



Tapping into The Wire: The Real Urban Crisis

By Peter L. Beilenson MD MPH, Patrick A. McGuire

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Did Omar Little die of lead poisoning? Would a decriminalization strategy like the one in Hamsterdam end the War on Drugs? What will it take to save neglected kids like Wallace and Dukie? *Tapping into 'The Wire'* uses the acclaimed television series as a road map for exploring connections between inner-city poverty and drug-related violence. Past Baltimore City health commissioner Peter Beilenson teams up with former Baltimore Sun reporter Patrick A. McGuire to deliver a compelling, highly readable examination of urban policy and public health issues affecting cities across the nation. Each chapter recounts scenes from episodes of the HBO series, placing the characters' challenges into the broader context of public policy.

A candid interview with the show's co-creator David Simon reveals that one of the intentions of the series is to expose gross failures of public institutions, including criminal justice, education, labor, the news media, and city government. Even if readers haven't seen the series, the book's detailed summaries of scenes and characters brings them up to speed and engages them in both the story and the issues. With a firm grasp on the hard truths of real-world problems, *Tapping into 'The Wire'* helps undo misconceptions and encourage a dialogue of understanding.

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

An engaging, fast-paced read that translates the fiction of a cable one-hour drama to the reality of an American City. Using the themes of the social determinants of health, governance, and intersectoral action, the book seeks to reframe the discourse about drug policy and the health of US cities. It is an important read for students and for those seeking to communicate the importance of social determinants of health and understand the politics of drugs and health in cities.

(Danielle C. Ompad *Journal of Urban Health*)

A convincing argument that nonviolent drug users are part of a significant public health problem that demands an effective response from cities... Readers cannot help but feel sympathy for those who struggle with addiction and the plight of government officials who strive to create alternatives to this dilemma. Highly recommended for readers interested in substance abuse or criminal justice issues and prepared for intellectual engagement.

(*Library Journal*)

Living in Baltimore for most of the five years that I filmed *The Wire*, I was astounded to see how closely life mirrors art for too many residents of this—and most other—major cities in America. I hope the readers of this intriguing book really 'feel' the problems that are highlighted and emerge committed to change.

(Michael Kenneth Williams, actor, *The Wire*)

A must-read—and a great read—to understand why drug abuse undermines all our lives and to learn effective and less costly ways to solve the complex riddle of poverty and drug abuse. We need such evidence-based public health analyses and leadership to strengthen our cities' futures and support a resilient, successful, and equitable nation. This book offers a cogent, 21st-century public health agenda to create urban health and well-being.

(Linda P. Fried, M.D., M.P.H, Dean, Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University)

This book will help both fans—and critics—of *The Wire* make connections between the stories presented on screen and how public health approaches can address vexing and seemingly intractable social problems.

(John A. Rich, M.D., M.P.H., author of *Wrong Place, Wrong Time: Trauma and Violence in the Lives of Young Black Men*)

Beilenson leads us through the rationale and implementation of public health initiatives that might have an effect on the show's characters, or on the city's embattled residents those characters are meant to portray.

(Andrew Cleary *Rain Taxi Review of Books*)

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Peter L. Beilenson, M.D., M.P.H., is the CEO of Evergreen Health Cooperative. He served as health officer of Howard County, Maryland, from 2007 to 2012 and as Baltimore City Health Commissioner from 1992 to 2005. **Patrick A. McGuire** is a journalist with more than twenty years of experience, fourteen of which were at the *Baltimore Sun*.

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