regard. While critical thinking seeks to retain impartiality and not impose any values by exercising skills in reasoning and logical thought, critical pedagogy is inherently political. This distinction will be taken up and examined in greater depth in Chapter Six.

Accepting then, that an encounter with values in some form is inevitable in the education process, we need to ask just whose values will be conveyed. Donnelly is predictably wary of central agencies with a particular ideological axe to grind leaving individual schools with little choice but to teach what is directed. He suggests this may be overcome by allowing greater freedom for schools to set their own curricula, and establish a ‘values market’ by offering the community a range of approaches. However, while this solution is already in evidence in some aspects of education, (most obviously in relation to religious content), Donnelly (Interview 2000) acknowledges the difficulties in the area of citizenship education with a stated objective of the promotion of a common, shared set of core values at the national level. He is faced with a dilemma here because of his fear of indoctrination. While he is keen to point out there are some significant achievements in Australia’s history that are worthy of recognition and celebration, perhaps even held up as forces shaping contemporary Australian values, Donnelly must then avoid his own accusation that this is a form of indoctrination. This is because he is particularly fearful that education be used by teachers from what he calls the ‘left’, to advance in an uncritical way such issues as feminism, environmentalism and multiculturalism. So in an effort to avoid accusations of indoctrination from either the right or the left, Donnelly must adopt a position of recommending ‘balanced’ teaching in which teachers are not seen to be promoting a particular set of views. Of course, when pushed to its limits, this can produce some curious outcomes. For instance, in dealing with the issue of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, Donnelly (Interview 2000) suggests schools should consider ‘both sides’ of the matter. When asked how this might be achieved, he suggested that in relation to the stolen generations, classes could examine the benefits, as well as the suffering, many indigenous Australians had experienced from being removed from their families at an early age.
Galston stresses the need to adopt an education process that is far more rhetorical than rational. This requires a more ‘noble, moralising history: a pantheon of heroes who confer legitimacy on central institutions’ (1991: 243-44). Adopting a view reminiscent of Schumpeter or Weber, he maintains it is unrealistic to expect a broad sweep of society to become critically attuned citizens. This stands in sharp contrast to Gutmann’s prominent advocacy of education based on critical awareness and reason rather than ‘emotional uplift’ (Callan 1994: 200). In Democratic Education, Gutmann (1987) presents a case for education as a means of ‘conscious social reproduction’. While this term may rouse the suspicions of those fearful of education as a tool of state repression, to Gutmann it connotes a commitment to collectively re-create the society that we share. It fits somewhere between what Parry describes as constructive and reconstructive views of education, the former typified by Oakeshott, Schumpeter and Sartori, the latter by T. H. Green, Dewey and Walzer (Parry 1999).

Despite this, Gutmann is keen to distance herself from a ‘liberal’ view of values neutrality in education. While a credible theory of education cannot support all claims to moral superiority made by educators, equally it cannot deny the legitimacy of all such claims (1987: 40). Some claims warrant advancement, others denial. This is directly contrasted with ‘unconscious social reproduction’, a process that can be likened to political socialisation by which societies seek to perpetuate themselves (1987: 15). While carefully eschewing a substantive set of educational aims, Gutmann is sufficiently confident to assert that ‘a society that supports conscious social reproduction must educate all educable children to be capable of participating in collectively shaping their society’ (1987: 39). Gutmann’s view of the democratic state is one that helps citizens understand and critically evaluate competing conceptions of the good life and the good society (1987: 44).

Meaningful education for democratic citizenship has little room for Galston’s sentimentality. A view of civic education that seeks to do no more than enable citizens to make a wise choice in elected officials, and enhance a sense of political loyalty fails to diffuse the virtues of critical reason that is necessary in order for liberal democracy to thrive (Callan 1994: 203). Instead of a moralistic, sentimental use of history as a means of building political engagement, Callan argues for
citizens to discover and take possession of their own political traditions. In pushing deeper into an examination of this critical reason, Callan argues that if, as commonly occurs, it takes the form of nothing more than implacable scepticism, it remains politically sterile. Consequently, it will contribute little to a process of deepening democracy.

5.4 Teaching democracy

When Australian students are invited to 'discover' democracy, just what are they likely to find? By aiming to provide students with the opportunity to 'gain knowledge and understanding of the origins and nature of Australia's democratic processes' (Discovering Democracy 1997a: 7), the Discovering Democracy Program clearly suggests that Australians inherit a strong democratic tradition that forms the basis of contemporary practice. However, the Program, while largely celebratory of Australia's evolution into one of the world's leading democracies, does imply democracy is under some threat. It is a threat caused by apathy, lack of understanding and disengagement amongst those with the responsibility to maintain the democratic system. Civics and citizenship education is designed to address that threat. The Discovering Democracy Program aims to engender a combination of civic knowledge, skills and values and attitudes that form a 'vital means of maintaining the civil society and also in developing and enhancing our democratic system as we move into the next millennium' (Discovering Democracy 1997b: 5).

However, a rather more challenging view contends that, rather than merely being under threat, Australian democratic traditions are in full-scale retreat, or are of questionable merit. In his somewhat ambiguously titled book, 'From Subject to Citizen', Davidson (1997) presents a detailed historical account of how the concept of democratic citizenship has been, and remains largely absent from the institutions of Australian government. To Davidson, active (or deep) citizenship remains something with 'potential' in Australia, noting, 'the basic right of an active citizen has not existed since 1901, and until the Constitution is altered it is difficult to see how it will exist.' (1997: 234). The Australian state has worked effectively to diminish Australians' expectations of active citizenship, most notably by failing to
acknowledge the concept of citizenship in the Constitution itself, and the state has done little to promote the idea that 'to be a citizen is to force justice from the power of the state' (1997: 251).

Democracy is always on the move – either forwards or back (Dryzek 1996: 5). John Ralston Saul (1997) talks of the Great Leap Backwards. By this he means that the people of countries such as Canada, the US and Australia are reverting to the role of subjects rather than citizens, and increasingly exist as creatures of public and private corporations. Modern government is a process dominated by arrangements made between groups of experts, and elected officials. In this situation, the people merely participate as spectators.

In turn, this can be linked to the changing culture of liberal-democratic government. A more managerial approach to government, one that is seeking to learn from and emulate the practices and values of the private sector, has had significant effects on the nature of democracy. Rather than maintaining a large permanent public service to implement its policies, modern Australian government is increasingly made up of small, 'boutique' departments that are reliant on private management consultancy firms that occupy an ill-defined position between government and the public. However, it is the nature of private business to guard commercially sensitive information. It is commercial-in-confidence. A private consultancy firm contracted to organise a key aspect of a Government Department, such as its human resource services, regards its own procedures and methods as commercially valuable information, and hence will require the Department to agree not to divulge it. Freedom of Information (FOI) provisions run into this barrier of confidentiality. Australian Commonwealth Ombudsman, Ron McLeod (1999) suggests that FOI is now well past its peak as a mechanism under which citizens can gain access to information about government activities.

Of course, an inability to access information about government flies in the face of openness and accountability. To the advocates of managerial government, democratic transparency and efficient government are uneasy companions. David Osborne notes:
Rational, strategic choices are almost the opposite of the political process, and it's very hard in a political environment, which a democracy has to be, to refine your capacity to do real strategic planning. And that's the great challenge. (1999)

To Osborne, the great challenge is to 'reinvent government' (Osborne and Gaebler 1992). We must dismantle the structures and practices that have been constructed over the past 100 years and replace them with a system of government better suited to the information age. Modern government demands efficiency and performance. By out-sourcing its activities, the quality of government services is improved. Indeed, this can be almost guaranteed as contracts between government and private providers and consultants often specify penalties for failure to meet agreed performance levels. Moreover, the power of market forces ensures that any consultancy not providing effective service to government will quickly lose its contracts, and in all likelihood, its entire business.

In such a political environment, the role of political and citizenship education becomes problematic. It seems somewhat unexpected that governments appear keen to re-enliven civic knowledge and citizens' participation at the very time when Osborne's challenge is being seriously addressed and acted upon. Despite their oft-repeated rhetoric, does government in the modern state really want active and informed citizenship? In what ways does having educated, informed and active citizens of the type advocated in this work further the interests of government? Many politicians may prefer an uninterested and ignorant public that lets their delegates get on with the business of government. As Langeveld suggests:

If one has a vested interest in the status quo, it might be that this interest is best served by widespread political alienation and apathy, or second best by passive acceptance and consent. (1981:30)

Of course, if an essential requirement of a democratic society is the ability of its citizens to understand how they are being governed, this lack of transparency casts doubt over the strength of democratic principles. As Saul notes:
Democracy is simply about the nature of legitimacy and whether the repository of that legitimacy - the citizens - are able to exercise the power its possession imposes upon them. We are having great difficulty exercising the power of legitimacy. It has therefore shifted away into other hands. (1997: 115)

Giddens (1999) claims the power of modern technology and the methods of the media mean that citizens are able to access information in ways that were previously beyond their control. However, what may be happening is that the citizens are now able to know how little they know.

Given this changing nature of government, what then is the perceived role for ‘new civics’? Is it, to adapt Saul’s words, to shift political power in liberal-democracies back to those with a legitimate claim to it? In recent decades, successive Australian governments at Federal, State and local levels have engaged in the process of ‘re-inventing’ themselves. The size of the public sector has been dramatically reduced; government contracts are awarded on the basis of compulsory competitive tendering; and the use of accrual accounting by government Departments are all evidence of the cultural shift that has occurred. Governments have stopped chuckled at the antics of Sir Humphrey Appleby, and put him on a performance-based contract. Governments have not tried to hide any of this from the public. Indeed it has been presented as simply part of the broader cultural shifts that have swept through society. This is a paradox of modern government. Governments speak an anti-government language in which the public sector is demonised and the private sector praised. During his term as Victorian Premier, Jeff Kennett suggested that by-elections be abolished in safe electorates as he regarded them as being a waste of time and money.

Yet while this process of re-invention has been taking place, State and Federal governments, have endorsed the re-invigoration of civics and citizenship education. Clearly, tension exists between democratic practice and efficient government. Citizens who wish to know ‘what’s going on’, can be a major impediment to the efficient conduct of government programs and policy. In short, they can be a nuisance to government. As De Maria (1999) demonstrates, citizens who choose to ‘blow the whistle’ on unethical practice within institutions are more often destroyed
than praised. In these circumstances, one may ponder just why government would want to build a greater sense of civic identity and understanding of democracy. What interest does government have in having its citizens poking their noses into affairs of state, and demanding to be genuinely informed about government activities?

