

FREDERICK A. MILLER

Frederick A. Miller: Leveraging Inclusion as a Breakthrough OD Strategy

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Abstract

Frederick A. Miller has contributed to the theory and practice of organization change by challenging and reframing how organizations understand and leverage differences to create inclusive workplaces. With Judith H. Katz, he published the first comprehensive model and framework for implementing diversity and inclusion as a lever for strategic culture change, moving diversity from a compliance-driven set of programs to a breakthrough OD strategy linked to higher operational and bottom-line performance. Miller came of age during a period heavily influenced by the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, which significantly shaped his vision not only of what society could be, but also of the role organizations needed to play in moving society toward a greater equality of opportunity and participation. His work reflects a lifelong commitment to pushing back on the status quo to help change organizations into places where human beings can be fully human and where each person can grow, do their best work and have a meaningful experience. Many of Miller's insights come from observing and learning from his clients, engaging with peers on corporate and not-for-profit boards, and studying

FREDERICK A. MILLER

what is happening in the world. In collaboration with Katz and others in his firm, he has developed several simple models and practical tools and processes that make it easier for clients to move towards a workplace in which people can do their best work in service of the organizational mission, vision and strategic objectives. Miller believes that, fundamentally, organizations are only as productive as the interactions between people. Significant organizational change for today's organizations requires an adjustment in the quality of interactions between people. Conscious Actions for Inclusion is a tool that provides a set of behaviors communicated in simple, common language that opens the door to greater clarity and enhanced ways of interacting.

Key Words: civil rights, culture change, diversity, high performing organizations, inclusion, National Training Laboratories, organization development

Introduction

An organizational heretic is “someone who sees a truth that contradicts the conventional wisdom of the institution to which she or he belongs—and who remains loyal to both entities, to the institution and the new truth (Kleiner, 2008).” Much of what Frederick A. Miller has done to advance the field of diversity, inclusion and organizational transformation has been done as a heretic.¹ A black activist, he chose to be a change agent working *inside* major United States corporations. In many of his early client engagements, he was the first African American to interact in a consultant capacity with members of senior management.

¹ Kleiner included Miller in *The Age of Heretics* (2008).

FREDERICK A. MILLER

Throughout almost 45 years of organization development (OD) practice, he has facilitated large-scale organizational change without undermining the cultural values that made the organization successful: acknowledging the contributions of the founding “white male” culture, while at the same time aggressively challenging the institutionalized “isms” that have kept other groups down. He rejected change efforts that sought to level, or even raise, the playing field for all groups to the current level of white men as *insufficient*, saying the treatment many white men receive is not good enough either. The real challenge was to raise the playing field *for all* by creating an inclusive culture in which everyone felt valued as an individual, and where differences were leveraged in support of the enterprise’s goals (Miller & Katz, 2002).

To raise the playing field, organizations needed an “inclusion breakthrough,” a level of culture change that involved the rethinking and redesign of many aspects of organizational culture: policies, practices and sometimes structure. With Judith H. Katz, he published the first comprehensive model and framework for implementing diversity and inclusion as a lever for strategic culture change, moving it from a compliance-driven set of programs to a breakthrough OD strategy linked to higher operational and bottom-line performance.

Influences and Motivations

The Civil Rights Movement and OD: Aligning Personal and Professional Values

Miller came of age during a period heavily influenced by the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, which significantly shaped his vision not only of what society could be, but also of the role organizations needed to play in moving society toward a greater equality of opportunity and participation.

FREDERICK A. MILLER

He was born in 1946, into a lower middle-class neighborhood in West Philadelphia, Pa., the only son and youngest child of four. With a 13-year gap in age between him and his next older sister, his experience growing up was more like that of an only child. He was also introverted by nature and liked spending time alone, or with a close friend or two, playing make-believe battles with miniature plastic soldiers or competitive board games. He also learned to play chess, a pastime he still loves. Miller's extraordinary ability to strategize and position organizational change interventions, always thinking two or more steps ahead, was born out of these early play experiences.

