

ACTIVIST SCHOLAR

SELECTED WORKS OF
MARILYN GITTELL



ROSS GITTELL
KATHE NEWMAN

EDITORS

ACTIVIST

SCHOLAR

SELECTED WORKS OF
MARILYN GITTELL

This book is dedicated to Marilyn Gittell, for her belief in and commitment to democracy; for her passion to make democracy stronger; for inspiring family, friends, colleagues, and students to make a difference in the world; and for showing us how to make a difference through her teaching and research.

ACTIVIST SCHOLAR

SELECTED WORKS OF
MARILYN GITTELL

EDITORS

ROSS GITTELL

University of New Hampshire

KATHE NEWMAN

Rutgers University



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

FOR INFORMATION:

SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
33 Pekin Street #02-01
Far East Square
Singapore 048763

Acquisitions Editor: Michele Sordi
Editorial Assistant: Megan Krattli
Production Editor: Laureen Gleason
Copy Editor: Linda Gray
Typesetter: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.
Proofreaders: Jenifer Kooiman and Kate Peterson
Cover Designers: Ravi Balasuriya and Gail Buschman

Copyright © 2012 by SAGE Publications, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gittell, Marilyn.

Activist scholar : selected works of Marilyn Gittell / [edited by] Ross Gittell, Kathe Newman.

p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-4129-9762-1 (cloth)

1. Social participation—Research. 2. Political participation—Research. 3. Communities—Research. 4. Gittell, Marilyn. I. Gittell, Ross J., 1957- II. Newman, Kathe. III. Title.

HM711.G58 2012 301—dc22 2011004382

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

11 12 13 14 15 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Preface	vii
<i>Sara Miller McCune</i>	
Notes on Contributors	ix
Introduction	xi
<i>Ross Gittell and Kathe Newman</i>	
Acknowledgments	xxi
PART I. EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION	1
<i>Introduction by Maurice R. Berube and Ross Gittell</i>	
1. Prologue and Epilogue From <i>Confrontation at Ocean Hill–Brownsville</i>	15
<i>Marilyn Gittell and Maurice R. Berube</i>	
2. Education: The Decentralization-Community Control Controversy	31
<i>Marilyn Gittell</i>	
3. School Reform in New York and Chicago: Revisiting the Ecology of Local Games	61
<i>Marilyn Gittell</i>	
4. The Effect of Geography, Education and Labor Market Segregation on Women’s Economic Status in New York State	79
<i>Marilyn Gittell</i>	

PART II. COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING	117
<i>Introduction by Kathe Newman</i>	
5. Chapters 1 and 2 From <i>Limits to Citizen Participation: The Decline of Community Organizations</i>	133
<i>Marilyn Gittell</i>	
6. Expanding Civic Opportunity: Urban Empowerment Zones	161
<i>Marilyn Gittell, Kathe Newman, Janice Bockmeyer, and Robert Lindsay</i>	
7. Race and Gender in Neighborhood Development Organizations	193
<i>Marilyn Gittell, Jill Gross, and Kathe Newman</i>	
8. Community Organizing, Relationships, Collaboration, and Research: Lessons From the Fund for Community Organizing Initiative	237
<i>Charles Price, Barbara Ferman, and Marilyn Gittell</i>	
PART III. WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND SOCIAL CHANGE	265
<i>Introduction by Nancy A. Naples</i>	
9. Changing Women's Roles in Political Volunteerism and Reform of the City	281
<i>Marilyn Gittell and Teresa Shtob</i>	
10. Activist Women: Conflicting Ideologies	295
<i>Marilyn Gittell and Nancy A. Naples</i>	
11. The Gender Gap: Coalescing for Power	301
<i>Marilyn Gittell and Nancy A. Naples</i>	
12. Social Capital and Social Change: Women's Community Activism	315
<i>Marilyn Gittell, Isolda Ortega-Bustamante, and Tracy Steffy</i>	

Preface

I met Marilyn Gittell as a student during her first year of teaching (at Queens College, a part of the City University of New York). I was in the middle of my junior year and in the process of changing my major from English literature to political science. I can still remember the passionate way Professor Gittell spoke of state and local government. She helped us understand that it was of vital importance to the strength of communities and neighborhoods, to entire cities and regions, and to the healthy functioning of democracies.