At this point it worth pausing to acknowledge possible objections to the effect that governments do not conceive of active citizenship in the way just described. It would be naïve to ignore the likelihood that when governments speak of active, or even democratic citizenship, they do not conceive of it the way this thesis does. Rather, what is desired is a greater citizen awareness of how the government is structured, and how, in broad terms it operates. It is not intended that citizens actually understand the practice of government. However, as I show in subsequent chapters, this view goes to the core of the civic deficit. It is an elitist view of government that on the one hand says to citizens, ‘You clearly do not sufficiently understand how Australian government works, and we need to educate you in that’, but on the other implies, ‘We want you to rest assured in the realisation that the system of Australian government is fundamentally sound. Government is a complex matter, and provided you grasp the basic concepts, you can leave the details to the specialists’. Such an attitude can be seen as compounding the civic deficit as it treats citizens as incapable of taking a more activist role in civic affairs. As Gill and Reid note in their comments in relation to the Discovering Democracy Program, ‘this curriculum could be an example of do as I say in relation to democracy, not do as I do!’ (1999: 39). In these circumstances, Botsman is correct in asking whether it is ignorance that separates Australians from their constitution, or ‘is it that lack of any meaningful, organic dialogue about, or articulation of, the principles and ideals of Australian government?’ (2000: 2).

Shanker (1998: 5) contends that every society has mechanisms for transferring the values of the adults to the young. He notes that when this process relates to technical or scientific matters, accusations of indoctrination are unlikely to be heard, yet he becomes defensive when considering the ‘teaching of democracy’. That Shanker feels the need to mount such a defence confirms the view that teaching democratic values is a sensitive issue. Indeed, it is this sensitivity that may
be responsible, at least in part, for the ‘decline’ of civics education in the three decades prior to its re-emergence in the 1990s. Teachers’ reluctance to teach politically sensitive material is commonly linked to fears of accusations of bias or indoctrination (Langeveld 1981, Turner 1981).

This reluctance contains several surprising aspects. That the fear of democratic values by teachers should become so pronounced during a period otherwise associated with ‘progressive’, critical or liberal educational theory and practice may seem unexpected. An era characterised by the largest anti-war movement ever seen; the emergence of identity and cultural politics in many dimensions and forms; and the growing power of social movements, all point to an education system less likely to be intimidated by accusations of bias, or failure to adhere to a values-free curriculum. Surely the teaching of democracy would flourish in such an environment? However, this may be to misunderstand ‘democracy’, or teachers’ interpretation of that term. Shanker correctly denies that education for democracy can be regarded as indoctrination at all, highlighting the critical and questioning nature of the citizens in open, democratic societies. A system that endorses dissenting views cannot, by definition, be indoctrinatory. Genuine participation in democratic citizenship requires the capability of critical, uninhibited and independent thinking.

Yet, this may be to adopt an altogether too sanguine view of democracy. The seminal event of the decades in which civics and citizenship education declined in Australia and elsewhere, was a war in which, at least at government level, the declared aim was a defence of democracy against totalitarianism. Clearly, this defence was unjustifiable in the eyes of many. Indeed, given the context of the Vietnam conflict, democracy may have become largely indistinguishable from the worst excesses of its sworn non-democratic enemies. Yet, if the ‘defenders of democracy’ in Vietnam were under scrutiny, what of the political system of the opposing forces? Even a teacher with a strong anti-US bias (of which there were probably many in the 1960s and 1970s), would find it difficult to portray the North Vietnamese, or their principal allies, the Soviet Union, as democrats. In such circumstances, it is hardly surprising teachers became uncomfortable in teaching democracy at all. Consider a teacher undertaking an examination of the evolution of
democracy. This would inevitably encounter laudable events in the history of both France and the United States, the two main opponents of the liberation of the Vietnamese people according to the predominant anti-war argument.

Of course in the 1990s, such confusion about democracy appears to have largely disappeared. The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 has seen the emergence of democracy as the preferred political system of virtually every nation. Liberal-democracy forms the basis of stable, successful polities, while market capitalism sustains the economic prosperity of their citizens. Here lies another surprising, even ironic, aspect of the revival of civics and citizenship education. Why is increased attention being directed towards a practice that now seems unassailable? From where is the threat to democracy to emerge that civics and citizenship is designed to ward off? We know of the internal threat apparently coming from the civic deficit, but what of external threats? For teachers, democracy is now safe territory. Freed from the confusion caused by the ideological conflicts of earlier decades, teachers can advance the evolution and practice of democracy confident few will challenge their values. Seen in this light, civics and citizenship education may be regarded as a celebration of democracy. To Shanker (1998: 7), we need to teach students ‘that democracy is the worthiest form of human governance ever conceived’. However, Shanker is unclear as to whether democracy is worthy in its current practice in societies such as the United States and Australia, or in its theoretical possibilities. On one hand, he emphasises the importance of students gaining an appreciation of the evolution of democratic ideals into institutions and practices, while also stating that ‘the fundamental task of education in a democracy is the apprenticeship of liberty - learning to be free’.

There is a crucial difference between these two interpretations. In the former case, students may conclude that ‘this is as good as it gets’, and that they are being asked to appreciate a system that, to them, delivers little. By casual observation of their own communities, and learning they are living in a democracy, students may feel somewhat let down, that the reality of democracy falls well short of its promise. Discrimination, injustice, endemic unemployment, poverty, crime, drug dependence. Are these the products of the ‘worthiest form of human governance’? In this case, there is a risk that rather than building faith in democracy, civics and
citizenship education courses may further undermine it. Inevitably students discover that under representative government, active participation is illusionary. Newmann notes the 'profound disillusionment for students who internalise the democratic ideal of government of, by and for the people. They soon learn that most societal institutions are run by elites, with few meaningful opportunities for citizens to participate in making social policy' (1981: 173). This can be likened to Barber's 'thin' democracy in which democracy is suppressed by liberalism as individuals are defined by their privacy and property, rather than an understanding of who they are and are unable to act as autonomous agents (1984: 98). Teachers, in attempting to resolve this gap in the democratic process, may stress the importance of regular elections, freedom of speech and so on. Yet as Newmann (1981) suggests, such mechanisms are inadequate for generating a sense of genuine participation, empowerment or connectedness with the political process.

However, if teaching democracy is primarily concerned with 'learning to be free', civics and citizenship education necessarily adopts a liberating approach. Instead of a fragile and precious item to be cherished and celebrated in its current form, students are introduced to the ideals of democracy, and encouraged to strive to achieve them. Rather than venerate what we have, students are taught to conceive of what could be. Democracy is never something that can be described as being "done", like so much baked bread' (Parker 1996: 191). True democratic citizenship involves a 'democratisation of democracy': the need to deepen and invigorate democracy (Giddens 1999: 4). Chair of the Civics Expert Group, Stuart Macintyre hints of this notion of truly democratic citizenship by noting, 'It became apparent to me that our citizenship is a form of buried treasure, precious, yet hidden' (1996: 60).

At some point, a willingness to dig up 'Macintyre's treasure' must involve confronting the facts of life in contemporary Australian society, to take some risks. To embark on such a task is to step back into 'unsafe' territory as it requires a critical analysis of the current practice of democracy. This will involve a far closer examination of how our democratic institutions operate including demanding far greater transparency in government and accountability from holders of power. It may lead to queries about the extent of basic democratic freedoms in Australia. It
may lead to some uncomfortable, persistent questions being posed concerning the operation of our parliaments and courts as students, no longer prepared to push their noses up against the glass and stare down at their leaders in awe, demand to understand ‘what is really going on’. In short, it may present a major challenge to the elite groups that dominate the political process in the mature democracies such as Australia, the United States and Britain.

The ambiguity reflected in the title of the Discovering Democracy Program is unlikely to be deliberate. The program is clearly presented as a solution to the inadequate level of civic knowledge possessed by young Australians. To its promoters, it aims to familiarise young Australians with their already strong, robust democracy. In this, it may not be as totally absorbed with teaching students about the institutional aspects of government as earlier versions of civics and citizenship education, yet it retains a strong focus on the citizen as operating within quite narrowly defined boundaries of conventional political processes (Gill and Reid 1999: 34). This position is premised on a belief that for some reason, Australians, especially young Australians, have lost touch with their civic institutions and practices. They have become disillusioned and detached from their system of government, and they are increasingly uninterested in the history and development of their civic institutions. If we accept this is the case, the reasons for this situation need to be considered.

Posed bluntly, can the source of the malaise be located in the Australian citizenry, or within Australia’s institutions, practices and structures themselves? If the first explanation is accepted, a program in civics and citizenship education appears a reasonable response based on a belief that an informed citizenry is more likely to be an engaged citizenry. As we saw earlier in this Chapter, there are serious doubts surrounding the strength of that relationship. However, the second possible explanation takes us onto a far more problematic area. Here, the threat to democracy comes from within the institutions and processes themselves, and it is citizens’ awareness and understanding of the political process that leads to their lack of engagement. As Condren notes, ‘Our institutions are predicated in high levels of distrust and to voice a distrust of politicians may be as much (or as little) an expression of mature civic awareness as it might be a sign of mindless cynicism.'
Conversely, high levels of trust may express apathy, or the uncritical party allegiance that makes life easy for party politicians' (Condren 1999: 29, italics added). The fundamental civic knowledge/citizen participation relationship that lies at the heart of civics and citizenship education is now basically reversed.

A schools poster produced by the Australian Electoral Commission portrays soldiers in the trenches, with a caption reading, 'Some people have to go to great lengths to have their say'. The message is clear: people fight and die for what we have, so don’t take it for granted. Seen in this light, civics and citizenship education is primarily a process in which governments, confident in their role as protectors of Australian democracy, are willing to fund sometimes lavish educational programs, but are unwilling to consider the possibility that the problems lie with themselves and the institutions they hold so dear. As one of the relatively few educators to confront this matter, Gilbert (1992, 1993) observes that it is the performance of government itself that warrants an important place within education for citizenship. Yet, he argues that a reluctance to address this adds credence to the fear that government-sponsored inquiries and programs to promote citizenship education are 'not without a self-serving motivation on the part of self-serving politicians' (1993: 91).

