



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

Edward W. Morris

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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.

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