Marilyn had a forceful way of driving points home. She once asked us in class where we would be if the NYC Sanitation Department refused to collect our garbage. I remembered this moment vividly about 10 years later, while wading past piles of huge, foul-smelling garbage bags while walking through Soho one evening in London with my husband, just after seeing a wonderful play!

By my senior year, I had become her research assistant and a part-time babysitter for her two children, Amy and Ross. After my graduation, we stayed in touch as I began my career in publishing. A bit less than 5 years later, when I founded SAGE Publications, Marilyn and her husband celebrated with me and the man who would later become my husband. As she was lamenting the lack of a City University Press, which thwarted her desire to start a journal in the field of urban research, I announced that I was a publisher and that SAGE would be delighted to publish such a journal. Irwin Gittell became our company's first accountant. Nine months later, *Urban Affairs Quarterly* (now *Urban Affairs Review*) was born. It was the first publication to carry the SAGE imprint.

Within 2 years, SAGE was well-known in the field of urban studies and rapidly being seen as a growing publishing house in the fields of

sociology and political science, with authors and advisors of national and international renown.

Forty-five years later, Marilyn and I were still good friends and “unindicted co-conspirators.” We worked together closely on launching and defining the mission of the McCune Foundation from early 1990 until her death at the beginning of 2010. Marilyn Gittell had significant influence on the foundation’s board and helped to define its role in seeking to build social capital by supporting the grassroots efforts of women and the underserved of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties (on the so-called Gold Coast), in California.

As a mentor, role model, advisor, friend, she was unparalleled. She was also a fellow member of the world’s greatest grandmother club. She will be sorely missed—but not forgotten.

Sara Miller McCune
Founder and Executive Chairman
SAGE Publications

Notes on Contributors

Editors

Ross Gittell is the James R. Carter Professor at the University of New Hampshire's Whittemore School of Business and Economics. His scholarly focus involves applying economic and management theory to economic development issues. He received his PhD in Public Policy from Harvard University. He is the author of two books, *Renewing Cities* and *Community Organizing: Building Social Capital as a Development Strategy*, and over 75 academic articles. He has published in a variety of academic journals, including the *New England Economic Review*, *Economic Development Quarterly*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *Regional Studies*, *National Civic Review*, and *Journal of Entrepreneurial and Small Business Finance*.

Kathe Newman is Associate Professor in the Urban Planning and Policy Development Program at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. She holds a PhD in political science from the Graduate School and University Center at the City University of New York. Her research explores urban change—what it is, why it happens, and what it means. Her research has explored gentrification, foreclosure, urban redevelopment, and community participation. She has published articles in journals such as *Urban Studies*, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *Urban Affairs Review*, *Shelterforce*, *Progress in Human Geography*, *Housing Studies*, and *GeoJournal*.

Contributors

Maurice R. Berube is Eminent Scholar Emeritus from Old Dominion University. He is the author or coauthor of 13 scholarly books on

educational policy and educational history, including *The Moral University*, *Radical Reformers*, and *American School Reform*. He also was editor with Marilyn Gittell of *Confrontation at Ocean Hill–Brownsville*.

Sara Miller McCune is the publisher and chairman of SAGE Publications, Inc. as well as president of the McCune Foundation. In 1965, she founded SAGE Publications in New York City and moved the company to California in mid-1966, serving as its president for 18 years, prior to becoming SAGE's chairman in 1984. She is a graduate of Queens College of the City University of New York, where she first encountered Marilyn Gittell, initially as a student in one of her classes and later as her research assistant. Sara continues to leave her mark on the academic community, serving as a Board of Directors member of the American Academy of Political and Social Science; as a member of the University of California, Santa Barbara Foundation Board of Trustees; and as a member of the UCSB Chancellor's Council.

