

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-46767-4 - Mind and Social Practice: Selected Writings of Sylvia Scribner

Edited by Ethel Tobach, Rachel Joffe Falmagne, Mary B. Parlee, Laura M. W. Martin and Aggie Scribner Kapelman

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Sylvia Scribner's research and theory have been monumental in forming the emergent field of cultural psychology. Her studies of reasoning and thinking in their cultural and activity contexts added new concepts, methods, and findings to what many are now viewing as a distinctive branch of psychological studies. She was among the first to combine ethnographic studies with experimental studies in order to determine relationships among indigenous literacy and logical activities and their cognitive outcomes.

Mind and Social Practice brings together published and unpublished work from Sylvia Scribner's productive and wide-ranging career. The book is arranged chronologically and includes five section introductions by the editors, placing Scribner's work in the context of her life, her commitments, and the political and intellectual events of the times. Her later, more theoretically rich writing is enhanced by an appreciation of her earlier work.

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Selected writings of Sylvia Scribner

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Series foreword

This series for Cambridge University Press is becoming widely known as an international forum for studies of situated learning and cognition.

Innovative contributions are being made by anthropology, by cognitive, developmental, and cultural psychology, by computer science, by education, and by social theory. These contributions are providing the basis for new ways of understanding the social, historical, and contextual nature of the learning, thinking, and practice emerging from human activity. The empirical settings of these research inquiries range from the classroom, to the workplace, to the high technology office, to learning in the streets and in other communities of practice.

The situated nature of learning and remembering through activity is a central fact. It may appear obvious that human minds develop in social situations, and that they come to appropriate the tools that culture provides to support and extend their sphere of activity and communicative competencies. But cognitive theories of knowledge representation and learning alone have not provided sufficient insight into these relationships.

This series was born of the conviction that new and exciting interdisciplinary syntheses are under way, as scholars and practitioners from diverse fields seek to develop theory and empirical investigations adequate for characterizing the complex relations of social and mental life, and for understanding successful learning wherever it occurs. The series invites contributions that advance our understanding of these seminal issues.

Roy Pea
John Seely Brown

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Preface

When Sylvia Scribner died in July 1991, suddenly and much too soon, we began almost immediately to plan a volume of her collected papers. We wanted her work, in her own voice, to be readily accessible to students and colleagues, and we wanted the volume as a whole to reflect the broad range of her interests. Papers written by colleagues in tribute to Sylvia Scribner and her work were published last year by Cambridge University Press in a volume entitled *Socio-cultural Psychology: The Practice of Doing and Knowing* and edited by L. W. Martin, Katherine Nelson, and Ethel Tobach.

Because of the richness of Sylvia Scribner's thinking and the breadth of her concerns, a collection of her papers could have been selected and organized in a number of ways. We decided to present her scientific writings in the context of her life, the time in which she lived, and her political and moral commitments. These elements are of course intertwined for all scientists. Unlike most of us, however, and from the beginning of her work as a psychologist, Sylvia theorized these connections explicitly as part of doing her science, and she enacted her societal concerns concretely, daily. We hope this volume will convey the unity of Sylvia Scribner's life and work as a scientist, teacher, colleague, union employee, poet, activist for justice and peace, spouse, mother, friend — a woman with a sense of humor and an appreciation for beautiful things.

The papers are arranged chronologically within sections organized around certain themes. The sections themselves are arranged roughly in chronological order of the emergence of these themes as a major focus in Sylvia's work, though we hope their continuity and development throughout Sylvia's life will be evident. In our brief introductions to the sections we identify the thematic focus and say something of its relationship to Sylvia's work and life during that period. Sylvia's style was to work collaboratively with students and colleagues. At the end of each section we acknowledge this aspect of her productivity by

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listing selected coauthored works relevant to the theme of the section. An extensive bibliography of Sylvia's writings is given at the end of this volume.

