Knowing our place

Children talking about power, identity and citizenship

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Sue Howard (1946–2006)

A great teacher
whose respect for children's thinking
shone through all her work.

Contents

Foreword

More than 25 years ago, educational research, and more generally social science research, was dominated by large-scale design experiments, complete with control groups. This instrumental approach to understanding was based on what was assumed to be a scientific tradition, in which variables were isolated and subjects manipulated in order to prove an hypothesis. While many of these experiments – such as those of Bandura, which showed passages of film to children to see whether they would imitate them – now seem absurd, there was nevertheless great suspicion of research that was based on trying to understand young children, their complex reactions and their thoughts (Cullingford, 1984).

In recent times it has become acceptable to take into account the voices of children – at least to listen to them, if not to hear what they say (Ruddock, Chaplain and Wallace, 1996). But, although the hold of Piagetian accounts of child development has been loosened, it still remains a powerful myth. This atavistic belief in the limitations, naiveté and untrustworthiness of young children remains a powerful force in the way in which schools continue to be run (Egan, 2002).

We no longer have intellectual excuses for not taking the thoughts and accounts of young children seriously. All the recent research on young children's cognition and on genetics demonstrates two clear findings. The first is the power of the brain and the complexity of its functioning, social and emotional as well as ratiocinative (Pinker, 2007; Damasio, 1997). The second is that the brain functions strongly from the moment of birth; some would argue that it functions before birth (Rutter, 2003; Rose, 2005). These findings have very important implications for the education system, although they have not yet been taken into account (Cullingford, 2007).

The significance and the strength of this book is that it explores ethnographically the most important source for understanding children's thinking: young children themselves. This might appear to be counter to the still-existing instrumental fashions of the time, and therefore may be disregarded as dealing with subjects who had limitations, but it is, in fact,

a return to the more astringent realities of understanding when children were not typologised as different (Ariès, 1962; Elias, 1978). In this book the authors apply their skills in exploring the complex mindsets of young people in their search for identity, in a way that uncovers the subtlety beneath the spontaneous opinions proffered. This is a complex matter, since children are from the beginning aware of the most significant of social facts; the points of view held by different people and the distinction between truth and falsehood (Dunn, 1988). They are also accustomed to polite obedience – or at least submission to authority – so it takes intelligent sensitivity to explore the meanings of what they say.

The research upon which this book is based pays due regard to the ideas of children and the influences on them. This approach is justified by neurological research and probes deeper than those complicated adjustments between received myths and personal reality. The subjects of the research are Australian, but the subject of the book is international. What these young people have to say is located within a distinct context, but the implications of what they say are universal.

Nowadays, people are constantly worried about the times in which they live. They are conscious of external threats, whether from the environment, and what people have done to it, or from people from other cultures and religions. They are aware of internal tribulations that affect the economy and behaviour. That concern has its roots in early experience, as well as in continuing awareness. There is always a balance between the sense of the communal and the 'otherness' of the international. The phrase 'global village' sums up both the interdependency of the world as a whole, in its financial arrangements and cultural comparisons, and the new manifestations of parochialism and tribalism. We may believe that international travel and communications lead to greater understanding and mutual tolerance, but we are also incessantly reminded of the many examples of intolerance and prejudice (Cullingford, 1999). Knowledge does not in itself change conduct.

Notions of being 'Australian' are not simply parochial, but are a stage in the development of personal identity. Hence, this book is not just about Australia. Although the notion of a nation state appears to some commentators to be somewhat dated, as one of a number of imagined communities, and with manifestations of banal symbolism, the constant sense of definition against others, whether it be a tribe or family or region, is still an important layer of self-realisation. Young children everywhere know about the almost arbitrary chance of being born where they are, and of the cultural consequences, such as language and attitude. These are feelings they explore, mostly with each other, and that question of why people are as they are and behave as they do remains at the core of their curiosity – and their troubles.

One of the examples of the counter-effects of internationalism is the growing interest shown in 'citizenship'. This concern is often interpreted as a new kind of chauvinism or patriotism, of saluting the flag and pledging oaths to behave in certain ways. As is the case that the notion of children's rights can lead at least to acknowledging the fact that they have a voice, ideas of citizenship can be turned from the usual tokenism into something deeper. In its usual application, citizenship does not include children. Citizenship can be a course in civics or constitutional knowledge, or a test that foreigners have to pass, or even a challenge to loyalty for football or cricket teams. It can also mean a far deeper definition and questioning of cultural values, which will always involve the sense of identity of individuals. There is a tendency to employ ideas of citizenship in more trivial ways, while the deeper question (notions of what it means to be British, Australian, Fijian etc.) remains unanswered. Here, in this book, however, we see the idea of citizenship linked to personal values, and the search as something more profound (see Chapter 2).

Although children would not express themselves in such crude terms, the profound question that drives their curiosity is about the world they are in, and the people they meet. Their constant query is about why people behave as they do, whether these people are themselves, their peers, their teachers or the wider communities of the neighbourhood and television. Their sense of the balance between personal and social morality, and the rival responsibilities of genetics and upbringing as reasons for behaviour, are constantly engaged, particularly in school (Cullingford, 2007). This is the notion of 'culture' in the true sense, as renamed by Bourdieu, and is encapsulated in the widespread and heartfelt cry: 'It's not fair!' Thus, each child's sense of self or 'habitus' grounded in personal experience is constantly challenged. It might be mostly kept hidden, under the surface or beneath the attentions of teachers, but it is this awareness of values, morals and meanings that drive young children's experience and their interpretation of each other.

The constant observations of others include the immediacy of friendship and enmity, which dominates life in the playground, as well as the roles and hierarchies in which teachers operate. At school, children scrutinise both the private interactions and the public performances that are at the core of human behaviour. For the most part, they have to work out the motivations and the causes of such behaviour for themselves, for it is not part of the official curriculum. Social learning becomes a necessary centre of their interest, not only in the testing of interactions of small groups, but in the larger assemblies of pupils in classes. While much of home life is essentially individual and private, the world of school is collective and public, in which the individual is persuaded to be as anonymous as possible.

Being part of the social centre that is school, children understand the concept of 'otherness', of the clashes between people and the assertiveness of the self against what is defined as different in other people (see Chapter 8). The sense of individuality and shared identity is defined against the perception of other people. While this is the basis of the social world of the school, it is extrapolated against the realisation of differences in other people. This is a reality made clear by the information they receive on public media, on the news, the Internet and through conversation.

The ways in which children learn about society, and, therefore, about politics, are not through formal presentations about the constitution and the law. They learn in a far more immediate way by observing how politics operates. They do not only learn about the abstract or theoretical concepts of power and of hierarchy, but see how these forces unfold in their daily lives. At the most obvious level are the structures of school, the distribution of power through personality and through position, between the teachers and principals, and also the place of the individual school within the larger educational system, with external influences as well as internal constraints. Schools demonstrate both the benign and malignant effects of power and control (see Chapter 1). Their pupils learn about the nature of rules, the domination of laws and the yearning for justice. They accept the need for rules but question the way they are imposed.

This personal analysis is carried out at a more sophisticated level than lessons in civics. It is developed in a number of ways and through multiple experiences. The most immediate observation is that of the peer group, where, from the trials of friendship to the forming of distinct gangs, there is a diurnal display of a variety of behaviours, some of which threaten them and some of which they can observe neutrally. But the concept of fairness or unfairness is not just as a consequence of outbreaks of trouble, of particular individuals being 'picked on'. It relates to the vision of the whole world. Nothing could be clearer than the description, say, on television, of the contrast between the rich and the poor. Images of destitution, promoted by aid agencies, abound. Demonstrations of inordinate wealth are displayed in contrast. This juxtaposition demonstrates the imbalance of the world as a whole.

Not surprisingly, many children extrapolate a clear understanding of the nature of power and of the distinctions between the rich and the poor, between those who have and those who have not. Citizenship in the reality of this context becomes a central matter, not only to their sense of identity, but to their understanding of society as a whole. Politics, in their eyes, becomes essentially concerned with the manifestations of power, of the distribution of resources and possessions. It is linked to the simple experience of the everyday with questions about rules and the seeking of reasons for them, with puzzlement about the extent to which they have

a right to be heard. Giving children a voice, as the authors do, is itself a liberating experience that bolsters their resilience but, importantly, it also uncovers the fact that children already have a strong sense of reality. The experience of this kind is not naive or simplistic.

Schools are small and intense communities. They are at once enclosed and forced upon their inhabitants by law, and also occasional, part of the larger experience of neighbourhoods and home. This juxtaposition makes them unusual and explains why some of their influences, for good or bad, go so deep and at a level that is never fully rationalised. The school contains models of all kinds, with many internal groups within the whole (see Chapter 10). It is the school itself that makes such a deep impression upon the future conduct of students, rather than the curriculum it delivers. As a complex social centre with clear lines of command and influence, the school is a demonstration of the future social world.

Should schools then have a duty to shape their students, to make them into model citizens? Should they foster patriotism and make more of such gestures as saluting the flag? (Chapter 6). The reasons for the promotion of a sense of belonging are commonly explained in terms of social cohesion, in underlining particular civil virtues. The problem with such explicit propaganda is that it is based on an assumption of a collective identity that needs to have an alternative; the 'other'. Patriotism is not just defensive or a cloak of protective well being; it implies defence and protection from something else. The verbal trinity of 'safe, free and proud' begs questions. Free from what? Safe from what? Given all the information about otherness that the children keep being presented with through the media, these are questions that answer themselves.

If schools are not supposed to teach nationalism but, as in the case of the Olympic Games, to foster a strong sense of national pride, the distinction is quite subtle. In the hidden curriculum schools teach all manner of things. The real lessons are not so much about literacy and numeracy as about behaviour. When pupils reflect on what they have learned in school they dismiss even the core curriculum of English and maths which dominates the timetable, and say they actually learn about relationships, how to deal with peers and with teachers (Cullingford, 2002). It is in pragmatic ways – the daily self-control, the witnessing of behaviour and the avoidance of trouble – that pupils actually learn about factors such as tolerance and prejudice.

It is in the unofficial and personal experience of school, and in the inadvertent messages, that real notions of citizenship are developed. Students learn the subtle art of knowing how to conform even to rules that they resent, how to submit to the demands of school, while maintaining those pleasures that are important to them, like talking to each other.

There is always a dichotomy at the heart of schooling. This is sometimes presented as the difference between the official and the hidden curriculum. But it goes deeper than this. The conundrum arises from the fact that children have a deep-seated love of learning. They need to ask questions, to explore, to understand, to extend their language and share ideas. But they also resent being taught – with the implication that they know nothing. In the way that schools are socially constructed, the implacable weight of the curriculum subtly clashes against the desire of children to learn. It is not the fault of teachers, who do an admirable job in different difficult conditions. It is a result of the tests, the league tables, the competition, with targets and inspections and the instrumental emphasis on skills rather than understanding.

The value of this book lies in the exploration of the ways that children make sense of a larger world. It celebrates what is most significant and often hidden. The difficulty in understanding the ideas of children is not only that they are rarely asked about them but because they are polite and even deferential. They understand what they are supposed to say, and have become accustomed to every question being a closed one with only one right answer. Even 'How are you today?' tends to be interpreted as, 'What is he after?' 'Why pick on me?' This way of adapting is a means of coping, of remaining undetected. That this defensiveness can be overcome is demonstrated in this book.

Meanwhile, the personal understandings develop in the children's own spaces, taken from a variety of sources, observed, overheard and experienced. They see beyond the official banal chauvinism (Chapter 3). They maintain a strong sense of neutrality about the information they receive and understand the ambiguities that underlie the sense of the 'otherness', say, of asylum seekers.

There are also some powerful mythologies that children share, a kind of personal curriculum. Although there are many associations of Australia with its exotic fauna and flora, with sport as well as landscape, the shared attitudes of children towards the towns and countryside are firmly held and communicated. The sense of 'space' is a crucial one. It means personal space within the home, psychological space, as well as places in which to roam. The countryside becomes a symbol of possibilities, of an alternative way of living (Chapter 4). This is because the towns are so closely associated with the threat of traffic, of people and of pollution. The sense of urban reality is given an edge to children's conception of their world. The sense of juxtaposition between open landscape and closed towns is not an abstract one, any more than is the contrast between riches and poverty.

The children create their sense of the world through disparate influences and sources of information, uncensored and uncontrolled. This

arises because of the essential neutrality with which they start to view the world. Prejudice has to be taught and comes later. This neutrality is a laconic acceptance of people as they are, in their good and bad manifestations. All the symbols and images about places and people are not just simple associations but gather particular meanings.

This observation of the world is carried out by forensic intelligence. They might not be articulate, or express things in accepted terms, but if they are idiosyncratic it is not so much to do with unformed minds, as with looking at the brave new world with surprise, like an intelligent alien being landing on Earth. The linked openness of mind and the sharp intelligence means that children seek help; they look for someone with whom to share ideas. They may not want to be told, but would rather have intelligent conversations, not so much about matters imposed on them but about ideas that interest them. They need intelligent relationships. It is when the desire for relationships, for the recognition of intelligence and the suppressing of personal information takes place, that they become vulnerable to trauma.

This book is, however, about some of the lighter sides of children's learning and their resilience. It celebrates their capacity to explore ideas. It demonstrates the importance of the feelings about the self in relation to others. It is not about notions of citizenship as a concept, but about conduct and values. The sophisticated methodology and the honesty, curiosity and vigour of the explorations do not simply add a new dimension but go to the heart and core of education.

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Acknowledgements

This book brings together a series of studies relating to children's understandings of citizenship, and suggestions for education in this area that would lead to the development of socially and historically aware participative citizens. Earlier versions of some chapters have been published in a number of specialist journals. In bringing them together in this book, editing and updating them and adding in a number of new chapters that explore parts of the project previously unpublished, we hope to demonstrate the empirical basis of the work, along with its ongoing commitment to educational research and development.

Chapters based on papers originally published in the following journals are:

Chapter 1: Howard, S. and Gill, J. (2000) 'The pebble in the pond: Children's constructions of power, politics and democratic citizenship', *Cambridge Journal of Education, 30*(3), pp. 357–78. <http://www.informaworld.com>

Chapter 2: Howard, S. and Gill, J. (2000) 'Under the power lines: Reflections on schooling, civics education and citizenship', *Change and Transformation in Education*, *3*(1).

Chapter 3: Howard, S. and Gill, J. (2001) ' "It's like we're a normal way and everyone else is different": Australian children's constructions of citizenship and national identity', *Educational Studies*, *27*(1), pp. 87–103. <http://www.informaworld.com>

Chapter 4: Howard, S. and Gill, J. (2002) 'Somewhere to call home? Schooling and a sense of place and belonging in an increasingly globalised world', *Curriculum Perspectives, 22*(3), pp. 33–42.

Chapter 5: Gill, J. and Howard, S. (2006) 'Revisioning the social: Young Australians and the rural/urban divide', *Citizenship Teaching and Learning, 2*(1), pp. 66–78.

Chapter 6: Howard, S. and Gill, J. (2005) 'Learning to belong: Children talk about feeling "Australian"', *Childrenz Issues, Journal of the Children's Issues Centre*, *9*(2), pp. 43–49.

Chapter 8: Gill, J. and Howard, S. (2008) 'Gaps in the record: Working with curriculum and young people's imagined Australias', *Curriculum Perspectives, 28*(1), pp. 11–21.

Introduction

Citizenship education has attracted a good deal of interest in recent times, both in Australia and overseas. The fundamental premise of the research detailed in this book is that children's schooling experience gives them the opportunity to make increasingly sophisticated comments about the ways in which institutions are constructed and organisational life is lived. The analyses presented here reveal that children do already know something about institutional hierarchies, governance and power. However, these perceptions have not been previously systematically marshalled in ways that provoke the sort of analysis that is fundamental to democratic practices that, arguably, should be significant in the project of education for citizenship.

The book presents a challenging series of chapters on questions to do with children's perceptions of themselves and their place in the world, their understandings of the workings of power in their lives and in the more abstract notion of power in the broader society. It deals specifically with children's understandings of themselves as social actors, their concepts of responsibility and their commitments to a range of positions about what may be termed the common good. The topics are located against a background of widespread educational thinking that is typical of the early 21st century, but the themes that emerge are to some degree timeless and applicable across cultures, political orientations and linguistic backgrounds. The structure of the book reflects the progress of the empirical investigations, along with the children's developing sense of the increasingly complex interrelationships between their own place and the wider world.

While the stream of investigations that constitute the basis of the work was initially conducted in Australia, the emergent themes resonate with those derived from empirical work in very different locations, suggesting that there are common elements in the ways in which young people come to develop a sense of belonging to a particular family, tribe

or neighbourhood, and from this to be recruited as members of a larger social community of state, country and nation. Ultimately, we suggest, the logical development of this sense of group membership is the assumption of global citizenship, which operates alongside those prior attainments but which neither forecloses nor transcends the allegiances developed along the way.

Of course, the ambit of citizenship education is not limited to schooling. Indeed, some of the citizenship programs in adult education have recently attracted a great deal of attention as a consequence of the plight of refugees and the move towards globalisation, which together have served to encourage a good deal of movement between countries and cultures. In the 21st century, immigration is less likely to be seen as a government-sponsored process of soliciting people to come, and more to do with the terms and conditions by which newcomers are to achieve recognition and belonging in their adopted homes. Governments have been increasingly drawn towards establishing formal criteria for citizenship and, at the time of writing, several countries including Australia have taken up the idea of requiring immigrants to take a citizenship test to establish the right to remain in the country, although there continues to be widespread debate about the content and form such testing might take.

However, it was the uptake of citizenship education in Australian schooling that inspired the series of studies detailed in this book. In late 1998, a nationally developed curriculum package, entitled 'Discovering Democracy', was released to all Australian schools. It comprised the official answer to the low levels of civic awareness that was widespread in our communities. However, as a curriculum reform initiative, the package appeared to be out of step with current pedagogical thinking, in that it was not based on an investigation of what children already knew and how they felt about the country in which they lived. Rather, the curriculum appears to have been designed from the point of view of expert knowledge and a conviction about what every child should know – an altogether more traditional approach to curriculum design. While the initial evaluation of the curriculum (DEST, 2003) appeared very positive, more recently there has been consistent reporting of the initiative being ineffective in producing students who are interested in and informed about what were seen as important features of citizenship (see, for example, Illing, 2007; Ferrari, 2006). The research reported in this book constitutes an attempt to remedy this situation by finding out what children do know about their country and how they feel about it. Thus, the following chapters detail some of the ways in which over 400 young people in South Australia responded to ideas about belonging, identity and social and political power. The title reflects our stance as researchers – the children are seen as 'knowers'; not empty vessels waiting to be filled with the relevant facts,

but as young people actively engaged in constructing their understanding of how their society works.

Hence, the first chapter details an in-depth investigation of young children's understanding of the operations of power in ways that directly affect their lives. Starting with the immediacy of family relations as experienced by two 5-year-olds, we identify and analyse the ways in which the rules of the school and classroom are understood as operating within an hierarchical power structure that is readily apprehended by quite young children. These features, we propose, are gradually extended in terms of the young people's increasing recognition of the interrelated power structures that determine public responsibility, covering the running of the classroom and school, the broader civic responsibilities such as the making of roads and cleaning of streets and so on. In summarising our analysis, we use the metaphor of a pebble being dropped into the pond to describe the series of ever-increasing concentric circles, which characterises the child's developing perception of the ways in which wider structures of power impact upon their lives.

Working from the same database, Chapter 2 argues that the knowledge of structures and processes is of itself insufficient for a developed citizenship education, insofar as the desire to take part is left unaddressed. Here, the younger children interviewed venture some critical comment about what they claim are the unfair uses of power by parents and teachers. However, the older children appear inclined to view the goal of shared responsibility and cooperative effort as important for maintaining the classroom as an efficient learning environment. Consistent with the argument put up by Haste (1987, 2004), we develop our analysis in support of the notion that an effective citizenship education involves the children coming to realise the benefits of social participation in ways that inspire a desire to become involved in the affairs of the classroom, school and the wider community. Following some comment on the ways in which the curriculum package 'Discovering Democracy' selectively represents questions of citizenship and nationalism, we argue that knowledge of facts alone is not sufficient to educate for participatory democracy. By demonstrating that young people can and do operate with a sense of political awareness in the daily context of schooling, we urge a more self-conscious approach to the question of civics education; one that attends to the processes and practice of schooling as well as the transmission of information.

The following chapter explores the idea of the children's development of a sociocultural awareness, which involves a sense of the correct way to be in contrast to 'others', whose ways are different and perceived as incorrect. Here, we argue that the more people are urged to 'think globally' and to see themselves as 'citizens of the world', the more taken-for-granted notions of national belonging (national identity) are called into question.

Nowhere has this been more evident than in multicultural Australia where, in recent times, a number of events have caused Australians to think most carefully about what it means to be Australian. Questions of the rights and treatment of refugees and the issue of the Indigenous peoples are key public concerns. While there may have been plenty of opportunities for adults to debate these issues, little attention has been paid to the way children respond to these questions and how they conceptualise a sense of 'belonging'. Do children see themselves as global citizens, an identity they are increasingly encouraged to embrace through mass media, mass communications and the Internet, do they see themselves as belonging to an entity called 'Australia' or are they juggling both identities? This chapter examines how 28 young Australian children are thinking about what it means to be 'Australian' and 'a citizen' in global times.

The early chapters are based on the initial in-depth study of discussions with a small selected group of young people at one outer suburban school. In all cases the children participated in small group discussions of four to six children with one or two adult researchers. We were careful to provoke open discussions by using techniques to 'start the ball rolling' but which did not involve inserting our own opinions or allowing our knowledge to dominate.

The following chapters draw on a much larger data set, drawn from similar discussions with upper primary children in 45 different primary schools. The children were all between 10 and 12 years of age, and the majority was in the final year of primary school, Year 7 in South Australia. These group interviews were audio recorded; it was found that children at this age emerge quite clearly from the audio record, whereas video evidence had been useful when younger children were involved, as it was sometimes difficult to identify who was speaking from the audio record alone. In all cases, the aim was to encourage the children to talk with one another in order to capture the ways in which they developed their thinking in conjunction with others rather than to give the 'right answer' or the one the adults were looking for. In this way the study moves from an intensive inspection of the thinking of a small group of children to the generalisable features of children's thinking across a wide range of locations and backgrounds.

Chapter 4 offers an analysis of the ways in which the concept of nation as home is taken up and applied by the child informants, in ways directly emerging from their experiences of school and home. In this way, the school functions as a bridge, not simply between family and the institution, but also progressing beyond the school to structures and processes in the wider world.

Chapter 5 takes up the idea of the traditional ways into which place was divided – that between the country and the city – and looks at current

constructions of location in terms of the children's responses to being city dwellers or located in a more rural place; that is, the 'country'. The argument here concerns the ways in which the traditional storylines are being recycled in contemporary children's thinking. Just as represented in the early Australian literature, the rural ideal continues to be mythologised as a place of ultimate freedom, space to move unrestricted by constraints associated with the city.

Three themes emerged strongly from the combined data from over 400 young informants about the ways in which they felt about Australia. In Chapter 6, these themes are identified as safe, proud and free, and the chapter details the analysis of children's talk that gave rise to the identification of these themes. The implications for curriculum in the area of citizenship are discussed and suggestions made about appropriate starting points for young people to learn about contemporary Australia.

Up to this point, the direction of the book has been to offer an account of young people's thinking about issues to do with citizenship and being Australian, and to analyse their thinking in terms of key themes. This perspective treats the children as already knowing; not as empty vessels of traditional curriculum approaches but rather as thinking and feeling people struggling to develop their own identification with place and belonging. In Chapter 7, we attempt to theorise the ways in which young people are drawn into a sense of ownership and thus become complicit in their particular constructions of country. They are still knowers credited with having ideas and responses to citizenship issues, but the point here is to develop an understanding of how their ideas might come about in ways more generalisable and theoretically robust than the commonplace accounts such as 'socialisation' or 'it's all because of the media'. The work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is used to conceptualise how this complex process might proceed.

In Chapter 8, a more specific focus on curriculum is elaborated. Data drawn from the study of the ways in which upper primary school students think about Australia has provided a rich source of information about their current attitudes to themselves, to Australia and the wider world. In this chapter, we look at the ways in which the children construct a sense of Australia in terms of its people and its symbols. The analysis suggests that many of the children's views appear to draw on popular liberal values but they appear to have little coherent knowledge of society and culture. Such knowledge, we argue, is necessary for properly developed and personally owned positions on social issues. This chapter urges a reassessment of the situation and argues the need for a new pedagogy involving elements from history and social science in order to generate more appropriate recognition of Australia as a sociopolitical entity with a past and a future in an increasingly globalising world.

Chapter 9 deals with the ways in which young Australians respond to the significant changes in the population connected to the changes in immigration policy and the inclusion of refugees. The attitudes and values implicit in the children's talk are contrasted with those of the former conservative federal government, which had initiated the citizenship education intervention in Australian schools. The argument here suggests that the government rhetoric is out of step with the children's thinking, and urges a reconceptualisation of the issues through a process of open debate and public discussion.

The last data chapter, Chapter 10, reports on the recollections of teacher education students about the ways in which they saw their schooling experience as having engendered a concept of community. Thus, the chapter examines the concept of belonging and community in terms of current schooling practice. Working from data supplied from school memories of a group of final-year teacher education students, we comment on the 'picture' of community available in the data. Our analysis reveals an individualist and quasi-familial notion of community, which privileges homogeneity and conformity. We suggest that this concept may need reformulation if it is to be useful to schools in the 21st century, which are challenged to build community and at the same time to acknowledge and celebrate the different backgrounds the children bring to schooling.

The final chapter summarises what has been learnt from the series of studies, and identifies those areas yet to be explored. In particular, we make a case for continuing the research into the adolescent years in order to comment on the ways in which young people's attitudes and values may change as they approach questions of career possibilities and taking up the role of adult citizens.

1 The pebble in the pond: Children's constructions of power, politics and democratic citizenship

Too much of political socialisation research turns out simply to be over-structured investigation of the attitudes of schoolchildren to adult political concepts. There is too little on the political language and lore of children, there is no political Piaget.

(Crick, 1999, p. 342)

Introduction

In Australia, questions of nationalism and civic responsibility are increasingly significant themes in discussions of education and cultural practice. Public debates are commonplace about such things as whether Australia should become a republic, constitutional reform, national identity, the award of civic honours and new designs for the Australian flag. In addition, the broader issues relating to the way the Australian government handles the competing claims of diverse cultural groups in its endeavours to manage multicultural policy successfully form a constant undercurrent in public discourse and media analysis. These issues raise important questions about how best to prepare young people for effective participation in the complex and evolving society of Australia in the 21st century.

The particular focus of the present investigation concerns children's developing knowledge of, and understanding about, the exercise of public power and the processes of democratic citizenship. The impetus for the study was the Civics Expert Group's *Whereas the people ...* (1994), a publication which detailed the findings of a major survey of adolescents and adults and indicated that levels of civic knowledge in the general population were very low. As a consequence, there has been a considerable resurgence of interest in civics curriculum as a way of ensuring that children and young people are adequately prepared to take their place in a

democratic society. Curriculum content and materials are currently being prepared for all levels of schooling, including the primary school.

In our experience, it is clear that children develop a range of political concepts (both broadly and narrowly defined) from their knowledge of life in families, schools and from exposure to the media. As teachers, we believe that any civics curriculum designed specifically for the primary school should acknowledge this 'everyday knowledge' and use it as a starting point; however we are aware there is a lack of theoretical and empirical work establishing children's understanding in this area. While important studies have been carried out with American children (for example, Hess and Torney, 1967; Greenstein, 1969) and British children (for example, Stevens, 1982; Cullingford 1992), not since Connell's study (Connell, 1971) has there been a systematic investigation of the ways in which pre-adolescent Australians grow to understand the workings of government and the rights and responsibilities of membership of a civil society.

Whereas Connell's study focused largely on children's attitudes and opinions about formal political structures, processes and identities, the present study chooses to focus on a more broadly defined sense of 'politics'. In other words, it is more interested in how children perceive 'power', how they see it being exercised and by whom in their daily lives, and how they see power articulated and organised in the broader social context. Not surprisingly, like Connell's participants, many of the children in the present study talk about formal processes of government (for example, voting, taxes), formal political structures (government, councils) and political figures (prime ministers, premiers, politicians). However, they also talk freely about their direct experiences of power in action, their developing senses of rights and responsibilities, justice and fair play and the social contexts within which they learn these things.

In our view, if we are to develop, to borrow Eva Cox's phrase, 'a truly civil society' (Cox, 1995), children need more than just formal knowledge of how a political system works. If they are to become active, socially conscious citizens, they also need to understand the *purposes* of democratic systems and the *principles* that underpin democratic citizenship. Logically then, civics and citizenship education should begin with and build on the child's already existing understanding and experience of power in the world.

The theoretical context

This study is shaped by particular theoretical assumptions. It draws on a relationship from contemporary developmental psychology in which Vygotsky is seen to build on the groundbreaking work of Piaget in

terms of cognition, and expands Piaget's theoretical frame to include the social dimension. As Piaget (1952, 1970) suggested, children develop concepts and understandings about their environment through concrete, lived experiences. However, as Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) work shows, the interpretations children construct are social products and cannot be independent of adults and adult thought. Much information about power and politics, for example, is either communicated personally and directly by adults to children in the course of conversations, discussions and explanations or it is mediated through such cultural artefacts as television, radio, newspapers and magazines. However, despite the diversity of sources and types of political information to which children can be exposed, broad patterns of understanding are detectable in populations of children, as Piaget (1952, 1970) suggested, and as Connell's work discovered three decades ago:

> *… the most casual study of the interviews, the slightest acquaintance with the children themselves, is enough to show that they are not* simply *reproducing adult ideas nor being processed by agents of socialisation. Each child's constructions are to a degree idiosyncratic, and taking the group as a whole we can see their political thinking passing through a sequence of phases which are much more than moments in the accumulation of a stock of adult ideas.*
>
> (Connell, 1971, p. 230, original emphasis)

The 'sequence of phases' referred to by Connell gives rise to the 'pebble in the pond' metaphor used in this account. As other cognitive, moral and social developmental theorists have indicated (for example, Piaget, 1952, 1970; Kohlberg, 1976; Selman, 1980), the present study also suggests that children's perception and understanding of power appears to start among the youngest children with the close, personal, concrete events of lived experience, and moves outwards, like the ripples caused by a pebble thrown into a pond. From understandings that involve 'me and my immediate context', they move to understandings that take into consideration 'familiar others and their contexts'. Finally, some of the older children are able to transcend the need for personal experience of power in order to be able to think and speculate about it, often generalising and deducing that it exists in institutions and locations of which they have very little or no experience.

Most Australian children progress from the family as the principal social context to the primary school and the neighbourhood. These contexts are subsequently included in, and subsumed by, a broader and more abstract sense of being a member of a wider social group (that may include membership of a state or the nation) in later childhood

and adolescence. These familiar contexts formed the focal points for discussions in which participants were invited to take part.

Methods

The phase of the project being reported here involved 27 children (15 boys and 12 girls) between the ages of 5 and 12 years of age. The number of children in each of the age groupings was as follows: two 5-year-olds, six 7–8-year-olds, nine 9–10-year-olds and ten 10–12-year-olds. The children's social background was homogeneously comfortable, middle class and Anglo-Celtic, and deliberately so – the intention was to provide a snapshot of a particular group of children at a particular time, rather than some kind of 'representative sample'. Subsequent phases of the project will develop, compare and contrast insights gained here with those gained from children from different social groupings and ethnic backgrounds.

This qualitative study was designed to allow small groups of similarly aged boys and girls to discuss a semi-structured set of questions relating to power and its use in the social contexts and institutions with which they are most familiar. The wording of the starter questions was very carefully considered because it was necessary to find a form of expression that children as young as 5 years of age could understand, bearing in mind that most of the relevant concepts (for example, power, politics, social organisation and so forth) are essentially quite abstract. Finally, the phrase 'Who's in charge …?' was chosen because most children's lived experience is that they are not 'in charge' of themselves most of the time – someone or some others have the power to determine what the child can and cannot do. Certainly, it was a form of wording that the children responded to immediately and unambiguously. Rather than narrowly predetermining what the children *could* say (that is, some would argue that 'Who's in charge …?' constructs an hierarchical world of top-down power relationships and thus pre-empts other perceptions), the children in this phase of the study used the question as a starting point for exploring the concept of power. In the discussion they also described situations in which power was shared, and were able to offer examples of situations where they themselves had power.

Two 5-year-olds were interviewed individually. Otherwise, small groups consisting of four or five boys and girls in the age groups: 7–8-year-olds, 9–10-year-olds and 11–12-year-olds were audio and videotaped in a quiet corner of the school as they discussed such questions as:

Is there anyone in charge in your family/ school/ classroom/ neighbourhood?
If so, who are they?
How can you tell if someone's in charge, what can they do?
Is it fair that they can do this?

Are there any rules that you have to obey in your family/school/class/neighbourhood?
If you don't like the rules, can you do anything about it?

After the audiotapes were transcribed, there was a data set of 37,000 words and 134 pages of transcript. NUD•IST (Qualitative Solutions and Research, 1995) software was used to assist in the management of the data during the analysis and interpretation process. In the discussion that follows, sections of original transcript have been used for illustrative purposes. The children's names have been changed; the number in brackets indicates the age of the speaker, square brackets contain interpolated information and […] indicates that a section of transcript has been omitted. 'I' denotes the interviewer.

Power and the family

When talking to the 5-year-olds, they listed off regular chores they had to do – such things as setting the table, feeding the cat and so on – and they claimed the penalty for not doing these chores was a rather vague 'getting into trouble'. When asked whether there were things their parents had to do, the children mentioned such things as 'giving us our tea' and 'putting out my clothes', 'taking care of me'. Here is Jon's response (after a thoughtful pause) when asked who tells his parents to do these things:

I: Who tells your parents to do it?
Jon (5): … Theirself.

There's a sense here that Jon sees his parents as 'benevolent dictators', beholden to no-one else – there appears to be no concept at this stage of lines or networks of power extending beyond the family. In addition, the two 5-year-olds seem to see power as linear and unidirectional – it is seen in terms of their parents' responsibilities towards them rather than in terms of some kind of mutual system of rights and responsibilities. We make these observations with great caution, however, in view of the fact that only two 5-year-olds were interviewed.

It is perhaps the move towards independence that accompanies going to school and growing older that inserts some negative perceptions of parental power into the responses of 7–8-year-olds. Whereas the younger children seemed more inclined to view parental power as purely benevolent, the 7–8-year-olds' perceptions are somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, they see themselves as the beneficiaries of parental responsibility – parents have to 'take us to school', 'fix broken toys and stuff because we couldn't do it', 'put out the garbage', 'fix your broken spoke' – while on the other hand they also see parental power in authoritarian, coercive terms. From all of the participants' talk about their experience of power

in the family, the 7–8-year-olds were the only ones to talk about it in these negative ways. The following is typical:

I: When you say they [your parents] are in charge, what does that mean, what does that entitle them to do, or what duties do they have?
Phillip (8): King of the palace.
I: Mary, what does it mean to say they are in charge?
Mary (7): They get to put you to bed whenever they want to.
I: Whether you like it or not?
Martin (8): Mmm.
I: Angela, can you think of anything; what does it mean to be in charge?
Angela (7): They tell you what to do.
Brian (8): They tell you when it is time to polish your shoes.
I: What do you reckon?
Martin (8): Probably the same as Angela: they tell you what to do.
I: Phillip? How do you know your parents are in charge? What do they do that lets you know that they are in charge?
Phillip (8): Making us always do jobs.

It is perhaps unsurprising that 7- and 8-year-olds who have developed some understanding of their own independence, as a consequence of going to school, should also express some negativity about being controlled or being told what to do. In a way, their very resistance stands as an indication of their increasing sense of self as powerful.

The older children (9–12-year-olds) did not talk about parental power as though it were a simple, linear and one-directional chain of command. Instead, their perception of power within the family was much more systems oriented, and involved recognition of a mutual and reciprocal set of rights and responsibilities. Although it was implicit that parents are the final arbiters in decisions regarding the children, the 9–12-year-olds discussed at great length how parents were responsible for different aspects of household and family maintenance, and they also gave detailed descriptions of their own responsibilities in relation to household chores. While recognising that parents had the power to make them do their chores and that, in some instances, no chores meant no pocket money, the 9–10-year-olds and the 11–12-year-olds all claimed it was *fair* that they took responsibility for some aspects of day-to-day family life even though, as these 11–12-year-olds admit, they may find this burdensome:

Bruce (12): I think it's fair, but I don't really want to do it.
I: Yes. Rachel, do you think it's fair?
Rachel (12): I think it is reasonably fair, yes.

I: Why is it fair?
Rachel (12): Because my dad does working and so does my mum, and so we've got to do something else to put in the work.
I: Anna, do you think the same thing?
Anna (11): Yeah, I think the same thing.
I: The same?
Damien (11): I think that Mum and Dad work for the money, and we should help them out by doing jobs around the house and things.

The 9–10-year-olds were similarly insistent on the fairness of household chores, emphasising the mutuality of responsibility within a family system:

I: Okay, do you think it's fair that you have these jobs to do?
All: Yeah.
Blair (9): You've all got to take a share of looking after the house.
Alicia (9): You can't just leave it up to your parents.
I: Why not?
Neil (9): Because it would be a bit unfair for other people if you could just lounge about all day while everyone else had to do the work.
Sally (9): Like, you live in the house.
Alicia (9): It wouldn't be fair if everyone worked, like cleaned up your mess and everything.
I: So it's a fairness thing that everybody has to pitch in and help because that way it's fair. Nobody should have too much work to do. Is that what you're saying?
Blair (9): You're the people that actually live in the house. You gotta do something as well.
Sally (9): It's not fair if it's all left up to the parents.

We see here that the children are being ideologically recruited into the power arrangements of the household. The approach is one of systems maintenance, and the children affirm a sense of responsibility to the family as a unit.

Differential distribution of power among family members was a subject for discussion among all the participants. The 7–8-year-olds linked parents' age with power – parental power was thus a function of being the oldest in the family. For these children, power was also associated with having access to money and resources:

Phillip (8): How come my parents are in charge?
I: Why aren't you in charge?
Phillip (8): They bought the house.
Brian (8): They have got the most money.

In terms of siblings, all age groups judged being the oldest child as the preferred position because this conferred privileges (for example, more pocket money, staying up later, choosing television programs). However, and especially for the 11–12-year-olds, the relationship between age and power was not absolute – many were aware that being the youngest child often carried with it a power of its own (that is, 'they get away with things', 'they don't have as many jobs to do', 'they get to go first at Monopoly', 'they get more presents'). This feature illustrates that the older children are beginning to grasp the complexities inherent in the concept of power, and is consistent with the increasingly sophisticated understanding of abstract concepts in general that is predicted by cognitive developmental theory.

Power and the school

The institution of school, whether it is preschool, kindergarten or the early primary grades, is the next major site where children experience the formal exercise of power. The two 5-year-olds in this study had barely begun their schooling when they were interviewed. The 7–8-year-olds, however, were voluble about their experience of power in the school setting, and were quite clear that their teachers and the principal were the school's agents of power. Once again, for this group of children, age and ownership of resources confer the right to exercise power over others:

I: What about in the classroom, who is in charge in the classroom?
All: The teacher.
Martin (8): Mr Grant.
Brian (8): Or Mrs Green.
Martin (8): Or Ms Hanlon [the principal of this school].
I: How do you know they are in charge?
Martin (8): Because they are older.
Brian (8): Because they are the teachers and the principal is the owner of the school and she or he gets the people who work there.

As with their discussion of power in the family, the 7–8-year-olds were somewhat ambivalent about the exercise of power in the school. On the one hand, they saw it in coercive terms:

I: Okay, tell me some more about how you know that the teacher is in charge. What sorts of things do they do?
Angela (7): They tell you what the work you have to do.
Phillip (8): And what the rules are.
I: Phillip?
Phillip (8): They send you out of the classroom sometimes.

Brian (8): If you been naughty, that is.
Martin (8): They can tell you off if you are messing about on the floor or talking to people and put you in the Time Out book.
I: Martin, what do teachers do that says they are in charge?
Martin (8): Give you work.
I: Is it fair that the teacher is in charge?
All: No.
Brian (8): Because they give us heaps hard work.