Nancy A. Naples is Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at the University of Connecticut where she is also affiliated with the Human Rights Institute and International Studies. She is series editor for *Praxis: Theory in Action* and *New Approaches in Sociology: Studies in Social Inequality, Social Change, and Social Justice*. She was a student of Marilyn Gittell's at CUNY Graduate Center where she worked on a number of research projects with her and urban sociologist Bill Kornblum. She is author of *Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community Work and the War on Poverty*, and *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis and Activist Scholarship*. She is also editor of *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class, and Gender*.

Introduction

Ross Gittell and Kathe Newman

Activist Scholar

As a political scientist, it is true, she has always rejected the posture of the uninvolved scholar, her politico-educational activism often embroiling her in the very issues which also constituted the subject of her research.

(“Mr. Shanker’s Vendetta,” 1974)

Marilyn Gittell believed strongly in research and scholarship that provided insights and perspective to help people engage more effectively in policy discourse and policy making. In her view, incorporating groups that lacked access to the political system and decision making on issues that affected their lives strengthened democracy and improved policy making. While others studied who had power, she studied who lacked it and why. Her efforts were strongly grounded in political theory and academic research, but unlike most academic scholars, her work had a political and public serving purpose. In its 2010 obituary, the *New York Times* characterized Marilyn Gittell as “an activist and an analyst on a range of social issues” (Fox, 2010).

Marilyn Gittell was trained as a political scientist, receiving an undergraduate degree in political science from Brooklyn College in 1952, a master’s in public administration from New York University in 1953, and a doctorate in political science in 1960. She began her

professional career at Queens College in 1960 and quickly rose in rank from instructor to full professor and director of the Institute for Community Studies, all in 7 years. In a career that spanned 5 decades, Gittell produced a substantial body of work that included 9 books, 6 edited volumes, more than 40 peer-reviewed articles, and 24 book chapters. She supplemented that with testimony to city, state, and federal governmental entities; newspaper editorials; and reports published by research centers she directed. She was a mentor to three generations of scholars, accomplishing this in classroom instruction, in seminar leadership, and through intensive relationships with students as partners in research, writing, and publications. After her passing, in urban policy forums now the question often comes up: “What would Marilyn have said and thought about this?”

Marilyn was a path breaker not only on scholarship and linking the academy to policy matters and to working-class and low-income people but also among women in the academy. Today it’s frequently said that having a family while getting tenure is extraordinarily difficult, and many female academics wait to have children until they have established themselves. But the challenges for female scholars were even greater in the 1960s. Marilyn Gittell began her career when the academy was even less accepting of women who chose to have a career and also a family. She not only did both—family and career—very well, but she also sought to transform both institutions and help make workplaces and families better places for generations of men and women who followed.

In the early 1970s, the *New York Times* reported on the recommendations she and others on the Queens College Advisory Committee on the Status of Women had made to transform the institution for working parents. A quotation from the *New York Times* captures the stark reality of the situation for women in the academy at the time, and it also reflects Gittell’s ability to always “tell it like it is” and expose the essential inequities and unfairness of institutions and institutional actors.

Current policy at the university requires a teacher to inform her department chairman as soon as she knows she is pregnant, to leave without pay at the end of the semester and to stay out of work for an entire semester. The university has the right not to rehire her. “The way it works now, it’s almost as if as soon as you get pregnant you have to get up out of bed and telephone your department chairman,” says Dr. Marilyn Gittell. (Maeroff, 1972)

Marilyn Gittell did not try to avoid controversial matters; instead, in her scholarship and publications, she confronted controversial issues regularly. Throughout her career, she challenged undemocratic powerful institutional and bureaucratic structures that made change difficult. Her first and perhaps most notable foray into a controversial issue was with the New York City (NYC) school system and with the NYC teacher's union (United Federation of Teachers, UFT) during the battle over school decentralization in the 1960s (see more detailed description of this later in this introduction and in the introduction to Part I). The powerful entities questioned by Gittell often fought back. But Marilyn did not give in or give up. She kept to her principles and used research and scholarship to try to help improve the lives of those neglected by prevailing institutions and political structures.

