• Presenter and contributor to conferences, seminars and workshops related to civics and citizenship education.

• Extensive research and professional writing on political and citizenship education.

My voice emerges from within the realm of the informed, committed practice or praxis of education, and as such, the inquiry adopts aspects of critical action research/reflective practice. It does not recoil from the allegation that it is an appeal to be heard amidst the massed voices that have emerged from the academy, institutional politics, consultants and bureaucracy in recent years. It draws attention to the ‘gap’ between educational theory and practice, and endorses critical research conducted by practitioners operating within existing conditions and perspectives. In doing so, it implies criticism of forms of research that employ theories of change designed largely to ‘bring practitioners’ practices into line with theorists’ theories’.

(Kemmis and McTaggart 1988; Carr and Kemmis 1986).

While an advocate for narrowing the gap between education theory and practice, Carr (1995) recognises the problems associated in its achievement. Indeed, the force of the current running in opposing directions will, in all probability, overwhelm a teacher involved in the process. In a passage, whose candour forces a double-take, Carr observes that ‘even the most resolute teachers, not wanting their pupils to come to grief, may have to skip their education in order to ensure their market value’ (1995: 58 italics added). The major reason for dispensing with the education process is that an examination of the curriculum in terms of its educational nature or purpose ‘will not convince the politicians or the parents, who, by and large, demand instrumental answers in terms of the functions education performs as a means to something else’ (1995: 58).

In a sense, it is hardly surprising that the practitioners’ voice has been largely absent in relation to the recent development of civics and citizenship education. As we know, the Report of the Civics Expert Group argues there is a considerable civic deficit in the knowledge of Australian citizens and much of the responsibility for
this can be traced to the lack of attention devoted to matters of citizenship in schools, especially in recent decades. Under these circumstances, teachers can be seen as the cause of the problem, so have little to offer in developing a solution, although of course they are expected to implement the solution (Reid 1996). By inference, teachers' lack the expertise required to offer advice on what may or may not be appropriate to include in a citizenship education curriculum. In Reid's words, 'Teachers could hardly be involved in setting directions if it was their lack of expertise that had produced the need for the project in the first place' (1996: 11). He draws an interesting parallel between this style of curriculum development, and a 'minimalist' citizenship model in which the knowledge and skills of elite, 'experts' are privileged, at the expense the democratic engagement of the majority. In both cases, the voices of those considered to be ignorant, ill-informed and non-expert, is effectively marginalised as unimportant.

Carr and Kemmis (1986: 40) clarify the meaning of 'critical' by stressing that such researchers do not become negativistic or complaining, but gather their intellectual and strategic capacities, and engage them in a critical examination of practice through a selected research project. Critical research adopts reflexive and dialectical thinking, hence its praxis is open and questioning. Typically it seeks out contradictions and tensions between elements such as rhetoric and reality, process and product, knowledge and action, and structure and function (Carr and Kemmis 1986: 33). Once revealed, these contradictions can be addressed and a resolution achieved. In this sense, dialectical reasoning distinguishes contradiction from paradox. While the former implies flexibility and resolution, the latter suggests ideas that remain incompatible and inertly opposed to each other.

While this thesis proceeds in the spirit of exposing the contradictions and tensions Carr and Kemmis mention, it is likely that the research will also encounter the type of paradoxes referred to here. In other words, matters that cannot be resolved because they involve issues of profound ideological difference. That is the nature of politics and political debate, and in such circumstances, no one really has much expectation that people will be convinced to change their mind by weight of argument. In this thesis, I endorse an activist, critical form of democratic citizenship – however, I do not do so with much confidence that I will convince
advocates of a minimal, passive, ‘spectator’ model of citizenship that it is superior. Indeed, some may see my proposals as threatening and fundamentally opposed to what civics and citizenship education is designed to achieve in Australia. To some extent, this somewhat pessimistic view reflects that of Hunter (1994), who argues that critical theories which aim to show how education can achieve its ‘higher’ objectives such as the self-reflective, democratically enlightened citizen will continue to fail because they do not appreciate the true nature of the school: ‘the radically autonomous hybrid of a bureaucratic problemisation of social life and a religious problemisation of individual conduct’ (1994: 173). They fail to pay sufficient attention to the school as a place formed out of cultural, political, and economic conflicts and compromises (Roman and Apple 1990: 41).

My appeal to be heard should not be distorted or exaggerated. In the years since the national debate on Australian civics and citizenship education began to accelerate, I have been offered regular opportunities to participate in the debate. Indeed, on many occasions my experience and expertise as a practising teacher has been sought. However, in such situations a certain asymmetry of power exists. This adds a further crucial dimension to the political nature of the inquiry. Although this power imbalance exist between practising teachers and the theorists and researchers is not a central question driving this research, it certainly has implications for it. It has been my experience as a teacher, as someone able to convert ‘policy into practice’ (Curriculum Corporation, 1996) that is wanted by researchers. They are less interested in my views on just what constitutes ‘democratic citizenship’, or the implications that may have for my approach to teaching citizenship education. As the father of scientific management Fredrick Taylor put it to one of his workers, ‘[You’re] not supposed to think; there are other people paid for thinking around here’. On those occasions when my experiences were sought, a report from ‘the front’ was required, presumably to be taken back to headquarters for further rumination and analysis by the experts.

This gap, or gulf between the theory and practice of civics and citizenship education is seen in many guises. A single revelatory example should make the point. In 1998, a civics and citizenship education program that I played a central role in developing won the Victorian Education Department’s Award for the best program
of its type in Victorian secondary schools. I was responsible for the planning and writing of the submission upon which the Award was made. The Award was presented at a formal function at the Victorian Parliament, and the school’s achievement celebrated in the appropriate manner. Yet from the viewpoint of an insider, I remained extremely critical of the winning program. I was aware of its almost complete unwillingness to confront students with the crucial question: What is the meaning of democracy and citizenship in contemporary Australian society? I was aware of the negativity the program generated within the school’s staff (‘I’m a Maths teacher, what’s civics and citizenship got to do with me?’). I was aware of the ambiguous model of citizenship the program presented to students, (Day One: Students helping local Meals on Wheels Service, Day Two: Students attack the character of political opponent in mock election). I regarded the program as a tentative, primitive step in citizenship education, and while I appreciate that such efforts often warrant recognition and praise, the Award implied a level of certainty of purpose and commitment to exemplary practice that was so manifestly lacking, I found the Award very perplexing. The elitist nature of the Award itself carried an ironic undertone that could be incongruous in the area of civic awareness and citizenship. I found I was too busy to attend the official presentation.

This brief personal anecdote illustrates that the critical perspective I bring to this inquiry is not solely directed at those responsible for policy development and planning but extends to my own contributions to the field. Significant implementation problems exist at the school and classroom level. Mellor (1996) has noted the primacy of pedagogy and school ethos to the development of democratic citizenship. Yet while such issues lie outside the immediate field of the current research, it is important to acknowledge the practical problems schools are likely to encounter in introducing a civics and citizenship education program. These include:

- the growing tension between the school as a service provider to the individual student, and the school as a socialising place of community;

- the growing tension within the school between liberal, and vocational education;
• anxieties generated by divergent conceptions of the school as a modernist institution based on certainty and truth, and the school as a site for doubt and dubiety;

• lingering conflict between teachers who support a Skinnerian 'technology of teaching', and educators in creative thinking, critical awareness and rational autonomy;

• the credibility gap between teachers, and status-superior outside experts;

• the assumption that teachers are by definition particularly interested in civics and citizenship education, or are personally committed to the promotion of good citizenship or democracy;

• the reluctance of many school communities to get involved with contentious matters of values;

• a lack of teacher skill in civics and citizenship education;

• and the trap that civics and citizenship education can be seen as an overly moralistic and doctrinal device ill-suited to a pluralistic and relativistic age.

A further issue is the unfortunate coincidence of increased attention on matters of citizenship in schools, and the impacts of widespread reforms conducted in many Australian public schools. Devolution of school management, micro-economic reforms of workplace practice, a declining sense of professionalism within the ranks of teachers and curriculum re-structuring are factors likely to have long-term consequences on the nature of both staff and student participation in school governance. Situations in which key stakeholders are provided less meaningful opportunity to have input into decisions are unlikely to engender positive attitudes towards democratic citizenship. It is these types of problems that attract insufficient attention from those promoting civics and citizenship education at the policy level. I acknowledge these matters, but cannot devote much attention to them.
methodologically. Their relevance for the current inquiry lies in the allegation that they constitute major problems for the implementation of a civics and citizenship education program at the school level.

In many ways, the 1998 Award discussed earlier is emblematic of many of the larger problems surrounding citizenship education. By isolating and publicly celebrating the achievement of one school’s citizenship program, it implies the possibility of building a consensus as to the meaning of citizenship within a community. The Award privileged a set of civic values the school deemed to be important, or more probably the values that I, in my capacity as writer of the application, suspected the Award wished to recognise and endorse. This suggests an element of deception on my part. It is an accusation to which I readily confess as it highlights the critical perspective I wish to bring to this inquiry. This critical analysis certainly does not exclude my own role as a participant in civics and citizenship education. It also demonstrates the element of postmodern doubt and reflexivity that pervades this work.

Having been involved in the civics and citizenship education field for a number of years, I had no difficulty in framing the Award application in appropriate language. By quoting from the Report of the Civics Expert Group and the Discovering Democracy Program, I cited the precise values, skills and knowledge ‘new civics’ seeks to promote. While none of the submission was a fabrication, like many applications, it accentuated the positive. Indeed, the submission for the Award replicated much of the language used in citizenship education planning and policy documents. The willingness of those making the Award to accept this language without developing a deeper understanding of the true nature of the winning program is indicative of the broader assertion that civics and citizenship education can be seen to a place a veneer of civility over the profound uncertainty that pervades contemporary understandings of citizenship, particularly among young people. Meaningful education for democratic citizenship seeks to remove that veneer and reveal what lies beneath. In Chapter Seven I refer to the risks involved in this process, but it is a risk that should be taken. Recognising isolated pockets of exemplary civic behaviour or models of good citizenship fails to address the deeper issues surrounding the Australian civic deficit.
2.5 Critical policy analysis

A formal study of public policy can be a rather prosaic affair. It can be seen as a form of research designed to assist governments in the task of policy development. Emerging in the post World War Two period, policy analysis or science was designed to determine the technically best course of government action in order to implement a decision or achieve a particular goal (Taylor et al 1997: 17). In this sense, by adopting largely positivist epistemology, policy science seeks to bring an element of rationality to the public policy making process. Under this conception, research identifies the ‘facts’, so that policy makers can proceed on the basis of empirical evidence (Nisbet 1999: 64). Ball (1997: 271) identifies the tension between research based on concerns for efficient use of resources on one hand, and concerns for social justice on the other. He argues that although the latter is overtly political, efficiency-based research tends to eschew such a label by presenting itself as possessing a neutral status reflected in a free-floating progressive rationalism.

