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AUTHOR Hutchinson, Frank
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ABSTRACT

This paper argues the importance of not only understanding how "cultural editing" may limit our images and those of our children for creating non-violent futures, but also of the need for quality responses by teachers and teacher educators to such editing. Cultural editing is a term futurists use to describe processes both within formal and non-formal education that are likely to restrict imagination about social alternatives, including alternatives to violence, and to hamper action competence or skills in non-violent democratic participation. Drawing upon new research in schools, a strong case is presented for an explicit futures dimension in the school curriculum and for a re-conceptualization of "literacy" to include more optimal forms such as skills of social imagination and action competence in the non-violent resolution of conflict. A number of working principles are advanced relating to active listening to young people's voices on the future, applied foresight, and empowerment. (Contains 29 references.) (EH)

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Frank Hutchinson
Faculty of Health, Humanities and Social Ecology
Locked Bag 1
University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury
Richmond, NSW 2753
Australia

Transcending Violent Futures: A Missing Dimension in the School Curriculum?

It has been commented that much of what happens in our schools is about driving into the future whilst looking in the rear vision mirror. This metaphor has been extended to picturing our young people as, in many cases, crash victims of 'future shock'. Even if we question the cynical nature of this comment, we may see some truth in its claims to describe reality and potential reality. Yet, is the situation more complex and open? Even if there is taken-for-granted knowledge about 'perpetual' trends in violence, are there opportunities for resistance? Notwithstanding fore-closed images or guiding metaphors about our schools and other social organisations, are there site-specific opportunities for our teachers and teacher educators to become practical futurists? Are there opportunities for choice and engagement in helping to build cultures of peace?

Schools, Cultural Editing and Restricted Images of 'the Future'

Our metaphors, images and assumptions about the world, about our schools and our children's futures and their children's are likely to play an important part in what we do or do not do in the present. Such images may not only be taken for granted but may rebound on whether we attempt to help create non-violent futures. Even if we would like a less violent future, we may assume that the task is too difficult and by our

own inaction, contribute to a self-fulfilling prophecy (Masini, 1993; E. Boulding & K. Boulding, 1995).

In this context, it is important to note that there are major traditions of thought that tend to 'edit out' schools as sites of much, if any, genuine possibility in resisting violent trends. Schools in some radical critiques may be relegated to a mechanistic reproductive function. Teachers may be seen as largely 'authoritarian dupes' or 'structural dopes'. The predominant metaphors may be ones in which teachers are little more than technicians on a factory production line unthinkingly working for agendas set elsewhere, 'quality control' on manufactured outcomes and 'a docile workforce'.

In more conservative or economic rationalist versions, there is also foreclosure of the future. The metaphors of teaching and schooling are likely to be couched in the language of 'competitive excellence', restated myths of 'the hidden hand of the market place' in a time of globalization, and of 'learning organisations' in which schools learn from businesses how to become entrepreneurial. Rather than schools being seen as potential sites for contributing in various ways to creating non-violent futures, they may be pictured more narrowly as places for adaptation to market-place demands, the quickening pace of technological change and 'the future'.

Critical futurists use the term 'cultural editing' to describe processes both within formal and non-formal education that are likely to restrict imagination about social alternatives, including alternatives to violence, and to hamper action competence or skills in non-violent democratic participation. Cultural editing is closely related to the concept of 'cultural violence' used in peace research. The latter refers to those forms of cultural editing in which 'texts' on potential reality exclude as unrealistic the possibility of transcending the institution of war, selectively make 'invisible' or condone violent acts or structures, normalise double standards on violence in times of war and times of peace, and rationalise as 'perpetual' contemporary trends in gender, racist and other kinds of violence. In such cases, guiding images, symbolic representations or taken-for-granted knowledge of what is and what might be cut our capacities for learning beyond hatreds and social hypocrisies and for actively working toward non-violent futures (Galtung, 1990; Slaughter, 1991; Hutchinson, 1996a).

Such editing may be illustrated in various ways from the global to the school levels. Acts of physical assault and murder are in peacetime normally the subject of strong moral and criminal sanction. Yet equivalent acts of physical violence or fighting, even though greatly multiplied in number and scale in wartime, may become matters of honour and heroism. They may be sanctioned in the name of the nation state or some other 'sacred' cause as in the former Yugoslavia notwithstanding the enormous human suffering entailed.

