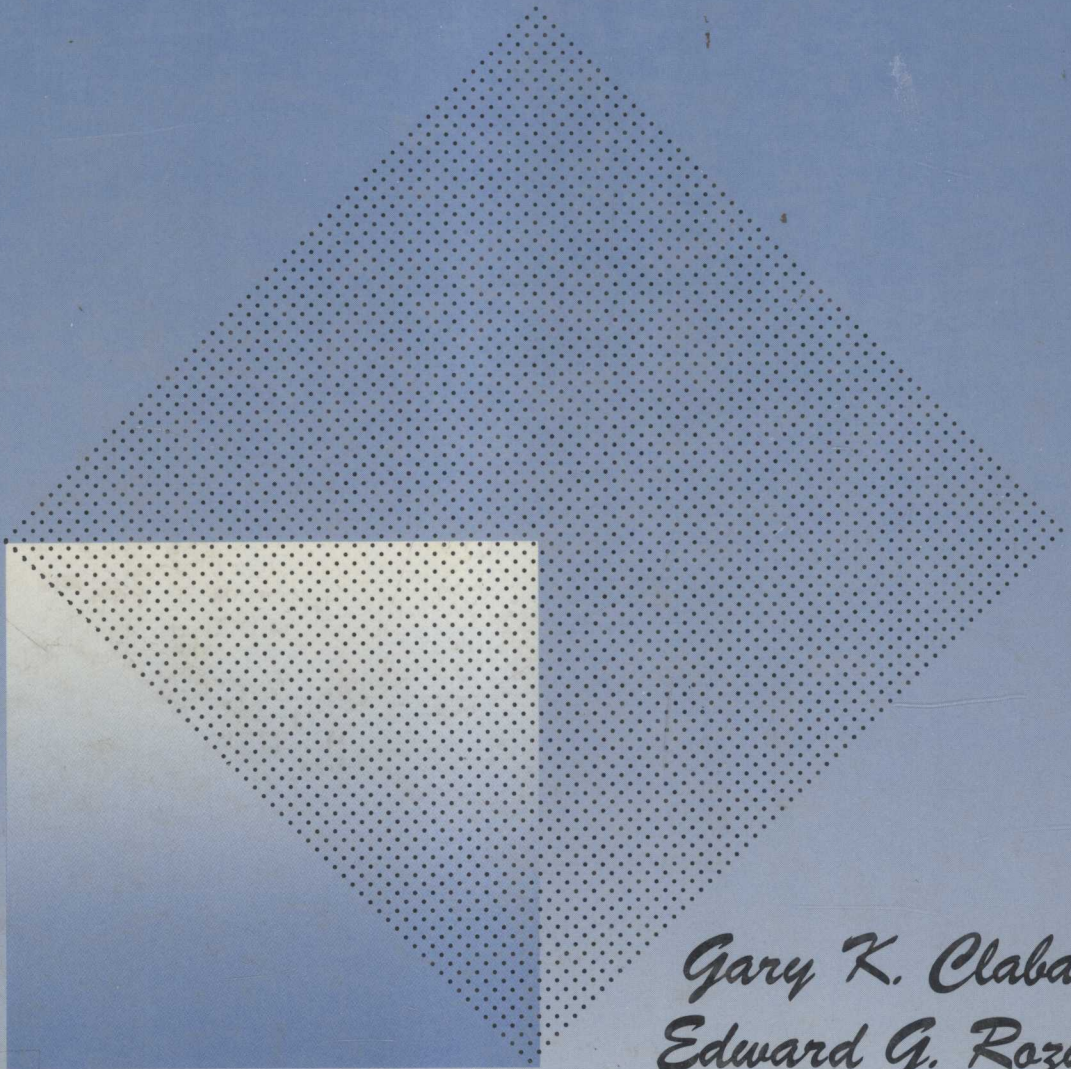


Understanding Schools

The Foundations of Education



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Understanding Schools:

The Foundations of Education

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1817

HARPER & ROW, PUBLISHERS, New York

Grand Rapids Philadelphia St. Louis
San Francisco London Singapore
Sydney Tokyo

Photo credits appear at the back of the book on page C1, following the appendixes.

Sponsoring Editor: Alan McClare
Project Coordination: Publishing Synthesis, Ltd.
Text and Cover Design: Delgado Design, Inc.
Cover Coordinator: Kathie Vaccaro
Art Direction: Kathie Vaccaro
Photo Research: Inge King
Production: Beth Maglione

Understanding Schools: The Foundations of Education
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Clabaugh, Gary K.

Understanding schooling: the foundations of education/Gary K.
Clabaugh, Edward G. Rozycki.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-06-041318-2

1. Education—Study and teaching—United States. 2. Education—
History. 3. Education—United States—History. 4. Educational
sociology. I. Rozycki, Edward G. II. Title.

