from the invisible norm of whiteness" (p. 3). The same is true for academic intervention and support classes. The researchers discuss parents and students' understanding of these classes as the schools' way of increasing the academic achievement of minority and low income students. The classes are automatically racialized as Black. This reinforces the beliefs of academic deficiency and intelligence as it relates to race for Blacks and Whites. This can also creates a climate in which Black students can categorize certain classrooms (Advanced Placement/Honors) within schools as Whites only.

Racial Hoax. Another implication of negative portrayals of Black males is the "racial hoax." Diuguid and Rivers (2000) define a racial hoax as a crime that is fabricated by someone that "blames it on another person because of his race or when an actual crime has been committed and the perpetrator falsely blames someone because of his race" (p. 122). The reason racial hoaxes work in our society is because they tap into the fears widely held by Whites. One of the most notable examples of a racial hoax occurred in Union, South Carolina, in 1994, and garnered national press (Hawkins, 1998). Susan Smith, a White female, spoke on national television and alleged that a Black male wearing a ski mask, hijacked her car with her two infant sons strapped in the back seat. When the car and the children could not be found, Union police held a press conference and Susan Smith pleaded for the return of her children. She went on a media tour, showing pictures and videos of her children, while begging for the kidnapper to feed, care for, and release them. When her story crumbled, she confessed to the killings. Her story reflects her racial knowledge that she, herself, was aware of and the power of the mainstream

media in their portrayal of Black males (Diuguid & Rivers, 2012; Page, 1997). Given Susan Smith's awareness of the assumptions made about Black males, it was easy for her to convince media outlets, audiences, and police officers "who were primed to believe, for a time, in a callous Black male assailant," (Page, 1997, p. 101) that a crime had actually taken place as she had described.

Social Capital. One final implication of constant and continued exposure to negative portrayals of Blacks/Black males is a lack of "social capital." Beaudoin and Thorson (2006) define this term as power, opportunities, and benefits gained from connections made through social networks. Their research looked at media consumption, the negative representations of Blacks, and how these images negatively impacted the community around them. They found that the relationship with news and entertainment television was less positive for Blacks than Whites. This leads to a loss of social capital for Blacks, making it less likely that they will connect with other members of their community and make the necessary connections needed for possible advancement in the larger society (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006).

Black Male Experiences

White Teacher/Black Male Student Relationship. After Brown, Whites sent a clear message to Black students and families that they were not desired or wanted in their schools (Irby, 2014). Sixty plus years since Brown, this notion remains unchanged. Schools operate everyday as places where the realities of race, racism, and how both play a role in the achievement of African Americans, go completely undiscussed. Despite increasingly diverse demographics/backgrounds of students in our classrooms, colleges and universities continue to prepare teachers to teach "primary English speaking White students who come from middle class, two-parent heterosexual, Protestant Christian homes" (Juarez & Hayes, 2015, p. 318). Therefore, if you apply Foucault's principles to public schools, they allow White female teachers

to potentially view and marginalize Black males as objects rather than treating them as human beings with feelings (Love, 2014). "Deficit views" (Allen, 2015, p. 210) of Black males and Black culture often cast this subgroup of students as "lacking normative intellectual and behavioral qualities needed to be successful. Less attention is given to understanding the factors and systems contributing to Black male success" (Allen, 2015, p. 210). It also allows them to walk around in a color-blind "White Gaze," insisting that Black males have the same life chances as their White male counterparts. Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011) refer to this concept as *abstract liberalism*, when Whites "frame race-related issues in the language of liberalism" (p. 192), making themselves seem moral and reasonable to dismantling systems of oppression while subtly opposing all real practical ways of dealing with racial inequality. "This frame allows Whites to be unconcerned about school and residential segregation, oppose almost any kind of government intervention to ameliorate the effects of past and contemporary discrimination, and prefer Whites as partners/friends" (p. 193).

Given that the majority of Black males are taught by predominately White female teachers (Allen, 2015), Black students all across this nation enter classrooms where they are faced with a cultural disconnect with their teachers; this directly impacts student-learning and achievement (Love, 2014). Cross cultural relationships between teachers and students present special challenges in the classroom-learning environment. Annamma (2015) conducted a study in which teachers were interviewed regarding the intersectionality of race and gender. Overwhelmingly, teachers were hesitant, almost fearful, to acknowledge or discuss race as a contributing factor to academic outcomes. Instead, they preferred to engage students through their instruction in a color blindness way as a means of deflecting privilege based on race. Matias (2013) points to a study by Di Angelo (2012) regarding interracial dialogues about race. The

researcher uncovered that Whites feared being called racists, bigots, feeling uncomfortable, and blamed for the societal struggles of Blacks. However, Blacks feared retaliation such as a loss of employment, becoming an outcast, and physical harm. "She argues that the fears for Whites are not equivalent to the real fears of People of Color because the latter fear is produced by the historical surveillance of People of Color under a system of racism" (p. 59). Within the study, the researcher also uncovered that Whites believe racism against them is more prevalent than racism against Blacks.

Teacher attitudes and beliefs of colorblindness reflect larger issues within our society and reveal "how the prevalence of Whiteness and White supremacy, frequently in the guise of colorblindness, covertly and overtly shapes the culture" (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015, p. 214) of education in our society. Researchers Matias & Liou (2015) suggest that, in many ways, White teachers can do more harm than good by having an abolitionist and/or missionary mindset. They examine the historical narratives of White abolitionists that vehemently opposed slavery and made it their quest to eradicate it. They suggest that their quest to save Blacks only advanced their "moral authorities" (p. 605) and White privilege. Relating that to the White teaching force, the authors suggest the same exits in our society today and refer to it as the White missionary mentality, or "White Messiah," which has been portrayed in the media through films and television like *Blackboard Jungle*, *Music of the Heart*, *The Blind Side*, *Dangerous Minds*, *Freedom Writers*, and the *Ron Clark Story*.

The concern around this concept is the idea that Black students must be "saved" from themselves and their circumstances rather than simply being taught, treated like and afforded the same opportunities, as their White counterparts. This media portrayal is to the benefit of Whites, providing positive images of them acting as liberators, saviors, and rescuers, rather than autocrats

over other races, thus potentially influencing the mindsets of White teachers. Given that these films and media stories often provide a way to view White self-representation, "they seldom critically analyze their White privilege and role as participants in this racist and capitalist society. Despite good intentions, their contemporary White abolitionist or missionary approach to the classroom may render a different set of relationships" (p. 605) with Black students as White teachers continue to maintain their "hierarchical balance of power in which they were the givers and the people of color were the recipients" (p. 606). Without fully examining the normalcy of the White superiority ideology, teacher education preparation programs will continue to mass produce White teacher saviors, rather than, soldiers for all students, particularly, their students of color/Black males.

For the purpose of this research study, the HBO (Home Box Office) television drama and original series, *The Wire*, has been chosen as the media form to examine the role that a fictional scripted television drama could have on shaping a teacher's attitudes, values, and beliefs. As such, *The Wire* actually repudiates the "White Messiah" portrayal that, too often, appears in mainstream media as it is "slow to emphasize binaries of good and bad and quick to highlight and examine the complexities of its characters and consequently, the social institutions that largely dictate their perceived autonomy and ultimate fate" (Atcho, 2011, p. 793). Similarly, Kinder (2008) explains how the show depicts the complexity of characters with enormous potential and a climate and culture that is set up for their demise. *The Wire* is about various American institutions and "the fates they dictate" (Atcho, 2011, p. 805) on individuals.

Black Male Classroom Experience. There are an abundance of research studies that document the struggle of black males in public schools in the United States (Duncan, 2002; Emdin, 2012; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Juarez &

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Hayes, 2015; Lloyd, 2005; Moore & Ratchford, 2007; Ponds, 2013, Reynolds, 2010). The research suggests that marginalizing the schooling experience of Blacks is a normal aspect of our education structure and that caricatures in the media have real world affects on Black males and place them in positions of vulnerability (Love, 2014). "The unique impact of school-based discrimination on academic and psychological adjustment highlights the importance of better understanding how Black adolescents make sense of the discrimination they face in the school context" (Hope et. al, 2015, p. 85). As such, by the time Black boys reach the age appropriate to begin kindergarten, they are viewed as grown men, capable of threatening behaviors, criminal activity, oppositional, intellectually inferior, and often labeled as unteachable (Love, 2014).

The educational fate of Black males is determined by how their teachers and peers perceive them and the relationships (or lack there of) that are a result of the teachers' perceptions. As a result of these perceptions, judgments, in regard to Black males, are made daily without considering intellectual ability (Love, 2014). "Each student-regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status similarities with other students-brings his or her own diversity to the classroom. That diversity is valuable and should inform teachers' professional decision-making" (Warren, 2014, p. 412). Further reasoning for the argument (that the educational fate of Black males is determined by how their teachers and peers perceive them and the relationships (or lack there of) that are a result of the teachers' perceptions) is that an individual's beliefs are programmed into their minds and that the Black male experience in schools is rooted in the historical construct of what it means to be a Black male in the United States (Love, 2014). "Whites often attempt to determine what kind of Blackness is acceptable to them, how that Blackness should be expressed, and how one gets disqualified or excluded from Whiteness through one's Blackness" (Juarez & Hayes, 2015, p. 321). When stereotyping occurs,

consciously or subconsciously, it produces assumptions, false perceptions, and fear (Guess, 2006; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Oliver, 2003). Love (2014), in her discussion and examination of the racially hostile environments of U.S. public schools towards Black males, states "the racial suspicions with which Zimmerman pursued (Trayvon) Martin on the night of his death are the same racial suspicions that kill Black males' aspirations and spirits because of their skin color, dress, speech, and posturing" (p. 295). Examining the shooting death of unarmed Trayvon Martin provides a link and critical lens as to how Black males are profiled everyday in their own schools solely based on the color of their skin. One can potentially link Zimmerman's perceptions of Martin to some teachers' perceptions of Black males in their classrooms (Love, 2014). "Media images, stereotypes, and myths, and personal experiences intersect in ways that naturalize what we think" (Banks & Esposito, 2003, p. 236). These are facts that are often never discussed or recognized by teachers and school leaders but, important to acknowledge given that "teachers' beliefs, conscious or unconscious, inform their pedagogical practices and behaviors" (Love, 2014, p. 300).

These misperceptions and misunderstandings shape Black males' schooling experience at a time in our society in which a quality education is critical to the survival and success of this subgroup of students (Juarez & Hayes, 2015). The struggles Black males encounter in society are mirrored within our schools. If Black males are feared and profiled (through the media) on our streets and within society, they are feared within our schools (Knight, 2015). "Shows cloak traditional stereotypes in contemporary characters by using modern colloquial language, clothing, gadgets, and in some cases surrounding Black characters with multicultural casts. As such, the media racial socialization of negative Black stereotypes persists across generations as older shows are retained, longstanding stereotypical characters are not modified despite

contemporary contexts and frames, and no counter-socialization strategies are presented in contemporary shows to debate the negative portrayals of these stereotypes" (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014, p. 372).

The intersection of media images, teacher perceptions and biases, and a lack of cross-cultural interactions, misinterpretations of Black male behaviors, and adopting colorblind approaches to interacting with students, all contribute to a school's climate. "School climate is a multi-faceted construct that includes individual perceptions of the academic and social culture of the school, as well as structural and organizational elements of classrooms, schools, and school districts" (Hope et. al, 2015, p. 85). All students benefit from a school culture/climate in which all students, regardless of ability or race/ethnicity, feel valued and welcome by other students, families, faculty, and staff as members of the school community; this is most important for students of color, particularly, Black males as they are often tolerated and not embraced by the school community as a whole (Irby, 2014). Allen (2015) conducted a study in which he highlighted academically successful Black males' perspectives on race, academic achievement, and their schooling experiences. The Black males interviewed overwhelmingly cited strong support systems (comprised of teachers and parents), rigorous instruction from teachers whose pedagogical knowledge was sound, and teachers who took time to build quality relationships as "keys" to their success. This study also revealed that the parents of the Black males interviewed all expected that their children continue schooling beyond high school as a means of social mobility. However, the parents stated they understood the importance in instilling racial pride in their sons while also informing them that their race would, in fact, create barriers for them. They also pushed the idea and the importance of being racially resilient "in a society where racism is endemic" (p. 219) and where teachers can serve as gatekeepers to their success.

Teacher perceptions are what shape classroom and school wide practices and cross cultural relationships can influence how students respond to and view their schooling experience, resulting discipline and academic disparities (Skiba, 2002). "In schooling as in policing, adults and youth interact across racial lines more than people in many other careers, while in many cases being underprepared to do so" (Carter, et. al, 2014, p. 3). One of the most crucial components in a child's educational career is the teacher/student relationship (Duncan, 2002; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Moore & Ratchford, 2007) as teachers have a direct impact on students' academic outcomes, development, experiences, and achievement (Juarez & Hayes, 2015). Equally important is the student's perception of their teacher's treatment of them (Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Marcus & Gross, 1991) given that race/ethnicity has a direct affect on teacher perceptions of students (Parks & Kennedy, 2007). "The relationship between teachers and Black male students is well documented, drawing attention to cultural incongruences between students and teachers, low expectations held by Black male students, and teachers' role in the overrepresentation of Black males in special education and school suspensions" (Allen, 2015, p. 222).

The separation of students of color from their White peers in schools and across school districts remains the same and prevents racial stereotypes from being challenged (Carter, et. al, 2014). Access to high quality education and instruction, rigorous courses, and various other educational resources and opportunities are at risk when students of color are physically separated and isolated within schools. "Our experiences in schools are not just segregated physically but also socially boundaried. That is, physical and psychological separation by race creates very real boundaries in lived experiences that make us unable to learn from and understand each other" (Carter, et. al, 2014, p. 3). Given that the teacher/student relationship is a

critical piece to academic success, researchers Hope, Skoog, and Jagers (2105) analyzed Black

high school students' perceptions of racial inequities and discrimination within schools. Out of

the Black students that participated in the semi-structured interviews, all of them were able to

recall a personal experience in which they were mistreated because of their race. Specifically, the

students were able to recall teacher biases based on their race and gender. The researchers state

"teachers are more likely to hold negative judgment for ethnic and minority students than White

students in terms of classroom behavior" (p. 94). This is a crucial outcome given that students

are able to interpret racial discrimination as young as third grade and students also interpret their

value and their place in society, as a result of teacher treatment/interactions due to their race.

Young black males notice differences in treatment by their teachers (as compared to

White males) very early on in their schooling career and understand that their behaviors are

likely to be deemed disrespectful and not of the "cultural norm" (Knight, 2015). A study was

conducted by a team of sociologists on the messaging of schools (Knight, 2015). Black and

White students participated in the survey. While White students reported that school embraced

and nurtured them while providing an environment conducive for learning, students of color

reported that school was a place that taught them discipline and responsibility. The relationship

between the teacher and the student is a central tenant in effective teaching and academic

achievement, yet this common practice transcends into classrooms across the country as some

educators judge students harshly and unfairly in their classrooms when African American male

students' behavior does not conform to this societal norm. "Part of our collective failure to meet

the needs of black males is a fear of acknowledging that they are always being compared to a

white middle class norm from which they often differ. This culture of fear, stoked by political

correctness, only serves to hamper efforts to meet their needs and will inevitably maintain

achievement gaps" (Moore & Ratchford, 2007, p. 1). Given a society that is rich with diverse cultures from around the globe, there is one that emerged as the dominant culture and set the tone, defined the norms, and language for what all cultures should strive to emulate in order to avoid discriminatory actions and behaviors (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009).

The role of teachers is to set high academic standards for all students and assist them in achieving those standards. Teachers often decide how they will work with a student based on their perceived academic potential (Kenyatta, 2012). Teacher perceptions, "dumbing down" curriculum, a lack of acceleration and proper remediation, and having low expectations of academic potential all play a significant role in Black male academic achievement (Allen, 2015) as Black male youth "are tracked out of upper ability or college preparatory programs and into remedial, vocational, or even special education programs" (Allen & White-Smith, 2014, p. 452). If the teacher/student relationship is positive, the student will benefit academically from academic support from that teacher, receiving various levels of treatment if they are perceived to be strong and hard working. However, if the teacher/student relationship is not positive, the student is left behind and the student is left to experience discriminatory behaviors described as microaggressions.

Microaggressions are defined as beliefs and common practices of racial discrimination, intentional or unintentional, that people of color encounter from various sources, including the media. Microaggressions are subtle looks, stares, comments, tones, and gestures that are usually brief, yet reminiscent of racial stereotypes. Within schools, microaggressions can take many forms as they can be perceived as acts that exacerbate underlying messages about students of color, i.e. Black males are dangerous, less intelligent than White males, and inferior (Carter, et. al., 2014). These practices provoke racially hostile environments and slights aimed at one person

or group (Agosto, 2014; Hensfield, 2011). African American students, particularly African American males, have less teacher interaction than White students (Kenyatta, 2012). Interaction can be defined as teacher praise, one-on-one assistance, lower academic expectations, and an overall lack of concern, both academically and socially/developmentally (Hinojosa, 2008; Kenyatta, 2012). The belief systems of teachers remain unchanged despite numerous attempts at restructuring school reform efforts toward African American students (Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Ladson–Billings, 1995).

Achievement Gaps. Black male students should not be integrated into a social structure that is set up to discriminate; rather, educational leaders should convert (transform) the structure such that Black males experience academic growth, proficiency, and achievement (Lloyd, 2005). However, caricatures/ethnic notions and stereotypes held by some teachers have been found to hinder the academic performance and achievement of Black male students (Allen, 2015, Carter, et. al, 2014; Khanna & Harris, 2015; Parks & Kennedy, 2007). Black males are consistently at the bottom when examining academic growth, proficiency, and achievement (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014). Though the goal of our education system has been to engage all learners to become productive citizens in our society, we find that our curriculum and teaching practices have "disenfranchised learners along racial and ethnic lines" (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014, p. 6), subjecting them to substandard teachers, instruction, tracking, lower expectations, and higher numbers in Special Education and remedial classes.

In many states across the country, the vast majority of Black males do not meet grade level proficiency standards in mathematics, reading, and fourth and eighth grade science (Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). In addition, less than 10% of Black males performed at or above grade level and performed at advanced

levels. African American males are suspended at much higher rates than Whites and, as a result, are falling behind academically due to missed days of direct instruction from classroom teachers (Lewis et al, 2010). Teachers' perceptions, assumptions, and biases about students' behaviors and capabilities academically can also have negative effects on their social development and outcomes.

  Discipline Gaps. The divisions extend into our institutions, including schools across the nation, where discipline policies and practices exacerbate disparities and inequities among racial lines (Carter, et. al, 2014). Too often, trends in schools reflect the current within the national contexts from which they arise. Schools operate everyday as places where the realities of race, racism, and how both play a role in the achievement of African Americans are completely ignored. Racial discrimination continues to plague the schooling experiences of Black males in schools and various other public settings where they are often viewed as violent, dangerous, and threatening (Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015). "Even in the face of rapidly increasing diversity in our nation's student population, the majority of U.S. teachers remain female, White, and middle class, creating a within-school boundary in itself. Many students in pre-service education programs enter with little previous contact with racial groups other than their own; unless pervasive negative stereotypes are explicitly engaged and challenged, educators can carry these common stereotypes with them into schools" (Carter, et. al, 2014, p. 4). Denying Black males equal access to effective schools and frequent encounters with disciplinary action exemplify negative views on Black masculinity, directly impacting academic achievement (Allen, 2015). This also leads to negative assumptions about academic potential, intellect, and a willingness to learn and achieve. This is an example of implicit bias. Implicit Biases are deeply rooted beliefs or attitudes that could possibly be in conflict with an individual's outwardly stated values (Carter,

et. al., 2014). Implicit bias, similar to the central tenants of cultivation theory, states that the brain holds on to stereotypes and images, positive or negative, of various groups of people while the associations to groups of people are involuntary. Though implicit biases don't necessarily lead to negative behaviors and policy decisions that have negative consequences, Carter, et. al. (2014) state that it can "undergird discriminatory behaviors-especially when such biases remain unstated and unexamined" (p. 4).

"Teacher bias frequently manifests itself in low expectations of their Black male students leading to overrepresentations in remedial and special education programs and underrepresentations in gifted and college preparatory programs" (Allen, 2015, p. 211). Placing students of color, particularly, black males in Special Education plays a significant role in the school to prison pipeline as 40% of students in juvenile detention have been identified with having a disability (Allen, 2015; Annamma, 2015). The persistent disproportionate use of discipline policies (resulting in the school-to-prison pipeline), the criminalization of Black males, combined with inequitable learning opportunities can be termed as an academic lynching. "Academic Lynching can take many forms, but its foundation is always centered on eliminating any threat to the White social order, just as Jim Crow-era lynching worked to eliminate any physical threat to Whiteness as perceived by Whites" (Juarez & Hayes, 2015, p. 321). Allen & White-Smith (2014) emphasize this point stating educators play a significant role in the educational outcomes of Black males. They point out that educators are often the "gatekeepers" of social mobility for all students and this path is determined by what teachers do, or don't do, in their classrooms. "To a large degree, the development of these gatekeepers begins in education preparation programs. These programs prepare teachers, counselors, and administrators, and are currently comprised largely of White middle-class women from suburban upbringings. This

means that though the nationwide population of school children has become increasingly diverse, the educators working in these schools are largely a homogeneous group" (p. 447). Therefore, it is highly unlikely that these teachers have had significant, critical cross-cultural interactions exposing them to race yet, these are the same teachers that will serve as gatekeepers of their Black male students.

A critical component in comprehending the lived realities of Black males in schools is to recognize, examine, and to be explicit about the saliency of race in our society (Matias & Liou, 2015). "Race is present in our classrooms irrespective of the presence of people of color because the vestiges of race/racism occupy a space in all of our classes" (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014, p. 11). Critical Race Theory (in education) states when educators take on a color-blind approach to instruction, policy implementation, and student interactions, it allows the status quo to continue in schools, whereby, maintaining the self-interests of the dominant group in society. The researchers also explain teachers often avoid examining the lived experiences of their students of color; instead, they rely on stereotypes (often portrayed in the media) when forming their views of their students of color, as well as, their academic ability. "Deficit approaches tend to blame the victim for his social woes and assume the student is intellectually inferior or educationally indifferent, without considering how structural impediments, such as racism, influence educational opportunity and, thus academic outcomes" (p. 447). When teachers' fears, biases, overuse of discipline policies, and assumptions of Black male behaviors collide, you have a recipe for overrepresentation of Black males in suspensions and expulsions. This yields to the reasons many teachers, counselors, and Principals use to justify low expectations held of their Black male students, which typically results in a misclassification of their academic abilities leading to Black males in special education and remedial classes. Irby

(2014) classifies these actions as preserving the White social order as school discipline policies and practices continue to manufacture Whiteness and frame the White student body as superior. As a result, Black males are placed on a lower academic track where they are likely to face less opportunity to matriculate into higher education and more likely to enter the judicial system.

Nationally, Black males are three times more likely to be suspended versus their White male counterparts for violating the same school conduct policies (Carter et al., 2014; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Kinsler, 2011; Skiba, 2011). Black students have twice the chance (compared to White students) of receiving an office discipline referral at the elementary level and four times the chance at the middle school level (Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Skiba, 2011). Zero tolerance policies (policies with predetermined consequences often punitive in nature) and the school-to-prison pipeline are situational variables and another rationale that alter the path of these students. The school-to-prison pipeline is a phenomenon in which school disciplinary policies such as out of school suspension, expulsion, detention, and alternative placement programs, alienate African American males "from the learning process by steering them from the classroom and academic attainment and toward the criminal justice system" (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010, p. 197). Knight (2015) explains that these are all examples of the "White Gaze." White Gaze is extremely evident when examining the data around disciplinary measures and misperceptions of behaviors of Black males by White teachers. The researcher also explains that teachers and administrators often see Black males/young males through a disciplinary lens. Given that "oppression does not occur in isolation" (Annamma, 2015, p. 295), an intersectional analysis must occur to recognize how oppressions are connected and position specific individuals to be placed within the pipeline.

Black male students are also disproportionately referred for Special Education services. (Allen, 2015). In many cases, Black males are inappropriately referred and erroneously determined to require these services as a means of isolation from the regular education setting, strictly due to behaviors (Allen, 2015). Concerns about disproportionate representation of ethnic and culturally diverse students in Special Education was first raised by Civil Rights advocates, educators, administrators, and policy makers, asking the question why children of color were over represented in classes for the mentally retarded (Harry, 1994; Luft, 1995; Markowitz, 1996). Losen and Orfield (2002), in their discussion of African Americans in Special Education, indicated that since the early 1970s, national surveys completed by the Office of Civil Rights of the United States Department of Education have revealed persistent overrepresentation of minority children in the area of emotional disturbance and emotional and behavior disorders. No other subgroup has been more affected by disproportional Special Education placements than Black males (Howard, Terry, & Flennaugh, 2012).

It is these challenges faced by Black males throughout their schooling experience that are the reason their academic dropout rates are the highest of any subgroup of students in the nation. According to *The Urgency of Now: The Schott Foundation 50 State Report on Black Males and Public Education* (blackboysreport.org), only 52% of Black males graduated from high school in four years. The Schott Report also revealed that 38 of the 50 states, including the District of Columbia, have the lowest graduation rates among Black male students as compared to Whites, Latinos, and female students. These statistics should raise questions about the institutional racism that runs rampant through schools across the country and how media imagery helps facilitate the creation of unwelcoming circumstances for Black males.