The explosion of communal violence in 1992 in Los Angeles followed an episode of 'jury blindness' in the Rodney King case. A non Afro-American jury denied the indisputable empirical evidence, as recorded on video, of the excessive use of force by police against an Afro-American person. Such an episode illustrates how some forms of cultural editing may make racist violence invisible.

A further example may be given to show aspects of the complexities involved at the community level when individual acts of extreme violence occur in societies and cultures that selectively condone male violence and the use of weapons. As demonstrated by the tragic events in recent times at Dunblane in Scotland and in separate Australian episodes at Strathfield in Sydney, Hoddle St in Melbourne and Port Arthur in Tasmania, a rampage by a male killer armed with a semi-automatic weapon can result in the deaths of many innocent people. In such circumstances, the normal community response has been one of moral outrage and widespread grief. However, such acts of multiple murder may be culturally edited, in ways that make invisible possible underlying causes, through individuating and medicalizing what has happened in each case (Reardon, 1985; Connell, 1995; Adams, 1996).

Rather than seeking to critically understand possible links with deeper problems such as gendered violence and hegemonic constructions of masculinity, media violence and armament culture (cf Figure 1), the violent episodes may be looked at in very reductive terms. The problem may be restricted to profiling the characteristics of 'an aberrant individual' or a 'weird loner' with 'an unstable mind', 'a diseased mind', 'criminal mind' or 'an evil mind.' The myth of neutral technology, even if the technology is purpose-built for killing, may be intoned as in the gun lobby's mantra, 'people, not guns, kill people'.

Figure 1. Physical violence, media violence and cultural editing: A satirical comment. (Source: Moir cartoon, *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 1, 1996, p.14.)

Pushed by strong public disquiet and the efforts of NGOs, such as the Coalition for Gun Control, there has been the major achievement in Australia since the Port Arthur massacre of an agreement by the Federal Government and state governments to introduce uniform national gun control legislation. The estimated nearly four million automatic and semi-automatic weapons that have proliferated in the community are to be banned. This anti-violence move has happened in spite of the rigorous opposition by the gun lobby.

Unlike the United States, Australia has followed the model of societies such as Canada that have recognised the link between the ready availability of weapons in the community and the greater risk of the use of such weapons in cases such as the Port Arthur massacre and other violent crime. Whilst non-automatic firearms remain the most widely used weapons in domestic violence cases and youth suicides, at least, a significant start has been made in hazard reduction and countering gun culture. The myths of the gun lobby's claim to largely unrestrained entitlements or freedoms to possess and trade what feminist critics have described as 'toys for the boys' are being resisted. Similarly, there is some significant ongoing resistance to those violent American media trends that portray greater home security in terms of a neo-medieval, home-fortress mentality.

Notwithstanding the end of the Cold War, there has not been any equivalent achievement in relation to 'a peace dividend' from the Australian defence budget. Even with the embrace of the dismal strictures of economic rationalist thinking in recent times for substantial savings in the health, education, social welfare and youth employment budgets, the Australian defence budget for the acquisition of 'new and more powerful weapons systems' has remained sacrosanct. Arguably such cultural editing in relation to the use of destructive weapons by individuals in peacetime as 'bad' but the potential use of even more destructive weapons in wartime as 'good', needs to be problematised in our schools and universities if the conditions for peacefulness are to become more durable.

Some additional examples may help to illustrate both the difficulties and challenges teachers and teacher educators may face. At the school level, cultural editing may occur within the formal curriculum, as when there is very selective presentation of the heroic deeds of one's own nation's history and a very ethnocentric reading of the histories of other

societies and cultures. This is shown, for instance, in the ways in which the frontier wars against Australian Aborigines in the nineteenth century were long completely ignored in Australian school texts. In these same texts, the ANZAC legend was strongly developed with its keynotes of a national rite of passage through the blood-soaked Gallipoli campaign in World War I, great heroism and noble sacrifice of men in arms. There were also in these books plentiful images of 'pride of race' in the British Empire, with its 'civilising mission' in so-called 'backward countries' (Hutchinson, 1973, 1977, 1992).