His mother Clarice, whom he described as "the first activist I ever met," was resolute in overcoming any barrier her son faced as an African American child in the 40's and 50's, as he made his way through school and life in the inner city. She was indomitable and would not let anyone, regardless of her or his title or level of authority, limit her son's potential. When the school counselor put Fred—along with most of the other African American kids in his class—on the vocational-technical track, Clarice demanded that he be moved into the college entrance courses. The counselor resisted, explaining the unlikeliness that Miller could manage the workload, as he was "not college material," to which Miller's mother retorted, "You are not going tell me what my son can't do. You do your job and get him into those classes, and I will make sure he does what he needs to get to college" (Miller, personal communication, May 12, 2016).

Even then, Miller knew that he was lucky; he didn't feel he deserved more breaks than his friends, he knew he wasn't the smartest in the group and he didn't feel superior to his friends and others of his peers. What he did feel was a deep responsibility to pay back the support and love of his parents and the kindnesses shown by neighbors and

FREDERICK A. MILLER

peers, by doing something big that would make the world a better place. He dedicated *The Inclusion Breakthrough*, a book he wrote with Katz, to his parents, who gave him “the wings to fly out of the box that was supposed to be the destiny of an inner city child whose birth certificate indicated Negro (Miller & Katz, 2002, preface).” In 1946, the word “negro” on a person’s birth certificate was more than a description of his or her racial group. It defined—and limited—who a person was and what she or he could become.

His father, for whom he was named, died suddenly when Miller was a high school senior. It was an enormous blow in many ways. Miller had no way to pay for college until a local pastor, the Rev. Leon H. Sullivan, recommended him for a scholarship set aside for fatherless boys. He reflected on this turn of events as the last gift his father gave him. Sullivan, a clergyman and civil rights leader, would become famous in 1977 for drawing up the Sullivan Principles, guidelines for American businesses operating in South Africa under apartheid. (Lewis, 2001).

Learning from Great Black Thinkers and Activists

In 1968, Miller arrived at Connecticut General Insurance Corporation (now CIGNA) as a management trainee, with a degree from Lincoln University (Pennsylvania), the country’s first degree-granting historically black university. Founded in 1854, the school provided a springboard for many notable African Americans who became pioneers in their fields. These included United States Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall; Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes; music legend Cab Calloway; Medal of Honor winner and editor Christian Fleetwood; Emmy Award-winning and Tony Award-nominated actor Roscoe Lee Browne; first President of Ghana

FREDERICK A. MILLER

Kwame Nkrumah and first President of Nigeria Nnamdi Azikiwe. In the 1960s, Lincoln was a place that awakened and sharpened Miller's social justice and Black Power activism and expanded his worldview.

He recalled, "At Lincoln I was exposed to some of the great black thinkers and activists of the decade. Charles V. Hamilton was the dynamic chair of the political science department. He and civil rights activist Stokely Carmichael (later changing his name to Kwame Ture) were coauthoring their groundbreaking book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, and they would come into my class and 'rap' about their ideas (Miller, personal communication, May 12, 2016)."

Miller was also inspired by civil rights leader James L. Farmer Jr., who had joined the faculty in 1966 after becoming disenchanted with the growing militancy of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which he had cofounded. He was known as one of the Big Four, along with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Whitney Young of the Urban League and Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Farmer was a pioneer in the development and use of nonviolent direct action as a tactic for fighting racial discrimination; he helped develop the concept of affirmative action and was one of the first blacks to serve in a high-ranking government position (Connell, 1999).

Becoming an Organizational Change Agent

Unlike many of his college friends, who were eager to become community activists, Miller felt he could be most effective as a change agent inside organizations. When he joined Connecticut General in 1968, the insurance industry was still reeling from the riots of the early '60s. The devastating riots that erupted in 125 cities nationwide

FREDERICK A. MILLER

after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination on April 4, 1968 reinforced the need for change. When the 1968 riots were over, some 39 people were dead, more than 2,600 injured and 21,000 arrested. The damages were estimated at \$65 million, approximately \$385 million today (Risen, 2008). While King's death may have ignited the riots, black people's frustration with de facto segregation, workplace discrimination, police brutality and urban poverty had been building for decades. Connecticut General, recognizing that things needed to change, both in society and inside the corporation, increased its commitment to Affirmative Action. Miller was recruited to join a pioneer cohort of African American professionals in the company. He eventually became the first person of color in the company's 100-year-plus history to rise from management trainee to the rank of officer.

Miller said, "I was brought into a corporate setting eager to work hard and be successful. I soon learned that it was not a level playing field—that it was not fair for everyone in the organization, and especially not for our group of black professionals. For example, after a round of performance evaluations, I realized that every single one of us was rated lower than our white peers. The organization just had a culture that very much supported certain people and groups, and did not support others (personal communication, May 12, 2016)." His career was interrupted in October 1968 when he was drafted for military service. Miller served for 2 years in the U.S. Army in Korea during the Vietnam War. He returned to his position at Connecticut General in 1972 with a greater awareness and appreciation for the value of all people, and a determination to eliminate discrimination.

FREDERICK A. MILLER

In spring 1972, Miller was introduced to what would become his life's work in OD when he attended a company diversity education session. OD was a natural career path for this black activist and change agent-at-heart because, for Miller, the underlying values of the Civil Rights Movement and OD were fully aligned:

Civil Rights: To create both a society and organizations in which people are treated fairly and with respect.

OD: to create workplaces in which people matter, are valued, and participate in and influence their work experience (Katz & Miller, 2014).

Fortunately for the work that Miller was to do, Connecticut General was a progressive organization led by CEO Henry Roberts, who valued individual and system change. Miller transferred from the group pension department to work with his white colleague, Richard H. Kremer, in human resources. With Kremer, he facilitated, and then directed, the Intergroup Cooperation and Understanding (ICU) Program. The ICU Program, one of the first diversity initiatives in a major U.S. corporation, was the management's response to black employees' increased pressure on Connecticut General to make good on its commitment to equal employment. Thousands of employees participated in three-day residential and experiential workshops that taught them how to work across racial and gender differences. This training shook up the status quo. Black-white, and later, woman-man, workshops brought people together across hierarchical levels for honest and emotional discussions about race relations and gender stereotypes. The workshops impacted all three levels of the system: building personal awareness, interpersonal understanding and group collaboration, and mobilizing employee action groups to challenge organizational norms and practices that kept some people "down." It

FREDERICK A. MILLER

is important to note how revolutionary the concept of partnering across racial and gender differences was during this period. It would be another decade before works such as Thomas Kochman's *Black and White Styles in Conflict* (Kochman, 1981) and Alice Sargent's *The Androgynous Manager* (Sargent, 1981), among others, would describe new paradigms for workplace communication and partnership.

At the black-white workshops, Miller originated the practice of starting every session by having people say "hello" to each other. Greeting another person and shaking his or her hand in a sincere manner is a very simple intervention, but one that Miller believed was fundamental to interacting across differences in an honest and authentic way. For some whites, this "hello" activity was the first time they had ever touched a black person's hand. Since that time, "hellos" have been a keystone in Miller's work; he continues to use the practice to help people connect across differences, whether in the workplace or community gatherings.

NTL, Kaleel Jamison, and Other OD Pioneers

His facilitation style and methods were influenced by the National Training Laboratories' (NTL) T-group methodology in which the facilitator creates a safe "container" that encourages participants to share emotional reactions (as opposed to judgments or conclusions) that arise in response to their colleagues' actions and statements. The focus on suspending judgment, to deeply listen to others, foreshadowed Miller's and Katz's later work on the impact of shifting from a judging to a joining mindset as the first step towards improving the quality of people's interactions (Katz & Miller, 2013). As an NTL member, Miller would find great satisfaction out of facilitating more than 20 T-groups, deeply impressed with the power and the effectiveness of the T-

FREDERICK A. MILLER

group as a means of fostering positive change in individuals and teams, and the potential impact on organizations.

Miller also participated in Will Schutz's Esalen encounter groups, which encouraged people to face their fears and express themselves honestly and directly. Later, with Kaleel Jamison, he taught and continued to develop her model of Straight Talk, which was one of the first to identify direct, honest and clear communication as a precursor to real systems change (Jamison, 1985). Straight Talk was a radical proposition for the time by presuming that conflicting views, values, cultures and styles were best addressed openly and that those differences—properly resolved—will enhance rather than detract from the organization and its success.

After meeting Jamison in 1973 at a Living School women-men working together lab, Miller hired her to facilitate woman-man and transactional analysis workshops at Connecticut General. Kaleel's workshops encouraged vigorous disagreement so that people in these groups could be heard and self-empowered. She was also one of the first to talk about self-empowerment in organizations. In their book, *Be Big*, Miller and Katz expanded on Kaleel's idea of the "big circle" by offering ways for people to show up more fully as individuals and in their interactions with others, and to find ways to be big together in organizations (Katz & Miller, 2008). Miller left Connecticut General in 1979 to join Jamison's OD practice, to partner with and continue to learn from her.

Miller's role at Connecticut General afforded him the opportunity to immerse himself in personal growth and OD workshops led by a variety of theorists and practitioners, including Jack Gibb, Robert Bales, Peter Block, John Weir, Sherman Kingsbury, Moshe Feldenkrais, Peter Vaill, Rose Miller, John Scherer, Jimmy Jones,

FREDERICK A. MILLER

Edith Seashore and Marvin Weisbord. (Weisbord and Seashore both consulted to Miller as he formed his firm, The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group Inc.; Seashore continued to provide coaching, support and entry for Miller into the OD professional network, throughout her life). What Miller took from these experiences significantly influenced his thinking about group process, OD and his use of self as an instrument of change.

When Block came to Connecticut General to co-facilitate his consulting skills workshops with Miller, he was still formulating what would later become *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used* (Block, 1981). While Miller practiced Block's process for engaging clients in an empowered and direct way, Block observed. Miller also went to visit Herb Shepard at Fort Courage, his home in Connecticut, to "inhale his wisdom," and then asked Shepard to lead a life planning workshop. When a senior vice president heard that people were being encouraged to plan their lives beyond the company, he blew his top and demanded that Miller be fired. This was tantamount to organizational sabotage, and not to be tolerated. Luckily for Miller, CEO Roberts intervened and Miller's job was saved. That wouldn't be the last time Miller would be threatened with termination. He joked, "I used to keep a letter of resignation in my back pocket for the day when either the company or I would be ready to end it (personal communication, May 18, 2016)."

Partnership with Judith H. Katz

Miller met Katz at a NTL Board meeting when Miller was a board member and Katz—along with colleague Bailey Jackson—conducted a workshop on racism. Katz's seminal work, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training*, is still used as a resource for consultants and educators (Katz, 1978). They stayed connected through

FREDERICK A. MILLER

NTL. Immediately after Jamison's untimely death in 1985, Miller invited Katz to become his business and thinking partner as he formed The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group (KJCG) to continue Kaleel's work and legacy.

Miller and Katz's shared set of values and their passion to make organizations places where all people can do their best work—places that leverage the differences, as well as similarities that all people carry—have sustained their creative partnership for more than 30 years. Both were influenced by NTL values and methodologies. Both instinctively seek out the people in organization that are on “the fringe” or are not given the opportunity to do their best work and therefore cannot add their value to the mission and vision of the organization. Their work creates environments that enable those voices to be heard. Both try to follow Lewin's counsel that there should be no research without action and no action without research. Their client interventions are followed by intense reflection and discussion, leading to the development of theoretical constructs, models and practical tools that help their clients create more inclusive cultures.

Key Contributions

Inclusion as a Strategy to Achieve Higher Organizational Performance

Miller has made his major contributions to the theory and practice of organization change by challenging and reframing how organizations understand and leverage differences to create inclusive workplaces, and how change agents facilitate strategic culture change using inclusion as a means to achieve higher organizational performance and accelerate bottom-line results. His work reflects a lifelong commitment to being a heretic, pushing back on the status quo to change organizations into places where human

FREDERICK A. MILLER

beings can be fully human and where each person can grow, do their best work and have a meaningful experience.

A New Definition of Inclusion

In September 1991, NTL Institute asked Miller to bring together the voices of 40 leaders, researchers and practitioners who were working to address issues of diversity in organizations. Little had been written to date to make this topic accessible for managers and the general public. The result was the landmark book *The Promise of Diversity* (1994), coedited by Elsie Y. Cross, Katz and Seashore. The book was a call to action for leaders and OD change agents to eliminate oppression which, despite the advances made in the 30 years since the Civil Rights Act, remained a daily struggle for many in organizations. It proposed that practitioners find ways to hear, understand and appreciate both the individual difference perspective (which held that the fundamental issue of diversity was to create understanding between different individuals, to discover and celebrate “common ground”) and the social justice perspective (which called for addressing discrimination and oppression at the group and system levels).

In the chapter “Forks in the Road: Critical Issues on the Path to Diversity,” Miller went a step further by calling for a radical rethinking, redefining and restructuring of many aspects of institutions and people’s lives. At a time in which diversity was presented in organizations as a human resource problem to be managed, overcome, neutralized or minimized, he was one of the first to describe the organizational change driven by diversity as a *revolution*. Organizations couldn’t realize the benefits of a diverse workforce without fundamental changes in how people led, communicated, planned, solved problems and designed organizational structures, policies and practices.

FREDERICK A. MILLER

Leaders also needed to surface and address conditions, some subtle and “invisible,” that blocked and oppressed people due to their differences. Miller did not think that people understood the magnitude of the changes involved. “Inclusion,” he wrote, “turns comfortable upside down and inside out (Cross, Katz, Miller & Seashore, 1994, p. 39).”

Miller and Katz were among a few practitioners who pioneered the use of the term *inclusion* in 1990, in part because it more fully described the goal for strategic culture change, and in part to differentiate between true culture change and mere change in head count. Proponents of the value-in-diversity perspective advocated a “business case for diversity,” linking a more diverse workforce to improvements in customer service, product quality and bottom-line profitability, however, few management practices, policies and accountabilities changed to make diversity a core business success factor (Cox, 1993). Miller recognized that diversity without inclusion did not work. A definition of inclusion was developed and popularized that linked directly to enhanced individual, team and business performance, standing apart from other definitions in the literature which generally overlooked the system-level element of improving collective work.

Inclusion is a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued and seen for who we are as individuals. There is a level of supportive energy and commitment from leaders, colleagues and others so that we—individually and collectively—can do our best work (Katz & Miller, 2004).

Historically, discussions of organizational development ignored diversity and inclusion as a means by which to position and drive strategic culture change (e.g. Tichy, 1983; French, Bell and Zawacki, 1989; Sikes, Drexler and Gant, 1989; Bolman & Deal,

1984; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Kezar, 2001). In *Inclusion Breakthrough: Unleashing the Real Power of Diversity* (2002), Miller and Katz introduced a comprehensive model, The Inclusion Breakthrough Cycle, and change implementation technology, the KJCG Methodology for Strategic Culture Change, that synthesized their insights, experiences, frameworks and interventions from three decades of OD practice. Inclusion is framed as the *HOW*—the means for transforming how people connect and interact as they do their work and achieve results.

The Inclusion Breakthrough Cycle and Methodology for Strategic Culture Change

The Inclusion Breakthrough Cycle (see *Figure 1*) focuses on five key elements for leveraging differences and creating a culture of inclusion: (1) New individual and team competencies; (2) Enabling policies and practices; (3) Leveraging a diverse workforce; (4) Community and social responsibility and (5) Enhanced value to a diverse marketplace.

- **New competencies:** Individual and team competencies for communicating across differences, addressing and working through conflict, and creating a safe and supportive environment for all. The competencies were further refined as 12 Conscious Actions for Inclusion (The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, 2016).
- **Enabling policies and procedures:** New baseline for how policies and practices support individuals and address all social identity groups.
- **Leveraging a diverse workforce:** Nine guidelines for becoming a worthy organization that retains key talent.
- **Community and social responsibility:** Ways to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with the people and organizations that furnish their workforce,

customers, suppliers and distributors, and to support economically healthy and safe communities.

- Enhanced value to a diverse marketplace: Capitalizing on the full range of differences of people in the organization’s home country before “going global;” Recognizing that the marketplace is becoming increasingly diverse and, therefore, the ability to partner across differences needs to be core competency of the organization.

The KJCG methodology for an inclusion breakthrough has four phases:

- Phase I—Building a platform for change: Develop a bottom-line business case for change, position the effort and conduct an organizational assessment.
- Phase II—Creating momentum: Develop a critical mass of people modeling the new culture.
- Phase III—Making diversity and inclusion a way of life: Link the inclusion breakthrough to operations and business process improvement initiatives; Inclusion becomes how business is done and how people interact.
- Phase IV—Leveraging learning and challenging the new status quo: Measure progress and reassess.