Conclusion

The purpose of the literature review was to provide a wide variety of research addressing the affects of negative portrayals of Black males students in schools on teacher perceptions, school policies and practices, and Black male student achievement. The review of the literature indicates, through an examination of Cultivation Theory, that it is entirely conceivable that the aforementioned barriers Blacks, particularly Black males, face, as a result of these negative portrayals, parallel their experiences within our schools (Allen, 2015) and larger society. The literature also provided a critical lens in examining race relations in our society by providing highlighting the various ways in which the media "continues to privilege whiteness even while giving the illusion of ethnic/racial diversity and inclusion" (Khanna & Harris, 2015, p. 44). The results of negative imagery often spill over into schools, influencing teacher perceptions. It is these perceptions that shape classroom practices and influence discipline policies and procedures within the classroom and school environment. Chapter 3 reiterates the research questions and offers methodological descriptions as to how this research study was completed. Chapter 4 details the findings and Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the findings and directions for future research on this topic.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In our society, individuals seek various forms of media to gain access to information and news on a regular basis. However, they are often unaware how specific mediums have the potential to influence their opinions of groups of people. According to Torres (2015), the media continues to function as an avenue for perpetuating Whiteness at the top of the societal hierarchy through the prevalence of negative Black images, caricatures, and stereotypes. "If we can recognize that the media's production of Black male imagery is one of the many White cultural practices undergirding the formation of a new world order, then we must decolonize the production and dissemination of media representations" (Page, 1997, p. 99). Chapter 3 focuses primarily on an overview of the methods that were used in this research and is divided into the following sections: purpose of the study/major research questions, rationale for a qualitative and quantitative (mixed methods) research study/conceptual framework, significance of the study, content analysis/qualitative and quantitative inquiry, data collection strategies, and the role of the researcher/limitations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to provide a critical lens in examining how negative caricatures of Black males in the media potentially allow teachers to view some of their Black male students as unintelligent, resistant to authority, disrespectful, and violent. To accomplish this task, a cultivation analysis was conducted to examine first-order and second-order effects that occur as a result of racial stereotype portrayal in the HBO original series, *The Wire*. A cultivation analysis is "defined as the 'study of the relationships between institutional

processes, message systems, and the public assumptions, images, and policies that they cultivate'" (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010, p. 338). The goal of this study was to explore and examine the likely/potential effects of racial stereotypes portrayed and to predict whether or not viewers of *The Wire* are more likely to perceive and treat Black males negatively in ways that reflect the media images portrayed and stereotypes gleaned as a result of watching the series. This study was also significant when considering how media cultivates attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, judgments, and values about gender and race-based stereotypes, as well as, the interconnectedness of students of color, their daily interactions with teachers, and their schooling experiences. "The influence of television viewing on perceptions of the world is disturbing given that past research has found that media distort reality about issues such as crime and minorities" (Lett, DiPietro, & Johnson, 2004, p. 41).

Major Research Questions

It is critically important to thoroughly examine controversial media caricatures to decode the hidden meanings behind these images and the influence they might or might not have over the formation of their audiences' implicit biases. The major research questions for the study are: 1) How are Black males portrayed in the HBO original series, *The Wire*? 2) Do these portrayals reify (or, not) stereotypes of Black males in the United States? 3) How might these portrayals cultivate teachers' perceptions and subsequent treatment of Black male students?

Rationale for the Study

Researchers (Martin, 2008; Miller, 1998; Oliver, 2003) suggest that Whites develop negative stereotypes about Black males when dependent upon television and film to learn about them. According to Allen (2015), "media discourse and sensationalization often contribute to the negative imagery of Black men as deviant, irresponsible, and uneducable. It follows that this discourse and popular ideas of Black male deviancy spill over into the schools, influencing how

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Black boys are perceived and treated by others" (p. 211). Research also suggests that marginalizing the schooling experience of Blacks is a normal aspect of our education structure and that caricatures in the media have real world affects on Black males and place them in positions of vulnerability (Love, 2014). While there are an abundance of research studies that document the struggles of black males in public schools in the United States (Duncan, 2002; Emdin, 2012; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Lloyd, 2005; Moore & Ratchford, 2007; Ponds, 2013, Reynolds, 2010), "many questions still remain regarding how these popular culture images influence practice in addition to the ways in which they are consumed" (Freedman, 1999, p. 81) by White teachers.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is derived from media studies and legitimizes the notion that exposure to negative imagery influences the audiences' attitudes and beliefs. This is the central tenet of Cultivation Theory (see Figure 2). Referencing Cultivation Theory, Monk-Turner et al. (2010) and Potter (2014) posit that television reaches a broad audience over a long period of time, making it a very powerful medium. According to numerous researchers (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Bilandzic, 2006; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Hetsroni, 2012; Jamison & Romer, 2014; Monk-Turner et al., 2010; Oliver, 2003; Parrott & Parrott, 2015; Potter, 2014; Torres, 2015), Cultivation Theory reveals that exposure to imagery influences perceptions and beliefs of society and often validate and mainstream long held gender and race-based stereotypes about groups of individuals.

Figure 2: Cultivation Process

Cultivation Theory provides a different lens of which to view/consider the intersectionality of media exposure and the life experiences of students of color, particularly Black males, how these life experiences position Black males in public schools, and the disparities they experience as a result. Cultivation Theory does not imply that every teacher is intentionally harming Black male students. However, it does suggest that the consumption of negative media imagery is part of the human experience and, "therefore, represents points of potential connection between those relating an experience and those who hear and interpret such accounts" (Dutro & Kantor, 2011, p. 140). This research performed a "backload" to examine and explore, through the HBO original series, *The Wire*, how individual assumptions are cultivated.

Significance of the Study

Exploring and examining how negative media portrayals might cultivate teachers' perceptions and subsequent treatment of their Black male students is rather new research (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014). Given that "it is important to recognize that a methodology is always employed in the service of a research question," (Stemler, 2001, p. 7), one of the major research questions of this study specifically addresses how negative media portrayals (as presented in *The Wire*) might or might not reify stereotypes of Black males throughout the history of the United States. According to critics, *The Wire* has been hailed one of the best television shows ever produced (Atcho, 2011, Brock, 2009; Dutro & Kantor, 2011;

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Kinder, 2008; Tyree, 2008; Trier, 2010). *The Wire* also had more Black actors in major roles than any other show on television during its five-year run (Brock, 2009; Kinder, 2008). "Although numerous studies have investigated television's effect on various types of beliefs and perceptions (e.g., perceptions of crime and violence, occupational prevalence, affluence), fewer studies have investigated cultivation effects" (Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011, p. 34) and how they might or might not influence teachers' perceptions and subsequent treatment of Black male students. This study ultimately added to the body of research on first-order and second-order effects (defined later in the chapter) within Cultivation Theory and the power and influence television can have on its viewers.

Media Content Analysis/Mixed Methods Inquiry

For the purposes of this study, I conducted a qualitative and quantitative media content analysis (on the implicit and explicit messages) (see Table 2) by examining the caricatures/characters that depict race and gender in HBO's (Home Box Office) original series, *The Wire*. This study did not seek IRB approval because it involved fictional subjects from scripted television readily available and distributed for purchase. Fictional crime dramas are also readily available for consumption, as they have become staples in prime time television (Parrott & Parrott, 2015).

Table 2: Methodology Alignment to Research Questions

Research Questions	Methodological Approach
RQ#1: How are Black males portrayed in the HBO original series, *The Wire*?	Quantitative – Content Analysis
RQ#2: Do these portrayals reify (or, not) stereotypes of Black males in the United States?	Quantitative – Content Analysis Qualitative – Cultivation Analysis • Categorization (maximize differences between groups and minimize differences between members of groups)
RQ#3: How might these portrayals cultivate White female teachers' perceptions and subsequent treatment of Black male students?	Qualitative – Cultivation Analysis

Media Content Analysis

Macnamara (2005), in his study of the uses and benefits of a media content analysis, defines this methodology as "a non-intrusive research method that allows examination of a wide range of data over an extensive period to identify popular discourses and their likely meanings" (p. 6). Initially developed to study media propaganda, media content analysis (see Figure 3) is used to study and analyze narratives and messages from film and television shows, for example, measuring trends and patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Stemler, 2001) and the frequency of something (the negative portrayals of Black males) in a form of mass-produced art (*The Wire*) (Macnamara, 2005). In the 1950s, media content analysis expanded from movies to television shows as more and more households began to acquire this mode of entertainment. As a result of its development, media content analysis has been used as a primary research tool to examine portrayals of race, racism, women, and violence in television programming (Macnamara, 2005).
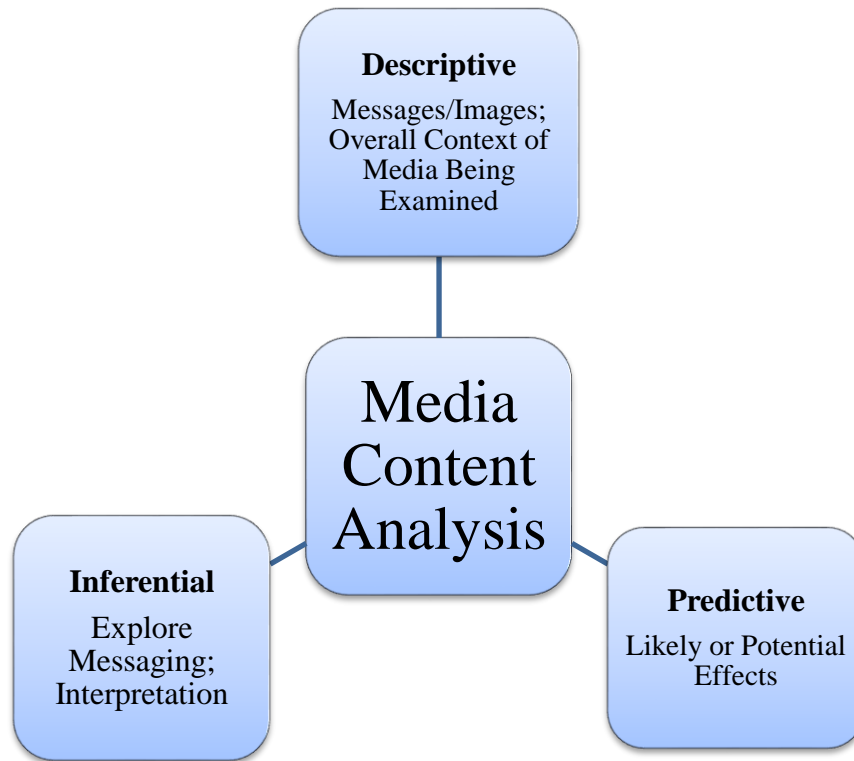
Figure 3: Media Content Analysis

A media content analysis is also geared towards determining "whether mass media *creates* public opinion, attitudes, and perceptions or *reflects* existing attitudes, perceptions, and culture" (Macnamara, 2005, p. 3). Macnamara (2005) cites the work of Neuendorf (2002) and states that content analysis in media has four distinct roles; however, only three (descriptive, inferential, and predictive) allow for productive applications to research studies (see Table 3). Descriptive provides the overall context of the media being examined. Inferential and predictive allow for the exploration into the messaging, what is intended by the portrayals of characters, what the content of the programming reveals about the larger society, and what the effects are on audiences when exposed to the portrayals. Macnamara (2005) suggests any researcher conducting a media content analysis use both qualitative and quantitative methods, stating both are complementary of each other when analyzing meaning and impact with audiences.

Table 3: Roles of Content Analysis

Role	Explores	Elements
Descriptive	The "what"	• Trends • Patterns • Frequency
Inferential	The "message"	• Implicit • Explicit • Create • Reflect • Intended • Interpretation
Predictive	The "effect"	• First Order – "learning" (relevant structures) • Second Order – "construction" (beliefs/attitudes)

Another reason for a mixed method approach is the exploration of content, the influence and impact it may have on society, and how the media content might reflect the views of society about a group, topic, etc. "Quantitative content analysis collects data about media content such as topics or issues, volume of mentions, 'messages' determined by key words in context (KWIC), circulation of the media (audience reach) and frequency" (Macnamara, 2005, p. 4). Quantitative content analysis also considers the form of media and suggests television has a greater impact on viewers versus print media. Macnamara (2005) notes that researchers have infused quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze media messages and points to the various forms of media as the reason. "In simple terms, it is not valid to assume that quantitative factors such as size and frequency of media messages equate to impact" (p. 5). However, qualitative content analysis does allow for the exploration into the impact of media messages. According to Macnamara (2005), qualitative content analysis is necessary when determining the meaning of such portrayals and how the audiences may have interpreted them. As such, research question three was answered through a qualitative cultivation analysis.

Media Content Sample

This study explored and examined, through a qualitative and quantitative media content analysis of media, portrayals of Black males in the HBO (Home Box Office) primetime original series, *The Wire*. This study examined Black male characters considered regular cast members that appeared on screen and were essential to the story line, making them a prominent character (Khanna & Harris, 2015). Airtime and presence within the series are critical to the development of the character on screen. For the purpose of this study, regular cast members were defined as actors whose names appeared in the opening credits or who appeared on recurring status. This study also examined the types of roles Black males were cast to portray. It is important to note that this show/series aired during primetime hours. Most people are at home during this time frame. As a result, the effects of positive and negative portrayals have the potential to reach a broader base of viewers (Khanna & Harris, 2015; Monk-Turner et. al, 2010, Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015), shaping their perceptions of Black males. Prime time refers to the time frame between 8:00 and 11:00 pm.

Why *The Wire*?

According to Macanamara (2005), media content sampling comprises of three elements: "selection of media form(s) and genre, selection of issues, and sampling from relevant content" (p. 13). As such, it is important to choose a media form that accurately depicts how racial identity is portrayed in media in America (Brock, 2009). For the purpose of this study, the HBO (Home Box Office) television drama and original series, *The Wire*, was chosen as the media form to examine the role that a fictional scripted television drama could have on shaping a teacher's attitudes, values, and beliefs. *The Wire* was one example of similar shows within the same genre such as the following: *CSI*, *NYPD Blue*, *Law & Order*, *Castle*, *Blue Bloods*, *The Closer*,

Criminal Minds, *The Blacklist*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, *NCIS: New Orleans*, and *Ray Donovan*.

     The Wire is a broad, on-going examination of a city power structure, the police force, and the intersection of race and institutions that interact with a certain group of city residents throughout the series (Atcho, 2011; Brock, 2009; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Kinder, 2008; Trier, 2010; Tyree, 2008). Set in Baltimore, Maryland, the television series investigates undercover corruption, police brutality, and racial inequities that, ironically, parallel the climate of Baltimore in 2015 in the wake of the death of Freddie Gray. Moreover, it realistically depicts the pull of the streets and "street life" that plagues so many Black youth in our society (Atcho, 2011; Brock, 2009; Kinder, 2008; Trier, 2010; Tyree, 2008). According to IMDb, *The Wire* aired for five seasons over its lifespan on HBO from 2002 to 2008 and, according to critics, has been hailed one of the best television shows ever produced (Atcho, 2011, Brock, 2009; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Kinder, 2008; Tyree, 2008; Trier, 2010). *The Wire* had more Black actors in major roles than any other show on television during its run (Brock, 2009; Kinder, 2008). Brock notes that the Black ensemble cast served "as a counter narrative against shows with all White casts set in cities (e.g., New York's *Friends*) with large Black populations" (p. 347). Each season focused on a different institution while profiling the same cast of characters (Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Trier, 2010): season one-the drug wars (13 episodes), season two-the docks (12 episodes), season three-city politics (12 episodes), season four-education (13 episodes), and season five-the media (10 episodes). Each episode aired approximately 60 minutes, making the total run of the series 60 hours. At its peak, *The Wire* topped four million viewers. However, it barely reached one million viewers leading into its final season on the air.

Season four of the series is significant for this research because it brought the Baltimore education system into the storyline, connecting four middle school Black males to previous storylines and a main character who, in the past three seasons, was a police officer responsible for locking some of his students' parents up, but is now a teacher (Atcho, 2011). "Season four took Baltimore City Schools as its central theme, demonstrating the crucial and complex connections between what occurs in the daily life of classrooms and the education and economic policies, mayoral politics, and law enforcement corruption that surround and impact students and their families, teachers, and the functions of educational bureaucracies" (Dutro & Kantor, 2011, p. 134). Season Four of *The Wire* also examined the federal education policy of No Child Left Behind. Specifically, it focused on the consequences of the over emphasis of testing and accountability that plague every school district in our society while further marginalizing students of color (Trier, 2010). According to Dutro and Kantor (2011), high stakes testing has led to school districts trying to cheat the system and a lack of quality in instruction, which often effects students of color more than White students. These researchers, along with Trier (2010), also credit *The Wire* for providing the narrative from the students' point of view rather than the teacher. They point out that the mainstream media often perpetuate the "White Messiah" savior narrative of a White female middle-class teacher with whom the audience feels a connection.

Data Collection Strategies/Coding Scheme

To answer the major research questions, coding was conducted throughout the entire series of *The Wire* with specific emphasis on Season Four. Dutro and Kantor (2011), in their discussion of Season Four of *The Wire*, make reference (specifically) to the education theme and state "the viewer is taken on a season-long guided tour of the small failures, moments of hope, misguided policies, and interactions with adults that ultimately and heartbreakingly make a positive relationship with school untenable for most of the kids for whom the viewer comes to

care" (p. 137). As stated previously, this study is significant when considering the effects media has on gender and race-based stereotypes, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as, the interconnectedness of students of color, their daily interactions with teachers, and their schooling experiences. Given that exposure to negative portrayals of Black males in the media can potentially result in viewers perceiving what is depicted as reality, (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Jamison & Romer, 2014; Monk-Turner et al., 2010; Oliver, 2003; Parrott & Parrott, 2015; Torres, 2015), Cultivation Theory was used as a conceptual framework.

The research for this study was modeled after the earlier work of Mastro and Greenberg (2010), Monk-Turner, et. al. (2010), Khanna and Harris (2015), and Parrott and Parrott (2015) by examining the ways Black males are portrayed in the HBO series, *The Wire*, and how these portrayals might (or might not) reify stereotypes of Black males in the United States. Researchers (Martin, 2008; Miller, 1998; Oliver, 2003) suggest that Whites develop negative stereotypes about Black males when dependent upon television and film to learn about them. Based on social cognition, (i.e. how individuals store, process, and apply information about others based on media influences) people often categorize others based on a variety of demographics, race being the main characteristic, thus perceiving that everyone "placed in the same box" must possess the same characteristics (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014).

Macnamara (2005) reveals that content analysis should also involve an examination of several variables. The variables are usually words or phrases such as 'violent' and 'aggressive.' All of the variables relevant to the study should be organized into a coding list. The coding list identifies the specific issues and/or topics to be analyzed within the study. To ensure balance when coding, Macnamara (2005) claims that all negative messaging should be "equally

matched" (p. 9) with any positive messaging presented in the media form chosen. "If 'boys in school are aggressive and violent' is analyzed, the oppositional positive message 'boys in schools are not aggressive or violent or are passive and non-violent' should equally be analyzed in the research" (p. 9). Otherwise, the researcher risks invalidating the study. Similarly, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) suggest prior research can be used when identifying key variables as coding categories. To identify which racial stereotypes/caricatures were cultivated in *The Wire*, I had to identify which specific stereotypes were presented most frequently (first-order effects) (Bilandzic, 2006; Hetsroni, 2012; Lett, DiPietro, & Johnson, 2004; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Potter, 1991). This process encompassed the quantitative piece of the mixed methodology.

Since the goal of content analysis is to "validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory," (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281), the (coding) categories were predetermined and were based on the racial stereotypes/caricatures presented throughout the history of the United States. As outlined in Chapter 2, Literature Review, they included the following: (1) the Uncle Tom – submissive, kind, and selfless, obeys his "masters" to solve his problems; (2) the Black Buffoon/Urban Coon – "no account nigger, those unreliable, crazy, lazy, subhuman creatures good for nothing more than eating watermelons, stealing chickens, shooting crap, or butchering the English language" (Bogle, 2013, p. 8); (3) the Pickaninny – used solely as an object of amusement and comic relief, dirty, unclean, poor; (4) the Sambo – lazy, content in his own despair, happy to be dependent upon others, (5) the Brutal Black Buck/Brute Nigger – sloppy drunk, lustful rapist, and barbaric brute; and (6) the "Gangsta Rapper" – thug lifestyle associated with gangs, drugs, and ambitions to be in the music industry. (For a much fuller description of each, please refer to Chapter 2) The coding categories, as well as, their definitions and code options are represented on the coding form (see Appendix A).

Appearance and behavioral traits were considered when examining each Black male character to align with the descriptions of the caricatures/stereotypes being coded. In order to answer research questions one and two, I first secured access to all episodes through HBO-Go and HBO On-Demand. I am an HBO subscriber and all subscribers have access to both of these features. I then watched each episode and used the coding sheet to begin collecting data. Since every episode of *The Wire* was watched, examined, and analyzed, each episode was listed (by title) and assigned a number (in increasing order and by season) on the coding document. Black male characters that appeared as regular cast members were coded episode by episode. This meant each character would be coded based on the frequency of their appearance on screen (first order effects). Once initial coding was completed, I re-watched the series to check my coding, ensuring its accuracy. I repeated this process for every episode of the five seasons until the entire series had been coded. I then compiled all of the data from the coding sheets into one chart, answering the research questions after each season based on first-order effect data. Potter (1991) suggests this is key given that "people might possess a wide range of beliefs about social reality and that by viewing television, certain of those beliefs get stronger through the reinforcement of repeated portrayals" (p. 99). I then used the data analyzed and answered research questions one and two. I used the same data to take a holistic approach when answering research question three (see Table 4). This analysis infused the effects and common treatments of Black males (outlined in Chapter 2) based on second-order effects.

Table 4: Cultivation Analysis

Caricature	Descriptors	Common Treatments of Black Male Students (Due to possible perceptions/attitudes/beliefs)
Uncle Tom	Submissive, kind, does not attract attention to themselves	• Lack of attention from teachers • Less likely to be nominated for gifted programs • "Undetected" in the classroom • Less likely to be recommended for Honors and AP classes
Black Buffoon/Urban Coon	Unreliable, erratic, lazy, thief, joker, clown, comedian	• Referred to Special Education services • Discipline referral for disruption • Remediation classes • Removed from class causing lack of direct instruction
Pickaninny	Object of amusement and comic relief	• Discipline referral for disruption, class disturbance • Zero tolerance polices • Labeled ADD/ADHD/ODD
Sambo	Lazy, laughs profusely	• Discipline referral for disruption, class disturbance • Removed from class causing lack of direct instruction • Less likely to be recommended for Honors and AP classes
Black Brute/Brute Nigger	Sloppy drunk, lustful rapist	• Suspension
Gangsta' Rapper	"Thug" life swagger associated with gangs and drugs	• Suspension • Alternative school placement • Less likely to be recommended for Honors and AP classes

Role of the Researcher/Limitations

Given the topic and nature of the study, I had to recognize my personal biases held on the issue of Black males. I am an African American/Black male with his own experiences growing up through public schools and experiencing a workforce that is approximately 85% White. I had to remind myself not to let my own experiences and beliefs overshadow what the data was and what the data revealed. I, as the sole researcher, had to remain neutral to protect the credibility of

the data and be consciously aware of any assumptions or biases throughout the research/data collection process. According to Macnamara (2005), two or more coders should have been used to ensure maximum reliability. However, I, as the primary researcher, chose not to employ the use of other coders or coders that were naïve to the research itself. I was the sole coder for this study. This presented a limitation regarding validity. Additionally, I also had to be aware, as a consumer of media, of the complexity of Cultivation Theory as it can affect Blacks and Whites the same way.

Though Cultivation Theory reveals that exposure could influence perceptions and beliefs of society and often validate long held gender and race-based stereotypes about groups of individuals, it does not address "the nuances of Black culture, the history of racial oppression, or the ongoing use of racial stereotyping in contemporary Black life, social and economic mobility and stagnation" (Adams-Bass, Stevenson, & Kotzin, 2014, p, 370). Similarly, Potter (1991) discusses the limitations of using first and second order effects as two separate measures. The author states that one could make the arguments that there is no relationship between first and second order effects, stating "a person could show evidence of television cultivation at the base level (first-order measures) but not necessarily at the inference level because other factors can shape the viewer's inference about the real world" (p. 93). The author gave an example of violent crime suggesting that first-order effects would most likely have a viewer overestimate the number of violent acts that occur, but that same information may not translate into a belief that the world is a violent place. The author also points out IQ and age, revealing that viewers with higher IQs are able to process and "encode or discount what they see" (p. 98). Another limitation was the simple fact that some viewers may have exposure to television messages but, because of

their attention level, may not process the information being "delivered" by the racial stereotypes/caricatures portrayed.

As noted earlier, *The Wire* aired for five seasons over its lifespan on HBO from 2002 to 2008 and has been hailed one of the best television shows ever produced (Atcho, 2011, Brock, 2009; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Kinder, 2008; Tyree, 2008; Trier, 2010). At its peak, *The Wire* topped four million viewers. However, it barely reached one million viewers leading into its final season on the air. Specific demographic data of viewers could not be retrieved through Nielson to compare the racial makeup of viewers to the racial makeup of teachers during the time the series was on the air. There are several television shows that have aired and currently air on basic cable channels, since *The Wire* was cancelled in 2008, mirroring *The Wire*'s content, narratives, and racial stereotypes/caricatures. A list of these shows is as follows: *Law & Order, SVU*, *Breaking Bad*, *Hostages*, *Damages*, *Justified*, and *Sons of Anarchy*. Lastly, I limited the scope of the research to one series from one premium cable channel, versus studying various media outlets such as news, magazines, music videos, movies, and social media such as YouTube. A premium channel is one that is not included with a basic subscription to cable. Premium channel viewing is also limited to those with money to purchase that power. This remains a factor if a consumer of television media were to stream the series (since it no longer airs) through HBO-GO. However, full episodes of the series are available on YouTube, Netflix, and other streaming networks that are free to consumers.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The image of "blackness" has been constructed by the majority culture and is portrayed through television and film, rooted in racial defiance (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014). Brown and Kraehe (2011), in their discussion of the sociocultural knowledge gleaned from visual representations in the *The Wire*, state the media and society work to position the Black male outside the norm and that the Black male must be different and classified as an 'other.' According to Brown and Kraehe (2011):

> How visual culture represents the Black male speaks to the way dominant, socially mainstream discourses construct and imagine him. When these constructions travel globally they frame how one makes sense of what it means to be a Black male. These frames discursively and materially fasten a narrative of Black masculinity that informs social responses to him (e.g. policy, media representations) and opportunities made available to him in society and in school (p. 75).