Other examples of cultural editing may be found in the invisibility or near invisibility of women in many school text book histories. What may be regarded as prerequisites for education in the twenty-first century, such as an explicit futures dimension and a global perspective, may be missing. Rather than a priority for intercultural understanding and democratic action competence, the emphasis may be on reciting past national achievements whether in peacetime or wartime.

Cultural editing may occur also within the informal school curriculum. There may be a lack of attention to problems of bullying and of racist and sexist discrimination. Such problems may be 'played down' or even not be seen as problems at all. If there are not quality responses by ourselves as teachers and teacher educators to any such circumstances, then the implicit lessons given to our children are likely to be those of taken-for-granted, violent futures.

Our Students' Voices on the Future: The Principles of Active Listening and Co-operation

With cultural editing, some voices may be given a very limited hearing or, perhaps even no hearing at all. Yet, learning that is empowering and socially creative is not about one-way communication, linear modes of reasoning, dogmatic closure and a failure of active or compassionate listening to our children's voices on the future. Whether in relation to peace education or other educations, the conventional mug-and-jug metaphor about teaching, in which the jug's contents of 'expert knowledge' are poured into empty mugs, denies reflexivity and the possible value of more participatory and collaborative approaches. The potentials for co-learning as well as from introducing collaborative learning tech-

niques in the classroom, are greatly undervalued:

> ...Hundreds of research studies have been done on the relative impact of cooperative, competitive and individualistic learning experiences ... The various studies of cooperative learning are quite consistent with one another ... indicating very favourable effects upon students. They develop a considerably greater commitment, helpfulness and caring for each other regardless of differences in ability level, ethnic background, gender, social class, or physical disability. They develop more skill in taking the perspective of others, emotionally as well as cognitively... (Deutsch, 1994, p. 8).

With the conventional model of teaching, futures are foreclosed rather than opened. There is a likely foreclosure in what is meant by 'literacy' or 'the educational basics' and what are interpreted as valuable, worthwhile or valid knowledge sources about times past, times present and times future. Rather than the teacher or the teacher educator as a practical futurist, the perspective is one in which the approach to schooling is very much 'business as usual'. In terms of the sociology of knowledge, or as some feminist critics have preferred to describe it as 'the sociology of the lack of knowledge', certain sources are likely to be strongly privileged in 'the texts' of conventional pedagogies. Other sources, such as voices from the low-income or the two-thirds world, and from women and children are likely to find more difficulties in getting a serious hearing for their views about war, peace and the future.

To recognise, however, that there are restricted 'texts' on the future in conventional pedagogies, whether as to gender relations, the institution of war or other assumed social invariances, is not the same as fatalistically accepting such 'texts' as the only true reading of potential reality. The partiality of such 'texts' is both a challenge and an opportunity. There are signs of this in non-formal educational contexts in the futures work of a range of NGOs, INGOs and social change movements as well as in varying efforts in formal educational contexts to negotiate preferable futures (Beare & Slaughter, 1993; Boulding, 1988; Gilbert, 1996; Harris, 1996; Hicks, 1994; Hutchinson, 1996 a,b; Reardon, 1988; Slaughter, 1996).

In critical futurist and peace research literature, the metaphor of the

future as a fan is sometimes used to highlight the varied potentials for non-violent resistance to feared futures:

> ... At every present moment the future stretches out before us like a giant fan, each fold of which is a possible future. We can range these from total catastrophe on one side to the fulfilment of human potential on the other. To each segment we can assign a rough probability ...
>
> For some of us the range of decision is very small; for the prisoner in jail who has not served his term tomorrow will be very much like today - there is not much choice. For all of us, however, there is some choice and we cannot escape a moral responsibility to choose ... Every decision that any human being makes, changes, however infinitesimally, the probability of catastrophe ... or betterment ... (K. Boulding, 1985, pp. 214-215.)

Whether as teachers or teacher educators, are there crucial challenges to become practical futurists? Are important questions raised about personal choice, professional foresight and responsibility? More particularly, are there important questions about what quality responses may be made to our children's feared futures? (Hicks & Bord, 1994; Hicks, 1996; Hutchinson, 1996a.)