Early encouragement for the re-invigoration of civics and citizenship education came from the Australian Senate. In 1988, a Senate Standing Committee asserted that a major aim of active citizenship should be to provide students with an understanding of how government works and the motivation to become active citizens. Gilbert (1993) is particularly critical of the Discussion Paper and Report of this Committee. To Gilbert, the focus of the Committee's concern was far too narrow, based on a conception of citizenship as knowledge and participation in formal procedures such as voting at elections. Gilbert concludes:

This participation is uncritical in its neglect of political corruption and accountability, and narrow in its restriction of participation to government and its exclusion of other areas of institutional experience. (1993: 91)
Pascoe (1996) is also critical of parliamentary investigations of civics and citizenship that on the one hand are willing to acknowledge the ‘problem’, but are less keen to go beyond a broad recommendation that there is nothing wrong with our system of government that a good dose of education won’t fix. Indeed, while not pursuing the matter in any depth, Pascoe (1996: 24) moves the matter of civics and citizenship education into a completely different dimension by noting the likelihood that the problems of modern youth alienation require a ‘sustained critique of Western culture’. This comment, from a member of both the Civics Expert Group and the Civics Education Group, is illuminating. It suggests rather more than a trip to Parliament House and the Electoral Education Centre is required in order to reverse the growing disenchantment of younger Australians with their democratic institutions and practice.

‘Mainstream’ civics and citizenship (taken here to mean the programs promoted by the Federal and State governments, bodies such as the Parliamentary Education Office and the Election Education Centre, and most civics and citizenship education texts), generally adopt a defensive position in which the cause of a lack of civic knowledge and participation is placed within the education system and the citizenry, rather than with existing institutions and practices of government. The strongest advocate of this position is perhaps the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO). Operating under the auspices of the Senate, and located within Parliament House, the PEO can be seen as firmly adhering to a model of civics and citizenship initiated by politicians ‘who wish to be noticed and gain esteem’ (McAllister 1998: 12). Despite this somewhat cynical view, the PEO is an acknowledged leader in parliamentary education of school age Australians. Naturally, it is in no position to bite the hand that feeds it. Hence, the PEO seeks to lay the responsibility for the negative and ill-informed attitudes it detects towards core civic institutions such as the Constitution and Parliament in a range of places other than the institutions themselves. Much of this negative feeling is attributed to a media, overly keen to sensationalise parliament. The PEO endeavours to move Parliament and the Constitution to the centre of the Australian political stage. As the then PEO Director, John Carter (1993), notes:
A knowledge of parliament . . . reveals the enormous pressures under which parliamentarians work and the sense of serious purpose which most bring to their tasks, the combination of which results often in those outbursts of temperament in the Chamber, frequently characterised by the press as irresponsible loss of self-control.

In mounting his defence, Carter is critical of those who diminish the role of parliament in Australian politics by suggesting real political power is exercised elsewhere. Colebatch (1995) is a good example of someone holding this view. He argues that civics and citizenship education should seek to develop the existing political interests and understanding and skills of citizens rather than perpetuate the myths of existing institutions and practice. Quite understandably, the PEO takes a contrary view and assumes the importance of parliament, which in turn gives significance to the people within it. If parliament makes laws, these people must be ‘law-makers’. To suggest that laws are made elsewhere is to reduce the significance of parliament and the worth of its members, something parliament would be very reluctant to do.

So to the PEO, parliament matters. Yet, to his credit, Carter does cast an accusing gaze towards parliament itself by arguing that an enhanced understanding of the workings of parliament may attract greater numbers of the nation’s talented men and women to seek elected office. In other words, when the nation’s youth confront the quality of their current parliamentary representatives, they may feel inspired to enter parliament themselves.

Conclusion

Drawing together several threads of criticism towards the approaches to civics and citizenship being envisaged in Australia, Colebatch (1995) suggests that such education should avoid ‘the reification and myth-making of standard institutional explanations of politics (eg: ‘Parliament makes the laws’). Colebatch recognises that this approach is unlikely to find favour with those holding the civics and citizenship reins as it ‘involves confronting the Profane as well as the Sacred’. Yet
if it is considered important that citizens know more about the processes of government, then any attempt to achieve this must be grounded in the realities of government rather than in institutional myths.

This is a view that holds considerable attractions for this thesis. This Chapter has examined the nature of the Australian civic deficit by considering aspects of civic knowledge, and the knowledgeable citizen. By doing so it casts doubt over the simplistic assertion that greater civic knowledge, narrowly defined as the ability to score well in a political knowledge test, will lead to greater citizen participation, or greater citizen efficacy. It goes further by considering the nature of civic knowledge deemed necessary for active citizenship. It suggests that much of the type of knowledge assumed to be vitally important for effective Australian citizenship may not in fact be crucial, while suggesting that the civic deficit may be more closely associated with what Australians know about their political system, than what they do not.

It follows from this analysis that democratic citizenship should not simply set out to expunge such awareness as ignorant or ill-informed, to be replaced with a body of historical and institutional knowledge of questionable relevance to the everyday practice of politics. Education for democratic citizenship, then, seeks to establish a deeper understanding of the culture of government and politics. It seeks to address the bewilderment and alienation of many citizens that contribute to the so-called civic deficit by asking, 'If citizens are disengaged from their political system, what can be done by schools to re-establish their faith in it?' This question now assumes more prominence in the remainder of this thesis.
Part B

Chapter Six
Schools and Citizenship

Introduction

As we have seen, civics and citizenship education can be seen as a vehicle for reproducing society, or changing society, and an elaboration of this theme will form the basis of this Chapter. All education is political, but in the case of civics and citizenship education, this is particularly the case. On one hand it can easily be regarded as a means of 'taming the masses', or making citizens 'safe for democracy' in which the school becomes the agency of the hegemonic state. Little effort is required to see much of the current impetus in Australian civics and citizenship education in this light, the state-sponsored activities of bodies such as the Parliamentary Education Office, and the Electoral Education Centre coming to mind. A prominent review of the Discovering Democracy Program sees it promoting this minimalist view of citizenship (Gill and Reid 1999).

On the other hand, quite clearly civics and citizenship education can be seen as education in resistance and social change. By equipping young people with the skills and attitudes required to actively participate in their political and social systems, it clearly invites students to wonder, 'What are we supposed to do with these newly acquired skills?' In these circumstances, their minds may turn to aspects of society they do not approve of, and seek ways of changing them. Now, of course this may lead straight back to the social reproductionists, some of whom may claim, 'That's exactly what we want young people to do! We want them to discover Australia's democratic traditions, and keep them alive.' But this view does not take us far and we soon re-enter the realm of truism and platitude. As I argue throughout this thesis, it is easy to win assent about the need to educate for citizenship among even a disparate group of people. It is only once a more intensive scrutiny is undertaken that the real differences emerge. Resistance theorists and advocates of
critical pedagogy may have vastly different notions in mind when they conceive of active citizen participation, and education programs designed to promote it, than do social reproductionists. The act of voting provides a useful metaphor of these divergent views of active citizenship. When cast in the light of democratic struggle to extend the suffrage, or its denial in undemocratic regimes, the right to vote is a powerful symbol of active citizenship. However, the vote can also be seen as emblematic of the insipid form of democracy, vividly expressed in Barber’s (1984) comparison of the act of voting and the use of a public toilet. Voters patiently wait in line in order to close themselves up in a small compartment where they can relieve themselves in solitude and in privacy of their burden, pull the lever, and then yielding to the next in line, silently go home.

This Chapter examines the fundamental conflict between education as social reproduction, and education as social change and resistance. Two significant points of difference are immediately apparent. Firstly, the forms of political participation endorsed by reproductionists and resistance theorists may differ wildly. While the former retain faith in existing, conventional forms of political engagement such as voting in elections, membership of political parties, or seeking elected office, the latter may see such devices as essentially disempowering for many citizens. They are seen as elitist and exclusionary methods of activity that are designed to reinforce Mosca's delineation of the class that rules, and the class that is ruled. They are indicative of the passive form of 'spectator', privatised democracy that is a core component of the civic deficit. Second and more importantly, the purpose of political participation is likely to reveal notable differences. Resistance theorists and reproductionists start with fundamentally different views of the world, differences that go to the heart of the political process. Resistance theorists and criticalists are dissatisfied with many prevailing economic, social, cultural and political arrangements. They can readily identify sources of exploitation, oppression and injustice in their communities, and they enthuse about the possibilities for educators and students to expose, understand and be emancipated from them.

As the name implies, social reproductionists are essentially satisfied with the prevailing arrangements. More particularly, they largely sanction the ways in which contemporary social conditions have evolved. Some disquiet may be expressed
about aspects of current culture, however in many cases this can be attributed to a loss of the values and attitudes that contributed to past progress. Education in general, and civics and citizenship education in particular should aim to acquaint students with those values, and provide an understanding of the ways in which they have evolved over time. This Chapter re-considers this enduring point of tension within education from within the context of revived interest in Australian civics and citizenship education, and then expands on the ways in which school education can advance democratic citizenship.

6.1 Places of progress

While on one level, clarity of purpose surrounds the school, at another, a persistent and pervasive sense of uncertainty besets attempts to state just what schools are designed to achieve. As perhaps the preeminent modernist institution, mass public schooling is, or has been inherently linked to the notion of progress. However, given the sense of uncertainty surrounding them, the suggestion that schools are places of progress does not take us very far. As Wringe (1984) has observed, the confusion as to what educators and school understand by ‘progress’ may be growing. Some responsibility for this may be sheeted home to the fragmentation and loss of certainty loosely associated with postmodernism. It is within the time frame generally described as ‘postmodernist’, that debate has intensified between theorists who see education as social reproduction, and those who see it as resistance and emancipation.

Although there is considerable divergence of opinion within each of these groups of theorists, both are able to present their model of education as involving some progressive elements. To social reproduction theorists, the school is seen as an essential component in preserving and protecting the existing social order by a complex amalgam of observable and more hidden curricula. The role of education in nation building and state formation has closely paralleled the rise of the nation itself. To Napoleon, there could not be a nation or stability of the state until there existed a body of teachers with fixed principles. This coincidence is especially strong during the earlier stages of a nation’s creation, or in time of national crisis or
recovery (Green 1997a: 184). For instance, the use of the education system in teaching a national language is of particular importance in this regard. At the time of the French Revolution, only 50% of the population were French speakers, while when the unification of Italy took place in 1870 less than 3% of the population spoke Italian (Hobsbawm 1990: 60).