An illustration of this is in the early 1970s when she was up for the position of assistant vice president and associate provost at Brooklyn College. Her appointment followed her very public work on the decentralization of the NYC schools and her challenges to the NYC teacher's union. To keep her from gaining this position, Albert Shanker, then president of the UFT, launched a public battle, including a paid advertisement in the *New York Times*, in which he challenged the quality of her scholarship and her critique of the teacher's union. The fight became so contentious that eventually the *New York Times* editorial board weighed in, chastising Shanker:

It was an appearance that can only be characterized as a crude attempt at blacklisting, keyed to the warning that the promotion of a person with Dr. Gittell's "anti-union ways" would "threaten the entire relation that exists between our union and the City University." . . . By rejecting Mr. Shanker's demand, the Board of Higher Education has served notice that it has not abdicated its independence. Given the nature of the threat, it is regrettable that the board failed to accompany its refusal to surrender with a public condemnation of Mr. Shanker's vendetta against Dr. Gittell. ("Mr. Shanker's Vendetta," 1974)

Marilyn Gittell was a lifelong resident of NYC and spent her entire career at the City University of New York (CUNY) system. She loved NYC and cities in general. Much of her scholarship was focused on cities and questions about democracy, participation, and political

access. And Marilyn Gittell was fully committed to the central mission of CUNY, to serve a diverse student body, especially those excluded from or unable to afford private universities. Her values and the way she did her work and lived her life were fully congruent with the mission of the CUNY system.

In 1978, Gittell moved from Brooklyn College to the Graduate Center at CUNY and a decade later became the founding director of the Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center, a center she ran until she passed away in 2010. On its website, Gittell described the center's mission:

Our aim is to advance and promote democracy by focusing on areas of research and public policy that are relevant to the work of community groups and policy-makers. We help increase access to, and participation in, the political process—especially at the state and local levels. We provide valuable information that helps foster equity and quality of services for minorities, immigrants, and other marginalized groups. (Howard Samuels Center, www.howard-samuelscenter.org)

Under Marilyn Gittell's leadership, the center became a place where multiple generations of graduate students learned about political science, democratic theory, urban institutions, and political processes, and they learned how to do research that could help to improve the lives of those often neglected by traditional political structures and institutions.

Gittell conducted research with support from a variety of foundations, including the Ford Foundation, the James D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Aspen Institute, New York Community Trust, and the Rockefeller Foundation. And she was not afraid to challenge even the largest foundations. Unlike most grant recipients, she often had a contentious relationship with her funders. She pushed them, as she pushed her students and others, to identify what was really going on in any particular context. Her standards were high. They were about democracy. They were about maximum inclusion in politics and decision-making processes. She tried to persuade foundations to use their resources to improve the conditions and prospects for the advancement of those underserved and neglected by prevailing institutions and traditional political structures.

Strengthening Democracy

The test of the viability of our democracy, we reasoned, was in its ability to establish a functioning inclusive and participatory political system.

(Gittell, 2008/2009)

Gittell studied education, community development, and welfare and women's rights, all with an intention of making democracy stronger and improving policy and practice for those who were neglected and often left out of decision making. Incorporating groups that lacked political power, she believed, was necessary to build a strong democracy, which she believed was essential for responding effectively to economic and social change.