On the other hand, anarchy may be disadvantageous in the long run:

I: Okay, hang on a second. What about the other way around, suppose the kids were in charge, would that be good?
All: Yeah.
Brian (8): Then we could get sport and activities.
Mary (7): It wouldn't be too good because what happens when we grow up, you won't be able to do anything.
I: What would happen when you grow up?
Brian (8): You wouldn't be able to do anything, like be able to spell.
Phillip (8): You wouldn't know how to spell anything. I would keep some of the maths sheets, I would do them in my spare time.
I: So you reckon, so do you think it is …
Phillip (8): At least do some work.
Brian (8): Sport on some days, like and …
Angela (7): An activity on some days and work on some days.

And so the children are drawn, somewhat reluctantly, to acknowledge the benefit of schoolwork in terms of making them able to 'do things' in adult life.

Like many Australian primary school children, these 7–8-year-olds have teachers who engage in a form of democratic decision making about class rules. This usually occurs at the beginning of the year, and involves the teacher and the class discussing and deciding as a group which behaviours will be considered acceptable in the classroom, which behaviours will be considered unacceptable and how the rules will be enforced. In the following discussion, only Brian and Martin seem to have a clear idea about the role the children play in this exercise, and Angela's final comment suggests that she recognises the limitations of this democracy – the teacher has ultimate control over the process and the outcomes:

I: Okay, now, who made up those rules?
Phillip (8): The teacher.
Brian (8): No, we did.
Angela (7): Mrs Green.

Brian (8): No, we did, because Mrs Green said we are going to make our class rules and we said what the class rules were.
I: So you had a say in that, did you?
Brian (8): Yes.
Mary (7): I was in Mrs Hill's class then, because you see the Year 3s used to be Year 2. Me and Martin were in Mrs Hill's.
I: So how does that work then, how do you get to have a say in those rules?
Martin (8): We make them up.
Angela (7): I am not quite sure.

As was the case when the 7–8-year-olds were discussing power in the family, power in school is generally seen as hierarchical and linear – as Phillip (8) says below, 'It's a ladder'. Age and power are linked once again in the children's perceptions, but not simply in terms of the age differential between children and adults. The school power hierarchy is also based on the age of the children being taught by individual teachers – the age of the children in the grade confers upon the teacher a relative power status in the hierarchy; thus, the Reception/Grade 1 teacher has less power status than those teaching the classes above hers.

I: So you say the principal is at the top of the school, is that right?
Brian (8): Mrs Steele is next.
Martin (8): Mrs Woolley after.
Angela (7): Mrs Wilson.
Brian (8): Mrs Green, Mrs Giles, Mrs Hill. Mrs Hill is right down the bottom of the list.
Phillip (8): It's a ladder.
I: Why are they in that order? Why is Mrs Hill on the bottom?
Phillip (8): Because she teaches the R/1s.
I: So Mrs Hill is with the R/1s – the little ones.
Angela (7): (joking) Wouldn't it be too heavy to be on the bottom, wouldn't you get squashed?

Among the 7–8-year-olds, perceptions of power beyond the school appear to be limited. When asked who tells the principal what to do, Angela (7) and Brian (8) both claimed that 'the law' is responsible, but they were unable to elaborate.

The 9–10-year-olds have had considerable experience of the class rule-making process and, like the 7–8-year-olds, they also recognise the teacher's ultimate power to control the process:

John (10): There's usually a decision with the class. The children make up the … they agree on what rules – they give the suggestions and the teacher says whether they're good or not.

In the particular school that these children attend there is also another level of democratic decision making and appeal: the Student Representative Council (SRC). Here, the children explain how it works, acknowledging a significant reliance *upon*, and accepting a significant level of control *from*, those in authority. There is an interesting mixture in the children's talk of liberal rhetoric and understandings (for example, 'voice their opinions', the principle of majority rule) and the conservative (for example, 'tell the teacher', '[it] goes to the principal to decide', 'you get some order in the school'):

I: Tell me about an SRC. What does 'SRC' stand for?
Mandy (10): Don't know.
Richard (10): They, like, bring problems and solve them with other people, other SRC people.
I: Okay, let's say somebody was stealing kids' lunches in this class, what would you do? How would the SRC deal with that?
John (10): Tell the teacher.
Mandy (10): Then if the teacher couldn't decide, they'd tell the principal.
I: So you have this meeting, and you say, 'This is a problem.' What happens then?
John (10): They take it to an SRC meeting, and that goes to the principal to decide whether that's a big problem or that's not worth taking any notice of.
I: And is that a fair way of going about things, do you think?
Mandy (10): I think so.
I: Why is that?
Mandy (10): Because that way you get some order in the school and that way all the classes have a spread and voice their opinions and that sort of thing.
I: Okay, so you feel that the rules that are set up in your classroom, you've got some say. And you can change those rules if you wanted to?
Mandy (10): No.
John (10): No, not definitely. If you suggested that and a lot of other people agreed with you, then you could change the rules.
I: Okay, and is that a fair thing, do you think?
Mandy (10): Yep.
John (10): Yeah.
I: Supposing only one person wanted to change the rules?
Mandy (10): That way the rules would stay as they were.
I: So you've got to have more people?
John (10): Yeah.

A power to veto class-determined rules and the teacher's role as 'leader' in the class are seen as being fair by the older children. One reason for this seems to be an implicit perception of adults' greater wisdom and moral judgement (that is, if the children had all the power they might make unwise or morally bad judgements – as John (10) says: '… you could just say "Kill everyone that you see".'). Another reason suggests that strong leadership from the teacher leads to desirable 'law and order' in the classroom:

Mandy (10): There's some classrooms that the teacher's one of the leaders, some of the kids are, too.
I: Is that a good thing or a bad thing?
Mandy (10): I think it's a bad thing.
I: Okay, tell me about that. Why is it a bad thing?
Mandy (10): Because the leaders who are the kids are basically more independent, harder to agree because they want their own way.
I: I see. What sort of situation does that produce in the classroom?
Mandy (10): A fight.
I: Okay. So are you saying it's more comfortable in the classroom where the teacher's the leader?
Mandy (10): Yeah.

Age and, in the case of teachers, the age of the children taught, as well as access to resources, are also mentioned by the 9–10-year-olds as signifiers of power in the school. Possibly as a result of experiencing bullying, this age group also acknowledges the advantage of *size*, when it comes to power:

John (10): Size is also important because a little kid wouldn't want to challenge a bigger kid.
I: Okay. Because?
John (10): Because that's more of a chance that you're going to get beat up.
Mandy (10): Yeah.

Perceptions among the 9–10-year-olds of how the school fits into a wider power network are as amorphous as those of the 7–8-year-olds. When asked who tells their principal what to do, Mandy (10) and John (10) both explain that 'the government' is above the principal and 'everyone else'.

The 11–12-year-olds' discussions about power in the school have some similarities with those of the younger children, but there are also significant differences, indicating more complex and sophisticated understandings. Like the younger children, the 11–12-year-olds perceive a top-down hierarchy, and they use age as a signifier of power, as this group of children shows when explaining why the teacher has power in the classroom:

Bruce (12): … we're younger.
Anna (11): Yeah.
Bruce (12): And she's like the leader and we have to follow. It's like if you're an adult you've got power. If you're adult, like if you're older, or being the oldest in the family, being old gives you more power.
Darren (11): It's just like the teacher's the follower and everyone in the class …
Anna (11): No, the leader.
Darren (11): Yeah, the teacher's the leader and everyone in the class has to follow or else.

Like the 9–10-year-olds, the 11–12-year-olds generally construct power in benevolent, paternalistic ways. For the first time, however, there emerges the recognition that, in democratic institutions at least, power has conditions attached to it: authority confers responsibility towards others and those others have rights.

Anne (12): The principal has power mainly over everybody, the teachers as well as the students, but I suppose you could say the teachers, like the students sometimes, if the teachers have a problem they have the right to discuss it with the principal, if the students have a problem they have the right to discuss it with a teacher or a principal.

The older children once again recognise the teacher's ultimate power of veto in the business of making classroom rules:

Caroline (11): When we are actually making rules, our teacher usually, like, asks us if we have any problem with them and if we do we speak to her personally about it.
Leanne (12): Not always to change it!

And …

I: Who makes up the rules in the classroom?
Bruce (12): The teacher.
Darren (11): The teacher.
Anna (11): The teacher.
Rachel (12): Oh, no, not really.
Anna (11): Sometimes we have a vote to see.
Damien (11): Oh yeah.
Rachel (12): Sometimes it's the class and sometimes the teachers.
Darren (11): Us kids make them.
Anna (11): It's just that if we don't want to do it, she'll just do it anyway.
[…]

I: What if it was a rule that you really didn't like? How would you change that?
Bruce (12): We'd put our hand up and say, 'We don't really like it, and can we modify it a bit.'
Darren (11): Because we've got like even power in the class.
Anna (11): But I don't think she'd actually change.

Despite this 'cynicism', however, the 11–12-year-olds have a clearer understanding than the younger children about the purpose and principles behind the democratic processes that are used in classrooms. Here, Anne (12) and Caroline (11) explain the advantages of the secret ballot when voting on difficult issues:

Anne (12): Put our heads down and put our hand up.
I: A silent vote.
Anne (12): So we don't have to look. Because once I think it is so we don't all look at each other and see what all or our friends are voting for.
Caroline (11): Because, like, you could be voting something else and your friends are going 'What are you doing that for?'. It is like you shouldn't be voting for that.

In this discussion, Caroline expresses a very clear perception of the power of the peer group and its potential for overturning an individual choice.

A further indication that the 11–12-year-olds have a more sophisticated concept of power than the younger children is that they recognise power is not simply an attribute of position – it has to be awarded, given or gained by plebiscite. Here, in discussing who gives the minister for education power to determine what goes on in schools, the children make it clear that being a voter confers the power to bestow power on others:

I: Anne is saying the government gives the minister power.
Caroline (11): That is what I think.
I: Where does the government come from?
Sam (12): They come from the voters of South Australia.
Anne (12): So the people of South Australia have some …
Sam (12): They give him the power so he gives the Education Department power, and the Education Department ...

In discussing the provenance of the teacher's power they also reveal a quite sophisticated understanding that power is inherent in some roles (that is, a teacher needs 'the taught' to valorise their power) and that, in many instances, the governed agree to being governed:

I: Okay, who gives the teacher the power to do that?
Bruce (12): The principal.

Damien (11): Us.
Rachel (12): All of us and the principal.
I: So how do you give the teacher the power to do things that you don't like?
Rachel (12): Well, if we weren't there, then she wouldn't be able to have anybody to talk to.

Here, Rachel voices her clear perception of the essential reciprocity of power relations.

As can be seen from the extended discussion that follows, the older children have a much clearer idea than the younger ones of how the school fits into power networks and hierarchies in the broader society:

I: Who gives Ms Hanlon [the principal] her power?
All: The Education Department.
I: What is the Education Department?
Sam (12): That is the big place somewhere. For schools.
I: Is it just a building? How can a building give you power?
Leanne (12): The people in it.
Sam (12): A group of people who have more power than the principal, and they decide.
Caroline (11): They make the main decisions that the principal doesn't know, like to go on an excursion the principal will send a letter and see if it is okay with them.
Sam (12): Like with the movies we have been doing. We have just watched *Moby Dick* and we had to get the video from the Education Department so we didn't infringe on copyright.
Caroline (11): So they had to make sure that it wasn't like unsuitable so they wanted to watch this movie – we had to send it to the Education Department first and get the okay sign from them so we could watch it.
I: Who gives the Education Department power?
Sam (12): The minister for education.
I: Who is he? Where would we find him?
Sam (12): In Parliament House. On King William Street, is that it? On North Terrace, on the corner, kind of at the crossroads.
I: Where does he get his power from?
Caroline (11): I don't know.
Sam (12): Some mystical being ...
Leanne (12): Who knows! Someone very high.
Anne (12): Is it from the prime minister, the premier?
I: From the premier? What is the difference?
Sam (12): The premier is for the State Liberal and the prime minister is for the Federal Liberal or the …

I: All right, well, where did we get to, we got to the Education Department and who gives the power to the Education Department, the minister for education, and the minister for education is in Parliament House, but we seemed to get stuck there, who gives the minister for education power?

Caroline (11): The government.

Sam (12): The budget, the treasurer who gives out the budget, he kind of gives them enough money to give them a certain amount of power.

Caroline (11): I don't really think that. Like it would have to be really serious I think if something had to be taken to the minister for education, like if it was a movie with 'language' in it, like if the Education Department doesn't think it is right and they don't really know what to do they will just ... and it would have to be really bad if it still went up.

Here, we see that while the children do have a sense of the outward progression of power moving from the central authority – the depersonalised Education Department – to much closer sites such as the school, they are rather vague about features wherein that power is exercised.

Power and the community

As might be expected, children's knowledge about how power articulates through the broader community becomes increasingly detailed as they grow older. The 5-year-olds were unconcerned about who maintains the roads or who pays the people to collect the rubbish – they didn't think their parents were responsible but apart from that they didn't know. The 7–12-year-olds, however, had increasingly complex understandings about the structures, mechanisms and processes of power in the society at large.

In the first instance, there was a clear development in the children's knowledge about the formal structures of government. All the children used the terms 'council' and 'government' in explaining who was responsible for getting things done in the community, but only the 11–12-year-olds understood that each level of government has a different sphere of influence. As Sam (12) says: 'Council is on a lower level to the government' and Caroline (11) responds: 'Yeah, like, council will do the community area and the government do a huge area.'

In terms of the mechanisms underpinning the power of government, all the children had some notion that things in the community had to

be paid for. The 7–8-year-olds here are struggling with the notion that somehow we all pay for things like the maintenance of roads:

I: And where does the government get the money to pay them, to pay all these people?
Martin (8): From workers and bills and things.
Phillip (8): From the bills, when you have to pay your power bills, it goes to the president or the government to make better roads.
Brian (8): You're correct.

The 9–10-year-olds, like similarly aged children in Cullingford's (1992) study, have organised their understanding around the concept of 'tax'. John (10) claims that things are paid for by taxes: 'Tax from houses, water taxes' and these are paid by 'parents. All of us. All the people in the world'. The 11–12-year-olds not only understand the concept of taxation; they have specific knowledge about such things as different rates of taxation related to income, the government's Goods and Services Tax (GST) and even tax havens!

I: Who pays for building and running the hospital and the schools?
Darren (11): The government.
Damien (11): Our parents.
Anna (11): No, the taxpayers.
I: And what is a taxpayer?
Anna (11): Someone who works.
Damien (11): Our parents.
Rachel (12): Someone who makes money.
Bruce (12): No, someone that works and gets over $10,000 I reckon.
Darren (11): I think it's that. It's 5 or 10.
Bruce (12): Yeah.
I: And what is this tax?
Bruce (12): Oh, it's tax on everything. Instead of GST you have to pay for your house and stuff like that, and water.
Rachel (12): You have to pay tax for every dollar you get.
[…]
Darren (11): Yeah, [the government] collects the money to fix the road. Does that have anything to do with – if anyone works for the government that's where they get the money from.
[…]
I: Do we all pay the same amount of tax?
All: No.
I: Why is that?
Bruce (12): Because some people have different incomes.

I: So if you earn a lot of money?
Bruce (12): You probably pay a bit more tax.
I: Is that fair?
Bruce (12): Yes.
Darren (11): Oh, but some people ...
Bruce (12): Because if you get sick. Say you earn a lot of money and then you quit and then you don't have to pay any tax, I reckon that's cool. But that's not very fair.
Darren (11): Some people do this, like real rich people, so they don't have to pay tax and it's completely legal, they send it off to a tax haven where you don't pay tax over there.

As children grow older they become increasingly better informed about the processes of government – they know more about formal positions of power and how these positions might be attained. The 7–8-year-olds' understanding seems limited to knowledge of the terms and titles associated with positions of power:

I: Who made up the law?
Phillip (8): The president.
Martin (8): The vice-president.
Brian (8): The queen and the king.
Martin (8): There is a queen of England and a president.
Angela (7): The princess of Wales.
Phillip (8): The president.
Brian (8): No princess either.
Mary (7): Prime minister.
Phillip (8): Yeah, the prime minister, that is it, and the jury.
Brian (8): The judge.

In addition, none of the children in this group appears to have any awareness of voting as a means of selecting those in power. Indeed, Brian gives the impression that the office of prime minister is handed down in a dynastic fashion:

I: How do you get to be in the government? How do you get to be the prime minister? Could you be a prime minister if you wanted to, Brian?
Brian (8): I don't think so. The other prime minister gets fired and you get the job.

The 9–10-year-olds, on the other hand, are clear about the possibility of voting people into and out of office:

I: Okay, so how did John Howard get to be the prime minister?
Blair (9): Voted in.

I: So who gets to vote for him?
Blair (9): The whole of Australia, putting their votes in there, like very popular places.
I: And is he a powerful person? Would the prime minister be a powerful person?
Blair (9): Reasonably, because, like, people can sack him.

Among the older children there is quite sophisticated understanding about the complexities of running for office, voting, elections and campaigning:

I: So the way you get to be prime minister is, how?
Leanne (12): By people voting for you. And wanting you to go up.
Caroline (11): You have to actually, like, start off really low and start working your way up until, like, you think you have already got enough power to go all the way.
I: Any of you could be prime minister?
All: Yes.
[...]
I: Okay, so if you wanted to be prime minister you have to start off locally, is that right, is that what you were saying?
All: Yes.
Sam (12): Work your way to the top.
Caroline (11): So you have sort of like got to start off like doing something for a small community, then get into a council, in parliament and whew!

Knowledge about the workings of parliament is also considerably developed among the older children. Here, they are explaining how laws are made. Sam refers to a recently well-publicised and controversial vote on whether the government should privatise the national telecommunications company, Telstra.

Sam (12): The government passes the laws.
I: They pass them.
Sam (12): They pass it like democratic, like recently they did the thing for Telstra and they all voted on that, like democratically.
Caroline (11): Would it be the government makes the final decision, don't they?
Sam (12): It is like a vote in parliament.
Caroline (11): Higher.
I: So the final decision, the government votes on the rules.
Caroline (11): Yeah they make the final decisions.
I: Okay, and who suggests them?
Caroline (11): Good question. Maybe it could be the head guy in Telstra. Like the Telstra thing, for example, it could be the head

going to the government and asking, and they say 'well, we are going to vote for it'.

Sam (12): I had shares in Telstra.

I: You can change the laws can you, can you change the rules?

Caroline (11): We can't but they can.

Sam (12): We can't but they can if they realise that there is something wrong.

I: How do they go about doing that?

Anne (12): Voting.

Caroline (11): They probably have a huge discussion and debate and then the head and all that, he comes up with like a decision and they all vote on it. Whether they should go along with his decision or not and they just …

Anne (12): They have to go into different, like, places, like, it is voted in one place and then if they can't properly decide it goes into another place.

A significant gap in the children's understanding here appears to revolve around the concept of individual representation – they believe that the 'head guy' of companies like Telstra can have their interests taken care of by government but the ordinary person doesn't have the same advantage – the ordinary person cannot effect changes in the law, for example. Their construction of government still appears somewhat paternalistic, relying on 'head guys' realising that things are wrong and need changing. The concept of having a political representative who is supposed to represent your views and interests – indeed, the entire relationship between the individual and the state – does not seem to be clearly developed. In fact, their opinion of politicians, possibly fuelled by media coverage of the campaign for an imminent federal election, is rather jaundiced. Interestingly, both of these views were characteristic of the attitudes and understandings of similarly aged children in the large Cullingford (1992) study. In the following excerpt, Darren, Bruce and Damien are decidedly pessimistic about our elected representatives' ethics:

Darren (11): Yeah, and then what they normally do in parliament is, say they'll do something really good but sometimes it doesn't mean they'll really do it.

Bruce (12): You have to get voted in.

I: All right. They make promises.

Darren (11): Yes, they make promises but they break them.

Damien (11): They break them, they twist them.

And …

Leanne (12): The prime minister also – some of them, like, just have power but that is only because they work their way up there but they are not probably very good at their job, anyone can work their way up there if they just get people to vote for them, just say what people want and want to hear and they will get up there.

One of the themes running through the younger children's understanding of high political office is that of demonstrable aptitude or skill, which the 7–10-year-olds interpret as achievable through 'doing courses' and taking 'tests' – doubtless inferred from their own experience of the Basic Skills Tests taken at ages 8 and 10 in the state of South Australia:

I: All right. I'm still interested in how you get to be prime minister. Chris, could you be prime minister if you wanted to be?
Chris (10): I'd have to go through heaps of courses and stuff like that.
I: Special courses?
Chris (10): Yes.
I: Where would you do them?
Chris (10): University.
Mandy (10): College, TAFE [Technical and Further Education].
I: And could you be prime minister if you wanted to, Mandy?
Mandy (10): You could if you wanted to go through all the courses and stuff you have to go through.

And …

I: Okay, and so is voting a fair way of choosing somebody?
Neil (9): Yeah, the one that most people, they choose the one that most people would like to have.
Alicia (9): I don't reckon they should really do it like that because they don't know if they go through all the tests to see if they're good at it or anything. So I reckon they should go through tests to see if they're good or not.

On the basis of these responses, the 7–8-year-olds were asked whether there were any special tests that had to be taken if you wanted to become prime minister:

I: Do you have to do any special tests to become prime minister?
All: Yes.
I: What sort of tests would these be?
Brian (8): The rules.

Martin (8):	A really, really, really hard Basic Skills Test.
I:	Harder than the Basic Skills Test, a Basic Skills Test for prime ministers?
Angela (7):	Probably a book around that thick [gestures a very thick book].
I:	What would be in that book, what are the things that they have to learn?
Phillip (8):	All the things of law and this kind of special thingamajiggo.
Brian (8):	How to be the prime minister.

And so the highest political office in the land is regarded as needing specific skills and passing specific tests but still vulnerable to the vagaries of voting and appealing to the populace. In this latter respect, the children show that they are aware of the problems associated with making promises and then not necessarily delivering – possibly a media-induced cynicism but certainly a widely shared perception.

Conclusions

Connell (1971) investigated children's constructions of politics and noted that these constructions were the result of children trying to make sense of phenomena, information and material that are almost entirely mediated by adults. In our view, the child's experience of power is somewhat different. Although adults clearly do mediate understanding about power to a degree, the child is enmeshed in power relations of various kinds and with various different power agents right from the beginning – their experience of power is direct and lived, and is thus open to interpretation, but that interpretation will be affected by age, social context, cognitive ability and so on.

Like the ever-widening circle of ripples that occurs when a pebble is thrown into a pond, the apperception of power demonstrated by the children in this study involves an awareness or consciousness that moves steadily outwards, keeping a similar shape and form but encompassing a broader and broader area. The concrete signifiers that the children in this study used to construct their concepts of power were age (including age of those over whom one has power), ownership of resources and size. This in itself may be unsurprising; however, when coupled with the children's generally benevolent and paternalistic construction of those in authority, there are clear implications for such things as child protection programs.

For all the children in this study, power was organised in hierarchies, whether it be in the family, the school or the wider community. The

younger the child, the more likely they were to see the operation of power in the hierarchy purely in simple top-down, one-way terms, whereas the older children were more likely to see how power can be shared fairly, how a system of rights and responsibilities can operate and how, in a democratic system, power can be bestowed, earned or vetoed. With the older children, they were also able to see power operating in multi-directional ways. Not only were they aware of the lateral power associated with being part of a group, they were also aware of the reciprocity of power relations, such as those that operate between teacher and taught in every classroom. While we do not offer this work as a total response to Crick's call for a 'political Piaget' in the quotation at the beginning of the chapter, we do suggest that our analysis has revealed some Piagetian-like dimensions of young people's understanding of the operations of power in the world.

The children in this study were generally inclined to see others' exercise of power over them as just, benign and in their own best interests. Given the comfortable middle-class backgrounds of these children, this may be an inevitable conclusion that they have drawn from their experience of nurturing family life, a stable, calm school environment and a quiet, bucolic community.

The preliminary civics and citizenship curriculum materials that have been released thus far in Australia are predominantly information-based. Clearly, the children in this study have partial and, at times, incorrect understanding of the political structures of Australian government, and we would agree that it is important for them to get the facts right. However, we would also argue that it is even more important to provide children with the space in which to discuss and explore their and others' emerging conceptions of power and politics. They need opportunities to consider issues about rights and responsibilities, fairness and justice, and the mediation of competing claims. They need to investigate who has power, why they have it, how they got it and what it entails. We would concur with Finn (1990) that children's lack of technical knowledge about political structures does not imply either an inability to speculate about or lack of interest in these things. The children in this study were clearly enthusiastic and able participants in such discussions.

A final point raised by this study and pursued in detail elsewhere (Palonsky, 1987; Gill and Howard, 2000b) is that schooling processes can be highly instrumental in developing student awareness about government and democracy. Teachers in Australian classrooms routinely use the democratic techniques of consultation, group decision making, negotiation, voting for office bearers and so on. Often, however, these techniques are seen simply as good classroom management practices and not as valuable teaching opportunities. As a consequence, children's understandings of

democratic principles and purposes are not extended because they are rarely made explicit in the classroom context. As adults, we should take every opportunity to explain why we are adopting particular democratic practices. In this way the home, the classroom and the school can become important sites for children to develop social capital – an essential quality, in our view, for a participatory citizenry and a truly civil society.

2 Under the power lines: Reflections on/of schooling, civics education and citizenship

In Australia in recent years, there has been much attention paid to the question of civics and citizenship education. In 1992, having raised the issue of Australia becoming a republic, the then-federal Labor government commissioned a study to be made of civics education, which led to the publication *Whereas the people* ... (Civics Expert Group, 1994), a report which identified the widespread weaknesses in public knowledge of civic structure and set out specific curriculum suggestions and injunctions to the nation's schools to address the problem. The change of government early in 1996 was associated with some pause in the development of this curriculum, especially as the newly elected, conservative prime minister continuously affirmed his position of commitment to the monarchy and hence against the notion of an Australian republic. However, the conservatives also deplored the lack of public knowledge of the existing system of government, and the decision was taken to proceed with a program of citizenship education. In November 1998, a curriculum package entitled 'Discovering Democracy' was delivered to every school in the country. This package proposed a detailed multi-media curriculum to cover Years 4–10 in the area of civics education.

The lack of representation of, and consultation with, teachers was a feature of the composition and conduct of the original committee, the Civics Expert Group. Its recommendations for curriculum clearly proceeded from a concept of what every child should know. Attention was directed to the assemblage of fact, in increasing levels of complexity, whereby the widespread ignorance of government structure and process could be overcome. Although the subsequent package of 'Discovering Democracy' did involve some teachers as writers and the materials were trialled in some schools around the country, these materials remain very much in the information-rich orientation adopted by the original report. The package does incorporate the latest technology – there are videos, a CD-ROM that can be used interactively – and affords both teachers

and students the possibility of communicating around the country. There are attractive booklets, which are readily available for teachers to photocopy and generate class sets of the pre-ordained exercises. However, the attention is on the learner gaining possession of a series of facts – upon which they can be quizzed at regular intervals; there is no attention to the 'grammar of understanding' (Haste, 1987, p. 164) seen by some as essential for theorising the ways in which children come to learning about society and its institutions. Even more problematic, perhaps, is the implication that democracy itself is an entity that awaits being discovered – as implicit in the title, which is manifest throughout.

The tone adopted in the writing of the materials could be described as triumphal – in terms of democracy, we may have made some mistakes in earlier times but now we've got it right! There is none of the continuing struggle for democracy of the sort that John Ralston Saul (1999) writes about; no way to deal with the urgent and divisive quality of current debates about, for example, bioethics, Indigenous rights or uranium mining. The static version of citizenship presented in these materials is constructed in historico-legal terms – stories of citizen-heroes of the past and questions of rights and responsibilities in the present. Feminist critiques of the male-centric construction of citizen have had no impact on these materials. While women are mentioned, they are not included in any real way in the construction of citizen. The package is essentially bland and carefully skirts 'dangerous' topics by opting for accounts of past history and the facts of civic organisation. In particular – and especially notable given that the materials are designed for children from their fourth year of schooling – there is virtually no mention of children in these materials. Citizenship, it would appear, is an attribute of adult status. Children's voices, their perceptions of current issues, their importance to the country in general are issues entirely unexamined. Of particular concern is the fact that the educator's dictum that, in order to teach effectively one must first discover just what the students know already, has been completely overlooked.

What do young Australians know about civics and citizenship?

Some local research has recently chosen to focus on student knowledge of government structure and procedures, especially in the senior secondary years (see for example Print, 1995). Generally, this work has reinforced the findings of the survey mentioned above, namely that young Australians in the senior years of secondary school are poorly informed about governmental structures and processes. However, an even more important question has been left unaddressed in this work. That question concerns the quality of thought that students use in considering the area of civic power, the question of how their thinking proceeds and with

what it engages, rather than the simple facts of how much they know. Several commentators have registered the lack of 'fit' between knowledge of civic structure and the ability to think and act politically (Finn, 1990; McAllister, 1998). In these cases, it is argued that because students or people generally do not know the correct title or procedure associated with public power, it does not follow that they are incapable of thinking politically and of acting on their thinking. The fact that curriculum can be written without any consultation with young people in terms of what they already know and how they already see the situation is educationally both incredible and indefensible.

Not since Connell's (1971) work, based on a study of Australian children's responses to questions of politics some 30 years ago, has there been any qualitative investigation of the current levels of perceptions of civic power and its articulation from the point of view of primary-school-aged children. While Connell's groundbreaking study is hailed as a first in its field, it must also be immediately evident that the changes in Australia over the past 30 years have been so profound as to render the findings quaintly inadequate in terms of the current social situation. By the late 1960s, when Connell was gathering his data, Australia was just beginning to recognise the political existence of the Indigenous peoples. Royal visits were occasions of great patriotic excitement and fervour. The Vietnam War was in full swing, and the nation was experiencing widespread levels of public protest never previously encountered. Many of these issues were raised by the children in Connell's interviews – their feelings about the Queen, the Royal family, their experience of waving the flag and lining the routes for the visit, as well as their understanding about the war in Vietnam and the arguments both for and against it.

Such issues are unlikely to have currency for young people some 40 years later. In particular, Connell's treatment – or, in fact, his silence – about Indigenous issues is perhaps one of the most dated features of the work. The listing under 'Aboriginals' in the index says 'see Race and racial conflict', a conjoining with the evident implication that race inevitably involves conflict. Upon following up entries under 'Race and racial conflict', it appears there is more discussion about race relations in terms of African Americans than of Australian Indigenous peoples. The point here is not to castigate Connell for this omission, but rather to demonstrate that social science is always and quite properly reflective of its social context. As an example of the ways in which children are recruited by what Haste (Haste, 1987) has termed the 'social origins of meaning and the frameworks the culture provides for making sense' (p. 169), the study is exemplary. The questions that engaged Australians in the late 1960s, and which were reflected in the conversations with children, are very different from those that are current now. It seems likely that children's thinking on these issues will differ accordingly.

The study

The current study was initiated to remedy the lack noted above in our knowledge of what primary school students know and how they think about issues of public power and politics. The sections described in this chapter form part of a larger work in which we sought to describe the political awareness of Australian primary school children.

The study began in one middle-class primary school, in a pleasant hills location just outside Adelaide, the capital of South Australia. The school comprises around 100 students and has been in place for just over 100 years. There are many features specific to this particular school – its small size, its age, its homogeneity, its mostly white middle-class, English-speaking, Australian-born population. We made a conscious choice to begin the study in this location despite its specificity – and attendant questions of generalisation – as we wanted to generate a discussion that was as rich as possible yet unhampered by issues of differences in language facility and social position. No doubt, we shared to some degree the popular misconception that politics is difficult for children! The study is continuing in locations markedly different from the one described here. However, there are, in our view, significant features of children's thinking already uncovered by the study that warrant report and discussion.

Because we wanted to comment on the quality of the children's thinking, rather than to produce a simple report of what they know, we opted for a qualitative approach to data gathering, based on small group interviews, each lasting around 40 minutes. These interviews allowed us to probe understandings beyond the availability of correct terminology or existing knowledge of actual structures of government. The recorded discussions were held with groups of four to five children. This feature was also important as it allowed us to capture something of the ways in which young people's thinking develops in interaction – an essential feature of what we wanted to find out. Previous research has demonstrated the advantages of group work such as this, insofar as the social process can be seen to operate 'as both a catalyst for and a consolidation of individual thinking' (Haste, 1987, p. 172). The process adopted here is in line with developments from discursive social psychology, in that it concentrates on the negotiation of meaning through narrative exchange that draws on cultural allusions and shared references. In this way, the children's conversations function to build the shared identity of which they speak.

The school is organised around four combined year-levels: R/1, 2/3, 4/5 and 6/7. For the current exercise we talked with students from all year levels, except the Reception/Year 1 group. In each case, the relevant teacher selected groups of four to five – three from each year level – with

each group comprised of roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. The discussions were recorded using both audio and video recording in order for the transcriber to be able to distinguish student voices not easily identifiable from the audio recording alone. The material was subsequently transcribed and organised for analysis using NUD•IST software. Data from work in this school alone comprised 134 pages of transcription of the students talking about power and politics. We reproduce sections of transcript throughout the chapter as evidence. The children's names have been changed and the numbers in brackets refer to their ages.

The approach taken in the semi-structured discussions was to initiate discussion about power in terms immediately relevant to young people's lives. Hence, we started with the idea that certain jobs have to be done in connection with the institutions of home and school. Our initial questions related to issues of power and responsibility: What do you have to do? Who makes you do it? In particular, the question 'Who is in charge at home, at school, in the classroom, in the playground etc.?' was productive of lively discussion. Our position was based on the shared conviction that young people's understandings of politics are likely to be derived from their own lived experience of the operation of power.

One theme in our study emerged quite clearly and quickly. This was that children's thinking about power, its locations and articulations, develops in ways highly congruent with their developing cognitive capacities. In the previous chapter we likened this process to the 'pebble in the pond' phenomenon, an ever-widening series of circles of possibilities in their perceptions of power relationships. The feature we wish to discuss in this chapter is not concerned with the developing sophistication of the children's conceptualisation of power, but rather with the quality of thinking used to address the question from the beginning. In this approach we are using theories of social cognition.

Beyond empowerment – social cognition

Educationists of late have embraced the notion of empowerment as a positive effect of the educational encounter. More often than not, the claim for empowerment rests on inference rather than empirical enquiry. If teachers act in mutually respectful ways, we are told, their students will be empowered. Authoritarianism is disempowering, as it represents domination of students by teachers. While the approaches commended in this way are intuitively reasonable, we want to suggest that there is a need to go beyond the assumption that if teachers act in accordance with currently acceptable pedagogic principles the students will automatically and transparently achieve a more potent position in their classroom and their worlds. We want to theorise what transpires when teachers and

schools operate consciously in ways that render their processes accessible and up for student comment and discussion.

In order to do this, there is a need to deconstruct some familiar ways of theorising young people's thinking processes. One of the long-lived binary oppositions in the way educational psychology has presented theories of minds concerns the disjunction between the cognitive dimension – meaning primarily mental processing governed by logical rules – and the affective dimension, which necessarily involves feeling, an emotional level of response. In addition, there is the split between the cognitive function of schooling, wherein the study of the ways in which children's minds develop is privileged, and the socialisation factor that is usually associated with the internalisation of social rules. In this chapter we propose the need for theorising that resists these long-standing distinctions. Instead, we argue for theories of social cognition that insist on the cognitive dimension of social learning and in which the social is not so much a system response into which behaviours and attitudes must be fitted, but rather the social itself is registered as a focus of thinking. In a recent work, Goleman (2006) has identified this dimension as social intelligence. As set out by Zimmer (1990):

> *The term social cognition refers to a new hybrid field of study that treats matters of how people think about themselves in relation to other people and how they perceive society and its institutions.* (p. 287)

Political thinking inevitably involves thinking about the ways in which society is organised, and struggling to achieve some sort of balance between the individual's needs and the society's requirements. Such thinking also necessarily involves a moral dimension – questions of justice, fairness and the general good – and a felt response, at times passionately felt, to current questions. In the analysis of the children's talk about power in their world of school and the ways in which their concerns are managed, we acknowledge the contributions made variously by Vygotsky in terms of the importance of the social context to cognitive operations generally and also of Kohlberg in the insistence of a developing moral dimension to young people's thinking. However, as shall be evident in the following, we also felt a need to go beyond the work of these major theorists in our efforts to theorise the ways in which young people approach political thinking.

The awareness of institutional hierarchy – and who has the power, really?

Much has been written of the need for authority and affection to be transferred from the child's primary caregiver – the parent, preschool teacher, child-care worker – to the teacher in the early years of schooling.

Anecdotal accounts abound of the young charges frequently mistakenly calling the teacher 'Mummy'. Similarly, parents often report somewhat ruefully that their authority becomes subverted in the early school years by their offspring's insistence on what Miss So-and-So said as being right and proper and the ultimate authority on the matter at hand. The children in our study had all completed the first two years of schooling and were thus in a position to have experienced not simply one teacher in charge of them but rather were able to see the school as a system of authority in which power was articulated through a structure. For instance, in an early group they quickly agree that the teacher is in charge in all classrooms, but then some of them wanted to qualify this simple hierarchical prescription:

Mandy (10): There's some classrooms that the teacher's one of the leaders, some of the kids are too.
I: Is that a good thing or a bad thing?
Mandy (10): I think it's a bad thing.
I: Okay, tell me about that. Why is it a bad thing?
Mandy (10): Because the leaders who are the kids are basically more independent, harder to agree because they want their own way.
I: I see. What sort of situation does that produce in the classroom?
Mandy (10): A fight.
I: Okay. So you're saying it's more comfortable in the classroom where the teacher's the leader?
Mandy (10): Yeah.

These middle-primary children show that they have rationalised the need for authority and structure in the world of school, but they are also aware of the transitive nature of power – it's not simply a top-down affair, and the children have power, too. They are also aware of the emotional dimensions of issues of power; they identify conflict – a fight – as a feature of competition for power between teacher and taught, and readily concede a greater degree of comfort when teacher is in charge.

From quite a young age, the power implicit in the institutional structure appears to be understood by the students, as noted by Haste (1987): 'the child learns to enact the rule before she can express it or make it conscious and articulated' (p. 166). Even the youngest informants had a clear impression of the school hierarchy. When Brian identifies the teachers in a particular order it becomes clear that their relative power is seen in association with the age and level of their students:

Brian (8): Mrs Green, Mrs Giles, Mrs Hill. Mrs Hill is right down the bottom of the list.
Phillip (8): It is a ladder.

Clearly, in the children's eyes there is no ambiguity about the relative importance of the teachers – and of the students they teach. Their own relatively recent experience of being in the lowest year-level clearly left them with the sense of being the least important and least powerful in the school.

I: Why are they in that order? Why is Mrs Hill on the bottom?
Phillip (8): Because she teaches the R/1s.
I: So Mrs Hill is with the R/1s – the little ones.
Angela (7): Wouldn't it be too heavy to be on the bottom, wouldn't you get squashed?

Little children are seen as having less power in the school community, and hence their teachers also are seen as being less powerful and less important than those who are associated with the older children. Here, the children offer a linear, top-down model of power, with the more senior people having authority over those lower down. Institutional power is directly understood in terms of their own experience of personal power.

The mid-primary children also reflect this typical school-based understanding, but they had incorporated other power effects into their hierarchy, which extend beyond the school.

I: All right, so the situation in the school, we've got, if we look at power going from the bottom to the top, who's on the bottom?
Mandy (10): Usually ...
John (10): The children.
I: Children?
Mandy (10): Children.
I: What about which children are right at the bottom?
John (10): Receptions.
I: Receptions are right at the bottom.
Mandy (10): The youngest.
I: The youngest. And then it goes up in terms of age. And then who's the next one up?
John (10): Size is also important because a little kid wouldn't want to challenge a bigger kid.
[…]
I: … All right, so we've got the kids at the bottom, and then who's next in the power?
John (10): Then teachers.
I: And then above the teachers?
John (10): The principal.
I: What about above the principal?
John (10): The government.

Mandy (10): Government.
I: All right, so the government's above …?
Mandy (10): Everyone else.

To some extent, the very arrangement of schooling into classes/levels along age lines is ratified as a power effect by the child informants. This effect is consistent with the process argued by theorists of social cognition:

> *Meaning and implicit theories about social relations are revealed in the practice of members of the society; the resources for the child's understanding of the grammar of rules are represented symbolically by the culture and within the framework of metaphor, symbol and action the child develops her own understanding.*
>
> (Haste, 1987, p. 168)

At the upper-primary level, the discussion reveals the students' perception of power, and its articulation extends beyond the school to the further specification of government as comprised of departments. However, their picture of these more formal power dimensions is fairly vague:

I: What is the Education Department?
Sam (12): That is the big place somewhere. For schools.

In the discussion of the Education Department, the children appear to want to show they have some grasp of the power beyond the local, as embodied in the school principal. At the same time, they quickly identify concrete issues about permissions needed and conveyed by letter as they seek to convey the working of power in ways that relate to their own experience:

Caroline (11): They [the Education Department] make the main decisions that the principal doesn't know, like to go on an excursion – the principal will send a letter and see if it is okay with them.
Sam (12): Like with the movies we have been doing, we have just watched *Moby Dick*, and we had to get the video from the Education Department so we didn't infringe on copyright.
Caroline (11): So they had to make sure that it wasn't, like, unsuitable so they wanted to watch this movie – we had to send it to the Education Department first and get the okay sign from them so we could watch it.

And when asked about the manner in which the Education Department has power, some of the children invoke government structures – the minister – so that once again the power becomes embodied.

I: Who gives the Education Department power?
Sam (12): The minister for education.
I: Who is he? Where would we find him?
Sam (12): In Parliament House.

However, when the question is pursued further, the speaker tries for an abstraction – the government – but then quickly reverts to particular issues and people in order to render the idea of government personally meaningful.

I: And who gives the minister for education power?
Caroline (11): The government.
Sam (12): The budget, the treasurer who gives out the budget, he kind of gives them enough money to give them a certain amount of power.
Caroline (11): I don't really think that. Like it would have to be really serious I think if something had to be taken to the minister for education, like if it was a movie with language in it, like if the Education Department doesn't think it is right and they don't really know what to do they will just ... and it would have to be really bad if it still went up.

This discussion is particularly interesting in that it offers a clear example of Vygotsky's scaffolding effect as the young informants build on one another's comments to construct a more complex picture of the articulation of power through school and community. They also maintain a sense of their own position within the hierarchy they mutually construct – the job of the higher powers is to look after their interests in the safety of the excursion and the choice of 'suitable' movies. They appear to feel personally looked after by the systematised power that underpins schooling processes. This is a very different picture from the official curriculum, which represents the seat of power as a somewhat remote historical construction, far removed from the actuality of student experience.

Power/control seen as necessary features of the classroom

In their thinking about the ways in which schools and classrooms are managed, the students seemed almost surprisingly compliant. In their assessment, order is important for the organisation of successful classrooms, and the power of authority is a benign and necessary feature of the classroom. As Anne (12) noted: 'But there has to be some power, otherwise it just all falls apart'. Before this feature can be dismissed as so symptomatic of the middle-class location of the students as to be

unremarkable, some points are worth noting. First, the students are not simply obedient to the existing power structure. Even the youngest groups offered some counter and resistant readings of the school situation:

I: Okay, tell me some more about how do you know, what does the teacher do that tells you that the teacher is in charge, what sorts of things do they do?
Angela (7): They tell you what the work you have to do.
Phillip (8): And what the rules are.
I: Phillip?
Phillip (8): They send you out of the classroom sometimes.
Brian (8): If you been naughty that is.
Martin (8): They can tell you off if you are messing about on the floor or talking to people and put you in the Time Out book.

While they perceive the teacher having a controlling role in determining what happens in the classroom, this perception is not seen as unreasonable but rather as a consequence of student behaviour. At the same time, they are also aware of a school culture that positions the teacher on one side and the students on the other, and fall readily into the 'not fair' claim:

I: Martin, what do teachers do that says they are in charge?
Martin (8): Give you work.
I: Is it fair that the teacher is in charge?
All: No.
Brian (8): Because they give us heaps hard work.
I: Okay, hang on a second. What about the other way around, suppose the kids were in charge, would that be good?
All: Yeah.
Brian (8): Then we could get sport and activities.
Mary (7): It wouldn't be too good because what happens when we grow up, you won't be able to do anything.
I: What would happen when you grow up?
Brian (8): You wouldn't be able to do anything, like be able to spell.
Phillip (8): You wouldn't know how to spell anything. I would keep some of the maths sheets, I would do them in my spare time.
I: So you reckon, so do you think it is …
Phillip (8): At least do some work.
Brian (8): Sport on some days, like and …
Angela (7): An activity on some days and work on some days.

In this excerpt we see the children actively reasoning about whether or not school is a good thing, imagining what would happen if they didn't learn what they understand as important knowledge – notably maths! – and constructing ways in which they could possibly get by without

attending. They end up in the position of supporting the need for there to be schools, but this is not a straightforward effect of 'the socialisation process', with its passive overtones, nor is it a simple effect of class location, although no doubt these scripts are at work, too. This sequence offers evidence of the 'complex social and cognitive processes through which children engage in the negotiation of meaning, of justification and legitimation' (Haste, 1987, p. 170). Elsewhere, there is the appeal to developing notions of fairness and justice in their argument for the need for teacher control, as in:

John (10):	There's usually a decision with the class. The children make up the … they agree on what rules – they give the suggestions and the teacher says whether they're good or not.
I:	I see, so the teacher can actually say, 'This is okay' or 'It's not okay.'
John (10):	Yeah.
I:	So is that fair?
Mandy (10):	I think it is.
John (10):	Because you could just say 'Kill everyone that you see' and the teacher wouldn't be able to say 'yes' or 'no'.

Once again, in John's 10-year-old view, the teacher's authority is a necessary part of the maintenance of classroom order in which they are all implicated. The children's responses are in line with Rawls' (1972) notion of natural justice, wherein the general good is seen to be of major importance.

Schools as models of democratic process?

The degree to which schooling processes enable and facilitate the role of students in decision making has been recognised as an important feature in the promotion of participatory democracy (Brennan, 1996). It seems, to us, unfortunate that the curriculum package 'Discovering Democracy' does not do more to actively involve students in the analysis of their own school location and its processes in its efforts to constitute a student citizenry. This is especially concerning because our young informants offered numerous examples of their ability to analyse their own schooling processes from the standpoint of a truly democratic sharing of power. For instance, the teachers at Melford appeared to follow the currently accepted practice of involving the students in the generation of class rules. The children were familiar with the practice of discussion and voting in order to determine whether or not a rule should be incorporated or changed. However, even the youngest group was somewhat cynical about an individual's potential to affect outcomes in this regard:

I: Okay, now, who made up those rules?
Phillip (8): The teacher.
Brian (8): No, we did.
Angela (7): Mrs Green.
Brian (8): No, we did because Mrs Green said we are going to make our class rules and we said what the class rules were.
I: So you had a say in that, did you?
Brian (8): Yes.
[…]
I: So how does that work then, how do you get to have a say, those rules?
Martin (8): We make them up.
Angela (7): I am not quite sure.
I: Supposing you make up a rule that the teacher doesn't like?
Martin (8): Then she won't write it down.

Angela's doubts, as in 'I'm not quite sure', give rise to Martin's assertion 'Then she won't write it down', a clear indication that although democratic process is officially followed, the teacher's power remains supreme. The school rules regarding teacher's power over the students are to varying degrees structurally embedded, and the children learn these rules in ways that the simple voice-over 'we can negotiate the rules for our class' doesn't easily overwrite. To some degree, this is ratified by the older children in terms of the teacher's status as adult, while at the same time they appear healthily aware of their reciprocally constituted importance in the classroom situation:

I: Okay, who gives the teacher the power to do that?
Bruce (12): The principal.
Damien (11): Us.
Rachel (12): All of us and the principal.
I: So how do you give the teacher the power to do things that you don't like?
Rachel (12): Well, if we weren't there, then she wouldn't be able to have anybody to talk to.
Bruce (12): And also because we're younger.
Anna (11): Yeah.
Bruce (12): And she's like the leader and we have to follow.
I: Is it that if you're an adult, or if you're older, or being the oldest in the family, being older gives you more power?
Darren (11): It's just, like, the teacher's the follower and everyone in the class.
Anna (11): No, the leader.

Darren (11): Yeah, the teacher's the leader and everyone in the class has to follow or else.

Our data provide ample evidence of the degree to which democratic process is taken on board in social arrangements by the children. By middle-primary school, the children appear to be disinclined to consider any one of their peers as a 'leader', and prefer to see themselves as equally involved in joint decisions.

I: Okay, what about, let's think about your friends now, in your group of friends. Some kids have told us that in their groups of friends that there's always a leader and, you know, other kids follow on. The leader determines what's going to be played, what games to play and where you're going to play them and so on.

Sally (9): Because with me and Alicia, we're best friends. We knew each other from when we were born because our brothers knew each other. We don't really care. We just go, like, if one says something we just do it and if she wants to do something we do it.

Alicia (9): We swap.

I: All right.

Neil (9): I don't really think it's fair how one person's the leader because some other people might want to do something else which they might enjoy but they still want to hang out with their friends.

Blair (9): I reckon it's better if two people discuss what, like, good friends discuss what they want to do, and see if they can make a compromise. Or people go off in their different directions.

Even in terms of friendship behaviours – usually regarded as straightforward socialisation – there is evidence of the children's thoughtful insistence on democratic process. In terms of decisions about what to do:

I: What about with your friends, who gets to say what you do when you are with your friends?

Adam (11): Nobody.

Sam (12): It is just kind of automatic, it is just kind of like a domino effect really, someone does something that is good, everyone else does it, yeah.

I: So somebody makes a suggestion and the other people say?

Sam (12): Agree or don't agree.

Anne (12): If they don't agree we sort of go our separate ways.

Sam (12): If someone goes 'boing' we go ...

Caroline (11): We usually just make our decision as a group, we don't usually, like, have one person make the decisions, we are all the leader.

Anne (12): It is more everyone has …

Caroline (11): Everyone has a say in what you do.

Melford School, like many, if not most, Australian schools, has an SRC, which operates by having elected members from each year level discuss school matters and contribute to the running of the school by giving student input about the various rules and activities. While Melford students, like students elsewhere, were somewhat cynical about the degree of impact the SRC had on school-wide decision making, it is abundantly clear that this school management structure was constructed very much along the lines of representative government. As such, it provided a ready opportunity for a civics education program to build on in terms of its democratically elected membership and its decision-making processes. Unfortunately, the curriculum package 'Discovering Democracy' does not take up this opportunity. In addition, the ways in which the students viewed the SRC appeared to be coloured by media images of politics; in other words, they exhibited a cynicism about student government in much the same way they regarded politicians as inherently untrustworthy.

Darren (11): Yeah, and then what they normally do in parliament is, say, they'll do something really good but sometimes it doesn't mean they'll really do it.

Bruce (12): You have to get voted in.

I: All right. They make promises.

Darren (11): Yes, they make promises but they break them.

Damien (11): They break them, they twist them.

And …

Sam (12): It is kind of like our jobs in the classrooms, if you are like, a computer monitor but you don't know how to work computers, you just use your power to look important and stuff and then when something happens and you don't.

Leanne (12): Are you talking about anyone here? *I* am a computer monitor and *I do* know how to use it.

Sam (12): I am just speaking as an example. So you know how to use your power because you ...

I: So some people can have power and have particular responsibilities but don't necessarily know how to do those things very well.

Caroline (11): It is like for the class monitors, they have power like inside of the classroom and in different classes except ones that actually are controlled by other class monitors.

Leanne (12): The prime ministers also, some of them, like, just have power but that is only because they work their way up there but they are not probably very good at their job, anyone can work their way up there if they just get people to vote for them, just say what people want and want to hear and they will get up there.

The fact that the students themselves made explicit connections between the way in which their class monitors and elected SRC members worked and the way in which they saw politicians as working underscores the potential of making these connections in the teaching of civics education. Their cynicism and disenchantment reflect the media images but also are testimony to their felt sense of disappointment in structures they can conceive of as working more properly. This is not simply a case of these students being effectively socialised – they are sophisticated and articulate social agents. But they are also operating as actively thinking through the implications for governance that emerge from existing routines and thinking about possible alternatives. Their responses are inflected with moral judgements about the rightness of particular arrangements, and they are emotionally invested in the outcomes. Some of this is lost in the simple transcription of student talk – the urgency of expression, the keenly felt quick response, as in Leanne's 'Are you talking about anyone here?', the equally quick denial and affirmation of a certain cynicism.

Our conversations with these young people provided us with a unique opportunity to observe them constructing understanding about the ways in which schools and society operate – and their place in the broader picture. It is our contention that this process involves far more than the simple transmission of fact about the structure of government and the purposes of elections. To have an opinion about such matters, to have your say, involves a thoughtful response to the facts as known certainly, but also such action involves an affective response – to want to do it – and some degree of moral judgement about how you see what is right in the process. In our view, schools need to provide young people with these sorts of opportunities and then consciously relate them to the larger questions of public power.

Some concluding remarks

Our study of children's reading of the power relations implicit in their daily schooling encounter appears to carry profound implications for

both the processes of schooling and the ways in which teaching and learning are understood and theorised.

Firstly, we would urge schools and teachers to become more self-consciously reflexive about their practices in the interests of teaching for participatory democracy. We have shown here that students do internalise aspects of their daily lived experience of schooling in ways that relate directly to their participation in institutional life. They see themselves as able to contest – to varying degrees – the rules of school existence. They see their school operating to incorporate them as individuals into features of corporate life – and they have opinions about the validity and fairness of this process. The students revealed themselves as critical commentators on the institutional politics of the school and ready to apply that learning to other social institutions. It is imperative that educators take note of this feature of school learning if they are to respond to the requirements of civics education in a democratic society.

Appeals to democratise the processes of schooling are not new. Ever since 1971, with the advent of the 'new' sociology of education, it has been argued that the ways in which schooling is organised impact on the forms of knowledge produced. Strangely, however, in this particular area, civics education, it would seem to appear that the curriculum developers have been wilfully blind to this sort of thinking. The curriculum package 'Discovering Democracy' owes much to the current technological developments for information exchange and packaging. However, in terms of what is actually happening in the schools and the way in which classrooms are run, the materials are conspicuously silent. We say conspicuously because the essential project of education for participatory democracy is one of encouragement for people everywhere to speak up, to give voice to their concerns about what is actually happening in their lives, as well as to their hopes and dreams and visions for the future. A suitable curriculum would need to attend to issues of practice as well as issues of factual knowledge.

The second implication from our work thus far concerns the way in which psychological theory has been taken up in teacher education. The split that is frequently forged between learning, as in the cognitive domain, and socialisation, as in the affective domain, is an artificial and dangerous construction. In this simplistic approach, schooling is seen as learning school subjects, and socialisation is seen as making friends and learning appropriate behaviours. What is elided, and what we have been focusing on here, is the fact that children also learn about school, and the ways of doing school becomes a focus for their cognitive and affective attention. In this chapter we have shown that the processes adopted by schools become internalised by the students in a conscious, reflective way that is not accountable in terms of typical theories of socialisation. Rather,

we have argued for the necessary place in theory of social cognition to offer an explanation of this process.

A related point concerns curriculum. The features of schooling described in this chapter have sometimes been loosely termed by some writers as 'the hidden curriculum' – meaning that which is not made explicitly part of the set of school-produced knowledge that every student must master. However, our work has shown that this aspect of curriculum is far from hidden – in fact, it is a powerfully evident part of the schooling encounter as experienced by students. Possibly it has become hidden, or at least hardly noticed, by the teachers and educators for whom the mysteries of schooling have for too long been understood as a series of managerial practices pragmatically adopted and subsequently taken for granted. Examples include the SRC, the negotiated classroom rules, the election of monitors etc. Such practices carry democratic overtones but may lapse into mechanisms for control and behaviour management, rather than offering an introduction to civic participation and responsibility. Curriculum theory needs to address the ways in which schools operate as part of the key learning associated with schooling.

The way ahead

The task for civics education is not simply one of making sure all the students have learned the correct information about our government, but rather of providing explicit treatment of the way in which the school and the classroom is managed, so that students can obtain a clear idea of their potential contribution to the running of that particular context. The arguments behind this approach are not simply that it is fair. Neither is it just a case of equity demands it. What we have argued in this chapter is that social cognition plays an important part in the intellectual development of the students. It is through social cognition that students perceive and understand the ways of institutions, home, school and broader society. Social cognition involves much more than simply being socialised – that is, learning the correct behaviours to take part in the group. It implies a cognitive experience whereby group and institutional procedures are subjected to recognition and then an intellectual scrutiny within which the student is drawn to make some judgement about the situation and their part in it. This is surely the ultimate goal of civics education, and must therefore merit incorporation into its practice.

3 | 'It's like we're a normal way and everyone else is different': Australian children's constructions of citizenship and national identity

Introduction

As Australia enters the new millennium, the term globalisation has become increasingly familiar. We are continually urged in our workplaces and in the media to consider ourselves as part of a global community, but the meanings associated with this idea are far from clear. Theorists, too, appear divided on the issue. On the one hand, Featherstone, Lash and Robertson (1995) claim that '... the global begins to replace the nation-state as the framework for social life' (p. 1). On the other hand, the process is described elsewhere, thus:

> *The process of globalisation seems to be accompanied by a rediscovery and revitalisation of the past and a pre-modern sense of community, of deeply emotional and atavistic patriotic feelings towards one's nation.*
>
> (De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak, 1999, p. 170)

It remains to be seen whether or not a transformative move towards global citizenry will obliterate earlier loyalties to state, homeland and/or nation – or will such a transformation necessarily accommodate differences in geographical location and politics as part of the newly constructed global world?

For Australians, the issue of globalisation adds a new dimension to the complex of concerns around questions of national identity. With the arrival in 1996 of a new political party entitled 'One Nation', which embraced a narrowly xenophobic platform based on a monocultural mythology, Australians were given cause to think about common values and visions for the future. The last year of the 20th century had seen both the defeat of the referendum on a republic and the rewriting of the Preamble to the *Constitution*, prior to which the news media was dominated for many months by questions of the meaning of being Australian and the sort of

governmental structure the country should have. Later in 1999, there was much publicity given to the increasing numbers of boatloads of refugees attempting to land on our shores. Consequently, there was wide coverage of issues of citizenship, refugee status and the rules permitting entry into the country.

Yet another indication of growing concern at the way Australia is understood came through educational initiatives. As a consequence of a report that detailed the widespread public ignorance of Australian government structures and processes, the government devoted considerable funds to a national curriculum package entitled 'Discovering Democracy'. The package offers detailed curriculum for the school years, from Year 4 through Year 10. It was released to every school in the country in November 1998. Concerns had been raised about these materials and the pedagogies they commend, not the least of which was the fact that they were not based upon research into the existing understandings of young Australians (Gill and Reid, 1999; Howard and Gill, 2000). While some studies were undertaken into the level of school students' knowledge of civic arrangements (Print, 1995; Doig, Piper, Mellor and Masters, 1994), the affective dimension – the sense of belonging to a community and a country – was left entirely untapped. The study described in this chapter was carried out to address that gap in the knowledge of what young people think about 'being Australian'. We begin with a brief discussion of the question of national identity.

National identity – a discursive construction

By now, Benedict Anderson's idea of the 'imagined community' has become something of a commonplace with regard to theorising people's felt sense of belonging to a place or a country (Anderson, 1983). More recent work has taken up the idea of an envisioned community as providing a means for self-identification, and has offered further theories about the ways in which this envisioning might take place. As Barker (1999) sees it, for instance, national identity is 'a form of imaginative identification with that nation-state as expressed through symbols and discourses … a construction assembled through symbols and rituals in relation to territorial and administrative categories' (pp. 64–65). Similarly, scholars such as Hall (1997) have described nations as systems of cultural representation, thereby extending the notion of citizen by explaining that people are not just citizens by law; they also participate in forming the idea of the nation as it is represented in their national culture – hence, citizens are constitutive of the nation at the same time as being constituted as citizen by it. Viewed in this way, nationality becomes a narrative, a story people tell about themselves in order to lend meaning

to their social world; a story that transforms perceptions of the past and of the present.

A constant feature of the current theorising about national identities is that they are discursively constructed and amenable to change and re-writing, a feature in marked contrast with earlier notions of fixity, history-as-truth and essentialism of genetic endowment. Seen thus, national identities are not completely consistent, stable and immutable; they are fluid constructions, generated differently in different contexts. There is no such thing as the one and only national identity. The work of constructing national identities is seen as being carried out by national cultures, often couched in descriptions that approximate educational experience:

> *National cultures construct identities by creating meanings of 'the nation', with which we can identify: these are contained in stories that are told about the nation, in stories which link its present to its past and in the perceptions of it that are constructed*
>
> (Hall, 1996a, p. 613)

This perspective is strikingly similar to that of Shirley Grundy, who writes from an educationalist position:

> *Thus what is presented in school lessons can be regarded as the 'official storylines of a society' … in classroom discourse we would find portrayed modes of being that are given wide social approval.*
>
> (Grundy, 1994, p. 17)

At this point, it seems appropriate to turn to the school in an effort to identify what storylines are currently circulating around the idea of 'being Australian'.

The school as a site for creating the nation?

Formal schooling has long been connected with the instilling of values of patriotism, loyalty and national identity. For the first half of the past century, generations of young Australians dutifully recited the Oath of Loyalty during Monday morning assemblies held throughout the land. Although such formal rituals have become less popular over time, the connection between schooling and national identification remains. In an interview in 1995, Edward Said commented:

> *Most systems of education today, I believe, are still nationalist, that is to say they promote the authority of the national identity in an idealised way and suggest that it is incapable of any criticism, that it is virtue incarnate.*
>
> (Said, 1995, p. 46)

This perception of the close connection between schooling and the inculcation of nationalist sentiment was echoed by Willinsky (1999): 'Fostering an allegiance to the nation lies so close to the heart of public schooling' (p. 99) – a claim that would appear to be based on an almost 'natural' order of things. Certainly, educational sociology has long theorised the school's central function in the maintenance of the nation-state:

> *According to Bourdieu, it is to a large extent through its schools and education system that the state shapes those forms of perception, categorization, interpretation and memory that serve to determine the orchestration of the habitus which in turn are the constitutive basis for a kind of national commonsense.*
>
> (De Cillia et al., 1999, p. 156)

And yet, most of this theorising comes from the northern hemisphere and derives from locations in which the concept of nation and nationalism has been privileged rather more than in Australia. One Australian intellectual has commented that what was significantly Australian here was:

> *... the lack of nationalism of 'race and place', and a schooling in which Australia was not the be-all and end-all or even the focal point of our lives as lives of the mind.*
>
> (Kamenka, 1993, p. 27)

In South Australian schools, there is currently little of the obvious ritual such as flag raising or anthem singing that might contribute to a kind of national commonsense such as Bourdieu describes, although there is a sense in which the very ritualised practice of schooling itself and the students' response to it may impact on the development of notions of collective identity in the students (Billig, 1995; Grundy, 1994). Certainly, given the current turbulence in Australia regarding the meaning of 'being Australian', it would appear to be an appropriate moment to investigate the ways in which current schoolchildren understand themselves in terms of national identity.

Previous investigations of children and national identity

There have been few previous investigations of children's responses to questions of national identity, and most of these have had as their subtext a concern with otherness, difference and the potential for racist attitudes being revealed (Carrington and Short, 1995, 1998). A cross-national comparison of self-identification was carried out with German children and English children as participants, and relied on the contrasting profiles generated by the children's responses in terms of self-perception. The

British children were revealed as more confident of being well received outside their own country than their German counterparts, whereas the children of Turkish guest workers in Germany had a significantly lower estimation of their positive reception in places other than Turkey. In this study, national identification emerged from the different profiles rather than being an explicit focus of the research.

Carrington and Short (1995, 1998) have carried out a series of studies in the United Kingdom, which focus explicitly on children's sense of national identity and have shown this sense to develop in complexity as the children grow older. These researchers adopted a three-part construct of national identity, derived from Penrose (1993), which first relies on the existence of a distinctive group of people defined in terms of tangible characteristics such as language or religion or other cultural practices; second, the assumption that such groups occupy or lay claim to a distinctive territory or place; and third that a 'mystical bond' is forged between people and place to form an immutable whole: the nation. Among the more significant of their findings was that children across the studies appeared relatively uninterested in the question of 'being British', and that only rarely were responses encountered that carried a potentially racist overtone (the examples of which appeared to us as more like the registering of difference than racist per se). Although Carrington and Short describe their studies as 'ethnographic', their handling of the data would appear to be in the more straightforward question-and-answer mode than that called for under discursive enquiry.

Approaches to investigating national identity through discursive practices

In her investigation of national affiliation in northern Ireland, Stephanie Taylor (1999) wrote of the participants in the study doing 'discursive work' *against* the idea of a national identity. This finding was revealing on at least two levels. First, it showed the necessity of the researcher avoiding a stance in which national identification is seen as a feature somehow inevitably moving the respondents towards identification with the nation; in Taylor's case the informants positioned themselves variously but personally and individually outside the 'national'. Secondly, and more importantly for the current study, Taylor reveals the power of the discursive position in which speech acts are seen not simply as revealing the 'true disposition' of the coherent subject speaker, but rather as the stimulus for viewing people in the process of achieving a position at that point in time (and necessarily one that may change at a later point). Certainly, the informants used familiar speech patterns that would have been taken on unreflectively, but in their reproduction they also revealed themselves to be co-constructors of new

ways of envisioning connectedness to entities both closer and more distant than the traditional nation-state (Taylor, 1999).

Discourse analysis was also the method of enquiry taken up in a large Austrian study of the concept of national identity, and once again it was the talk that happened rather than the answers to the questions that constituted the focus for analysis (De Cillia et al., 1999). Given the somewhat ephemeral nature of the concept of national identity, it would seem particularly appropriate to adopt a similar position when investigating this concept with young people. The point is not so much *whether* they identify as being Australian (or not as the case may be), but rather how they feel about doing so, what images they use, their language, their expressions, their inconsistencies etc. Only in this way can the research begin to reveal the ways in which 'the nation' operates as an imaginary construction for the participants. In the present study we have used an approach in which the children are drawn in to a discussion of 'Australianness', not in the sense of being questioned, but rather we have observed and recorded their ongoing conversations that were instigated in response to the researchers' initial query. Our interest lies not so much in whether or not they admit to 'feeling Australian' but in how they talk about it. We see them as engaged in the discursive work of positioning themselves variously both within and against constructions of the national.

The study

The research being presented here is part of a larger, ongoing qualitative study of Australian children's perceptions of public power and politics. To this point, more than 60 girls and boys between 7 and 12 years of age took part in small group discussions about power and its use in the social contexts and institutions with which they are most familiar. We have reported on aspects of this research in the previous chapters.

In the groups of the oldest children (11- and 12-year-olds), their talk about the articulation of power in the wider society inevitably raised issues of citizenship, and this in turn led to the question of national identity. When these topics emerged in the children's discussions, the researchers used three probing questions to encourage the participants to explore their ideas. The first two of these were 'What is a citizen?' and 'What does it mean to say you're Australian?' The third probe asked the children to nominate some images or words that they would use in a collage designed to represent what being Australian means.

This chapter explores how 21 Anglo-Australian boys and girls from two separate schools in very different social class areas responded to these questions of national identity and citizenship at a time in Australia's history when both issues are very much at the top of the national agenda.

The children's talk was audiotaped and subsequently transcribed for analysis using NUD•IST, a software tool for the management of qualitative data (Qualitative Solutions and Research, 1995). Where excerpts from the transcripts have been used for illustrative purposes, the children's names are pseudonyms and the number in brackets after a name is the child's age.

The main themes for the analysis were suggested by and, to a certain extent, adapted from the critical discourse analysis approach adopted by the large Austrian study of adult constructions of national identity (De Cillia et al., 1999). Here, three interrelated dimensions were used to guide analysis of the data: (i) contents/topics (that is, what was talked about), (ii) strategies (the ways in which the topics were addressed) and (iii) linguistic means and forms of realisation (the use of specific language constructions to express meaning) (De Cillia et al., 1999, p. 157).

For the present study we collapsed the third category (linguistic means and forms of realisation) into the second (strategies) – a move we felt was justified by the smaller corpus of data; the fact that the children's talk used far fewer of the sophisticated strategies used by the Austrian adult participants and because specific language constructions can be seen as a type of conscious/unconscious strategy used in addressing the topics being discussed.

Content

The substance of the children's talk produced two major themes, which are explored below.

(i) Symbols, stereotypes and icons

The most common way in which the children responded to the question of what it means to be Australian was to list symbols, icons or stereotypes that have come to signify Australia in the popular imagination, both at home and abroad. They mentioned the Australian flag; animals such as kangaroos and koalas; Australian beer brands and football; gum trees; the Australian accent and idioms ('G'day mate'); and desert and bush landscapes. They knew what stereotypes were, and one group took great pleasure in describing a stereotype of an Australian male:

Mark (12): I reckon it's like a guy who's got a check shirt that's all dirty.
Sharon (12): G'day mate.
Mark: All jeans, you know, the VB in one hand.
Sharon: Overalls.
Robert (11): And an Akubra hat.
Sharon: With the corks hanging down.

Mark: Yeah.
I: Okay, so why is that a stereotype?
Sharon: Because most people aren't like that.

Important public buildings that have achieved iconic status were also mentioned by both groups. Despite the fact that the children are South Australian, the buildings that signify being Australian to them are all located on the east coast – the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Sydney Opera House, Sydney's Centrepoint Tower, Parliament House in Canberra.

When the groups were asked to explain what they would include in a collage representing what it means to be Australian, a similar list of items, places and buildings was used.

Despite encouragement to reflect on whether being Australian makes a difference 'inside you', only Simon (12) offered a more complex explanation that seems at first to suggest an emotional attachment to country based on 'feelings'. However, his argument (supported by Caroline and Ailsa) seems finally to rely on specific political knowledge and recognition of nationalist symbols:

I: So, talk a bit about what you think being Australian means.
Simon (12): I think Australia's – it's almost a state of mind. Like, even if you're, let's say you're American but you're born in Australia you still don't, I don't think you really feel Australian. You still feel as though you're American [...] It's what you think you are. If you think you're Australian, you're Australian. If you don't think you're Australian, you're not.
I: So how would an American, say, or a French person think differently from an Australian person? What would their state of mind be like? Does being Australian make you different inside from other people?
Simon (12): It doesn't necessarily make you different as in personal actual feelings. I just think if you were American you'd feel American, you know? You may not know about all the politics and stuff but you'd know that Bill Clinton's the President; there are 52 stars on the flag and stuff whereas, with us, we kind of know that John Howard is the Prime Minister – for the time being.
Caroline (11): Our leaders, we know who they are.
Ailsa (12): We know what our flag looks like, you know.

(ii) Everyday life

A second way in which the participants explained what it means to be an Australian was to draw attention to shared aspects of everyday life, often comparing these with what they knew about other countries. Clearly, to

a certain extent there is overlap here with the comparisons strategy that is addressed below; however, here we wish to focus on the content of these comparisons.

Language – particularly the Australian accent and idioms – was seen as an important factor in being Australian. Some of the children, like Leonie, had travelled overseas and they were intrigued to find that others consider Australians to have accents. For Leonie, this, perhaps, was her first experience of being 'other':

Leonie (12): I was in Holland for a few months two years ago and we were staying in a hotel before we moved into a house and we met a couple of American people and they said, 'You've got really strong accents' and it was kind of like, 'Pardon?' You know, it just doesn't click that we've got strong accents. It's like we're a normal way and everyone else is different.

All groups commented on the standard of living in Australia as an important element of being Australian. Ailsa (12), for example, explained how '... we have a lot of things that other countries don't'. Amy (11) and David (11) in another group go some way to indicate what these things are:

Amy (11): In Australia there's a lot of open places where you can walk and lots of fresh air, animals and stuff like that.

I: Mmm.

David (11): No wars or fighting over things. No poverty – or most people have got money.

Explicit comparisons with other countries also produced a facet of being Australian that borders on being a stereotypical 'national characteristic'. Some of the children, who are studying Indonesian language and culture in school, referred to the way different attitudes to religion highlighted for them important aspects of being Australian – in this case a non-demonstrative, laid-back approach to religious affiliation:

Caroline (11): Most people over here would be either Christian or Catholic or nothing. But in Indonesia they virtually have got a lot of different religions that they're like really, really strong about their religion. But people here, they can be strong about it but just normal.

Ailsa (12): Like they [the Balinese] give up offerings every day.

Simon (12): They [Australians] can still have religion but they might not exactly be as faithful as some people in other countries may be.

Caroline (11): People might be Catholic but they don't exactly show it.

This notion of a relaxed attitude to matters that raise passions in others is also discussed in relation to demonstrations of nationalist sentiment.

Amy (11): There was this girl who came from America in my old school, and she used to say every morning, everyone in the whole city used to go out the door and sing the American thing [anthem]. And it was really funny because she was telling everyone at our school.

I: Every day at school in America they say 'I pledge allegiance to the flag, to the United States of America ...'

Amy: Yeah, that's right, that's right!

I: '... and to the Republic ...'

Amy: Yeah, she was saying that in front of us and she had a really strange voice.

I: Do you think something like that would work here at this school?

All: No!

Simon and Ailsa, in another group, also raise a similar point with regard to expressions of American patriotism that they have observed:

Simon (12): It's like I was saying with the religion. It's more like a faith thing. They're very faithful to their country. Whereas we're faithful but we don't necessarily show it.

Ailsa (12): We don't overdo it.

Strategies

The children used two major strategies for discussing what it means to be both Australian and a citizen. The most pervasive was to negotiate and then to apply rules and definitions. The second was to draw comparisons between 'us' and 'others', and to tease out the differences.

(i) Rules and definitions

The rules that were adduced to define being Australian and being a citizen often overlapped. Where the children were specifically talking about being Australian they frequently relied on questions of parentage and/or place of birth. As Sharon (12) says '... if your mother and father and all that are Australian, I think you consider yourself an Australian.' It's not that easy for Angela (11), however:

Angela (11): I got how I'm Australian from my mum and my sisters. It must have been ages ago – I can't remember when – it was heaps long ago. They were discussing that they were all English, and Dad said that me and Dad were Australian.

I: How come?

Angela: Because we were born here and they were born in England.
I: Is that what makes you something – where you're born?
Angela: Yes.

Tamara (12) relies on a kind of 'residence rule': 'I know my mum was born in England but I'm still Australian. It doesn't matter where my parents came from. I'm still Australian because I've lived here all my life.'

The 'residence rule' is also a key consideration when it comes to the question of what it means to be a citizen – most children agree that the right to be a citizen is achieved after a statutory period of residence in a country. The following discussion is typical:

I: Okay, let's turn to the other question now about citizens. What is a citizen?
Simon (12): It's ... if you're living somewhere, then you're a citizen. Sorry. Let me rephrase that. If you've been somewhere for a time ... we're Australian citizens, but if you've just come over from, let's say, Portugal – you've just come over from Portugal you have to achieve a citizenship to be able to become a citizen.
Caroline (11): So, like, a citizen is from, like, what country you come from. Like, what country you were brought up in.
Simon: Not so much that. It's what country you take residence in, really. Well, where you've lived in for a while.
Ailsa (12): You have to stay there for like over 5 years or something.
I: So there's a period of time that you have to be there?
Ailsa: Yes.

Throughout the transcripts there is a sense in the children's talk that a period of residence somehow demonstrates a prospective citizen's bona fides in relation to the country – it shows commitment; a desire to belong while simultaneously demonstrating belonging. A sufficient period of residency to qualify for citizenship, though, was hard to determine:

I: How long then does it take to become a citizen?
David (11): A year.
Amy (11): I don't know. I reckon they should be there for about half a year or something.
Ben (12): It should be at least a week.
David: Well, I'm not really sure but whatever they've got is pretty fair because you don't want people just going there, then going to another place and then to another place and then to another place and so on.
Ben: And going around, 'Yes, I'm a citizen of 40 different places'.

While most children agreed that the 'residence rule' determined who could be a citizen, on two occasions the whole notion of this right to citizenship was disrupted. Leonie (12) and Rosie (11) were members of different discussion groups, and both very clearly articulated a libertarian approach to citizenship. The discussion between Simon, Caroline and Ailsa cited above led on to speculation about visas, passports and other forms of identification. Leonie then challenged the earlier discussion:

Simon (12):	You have to have a visa to be able to get citizenship. You have to have a proper passport so they can map where you're from. You need proper identification.
Leonie (12):	I don't think anyone should have to achieve being a citizen. If they live in the country, why can't they just be accepted as someone that lives there?
I:	So what does it mean then, being a citizen?
Leonie:	It's being accepted in that – it's kind of like saying you're part of that country.
Ailsa (12):	Yeah.
Leonie:	I don't think you need to be part of – I don't think you need to be accepted to go somewhere.

In another group, the discussion also centred around visas for visitors and the right to remain in a country if you are a citizen. Rosie and Amy then radically challenged the whole notion of citizenship:

David (11):	I think it's a good thing to be a citizen because if you're not a citizen of the country and you really like it, well then the government can make you move out.
I:	I see.
Rosie (11):	I don't really think that's fair ... about the citizens. If you really like the place then I reckon you should be able to stay there.
I:	Just because you like it?
Rosie:	Yeah, if you want to live there you should be able to live there.
Amy (11):	Just like you can move to a house and buy it and live there.
I:	You think the world should work like that?
Amy and Rosie:	Yes.
Rosie:	I don't think there should be such things as citizens.
David:	Like gypsies or something. Moving around.
Rosie:	Different coloured people living in all different countries.

Being a citizen, then, for these children should not be subject to rules and regulations but should be an entirely individual choice based on desire.

People should be free to come and live in Australia if they wish, while Australians should be free to go and live wherever they choose in the world.

More generally though, rules and regulations regarding who could be a citizen were seen as necessary because of well-publicised problems associated with illegal immigrants. In all groups there was some discussion about this; in one group the problem was seen to be that illegal immigrants could not be vetted for suitability and thus could have criminal records – this was the only occasion in the transcripts when people from another country (China) were referred to pejoratively. In another group, it was thought that the privileges of citizenship could be gained under false pretences:

David (11): Well, there's a lot of people from overseas, and they've been saying on the news, like, they come over here when they're pregnant and they stay here for a while and then have a kid and then they're able to be citizens because they're related.

All groups were well aware of the technical details regarding political rights and responsibilities of citizens – a citizen may vote for a government, work and own property:

Simon (12): You're allowed to vote.

Caroline (11): If you want to build a really big house, or just a little one, or get a good job at a big building, you have to have a citizenship.

And in return you needed to '... respect your country' (Ailsa, 12) and ' ... respect the laws' (Leonie, 12). Despite the force of Leonie's and Rosie's challenge to the notion of citizenship, the groups seemed to agree that it would be inappropriate for a non-citizen to have voting rights. As Ben (12) says: 'I don't know that it's a good idea that people who aren't citizens get to vote because they don't really know what they're doing'. Ailsa (12) echoes this: 'They don't belong to the country. And in a way it's sort of private, it doesn't concern them. It's like voting for a class monitor'. Here, once again, the children spontaneously related the school practices to the democratic processes in the wider society, demonstrating the importance of schooling in the development of understanding of issues relating to citizenship.

(ii) Comparisons

The second most frequently used strategy to identify what it means to be Australian consisted of comparing Australia with other countries. Many of these comparisons have already been discussed above and include different standards of living, different religions, different approaches to religious affiliation and expressions of national sentiment. The children were drawing these comparisons from actual experience or from what

they knew about other countries from the mass media. Not surprisingly, in most comparisons there was a sense of approval or preference for the Australian customs or circumstances.

A preference was not always expressed, however. Some children talked about different ways of being brought up and different 'cultures':

Tamara (12): Being Australian is, like, how you were brought up. Like, there's ways Australian kids are brought up. And there's different things that Australia has from other countries.

and

Robert (11): Yeah, and also cultures are different. So if they're from another kind of culture, they consider us different in what we do. And we just consider other countries different.

But it is acknowledged that you can be brought up differently and still be Australian if you consider Australia to be your 'natural home':

Ailsa (12): There are lots of different people in Australia, like the Aboriginal people and the white European people, and yeah I agree, they all bring their children up in different ways. Like the Aboriginal children get brought up different to what we are.
Caroline (11): But they're still Australian.
Ailsa: Yeah, you might be different but you're still Australian.
Caroline: What I mean is your natural home is like in Australia.

David (11) explains that he realised he was Australian from watching television: 'When I was young I was sort of watching the American TV shows and I suddenly thought I'm not like that, I'm Australian'. Another boy claims he hadn't thought about 'what he was' until he was asked by a school friend:

Ben (12): Johnno in our class, he's English, and when I first met him he asked me what I was. I didn't know what he was talking about, and I asked him what he was and he said he was English, and that was a bit of a surprise, and I said 'Of course, I'm Australian!'