The goal of this study was to explore and examine the likely/potential effects of racial stereotypes portrayed and to predict whether or not viewers of *The Wire* were more likely to perceive and treat Black males negatively in ways that reflect the media images portrayed and stereotypes gleaned as a result of watching the series. This study focused on Black male regular cast members or cast members with recurring status that were essential to the storyline. This chapter will provide a summary of the series, season by season, that will lay a foundation for data analysis. Within the data analysis, I will provide specific examples, from relevant episodes throughout the series, that will provide contextual data to support the racial stereotypes coded/associated with each character analyzed. The data analysis on the first-order effects will answer the first two major research questions of the study: 1) How are Black males portrayed in

the HBO original series, *The Wire*? 2) Do these portrayals reify (or, not) stereotypes of Black males in the United States?

Overview/Background of *The Wire*

The Wire is a critically acclaimed original series that aired on the cable premium channel, HBO (Home Box Office). Each season of *The Wire* focused on various aspects of the city's war on drug trafficking and the relentless pursuit of two drug kingpins, Avon Barksdale and Marlo Stanfield: season one examines poverty and the drug wars in the projects, season two explored how the city's quest at gentrification would potentially leave dock workers of industrialized jobs and unions unemployed, season three explored city politics and the complexity of the mayoral race, season four examined the broken, underfunded Baltimore city schools, and season five examined the intersectionality of the media (Baltimore Sun), policing, and corruption (Brown & Kraehe, 2011; Dutro & Kantor, 2011; Trier, 2010; Wilson, 2014). According to Jacobson (2014):

> *The Wire* effectively rewrites slavery out of the Black experience. The telling omission documents *The Wire's* (conscious) refusal to connect the city's and the characters' problems to this much longer history of predatory capitalism. Simon, following this neoliberal vein, suggests that race ultimately creates "precious little" difference among people. Thus, while critics sing the praises of the *The Wire's* sociological realism, pedagogically-if we take Simon at this word-*The Wire* teaches viewers "precious little" about race. These claims seem to be at odds with each other. Simon's narrative strategies resemble the neoliberal tactics described by David Theo Goldberg in *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*: "modern racist culture is marked, fundamentally, by its refusal to acknowledge the role that racism plays in everyday structures of society and how these structures work to fundamentally disguise and, simultaneously, reify the power of racism within society" (p. 159).

The Wire paints a picture of the bleak streets of Baltimore with drug lieutenants, dealers, and hoppers at every street corner, abandoned row houses, drug addicts and drunks, and police officers often using excessive force as they patrolled the streets. This is "Bodymore, Murdaland" as the locals affectionately referred to it. "*The Wire's* crime fiction likewise combines detective

work with sentimental features such as sympathetic characterizations and a narrative focus on familial and social politics" (Jacobson, 2014, p. 153).

The series has a way of making its viewers relate, sympathize with, and root for the characters all at the same time, regardless of what side of the law they reside, as the line was often blurred. One of the main features of the show that made it stand out from any other was the vast amount of Black actors and actresses on the show. In terms of gender and race-based depictions, Black males represented the predominant gender and race within the series. "A cast dominated by people of color is rare, especially for a show about crime and drama" (Guastaferro, 2010, p. 267). All characters portrayed on "the street" were Black except for Bubbles's sidekick, Johnny. The police force was evenly split Black/White, including its upper ranks.

David Simon is one of the creators of the show and previously worked as a reporter for the Baltimore Sun, a storyline arc that parallels the storyline of season five (Trier, 2010; Wilson, 2014). According to Wilson (2014):

> His co-creator, Ed Burns, had been a homicide detective in Baltimore for twenty years before becoming an inner-city public school teacher. Not only does this arc parallel the storyline of one of the series' protagonists, Roland "Prez" Pryzbylewski (Jim True-Frost), a policeman who, in the fourth season of the show, becomes a middle school teacher, but it also illustrates the importance to Simon that those who worked on the show were familiar with the social reality upon which the show was based" (p. 63).

As the series progresses, the storylines have been written such that characters are strategically connected to past seasons and storyline arcs (Atcho, 2010). *"The Wire* offers its viewers the opportunity to take up the position of witness" (Dutro & Kantor, 2011, p. 138), a perspective of Black males' lived realities, while at the same time, telling their stories (Ault, 2012). This is a feat that very few shows have been able to do to this magnitude. The following is a summary of each season and tables charting first-order effects of each major or recurring Black male character by the number of minutes they appeared (total) on screen for each season. Each chart

will also show the percent of time each character appeared on screen for the entire season based on the total number of minutes in the season.

Season One. The first season of *The Wire* focuses on the Baltimore drug trade, the law, and policing. The series begins with the court trial of D'Angelo Barksdale (Lawrence Gilliard, Jr.). D'Angelo Barksdale is the boss of the low-rises in Baltimore called Franklin Terrace. Det. James "Jimmy" McNulty (Dominic West) and Det. William "Bunk" Moreland (Wendell Pierce) enter the courtroom to watch the trial. Already seated in the courtroom is Russell "Stringer" Bell (Idris Elba) and, whom the audience would later learn is considered essential muscle to the Barksdale organization, Roland "Wee-Bey" Brice (Hassan Johnson). William Gant (Larry Hull) is testifying and identifies D'Angelo during the trial as the suspect accused of shooting and killing a man in the terraces. D'Angelo turns and looks at Stringer; Stringer nods his head, giving a signal to D'Angelo that he would take care of the situation and not to worry. The audience is also given a glimpse into the antagonistic relationship between Stringer and McNulty as Stringer shows the detective a picture he has drawn during the trial with the message, "Fuck You Detective" on it; McNulty smiles in amusement. However, when one of the lead witnesses doesn't identify D'Angelo, stating she thought it was D'Angelo but later realized she was wrong, McNulty realizes that the Barksdale organization has somehow convinced the witness to change her story. Wee-Bey is in charge of picking up D'Angelo after his trial. When this happens, the audience is introduced to Avon Barksdale (Wood Harris), the kingpin of the Barksdale organization and D'Angelo's uncle. Though Avon is critical of D'Angelo's actions that lead to his trial, there is a tender moment between them when Avon pulls D'Angelo to his chest, kisses his head, and hugs him saying, "we're family." The audience also learns that Avon uses a gentlemen's club called "Orlando's" as a cover to hide the drug operation.

Det. Ellis Carver (Seth Gilliam), Det. Thomas "Herc" Hauk (Domenick Lombardozzi), and Det. Shakima "Kima" Greggs (Sonja Sohn) are shown doing a routine drug bust on the streets of Baltimore. When the three of them are later shown writing up the police report, they engage in a conversation about the war on drugs:

Kima: "You heroic motherfuckers kill me…fighting the war on drugs…one brutality case at a time."

Carver: "Girl, you can't even call this shit a war!"

Herc: "Why not?"

Carver: "Wars end."

Det. Carver knew, as the audience would learn in the series finale, that the war on drugs in Baltimore did not end. The drugs simply changed hands and new drug kingpins arose.

D'Angelo is reassigned to the pit (low rises) once "Ronnie Moe" is arrested. When he arrives, the audience learns that Preston "Bodie" Broadus (J.D. Williams), Malik "Poot" Carr (Tray Chancey), and Wallace (Michael B. Jordan) are his hoppers/crew members. Anderson (2010) notes that D'Angelo explains the hierarchy of the drug trade when he finds Bodie and Wallace playing checkers with chess pieces in episode three, "The Buys." "D'Angelo holds up a few different pieces one at a time and explains their roles. He demystifies the intimidating game by leaning on Bodie and Wallace's prior understanding of the Barksdale operation" (Anderson, 2010, p. 377). He refers to the king chess piece as the kingpin and, as a result, Bodie and Wallace are able to associate the king with Avon Barksdale. D'Angelo gives a description of the queen, which allows his crew to associate this chess piece with Stringer. He then discusses the role of the pawns and states they are simply foot soldiers and are the ones that find themselves the most vulnerable; everyone's role is to protect the king at all costs. Anderson states:

> Like a king on a chessboard protected by his subordinates, Avon Barksdale directs his organization but is rarely seen acting in public. He does not personally handle any drugs or participate in gang hits (murders). His pawns (juveniles mostly immune to adult prosecution) handle the product at the level of street sales. The rooks on a chessboard are the 'stash houses,' and they move regularly to evade detection or theft. Similarly, cell phones with prepaid minutes are dumped before they can be traced (p. 379).

Stringer is the intellectual behind the operation and best friends with Avon. It is revealed that they grew up together and have been best friends since childhood. Stringer develops the plans that enable the Barksdale crewmembers to stay ahead of the police. Stringer has also established B&B Enterprises as a way to funnel the drug profits he and Avon acquire into above board, legal real estate businesses within Baltimore's redevelopment areas downtown.

As a result of the state losing the D'Angelo Barksdale case in the pilot episode, "The Target," the Major Crimes unit has been established. This team encompasses Police Lieutenant Cedric Daniels (Lance Reddick), Detective Ellis Carver (Seth Gilliam), Detective Leander Sydnor (Corey Parker Robinson), Detective Shakima "Kima" Greggs (Sonja Sohn), Detective Lester Freamon (Clarke Peters), Detective Roland "Prez" Pryzbylewski (Jim True-Frost), Thomas "Herc" Hauk (Domenick Lombardozzi) and Leandor Sydnor (Corey Parker Robinson). They set up surveillance in the towers, taking pictures of the Barksdale crewmembers and of the drug deals. Bubbles is on the ground assisting Kima as an informant. He is a drug addict himself and roams the streets hustling for money, making it easy for him to blend in with the citizens of west Baltimore. Bubbles pretends to sell hats to Wee-Bey and Anton "Stinkum" Artis (Brandon Price) and, by either placing the hat on their head or handing them the hat, he is identifying (for Kima) who is in the organization and the position they hold within its ranks. He is also able to supply the names of all the members. Jameson (2010) discusses the lack of knowledge of the Special Crimes Unit in the following quote:

Obviously enough, not only do the police not initially know who Barksdale is, they have no inkling of Stringer's existence, save in those rare moments in which he has to visit the corners and monitor the operation on the street personally. Then one day, Jimmy takes it on himself to follow this so far unidentified figure (it will later on transpire that he is administering a whole expanding real estate investment development for Barksdale, something only gradually revealed by Lester's extraordinary creative curiosity and know-how). At any rate, the car leads Jimmy to a university and thence to a classroom, in which, through the window, he can observe the drug kingpin and gangster taking a course in the business school and obediently answering questions and doing his homework (p. 365).

McNulty and Bunk go to the towers and bring in D'Angelo for questioning on the murder of William Gant. During D'Angelo's questioning, Bunk and McNulty provide "alternative facts" to D'Angelo about Gant, him being a father of three children, and how he was a church going citizen. The audience sees that D'Angelo has heart and is sensitive to the murders. Enter Omar Little (Michael Kenneth Williams). "A fearsome legend of the streets while alive, Omar's trickster brilliance, daring insouciance, ethical code, and perhaps even his principled rejection of profanity as ugly will render him a folk hero in death" (Anderson, 2010, p. 390). He robs a Barksdale stash house with his lover, Brandon Wright (Michael Kevin Darnall); however, Brandon accidently calls Omar by name while the robbery is taking place. Bodie, Wallace, and Poot are in the stash house at the time of the robbery and inform Wee-Bey that Omar was the thief. In episode four, "Old Cases," Avon, Stinkum, Wee-Bey, and Stringer discuss the robbery, at which time, Avon orders a hit on Brandon and Omar. He insists that their bodies are displayed in the courtyard of the towers to send a message to all the residents living there. At the beginning of episode six, "The Wire," Brandon's tortured and mutilated body is on full display on the hood of a car. McNulty finds Omar and informs him of Brandon's death. Omar insists on seeing the body, at which time, he declares war on the Barksdale organization. McNulty and Kima question Omar and he explains that Wee-Bey, Stinkum, and Bird were in on the hit on Brandon. Omar also tells Kima that Bird shot William Gant, that he can identify Bird as the shooter, and is

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willing to go to court and testify against Bird. This sets up a significant storyline arc in season two.

Wallace is traumatized by what he saw. He tells D'Angelo that he cannot get the image of the body out of his head as he is feeling remorse for reporting Brandon's whereabouts. Bodie asks Poot about Wallace because he hasn't been seen since the Brandon incident. Poot explains that Wallace hasn't been right since the situation. The audience learns that Wallace has become so distraught that he has begun snorting cocaine. In episode nine, "Game Day," Wallace tells D'Angelo that he doesn't want to be in the game anymore. He says he wants to enroll in school. D'Angelo gives him some money and tells him to start over. D'Angelo then tells Bodie and Poot to leave Wallace alone.

Major Crimes works tirelessly to intercept the Barksdale crew through wiretaps and surveillance after they piece together that the hoppers receive pages and go to certain pay phones to retrieve their instructions. Freamon and Prez are instrumental in decoding the pages, messages, and coded language the hoppers (pawns) are sending through their conversations. Pawns rarely see a way out of the game given the chances of being labeled snitches are very high, making their death immanent. By episode seven, "One Arrest," the Barksdale organization is in disarray. D'Angelo goes to Orlando's to speak with Avon, Stringer, Stinkum, and Wee-Bey after they lost $40,000 worth of drugs in a sting at the towers. D'Angelo assures his uncle that there are no snitches and that his hoppers are not speaking to the police nor are they stealing money. When Stringer comes to the towers to make sure the stash is moved every night, he orders Wee-Bey to tear out the payphones in the towers. He also orders the hoppers to walk several blocks to use the phone and to never use the same phone twice.

Bubbles and Omar assist in the arrest of Bird. While Omar is being questioned by Bunk, Omar realizes that he and Bunk graduated from the same high school. Bunk then asks Omar if he has any additional information regarding open murder cases:

Bunk: "So, you're my eyeball witness, huh?"

Omar shakes his head in agreement.

Bunk: "So why'd you step up on this?"

Omar: "Bird trifling, basically...kill a everyday workin man an all. I mean, don't get it twisted, I do some dirt, too, but I ain't ever put my gun on nobody who wasn't in the game."

Bunk: "A man must have a code."

Omar: "Oh, no doubt."

In episode eight, "Lessons," Omar kills Stinkum and shoots Wee-Bey in the leg. Avon then declares war on Omar and tells his muscle that they have nothing else to do but to be on the hunt. However, Stringer tells Avon to hold off. When the murder comes up in the wire, the Special Crimes Unit talks to Omar about his actions. They explain to Omar that they need for him to lay low. By episode nine, Herc and Carver are on patrol and wonder why the corners are clear. They come across the annual east side versus west side basketball game. Avon and Stringer are coaching the west side while Joseph "Proposition Joe" Stewart (Robert F. Chew) is coaching the east side. Bodie and Poot approach Herc and Carver and explain how the game is tradition and that the loser throws a huge block party for the winners. In the midst of the conversation, they mention Avon. Herc and Carver radio back to Special Crimes that they may have a visual on Avon. The rest of the unit comes to the game and Sydnor spots Avon on the coaching bench beside Wee-Bey and Stringer.

Omar pays a visit to Prop Joe and gives him drugs from the Barksdales in exchange for a number to reach Avon. Prop Joe gives Omar Wee-Bey's pager number. Omar attempts to assassinate Avon while sending him 911 pages so Avon would walk outside of Orlando's. As Omar approaches Avon, Wee-Bey pulls up and a shoot out occurs. As a result, the Barksdale organization closes ranks around Avon to protect him. They also put the word out that they are willing to call a truce with Omar. Wallace is questioned by Special Crimes in episode ten, "The Cost," and agrees to testify against the Barksdales. Daniels takes him to his grandmother's house to wait out the trial. McNulty also puts Omar on a bus out of town and tells him to keep in touch, as he will need his testimony against Bird. At the end of episode eleven, "The Hunt," there are major raids in the towers and several stash houses attached to the Barksdale organization are cleaned out. In episode twelve, "Cleaning Up," Stringer collects all of the pagers and gives D'Angelo and Bodie burner cell phones. He gives them specific numbers to call and set up face-to-face meetings. Avon and Stringer meet with D'Angelo and ask him about Wallace. D'Angelo informs them that Wallace is out of the game and asks his uncle to leave him alone. However, Wallace returns to the towers after asking Poot to send bus money. D'Angelo tells Wallace that the game is not for him anymore. He also tells him to make sure, if asked, he says he stands by "his people." Stringer meets with Bodie about Wallace and orders him to kill Wallace. Bodie and Poot lure Wallace back to the towers and shoot him at point blank range.

D'Angelo is arrested on his way to New Jersey to conduct business for the organization. He is offered a chance to dramatically change his life by entering the Witness Protection Program in exchange for his testimony against his uncle. He agrees and tells the police everything once he is shown a picture of Wallace's dead body. He immediately knows who had him killed, as he understands "the game." Avon was also arrested and was released on bond. He and Stringer

move their organization to Tomkins Funeral Services. Brianna Barksdale (Michael Hyatt) is Avon's sister and D'Angelo's mother. She meets with Stringer and Avon. Within the meeting, Stringer decides he will handle the product while Brianna handles the money. They urge Avon to lay low. Brianna then visits D'Angelo in prison. He tells her about the opportunity he was offered and expresses his desire to start over. Brianna immediately rejects this idea and convinces her son that he must protect family at all costs and take the twenty years he is facing. "This points to the importance of considering televisual images as pedagogical tools alongside their function as reservoirs for identification" (Ault, 2012, p. 397). In the season finale, "Sentencing," D'Angelo receives a sentence of twenty years, Wee-Bey is sentenced to life without parole, and Avon only receives seven years in a plea agreement.

Guastaferro (2010) details several themes that emerged from season one. She discusses Avon Barksdale and notes the fact that he wanted the punishment for anyone who stole from him to be severe and on display. He also used intimidation to keep his hoppers and dealers that worked for him in line. The drug world was extremely homophobic. This was apparent when Avon doubled the bounty on Omar and Brandon simply because of their sexuality. Omar Little (Michael Kenneth Williams) immediately became the villain of the villains as he stole from other drug dealers for sport and began a journey of working with police, like an "anti-hero" and unofficial informant as a means to avenge Brandon's death. Lastly, she references the amount of remorse several members of the Barksdale crew showed as a result of the killings. This was most apparent with Wallace when he ultimately cracks and tells the police about Brandon's killing. Table 5 charts the number of minutes and percentage of screen time each caricature appeared in the season. Season one comprised of thirteen episodes, each episode lasting approximately one hour. This is a total of 780 minutes of airtime.

Table 5: *The Wire*, Season One, Poverty & The Drug Wars

Character	Caricature	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Season Depicted (X/780)
Det. William "Bunk" Moreland	Acceptable Black	76	10%
Russell "Stringer" Bell	Gangsta	74	10%
Det. Ellis Carver	Other Acceptable Black	98	13%
Lt. Cedric Daniels	Uncle Tom	128	16%
D'Angelo Barksdale	Uncle Tom	128	16%
Roland "Wee-Bey" Brice	Gangsta	44	6%
Avon Barksdale	Gangsta	60	8%
Preston "Bodie" Broadus	Sambo	51	7%
Wallace	Uncle Tom/Neutral	48	6%
Malik "Poot" Carr	Sambo/Coon	41	5%
Bubbles	Uncle Tom	48	6%
Omar Little	Uncle Tom/Gangsta/Brute Nigger	36	5%
Det. Lester Freamon	Acceptable Black	74	10%
Det. Leander Sydnor	Other Acceptable Black	43	6%

Season Two. Season two of *The Wire* focused more on organized labor in the waterfront port district of Baltimore. McNulty has now been assigned to patrol the harbors and shipping channels of Baltimore. Bunk visits McNulty at the docks and informs him that the murder case against Bird is approaching and one of their key witnesses, Omar Little, is nowhere to be found. Daniels is now in charge of the evidence unit. When Bunk tries to retrieve evidence in preparation for the case against Bird, he sees Daniels and, to their surprise, the evidence they are looking for is missing. Stringer has taken over the Barksdale drug operation (as a result of Avon's arrest) and has moved their operation to a local morgue as a way of covering up the organization's daily activities. He regularly visits Avon in prison and receives direction on how to keep the business moving and where to receive the drugs. Avon, Wee-Bey, and D'Angelo are serving their sentences in the same prison facility. The viewer later discovers that Avon has

security guards on his payroll. In episode two, "Collateral Damage," Brianna visits Avon in jail

and informs him that the drug supply is getting low in the projects. He tells her he is sending

Stringer to Atlanta for a possible connection. She urges Avon to care for D'Angelo because he

took twenty years for the family. Avon assures Brianna he will not let anything happen to her

son.

Frank Sobotka (Chris Bauer) is the local union leader for the dock workers. A real estate

developer plans to build luxury waterfront condominiums at the expense of the doc workers'

livelihood. Sobotka "turns in desperation to illicit enterprises to fund a political lobbying effort

to defend their jobs" (Anderson, 2010, p. 374). When doubt is placed on the fate of their jobs,

some of the doc workers dive into the "underground drug economy" (Anderson, 2010, p. 374)

from season one. Frank is working with "The Greek" (Bill Raymond) and his drug operation at

the docks, transporting the drugs from the shipping lanes to the drug hideaways. According to

Jameson (2010), Frank is not interested in the money from a profit standpoint. "Frank uses the

money to build up his own contacts, in view of a supreme project, which is rebuilding and

revitalizing the port of Baltimore. He understands history and knows that the labor movement

and the whole society organized around it cannot continue to exist unless the port comes back"

(Jameson, 2010, p. 371). His nephew, Nick Sobotka (Pablo Schreiber) is aware of the operation

and regularly works as an informant. Frank's son, Chester "Ziggy" Sobotka (James Ransome)

and Nick work out an arrangement with The Greek to hustle drugs on the side to bring in extra

income. Major Stanislaus Valchek (Al Brown) is Roland Pryzbylewski's father in law and

becomes concerned about the operations at the docks after fourteen dead female bodies are

discovered in a shipping container. When Frank fumbles a stained glass church gift, Valchek

decides to get even by asking Deputy Commissioner Burrell for a detail to investigate Frank

Sobotka and his staff. Burrell states that the detail will only last six weeks. As a result. Valchek puts Pryzbylewski in charge of the unit. This ultimately sets the stage for a reunion of the Special Crimes Unit later in the season.

Wee-Bey is brought to Avon's cell after a shakedown by a prison guard, C.O. Dwight Tilghman (Antonio D. Charity). Avon assures Wee-Bey that he will take care of the situation after Wee-Bey informs Avon that this same security guard is selling drugs to inmates on the side. This information will be pertinent to Avon's release later in the season. Avon continues to meet with Stringer and directs him to have Donette (Shamyl Brown), the mother of D'Angelo's son, visit D'Angelo in prison. Avon suspects D'Angelo has begun using cocaine. Avon also believes, as Stringer says to Donette, that a man needs to see his child and the mother of his child in order to stay strong and finish out his sentence without regret. When Stringer visits Donette to deliver that message, he has sex with Donette and begins an affair. D'Angelo has become distant from his uncle despite Avon arranging for D'Angelo to get a job in the prison library. Avon urges D'Angelo to keep his head in the game (while confronting him about his drug use) because of possible events that could lead to both of them serving very little time. At the end of episode three, "Hot Shots," prison guards are rushing to multiple inmates' cells. In episode four, "Hard Cases," it is revealed that several inmates died as a result of snorting cocaine laced with rat poison. When D'Angelo confronts Avon about the incident, Avon explains that the investigators will need a name and that will be to their benefit. However, D'Angelo tells Avon he wants no part of it. When an investigation ensues, Avon emerges as the informant stating he knows who supplied the drugs. His lawyer argues for a commuted sentence in exchange for supplying the information. Avon points the finger at C.O. Tilghman.

Stringer talks with Donette about her visit with D'Angelo. Based on Donette's account of their conversation, he becomes concerned about possible leaks that would disrupt business as usual. In episode 6, "All Prologue," Stringer arranges for D'Angelo to be murdered by strangulation in the prison library where he works. The murder was staged to look like a suicide. After D'Angelo's funeral, Stringer visits Avon and asks what the prison officers are saying about the death investigation. Avon says the investigation states that D'Angelo tied a rope around his neck and sat down on the floor to cut off the flow of oxygen. This was Stringer's way of making sure the job had been done correctly.

The Special Crimes Unit is pieced back together once Col. William Rawls (John Doman) meets with Daniels to take over the case against Frank Sobotka and the dead women found in the shipping container. Similar to their operation in season one, they begin surveillance in abandoned buildings and rooftops of various corners where drug deals are taking place. Officer Beatrice "Beadie" Russell (Amy Ryan) has also joined the team. She was conducting patrols of the docks and would play an integral part in the investigation. She is familiar with a computer system that monitors the shipping containers, how they are off loaded onto trailers, and where they are placed in the stacks. Freamon and Beadie begin monitoring the system in order to try and crack the case. The long hours and intense cases are beginning to put a strain on Daniels's relationship with his wife, Marla. In episode seven, "Backwash," Marla expresses concern about his ambition, stating she misses "that man" she married. By this time, McNulty has been in contact with Omar and prepares him to testify in the trial against Marquis "Bird" Hilton (Fredro Starr). It is Omar's testimony that ultimately provides the State with enough evidence to convict Bird.

In episode eight, "Duck and Cover," the Special Crimes Unit has enough evidence to support a warrant requesting a wiretap as they explain their case with Assistant State's Attorney

Rhonda Pearlman. The team has reason to believe that the dead females and the drug smuggling are connected. Meanwhile, Bodie and Poot claim more corners in an effort to expand their market share. A shoot out ensues and, as a result, a five-year-old boy was killed. Major Howard "Bunny" Colvin (Robert Wisdom) is called to the scene to launch an investigation. As a result of the shooting, Colvin conducts several raids on the towers. Stringer orders Bodie to shut down the operation until the investigation is over. Bodie places the weapons used in the shooting in a red bag and tosses it over a bridge. Unbeknownst to Bodie, the bag lands on a barge passing under the bridge. Stringer is in constant conversation with Proposition Joe and makes a deal to give Prop Joe some of the towers in exchange for having access to his supplier, the Greek. When Prop Joe asks Stringer about Avon, Stringer says Avon will know about their deal when it's necessary. Stringer talks with Brianna and convinces her to talk with Avon regarding their limited supply and need for muscle. She reports back to Stringer and says that Avon is not interested in getting into business with Prop Joe. She also states that Brother Mouzone (Michael Potts) will be coming from New York and will stay in place as long as he is needed. Against Avon's wishes, Stringer meets with Prop Joe and states that their deal is still on.