Social reproduction is progressive in the sense that it allows both the individual and the broader community to advance or grow in a range of material and non-material ways. By inculcating a set of values deemed to be crucial to the maintenance of the existing order, education lays the basis for further social, economic and cultural advancement. It takes a fundamentally assured view of prevailing social and cultural conditions, and seeks to build on their strengths.

The understanding of progress underlying resistance theory is different. Here the emphasis shifts from the progress of the individual and the unsatisfactorily ill-defined ‘national interest’, and moves to matters of the social good. Rather than being designed to bolster existing social conditions, it sees education as a prime source of critical inquiry. Education is regarded as a means of moving towards a desired social state. As such, resistance theory is often founded on a sense of dissatisfaction with prevailing social conditions. By highlighting and examining the nature of society from both contemporary and historical perspectives, it seeks to expose conditions of injustice, discrimination and intolerance.

The role of the school as agent of social preservation versus social change often becomes blurred, fragmented and confused in practical situations. In a single school, a student may be exposed to some programs and activities that are unequivocally socially reproductive, and others that take a more critical approach. Even within a single program, and I argue that civics and citizenship is a prime example, the distinction is not so clear-cut. While certain aspects may be designed to preserve existing mores and values, others may encourage challenging and contesting prevailing social, political and economic arrangements. Indeed, critical thinking and problem-solving form an important component of a liberal education in which the conservative and transformative converge. Somewhat paradoxically, critical examination of existing social arrangements becomes an important element
in their preservation. Society can only be maintained by a continual process of reflection and scrutiny, although ultimately, this is designed to incrementally improve the operation of the present configuration of society, rather than causing any radical changes to its structures and institutions (Symes and Preston 1997).

Moreover, an individual teacher may be required to teach separate courses that promote each of the respective viewpoints. At one point in my career, I found myself teaching a course of Business Management. As someone for whom critical thinking forms a basic teaching strategy, I inevitably sought to present both sides of each of the major topics. To use Symes and Preston's words, I sought to 'engage the discourse of vocationalism dialectically' (1997: 281). However, I soon learnt that while such an approach is almost essential in the teaching of politics, it did not work so effectively in Business Management. While of course there is 'another side' to matters such as human resource management, industry training or the introduction of new technology to workplaces, it was not acknowledged in the course that I was expected to teach. While keeping to the spirit of the prescribed course content, I was simply unable to re-imagine the subject in light of different kinds of practices, such as 'non-capitalist forms which are not dominated by profit or the market' (1997: 281). As I moved from Political Studies to Business Management classes, often literally a matter of a few minutes, I had to switch from a promoter and role model in critical thinking and social analysis, to one of advocate of a business culture presented by the course description.

This thesis is primarily concerned with modernist concepts such as citizenship, the nation and democracy. As Chapter Two explained, this thesis is not a piece of postmodernist analysis and the nature of the politics that is discussed throughout much of this paper is largely informed by the modernist discourse of progressive emancipation. By casting a critical eye at the nature of the Australian civic deficit, and the practice of democratic citizenship more generally, I am clearly implying there is a 'better way'. However, to reiterate comments made in the opening Chapter, this attention on concepts such as emancipation and progress are made with an awareness of the impact of postmodernism. As Usher and Edwards (themselves 'part postmodernists' at best) somewhat tentatively suggest, it is the doubt about the possibility of progress through 'reasoned reform or emancipation
through revolution' that may characterise a postmodernist view of education (Usher and Edwards 1994: 209). So in offering some suggestions as to how school education may be used to close the Australian civic deficit, as I do in this, and subsequent chapters, I proceed from a clear recognition that the nature of citizenship and democracy is changing. Obviously dubious about the role of civics and citizenship education as a means of reproducing Australian society, I proceed from the view that Australian society is undergoing a process of transformation whether we like it or not.

Civics and citizenship education can be readily accommodated within both the major purposes of education outlined above. The 'good citizen' can be made to feel equally at home in the socially reproductive educational setting as the socially critical one, and it is towards a more thorough examination of these two settings that we now turn.

6.2 The good citizen reproduced

The production of citizens, or 'good' citizens may go the very heart of what school education is designed to achieve. Jefferson emphasised the importance of education in citizen formation by arguing that a nation cannot be both ignorant and free. Under this conception, the school is an integral component of the maintenance of society and 'the citizen's identification, loyalty and commitment to society are the result of civic education' (Pratte 1988: 20). This is literally a conservative view in that education plays an important role in holding society together. This branch of social reproduction or transmission, often linked to the work of Talcott Parsons, sees schools performing a vital role in reinforcing the existing social and political order. According to this functionalist view, education systems perpetuate the 'accepted culture'. This implies either that there is a broad consensus as to what that accepted culture is, or that consensus can be reached without major upheaval to the system itself (Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte 1999: 7). Emphasis is placed on the values, the history and the aspirations that a society holds in common. In that sense, it can be said to possess democratic features as its primary concern is the interests of the collective. At its core, it is utilitarian in nature and based on the
interests of the community rather than those of the individual. To be a citizen, is to be part of a community, and hence it seeks to shift the emphasis from the rights of the individual person, to the responsibilities of citizens. Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte describe various 'Americanisation' programs used in the US as prime examples of schools fulfilling this functionalist role.

Interestingly, while this can be referred to as a 'conservative' view, it can win the approval of a diverse range of people. A declared desire for a sense of community to be re-activated in the face of a rampant individualism, and an emphasis on citizens' responsibilities rather than their rights, can build a consensus between left and right, especially in their 'older' manifestations. It has been argued that the Australian Civics Education Group contained such a diversity of political viewpoints, yet it was able to reach consensus on the aims and contents of the Discovering Democracy Program (Donnelly, interview 2000; Ferguson, interview 2000). Of course, an alternative argument is that this Group was able to conveniently sidestep the matter of political alliances, and coalesce around a set of shared, conventional views by a quite atypical and narrowly focussed group of academics and education administrators. In other words, while it may have seemed a risky strategy to combine the 'leftist' ideas of Stuart Macintyre, with the more conservative views of John Hirst and Greg Craven, there was little likelihood of disharmony as all had a shared understanding of the Australian civic deficit and the need to 'do something' about it.

Of course lurking behind a rather innocuous view of social reproduction is something darker and more threatening. While the most irresistible evidence of 'education as indoctrination' can be found in the tight hold exercised over their education systems by totalitarian regimes, similar strategies present an equal or even greater threat to the advancement of more participatory citizenship in societies which claim to be democratic (Kelly 1995: 80). Education is seen as something designed to reinforce not just existing cultural and social arrangements, but economic and political ones as well. In this case, it is designed to educate a select few to rule, and the masses are trained to obey. Rather than a benign factor in the maintenance of civic order or building national identity, education takes on an inherently political quality. The school system in general, and civics and citizenship
education in particular, are regarded as programs designed to protect the interests of entrenched power bases and dominant groups within society, and hence becomes an ideological force of tremendous importance (Harris 1979: 140). Giarelli regards civics and citizenship education in this context as a mechanism by which the education system is appropriated by elite sections of society in order to bolster their positions of power and privilege. Education for democracy really becomes education in the status quo. As he notes,

Once democracy is made into a mechanism controlled by elites to ensure the smooth functioning of existing institutions, democracy's radical moment, its capacity to educate for citizenship, is vitiated and the public awaits only the articulation of interests of the next new hegemonic class to give substance to democracy's lifeless form. (Giarelli 1988: 56)

Giarelli is clearly perturbed by such a view of education for democracy and in its place proposes a radical analysis of the language of democracy by critically noting, 'when democracy does become defined in reference to an existing political system, the task of democracy tends to become one of preserving and defending the state' (1988: 62).

Once educators reach a heightened awareness of the severe limitations of contemporary democratic practice, they can be lured into a condition Wood describes as 'radical educational cynicism' (1988: 69). Educators may be well aware of the shortcomings of their political systems, but feel the adoption of the radical analysis advocated by Giarelli is a pointless process. This is an idea worthy of further consideration as it addresses elemental aspects educators need to confront in the interpretation and implementation of a program of civic and citizenship education. This form of radicalism is typified by the analysis of Bowles and Gintis, and their 1976 work, *Schooling in Capitalist America*. This examines the relationship between the education system and the broader economy, and maintains the school system reproduces the dominant ideology and consciousness through structures and practices designed to meet the needs of the market economy. This is achieved by replicating the social relations of the workplace in the school as students are acclimatised to the types of demeanour, self-image and behaviours that
are crucial to the labour market. This can be seen as at least a partial explanation, contrary to the predictions of Marx, for the relative stability and longevity of capitalism (Strike 1989: 149). To Bowles and Gintis, neither the content of the curriculum, nor the process of information transfer is particularly important. What is vital is the close correspondence between the social relations of dominance, subordination and motivation of the school, and that of the workplace. Through the educational encounter, individuals are induced to accept the degree of powerlessness with which they will be faced as adult workers, as education helps to defuse and depoliticise potentially explosive class relations, and thus serves to perpetuate prevailing social, political and most importantly, economic conditions (Bowles and Gintis 1976: 11). While bearing strong similarities to functionalism, conflict theorists such as Bowles and Gintis abhor the inequalities perpetuated by education as reproduction (Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte 1999: 12). They believe that the consensus claimed by the functionalists is false, and is maintained only by the ability of dominant classes to control the education system.