In the general introduction we convey how Sylvia's work, politics, and family were interconnected throughout her life. The editors were each part of Sylvia Scribner's scientific, political, and personal worlds (a unique blend in each case) at different phases of her adult life. In the course of editing this collection we all contributed our knowledge of and perspective on Sylvia's life and work and collaborated on the editorial essays. Mary Parlee had final responsibility for the general introduction, Rachel Joffe Falmagne and Ethel Tobach for the introductions to Parts 1–4, and Rachel Falmagne, Laura Martin, and Ethel Tobach for the introduction to Part 5. Aggie Scribner Kapelman, Sylvia and David Scribner's daughter, researched and wrote the biography that expands and enriches the general introduction by telling Sylvia's life story from a different perspective with different emphases.

Julia Hough of Cambridge University Press supported this project enthusiastically from the beginning. Barbara Rogoff kindly agreed to contribute the foreword. The cataloguing of Sylvia Scribner's papers, correspondence, and library was begun by Emily Filardo and continued by Malka Grinkorn. Malka Grinkorn also helped us assemble Sylvia's published and unpublished papers, and made it possible in many ways for this volume to be produced and for the materials to be prepared for archival use. Sylvia Scribner's published and unpublished papers will be deposited in the Archives of the History of American Psychology at the University of Akron, Akron, Ohio.

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Foreword

Barbara Rogoff

Watch the WRIGGLE
Of my toes
In the air.

My head is on the ground
And I don't care.
Some people think it neat
To always have their feet

Planted firma
on the terra
where it is

A dull biz.

If pie is in the sky
Treading dirt
Won't bring it nigh.

Sylvia Scribner

Sylvia Scribner was a practical theorist, with her theoretical contributions well grounded and her practical aspirations sky high. Her work across the decades provides a continuing legacy of inspiration. This volume provides a collection of her ideas in written form that gives those of us who knew and worked with Sylvia a chance to revisit her ideas and those who never knew her to explore her line of thought. It provides us with a chance to examine the development of Sylvia's ideas historically, with access to her older and newer classic work (much of it never published before), in Sylvia's words and in the words of her editors and biographers.

In this volume, we see Sylvia as an individual – a poet, a scholar, a woman, a colleague, and a mother, committed to connecting broad ideas with practical

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social action – and as a participant in and contributor to societal institutions. Institutional forces that shaped her life include the constraints on the roles of women in academia and factories and the societal issues of her times, including civil rights, the interpretation of intelligence tests, and the role of schooling in the social order; she contributed to shaping institutions through her social action, institutional leadership, and clear-minded analyses of the relation of individual and society.

In the sociohistorical approach in which Sylvia has been a key pioneer, it is clear that our work, the institutions and times in which we work, and the goals toward which we work all fit together. Comprising the grand enterprise that connects and extends beyond particular individuals is the rich detail of the dynamics and feeling of personal relationships as well as the enduring value of individual contributions. The relations of individual and society, of particulars and universals, were central to Sylvia's work, and in this volume we have the opportunity to learn from her ideas as well as to learn about how Sylvia as a person contributed to and was shaped by the institutions and societies in which she participated.

I am honored to have the opportunity to provide the foreword to this collection, both because of my gratitude to Sylvia as a person and because of the importance of her ideas and their contextualization by the editors in this volume. Sylvia's editors provide an extremely valuable account of the background and events surrounding Sylvia's written work, including biographical information far more complete than that with which I was familiar. My contact with Sylvia began two decades ago; I had a partial understanding of the course of her ideas and work before that time, and was glad to have the chance in reading preliminary sections of this volume to learn about the larger trajectory. My contact with Sylvia, though she died in 1991, continues in the present, as her ideas continue to provide me with inspiration.