In episode nine, "Stray Rounds," the Special Crimes unit uncovers information that leads to the confiscation of $45 million dollars worth of crack cocaine. They also arrest a madam (in a brothel) in connection to the death investigation; however, there is still no evidence to link the case to Frank Sobotka or the Greek. In episode ten, "Storm Warnings," Brother Mouzone shows up in the towers and runs the east side crew out of the towers. Prop Joe and Stringer come up with the idea to tell Omar that Brother Mouzone was responsible for Brandon's mutilation and death knowing Omar would want to avenge his death in an effort to rid themselves of his (Brother Mouzone) presence. Omar goes to Brother Mouzone's hotel room, knocks out his

muscle, and shoots him. Brother Mouzone and Omar engage in conversation about Brandon. Brother Mouzone tells Omar he received wrong information. As Omar watches Brother Mouzone pray and tell Omar that he is at piece with his God, Omar realizes he was indeed given wrong information. As a result, he dials 911 and reports a shooting knowing the paramedics will arrive and save Brother Mouzone's life. Meanwhile, the Sobotka case is coming to a close as Frank has been questioned about his connection to the drug trade and Ziggy has been arrested for murder. Beadie visits Frank and urges him to turn himself him. "You're better than who you got in bed with," she tells him. Frank decides he is going to cooperate with the police but decides to speak with the Greek before turning himself in. In the season finale, "Port in a Storm," Frank's body is found floating in the harbor. Nick, Frank's nephew, tells the police about the drug operation and is placed in witness protection. Omar talks with Butchie (S. Robert Morgan) about Brother Mouzone. Together, they figure out that Stringer lied about Brother Mouzone's involvement in Brandon's murder, at which time, Omar declares war on Stringer.

Table 6 charts the number of minutes and percentage of screen time each caricature appeared in the season. Season two is comprised of twelve episodes, each episode lasting approximately one hour. This is a total of 720 minutes of airtime.

Table 6: *The Wire*, Season Two, Gentrification & The Docs

Character	Caricature	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Season Depicted (X/720)
Det. William "Bunk" Moreland	Acceptable Black	92	13%
Russell "Stringer" Bell	Gangsta	46	6%
Det. Ellis Carver	Other Acceptable Black	34	5%
Lt. Cedric Daniels	Uncle Tom	80	11%
D'Angelo Barksdale	Uncle Tom	18	3%
Roland "Wee-Bey" Brice	Gangsta	3	0.4%
Avon Barksdale	Gangsta	23	3%
Preston "Bodie" Broadus	Sambo	24	3%
Malik "Poot" Carr	Sambo/Coon	35	5%
Bubbles	Uncle Tom	8	1%
Omar Little	Uncle Tom/Gangsta/Brute Nigger	23	3%
Det. Lester Freamon	Acceptable Black	83	12%

Season Three. Season three explores the complexity of the mayoral race, gentrification, and city politics. Episode one, "Time After Time," begins with the demolition of the towers, which instantly forces the Barksdale organization to find another place to push their drugs. The Special Crimes Unit is now following Prop Joe's organization and they have a wiretap to collect information. The season three premiere introduces the audience to Councilman Thomas "Tommy" Carcetti (Aidan Gillen) and Councilman Anthony "Tony" Gray (Christopher Mann). Commissioner Ervin H. Burrell (Frankie Faison) and the Deputy Commissioner of Operations William A. Rawls (John Doman) appear before the city council to discuss the crime statistics of Baltimore. The audience also learns that Cedric Daniels and his wife, Marla Daniels (Maria Broom) are separated; however, Daniels shows up to various functions to give the illusion that they are still married. Marla has aspirations to run for a seat on the city council and the two agree that they must keep up appearances. The mayor of Baltimore, Clarence V. Royce (Glynn

Turman) is also introduced and urges Burrell to "get the murders down" as they figure out that Carcetti has aspirations of becoming mayor. Meanwhile, McNulty informs Bunk that the autopsy on D'Angelo Barksdale indicates that he may have been murdered. McNulty visits Donette and explains that they received a tip about the autopsy and leaves his card for her to contact him with any questions.

Omar resurfaces in episode two, "All Due Respect," and robs another Barksdale stash house. Stringer visits Avon in jail and the two discuss the need to gain more corners. He assures Stringer that he will be home soon but to maintain the drug trade a little while longer. Bodie hits the streets on behalf of the Barksdale organization claiming corners knowing that there is a new kingpin in Baltimore. Marlo Stanfield (Jamie Hector) is introduced and monitors the scene on the streets. Trier (2010) describes Marlo Stanfield as "a young, cunning, and utterly ruthless and murderous drug kingpin…intent on gaining control of the drug trade over his many remaining competitors on Baltimore's East side" (p. 194). When Bodie approaches Marlo, he is told to "pack up his people," despite Bodie informing Marlo that he is with Avon. Omar continues to scope out and steal from Barksdale's stash houses. By now, he has established lieutenants of his own: Tosha Mitchell (Edwina Findley Dickerson), Kimmy (Kelli R. Brown), and his lover from season two, Dante (Ernest Waddell). Tosha asks Omar why they continue to steal from the Barksdales. Omar's lieutenants are unaware of the history, bad blood, and rivalry he has with Avon and Stringer. Omar has never gotten over the brutal slaying of Brandon and has never stopped trying to avenge his death. Prop Joe and Stringer meet and discuss the fact that his lieutenant/nephew, Melvin "Cheese" Wagstaff (Method Man), was questioned and the police tried to pin murders on him. Stringer and Prop Joe conclude that Special Crimes must still have

phones tapped. In episode three, "Dead Soldiers," Omar's crew robs a Barksdale stash house; however, things do not go as planned. A major shoot out occurs and Tosha is shot in the head.

Bunk is called to the scene of the shootout to investigate. He observes children pretending to be Omar and re-enacting the shootout. Omar talks with Butchie about Tosha's death and says that he feels guilty about it. Butchie serves as a mentor and father figure to Omar. He also serves as Omar's banker. Any time Omar robs a stash house, he gives his earnings to Butchie for safekeeping. Marlo Stanfield is concerned about a drop in sales and confronts one of his lieutenants, Fruit (Brandon Hobbs). Fruit explains that the Barksdale organization is taking over several corners. He orders Fruit to "have them moved," and to take plenty of muscle with him to get the job done.

The Special Crimes Unit is feeling the same pressures to bring down the murder rates and increase the drug arrests. As a result, they expand their scope while still focusing on the Barksdale organization and Proposition Joe. Major Howard "Bunny" Colvin begins to survey the streets and vacant lots in his jurisdiction. Under pressure from the city council, in particular, Councilman Carcetti, to reduce the crime rate, clean up the corners, and make the neighborhoods safer for residents, Major Colvin devises a plan to create a neutral zone of the drug trade. He finds an area where the row houses are abandoned and creates, "Amsterdam." Know as "Hamsterdam" by the drug dealers and hoppers, this was a police free zone where the drug trade could be conducted without the fear of police interference and arrest. Major Colvin and his team loaded up dealers and addicts in police van sweeps and dropped them off in the zone. The drug trade was legal so long as it happened in Hamsterdam. If the dealers and hoppers returned to the corners, they would be arrested immediately. Carver works with Colvin and supervises the areas. McNulty and Kima meet with Bubbles and hire him to work the new corners and find out who

works the corners; specifically, they are interested in the Barksdale organization. In episode four, "Amsterdam," McNulty reports (to his colleagues) that he has been following Stringer Bell. He reveals Stringer lives in a high-rise condominium with no attempt to hide his name on the lease. "The moral line of the drug is blurred when viewers begin to see that those who have a hand in its proliferation extend from the streets to city hall" (Guastaferro, 2010, p. 266) as McNulty also reveals that Stringer was having lunch with State Senator R. Clayton "Clay" Davis (Isiah Whitlock, Jr.). Freamon and Prez pulled his phone records, which showed that he has had several calls coming in and out with real estate agents, architects, and lawyers on behalf of B&B Enterprises. They realize that Stringer has become an entrepreneur and a developer. He is purchasing several properties and acquiring wealth in the process. They realize Stringer will never get close to the streets and the drug trade and that he is funneling the money through his businesses so it cannot be traced.

In episode five, "Straight and True," it is revealed that all of the drug kingpins in Baltimore have created the "New Day Co-Op," a neutral meeting space where they come together and conduct business. Stringer is the chair of the co-op and states that any grievances they have, they are to bring it to the meetings. Stringer meets with Marlo and invites him to join the co-op. Meanwhile, Avon has been granted parole and is released from prison. Stringer throws a huge celebration for Avon in downtown Baltimore. Brianna, Prop Joe, and Levy are all in attendance. Avon starts to notice a subtle change in Stringer, particularly, when Levy and State Senator Daniels inform him that Stringer has channeled the money through legitimate businesses such that he and Avon are unreachable as drug targets. In episode six, "Homecoming," Stringer begins to see Avon's attitude as a threat to B&B Enterprises. He tries to describe what their future could be to Avon who simply responds, "I'm just a gangster, that's all." Avon quickly sees

that "his partner no longer lives in the neighborhood and has peered at a broader panorama where success in the local drug trade could lead toward broader economic opportunities untethered to the old neighborhood" (Anderson, 2010, p. 392). Avon becomes extremely angry when he learns about Marlo Stanfield. He sends his muscle to regain corners from Marlo; however, two of Avon's lieutenants are killed.

Donette tells Brianna that McNulty informed her that D'Angelo's death may not have been a suicide. When she tells Stringer that Brianna wants her to accompany her to the police station to hear McNulty out, Stringer becomes enraged. The audience knows the reason Stringer is having this reaction is because he ordered the hit on D'Angelo. Stringer confronts Levy and states that he had no right to tell Brianna to pursue it. Levy states that Avon needs to be informed; Stringer tells Levy he will handle it. In episode eight, "Moral Midgetry," Brianna meets with McNulty and says there's no way Avon would have let D'Angelo be killed in jail. McNulty shows Brianna the autopsy photos taken of D'Angelo's neck and tells her he was strangled. He also tells Brianna that, whoever killed D'Angelo, set it up to look like a suicide:

McNulty: "Look, two years ago we hung more wire on your brother's crew than AT&T…and in the end, D'Angelo was this close to flippin, givin up everybody, everything but, you know all that, right? You were the one that went down to that detention center and talked your son out of deal. I kinda like your son, you know? All things considered, he was a pretty decent kid…and it grinds me that no one every spoke up for him…seems to me nobody ever will. But, mostly, at this point, I'm sorry I bothered his girl, and I'm sorry she bothered you."

Brianna: "Why go to her? Why not come to me, first?"

McNulty: "Honestly? I was looking for someone who cared about the kid…I mean, like I said, you were the one that made him take the years, right?"

Brianna is devastated and enraged at this news and immediately goes to Avon; however, she confronts Stringer. He tries to explain to her that McNulty is trying to drive a wedge and create division in their organization. Stringer and Avon confront each other. Avon states that he believes Stringer has become soft and is not hard enough for the game. In the midst of the conversation, Stringer reveals that he ordered the hit on D'Angelo. They get into a physical altercation but Stringer overtakes Avon, pins him to the floor, and says he took D'Angelo's life because he would have taken down the entire organization. This is a pivotal scene in the series as this is the beginning of the end of the Barksdale organization. From here on out, the organization begins to implode from within.

Marlo and Avon begin a turf war, which leads to Marlo sending his henchmen to shoot and kill one of Avon's lieutenants while Avon is in the car. This leads to further dissention in the Barksdale organization. Prop Joe informs Stringer that the co-op members took a vote and decided to cut him and Avon off of the drug supply until Avon and Marlo call a truce. Marlo is only willing to meet with Avon on the condition that he keeps his corners. Stringer meets with Avon and delivers Prop Joe's message. He urges Avon to think about the business…about the game. At the beginning of episode eleven, "Middle Ground," Brother Mouzone re-emerges in an ally as Omar is leaving a recent robbery. The two draw their guns on each other and begin to engage in conversation. Later in the episode, Brother Mouzone visits a barbershop where Avon is getting a fresh haircut. The conversation is as follows:

Barksdale: "You look healthy."

Mouzone: "For a man who was gut shot. You reached out to a third party…who engaged me for the purpose of holding your towers. That third person's word was your word, as he represented you."

Barksdale: "That's right."

Mouzone: "And, I ran those East Baltimore gentlemen off." "I held up my end of the agreement, at least, for as long as I was physically able."

Barksdale: "You did."

Mouzone: "Your man then set up a meet at Butchie's bar, your man told Omar Little that I was responsible for the torture of a young man that is close to Mr. Little's heart. Your man…in effect…sought to have me hit.

Barksdale: "Omar told you that and you believe that motherfucker?"

Mouzone: "He doesn't strike me as a man that would tell stories…even at the point of dying."

Barksdale: "Shit."

Avon instantly realizes that Stringer wanted to kill Brother Mouzone in order to go into business with Prop Joe and lied to Omar to make it happen. Meanwhile, Stringer meets with Major Howard "Bunny" Colvin (Robert Wisdom) in a cemetery and offers Avon up on a silver platter. Colvin states, "Speak your mind, Russell." Stringer tells Colvin about the arsenal Avon and his muscle are surrounding themselves with and hands him the address written on a folded post-it note:

Colvin: "Must have done something to you."

Stringer: "Nah…it's just business."

Later, Avon and Stringer have drinks on the balcony of his condo. They reminisce about their childhood…about easier times. This is a real moment of vulnerability for the two of them, as the audience knows that Avon and Stringer have set traps for each other. Stringer mentions that he can't get too "lit" as he has a meeting the next day. Avon asks what time he will be meeting. Once he acquires the time, they embrace for the last time:

Barksdale: "Us, motherfucker."

Stringer: "Us."

This would be the last time Avon would see Stringer alive. It is inferred that Avon informed Brother Mouzone of the location and time of the meeting. It is also inferred that Brother Mouzone then informs Omar as the two appear outside of the construction site as Stringer enters the building with the developer. Stringer is having a confrontation with the developer when Omar shoots and kills the muscle Stringer has brought for protection. Unarmed, Stringer runs frantically, trying to elude danger, as he himself is unarmed. Stringer rushes to find an exit, continuing to climb the stairs, reaching floor after floor, only to discover the exits boarded up. Meanwhile, Omar is patiently walking behind Stringer with his shotgun by his side. Just as Stringer rounds a corner to climb another flight of stairs, Brother Mouzone appears on the landing, pointing a gun at Stringer, and motions for him to move away from the stairs. By this time, Omar comes around the corner and points his shotgun at Stringer. Stringer tries to reason with his would be assassins. Both Omar and Brother Mouzone shoot and kill Stringer Bell. Avon and the entire Barksdale organization are arrested and sent to prison. Bodie is the only remaining lieutenant that is free.

As the crime numbers dropped and the street corners become noticeably cleaner, Colvin's supervisors began to worry that Colvin was "juking the stats," in other words, manipulating the numbers to give the politicians what they asked for. Eventually, the mayor and police commissioner find out about the existence of Hamsterdam and order tis immediate dissolution (Wilson, 2014). Table 7 charts the number of minutes and percentage of screen time each caricature appeared in the season. Season three is comprised of twelve episodes, each episode lasting approximately one hour. This is a total of 720 minutes of airtime.

Table 7: *The Wire*, Season Three, City Politics

Character	Caricature	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Season Depicted (X/720)
Det. William "Bunk" Moreland	Acceptable Black	40	6%
Russell "Stringer" Bell	Gangsta	78	11%
Det. Ellis Carver	Other Acceptable Black	46	6%
Lt. Cedric Daniels	Uncle Tom/Brute Nigger	62	9%
Avon Barksdale	Gangsta	50	7%
Preston "Bodie" Broadus	Sambo	23	3%
Malik "Poot" Carr	Sambo/Coon	11	2%
Bubbles	Uncle Tom	23	3%
Omar Little	Uncle Tom/Gangsta/Brute Nigger	27	4%
Det. Lester Freamon	Acceptable Black	58	8%
Det. Leander Sydnor	Other Acceptable Black	22	3%
Marlo Stanfield	Gangsta	35	5%

Season Four. Season four of *The Wire* was able to capture the intersectionality of education, city and mayoral politics, and law enforcement that impact the daily lives of teachers, educators, students, and families (Dutro & Kantor, 2011). According to Buzuvis (2012), season four of *The Wire* "presents a tale of three classrooms. Two are institutional; one, the street, is not" (p. 366). The first classroom is that of Roland Pryzbylewski. After Prez mistakenly shot and killed a Black police officer in season three, episode nine, "Slapstick," he becomes a lateral entry eighth grade mathematics teacher (Dutro & Kantor, 2011) at Edward J. Tilghman Middle School on the west side of Baltimore during the season four premiere episode, "Boys of Summer." All of the students (shown) at Tilghman Middle are Black. As Prez begins teacher workdays, leading up to the first day, he begins to realize he may be in over his head. The season primarily centers on the lives of four eighth grade boys: Michael Lee (Tristan Wilds), Duquan "Dukie" Weems (Jermaine Crawford), Namond Brice (Julito McCullum), and Randy Wagstaff (Maestro Harrell)

(Dutro & Kantor, 2011). These are four fatherless boys whose lives intersect with four established male characters that influence them and change "their lives for better and for worse" (Ault, 2012, p. 390). According to Atcho (2011), Namond is the son of one of the Barksdale's enforcers (Wee-Bey) that was jailed at the end of season one. His mother consistently pressures him to enter the drug trade and to be a "soldier" like his father. Randy is a product of the Maryland juvenile system that has been shuttled from foster home to foster home over the course of his life. He has been stable in a home for quite some time when he is introduced in season four and is a rising entrepreneur. Dukie is very docile and comes from a home with drug-addicted parents that often sell his clothes in order to score their next high. Lastly, Michael emerges as the group leader very early on. He is a big brother that loves and cares for his little brother "Bug" (Keenon Brice) yet, lives with his drug-addicted mother that sells their food in order to score her next high.

When the first day arrives, in episode three, "Home Rooms," Michael, Dukie, Namond, and Randy all have Prez for math at the same time. Prez is trying to maintain order and begins to hand out bus passes and assign seats. A female student states that she cannot sit beside Dukie because he smells. Dukie, with a look of embarrassment, sinks into his seat. Unbeknownst to Prez, he is passing the bus passes out to the wrong students. Once he realizes his mistake, the bell rings and students rush to the door. Prez is distracted trying to collect the bus passes, so he doesn't see Randy stealing hall passes from his desk. It is later revealed that Randy, using the passes to get out of class, goes to his locker, changes out of his burgundy polo (8th grade) into a green one (6th grade), in order to blend in with sixth grade students. He then goes to the cafeteria to sell candy during sixth grade lunch. He repeats this over and over until one of his former teachers catches him and walks him back to Prez's class. Early on in season four, it is revealed

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that Michael is the primary caretaker of his younger half-brother. Michael also controls the WIC card because his mother cannot be trusted with it. There are several instances that Michael searches for food only to find the cabinets bare. Michael confronts his mother only to find out she has sold the food for drug money. When Bug's father returns, it is inferred that this man sexually abused Michael.

Marlo Stanfield gave all of the boys money before the first day of school, claiming he didn't want them going to their first day "not looking right." Michael refused the money because it was dirty. Michael often tries to avoid Marlo and his muscle because he has no use for the drug trade (Trier, 2010). However, with the return of Bug's father, he is desperate to protect his little brother. He goes to Marlo Stanfield and his crew pleading to have him disappear. As a result, the man is beaten to death and Michael is given a new place to live, but not without a price. He begins working for Stanfield as muscle, trained by Snoop and Chris Partlow (Gbenga Akinnagbe).

A storyline that is significant in the fourth season is introduced in episode five, "Alliances," when Bunny Colvin and Dr. David Parenti (Dan DeLuca) approach Ms. Donnelly about conducting a research study "with the goal of developing an intervention program" (Trier, 2010, p. 185) for students that were not able to function in a regular classroom setting. Specifically, the goal was "to test whether isolation and radical teaching methods can change at-risk students' behavior and keep them from their apparent destiny on the street, the inevitable rising of the ranks in the drug trade from their current status as corner boys" (Buzuvis, 2012, p. 370). This is the second institutional classroom Buzuvis (2012) referenced in his discussion of season four. Colvin requests the "corner kids" after days of observations. Colvin has come to the conclusion that there are two types of students walking the halls: the "stoop kids" that stay on the

front stoop and do as their parents ask of them, and the "corner kids" that go down to the corners and work within the drug trade as hoppers. They are granted permission and create a small class of eighth grade students with extreme behavior problems. Trier (2010) relates Colvin's creation of the class to "Hamsterdam" in season three. Namond is one of ten students chosen for the class. The first day of the special class is introduced in episode seven, "Unto Others." Time and time again, you see students, including Namond, acting extremely disruptive in order to get suspended; this is their way of escaping the class. The problem is, no one gets suspended. Instead, students are taken to a time out area with Colvin and two other adults to cool off. Students begin to realize there is no way out; thus, they slowly begin to cooperate. According to Trier (2010), Colvin (through continued observation) begins to realize that in order to engage the students, they have to be able to relate the content to their daily lives.

During episode eight, "Corner Boys," Colvin engages the students in a conversation about the characteristics of a "good" corner boy. The students are then placed into groups and tasked with writing the rules of what it takes to be a good corner boy. In episode nine, "Know Your Place," students are placed into groups and given pieces of a tower to build. Namond's group wins and is taken to an expensive restaurant as the prize. As the season progresses, you can see Colvin grow closer to Namond, despite Namond's hard exterior. By episode ten, "Misgivings," the reality of standardized tests becomes a real issue when Ms. Donnelly informs Colvin that they must begin preparing their students for the state tests. In addition, the Area Superintendent has voiced concerns over the program after she observes the class and witnesses Zenobia Dawson (Taylor King) and Chandra Porter (Na'Dria Jennings) get into a confrontation. "Colvin's experiment was on shaky ground from the start, as school officials feared that it could be perceived as the 'warehousing' of children, an image that would undermine the myth of

universal expectations. And when the goals of Colvin's class conflict with the administration's goals of preparing students for the statewide test, it is the class that is sacrificed" (Buzuvis, 2012, p. 371).

Trier (2010) explains that the last three episodes of season four ("A New Day," "That's Got His Own," "Final Grades") bring the political storyline, began in season three, full circle with the education storyline of season four. "In these episodes, Mayor Carcetti and his advisors consider blaming the public schools for mismanaging their own budgets, and they also consider cutting the school system's overall budget, thereby finding necessary funds to maintain their political leverage, though risking the support of the unionized teachers throughout the city" (p. 193).

While the Baltimore police are wrapping up their case regarding Avon Barksdale and his drug organization, a new drug kingpin has been lying in wait, taking over corners while the Barksdale organization imploded in season three. La Berge (2010) describes Marlo Stanfield as "the series' most ruthless killer" (p. 548). Marlo's two main assassins are Chris Partlow (Gbenga Akinnagbe) and Felicia "Snoop" Pearson (Felicia Pearson) and kill on command with no questions asked. They discover vacant row houses and dispose of the bodies there. As many as 22 bodies are discovered by Lester Freamon and Bunk Moreland, which sets up the final season of the series. In episode thirteen of season four, "Final Grades," Bodie becomes disillusioned by "the game" as he recognizes that there has been no advancement in it despite his loyalty. He is speaking with McNulty after the murder of one of his workers and agrees to do what he can to bring Marlo Stanfield down. Though he has not told McNulty anything pertinent, Bodie is seen exiting McNulty's car and is later shot in the head on one of the corners by Marlo's muscle. Table 8 charts the number of minutes and percentage of screen time each caricature appeared in

the season. Season four is comprised of thirteen episodes, each episode lasting approximately one hour. This is a total of 780 minutes of airtime.

 Season Five. Season Five examines the intersectionality of the media and the Baltimore police force. According to La Berge (2010), "the fifth season departs from the previous four, whose defining aesthetic feature was their realism as measured against a black underclass and the violence of its illicit economies. By substituting the melodrama of newsroom-serial violence for he structural violence of urban poverty as the main narrative thread, season 5 invites us to critique the relationship among race, violence, economy, and seriality in the construction of realism" (p. 548). Marlo Stanfield is running the drug trade in the city and has all but taken over the drug co-op. Lester Freamon has found the abandoned row houses in West Baltimore that Marlo Stanfield and his hired assassins have turned into tombs. As the boards covering the entrances of the homes begin to be revealed, more and more bodies are discovered. In total, Marlo Stanfield has killed 22 individuals. McNulty, Bunk, and Freamon are extremely frustrated with the lack of resources and public attention to this matter as they have been on the hunt for Marlo since he took over the drug trade in Avon Barksdale's absence and Stringer Bell's murder by Omar and Brother Mouzone. "The vacant murders suggest that little has changed in the sympathetic portrayal of Black men since the nineteenth century. For Black bodies to elicit sympathy they must be killed despite their moral *and* economic value–such as those entombed in the vacants–elicit no sympathy from the public" (Jacobson, 2014, p. 165). This sentiment is captured in the following conversation during episode two, "Unconfirmed Reports:"

Table 8: *The Wire*, Season Four, Education in Baltimore City Schools

Character	Caricature	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Season Depicted (X/780)
Det. William "Bunk" Moreland	Acceptable Black	49	6%
Det. Ellis Carver	Other Acceptable Black	35	5%
Lt. Cedric Daniels	Uncle Tom/Brute Nigger	29	4%
Preston "Bodie" Broadus	Sambo	27	4%
Malik "Poot" Carr	Sambo/Coon	9	1%
Bubbles	Uncle Tom	35	5%
Omar Little	Uncle Tom/Gangsta/Brute Nigger	60	8%
Det. Lester Freamon	Acceptable Black	56	7%
Det. Leander Sydnor	Other Acceptable Black	21	3%
Michael Lee	Gangsta	93	12%
Namond Brice	Pickaninny	102	13%
Randy Wagstaff	Acceptable Black	82	11%
Duquan "Dukie" Weems	Coon	74	10%
Marlo Stanfield	Gangsta	46	6%

McNulty: "The guy leaves two dozen bodies scattered all over the city and no one gives a fuck!"

Freamon: "It's 'cause of who he dropped."

Bunk: "True dat. You can go a long way in this country killin' Black folk. Young males,

especially. Misdemeanor homicides.