These views are echoed by Braverman who argues that due to changes in the structure of the workforce (especially the prevalence of the two-income family), schools have developed into 'immense teen-sitting' organisations', a process that leads to a growing antagonism between schools and students. Students grow resentful of the fact that there is no longer any place for them to occupy in contemporary society, other than the school. This is compounded by the fact that since the collapse of the youth job market in the 1970s, chances of employment have become more closely linked to educational achievement, yet much of what is presented at school is regarded by students as having little direct relevance to the workplace (Braverman 1974: 439-440). The arguments of both Bowles and Gintis, and Braverman were developed in the 1970s and may be dismissed as dated, yet far more recently Apple has argued that the most powerful factor seeking to change the soul of contemporary education is the 'growing pressure to make only the needs of business and industry into the goals of the education system' (Apple 1996: 99). Closer to home, Gill and Reid see Discovering Democracy as endorsing a minimal form of Australian citizenship that 'sits comfortably alongside the economic purposes and an individuated concept of citizen' (1999: 33).
Similarly, Knight's idea of 'split referentiality' proposes that school education, while characterised by humanistic notions such as the inherent worth of the individual, progress and the development of human autonomy, actually stands for something else. Knight says that to equate mass schooling with humanistic education is akin to an oxymoron. Education is about the production of docile and disciplined bodies for industry. In line with a shift to a postindustrial society, so Knight sees a shift to 'posteducation'. This is defined as replacement of the 'massified reproduction of the Fordist forms of schooling' (Knight 1995: 24) with the flexibility demanded by post-Fordist modes of production and management. The nature of technological change is such that training students in specific skills useful to employers is of doubtful relevance. In these circumstances, education provides what employers want; 'not an increasingly skilled workforce, but one that is increasingly flexible and tolerant of boring and tedious activities' (Wringe 1998: 353). In a similar vein, Gadotti seeks to highlight the class characteristics of education and the 'mystification of its pedagogy' (1996: 97). He endorses the comments of Paulo Freire who noted that,

there's no way of expecting that an education . . . takes the productive process as the object of critical reflection. Such an analysis would end up by revealing the reason of being of the alienation of work, of its degradation. Therefore the exclusive emphasis should be given not to the political and complete transformation of the worker, but to training. (Quoted by Gadotti 1996: 96)

Wood accepts that much of what has passed for civics and citizenship education in liberal-democracies has conformed to this mould. He suggests it is hardly remarkable to find that schools have operated to support and legitimate the dominant cultural, social and economic order (1988: 75). Where he parts company with the reproduction theorists such as Bowles and Gintis is in his rejection of the sense of hopelessness and pessimism that pervades their ideas. Wood joins Giroux in noting the willingness of many reproduction theorists to speak a language of critique, but not a language of hope (Giroux 1997: 120). He also questions the functionalist idea that schools operate merely to reproduce the existing social order. It is grossly simplistic to see the school merely as a place of instrumentalism in which education is reduced to a functional process where the input of various
resources will necessarily produce a desired output. Education in general, and civics and citizenship education in particular is a far more complex process than one in which the degree of efficacy implied by reproduction theorists can be assumed.

Can the significant contributions of Amy Gutmann to education and democracy be seen as belonging to the reproduction theory? The concept of ‘conscious social reproduction’ is a core aspect of Gutmann’s view of democratic education. However, it is far from clear exactly where to place Gutmann on the reproduction-resistance continuum. There is no doubt that as a confirmed Deweyite, Gutmann is an enthusiast for the school as a prime site producing more engaged and participatory citizens. As such, she has little time for the pessimism of Bowles and Gintis who, as noted earlier, do not place much faith in the power of education to improve the state of democracy, simply because this is not what schools are set up to do. Gutmann also challenges the argument that the causal link runs from civic participation to civic knowledge advanced by Mill, Rousseau and De Tocqueville, and more recently by Barber, and she denies that reforms to education would be less useful than reforms to politics as a means of producing democratic citizens. It is this reluctance by Gutmann to confront the nature of existing political culture within contemporary liberal-democracies that makes it more difficult to state exactly what ‘social reproduction’ means to her. Like Dewey, her contributions to democratic theory and practice fare better within the school, than on extramural terrain of power (Brosio 1994: 513).

Gutmann moves closer to the ideas of Bourdieu in which the school is a source of cultural, rather than social reproduction. Giroux sees this view as one in which ‘schools are relatively autonomous institutions only indirectly influenced by more powerful economic and political institutions’ (1983: 87). According to Gutmann, education is, or should be, an independent and autonomous process able to prepare citizens to participate in consciously reproducing their society (1987: 287). Gutmann certainly does not see the education system as exclusively a political tool in the hands of the ruling elites in the sense analysed by Bowles and Gintis, although she is willing to acknowledge its repressive potential (1987: 107).
Gutmann’s concern for civics and citizenship education programs that fail to adopt a critical stance is evident in this question:

How can a civics course legitimately teach teenagers to trust their government without also teaching them to think about what kind of government is worth trusting? . . . history and civics courses can and should teach democratic virtue, so long as we understand democratic virtue to include the willingness and ability of citizens to reason collectively and critically about politics. (1987: 107)

This statement is certainly encouraging and reflects core elements of deep, democratic citizenship. It takes to task civics education programs that seek to do little more than celebrate the supposed assets of contemporary democracies, and like Enslin challenges the idea that education for democratic citizenship should harness historical and political myths (2000: 81). Yet Gutmann’s emphasis on the importance of ensuring that the present generation of citizens accepts its responsibility to collectively re-create the society that they share (1987: 39), certainly suggests there is something in existing society worth preserving. However, just what this is, Gutmann is reluctant to say. This reluctance to confront the existing state of contemporary liberal-democracy, is compounded by Gutmann’s confusing tendency to slide from discussion of democracy as a political principle, to democratic practice in schools, to democratic decision-making about how schools should be run. It seems that to Gutmann, the most significant thing about democracy is its capacity to educate its citizens, and the most significant thing about education is its capacity to reproduce democracy. Democracy and education are so intricately intertwined that Gutmann has little to say about the importance of democracy in relation to other aspects of society such as the law or the economy, concerns which have received far greater prominence in the evolution of democracy than the education system. This results in a model of citizen education which believes schools can educate students to exercise political influence over the state, but largely ignores how the state shapes and influences the school, and places specific constraints over the political, ideological and structural nature of education (Giroux 1983: 188). She remains shackled by the problem of which comes first – democracy or democratic schooling (Brosio 1994: 524). This criticism of Gutmann is not to deny the normative value of either democracy for education, or democratic
education. Rather it asks that more serious consideration be given to the numerous complexities surrounding such projects. Specifically, the capacity of the word democracy as a slogan to be appropriated, used and abused by a wide range of individuals and groups must be recognised.

6.3 Creating critical citizenship

Reproduction theory reflects the belief that education can be regarded as a service industry in which students arrive at the school in an ‘uneducated state’, and leave in an educated one, or more accurately, leave conditioned to adhere to the requirements of the liberal-democratic polity and a market economy. It sees the school as a service station, or a supermarket in which customers leave with a trolley full of sought after produce. In reality many educational customers, particularly those deemed to be most in need of education in citizenship of the type designed to make them ‘safe for democracy’, may wander the aisles in an aimless manner for extended periods of time, and leave the store empty handed. Others may steal products, interfere with displays or engage in a range of other activities designed to disrupt the smooth operation of the business.

As I have attempted to show elsewhere, the comparison of schools with service providers operating in the interests of existing social and cultural order is fraught with problems. Likening a school to an airline in which the students are passengers, and teachers are flight stewards, I suggested,

After take-off, many passengers immediately go to sleep, apparently not caring where they are going. Others object to the disciplines imposed on them, such as having to sit while in flight, and become rather objectionable. On occasions, passengers even display violent behaviour towards the stewards. As flying a certain distance is compulsory, this also upsetting a proportion of the passengers, while others, having no real understanding of the purpose of flying, see the whole process as pointless. Understandably, they also become unruly and disruptive.
Boredom quickly sets in. Graffiti soon covers the tray tables and the seats deteriorate as the passengers jab holes in the fabric with sharp objects and pull out the stuffing. (Wise 1997a: 2)

Unlike theories of social transmission or reproduction, education as social transformation or reconstruction, is active rather than passive. This often reflects an influence of critical theory that examines the current structure of society, and the ways in which dominant groups exploit their positions of power and privilege. Rather than simply railing against such dominance, criticalists retain faith in participation as human agency to transform society. Critical theorists seek to identify and challenge the inherent contradictions between mutually opposing beliefs and practices that are characteristic of established social organisations. Such contradictions can provide a natural source of instability and hence, opportunity for change (Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte 1999: 27). One such contradiction may be the desirability of citizen participation. On the one hand, lack of active civic participation is deplored, yet on the other such participation is only to be condoned within strict limits and democratic traditions that may be perceived to be overly restrictive and reflective of a quite false model of democracy.

Critical theorists agree with conflict theorists such as Bowles and Gintis that the power of dominant groups is reinforced within schools, but differ in that criticalists argue that those involved in the education process are not powerless to resist this function. Clearly teachers play a crucial role here. They need to become critical pedagogues and continue to be active, questioning learners along side their students (Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte 1999: 32). Resistance theorists such as Giroux regard reproduction education theory as overly negative as it sees students and citizens more broadly, as unrealistically passive. It underestimates civic courage and the power of students to reject the dominant ideology through deviant and aberrant behaviour, or simply ignore it ‘as students are unwilling to engage themselves at all in the educative enterprise’ (Wood 1988: 82). Students also create their own cultural structures with which they defend themselves from the imposition of schools. Instead of the perfect worker, schools reproduce the worker as bearer of many of the characteristic antagonisms of the society as a whole (Johnson, cited by Giroux 1983: 199).
While it is naïve to deny that school education does play a vital role in preserving and ratifying the existing social order, there is potential within schools to provide the cultural capital that holds the possibility of human emancipation (Wood 1982: 69). A more critical pedagogy involves the enlightenment of both teachers and students. For example,

The system itself is worth studying with our pupils. Let them find out what it is, how it works, who serves it, and whom its serves. Let them research and find out for themselves, and let us as teachers and educators find out for ourselves, since we are often as ignorant as our students. (Kohl, quoted by Wood 1982: 84)

Despite, this Wood clearly has some reservations about the possibility of such resistance and emancipation. He subjects the notion of resistance theory to a scrutiny that hints of an improbability of resolving the tension between education as social reproduction, and education as emancipation. For instance, he notes the fact that most teachers are conservative by nature, many of whom regard the school as a bastion of equality of opportunity and progress, rather than a site of social transformation. In the current political climate, democracy itself has become a conservative rather than transformative force, and teachers can afford to advocate democracy without being particularly brave (Brosio 1994: 524). In his rejection of the radical educational cynicism he associated with reproduction theory in which educators resign themselves to pessimism and relative powerlessness, Wood is forced to adopt what can be seen as a conversely optimistic view in which radical educators work to persuade others of the preferable alternatives to what now exists. But by his own admission, many educators simply do not see education in the way Wood does.