I met Sylvia about 1975, on a visit to her and Mike Cole at Rockefeller. I was a doctoral student at Harvard, working on a dissertation that was greatly influenced by their work in the book *Culture and Thought* (Cole & Scribner, 1974) and in the *Science* article on formal and informal education (Scribner & Cole, 1973). During my first visit and subsequent correspondence, Sylvia became an informal but essential dissertation advisor. She provided me with a depth of understanding of important concepts of activity theory and compatible research methods, as well as with her warmth and character as a person. Sylvia did not mince words in giving suggestions for my research, and important suggestions they were, offered straightforwardly and generously. In subsequent years, I have continued to gain from Sylvia's intellectual acumen, both in reading her written work and in formal and informal discussion. I have learned from her clarity of thought, her commitment to social action, and her wit. My work continued to be inspired by her example and her ideas.

Sylvia's work on cross-cultural use of logic, classification, and memory was

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influential in bringing attention to the practical direction of thinking, especially in her work distinguishing empiric and theoretic uses of logic. In everyday circumstances, she noted the hypothetical reasoning of nonliterate Liberian people who declined to consider the hypothetical connections between premises in logical syllogisms. Regarding logical syllogisms, Sylvia wrote:

This will be a miracle if it works.

It works.

It is a miracle.

It is also a syllogism

proving syllogisms

are miracles.

The cross-cultural work on cognition was transformed with the collaborative translation of Vygotsky's *Mind in Society* in 1978. The groundbreaking research on the role of literacy in cognition (Scribner & Cole, 1981) has reoriented the views of the field on how particular practices (such as Vai letter-writing, Q'uranic literacy, and school-based literate tasks) relate to the development of specific cognitive skills – a major shift from the field's earlier assumption that literacy would provide a general transformation in thinking.

Sylvia's subsequent work involved a continued, close examination of the relation between individual thinking and its use in institutions such as the workplace and the school. She focused on locating mathematical activities in work and cognitive tests as particular formats of knowledge and thought embedded in their respective institutional histories. In explicating activity theory and social practice and in articulating concepts of development and history in sociocultural thinking, Sylvia exemplified the advances possible in taking a transdisciplinary perspective.

Sylvia developed the notion of the mutually constituting processes of societal institutions and individual action, developing over historical and personal time. Her research showed a commitment to using methods as a tool carefully designed to address specific questions in order to elucidate individual and institutional/cultural change. Her studies employed ethnographic analyses of naturally existing cognitive activity as people engaged in social practices, combined with experimental cognitive tasks designed according to analyses of the social practices.

She emphasized a functional approach to the study of cognition as people engaged in social practices in the institutions of their culture. She drew attention to the notion that people's cognitive strategies are purposive, flexible, and minimize the effort needed to accomplish a task, examining this idea in her observations of dairy workers as they assembled orders. Sylvia integrated the work of the head and of the hands in the cognitive processes of purposive activities. Her work reveals a deep understanding and respect for the complex mental processes for action that workers carry out, which may or may not be

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facilitated by the formalisms taught in school or by those introduced by management to order the workers' process. Sylvia's colleagues and students extend her ideas and work in her absence.

The commitment of Sylvia's colleagues and students to the continuation of this line of thinking and work was made concrete by the establishment of the Sylvia Scribner Award from the American Educational Research Association. I was deeply honored to receive the first Scribner Award; Jean Lave received the second.

Sylvia's work is both classic and ahead of our times. In the years preceding her death, I urged Sylvia to put her ideas together in a book to make them more accessible. Some of her most important ideas were in unpublished and difficult-to-access papers; she was the sort of author who did not repeat her ideas in several outlets. Unfortunately, Sylvia's own life span did not allow her to pull the work together in a book herself. So it is fortunate for all of us that her colleagues and daughter have taken on the job.

Shortly before Sylvia died, she asked me if I would think about illustrating some of her poems. (She knew that I was in the midst of illustrating a children's book written by Sheila Cole, Mike's wife.) A sheaf of poems came to me in the mail about the time that Sylvia died. I have quoted several of them directly, in this foreword.