Learning Environments and Cultures of Peace: The Principle of Non-Violent Ends and Non-Violent Means

To be a practical futurist implies active listening to the voices of our students on the future and the encouragement of classroom milieux congenial to futures-thinking and non-violent values and skills. Attention to the procedural values or principles of active listening and of co-operative rather than strongly competitive learning styles are likely to be important for any practical efforts in our schools to create non-violent futures. A related principle may be stated. It concerns the relationships between the images we may hold of better futures and the processes we are prepared to use in attempting to reach such a future, whether in schools or other social organisations.

Even with believed good educational goals relating to a non-violent future, it is important not to neglect questions of appropriate means. If

authoritarian means are used, such means easily corrupt educational or other social policy goals, irrespective of whether the ends are worthy in themselves. To teach about the problems of violence in society or the world at large in tightly prescriptive, morally strict or authoritarian ways may be just as flawed as a laissez-faire approach that choses to ignore such problems.

As far as is feasible as parents and teachers, we should protect our children from gratuitous multimedia violence, but we should do so in empowering ways. To simply impose a ban, for example, on violent television programmes or violent computer games, without adequate dialogue with our children or without encouragement of critical multimedia literacy, paradoxically may have unwanted effects. This is especially likely if the broader culture is one that selectively condones masculine violence. The very act of banning violent programmes or games may intensify the interest and desire, especially among some older boys who lack non-authoritarian male role models in the home and the school, to watch these very same programmes or to play these very same games. Similarly, the seemingly easy answers such as the call for television receivers to be sold with a 'v-chip' device so that parents can censor excessively violent programmes is a 'technofix' solution that neglects questions of children's media literacy and whether children live in peaceful or predominantly violent home environments (McNicholl, 1996).

To attempt optimal forms of reconciliation between non-violent ends and non-violent means in our schools and classrooms may present major challenges but are likely to be crucial to practical beginnings of active dialogue and active hope among our students for non-violent rather than feared futures:

> ...The school should try to give its students optimal possibilities to express themselves as having co-influence and responsibility in real situations. The goal is to have students develop a desire and ability not only to meet the future but also to contribute to its shaping ... (Bjerstedt, 1992, p. 30).

Broadened Literacies for the Twenty-first Century: The Foresight and Empowerment Principles

In preparing for the twenty-first century, it has been argued that our schools have an important, if not unambiguous, part to play. The caricature of many of our schools as places for driving into the future whilst looking fixedly in the rear-vision mirror is just that - a caricature. There are institutional constraints but there are also contradictions and site-specific opportunities that may be realized to a greater or lesser extent. Opportunities may be missed in our schools to help negotiate non-violent