McNulty: "If Marlo was killing White women…"

Freamon: "White children."

Bunk: "Tourists."

McNulty: "One White, ex-cheerleader tourists missing in Aruba."

Bunk: "Trouble is...this ain't Aruba bitch."

Freamon: "You think that if 300 White people were killed in this city every year, they wouldn't

send the 82nd Airborne? Negro, please!"

McNulty: "There's got to be some way to make them turn on the faucet."

Bunk: "Ah, come on Jimmy…you're the smartest boy in the room. You come up with something for this broke ass city."

McNulty takes Bunk's suggestion to heart and creates a fictional serial killer with a sexual fetish that is preying on White homeless men (Wilson, 2014). Due to the sensationalism of the media, particularly the Baltimore Sun, there is a public outcry and demand for the capture of the fictional killer. "The narrative juxtaposes the deaths of these similarly 'disposable people' Black drug dealers and White homeless and presents two different reactions" (Jacobson, 2014, p. 164). The White victims elicit concern for the homeless…so much that Mayor Carcetti devotes endless resources and overtime to the police force for this case (Wilson, 2014).

McNulty then funnels the money to Freamon to track down and build a case for the ultimate capture of Marlo Stanfield and his "muscle." According to Jacobson (2014):

> Black drug dealers are, in the words of *Baltimore Sun* reporter Mike Fletcher (Brandon Young) 'dead where it doesn't count' (season five, episode three). While the White homeless occupy the same geographic region and economically many of the low-level drug dealers are not much better off than the homeless, the vacant dead's connection with the illegal drug trade and the fact that they are Black make them unsympathetic. The violent crimes committed by Marlo or in his name do not categorize him or his hired guns as serial killers; these behaviors fold into stereotypes about Black male violence (p. 164).

Avon Barksdale resurfaces after Marlo visits him in prison to access the heroin supply of the Greek (from season two). Through this connection, Marlo would become the main drug distributor in Baltimore. Barksdale also gives Marlo a direct phone number granting him direct assess to the Greek. Marlo gives the phone number to Levy. Herc, a former member of Special Crimes, steals the phone number and gives it to Freamon. This ultimately leads to the demise and arrest of Marlo Stanfield and most of his lietenents. As the series wraps, the truth surfaces regarding the serial killer and McNulty and Freamon are forced to resign. Kima later confessed

to Freamon and McNulty that she leaked the truth to investigators. Michael Lee shot and killed Snoop after Marlo and Chris were arrested and assumed Michael was the snitch. Levy is able to get charges dropped against Marlo, bringing Carver's declaration of the war on drugs never being over full circle.

In the final minutes of the series finale, there is a closing montage of scenes that reveals what has become of the main characters. Poetically, season one's opening theme is played in the background as it reveals Bubbles continuing to beat his addiction and he is finally rewarded by his sister as she allows him to enter the main floor of her home (from the basement where he resides) and sit at her dinner table with his niece. It is also revealed that Dukie's life now parallels what Bubbles' once was…a life of addiction and homelessness. Dukie has been unable to land legal employment and is living with the junk man he is working for. The montage shows Dukie tying a band around his arm and shooting heroin into his system. "Bubbles and Dukie's contrasting fates emphasize that the war against drugs is a deception" (Jacobson, 2014, p. 156). Michael bursts into the shop of a drug dealer in the co-op with a hood over his head and a shotgun. Aided by another individual that he is likely partnering with, he (Michael) shoots the co-op member in the knee as he steals drugs and money, and then quickly exits the door, a move eerily reminiscent of the late Omar Little. Marlo Stanfield, unable to be the business man his attorney (Maurice "Maury" Levy) recommended he become after beating the drug charges, leaves a lavish party, dressed in a suit and tie, and returns to the streets, claiming a corner and shoots one of the corner boys as he asks him, "Don't you know who I am?" Jacobson (2014), in her analysis of season five, discusses the idea of White authors creating narratives that are "largely set in stereotypically Black domestic spaces" (p. 156). The author is referring to the ghetto depicted in West Baltimore and states that the creators knew that they

must make the series as gritty and authentically real as possible. She points to various critics that have stated *The Wire* (at that time) was more reality television than it was fiction. "The final montage emphasizes this blurred boundary between fiction and reality by turning the lens from the fictional characters to focus on footage from the streets of Baltimore and its inhabitants. In doing so, the closing gesture continues to invite the viewer to understand the fictional drama as reality" (p. 157), particularly if one wanted to measure the parallels of police brutality portrayed to the untimely death of Baltimore native and resident, Freddie Gray. Table 9 charts the number of minutes and percentage of screen time each caricature appeared in the season. Season five is comprised of ten episodes, each episode lasting approximately one hour. This is a total of 600 minutes of airtime.

Summary of the Data/First Order Effects

Potter (1991) explained the cultivation process by describing two sub processes; the two categories are learning (first order), which yielded insight into research questions one and two, and construction (second order), which yielded insight into research question three. The data analysis on the first-order effects will answer the first two major research questions of the study: 1) How are Black males portrayed in the HBO original series, *The Wire*? 2) Do these portrayals reify (or, not) stereotypes of Black males in the United States? Learning involves the relationship between television viewing and the frequency of images. "The more a person views, the more incidental information he or she learns from television" (p. 94). Construction is described as the process of using first order effects and the formation of beliefs of society. Construction, mainstreaming, and media priming will be explored in chapter five when answering the third and final research question.

Table 9: *The Wire*, Season Five, The Media, Policing, and Corruption

Character	Caricature	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Season Depicted (X/600)
Det. William "Bunk" Moreland	Acceptable Black	60	10%
Det. Ellis Carver	Other Acceptable Black	21	4%
Lt. Cedric Daniels	Uncle Tom/Brute Nigger	41	7%
Bubbles	Uncle Tom	25	4%
Omar Little	Uncle Tom/Gangsta/Brute Nigger	16	3%
Det. Lester Freamon	Acceptable Black	82	14%
Det. Leander Sydnor	Other Acceptable Black	35	6%
Michael Lee	Gangsta	31	5%
Duquan "Dukie" Weems	Coon	27	5%
Marlo Stanfield	Gangsta	47	8%

Table 10 charts the number of minutes and percentage of screen time each caricature appeared in the entire series. In total, there were sixty episodes, each episode lasting approximately sixty minutes. That is a total of 3,600 minutes of airtime. Table 11 charts the number of episodes each caricature appeared, as well as, the percentage of the series based on the total number of episodes. The characters listed were either regular cast members or cast members essential to the storylines in the series. The characters listed in table 10 and table 11 are ranked in order from greatest to least amount of time (by percent) depicted on screen. Tables 12 through 17 group together the caricatures that were depicted the most and chart the number of episodes and percent of screen time as well as the number of episodes they appeared throughout the entire series.

Table 10: *The Wire*, First Order Effects

Character	Caricature	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Series Depicted (X/3600)
Det. Lester Freamon	Acceptable Black	353	10%
Det. William "Bunk" Moreland	Acceptable Black	317	9%
Lt. Cedric Daniels	Uncle Tom/Brute Nigger	340	9%
Det. Ellis Carver	Other Acceptable Black	234	7%
Russell "Stringer" Bell	Gangsta	198	6%
Omar Little	Uncle Tom/Gangsta/Brute Nigger	162	5%
Avon Barksdale	Gangsta	133	4%
Preston "Bodie" Broadus	Sambo	125	4%
Bubbles	Uncle Tom	139	4%
Marlo Stanfield	Gangsta	128	4%
D'Angelo Barksdale	Uncle Tom	146	4%
Malik "Poot" Carr	Sambo/Coon	96	3%
Michael Lee	Gangsta	124	3%
Duquan "Dukie" Weems	Coon	101	3%
Det. Leander Sydnor	Other Acceptable Black	121	3%
Roland "Wee-Bey" Brice	Gangsta	47	1%

Table 11: *The Wire*, First Order Effects by Episodes

Character	Caricature	Number of Episodes	Percent of Series Depicted (X/60)
Det. William "Bunk" Moreland	Acceptable Black	60	100%
Det. Ellis Carver	Other Acceptable Black	60	100%
Lt. Cedric Daniels	Uncle Tom/Brute Nigger	60	100%
Det. Lester Freamon	Acceptable Black	59	98%
Bubbles	Uncle Tom	52	87%
Omar Little	Uncle Tom/Gangsta/Brute Nigger	51	85%
Det. Leander Sydnor	Other Acceptable Black	45	75%
Preston "Bodie" Broadus	Sambo	42	70%
Avon Barksdale	Gangsta	39	65%
Russell "Stringer" Bell	Gangsta	37	62%
Marlo Stanfield	Gangsta	32	53%

Malik "Poot" Carr	Sambo/Coon	26	43%
Michael Lee	Gangsta	23	38%
Duquan "Dukie" Weems	Coon	23	38%
D'Angelo Barksdale	Uncle Tom	21	35%
Roland "Wee-Bey" Brice	Gangsta	19	32%

Table 12: *The Wire*, First Order Effects – "Gangsta"

Character	Caricature	Number of Episodes	Percent of Series Depicted (X/60)	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Series Depicted (X/3600)
Omar Little	Gangsta	51	85%	162	5%
Avon Barksdale	Gangsta	39	65%	133	4%
Russell "Stringer" Bell	Gangsta	37	62%	198	6%
Marlo Stanfield	Gangsta	32	53%	128	4%
Michael Lee	Gangsta	23	38%	124	3%
Roland "Wee-Bey" Brice	Gangsta	19	32%	47	1%

Table 13: *The Wire*, First Order Effects – "Acceptable Black/Other Acceptable Black"

Character	Caricature	Number of Episodes	Percent of Series Depicted (X/60)	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Series Depicted (X/3600)
Det. William "Bunk" Moreland	Acceptable Black	60	100%	317	9%
Det. Ellis Carver	(Other) Acceptable Black	60	100%	234	7%
Det. Lester Freamon	Acceptable Black	59	98%	353	10%
Det. Leander Sydnor	(Other) Acceptable Black	45	75%	121	3%

Table 14: *The Wire*, First Order Effects – "Uncle Tom"

Character	Caricature	Number of Episodes	Percent of Series Depicted (X/60)	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Series Depicted (X/3600)
Lt. Cedric Daniels	Uncle Tom	60	100%	340	9%
Bubbles	Uncle Tom	52	87%	139	4%
Omar Little	Uncle Tom	51	85%	162	5%
D'Angelo Barksdale	Uncle Tom	21	35%	146	4%

Table 15: *The Wire*, First Order Effects – "Sambo"

Character	Caricature	Number of Episodes	Percent of Series Depicted (X/60)	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Series Depicted (X/3600)
Preston "Bodie" Broadus	Sambo	42	70%	125	4%
Malik "Poot" Carr	Sambo	26	43%	96	3%

T**able 16:** *The Wire*, First Order Effects – "Coon"

Character	Caricature	Number of Episodes	Percent of Series Depicted (X/60)	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Series Depicted (X/3600)
Malik "Poot" Carr	Coon	26	43%	96	3%
Duquan "Dukie" Weems	Coon	23	38%	101	3%

Table 17: *The Wire*, First Order Effects – "Brute Nigger"

Character	Caricature	Number of Episodes	Percent of Series Depicted (X/60)	Minutes on Screen (Season)	Percent of Series Depicted (X/3600)
Lt. Cedric Daniels	Brute Nigger	60	100%	340	9%
Omar Little	Brute Nigger	51	85%	162	5%

Caricatures and First Order Effects by Character

The first section in this chapter provided an overview of the series and a summary of each season to provide context and a narrative of the show. In analyzing the portrayals of Black men in *The Wire,* I referred to the identified caricatures described in detail within chapter two. The entire series was viewed, with each episode lasting approximately sixty minutes, coding the length of time each Black male regular cast member appeared on screen. Like Brown and Kraehe (2011), I found some of the Black male characters to be "complicated" as they would embody two caricatures at once. Typically, "black men are stereotypically represented as either sexual threats or emasculated; representations that *The Wire* takes much care to counter in its panoply of interesting, complex Black male characters" (Ault, 2012, p. 390) yet, despite its efforts, Black males (as shown) were often typecast as gangsters, drug addicts/dealers, buffoons, and delinquents. In this next section, I will analyze several of the key characters; specifically, the stereotypes that were presented most frequently (first-order effects) in order to identify which racial stereotypes/caricatures are cultivated in *The Wire*. These characters are either regular cast members or recurring cast members that were essential to the storyline(s), making them a prominent character throughout the series or a season.

The Law

"The Uncle Tom & Brute Nigger:" Colonel Cedric Daniels. Colonel Cedric Daniels (Lance Reddick) is a prominent figure in the show who, according to Brown and Kraehe (2011), has a checkered past with the Baltimore Police Department. This character appeared in all 60 episodes of the series. He is tough, no nonsense, and very strategic. Daniels was placed in charge of the Major Crimes Unit, by Deputy Commissioner Ervin H. Burrell (Frankie Faison), to hunt down the drug kingpin, Avon Barksdale. The authors cite the series premiere, "The Target," and state that Daniels is placed in charger of Major Crimes because he is seen as a compliant

officer that will not challenge the status quo, meaning, he will take and follow orders and adhere to the chain of command. Daniels has the ambition and the wherewithal to get the job done; however, he also has career ambitions that sometimes put him at odds with his wife, Marla Daniels (Maria Broom), as she wanted him to pursue becoming a lawyer. "In the beginning of the series, Daniels' characterization as the 'devoted servant,' a common historical stereotype of Blacks found in Hollywood films" (Brown & Kraehe, 2011, p. 79) parallels with the description of the Uncle Tom…a Black male that is content with their surroundings and caters to their White master, regardless of the consequences of other Blacks. "By all appearances, Daniels' servile guise–at home and at work–stands him in good stead" (Brown & Kraehe, 2011, p. 80). Here are two examples of *The Wire*'s portrayal of Daniels as in episode two of season one, "The Detail," Prez, Carver, and Herc are discussing the ills of the case over several beers. Herc states that the three of them should head down to the towers to let the residents know "who they are."

When the three of them show up and begin to rough up several residents, Prez hits a young Black male, Kevin Johnston (Jimmie Jelani Manners), in the face with his gun. A shootout ensues as the residents begin to throw bottles and televisions, high out of the windows of the towers, at the officers and onto the squad car below. Then a huge shootout ensures. Daniels confronts his three officers and reveals that Kevin was blinded in one eye as a result of the blow to his face. Daniels states that an investigation was going to take place and the three officers needed to have their story together at that time, insinuating that he knows they did not go to the towers to conduct field interviews as they claimed. Daniels then asks who was responsible for Kevin:

Daniels: "Now tell me…who cold cocked the kid?"

Prez: "Me."

Daniels: "Why?"

Prez: "He pissed me off."

Daniels: "No, Officer Pryzbylewski he did not piss you off! He made you fear for your safety and that of your fellow officers. I'm guessing now, but, maybe…he was seen to pick up a bottle and menace officers Herc and Carver, both of whom has already sustained injury from flying projectiles. Rather than use deadly force in such a situation, maybe you elected to approach the youth, ordering him to drop the bottle. Maybe, when he raised the bottle in a threatening manner, you used a kill light, not the handle of your service weapon to incapacitate the suspect. Go practice! You fuck the bullshit up when you talk to internal, I can't fix it, you're on your own."

Another example of this same kind of action is in season three, episode nine, "Slapstick." By now, Daniels and his wife have separated. She is running for City Council and Daniels dutifully shows up at campaign events to be by her side. He feels obligated to engage in this facade because of the loyalty she showed him through his checkered past on the force, as he explained to his new love interest, the White Assistant State's Attorney Rhonda Pearlman (Deirdre Hall), a point I will address later. Within the episode, Prez and McNulty decide to take a break and pick up food for themselves and others in Major Crimes. As they are picking up the food and heading back to their office, a call comes in for backup and the two decide to respond. McNulty and Prez separate to cover more ground. McNulty hears shots fired and when he rounds the corner, Prez has shot and killed a Black man. When McNulty leans to check for a pulse, he not only discovers the man is dead, but he is a police officer. Once again, Daniels goes to the aid of his officer. When his visits Prez, he councils and coaches him on what to say:

Daniels: "You should call the union Roland. Talk to a lawyer before you say anything further. I'm not saying anyone's going to charge anything criminally…everyone knows you had no intention of…but, administratively, you need to be careful because of the racial thing. You see that, right? There's going to be people in the department that see this that way. You see that, right?

Prez: "I wasn't scared, I wasn't angry. I didn't give a shit he was Black…or…whatever. Or, maybe I did…how the fuck do you now if that's in your head or if it's not?"

Daniels: "But, you saw the gun…"

Prez: "Yeah…yeah, he turned toward me and, yeah…"

Daniels: "..cause you shouted, right? You shouted police and he turned, right?"

Prez tells him that he didn't shout police. Daniels continues to push Prez to call an attorney. Before he walks out, Daniels places his hand on Prez's should and says, "Let the lawyer talk for you." When Daniels walks out, he directs Sgt. Jay Landsman to "call the union." He tells Landsman that Prez wants a lawyer with him despite Prez's refusal to contact one and professing that he was done with policing.

The Wire also portrays Daniels as a brute/Black buck. However, it is important to note that his character did not begin exhibiting these characteristics until season three. As previously noted in chapter two, Bogle (2013) suggested D. W. Griffith, the producer of 1915's *Birth of a Nation,* played on the myth and fear that every Black man lusted after White women and used this imagery to rile up his audience and draw them (emotionally) into his film. The same could be said for how the affair between Daniels and Pearlman came to be. Brown and Kraehe (2011) state that Marla was portrayed as his controlling business partner, not his passionate lover. Daniels tells Rhonda he does not feel fulfilled in his marriage and later confesses that he never

felt like he was fully a man while married to Marla. This could lead to the conclusion that, now that he has found love with a White woman, all of his problems have been solved. *The Wire* also played into what Bogle (2013) stated as the lust of White women by Black men as Daniels is seen in nothing but boxers in several scenes with Rhonda. His dark skin and muscular physique are on full display. According to Brown and Kraehe (2011):

> The camerawork further eroticizes the Black male image by gratuitously sweeping across Daniels' entire nude body during sexual intercourse between him and Rhonda. Framed immediately overhead, the gaze displays Daniels' dark, bare form pulsating on top of Rhonda and calls special attention to his tightening buttocks as he climaxes. Only small portions of Rhonda's face are visible. Mostly we see her pale thighs splayed on either side of his muscular posterior. By contrast, Daniels is never shown in bed with Marla, who is depicted as asexual. Dressing her in clothes that fully cover from her neck to her ankles helps position Marla as an overbearing, antiseptic killjoy. The re-emergence of this 'sexual superman' stereotype of the Black male can be traced historically to White fear and aggression toward Black manhood openly avowed during reconstruction through the ear of Jim Crow. The premise of such trepidation is that Black males with too much freedom will overstep racial boundaries of behavior by defiling White women (p. 81).

Daniels and Rhonda remained a couple throughout the remaining seasons. In the series finale, Daniels had begun practicing law, a dream that his first wife, Marla, always wanted to see come to fruition.

"The Acceptable Black:" Detective Lester Freamon. Lester Freamon (Clarke Peters) emerged as the mastermind of the Special Crimes Unit. This character appeared in 59 episodes of the series. As the first season progresses, it is revealed that Freamon was once assigned to work at the pawnshop unit when he refused to stop pursuing a case against a politician suspected of corruption (Wood, 2014). According to Love (2011), the show "provides perspectives in his character that allow us to surmise just how great a danger his investigative acumen posed the corrupt institutions of yesteryear" (p. 500). Once assigned to the unit, he remained reserved and quiet. Cedric Daniels once described Freamon as "a cuddly house cat that couldn't even find his gun." According to Jameson (2010), Freamon was practically unemployed when his character is

introduced. He is seen in the background making antique dollhouse miniatures, which gives his

colleagues the impression that he may not be intelligent enough for the Special Crime Unit.

Jameson states:

> Lester is also the type of archivist-scholar capable of spending long hours on minutiae and in dusty files, which ultimately cracks open financial conspiracies all over the city; and he has deep, unostentatious, yet invaluable, roots in the community, as when he first uncovers an old photo of the youthful Barksdale in an old boxing hangout not many of his fellow officers would be likely to have any knowledge of: and to many of them he is also an inestimable mentor (p. 364).

Freamon also served as the moral compass of the unit, always reminding his colleagues

of the importance of good police work (Love, 2011). "'Cool Lester Smooth' (Detective Shakima

"Kima" Greggs's nickname for him) has a rare degree of patience, intelligence, and ease with

unorthodox thinking. Alongside those characteristics and his musical taste, his first name alludes

to the master jazz musician Lester Young, another unassuming genius and African American

archetype of cool" (Anderson, 2010, p. 394). Detective Freamon was also the brains behind the

wiretap operations that the Special Crimes Unit would always use in order to gather evidence

against Avon Barksdale and Marlo Stanfield. He and Roland Pryzbylewski formed a bond during

season one when Prez was taken off the streets and assigned to assist him with the day-to-day

operations, listening in on the wiretap, and providing clues to the detectives on the streets.

"The Acceptable Black:" Det. William "Bunk" Moreland. William "Bunk" Moreland

(Wendell Pierce) is Jimmy McNulty's partner. La Berge (2010) described Bunk as "laconic," (p.

549), yet brilliant in his craft. This character appeared in all 60 episodes of the series. Bunk and

McNulty have a very strong bond, like brothers, and he serves as McNulty's conscience. They

are often seen having drinks together commiserating over the drug/murder cases.

"The 'Other' Acceptable Black:" Det. Ellis Carver. This character appeared in all 60 episodes of the series. Carver's character is first introduced to the audience in the pilot episode. Carver's partner is Herc. Yet, at times he seems to play the role of the sidekick. The two trade barbs between each other like brothers genuinely have each other's backs.

"The 'Other' Acceptable Black:" Det. Leander Sydnor. Leandor Sydnor (Corey Parker Robinson) is a member of the Special Crimes Unit. He previously worked in the auto theft division before Daniels picked him for Special Crimes in season one. He plays an intricate role in the demise of the Barksdale organization. During season one, he goes undercover to assist the unit in drug arrests and gathering more evidence for the case. He was a character that was mostly seen, but not heard as the series progressed and did not appear in season two. He was clean cut, well spoken, and kept his head in the game, never wavering from the task at hand. Sydnor is also responsible for finding evidence against Senator Clay Davis, as well as, cracking the clock codes in season five. Sydnor appeared in 45 episodes of the series.

The Street

"The Uncle Tom:" Reginald "Bubbles" Cousins. Bubbles (Andre Royo) is a recovering heroin addict who consistently serves as an informant for the Special Crimes Unit. This character appeared in 52 episodes of the series. He is seen throughout the series snorting and shooting drugs in his arm. His best friend on the street is Johnny Weeks (Leo Fitzpatrick) and is one of the only white males to appear in the series. He also has a son that lives with his mother; however, neither ever appeared on screen. In the pilot episode, the audience learns that Bubbles has been out of jail for three months. When Johnny is beaten for trying to buy drugs with counterfeit money by D'Angelo's hoppers, he is hospitalized and Bubbles stays by his side. Bubbles pages Kima to come to the hospital. The audience learns that Kima and Bubbles have a trustworthy relationship. He asks Kima if she is still working in the drug unit. When she confirms that she is,

he says, "I got something for you." This would be the beginning of Bubbles working with Kima and the Special Crimes Unit to supply them with information from the streets and collecting evidence throughout the first four seasons.

Though he still continued struggling with his addiction, Kima and McNulty would often solicit his assistance in their surveillance operations. He was never seen as a threat to any of the drug kingpins, hoppers, or muscle because he was a user and an addict. Bubbles was instrumental in assisting the Special Crimes Unit in their apprehension of Bird and retrieve his signature gun in the murder case of William Gant. He is hired by McNulty and Kima in season three to work the corners and supply information regarding Prop Joe, Avon Barksdale and Stringer Bell, and Marlo Stanfield. In season one, episode nine, "Game Day," the audience learns that Bubbles has a sister and a niece. She is his refuge and only support system. She allows Bubbles to sleep on her sofa in the basement and forbids him from entering the house. She warns that she will call the police if he enters the house. Throughout the series, Bubbles was often seen trying to start anew despite his struggles with addiction. Buzuvis (2012) describes his efforts at redemption in season four when he took on an apprentice named Sherrod. Bubbles enrolled Sherrod at Tighlman Middle in an effort to gift him with the education he never received. He explains to Sherrod that he has to earn his education if he is to continue working under him. Bubbles soon realizes that Sherrod is not attending school regularly and he also discovers that Sherrod does not know how to read. Despite these discoveries, Bubbles tells Sherrod they can no longer share a living space. As a result, Sherrod develops a drug habit and when Bubbles does allow Sherrod back in the fold, he took some heroin that Bubbles had laced with poison and died.

After the accidental poisoning of his young protégé, Sherrod (La Berge, 2010), Bubbles attempts suicide in a police interrogation room where he had confessed to Sherrod's murder. The death was ruled unintentional and Bubbles is sent to a psychiatric hospital. In season five, Bubbles is finally clean and begins working at a local food bank and ultimately comes to terms with his role in Sherrod's death. In the series finale, Bubbles is finally invited to sit at his sister's kitchen table, upstairs, away from the basement. His life has finally come full circle.

"The Uncle Tom, Brute Nigger, & Gangsta:" Omar Little. Omar Little (Michael Kenneth Williams) emerges as the anti-hero (Brown & Kraehe, 2011; Wilson, 2014) of *The Wire.* This character appeared in 51 episodes of the series. Similar to Catwoman in the Batman world of Gotham City, Omar is only on his side and only serves his interests. He robs drug dealers for sport and manages to evade both police capture and bounties for his life for the majority of the series. Brown and Kraehe (2011) state "he lurks in the shadowy, hidden places among the row houses and alleyways of west Baltimore. Though rarely seen in public, he always seems to know the goings on in the neighborhood" (p. 82). Omar is tall, dark skinned, with a muscular physique. He has a distinctive scar that runs across his face, which adds to his brute like features.