Beginning her career in the 1960s, she had an extraordinary window to dramatic political, social, and economic change. NYC and other large cities in the 1950s and 1960s were on the forefront of the major economic, political, and social transformations. Industrial cities were shifting to postindustrial cities. The suburbs were rapidly expanding, and the Great Migration and other demographic shifts brought new populations to the north. But occupational and residential segregation, combined with the transforming economy, reduced opportunity for many of the immigrant and traditional minority groups that had become the majority populations in cities across the United States. And importantly, Gittell argued that these groups lacked the incorporation mechanisms of the political machine that had ensured the political incorporation of so many immigrant and other groups that had come before.

In the 1960s and 1970s, city governments became more bureaucratic and professional in orientation and those who worked in government moved into the middle class and out of cities to suburbs. This happened while the population within many urban communities changed. These processes created a disconnect between city governmental agencies and city residents who increasingly looked nothing like the people managing and influencing policy making at the city institutions. The civil rights movement and the responses to urban renewal and other federal urban policies that threatened cities and their lower-income and minority residents highlighted the need

for increased access to decision making for minority and low-income city residents at the same time that city governments were increasingly less representative of and responsive to the people they were supposed to serve.

Gittell believed in the power of participation to help overcome these disconnections between urban populations and power. While other urbanists highlighted larger political economic structures and the limited power of local residents to change market conditions and the future of cities, she firmly believed that broader citizen participation would make for a stronger, more robust democracy and a stronger, more sustainable economy. She felt vindicated years later when Robert Putnam (1993) in *Making Democracy Work* found that regions in Italy with stronger civic traditions, more democratic institutions, and broader civic engagement had stronger performing economies.

As a young scholar, Marilyn Gittell initially focused on urban public school systems. In many suburban and rural school systems, there was not—and still is not—the disconnection between those running the schools and the parents of children in the school system as there was—and still is—in many urban schools. In NYC and other city school systems, Gittell found that many parents had little control over what went on in their children's schools. She argued that urban school systems could be more responsive to changing community needs and more effective if the people within the communities were more engaged in and more in control of the schools.

The idea of the participation of parents in the city schools directly challenged the prevailing power of school administrators and teachers. In the debates about urban schools in NYC, Gittell was quoted in the *New York Times* explaining this idea: “No lasting, meaningful social change can take place without ‘significant community participation, which would transform the professional’s role and revitalize public policy’” (Raymont, 1970). This put Marilyn Gittell at the center of a political storm both in NYC and nationally. City schools were a central battleground during the civil rights movement as groups sought to reduce inequities through education and individual and group mobility (Gittell, 1971). Instead of the NYC schools being a source of mobility and social change, Gittell found that institutional structures made change difficult and helped to perpetuate inequality.

Gittell was decades ahead of the field of political science, which later caught up to her with a “new institutionalism” of its own. In the 1960s in the NYC school system, she identified how institutional

structures, including civil service and union practices, could impose significant challenges for making governmental and public serving bodies responsive to residents. Leaving influence largely with professionals meant that, often, decision making was not in the best interest of the people the decisions were supposed to serve. This finding led her to challenge the pluralist view of American governance as the result of competitive interests because, clearly, some important institutions of government (including local school systems) played a substantial role in decision and policy making and were not responsive to diverse interests, including the interests of constituents who were supposed to be served.

Finding the Grassroots

Despite urban critics on the Left and the Right who argued that cities had little control over the things that happened day-to-day, Gittell thought that the community, the neighborhood, and the essential elements of day-to-day activity were precisely the things that mattered to people and engaged them in political life. She was in this, as in many things, significantly ahead of her time; the study of the “everyday” engagement now consumes vast amounts of intellectual energy and has emerged as an important area of study. While the Left looked at class, Gittell looked at the intersection of class and the other pivot points of inequality in much the way that Iris Marion Young (1990) later described the faces of oppression. While Gittell acknowledged the broad class inequalities, it was the intersection with other points of inequality that interested her. It is perhaps then not surprising that her solution wasn’t to radically transform the economic system but, rather, to incorporate those who were left out—women, the poor, people of color and others—into the political system. The inclusion of those voices, she believed, could produce social change that in turn could reduce inequality and improve cities and society.

It wasn’t just what Marilyn Gittell researched; it was how she did it. Her idea of strengthening democracy through the engagement of voices that are often left out figured prominently in her research design. There is a now burgeoning literature on participatory research, but she did that research years earlier. For Gittell, research was a collaborative endeavor performed in the processes of identifying research questions, conducting research, producing scholarship, presenting findings, and making sense of the implications and using

findings to effect change. Her interviewees were never “subjects.” They were informants, experts, and partners in conversations, research, and social change. She challenged herself and her graduate students to find the grassroots. And the research was contextualized. Her inquiries and community studies were of organizations and people in places, each with its own history and political culture. Those stories and that context made a difference in how those organizations, communities, and networks formed as well as how, as researchers, we understood them.

There is an energetic debate today within urban studies about the limits of the local. Some wonder whether there is something inherently more democratic about the local or if the local can be a restriction when we think about social change. While we’re not entirely sure of Gittell’s response, we would expect that she would say that there is something very important about the local for democracy. It’s where people live and connect and share similar interests with others, and it is where they collectively confront issues about home, education, food, and family. That is of fundamental importance. It’s often the place where the construction of the collective effort with common goals takes place.

Of most concern to Gittell were those who lacked power and were without political access to influence important matters that strongly affected their lives. For people who found it difficult to gain access to the political system individually, the creation of organizations and group efforts, according to Gittell, were important vehicles for gaining access to and voice in the political system and making demands on the system to change to meet their needs. And the formation of organizations and group efforts could also serve as “training grounds” to learn the skills and develop the habit of civic participation.

In the United States, because of the history of residential segregation and the traditional roles of women in the household and communities, the place and space of the neighborhood, the “very local,” takes on an important political significance. It can be the venue for underserved groups—for example, people of color and women—to organize collective efforts, gain political voice, and influence and develop organizations to serve their needs. It can also serve as the starting place for political participation and action. How this local approach will play out in the future is uncertain. We think Marilyn Gittell would argue that the place of the local is a critical place for incorporating people who are left out into democracy.

Organization of the Book

This book of selected works is organized in three parts with an introduction to each of the sections. The brief introductions are written by three former students and coauthors of Marilyn Gittell—Maurice Berube, Nancy Naples, and Kathe Newman—and Ross Gittell, Marilyn Gittell's son and also a research collaborator. The first topic area of Gittell's publications presented is educational reform and citizen participation. This was an area of her initial focus and on which Marilyn Gittell established a strong professional reputation and standing. It also laid the foundation for her latter work. The second group of selections is on community-based organizations and community organizing. This area of focus was central to Gittell's lifelong work, and her publications had a profound impact on the field of community development. The final section includes selected Gittell publications on women's leadership, social capital, and social change. This subject area was fundamental to all her inquiry, including her work on community development and school reform. Together, the 3 sections and 12 selections (4 on each topic) provide a collection that depicts the depth, breadth, and impact of Marilyn Gittell's work and life as an activist scholar.

References

- Fox, M. (2010, March 12). Marilyn Gittell, advocate for local school decisions, dies at 78. *New York Times*, p. D8. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/2010/03/13/nyregion/13gittell.html
- Gittell, M. (1971). Education: The decentralization–community control controversy. In J. Bellush & S. David (Eds.), *Race and politics in New York City* (pp. 134–163). New York, NY: Praeger.
- Gittell, M. (2008/2009). Letter from the director. *Howard Samuels Center Annual Report*. New York, NY: Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center, City University of New York.
- Maeroff, G. (1972). Must he also get morning sickness? *New York Times*, October 1. Retrieved from <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F20910F73C5A137A93C3A9178BD95F468785F9>
- Mr. Shanker's Vendetta [Editorial]. (1974, January 15). *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F30B15FD395F137B93C7A8178AD85F408785F9>.
- Putnam, R. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.