This instrumental view of policy analysis or policy-oriented research is of little utility for this inquiry. Following a range of researchers willing to use the concept in a broader sense, the form of education policy analysis adopted here rejects a positivist distinction between facts and values, and following the critical tradition, insists there is no such thing as value neutrality in social science research. Indeed, Ball describes attempts to have educational studies stand above or outside the political agenda as ‘dangerous and debilitating conceits’ (1997: 264). Critical policy analysis, either implicitly or explicitly makes judgements as to whether policies have made things better (Henry 1993: 104). In mounting a defence of critical policy analysis, Taylor et al (1997) link the broad educational process and their preferred research methodology in ways that are particularly prescient for the current inquiry. They see a critical view of educational policy analysis as based on a conception of education that converges around ‘the idea of active and informed citizenship’ (1997: 19). In other words, Taylor and her colleagues see education playing a crucial role in the formation of cultural practices and communities. Yet in acknowledging the contested nature of this view, and the wide variety of ways in which it could be interpreted, they recognise the need for a method of investigating
the ways in which key terms are used, and the ways in which particular policies and practices reflect the inherently political nature of policy development. By appreciating the manner in which power is exercised in making political choices, critical policy analysis can perform this function (1997: 20). As Nisbet notes:

Policy-oriented research modifies (and hopefully improves) the existing situation, protecting it from running into trouble by identifying and anticipating problems. It may challenge established policy by demonstrating its impracticality, or may develop or explore alternative policies. (1999: 66)

Of course this form of research clearly presents a dilemma for policy makers. Nisbet (1999:71) suggests the most valuable research design is one that focuses on problems, rather than simply seeking to supply answers to questions. Yet as Husen and Kogan (1984: 52) note, policy makers generally want researchers to provide answers to existing questions, not present more questions, and critical research findings may add to, rather than reduce uncertainty for decision-makers. Moreover, a style of research that focuses on the analysis of problems rather than placing its emphasis on seeking solutions, may lead to accusations that the research is being conducted for little reason other than the benefit of the researchers themselves. Isolated from the practicalities of the ‘real world’, research pursues issues of academic interest, rather than problems that require solutions (Nisbet 1999: 72). However, as comments earlier in this Chapter demonstrate, it is difficult to level this charge at this inquiry. Indeed, far from being conducted in a ‘laboratory’ removed from the realities of classroom practice, the research is strongly grounded in the ‘action’ model in which the researcher has been, and remains a direct participant, with extensive exposure to the implementation of policy at the classroom and school level.

‘Policy’ is defined broadly and critically in this project. The focus of Australian policy developments in civics and citizenship education is the Discovering Democracy Program. This project is the culmination of the federal government’s attention to civics and citizenship that can be traced back to Report of the Civics Expert Group, and earlier Senate Committee Reports. However, while Discovering Democracy is clearly the centre of Australian attention, it is not the ‘policy’ in

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terms of the analysis being undertaken here. Although aspects of the development, implementation and content of the *Discovering Democracy* materials will be examined and assessed in some depth, this does not constitute the entire analysis. Rather ‘policy’ is taken as a cycle commencing with the recognition of a problem in need of a response, the formulation of that response, its subsequent implementation and reactions to it. As Ball (1994: 10) suggests, policy is both text and action, words and deeds. Moreover, policies are always incomplete as they are modified and adjusted to fit the ‘wild profusion of local practice’.

An analysis of Australian civics and citizenship education policy involves more than an evaluation the *Discovering Democracy* Program such as that conducted by the Erebus Group in 1999. While such a study may reveal aspects as such stated aims of the policy, or the extent of its implementation, it may shed little light on disjointed, less rational and political fashion in which policy is developed and implemented (Taylor et al 1997: 25).

### 2.6 The emergent research method

The research method that emerges from the discussion in Sections 2.1 to 2.5 is one that is critical and constructivist. It is driven by the criticalists’ insistence that the nature of power relations within society be carefully scrutinised in reaching an understanding upon which to proceed. It is for this reason that considerable attention is devoted to the nature of an Australian civic deficit in Part A of the thesis. To simply accept the findings of the Civics Expert Group (CEG) that an Australian civic deficit existed in the terms with which the CEG Report defined it would be to take too much on trust.

As an active participant in both the theory and practice of civics, citizenship and political education for many years, I am attracted to a range of strategies in conducting the research. An analysis of national and state policy in relation to development and implementation of Australian civics and citizenship education in the past decade calls for a different research approach from critical self-reflection on my personal participation as an educator and education writer in the field. That
the inquiry seeks to draw together aspects of theory and practice, and draws elements from each end of the policy continuum is a direct reflection that the project is not 'on or about' education but rather 'in and for' education (Carr and Kemmis 1986:156). It proceeds in the criticalist tradition of seeking to transform, 'explicitly conceived with the purpose of overcoming felt dissatisfaction' (Fay 1977: 109).

The research strategies are of four broad types:

- Literature review, analysis and discussion of citizenship, democracy and education.

An extensive body of literature has been produced in relation to the nature of citizenship in liberal-democratic states, and relevant aspects of this will be reviewed and discussed in Part A of the thesis in an effort to analyse and understand the Australian civic deficit. This literature is largely drawn from the Western tradition, as this is likely to shed light on changing attitudes towards citizenship in Australia. For instance, strong parallels can be drawn between the ascendancy of neo-liberal ideas in Europe and North America, and Australia. Similarly, a retreat from democratic participation by citizens is evident in many contemporary liberal-democracies. Much of this literature revolves around key questions such as what role citizens should reasonably expect to have in democracy, and whether active participation is desirable in the first place. Although much of this material is drawn from the broader field of political and citizenship theory, its implications for education are considered, providing a basis upon which to proceed in Part B in which education policy and practice come to the fore.

The use of an established body of literature continues throughout the thesis, although this becomes less prominent in the later chapters in which school education becomes the focus. It is here that greater emphasis is placed on the curriculum materials, policies and programs produced within the current revival of civics and citizenship education in Australia.
• Analysis of policy documents, reports of government and commissioned papers, research papers, curriculum materials and programs produced under government auspices.

Attention is devoted to the most significant documents and statements emanating from Australian governments in relation to civics and citizenship education. Chapter One made reference to the ability of political leaders and policy makers to appropriate the language of citizenship, democracy and education in order to communicate a particular view of an idealised civic society. Clearly, this needs careful and mature scrutiny. Few educators would be likely to uncritically accept Keating's mollifying statement that civics and citizenship education need be 'no more political than Maths, English or Woodwork', yet who interjected when the statement was made? It shows a gross misunderstanding of the nature of school education in general, and civics and citizenship in particular. In a sense, politicians may be in a poor position to acknowledge the political nature of their statements.

This thesis uses such statements as a means of examining the ideological nature of citizenship, and citizenship education. Because the political system itself is so intimately connected to the notion of citizenship, an examination of the motivations of policy-makers constitutes a form of critical inquiry that models a deeper form of democratic citizenship. So paradoxically, in commencing a process of understanding the Australian civic deficit and disenchanted with the political process, we can start with the very program designed to address it. Political leaders motivated by partisan considerations, yet masquerading as disinterested advocates of enhanced civic engagement induce justifiable suspicion, and warrant intense interrogation.

• Critical examination of the author's, and other educators' contributions to the field.

Reference has already been made to the extensive body of my personal professional experience brought to the project. At several points in the thesis this work is drawn on primarily as a means of comparative analysis and as offering suggestions as to
how education in democratic citizenship may proceed. They are not presented as examples of exemplary educational practice, but rather as illustrative of the broader principles outlined in the thesis. In other words, in advocating a deeper form of democracy formed by greater opportunities for deliberative participation by citizens, I feel under some obligation to show how this may be modelled in real educational settings. I do with this with a clearly declared intention of addressing the gap between the theory and practice of education, and of avoiding the desire to bring practitioners' practice into line with theorists' theories (Carr and Kemmis 1986). A glaring omission of too much writing on education in democracy and active citizenship, especially that informed by critical pedagogy, is any meaningful attempt to convert principles to practice.

This is not without its problems as inclusion of personal insights and practice compounds a certain disparity between the more theoretical aspects of the thesis, and the arguably rather prosaic offerings of the author. While this work does certainly delve into some relevant political and educational theory, it is intended, wherever possible, to relate this theory to the practical experience of recent political trends and events in Australia. This reflects a broad commitment in both democratic citizenship in general, and citizenship education in particular, to ground principles in the lived experience of participants. As John Hirst notes, his emphasis in the Discovering Democracy Program was not on what he calls the 'immediate, local and mean' (Hirst 1997), but rather to fire students' imaginations with grand historical narrative and knowledge. He clearly believes that too much stress has been placed on skills and values components of social education in Australia in recent decades, at the expense of knowledge. He sees Discovering Democracy as going some way to rectifying that (Hirst, interview 2000). As he willingly acknowledges in Chapter Seven of this work, this is not my approach. It is argued throughout the thesis that for citizens to be drawn back into a more active role in democracy, that activity must relate to their lived experiences. It is in that spirit that regular reference is made to my own professional work as an educator throughout this project.

Aspects of the contributions of other educators and organisations to Australian civics and citizenship education are also examined. At no point does this involve a
detailed comparative analysis, instead they are used to highlight the forms of
democratic citizenship the thesis endorses.

- Interviews with key participants in the development and implementation of
civics and citizenship education in Australia.

Reactions and responses from a range of leading participants in the Australian
civics and citizenship education field were sought in the form of a series of semi-
structured interviews which were conducted in early to mid 2000. These were not
regarded as a means of data collection in a strict empirical sense that then constitute
an essential core of information upon which to reach a set of findings. Rather, the
interviews with participants are best regarded as a means of presenting some
important ideas/contentions/suggestions to them, and then using their comments and
responses as a stimulus to further analysis. Hence instead of slavishly reporting or
regurgitating their comments, they are used as a means of adding to my own
broader understanding of relevant issues and providing a depth of perspective to the
work. In some cases, they allowed interviewees to confirm, amplify and expand on
views that are part of existing literature. While some direct references to these
interviews are made throughout the thesis, they were not a major source of primary
data.

Having agreed to participate, subjects were asked to examine a series of preliminary
issues and questions provided in advance of the interview. This preliminary activity
involved minimal time commitment. No further preparation for the interview on the
part of the subject was required. As the matters discussed were ones with which the
subjects have extensive familiarity, subjects did not need to undertake preparatory
reading or research. The questions relate to aspects of the interviewees' own work,
or matters on which the subjects had an expert opinion.

The interviews were of approximately 45 minutes. During this time, the subjects
were not required to complete any activity other than provide verbal responses.
Six adults were interviewed. Rather than a 'sample' group, each subject was a well-established source on aspects of civics and citizenship education and hence no attempt was made to ensure confidentiality. Each represents a different dimension of the field. This group comprised:

**Ms Libby Tudball:** A tertiary teacher educator and researcher in civics and citizenship education (Monash University).

**Dr. Kevin Donnelly:** A private educational consultant for the Discovering Democracy Schools Project.

**Ms. Sue Ferguson** - Project Director, Discovering Democracy Schools Materials Project, Curriculum Corporation.

**Mr Ross Attrill** – Director, Electoral Education Centre (Melbourne).

**Ms. Suzanne Mellor:** A prominent researcher in civics and citizenship education, Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER).

**Dr. John Hirst:** Academic historian and Chair of the Civics Education Group.

A reluctance to invest too much in interviews was based on a clearly acknowledged premise: they may not give up much useful data. This can be linked to the political nature of the interview itself. For instance, at the commencement of one interview the respondent inquired whether he was the 'token fascist' among my interviewees. As semi-structured interviews, they did not conform to a model of one-way flow of information from the interviewee to the interviewer, an interpretation likely to be assumed by an interviewee eager to retain firm control of the information that is, and is not released. This view sees the researcher as largely passive, with little to contribute, and with no capacity to provide any data to the interviewee. Rather, the interviews proceeded as a discussion between two well-informed and interested participants in the field under consideration. I immediately sought to establish my
own knowledge of the field, often by means of extensive preliminary comments made prior to asking a specific question.

Each interview was tape recorded for later transcription. Either complete copies of these transcripts, or point summaries, were provided to each participant for their review. Participants then had the opportunity to revise their comments prior to the completion of my research. Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4 contain further details of this aspect of the research, and extracts from the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews.

Conclusion

This thesis seeks to critically examine the nature of civic participation in a modern democracy, and the role schools can play in educating for that process. The methodology for this referred to my role as both an observer and a participant in Australian civics and citizenship education. Extensive experience as a practising teacher was also mentioned. This is significant on several fronts. First, my participatory role in the field means I cannot assume the position of a disinterested observer. In interviewing a range of notable contributors to Australian citizenship in education, I did not go with a ‘blank sheet of paper’ to dutifully record their thoughts. I largely knew the broad dimensions of their ideas and attitudes prior to the interviews taking place. Given that, it could be asked, ‘Well, what is the point of interviewing them in the first place?’ Yet that is to miss the point. By using the interviews as a means of confirming and elaborating on existing impressions, it provides a valuable means of verifying the political nature of the field. By talking to a diverse range of specifically selected contributors, I could establish the idea that they often placed quite different meanings and priorities on relatively benign concepts such as ‘democracy’ or ‘citizenship’. On one level, there is polite accord, on another significant divergence. Despite this, the interviews did reveal some unexpected results such as historian John Hirst’s casual aside that a civics and citizenship course based entirely on history would be a ‘dead bore’ for students.
Secondly, my own teaching and published materials in the field mean that I have given considerable thought to the meaning of fundamental concepts such as 'democracy' and 'citizenship'. As a teacher and analyst of Australian politics, I inevitably bring an ideological dimension to the project. This encompasses my own views, as well as an ability and willingness to identify the political views and motivations of others. Indeed, it is the marked reluctance by others to confront these political dimensions that is a core concern of the work. If the inherently political dimensions of a government's policies in relation to areas of public administration such as health, industrial relations or taxation are willingly acknowledged, why aren't the same standards applied in relation to education policies? Skills of political analysis allow the educator's gaze to extend well beyond the school, and into the broader realm of public policy formulation and implementation, where it is argued, more penetrating insights into the nature of Australian citizenship and democracy can be located.

Third, as a practising educator I bring an element of doubt to the project. While expressing broad sympathy with the critical theory in general, and the critical pedagogy of Giroux, Wood et al, reservations are expressed of the tendency to leave too much to mere hope and to invest excessive faith in the emancipative powers of education. Education can make a significant contribution to improving the state of Australian democratic citizenship, but this is unlikely in circumstances where the education system itself is seen as somehow standing aloof from broader society. Education is intricately intertwined with society, and that provides an explanation for the frequent failure of many educational endeavours. Numerous forces of resistance and counter-resistance both inside and outside the school and classroom operate in a complex amalgam that often undermines educators' best intentions.
Part A
Chapter Three
Political Participation in Democracy

Introduction

Clearly a political theory, structure or method that incorporates some notion of popular will or sovereignty must consider just what the role of the citizen shall be. Should a democracy require the citizen be an active participant in the system, or does it imply a passive citizenry that is content to let the government govern? A recurring theme throughout the history of democracy has been the connection between an informed citizenry, and its participation in civic affairs. How vital is an educated and knowledgeable citizenry to the operation of a successful democracy? Consideration of this question is crucial for the development of civics and citizenship education in contemporary liberal-democracies, yet as this Chapter will show, it is not free from contested views. While on first blush it may seem fundamentally undemocratic to deny full participation to a citizen due to deemed lack of understanding or grasp of key issues, a considerable weight of argument has been presented that democracy is weakened by participation of the ill-informed and uneducated. However, such arguments need to be treated with some caution. To judge the masses too ignorant or gullible to participate in political affairs is an elitist view that may too readily dismiss forms of participation or political views not deemed appropriate to orthodox political culture.

This Chapter starts by confronting the fact that in some eyes, extensive participation is considered undesirable to the effective operation of democracy. These so-called 'realist' models seek to explain why citizens lack the competence to play a meaningful participatory democratic role. Of course, such realist, or elitist models have caused considerable dismay within the ranks of many defenders of democracy who claim they too readily abandon elemental democratic principles, most notably extensive participation by citizens in their civic affairs. The Chapter detects significant elements of this realist view of democracy in contemporary Australia, and in doing so, throws light on the nature of the Australian civic deficit.
The Chapter also devotes attention to more participatory styles of democracy. It is argued that, while apparently offering citizens a greater role in civic affairs, pluralist theory is still essentially elitist in character. It largely regards the citizen as too poorly skilled to engage in an active form of democratic participation. Yet, this view may itself contribute to the growing gulf between elites and the mass citizenry. By regarding citizens as lacking the attributes required for meaningful participation, it may merely exaggerate a sense of disillusionment and despair that is characteristic of the civic deficit. Moreover, offers of a constricted form of participation are likely to compound the problem.

Further dimensions of the nature of democratic participation are provided by consideration of several significant strands of so-called ‘new politics’. The paradoxical nature of the practice of politics in many liberal democracies is introduced. While democracy as a form of social organisation has reached a high-point in world history, many citizens of the ‘old’ democracies such as Australia are expressing declining engagement in the system. The Chapter previews calls to deepen or ‘democratise’ democracy by adding to its scope and more importantly, its authenticity.

However this deepening of democracy may hold little appeal for exponents of various strands of depoliticised citizenship. The Chapter argues that they add a significant, yet often discounted component to the civic deficit. Variously described here as expressivists, postmaterialists and postmodernists, they reveal a detachment from membership of the polity that is a prime characteristic of democratic citizenship. They have discovered a range of new politics in which traditional forms of civic participation are increasingly redundant. By being both successful and detached, they add a perplexing dimension to our understanding of the civic deficit.

The Chapter closes by considering the antipolitics practised by those who have been disempowered by the very success enjoyed by the elites of the new class. It is argued that it is too easy to dismiss or even ridicule exponents of antipolitics as ignorant or uninformed. Indeed, to do so is to compound the civic deficit as it risks
driving increasing numbers of people into the arms of anti-elitists, populists and demagogues.

3.1 The incompetent citizen: the realist view of democratic participation

While there are major variations and interpretations of just what democracy might entail, it is grounded in some normative values (for instance, individual freedom, political equality, and respect for human rights) for which most people would have at least some basic appreciation. Consequently, there is an expectation that the gap between these values, the theory of democracy, and what actually takes place should not be too great. Despite Burke’s imploration to his electors of Bristol in 1774 that he be left alone to get on with the nation’s business, there remains an expectation that democracy will at least attempt to live up to its high-minded, participative ideals. Indeed, it is this persistently perceived gap between the theory and practice of democracy that is likely to be responsible for the sense of disappointment, sometimes revealed as profound negativity or cynicism that is directed towards the way politics is conducted in contemporary systems such as Australia (Burchell 1999).

More generally, as Sartori (1962) observed, the disillusionment with democracy displayed by many citizens results from a realisation that the promised goals of democracy cannot be reached. This gap is linked to the civic deficit. As citizens come to realise how little impact they can bring to bear on civic affairs, they take less interest in political and constitutional matters, which inevitably leads to reduced levels of civic knowledge, at least the narrowly defined form of knowledge identified as being a problem in Australia.

However, that this gap, and its negative consequences, should persist is surprising, as regular attempts have been made to narrow the disparity between the ways in which citizens may expect a democracy to operate, and how it works in practice. Some quite forthright attempts have been made to bring citizens down to earth in terms of what role they can reasonably expect to play in democracy. Max Weber’s work was prophetic in this regard (Held 1987: 160). In his aptly titled essay,
'Politics as a Vocation', Weber presented his case that representative, parliamentary styled government in the modern, industrialised nations was a matter best to left to those with the skills and attributes to make it their life's work. In political systems with an extensive franchise, democracy is best regarded as an organising mechanism to ensure effective political and national leadership is put in place. In order to mobilise electoral support, political organisations such as parties are established which become bureaucratic in nature. As the success of a political party is measured in terms of its ability to have its members elected to positions of legislative or executive power, it needs to develop strategies to reward loyalty and dedicated service to the party. This gives rise to career politicians at either parliamentary or organisational level, who become well-disciplined 'yes' men or women. Weber's observations on the state of British parliamentary democracy draws a strong parallel with contemporary Australian practice. Indeed, the major point of difference is his exclusionist language; '... the Member of Parliament must only vote, no commit party treason. He (sic) must appear when the whips call him, and do what the cabinet or the leader of the Opposition orders.' (Weber 1972: 106).

The role of the citizen in such an arrangement is fundamentally passive. In seeking an explanation for this passivity Weber described the 'emotionality' of the people as being an unsound and inadequate basis upon which to expect them to exercise judgement about public affairs. This passivity has major significance for the way an education in democratic citizenship might be conceived. Passivity can be seen as a quite understandable response from citizens who have no meaningful part to play in the system. In other words, why would a citizen expend time and energy on a project in which they have no significant chance of influencing the outcome, in which they exercise no political efficacy? How might civics education be expected to respond to this view of the passive citizen? Firstly, it could be argued that as the citizen is largely powerless in such an arrangement, to 'educate' citizens is really a waste of time, and education should devote its energies to those areas (such as individual career prospects) where it may be expected to make a difference. Alternatively, educators may seek to build an understanding and acceptance of passivity within the citizenry. Finally, education may seek to firstly understand the nature of such passivity, but then move to emancipate citizens from it. The attitude
educators adopt towards the passivity of citizens will therefore have strong
influence on how they conceive of education for citizenship.

Like Weber, Lippmann (1922, 1993) sought to drag believers in the ‘mystic fallacy
of democracy’ back into the real world. Lippmann’s concentration on the
unreliability of public opinion as a basis upon which to make government decisions,
revealed his belief in the disinterested pursuit of knowledge and truth as the only
rational basis for democratic government. Subject as it is to manipulation and the
sloganising appeal of populists, public opinion was best ignored in the political
process. Popular participation in government would only lead to anarchy and mob
rule. Rather than aiming to produce autonomous and critically aware citizens, the
test of a successful democracy is its ability to provide its citizens with the good
things in life. This dismal view of citizen competency was especially prevalent in
the United States throughout much of the twentieth century.

However, the notion of 'emotionality' and civic incompetence leaves the door ajar
for the education system. Citizens capable of recognising, and hence resisting the
manipulative techniques of the political process are clearly what Weber and
Lippmann prefer. In this case, the key question becomes, what role can the
education system play in this? In later chapters, I argue that, in fact, schools can
play a considerably greater role than the pessimistic prognosis of Weber and
Lippman seem to imply.

Perhaps the most significant contributor to the ‘realist’ school of democratic
modelers has been Joseph Schumpeter. To Schumpeter, democracy is a political
\textit{method} designed to provide a solution to the diversity of individual desires and
demands placed on government. It becomes a market mechanism in which citizens
act as consumers, politicians as entrepreneurs and voting as the purchase of
products (Giarelli 1988: 56). In denying the notions of the common good and the
will of the people, Schumpeter re-assessed the concept of popular sovereignty. It is
the politician, rather than the people who rule in democracies and Schumpeter had a
low regard for the ability of the public to participate in political life in any
meaningful manner. He was not optimistic about the chances of education
improving the competency of citizens. Indeed, he suggested that the lack of
engagement in political matters was extended even to the more educated sections of society. Such ignorance and inaction will persist 'in the face of meritorious efforts that are being made to go beyond presenting information and to teach the use of it by means of lectures, classes, discussion groups. Results are not zero. But they are small. People cannot be carried up the ladder'. (1943: 262) As a result, the typical citizen adopts 'primitive' and 'infantile' methods of argument and analysis in relation to politics. In such circumstances, the curriculum of citizenship education is reduced to a mixture of ritual, myth and abstraction, an irrelevant requirement that is dealt with as painlessly as possible so as to move on to the information required for life in the real world (Giarelli 1988: 64).

Schumpeter's less than flattering views about the competence of the typical citizen have somewhat ambivalent implications for civic education. His views were shaped by the techniques employed by Fascist and Nazi regimes in the 1930s to manipulate the popular will. Fundamentally, his argument is that it is better to leave sleeping citizens lie than repeat the style of civic participation seen under Hitler or Mussolini. He acknowledges that an ill-informed citizenry lacking skills of critical analysis of the political process is more susceptible to manipulation by individuals and groups interested in 'staging and managing political shows' (1943: 263). Compounding other problems of lack of citizen competence noted earlier, Schumpeter is blunt concerning the methods employed by political operatives. Since the 'first thing man (sic) will do for his ideal or interest is lie', we 'find that 'effective information is almost always adulterated or selective, and that effective reasoning in politics consists mainly in trying to exalt certain propositions into axioms and put others out of court' (1943: 264). Again this reminds us of the contradictory nature of contemporary politicians who on the one hand, promote citizenship education, while on the other, go to such extensive lengths to have citizens to accept their policies without too much detailed analysis (Kelly 1995: 174).

Schumpeter's argument suggests that citizens need greater skills in guarding against the forms of political manipulation and deception he identifies. If manipulation of the popular will is possible because the public lacks the skills to subject the political process to rational and critical examination, this clearly tempts the education system
to provide these skills. It needs to equip citizens with the critical and reflective capabilities needed to confront such manipulation. However Schumpeter pessimistically counters this by arguing that the political culture of contemporary democracy is capable of withstanding any attempt by the education system to alter it. This certainly has empirical attractions, yet it is a gloomy view of democracy for it sees the citizen as largely unable to exercise any meaningful control over the societies in which they live, and the education system as being largely unable to do anything to change this situation.

Whether they intend it or not, the rather despondent views portrayed by members of the realist school of democracy do nevertheless leave the door ajar for education to produce more competent citizens. By suggesting that citizens lack the skills to play a meaningful role in their government, the realist view presents government as an affair to be conducted by elite groups free from the interference and prying of its citizens. However, this can be seen as fundamentally anti-democratic. It is a view that invites educators to take a more active role in producing democratic citizens. However, a style of education that merely acquaints citizens with their expected minimal role will achieve little more than reinforce the incompetence the realists of which complain.

3.2 Incompetent Australian citizens

A Schumpeterian-styled gap between an idealised, moral view of democracy, and the symbolic practice of politics in contemporary Australia has been well-documented. Following the realist tradition, Burchell (1999) argues that it is this gap that contributes to much of the negativity felt towards Australian politicians. A well-entrenched romanticism about democracy in which some ‘fairly woolly notions of popular sovereignty’ (1999: 25) are expressed, is quite unrealistic in terms of the practice of modern government. Moreover, key features of the Westminster system are particularly ill-suited to maintain the fiction. An elitist, expert and largely secretive bureaucracy does not make for open and transparent government. The adversarial nature of the Australian party politics adds to the public perception that politics is negative business.
On occasions, parliamentarians themselves advance the view that the practice of contemporary Australian politics is not viewed in high regard and that the gap between the government and the governed is becoming too wide. Speaking on ABC Radio’s, *In the National Interest* early in 2000, Andrew Thomson (MHR, Wentworth, NSW), in discussing the state of Australian parliamentary democracy suggested that,

If it’s a strongly held view that this system is bad, and the people in it are not trustworthy and deserve no respect at all, then let’s figure out how to make this thing a little better - it can’t just keep getting worse. (Thomson 2000)

Later in 2000, Carmen Lawrence (MHR, Fremantle, WA) referred to the,

... conviction that our political system needs to change; that the fundamentals of the democratic contract have been corrupted. Many Australians I talk to are disgruntled by a system which does not appear to respond to their needs and seems increasingly, to be in the hands of elites more interested in their own advancement than the general good. As a result, our political system has less and less legitimacy. (Lawrence 2000)

It is this perceived lack of trust and respect for both the institutions of the Australian political system, and the occupants of significant positions within it, that is an important factor driving the civics and citizenship education revival (Leigh 1999: 31). Of course, just what educators are expected to do about the situation is a core concern of this thesis. It is noteworthy that Thomson did not advance improved education as a remedy to the problem he identified, opting instead for a more radical solution - wholesale changes to the Westminster model of government. Similarly, Lawrence went on to advocate radical changes to the ways Australian politics is conducted.

Despite these views, some feel any ‘legitimacy crisis ’ in Australian politicians is overblown, even somewhat sensationalist. Mackay (1993) echoes the sentiments of Thomson, noting, ‘the level of cynicism in the community is now so high that it
may well stimulate demand for some redefinition of our political institutions' (1993: 169). Mackay reached this view as a result of analysis of opinion poll data, as well as his own extensive work with focus groups. Mackay’s findings have been re-examined by Goot who presents additional poll material to assess Australian voters’ interest in politics, support for the electoral system, the honesty and ethics of politicians, and the performance of political parties. While Goot’s conclusions do confirm aspects of Mackay’s work, he is keen to downplay the sense of crisis in relation to the public’s confidence in the political system. Goot stresses that while the data does indicate low levels of public confidence in the political system, this is not a particularly recent phenomenon. Goot’s findings under the heading ‘Trust in Government Personnel’ indicate there is considerable volatility in this measure. In 1969, 47% of respondents considered people in government ‘usually/sometimes/too often look after themselves’, rising to 67% in 1979, falling to 51% in 1996 and back to 66% in 1998 (Goot 1999: 21). Ultimately, while Goot succeeds in reducing the validity of Mackay’s argument to some extent, he does little to alleviate the view that Australians are not entirely happy with their political system. For instance, whether we take the low or the high figure, a society in which between only one third and one half of respondents feel their politicians can ‘sometimes/usually/all the time’ be trusted, does not have a deep level of support.

An awareness of declining faith in the efficacy of citizen participation may lie behind an interesting experiment undertaken by the Australian government in 2000. In an effort to close the gap between the representatives and the represented, in July of that year the federal government released a public discussion paper as part of the major review of Australian defence policy entitled, Defence Review 2000 – Our Future Defence Force (Department of Defence 2000). In its introduction, the paper declares,

In the past, input into these decisions would have been confined to a select group of experts. However, this government wants to know what all Australians think about out defence needs. Our aim is to be more open about the business of making defence policy. (Department of Defence 2000: 1)
A range of consultation methods was made available to citizens, including a series of public meetings held around Australia. Numerous questions can be posed as to why the government decided to undertake such a process, and why it selected defence policy for its experiment in this form of participatory democracy. It could be argued that health, education or social welfare are policy areas in which Australian citizens may have greater ability and willingness to participate. Reflecting this view, Peter Nicholson, the cartoonist with The Australian newspaper, produced this comment (see Figure 3.1) on the consultation process. In fact, the public consultation meetings were well attended, with a broad range of viewpoints being offered.Commenting on the prevalence of unorthodox suggestions on national defence presented in the process, consultation panel member, Stephen Loosely noted, ‘This is democracy. Everyone is entitled to a point of view’.

Disillusionment and cynicism with the political process are important components of the Australian civic deficit. Adherents of a realist view of democracy suggest that this is the result of citizens holding unrealistic views about what democracy is, and how it works in practice. An alternative view regards this negativity as at least partially justified given the performance of Australian politicians, and the largely symbolic nature of contemporary democratic citizenship. While the former risks the accusation that it is fundamentally anti-democratic, the latter can be dismissed as based on an overly idealised view of democratic citizenship. Clearly, education citizenship programs would be vastly different, depending on which of these views of democracy was adopted.

3.3 Participation and pluralism

While the notion of popular sovereignty may form a core component of many conceptions of democracy, it is also the very element that gives rise to much of the disquiet surrounding the democratic system. Although elite groups have long dominated political systems, the mass enfranchisement of society more clearly revealed the extent of this dominance. This led Mosca (1939) to refer to the political
division of society between the class that rules and the class that is ruled. By the 1970s, it was widely accepted that under orthodox or contemporary models of democracy, citizen participation would be minimal (Pateman 1970).

A series of pluralist democratic models, notably Robert Dahl’s polyarchy, or rule by multiple minorities, have been directly influenced by Schumpeter. As Sartori (1987) argues, Dahl takes on where Schumpeter leaves off. Pluralism does not involve a reinvigoration of classical democratic theory, however it does see the citizen as playing a more active role in the political process than within the Schumpeterian elite. While conceding that individual citizens have relatively little understanding of, or influence over the political process, the capacity of citizens to accumulate power in a wide range of factions, groups and institutions should not be underestimated. Pluralists such as Dahl use empirical analysis to construct what they see as objective accounts of a political process in which outcomes are produced from an on-going struggle between competing demands of interest groups (a ‘polyarchy’). Political power is dispersed throughout society, achieving a desirable stability between numerous groups, none of which has the ability to completely dominate the political process. As a result, a tyranny of the majority is unlikely to emerge as contemporary democratic government is really a government by minorities (Dahl, 1961; 1971).

However political power is concentrated in the leadership of such groups, effectively forming a new elite, and so the polyarchy falls well short of achieving true democratic process (Dahl 1989: 223). So pluralism effectively produces government of the elites and by the elites ((Sehr 1997: 49). For the majority of citizens, politics remains a ‘remote, alien and unrewarding activity’, and rather than asking why more citizens are not active and concerned, we would be better served by explaining why so few citizens actually are (Dahl 1961: 279). In a similar vein, Sartori largely rejects the pleas of ‘perfectionists, participationists and populists’ that modern representation makes a sham of democracy. Adopting a peculiarly non-Westminsterian use of the term, he describes a government that responds to the demands of the public as ‘irresponsible’ (1987: 170).
A problem for this pluralist view of politics, especially given its empiricist base, is that it suggests a far higher level of political participation by citizens than is evident in practice. To explain this, the pluralist argument begins to merge the empirical with the normative, a problem frequently detected, but rarely acknowledged in democratic analysis (Held 1987: 192). In other words, extensive citizen participation may not be evident in contemporary liberal-democracies, but that is no bad thing. Indeed, political apathy may be interpreted as a sign of a healthy democracy (Almond and Verba 1963, Lipset 1963). In the most radical of these revisionist versions of democracy, disengaged and uninformed citizens became an asset as political discussion should be kept to a minimum as it often merely complicates matters and ‘arouses a psychology of conflict which produces obstructive, fictitious and irrelevant values’ (Lasswell 1970: 93).

Of course, pluralism has attracted a range of intense criticisms, most of which focus on its overly sanguine view of the disaggregation of political power in contemporary societies. Most people do not generally participate in interest group politics (Schattschneider 1975: 32-35), and while many sources of political interest inevitably appear, the actual power they wield varies enormously, a point Dahl concedes in his later ‘neo-pluralist’ work (1989: 267-271). A brutal challenge to the notion of disaggregated pluralism comes from Hellyer (1999a)) who suggests that in the US and other modern democracies there are really two governments. Every now and then the people have the opportunity to elect the provisional government that undertakes the duty of running the state for however long it is considered acceptable. However, in addition there is the permanent, un-elected government. In Hellyer’s view the permanent government of the US is made up of the Fortune 500 companies, large law and public relations firms, and senior Washington bureaucrats. Moreover, the impact of neo-liberalist, market economic theory on the political process has been given greater prominence especially in an era of growing globalised corporate capital. Government actions are now increasingly viewed as being influenced by ‘the markets’, rather than participating citizens. Government policies or administration deemed to be of poor quality can create a flight of capital likely to have significant effects on national employment, interest rates, production and price levels (1999a: 131)
As well as being largely ineffectual, political participation may also be seen as an irrational act from the viewpoint of the individual citizen. Game theorists (for instance, Olson 1971) employ techniques such as the familiar Prisoner's Dilemma to demonstrate the logic of not participating in political action in the ways considered desirable for a healthy democracy. Within any community there are 'free-riders' who correctly determine that they will benefit from the work of more politically active citizens, without themselves becoming involved in the collective effort (Nagel 1987: 24). Of course, this inactivity assumes others are making a large commitment to political participation. However if this does not occur, the free-rider strategy breaks down, as everyone relies on others to do the work, resulting in no one doing anything. Yet even if an individual discovers her fellow citizens have opted out of participation, this is unlikely to stir the citizen into activity as they now reason that if so few people are involved one more won't make any difference.

Olson's rather pessimistic outlook on civic participation is tempered to some degree by his recognition that participation is likely to occur in situations involving small numbers of people, and in situations where the benefits of participation (or penalties of non-participation) can be targeted directly at those participating in action. Nagel (1987) is more effusive in advancing the benefits of civic participation, nominating its positive instrumental, developmental and intrinsic effects. In addition, he notes the 'pleasures of participation' experienced by many politically active insiders and operatives, described by Chaples as political 'junkies' (1997: 355). Rather than identification with a cause, to such people 'the enjoyment of the game, the excitement of the struggle, the gratification of exercising skills rarely needed outside the political arena' becomes the attraction (Nagel 1987: 31). This observation recognises that, while practising politicians may endorse and encourage wider political participation; this is hardly surprising, given their obvious personal interest and involvement. While some people certainly enjoy the process of political participation, it is unlikely to appeal to a majority of the population. As Beck argues, major political parties struggle to retain membership as 'freedom's children' find organised politics 'with its debates on agendas and proposals, intensely boring' (1998: 4). It provides no fun.
Recognition of the chaotic potential of democracy is as old as the history of democracy itself. Aristotle's warning against mob rule, or J. S. Mill's 'tyranny of the masses' are typical of repeated warnings that have been issued by those not generally seen to be antipathetic to the democratic ideal. More recently Dye and Zeigler (1987) talk of 'mobocracy', and see mass participation as a threat to democracy. Mass activism is extremist, unstable and unpredictable. It is an expression of resentment against the established elites and is often led by a 'counter-elite' or demagogue who emerges from the masses to mobilise this anti-elitist anger (Dye and Zeigler 1987: 15). Walter Bagehot warned that an extended franchise would bring about 'the supremacy of ignorance over instruction and numbers over knowledge' (1963: 277). The inability of the Athenian model to resolve the tension between 'the virtuous', 'the noble' or 'the best' on the one hand, and 'the mob', 'the poor' or 'the mass' on the other, can be seen as a major contributor to its eventual decline. Clearly, many influential elements within the Greek polity were unconvinced of the possibility of 'government by amateurs' (Arblaster 1987: 20). The works of Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle contain some of the most challenging assessments of the limitations of democracy ever written (Held 1987: 16). Rather than unalloyed praise of democracy, much Greek political philosophy involves persistent analysis and critical examination of democratic principles. Indeed, as Held notes, our understanding of Athenian democracy derives more from its critics, than its enthusiasts.

The central point of contention was that the 'amateurs' were also citizens, and as such, each citizen was an integral part of the state, with an equal share in the practice of ruling. Although they may bring no specialist skills or knowledge to matters of state, it was crucial citizens accept their civic responsibilities, a commitment to civic virtue. Yet in order for this to occur, it was necessary to take seriously the active participation of every eligible citizen in the government of the state. It is unreasonable to expect the citizen to act in a civilly responsible manner, and then be denied any meaningful participation in affairs of state. Citizens in contemporary representative democracies may be caught in a no-win situation. As they perceive their participation has little efficacy, their participation falls to low levels (Woyach 1991: 48). To this end, the ancient Greeks employed a range of techniques, not just to encourage participation, but also to ensure it would take
place in practice. Most obviously, they rejected the concept of representation. Even where smaller, planning bodies such as the Council or Boule were required, membership was by lot. This meant that sovereignty was not simply transferred from the people to an elite body, an idea stingingly rejected by Barber’s description of representative democracy as ‘paradoxical an oxymoron as our political language has produced’ (Barber 1984: xiv), in turn a reiteration of Rousseau’s well-known repudiation of the British parliament in which he noted that ‘as soon as the Members are elected, the people is enslaved; it is nothing’ (Rousseau 1968: 141). Indeed, most voters in contemporary liberal democracies do not regard their vote as an act that will influence the political life in their community (Woyach 1991: 45).

As an advocate of participatory models, Pateman is keen to endorse the importance attached to active citizenship by both Rousseau and John Stuart Mill. Interpreting the education process ‘in its broadest sense’, Pateman (1970: 29) finds in both Rousseau and Mill strong evidence of the link between civic participation and civic education. Of course, it is vital to recognise the causal link involved here runs in reverse to that advocated by increased levels of civic and citizenship education in many contemporary settings. As an enthusiast for civic participation, Barber has a similar view of this relationship. In over 300 pages of analysis of how to build a ‘strong democracy’, Barber pays scant regard to the role of formal pedagogy, insisting that in his model of strong democracy, knowledge or the quest for civic knowledge tend to follow, rather than precede, political engagement. In his words:

... give people some significant power and they will quickly appreciate the need for knowledge, but foist knowledge on them without giving them responsibility and they will display only indifference. (Barber 1984: 234)

Both Rousseau and Mill suggested that greater participation would lead to a more educated citizen, a view shared by De Tocqueville who maintained that the most powerful and perhaps the only means of having citizens take an interest in the welfare of their county is to make them ‘partakers in the government’ (De Tocqueville 1945: 252). Rousseau believed that as a result of participating in decision-making, the individual is educated to distinguish between his own impulses and desires, he learns to be a public as well as a private citizen (Pateman
1970: 25). When the individual is given no opportunity to participate in public affairs, he or she will become preoccupied with their private affairs, however Pateman endorses Rousseau's argument that the 'whole situation is changed' when the citizen can participate in public affairs (1970: 30). To Mill, involvement in government acts as a school (Parry 1999: 32). Greater participation leads to an enhanced citizenship caused by a sense of political efficacy - feeling that one's view counts in the operation of government (Thompson 1976: 39). Using Mill to support her broader arguments in favour of workplace democracy, Pateman emphasises Mill's suggestion that the educative effects of citizen participation are best expended at local and industry levels. To Mill, infrequent visits to the polling booth would achieve little. Of far greater benefit is involvement in the politics of local communities. 'We do not learn to read or write, to ride or swim, by being merely told how to do it, but by doing it, so it is only by practising popular government on a limited scale, that the people learn how to exercise it on a larger' (Mill, quoted by Pateman 1970: 31).

