**Chapter 11: Education: What Are We Learning?**

**This American Life**

**Recommended Readings**

Ann Arnett Ferguson, Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black MasculinityUsing interviews and participant observation, Ferguson notes that some young black men are being labeled “unsalvageable” or “future criminals” by their teachers. She explores the implications these labels have on the young men's senses of self.

Samuel G. Freeman, Small Victories: The Real World of a Teacher, Her Students and Their High SchoolThis book focuses on a year in the life of one New York public school teacher and the “small victories” she achieves, including encouraging a few children's dreams of attending college.

Jonathan Kozol, Savage Inequalities: Children in America's SchoolsKozol examines the numerous inequalities among public schools that result in poor and minority children being taught in woefully underfunded and understaffed schools and being tracked into a permanent underclass.

Peter Coolson and Caroline Hodges Persell, Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding SchoolsBased upon their visits to nearly 60 elite preparatory high schools, Coolson and Persell argue that these schools act as one way of transmitting privilege among the American power elite.

Murray Sperber: Beer and Circus: How Big-Time College Sports Is Crippling Undergraduate EducationSperber critiques the party scene surrounding college sports and argue that universities, rather than attempting to quell it, rely upon this (sometimes dangerous) subculture to recruit students at the expense of quality undergraduate education.

Barrie Thorne, Gender Play: Boys and Girls at SchoolThorne observed elementary school boys and girls in the classroom and on the playground. She notes that children divide themselves (and are divided by others) into sex-segregated groups and use games like “cooties” to reinforce difference.

Claude S. Fischer, Michael Hout, Martin Sanchez Jankowski, Samuel R. Lucas, and Ann Swidler, Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth  
The authors of this book attack the idea that intelligence and inequality is genetic. They detail the role educational policy and the structures of society create inequality in society.

Jonathan Kozol, The Shame of a Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in AmericaIn this best-seller, Kozol details how we have reverted to a racially segregated education system in the United States.

Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the OppressedIn this classic theoretical work, Freire argues that the poor are educated in a way so that their education is not useful or able to use to develop their human potential.

William G. Bowen, *Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America’s Public University*

Bowen provides data analysis that uncovers discrepancies in graduation rates and educational attainment, showing that widespread discrepancies persist despite the efforts of colleges and universities to address them.

James E. Rosenbaum, *Beyond College for All: Career Paths for the Forgotten Half*

Rosenbaum questions the college-for-all model of higher education we follow in the United States. He shows that our beliefs about social inequality negatively influence our ability to offer vocational education to individuals who do not have access for a college preparatory curriculum. Not all young adults, as a result, have a chance at occupational success.

Richard Arum, Irenee Beattie, Richard Pitt, Jennifer Thompson, and Sandra Way, *Judging School Discipline: The Crisis of Moral Authority*

In this book, the authors present the results of their investigation of the zero tolerance policy used in compulsory education. They argue that this policy and school discipline is much more influenced by the American legal system than the education system. As a result, teens are subjected to school discipline that undermines their educational pursuits.

Margolis, Eric. *The Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education*. Eleven essays on the ways in which higher education reproduces race, class, and gender hierarchies.

Participant Media Group. *Waiting for "Superman": How We Can Save America's Failing Public Schools*

Like all good point of view exposes this book provides many statistics and other evidence to support its point of view that the American school system is in serious need of reform. By bringing in engaging and highly controversial topics such as teacher tenure and the need for teachers’ unions, this book presents the staggering claim that the American public school system is in crisis, failing millions of students, producing as many drop-outs as graduates, and threatening our economic future. By 2020, the United States will have 123 million high-skill jobs to fill—and fewer than 50 million Americans qualified to fill them. What this volume also does is to expose the “lie” that inner city children cannot learn.

Ken Robinson. *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative*

This book can best be summarized through a quote from its author. “It is often said that education and training are the keys to the future. They are, but a key can be turned in two directions. Turn it one way and you lock resources away, even from those they belong to. Turn it the other way and you release resources and give people back to themselves. To realize our true creative potential—in our organizations, in our schools and in our communities—we need to think differently about ourselves and to act differently towards each other. We must learn to be creative.”

—Ken Robinson