In preparing my contribution, I have struggled to find a way to characterize Sylvia as a person, a scholar, and a colleague. I have listened to her other colleagues for their efforts to do the same, and have noted that for each of us there is a somewhat (or even quite) different characterization. My attempt to sum it up in a few words was clarified by referring to the poems she sent. In reading them I was struck by how they are whimsical with a punch. I think that characterization applies to other aspects of Sylvia's life and work as well. Consider Sylvia's poem on the human cognitive process of writing and responding to poetry.

Please Try AI

Put it in your APPLE

See what it can do.

Will it know

The rhyme I want

Is through

Or blue?

(Not gu-ru

Ne-ver new)

Will it read the metre

Carry on the beat?

Scan a set

of standing lines

Into running feet?

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Will it glimpse
The image
Be-neath the metaphor?
And seeing
Fall to weeping
As it
Never wept
Before?

When I tried to think about how I might illustrate Sylvia's poems, I was stumped, because they are cerebral wit and commentary more than visual story lines. Accompanying the words of her poems, as I read them, is Sylvia's laughter framing her strength of commitment. The best illustration I can think of for Sylvia's poetry, as well as her scholarly wit and wisdom, is this view of Sylvia herself.

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A daughter's perspective

Aggie Scribner Kapelman

I'm feeling awe
for Ma and Paw.

How nice they were
To have a Her
They knew a She
Was what to be.

Something good
Through womanhood.

How truly noble
Great and wise
That they saw life
Through my clear eyes.¹

Sylvia Scribner's soul was a political and philosophical blend. She uniquely understood how seemingly minute actions of human behavior could become critical components of the whole. This was evident throughout her professional life as union organizer, researcher, and scientist.

Sylvia Cohen was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1923 and she was unique from the start. In a town that was steeped in the American legends of sea captains and whaling expeditions, she was a first-generation American. In a town with few Jews, Sylvia's grandmother had been killed in a European pogrom.

Sylvia's relatives were immigrants. Her maternal grandfather, Mates Kranzler, had sailed from Austria, passed through Ellis Island, and settled in New Bedford in the early 1900s. Having to support five children from his first marriage and eventually six from his second marriage, Mates opened up a small junk shop. Sylvia's mother, Gussie, was the youngest of five children born in Austria and it was Gussie who had the primary responsibility of raising the

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younger children. Gussie was not, however, only a caregiver but an employee and part-time manager of her brother's flower shop. Sylvia's paternal grandfather brought her father Harry and his siblings to the United States from Russia. When still a child, Harry sold pencils on the street and went to work in a circus. He later became an itinerant peddler in the South and eventually opened a junk store in New Bedford.

Gussie and Harry married and had two children, Shirley and Sylvia. Education was valued in their household. Although they had little formal education, Gussie and Harry were well read and self-educated. Sylvia often mentioned how proud her mother had been when a college professor had once assumed Gussie had been formally educated, when in fact she had only gone to school through fourth grade. Harry was known in town as an "independent cuss" and "socialist" because of his independence of spirit and strong sense of justice. Sylvia evidently acquired some of his traits. As a child, she was labeled a "firebrand" and she took nothing for granted. One cousin fondly remembers that her brother was called "Manny." Sylvia, at seven years old, logically asked why her cousin could not be called "Womanny." Even then she constantly challenged her world.

At a young age Sylvia became enamored with the written word, a theme threaded throughout her life, and she started writing poetry when she was seven. By the time she was nine years old her poetry was published in the *New Bedford Standard Times*. At age ten she won a Blue Ribbon for a poem entitled "Be a Man." During these early years several of her poems were published in the paper.

Active in high school, Sylvia was a debater and worked on the school newspaper. When she graduated, she was class valedictorian. That summer, she worked on an assembly line at Nonquitt Mills, Inc., in New Bedford. Years later she would recall the work as laborious. It was clear, however, that her experience at a relatively young age must have given her an appreciation for the importance and tremendous strength of workers.

Sylvia went to Smith College on a full scholarship on the basis of her poetry, which she had continued to write throughout high school, as well as her academic achievements. Throughout her life she appreciated the education she received at Smith and spoke highly of women being educated together, in the absence of men. She spoke not only of the camaraderie of being among other women but of the importance of having women as mentors.

During her years at Smith she was an academic achiever. As a freshman she was a William Allan Nielson scholar and in October 1941, as a sophomore, she was awarded the Arthur Ellis Hamm Scholarship Prize on the basis of her academic achievements during her freshman year. In the fall of her sophomore year, she held the position of vice president of the American Student Union (ASU).

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The ASU was an outcome of the growth in student movements on college campuses in the early 1930s.² At that time, students became active in the antiwar movements and revolted against the increasing call for suppression of their civil liberties. In 1935 the ASU held its first session. Created by the merger of two student groups, the National Student League and the Student League for Industrial Democracy, its agenda included racial equality, equal educational opportunity and economic security, and support for the labor movement. By the mid-1930s leaders of the student movement “saw the working class as the primary agent of social change”³ and some of the former leaders joined the labor movement. By 1941 its national platform included promoting labor’s right to organize and bargain collectively and advocating full civil liberties and academic freedom. That summer, Sylvia attended the ASU’s summer camp in Delaware, where she participated in seminars that provided formal training in political thinking and activity.

Sylvia soon became involved in the politics on campus. Among other activities, in May 1942 Sylvia became a member of the Interracial Commission, which was started by the Interfaith Commission on the Smith campus. The Interracial Commission was formed to delve into existing racial problems. It became an affiliate of the NAACP and held suppers and discussions on issues involving racial inequities. During this period of time Sylvia attended the Group Prejudice and Interfaith Commission of the NE Student Christian Movement conference in Boston on issues concerning minority groups. Issues raised concerned prejudice directed toward African Americans, Japanese Americans, and Jews. By October 1942 Sylvia became chair of the Interracial Commission. Although World War II was foremost in people’s minds, racial equality was never far away in hers. Linking the two, Sylvia stated: “Just as the outcome of effort to extend full democracy to minorities is dependent upon the outcome of the war, so does victory require an immediate halt to all discriminatory practices.”⁴ With Sylvia as its chair, the commission organized a course on the role of African Americans in American history and formed a poll tax committee. While on the committee Sylvia went to Washington and spoke with legislators to oppose the poll tax.

At Smith, Sylvia became a labor economics major and eventually met her mentor, Dr. Dorothy W. Douglas, assistant professor of economics. In retrospect, it appears that Dr. Douglas’s work influenced Sylvia’s. Dr. Douglas wrote about the workers in society generally and about women more specifically. She was on the executive committee of the American Association for Labor Legislation, studied trade unions in the USSR and was a visiting professor of economics at the University of East Africa in Kenya at age seventy-four. From unions to Africa the similarity in interest and study, as will be seen, appears uncanny.

After her graduation from Smith in December 1943, as valedictorian and Phi

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Beta Kappa, Sylvia was employed by the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE). During the time that she worked for the UE, she was involved with numerous issues: minority issues, women in industry, equal pay for equal work, improved working conditions, and politics – themes that resonated throughout her life.

Beginning her career as the UE research director and an organizer, she was limitless as to her capabilities. She immersed herself in issues involving women and minorities.⁵ Over the years, she used her burgeoning knowledge to organize outlines for courses on minorities and economics. She had significant knowledge as to the numbers of women in the industry and their rates of pay. Sylvia administered educational programs for the union and helped develop the union's first health plan by doing a comparative study of other countries. She was, however, particularly interested in the issue of women in industry.

Scribner's work on behalf of women impacted thousands of workers and set new standards in the industry. She focused on preventing the layoffs of women employees. In the process of breaking down the various jobs and their pay, she became acutely aware that women had lower-paying jobs than men. Several women's jobs were upgraded because she argued successfully that women had greater dexterity and therefore should be recognized for that fact with increased pay. Sylvia was also a liaison between the union and women employees, informing them of the union's interest in their working conditions and what the union was trying to do to help improve their situation. In addition, according to one union representative, she helped the union staff members themselves see how and why women were being discriminated against in industry.

Over the years, one particular organizational victory remained "dramatic and vivid" to her.⁶ Scribner led the union's negotiations with a large electrical manufacturing plant in New Jersey. The plant had several thousand workers, approximately 35 percent of whom were women. The plant determined job scales according to an evaluation plan for jobs and wages. This plan maintained wage differentials for women workers, the majority of whom were on the production line. The employer justified its wage differential for women by making the distinction that their work required fine eye–hand coordination and not heavy manual labor. Scribner researched fatigue and found studies that established that repetitive movement could result in greater fatigue than occasional heavy manual labor. Scribner focused and organized the women's discontent into a fight for comparable worth. Regular meetings were conducted and women were encouraged to develop leadership capabilities. Women wore buttons to work and leaflets were distributed. Sylvia also was able to garner the support of the male employees who had initially been afraid to upset the social structure. They came to realize that the issue was important to all employees and was not a fight between the sexes. The organizing efforts were successful and the plant removed its pay differential for women. Thereafter, UE became the first international union to organize a conference concerning the elimina-

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tion of discrimination against women workers and on developing leadership among women.⁷

Scribner's work with the UE seems to be the forerunner of her later work in the field of psychology. She became fascinated with the process of learning and adapting one's environment to both increase individual knowledge and gain advantage. In this vein, Scribner's union activity gave her access to industrial plants and thousands of employees where she gained insight into the ingenious ways the workers manipulated their environment to improve their working conditions. One such example was at a Singer plant in New Jersey where, in or around 1950 or 1951, the UE organized a strike that lasted for six months. The strike was prompted by the employer's position that it was going to change the incentive plan formula by which employees were paid. In reality, the employer's formula did not work to the employees' advantage. Employees who increased their production levels in fact received only minimal increases in pay. To allow for a more equitable system, the workers had devised their own system wherein they would vary the production level of each worker. In order to sustain this system the workers had to discipline themselves to either reduce or increase their productivity levels and back up their production levels with work records. Therefore, the employees did not want the employer to change a system that they had elaborately manipulated to work for them rather than against them. The union was unable to dissuade the employer from dismantling its payment system, however, and eventually the plant moved to the South, a notoriously low-wage district.

With the onslaught of the McCarthy period, the UE, branded a communist organization, took on the fight. During this period of time, Sylvia was involved in a myriad of issues, writing policy papers on the effect of the Taft-Hartley Act, obtaining dossiers on congressmen who were going to be interviewing union representatives before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and trying to determine who, if anyone, involved with the union might turn informer. More and more shops dropped out of the union and the membership eventually declined from five hundred thousand to sixty thousand or fifty thousand.

While working for the UE, Sylvia met David Scribner, general counsel for the union from approximately 1937. In David she met an individual whose social and political goals merged – justice and social change for the working class. In 1953 they married. Their son, Oliver, was born in 1954 and in 1958 a daughter, Aggie, was born. David also had three daughters by an earlier marriage, Toni, Wendy, and Nancy, with whom she was close. Although her sister had died in 1969, Sylvia was also close to her sister's daughter, Barbara. In later years, she had much joy with all of their children.

In 1958 Sylvia became the assistant to the director and operational research analyst at the Jewish Board of Guardians. Subsequently, as her interests expanded to include mental health and psychology, she held several positions in the mental health field while she was going to school for her master's in

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psychology. By 1967 she was assistant clinical professor of psychiatry (psychology) at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Sylvia was a working mother in a generation that was not yet familiar with the term. Working and going to school at night, she received her Ph.D when she was forty-five years old. Yet despite her academic achievement and accolades she worried that she would be unable to obtain a job because of what she perceived was her advanced age and because she was a woman. Shortly thereafter, however, she obtained a position at Rockefeller University.

