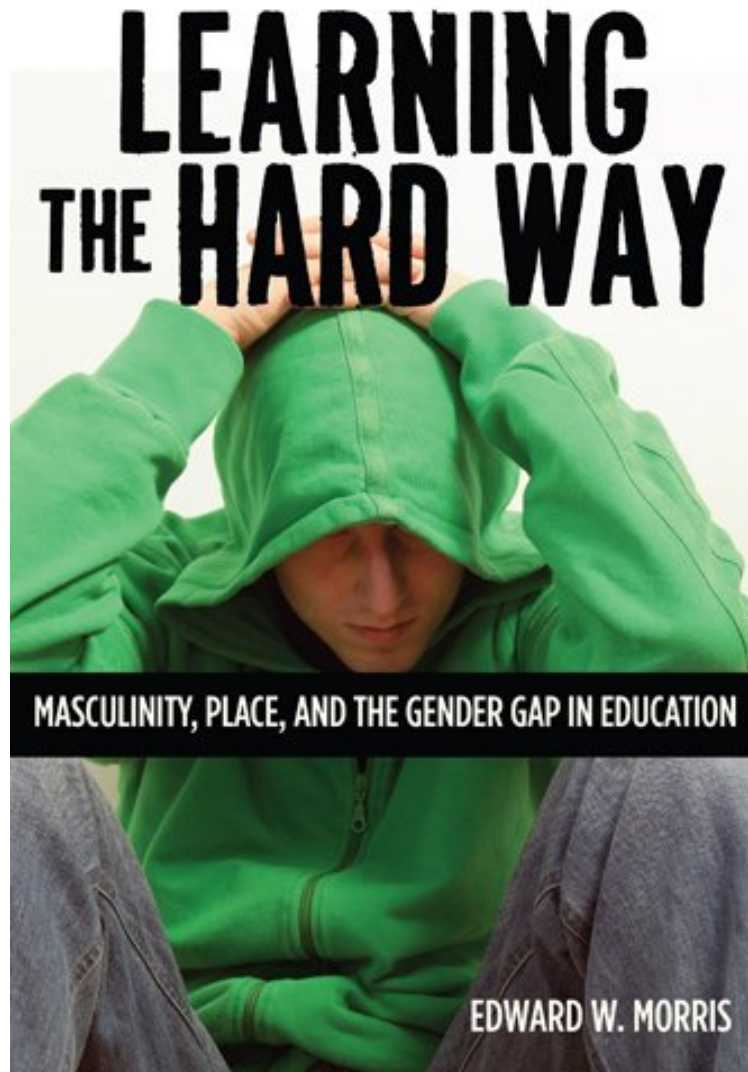


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Learning the Hard Way: Masculinity, Place, and the Gender Gap in Education (Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies)