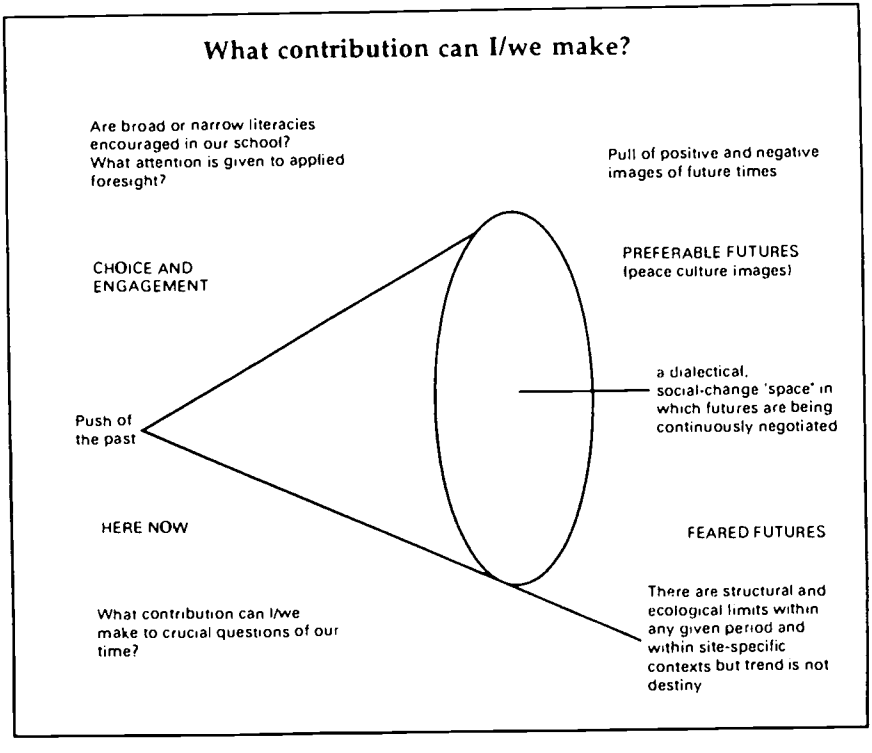

Figure 2. Schools as sites of possibility: Negotiating new literacies for the twenty-first century. (Source: Hutchinson,1996, p. 269.)

futures. Perhaps what is crucial is that less of these opportunities are missed.

Rather than organisations that must be driven blindly and take their passengers uncomprehendingly to some 'future shock' destination, there are varying opportunities in our schools to extend what might be termed 'the foresight principle'. There are varying opportunities to encourage the defensive or anticipatory driving practices in our schools. There are varying opportunities for our students not only to learn from past travels or hindsight but from developing new 'maps' of potential reality, includ-

Figure 3. Negotiating nonviolent futures: Can hope be made practical rather than despair convincing? (Source: Tandberg cartoon, *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 11, 1996, p. 26.)

ing less violent routes for would-be travellers into the early decades of a new millennium.

In this context, there are arguably important considerations for ourselves as teachers and teacher educators. In a world that is becoming more interdependent but is confronted by violent trends, is there an increasing need for ourselves to be more futures-oriented in what we do or do not do? Are there important questions relating to choice and engagement? In preparing our children for the twenty-first century, is more needed than the traditional 3Rs and the appeal of the apparent security of 'the good old days', with a 'back to basics' curriculum? Does the answer lie in adding the often proferred R or ROM of computer literacy? Or, in actively listening to our children's voices on the future, do we need to reconceptualise 'literacy' in more optimal ways such as skills of foresight, empathy, social imagination and action competence in the non-violent resolution or transformation of conflict? (Goleman, 1996; Hutchinson, 1996a; Jensen, Larsen & Walker, 1995).

To begin to effectively work for more peaceful futures, how important is it for motivation that our students are able to imagine what such futures might be like? Instead of the implicit R of Resignation to a feared, violent future, do we need to encourage skills of social imagination about non-violent alternatives and an explicit futures dimension across the curriculum? Do we need what Elise Boulding (1988) has described as 'image literacy' or the Rs of Resourcefulness in envisaging peaceful futures and of Respect for the rights of future generations? As commented by Hicks (1996, p.11), 'existing research on children's views on the future ... is one of the strongest endorsements of that need' and related needs.

Such broadened notions of literacy relate closely to practical considerations of whether our students at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels are primarily empowered or disempowered by their learning experiences (Figure 2). In what we do in our classrooms, our schools, our colleges and our universities, is hope made practical about more peaceful futures rather than despair convincing about 'perpetual' trends in violence? (Figure 3). Can we make practical contributions to lessening illiteracy about cultural editing and foreclosed images or 'texts' on the future? For teachers and teacher educators the challenges are great, but there are site-specific opportunities for choice and engagement

in helping to build non-violent alternatives and cultures of peace (Harris, 1996; Hicks, 1996; Hutchinson, 1995, 1996a, b, c).

Note: This is a slightly revised version of a presentation at the 16th General Conference of the International Peace Research Association, Brisbane, July, 1996.

Notes on Contributor

Frank Hutchinson is a lecturer in the Faculty of Health, Humanities and Social Ecology at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. Previously, he has worked as a curriculum consultant at both the primary and secondary school levels in areas of social literacy and alternatives to violence. He has written widely on issues concerned with educating for peaceful, socially just and environmentally sustainable futures. He did his PhD on the topic 'Futures Consciousness and the School' (University of New England, Australia, 1992). His most recent publications are as contributing author to *New Thinking for a New Millennium* (edited by R. Slaughter; Routledge, 1996) and as author of *Educating Beyond Violent Futures* (Routledge, 1996). He is a member of the International Peace Research Association and the World Futures Studies Federation.

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