We asked if there were differences that arose simply from living in different regions of Australia. The children were very forthcoming about what defined them, as South Australians, in contrast with other Australian children. Language differences in idiom and accent between South Australia and the eastern states were singled out as being very important in this regard, although, as Ailsa points out below, these differences are really just superficial. The following discussion is typical:

Ailsa (12): Yeah. In Sydney they say things differently. Like we say 'pastie' [long *a*] and they may say 'pastie' [short *a*].

Sam (12): They say, 'Let's go down to the milk bar,' and we say, 'Go down to the deli'.

Caroline (11): And, like, 'corner store'. They say, 'We're just going to walk down to the corner store'.

Ailsa: Yeah, words, but still it's pretty much the same, because same vegetation ...

Caroline: Oh yeah, I've got a friend who lives in Victoria and they call hockey 'minkey'.

Simon (12): Minkey? What a funny thing to call it.

(iii) Linguistic strategies

The method adopted by this study allowed the children to discuss, in small groups of same-age peers, questions of what it means to be both Australian and a citizen. As can be seen frequently in the extracts above, this method allows the children to construct discursively their understanding about these issues – their choice of examples, the ways they chose to approach the questions, their inclusions and omissions were part of the group's negotiation and construction of meaning.

The actual language that the children used in their discussions was much simpler and less figurative than that used by De Cillia and colleagues' (1999) adult participants. Unlike the Austrian adults, when talking about what it means to be Australian, the children in this study made no reference to defining historical moments; they used no constructs that began 'we Australians ...', and there were no expressions of patriotic attachment. By contrast, at the time the data were gathered, there were daily expressions of the 'hand-on-heart', 'I-love-Australia', 'this-is-godzown-country' variety in the press and the electronic media from public figures and ordinary citizens who were making their contribution to public debate about whether Australia should become a republic.

The closest the children seemed to come to overt expressions of national attachment was phrased in terms of being respectful or faithful to one's country: '... you should *want* to be a citizen because that's like saying that you respect your country' and 'Being a citizen is showing you respect your country and you belong to that country'. Others might want to come to Australia because 'maybe they don't like their country, don't respect their country and they respect Australia'. Responsibilities of being a citizen include 'respecting your country' and 'respecting the laws'. Compared with some other countries '... we're faithful [to our country] but we don't necessarily show it'. The use of such restrained, dispassionate terms to express attachment to Australia by the children is in stark contrast to the

more florid expressions of national sentiment that we have become used to hearing from Australian adults in recent times.

Conclusion

While we are conscious that the number of children taking part in this study is, at this stage of our research project, quite small, we believe that the findings are sufficiently interesting to warrant pursuing them as the study grows.

In terms of the substance of their responses to the question of what it means to be Australian, the children appeared to adopt a fairly practical approach. They listed things that were uniquely associated with Australia (animals, landscape, flag etc.) – things that have come to be used in the wider culture to signify Australia in such things as advertisements, films, books, art and so forth.

An explanation for the largely concrete set of associations the children produce is provided by Carrington and Short (1995) who worked with similarly aged children:

> *It is a truism of developmental psychology that thinking proceeds from the concrete to the abstract. We were not surprised, therefore, to discover that while some of the responses to the question 'What makes a person British?' were abstract in nature, the majority were at the concrete level, focusing on such things as speaking English or being born in Britain.* (p. 236)

A further explanation is that, perhaps for children like Leonie (who is quoted in the title of this chapter), Ben and David (see p. 62 above) 'being Australian' is the unconsidered norm – a state best described from the outside and through comparisons with those who are different.

Like the British study, which found that children were largely unconcerned about 'being British' (Carrington and Short, 1995) perhaps, too, these Australian children are less concerned than their parents about 'being Australian'. Perhaps they are able to move easily back and forth between identifying themselves with a particular country while at the same time seeing themselves as global citizens – an identity they are increasingly encouraged to embrace through mass media, mass communications and the Internet.

Attempts to get the children to reflect on more personal or affective responses to what it means to be Australian were largely unsuccessful. Their characterisation of Australians as laid back and undemonstrative in relation to such things as religion and expressions of national sentiment, however, goes beyond their popular, concrete associations. The typification of the relaxed, laconic Australian is a widely held and widely mythologised stereotype, and it is not surprising that the children

reproduce it. As Hodge (1988) said, children's sense of national identity is very much inherited from their parents and, indeed, from the myths and stereotypes that circulate in the wider society. Along the same lines, the children's raising of regional differences and the fixation on the eastern states as being the place where everything of importance in Australia is to be found is a strongly held form of paranoia among adult Australians from the centre, the north and the west of the country.

In relation to citizenship, the children are reasonably well informed about the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen – a state that these respondents believe entails a respectful attitude towards one's country. Moreover, despite the three girls' spirited advocacy of free movement of all people between countries, there is general approval for rules to govern who can and cannot become a citizen. What is particularly encouraging is that, given the multicultural nature of Australian society and the numbers of visibly different groups that help constitute it, at no time did these children question whether non-Anglo-Australians should be eligible for citizenship – unless they were illegal immigrants.

We believe this study suggests that children may be beginning to adopt new forms of national identity – forms that involve an easy slippage between the global and the local, the national and the international. This dimension is further explored in the following chapters.

4 Somewhere to call home? Schooling and a sense of place and belonging in an increasingly globalised world

Introduction

This chapter approaches the issue of national identity in terms of a felt recognition of belonging and of desire to identify with a place – in this instance, Australia. Drawing on our own reading of the representations of national identity in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games' Opening Ceremony, we argue that a new sense of the legitimacy of diverse 'nationalisms' and of ethnicities of both 'origin' and 'destination' (Castan, 1994) is replacing the traditional, hegemonic version of what it means to be Australian.

Traditionally, the school unashamedly played a large part in the formation of national identity through various practices designed to induce a sense of national pride and loyalty. As described by Lawn (2001):

> *Most of all they [education systems] were managed through a conceptual discourse in which the purpose and structure of the system, teacher identity, and national identity were all bound together in a constant refrain that built the education service and cultural identity every day.* (p. 174)

In Australian schools, particularly primary schools, practices that helped to build 'cultural identity every day' included such things as loyalty oaths recited at school assemblies, accompanied by rituals of raising and saluting the flag; the use of readers that referenced Australian literature and history, and so on. Many of the more egregiously 'nationalist' practices have subsequently disappeared, to be replaced by more inclusive ones that recognise the diverse backgrounds from which students have come and the contributions they make to contemporary Australia. This situation raises interesting questions about how Australian children today construct their understandings of cultural identity/identities (see Chapter 1) and to what extent these understandings translate into a sense of belonging or attachment to the collectivity we call Australia.

Working with primary school children, we set out to explore the affective dimensions of what it now means 'to belong' and to feel a sense of affiliation towards 'one's country'. We found that the children who participated in this study expressed a sense of national belonging and pride, both different from and similar to traditional expressions of national allegiance. Moreover, their enthusiasm for exploring these issues was palpable. We conclude by suggesting that schools do still have a role to play in nation building – not by returning to the practices of the past, but by making space for young people to explore and negotiate their own complex responses to the 'national'.

National identities

Anderson's concept of the nation being an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) is a useful one for understanding the difficulties facing settler/post-colonial societies as they attempt to create a common identity. This 'imagined community' – a constructed intersubjectivity – has been described as 'a feeling shared by a mass of people that they all belong to a grouping which in important ways gives meaning to their lives' (Castan, 1994, p. 121). This meaning revolves around a powerful need for human-scale community, and seems to be of a different order from those meanings that attach to global community membership. In Australia, the version of national identity that emerged to serve this need for community was, according to Turner (1994): '… prescriptive, unitary, masculinist and excluding' (p. 5). Many writers share this view and agree that it is a construct in urgent need of repair and/or disposal (for example, Magarey, Sheridan and Rowley, 1993; Castan, 1994; Castles, Kalantzis, Cope and Morrissey, 1988; Ferres and Meredyth, 2001). The task, as they see it, is to create a sense of national identity that simultaneously recognises, includes and negotiates the complexities of tradition and ethnicity, not only of successive waves of immigrants since 1788, but also of Australian Indigenous peoples who were subsequently dispossessed.

Other voices call for a move beyond the national, claiming that the concept of 'nation' is counter-productive in a heterogeneous settler society such as contemporary Australia (Castles et al., 1988). There is even a move in some quarters to argue that the nation as a concept has outlived its usefulness, and that we should concentrate on promoting the notion of a borderless global world in which people's subjective awarenesses are more fluid and less tied to place, language or system of government (Tishkov, 2000). All of these positions carry implications for schooling and give rise to the question of the degree to which the school should consciously participate in the development of a national

consciousness among students. Questions such as this form the impetus for the current investigation.

The Olympic Games Opening Ceremony – a medal-winning event

In this section, we present our personal experience and reading of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony – an event we were most keen to observe because of the potential of such spectacles to make very public statements about 'national identity'. Of course, we were not alone in this interest. Writing in 1994, Turner had suggested that the Sydney Olympics (then to take place six years hence) had the potential to be a nation-building event, affording the opportunity to both dispose of outdated nationalisms and to redefine and re-negotiate our sense of who we are. In particular, he suggested, the Olympic Games Opening Ceremony could be the stage for demonstrating this new set of signifiers to the rest of the world:

> *It is undeniable that modern nations are built through … moments of high spectacle. As Sydney 2000 is going to happen, then, it is worth thinking about how it could be turned in a progressive direction. As a nation-building exercise, the Games provides an opportunity for Australians to activate the 'use by' date on our traditional nationalisms and attempt to establish a more heterogeneous and socially grounded set of signifiers for the nation. I would like to think that the opening ceremony – traditionally the place where the host nation signifies its identity through spectacle – is the location where this could occur.*
>
> (Turner, 1994, p. 143)

We shared Turner's hopes, but did not feel terribly optimistic. After the winking kangaroo mascot of the 1982 Commonwealth Games; the Coca Cola and Telstra logos printed onto the sails of the tall ships as they entered Sydney Harbour during the bicentennial celebrations in 1988; and the plastic blow-up kangaroos on bicycles at the preview of the Sydney 2000 Olympics in Atlanta in 1996, we had been feeling increasingly nervous as the time for the Sydney 2000 Opening Ceremony approached. We were afraid the image we would present to the rest of the world would continue to be backward-looking (Gallipoli, famous historical figures, founding fathers), clichéd and sentimental (kangaroos, koalas and crocodiles) and monocultural (Henry Lawson's laconic, irreverent bush larrikins exuding mateship). The opening moments of the Ceremony, arresting though they were, seemed to be pointing in just that direction. One hundred and twenty mounted stock riders – RMW-booted, Akubra-hatted and Drizabone-coated – thundered up and down the arena, celebrating a bush way of life that the vast majority of the population has never, and will never, experience. Then,

however, it became very clear that the spectacle's ensuing narrative was not going to continue relying on signifiers of Australian-ness that were well beyond – in Turner's terms – their 'use-by' date.

The Opening Ceremony spoke about who we are in ways that we had not encountered before. It largely jettisoned the backward-looking, the clichéd and the monocultural, and instead foregrounded Indigenous and non-Indigenous people; the young and the old; men and women; and immigrants from everywhere. It featured Aboriginal custom and ceremony, and acknowledged the right of Indigenous peoples to welcome the world to Aboriginal land and to preside over the festivities. It told stories about our struggle to live in a harsh and inhospitable country; our dream of the beach and limitless ocean; our delight in our unique flora and fauna; and our ingenuity and industry in agriculture, mining and manufacturing. It also presented symbols of the bush (galvanised-iron rainwater tanks, windmills), the city and the suburban dream ('Turn your grass into lawn with a Victa Mower!'). The past was not banished – Ned Kelly was there (the Sidney Nolan version) as was Captain Cook (in a boat resembling one of the cartoonist Bruce Petty's amazing bicycles), but both were presented ironically, playfully – there was no false reverence or triumphalism here.

Most memorably, Australia's immigrant peoples came together on floats representing the Olympic rings and thus the five major regions brought together by the Olympic movement. The floats locked together and unfolded into a huge scaffolded worksite, where the (tap-dancing) immigrant workers in their Blundstone boots and flannel shirts constructed the Sydney Harbour Bridge and, by inference, the rest of contemporary Australia.

In our view, this representation of national identity was designed as much for Australians as it was for the rest of the world – there were, after all, things that only Australians could probably understand. Reports in the foreign press at the time suggested people in other countries were mystified by the image of the Olympic rings comprising 150 2-stroke Victas doing formation-mowing, and by our apparent obsession with corrugated iron and tap-dancing! But most Australians would have understood the significance of these things, because of our shared history – both experienced or learnt. Moreover, we contend, as Australians we could recognise ourselves in our diversity and our ordinariness; in our histories – individual and shared – in our achievements and sheer hard work. We could celebrate what Kalantzis (1992–3) sees as one of our virtues '[that] we have got so much done, and done in a peace that is all too rare in the world' (p. 30). Another 'virtue' that seemed very apparent to us was that these stories could be told and understood without recourse to tub-thumping nationalism. The sense of humour, the teasing, the playfulness and irony that characterised the Ceremony's stories were continuously apparent – for evidence, one only has to think of James Morrison's

cheeky swing interpretation of 'Waltzing Matilda'; the satirical big-screen depiction of legendary swimming coach Laurie Laurence in full cry; the irreverent depiction of Captain Cook (with a rabbit in a cage!) and the tap-dancing construction workers.

Certainly, there were absences and silences – *terra nullius* and the atrocities committed under the guise of this belief were absent. And while Indigenous people were an integral part of the story, as one of our Indigenous colleagues observed, 'Yeah, we were there, but they left us is in the Dreamtime'. The White Australia policy and the shame of racism were also absent. The divisions of class, wealth and gender, the inequalities of rural and urban life – all of these were glossed over. And one can argue that this was perhaps not the very public time or place to explore these issues in any depth. The real achievement of this re-working of national identity, in our view, was that it captured changes in perception and understanding that have been slowly occurring, so that more Australians than ever before could recognise at least some aspect of themselves and their lives in this spectacle. In making this possible, spaces have been opened up for exploring different senses of belonging to the collective while recognising, in broad terms, shared life patterns, a shared sense of place, a shared sense of contribution to the nation and some shared values.

Amid the general euphoria about the success of the Olympic Games ceremonies, commentators noted the role that education and the increasingly multicultural population had played in the production of this new, expanded set of identities. Here, for example, is Janet McCalman writing in the Melbourne *Age* newspaper:

> *… the talent that would flow forth in an ever-growing stream after the early 1970s would come from the children of migrants, especially non-English speaking ones, from indigenous Australians, from women and from working class kids who made it through an expanded secondary and tertiary education system … Australia has turned into an exciting, creative, funny and stylish culture because we have made it possible for talent to be trained and expressed.*
>
> (McCalman, 2000)

Adults and children

Our observations thus far have, of course, been from adult and personal perspectives. The question remains whether, and to what degree, the current generation of school students is aware of, or shares, our sense of the transformed notions of identity implicit in the images and performances presented by the Opening Ceremony. Relatedly, what role is there for the school in this new construction of the meaning of 'being Australian'?

A whole literature exists that explores the development of nationalist feelings in different populations of adults (see, for example, Anderson, 1983; De Cillia et al., 1999; Penrose, 1993) but little exists in relation to how these feelings develop in children. A British study by Carrington and Short (1995) and our own previous work (Howard and Gill, 2001), found that primary school-aged children were largely unconcerned about what it means to be British or Australian. In our own study, the largely Anglo-Australian participants listed various things they associated with Australia (largely drawn from popular culture, tourism and advertising), and they explained what they thought the rules of citizenship were, but an affective response – an articulation of a sense of belonging to a place – was not expressed. Since that study, Australia has been through some very heavily publicised and widely broadcast national events, including the debate about becoming a republic; the Sorry Day marches and issues to do with Aboriginal Reconciliation; the celebrations surrounding the millennium, and the spectacle and international competition of the Sydney 2000 Olympics. While these debates and events certainly forced many adult Australians to re-think their values and their sense of what 'being Australian' meant, we were keen to see whether these experiences had altered or shaped our young respondents' attitudes and feelings in this regard.

The study

We collected two kinds of data in two separate urban primary schools, both of which had students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. One of the schools is very proud that it has 43 different 'ethnicities of origin' (Castan, 1994) represented within its school population.

In all, 80 10–12-year-old students (Grades 6 and 7) took part in the study. Thirty-five students (20 boys and 15 girls) undertook a written task that asked them to complete the sentence: 'Being Australian means …'. Forty-five students (21 girls and 24 boys) took part in small focus group discussions in which the key questions explored what 'being Australian' meant to them. The focus groups were conducted immediately after the Sydney 2000 Olympics, and the written task was undertaken in early 2001. NUD•IST Vivo (QSR 1998–9) was used to assist in the management of the data and in the task of analysis.

Findings

Uniqueness

As in our earlier study (Howard and Gill, 2000), we found that our respondents were quick to interpret the question of what *being Australian* meant to them as an opportunity to list all those things that they uniquely

associated with the country. In doing so, many children, like Carl (11), hinted at pride in the uniquenesses they identified: 'Nowhere else in the world has gum trees except us'. Animals and landscape feature strongly here, with kangaroos and koalas, rainforest and the outback/bush all being mentioned. The beach (interestingly, an important element picked up in the Olympics Opening Ceremony) was mentioned most frequently by the children as one of the clear positives about life in Australia: 'We have great beaches to swim in' (Andrea, 10).

Being Australian, for these children, was often associated with unique places like Ayers Rock (Uluru), the Barrier Reef, Sydney's harbour bridge and Opera House. Interestingly, for children living in South Australia, the things they chose were often located outside their own state. Here, for example, is one group of three girls who decided that their way of showing what it meant to be Australian would be to design a collage. On it, they would include unique animals, landscape and famous places, with the only South Australian contribution being a new store that had recently opened (with much fanfare) in the city of Adelaide (David Jones):

Inez (12):	[The collage] is in the shape of Australia and Ayers Rock and like all Aussie animals, like kangaroos and koalas and that, and coastline like Lizzie said and all that kind of stuff.
Lizzie (11):	People patting animals.
Nguyen (11):	Okay, people laughing having fun in Australia.
Lizzie:	Aboriginals for the homeland like …
Inez:	We could, like, draw half of the bridge and then half of the Opera House or whatever it is, like part bridge and then the rest of it is the Opera House, I don't know, just like join bits on to everything and become a funny picture.
Lizzie:	You need bush land.
Nguyen:	And the new David Jones.
Lizzie:	I've been there.
Inez:	I'd say a picture of the beach.
Lizzie:	Canberra.

The domination of east-coast 'icons' in children's consciousness about Australia was also a feature of our data in the previous study, and can be linked to a pervasive centralism in Australian government and business affairs, tourism publicity and cultural imagery. The actual state – South Australia – its name, its places, its leaders, didn't rate a mention in any of the children's discussions about being Australian. It seemed that the state as a governmental structure did not impact on their sense of felt response to the country as a whole. The children seemed to be saying 'we are Australians' rather than South Australians or Victorians or

Queenslanders – even though some of them had lived in other states prior to moving to South Australia.

'Playing a lot of sport' (Serge, 11) and being '… passionate about sport' (Robert, 12) were recurrent themes, but chiefly in the boys' identification of what being Australian means. All kinds of sports and a wide variety of Australian sporting personalities were identified; however, Aussie Rules football was seen as uniquely and proudly Australian: 'There are things that make Australia unique though, such as the way we play football. Nowhere else in the world will you find Aussie Rules' (Martin, 12).

While it was true that the boys appeared more likely than the girls to volunteer sport – being able to play it and be good at it – as a key feature of being Australian, this emphasis no doubt also derived in part from the recent Olympic Games. All of the children had watched at least some of the spectacle and some of them had relatives or friends who had gone to Sydney to attend the Games. There were interesting discussions about which team one supported, especially in the case of young people being well aware of multiple allegiances within their families. For Tony, 'being born' somewhere clearly confers some kind of obligation of loyalty and allegiance, however 'living' somewhere also makes demands on allegiance. Here, he discusses the tricky balancing act that his father (born in England) had to manage during Olympic events in which Australia and Britain were both competing:

> Tony (11): I was born here and it's my country, and in everything at the Olympics you go for Australia because you were born here. Yeah – my Dad goes for Britain because he was born there even though he's living here now. But that depends on who's competing, 'cos if Australia are, he'll go for them, but if it's like Britain and no-one from Australia, then he'll barrack for Britain.

It seems as though sport does assist young people to feel part of a larger community and that it can function to rope people in to the larger project of 'nation' – such was the response from some of our young informants. There is of course a direct parallel with the ways in which sport and competitive games function in schools to recruit students to 'play for school'.

Absences

If, for these children, *being Australian* was, to a degree, associated with unique elements of Australian landscape and culture, the reverse was also true. On many occasions the children identified being Australian with the *absence* of certain things. Haste (2004) suggests that this process of 'othering' is central to the development of national identity:

> *We define as 'other' those persons whose national characteristics by being different from ours, affirm our own nationhood*
>
> (Haste, 2004, p. 424)

In other words, the children saw Australia as not having – being free from – the undesirable features they associated with other parts of the world.

And so in Australia, according to our young informants, there is no overcrowding: 'Australia is not a crowded place. There's plenty of spaces and we don't have parking all over the place' (Barney, 10) and 'All the space you can have. You can have your own house and not live in an apartment' (Thea, 11). We have no poverty: 'Our country has hardly any poverty and there are not many people without a home to go to' (Owen, 11). We have no famine: 'We don't starve like some poor Africans do' (Angela, 11). Most important of all these absences, however, was the absence of war. This was a most frequently mentioned feature: 'I love living in Australia because there are no wars that go on within Australia' (Charles, 11) and 'We don't have to go through things like East Timor did' (Mirella, 12).

Of course, this position reflects a fairly naïve estimate of the 'boundless plains to share' (as in the national anthem) and, given recent events, possibly an over-optimistic view of Australia's peaceful status. It is clear, however, that even though these claims are about what Australia is *not*, they nevertheless offer a strong rationale for positive feelings about being Australian.

Multiculturalism and Indigenous issues

The children all attended schools with a wide range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. In discussion, they showed an awareness of this diversity and a pride in the fact that: 'Australia is a multicultured nation' (Dianna, 10) that we had not noted in talking with young people in the more homogeneous schools of the initial study. Here is an exchange in one group:

> Angela (11): We are like, we're all countries just joined together.
> David (11): Yeah, we're in the reunion thing.
> Jasper (11): People who come from other countries come to Australia and become Australian. Australia is a multicultural nation and even though people speak other languages and have different beliefs they are still Australian.

Others expressed their pride more directly. Harriet (10) is one of many to claim that she likes being Australian because: '… there are a lot of cultures and like in my school there is 43 different cultures, which I think is great!'

In many discussions the children brought up issues to do with Indigenous people. This group shows an awareness of the history of Indigenous/European conflict:

Tony (11): We're all different.
Arturo (10): Some are Aboriginal.
Avril (10): Most are European, 'cos when the Europeans settled, they wiped out most of the Aboriginals, I think. That's why there are not so many now.
I: So there are a whole lot of people living here who are Australian.
Arturo: Partly. You could call them partly Australian. Or you could call them … I don't know, it depends on what they want to call themselves.

In other groups, the children spoke of the need for reconciliation and appeared familiar with ideas about the need to say 'sorry' in the case of the Stolen Generations. Here, Stacey (12) talks about a picture she would create to represent the kind of people that Australians are:

I: What kind of people are we?
Stacey (11): We're all different kinds. You'd put like one brown hand and one white hand shaking hands and reconciliation or something.
I: So that's a sign that we're lots of different people?
Stacey: And we'd have the word 'sorry'.
I: The word 'sorry'?
Stacey: Yeah, like there's this thing about 'sorry'.
I: What are we saying 'sorry' about?
Stacey: Like what the government did to take the children away from the Aborigines.

Undoubtedly, some of this awareness has come from their school experience – but it has also come from exposure to the wider culture. Major public debate about Indigenous issues had been a feature of this time, with protracted discussion about the refusal of the prime minister of the time to say sorry, and it is not surprising that the children's views reflect this.

The Olympics

As our focus group discussions took place immediately after the Sydney 2000 Olympics, it was inevitable that it would form a popular topic for discussion. We were interested to find that many children recognised and understood the significance of aspects of the Opening Ceremony. The meanings surrounding corrugated iron and tap-dancing, for example,

were well understood by several groups, and the inclusion of Aboriginal people was noted by others. Here's what one group thought:

I:	What did you like about the Opening Ceremony then?
Carla (11):	I really liked the tap-dancers cause it's real Aussie 'cause they're wearing the boots and like outback style.
Owen (11):	Yeah, I liked the people rolling those corrugated-iron tanks.
I:	Yes.
Barney (10):	And the Aborigines.
Carla:	And I reckon the tap-dancers are Australian because other countries they have traditional costumes and stuff to do dancing in and we're just casual.
I:	Just wearing our work clothes.
Carla:	Yep.
I:	And what was the significance of the corrugated iron?
Owen:	Because the first settlers used it a lot when they came here.
Carla:	Well, they used water tanks a lot because they were lucky to get any rain.
Barney:	They needed the fresh water.

Another group liked the Aboriginal content as well:

Stephanie (11):	I like the Opening Ceremony because I liked when the Aborigines did their dance on the stilts and when the big face came out of the ground.
I:	Yes, that was great, wasn't it?
Thea (11):	They had to drink this stuff so they could breathe fire.
Charles (11):	I liked the rainwater tanks.
I:	Why were they there, do you think?
Thea:	Outback.
Charles:	Yeah, the outback.
Stephanie:	My dad's got a rainwater tank

In these interchanges, the children showed themselves to be culturally aware and to delight in recognising the playful ways in which particular images triggered associations with national stereotypes, some of which they translated directly into their own lived experiences. Despite their appreciation of the Opening Ceremony, it was the Closing Ceremony that our participants generally preferred. Here, the popular 'icons' that they recognised and enjoyed – pop stars, film stars and sporting heroes – featured as individual achievers rather than the more distinctly collective orientation of the Opening Ceremony.

The children were generally sure that the staging of the Olympics had to be a good thing for Australia because they saw it as a chance to showcase the country to the rest of the world, as Jasper (11) indicated: 'It's good to show the rest of the world what Australians can do'.

Individual athletic heroes – like Ian Thorpe and Cathy Freeman – were mentioned by name, and our participants were pleased to see them win but there was a sense of their pleasure being more because they knew them as local identities rather than because they were Australian per se. Unlike so many popular depictions of athletes as pseudo-warriors for 'King and country' (viz *Chariots of Fire*), these children did not talk about the idea or the actuality of winning as some kind of national crowning glory. It was as though these young people had not experienced the Olympics as a world competition so much as a local spectacle.

Notes on the written exercise

While the foregoing analysis drew on both the written data and data transcribed from the focus group discussions, here we wish to comment specifically on aspects of the written data.

When asked to provide a written statement beginning with the words *Being Australian means …* some respondents chose to write in dot points about the virtue of Australia as a place to live – lots of room, no poverty, no wars, unique animals and places. However, many also chose to either begin or end their written statement with an expression of positive affection for the idea of Australia, for example: 'That's why Australia is such a great place to be' (John, 10).

There was a sense in which the formality of requiring a written response produced some more formulaic outcomes than had the free-flowing discussions. However, here, too, were ideas very similar to those recorded by Cope and Kalantzis (1998), working with much older children. For instance:

> *Being Australian means a place of freedom, trust, acceptance and generosity. Australia is a place that lots of people come and make their future life and a better place to live. There's no place like Australia!*
>
> (Year 11 girl, Cope and Kalantzis, 1998)

> Sarah (11, current study): To me, being Australian means you were born here or have come from another country and lived in Australia for a number of years. If you are Australian you aren't only living in Australia but are part of the country. Some people feel pride when thinking of being Australian – that's what being Australian means to me!

Did the exercise force their hands to write only of the positive? Not entirely. In our study, one boy offered a well-developed account of his view that Australia had forgotten its traditional image and had allowed itself to become overtaken by other newer and less desirable qualities:

> Peter (11, current study): I believe being Australian has lost a lot of meaning over recent years. Up until about the 1950s being an Australian meant you were simple, hard working, honest and very sturdy as well as being kind and very family oriented. I believe this image has become obsolete because of increased communications with other countries such as America, which has influenced our culture dramatically. I also believe the diversity of cultures has stretched that image so much that it's up to you whether you want to be an Australian because the people of Australia are so different.

In general, however, the responses from the present study echoed those found by Cope and Kalantzis (1998), working with high-school students. Like their older counterparts, our young informants had been born into a world in which there was no White Australia Policy, in which questions of reconciliation were high on the agenda and their descriptions of Australian ways were resonant with notions of inclusivity and sharing of resources, even as they acknowledged past injustices to Indigenous people.

Conclusions

General comments

Young students such as those involved in our study do have a positive regard for the idea of being Australian, although this does not seem to be a direct result of their formal school experience. Their understanding appears to come from popular cultural meanings and tourism images that present the exotic fauna and physical beauty of this country as its special claim to uniqueness. One respondent, for example, recognised the Paul Hogan character as an Australian trademark even as she knows that he is a caricature:

> Billie (11): But then again, you can't stereotype Australians and say that we're all Aussie ockers and 'put another shrimp on the barbie, mate', you know, the kangaroos jumping around everywhere.

Our respondents were more comfortable talking about concrete things that are Australian, such as buildings, places and animals, rather than what being Australian means to themselves. In the face of a dearth of

great events, great leaders or particular causes, sporting heroes appear to emerge as significant in shaping a national psyche – but again, the staging of the Sydney 2000 Olympics represented a particular case for raising the question of the meaning of being Australian, and so it is probably not surprising that sporting heroes came to mind. Our respondents were generally very positive about the idea of being Australian, and were prone to offer negative images of other places as a way of celebrating Australia's goodness as a place to live. There can be no doubt that their position was one of affinity with the idea of being Australian and that their image of community was very much in tune with the current cultural mix and at odds with the monoculturalism of former generations.

Missing from these accounts about the meaning of being Australian was any reference to Australian history, Australian participation in war (despite the fact that Gallipoli has taken on renewed significance in recent times), national anthem(s), the Queen, a national literature or artistic production. The references to the 'outback' and 'the bush' showed that the children were aware of these traditional Australian reference points, much as the Olympics Opening Ceremony had featured the stockmen and the Ned Kelly themes. However, as with the performance, the young people used the references and then moved on to depict an Australia that they knew and lived in, a place of good food and wide beaches, where people were friendly and helped one another. In many respects, the picture of being Australian offered by these 10-, 11- and 12-year-olds mapped very closely onto the complex diorama supplied by the Opening Ceremony.

It must be remembered, however, that the data gathering for this project occurred in 2000. Since then, the *Tampa* crisis and the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States may well have affected the ways in which children understand their world and their place in it. Most young Australians will have seen the images of the *Tampa*'s boatload of refugees being turned away from Australia. Even more will have seen the American images of the hijacked planes on their suicidal missions, the burning buildings collapsing, people running in fear for their lives and the grief of the many who lost people close to them. More than ever before, the young people with whom we spoke will have had cause to realise the degree of violence and mass destruction of which people are capable. Theirs is an increasingly globalised world, and communications technology has ensured that they are able to identify with Manhattan and Washington in ways more concrete than Anderson's (1983) notion of the imagined community ever envisaged. Just how these events will have affected their sense of belonging to Australia, of seeing Australia as a safe haven, quarantined from the violence and atrocities of other parts

of the world, or as a tolerant country that welcomes people from other countries, is as yet unknown.

In the fluid conception of the 'national', for which we have been arguing in this chapter, it is conceivable that degrees of allegiance to nation will vary along with particular world events. Like some of our young informants, we have pressed for a transformative sense of national identity that permits and even encourages the potential for multiple allegiances rather than a unitary exclusive one. It is thus conceivable to be Australian and Greek, Australian of Chinese origin, Italo-Australian and so on. Just how the sense of multilayered identities and national allegiances will be able to play out in a world conflicted by violence and destruction is not knowable from our data. We do, however, remain convinced that a schooling more actively involved in developing a revitalised sense of Australian community, which recognises itself as comprised of a mix of peoples joined in a desire to live in harmony, is the most effective preparation for a stable and healthy society for the future.

Implications for curriculum

Our data support the call for schools to encourage reflection on the meaning of being Australian as part of the knowledge package on offer to all students. Our informants were definitely not 'beyond nation' or 'pre-nation', and in fact had absorbed more of a sense of 'the national' than we had originally anticipated. This is not to say that we urge a return to earlier forms of nation building in schools. Rather, we see it useful for the school to offer a transformative approach that continually makes and remakes understandings of Australianness in terms of particular issues. Such a concept may well turn tradition on its head – rather than the usually chronologically ordered history, it may be more productive to start with investigations of the current picture of Australia and its people, and then work back to gain a greater understanding of origins and stories. By 2001, multiculturalism had itself been transformed; no longer satisfied with mere inclusivity, the current multicultural edge demands that differences be celebrated and configured in dynamic relation to the acknowledgment of shared hopes and values.

There are issues here, too, for teacher education, which should incorporate Australian studies courses into the standard preparation for working in Australian schools, especially given that teacher populations are still less heterogeneous than the student communities.

In this chapter, we have argued for schooling to take account of the current social composition of Australia and to take a leading educative role in the development of this settler society. We urge schools to provide a space within the formal curriculum in which recognition of difference

is promoted, along with the development of widespread understanding of those values that can be shared. One of these shared values is that people come from different places and bring different customs, languages and attitudes into the rich mix that is contemporary Australia. In this we echo Lawn's (2001) vision of education's role in the creation of the new knowledge economy within a newly configured Europe:

> *… this new space for education exists today … as a necessary element in the building of shared identity […] The space can be described as fluid, heterogeneous and polymorphic yet it is recognisably a new space. It exists within the daily work of teachers and policy makers …* (p. 174)

5 Revisioning the social: Young Australians and the rural/urban divide

Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.

(Preamble to the Adelaide Declaration, 1999)

Introduction

Despite the well-developed theoretical connection between the role of the school in the construction of national identity (Willinsky, 1999; Said, 1995), Australian education has only recently invested formally in the production of an informed and active citizenry, as identified in the Adelaide Declaration above. Such an orientation presupposes a conception of Australia as a social and political entity, along with some understanding of oneself as a part of this larger whole. Given the range of possible constructions about what the new Australia is and the efforts to describe and define national identity within the broader contexts of multiculturalism and globalisation, it seems the task is far from simple.

Not only must Australian education craft a sense of national identity that incorporates and encompasses the rich mix of immigrants from Europe, Britain and, more recently, Asia, it also has to deal with ideological legacies from the past. One of the most enduring of these is the oppositional positioning of the city and the bush in the Australian imagination. In the early days of Australia, artists and writers had presented a British perspective of Australia as a country whose major division was that between the city sophisticates and the rural outback workers, with the latter being depicted in terms of the joys of life in the bush, an image which has persisted down the years. Such work celebrated

a male-ordered, Australian humanist ideal, characterised by a freedom of spirit, being one's own boss, answerable only to oneself, being at one with nature (Kapferer, 1990). While some of these features continue in the celebration of the sporting hero, enduringly part of Australian popular culture, the city/bush distinction against which they were constructed appears increasingly irrelevant to the lived experience of contemporary Australians. While the vast majority of Australians have always tended to live in the cities and along the narrow coastal fringes, many country towns are currently in serious decline. Recent projections suggest that the populations in country towns are fast diminishing, such that only half of those towns currently in existence will be there in ten years' time. In this chapter, we take up the question of the connection between schooling and national identity in the light of recent sociocultural change. Hence, we are not addressing issues specific to civics and citizenship curriculum; rather, we explore the prior concepts upon which such education must build if it is to be effective.

What *do* children know about Australia as a social and political entity?

For the past five years we have been conducting studies of the ways in which Australian school children understand themselves as Australians and what they know about Australia's social and political conventions and practices. Our initial motivation for this work was our disenchantment as educationalists with the curriculum package known as 'Discovering Democracy', which was sent to every school in Australia in November 1998. While recognising that this curriculum development constituted a courageous response by government advisers to do something about the alarming levels of ignorance of the workings of the Australian political system that had been shown to be widespread in the general community, we were concerned that it was not based on any evidence of children's present state of knowledge. An American researcher makes a similar point:

> *Reports of various test results ... provide some data about what students do not know, but very little about what they* do *know and believe about the United States, the nation's history and their own and the nation's future.*
>
> (Cornbleth, 2002, p. 520)

As educators, we are committed to the principles of constructivist approaches to learning and, in particular, to the idea that new knowledge is always and inevitably constructed on the basis of what is already known (Hendry, 1996). Hence, our attempt to find out what primary school

children *do* know about institutionalised systems of power (Howard and Gill, 2000).

In the course of this research we were able to establish that children were indeed aware of systematised power, although they may not have the correct words to describe the processes of government. They may not always have been able to name key figures, but they did understand the concept of law and the need for civic regulation. They also showed a ready understanding of the principles of democratic practice insofar as these were enacted in their school experience. In particular, we were able to show the development of children's political understanding from a fairly crude construction of power in the junior primary years to a much more sophisticated realisation of the operations of community, state and nation by the upper years of primary school. We likened this phenomenon to that of the 'pebble in the pond', with the pattern of ever-widening concentric circles representing their increasing knowledge domains (Howard and Gill, 2000). This research led us to regard schooling as important in young people's understanding of political systems, along with developing knowledge about their own place, its history and customs; a position similar to that expressed by Cornbleth (2002):

> *Schooling plays a key, but not exclusive, role in shaping student's knowledge and beliefs about the nation.* (p. 521)

How do children *feel* about being Australian?

Having established that children do have understandings, albeit rudimentary and incomplete, about the workings of Australian society upon which teachers can build effective civics and citizenship curriculum, we turned our attention to questions of national identity. Our interest was in the ways children might identify themselves as being Australian. We concur with the position proposed by Haste (1987), that an affective element of cognition is centrally involved in any effective civics or citizenship-education program.

The routine ways in which young people were traditionally drawn into an understanding of place and country – the formal lessons in the geography, history and literature of Australia – have largely disappeared from the curriculum, to be replaced by subjects loosely grouped under the heading Society and the Environment, which assuredly address a new set of issues, possibly with some assumptions from the older curriculum offerings. As Grundy (1994) has written, the texts and practices contained in school lessons constitute the official storylines of a society. Frequently, such storylines are laden with implicit values, sometimes explicit – such as the tales of the 'first settlers', the 'discovery of Australia' and other

phrases that effectively reconstitute the 18th-century myth of *terra nullius*. Similarly, the stories and poems of 19th-century writers like A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson and Henry Lawson enshrined the concepts of mateship, the nobility of bush battlers and the unique beauty of Australia's rural landscape. Texts such as these are no longer favoured in many schools, and the current generation of primary schoolchildren is likely to be unfamiliar with these traditional themes. Moreover, contemporary schooling practice is less likely to be intermeshed with exercises of patriotic alignment such as flag raising, anthem signing and Anzac Day observance (military history), as was the routine for previous generations.

In addition, the penetration of overseas media, most especially through the medium of television, would likely mean that today's young Australians are equally familiar with downtown Springfield from *The Simpsons* or the New York cityscape from *Sex in the City* as they are with their own local towns and cities. There is no doubt that the burgeoning fields of children's literature, media and social studies supply a wealth of offerings that constitute images and understandings of space and place, but the question remains: In what ways do the children construct an image of and a feeling for the country in which they live? What are the features of their Australia(s) and by what means are their images realised? With the renewed interest in citizenship as a project of education, it seemed both timely and useful to find out how the current generation positions itself in relation to the country as a whole.

In the course of our research into these questions, we were able to show that young people do in general feel very positively about 'being Australian' (Gill and Howard, 2002). Their responses echoed the pattern established by American researchers who found that the young people in their study held to 'an image of the country's continuous and beneficial progress' (Barton and Levstik, 1998, p. 3). Moreover, strongly linked to their sense of being Australian were feelings of being 'safe', 'proud' and 'free' – we explore what this might mean in the following chapter.

This present chapter addresses the question of the degree to which the division between city and country (in terms of culture and place) still impacts on the ways in which contemporary young Australians identify themselves. Are the current imaginings of the 'Australian way' still forged in terms of the older stories of strong, resourceful bush dwellers as compared to their more sophisticated city cousins? We focus on the children's language when talking about Australia, the images used, the words and phrases repeated and the concrete detail provided. From this material we analyse the major themes that recur in children's talk, themes that will constitute the current songlines through which they understand the country and variously position themselves more or less as part of it.

Methodology, methods and processes

As with our earlier work (Howard and Gill, 2000, 2001, 2002; Gill and Howard, 1999, 2002), our study was conducted as a qualitative investigation through small group interviews with upper-primary school children. We chose this approach as most likely to allow us insight into features of the young people's attitudes that may not be revealed in other methods of investigation (Patton, 1990). Hence, we used a semi-structured interview schedule with groups of four or five children in a range of schools in distinctly different regions of rural South Australia. In the most recent investigation, we deliberately chose rural schools because our earlier studies had involved only urban children and we wished to discover whether 'being Australian' carried different meanings for rural children as compared with those from the city. In this part of the study we interviewed some 250 young people spread across schools in South Australia's famous wine-producing region, the Barossa Valley, the industrial steelworks regions north of Adelaide, known as the Lower and Mid-North, the Riverland and the farming districts of the South East.

The students were generally in their final year of primary school (Year 7 in South Australia) and they were nearly all 12 years of age. The study has thus far included some 400 children – the original 150 from urban schools and the more recent 250 from rural locations. The rural children comprised 124 girls and 130 boys from 14 different schools. In terms of cultural mix there was a definite presence of Indigenous children in the rural groups – one of the schools was 80 per cent Indigenous, whereas the city schools had fewer Indigenous students. In certain areas, such as the Riverland and the South East, the rural children were predominantly non-Indigenous Australians whose families had farmed the area for generations. In other cases there were children from German background in the Barossa Valley, and in the Lower North market-gardening districts there were significant numbers of children with Vietnamese background.

Procedures

Considerations of language are very important in generating free-flowing discussions with young people (Haste, 2004). Our intention was to try to capture the processes whereby the children engaged with one another in a negotiation of meaning around the concepts. As interviewers, we deliberately avoided using more abstract concepts such as 'national identity', 'culture', 'nation' and so on, preferring to speak in terms of concrete features of their daily living and to gently probe their felt responses to these aspects. We used a visual methodology (Rose, 2001), in which the children were encouraged to describe pictures they might

select to symbolise what features of Australia they saw as important. Only in the few cases when informants invoked more abstract terms did we pursue them in conversation.

The discussions began with some general icebreaking techniques designed to get the children talking easily. In a few cases it took some time to wean the children away from the school-produced convention of raising hands before they began to talk – but eventually talk they did. All discussion groups met at their regular school, and as interviewers we took time to reassure the participants that the discussion was not part of the formal school requirements. Early on we made it clear that there were no correct answers to the sorts of questions we were asking – and that all opinions were of value and interest to us. Then we moved to issues raised in the deliberate effort to get at the children's felt responses to questions of place and nation. Among the questions we asked are:

> What's it like to live here?
> What do you like about it? And what's not so good?

We sought ways of uncovering the images that conveyed meanings to our participants in questions such as:

> If you were asked to make a collage which showed the way you felt about Australia, what would you put in it?

With this question we were using a familiar task – primary students are familiar with the idea of collage making – to move to the more abstract level of representation and felt response. We also used hypothetical questions such as:

> If you had to go to live in another country, apart from family and friends what do you think you'd miss?

During the course of the discussions, we sought clarification of key terms or words that the children used. Probes were often used to ascertain that the meaning was clear.

All discussions were subsequently transcribed and organised for analysis using the NUD•IST data management software. The analysis was conducted in terms of the words and phrases used, their meanings and affective connotations, and the frequencies of occurrence in the partial and entire data set. No actual names of students or schools are reported in this paper. All names are pseudonyms, although the general region is identified.

Results and discussion

In the following paragraphs we identify themes that emerged during our discussions, and give examples of the ways in which the children's

thinking about their place is framed by particular features of their home environments. Direct quotations are used as examples of the children's speech; sometimes as individual representation and elsewhere as an excerpt of conversation in which the reader can observe the negotiation of meaning between the group members. Indications of the frequency of a particular feature are also identified in order to substantiate our claim for its thematic status.

The place to be

Compared with city children, country students exhibited a strong sense of place; for example, they frequently mentioned the name of their particular town, whereas the city children rarely named the neighbourhood, suburb or the city in which they all lived and went to school. While some rural children felt themselves to be possibly less significantly located when compared to city dwellers, they were sure their place was more desirable than a city location. They knew they were 'not-city', whereas the urban children had never identified themselves as being 'not-country'. This phenomenon is consistent with the sociological insight that the inferior location (in this case rural populations are numerically inferior and also less likely to have concentrations of status and power) usually experiences itself as marked, whereas the superior other is the unmarked norm (Connell, 1983). Several of the rural children volunteered their fears of what they would have to go without if they were to move to the city:

Carey (Mid-North): We've got a very big property and if we had to move into a town or a city or something we probably wouldn't be able to take all the animals because we've got tons.

I: Okay and Greg, what's good about living here for you?

Greg: I would miss all the trees. I'd miss doing burnouts and that on the motorbike, and because you can't do them in the town without getting caught with the cops … and I'd miss rounding up sheep, going shearing … and them things.

Clearly the thought of life in the city was for these youngsters a fate they would gladly do without. In the above quotation they used the city as the negative reference point from which they go on to establish what was good about their own situation. Another rationale for living 'in the country' was developed in terms of the clean green environment with lots of space, as in the following comment from a boy from the Barossa Valley:

Jack: It's good living here 'cos it's not cramped. And you don't have to go down a street and there is a stink of car fumes and all that like it is in the city.

Being 'in the country' was intimately connected with the themes of safety and freedom – two key themes in the children's emotional response to being Australian (Gill and Howard, 2002). Whereas many of the rural children, along with their city based counterparts, appeared to regard other countries as different and inherently dangerous, for these country dwellers the city itself became the dangerous other, too.

Bob (Riverland): The thing I like about Rivertown is that when you go places you can just leave your door open and no one goes in your house, not like in Adelaide. And when you go to bed you don't hear cars go past. And it's nicer weather …

And Lara from the Riverland also suggested that the country is safer than the city:

There's no wars and most of the people are happy most of the time. And there's no real bad things happen. Like if you were living in the city it would be like murders and drugs and drinking and stuff. But here it's not.

Their sense of freedom was often expressed in being able to do things they thought city kids couldn't, such as:

Mary (Mid-North): If I moved to Adelaide, right, I wouldn't get the chance to scream. Like in here it's remote. We live near the town and not too far from the city. It's the outback actually, a very remote area.

I: And what about you Steve? What's good about living here for you?

Steven: Like Mary said, you can just scream. I live here and I've got a big paddock and then it's my next door neighbour's house. And I just scream over to her.

For many rural children, the sense of freedom was associated with space, not being on top of other people and having room to move. The term 'space' appeared repeatedly (99 hits in 76 documents) in conversations with the children as they offered a rationale for the joys of country life. In the above examples, space is associated with being able to raise your voice, whereas the city in their construction is a place where you have to limit your bodily movements, your voice and your impact on the environment generally. Perhaps the ultimate expression of this sort of freedom was given by Dan from the Lower-North:

Dan: Oh, and if you live out in the farms and that or if you go out there, like – you could actually, if it was a really hot day, you could walk around in your underpants.

The sense of feeling free in the safety of the country was echoed throughout the different locations. For instance from the South East:

David: There's lots of open space and you can ride the motorbike around and there's not many thieves, because when we went to West Beach [Adelaide beach suburb] someone stole my pair of thongs and I was upset.

Nick: I just like the freedom and you can do lots of things without worrying about stuff.

I: Such as?

Nick: Such as, like, lots of, like, kidnappers and everything like that.

Working with young adolescents in the United States, Cornbleth (2002) found that the term *free* was frequently connected with the United States, but was used as a symbol or a slogan by most students as in 'land of the free'. The young rural Australians tended to express their sense of freedom in terms of being able to do things because they lived in the countryside. Their freedom was expressed in personalised and localised ways as an enabling capacity for action, in addition to being seen as a question of rights.

For others it was the sense of friendliness that was a source of pleasure in country life. In this feature the children echoed the idea of Australian mateship, a mythologised quality associated with life in the bush (Kapferer, 1990) frequently referred to with pride by the then-conservative prime minister. Whereas none of the city children spoke about the friendliness of their particular neighbourhood communities, it was a theme frequently invoked by the rural children:

Jim (Riverland): It's a friendly place and you can walk down the street and you'd see someone and you'd be able to go 'Hi' and you'd know who they are.

Anna: Yeah, just knowing everybody in town and becoming friends with as many as you can ... that's good.

Michael: Friends and you're close to family because my gran lives here too and apart from my pop practically all my other family live close by.

Once again, this theme provided a way of establishing themselves as 'not-the-city', with the city being associated with strangeness, lack of friendly faces and danger. And from a group of Aboriginal children in the Mid-North, for whom the city represented loneliness and dread:

David: All of Kaloomba, they basically know you and you get on with everyone goodly and then if you get taken away to the city it would be heaps different and there would be robberies and that, and you wouldn't know how to stop them.

Ali: Yeah, you know everyone round the town, except for new people and it's easy to get to know them and stuff ... if you move to a city you won't know anyone.

But a hint of bitter personal experience, too:

Alan: The only bad part about living in a small town like this is news spreads really quickly. So if you do something wrong the whole town will know in an hour or so.

In many respects, the children, in their estimation of the joys of country living and the miseries of the city, echo the sort of fundamental division that was constructed a hundred years ago by the first wave of writers and artists in crafting a vision of Australia. Certainly, their ways of expressing the differences they believe to exist between life in the city and life in the country are less poetic and rather more influenced, one suspects, by local attitudes and the nightly news than anything they've heard or read. But their sentiments are remarkably similar to one another across their very different rural locations. Thus, the idea of being not-the-city appears to be widely shared and celebrated in ways decidedly similar to those earlier voices in the bush ballads of the late 19th and early 20th century.

Like the urban children had done in the earlier investigation, many of the rural participants affirmed a sense of delight in nature, in Australian flora and fauna, as part of their reason for enjoying life in the country. Boys and girls spoke easily about their emotional response to the place they understood as their part of the world, without any sentimentality or jingoism:

Nick (Mid-North): Big space – we've got three very big farms and the possibilities of having hundreds of lizards is quite high – I love the lizards.

Charlie: Oh yeah, I love the mallee trees and making cubbies. I forgot to mention that … and I love this place because it's just perfect. It's nice in summer but in the winter I hate it when it starts to rain real hard and it's windy and really cold.

I: Okay, what's good about living here then?

Charlie: Knowing that this is your home and nothing else can take it away.

In many cases, these children affirmed a belief in the uniqueness of Australia and its flora and fauna; a belief that does not reflect reality (there are gum

trees in other parts of the world) but which undoubtedly contributes to the sense of the children's pride in their country.

I:	So you want to put native animals on the collage?
Nancy (Barossa):	They are an emblem.
Chris:	They belong to us and no one else.
Nancy:	Like the kangaroo and the emu or the ostrich or something.
I:	Anything else for the collage?
Bruce:	Oh, you'd put wombats.
Diana:	Koalas.
Nancy:	Dingo, because that was already in Australia before.

Their responses here centre on a sense of the uniqueness of the country and their sense of themselves as its rightful owners – 'they belong to us and no one else'. They name the animals they believe to be unique to Australia – with Nancy's note that the dingo 'was already in Australia before'. We did not pursue the meaning here but it would be most probable that she meant 'before European settlement' or 'before the white people came here'. And so, in talking about what is meant by being Australian, the children reveal some understanding of the notion of pre-history, a pre-existing Australia before European settlement, an ancient land with unique and sometimes weird animals.

The place of education

The rural children were much more likely to offer favourable comments about their education than had the city children of our earlier interviews. Some country children saw a good education as one of the privileges associated with being Australian; for instance:

I:	Why would you put pictures of schools in your collage of Australia?
Lily (Riverland):	'Cause there's a lot of people that don't get education like us.
Tom:	Put the words 'good education' because education is strong here and in some countries education is very poor.

And from the South East:

Lara:	[If living in another country, I would miss] ... the good education. I would miss Australian food, too because it would be different food there.

Nor did the children limit their idea of education to the schooling alone:

Billy (South East): I was going to say that some countries can't have cars and that because they haven't got TAFEs [institutes of Technical and Further Education] and that to make people become engineers and all that.

They evidently understood the purposes of a good education in functional terms, and the idea of good education emerged very clearly as one of their values.

Joanna (Barossa): And we've got schooling where some other places haven't. We've got classrooms and they have to sit outside and do their lessons.

For educators, it is heartening to note that the ideal of good education was widely shared by these rural children. In these discussions, there was no talk about choice of school – you lived in a particular place and you went to the nearest public school. For most of them, their experience of schooling was grounded in terms of the one institution they had attended all their school days. They readily admitted to a sense of privilege about having a good education, and they were almost universally positive about their schools.

Symbols of place

In their quest to identify symbols of Australia for the collage, the city children almost all offered examples of Australian icons, derived from features of the built environment associated with the eastern states and, in particular, with Sydney. Thus, they nominated the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House as preferred images of Australia, reflecting perhaps the dominance of Sydney in terms of population and its more frequent appearance in representations of Australia with which they are familiar. (South Australian buildings or city features were rarely mentioned, if at all, despite the fact that all the children were from that state.) The rural students, on the other hand, were more likely to nominate natural icons – Uluru, Flinders Ranges, MacDonnell Ranges, the Murray River – many of which belong in their home state, others such as Uluru and the Olgas lying just across the border in the Northern Territory.

Jill (Lower North): Uluru and the Olgas.
Michael: Because we are proud of them.
Jill: Because people like to see them.
Tim: Because we are proud that they are natural and they are not all manmade like some countries are and we are proud of them.
Van: Yeah ... like temples and stuff.

A rejection of the built environment, and awareness and positive valuing of the natural environment came through many of the rural children's choices in terms of ways to represent Australia. For example:

> Denise (Lower-North): And I'd put pictures of like all the different environments because that's part of Australia, like deserts, and rainforests and mountain ranges.

Another notable difference between urban and rural respondents concerned the fact that the rural children were much more likely to nominate Anzac Day and Gallipoli as possible inclusions on their collage. In other words, they appeared more aware of Australia's military past than the city children. In seeking to explain this difference, we noted the presence in every country town of the war memorial as a built feature, and the annual services that take place around this structure in which the townsfolk are routinely involved. For these children, such rituals enabled a sense of history and served to 'create a sense of collective identity' (Barton and Levstik, 1998, p. 1) as Australian citizens, regardless of their own particular origins.

It's my place

Virtually all the children expressed positive concepts of Australia and wanted to demonstrate this pictorially, but there were some interesting differences, too. While all the children, both rural and urban, suggested the inclusion of happy, smiling people – all sorts of people, young and old, black and white and so on – in their collage of Australia, the rural children were much more likely to nominate pictures of themselves as well in their list of worthy and desirable inclusions. In talking about this they affirmed a sense of self as Australian and, therefore, affirmed their right to be featured in any representation of the country. Just as the American children had used the pronoun 'we' and 'ours' when talking about the American revolution, regardless of their own particular ethnicity or gender (Barton and Levstik, 1998, p. 3), so too did these rural young Australians describe their country as 'our place'.

Conclusions

The storylines/songlines that were evident across the different locations of the children reflect some of the dominant ways of thinking about contemporary Australia. The differences between rural and urban children described above should not be seen to mask the very real and notable similarities between the groups. All the children expressed positive feelings about Australia, and some of these broadly shared responses to the idea

of being Australian are developed elsewhere (Gill and Howard, 2002). In this, too, they echoed the findings of the American study in which the young people said 'From all over the world people come here. Straight to America. Better than any other country' (Cornbleth, 2002, p. 531). Like the American students, our young informants shared in an evident desire to claim their place as 'best in the world'.

In the absence of the traditional songlines/storylines that once filled the curriculum in Australian primary schools, the rural children's sense of their country remains highly congruent with the older, traditional images, although the country no longer appears quite as abundant as it once used to be. Urban children constructed their storylines around global themes such as the evident multiculturalism in their lived experience, sporting achievements in an international arena and east-coast icons of the built environment. On the other hand, for rural children the iconography is more linked to natural symbols, sky, weather, geography, landscape and, above all, space. Space also had connotations over and above room to move. It signified freedom, lack of constraint at a spiritual and psychological level, as well as the physical level. The nature/culture binary is reflected in these responses. The urban children saw themselves as part of the current scene in their ready acceptance of other cultures and their capacity to identify with aspects of their culture and the human-made environment. The rural children, on the other hand, constructed themselves in terms of the natural environment in which they were positioned as free to be themselves, unfettered in movement and capacity for noise making and unrestricted by rules and regulations that they saw as constraining the urban dweller – for example, the capacity to do burn-outs on one's motorbike in the back paddock.

Most interestingly, perhaps, was the way in which the rural children positioned themselves within the landscape in terms of their ready nomination of natural icons, their repeated avowals of their love of animals and trees, and their insistence on presenting themselves pictured within the collage. They were key players within their understanding of what it meant to be Australian, whereas the city children had more readily engaged with the idea of principles binding a society together, ideals of inclusiveness and multiculturalism. While many of the rural children also affirmed these principles, for them a sense of the land itself in terms of the physical environment was the more dominant theme.

In conclusion, it would appear that the old storylines are being, to some degree, recycled in these rural children's accounts of Australian ways. Like Paterson's fictional hero in *Clancy of the Overflow*, they affirm a sense of space and freedom associated with life away from the city. A similar feature of the old storylines being recycled in current students' interpretations was revealed by studies of Canadian students' accounts

of social change (den Heyer, 2002). Currently, popular media have contributed to the celebration of the good life in locations removed from the city (viz television's *Sea Change* and *McLeod's Daughters*), suggesting that this mindset is not limited to rural youth.

Similarly, too, Australian rural students have negative associations with the idea of the city in terms of its polluted environment, crime and crowdedness, and they describe a sense of danger permeating city life. They delight in the natural environment, in which they experience themselves as properly located. The point here is not simply to suggest that the older storylines are being seamlessly recycled by rural young people. It could be that they are building a construction of the joys of country living from the truths of their daily experience and that the image of the crowded and polluted city serves simply to legitimate this position. However, the frequency of their negative allusions to the city across the different rural locations would seem to indicate a shared need to represent the city as other in order to validate their claims.

Implications for civics and citizenship education

In terms of the educational project of developing understandings of citizenship and national identity, there are some worrying trends that emerge from the data. Neither rural nor urban children appeared to have a sense of the country as a whole. First, there is a sense in which the children's negative views of the city and life in the city run counter to the current population movements, which record a shrinking of country towns as people move to the cities in search of work and livelihood. Given that most of these children will spend their adult lives as urban dwellers, such negative associations are potentially dysfunctional.

Second, their reiterated sense of their place as not-the-city appears to have emerged without the mediation of school learning, but rather as a random amalgam of community attitudes augmented by media reports on the nightly news of crime, killings and mayhem. Without the attention to a sense of the country as a whole that used to be delivered through traditional social studies, these rural young people appear to have elevated the local in ways that are perhaps not congruent with the reality of life beyond their immediate neighbourhood. Their general concept appears as a non-school based, cultural construction of 'here', which is essentially and fundamentally defined as 'not there' – not the other, dangerous, unknown city. Whereas the city children had tended to view themselves as incredibly better off than the people from other places, whom they saw on television amidst war, famine and cultural and religious persecution, for these country children the city itself had become the frightening 'other'.

For educators there are some concerns that this binary distinction between city and country, this regenerated 'false dichotomy' (Kapferer, 1990, p. 87), may preclude young Australians from a more accurate appreciation of the range of lifestyles possible in contemporary Australia. After all, our cities may not warrant the negative associations offered by the rural children. Moreover, it seems that the city children are largely unaware of the space and freedoms associated with life in the country. Education should avoid reinforcing simplistic perceptions, and work instead to break down misconceptions and promote informed choice. Some schools have implemented programs deliberately designed to overcome the sort of stereotyping we describe here. In some cases, this has involved outlying and country schools operating a 'city year' for their students during the course of their schooling. In others, there is the option of spending time at a rural location for at least one half the school year, so that students gain an awareness of life in the country grounded in sustained experience and not simply as tourists. And, of course, in some wealthy schools, there are travel programs for senior students who can learn from experiences of life in different societies to regard difference as neither threatening nor necessarily wrong.

Schooling has a responsibility to facilitate a revisioning of the social for young Australians in ways that contribute to social inclusion and avoid the traps of the urban/rural divide. The whole country stands to gain by education programs that promote real understanding of the many different ways in which people choose to live in Australia. The ideal is not to eradicate regional differences, but rather to celebrate them within a general understanding of the country as a whole, a 'political imaginary' (Hall, 1996b) in which people can come together to make decisions for all Australians. And from this broad understanding comes the basis from which to educate for national and global citizenship.

6 Safe, proud and free: Young people talk about what it feels like to be Australian

And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended
And at night the wond'rous glory of the everlasting stars

Paterson: *Clancy of the Overflow*, 1889

A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson's poem *Clancy of the Overflow* (1889) draws a comparison between conditions in the 19th century Australian city, in which the poem's protagonist lives and works, and the bush of which he dreams. The somewhat romanticised image of the bush that Paterson creates calls up notions of the space, autonomy and freedom available to the drover, which the poet sharply contrasts with the rule-bound constraints of life in the city. This vision is charged with an emotional investment in the *idea* of Australia, and much of 19th-century Australian literature and art is replete with similar ideas. It appears that these images were crucial to the traditional construction of Australia – a construction of place that earlier Australians called 'home', and to which they evidently felt a sense of affection and belonging. This chapter takes up the question of people's felt response to country as experienced by a group of young contemporary Australians.

For the past five years, we have been conducting studies of the ways in which Australian school children understand themselves as Australian citizens and, relatedly, what they know about Australia as a social and political entity. Our studies were initially inspired by the federal government's intervention into schooling, which came through the curriculum package 'Discovering Democracy', which was sent to every school in Australia in November 1998. This curriculum was mandated for all schoolchildren from Year 4 through Year 10, and comprised a set of experiences, information and testing about elements of the current democratic political processes in this country. We were concerned that it was not based on any evidence of children's current state of knowledge. As educators, we are committed to the principles of constructivist approaches

to learning and in particular to the Vygotskyan idea that new knowledge is always and inevitably constructed on the basis of what is already known. Hence, our study was initially designed to find out what primary school children do know about institutionalised systems of power. We started with those systems that affect them directly, such as the family and the school, and then moved on to explore their understandings of governance at community level, the state and the country as a whole.

One dimension that we did not specifically investigate, but which emerged consistently in the children's responses to our inquiry, was that of their affective response to the idea of being Australian in the sense of belonging to a place, whether that be community, town, state or nation. Although we did not ask explicitly 'How does it feel to be Australian?' this dimension emerged repeatedly in our analysis of the transcribed discussions, and thus we were persuaded to pursue it more directly in the present study. We did not seek to investigate what our respondents had learnt about Australia in terms of a literature or an official history. Rather, our focus was on their *feelings* about the place in which they live.

We were encouraged in our endeavour by the work of Helen Haste. From a broad cross-national study of children's responses to the concept of nation, Haste (1987) proposed that an affective element of cognition is centrally involved in any effective civics or citizenship-education program. Learning to belong thus becomes not simply a question of knowing the facts and being aware of one's rights and legal entitlements, but also of *learning and wanting to be a part* of the social organisation as a civic whole. Clearly, then, any coherent attempt to ensure that the young develop a strong sense of their civic rights and responsibilities should begin from their affective response to the place in which they live.

Despite the cliché about schooling being a project of socialisation, we still do not know if and how children become drawn into the sense of being part of a community beyond family and school. Traditional schooling practice has been seen as strongly connected to the establishment and maintenance of feelings of national allegiance, national identity and patriotism (Bourdieu, 1990b; Connell, 1993; Feinberg, 1998). Despite this belief, the ritual practices of flag raising and anthem singing, once so characteristic of the regular school assembly, were largely unknown to the children in the present study. In light of this, it is interesting to note that recently there has been renewed interest in reviving these nationalistic practices. In the interests of developing a stronger sense of national identity in our multicultural community, the Prime Minister has required all schools to have 'a fully functioning flag pole' upon which the Australian flag is to be flown. Clearly, understanding a key role of schooling as instilling feelings of patriotism and national loyalty remains the accepted norm in some circles.

Recent theorists also speak of the need for a sense of the nation to be passed on through schools, although the concept of nation envisaged here is more an overarching entity comprising many different groups. In particular, Feinberg (1998), from an American standpoint, has argued that the common school has an historic and continuing mission to create a national identity in a multicultural nation. The American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, on the other hand, has urged that education be directed towards generating a sense of global community rather than the national allegiances, which she sees as inherently divisive and counter to the realisation of a global humanity (Nussbaum, 1996). Other theorists have suggested that current society has evolved beyond the usefulness of a national identity (Castles et al., 1988; Lawn, 2001). Echoing Haste's thesis, Abowitz (2002) proposes the idea of a sense of belonging to place and nation as an essential precursor to the development of a sense of common global interests.

It is important to note the role of the media in children's construction of place. The question of desire as constituted by image and popular culture has all too often been overlooked in studies of children's learning. Moreover, material that comes from the media, and in particular from television, is readily seen as oppositional to the formal knowledge associated with school. And yet, there can be no doubt that Australian children watch a considerable amount of television, including the prime-time nightly news, and through this medium children are introduced to understandings about the world beyond their actual community and their own lived experience. Television thus has the potential to offer a visual realisation of the 'imagined community' that Anderson (1983) theorised as the mechanism through which people are drawn into the concept of nation and belonging.

For the purposes of the present study, we place our investigation of children's felt sense of place at the intersection of many competing forces, among which are global citizenship, patriotism, educational conservatism and attachment to local community, all of which are variously represented in the media and portrayed to children on a nightly basis.

The children

As with our earlier work (Howard and Gill, 2000, 2001, 2002; Gill and Howard, 1999), this study was conducted through small group discussions, of around 45 minutes' duration, with upper primary school children (aged 11–12 years). We used a semi-structured interview schedule with randomly selected groups of four or five children in a range of schools, in distinctly different regions from rural districts of South Australia. We

had begun the interviews with 154 children from 10 city schools across a range of urban locations, and then followed with interviews in rural communities. In the latter group, we interviewed some 250 young people spread across schools in South Australia's Barossa Valley, the northern regions in the Iron Triangle, the Riverland and the farming districts of the South East of the State.

In total, the participants comprised 214 girls and 189 boys from 35 different schools. All discussions took place in school settings. In terms of cultural mix, there was a definite presence of Indigenous children in some groups – in one school, Indigenous students made up 80 per cent of the student population. In certain areas, such as the Riverland and the South East, the children were predominantly non-Indigenous Australians whose families had farmed the area for generations. However, this was not a constant feature of the rural children. In other cases, there were children from German background in the Barossa Valley, and in the Lower North market-gardening districts there were significant numbers of Vietnamese children. In general, the urban schools had more children from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds than did the rural schools.

During the course of the discussions, we sought clarification of key terms or words that the children had used. Probes were often used to ascertain that the meaning was clear. The children were told from the outset that there were no correct answers to the questions that initiated the discussions. We reiterated that our interest lay in what the students thought and felt about the issue, and that all opinions were of interest. All discussions were subsequently transcribed and organised for analysis using NUD•IST data management software.

In the following sections of the chapter, we identify particular elements or themes around which we found the children's reported feelings cohered. To illustrate our analysis, we provide excerpts from more than 700 pages of transcribed data. While we have chosen quotes from individual voices to illustrate particular analytical points, we have also included larger pieces of conversation, which we suggest reveal the children working together to create shared meaning, a feature that has been theorised as central to children's conceptions of the meaning of citizenship (Haste, 2004).

The lead question was: *Can you give me two words that describe how you feel about being Australian?* Perhaps unsurprisingly, the children's responses were on the whole very positive, with a large number of them clustered around the ideas of *safety*, *pride* and *freedom*. These themes were heard in the vast majority of the group discussions, although in some groups they were pursued more vigorously and for a longer time than in others. Although in many cases the discussions involved all three concepts, we have separated them in this chapter for the purposes of discussion.

NUD•IST software enables the researcher to identify cohort effects, and so we explored the data for gender, race and ethnicity, and regional differences in the respondents' talk. No gender or race and ethnicity effects were found. Boys and girls from a range of ethnic backgrounds, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, exhibited a similar range of responses during the discussions. A great deal of similarity was also found across the range of locations in which the children lived. Comparing the rural respondents' talk with those of our urban participants did yield some interesting differences, however, and these were explored in Chapter 5.

Safe

The term *safe* occurred in over half the group responses (56 of the 74 discussion groups). In these discussions, *safe* emerges as absence of immediate threat or war rather than a simple state of security or of being looked after and protected.

Children's understanding of the word *safe* often tends to be constructed in opposition to undesirable forces they describe relatively easily – fighting, famine, serial killers, muggings – most of which are perceived to be located in countries other than Australia. As Lionel, an Aboriginal boy from the Mid-North and Nathan from the Barossa Valley indicate, bad things happen elsewhere:

> Lionel (12): Like over in America they're having big wars and all that ... there's like serial killers in other countries, too.
>
> Nathan (12): But, like, in America and stuff you always hear about murders every second. I'm not sure, because I've never been there or anything, but I don't think they take it as big a deal, not nearly enough as Australia does. If one person dies and gets murdered here it's all over the news and they do everything they can. I don't think they do quite enough in other countries.

Like Nathan, John from the Riverland believes that, compared with other countries, Australia's criminal justice system is superior in protecting citizens from such violence:

> John (12): I feel safe basically because all the murderers and all those people go to jail, and the jails are pretty strong and they can't get out easy ...

Some of the country children felt particularly safe because of their geographic locality. Whereas many saw undesirable locations as existing in other countries, others, like Tina from the South East and Lisa from the Mid-North, saw the city as being the place where these undesirable things occur.

Tina (12): It's safe ... like, there is good protection because Mum and Dad are in the house and you know you're safe. It's not, what if there is a war tomorrow? Or if there is a sudden attack because we are in Nankivell and we are not in a city. People are not going to say 'Let's go and get Nankivell'. There's no point, really. Rather, if you lived in Sydney it's a sort of target ...

Lisa (12): Australia makes me feel safe because there's no wars and most of the people are happy most of the time. And there's no real bad ... like, if you were living in the city it would be murders and drugs and drinking and stuff but here it's not.

For some children, like Josie, their sense of being safe resided in what they perceived as Australia's extreme geographical isolation:

Josie (11): … 'Cos we are all the way on the bottom of the globe. Like, we're near Antarctica.

Overwhelmingly, though, the children gave as their rationale for feeling *safe* the fact that there was an absence of war and oppression in Australia – although the possibility of it in the future was recognised by some, like these children from the Barossa Valley:

Hilary (11): I know that I'm safe and all the bombings and stuff are in other places ... like, it can happen here but it hasn't ...

Neil (12): We're not involved in it.

Ken (12): You can feel safe when you go to bed at night, you know your house isn't going to get bombed or anything.

Tom (from the Barossa Valley) and Tranh (from the Lower North) both explained their feelings of *safe* in terms of an absence of oppression and surveillance:

Tom (12): You know you are not going to be taken out of your home. Say you were just like an illegal immigrant and you came here and didn't tell anybody ... you might be scared at night that somebody's going to come and tell you that you have to go. So you feel safe [that] that's not going to happen.

[…]

Tranh (12): I feel safe because I know that if I want to go outside and play there's not going to be someone sitting there watching me and watching my every move ... and I just feel great, happy to be in such a nice country.

The theme of *safe* as intimately connected to the familiar and the known was echoed by many in these discussions, and it was generally in contrast

to the *other* – the unfamiliar, the dangerous. It appeared that the children's knowledge of the dangerous, unsafe *other* was gleaned from television more than anywhere else.

I: Peter, when do you get this feeling ... in what situations?

Peter (12): Most of the time when I watch TV, or hear about when wars are going on. When the Twin Towers crashed. It's like we don't know how lucky we are because we could have easily been brought up in another family in another country and we could have been those people that were getting hurt. So mostly when I hear and watch the news.

I: Alison, you used the terms 'great' and 'safe' ... what do you mean by that?

Alison (12): Great is because ... like, compared to Africa or something, they don't have a lot of food and it's great to be here because there's more food. And safe ... because we are a peaceful country, not like Afghanistan or something.

For some there was also a nascent political awareness in their responses:

I: You said 'safe' ... what lies behind that?

Hung (11): Well, we have a land already, we are happy to be here ... like, some other countries they are still fighting wars to get more land. Greed. And since we don't try and get more land, they don't try and get our land ... so we don't get attacked that much.

These representative excerpts from a much larger data set reveal that feeling safe is intrinsically linked to how these young people feel about being Australian. While this might be considered a desirable state of affairs for children this age, our analysis shows that this sense of being safe was achieved by comparing Australia with other countries perceived to be less safe. In this way, the children voiced their sense of what they were pleased to have in Australia by elaborating and stereotyping the differences they might experience if they lived somewhere else (Haste, 2004).

Proud

This theme occurred in 52 of the 74 discussion groups. There was a fair degree of overlap between the way the children explained their feelings of *proud*, *safe* and *free*. For example, one of the things many children identified as an aspect of pride in Australia was our difference from other countries and the perception that Australia was peaceful. These dimensions of uniqueness and peacefulness also evidently related to their sense of being safe. A second strong theme emerging under the *proud*

heading involved Australian achievements, particularly in the sporting arena. A third theme related to children's perceptions of the orderliness of Australian society; as one child remarked 'the country works well'.

In the following excerpt, four children from the Barossa Valley combine elements of all three themes. They allude to Australia as being different from other places and Australians as different from other people because of our 'special privileges'. These include the fact that we have no wars in Australia, we have many sporting achievements and we have a well-ordered society that provides a tidy environment and a good education system:

I:	How do you feel when you say 'I'm an Australian'?
April (12):	Well, I feel proud to be in the country because other countries aren't like we are – kind of spoilt. And other countries don't have the things that we have.
I:	So we're a bit special?
April:	Yes.
Tom (12):	Got special privileges.
I:	What particular privileges are you proud of?
Katie (12):	Just live a normal life instead of having to go through all those wars and that.
I:	What other things are there to be proud about?
April:	Well, the Commonwealth Games are on now and Australia has got the most medals. We've got good swimmers and good runners.
I:	Good sport all round.
April:	Yeah. We've got good all rounders. It's a nice country. It's not got rubbish all over the place. It's like a really nice country. It's got lots of trees and gardens.
I:	So there are open spaces.
Joanna (11):	And we've got schooling where some other places haven't. We've got classrooms and they have to sit outside and do their lessons.
I:	So there are things to be grateful for as Australians? You've got it pretty good? Do you agree with that, Tom?
Tom:	Yes. My family sponsored a kid in Peru and Mum used to keep saying 'You are lucky you don't have to go and work from the age of five because kids over there do'. And that's one privilege we've also got. We get to do schooling instead of going to work.

Australia's difference from other countries is again evidenced in the following excerpt from a Mid-North group – we are inventive and our well-ordered society provides us with a good health system:

I: What makes you feel proud, Alice?

Alice (12): I think things like Aussie inventions like the Hills hoist and Vegemite and them things ... because I'm proud to be Australian because we can like make inventions, inventions like that.

Anna (12): And we've got the medicines and hospitals. Other countries don't and they have to work for the money to get their medicines.

Again, by contrasting Australia with other countries, this group from the Riverland feels pride in our country's ability to provide good jobs and an education system:

Belinda (12): [I'm proud] … 'cos we've got good education. You can get better jobs and make more out of life.

I: Better jobs than where?

Belinda: Than other countries where you have to be a maid or something.

I: Okay, what are you proud of, Philip?

Philip (12): I'm proud of the good variety of jobs and, like, say in countries like Africa – here you don't have to walk 14 km to school and cart water home and, like, there some can't afford schooling.

The sense of being different and privileged – of having things that other countries don't have – comes through very clearly in many of the discussions. This feature forms a rationale for the feeling of pride, but it is also associated with an emerging sense of social responsibility, a concept of social justice.

The fact that Australia is not involved in war was not only a reason to feel safe but also a frequently mentioned source of pride. These Aboriginal children from a school in the Mid-North offer the no-war stance as their main reason for taking pride in their country:

Mary (11): I feel proud because I'm from a country who don't have lots of wars and who aren't going through famine.

Melissa (12): What I reckon is that Australia is the place that doesn't fight.

Students from the South East also claim Australia's no-war status as a source of pride, but their greatest sense of pride is reserved for Australia's sporting achievements:

I: Proud, proud of what?

Jeff (12): About being an Australian.

I: What does Australia do to make you feel proud?

Roy (12): Winning the rugby match against New Zealand.
I: So sport is one thing, obviously – anything else you would be proud of?
Leo (11): We don't have heaps of wars and bombers and that.
I: Okay.
David: It's just one big country or continent.
Leo: Just states and that.
Jeff: Like happy people, like peacekeepers, we help people and stuff like that.
I: Okay, anything else you would be proud of?
Sam (12): If we won the World Cup!
All: Yeah!

Tessa, an Aboriginal girl from the Mid-North, refers to a sporting event in the form of the Olympic Torch relay. While she did not take an active part in the event, the symbol of Australia's sporting prowess was sufficient to induce the feeling of pride in her:

Tessa (12): I feel proud, like the Olympic Games. Like, when we had the torch and that come through Port Albert and people, like, they brang it to our school.
I: Oh right.
Tessa: I feel pride about that.

For others, the sense of a well-ordered society was the principal reason for feeling proud of being Australian. Frequently, there was a moral and social-justice dimension in their rationales for their feelings of pride. Keith from the Riverland expressed pride in his town's civic activity ('good things going on') – activities that he thinks make the town attractive to immigrants. It is noteworthy that Keith's idea takes the positive turn that immigrants come here because they like it rather than the more usual rationale that they come to get away from less desirable places. The newcomers like the good society they find here and that's a reason to feel proud.

I: Keith, you said you were proud – what's the proud bit for?
Keith (12): Because you hear of all the good things that Australia's doing. Like even little towns like Rivertown, in the community there's always good things going on ... and there's always (people from) other countries coming to live here because they obviously like it ... and you just feel proud about it.

Katie from the Barossa Valley felt her pride lay in her community's capacity to encourage charity to assist those who were less well off:

Katie (12): I feel proud when I see ... say, like if you have clothes that don't fit you or something you take it to the Goodwill Bin and

you make, like, so that someone else can make use of them instead of just chucking them out, or well just chucking them in rubbish bins.

Children from farming communities in the South East were often quite explicit about their pride in their families' capacity to feed people in distant locations. Here, there is a sense of the reciprocal nature of a well-ordered society – different sectors work, in special ways, for the common good:

Steve (12): You also feel proud when your crop is going well and it's ready to harvest, and it's all good.
I: Okay. That is something very few city people would feel.
Sally (12): Like, you feel proud when you accomplish something that you know is going to help other people in Australia.
Steve: Feeling proud if, say, a farmer does corn crops and you're feeding all the city and area – you feel proud for doing that.

In the following conversation among children from a small school in the Lower North (which, of all our rural research sites, was closest to the city), they revealed their understanding of the well-ordered society in what seem to be particularly urban terms. In their view, the benefits included orderly shopping, consumer goods, lower taxes and equality.

Tran (12): I'm proud because some countries you go to you see people there and they are living on the streets because of the facilities and the government, but here in Australia it's more like laid out properly so you can go down to the shop and get change. We've got computers – in other countries they probably haven't even heard of television or radio.
I: What are you proud of?
Jill (12): Proud that it's a multicultural country.
I: That's an accomplishment, isn't it?
Jill: We've got people from everywhere around the world.
I: What else are you proud about?
Jill: Lower taxes, because in the medieval times with kings and all that, lower people like the serfs got charged more, like, they worked more than other people.
I: Anything else that people are proud about?
Nguyen (11): People are treated evenly no matter who they are.
Tran: You can accomplish whatever you want. If you want to be prime minister, just go for it.

In this conversation, the children also showed a ready acceptance of multiculturalism, possibly because like Keith earlier they understand

people coming to Australia as further evidence of the good life available here. Their perception of the society operating justly and treating everyone equally was another recurring view expressed by the children as a reason to feel pride in Australia.

Free

This theme occurred in 48 of the 74 recorded conversations. Our analysis shows some degree of overlap between the children's conceptions of freedom meaning both *freedom from* constraint and *freedom to* do things. For many, the sense of freedom in Australia is constructed around the absence of restrictions they have seen to operate in other countries. The principal indication of restriction for these children is often focused on concrete particulars; for example, Muslim dress. Once again, the images on the television news appear to have been the source of their understanding of places in which they perceive people not to be free. Here, a group from the Iron Triangle explains its concept of freedom by contrasting Australian society with Muslim society:

I:	You said 'free'. Can you explain that?
Jo (12):	Like, in other places you have to wear those thingies on your head. And sometimes when they have a war you have to stay home.
Shane (12):	Girls have to hide their face away.
Don (12):	Yeah, they're not allowed to show any of their body.

Another group from the Riverland provides another example of this view:

I:	This word 'free' crops up a lot. Linda, you used it as well.
Linda (12):	There is no real rules that you can't wear certain clothing.
I:	Elizabeth, why did you use the term 'free'?
Elizabeth (12):	Because in some countries women can't go out their door without their face covered, and over here they can do that.
I:	Okay. So all of you would say that one of the good things is that you feel free. What does that mean to you?
Leeanne (12):	You can do whatever you want without breaking the law.

The basic idea of freedom from oppression and/or surveillance was reiterated in a range of ways. This conversation among Iron Triangle children illustrates a number of them:

Louise (12): You feel lucky and free. Like when you go ... I dunno ... you ride your bike around or something and you don't have to ... like you're not worried about the army coming up and shooting you or something.

Bridie (12): Because you have freedom to think what you think and choose if you're Christian … and you can basically do what you want to do.

I: What are you proud of, Damien?

Damien (12): Well, we get ... we're practically free to do whatever we want.

I: In what sense?

Damien: Well, we can choose if we want to be Christians or Muslims.

[...]

Anna (12): It's fantastic to be an Australian, 'cos you're free of mind basically to do some things that we want to do.

As Anna does above, occasionally the children spoke of a sense of freedom meaning what they can do in terms of their own desires rather than as a reaction to restraints elsewhere.

Minky (11): I feel free 'cos after work you can go out in the warm sun and when you're by yourself and you run on the oval you feel free.

I: Okay.

Minky: You feel a sign of freeness.

In this last contribution, Minky's language – 'a sign of freeness' – and Anna's use of 'free of mind' convey the difficulties our young informants experienced as they tried to express themselves about what are essentially abstract issues. There can be no doubt that Minky was describing something pleasurable, a dimension that she associated with her life in Australia. Here, 'free of mind' and the 'sign of freeness' are linguistic indicators of the children's efforts to put into words a concept that they are still working out.

In dealing with the idea of feeling *free*, the concept of the well-ordered and equal society emerged, too. Here is an excerpt from a conversation in the South East:

Tina (12): It's a free country and we respect everyone and let everyone come and join us from other countries. You can only be Australian here.

I: Can you explain the concept of a free country to me?

Tina: There is no ... you can do what you want and we have our choices and stuff. You can make your own choices.

I: Choices about?

Tina: Government and what to do when you grow up and stuff.

In this conversation, Tina embraces a multicultural Australia within her vision of a free country in which one has freedom to do and be, according to personal choice.

Discussion

In general, the children's responses were very positive when we asked them to think of words that expressed how they felt about being Australian. They readily spoke of feeling *good*, feeling *lucky*. *Special* and *unique* were also common responses in terms of the particular features of Australia – usually flora and fauna or landmarks that they identified as unique to this country. The frequency with which the words *safe, proud* and *free* were nominated and discussed, however, warranted special attention because these words provide particular insights into how these young people conceptualise the larger social group to which they belonged – their construction of nation and the world beyond.

In a sense, all three words can be seen as the positive pole of a binary pair: safe/dangerous, proud/indifferent, free/oppressed, which are the result of comparisons the children made between where they live and other places (that is, cities, countries elsewhere in the world). Although we did not specifically ask them about their television watching, we speculate that these comparisons have been made possible through the children's exposure to television. The images of urban violence and foreign wars, which they are very likely to have seen on television news programs, would contrast starkly with their experience of community life in rural South Australia.

Understandably, the concept of Australia being a *safe*, *proud* and *free* country is, to a degree, idealistic and partial. The notion of *safe* is largely derived from the fact that the children perceive that Australia is not war-torn like other countries. Being proud of Australia as a peace-loving nation overlooks the fact that many of the images of war to which the children refer came from Afghanistan, where Australia was a protagonist. Similarly, the concept of *free* is derived from comparisons with countries where such oppressive acts as surveillance and summary arrest indicate that people demonstrably do not share the same civil rights and basic freedoms enjoyed by most Australians. Frequently, however, oppression was linked to visual symbols of 'other'; for example, customs relating to religious dress for women. Some children struggled with a more abstract sense of *free* that revolved around *freedom to* rather than *freedom from*. Leanne's understanding that one is free to do anything so long as one

doesn't break the law; Anna's concept of 'free of mind'; Minky's 'sign of freeness' are important indicators of a struggle towards a more abstract political and philosophical definition of *free*.

In their idealism there is much to be commended and encouraged. Pride in a multicultural awareness is evident. Several groups expressed the belief that immigrants choose to come to this country because they perceive the Australian 'well-ordered society' to be desirable. Surprisingly, given the negative publicity about refugees, such people are not constructed by these children as 'illegal queue jumpers' trying to gain access unreasonably and unfairly to an enviable lifestyle. Comparison with the situation in other countries led many groups to a humbling sense of privilege. There was recognition that good schooling, enough to eat, freedom of movement, social stability are the benefits of a 'well-ordered society' – but there was also a recognition that things need not be this way and they clearly are not in many other places. Among these respondents there was a sense of 'There but for the grace of God go I', but little apparent understanding of the social and political rules and regulations that provide the privileges they enjoy.

In speaking about their feelings, the children were operating in an ideal-type world of hopes and wishes. The actual mechanisms of government whereby these themes might be rendered realisable appear somewhat beyond the range of responses discussed here. The children offered, instead, value-laden ideals and associated these closely with a positive vision of being Australian.

Conclusion

Our analysis shows a high degree of consistency in the young people's responses, sufficient to warrant a claim that there is some sense of a shared idea of Australia across the different children who participated in this study. This finding is all the more remarkable, given the lack of formal schooling ritual and curriculum designed to inculcate national allegiance. Such an outcome raises the question of the school's role in the work of nation formation.

If Haste (1987) is right and affective responses to where one lives – a felt sense of belonging – is an important precursor to any effectively taught civics curriculum, then this paper offers a number of starting points for teachers. The binaries of safe/dangerous, proud/indifferent and free/oppressed need to be discussed and explored in greater depth. The comparisons between Australia and other countries that lead to judgements that Australia is peaceful, well-ordered and free must surely invite investigation of the ways in which societies may be organised and the impact the resulting systems may have on individual citizens. This

orientation could then lead on to an examination of the rules and regulations necessary to ensure the desired social organisation and a consideration of democracy and its concomitant social justice, civil liberties, civic rights and responsibilities. Such an approach is clearly grounded in the current perceptions and attitudes of young people, rather than proceeding from an idea of what they 'ought to know'.

On the basis of this study, we would also suggest that it is important that educators recognise the link between television images and students' perceptions. In particular, they should look at the power of the media's images of the *other* to create unbalanced perceptions in students' minds. Many of our participants thought they were better off for reasons based on images of other countries that communicate cultural difference (for example, dress codes) that appear to be derived from the television news. While students in Islamic dress are not uncommon in urban primary schools, there were none in the schools used in this study. From an education standpoint, it is important for students to develop a more nuanced understanding of other societies – learning more perhaps about the bases for economic inequality, about the reasons for poverty, about the history of war-torn countries, about different countries' social and cultural practices. This path would seem to offer a sounder basis for becoming global citizens as well as local agents.

Of course, we believe that children should be led to explore the way in which their society is organised, and we believe this is best done when such an enquiry is based on their present understandings. In addition, we stand alongside Abowitz (2002), who seeks to combine the projects of Martha Nussbaum and Stephen Feinberg in offering a curriculum (not exclusively related to civics and citizenship) that recognises and acknowledges a celebration of difference, globalised effects and world diversity. Schools are to be key in this important endeavour. It is our hope that this study offers some pointers as to how to begin just such a project.

7 My place: The remaking of images of country and belonging in Australian young people

In recent years, Australian society has been undergoing major revision in terms of a vastly expanded immigration program. Immigration grew fairly steadily through the second half of the 20th century, such that by 1996 one in four Australians was born overseas (Australian Law Reform Commission, 1997). Most recently, the arrival of significant numbers of refugees has added to the population mix. In the schools, the effect of changes in the population is felt most keenly as it involves the children of recent arrivals as well as the newcomers themselves, and their distribution is not evenly spread throughout the population. These developments pose significant issues for education, its form and content – not the least of which concern the ways in which the school works to fulfil its traditional function of inculcating an understanding of Australian law and political systems, a respect for its leaders and a sense of belonging.

The data reported on in this chapter were derived from the responses from some 400 young South Australian schoolchildren to questions about their feelings for the country in which they live. These responses show a ready and genuine engagement with questions of the current social mix, an acceptance and pride in being a new society, a positive response to Indigenous issues along with some idiosyncratic comment about the country that provides further evidence of the ways in which young people are accurate deconstructors of the manifold media messages about place and belonging, along with their formal learning in school and home.

Thinking about place in the context of children's views of Australia immediately calls to mind two very different Australian publications, both of which deal with questions of place and identity as constructed in space and time, and both of which are widely used in schools. The first is Sally Morgan's *My Place* (Morgan, 1987), a largely autobiographical account of a young girl growing up in Western Australia in the later decades of the 20th century. In the story, the narrator describes her state of increasing

confusion as she grew to realise that the story she had been told about her family origins was a convenient fiction, and that her reality, her identity, was indeed rather different. She had been told that her ancestors were from India, a story that at first successfully accounted for her shadowy memories of a darker-skinned grandmother and other relatives. In fact, Sally gradually discovered that her ancestry was Aboriginal; that she derived from Indigenous stock. At the time it was seen as preferable by her immediate family, in particular her mother, to disguise this fact – hence, the story that they had come from India. The book was exceedingly popular and was taken up by many schools around the country as required reading in the secondary years. Of course, the story was further evidence – if any was needed – to underscore the deep prejudice and racism that had operated as a running theme throughout much of this country's history. It was unthinkable for the hundreds of late 20th-century young Australian readers (if not for their parents!) to imagine that being Indigenous could be seen as shameful and therefore hidden from public knowledge.

Interestingly, in terms of questions of identity and Indigenous identity, there is evidence that greater numbers of Australians have become willing to claim their Indigenous heritage. The numbers of Indigenous people identified in recent censuses has risen far and away beyond that which could be explained by natural increases. More people are prepared to own their Aboriginality and to identify as Indigenous, an outcome suggesting that some of the racial barriers are a little less dramatically exclusive than once was the case. Certainly, in our discussions with young people about issues such as the meaning of being Australian, there was a ready acceptance of the need to respect Indigenous people and acknowledge their right to the land because 'they were here first' – a claim hardly mentioned in the early history books. In general, the young people's notions of Australian history was remarkably vague, except for their responses to Indigenous people and their issues – for instance, many knew about the Stolen Generation and the long-standing impasse over the 'sorry' word (leading up to the historic apology in federal parliament in February 2008). Undoubtedly, this sea change in Australian attitudes is due to many more factors than Sally Morgan's book, but there can be no doubt that it contributed to a widespread re-evaluation of Australian studies. Sally Morgan is now Professor of Indigenous studies at the University of Western Australia.

The other text that comes to mind in this connection is also entitled *My Place*. However, this is a children's picture book by Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins (1996), designed for preschool or early readers – rather younger than the children of our discussions. The book, itself somewhat reminiscent of Ruth Park's *Playing Beatie Bow* (1980) – another senior school classic – depicts a street in Sydney and shows how

its inhabitants, their dwellings, their dress and customs changed across the years as generations of people moved into and out of the neighbourhood. In other words, the book functions somewhat like a museum, showing the ways in which Australian society has changed and adapted in subsequent generations, through particular historical moments, how the cities have developed, how housing styles have altered, along with cultural practices such as how children play differently with different toys. Apart from responding to the book's delightful drawings and conceptualisation, the reader is offered a real sense of history through the stories of a succession of children who have lived in the street. As such, it is surely a worthy inclusion in young children's reading. The popularity and widespread use of these books suggests a felt need to respond to a gap in young people's understanding of the past and present in Australia. Indeed, as our investigations have shown, Australian 12-year-olds appear to have little sense of history. What they do have is a notion of history as personalised – my history, as in my life story – or else history which, like culture, only exists in other places. For example:

I: And where would you choose to live if you didn't live here?
John: Egypt. Because it has history.
I: What about you, Sean?
Sean: England. Because it has history and my parents used to live there.
I: If you could live anywhere else in the world, where would you like to call home? And why?
Ian: Okay, Egypt.
I: Why?
Ian: Because of all the history in Egypt, Egyptians there, and all the stuff that happened.
Carey: England's green and there's lots of history there.

Our informants were upper-primary school students, of whom the majority were 12 years old – they were from Year 7, the last year of primary school in South Australia. While they all appeared happy to spontaneously identify as Australian, just what that identification meant was rather less clear. For instance, many of the children to whom we spoke were more ready to describe Australia and their place in terms of what it's not rather than what it is. Thus, they recounted the atrocities of war-ravaged 'other' countries, and saw these conditions as particular to those places and different from here, which was safe. They saw the women wearing the veil or the *burka* as unfairly restricted in their dress and movements, whereas Australia, by comparison, was vigorously defended as fair and free. Pride in the country was more often described in terms of Australia's sporting achievements than in any deep sense of its politics, history or culture.

Who are Australians?

At a time when the influx of immigrants and refugees has profoundly altered the composition of the Australian population, questions of definition or even description are not easy. And yet, in conversations with our 400 12-year-olds, spontaneous claims of 'I'm an Australian', 'we are Australian' occurred frequently and were equally likely to have come from Indigenous youngsters, those from non-Indigenous Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, recently arrived Asian immigrants or second and third generation Australians from the Middle East or southern Europe. Most of the children appeared to understand that a salient and, in their view, admirable feature of the current population was one of difference, and they opted to describe or pictorially represent difference in their pastiches of Australians. For example, when asked what they would put on their collage of Australia, this group offered:

Jane: I'd put faces of all the different colours that people look like.
Alison: The different countries that people come from.
I: Okay, what else would go in this collage?
Faye: People who have come from overseas, and are now settled in Australia, and are very proud to be here.
Sally: Because we've got all different kinds of people in Australia.
I: This is very true actually, very different.
Sally: Like heaps of Chinese people in Melbourne.
James: Like, we got, yeah we got, nearly every single one, nationality in Australia.
Leanne: It's where people from other countries come.

This refrain was echoed in almost all the interviews: We've got people from everywhere – all different sorts of people in Australia!

The point here is not so much the children's recognition of the range of backgrounds from which the current generation of primary school students have come, but their pride in acknowledgement of the cultural mix and their repeated claim that it is this mix that makes Australia special. A recent commentator described the Australian policy of multiculturalism as 'one of the triumphs of the post war period' (Carney, 2005), a sentiment with which the children would evidently agree. Some of them knew of the older images of 'being Australian' and commented derisively on the picture of the dishevelled bush worker with a hat from which dangled a fly net and numerous corks. They recognised that this image was long past its use-by date. Even its more recent emanation, such as in the Paul Hogan or Steve Irwin-like heroes, is already passé in the minds of the young people, especially those born after 1990, long after the antics of Crocodile Dundee.

A continuous refrain in media discussions of Australianness in recent times has to do with multiculturalism – despite the former conservative prime minister's disinclination for the term. One recent media commentator noted:

> *… Australia has managed to absorb a multiplicity of nationalities and races and has done it peaceably and with relatively little social dislocation. The nation is stronger for it.*
>
> (Carney, 2005)

The above comment is all the more dramatic, given that it occurred amidst the recent furore about terrorist cells infiltrating our major cities, the sort of news that can easily contribute to the 'othering' of any foreign presence in our midst. And multiculturalism has entered into media practices, too. Now we see a routine mix of presenters on the nightly news. Women, Indigenous people and others from visibly different racial backgrounds, at times with pronounced accents, are standard commentators and appear in the range of television dramas, including the soap operas. While there may be some dismissal of this practice as merely token and designed to meet quotas, there can be no doubt that local people appear across a much broader spectrum than before.

At the same time, in a consideration of positions of power and influence, the domination of white Western males continues. National and state parliaments, senior professionals, company boards and directorships, along with the business pages of the daily press, continue to reflect an earlier version of the public Australian – white, middle class and male – and the associated attitudes and values. The interests of these power groups align with neo-liberal versions of economic rationalism and work to ensure Australia as a player on the world stage of free trade policies and globalisation. While there is more recognition of Australia as geographically positioned in Asia and thus as a sharer in the interests of Asia-Pacific region countries, our ties with Europe remain such that some Asia-Pacific nations appear reluctant to include Australia within their set. And so there continues to be a degree of ambivalence about the country as a whole in terms of its partners and allegiances – and even its own key identity. Situated in Asia but still largely peopled by non-Asians, monolingual in its public practice but inclusive of a huge range of language groupings, still tied to British governance albeit less tightly so in recent years, Australia appears to be gradually metamorphosing into an as-yet unknowable new form of space and place.

Politicians – and especially the former prime minister – have been inclined to decry certain policies and practices as un-Australian, an epithet apparently more powerful than unfair or unpopular. Certainly,

this practice aligns with the children's response of telling us what Australia is not like more easily than what it is. This is not to say there are no points of convergence in popular thinking about the Australian way. Discussions with the children lend support to the claim that issues of the 'good life' represent one theme running through generally shared views on what Australia has to offer. Hence, the idea of holidays, of leisure, often incorporating visions of sun-filled beaches and long, lazy summer days have long been regarded as an intrinsic part of Australian lifestyle (Fiske, Hodge and Turner, 1987). Before the last election, the conservative government's effort to introduce new industrial relations legislation was opposed in Parliament as 'doing away with the Sunday barbecue', a phrase that encapsulates the popular idea of weekends being important leisure time. Certainly, the children's pictures of life in Australia practically all included reference to the beach, to the outdoors and to fun in the sun – showing that they are accurate readers of the cultural messages in media representations and family living practices (Fiske, 1989). And while these responses formed part of the ensemble of the meanings of being Australian and were described with energy and pride, we are still left with the questions of how the many newcomers to this country might develop a sense of belonging and, indeed, how the locally born young people do so as well.

How to theorise a sense of belonging?

Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* offers one way to theorise the sense of belonging to the group, the place, the country. *Habitus*, as formulated by Bourdieu, is conceived of as an ensemble of practices and dispositions – what you do and how you feel about it – whereby one is 'at one' with the environment or context in which one lives. This concept is at the core of Bourdieu's theoretical framework. It refers to the network of understandings that is acquired, often early in life, which predisposes members of a society to interact in ways consistent with the specific societal norms of their group and consequently to feel at ease and to belong. For Bourdieu, *habitus* also stands for an embodied understanding, a system of durable transposable dispositions, which refer, inter alia, to bodily comportment, to holding oneself or to gesturing in a certain way. A bodily disposition reveals the working of *habitus* when it encodes a certain cultural understanding that is shared by a particular group. It therefore represents the physical and spatial knowledge displayed by group members in ways of which they may or may not be consciously aware. The domain of the *habitus* is a 'practical sense which reactivates the sense objectified in institutions' (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 67) – thus we as actors echo in myriad ways the conventions within which our society works,

its divisions and distinctions and the particular levels in which we find ourselves. We notice that film and stage actors, and in particular mimers, display such an awareness as they seek to reproduce culturally familiar characters such as the Italian waiter who constantly gesticulates, the upper-class English gentleman with his stiff demeanour and supercilious expression, or the Dame Edna Everage mode of dress as the archetypal Australian housewife. Brief encounters with such images convey whole worlds of meaning, particular to place and time and class.

Habitus is usually learned as a child, when the assimilation of speech, ritual and body hexis[1] is accomplished and normalised as child development as though it were part of the inexorable universal progression into full participatory adulthood. The *habitus* appears to operate at the pre-conscious or unconscious levels, rather than as a response to a conscious recognition as with a rule of behaviour. Thus, our young informants told us that they 'had never been asked about these things before'; at times they said they 'hadn't thought about it much' and like their British counterparts they 'weren't bothered about the idea of being Australian', and yet, once encouraged to talk they did have lots to say. Much of their response to questions of the national had been taken in at the pre-conscious level, as with the operations of the banal nationalism that Billig (1995) had written about. For Bourdieu (1990c) the explanation for these effects lies with the concept of *habitus* which:

> *… entertains with the social world that has produced it a real ontological complicity, a source of cognition without consciousness, intentionality without intention, and a practical mastery of the world's regularities which allows one to anticipate the future without even needing to posit it as such.* (pp. 11–12)

What we also know is that all such practices are profoundly influenced by culture; the taken-for-granted practices of greeting, tonalities of speech and speech recognition itself, are all examples of situated learnings that are specific to particular contexts. Young people internalise these learnings as they grow into being within the world.

Habitus can therefore be read as an integrated process of individual and environment, a property of neither one nor the other, but simultaneously both. This reading of *habitus* does not sit comfortably with the idea of *habitus* as a property of an individual – or of a particular environment – although some scholars have chosen to apply it that way. Bourdieu

1 'Body hexis' is a concept from Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*, referring to the ways in which our bodies unconsciously take on ways of moving and working consistent with our early learning and status, such that we automatically extend our hand if someone gestures towards shaking hands in greeting, to sit at the table in certain ways, to pick up a knife and fork etc.

consistently refused the separation between person and environment that had become structured into so much of social science – little wonder then that his formulation of *habitus* maintains this integrated position.

The set of long-lasting dispositions Bourdieu associated with *habitus* also necessarily involves values, a sense of importance and correctness associated with particular responses to the world that is even physically felt by social members. Bourdieu (1990a) suggests that these dispositions are produced by a hidden or implicit pedagogy, rather than being the product of conscious teaching:

> *One could endlessly enumerate the values given body, made body, by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy which can make a whole cosmology through injunctions as insignificant as 'sit up straight' or 'don't hold your knife in your left hand'.* (pp. 69–70)

Such instances are readily observable in practices around teaching children to conform to stereotypical gender norms – big boys don't cry, young ladies always speak softly, and so on. The crucial feature of Bourdieu's formulation of symbolic violence lies in its explanation of compliance in which it echoes the Althusserian notion of ideology's power of interpellation. For Bourdieu, symbolic violence is 'the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with her/his complicity …' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1996, p. 167). And so we take on the messages hidden in daily transactional talk, and for some of us this means that we do sit up straight, we do attend to our table manners and we notice and perhaps judge those who don't conform because we share in the value positions in which we have been framed. It is important to note that Bourdieu sees us all as social actors, not simply as constructed by our environment but complicit in the remaking of that environment.

In an interview in 2000, in what is perhaps his most concise encapsulation of *habitus* and agency, Bourdieu (2000) declares both his recognition of structural division as lived out by social actors and his refusal of the subjective/objective binary distinction:

> *I developed the concept of habitus to incorporate the objective structures of society and the subjective role of agents within it. The habitus is a set of dispositions, reflexes and forms of behaviour that people acquire through acting in society. It reflects the different positions people have in society, for example, whether they are brought up in a middle class environment or in a working class suburb. It is part of how society produces itself. But there is also change. Conflict is built into society. People can find their expectations and ways of living are suddenly out of step with the new social position they find themselves in … then the question of social agency and political intervention becomes very important.* (p. 19)

How then can the theory of *habitus* be usefully employed in the understanding of how one comes to belong, to feel 'at home', to function 'naturally' within a culture, language and physical context different from that within which one's earliest development took place? For this is the question at the heart of the building of theoretical understanding of the positioning of many of the people who make up contemporary Australia.

Bourdieu (1990c) repeatedly described the work of *habitus* in reconciling person and society as follows:

> *the source of historical action … is not an active subject confronting society as if that society were an object constituted externally. This source resides neither in consciousness nor in things but in the relation between two states of the social, that is, between the history objectified in things, in the form of institutions, and the history incarnated in bodies, in the form of that system of enduring dispositions that I call habitus. The body is in the social world but the social world is also in the body.* (p. 190)

In this quotation, reminiscent of the old cliché that 'you can take the boy out of the country but you can't take the country out of the boy', Bourdieu has sought to explain how we become part of our social world, in the sense of taking into ourselves at a subconscious level the way our cultural location affects our being-in-the-world and the *habitus* becomes the mechanism for that transformation.

The central function of the *habitus* is to generate an ensemble of practices consonant with member positions within the total social formation, even and possibly especially when those positions are unequally located. As Bohman (1999) writes:

> *Habitus is supposed to explain how it is that agents come to share a culture and its practices, even when there are asymmetrical social positions and relations of domination. Bourdieu solves the Parsonian problem of social order not through the internalization of norms, but through the 'inculcation' of dispositions that come not only from being socialised into a culture generally, but into a particular subordinate or dominant position within it. It operates through the agent's own dispositions rather than coercion, through 'generative and implicit schemata' rather than sanctioned rules. Even if sanctions or rules were present, it would still have to be explained why it is that agents are predisposed to accept them. This is the role of the habitus.* (p. 133)

It is fairly clear that the *habitus* works to maintain the status quo in terms of social structural division, but the issues for those whose conditions have changed physically, linguistically and culturally call for a more complex explanation. Critics of Bourdieu's approach have noted that

such a formulation presupposes a steady state condition, and have questioned its appropriateness for describing social change. What if there is coercion and the agents are no longer predisposed to accept the rules? How to account for say, Afghanistan under the Taliban or, for that matter, any country beset by major internal strife and revolution? Many of the recent arrivals in Australia have escaped from their countries because of the terrible conditions imposed upon them. The situation of refugees is perhaps an extreme example of the situation that all immigrants have to face as they come to a new country: how to find out how it's done here, how to find a place, how to feel comfortable, how to come to belong.

Nearly all are migrants

At one level, all but the Australian Indigenous peoples are recent immigrants – in that they have been here less than ten generations. Earlier generations of incoming Australians – many of them child refugees from Britain – had little opportunity to reflect on their changed circumstances and were quickly incorporated into the harsh realities of life as unskilled labour in the early Australian workforce. Most recently, our newest arrivals have come from cultures more different from the older Anglo-Celtic mainstream – resulting in differences in language, in religion, in values and attitudes, in everyday living practices. Schools – perhaps especially primary schools – have had primary responsibility for inducting newcomers into Australian ways of speaking, behaving, thinking and so on. With some notable exceptions, this complex process has proceeded more or less smoothly (Carney, 2005, see quote above) – but what is going on here?

Friedmann (2002) cites Bourdieu's suggestion of a 'second birth' as one way to describe the process through which immigrants achieve the necessary social and cultural transformations that accompany their investment in moving to a new home. He writes of the multiple challenges for immigrants as having 'to learn not only the new skills but also a new work discipline, a new rhythm of life, a new sense of time' (Friedmann, 2002, p. 302). Ultimately, Friedmann sees the challenge for the immigrant as 'how to make a more or less successful transition from one *habitus* to another as a matter of economic survival' (p. 303).

As initially conceptualised, *habitus* operated below the level of consciousness; it occurred as a sort of patterned behaviour, produced out of observation and conditioning, and became part of who one is. As Bourdieu (1987) carefully and repeatedly points out, *habitus* does not come down to a simple system of rules or codes of behaviour, and he distinguishes *habitus* as:

> *… that regulated disposition to generate regulated and regular behaviour outside any reference rules; and in societies where the work of codification is not particularly advanced, the habitus is the principle of most modes of practice.* (pp. 81–2)

The last point indicates a possible explanation for some of the problems teachers have experienced in attempting to interact with young people whose backgrounds are relatively free from the rule-boundedness of middle-class families in Western capitalist society. For these children, their 'normal' behaviour – often disruptive, maybe antisocial – has not developed in terms of a set of rules about bedtimes and putting away toys and folding clothes. At the same time, some of the most successful accounts of educating young Indigenous Australians involve cases of a good deal of explicitness around the expectations of the learners and the teachers (see for example, Sarra, 2002).

One intervention that education can make is to bring these features to the level of consciousness, to make explicit some of the taken-for-granted aspects of the contextualised practices of a particular location. There is a sense in which some teachers have always done this – it comes under the notion of 'how it's done here'. Such learning operates at a more micro level than formal school rules, but more often it is less clearly stated. As Bourdieu (1977) wrote:

> *The absence of a genuine law … must not lead us to forget that any socially recognised formulation contains within it an intrinsic power to reinforce dispositions symbolically.* (p. 21)

The newcomer is in the situation of the small child, having to observe and practise whatever appears to be the correct response. The difference is that newly arrived immigrants must participate in this process at a conscious level. Going to school is an induction into a school culture whereby the newcomer has to work out the unwritten rules of the place and of each situation in which they find themselves. After some time of practice and application, the new practices become part of the cultural baggage that one brings, an unconscious frame for seeing the world and behaving in it, and feeling entirely comfortable with self and situation. What the cultural-induction process requires is a heightened self-awareness and reflexivity on the part of the teacher, along with the capacity to be sensitive to points of difference. Also necessary in this process is the capacity to imagine what it's like to be in the position of the newcomer, and to call to consciousness those elements of *habitus* that are brought into question and to make them explicit. Such a position has long been part of the job of teaching and educating – but what is new here is that it derives from

an understanding of the generative process that must attend all aspects of living in a new culture.

More specifically, the question of values

The recent spate of terrorist incidents on a global scale has provoked renewed discussions of values and values education. The incidence of suicide bombers gives rise to considerations of the valuing of human life and so on. For Australian educators still reeling from the former Prime Minister's comment about the lack of values in government schools, such questions take on some urgency. Certainly, some of this thinking is seen in the government's commitment to civics and citizenship education, and the requirement that all schools have a fully functioning flagpole. What we would want to argue, in conjunction with Bourdieu's formulation of *habitus*, is that the simple promulgation of rules and regulations cannot develop that sense of place and belonging that is central to social inclusivity and community cohesion. In our conversations with the children, their values shone through in terms of valuing freedoms and the right to decide about lifestyle and religion, the willing recognition of Indigenous peoples, and their ready delight in speaking about their sense of allegiance to sporting teams and media heroes which, while not in the same league as king and country, revealed a readiness to be involved in group activities and their absolute understanding of their right to do so. Although they may not have known the complex principles of the voting system or even the names of leading politicians, they were imbued with a sense of security and freedom derived from living in this country, in which they took evident pride:

I: Okay Matt, what would you put or how would you go about building this collage?
Matt: Probably a picture of Australia and um, yeah, sport and yeah, picture of myself …
Keith: Pictures of like the Olympic Games and stuff, to show that, like, we can do just as good at the Olympic Games as everyone else, we're not just a country, you know, with the 'yeeha' cowboys.
I: Okay, and so how would this show people what you felt?
Keith: Proud about it, I suppose

Conclusion

In this chapter we have suggested that Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* has much to offer in terms of a theory of a sense of place and belonging.

Given the central importance of developing these aspects in contemporary Australia and the key role of the schools in so doing, it seems that this concept of *habitus*, which has been sometimes criticised as 'inherently ambiguous and overloaded' (Nash, 1990, p. 440) retains singular importance in the general commitment to develop in this country a shared appreciation of the cultural mix; one which recognises and acknowledges difference at the same time as it celebrates community and cohesion.

8 Gaps in the record: Working with curriculum and young people's imagined Australias

Introduction

Current concern with education for citizenship has tended to take up issues related to knowledge of individual and state rights and responsibilities (Ferrari, 2006; Print and Gray, 2000; Print, 1998). However, research into what young people already know about their country and their place in its political formation is relatively scarce (Cornbleth, 2002; Gill and Howard, 2004). Even harder to find are studies concerning how young people *feel* about where they live, their physical location and the meanings they associate with home. With current statistics of one in four Australians born overseas and a high proportion of school-aged children coming from families of recent immigrants (Australian Law Reform Commission, 1997), such questions emerge as particularly important in the effort to develop citizenship education for a multicultural society.

Long before globalisation became a catchword, generations of schoolchildren learned to understand the world as divided into different realms and territories; often the distinctions were colour-coded in primary school atlases. In the past 50 years, the boundaries separating lands and territories have undergone considerable change, requiring the maps to be re-worked and new colours to be added, but the practice of picturing the world as made up of disconnected land masses, some of which are further divided into nations and states, continues. Many of us began with this conceptualisation of the world, and the idea is reflected in popular understandings of a world comprised of bounded and representable 'countries' (Wood, 1992). Not even the graphic and terrible evidence of peoples divided within geographic boundaries – such as in war-torn Bosnia or the continuing boundary strife in Rwanda and the Middle East – serve to dislodge the idea that there is a France, an England, a Tanzania and so on.

Part of the project of Western schooling was traditionally understood as advocating a sense of allegiance to one's country in an unproblematic and already given way (Connell, 1971). Hence, the connection between schooling and practices such as raising the national flag, singing the national anthem and marching to and from classrooms, all of which were once part of the normal routine in schools in English-speaking countries. What was perhaps less well understood was that these schooling practices worked to constitute a sense of nation as stable and knowable, even as they sought to serve it. In this way, schooling has been consistently seen as intimately connected with nation formation as well as the preparation of future citizens (Said, 1995; Willinsky, 1999).

By the early 21st century in Australia, as in other parts of the world, the notion of national identity has attracted significant critique. Some commentators believe that national identity is a concept that has outlived its usefulness (Castles et al., 1988; Nussbaum, 1996); their claim is that outpourings of nationalism were centrally involved in most of the major social disruptions of the past century. From this perspective, nationalism operates to create and maintain unnecessary and dangerous divisions and differences between peoples, a process that works in direct conflict with movements for greater unification and consensus. Certainly, movements such as the current press towards European unity would appear to operate against separatist constructions of national identities and in favour of greater understanding of mutual interests. Hence, some theorists commend a rejection of the notion of national identity while urging for the development of a global citizenry in which local identification is relatively unimportant (Featherstone et al., 1995; Castles et al., 1988; Nussbaum, 1996).

One problem with the rejection of the concept of national identity concerns the different positions of countries in terms of their cultural and ethnic mix (Cogan and Derricot, 1998). While monocultural nations, relatively secure in their traditions and culture, may choose to move towards a position of global citizenship, smaller, less-developed countries may be threatened by the possibility of cultural genocide in the move towards the notion of a world village. Some research has identified a realignment with the local and the national at the same time as the incursions of globalisation attempt to overthrow borders and former boundaries in the interests of world trade. In these studies, the participants appear to be newly identified with their particular part of the world, their culture and language as a way of maintaining a sense of self and community within an increasingly disparate and diverse global society (Taylor, 1999; De Cillia et al., 1999). Ultimately, the reader is left with a sense of oppositional movements: one reaching out beyond old lines of demarcation and the other pulling people back into a closer

identification of home culture in ways that may be much more localised than the national boundary.

For countries whose populations are undergoing significant change through migration and the influx of refugees, the situation is even more complicated (Kymlicka, 2003). Self-proclaimed multicultural countries such as Australia are faced with the problem of attempting to recognise and celebrate cultural differences while at the same time urging an allegiance to the country of adoption (Cogan and Derricot, 1998). This development is necessary for the successful democratic governance of the country in the immediate future. For schooling, whose traditional practices were once seen as involving the promotion of allegiance to country (Connell, 1971; Said, 1995), the task is less clear in the newer social and political configuration. Furthermore, traditional schooling rituals that were premised on an earlier notion of nationhood have largely disappeared. At the time of our investigations, in none of the 70 schools visited was there a regular flag-raising ceremony; anthems were sung only rarely and the flag was absent from most sites. Without the trappings of nationhood, how is schooling to effect its commitment to produce 'each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society' (Adelaide Declaration, 1999)?

The initiatives in civics and citizenship education are evidence of the former conservative government's desire to establish a better-educated citizenry in terms of democratic rights and responsibilities. Voting remains compulsory in Australia, a practice that depends on the vision of each citizen as informed and capable of exercising democratic choice at election time. The federally funded 'Discovering Democracy' package was delivered to all schools in November 1998 and accompanied the citizenship education curriculum developed in each state jurisdiction. The aim of these materials was evidently to provide learning experiences that might lead young people into a developed understanding of the political structure and system of governance. The formal evaluation of 'Discovering Democracy' found that all states and territories have provided avenues through which civics and citizenship can be incorporated into the curriculum during the compulsory years of schooling (DEST, 2003). However, there have been differing levels of participation, and different states and territories focus on particular aspects of civics and citizenship and not others. Since its inception, the 'Discovering Democracy' program has been strongly supported by the development of sets of curriculum resources at both primary and secondary levels. However, young people's current levels of awareness of the country as a whole, their attitudes to the idea of Australia, their understandings of nation and their felt responses to living here remain largely unexplored.

Youth and nationhood

Traditionally, young people were inducted into understanding themselves as part of the nation through stories. In developed societies, these stories were contained in school curriculum through a variety of texts – history, geography, literature, music, science – the storylines of the nation (Grundy, 1994). In this way, national narratives were produced as a fairly cohesive set of shared understandings by which people identified themselves as belonging to a particular national group.

The concept of nation produced through this process is an abstraction – the imagined community of nation (Anderson, 1983). In Anderson's account, this 'imagined community' was made possible as a consequence of print and the wholesale dissemination of information whereby people could learn about their own national geography and were led to conceptualise larger political–socio–geographic constellations without having actually been there. In a similar vein, it could be suggested that the process of globalisation can be related to technological advances through which people can come to see, hear and understand different cultures and peoples from distant parts without ever leaving their homes. However, the degree to which the current generation of young people is drawn to an understanding of national identity or some version of global citizenry remains unexplored. Hence, the current study of young people's responses to the idea of 'being Australian'.

The study

The study was conducted as a qualitative investigation through small group interviews with upper-primary school children. We chose this approach as most likely to allow us to identify the particular 'habits of language' that Billig (1995) had suggested work to form a 'universal code for nationalist consciousness' (p. 73). Hence, we used a semi-structured interview schedule with groups of four or five children in a range of schools in distinctly different regions of South Australia. The conversations were tape-recorded, transcribed and organised for analysis using the NUD•IST software package.

In the first stage of the investigation, we interviewed over 150 children in a range of metropolitan schools, some in the leafy green, middle-class areas and others in outer suburban pockets characterised by poverty. All the school groups contained some non-Australian born children, with more in the middle-class areas and fewer in the low socio-economic neighbourhoods. In the second part of the study we interviewed some 250 young people spread across schools in South Australia's famous wine-producing region, the Barossa Valley, the industrial steelworks regions

north of Adelaide known as the Lower and Mid-North, the Riverland and the farming districts of the South East.

The students were generally in their final year of primary school (Year 7 in South Australia), and they were nearly all 12 years of age. In terms of cultural mix, there was a definite presence of Indigenous children in some of the rural groups – one of the schools had 80 per cent Indigenous students – whereas the city schools had fewer Indigenous students. In certain areas, such as the Riverland and the South East, the rural children were predominantly non-Indigenous Australians whose families had farmed the area for generations. In other cases there were children from German background in the Barossa Valley, and in the Lower North market-gardening districts there were significant numbers of children from Vietnamese background. Our initial impressions were that the city based schools comprised a greater mix of cultural backgrounds than the rural schools, although, as we were to discover, some of the rural children told us of a hybridised ancestry.

After establishing that we were not testing for knowledge or opinion and that all responses were welcome, we used a series of key questions to initiate thinking and discussion. Our young informants, after their initial surprise that all we wanted was their ideas and that there were no right/wrong answers, spoke easily and often with considerable fluency about their ideas of the meanings of 'being Australian'. It quickly became evident that they had all been exposed to media images of other places which, to varying degrees, had impacted on their understanding of Australia as 'safe' and 'free' (see Chapter 7). Many of their accounts of what it's like to live in Australia emanated from notions of what it's *not* like – their descriptions were peppered with media-derived images of 'otherness' to do with war and famine, crime and danger, along with restrictions on dress and behaviour, all of which they associated with places other than where they lived. We speculated that they fell back on the negative reference point – what we're *not* like – as a consequence of their lack of exposure to national narratives other than those of popular myth. In this chapter, we proceed to re-analyse the data for their references to shared experience – national narratives – of the meaning of being Australian.

The particular focus of this investigation was on the ways in which the young informants identified images of Australia to constitute a 'national imaginary' (Hall, 1996b) by which we mean the ways in which they think about the country as a whole – an extension of Anderson's notion of the nation as 'imagined community'. To this end, we engaged in conversations with the young people about a range of topics to do with 'being Australian'. Considerations of language are very important in generating free-flowing discussions with young people. As interviewers we deliberately avoided using more abstract concepts such as 'national identity', 'culture', 'nation'

and so on, preferring to speak in terms of concrete features of their daily living and to gently probe their felt responses to these aspects. Only in the few cases when informants invoked more abstract terms did we pursue them in conversation.

Our approach was to use a visual methodology (Rose, 2001) in which we asked the children to participate in generating an imaginary collage that represented how they felt about Australia. In this task they were asked to present their concepts of Australia in a form that was both familiar (primary school children are used to the idea of collage) and strange – they had never been asked before what they thought about the country as a whole. Thus, they were encouraged to engage in levels of abstraction that would probably have been beyond their typical usage. So the children talked about concrete objects they would put on their collage – mostly in the form of pictures – and why they felt that these things belonged there. Some of the children invoked notions of 'representation' and 'emblem', showing that they could deal with this level of abstraction; many also chose to construct their images as positioned on a map of Australia – once again using a familiar form of representation for the social, political and geographical imaging of country.

We are not proposing to offer an accurate picture of young people's attitudes and feelings as fixed. Rather, we attempt to show the ways in which young people engage with the discourses of nation that are made available to them through their interactions with family, peers, media and, of course, their school learning experiences. Our argument is that the words and images used by the young people provide evidence of the ways in which discourses of nation are mobilised in popular culture and then refracted in everyday experience. Our analytical standpoint derives from the Foucauldian insight that discourses structure the possibilities for thought and action (Foucault, 1972). Thus, the constructions of nation picked up by the young people are centrally implicated in their potential to act as citizens in the future. The children frequently remarked on the novelty of this approach, saying that they had 'never been asked about this sort of stuff before', thereby identifying the 'difficult knowledge' at the heart of our concern. This knowledge is strangely unspoken; both powerful and taken for granted to such a degree that its operations are rarely made visible in everyday talk.

In many of the groups, the children came up with the idea of a map of Australia to constitute the background for the collage. Some of them worked out the idea of a map in novel ways (for example, by 'going up in a blimp and looking down', or a spaceship journey) that allowed them the overall vision of the shape of the country. In these constructions it was clear that the whole country, in terms of its island status as a geographical entity, formed their frame of reference – much as did the maps in the

atlases described above. The lines of division between states were rarely mentioned, and the states were not named as separate entities, nor was there mention of capital cities. The children's vision was of the country as a whole. Moreover, there was no mention of the national capital, Canberra, the seat of the federal government – any political frame of reference was therefore lacking in these responses. Through their response to this activity, the children appear to have grasped the concept of nation at its most rudimentary level; that of a geographically bounded and bordered location. (Sadly, for the majority of informants, Tasmania, the island state, did not appear in their rendition of the map of Australia.)

People – the country *is* its people

The most common theme to emerge in the collage discussions concerned the depiction of people as constituting the preferred image of the nation.

Me and my people

Many children included themselves as central to their collages, thereby producing a fusion of self-identity and country:

I: And Jason, would you put anything on this collage?
Jason: Myself.
I: Yourself. Okay. Why's this?
Jason: Because I'm Australian.
Jeremy: Me.
I: Now, why would you put you in it?
Jeremy: Because I'm a proud Australian.

Some wanted to include family and home as well as themselves in their collage:

Breanna: Cut out photos of people in your family.
I: How would that show how you feel about being Australian?
Breanna: Having your family here … family people.
I: Just family people?
Natalie: And friends.
I: Anything else?
Nathan: Me.

And:

Noah: I would have a photo of myself.
Rebecca: Put your home town on there.
I: Okay, why would you put your home town on there?
Rebecca: 'Cos it's a good place.

Natalie: I'd put in, like, specifically where you lived, and remember that ...
Brian: The name and a picture of the house.
Natalie: And then, like, take pictures of when you drive into town and it says 'Nanbilk'.

In many cases, the children claimed the right to position themselves and their space on the collage, a move that can be seen as a claim to place themselves, their family and friends within a populous sense of nation. In this way, they offered a personalised story of nation, a distinctly different one from that contained in traditional narratives that generally provided no space for individuals to interpolate themselves. For example, the traditional schoolbook history of the 'discovery' of Australia does not offer spaces for contemporary young people to claim parts in the drama – nor did it give much credence to the Indigenous people who were already there.

Different people

Many groups insisted that their collage would include pictures of visibly different people in terms of colour and place of origin, thereby demonstrating the multicultural message that has been keenly advocated in many schools. In these collages, young people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds were to be seen shaking hands and joining in a celebration.

Mia: People from everywhere.
Jim: Faces of all the different colours that people look like.
Annie: The different countries that people come from.

And there was evident pride in their commitment to a peaceful coexistence with difference:

I: Okay, what else would go in this collage?
Sam: People who have come from overseas, and are now settled in Australia and are very proud to be here.
Jon: A peace sign.
I: A peace sign, why would you put a peace sign on it?
Steve: Planes, and other people coming in from countries and …
Jon: Because we've got all different kinds of people in Australia.
Sam: Like heaps of Chinese people in Melbourne.
Jon: Like, we got, yeah we got, nearly every single nationality in Australia.
Leo: It's where people from other countries come.
Jon: Yeah, and hey, we got every one.

Alan: I'd have like all the people from different nations, like, some Chinese people or some Aboriginal people or some …

It was noteworthy that these children appeared happy to acknowledge difference and took pride in their capacity for inclusion. However, they were also content with the explanation that people came to Australia for the good life here. They gave no indication of any awareness of the political circumstances surrounding the plight of many of these immigrants; for example:

I: Keith, you said you were proud – what's the proud bit for?
Keith: Because you hear of all the good things that Australia's doing. Like even little towns like Rivertown, in the community there's always good things going on ... and there's always (people from) other countries coming to live here because they obviously like it ... and you just feel proud about it.
Annie: Because people have come here at their own will … and people like it in our country.
George: I know, because, probably because they think our country's better than theirs or something like that.

Refugees were not mentioned by any of the children despite substantial media coverage.

Indigenous people

Indigenous people were featured in the imaginary collages of most groups. In discussion, the children nearly always referred to Aboriginal peoples' prior claim to the land – as they so often put it, 'they were here first'. In other words, the children were aware of the Indigenous peoples' long occupation of the land, and were acutely aware that they pre-dated the European settlers. For example:

Casey: Aboriginal paintings.
I: Uh huh, why would you put those in, Casey?
Casey: Well, because the Aboriginals have been here for so long, in Australia.
I: Uh huh, and how does that make you feel?
Casey: Good, because, I don't know, makes you kind of want to respect them, because they've been here so long.

While *respect* for Aboriginal people was frequently mentioned, some of the groups engaged in talk about racism and its variants, too. For instance, in the following excerpt, when Adele offers a conservative explanation for the killing of Aboriginal people, she is quickly challenged by Jo:

Adele: I would do mine [the collage] like in Aboriginal colours and like, Aboriginals because they were the first ones here, and …
I: Uh huh, and they actually …
Adele: They could have … like, they let us into the country.
Jo: They tried to kill them.
Adele: I know but, the Aborigines, like they didn't fight back as much as they could have.
Jo: I disagree.

While the young informants were keen to recognise and include Indigenous people, their knowledge of the history of post-European settlement was decidedly vague. They knew that racism was wrong but they didn't really understand what had happened. For instance, when the topic of the Stolen Generation came up, the following interchange was recorded:

Claire: Well, I personally thought white people should have thought a little bit more before they went ahead, yeah, like they, they just thought they were doing the best for them, but they didn't actually ask them, and they just took them away.
Shelley: They didn't look at their points.
I: So how does that make you feel?
Claire: A bit sad.
Shelley: Horrible.
Annette: To think about what they've been through and everything.
Claire: Well, they didn't know that they were doing it wrong at the time, they thought they were helping … but in the end they realised.
Shelley: It's just, they mainly, like, they think the Aboriginals are different because of their coloured skin, they're just totally different, but they're not actually.
Claire: Because, they're Australian too, we're all part of one big group.
Shelley: They were actually here first, too.

In this sequence, the children reiterated their version of a very public discussion about the Stolen Generation, which had been widely covered in the print and television media following the report of a Royal Commission in 1997 and had been subsequently re-told in the popular and award-winning film *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002). In the conversation above we saw Claire struggling to reconcile actions she believed to be wrong with her conviction that the authorities involved believed they were acting in the best interests of young people at the time. Shelley's position is more straightforward – the authorities were racially motivated by a belief that skin colour constituted fundamental and irreconcilable difference. While

most of the children's responses were sympathetic, they appeared to stop at acknowledging Aboriginal people and their longstanding connection to country that rendered them worthy of respect. Very occasionally, some more insightful comment was offered:

Charlie: How the past has made us so glad to be Australians.
I: Okay, in what way?
Charlie: Some of, like with the Aborigines, like, how they've, how the Aborigines have made us think more.

Elsewhere, the concept of Australians as a people produced the following:

George: There's Aboriginal people, there's English people, there's …
Jem: Italian.
George: Yeah, as well.
I: Why do you think it's important to show that?
Emory: That we're the main ones around here.
Sam: No, that's just being racist or something.
I: Why does it feel good to see all of these different people in Australia?
Emory: Cause you get to meet a lot of people and get to make friends with a lot of people and that.

Here, the children rationalise their preference for showing diversity in terms of a national pride in being recognised as friendly people. They are also aware of negative connotations of 'racism', but many tended to speak readily of 'we' and 'our', regardless of their own background.

Questions of race and racism came through the discussions, with some children ready to accuse others of racism, as with Sam's response to Emory's 'we're the main ones …'. Others engaged in questions of race in fairly traditional ways:

Scot: Yeah, because my Dad's full Aboriginal, I think my Mum is but I don't know, but I'd be fully Aboriginal because my Mum might be full and my Dad is definitely.

They also wanted to include pictures and artefacts from Indigenous peoples, some including the word 'sorry' in their collage – a trope indicative of the degree to which debates around the Stolen Generation have permeated the schools and media.

The past is another country!

The lack of any formal historical knowledge against which to locate their understandings of the current cultural mix of the Australian population

was not limited to discussions about Indigenous peoples. While the traditional Australian histories, with their stories of the 'discoverers', the early pioneers, the taming of the land and the exploitation of its wealth, have been deservedly criticised for their white supremacist, male-ordered overtones, it is not surprising that they no longer appear as standard primary school curriculum. However, there did not seem to be much in the children's schooling that had replaced them. Only very rarely did the children mention any of the actors whose stories once made up Australian history, and inevitably these accounts were vague; for example:

Sam: I think it was Captain Cook or someone, came over from England and they said, there's too many people here in England and that sort of stuff, and so he went for a trip around the world and then he saw like, a little piece of Australia, so he just got ships and brought people over and Aboriginals got killed because of most of the English people were just invading their territory.

While Sam's version of history is in a distinctly revisionist mode, his was almost the only mention of Captain James Cook in the children's accounts. In other discussions, the children used the word 'history' to refer to their own personal stories, as in:

Amy: My home, the country that I grew up with and everything that felt right to me.
I: Such as?
Amy: I don't know, just the town you grew up in and everything like that. Like, all your history's here.

And even more explicitly:

Carla: My history. My family.
I: When you say 'your history', what do you mean?
Carla: Like my background.

For still others, the idea of history was connected to other countries, especially European ones. In response to the question about where they would consider living if not in Australia:

I: England. Why would you live there?
Sam: Its history and 'cos my parents, my parents used to live there.

And in a group from the Riverland, when asked where they'd like to live if not in Australia:

Gail: Okay, Egypt.
I: Why?
Gail: Because of all the history in Egypt, Egyptians there, and all the stuff that happened.

In particular, the lack of historical knowledge was reflected in the children's repeated perception that the reason people from other countries came to live in Australia was because of all the good things Australia has to offer, rather than as a result of persecution in their home countries. Their responses echoed the pattern established by American researchers who found that the young people in their study held to 'an image of the country's continuous and beneficial progress' (Barton and Levstik, 1998, p. 3). While it is commendable that they shared a very positive view of Australia and the living possibilities here, and they were invariably positive about the cultural mix and the need to welcome new people to share in what they had, it would seem important that their education provided some historical insights as well as the injunction to treat all people properly. For many of the young people interviewed, other places were regarded as different, strange and dangerous.

Traditional national imagery – heroes, flags

Our young informants were not unaware of the traditional trappings of nation. The flag appeared reasonably often on their collages, even though its regular appearance on top of the school flagpole is a thing of the past. (Our interviews took place immediately prior to the then-Prime Minister's exhortation to schools to have a 'fully functioning flagpole', with the promise of financial rewards for compliance.) When asked about their felt response to the flag they offered:

I: So what do you feel when you put it up?

Andrew: You feel like you are a part of something, that you're doing something for Australia.

Some seemed to recognise the role of flags as indicating a community of countries, an ideal type of world citizenship:

MaryAnn: Australia is part of the world along with other countries, too and the flag, that's what makes Australia.

Others spoke of national heroes in terms of the wars of the past century and thought about how they would portray a sense of debt they felt to those who had fought to preserve what they had:

Kate: Like, people that, like, fought for our country, like, the war and stuff, because they like our country, and they just want it to remain this Australian country so that we can live in peace.

Here, too, there is an alarming degree of vagueness about war – never in these conversations was war distinguished by name, which could have been World War II or the Vietnam or Korean wars, or the present

incursions involving Australian troops. It is war as a concept they refer to, rather than any particular war; the exception being the following, in which an enemy is named:

> Fred: If they wouldn't have defended us, then we would be coming from another country … it could have been overtaken by Japan, and quite possibly it wouldn't have been called Australia.

They speak of a sense of indebtedness, thereby echoing some of the familiar rhetoric around war:

> Mary: So, I might just put people closing their eyes and just like remembering the people that fought for us and kept our country.
>
> George: I would give the people a very nice grave.

These quotations are redolent of the discourses around Anzac Day. These rituals have been enjoying some resurgence in recent years, along with the commitment to provide citizenship education. Certainly, the country children, possibly as a result of the ubiquitous war memorial located in Australian country towns, appeared familiar with the rhetoric of war heroes and respect for the fallen, tropes of a more traditional discourse of nation. The city children were less likely to speak of wars and war heroes as connected to Australia or Australians; for them, wars took place in other countries as seen on the television.

Implications for education

One of the most striking features of the discussions was the similarity in the responses of the children to questions about Australianness. While there were certainly different responses between rural and city children (see Chapter 5), the main themes we have identified were shared across differences in location, making it likely that they are representative of the ideas of the majority of young South Australians. They do identify with the country in which they live, which they credit in a range of ways as being a good place to be. At one level, the privileging of, and identification with, the local and immediate has been seen to be an important element in developing a sense of place and belonging (Abowitz, 2002), and our young informants echoed their American counterparts in a generally positive orientation to their country. As Feinberg (1998) has argued, these sorts of identifications are probably necessary precursors of a properly located, global worldview. However, it seems that this celebration of the local should also be accompanied by an introduction to the wider world in terms of history and culture. In particular, the situation in Australian society broadly, and in many Australian schools in particular, would

seem to require more than a simple welcoming of strangers. In order to build the sort of socially inclusive environment needed in a multicultural society, some recognition of the different histories and cultures that go to make up multicultural Australia would seem to be a necessary part of Australian education. Equally necessary would be an introduction to Australian history that acknowledges the Eurocentric limitations of much of the textually recorded past and incorporates some of the oral histories of different Indigenous peoples. In this way, history would then be understood as comprising personal stories but also allowing some insights into the ways of the world, and thereby explaining how we came to be the amazing mix of peoples that we are.

None of the children interviewed mentioned the state as a geographical or political division within the nation as a whole. No doubt, this reflects their general lack of knowledge about the ways in which Australian political life is organised – the situation that gave rise to the press for civics and citizenship education in schools. However, rather than plunge these young people into a set of rote learnings about the mechanisms of government and the mysteries of preferential voting, we would argue that it is of primary importance that they are given some introduction into the histories and cultures of all the people who make up contemporary Australia, along with the history of the nation as a whole. Such an introduction would necessarily privilege the stories of the Indigenous peoples and their involvement with the land. It would also identify the stories of migration, starting with the Europeans in the late 18th century and continuing into the present. In this way, education would supply a knowledge base upon which the common good for the whole society could be recognised and established.

Conclusion

The suggestion to emerge from this study is that the concept of nation as a fixed geopolitical entity does not sit well with the children's current understandings. Even when framed within the idea of the 'imagined community', traditional education has tended to reify that imagined reality in terms of rules and rights, with a level of fixity far beyond Anderson's original conception. Anderson (1983) wrote of a certain ambivalence connected to the idea of nation, a notion picked up by Bhabha (1992) in the assertion that 'the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality' (p. 1). In the present degree of social flux, with significant numbers of newcomers entering Australia, the cultural constant once constructed around the binary location of 'Sydney or the bush' has been outmoded. Nation, if it is to retain any meaning, has then to become a more fluid concept, less

linked to a particular piece of land and more to the particular society that constitutes it. In Bhabha's (1992) words:

> *The nation's 'coming into being' as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social life rather than the discipline of social polity, emphasises this instability of knowledge.* (p. 2)

This idea appears to be much more applicable to contemporary Australia – a state of 'coming into being', of emerging from its original cultural significations as a place of pioneering bush dwellers living 'off the sheep's back', of the infamous White Australia policy, of a place where sport was king and the expressive arts happened 'overseas'. Australians are now urged to understand themselves as comprising increasing layers of multicultural complexity that include recognition of the Indigenous peoples and their contribution to the national culture. Leaders in the world of expressive arts are slowly drawing on recognition formerly reserved for sporting champions, although the latter continue to dominate the popular media, especially in world events. The former rural/urban divide may still exist, but there are clear predictions of further diminution among the ranks of rural dwellers, alongside the likely growth of larger country towns and outlying conurbations.

And so much of the older cultural forms, the poetry that celebrated mateship and the bush myth, the tales of wartime bravery and the amazingly talented individuals in the expressive arts are being replaced by more broadly shared understandings. Certainly, the children's conceptions of country appear to go some distance to filling the gap left by the diminution of the previous cultural forms. The strength of their commitment to the development of social connection and a shared sense of belonging emerged clearly in this study, a commitment that reflected the values implicit in their primary schooling experience. Their concept of country as a social rather than a political entity suggests that the framing of citizenship education in the 'Discovering Democracy' package is somewhat at odds with the mindset of the learners. New knowledge must connect to old. In order to produce young people better able to participate in new stories of nation in an increasingly globalised world, what is needed, then, is a curriculum that includes the established historiography but is also located within a contemporary sense of nation.

9 Australian people – not alike people: Challenges for citizenship education in contemporary Australia

Drawing on data from a qualitative study of the ways in which primary school children understand themselves as part of the country in which they live, this chapter argues that the children have embraced the concept of diversity in the Australian population. However, the children's ready acceptance of multiculturalism sits oddly with the government's drive for citizenship education to focus on a more exclusively nationalist agenda that involves border protection and a heightened sense of militarism. Moreover, we note that sport is a particular feature within the Australian social landscape, one that offers some scope for revisioning sociocultural allegiances in ways not currently available in other cultural practices. The focus is on the role and possibilities for education in the maintenance and transformation of national cultures.

Currently, there are interesting parallels between the situation in Australia and that in Europe, where education emerges as a key strategy in the generation of popular allegiance to the European Union, as well as to its member nation states. The somewhat similar challenge for Australian education is to build a sense of belonging and inclusivity in the newly configured population, in such a way as to acknowledge difference while the same time generating and maintaining allegiance to the whole. In addition, we would maintain that in both places the further challenge is to educate for a cosmopolitan citizenship (Davies, 2003; Osler and Starkey, 2003) that recognises places and cultures but also contributes to the generation of a new worldview of citizens working together across national boundaries for global sustainability.

Recently, in the endless after-match analyses of the World Cup, football (soccer) administrator Frank Lowy made a comment about the image of soccer in Australia. This sport, originally associated with the immigrants from southern Europe, an 'ethnic' space often the scene of bitterly fought contests between Italian and Greek sides, was until recently regarded as distinctly different from Australian Rules football, the dominant football

code in Australia. Lowy's achievement as manager was to broaden the appeal of the game by assembling a team that was highly skilled and also much more broadly representative of the people who make up contemporary Australia. In celebrating the changed image of the team, he commented: 'It's a picture of Australia now', meaning that the cultural mix of the team mirrored that of the country as a whole. Indeed, the press had made much of the fact that when Australia played Croatia, seven of the players were born in Australia and they were almost evenly distributed between the two sides. The media delighted in raising questions of allegiance in interviews with people from the Italian community, the Croatian community and so on, but for the most part people were less drawn to take sides than to be delighted with whichever outcome; although, of course, there were huge parties within particular ethnic communities following a victory. Lowy's comment and this less than strictly partisan response are examples of a new and increasingly complex understanding of the multiple and interconnected notions of citizenship and national identity in Australia. This chapter traces the recent development of a far greater degree of perceived pluralism in the Australian population, as experienced by the current generation of school children and comments on its implications for the project of citizenship education.

Context

Since the middle of the past century, Australia has been increasingly seen as distancing itself from its colonial past, a time now regarded as one of monocultural exclusivity involving constant celebration of all things British; an association reified in its system of governance, its educational structures and content, its rule of law and so on. While such features still seem both strangely familiar and also reminiscent of times long past, there remains some degree of relative uncertainty about the future. Questions regarding Australia becoming a republic, its allegiance to trade partners in Asia and its role with respect to comparable Western nations are continually raised, each framing a particular version of nationalism and Australian citizenry. The close ties that had operated prior to the 2007 election between the then-conservative government and the United States had been frequently challenged, admittedly on political and trade grounds more frequently than cultural ones. Young people, who are regularly exposed to a large amount of American culture through popular media, are caught up in some of these debates, but their opinions are rarely sought (Wyness, 2006).

In the decade 1996 to 2006, the Australian conservative government intervened in educational provision, in the interests of creating a future

citizenry more aware of the features of Australian citizenship and its associated responsibilities and rights. The federally funded civics and citizenship education package, 'Discovering Democracy', was sent to all schools towards the end of 1998. Given that education in Australia falls under the control of the various state and territory governments, this hitherto unprecedented federal intervention appeared to signal particular interest in the matter of civics and citizenship education as part of a new national education agenda. At this stage, it is interesting to reflect on the ways in which nationalism has been understood by social theorists in order to identify the direction in which the government's involvement in civics education might be heading.

Michael Billig (1995) put forward the idea of 'banal nationalism', by which he meant that national identity is produced by the many symbols and rituals with which one is surrounded; so much so, that nationalism forms part of the taken-for-granted aspects of everyday life. It passes unnoticed but is never forgotten. However, unlike in the United States, where there is a plethora of signs and images connoting nation, in contemporary Australia there are relatively few nationalist symbols. School classrooms rarely have a flag on show, in contrast to the stars and stripes that is regularly draped in a corner in American classrooms. The national anthem routinely sung at major sporting gatherings is remarkable mainly for the fact that few can recite the words beyond the first three lines. The automatic and unthinking response to country that was the basis for Billig's theory of the pervasiveness of a sense of nation would appear to be more readily encountered elsewhere. Nor do Australians appear to spend much time thinking about their affiliation with place and country. And yet, there are some fairly unremarkable daily reminders of national location. There is a national newspaper *The Australian*, various buildings and institutions proclaim themselves to be the National Gallery or the National Broadcaster and there is a national capital, Canberra, located in the Australian Capital Territory, both city and state being distinctly smaller than the other states and capitals. The question arises as to whether there might be other ways than flag waving through which people establish a sense of country and national identification. Are there 'widespread common habits of thinking' (Billig, 1995, p. 9) that indicate a shared Australian consciousness? Certainly, the notion of a populace has long featured strongly in official Australian documentation. The commitment to democratic government was enshrined from federation in the Constitution, 'Whereas the people …'. But at this particular historical moment, who are the people, and what does it mean to be Australian? The current study sought to gain some insights about these questions through discussions with schoolchildren.

Population change

Two highly significant changes in Australian sociocultural formation in recent decades have been the increased recognition of the Indigenous peoples and the influx of immigrants and refugees from places other than Britain. For almost two centuries since British settlement, the Indigenous peoples had been virtually ignored in formal accounts, while subjected to widespread racism that had led to various forms of abuse. They were not officially recognised as citizens until 1967, before which time they were neither included in the national census nor allowed to vote. As a group, Indigenous Australians continue to constitute the most disadvantaged people in the country on standard measures such as life expectancy, infant mortality, access to education, schooling completion and health care. While these serious problems persist, it is also the case that in recent years there have been significant advances in terms of official and formal recognition of rights, government programs and much broader community acknowledgement. We were interested to discover the ways in which the current generation of young Australians would respond to Indigenous issues.

In the aftermath of World War II, Australia attracted high levels of immigration from southern and eastern Europe, which led to significant alterations in the labour force and the school population. The new arrivals took up work in the developing industries, and their children attended schools that were ill-prepared to deal with considerable numbers of children from non-English speaking backgrounds. In the language of the time, the immigrants became known as 'New Australians'[2], identifiable largely through their lack of English and 'strange' accents. The ready availability of work meant that people kept coming, and soon there was broader representation from Europe, especially since the demise of the former Soviet Union, and more recently from the Middle East as well.

The rejection of the White Australia policy in the 1970s, along with increasing recognition of Australia's geographical location, was to lead to significant immigration from Asian countries. More recently, Australia's response to refugees has meant that peoples from Africa are increasingly seen in Australian cities and suburbs, and even in some of the smaller country towns.

Currently, one in four Australians was born overseas, and 22 per cent of the Australian school student population have at least one parent who speaks a language other than English. The 1997 census showed that 13 per cent of schoolchildren spoke a language other than English at home, with

2 The term 'New Australian' was prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s, but has rarely been used since.

speakers of Chinese, Arabic and Vietnamese outnumbering the Greek and Italian speakers (Australian Law Reform Commission, 1997). By 2006, this situation was even more complex. In the study, we wanted to discover the ways in which the current generation of young Australians registered and responded to diversity within the population.

Response from education

Australian education has developed increasingly sophisticated responses to language education for students who come from non-English speaking backgrounds. There is now a range of educational options designed to cater for new arrivals, and remedial English programs and senior school-assessment procedures are geared to compensate to some degree for the non-English speaker. Schools have become more conscious of issues related to cultural difference. Whereas once a 'spaghetti and polka'[3] approach was considered to be a sufficient acknowledgement of cultural difference, that approach is now regarded as tokenistic. There is broad recognition of different sorts of Australians – as noted by Lowy in the above quote. In this newly configured Australia, there are clear implications for the project of citizenship education, itself a recent development in educational thinking.

Education for citizenship

Schools have long been theorised as having a central role in nation building; for example, 'Fostering an allegiance to the nation lies so close to the heart of public schooling' (Willinsky, 1999, p. 99). Traditionally, schools and teachers understood that a significant part of the education they provided was to involve the inculcation of a sense of national loyalty and pride. Writing in 1971, Connell had noted:

> *The Australian state communicates a tradition in the same way (as formalised tradition). Its principal catechists are the infants' school and primary school teachers, who are instructed to teach young people about the Queen, the flag, the national anthem, the British Commonwealth and the national history. This they do and elements of this formal nationalism are acquired by children.* (p. 236)

In subsequent years, such practices slowly disappeared, along with the understanding that it was part of the teacher's role to inculcate such feelings of patriotism. Schools became less militaristic and more progressive; teaching became less didactic and more interactive. Civics disappeared

3 This phrase is indicative of a once popular, patronising rendition of what the newcomers brought.

from the school curriculum. By the late 1980s, concern began to be raised at the widespread ignorance of the central structures of governance – an ignorance seen to be more profound in younger populations. The federal government commissioned an inquiry to investigate what could be done. The government response led to the promulgation of 'Discovering Democracy', a national project of civics and citizenship education. These developments were generously funded, and the materials incorporated the latest in media technology, interactive video and a great many teaching resources, supported by teachers dedicated to the project. The overt commitment of the project was to ensure that the current government system was understood by all young people in such a way as to prepare them to take up the rights and responsibilities of operating within the Australian political and legal systems.

The orientation to citizenship in this new curriculum was fairly linear – a series of undertakings about the working of government in a democracy traced back to the Greeks, followed by detailed outlines of the current system. There was little attention given to the multiple meanings of citizenship, and almost no reference to any affective dimensions (Gill and Reid, 1999; Howard and Gill, 2000). Nor was there any attempt to discover the current constructions of nation, of culture, or even of history, held by the generation of children for whom the citizenship curriculum was designed. Concerns about these omissions gave rise to the current study, which involved talking with over 400 young people in the final year of primary school in the state of South Australia about their understandings of Australia as a concept and their feelings about being Australian.

The study

The study was conducted as a qualitative investigation through small group interviews with upper primary school children. We chose this approach as most likely to allow us to identify the particular 'habits of language' that Billig (1995) had suggested work to form a 'universal code for nationalist consciousness' (p. 73). Hence, we used a semi-structured interview schedule with groups of four or five children in a range of schools in distinctly different regions of South Australia. The conversations were audiotaped, transcribed and organised for analysis using the NUD•IST software package.

In the first investigation we interviewed over 150 children in a range of metropolitan schools across the range of socioeconomic backgrounds. All the school groups contained some non-Australian born children, with more in the middle-class areas and fewer in the low socioeconomic neighbourhoods. In the second part of the study, we interviewed some 250 young people spread across schools in South Australia's famous wine-

producing region, the Barossa Valley, the industrial steelworks regions north of Adelaide known as the Lower and Mid-North, the Riverland and the farming districts of the South East.

The students were generally in their final year of primary school (Year 7 in South Australia) and they were nearly all 12 years of age. In terms of cultural mix, there was a definite presence of Indigenous children in some of the rural groups – one of the schools was made up of 80 per cent Indigenous students – whereas the city schools had fewer Indigenous students. In certain areas, such as the Riverland and the South East, the rural children were predominantly non-Indigenous Australians whose families had farmed the area for generations. In other cases, there were children from German background in the Barossa Valley, and in the Lower North market-gardening districts there were significant numbers of children from Vietnamese backgrounds.

Our initial impressions were that the city based schools comprised a greater mix of cultural backgrounds than the rural schools; although, as we were to discover, some of the rural children told us of a hybridised ancestry. All of the children were interviewed at school and all the schools would have received the 'Discovering Democracy' package several years before the interviews. However, the majority of our young informants volunteered the information that they had never before been asked about 'being Australian', nor had they thought about the issue before speaking with us.

Results

Despite the participants' insistence on the topic being novel and not previously addressed, it was immediately evident that their responses to the question 'what's good about living here?' exhibited commonalities of terms and ideas, 'habits of thought' across the range of different locations and cultural mixes. The overwhelming majority of the participants readily expressed a strongly positive feeling about living in Australia. Our initial concern was that by framing the question 'What's good …?' we might have precluded criticism. However, other studies had produced a similar response (Purdie, 2003; Cornbleth, 2002), with Purdie's involving large numbers of Australian young people (N = 1242) of roughly similar ages to the informants, the overwhelming majority of whom identified strongly with Australia. Like Cornbleth's young American respondents, those in the present study adopted the pronouns *we* and *our* immediately, regardless of background or of how long they had been in the country, confirming Billig's insight that '[n]ationalism is an ideology of the first person plural … there can be no us without a them' (Billig, 1995, p. 78).

Recent arrivals were just as likely as Australians of several generations to affirm a sense of good fortune associated with being in Australia. Only

one voice among the 400+ interviewed offered some misgivings. A recent immigrant from South Africa, his response about 'being Australian' spoke of the problems of unrestricted immigration and the potential dangers of an increased mix of peoples. Apart from this one example, we were surprised by the uniformity of the responses across the whole range of groups interviewed. This generally positive response has been encountered in other research (Manning and Ryan, 2004; Purdie, 2003), indicating that for many young people the positive construct of nation operates to preclude a more critical stance. Said (1995) saw this very positive response as a direct effect of schooling:

> *Most systems of education today, I believe, are still nationalist, that is to say that they promote the authority of the national identity in an idealised way and suggest that it is incapable of any criticism, that it is virtue incarnate.* (p. 46)

The NYARS study (Manning and Ryan, 2004) did reveal that the positive response was more typical of the younger age group – the same age level as those in the present study. So we conclude that the current generation of 12-year-olds is likely to feel very positively about the idea of Australia and their place in it. The reasons they gave when pressed (they didn't find it easy to justify their felt response) did offer some variation, however, with the rural children offering accounts of the delights of country living and the natural environment, whereas those in the city appeared more oriented towards a more sophisticated city life and the built environment. While many of the children found it difficult to speak about what it means to be Australian, their responses converged around the themes of *safe*, *proud* and *free* (Chapter 6). In each case, the children offered examples of other countries that they considered were not safe, did not have things to be proud of and, most powerfully, were not free. In this way, the children created the *them* against which they were able to affirm the *us*.

Who is Australian?

Curiously, while the children affirmed a notion of *us* that was identifiably different from the 'others' in different countries, they also held to a strong sense of the non-homogeneity of the Australian people. Some of the children seemed to delight in the mix of cultures they personally could acknowledge:

I: Would you say 'I'm Australian'?
Katrina: I don't know, I've got lots of cultures, I've got German, Scottish, Welsh, English, Australian, I have Italian as well.
I: Fantastic.
Malia: I'm a bitsa; I've got everything.

I: You've got everything?
Malia: Including, I think it was Vietnamese.
Molly: I think I've got a bit of English, and –
Opal: I am German, Scottish, Patch Indian, Aboriginal and … can't 'member them all.
I: And you, Rebecca?
Rebecca: I'm probably Australian. (All laughing)

While Rebecca happily conceded that she was 'probably Australian', many of the children responded to the question of cultural background in terms of the mix of cultures in their own backgrounds. This hybridity is reflected in the Indigenous activist Noel Pearson's idea of the multiple layers of identity currently available to many contemporary Australians (Pearson, 2006). For these children, being labelled 'Australian' was seen as unremarkable and somehow less interesting than the mix of cultures they acknowledged. As has been pointed out '[im]migration requires individuals to develop multiple loyalties and identities' (Osler and Starkey, 2003, p. 243) and it seemed as though these young informants took this multiplicity as a given. In a study of Asian schoolgirls in Australia, Matthews (1996) found that the girls identified themselves as 'Asian' but were well aware of the multiplicities of cultural identities contained therein. For instance, some described themselves as Chinese, but were born in Vietnam of Chinese-speaking parents, and now in Australia they used the term 'Asian' as a convenient shorthand that was accepted. In the current study it seemed that 'Australian' operated in a similar way for some of the young informants, in that it signified a generic label that covered all sorts of differences.

For some, being born in Australia made you Australian, but for others it was a more complex story:

Henry: If you're born here you're technically an Australian.
I: Okay, but why do you think some kids say they are different nationalities?
Nina: It could be because their parents were born in those other countries, or their parents grew up in the country that wasn't Australia.
Henry: Because they have Greek or Bulgarian or whatever blood in them.
Maria: Because if their mother and father might have been different parts of other areas, like, my dad's Scottish and all of that, and he was born in Australia, and my mum is German and all that, and she was born in Australia, so they might have thought that when their parents saying that they're, like what sort of like blood they have in them …

In these accounts, the children explained effects of culture and ethnicity in fairly concrete ways – it was 'in the blood'. Given this belief, the challenge for citizenship education in the context of contemporary Australia is one of building from the mix of loyalties and backgrounds rather than attempting to deny them in a press to assimilate.

The children were almost universal in their spoken recognition of Indigenous heritage and land rights, ''cos they were here first', although beyond the fact of prior occupation they appeared to have little knowledge of Indigenous history.

'Not alike people' – positive difference

Many children insisted on difference as a feature of the Australian population, and most often it was visible difference that they highlighted in their choices for picturing Australia. For instance, when invited to contribute towards a collage to make a pictorial image of Australia, they responded:

Mia: People from everywhere.
Jim: Faces of all the different colours that people look like.
Annie: The different countries that people come from.

And there was evident pride in their commitment to a peaceful coexistence with difference:

I: Okay, what else would go in this collage?
Sam: People who have come from overseas, and are now settled in Australia, and are very proud to be here.
Steve: Planes, and other people coming in from countries and …
Jon: Because we've got all different kinds of people in Australia.
Sam: Like heaps of Chinese people in Melbourne.
Jon: Like, we got, yeah we got, nearly every single one nationality in Australia.
Leo: It's where people from other countries come.
Jon: Yeah, and hey, we got everyone.
Alan: I'd have like all the people from different nations like some Chinese people or some Aboriginal people or some …

The attempt to assemble pictures of different people for the collage provoked the question 'Who are Australians?' In addressing the question, the children showed some awareness of the complexities of citizenship, as in:

Sian: … 'Cause in Australia, some people who were born in Australia, were born by somebody who might not have been Australian, so, basically some people from other countries are Australian.

Elsewhere the concept of Australians as a people produced the following:

George: There's Aboriginal people, there's English people, there's …
Jem: Italian.
George: Yeah, as well.
I: Why does it feel good to see all of these different people in Australia?
Adele: Because people have come here at their own will … and people like it in our country.
George: I know, because, probably because they think our country's better than theirs or something like that.

Here, the children rationalise their preference for celebrating diversity in Australian people in terms of a national pride in being recognised as having a desirable place to live. The strongest theme evident in the children's ideas about ways of representing Australians on the collage was one of difference. Features of difference recurred throughout the discussions:

Josh: Aboriginal people, and white people, and yeah. All sorts of people from all sorts of countries joining together like Chinese, Japanese and they're all hugging and … (laughter)
James: And I'd have the word Australia in the middle.
Len: Australian people. Not alike people …
David: I'd put like all different kinds of people because Australia, like, it's got all different, like, it's just not like us, just, like, white people, there's all different kinds.

Sometimes difference was explicated in terms of race, but elsewhere difference was constructed in terms of race and ethnicity:

Harry: Aboriginal boys and girls and Aboriginal people.
Niamh: I would maybe do a few Japanese people.
Julie: And Asians.
Frank: A few Germans.
Niamh: How could you tell that?
Julie: They would look like Jack.
Jack: Well, you wouldn't know. [Presumably he means that because someone was German they would not look any different.] You could just go and get photographs of all different people that you have seen around the place.
I: So there wouldn't be anyone in particular?
Niamh: Just a variety.
Len: People giving handshakes to other people. Welcoming them to Australia.

Interestingly, the children's identification of different Australians was not done in the same form as the hyphenated cultural citizenry of melting-pot America, in which one is Chinese-American, Polish-American, African-American, Irish-American and so on. These young people did not appear to want to insist on such dualities, but rather more simply to register their mixed heritage within a society in which such mixing is the norm. Besides, in many cases they identified multiple ancestries; a hybridity beyond dualisms and a situation produced by the more mobile diasporic peoples coming into a population that was already fluid and continuing to mix. They were proud of their difference as Australians from other peoples, and the most common feature of this difference was in terms of sociocultural diversity. And so they told us proudly, 'We've got 47 different cultures in our school!' And as one young informant of Chinese origin said excitedly:

> Yes! If you were up in a space ship looking down at Earth and trying to figure out where to land you'd say let's go to Australia because everybody's different there and so you'll be sure to fit in.

Diversity emerged as a dimension around which the participants appeared strongly supportive. Their country was special and different because of the diversity of its people.

Sport – a primary signifier of national allegiance?

We now want to look more closely at the ways in which the children referred to organised sport – a tendency we had initially dismissed as a banal form of nationalism, but which on closer analysis appears to offer a model for thinking about local, national and global citizenship. Sport is seen to feature as a medium for the taken-for-granted assumptions through which a sense of nationalism is reproduced. First, some examples of the ways in which sport became a ready reference point for 'feeling Australian'. Children repeatedly nominated sport as one thing they wanted on their collage about Australia:

> Hal: I'd put things on there, what Australians do, like cricket, netball, and Aussie rules, like that.

as though sport comprises the ultimate definition of being Australian.

> I: Okay, is there anything you'd put on this collage?
> Jim: Sport.
> I: Uh huh, what sort of sport?
> Jim: Football, 'cause that's the best –
> I: You mean soccer, that round-ball game?
> Jack: No, the other one.

