freedom here and now. And of course, education is a key social activity for realizing such freedom.

As the tradition has matured, critical social theorists have become less clearly prescriptive (no longer asserting such declarations as Communism is the way! or Long live Matriarchy!) and thus more circumspect about what liberation entails. Some version of *democracy* has largely come to supplant socialism as the key referent on the critical utopian horizon. (In chapter 8, we will return to a discussion of this development and of why it should open up the critical canon.) Yet this does not indicate an exhaustion of the paradigm. Rather, we would say it is one of the outcomes of ongoing social diversification and of the necessary cultural contextualization of critical theory. It may also signal the increase of a salutary humility and an awareness of the unpredictable contingencies of human evolution. Is it so bad, after all, to say, I don't know what an ideal society looks like, but it certainly ain't this!?

WHY THEORY? WHY NOT? HOW EDUCATION AND CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORIES INFORM ONE ANOTHER

There are many good reasons for studying critical social theory and applying it to educational research or practice, but perhaps the best reason is what we call the "getting real" factor. One of the enduring insights of critical social theory is that all social practice, including the practice of education or educational research, is deeply informed by interests and value commitments that have political consequences. Another way of putting this is to say that no social practice is innocent and that all social practice is "interested." So part of the process of "getting real" is seeing beyond facile statements about educating "for the good of the kids," or for the "betterment of society," and understanding the specific value commitments that always inform educational policies and practices. It also means shedding the objectivist fallacy that we can somehow stand above the fray to produce untarnished knowledge. Critical social theory enjoins us to continually make explicit what are normally implicit assumptions. It insists that we get real by critically examining the values and worldviews that inform our own social practice and by engaging these values with those of other people in our sphere of work. That is why the concept of *reflexivity* is so important in critical theory. Being reflexive in critical theory means always keeping ourselves honest about getting real, too.[5]

One of the ways we have found useful to think about the mutual importance of education and critical social theory to one another is through the broad concepts of *power, knowledge, and identity.* Throughout human history, the relationships among power, knowledge, and identity have been constitutive of society. One's social position and social possibilities are strongly shaped, even determined, by the sense of who we are in relation to others (identity),

by what we know about ourselves and the world (knowledge), and by what we are capable of doing with ourselves and others in the world (power). If it is true that, historically, brute force often channels power, it is no less true that knowledge and identity are integral to power as well. Indeed, as we shall see, critical social theory—through concepts like ideology (Marx), hegemony (Gramsci), governmentality (Foucault), and doxa (Bourdieu)—has attempted to understand the unique ways that modern institutions employ "knowledge" to manipulate "identity" in the service of "power."

No doubt it will have occurred to you that power, knowledge, and identity also have a lot to do with the substantive topic of our interest—education! Education, after all, is fundamentally about the production and transmission of knowledge in society. Informal education, such as what we learn from our parents while growing up or by watching television, gives us a lot of our knowledge and sense of self, just as participation in formal education—schooling—does. And who would deny that this transmission of knowledge, formal and informal, is shot through with power. Through the various educational means of a society, we are constantly learning about who we *are*, and about what we *can or should become*. Our life opportunities, our chances for material and spiritual success of various kinds, are strongly conditioned by the organization of education. It is in this sense that education is a dimension of human activity that bears upon the key questions of the social sciences: the nature and power of social structures to affect human beings and their activities, the role of knowledge in maintaining and transforming social relationships, and so forth. In other words, looking at education helps illuminate how society more generally works. It is no coincidence that many of the most prominent theorists in the sociological tradition have written about formal processes of education at one time or another. Durkheim, the founder of modern sociology, was originally a student of pedagogy, and he wrote and spoke frequently about moral education ([1925] 1961), while Bourdieu often wrote critical accounts about how formal educational institutions reproduce class inequality (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1988).

But perhaps more importantly for us, and looking the other way around, using critical social theory helps us understand how education works; it helps us understand that education is a big part of the way social structures do their work to distribute power and knowledge and life chances unevenly. In other words, employing critical social theory helps illuminate educational processes—from the microlevel negotiation of relationships between teacher and student in the classroom to the macrolevel structuring of national and even global educational policies and systems.

Finally, there is an important sense in which critical social theory, and the kind of critical educational scholarship it inspires, has a broadly educative dimension as well. After all, critical scholarship aims to contribute knowledge for emancipation. The basic premise of such work is that some educational processes aim to *obscure and ratify* existing power arrangements, while others

aim to *clarify and equalize* such arrangements. Critical work aligns itself with the latter. It should come as no surprise, then, that Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci wrote extensively about the need for workers' education, or that philosopher Brian Fay contends that all "critical social science" employs a "theory of education" (1987, 32).

