

## Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

Several statements in the Resnick-Gilchrist review, "Literacy Development: A Laboratory for Social History" (Vol. 30, No. 4, 1990), demand comment:

1. Resnick and Gilchrist (pp. 668–669) surprisingly miss the point of my citing the pathbreaking research of Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole. That point, which the reviewers muddle, is that literacy and schooling are *not* synonymous. I wrote about the need to limit the presumptions we bring to studies of literacy, *not* about the consequences of schools. The point they attempt to make against my work is in fact my own.

2. Their 1990 criticism of my 1979 essay on literacy, education, and fertility, reprinted in *The Labyrinths of Literacy* prepared in 1986 and published in 1987, cites a study published in 1988! Despite their subsequent claim "It would be more correct to note...", the kind of study they cite only begins to meet the strictures I advanced in 1979 but it hardly proves the point. The important issue remains unresolved.

Writing about three books in another review in the same issue, H. S. Bhola manages to misrepresent, disparage, and unfairly attack my writing in *ad hoc* mentions. On page 661, he twice attempts to reduce it to the absurd by first "caution[ing] the reader against drawing the hasty conclusion that literacy, therefore, is useless in the world of the 1990s" and then wholly misrepresenting a quotation. Neither reference is accurate. On p. 664, he refers with no specifics to my (and Brian Street's) "excesses."

Harvey J. Graff  
*University of Texas at Dallas*

To the Editor:

The wounded tone of Professor Graff's response is completely misplaced. Preliminary hypotheses should be subject to modification. They are not etched in stone. When a body of research establishes a relationship between maternal education and child mortality, that should be acknowledged. We did not hold him responsible for findings published after the appearance of his work; we do now fault him, however, for refusing to acknowledge the contingent nature of his own argument. As to the relationship between schooling and literacy, we are pleased that what we

have written reinforces the position he himself took. Our readers will have to decide who is muddling what.

Daniel P. Resnick  
James Gilchrist  
*Carnegie Mellon University*

H. S. Bhola did not wish to respond.

*Editorial note:* Letters to the Editor are printed verbatim.