Ultimately Wood's view of radical pedagogy is weakened on several fronts. Firstly, while he willingly acknowledges that education is an inherently political process designed to preserve and undergird the interests of those currently enjoying political privilege (1982: 70), he underestimates the inevitability that those elite interests will zealously resist, or counter-resist, any attempt to re-constitute the school as site of resistance pedagogy. In other words, having striven to configure school education
as a means of reproducing the society they want, dominant interests are unlikely to simply stand aside schools are re-configured as places of radical pedagogy and transformation.

Secondly, students may reject a radical pedagogy based on participatory democracy and opt instead for a cynical route based on a claim that given current limits on political power, citizen participation makes little difference anyway. Wood’s response to this possibility is unsatisfactory, arguing that such cynicism is ‘factually unsound’ and can effectively be countered by examination of historical and current reality. This is where Wood’s radical optimism encounters a further major problem. On the one hand, he endorses the use of social reality as a means of understanding the oppressive nature of existing social, economic and political conditions, yet on the other suggests cynicism can be eliminated by drawing inspiration from facts such as the resistance to the Vietnam War and opposition to nuclear arms.

More encouragingly, Giroux seeks to build a model of citizenship education which avoids the pitfall of treating schools as if they exist in a political and social vacuum (1983: 194). It is essential to recognise that schools do act as agents of social and cultural reproduction, and more importantly for schools to confront and act upon the implications of this. For instance, an analysis of power and transformation must be an integral part of citizenship education. Here Giroux’s version of resistance theory comes to the fore as he insists that power in the service of domination is never total (1983: 199). Points of contradiction and weakness can always be found. This resistance forms the potential for involvement by the critical pedagogy that Giroux advocates. Much of this resistance is in the form of symbolic opposition (for instance, dress, language and sub-cultures). However, Giroux argues this is of secondary importance and must be linked to a sense of civic courage - students acting as engaged citizens willing to question and confront the structural basis and nature of the larger social order.

Rather than mere symbolism, critical pedagogy demands that conflicts and contradictions be studied and analysed by teachers as issues to be problematised and used as points for classroom discussion and vehicles for connecting classroom practices to larger political issues (1983: 200-201). In this sense, critical pedagogy
can be differentiated from its relative, critical *thinking*. Burbules and Berk provide a useful basis upon which to make this distinction. Critical thinking is inherently linked to reasoning skills, and the critical thinker is one who is seeks evidence for holding particular views. It seeks to isolate invalid or inconsistent aspects of arguments, and to the critical thinker, this foundation in rationality is a prime, if not the prime aim of education itself (1999: 48). Critical pedagogy has its roots in the neo-Marxist tradition of critical theory. As we have seen, this is overtly political and involves efforts to work within education institutions to raise questions about inequalities of power, about the false myths of opportunity and merit, and the ways in which cultures and belief systems become internalised. However, as well as merely raising awareness of such matters, critical pedagogues seek change in the form of justice and emancipation.

Of course, to critical pedagogues such as Aronwitz and Giroux (1986; 1993), mere critical thinking is not enough. They disapprovingly identify as 'critical intellectuals' those who may have an alternative ideology and engage in savage critique of prevailing social arrangements, all from a self-consciously apolitical posture that avoids any activity to change society. Instead, educators need to be 'transformative intellectuals' who advocate and actively work for emancipatory change. Giroux insists that too much of the literature on citizenship education borders on despair and a crushing pessimism, and lacks the vision to dream, imagine or think about a better world (1983: 204). Of course like Wood, Giroux must face the fact that his view of view 'a better world' is not universally acknowledged. In a blunt revelation, reminiscent of the realism of Weber, Schumpeter, or Dye and Zeigler we encountered in Chapter Three, he notes:

> It is equally important to recognise that the structural alterations of capitalist societies in the West during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has vitiated in great part, the conditions for a democratic public sphere. Formal democracy has subsumed substantive democracy in bourgeois society, and behind the façade of elections and plebiscites hide economic and political interests that depoliticise the masses while simultaneously exploiting them. (Giroux 1983: 237)
The imperfect world lacking in social and economic democracy he wants to change is the very world dominant groups have deliberately sought to entrench. The education system has been a prime vehicle for the structural alterations Giroux identifies, and while he contends education can likewise be used to critique and challenge it, he pays scant regard to the *counter-resistance* that such attempts will inevitably generate. Indeed, important strands of educational reform witnessed in the West during the final two decades of the twentieth century, including the revival in civics and citizenship education itself, can be seen as forming part of that counter-resistance. Growing emphasis on instrumentalism such as vocational education; a range of ‘back-to-basics’ movements; more clearly articulated links between education and national economic success; and the preservation of the values of a privatised, minimalist form of democratic citizenship can all be characterised as education for a post-industrial age in Australia. While Giroux and Wood are correct to accuse the conflict theorists such as Bowles and Gintis of simplifying the degree of correspondence between schools and society, in turn they are vulnerable to a challenge that they underestimate the ability of dominant elites to maintain their power and privilege.

Resistance theories of education see the school as a political site. It becomes a place where teachers and students can challenge aspects of social reproduction designed to entrench the power and privilege of the dominant and elite groups. It draws succour from student deviance, lack of student engagement in the educational process and the ability of students to create a diverse range of cultural structures with which to deflect the reproduction messages being directed at them (Wood 1983, 1984, McLaren 1989). However, this may be to grossly oversimplify the nature of resistance and reproduction within education. It can be argued that much of the student behaviour and demeanour Wood regards as evidence of resistance towards the orthodoxy being presented by schools should be regarded as a form of *counter-resistance* towards the resistance theory on offer. This is at least partly acknowledged by Giroux in his ‘postmodern’ phase (for example, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope* 1997) in which the simplicity of the ‘dreaming for a better world’ so characteristic of his earlier work is largely replaced by talk of ‘slacking off’, and ‘border youth’ existing between a world of certainty, reason and progress, and a situation Giroux describes as postmodernism. It seems that Giroux cannot
fully come to terms with postmodernism. Despite his willingness to incorporate many of its features into his critical pedagogy, thoughtfully re-named 'postmodern' or 'border' pedagogy (1996: 74), he is forced to insist that important legacies be salvaged from modernism, although as he regrets, 'without the benefit of master narratives' (1996: 76). The most significant piece of salvage is the notion of democratic citizenship itself, something he struggles to find within the border world preoccupied with identity, plurality and hybridisation he describes. To this end, Giroux is somewhat plaintive in his hope that,

The struggle for power is not merely about expanding the range of texts that constitute the politics of representation. It is also about struggling within and against those institutions that wield economic, cultural and political power. (1996: 75)

Despite his attention on the 'border', Giroux cannot abandon the 'better world' he was dreaming of in the early 1980s because the social antagonisms of power, domination and emancipation that Giroux continues to use are thoroughly modernist traditions (Popkewitz 1999: 3). Despite his rhetorical flourish, there is little in the 1990s 'postmodern' Giroux that was not common currency in the liberal progressivism of the 1970s (Green 1997b: 19), and Giroux’s preoccupation with emancipation and the wrongs of society seem strangely outdated in a postmodern era (Miedema and Wardekker 1999: 68). As Siegel points out, 'postmodern advocacy of radical pedagogies (and politics) requires Old Fashioned Epistemology which endorses truth and justification as viable theoretical notions' (1993: 22). Moreover Giroux's critical pedagogy seems to come dangerously close to prejudging what are the correct conclusions for students to draw – in the case of Giroux, it is democracy and social justice (Burbules and Berk 1999).

Despite these criticisms, clearly the idea that school education be regarded as a process of critical inquiry and social change is more closely allied to the form of democratic citizenship this thesis advocates. As Giroux notes, in the traditional curriculum, notions of conflict and ideology are largely invisible. Politics disappears to be replaced by, to use Giroux's words, a 'façade of elections and plebiscites' so characteristic of many of the attempts to reinvigorate civics and
citizenship education in contemporary liberal-democracies. Theories of social reproduction are useful in that they force us to confront the political nature of schooling, and the fact that schools do not exist as autonomous entities free from the influence of society at large. In many ways, they directly reflect that society. Critical theorists such as Wood and Giroux are at their strongest when they recognise the complex relationships that exist between schools and the broader society. Despite some of the shortcomings discussed here, the critical or radical pedagogy endorsed by the social transformationists certainly contains more of the characteristics needed to deepen or democratise contemporary democracy, and it is towards these characteristics we now turn.

6.4 Democratic pedagogy

Civics and citizenship education has the potential to achieve truly emancipated citizens, but not within existing political and economic structures (Giarelli 1988). In conventional symbolic democracies such as Australia and the US, the people do not act as citizens but rather voters choose representatives who, in turn act like genuine citizens. These representatives argue, and make politics in the manner of true citizenship (Hess 1979: 10). Successful civics and citizenship education must aim to show that an enlightened citizenry is merely a myth perpetuated by elements of society with entrenched interests in demonstrating the efficacy of ‘active’ citizenship, but from within a narrow passive perspective. Education for democratic citizenship would expose what Giarelli calls the ‘new public philosophy’ in which ethics has become economics, democracy has become decision-making and politics has become public administration’ (Giarelli 1988: 53). What incentive do students have in acquiring the moral arts of democracy, if government prescribes the nature of these arts, and their exercise prescribed by bureaucracy? (Goodlad 1996: 107).

Instead of this new public philosophy, what is needed is a model of citizenship that makes a clear distinction between the people and the state, and clearly establishes the idea that the state itself is often the source of citizen alienation and disengagement. In this sense, to be a citizen is to be 'a breaker and a maker, as well
as a finder and user of society (Giarelli 1988: 64). In advocating education as promoting the capacity for constructive resistance, Giarelli acknowledges this is likely to frighten many educators. Furthermore, he reminds us of the paradoxical, even contradictory nature of an education program designed to re-enliven interest in active citizenship but may in fact produce outcomes which may increase a sense of cynicism and disenchantment with conventional political structures and institutions. These contradictions are effectively portrayed by Sehr (1997) in his fascinating account of education for democracy at ‘Uptown High School’. Described as a school that ‘encourages student engagement and preparation for public democratic citizenship’, Sehr portrays the tension within a school which on the one hand, urges students to attend demonstrations against government education cutbacks, while on the other, conducts an on-going war between students and staff over the students’ rights to wear hats and caps inside the school building (1997: 158-166).