In 1972, while at Rockefeller, she conducted her first cross-cultural research in Liberia, West Africa, among the Kpelle people. I joined my mother and together we spent five months in Sinyea, a small village on the edge of the bush, approximately three hundred miles from the capital of Monrovia. Without indoor plumbing and electricity, and with a leaky tin roof in the rainy season, Sylvia worked and assimilated. Within three days of our arrival, the two of us hiked sixteen or so miles into the bush to see the coming out of the Sande society – girls who had lived in the bush for three years, without their parents, learning about traditional life. Sylvia danced to the drums, like everyone else. She had a way of enjoying people that transcended any cultural boundaries. At times she would sit on a small wooden table next to the general store in Sinyea, playing whist with some of the men in town. Other times she might join in a sip of palm wine or listen not only intently, but enthralled, to a storyteller in town although none of the words were in English. She refused to use mosquito netting over her bed because it was too “Western”; amusingly enough, in Sinyea she was called “Kwita” – Kpelle for Western town. At the time of her departure three chiefs of nearby villages gave her a going-away party – quite a tribute for someone from a Western town. Although she never returned to Sinyea, she went back to Liberia several times to conduct research among the Vai.

In 1978, Sylvia left Rockefeller and became an associate director at the National Institute of Education in Washington, D.C., and thereafter a scientist at the Center for Applied Linguistics.

Sylvia became a professor in the Developmental Psychology Program at the City University of New York, Graduate School and University Center in 1981, where she stayed until her death. In 1982 she founded the Laboratory for the Cognitive Study of Work, where all her interests seemed to come together. She continued to work at the Graduate Center until shortly before her death in July 1991.

Politics was essential to Sylvia. She was vocal with her opinions and believed in action. In 1953 she was arrested and spent the night in jail after demonstrating against the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. She marched on Washington and in New York. Civil rights, opposition to the war in Vietnam, women’s rights, workers’ rights – all were supported and discussed. She believed in clear, precise thinking and in taking a stand on the issues. These

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discussions were not confined to the adults in her life but included her children. She was interested in their opinions, engaging them and challenging them to probe further. Her children went with her on peace marches and learned about activism. Most important, they learned that a professional life did not have to be, and should not be, devoid of politics and social consciousness.

Although clearly engaged with her work and her family, Sylvia had many other passions. She continued to write poetry throughout every stage of her life. She also enjoyed the theater, music (both jazz and classical), and cool hours at the ballet with David. For those close to her, there are many memories of her dancing with David in their living room. Nothing better than a few close friends and music for an evening. In fact, their dancing started in the late 1940s at the jazz clubs in Harlem. It has been said that at one club in particular, they were the only people allowed to dance because they were just so good. Sylvia also had a wonderful sense of humor, appreciating, and participating in, both silly farce and sophisticated double entendres.

Sylvia's life was not simple. She juggled many things and overcame many stereotypes. No matter what the situation, however, her intellect and strength of ideas could not be ignored. As in her poetry, Sylvia could capture an idea and run with it to a new dimension as she put words and thoughts into a framework that was unique. She was able to convey her ideas so clearly that people often commented what a pleasure it was to discuss something with her or to read her books and articles.

Although she had several different fields during her lifetime there was a natural progression. From the labor movement to psychology her primary interest and devotion lay in the nature of people and their work. It was the foundation of her life.

It seems impossible that time has passed without her. At least we have her words.

Notes

1. "A Daughter's Praise," by Sylvia Scribner, December 19, 1980.
2. The information set forth regarding the history of the American Student Union was obtained from Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement 1929–1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
3. *Ibid.*, 196.
4. *The Smith College Associated News*, October 6, 1942.
5. Much of the information regarding Sylvia's UE work was obtained from an interview of union representative Walter Barry by Emily Filardo in 1992.
6. "Comparable Worth in the Forties: Reflections by Sylvia Scribner," interview by June Duffy, *Women's Rights Law Reporter*, Rutgers, 8, nos. 1–2 (Winter 1984): 107.
7. *Ibid.*, 105–107.