Edward W. Morris

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Edward W. Morris : Learning the Hard Way: Masculinity, Place, and the Gender Gap in Education (Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Learning the Hard Way: Masculinity, Place, and the Gender Gap in Education (Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Superlative!
By Jeffery Mingo
The author tells a story that I found comic and I don't know if he meant it that way. He said a teacher divided a class up into groups of four and told them to do a report about different decades. In one group, a Black female spoke about politics in the 1980s, another spoke about film, and another about a related matter. When the Black male had the turn to speak, he just said, "So that's how it was back in the day, y'all! Thanks for listening!" LOL! Really, it's unfair when someone in a group fails to do his share. Still, it's funny how a young brotha got over. He gets the same grade when all he did was act as a Master of Ceremony; he didn't do a drop of research. It's supposed to be sad that a young brotha is not preparing himself for the future by working hard today. But, he played a clown or trickster role that some of us in the Black community support. This book was filled with amazing anecdotes like this one.
Back in the 1990s when I was in college, I started hearing reports that colleges were starting to have fewer male students than female ones. I think I may have been in the 1st or 2nd class of any Ivy League school that had a female-majority campus. When I asked an (European-American) admissions officer about it, she responded, "Of course! Faaaar more Black female and Mexican-American female students apply compared to their male peers." I was asking a race-neutral question and received a race-related response. Soon after, I read reports that said middle-class, white males were still heading to college; it's working-class whites and some males of color that had declining numbers. The author's wonderful book studies this trend. Too often, scholars celebrate "race, class, and gender" and then forget other axes of identity. This author thinks about the issue of "place" when looking at why more females succeed, rather than dudes, by observing an inner-city, Black school and a rural, white one. I agree with many activists of color who say, "If I hear the word 'Appalachia' one more time, I'll just scream!" However, I applaud the author for looking deeply into the lives of low-income whites as part of his scholarly work. This book reminds me a lot of "Troubled Boys, Hopeful Girls" by Dr. Lopez. This author acknowledges that by mentioning that book often. This author is the same one that published that amazing book on being white in a majority-minority school, with its heavy mentions of a white, male student named Jackson. He quotes Dr. Christine Williams often and I'm not surprised about that as they both wrote on issues that I think are fascinating and shamefully understudied. I'm already asking myself, "I wonder what incredibly interesting book will this author produce next?"
The author does a great job in emphasizing trends. He freely admits that there are some girls who do poorly in school and some boys who do well. Like Dr. Itzigsohn of Brown University, this author is able to bring up real-life examples of trends without losing their academic tone and becoming more like journalists. Still, this was a user-friendly book for people outside of and inside academic settings. When I was in high school, I barely remember when someone set the curve on an exam or when someone got an acceptance letter from my state's flagship university. However, that one fight I saw two girls get into my sophomore year is still solidly etched in my head. Like most Americans, I lament violence and the tragedies that occurred in Columbine, Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois University, and other places. Still, when the author said, "I have a chapter on fighting," that's the immediate chapter I began reading. Lisa Simpson once said "Violence is fun!" and threw a soda can at her brother Bart. Marge did send Lisa to her room, but not before she chuckled. I have that guilty feeling about that fighting chapter. Sexual orientation does not come up here, but the author interviews a trans female at the rural campus. Trans activists may want to read this. I think readers would enjoy reading, "Dude! You're a Expletive-in-Title!" alongside this book for added insight. Okay, it's been at least six weeks since I read this book. But I remember tearing through it as it was so interesting and informative. I highly recommended it to any reader even remotely interested. This text was a needed gem.
2 of 7 people found the following review helpful. His study is worth the read and his observations of ...
By Richard O. Jacobs
His study is worth the read and his observations of boys conduct are interesting, but he draws conclusions that do not appear to be scientific or logical conclusions from his observations. Essentially, he seems to see boys as blank slates shaped by society with little or no input from genes, and the evidence and experience is against that point of view. His sample is also small, but his observations are in depth.

An avalanche of recent newspapers, weekly newsmagazines, scholarly journals, and academic books has helped to spark a heated debate by publishing warnings of a boy crisis in which male students at all academic levels have begun falling behind their female peers. In *Learning the Hard Way*, Edward W. Morris explores and analyzes detailed ethnographic data on this purported gender gap between boys and girls in educational achievement at two low-income high schools—one rural and predominantly white, the other urban and mostly African American. Crucial questions arose from his study of gender at these two schools. Why did boys tend to show less interest in and more defiance toward school? Why did girls significantly outperform boys at both schools? Why did people at the schools still describe boys as especially smart? Morris examines these questions and, in the process, illuminates connections of gender to race, class, and place. This book is not simply about the educational troubles of boys, but the troubled and complex experience of gender in school. It reveals how particular race, class, and geographical experiences shape masculinity and femininity in ways that affect academic performance. His findings add a new perspective to the gender gap in achievement.

"Differences in school performance related to gender represent one of the more enduring discussions in education and

psychology. Explanations have ranged from differences attributed purely to the way young people are socialized, to differences that are fundamentally biological. Based on an ethnographic study of poor students in two schools Morris has synthesized an explanation making economic circumstances, something described as 'place,' a critical element in shaping gender differences. Recommended."