Democracy and democratic process can never be givens, but are continually open to review and contest. Persistent questioning in the quest of a democratic polity is fundamentally important in civics and citizenship education (Pratte 1988: 22). While on first blush, like much of the language of citizenship, this is unlikely to raise much concern within the ranks of a broad range of citizenship education advocates, a more prying inquiry may reveal some deeper concerns. Some may have cause to wonder just what such persistent questioning may involve. Will it be a force of social reproduction, or transformation?

Once again, we confront perhaps the nub of the matter. A reproductionist view of civics and citizenship education may well endorse, even celebrate, the idea of persistent questioning as the great strength of democracy. It is easy to drop into flowery rhetoric about how wars were fought to protect our rights to engage in such questioning. However, the palpable, yet often unspoken, understanding is that such questioning will be conducted within the boundaries of the existing political culture. The object of persistent questioning should not be to undo what we have struggled to win. Discovering Democracy attempts to demonstrate this in a unit entitled ‘A Democracy Destroyed’ in which the rise of Nazism in Germany is analysed. After examining the methods used by the Nazis to remove the democratic rights of Germans, the unit reveals its purpose. It notes,
The destruction of democracy in Germany happened a long time ago in a very different place from modern Australia. However, there may still be important lessons which we can take from history, and which can help us to be vigilant about our own democracy today. (*Discovering Democracy* 1998a: 98)

However this presents a problem for those advocating an education in the reproduction of democracy. Even an advocate of a strongly historical, ‘pantheon of democratic heroes’ approach to civics and citizenship education will find it difficult to deny the fundamental right of citizens to question and challenge existing political structures and practices. An examination of the achievements of many such heroes will reveal just such persistent questioning. Indeed, it is often the source of our admiration for them and the reason for their accession to the pantheon.

Although not a course in history, *Discovering Democracy* does contain a strong element of narrative in its presentation. For instance, the materials include a wall chart entitled *The History of Australian Democracy* (*Discovering Democracy* 1999b). This is presented in the form of a time line of major events in Australian political history between 1788 and 2001. Interestingly the time line’s arrows do not cease at 2001, but point to the next, as yet unknown development in Australia’s democracy. Yet, beyond the establishment of an Australian republic, one is tempted to ponder just what the arrow is pointing to. What is the next major reform to Australian democracy?

In a clear reflection of John Hirst's personal interests (Hirst, interview 2000), the ideas of the Chartist movement are singled out in *Discovering Democracy* for their contribution to the evolution of Australian government. A detailed examination of Chartism, and its links with Australian democracy is included in the Lower Secondary Units (Years 7 and 8). It is easy to locate other examples of persistent questioning in the development of Australian democracy. Just why is attention drawn to these events? Does *Discovering Democracy* endorse a continuation of this style of challenging contemporary Australian political practices and institutions with a view to making further improvements to Australian democracy? Or does it
instead suggest students be aware of the seminal events that marked the course on the way to the idealised state of government Australians currently enjoy?

The distinct lack of Crick’s ‘inquisitive turbulence’ within *Discovering Democracy* about possible flaws in the operation of the contemporary Australian political system clearly implies the latter approach. There is little suggestion in *Discovering Democracy* that the institutions and workings of Australian government will be much different in 50 years from what they are today. All the noble struggles seem to lie in Australia’s past. As Davidson (2000) argues, there is little attempt to examine what citizenship and democracy might mean in Australian today, and hence there is no way in which we can measure contemporary practices in order to determine how short we are of achieving meaningful democratic citizenship. All Australians who could reasonably expect to vote can now do so; ample opportunities exist to join a pressure group and seek to influence public policy; and Australia has an excellent record of protecting human rights. Students are acquainted with all these matters in *Discovering Democracy*. Both direct and subtler forms of comparative analysis form a strong educational strategy within the program. Case studies examining the rise of Nazism in Germany (‘A Democracy Destroyed’), and successful campaigns to extend the franchise to women and minority groups within the Australian population reinforce an understanding that the democratic conditions Australians enjoy are far superior to those prevailing in other times and other places.

It would be foolhardy to suggest the operation and structure of the Australian system of government will remain unchanged or that Australia has reached the zenith of its democratic achievement. The danger of adopting an overly celebratory approach to Australian democracy in the way favoured by the *Discovering Democracy* Program is that it limits the persistent questioning that younger Australians can be involved in. By looking *backwards* to the milestones of Australian democracy, or *outwards* to the blatant abuse of democratic principles evident in many other parts of the world, young Australian citizens may feel they are being denied the right to look *inwards* at the nature and operation of the prevailing system of government. By not living in the heady days of Eureka or Federation, Australians can conclude they have missed the opportunity to advance Australian democracy; that all they can do in maintain the tradition. Meaningful
civics and citizenship education must involve more than this. Democracy needs more than merely protection. It is a path that citizens in a pluralist society try to walk together (Parker 1996: 191). Indeed the notion that citizens can do little more than act as protectors of an existing tradition may be an important contributing factor of the Australian civic deficit. As I argue in the Preface to the school text, *People, Power and Politics*,

Australia is often cited as one the best examples of democratic government in the world, yet how close to a 'perfect democracy' are we? To recognise that Australia may still have some way to go before it can claim the title of 'world's best democracy' requires some critical examination of our system of government and politics... If Australians feel that the gap between the government and the people is widening and power is flowing towards the government and away from the people, then cynicism and disillusionment with politics and politicians are likely to increase. Yet closing this gap is a two-way process. As well as politicians keeping in touch with the people they represent, the people need to exercise their democratic rights. *People, Power and Politics* encourages young Australians to engage in this process - by becoming informed about their political system and by becoming more actively involved in it. (Wise 2000a: x)

As Pratte argues, 'should civic education exclude as one of its essential tasks the serious questioning of democracy itself, then we risk in civic education a minimal standard of informed and rational decision-making. We are merely producing doctrinaire democrats' (1988: 23).

### 6.5 Resistance and counter-resistance

Many Australian schools remain committed to a version of a liberal model of education. Overtly conservative values are replaced with a liberal ideology designed to fulfill students' needs, alongside a sense of order and control maintained by a pedagogy of cordial relations and child centredness (Giroux 1997). All this occurs within a largely depoliticised environment which seeks to maintain the dominant culture free from considerations such as how power is acquired and how it is maintained. In a curious way, students are empowered in a very disempowering
environment. The ballot box and the market are praised as devices that are sensitively attuned to the wishes of consumers and citizens, yet fail to demonstrate how individuals can develop their capacities for social participation, and their abilities to make informed and critical choices (Bowles and Gintis 1989: 27). Although many schools and educators are likely to have been influenced by Giroux’s 1980s proposals for civic courage, critical pedagogy and resistance, this is conducted within a liberal setting. As a result, many schools became both a place of social and economic reproduction, and a place for critical questioning.

Rather than the school as simply a place to preserve and protect the existing order, throughout much the 1980s and 1990s it also became a place to challenge the notion of privatised democracy and acquiescent citizenship. However, it was a form of challenge that often falls short of the sort of persistent questioning advocated in the previous section. As I argue elsewhere, by the mid-1990s the school had become a bastion of political correctness, and as a result for many students, a boring place to be.

If you ask kids why they don’t like school, many will say it is because school is ‘boring’, and we ‘never have any fun’. While these reasons have been around for decades, if they are placed within the current debate about political correctness, is it possible to suggest that schools are becoming increasingly unpalatable to kids because as institutions they are becoming too PC [politically correct]? More significantly, are teachers becoming increasingly alien to kids because as a group teachers are too PC? . . . Politically correct views, while they may be rational and reasonable are also boring and full of bad news. Kids like fun. They like taking risks. They like talking about inconsequential things and laughing a lot. They are probably very politically incorrect. (Wise 1996)

In these circumstances, the aberrant student behaviour Wood finds so encouraging in fact indicates a rejection of the politics of engagement and participation. It represents a shift from the politics of struggle, to the politics of fun. In the spirit of resistance, many teachers and schools in the past two decades have intensified efforts to re-politicise education in the face of the dramatic changes sweeping through most Western liberal-democracies. They started to dream of Giroux’s
‘better world’. Yet, just as this occurred, many students resisted these dreams. They have remained one jump ahead of schools and teachers by dismissing the resistance and radicalism of political awareness and action as profoundly old-fashioned. At the end of the twentieth century, resistance became just another form of reproduction, and for that reason a subject of derision by youth. Just when schools were showing interest in re-politicising education, students become less interested in this style of politics because, as Beck reminds us, it is ‘no fun’.

A further complicating factor is that many individual teachers represent important elements of both reproduction and resistance. For instance, despite my earlier recognition of what was described as the politics of fun, as an educator I have alternated between orthodox resistance theory, and counter-resistance. The student text, *Give and Take - an issues approach to civics*, (Wise and Baron 1999) contains a section entitled ‘The power of the swoosh’. This is an analysis of the operations of the Nike Corporation, especially the production of the company’s sports shoes in Asian factories. This material is incorporated in the text as an example of an issue in which Australians could employ skills of persistent questioning. While it is not presented simply as criticism of Nike, that the possibility of worker and consumer exploitation is raised, provides a clue of the intent of the exercise. A question directed towards students that asks, ‘If it were proved that Nike was abusing its workers in Asian factories, would this alter your attitude towards Nike, and its products?’, reinforces this point. As the writer of this exercise, I acknowledge its political nature. It is designed to challenge student perceptions of one of the icons of the consumer age. Aware of the allegation that Nike sub-contractors do employ exploitative methods of production, I incorporated this argument into a book designed for widespread Australian distribution as a civics and citizenship education resource. At the same time, I realised the exercise has a distinctly old-fashioned flavour. It smacks of a style of political action, resistance and emancipation from a previous era. Yet, at approximately the time I prepared this exercise, I developed another exercise for the text, *People, Power and Politics* (Wise 2000a) entitled, ‘Graffiti - Mindless Scribbling or Serious Statement?’ (See Appendix 5). By presenting the possibility that graffiti may be regarded as a legitimate form of political statement, it seeks to move politics beyond the realms of parliaments and the voting booth. While it can be seen as a form of resistance in a
similar vein to the Nike exercise, it goes further. It envisages young people producing graffiti while at the same time, wearing Nike sports shoes. This is because the exercise considers a range of types of graffiti. As well as the material dealing with traditional issues of struggle, justice and oppression, it includes examples of contemporary hip-hop graffiti likely to have been produced by middle class youths for no other reason that it was fun or a personal challenge for the writer. By shifting the focus to the politics of fun and identity it notes that politics has moved beyond issues of left and right. It notes that much modern graffiti is a basic statement of individual identity, a single word in the form of a tag saying ‘I exist, and this is who I am’ (Wise 2000a: 65).

The exercise can be presented as an attempt to take seriously the idea that for many young people, the politics of institutions and states is of little interest and relevance. It recognises that for many people, education in the structures and procedures of mainstream politics is social reproduction disguised as resistance. However, this may be an altogether too sanguine view. Is the exercise really anything more than a slightly more subtle form of social reproduction? By taking graffiti ‘seriously’, by seeking to intellectualise the matter, does it do anything more than appropriate a form of popular culture in the interests of maintaining social control, a device often used by liberal theorists trying to operate a pedagogy of cordial relations (Giroux 1997)?

In preparing materials for use in civics and citizenship education, and political education more broadly, the tensions between social reproduction and transformation constantly arise. The cover designs of each of the two student texts referred to earlier are illustrative in this regard. In advising on the front cover of Give and Take - an issues approach to civics, I strongly recommended any photographs or illustrations that were used should be of ordinary Australian citizens, rather than rather cliched images of parliaments and politicians. This advice was based on a wish to convey the message that the book is about forms of citizenship that extend beyond formalities of voting and visiting parliament house. As Figure 6.1 shows, I was successful in this argument. However, somewhat ironically, when I offered the same advice in relation to the text, People, Power and Politics, I was overruled. It was felt the cover needed to incorporate images of
Figure 6.1: Cover design of text, Wise, R., and Baron, V., (1999). *Give and Take: an issues approach to civics*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press
Figure 6.2: Cover design of text: Wise, R., (2000). *People, Power and Politics*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
mainstream Australian politicians (see Figure 6.2). Despite my argument that the appearance of prime ministers and presidents on the cover would do little to convey the notion of political participation I was trying to endorse, the publisher clearly wanted to remain within more orthodox political boundaries. As Hunter (1994) has argued, it is difficult to avoid acknowledgement that schools are an 'improvised reality from the available and governmental technologies' as a means of coping with immediate and dire contingencies.

Conclusion

This Chapter has established the crucial link between the political and practical contexts of this thesis. By shifting the primary attention from the more abstract notions of civic participation, citizenship and a civic deficit considered in Part A, and onto the school, it reminds us that civics and citizenship education goes to the heart of the enduring debate about what it is that schools are attempting to do.

This Chapter shows that citizenship education can be conceived as a means of reproducing existing institutions and values of Australian society. This can be regarded in either a positive or negative light. Functionalists see school education as performing the totally defensible task of social formation, while conflict theorists view this process as merely a device by which dominant social, cultural and economic groups appropriate the education system in order to perpetuate their power and privilege. While both these perspectives certainly hold some appeal on an empirical level, neither offers much sustenance for democratic citizenship. The first is too compliant, the second too gloomy. Each lacks the sense of nosiness, of persistence, of discursive deliberation that characterise the deeper form of democracy required to address Australia's civic deficit.
Given these shortcomings, it is tempting to embrace the criticalist school that sees education as a means of social transformation and emancipation from oppression. Clearly, this bears a much stronger resemblance to democratic citizenship. However, as the Chapter has shown, this position is not without problems of its own. While seeking to expose the intrinsically political nature of school education, it then invests too much hope in the ability of educators to tackle the prevailing sources of power that dominate the purpose and content of curriculum. It underestimates the degree of counter-resistance likely to be generated by projecting the school as a place of resistance. On the other hand, it overestimates the degree of consensus within educational communities as to what education is designed to achieve. While perhaps not representing a typical cross-section of society, school communities obviously contain a broad range of opinion on the politics and ideology of education.

What then is to be done by schools? Rather than petering out in the realm of theory, this thesis seeks to add a practical dimension to the problem of how school education might help produce democratic citizens. It does so in a clear recognition that any movement beyond the level of rhetoric is fraught. Advocacy of 'democratic citizenship' is relatively unproblematic if it is left at that. However, to do so would leave this thesis open to the very accusations it has levelled at others. Who could object to a program of education in the concept of democratic citizenship in 2001? Given the popularity and 'safety' of democracy in contemporary society, it has a benign and innocuous ring, reminiscent of much of the language of citizenship. However, as latter sections of this Chapter have shown, to leave matters at this point is unsatisfactory and unhelpful. Rather, there is an obligation to spell out more precisely what the idea of education for democratic citizenship means. The closing sections of this Chapter commenced this process by critically analysing aspects of one view of education for democracy, and also presenting an alternative perspective.

This process intensifies in the next two chapters. In addressing what schools can do to promote Australian democratic citizenship, Chapter Seven undertakes a more detailed examination of the strengths and shortcomings of the Discovering Democracy Program as well as focusing greater attention on my own work in the
area of civics and citizenship education. A case study forms the basis of Chapter Eight. Here the issue of the role of school education in the Australian republican debate is taken up. It provides a particularly effective means of exploring the diversity of views about just what roles schools could perform in this issue, and then models the style of citizenship education this thesis proposes.
Chapter Seven

Maximising Democratic Citizenship

Introduction

At several points during this thesis, references have been made to the possible irony expressed by the title of the major Australian civics and citizenship education initiative, Discovering Democracy. Does a vibrant and living democracy exist in Australia merely waiting to be disclosed to young Australians; or is Australian democracy something yet to be discovered? Of course, it is somewhat churlish to deny Australia’s democratic traditions and practices. However, as Dryzek (1996) points out democracy cannot be discovered in a static and rigid form. It is in a never-ending process of advancement or retreat (Mouffe 1993: 72). In declaring my interest in deepening or ‘democratising’ democracy, it is argued that Australian democracy is not all it could be, and that, in fact, a recognition of this is directly linked to the civic deficit. Where citizens feel the efficacy of their actions are of dubious worth, they are more likely to withdraw their involvement, express cynicism in the political system, or seek alternative means of exercising their citizenship. As Barber argues, democracies tend to erode from within. They are consumed by complacency in the guise of privatism, arrogance in the guise of empire, irresponsibility in the guise of individualism, selfishness in the guise of rights, passivity in the guise of deference to experts, and greed in the guise of productivity (1984: xvii). They are not consumed simply by citizens’ inadequate knowledge of civic institutions and practices of government. Indeed, education that merely celebrates these institutions and practices may do little more than produce the passivity in the face of experts that Barber deplores. Education for democratic citizenship must strive to identify these threats to democracy. This is not achieved by seeking to de-politicise politics or silence dissent. Instead, it requires articulate citizens with the skills of inquiry and discourse needed to expose causes of erosion.
In this Chapter, I want to consider the contribution *Discovering Democracy* may make to a deepening of Australian democracy, as well as offer some alternative proposals as to how the education system can contribute to this process.

7.1 Persistent questioning

Chapter Six drew attention to the importance of Pratte's idea of 'persistent questioning' in a democracy. The ability of citizens to engage in a continual process of review and contest is the great benefit democracy bestows, but it is also the means by which the system is nourished. It is this style of citizenship that is considered so vital for the health of democracy. However it is difficult to form a consensus as to what this means in practice. Both parts of Pratte's suggestion may be of concern. Just what is being 'questioned'? Challenging questions about the nature and operation of contemporary Australian government may not constitute the type of inquiry deemed suitable for young Australians to engage in. As we saw in Chapter Five, questioning by ill-informed or confused citizens may be symptomatic of the civic deficit education is being asked to address. Also, the notion of persistence may cause disquiet, implying as it does a refusal to settle for what Pascoe (1996) calls 'political prissiness or compliance'. Kelly (1995) displays few such reservations in arguing that it is not the role of education in a democratic society to foster passivity or apathy in the citizens of the future. On the contrary, he believes educational provision must be positively designed to encourage and promote questioning, challenge and critique, dialogue and debate (1995: 133) reflecting an emphasis on the open communication, deliberation and exchange of ideas which Dewey claimed constituted a democratic public (1988: 153-54).

Clearly, Kelly is a persistent questioner. His views are endorsed by Hogan and Fearnley-Sander's critique of *Discovering Democracy* in which they stress that young Australians should not 'learn about' democratic citizenship via the acquisition of slabs of propositional historical and institutional knowledge, but rather understand the practice of citizenship in deliberative and democratic classrooms. This is best accomplished in situations which give students ample and meaningful opportunities to 'investigate, analyse, audit, critique, deliberate, delegate, listen,
speak, report, advocate, monitor, collaborate, plan, organise, represent, choose, respect, tolerate, value and commit' (1999: 59).

One of the most significant challenges Kelly endorses is about the nature of contemporary democracy itself. Like Davidson (2000), he believes that the primary purpose in identifying the characteristics of the idealised model of democracy is to judge by how far contemporary models fail to reflect ideal practice. It also makes it easier to ascertain whether any serious attempt is even being made to reach it (Kelly 1995: 104). This highlights the tendency, pointed to in Chapter Five, of governments to recite the grand rhetoric of democracy while frequently ignoring basic principles in the development and implementation of policy and programs. Contemporary democratic practice can be examined as representing a fair attempt to replicate high principle in the face of the contingencies and turmoil of modern society, or it can be examined as something which often falls well short of what could reasonably be expected of it. Like Kelly, this thesis favours the latter approach. Democracy cannot be deepened by simply a Churchillian styled acceptance that 'this is as good as it gets', and it is far better than the alternatives. As I argue elsewhere,

Successful teaching of political and civics education requires the generation of student interest. This may require teachers taking some new approaches to teaching the subject. Some of these approaches may involve looking at politics in a much more candid manner than some may feel comfortable with. Young people cannot be blamed for being cynical if what they are told does not match the reality they see around them. I don’t encourage students to be disrespectful towards politicians. However, when politicians act in such a way as to lose respect, they are fair game. The concept of civics education as a means of transmitting essential political knowledge has failed before and is in danger of failing again . . . Learning about politics can be stimulating and interesting. However, for this to occur, it is necessary to take a few risks. Teachers must be prepared to look at the Australian political system – warts and all. (Wise 1997b: 2)

Kelly rejects the idea that democracy should be seen as totalising theory seeking to discover an unproblematic universal truth as to the best way to organise society. This implies the dogmatism, the certainty and the assurance of democracy as a