I: Oh, the other one, oh rugby?
All (loudly): Noooo! AFL [Australian Rules Football].
I: AFL, oh right, so you'd put in Aussie rules?
Jack: Yep.
I: How, why would that show how you felt about being Australian?
Jim: 'Cause it's played nowhere else, it's just played here.
Steve: Yeah, that's why it's called the AFL, because it's Australian football.
Sam: It originated in Australia.

In this comment, the children echoed other responses they made as they searched for a definition of what was really Australian. In this connection they mostly offered names of flora and fauna, which they asserted were unique to Australia and nowhere else (a claim not strictly true in several cases, but vehemently asserted nevertheless). We suggest that their insistence on uniqueness and difference as a form of definition was reached as a consequence of the difficulty they experienced in identifying any single defining feature within the mix of contemporary Australia. While Purdie (2003) had found that boys were more likely to nominate sport as a key feature of Australian life, in the present study girls were equally as likely as boys to describe sporting achievements as a means of taking pride in being Australian, and they particularly invoked international sporting competitions – Commonwealth Games, Olympic Games – as producing a response of identifying with Australia. In this way it seemed that in Australia sport becomes the banal, ever-present reminder of a state of national consciousness in ways similar to the buildings and flags Billig (1995) had identified as forming an ever present sense of the national in other places.

Multiple allegiances occurred in relation to sport, with the children identifying competing loyalties in family members whose original home country was competing with an Australian team.

Tony: I was born here and it's my country, and in everything at the Olympics you go for Australia because you were born here. Yeah – my Dad goes for Britain because he was born there even though he's living here now. But that depends on who's competing, 'cos if Australia are, he'll go for them, but if it's like Britain and no-one from Australia, then he'll barrack for Britain.

These positions were noted and recalled with acceptance and without rancour; a recognition of background and difference but not a cause for serious disruption. In this the children demonstrated a pragmatic approach to questions of sporting loyalties, reflecting the realities of their situation and the choices they made within those realities.

Discussion

In our analysis of the children's discussions, we have suggested that in Australia stories of nation appear to circulate in a discursive space around questions such as diversity, rather than being emblematised by symbols such as flags and rituals such as anthem singing, parades or national festivals. Sporting events can provide an opportunity for the demonstration of local, state and national allegiances. Such a position is consonant with the idea that the nation is a construction continually being redrawn through the range of discursive practices made available. It also suggests the idea that all of the people are constantly engaged in the building and rebuilding of a sense of nation. There remains the question of the level to which people engage in these practices without being consciously aware of the impact of their discursive acts – as Billig (1995) describes the pervasive presence of nationalism being so ever-present, so banal, that you don't notice it. Certainly, the children demonstrated an acceptance of being Australian, even though they found the concept hard to define and didn't think about it much.

Their stories represent shared sentiments, moments of pleasure and recognition in the present, rather than being a revisiting of past glories. Much of their iconography is concerned with flora and fauna – national becomes native in the minds of the young informants, especially with regard to the native animals. They find it pleasurable to note that there are life forms that are uniquely Australian – even if they don't think about it very much. To Billig's (1995) question about why people don't forget their national identity, our young informants would say, 'Why does it matter'? Clearly, the prospect of 'being Australian' has become a taken-for-granted feature of their lives, which in their view hardly warrants mention. Certainly, the same was true for Billig's examples and yet, they were surrounded by national icons, a sense of history embedded in the built environment, the ritual of royalty, or even 'first family' – none of which applies in Australia. Perhaps the 'borderlessness' of the island continent offers some explanation for the evident lack of concern about being part of a geographic, political and social entity. Even the issue of citizenship status, of which many were aware – probably due to some widely reported cases of refugees and resident rights – did not appear to rouse great concern.

The young people appeared to share certain values, which they used in their efforts to describe what if felt like to be Australian. In ways familiar to previous research, these informants described what they are most easily in terms of what they're not. Thus, what was specific and important in their shared version of the Australian way of life was the absence of war and the freedom from threat of invasion. It seems curious, if not fundamentally ill

conceived, that the former government intervened in the area of citizenship education in ways that reflect an earlier discourse of country and nation, and appeared to have little to offer the new-style discourse around 'being Australian', as evidenced by the young people interviewed. For them, the idea of Australia was connected with peace and the absence of war and political strife. And yet, the former government sanctioned a return to teaching the history of Australian engagement in war, and urged renewed attention to the events of Gallipoli as celebrated on Anzac Day, a national holiday. In fact, the initiatives, which began with a focus on citizenship education as a commonsensical response to an evident need, similar to that happening in Britain at the time, appears in hindsight to have had another agenda, namely the return to teaching a form of nationalism, complete with the trappings of militarism and singular loyalty to the nation state. This old-style nationalist agenda was also signalled by the adoption of a new term – 'un-Australian' – frequently used by the former conservative government, which carried the implication that there is one right and proper Australian identity, rather than the multiple identities of people living in Australia (Schwarz, 2004).

The incursion of the federal government into schooling for citizenship has become most evident around the question of values in education. Whereas theorists have warned of the dangers inherent in the imposition of 'the abstracted nature of shared values which cover up inherent diversity, opposition and inequality' (Jansen, Chioncel and Dekkers, 2006, p. 195), it is the stark contrast between the government's position and that shown by the children that is at issue here. While the children's comments gathered in the course of this study clearly show the children as valuing peace and diversity, and committed to the recognition of Indigenous peoples from a sense of fairness and justice, these are not seen as preferred value positions by the country's leaders. The former Prime Minister had publicly commented on the lack of values in current schooling, presumably referring, inter alia, to the disappearance of the rituals of flag raising and anthem singing that once characterised Monday mornings around the country. Schools have subsequently been offered a monetary reward for having a 'fully functioning flagpole', and resources have been poured into a values education program. The values education logo, which lists the nine key values to be taught in schools,[4] is set against a military image memorialising the story of 'Simpson and his donkey'. In earlier times, young Australians were told the story of the heroic exploits of the World War I ambulance attendant, Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick, who risked his own life in continuing efforts to bring the wounded to safety. The story

4 For a critique of the idea that the listed qualities are indeed values and that they can be taught see Knight and Collins (2006).

had fallen from favour in the schoolbooks, and none of the young people in our study had heard of it. When subjected to closer investigation, it proved to be a fabrication, a popular myth whose truth was very different from the celebrated story. In one sense, this scenario is emblematic of the ways in which nation is created and recreated in discursive spaces. In another, the former government's response also offers evidence of its further incursions into schooling, deliberately designed to foster an outdated, militaristic style of nationalism that reasserts the prominence of the nation state – a position at odds with much current thinking, and certainly with the children's stated desires for peaceful coexistence. Similar developments elsewhere have been described by Kofman (2005) as 'the ways in which states have sought to recouple rights and identities and reassert their authority in shaping national identity and citizenship' (p. 455). The former government's initiative in citizenship education goes beyond teaching young people about their rights and responsibilities; it carries clear implications for the preferred type of Australian national identity and the style of its citizenry.

Re-placing sport?

Reinventing the story of nation under the former conservative government would appear to be running counter to the general feelings of the community – at least in terms of the sentiments expressed by the more than 400 young people who participated in the project. Their Australia was one in which sport reigned supreme on a national agenda; a situation that has all the trappings of the time-honoured stereotype of a people who take pride in physical prowess, as demonstrated in the sporting arena above all else. However, some of the new-style sporting discourses are not in the direction of 'my country right or wrong', but rather more in the sense of a world game in which players who have some connection with Australia are seen as champions. Of course, there is still widespread support for Australian teams as victors, but even victory is regarded as less due to embedded Australianness and rather more as having been able to put together a top team from the diverse champions available at the time. Diversity is also more apparent in sport played at the local level, too. Whereas once Indigenous players were a rare exception, nowadays their presence is a common feature on the football field and in athletics championships. At amateur levels, and particularly in country towns, the local teams forge a form of social capital between players and the local community, with general celebrations should leading players be selected for state or national teams.

In Australia, sport functions as one very obvious dimension of Billig's (1995) banal nationalism – it provokes the recognition of togetherness

across difference. Certainly, for these young Australians, sporting contests provided one arena in which they felt a comfortable identity with the national, even as they registered different loyalties within the mix of heritages that comprise contemporary Australia. For young people for whom war is something that happens in other countries, sport offers a sense of allegiance, identification and pride in the heroic exploits of the competitors, who stand and strive for school, district, state and country. Team sports offer this identification on a broad scale in ways that other more individually based competitions do not. They also stand for the collective nature of human agency, which engenders social order (Jansen et al., 2006) – a model of active citizenship. In the absence of nationalist rituals of former times, the sporting event may be the only occasion that the current generation of young people experience this sense of being called together by the idea of belonging to a larger community. At the same time, the multiplicity of cultural origins evident in these groups of schoolchildren means that they register Australian sporting achievements within a broader world of sport, and one that may call up different allegiances from family members, neighbours and friends. The very banality of sport in Australia, along with the increased publicity associated with global competition, allows it to operate on a system of local, national and global identification. It seems unlikely that renewed attention to military history would be able to create a similar response.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have argued that Billig's (1995) theory of banal nationalism does have some purchase in the contemporary Australian cultural outlook, albeit not exactly in the same ways as in the original formulation. Certainly, the discourses around nation and national membership, as identified in the children's talk, reproduce a sense of national identity and belonging constructed around themes of diversity, safety and freedom – an identity in which sport plays a key role. Rather than dismiss sport as simply concerned with physical prowess, we have argued that in Australia, and perhaps particularly for young Australians, sport constitutes Australia as a participant in a globalised world. Sporting events also constitute an image of a world comprised of the many different cultures that currently make up the Australian population. Thus, young Australians can be seen to view sport as not simply 'us against them', but as a lens through which the world becomes real, and Australia's involvement in it renders a global membership that is unavailable in the regular newscasts of frightening, dangerous 'other' countries. Sporting events can take on a singular importance in the development of a cosmopolitan citizenship for young Australians.

We remain committed to the proposition that citizenship education needs to take account of the cultural mix of the population, and to heed the position of cultural minorities among whom the Indigenous community occupies a special place in contemporary Australia (Kymlicka, 2003). Our concern is that some educational initiatives emanating from the highest level of government appear to operate in a reverse direction to that commended by our analysis. The desire to re-institute a curriculum centring on military history would appear likely to reintroduce an older, more parochial style of nationalism that would not sit well with the more cosmopolitan values and attitudes evidenced in the children's talk. Our young informants expressed clear values connected with security, freedom from oppression, anti-war, recognition of others and difference, responsible sharing of resources and materials, and caring for the environment, along with delight in living in their very different locations in contemporary Australia. This is surely a sound basis upon which to build a citizenship education that is representative and democratic as it celebrates the local and the national, but also offers a cosmopolitan identification that is uniquely appropriate to contemporary Australia.

10 Old school ties: Schooling and the construction of allegiance

Introduction

In recent times there have been several investigations relating to the concept of national identity as revealed in conversations with primary school children (for example, Cullingford, 1992; Carrington and Short, 1995; Howard and Gill, 2001). Interestingly, two of those studies found that British children (Carrington and Short, 1995) and Australian children (Howard and Gill, 2001) were largely unconcerned about what it meant to be 'British' or 'Australian', although both groups could articulate versions of rules and definitions about how one could claim nationality in either country. In neither case did the 11- and 12-year-old participants express any immediate affective response to the political entity that was Australia or England, although with the Australian children there was a felt sense of ownership of features seen as unique to the country – our gum trees, our koalas – as well as a degree of pride in the sporting achievements of Australians and Australian teams. As detailed in the previous chapters, the researchers had to probe beyond these immediate responses in order to unearth some features of the children's understanding that might indicate some felt sense of belonging to the country as a geopolitical entity.

This observation raises interesting questions. Are these young participants more comfortable with identities that are at once both global and highly individuated, and that bypass the national? Do such complex identities allow for a sense of allegiance and commitment to social communities, regardless of size? How do children achieve a sense of self-identity – not just as individuals, but also as part of a larger social structure?

It seems logical to expect that developing a sense of belonging might be achieved through participation in, and identification with, social institutions such as the family and the school. The school is usually the first public arena in which the child is invited to forge a sense of belonging

to a larger entity than self, immediate family and/or carers. Indeed, at school children are required to understand themselves as part of a group that forms a nested set within the classroom, the year level and then the whole school. It is frequently the case that the values and attitudes of the school are unstated and implicit but nevertheless carefully policed – a process that can then constitute areas of unconscious learning in many students. School experience can involve the formation of multiple sets of allegiances, but how does this happen? How are students drawn into a vision of themselves as part of a larger whole – a community? The present study attempted to begin the task of understanding just how this sense of belonging to a notional school community might happen.

School and community

In discussions of schooling the idea of young people learning to belong to a school is not invoked as much as its parallel concept – that of the school community. This term is frequently heard, from school principals, teachers, parent groups and also in the research literature. And, yet, it seems that the term occupies a similar position to that of the senior British anthropologist's ironic and memorable comment about the family – 'we speak of families as though we know what they are!' (Leach, 1982), his point being that families come in a wide range of structures and styles with a similarly broad and largely unknown variation in their internal workings. The same comment could well be made with regard to 'community' when writing about schools. The discussion begins with an attempt to unpack the meaning of the term 'community' as it is used in the education literature.

Historically, there have been all sorts of indications that traditionally schools were seen as forging close relations between students and the wider geographical and sociocultural communities in which they were located. Traditionally, schools and teachers understood that a significant part of the education they dispensed was to involve inculcating a sense of national loyalty and pride. In 1971, Connell had noted the ways in which a 'formal nationalism' was taught, involving learning about the Queen, standing for the flag and singing the national anthem at school assemblies (p. 236). The social control evident in such practices has subsequently come in for sound critique (Freund and Givner, 1975), and by the 21st century they have largely disappeared, along with the understanding that it is part of the teacher's role to inculcate such feelings of patriotism. Today's schools are broadly understood to be committed to the fulfilment of individual student potential within environments that are safe and respectful of individual differences, possibly best summarised as national goals of education in the Adelaide Declaration:

> *Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision […] Schooling provides a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, schooling contributes to the development of students' sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future.*
>
> (Ministerial Committee for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1999)

The reference to the school being a 'supportive and nurturing environment' suggests a notion of 'community' that is quasi-familial; in other words, it exists to serve and support individual students in much the same way that a family would serve and support its members. There is little recognition here that school can be a 'community' in and of itself, or in ways possibly more befitting an educational institution. And while this concept of the school community, as supportive of individual endeavour and personal security, is frequently invoked by school principals, in advertising brochures and spoken of by parent groups, it does not appear to have been the focus of very much educational research. Indeed, all too often in the educational literature the school is positioned as separate from the community, which is identified in geographic and spatial terms as the surrounding area, or is mentioned in terms of a particular group such as 'the Indigenous community' or 'the ethnic community'. In these ways, the school is produced as 'other' to the community. We are consciously taking a different line in this book in that we want to look at the school as community.

School as community

Despite a recent upsurge in interest, discussion in the research literature of the school as a community in itself has occurred only infrequently.

Early work in this area adopted a psychological stance and theorised the school as a community in terms of student attributes that emerge in such a context. In a large 1989 study, which promoted the idea of social bonding and school membership in theorising schools as effective caring learning organisations, Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko and Fernandez (1989) wrote:

> *School membership occurs through social bonding which is generated by attachment, commitment, involvement and belief in the institution. One of these bonding elements, involvement, is particularly important to any conception of effective schooling.* (p. 176)

In this study, social bonding is understood to include a sense of belonging to the institution, having a personal stake in its affairs and being involved. The researchers regarded active involvement with school activities, both academic and extracurricular, as one key form of legitimation in a school in which teachers and students experienced a sense of belonging and attachment.

Working from evidence from a range of case studies of schools with varying numbers of students deemed to be 'at risk', the writers identify the sorts of students who are less likely to drop out as follows:

> *Students who feel a sense of social bonding to school or teachers are less likely to reject school and more likely to conform to certain otherwise unappealing rules and procedures associated with schooling. Students who exhibit a high degree of social bonding tend to identify with the institution, its actors or norms and see themselves as having a role or a stake in the outcome of the institution's or the individual's efforts.*
>
> (Wehlage et al., 1989, p. 156)

In this way, the study generated a comprehensive theory about the ways in which school works for certain students in terms of promoting social bonding along with a sense of commitment, an attachment to their peers and to the institution. This the writers term 'school membership', a feature they see of fundamental importance to schools working effectively and successfully:

> *The concept of school membership helps interpret and explain much of the data about social relations … School membership occurs through social bonding which is generated by attachment, commitment, involvement and belief in the institution … Membership is particularly important for those students who have histories of school failure and who lack the support in their homes and outside communities.*
>
> (Wehlage et al., 1989, p. 176)

But what was going on inside the schools themselves that gave rise to the social bonding, the faith in the institution and ongoing relationship with it? Wehlage et al. (1989) make some fairly general suggestions here: the importance of caring teachers who have opportunities in terms of institutional arrangements to have the space and time to get to know their students, the resourcing implications and so on. Their most significant and much-repeated claim concerns the importance of school membership for students who may be classified on any of the criteria of disadvantage; that is, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students from non-English speaking backgrounds, Indigenous students, students with disabilities and so on.

What is missing from this writing is any sense of critique of the goodness of conformity to the dominant attitudes and values of the schools concerned. It is seen as useful and productive to have students involved with the school organisation, to believe in it as an institution and to identify future hopes in terms of what the school has to offer. The emerging picture is one of conformity and homogeneity – a model of institution that may be less appropriate for multicultural schools in the 21st century.

What does 'community' mean?

At a more philosophical level, there has been a recent spate of writing about 'school as community' from the point of view of appropriate democratic practice. Several commentators have questioned whether or not schools *can* be communities, given that community has been understood to imply homogeneity of attitudes and values (Strike, 1999, 2000; Alexander, 1999; Riehl, 2000). Noting that community is often associated with benefits such as a sense of membership, rootedness and belonging, Strike (2000) questions the clarity of the concept of community:

> *… it is not always clear what it means for a school to be a community or whether the aspiration for community involves any distinctive vision of a good education. Sometimes the desire for community does not go very far beyond the suggestion that schools should be more caring and intimate. In such pictures the idea of community gets reduced largely to its affective dimensions.* (p. 618)

Strike proceeds to delineate four metaphors for the troubled notion of community in schools. These he identifies as 'congregations', 'guilds', 'families' or 'participatory democracies'. While Strike is arguing against any simplistic notion of school as community, he does admit that the idea of the democratic community is potentially analogous to ideal school operations. While noting that processes of democratic deliberation are constitutive of a democratic-style community, he warns that democracies also include 'the possibility of durable and serious disagreement over substantive matters and that this disagreement will tend to dissolve community or generate a tyranny of the majority' (Strike, 2000, p. 623). Strike concludes with the proposition that the idea of community can still be useful for schools, so long as it is accompanied by a vision of a good education and the practices and social values such a vision generates. Schools are seen, in Strike's view, as institutions necessarily dedicated to, and purposefully directed towards, the promotion of learning. He sounds a clear warning against any simplistic assumption of the 'goodness of community' as a schooling ideal, at the same time as

presenting an argument for school-as-community not very different from that of Wehlage et al. (1989) noted above. To some degree, this position stands as an antidote to some of the more saccharine claims of the need for schools to be 'caring communities', reiterated in this literature (see, for example, Baker, Terry, Bridger and Winsor, 1997). Themes of caring and of democratic process thread through the literature with very little attention to potential conflicts between these orientations, other than that raised so clearly by Strike (1999, 2000).

Others have called for a redefinition of the notion of community that would reject homogeneity and celebrate difference as a cornerstone of new-style community building (Shields, 2000). In this view, the diversity present in Western society tends to be amplified in the public school systems, and thus schools are required to acknowledge diversity as a strength in their efforts at community building. There are strong Australian voices in this call too; for example, Singh's (1998) commendation for teaching 'so that ethnic and indigenous diversity is recognised as being at the core of Australianness' (p. 56).

Much of this literature is carefully argued and clearly analysed. Most of it is also speculative and hypothetical. It is clear that the case for schools as certain sorts of communities has been made, and that this case is most convincing in the situation of disadvantaged students. What is missing from most of this literature is the student voice, speaking of the actual experience of being a student in a school that is or is not attempting to generate allegiance to the project of schooling in its students.

The study

In order to get some student accounts of school experience along the dimension of school allegiance, we conducted a survey with final-year classes of teacher education students. Most respondents had left school four years earlier, and most had attended Australian schools in both their primary and their secondary education. We told them we were interested in whether they had ever felt attachment or a sense of belonging to any of their schools and, if so, what had made them feel that way. To this end, they were asked to give written replies to a series of open-ended questions about their school experiences. Questions asked them to recall their happiest and unhappiest moments of schooling, their sense of attachment to and/or alienation from certain schools and the extent to which sport or school rituals (for example, uniforms, songs, mottoes etc.) had had any effect on these feelings. We also asked each respondent about the type of school(s) attended (religious, state, private, single-sex, co-educational), whether it was rural or urban and the length of time spent

at each school. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no identification of the informants was involved in the survey responses.

Several features of this methodology warrant comment. First, the respondents were teacher education students and, as such, are likely to have more positive than negative memories of schooling. It seems reasonable to expect that young people who choose teaching as a career might be more favourably disposed towards school and schooling, and might be more likely to have felt happy at school, to have engaged with it and felt they belonged there. They may thus be expected to demonstrate a stronger form of allegiance to their old school than would the general population. Despite these caveats, we felt that finding out what their memories of schooling were like would be useful in developing a picture of contemporary Australian school experience in terms of school allegiance.

Second, in using memory work, we were aware that the results would likely provide more of an overall sense of the writer's felt response to the events described than actual accurate detail (Haug, 1987; Errante, 2000). By asking for personal narratives, we were consciously looking for the role schooling had played in generating their felt responses to school as institution. We were much less interested in the truth of any claims made – that someone had starred in basketball, that another had topped the class in Year 9 or that another had been 'picked on' by a particular teacher, for instance – than in the feelings that were generated by the task of thinking back over schooldays in the fairly recent past. Long enough ago to be recalled without embarrassment but not so long that the sensations of being 'of the school' would have faded altogether.

Results and discussion

In all, 68 students completed the questionnaires. In the following discussion, excerpts from the students' writing are quoted verbatim, using pseudonyms to protect confidentiality and enhance the verisimilitude of the responses for the reader.

By and large, the students' memories of schooling were very much bound up with the personal. They wrote easily about their own experiences, with much emphasis on the individual encounter with friends and teachers. School as a goal-oriented educational institution did not feature in their accounts nearly as much as did the people in it.

Friends

'Friends' emerged as the most important dimension in these school memories – a relatively unsurprising result, given the regularity of cultural

constructions of school friendships as lasting relationships and some recent research based on a Finnish study (Lahelma, 2002). Indeed, the majority of respondents insisted that their sense of belonging to school was most clearly related to having friends.

Erin: [Belonging] was not so much the school but the students who were mainly friendly and accepting.

Robert: I don't think my school had any practices which fostered allegiance. It was a great time of my life, but only through peer friendships and the fun we had with other peers that made it so.

Angela: Your friendship groups make you feel like you belong …

These responses also reveal a certain degree of ambivalence to the school as institution, in terms of a readiness to deny any overarching attachment but to validate the interpersonal connections made there.

While many of the respondents' happiest memories of school involved their friendships, fights with friends and the difficulties of negotiating friendships featured frequently in unhappy memories of school, with many reports of 'teasing', 'bullying' and 'having petty fights with friends'. For some, finishing Year 12 was an unhappy memory because it meant 'leaving all my friends'. For others, moving from one school to another (most commonly the shift from primary to high school) involved unhappiness because of initial loneliness and the effort needed to re-establish friendship groups.

Involvement

Much of the respondents' talk about belonging and community involved shared experiences. Being part of something, usually a team or a group involved in extra-curricular activity, was seen as important in producing a sense of belonging which, in some instances, developed into a sense of being part of the whole school, as Jane and Harriet indicate:

Jane: When I was performing in the school play (Yr 12), it was an amazing experience. I felt like I was a great part of the school and I was so sad on the last night, but it was definitely my happiest memory of school.

Harriet: Classes and achievement don't help you feel attachment, but I found being involved in the school community through extra-curricular activities did. For me, music helped me to be part of the school and feel as though I belonged. After all, I was an important member of both band and choir.

Those who recalled having leadership positions in the school and those who had been part of victorious teams often reported that they had felt proud of their school.

Deborah: I was very involved in the school community, extra-curricular activity, leadership and decision-making. I guess that I felt proud to be a part of the school.

Grace, who spent some of her school years in the United States, clearly articulates her sense of pride in her team's victory and, in doing so, captures the feeling of being swept up in a sense of belonging to the larger whole:

Grace: [My happiest memory of school] was standing on the High School oval at the end of the football game. In the frosty air, the crowd blended into a great roar with the band somehow blasting through with a rendition of 'We will rock you'. I was frozen, surrounded by my friends and grinning from ear to ear. My Junior Varsity team (I took stats and got to travel to all the games) had just won their division. The cheerleaders were ecstatic and it was wonderful!

In these excerpts, the sense of involvement echoes that described in the work of Wehlage et al. (1989). For these people, it was their involvement in a school activity – usually some sort of performance – that gave them a felt sense of belonging to the immediate group and through this to the institution. Once again, it was the particular incident rather than the school per se that was featured in their responses.

Location

Some respondents explicitly invoked a familial notion of community. Those who had attended boarding school were the most likely to offer this impression. Others, especially those whose schooling had taken place in a country town, wrote warmly about the sense of being known by the school and the wider community. In these cases, the sense of shared location – having grown up in the town in which their schooling had taken place – afforded a special sense of belonging. Here, Tara, a country girl who boarded in town, expresses both these feeling:

Tara: I was attached to my primary school in the country. The majority of the students were also from rural settings. We all enjoyed the same things. I then went to an all-girls' boarding school where we lived on the school grounds. I lived with all the country girls so we all felt like sisters after five years of living together.

On the other hand, those whose schooling had involved moving from one school to another were more likely to recall feelings of dislocation and alienation, both from the school and the wider community.

Geoff: My first high school was a school we moved house to be able to attend. It was a great school and my education was good but it was detached from feelings of community I was used to. I had not grown up with the same experiences as the other students, the area was different and the school felt more like a chore than a natural place to be. I felt like an outsider looking in – especially with socialising.

For some, it was the fact that their parents had been active in the school community, and for others it was because their siblings had attended the same school, which gave them a sense of belonging.

Greg: While attending primary school I felt attachment to the school because I had a brother and sister there […] I had grown up around the school and felt that being part of the school was being part of the community, it was a natural place to be. I had grown up with the same people and we all shared the same experiences […] Parents taking an interest was a strong factor. At primary school my mother was often involved in classroom/excursion activities and she was on the School Council. My father was coach of all my sports teams and we even had the Principal over for dinner. This sense of community made me feel very attached and a part of the school.

In these cases, the school is described in terms of deep personal familiarity (or lack thereof in the case of Geoff) – the sense of belonging derives from the recognition of the place, its style and the connections made between it and family.

School uniforms and rituals

Our informants were divided as to the worthiness of school rituals in establishing community. Some saw the wearing of uniform, regular assemblies, school mottoes, logos and a school song as instrumental in provoking allegiance, while for others these things were dismissed as irrelevant, boring and, particularly with regard to the school song, 'corny'.

Hayden: The private school I went to was big on school identity. School uniforms, inter-school sports etc. I didn't want to be part of this identity. When you create an identity this is often reinforced by ridiculing students from other schools, bullying. It can set up bullying and racism e.g. our school is best and the other school is full of poofs and let's go beat them up.

For many, uniforms were seen as a good idea as they made everyone equal, worked against students trying to outdo one another in 'cool'

fashion and helped create a school identity. Some female respondents also wryly mentioned that uniforms did relieve them of having to make daily decisions about 'what to wear'. For one respondent at least, the uniform was not seen as sufficient to establish a sense of belonging:

> Rebecca: Other than our school uniforms, I never felt like I belonged to a particular school as a whole. I felt like I belonged to a certain peer group and to certain classes but never a whole school.

Sport

There was division with respect to sport, which for some respondents had formed a central part of their enjoyment and involvement with school, while for others it was regarded as unimportant, if not downright offputting. Ian, for example, was enthusiastic about the role played by sport:

> Ian: For me and my friends sporting events were very important for feeling attached to the school. All through school I and the same group of friends were involved in successful sporting teams and we bonded together and this went into the classroom. We were proud of ourselves, our teams and when recognised by the school, proud to have contributed. I found myself being proud to wear the school colours/logo when visiting other schools.

Whereas others were much more low key:

> Patricia: Most schools place a lot of importance on [sport] but there is only a small percentage of students who are exceptional athletes – what other virtues do they have?
>
> Jane: Sporting events (swimming and sports) were valued more than rituals etc. However, we still had a large proportion of students who were not interested in either of these events.

For those for whom sport did function to align them with school values, the significance of Wehlage et al.'s (1989) proposition about the positive outcomes flowing from identification with the school was abundantly clear. However, for the non-sporting types, the importance of his caveat that not all students will respond to calls for identification with school was also very clear.

Teachers

Teachers, as reasons for feelings of attachment to school, were mentioned fairly frequently in these accounts, albeit not so often as friends. Good

teachers, teachers who 'cared', were seen as essential to students' sense of belonging.

Hayden: Year 7 camp we had a teacher who loved us all as individuals and who developed a class identity and a strong class unity. We all cried at this camp at the thought of leaving him and the class as a whole. I don't think any of us had felt such a strong sense of belonging and attachment to a group and a teacher before … It was the teachers who formed a bond and made learning rewarding. Supportive teachers encouraged us and made school a great place to be.

David: All teachers in high school knew your name – this made you feel like you belonged.

Lucy: I think caring staff make a more 'belonging' school …

On the other hand, 'bad' teachers, teachers who acted unfairly or neglectfully or without respect for students and their feelings, were recalled in the accounts of the unhappiest times at school.

Erin: Writing out the phone book every art lesson after I had poured out heart and soul into a piece of art work …

Gretel: Being told I was useless by my year 8 teacher and being physically threatened when answering her back – the result was I threw the desk at her and spent several hours in the Deputy Principal's office.

Karen: Wetting my pants at assembly in year 3. I had put my hand up but wasn't noticed until it was too late. I was either too shy or too scared by the authoritarian system (or both), to dare to just leave and go to the toilet without permission or leave the line while assembly was in progress to see the teacher who stood at the back of the line.

Megan: Not understanding a question in a test and being ridiculed in public for the answer I wrote down.

The stories, however, detailed individual teachers in relation to individual students. There were very few comments about teachers as a group, as a school staff, as representing the school or even as teachers of children and subjects. In the positive accounts of teachers, they were generally identified on the basis of their individual personality characteristics rather than with any particular school subject, although the year level was mentioned in recollections of primary school teachers. There were very few stories of teachers as subject teachers: no wonderful teachers of maths or memorable teachers of physical education. Perhaps even more notably,

there was virtually no mention of the school principal in these accounts of schooling.

Conclusions

In general, these young people recalled their schooling in a positive light – as was to be expected from a group of teacher education students. It is notable that their stories are inflected with current 'good teaching' rhetoric, possibly a discourse they have encountered in their university classes. In addition, the choice of data gathering through personal narrative called on them to produce material that was self-oriented. Thus, they tell of individual triumphs – and individual disasters – reflecting, too, the stress on 'the individual' and 'treating them as individuals', which is still a favoured dictum of post-progressive, early 21st-century schooling. Our informants remembered their schooldays in terms of their personal friendships and individual development, rather than in terms of group engagement with an institution.

Lying not far beneath the surface of these accounts are some worrying issues for teacher educators. For instance, the picture of community proffered by our young informants aligns very closely with Strike's familial metaphor in which community rests on a sense of sameness and unity in an atmosphere of warmth and nurturance. Our respondents wrote of being part of a closely knit group as young people in small country towns, as boarders at school, as players in teams. These experiences were readily identified as binding, as constitutive of 'the school' – even if some among them said it was the group really and not the school at all.

This study of what makes 'community' at school presents us with some insights consistent with some of the theory canvassed earlier. As cautioned by Strike (2000) and others, we can see how in these accounts the very process of building togetherness also worked at the same time to constitute others as outsiders. These 'others' were the ones who didn't play sport, whose parents weren't on school council, who had no siblings at the school and who weren't able to relate to the teachers, much less see them as caring. The presence of these others operates at the edges of these accounts and is only sometimes allowed to come to the fore. 'Good – if there's something for everyone' comments Kelly about her perception of sport in the school, thereby reminding us that the teams and the cheering and the triumph and the fun are not universally enjoyed.

Clearly, there is a task for teachers and the school as a whole to build understandings of mutuality and respect so that all school members can share in the project of schooling, albeit in a range of different ways. The old-style familial notion of community reproduced in these accounts is

not likely to be applicable to many of the schools and classrooms the graduating teachers will encounter in their workplaces. Rather than abandon the community concept, we urge the development of schooling practices that involve a sense of belonging, such as has been shown to be important in achieving positive schooling outcomes. These practices will require a new concept of community, one that is built around a recognition of diversity and an awareness of the value of difference in the life of the school and that of the wider society.

As noted earlier, Strike made a crucial observation about a warm, caring environment in schools as possibly necessary but certainly not sufficient for the 'vision of a good education'. The accounts of our teachers-in-waiting appear to underscore a schooling experience characterised more by the former than the latter. One would hope that in their aspiration to be great teachers they will see their roles not only in terms of creating a warm, caring environment for their students but also in terms of generating a love of learning in their school communities. Because, as Strike reminds us, at the end of the day that is what schools and teachers are for, and that is the vision around which the school community should surely thrive.

11 Conclusion

While each of the preceding chapters has moved towards its appropriate conclusion, it is now time to reflect on the whole and to make some comment on the generalisable features that have impinged on young people's understandings of themselves as belonging to a particular place, people and cultural group, and from this to a broader notion of community comprising state, country, nation and beyond.

Firstly, it appears that the perspective of the children as knowers was amply justified in this work. The children emerge from the series of studies as consistently interested and aware of the possibilities of process and governance in the classroom and the school, which would involve student participation and debate about matters of the general good. In the interviews, it was the children who spontaneously made connections between elements of classroom process and school management (for example, secret ballot, majority rule) that reflected the processes of civil society. They did this in ways that were evidently untaught – they had never been asked about what they thought of such matters before. This is not to suggest that the children have all the answers or that they are somehow privileged visionaries of the truly civil society. There are many things they do not know and have not been exposed to – some of these have been identified in these chapters as comprising spaces for urgent educational action. At the same time, the positions taken up by the children (around questions of people's rights and freedom, for example) would appear to be more in line with Rawls' (1972) vision of 'natural justice' than are some of the more systematic practices of schools and governments, which make clear decisions about people based on accidents of birth and involving race, class and gender.

In this research, the children are seen to support in various ways the concept of individual freedom as a basic human right in terms of choices of religion, preferred clothing, capacity for movement around the world and places to live. At the same time, they are not so ideologically committed

to individual choice as to be blind to questions of the general good. They spoke of the sharing of privilege, of recycling materials and clothing, of working on the farm to feed all the people in the city and of needing to act together to produce a more orderly classroom. In this they clearly operate as being committed to maintaining fairness and participation in the social context as well as to individual rights and freedom.

While for most of these children the concepts raised in the discussions were regarded as novel and definitely not part of the normal daily stuff of school and classroom, it seemed that the school is an important mediator of their perceptions of the workings of a society that is ideal, effective and just. While some of the younger children were inclined to decry as 'not fair' their accurate perception of the teacher's overweening formal power in the classroom and, relatedly, their parents' power at home, the older children appeared to have adopted a more pragmatic stance in their rationalisation of this use of power as being necessary for the smooth running of the school and classroom. Furthermore, the older children had come to realise that teacher power was not absolute but depended on their consent in order to operate – 'If we weren't here she wouldn't have anyone to talk to ...'. With this perception we see the children writing themselves in to the dominant order of the classroom by undertaking a role they appear to relish. The children want to have a say in how the school works, and are rightly suspicious of some of the practices of collaborative classroom rule construction if it appears that such frameworks are token rather than genuinely structured into the power relations of school and classroom. They are keenly aware of the teacher's position within this task, and recognise the teacher's ultimate power of decision making – 'then she won't write it down!'.

From the standpoint of teacher education, this research appears to indicate that we may be at a 'tipping point' of transition between the idea of the individual whose learning must merit individually focused attention and whose needs must be individually assessed and responded to and, alternatively, the need to educate for social well being, a vision which sees the good of the whole society as implicitly the goal of school education. The dominance of the individual as the target of educational action developed rapidly in the educational thinking of the past century, such that 'treat them as individuals' had become the mantra of teacher education and of schools' promotional materials. With hindsight, this change can be seen as a reaction against the rule-bound and repression-laden classrooms of Victorian times, in which the teacher was positioned in powerful control and children's voices were rarely heard. Certainly, the children whose voices appear in these pages seem to be happily convinced of their individual right to have a say in terms of their responses to the questions raised. To be known and recognised as individuals continues to be important to the students in our

schools. However, on the basis of our findings, we would also say that to be able to participate in the group to which one belongs may be equally important, and that the idea of the general good would form part of the regular content of school education. Advances in environmental education from the standpoint of social and ecological sustainability appear to have much in common with the position advocated here. In a similar vein, a properly conceived citizenship education would surely provide an arena for thinking and acting on behalf of the group, the class, the school and the wider society and, as such, would ideally form part of the formal curriculum in all schools.

At this stage we are not in a position to propose how best to proceed with education for citizenship, nor is such a position the point of our endeavour. On the basis of our analysis of the series of studies detailed here, we would contend that there is probably no one right way but that each school and teachers within that site must work out how best to treat the subject in ways that relate to the local context, and also to move beyond it to make connections with the wider dimensions of city and state. However, it does seem clear that a rote learning of facts is insufficient to generate the sort of truly democratic participation in governance that the children seem to want, and which would appear to align most closely with the rhetoric of participatory democracy as practised in Australia. In this conclusion we echo Haste (2004), who writes:

> *Civic knowledge is not enough: such knowledge has to become salient to the individual through the experience of participation in relevant action, through the negotiation of identity with others, and through incorporating narratives about values, selfhood and national identity into one's self definition.* (p. 433)

We believe that through our series of investigations we have made a small beginning in this process by providing an opportunity whereby the children engaged in a negotiation of values and identities, both individual and national. Our hope is that schooling will provide them with ongoing opportunities for such work.

Certainly, the logical outcome of an education geared to the provision of the necessary knowledge for future citizenry would generate the desire to be involved and would involve national recognition and allegiance. Moreover, such an education would also continue moving outwards, like the pebble in the pond metaphor, to embrace a globalised vision of citizenship.

At this stage it is not possible to comment on the degree to which these typifications of children's thinking offered here hold true for students at higher levels in the school. The young people in the interviews showed very little of the widespread disaffection for school and community frequently encountered in studies of adolescents. They emerge as perhaps

a little naïve, as positive and hopeful, secure in their sense of rightfulness of their place and their ways of being. It would appear that childhood for these young people may still operate as a protected zone wherein some of the harsh realities of high school and beyond have not taken hold. Undoubtedly, in a few years' time they, too, will become caught up in the peer-governed group thinking that privileges certain styles of dress, behaviour and, indeed, thinking so familiar in the adolescent literature. Citizenship education in the secondary years may need to address a different set of dimensions than that which is being suggested from these investigations of primary students' thinking. On the basis of the research detailed here, we would make the same argument as we did at the beginning of this project: that any such curriculum should be developed in terms of current adolescent thinking rather than once again comprising what an expert group might deem to be appropriate and necessary knowledge.

Ultimately, the goal of education at all levels is perhaps best summarised in the Adelaide Declaration (1999), as one which would involve the production of a participatory and well informed citizenry with 'the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society'. It is a goal that all of us in education will continue to strive to meet.

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Knowing our place

Knowing Our Place examines the way in which children view their world. It poses questions of citizenship and how children come to a sense of belonging in their community of nation, family, classroom and school. The book describes and analyses the responses of more than 400 children to a series of open-ended questions.

While the fundamental aim of the book is to identify and describe aspects of children's thinking as they grapple with their developing sense of being in the world, there are evident implications for the project of citizenship education.

Judith Gill is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at the University of South Australia. She has been a high school teacher in Australia and North America and has been engaged in academic research into gender and equity issues as well as citizenship for many years. The material in this book is drawn from her research work with the late **Dr Sue Howard**, a colleague at the University of South Australia.

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