Of course, Mill's enthusiasm for civic participation was far from unambiguous (Sartori 1987: 158). Any educative benefits flowing from greater political equality were tempered by his priority on the liberty of the individual. In fact, individual liberty was placed in jeopardy by an equality in which all citizens exercised political rights. In the tradition of Locke, liberty here is essentially 'negative', characterised as 'freedom from' restraint or compulsion, rather than a positive, 'freedom to' exercise rights and expand opportunities. Indeed 'so long as education continues to be so wretchedly imperfect, we dreaded the ignorance and especially the selfishness and brutality of the masses' (Mill 1873: 231). Mill's Platonic elitism (Arblaster 1987: 48) is manifest in the extraordinarily low level of faith he displayed in the political judgement of the general public. This led Mill to support 'fancy franchises' including a complex arrangement of plural voting as 'it is not useful, but hurtful that the constitution . . . should declare ignorance to be entitled to as much political power as knowledge' (Mill 1948: 221). Mill also demanded voters submit to a literacy test. As the population became more politically literate, plurality could be gradually phased out. The apparent incongruity of Mill's argument should not be dismissed too lightly, as the second vote enjoyed by
university graduates and some business proprietors in Britain was not abolished until 1948 (Birch 1967: 48).

As we have seen, rather than being directly antagonistic towards popular sovereignty, Schumpeter was reviving the fears raised earlier by Weber of the undesirable consequences popular will has when used in exploitative ways. This is the recurring problem of differentiating democracy from demagoguery or the more recent label, populism. To politicians from the ‘respectable centre’ of democratic liberalism, the potential for democracy to be appropriated by the parties of the left or right presents a considerable challenge. While keen to endorse greater citizen engagement as vital to the health of the polity, politicians from the liberal-democratic mainstream are often forced to justify calls for what they see as ‘responsible participation’.

Yet, the persistent attraction right wing (and to a lesser extent, left wing) parties hold for a significant minority of the population in many Western nations suggests political leaders have failed to adequately meet the demands of citizens for greater participation. It is an unenviable task. On the one hand, if moderate centrist politicians endeavour to convince citizens of their participatory power using conventional democratic tools such as voting, they will encounter accusations of trying to hoodwink the public, and risk even greater alienation and cynicism. On the other, if they ‘come clean’ and explain that it is unrealistic and unreasonable for citizens to expect to exercise much influence over their rulers, they risk driving even greater numbers into the arms of what Sartori calls the ‘perfectionists, participationists and populists’.

3.4 Depoliticisation and the civic deficit

By referring to the ‘paradox of democracy’ (1999: 3), Giddens describes a world in which democracy is emerging in more and more countries, yet in the ‘old democracies’ there is a widespread cynicism about democratic process. Giddens asks why the citizens in nations such as the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom are apparently becoming increasingly disillusioned with democracy, at the
very time it is proving so popular in countries struggling to shake off a range of non-democratic systems of government. To Giddens, part of the answer can be found in the power of technology. Citizens in the old democracies are part of a world based on active communication, and as such, cannot be ‘kept in the dark’ by those holding positions of power in ways used in the past. Giddens contends that rather than losing interest in politics, people, especially young people, are in fact more interested in politics. However, it is not the symbolic politics of nation-state, and the institutions traditionally associated with it. Parliamentary politicians are seen as self-interested, even corrupt. Politics may not be any more corrupt than it has ever been, what has changed is the capacity of the people to become aware of that corruption. The power of technology to provide information to citizens can be viewed as educative in that citizens have far greater capacity to know, if not fully comprehend, what is occurring within their political systems (1999: 4). This points to the tension that exists between the education system, and the broader political and social systems, a tension that is a recurring theme within this thesis. It again raises the crucial question of just what is meant by civic knowledge,’ and the knowledgeable citizen? The truly knowledgeable citizen can be viewed as one with access to, and understanding of the information/knowledge that has contributed to the disillusionment with democracy in the West identified by Giddens as part of democracy’s paradox.

Giddens calls for a ‘deepening or democratisation of democracy’ in which there is far greater transparency in political affairs. Democracy needs to give a voice to those who currently see politics as a ‘professional spoils system’ beyond their control and concern (Hirst 1993: 116). A democratisation of democracy is a laudable objective and has been described as containing three basic elements (Dryzek 1996). Two of these, an extensive franchise, and the scope of life under democratic control, are relatively unproblematic as they are often used as indicators of the extent of democratic government. However, Dryzek’s third element is of far greater significance. In referring to the authenticity of democracy, Dryzek points to a form of democratic control that is substantive rather than symbolic (1996: 5). Authentic democracy concerns more than simply ensuring a broad franchise, and it is more than expanding the domains of life affected by democratic forms. Such things can merely be the stuff of grand rhetoric. Authenticity suggests genuine
citizen participation that goes beyond situations in which formal, symbolic
democracy has subsumed substantive democracy behind a façade of elections and
plebiscites (Giroux 1983: 237). The role of education in working towards that more
substantive democracy is taken up in Part B of the thesis.

Within many Western liberal-democracies a range of factors have led to declining
engagement in democracy. A shift away from an idealised democracy based on
mass participation has been both the cause and effect of the way politics is
conducted. We have seen a deliberate ‘depoliticisation’ of politics that is built on a
new consensus reminiscent of Marcuse’s ‘one dimensional thought’ (1964). Dissenting
voices are effectively silenced or pressured into conformity with the

Walter argues that the ability to see politics as the negotiation of collective benefit
for a definable community has been lost. The art of persuasion about the sort of
community we want has been replaced by prescription about the type of economic
management we must have (1993: 549). A consensus has been reached. An obvious
critic of neo-liberal, post-Keynesian economics, Walter extends his criticism to
those on the left who have been tempted by postmodernism, a social theory he
describes ‘as vacuous as free market economics’ (1993: 554). Walter makes a
passionate call for a re-politicisation of Australian politics. Rather than turning
away from politics, he insists that we recover the ties of history and our community,
and begin ‘discussing the state of civil society rather than being preached at about
the health of the economy’ (1993: 556). Yet, looking back on Walter’s 1993
‘demands’, what do we find? Are Australians treated any less as ‘consumers’, and
more as ‘citizens’? Despite Walter’s imploration for more informed critique,
precious little seems to have occurred. A partial explanation may be linked to
Walter’s blunt dismissal of ‘postmodernism’.

Politics based on notions of moral or ideological struggle advocated by Walter can
increasingly be regarded as a modernist concept. It can be seen as a fundamentally
old-fashioned idea that is pursued by the marginalised, the poor and the politically
disempowered. The ways in which political power is exercised in practice make
ideas such as democracy and citizenship seem ‘puny and pathetic’ (Frazer 1999:
It has the feel of something archaic, it encompasses a set of rituals and tensions that form a symbolic link with the past rather than the present. While the parties and parliaments went on talking, issues that had traditionally been regarded as non-political became the ‘real issues by which people defined their position in the world’ (Mulgan 1994: 18).

Gibbins and Reimer describe postmodern individuals as ‘expressivists’ - people who feel confident about shaping their own identity, assertive people who feel that their lives and activities can be of worth and value. They are members of the ‘new class’, with stimulating jobs, and opportunities for self-realization and self-expression. Boundaries of leisure, work and play are considered pernicious (1999: 66-67). While perhaps not overtly aware of the political repercussions of their actions, expressivists take responsibility for their lives in ways likely to win the approval of neo-liberals. By effectively taking control of their lives, they implicitly demonstrate the perceived inadequacies of those who cannot. With scant regard to matters such as unemployment, alienation, dysfunctional family structures and lack of education, Gibbins and Reimer, assert that ‘most people can change their lifestyles if they do not like the directions their lives are taking’ by changing career, leisure habits or moving to a new location (1999: 72-73). Postmodern expressivists collect a set of values likely to appear perverse and anarchic to modernists. Political participation based on party or pressure group membership has declining appeal. Indeed, many of the characteristics of the civic deficit are emblematic of this new politics of expressivism. Expressivists don’t know much about the parliament or the Constitution simply because they do not need to. A de-alignment of voters and parties, growth of distrust and declining attachment to and felt legitimacy of the state, dissonance in regard to ideology and increasing cynicism and alienation from politics are indicative of a shift from old to new politics (1999: 105).

This form of new politics is characterised by consumer and lifestyle issues. Walter would be horrified by Gibbins and Reimer’s concept of ‘consumer citizenship’ in which everyday culture and neo-liberal politics feed off each other (Mattson 1999). Rather than a politics based on traditional classifications such as the occupation or workforce category, citizens increasingly demand the state provide an environment suitable for continuous and satisfying consumption. Economics assumes greater
importance as the state must respond in ever more flexible ways to the diverse and volatile demands of consumers (1999: 129-130). Concentrating on the 'progressive potential of postmodernity', a view that seeks to cast off the fear and scepticism of postmodernism's more dystopian dimensions, Gibbins and Reimer believe more active consumer citizens will ironically be more like the ideal democratic citizen, forcing the institutions of the 'old' political world such as political parties and the state, to react to their demands. The political party will need to reinvent itself in the manner achieved by Clinton's New Democrats, or Blair's New Labour. Moreover, the state will be forced to give up patriarchal control and become more transparent and accountable having to reconstitute itself regularly as citizens and their demands change (1999: 145).

Gibbins and Reimer envisage a form of democracy that may 'make good the present democratic deficit, with options such as people's panels, referenda and polling' as the Athenian agora is replaced by a global agora of ideas, knowledge, media and messages (1999: 152-153), an idea endorsed by Davidson who clearly links a more direct form of democracy to the possibilities presented by electronic technologies (1997: 218-221). Similarly, Morris' concept of 'vote.com' describes a new form of global democracy in which public opinion is determined by electronic polling, and responses are emailed to relevant institutions and decision-makers. Morris sees his concept as a 'form of political karaoke'. It forms a genuine method of direct democracy, which when it becomes global, will provide citizens a means of speaking out about institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, or the World Trade Organisation 'without having to go out on the streets are get pepper sprayed' (The Weekend Australian 2000: 7).

3.5 Progress, democracy and participation

Economic advancement can be construed as being conducive to democracy because it gives rise to a society that is capable of mass participation, and it produces a political culture that helps stabilise democracy (Inglehart 1997). Rising levels of economic development produce cultural patterns in which mass publics are 'more likely to want democracy, and more skillful at getting it' (1997: 215). Of course,
this provokes the immediate query, ‘Well, so what’s the problem?’ If as Inglehart contends, economic development and democracy are directly correlated, then why is there a sense of crisis of democracy in the wealthy West such as Australia, Britain and the United States? Where is Giddens’ paradox of democracy? Why is concern expressed about the civic deficit and the decline in the competency of democratic citizens?