Omar often whistles "The Farmer in the Dell" as he hunts down his victims, dressed in a long Black trench coat, bulletproof vest, and long shotgun hanging from his side like the golden lasso of Wonder Woman. "A force unto himself, he is a legendary figure in the neighborhood and throughout the underground Baltimore drug trade" (p. 81). When corner boys and hoppers hear his signature nursery rhyme and see him coming, they scatter in fear, often warning others of his presence, an image reminiscent of White women running in fear of the evil Black brute nigger in *The Birth of a Nation*. The viewer is introduced to this character in season one, episode three, "The Buys," when he bursts through the doors of a stash house run by Avon Barksdale, with a

shotgun in hand, and steals money and drugs. Omar himself best describes who he is and what he is about in season two, episode six, "All Prologue," when he testifies against Marquis "Bird" Hilton (Fredro Starr). Omar is a witness for the prosecution and is being cross examined by Maurice "Maury" Levy. Levy serves as the lawyer for all of the drug kingpins in the co-op in the Baltimore drug trade:

Levy: "So you rob drug dealers…this is what you do?"

Omar: "Yes sir."

Levy: "You walk the streets of Baltimore…with a gun…taking what you want, when you want it, willing to use violence when your demands aren't met…this is who you are!"

Omar shakes his head in agreement that he does, in fact, make a living robbing other drug dealers. He also has a code that he also expressed in the same testimony that he does not pull his gun on a "citizen," meaning, he does not pull his gun on anyone not involved in the Baltimore drug trade. The audience also learns that Omar is openly homosexual and Bird killed Omar's lover, Brandon, in season one. This is why Omar is all too eager to testify against Bird. "His open homosexuality amid the virulently homophobic gang culture emphasizes his extreme outsider status. However, he is not simply a violent Uncle Tom; rather his steadfast ethics and 'feminized' sexuality queer this and other Black male stereotypes" (Jacobson, 2014, p. 166). Brown and Kraehe (2011) cite this as a primary reason that being robbed by Omar is emasculating to his victims. Brandon's body was tortured, mutilated, and left out on display for the public to see in response to the robbery in episode three of season one.

Omar's testimony against Bird is just one example of his Uncle Tom behavior. Omar, McNulty, and Bunk develop a relationship in which Omar serves as an unofficial informant. He is seen riding in undercover cars with McNulty and Greggs pointing out various members of the

drug trade and also assists Bunk in recovering a gun used to shoot a cop in season three. Omar

has several rules within his code of ethics; one being, refuses to shoot and kill children. It is this

rule that ultimately decides his fate, as it is a child, Kenard (Thuliso Dingwall) that assassinates

him in season five, episode eight, "Clarifications." Jacobson (2014) states:

> Omar's death paints an individual picture of one of the hundreds of "misdemeanor
> homicides" and the lack of economic and social investment in the twenty-two vacant
> murders. Little, if any, social or economic capital is invested in these deaths. Omar's
> death highlights the collective lack of sympathy for the overwhelmingly disproportionate
> number of violent deaths experienced by Black males (p. 167).

Brown and Kraehe (2011) discuss Omar's legendary status in the streets and state drug

runners, children, and corner boys all run in fear when they hear him whistling his infamous

nursery rhyme. The researchers also discuss the traditional villain role and the fact that Omar's

sexuality served as a constant conflict throughout the series. Like Cedric Daniels, Omar was also

shown naked in the series with his dark muscular body on display. "Omar has earned a reputation

for unapologetic violence, but this does not diminish the stigma of being perceived as sexually

deviant in relation to Black maleness as defined through a normative, heterosexual family

structure" (p. 83). Brown and Kraehe (2011) state that being a victim of Omar's is exacerbated

by his homosexuality while still earning the distinction as a figure to be feared.

"The Gangsta:" Avon Barksdale. Avon Barksdale (Wood Harris) is the drug kingpin of

west Baltimore, specifically, the west Baltimore towers. He has one sister, Brianna, and a

nephew, D'Angelo, who are also members of the overall Barksdale organization, one of the most

powerful in all of Baltimore. It is inferred early on that this is has been a family business well

before Avon took over. When the series begins, Avon is virtually an unknown. According to

Jameson (2010), Avon is "not yet known by the street cops, who learn his name in an early

episode and finally manage to glimpse his face and person when he organizes a basketball game

with a rival gang" (p. 361). Though Avon was the head of the organization, he was isolated and surrounded by members of his team that protected him from the day-to-day operations of the drug trade. These members included Stringer, Wee-Bey, his attorney Levy, Stinkum, Bird, and Little Man. His sister, Brianna, also served as the treasurer and his nephew, D'Angelo ran The Pit. Avon was arrested at the end of season one but gains parole after setting up an officer in the prison. Once he is released, he begins a turf war with Marlo Stanfield to regain control of the drug trade and his organization's place at the top. However, he is arrested at the end of season three for violation of parole and weapons and drug charges. He resurfaced in season five, episode two, "Unconfirmed Reports," when Marlo Stanfield arranges a meeting with a former soldier of the Greek, Sergei. Avon appears and tells Marlo he is aware of his plan with the Greek and reminds him that he is still a force within the Baltimore drug trade. Avon Barksdale appeared in 39 episodes of the series.

"The Gangsta:" Russell "Stringer" Bell. Russell "Stringer" Bell (Idris Elba) is the brains of the Barksdale drug organization. This character appeared in 37 episodes of the series. According to Love (2011), Stringer serves as McNulty's nemesis throughout the first three seasons of the series. "McNulty sacrifices everything but his life in order to investigate Bell, who continually avoids prosecution and capture" (Love, 2010, p. 493). In the pilot episode, "The Target," Stringer appears in the courtroom as D'Angelo Barksdale is on trial for murder. Jameson (2010) described Stringer as Avon's closest confidant and likened him to "his executive officer or prime minster in the classic political situation" (p. 364). Jameson states:

> Stringer is in fact a real intellectual, and when the police (and the viewers) finally do penetrate his private apartment, they find modest furniture and a décor of unexpectedly enlightened artistic taste. Yet, although this figure may thereby come to seem a positive one, he gives all the most lethal killing orders without a moment of remorse. Still the interplay with Barksdale, to whom he is absolutely devoted, but who envies his intelligence and sometimes seems to resent it, is characteristic of the extraordinary dense

and minute interpersonal situations through which *The Wire* play out its larger plot (p. 364).

In Season two, the viewer is able to see the real Stringer Bell. By now, Avon is in jail and is still trying to run the operation from the inside. He relies heavily on Stringer, Stringer's perceived loyalty, and their lifelong friendship. However, Stringer continues to attend classes at the local community college and evolve is thinking. He is still in the game, but he is also trying to channel his earnings in legit businesses in order to increase is earnings. Stringer has taken classes at a local university in macroeconomics. As such, "Stringer will gradually reorganize the Barksdale mob; he uses words like product, competition, investment; he brings the gangs together to eliminate the kind of internecine warfare that is always bad for business" (Jameson, 2010, p. 365). When the drug supply gets low, he partners with Prop Joe to get a legitimate supply, despite Avon's order to stand down. In season two, episode eleven, "Bad Dreams," Stringer lies to Omar and tells him that Brother Mouzone is responsible for Brandon's murder in an effort to remove him (Brother Mouzone) from the Barksdale operation. Once Brother Mouzone returns to New York, Stringer visits Avon in jail, at which time, Avon reminds him that "the street is the street" and that he could care less about his business classes. More and more, Stringer begins to make moves that will further his own interests, putting his personal and professional relationship with Avon at risk. Once Avon is released from prison, their relationship begins to unravel, particularly when Stringer reveals that he had D'Angelo killed. In episode eleven of season three, the time and location of Stringer's activities were reported (by Avon) to Brother Mouzone and Omar Little who ultimately shot and killed him "in the same condo development that was to serve as his springboard to legitimacy" (Love, 2011, p. 494).

"The Gangsta:" Marlo Stanfield. Marlo Stanfield (Jamie Hector) first appears in season three, episode two, as the new drug kingpin in town and proves to be more ruthless then Avon Barksdale and Proposition Joe. La Berge (2010 described Marlo Stanfield as "a serial killer whose race and economic acumen prevent him from appearing as one" (p. 552). The conversation between Bunk, McNulty, and Freamon in season five, episode two, prove this description of Marlo to be accurate as the three officers are complaining about the inequity between the 22 bodies discovered entombed in abandoned row houses versus the killings of Whites:

McNulty: "The guy leaves two dozen bodies scattered all over the city and no one gives a fuck!"

Freamon: "It's 'cause of who he dropped."

Bunk: "True dat. You can go a long way in this country killin' Black folk. Young males, especially. Misdemeanor homicides.

McNulty: "If Marlo was killing White women…"

La Berge (2010) is referring to the fact that Black males are being killed as a result of drug warfare and the fact that race and illegal drugs have intersected is what allows Marlo to avoid such a label given that society sees both as insignificant. Marlo is only 22 years old and has acquired an extreme amount of wealth as a result. Marlo emerges from the shadows only after the towers are demolished and the Barksdale organization then has a need to return to their original roots (selling drugs on street corners) as a means of continuing their drug profits. When Avon's organization realizes that Marlo will not go down without a fight, a drug war ensues the Marlo ultimately wins. Chris Partlow and Felicia "Snoop" Pearson serve as Marlo's main lieutenants and kill on command with no questions asked. The murders often occur as a result of

Marlo feeling disrespected or feeling his name has been undermined in the streets. Marlo Stanfield appeared in 32 episodes of the series.

"The Gangsta:" Roland "Wee-Bey" Brice. Roland "Wee-Bey" Brice (Hassan Johnson) is a lieutenant in the Barksdale organization and is arguably the most trusted. Wee-Bey grew up with and was on the streets dealing drugs with Avon and Stringer before Avon took over the drug organization. Wee-Bey is seen taking care of day-to-day operations including driving Stringer around and running errands when needed. However, Avon never established plans without Wee-Bey by his side. Wee-Bey would be responsible for warding off Omar in his attempt to assassinate Avon. Wee-Bey is eventually arrested at the end of season one as a result of a botched assassination on Orlando Blocker. Though Orlando was killed, Kima was in the back seat of the car and she was severely injured. Avon ordered D'Angelo to drive him to Philadelphia to hide out; however, D'Angelo informs the Special Crimes Unit of Wee-Bey's location once he is arrested and agrees to testify against his family's organization. When Wee-Bey is arrested and questioned, he confessed to multiple homicides, including those he did not commit in order to protect others within the Barksdale organization. As a result, he is given life in prison without the possibility of parole. Wee-Bey resurfaces, in the remaining seasons of the series, whenever pertinent to the storylines; most notably, he appears in season four when his son, Namond, is about to enter the fourth grade. Namond's mother, De'Londa, often takes Namond to visit Wee-Bey to keep Namond in check about the drug trade. At the end of season four, Wee-Bey grants Bunny Colvin permission to raise Namond and provide a positive future for his son. This character appeared in 19 episodes of the series.

"The Neutral Uncle Tom:" Wallace. Wallace (Michael B. Jordan) is considered a hopper in Avon Barksdale's crew (Guastaferro, 2010). In season one, episode six, "The Wire," the viewer learns that he is living in a row house. There is never any mention of Wallace's parents. The row house is boarded up and there are extension cords connected from a neighboring row house to Wallace's in order to obtain electricity. He is also the caretaker of several young kids. At the beginning of episode six, he discovers that Brandon, Omar's boyfriend, has been tortured and killed, and sees his body laid out on the hood of a car on display. He feels remorse after he spotted Brandon in an arcade and reported it to D'Angelo. In episode nine, "Game Day," Wallace confides in D'Angelo and considers leaving the game, despite his desperate need of money. However, Wallace was spotted speaking with the police. Word gets back to Stringer who orders a hit on Wallace. In episode twelve, "Cleaning Up," Bodie and Poot lure Wallace back to his row house. Wallace senses something is wrong when he finds the house empty and none of the children he cares for are present. As he turns around, Poot and Bodie have their guns drawn, aimed at him, in a stance ready to fire. Wallace begs for his life and reminds Poot and Bodie of the good times. However, Poot and Bodie fire several shots killing him for his disloyalty to the game. As a result of his murder, this character only appeared in the first 12 episodes in the first season in the series.

"The Sambo:" Preston "Bodie" Broadus. Preston "Bodie" Broadus (J. D. Williams) appeared in 42 episodes in the series. Bodie is a loyal drug hopper in the Barksdale organization and the Stanfield organization. In season one, episode four, "Old Cases," we learn that Bodie was raised by his grandmother after his mother died at four years old. She explained to Herc that he was angry as a child as a way to explain his behavior as a young adult. He follows orders on

command while working as a lieutenant for Avon Barksdale and Marlo Stanfield. Bodie is killed in season four after he is seen talking with McNulty and assumed a snitch.

       "The Sambo/Coon:" Malik "Poot" Carr. Malik "Poot" Carr (Tray Chaney) appeared in 26 episodes of the series. Much like Bodie, Poot is a loyal drug hopper in the Barksdale organization who works for D'Angelo in season one in the Pit. He also follows orders on command and assists in killing Wallace in season one. Unlike Bodie, Poot is arrested and jailed at the end of season three. When he is released on parole in season four, fifteen months later, he joins Bodie on the corners, only to learn Bodie is now working for the Stanfield organization. When Bodie is killed at the end of season four, Poot leaves the drug trade. He reappears in season five when Dukie enters a Footlocker looking for a job to make ends meet and encounters Poot working as a salesman. They engage in conversation as Poot remembers Dukie through Namond Brice. The two reminisce for a few minutes before Poot tells Dukie to work the corners a few more years until he is legally old enough to work. Poot is the only remaining Barksdale lieutenant that is not jailed or killed by the end of the series.

The Classroom

       "The Gangsta" Michael Lee. Michael Lee (Tristan Mack Wilds) is the quiet leader of the young Westside crew. This character appeared in 23 episodes of the series. Atcho (2011) states that Michael's loyalty to his friends, particularly Dukie and Randy, serves as evidence that he has the potential to avoid the pull of the streets and succeed. In the first two episodes of season four, it is revealed that "he lives by the drug corners controlled by the king of Baltimore's drug game, Marlo Stanfield, and even within Michael's home, he is forced to cope with a sexually abusive step father and a heroin-addicted mother" (Atcho, 2011, p. 796). Despite these circumstances, Michael is often shown training at the community boxing gym that has been established as a means of avoiding the drug trade all together. His number one priority is his little brother that he

has been forced to raise and ultimately protect. Leading up to the first days of school, Marlo sends one of his enforcers, Monk (Kwame Patterson), to pass out money to all the children in the streets to buy clothes and school supplies. Michael is leery of the implications of receiving such a handout, refuses the money, and walks away visibly agitated. Marlo is watching this scene play out and steps in front of Michael:

Marlo: "Fuck is wrong with you boy? Too good for my money? Or is you such a bitch ass punk you worried about where my money come from?

Michael looks up and glares at Marlo.

Marlo: "Yeah…ain't no thang shorty…I'm cool."

Michael is able to discern that taking Marlo's money would lead to Marlo "cashing in" on favors later on. Atcho (2011) points out that this exchange is significant because the viewer knows that Michael desperately needs the money in order to provide for Bug and himself. Namond, in his desire to come off of the streets, allows Michael to take over his shifts as a corner boy (temporarily) in order to earn money. Marlo observes Michael working the corners and becomes extremely interested in recruiting Michael for his organization.

Michael's main priorities are his brother and school, a point he made clear to Bodie when asked to drop out of school and work the corners full time (Atcho, 2011). Once Michael earns enough money, he leaves the corners. Later in the season, Michael's stepfather, Devar Manigault (Cyrus Farmer), reemerges after his stint in prison. Instantly, there is tension between them. It is inferred through their interaction together that Michael was sexually molested by this man and is afraid to leave Bug alone with him. In addition, Michael's mother is elated that her husband is home from prison. She "removes" Michael as the man of the house and demands that he give control of their welfare card to his stepfather. Michael is at a loss and he feels all of his power

and his power to protect Bug has been stripped away from him. His demeanor begins to shift from leader of the pack to withdrawn, angry, and aggressive. He refuses Prez's attempts to assist him and refuses to speak with the school social worker for fear of separation from his little brother. Seeing no way out, he seeks the help of Marlo Stanfield. In episode nine, "Know Your Place," he and his stepfather get into a confrontation of the DSS card. Michael confronts his stepfather and quickly backs down once Devar reminds him that he's big, but not big enough…implying that Michael would not win a physical confrontation. Later in the episode, he is walking home with Randy and Dukie and asked them what happens when a call gets placed to social services:

Michael: "Yo, Dukie…"

Dukie: "Huh?"

Michael: "You ever call social services on your mother?"

Randy: "What?"

Michael: "I don't know; I just want to know what happens if you call social services on somebody."

Dukie: "You wanna report your mother?"

Michael: "She brung someone home. He won't leave."

Randy: "You don't want to call social services. They gets to lookin into things…they can put you in a group home…split you and Bug up even."

Hearing Randy discuss the possibility of him and his brother being separated, Michael feels he has run out of options. Later in the episode, Michael and Dukie go to Marlo Stanfield's hangout. Michael approaches Marlo's muscle, requesting to speak with him. Michael approaches Marlo and Snoop and states he has a problem that he can't bring to anyone else. At

that moment, Michael has entered into a pact to become a member of Marlo Stanfield's crew, which includes dealing drugs and murder (Atcho, 2011). Atcho (2011) discusses Michael's evolution once Snoop and Chris murder Devar Manigault stating, "Michael's persona begins to reflect his qualified subjectivity and his evolution as a Stanfield soldier. Freed from subjection to his stepfather, Michael now acts increasingly in step with his acquired empowerment through his subjection to Marlo and the streets" (p. 800). Michael's evolution hits a pivotal point when he punches Namond in the face repeatedly as a result of Namond's insults and bullying behavior towards Dukie. Now fully independent, Michael, Bug, and Dukie all live in an apartment rent free, courtesy of Marlo Stanfield. However, this all comes to an end in season five.

In episode seven, "Took," Michael is questioned by Bunk Moreland regarding the brutal murder of his stepfather. Later in the episode, Omar Little pays a visit to Michael's corner, armed, and issues a warning for Marlo. In episode eight, "Clarifications," Michael delivers Omar's message to Snoop and Chris. During that meeting, Snoop becomes visibly agitated by Michael's stance, injecting his opinion of the operation and whether or not Marlo should be concerned about Omar being on the warpath. In episode nine, "Late Editions," Marlo and several of his gang members (Chris, Cheese, and Monk) are arrested. While in lock up, they are going over the list of charges that each of them are facing. The murder of Devar Manigault is listed and they begin discussing the fact that Michael is the only other person that would know about that crime. They also suggest that Michael has been acting out of order and possibly acts differently in front of the police. Later, Snoop picks Michael up to conduct a hit that she claims Marlo ordered. She is actually following orders to murder Michael. She drives to an ally where Michael pulls a gun on her. He figures out that Snoop is going to murder him and instead, shoots her at point blank range in the head, slips out the passenger side of the car, and walks away. In the

series finale, Michael busts into the shop of a drug dealer in the co-op with a hood over his head and a shotgun. Aided by another individual that he is likely partnering with, he (Michael) shoots the co-op member in the knee as he steals drugs and money, and then quickly exits the door, a move eerily reminiscent of the late Omar Little that completes Michael's transformation into a "gangsta."

"The Coon:" Duquan "Dukie" Weems. Duquan "Dukie" Weems (Jermaine Crawford) appeared in 23 episodes of the series. ukie lives in extreme poverty (Dutro & Kantor, 2011), is hungry for attention, and thankful to be part of the "in crowd." For example, in episode one, "Boys of Summer," Randy, Michael, and Namond are trying to catch a white pigeon, believing that, if caught, could be sold for three hundred dollars. When Dukie throws and breaks a bottle, the pigeon flies off. The boys approach Dukie and he and Namond get into a confrontation. Namond makes reference to how Dukie smells (stinkin' like rat fart) and calls him a dirty motherfucker. In the same episode, Namond is heard taunting him about not having running water at his house and Michael prompts Namond to give Dukie money so he is able to buy ice cream from the ice cream truck like everyone else (Dutro & Kantor, 2011). The viewer is made aware of Dukie's poverty long before Prez, who will eventually form a strong bond with Dukie.

Prez has taken an interest in Dukie after noticing his clothes are not clean and he rarely eats during lunch. In episode five, "Alliances," Prez asks Crystal (Destiny Jackson-Evans) what was going on with Dukie. He explains to Crystal that he gave him clean clothes and Crystal informs him that his "people" sell his clothes on the corners for drugs. As a result of learning this news, Prez meets Dukie one morning before school. He takes Dukie to the locker room and tells him to place his dirty clothes in a laundry bag every morning and to take a shower before the other students arrive. Prez tells him he will take his clothes home every night and wash them and

bring them back the next day. This arrangement lasts throughout the school year. As season four progresses, the viewer sees Dukie begin to thrive under Prez's care and supervision and the bond between them grows. Prez soon realizes that he needs to find some way to enhance his lessons while attempting to make the lessons relatable to his students. In episode seven, "Unto Others," he asks Ms. Donnelly if there are any games. She hands him the keys to the supply room. Taking Dukie with him, he comes across brand new textbooks, as well as, computers, dice, and other math manipulatives. Dukie begins working on a math program and shows gains in his proficiency in math. Despite these gains, Dukie comes home only to find that his family has been evicted because they failed to pay the rent (Buzuvis, 2012). All of their belongings are out on the street and his family members have left Dukie to fend for himself. Buzuvis (2012) reports that Prez makes every effort to support Dukie even though Ms. Donnelly reminds him that none of the students are actually his children and he cannot save them all. "Duquan is socially promoted to high school" (Buzuvis, 2012, p. 368) and becomes separated from Prez, Randy, Namond, and Michael. As a result, he "drops out to slowly embrace the life of drugs and danger that awaits him on the streets" (Buzuvis, 2012, p. 368) as evidenced by the series finale. Dukie becomes the new Bubbles, addicted to heroin and cocaine while hustling "junk items" as a way to make ends meet.

"The Pickaninny:" Namond Brice. Namond Brice (Julito McCullum) is the son of Roland "Wee-Bey" Brice (Hassan Johnson), who played a huge role in the Barksdale operation and confessed to several murders in season one, episode thirteen, "Sentencing." This character appeared in 14 episodes of the series and, according to Ault (2012), the Brices are rewarded for Wee-Bey's loyalty by receiving a pension every month. As such, Namond consistently wears the latest clothes and shoes while his other friends in the neighborhood are barely making ends meet,

wearing "hand me downs" and relying on government assistance for food (Brown & Kraehe, 2011). However, in episode six, "Margin of Error," De'Londa (Sandi McCree) expects her son to continue in the family business and become the man of the household by entering the drug trade. She forces him into working with Bodie and often takes Namond to see Wee-Bey in order to keep him in line. Namond is very uneasy with this expectation as the drug game is intensified as a result of Marlo Stanfield.

According to Brown and Kraehe (2011), Namond is able to take advantage (socially) of being known as Wee-Bey's son. He passes as 'hard' in order to maintain this status and often challenges authority to keep this persona. "Caught in a seemingly endless string of power struggles with adults outside of and within school, Namond seems the least likely of the four boys to find a foothold that will allow him to build a positive relationship with school" (Dutro & Kantor, 2011, p. 145). Dutro and Kantor (2011) suggest part of Namond's inability to develop relationships with adults is his witnessing the abuse of power by the police in his neighborhood. However, there are several instances within the season where Namond is put to the test and flees from violent confrontations and avoids getting his hands dirty. As the season progresses, Namond is removed from his regular class setting in order to participate in a pilot program from a local university on socialization. "Bunny" Colvin is part of this program that takes place in the middle school of which the four boys are enrolled and Prez is now a math teacher. In the beginning, Namond's behavior is extremely erratic. However, Colvin notices his potential. When Namond is arrested for drug possession, Carver allows him to sleep at the station overnight when he is unable to contact his mother or his aunt. Colvin eventually picks Namond up from the police station and takes him back to his home for the night. According to Ault (2012), Colvin is taken aback by De'Londa's lack of concern for Namond's future and his potential. "Bunny"

makes a man-to-man appeal, visiting Wee-Bey in jail to plead for another path for Namond. The pretense is that Bunny goes to save Namond from the corner; in reality, saving Namond from De'Londa is as pressing a motive" (p. 397). In the end, Wee-Bey stands his ground as the patriarch of the family and demands that De'Londa let go. "Colvin and his wife effectively, if not formally, adopt him and raise him in their home" (Buzuvis, 2012, p. 371). In season five, episode nine, "Late Editions," the viewer is offered a glimpse as to what has become of Namond. He is successfully participating in a citywide high school debate that he ultimately wins. He has been the most successful of the four boys.

"The Acceptable Black:" Randy Wagstaff. Randy Wagstaff (Maestro Harrell) is the fourth member of the crew and appeared in 14 episodes of the series. Though it was never established during the series, the show's creator confirmed that Melvin "Cheese" Wagstaff was actually Randy's biological father. However, it is revealed that Randy "has been a ward of the state of Maryland most of his life, having lived in many foster care facilities, though he currently lives with Miss Anna, a strict and caring woman who provides Randy with a stable home environment that is rare for Randy and that he values more than anything" (Trier, 2010, p. 194). One afternoon, during episode one, "Boys of Summer," Randy unknowingly becomes involved in one of Marlo's murders as he is asked by Little Kevin (Tyrell Baker), to tell Lex (Norman Jackson), a corner boy Marlo assumed snitched to the police, that a girl wanted to see him in an ally. He later finds out that he played a role in setting up the murder.

Randy confesses this information to Ms. Donnelly in episode six, "Margin of Error" after he is accused on knowing about and assisting in an alleged sexual assault in episode five, "Alliances." In episode seven, "Unto Others," Leandor Sydnor and "Herc" Hauk, regarding the events that lead up to Lex's murder, question Randy. Police protection and surveillance are

eventually issued to protect Randy and Miss Anna as word gets around that Randy spoke to the police. In episode twelve, "That's Got His Own," two of Marlo's henchmen throw bottles filled with lighter fluid through Randy's windows, causing their home to go up in flames. Miss Anna suffers second and third degree burns and she and Randy lose their home. Unable to care for him, Randy is placed in a group home and, again, becomes a ward of the state of Maryland. According to Buzuvis (2012), "he hardens and turns violent, suggesting he is on track to demonstrate the accuracy of the so-called school-to-prison pipeline. The pipeline seems apparent enough to Randy. He is convinced, perhaps from his own experience or that of his peers that getting into trouble in school will cause him to be re-institutionalized in the group home" (p. 368). The researcher also states that Randy, given his trajectory, will enter into the criminal justice system.