LB17.C49 1990

370'.973—dc20

89-77201
CIP

90 91 92 93 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Some of the most telling criticisms and evaluations of schooling's purposes and practices have come from foundations scholars. To make certain that *Understanding Schools* reflects this tradition of influential and useful scholarship, we relied heavily on recent work in the field. Our writing was also guided by the standards of the Council of Learned Societies in Education. Intended to define the nature of foundations as a field, these standards stress that foundational studies must:

- Promote analyses of the meaning, intent and effects of educational institutions, including schools.
- Encourage students to develop their own value position regarding education on the basis of critical study
- Promote critical understanding of educational thought and practice, and of the decisions and events which have shaped them, in their various contexts.
- Encourage the development of policy making perspectives and skills in searching for resolutions to educational problems and issues.

Following these standards helped us make certain that *Understanding Schools* provides students with information and techniques which, with your help, encourage an articulate point of view that looks beyond the walls of the schools, is guided by reason rather than rhetoric, and moves well beyond an unexamined personal experience of schooling.

We have also included many special features which make the book more accessible to students and handier for you. Specifically, we:

- Provide analytic techniques of broad applicability
- Place facts and events in the context of social processes, institutions and ideas
- Furnish competing accounts and explanations for school and social realities
- Incorporate unifying themes and imagistic analysis using common images of the school
- Supply over two hundred learning enhancing illustrations, tables and graphs
- Include more than one hundred interesting and provocative photos
- Furnish a powerful instructor's manual that includes, among other things, answers to the end of chapter discussion questions, lead-in questions which direct student reading, suggested learning activities, transparency masters and the customary test questions. (This manual is particularly useful for those teaching the course without formal training in the field.)

The text treats numerous topics of contemporary interest. In addition to developing the educational implications of drugs, child abuse, gangs, teenage pregnancy, sexism, racism, AIDS and the like; we also provide:

- Conflict and negotiation theory
- Organization and institutionalization theory
- Procedures for the analysis of educational policy statements
- Techniques for evaluating the feasibility of educational programs and the rationality of educational interventions
- A continuing and in-depth focus on the problems of schooling consensus in a pluralistic society

Many reviewers have contributed to the development of this book and we thank them for their conscientious criticism and helpful comments:

Morris L. Anderson, Wayne State College
William Cutler, Temple University
Joseph L. DeVitis, S.U.N.Y. — Binghamton
Michael S. Katz, San Jose State University
Christopher Lucas, University of Missouri—Columbia
C.J.B. Macmillan, Florida State University
Michael Oliner, Loyola University of Chicago
Lita L. Schwartz, Pennsylvania State University
Thomas Skrytic, University of Kansas
Timothy Smith, Hofstra University
Janice Streitmatter, University of Arizona

G. K. C.
E. G. R.

This text in the foundations of education is designed to help you gain the competence based on knowledge that is the distinctive characteristic of a learned professional. Only when you have learned to think clearly and systematically about educational issues can you act with the integrity that comes from knowing what you are doing. The alternative is to accept standard formulations from others and simply do what you are told. And that is hardly ethical when you are dealing with the lives of children and the future of our nation.

The foundations tradition offers an approach to knowledge that is very distinct from the single-discipline approach. Using the interpretative perspectives of a variety of disciplines to examine and explain the educational process, it provides three major perspectives:

- The interpretive perspective—using theories and resources developed within the humanities and the social and behavioral sciences, foundational studies promote analyses of the meaning, intent and effects of educational institutions, including schools
- The normative perspective—foundational studies encourages the development of value positions regarding education on the basis of critical study and reflection.
- The critical perspective—foundational studies promotes understanding of the inevitable presence of normative influences in educational thought and practice. It also encourages the development of policy making perspectives and skills in searching for resolutions to educational problems and issues.

You will have no difficulty in finding these perspectives throughout this text. They were the guidelines within which our writing was accomplished.

We could have offered a celebrationist approach, stressing only the wonderful things that educators can accomplish. But this would have encouraged a superficial understanding of the relationship of school and social realities while simultaneously discouraging critical inquiry. Worse, it would have promoted unrealistic expectations which ultimately interfere with effective teaching.

Foundational studies takes you beyond your own impressions and feelings about school, increases your knowledge and enlarges your arsenal of intellectual techniques. Having accomplished this you will be able to move beyond unexamined personal experience to interpret situations and determine courses of action with a subtlety and competence which will make you clearly distinguishable from the untrained layperson. In short, you will be on your way to becoming a true professional.

G. K. C.
E. G. R.

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To the Student xviii

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