Inglehart is quite willing to recognise the profound differences that have emerged in the world he calls, the postmodern. In his version of postmodernism, the concept of postmaterialism looms large. He argues that a characteristic of modernism is, or was (depending on what part of the world being referred to), the ‘disciplined, self-denying, and achievement-oriented norms of industrial society’ (1997: 28). However in a postmodern society, this emphasis on individual material welfare is replaced by a new set of values in which individual self-expression and quality of life concerns assume far greater importance. With this has come a shift from the politics of class conflict, to politics based on issues of identity, diversity of lifestyle and environmentalism (1997: 31). So to Inglehart, the postmaterial involves the transition to a life beyond mere precarious survival. This has led to an ‘intergenerational values change’ in which politics becomes a more important pursuit as ‘Postmaterialists are more highly educated, more articulate, and politically more active than Materialists. Consequently, their political impact tends to outweigh that of Materialists’ (1997: 35). However, like Gibbens and Reimers’ expressivists, this is less likely to be the institutional politics of the nation-state.

Postmaterialist political participation is somewhat contradictory in nature. In modernist society, participation is mobilized by elites led by political parties who are responsible for unprecedented numbers of people voting in elections. In the Postmodern/Postmaterialist society, this form of participation begins to decline, replaced by more active and issue-specific forms of mass participation. Inglehart summarises this view:

Mass loyalties to long-established hierarchical political parties are eroding; no longer content to be disciplined troops, the public has become increasingly autonomous and elite-challenging. (1997: 44)
This version of new politics, or sub-politics, a 'shaping society from below' (Beck 1994, 1998) involves an individualisation of conflicts and interests. To Beck, it is characterised by a contradictory multiple engagement and participation which mixes and combines the traditional political poles such that 'everyone thinks and acts as a right-winger and left-winger, radically and conservatively, democratically and undemocratically ... all at the same time' (1994: 21). A new political dimension is formed as people begin to search for politics in places not prescribed for it and practised by people other than its 'duly authorised agents'. Traditional politics may peter out as sub-politicians become more active (1998: 38).

The forms of new, or postmodern politics advanced by Beck, Ingelhart, and Gibbins and Reimer stand in stark contrast to decline of democracy portrayed by Lasch who claims a careerist, new class practising the politics of the postmodern have largely betrayed democracy. While advocating values such as tolerance and openness, this new political class is not eager to participate in 'old-style' modernist politics by confronting power imbalances and injustice. Clearly critical of this, Lasch notes that tolerance is a fine thing, 'but it is only the beginning of democracy, not its destination' (1995: 89). As Pearl and Knight suggest, 'being nice is not democracy' (1999: 337). Democracy is more than just a license to celebrate differences. It is a political system of 'mutual reliance and moral obligations' (Gitlin 1995: 236). It is far more than the politics of Me in which collective politics is pushed to the periphery as personal politics takes centre stage.

Similar views have been raised in Australia. Notable is the stinging critique of tolerance and multiculturalism by Ghassan Hage in which he argues that relationships of power are often overlooked in the discourse of tolerance. It is a strategy aimed at reproducing and disguising relationships of power in society, a form of symbolic violence (Hage 1998: 87). Citizens of the modern liberal-democratic state live in soft dictatorships (De Maria 1999) in which issues requiring a political response are ignored. Believing it is necessary to 'go along to get along', this new class is acquiescent to a passive form of democratic citizenship in which any notion of popular sovereignty is far removed.
The re-emergence of politics in the form of street demonstrations and civil disobedience at the meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle in November 1999 confounded many commentators and politicians who believed participation of this type was obsolete. A diverse amalgam of interests spanning unionists, environmentalists, human rights activists and anarchists assembled in the city selected as symbolising the innovative global economy, to protest the liberalisation of international trade championed by the WTO. An Australian commentator observed, ‘consensus is all the rage these days’, and dissent from the orthodox is to risk ridicule, even demonisation. The problem with being subversive is it’s too easy to ‘look like a fruit-loop who’s well, out of the loop’ (Gare 1999: 20).

So a picture emerges of a new class of an empowered, yet depoliticised elite which sees the politics of the state as increasingly redundant. There is abundant evidence pointing to a declining interest in orthodox, institutional politics, what Americans call ‘beltway’ politics. As Enzenburger observes of Germany, politicians are insulted that people are less and less interested in them, but ‘Germany can afford an incompetent government, because ultimately the people who bore us in the daily news really do not matter’ (Quoted by Beck 1994: 140).

When dissenting voices such those at the WTO meeting in Seattle in 1999 are heard they tend to belong to the marginalised. Able to push items onto the political agenda, and possibly capable of attracting significant minority support, such dissenters generally lack the organisational skills and financial resources required to make a major impact on government. More significantly, their notion of a ‘real alternative’ holds little appeal to those in the new class and the policy culture seduced by the attractions of a materialist or post-materialist society. In the past three decades, most liberal-democracies have entered an era dominated by a political ideology loosely based on neo-liberal social policy and post-Keynesian economic policy. The meaning of T. H. Marshall’s social citizenship has been subjected to intense scrutiny as principles of individual merit and initiative, mutual obligation and personal responsibility are given greater prominence. Indeed, to its critics, the welfare state is becoming the source of both amusement and contempt as it wreaks enormous harm on the very people it is designed to protect, while
crippling the enterprise and self-reliance of individuals. More than merely being ineffectual, welfarism 'lays a depth charge of explosive resentment under the foundations of our free society' (Marsland 1996: 212).

Within economics, a new consensus has formed around the logic of the market, the mechanism of the age. Situations in which buyers and sellers are left relatively free of restrictions to pursue their own interests has an obvious appeal in a society eager to commodify as many products and services as possible. In these circumstances, governments have encountered few strategies capable of standing in the path of their market-oriented reform proposals. The break-up of public and private monopolies, the expansion of user-pays principles through the public sector, the 'incentivisation' of the work force, the demonisation of organised labour and major overhauls of welfare systems. The distinction between the public and private sectors has been blurred. The resistance that is offered tends to be noisy and well publicised, but rarely well organised, resourced and co-ordinated — and almost inevitably unsuccessful.

The market is a fundamentally dynamic concept, and clearly liberalism is comfortable with economic man (Dagger 1997). The market thrives on innovation and experimentation. It sustains a business culture in which individuals are encouraged to display a spirit of enterprise and ingenuity. Risk-taking behaviour is rewarded, and the rewards are achievable within relatively short time frames. A social policy consistent with these ideas also celebrates notions of individual choice and freedom. The pervasive effect of the market cannot be confined to economics, but has spread into virtually every aspect of contemporary life. A free marketplace of ideas is manifest as the tolerant society and proliferation and hybridisation in lifestyle and culture are a source of celebration rather than moral opprobrium. Boundaries between high and popular culture are challenged and penetrated as the financial rewards flowing to purveyors of the ephemeral vastly outstrip those of 'serious' artists. As Turner notes, a growing difficulty in reaching consensus as to the cultural superiority of various high traditions brings into question the role of the intellectual as guardian of high culture (1994: 166). Increased marketisation produces rapid social change. A dynamic economy is reflected in broader cultural, religious and social practices and mores.
Unabashed social conservatives may approve of the market while deploiring the decline of existing values and patterns of behaviour. This is the dilemma facing many shapers of public policy in contemporary liberal democracies. The contemporary, even postmodern, politician is often a self-styled change agent, someone with the ability to tell stories and narratives we like (Gibbins and Reimer 1999: 158). In the realm of economic policy, this has proven a relatively easy task. The promise of increased personal and national success that drives so much of the market reform process will immediately attract majority attention regardless of how false the promise may turn out to be. Yet in relation to social change, the process is far less straightforward. Here it is necessary to occupy an ill-defined grey zone between the conservative and progressive positions. Able to afford an open, unequivocal message in relation to economic policy, and the implications this holds for education and training, and work and income on an individual level, the same political leader falters once the area of social policy is entered. Here, existing social institutions such as the family are deemed to be important, but not so important that intolerable situations can be defended. This is the dilemma Australian Prime Minister, John Howard grappled with throughout much of his term in office. A pioneering advocate of economic policy reform in Australia, he revelled in the opportunity to endorse the dynamism of resource and product markets. Yet he had a far more difficult time in the free market place of ideas and lifestyles. In relation to policy areas such as drug policy reform, law and order, indigenous Australians and most notably multiculturalism, Howard’s progressive dynamism was often absent.

The Australian civic deficit is characterised as being the result of ignorance, apathy and cynicism. As we saw in Chapter One, it distressed Prime Minister Keating. Yet, as the sections 3.4 and 3.5 have shown, a depoliticised new class can be important contributors to the Australian civic deficit. Practising various forms of new politics, the notion of democratic citizenship based on membership of the polity assumes diminished importance. In effect, they have empowered themselves and consequently moved beyond the politics of the nation-state. As Bielharz suggests, these days no one has time for democracy (2000: 41). They take little interest in, and have little understanding of, their civic and constitutional affairs because they
have little need to do so. Drawing members of this new class back into a commitment to democratic citizenship presents a particularly daunting challenge.

3.6 Antipolitics and the civic deficit

Running parallel to these forms of new, even postmodern, politics, are various styles of ‘antipolitics’ (Schedler 1997, Hindess 1997, Brown 1997) that are also closely connected to the civic deficit. This incorporates movements that are broadly antagonistic towards the dominant political orthodoxy characteristic of many modern liberal states, especially those with a two-party system. It does not reject Western political culture, so much as try to replace a ‘corrupt’ model of politics, with one deemed to be more worthy of citizen support and respect. Many such idealised political models spring from the ‘fantasy of a self-governing community’ and the unrealistic persistence by citizens that they exercise control over their governments (Hindess 1997: 34). Hence antipolitics is often revealed as populist movements based on disenchantment, cynicism and anger directed towards major party politics that is seen to disenfranchise large sections of society. Populists often occupy the gap between ‘haloed democracy’ and the grubby business of politics by promising to replace the dirty world of party maneuvering with the shining model of democracy re-newed (Canovan 1999: 11).

Antipolitics is opposed to the way politics has come to be conducted in the contemporary liberal-democratic state. Here politics and government become interchangeable; politics/government become the enemy. Despite its label, antipolitics is inherently political as it offers an alternative to mainstream ‘politics as usual’, and seeks to fundamentally reform the way government is conducted. It seeks to re-enliven democratic citizenship, albeit often accompanied by views deemed intolerant and even undemocratic.