Conclusion

It is critically important to thoroughly examine controversial media caricatures to decode the hidden meanings behind these images. As such, a cultivation analysis was conducted to examine first-order and second-order effects that occur as a result of racial stereotype portrayal of Black males in the HBO original series, *The Wire*. "David Simon's *The Wire* portrays realistic relationships between citizens of Baltimore and its various social institutions, including that of education in the show's fourth season. The show depicts how statistics and other false indicators of success promote the mythology of progress and divert resources away from programs and initiatives that could help improve the lives of those affected by crime and poverty" (Buzuvis, 2012, p. 379). Viewers who are encountering and grappling with these portrayals of Black males for the first time are highly encouraged to think and critique critically against "the structural and political circumstances that create and sustain the oppressions they face" (Ault, 2012, p. 388). This chapter provided a summary of the series, season by season, as well as specific examples from relevant episodes throughout the series that provided contextual data to support the racial

stereotypes coded/associated with each character analyzed. As a result, research questions one and two were answered within the findings of the study. Chapter 5 will use the contextual data to examine how the portrayals outlined could cultivate teachers' perceptions and treatment of Black male students.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Ethnic notions and negative perceptions/portrayals of Black males within the media are multifaceted issues that require a comprehensive approach to dismantle. Citing Entman (2006), Guastaferro (2010) states that the media is "the single most influential contributor to (most) people's understanding of reality" (p. 265). According to Parrott and Parrott (2015), the average person watches approximately thirty-three hours of television per week. The researchers believe that both short-term and long-term exposure to negative imagery will inform viewers' race and gender based attitudes and beliefs. Negative portrayals of violence, brutes, criminality, etc. continue to foster traditional racist attitudes, influence public opinions, and ideals in a post-Civil Rights era. These representations of "blackness" begin to permeate into our society, becoming socially accepted as the norm while perpetuating misunderstandings, among races and of Black males. "Therefore, it is important researchers study the images presented on television to determine what implicit and explicit messages are being communicated concerning race and gender" (Parrott & Parrott, 2015, p. 70). This study examined the pervasive nature in which the media perpetuates gender and race-based stereotypes/caricatures of Black males in the fictional crime drama and HBO original series, *The Wire*. As a result, multiple caricatures were examined and analyzed. As documented in chapter 4, the findings indicated that *The Wire* does depict and reify stereotypes of Black males as outlined in chapter 2. In this final chapter, I will use the contextual data outlined in chapter 4 to answer the final research question of the study: How might these portrayals cultivate teachers' perceptions and subsequent treatment of Black male students? Given the fact that the media cultivates attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, judgments, and

values about gender and race-based stereotypes, as well as the interconnectedness of students of color and their daily interactions with teachers, I will also provide recommendations for professional development for teachers and educators in regard to students of color and conclude with recommendations for future research.

Cultivation Theory

Second-Order Effects

Cultivation Theory reveals that exposure to imagery influences perceptions and beliefs of society and often validates and mainstreams long held gender and race-based stereotypes about groups of individuals. Gerbner, considered the "founding father" of cultivation theory, was convinced, due to the vast amounts of portrayals of groups of people, that media messages influence public perceptions and beliefs and cultivated individual assumptions of society. As such, he was quick to narrow his focus to television media arguing, "commercial television, unlike other media, presents an organically composed total world of interrelated stories (both drama and news) produced to the same set of market specifications" (Potter, 2014, p. 1018). He also broadened the scope of his investigation from solely examining violence and began looking at the portrayal of race and gender roles. "Cultivation involves the media acting as a mechanism by which the powerful maintain the status quo, informing stereotype formation through long-term and repetitive exposure to homogenous gender and race-based messages" (Parrott & Parrott, 2015, p. 82). Punyanunt-Carter (2008) describes the cultivation process as a steady stream of messages and contexts and posits that opinions among heavy viewers of television content will often express views that parallel what has been portrayed. Second-order effects are the relationship between television viewing and attitudes and beliefs that might result from images, racial stereotypes, caricatures, and messaging. "The media consistently make the connection between race, poverty, drugs, and crime and in turn, public perception mirrors these

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connections" (Guastaferro, 2010, p. 267). This makes second-order effects far more common than first-order effects because viewers encounter information in everyday situations and make spontaneous judgments as a result (Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011). In this next section, I will provide examples of storylines/plots from *The* Wire that provide context for the construction of attitudes and beliefs of Black males to occur.

Construction, Categorization, and Mainstreaming in Associative Media Priming

Parrott and Parrott (2015), in their discussion on stereotypes, state television programs that consistently contain stereotypical caricatures (based on race and gender) are "agents of belief systems and behavior, and may even hold the power to perpetuate biased, inaccurate stereotypes in society through the repetitive association of gender/race/crime/violence pairings" (p. 72). The researchers also discuss genre-specific programming as it relates to second-order effects, suggesting that viewers are more likely to negatively associate Black males with aggressive behavior and categorize them as criminals in crime dramas like *CSI*, *NYPD Blue*, *Law & Order*, *Castle*, *Blue Bloods*, *The Closer*, and *The Wire*. Known as Associative Priming (see Figure 4), Oliver (2003) reveals that viewers of the media have already associated Black males with violent criminal behaviors "as part of their cognitive structure, and once this structure is in place, exposure to violent crime alone is sufficient to call this stereotype to mind and to influence subsequent judgments" (p. 10).
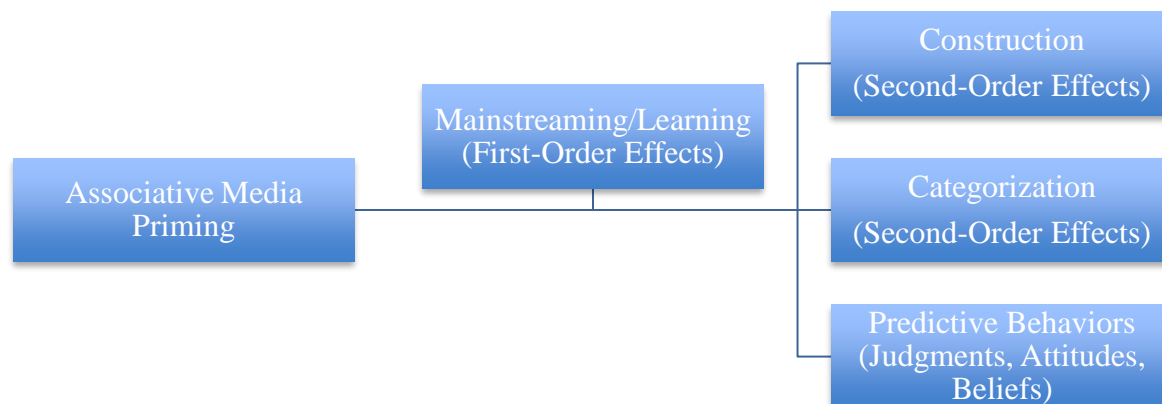
Figure 4: Associative Media Priming

Mastro, Lapinski, Kopacz, and Behm-Morawitz (2009) add to the research on media priming and state that this exposure can lead to "real-world racial evaluations" (p. 617) of people of color such as culpability and determinations of punitive consequences and judgments of guilt. Specifically, the researchers state "when racialized depictions of crime in the news are linked with Black males. Dispositional attributions for the behavior are more likely to be made (e.g., character-based judgments)" (p. 618). The storyline arc of Omar Little and Bunk Moreland serves as an example of a real-world racial evaluation.

As stated previously, several characters in *The Wire*, including Omar Little, embodied two caricatures at once. He was an anti-hero, vigilante/gangsta, but he also displayed "Uncle Tom" characteristics as he consistently aided police in their hunt for members of the Barksdale organization. Brown and Kraehe (2011) state, "the show takes care in showing that Omar grew up in the neighborhood he now victimizes and even attended the local school. He is racially and culturally connected to the Black community" (p. 83). For example, in season one, Omar is

committed to avenging the death of his boyfriend, Brandon. He knew that Avon Barksdale had placed a bounty on Brandon and had him brutally killed in retaliation for Omar raiding and stealing from his stash house. Omar works with the Special Crimes Unit to provide information against Bird. Bunk Moreland is assigned to the case and questions Omar in season one, episode seven, "One Arrest." During their conversation, Omar recognizes Bunk:

Omar: "A man, I know you from somewhere.

Bunk: "Yeah? I was on the southwestern before I came to homicide I worked Fredrick Road."

Omar: "Nah, I mean back in the day…you go to Edmondson, right?"

Bunk smiles.

Omar: "Yeah…you was ahead of me. I remember you was the first brother I ever seen play that sport with a stick…ahh…what's it called?"

Bunk: (Laughs) "Lacrosse man!"

Omar: "Fo sho"

Bunk: "I was all metro as heck…prep school boys use to pee themselves when they see the ole' Bunk comin at 'em, you know?!"

In season three, episode three, "Dead Soldiers," Omar and his lieutenants decide to rob another Barksdale stash house. In the beginning, all is going according to plan until, a Barksdale crew member spots Omar holding his signature shotgun on one of their own. He rallies the other muscle and they begin a neighborhood shoot out. Omar and his lieutenants escape except for Tosha Mitchell, who is fatally shot in the head. Bunk is the responding officer. As he approaches Mitchell's dead body, he hears children playing in the street, re-enacting the shoot out, taking turns playing the role of Omar. Bunk and Omar meet once Kimmy informs Omar that Bunk was

questioning Tosha's family about her involvement in a "stick up gang." The two have a heated confrontation in episode six, "Homecoming":

Bunk: "Your message said you'd be here. Still…kinda thought it would be one of your minions showed up in the flesh. "

Omar: "Callin some my people's people."

Bunk: "I'm just workin…doin what a man's suppose to do."

Omar: "Well, I know you been busy…caught some talk from them young men you rousted over on the west side."

Bunk: "That was about a gun that belonged to police."

Omar: "Yeah…caught some talk about that, too."

Bunk: "This here…is about something else. Girl by the name of Tosha got her head blown off in a firefight. If you not here to cooperate, then why you here? Okay…I can just pull up that other girl from your squad.

Omar: "She ain't gon talk to you…ain't nobody gon talk to you. I just came to make that clear, man."

Bunk: "Ain't no thang…cause I already got me an eyeball witness."

Omar: "You do?"

Bunk: "Mmm"

Omar continues to bait Bunk until Bunk finally loses his cool and says:

Bunk: "I was a few years ahead of you at Edmonson…but I know you remember the neighborhood…how it was. We had some bad boys for real. Wasn't about guns…so much as knowing what to do with your hands…those boys could really rack. My father…had me on the straight. But…like any young man, I wanted to be hard, too. So I would turn up at all the house

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parties where the tough boys hung…shit…they knew I wasn't one of them. Them hard cases would come up to me and say go home schoolboy you don't belong here. Didn't realize at the time what they were doing for me. As rough as that neighborhood could be, we had us a community… no body, no victim, who didn't matter. And now, all we got is bodies. And predatory motherfuckers like you. And out where that girl fell, I saw kids acting like Omar, calling you by name, glorifying your ass! Makes me sick motherfucker, how far we done fell."

Life would eventually imitate art when William Porter would become one of six officers to be charged in their role in the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland years later. On September 3, 2015, the Washington Post printed an article with the title, "Freddie Gray and William Porter: Two Sons of Baltimore Whose Lives Collided," almost eleven years to the date in which the season three episode, "Homecoming," aired. The article instantly feels very familiar. From the beginning, the author begins to tell their story, revealing Freddie Gray, Jr. and William G. Porter, Jr. were both named after their fathers, they both grew up in West Baltimore (where the bulk of the series was based and shot on location), and were both raised by single mothers that reported having high levels of lead in their system during their pregnancies. The author makes a point to state that their lives paralleled for over 20 years before their paths would collide. Their pictures appear beside each other. Gray is wearing street clothes with city housing as his background. However, Porter, like Bunk Moreland, is pictured as a decorated officer of the law, in full uniform, with the American flag as his background. This sets up a divide, like Bunk and Omar, as William Porter was being portrayed as a martyr and Freddie Gray was being portrayed as a criminal.

William Porter is quoted saying had he made different choices, he would have been Freddie Gray. The article continues to elaborate on their stories and paints a picture of the bleak

streets of Baltimore. It reports that violence was rampant in the 1990s, during the time both Porter and Gray were young children and that the city averaged approximately 300 homicides a year, the majority of whom were Black men. Porter's mother worked hard to provide for her family to save enough money to purchase a home in north Baltimore, away from the violence. Porter eventually took a job as a police officer after two years of college. The article cites a report from the Baltimore Sun (portrayed in season five) that stated the city paid millions of dollars to residents of Baltimore that filed lawsuits alleging police brutality. Then, the article takes a very different tone as it shifts to Freddie Gray. Porter states that he had heard of Gray before their lives intersected. Porter reports that Gray had had multiple arrests for drug possession, selling drugs, had served time behind bars, and was facing two criminal cases at the time of his death.

Similar to Porter, Gray grew up in West Baltimore. However, his mother was not able to afford to move her family out of the neighborhood. Gray attended a facility run by the Department of Juvenile Justice because he was already involved with the criminal justice system. The article concludes with an account of the day Freddie Gray and William Porter's lives intersected, leading to Gray's death. According to Ramasubramanian (2010), "responsibility framing involves ways in which 'the description of events influences the determination of responsibility for those events.' Typically, media stories about racial/ethnic outgroups are framed in ways that deemphasize the role of systemic racism for status differences by attributing outgroup members' failings to individual traits such as laziness and criminality" (p. 105). This article affirms the belief that Freddie Gray, despite the injustice that was done to him, was somehow still criminally liable for his own victimization because he, like Omar, had the opportunity to choose a different path. Freddie Gray, like Omar Little, had been categorized as a

criminal and a "gangsta." This article attributed Freddie Gray's demise to laziness and criminality "rather than to societal factors such a systemic racism or a lack of equitable access to education" (Ramasubramanian, 2010, p. 106).

Potter (1991), in his discussion of the relationship between first and second order effects, described construction as the process of using first order effects as a basis of the formation of beliefs of society through television viewing. From a cultivation perspective, racial stereotypes/caricatures are measures of second-order effects because they possess a variety of attitudes that can be internalized by media exposure. Potter (1991) states "television viewers learn facts about the real world from observing patterns in the television world and then use these facts in some way to formulate their beliefs about the real world" (p. 111). Based on social cognition, people often categorize others based on a variety of demographics, race being the main characteristic, thus perceiving that everyone "placed in the same box" must possess the same characteristics (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014).

Caricatures and racial stereotypes, like the examples coded and documented in chapter 4, pack the hardest punch when viewers have less lived realities of Black males to compare their perceptions to. If huge amounts of media consumption create inflated/farfetched attitudes and beliefs, huge amounts of distortions are created as a result. Potter (1991) believed that the relationship between heavy viewership of television and construction of attitudes and beliefs was contingent upon a "situational variable" (p. 96) and the racial stereotypes "learned through television exposure" (96). The situational variables for my study were the three classrooms Buzuvis (2012) outlined in his discussion of *The Wire*: the classroom of Bunny Colvin (season four), the classroom of Roland Pryzbylewski (season four), and the "classroom" of the street (all five seasons).

Torres (2015), in her discussion of audiences' perceptions of cultural and ethnic stereotypes, posited that viewers can be trained to view a person as guilty just by the color of their skin and that heavy consumption of media has a direct impact on how Black people are perceived and then consequently treated and categorized. Torres (2015) defined categorization as "the maximization of differences between social groups and minimization between group members, creating an 'us' versus 'them' perspective" (p. 289), and states that ethnic minorities do not share the same perspectives of themselves as Whites while noting the media's ability to influence it's audiences' emotions towards people of color. One of the dangers of construction and categorization is their relationship to overrepresentation. Mastro et al., (2009), in their discussion of depictions of Black Americans, state that overrepresentation of negative portrayals "strengthens the cognitive association between Blacks and criminality in the mind of consumers such that the connection (i.e., Blacks and crime) becomes so chronically accessible for use in race-related evaluations. Notably, as the research on media priming illustrates, even a single exposure to the unfavorable characteristics can produce stereotype-based responses" (p. 616). An example of this is couched in the storyline of Namond Brice in season four of the series.

As stated previously, season four was focused on the intersectionality of Baltimore City Schools, city politics, and policing and focused (primarily) on the lives of four fatherless, eighth grade Black males. Season four has been praised for realistically portraying "the intersections of students' and teachers' lives and academic engagement and opportunity" (Dutro & Kantor, 2011, p. 136) in an urban classroom. In episode one, "Boys of Summer," the viewer is already aware of Namond Brice's life prior to his character being introduced. His father was a lieutenant in the Barksdale organization and is serving a life sentence in prison without the possibility of parole for multiple homicides that he committed and took the blame for in order to protect other

members of the drug trade. In episode five, "Alliances," Roland Pryzbylewski, Namond's math teacher, is trying to review new procedures for his math class when he writes Namond's name on the board:

Namond: "Dang, yo! Everyday you be changin it up! You got us confused Mr. P!"

Mr. Pryzbylewski continues explaining how students can earn stickers for positive behavior. He then discusses what the consequences are for not completing assignments and writes Namond's name on the board.

Namond: "Yo, Mr. P, why you do me detention, huh?

Mr. P: "You interrupted the class Namond."

Namond: "Yo, when you first came in here you was all treat'n us straight up and all, now you just dog me before I know the rules…that ain't right man."

Mr. Pryzbylewski walks over to the board and erases Namond's name.

Mr. P: "When you're right, Namond, you're right."

Later in the episode, a student informs the class that Ms. Donnelly, the Assistant Principal, is conducting a shake down meaning, she is shaking bushes searching for weapons and other items the students may have hidden that were not permitted on campus. Mr. Pryzbylewski orders his students back in their seats and slams the windows closed as Namond is looking out. Namond rolls his eyes at Mr. Pryzbylewski and walks back to his seat. Mr. Pryzbylewski follows him:

Namond: "Yo, you all up on for I do my work!"

Mr. P: "I'm not your yo! Show me your work!"

Namond flips the worksheet over so Mr. Pryzbylewski will not see that none of the questions have been answered. Mr. Pryzbylewski flips the paper right side up:

Mr. P: "Yeah, I see."

Mr. Pryzbylewski walks to the board and writes Namond's name down for detention:

Namond: "Yo, my head hurtin from all this learnin,' you got some Tylenol?"

Mr. P: "What I got for you is detention!"

Namond: "Fuck you Prezbo! Fuckin' gimpy ass big grill motherfucka!"

Mr. P: "That's it! You're outta here! Go!"

Namond walks up to Mr. Pryzbylewski as he hands him a note to report to the office. Namond, grabs the note, crumbles it up in his hand, and tosses it to the side:

Namond: "Get your police stick out your desk and beat me! You know you fuckin want to!"

Namond storms out of the classroom and passes Dr. David Parenti in the hallway:

Namond: "Fuck you lookin' at bitch?"

Namond was coded as a "Pickaninny," not because of his perceived aggressive behavior, but the reasoning behind it. Namond talked back and acted out as a way to get a rise out of his teacher and to be the source of comic relief for his classmates. Namond appeared on screen 102 minutes, which equates to 13% of the total number of minutes in the season and the most of any other character coded in season four. Given the fact that one exposure to this type of portrayal on screen can lead to "stereotype-based responses" (Mastro et al., 2009, p. 616), judgments, in regard to Black males, are made daily without considering intellectual ability (Love, 2014).

Mainstreaming is considered a key element in the cultivation process because it reinforces commonly held perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs of viewers (Parrott & Parrott, 2015) regarding people of color through a "blurring/blending" process (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 2002). Mainstreaming also occurs throughout the cultivation process. Regardless of the diversity in the United States and the world, television has become the one thing that

connects us all. Gerbner was convinced that television had more influence than any other medium and creates a "common outlook" on cultural, social, ethnic, and racial beliefs (Gerbner et. al, 2002). The more television the viewer consumes, the more the viewers' attitudes and beliefs will mirror that of what is being portrayed. Gerbner stated that the blending/blurring process can occur without the conscious knowledge by the viewer that it is happening and can completely change their views to reflect that of the television portrayal, particularly works of fiction (Gerbner et. al, 2002). The representations the media projects and "mainstreams" on screen are important to examine because of how viewers "digest" what they have seen and try to make meaning as a result (Banks & Esposito, 2003). The media, according to Banks and Esposito (2003), perpetuates stereotypes by "portraying the subject in specific and frequently stereotypical ways" (p. 236).

"Dangerous Black Male" Frame

The literature review in this study provided broad context into the historical racialized creation of the "dangerous Black male" frame, an intentional leftover from slavery and Jim Crow to further marginalize males of color (Carter et al., 2014). It focused on both the evolution and the progression of Black male stereotypes because of the consistent dehumanization, criminalization, and institutional consequences that result for Black males that I argued are rooted in our nation's racist history "Regrettably, our history also left us with the pervasive and false ideas about 'races' that have shaped our perceptions of who is valued and who is not, who is capable and who is not, and who is 'safe' and who is 'dangerous'" (Carter et al., 2014, p. 2). The ideals of White supremacy are what the "founders" of this nation used to build up systems of inequities that established a Black/White paradigm. These ideals encompassed the values the founders wanted to preserve. Carter et al., (2014), in their discussion of slavery and the notion of the dangerous Black male, describe this racial stereotype as one that directly developed out of

slavery as a means of controlling and disciplining those that were enslaved. The researchers state

that this frame was couched in the ideology that Black males were aggressors and predators

leading to extreme life threatening and/or life altering consequences for very punitive grievances.

Once slavery ended and Jim Crow began, negative racialized attitudes and beliefs regarding

Black males, as well as, various other disadvantages, were well established. During this time,

there was also a rise of Black male racial caricatures and stereotypes (portrayed in the media)

that were "created" as a result of the social construction of race, Whiteness, and White

supremacy.

When television media began to be analyzed and examined post-Civil Rights, Blacks

were often found to be typecast as gangsters, drug addicts/dealers, buffoons, and delinquents,

caricatures that revealed themselves to be present in *The Wire*, despite the creators' efforts to

counter such portrayals within their complex Black male characters. Carter et al., (2014) state

that these stereotypical portrayals of Black males serve as reinforcements of biases and beliefs

held over through the years. They cite the television series *Cops* as an example of a show that

continuously mainstreamed negative imagery of Black males and contributed to the endorsement

of punitive consequences and violence against them. What begins to form is a link between the

media portrayals of Black males and public opinion of members of this subgroup (Allen, 2015;

Gray, 1986; Hawkins, 1998; Knight, 2015; Martin, 2008; Miller, 1998; Oliver, 2003). Bilandzic

(2006) and Morgan and Shanahan (2010) note that various types of media content can prompt

relevance structures, including fear.

Given that the majority of citizens report that their knowledge of crime and criminals is a

result of the media (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014; Oliver, 2003), the result of such

caricatures and misrepresentations lead to the following: a general antipathy/animosity towards

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Black males, distorted views on violence and crime, a lack of association with Black males, and a lack of empathy for and understanding of the plight of Black males (Bogle, 2013; Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010; Gray, 1986; Miller, 1998; Page, 1997). "The origins of inequality began with slavery and gave us many of the racial stereotypes that retain much of their power today in schools and society" (Carter et al., 2014, p. 2). As such, negative portrayals of violence, brutes, criminality, etc. continue to foster traditional racist attitudes of Whites, influence public opinions, and ideals in a post-Civil Rights era. "Some of the responses by Black males to such poor economic and social opportunities are then used as powerful forms of Black masculine representation, as media discourse and sensationalization often contribute to the negative imagery of Black men as deviant, irresponsible, and uneducable. It follows that this discourse and popular ideas of Black male deviancy spill over into the schools, influencing how Black boys are perceived and treated by others" (Allen, 2015, p. 211).

Different races and ethnicities experience schooling in vastly different ways. This can range from the demographics and racial composition of their classes and schools to opportunities and resources that are withheld from them because of perceived lack of ability and/or perceived danger or threat to the teacher/educator (Carter et al, 2014). It is these events that "remind us time and time again that our society's racial dividing lines, especially those involving Black males, can have serious, even deadly consequences. Those divisions and their consequences extend beyond the streets into most of our institutions-including schools" (Carter et al., 2014, p. 1). These stereotypes continue to fuel racial inequities and disproportionalities within our schools today.

Analysis of the Caricatures/Racial Stereotypes

The primary findings of my research have established a relationship between the stereotypes/caricatures coded and the series' portrayals of Black males. It is important to emphasize the point raised by Mastro et al., (2009) that it only takes being exposed to these negative stereotypes/portrayals once to serve as the "trigger point" for a negative belief to form, be confirmed, and negative response to occur. Given that the (coding) categories were predetermined and based on the racial stereotypes/caricatures presented throughout the history of the United States, we must review the characteristics of each one to understand how a teacher (who watched the series) might categorize their Black male students who possess similar qualities. How might these portrayals cultivate teachers' perceptions and subsequent treatment of Black male students? Spingarn (2012) described the "Uncle Tom" as a submissive race traitor, an iteration this classification still holds in present day. It is this descriptor that was the basis for assigning this distinction to D'Angelo Barksdale, Bubbles, Omar Little, and Cedric Daniels. Despite all coming from vastly different circumstances, all four characters possessed submissiveness when it came to doing what was right and chose the role of informant (for the Special Crimes Unit) when deemed necessary, regardless of intent. Bogle (2013) noted that the "Uncle Tom" is one that remains devoted and faithful to his master regardless of the way they are treated. The "master" in relation to these four characters was the law/police, each having a unique relationship with at least one member of the Special Crimes Unit.

