



EDUCATION FOR HEALTH

EDITORIAL

The Pragmatics of Editing an International Journal: Communication in a Multicultural Context

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The impact of culture on interpersonal communication in a variety of settings has been much studied and referenced (Gudykunst et al., 1988). Less routinely considered is the cultural context in which a manuscript is written and from which it is read. This issue is particularly pertinent to international journals in which manuscripts are both written and read by professionals from a wide variety of cultural settings.

The cultural disparities between researcher/author and reader impact both on how the data is presented and how it is interpreted. As a reader, my interpretation of scientific results is in part a reflection of my own experience and value system. These may differ from those of the researcher; we may vary greatly in the significance we attribute to the findings. This is unavoidable, as all of us have a somewhat limited knowledge of other cultures. Yet this also offers us the opportunity to better understand global variations in values and belief systems.

On reflection, I have come to realize the importance not only of the content authors actually submit for publication but also of that which they *omit*. As an editor who lives and was raised in a country in which, at least at times of peace, freedom of speech has been unquestioned, I can only suspect that political and religious factors may influence writers' willingness and capacity to publish certain types of research, interpretations of those research results and commentaries. Such concerns are challenging to understand in the context of modern western thought, in which the verity of science is unquestioned.



It is therefore the charge of readers of an international journal to consider these factors as they reflect on the material presented. This is a particularly important consideration for readers of a journal such as *Education for Health*, in which the impact of social factors on health is often discussed. *Education for Health* will at times publish articles that we believe are likely to be controversial, and we will invite commentary on them. The primary author's freedom to respond to such commentary however, should not be assumed.

Scientific journals exist as a forum to disseminate and advance knowledge. An international journal such as *Education for Health* offers readers the opportunity to apply lessons learned in one part of the world to similar settings in another. The Internet and open journal access has allowed for virtual dialog and discussion. In the absence of open societies globally, readers could benefit by viewing international writings through the filter of a multidimensional lens.

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Reference

GUDYKUNST, W.B., CHUA, E., & TING-TOOMEY, S. (Eds.), (1988), *Culture and Interpersonal Communication*. California: Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA
