

WHY SOCIAL SCIENCE ?

Because Social Science Is the Fundamental Bedrock of Just Societies

By Sara Miller McCune, Founder & Executive Chair, SAGE Publishing

October 10, 2017

I am writing this blog informed by multiple perspectives—as a publisher of social science for over 50 years; as a social activist for over 60 years; and as a philanthropist for nearly 30 years.

In all of these aspects of my life, I have grown to believe in what I call “The Four Justices”—in alphabetical order: Economic Justice, Educational Justice, Environmental Justice, and Social Justice. They are all intertwined and my understanding of how we are to achieve justice in these arenas is deeply informed by the work of social scientists.

I grew up believing that I was one of the luckiest people in the world—a young person living in New York City with the freedom to enjoy theater, ballet, the outdoors, as well as access to excellent public education from first grade through college (tuition-free!). I had the privilege of serving as Queens County Students for Democrats and to participate in electing President John F. Kennedy before I was old enough to vote! Throughout my teens, I was also active in a youth organization (representing it at the White House Conference on Children and Youth in 1960, and becoming National President the year before I graduated college, four months after my 20th birthday). I saw the Peace Corps born as a result of our activism and beliefs.

My publishing career started with short stints at large firms (Macmillan in New York and Pergamon Press in Oxford); in January 1965 I started SAGE Publishing, shortly before my 25th birthday. From 1965 to 1990 we focused on becoming the finest specialist social science publisher in the world—with offices in the USA, London, and New Delhi. We have since expanded to include science, engineering, and medicine in our journals publishing portfolio, as well as establishing publishing and sales offices in Singapore, Cairo, China, Melbourne, Canada, and elsewhere in East Asia and South America. Our 1,800 employees share our core beliefs of free expression and a commitment to publishing and dissemination of research-based knowledge in print and digital media widely, actively, and fairly.

I can remember the first time a SAGE book changed policy for the better with the publication of C. Ray Jeffery’s *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design*—the mayor of my hometown used it to great effect in NYC a few years after the federal government highlighted it on the internet! We have thrown light on family violence

and what can be done not only to understand it, but also how to treat it, and what policies can be utilized to prevent it. And our pioneering work in the field of program evaluation enables governments all over the world to figure out which interventions work and which are in need of remediation or termination. When Yale's Charles Lindblom wrote *Usable Knowledge* (a Wiley publication), he was referring to the work that social scientists contribute to making better public policy. This is what social scientists bring to the table. The list is endless.

Reading about social networks and how they behave and studying organizational behavior, both in college and through life experiences, has influenced what I have done as a leader at work and in my community as a philanthropist. I am proud of the work that SAGE has done over the years publishing the work of social scientists. We have done much to train multiple generations in achieving robust skills in all types of research methodology, in pioneering interdisciplinary work in urban studies, criminology and criminal justice, program evaluation, communication and media studies, family studies, leadership, organizational management and behavior, as well as many other fields.

One of my hobbies now is to collect (and occasionally exhibit) first editions of books. My collection includes many of the books I have mentioned above—although when I think about the five holdings I am most delighted to own, it is *The Federalist Papers* that come to mind. Hamilton and Jefferson were educated men, standing on the shoulders of the political philosophers and historians who came before them.

Let's use knowledge wisely and well—for the betterment of our fellow citizens, and for the building of better societies for generations to come. Social Scientists help us do that. That's our job. It matters greatly.



Sara Miller McCune is the founder and executive chair of SAGE Publishing. Ms. McCune is the co-founder and President of the McCune Foundation and the founder of the Miller-McCune Center for Research, Media and Public Policy, which launched the award winning print and online magazine Pacific Standard. She currently is a member of the Board of both the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, and the Social Science Research Council.



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