Critical educational scholars work to construct knowledge in the service of human freedom and social justice. Not only can such knowledge inform the transformation of formal educational practices and policies (that is, school systems), but it can also inform the development of popular consciousness. Critical social theorists have always been educators of a sort, even if their stance vis-à-vis nonprofessional, everyday theorists has often been detached or elitist. As the Korean scholar Kyung-Man Kim (2005) notes, critical social theorists have themselves wavered in their conception of the "educational" role of theory and the theorist. Some, like Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, have maintained that there is a special role for the professional intellectual as someone who uses theoretical concepts to "see" structural domination and then communicates such insights to everyday "lay people." Others, like Habermas, have tried to erase such a distinction by professing to enter into a hermeneutic "dialogue" with everyday actors in order to mutually clarify and reciprocally educate about domination. This is also the sense in which the Brazilian theorist and educator Paulo Freire developed his "pedagogy of the oppressed." Arguably, few theorists have provided compelling illustrations of how their critical theory has effectively transformed power relations or "emancipated" a social group (Freire may come closest here; see chapter 8). We try to give a few examples of such critical "success stories" later in the book, but they are scarce. Perhaps it is through books like this, and readers like you, that the transformative educational work of critical theory will be advanced.

WHAT'S IN, WHAT'S OUT: THE LOGIC AND ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

As you have already guessed, the terrain we are attempting to cover here is vast. Yet we want people to not feel daunted in reading this book, so we have had to make some difficult choices about what to include and what to leave out. We have not tried to be exhaustive, and we are sure to have left out many important theorists and theoretical traditions. To keep ourselves honest and to help you in your own discovery process, we have at least tried to indicate connections with theorists that we do not attempt to cover in any great depth. Ultimately, we see ourselves as entering an ongoing conversation about critical social theory in education rather than as making a definitive statement.

Our choice of theories and theorists for this book is also influenced by a concern for *qualitative* types of research and for the kinds of interactive

educational exchanges that occur every day around the world. I was trained as an anthropologist, and my work has been mostly ethnographic, so I gravitate toward those theories that help me understand what I am seeing "on the ground." If my research involved attempts to survey large populations or statistically model more macrolevel processes, this book might emphasize a different set of critical theories. But there is another reason for emphasizing the theorists we do. Most educators lead their lives in classrooms or other interactive spaces, so we wish to focus on theory that permits educators to "see" their own practices, classrooms, and institutions more clearly, hence to make possible *interventions* with transformative possibilities. Nevertheless, we do not want to get trapped in the classroom, either. We recognize that to focus exclusively on the classroom runs the risk of neglecting the many other dimensions of teachers' and students' lives, as well as the many other dimensions and levels of power in education. In the examples of critical educational scholarship that we discuss, then, we also turn the lens of critical theory onto the dynamics of school organization, curriculum, politics, law, policy formation, and so forth.

The ordering of the book's chapters follows roughly the chronological development of different strains of critical social theory—but only roughly. Perhaps more importantly, the chapters move out from a focus on class as the primary dimension of inequality to the inclusion of wider and more complexly intertwined dimensions of domination. With Marx, a tradition of critical theory began that focused exclusively on class domination. As we will see, other traditions have broadened out the structures and categories and processes by which domination may be effected. According to our broad definition of critical social theory, class came first, but then race, gender, and other dimensions of structural domination were included.[6]

We begin with a chapter on "forerunners and foundation builders." Here we introduce the work of Marx and Weber, two of the oft-acknowledged "fathers" of critical social theory. Each in his own way, Marx and Weber attempted to theorize the new forms of class domination that emerged with modernity and industrialism. Yet in this same chapter, we introduce a number of theorists and theoretical traditions whose work would not be considered part of the critical tradition, properly speaking. The symbolic interactionists and phenomenologists, like George Herbert Mead and Alfred Schutz, were not especially concerned with power and domination. Rather, they were concerned with how local social order and meaning was produced. Yet their work laid an important foundation for later critical theories, which try to link the "micro" dynamics of social interaction with the "macro" dynamics of political and economic systems.

The next six chapters are organized around key theorists and theoretical traditions. Each of these chapters begins with some biographical notes and an attempt to situate the work of the theorists in historical and intellectual context. From there, we introduce and explicate some of the key concepts in