From an Australian perspective, antipolitics is conducted by ‘those variously disenfranchised by Canberra’s new globally-oriented policies: bankrupted farmers, the discards of industry restructuring, the protean group of ‘battlers’ to whom the major parties swear the electoral troth as assiduously as they do the bidding of the
IMF’ (Regan 1999: 8). Drawing a parallel with his role of Australian Health Minister, Michael Wooldridge refers to a ‘pathology’ in the political process characterised by the existence of two quite distinct cultures in Australian civic life. A ‘policy culture’ made up of people plugged into the large decision-making process and with some capacity to influence the shape of the future is contrasted with a ‘community culture’ that is ‘trying to make do today, and struggling to pay off the debts of yesterday, the mass of people whose timeframe is short-term and immediate, whose outlook is personal, family and local’ (1998: 182). Somewhat predictably, the community culture is drawn to a style of politician who declares they are fundamentally different from those hamstrung by the discipline of party membership. Typical are the views of former Australian MP, Pauline Hanson:

I hope you’ll give us the opportunity to give you a chance for a change... how many of you have said, “What’s the difference between them – they’re both tarred with the same brush, they’re all headed down the same track”. But at least I’m prepared to give it a go and say, “Right, here’s some different ideas, different ways of doing things.” It can’t be any worse than what we’ve had, anyway’ (Hanson, quoted in Kingston 1998: 105)

On occasions, independent candidates for election such as Hanson have success, almost inevitably in situations in which a groundswell of the community culture reaches the intensity needed to propel the often-dumbfounded independent into an Australian state or the Commonwealth legislature. Typically such politicians present themselves as offering a ‘fresh’ approach to politics. Generally, this involves a rejection of the Burkean notion of the representative, offering instead to act as the delegate of their constituents. Party politicians reserve a particular loathing for such independents, and muster major efforts to chase them out of parliament as soon as possible. Despite this, when in fear of massive rejection by the public, the major political parties will also revert to the role of ‘listeners’, rather than ‘leaders’. They pander to the democratic ideal, sustaining the religious quality of democracy. In early 2000, Australian Prime Minister embarked on a ‘listening tour’ of rural and regional Australia (‘the Bush’) in order to obtain a first-hand account of the concerns of citizens before returning to Canberra, presumably to act upon what he had heard.
Brett (1998) believes that anyone who values democracy should be grateful for Hanson’s party, One Nation. The rise of the party indicates a widespread and fundamental disenchantment with the conduct of Australian politics as it provides a warning that many Australian citizens are profoundly dissatisfied with their role under current arrangements. It indicates the necessity for a revitalisation of our political life. To Brett, a major force behind One Nation was the failure of elected parliamentarians to adequately represent their constituents. This goes further than a representation of views, but a representation of occupation, educational attainment and lifestyle. In short, Australian parliaments have become increasingly part of Wooldridge’s policy elite, a class unto themselves. Hence Australians admiration for Hanson’s ‘guts, her determination and her ability to throw the pollies, and the educated classes into a panic just by being herself’ (1998: 27). Albert Langer, member of the Revolutionary Communist Party (‘which doesn’t exist at the moment, but if it did exist, I’d be a member of it’), largely agrees with Brett’s viewpoint. He argues that One Nation enhanced Australian democracy by adding diversity to parliament, noting that ‘people are very worried at the prospect that people with those views being represented in Parliament. Well, what on earth are Parliaments supposed to do, other than represent the different political views in the country?’ (Langer 1998).

However, whether such views can sit comfortably in a school education setting is more debatable. In 1998, when One Nation was at its zenith in Australian politics, leading teacher educator Kerry Kennedy made no secret of his view of how teachers should deal with the matter. He noted that teachers should be prepared to be both supportive and critical of Australia’s democratic traditions, they must be ‘willing to speak out against the voices of oppression and hatred that are becoming far too common in the Australian community’ (Kennedy 1998: 34). Given the year in which this statement was made, it is fair to assume that One Nation is at least one of the ‘voices’ he is referring to. In this case, in what sense is Kennedy suggesting Australian teachers be ‘critical’ of their democratic traditions? Any suggestion that Australian teachers adopt a critical stance towards a form of democracy that allows a diverse range of voices be heard, is questionable. It suggests a constricted, ‘politics as usual’, in which alternative points of view are effectively silenced, and
as such runs the risk of further compounding the sense of alienation and disillusionment with civic affairs. Deepening democratic citizenship cannot be reduced to eliminating the views of those considered unsuitable to have a place at the representative table.

The views expressed by Langer and Brett may be characteristic of the irony of democracy identified by Dye and Zeigler (1987). Part of this irony is that for democracy to survive, elite groups must rule, and the instability and unpredictability of the masses must be controlled. Hanson is a classic 'counterelitist' – a mass-oriented leader expressing hostility toward the established order, appealing to mass sentiments: extremism, intolerance, racial identity, anti-intellectualism and egalitarianism. To Dye and Zeigler, this presents a threat to democracy. According to their analysis, the masses are generally apathetic and inactive, but when they become politically activated, they become dangerous. This activism is generally stimulated by a sense of mass anxiety or vulnerability caused by factors such as defeat in war, national humiliation, economic dislocation and rapid social change.

Elites provide greater support for democratic principles than masses, and are more committed to the 'rules of the game'. The masses are more prepared to go outside those rules and exploit the alienation and hostility of the vulnerable by for example, scapegoatism (1987: 143). Somewhat predictably, Dye and Zeigler find support for democratic values (as indicated by factors such as tolerance of minorities, freedom of speech and extent of authoritarianism), rises in direct proportion to education. Interestingly, this conclusion is based on a study, part of which measures the percentage of the population that would support the right of a racist to teach. While only 33% of the sample that had failed to complete high school supported this right, this rose to 67% for those holding a postgraduate degree. In other words, tolerance of those holding intolerant views rose with greater education.

Brown (1997) builds a profile of H. Ross Perot as a good example of a practitioner of antipolitics. Railing against political elites and the Washington bureaucracy, Perot engendered a feeling of re-newed political engagement by encouraging a culture of complaint about current government practice. Indeed, to many people, a conduit that provides the chance to express some of their frustration with
government is probably their preferred form of political participation. Participation in the argument about their government is after all better than no participation at all (Brown 1997: 132). Ironically Perot’s candidacy in the 1992 US Presidential election was a major contributing factor to the election of that most ‘political’ of politicians, Bill Clinton. Derided by the political centre for his simplistic solutions, Perot attracted 19% of the vote in the 1992 election for US President. Perot offered American voters an alternative to Bush and Clinton. Admonishing that government should come ‘from the people’ not ‘at the people’, Perot would become the ‘servant’ of the people as he reminded Americans, ‘I’m Ross, and you’re the boss’. He offered voters the mechanism to defuse the power of politicians and reclaim their government in a new democracy (Brown 1997: 142-143).

Delving further into the nature of antipolitics, (Lechner 1997) argues it arises from situations such as the disappearance of familiar symbolic points of reference like the Berlin Wall, so that people no longer know what to think of politics, and the world loses its meaning (Laidi 1998). If people do not know what to expect from democracy, it is easy to develop distorted views of what is politically feasible. Using the cartographic map as a metaphor, Lechner contends that orthodox politics/government is carried out based on instrumental rationality using small-scale maps that generate excessive information, making it difficult for citizens to discern points of significance. In their place, large scale political maps are required that are more useful for approaching a globalised field, reconstructing relationships at multiple levels and establishing a means of orientation - in other words, of knowing where we are. ‘Effective political leadership consists precisely in offering mental maps that permit the citizenry to recognise itself as a community of citizens’ (1997: 180). Without it, people feel abandoned in a world without boundaries and they lose confidence in politics as ‘political positions appear as collages in which different and contradicting elements are juxtaposed in kaleidoscopic configurations’ (1997: 183). While Lechner’s metaphor has attractions, it fails to explain why this redrawing of political maps will not involve the ‘populist and plebiscititarian invocations’ to national unity he rejects. Indeed, it could be argued that Perot’s style of antipolitics was precisely an attempt to redraw the American political map employing the tools, if not the outcome, Lechner recommends.
Various styles of antipolitics are on display in many Western liberal democracies. Rather than rejecting politics, or seeing little need for politics, its adherents have a vital stake in political discourse, yet find they have been effectively removed from it due to their inability to meet the criteria deemed necessary for genuine participation. Even when electoral support reaches levels where admission to government cannot be denied, antipolitics is often overwhelmed by the power of institutionalized politics. The culture of contemporary politics is incapable of accommodating the intrusion of the ill-informed and unqualified. So despite entreaties such as that of former Australian Democrats leader, Janine Haines, that in a healthy democracy people do not refer to some distant group of politicians and say, ‘they will make the right decisions’, but instead believe that ‘we will make the right decisions’, the reality is rather different. Although citizens’ legal and rights may be respected, ‘dialogue with those who are not like-minded is thought to be repellent or futile’ (Oldfield 1997: 2). This is both caused by, and in turn compounds, a new consensus formed around a new ‘radical centre’ which limits the scope of politics and adds to sense of alienation and dissatisfaction experienced by many citizens. It adds to the civic deficit.

Conclusion

This Chapter has discussed the growing complexities surrounding the notion of democratic participation and citizenship. The implications for civics and citizenship education are profound. Clearly the nature of contemporary politics is changing, and this casts increased doubt over the efficacy and extent of civic participation. Moreover it again throws attention onto the key matter of just why governments want to use the education system to reactivate citizenship and address a civic deficit. The question of why governments appear keen to draw citizens back into the civic arena, while at the same time pursuing practices that effectively drive many citizens away from the political process is one that will be taken up in Chapter 5. Advocates of a reinvigoration of Australian citizenship stress the need for members of a democratic polity to be active participants in their system of government, yet this Chapter exposes some problematic matters related to this suggestion.
Firstly, an acquaintance with a range of realist or elitist models of liberal democracy immediately throws into doubt the capacity of the public to expand their role as democratic citizens. The suggestion that the system is better off without the input of 'perfectionists, participationists and populists' provides little incentive for educators to advance greater civic involvement.

However, while acknowledging the empirical aspects of the realist model of democracy, it is argued that they do leave the door ajar for education. Schumpeter's suggestion that citizens lack the skills of rational and critical examination needed to properly perform their role as citizens leads to the obvious challenge that they can be equipped with such skills. The acquisition of these skills by a broader range of citizens is likely to lead to a deepening, or democratisation of democracy. Clearly education can play a role in that process, but it requires the education system itself to adopt a critical stance in relation to the existing political culture, and it is this style of education that is advocated in the second half of this thesis.

Secondly, this Chapter demonstrates the complex nature of Australia's civic deficit. A disinclination to be engaged in the nation's system of government is characterised by a range of sometimes contradictory elements. While Walter may describe postmodernism as 'vacuous', it is impossible to avoid the fact that a proportion of the population in contemporary liberal-democracies have, in a sense, moved 'beyond politics'. A range of postmodern and postmaterialist models describes those for whom the politics of the nation-state may become increasingly irrelevant. They have moved on to the politics of consumption, the politics of career, the politics of personal success and self-actualisation. Members of educated policy elites, capable of participating in the political system when the need arises, they are content to largely allow the prevailing political culture to remain intact as it has delivered the society they largely approve of. More problematically for governments wanting to re-activate commitment to active citizenship based on the nation-state, these practitioners of the new, depoliticised politics have largely adopted the lifestyles based on education, empowerment and personal initiative so enthusiastically advocated by those same governments.
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