Aside from Omar Little, neither character was ever depicted showing violent or aggressive tendencies, which would have allowed these characters to essentially go about their daily routines completely undetected. These four characters also displayed a high level of intelligence, which allowed them to navigate the nuances of the Baltimore drug trade. The "Uncle Tom" was depicted a total of 787 minutes (22% of the total amount of minutes in the

series) and in every episode of the series. According to the research documented in chapter 2, students displaying these same behaviors are prone to receive significantly less acceleration and proper remediation needed to attain and maintain proficiency (Allen, 2015). The "Uncle Tom" will not be a behavior problem and will comply with the teacher's directives. However, the "Uncle Tom" is not likely to have the proper teacher/student interaction needed to adequately achieve (Kenyatta, 2012). Interaction can be defined as teacher praise, one-on-one assistance, lower academic expectations, and an overall lack of concern, both academically and socially/developmentally (Hinojosa, 2008; Kenyatta, 2012). These students are also less likely to be nominated for gifted education services (Allen, 2015; Carter et al., 2014) and be pushed by their teachers to enroll in honors and/or advanced placement courses in high school, decreasing their chances of graduating from high school college and career ready and increasing their chances of lower academic achievement (Brown & Kraehe, 2011) as compared to their White peers. As a result, Black males are placed on a lower academic track where they are likely to face less opportunity to matriculate into higher education. This also leads to negative assumptions about academic potential, intellect, and a willingness to learn and achieve. According to the Office of Civil Rights 2013-2014 data, Blacks and Latino students represent 38% of students enrolled in schools that offer advanced placement courses but, only 29% of students actually enrolled in one course.

Characters coded as a "gangsta" had to exhibit "thug" like qualities in their actions and live a lifestyle with gang tendencies. It was not difficult to quickly identify the following six characters: Avon Barksdale, Russell "Stringer" Bell, Omar Little, Marlo Stanfield, Michael Lee, and Roland "Wee-Bey" Brice. These were characters that were all gang members or leaders of drug organizations that either murdered or ordered the murders of several members of the

fictional Baltimore community while consistently disturbing the peace. Each of these characters could be described as serial killers. However, as Bunk and McNulty pointed out in season five, they were "dropping" Black male bodies, and, as a result, dehumanizing and judging them as inferior. These characters fit the dangerous Black male frame. The amount of crime these individuals committed forced several citizens to alter their way of living and adjust to a new normal, similar to the "Black Brute/Brute Nigger" disrupted the small South Carolina town in 1915's *The Birth of a Nation*. Omar Little and Cedric Daniels were two characters that were coded as Brutes. Bogle (2013), Brown and Kraehe (2011), and Hawkins (1998) describe Black male bodies as being hyper sexualized and something to be feared. In *The Birth of a Nation*, the Black male was portrayed as an animalistic, untamed, sexual savage controlled by its sexual urges (Hawkins, 1998). Brown and Kraehe (2011), in discussing Black male bodies, state "the Black male is viewed as different, strange, dangerous, and rendered devoid of humanity" (p. 75). The researchers also describe drug dealers, hoppers, children, and ordinary citizens of west Baltimore running away in fear when Omar would make a rare appearance in the daytime. They also describe Omar (as he was portrayed in the series) as a menacing Black man lurking in the shadows, lying in wait to rob and steal from his victims. The "gangsta" (in total) appeared on screen for 792 minutes of the entire series, equaling 22% of the total number of minutes in the series. The "Brute Nigger" (in total) appeared on screen for 502 minutes of the entire series, equaling 14% of the total number of minutes in the series. The research of chapter 2 is indicative of the following: if Black males are feared and profiled (through the media) on our streets and within society, they are feared within our schools (Knight, 2015). Adolescent development is complex in nature as individuals explore and try new facets of life, discover their sexual identity, and establish their place in the world. Black youth identity development is far more complex

because they also have to discover their racial identity and what it means to be Black in America (Martin, 2008). This proves to be extremely difficult, as society has often defined (for Black youth) what it means to be Black (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2006; Martin, 2008). Black youth face a barrage of negative images "which may ultimately have an impact on their development and their overall sense of who they are or who they can become" (Martin, 2008, p. 338).

Caricatures/ethnic notions and stereotypes held by some teachers have been found to not only hinder the academic performance and achievement of Black male students (Allen, 2015, Carter, et. al, 2014; Khanna & Harris, 2015; Parks & Kennedy, 2007), but lead to both short-term and long-term negative consequences. When teachers' fears, biases, overuse of discipline policies, and assumptions of Black male behaviors collide, you have a recipe for overrepresentation of Black males in suspensions and expulsions. According to Carter et al., (2014):

> Racial and ethnic differences in everyday experiences in schools remain ubiquitous in American education. As the research cited in the Discipline Disparities Series indicated, ongoing severe and consistent racial disparities in school suspension and expulsion lead to a variety of other negative outcomes: the more students are removed through suspension and expulsion, the more they vanish from graduation stages and fill the pipeline to prison (p. 1).

Racial discrimination continues to plague the schooling experiences of Black males in schools and various other public settings where they are often viewed as violent, dangerous, and threatening (Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015). The Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education released a report in October of 2016 that highlighted several key areas around discipline. According to 2013-2014 data, the report indicated that Black boys represented only 19% of male preschool enrollment but, 45% of those suspended. The report also indicated that while 2.8 million students nationwide received one or more out of school suspensions, 1.1 million were Black students. While 6% of K-12 students received one or more suspensions, 18%

belonged to Black males, making them 3.8 times more likely than Whites to receive an out of school suspension. The data also showed that Black students made up approximately 18% of preschool children but 48% of those suspended. This shows that discipline disproportionalities begin as early as Pre-K. Researchers (Diuguid & Rivers, 2000; Gray, 1995; Martin 2008; Page, 1997) suggest negative caricatures in the media influence Black cultural views and potentially affect the development (socially, emotionally) of Black males as negative stereotypes (thugs, hoods, criminals, over sexed brutes) reduce self-esteem, expectations, and outcomes. These same researchers (Diuguid & Rivers, 2000; Gray, 1995; Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014; Martin 2008; Page, 1997) also suggest Black males can internalize stereotypes and negative caricatures and, through their words and actions, reinforce these same negative images (Allen, 2015; Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014) by mimicking what is portrayed on television.

There are similar statistics in regard to expulsions. Black students are 1.9 times more likely to be expelled from school without educational services as compared to their White peers. Black males represent 8% of all students but, 19% of students receiving expulsion from school without educational services. The same disproportionalities are present when examining seclusion and restraint. Black males represent 8% of all students, but 18% of those restrained and subject to seclusion. Out of school suspension, expulsion, detention, and alternative placement programs, alienate African American males "from the learning process by steering them from the classroom and academic attainment and toward the criminal justice system" (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010, p. 197). Losen, Hewitt, and Toldson (2014), in their discussion of discipline policies, disparities, and disproportionalities, state that school districts that have higher rates of suspensions also have high rates of retention and lower graduation rates. School districts

that have lower rates of suspensions have higher rates of academic achievement for all students and higher graduation rates.

Bodie and Poot were the characters that exhibited "Sambo" like qualities because of their loyalty and devotion to the Barksdale organization. They followed orders on command and, prior to the towers being demolished, they made sure the stash houses changed locations to ward off any potential robberies. They appeared content in their existence. Both Bodie and Poot dropped out of school in favor of the drug trade. Like the description of this caricature, they posed no threat to their "master" (Avon Barksdale and Marlo Stanfield). They were often depicted acting extremely boisterous, laughing profusely while passing the time on the street corners between drug deals. They were not afraid of conflict and were often shown arguing aggressively with other dealers when positioning for corner space, getting up in rival gang members' faces, cursing, and getting into fights. Similar characteristics describe the Coon and the Pickaninny. However, the Pickaninny and Coon (historically) were primarily used as an object of comic relief. The "Sambo" (in total) appeared on screen for 221 minutes of the entire series, equaling 6% of the total minutes in the series. The Coon (Dukie and Poot) appeared on screen for a total of 197 minutes, equaling 5% of the total minutes in the series. "Media images, stereotypes, and myths, and personal experiences intersect in ways that naturalize what we think" (Banks & Esposito, 2003, p. 236). These are facts that are often never discussed or recognized by teachers and school leaders but, important to acknowledge given that "teachers' beliefs, conscious or unconscious, inform their pedagogical practices and behaviors" (Love, 2014, p. 300). Bodie, Poot, and Dukie exhibited behaviors that would interfere with instruction and warrant a discipline referral for class disturbance, physical aggression, inappropriate language, and non-compliance.

Black students have twice the chance (compared to White students) of receiving an office discipline referral at the elementary level and four times the chance at the middle school level (Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Skiba et al., 2011). According to the Skiba et al., (2011), "some studies have found no significant differences in behavior between African American and White students while others have reported that African American students receive harsher levels of punishment for less serious behavior than other students" (p. 87). The researchers also state that no differences have been found in the severity of behaviors for which African American and White students were referred to the office. However, Black students' referrals are more likely to require "a higher degree of subjectivity, such as disrespect" (p. 87) and non-compliance. Removal from the classroom impacts the amount of direct instruction a student receives, putting them further behind their peers. Students are not able to receive the descriptive feedback from their teachers hence, reducing their chances of comprehending the mastery objectives and widening the learning gap.

Torres (2015) points to a study that examined an audience's perceptions of various ethnic groups as a result of heavy television consumption. The results indicated that audiences overwhelmingly perceived ethnic minorities negatively as a result of television depictions. According to Bilandzic (2006), viewers will often try and interpret television media content in order to make sense of what they have seen. "If the content pertains to actual experiences or concerns, a viewer may perceive television content as close" (p. 336), meaning, the viewer has had a similar experience and can relate to a character, storyline, or certain events as presented. In other words, if teachers watching *The Wire* do not have personal experiences with their Black male students to serve as counter narratives of portrayals like Omar Little, Namond Brice, Marlo Stanfield, Bodie, or Michael Lee, the media becomes one of their primary forms of education

thus having a great impact on shaping beliefs and attitudes (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Martin, 2008; Monk-Turner et. al, 2010, Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011; Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). Namond's portrayal, mainstreamed in season four, is an example of that education source for teachers watching *The Wire* that allows for the construction of beliefs and attitudes about this subgroup of students.

There are an abundance of research studies that document the struggle of black males in public schools in the United States (Duncan, 2002; Emdin, 2012; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Lloyd, 2005; Moore & Ratchford, 2007; Ponds, 2013, Reynolds, 2010). The research suggests that marginalizing the schooling experience of Blacks is a normal aspect of our education structure and that caricatures in the media have real world affects on Black males and place them in positions of vulnerability (Love, 2014). Teachers have reportedly assigned lower grades and used harsher punishments for Black male students as compared to those of Whites (Hope et. al, 2015). According to Allen and White-Smith (2014), when analyzing achievement data of Black male students, End of Grade testing from third and fourth grade, as well as, drop out data is used to determine the amount of space that will be needed in state penitentiaries. The results of negative imagery often spill over into schools, potentially influencing teacher perceptions. It is these perceptions that can then shape classroom practices and influence discipline policies and procedures within the classroom and school environment. Behaviors (suspensions, zero tolerance policies) by educators can also affect school policies and practices leading to discipline disproportionalities (Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Juarez & Hayes, 2015; Kinsler, 2011; Skiba, 2011), a lack of academic growth, proficiency, and achievement (Allen, 2015, Khanna & Harris, 2015; Parks & Kennedy, 2007), the absence of teacher-student relationships (Duncan, 2002; Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015; Juarez

& Hayes, 2015; Moore & Ratchford, 2007), and the overall schooling experience of Black males as a whole (Allen, 2015; Allen & White-Smith, 2014).

Recommendations for Professional Practice & Future Research

Teacher Education, Instructional Practices, & Professional Development

Schools are one of many settings that continue to systemically oppress and marginalize Black male students. According to Brown and Kraehe (2011), Black males have been labeled as a population of students in need of rescue. This label has in turn established common images and beliefs regarding Black males and dictated how school officials act on their behalf. "In an examination of how Black boys get labeled and tracked as having behavior problems in school, Ann Arnett Ferguson (2011) argues that school officials read and make decisions about Black male students based on cultural images about Black maleness found in larger social discourse" (p. 74). Brown and Kraehe (2011) cite these reasons as to why representation in a larger media context matters. "This is especially important to education and schooling where social discourse fashions Black male bodies as occupying a space of presumed risky 'otherness'" (p. 75).

Given that public schools are becoming more diverse while the teaching force remains mostly White and female, all teachers must have experiences that prepare them to teach a more culturally diverse population of students (Warren, 2014).

All students benefit from a school culture/climate in which all students, regardless of ability or race/ethnicity, feel valued and welcome by other students, families, faculty, and staff as members of the school community; this is most important for students of color, particularly, Black males as they are often tolerated and not embraced by the school community as a whole (Irby, 2014). "Preparing teachers from all racial backgrounds to work effectively with Black male students is of special concern but particularly for those who are White and who come from middle-class backgrounds. This because the vast majority of practicing teachers, and those

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preparing to become teachers, are White middle class and often recognize themselves as having limited substantive knowledge about and experiences with groups of color" (Brown & Kraehe, 2011, p. 73). These are the same educators that will, one day, shape the academic trajectory of their Black male students in a positive or negative direction. Educators will have to broaden their sphere of influence and "critically interrogate the normalcy of their ideology of White superiority and how it impacts how people of color experience race on a daily basis" (Matias & Liou, 2015, p. 606), if they are committed to making a positive change and impact on the lives of their Black male students.

Teacher education programs should explore the social construction of race, the system of racism, and the historical inequities that have occurred that preserve the legacy of White supremacy (Matias & Liou, 2015), challenging the dominant discourse that exists in curriculum. "Teacher education must explicitly reject approaches that ignore systemic injustices and instead explicitly connect these racial inequities (e.g., the achievement gap, disciplinary exclusion, special education assignment, and the entire School to Prison Pipeline) with the seemingly race-neutral education laws, policies, and practices that create and enforce these patterns" (Annamma, 2015, p. 310). Education leadership must carefully examine and pay very close attention to hiring practices and professional learning experiences allotted to teachers and teacher leaders (Matias & Liou, 2015). The professional learning educators participate in should be geared towards questioning one's own beliefs, privileges, and biases and how they can affect the schooling experiences of Black students, particularly Black males, i.e. "dismantling deficit thinking" (Matias & Liou, 2015, p. 619).

All educators should engage in professional development that strengthens their recognition of their current biases, connect their biases to their understanding of racial inequities,

how their biases impact racial inequities and instructional practices, and how their biases impact the educational outcomes of marginalized students, particularly, their Black male students. Teachers should plan and adjust their pedagogy from the perspective of their students' cultural, social, and emotional needs (Warren, 2014). Having teachers work through their dispositions would foster an authentic ethic of care. "This authentic ethic of caring would replace the disposition of suspicion and be rooted in sustained, reciprocal relationships between students and teachers; one where teachers are invested in their students' lives and students therefore become invested in the institution of schooling" (Annamma, 2015, p. 310). As shown with the relationship between Roland Pryzbylewski and Duquan Weems and Bunny Colvin and Namond Brice, students of color will thrive when they encounter a teacher who can empathize with their personal experiences, backgrounds, and home lives, as well as, the implications and "consequences" of being an ethnic minority (Warren, 2014). Like Bunny Colvin modeled, "teachers interested in becoming more culturally responsive must submit themselves to the process of learning students. Learning students means acquiring a student-level understanding of their preferences for social interaction, learning styles, communication patterns, and issues that matter most to them" (Warren, 2014, p. 399). Instead of approaching this training from a deficit standpoint, educators must be "focused on strength, commitment, passion, and obstinate refusal to maintain, support, or recycle racist educational practices" (Matias & Liou, 2015, p. 617).

Using Critical Race Theory as a conceptual framework, teacher attitudes and beliefs of colorblindness reflect larger issues within our society. Ledesma and Calderon (2015) state there is a need for teachers of color and a need for teachers (as a whole) to formulate their instruction in ways that are culturally relevant to students of color. "Through innovative, dynamic teaching, and the creation of new knowledge, teachers can engage in social change. Schools are places

where transformative teaching can and is taking place. This form of teaching will change students and teachers' worldviews because education is a 'cultural practice' and the creation of power and oppression is cultural" (Love, 2014, p. 296). Matias and Liou (2015) suggest using a Critical Race Theory tenant when challenging dominant ideology and majoritarian narratives that claim to be universal, neutral, and color-blind in curriculum and instruction. Educators must infuse a critical race curriculum that does not silence race and racism, rather pushes it to the forefront and forces students to confront it in every subject area. The most obvious place for educators to start is lesson planning. Just as racism has influenced laws and policies, it has also influenced curriculum. National and state standards are predetermined so, it is the role of the educator to offer "multicultural perspectives" (Matias & Liou, 2015, p. 612) in order to provide students with a full critique of the learning target/mastery objectives.

Counter storytelling, or counter narratives, have been cited as tools to combat institutional racism in schools, particularly, when planning lessons and during instruction. Counter storytelling is the method of allowing marginalized students' voices and lived experiences to be acknowledged. However, "it is not enough to include students of color voices; without critical educators, such work does little to critically engage White supremacist ideology prevalent across pedagogy" (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015, p. 209). This requires a commitment from school leadership to bridge the gap between the history that is taught and the real history of the founding of this nation, as interpreted in chapter two. Counter narratives should be the stories of Black males and based on the history of Black males in this country. Within their instructional leadership, building and district administrators' racial literacy is essential in ensuring this process is institutionalized. Teachers should be mindful that the students whose voices are those from which the counter narratives come are the same students that are often

repudiated from dominant curriculum. "It is not enough for a teacher to witness from an invulnerable distance; rather, classrooms can be spaces in which teachers, yes, attend closely to kids' testimonies, but also allow students to be their witnesses. Children testify to their experiences in various ways within classrooms (e.g., discussion, writing, informal talk, displays of emotion, or changes in behavior) and when these testimonies to what are often challenging experiences from the private sphere enter a public space they inevitably and necessarily elicit responses from those who witness them" (Dutro & Kantor, 2011, p. 140). This involves the witness connecting the testifier's truth to something in their own lives in order for assumptions and perspectives (in regard to race) to be examined, analyzed, and changed. The researchers also state the students' witnessing should cut at the core of educators and unveil the structures that privilege have built to impede the progress of students of color. This is an element of culturally relevant teaching in that it allows the educator to engage students in instruction that uses a student's culture as the foundation of the lesson (Trier, 2010). Counter narratives should become the norm within instructional practices.

Finally, there is a need for media literacy education and "stereotype reduction interventions" (Ramasubramanian, 2010, p. 116) aimed at consumers of all media about racial stereotyping and caricatures of minorities as regulating such depictions is highly unlikely (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). This type of training should also be added to education training for teachers and administrators as a type of intervention aimed at creating a more inclusive environment for learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of my study on *The Wire* indicate the need for content analysis to occur when investigating the interconnectedness of gender, race-based stereotypes, media portrayals that perpetuate these stereotypes, and their potential pairings and the effects of schooling

experiences of Black males that result. This study only focused on Black males because of the

multitude of structures that help shape the negative outcomes of Black males in this country.

However, this is a limitation in the study because *The Wire* is one of many television shows that

could have been used as the media content sample. Given outcomes for these students, including

academic ones, are both alarming and reprehensible and the complexity of the educational

challenges Black males face, I feel there is a need for more oversight in how "the media educates

society" (Torres, 2015, p. 286). My first recommendation is to monitor both current and future

portrayals of Black males in television crime dramas on the top four cable networks (CBS, ABC,

NBC, and FOX), as well as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, and other streaming media outlets. There is

no longer a need to subscribe to cable television, much less purchase a premium cable channel

now that streaming media content is readily available for consumers/viewers. These outlets

(Netflix, Amazon, Hulu) are able to script shows much like HBO, which allows them leeway

regarding content. The same study could be conducted but, with a more current show that

viewers have easier access to. *The Wire* was unique because of its mostly Black male ensemble

cast. However, "*The Wire* is, after all, a show created and written predominately by writers from

a White middle-class background, and, distributed via HBO and DVD, is ultimately consumed

by a similarly privileged audience" (Wilson, 2014, p. 60). Though most shows on the top four

networks are mostly White, a Black male character is generally cast and, given the research, it

only takes one portrayal for the cultivation process to occur. Audiences should demand that there

be immediate action taken to reduce the number of stereotypical depictions of ethnic minorities.

My second recommendation is related to Black male students. As I conducted the

research for my study, I found vast amounts of literature on the portrayals of Black males in

general. However, I found no literature on the portrayal of Black male students in television,

their interactions with their teachers, and the factors that could hinder their success in school. The data collected from such literature would serve as a data set for a researcher conducting a similar study.

Finally, future studies should look at the correlation between television consumption of children, as well as social media, and how negative imagery of people of color effects their treatment of their classmates. This study was aimed solely on the teacher-student relationship and how that effects the achievement of Black males. However, Moore and Ratchford (2007) remind us of our collective failure to acknowledge the fact that Black males are constantly and consistently being compared to a White (male) middle class norm. The student-student relationship is just as crucial to the success of Black males as the mistreatment they encounter in schools is not just from the adults they encounter, but the peers they interact with on a daily basis. Black males benefit from a school culture/climate in which they feel valued and welcome, not just by faculty and staff, but other students as well.

Conclusion

Race and racism are woven into the fabric of American history. The United States of America is a country that has been enslaved longer than it has been emancipated and the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, and segregation continue to play out in our society. After Brown, Whites sent a clear message to Black students and families that they were not desired or wanted in their schools (Irby, 2014). Sixty plus years since Brown and the Civil Rights movement, this notion remains unchanged. "Civil Rights-era racial integration and racial equality discourses made espousing a desire for racial purity politically incorrect. This silence laid the ground for the color-blind racism that exists today" (Irby, 2014, p. 785). Race still remains the number one factor that grants or denies individuals access to power, resources, opportunity, and privilege. In our society, individuals seek various forms of media to gain access to information and news on a

regular basis. However, they are unaware how this specific medium is influencing their opinions of groups of people.

From the literature review, there has been a huge amount of research conducted in regard to representations, depictions, and portrayals of Black males in television and film. The image of Black men is one that has been constructed by the majority culture and rooted in racial defiance (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014). The media plays an important role in maintaining these perceptions as they possess significant power and influence over their audience, given that television often acts as a means for people to observe the world around them. The purpose of this study was to provide a critical lens in examining negative caricatures and stereotype portrayals in television media that potentially allow teachers and educators to view some of their Black male students as unintelligent, dangerous, violent, disrespectful, and uneducable. A cultivation analysis was conducted to examine first-order and second-order effects in the critically acclaimed HBO original series, *The Wire*. The goal of the study was to explore and examine the potential effects of negative stereotype portrayal (through the cultivation process) to predict whether or not viewers of *The Wire* were more likely to perceive and treat Black male students negatively.

This research contributes to the body of work on the negative and pervasive racial stereotypes/portrayals of Black males in our society and reifies the notion that the media can be viewed as a "source of social learning that essentially teaches, reinforces, and cultivates certain ideas about Blacks" (Dixon, 2008, p. 332). Negative stereotypes of Black males parallel their experiences within our schools and contribute to representations and ideas of Black male deviancy that often influences how they will treated by educators (Allen, 2015). "Without some critical sense of how students view (a) themselves, (b) the teacher, and (c) the schooling process

in general, teachers are left to their own assumptions of these things. These assumptions are largely informed by the privileges afforded to teachers through their own education attainment, social capital, mainstream valued cultural capital, and access to resources beyond the reach of their school-age constituents" (Warren, 2014, p. 400).

Such negative portrayals should not be tolerated (Torres, 2015) and require efforts to dismantle, just as all vehicles of discrimination should be eliminated. "If we can recognize that the media's production of Black male imagery is one of the many White cultural practices undergirding the formation of a new world order, then we must…decolonize the production and dissemination of media representations" (Page, 1997, p. 99). As such, educators should provide a lens into the media and what role it plays in effecting the daily lives of Black males in all of our institutions, but specifically, schools and other institutions of learning that have the capacity to mold them into globally competitive citizens. "Whether responding to kids' lives on or off screen, such insights demand an active response" (Dutro & Kantor, 2011, p. 139). Race is will continue to be a present force in our classrooms regardless of the presence of educators of color (Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014), just as the media will always be a source of "social learning that essentially teaches, reinforces, and cultivates certain ideas about Blacks" (Dixon, 2008, p. 332). However, teachers are change agents and, by acquiring sociocultural knowledge about the media and the racial stereotypes/messages that are consistently mainstreamed, they can become more aware of their implicit biases and microaggressions that hinder the achievement of their Black male students

APPENDIX A: CODING CATEGORIES FOR U.S FICTIONAL CRIME-BASED TELEVISION DRAMA, *THE WIRE*

Coding categories for U.S. fictional crime-based television drama, *The Wire*

Coding Category	Definition	Characters	Season/Episode	Frequency (Time on Screen per Episode)
Uncle Tom (UT)	**Appearance**: meek, mild **Behaviors**: submissive, kind, and selfless, obeys his "master" to solve his problems, does not attract attention to themselves, willing to "sell out" other Blacks to protect themselves			
Black Buffoon/Urban Coon (BC)	**Appearance**: dirty, disheveled **Behaviors**: unreliable, erratic, lazy, thief, shooting craps on the street corner, joker, clown, comedian, gambler			
Pickaninny (PY)	**Appearance**: unclean, dirty, hair resembles a "fright wig," "Buckwheat" **Behaviors**: object of amusement and comic relief			
Sambo (SO)	**Appearance**: older, bearded with grey hair **Behaviors**: Lazy, content in his own despair, happy to be dependent on others, laughs profusely, performs menial tasks			
Brute Black/Brute Nigger (BN)	**Appearance**: darker-skinned, muscular, larger in size **Behaviors**: sloppy drunk, lustful rapist (typically after white women)			
Gangsta' Rapper (GR)	**Appearance**: oversized clothing, big jewelry, boots, sagging pants, grills or gold teeth **Behaviors**: "thug" life swagger associated with gangs, drugs, and ambitions to be in the music industry			

Positive Depictions	The "Acceptable Black" **Appearance**: neat, clean, well dressed, groomed, brown skin **Behaviors**: mannerly, respectful, articulate, college educated			
Neutral Depictions	Neither positive or negative characteristics/behaviors **Appearance**: mild, plain, blends into the background **Behaviors**: calm, quiet, unassuming			
Other Depictions	The other "Acceptable Black" **Appearance**: light-skinned, bi-racial (but identifies as Black), "preppy/Ivy League," "good hair" **Behaviors**: mannerly, viewed as "acting White"			

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