Through the implementation of the KJCG methodology, many organizations have been able to connect the inclusion culture change effort to achieving their higher business objectives. The methodology also introduced several innovative change interventions developed, tested and refined in large client systems (Dun & Bradstreet, Eastman Kodak, Ecolab, United Airlines, Mobil Oil Company, Allstate Insurance, Toyota Motor Co.,

Merck & Co. and Apple Inc., among others). Some examples include: co-creation with senior leaders of the “from-to culture vision” (see *Figure 2*) to provide a gap analysis and concrete vision of the desired future state; Pockets of Readiness strategy to engage business units or functions to be the first to model and act as “proof of concept” for the new culture; and group interventions such as Learning Partners and Core Inclusion and Change Partners designed to inform, enroll and build a critical mass of people in the organization to reach the tipping point for change.

Pockets of Readiness Strategy

Miller developed the Pockets of Readiness strategy to increase buy-in from clients who were more willing to invest in a systemic culture change effort once they saw evidence of successful transformation in a business unit or function. Miller knew senior leaders needed a concrete picture of the “end state”—what a more inclusive organization that leverages differences will look and feel like, how people would interact differently, and, most importantly, how inclusion would impact the bottom line. From his experience, Miller also knew that there were parts of the organization that could move a lot faster towards the new culture. Why not leverage these pockets of readiness as “proof of concept?”

It is common for organizations to cascade or “roll out” change initiatives from the top down through the organization, a slow and unpredictable way of building critical mass for change. Some organizations invest in large group interventions (e.g. search conference, future search and open space technology), engaging the “whole system” to describe current state and identify targets for change (Bunker & Alban, 1997). These technologies give voice to all the organization’s stakeholders and can create common

ground to move the entire organization forward, but they can be time-consuming and the implementation of the change—new state—can be uneven.

In contrast, the Pockets of Readiness strategy has proven advantageous because it provides observable and measureable benefits of an inclusion breakthrough quicker in order to inspire and enlist the rest of the organization. Both approaches have their place, but the proof-of-concept model creates a “pull” in the organization as leaders see the success and bottom-line impact and say, “I want some of that.”

Learning Partners

Miller believes that the most critical component of any culture change effort happens in Phase I: the positioning of the organization and its leaders to create and support a structured, systematic inclusion breakthrough. When an organization’s senior leaders realize that a culture change effort will affect every dimension of the organization, big questions arise: “How can we make changes of this scope, intensity and depth?” “Where do we start?” “How can we ensure success (Miller & Katz, 2002)?” They often need to develop a new perspective on the organization’s current state and how it is sub-optimizing many in the organization, not just those who are different from the founding group. To that end, Miller enhanced the impact of the organizational assessment process by developing Learning Partners, a diverse cross section of high-performing team members who interview their peers and share with senior leaders—in a direct and personal way—the different experiences people in the organization are having. Learning Partner sessions provide powerful insight for leaders about why change is needed, and prepare them to create a culture change strategy that everyone can understand. Learning Partners continue to support the change effort, acting as credible witnesses to the leaders’

learning process and commitment to action.

Peer-to-Peer Leadership

As important as positioning the change with senior leaders is for the success of any culture change effort, an exclusively top-down approach can lead to skepticism and resistance. Core Inclusion and Change Partners is a peer-to-peer leadership model that involves selecting, educating and supporting groups of internal change advocates focused on accelerating change through peer-to-peer education, interaction and modeling. Momentum for change increases as each change advocate initiates and leads peer groups. People throughout the organization come to trust the change because they learned it from team members they trust. From a systemic standpoint, including more people in this way accelerates the creation of a tipping point for culture change (Katz & Miller, 2012).

Four Corners Breakthrough Model

In his approach to organizational change, Miller has adopted several concepts from open-systems and chaos theory, i.e. organizations are systems operating in a constantly changing context and environment, therefore they must find ways to stay open to information “from everywhere, from places and sources people never thought to look before (Wheatley, 2006, p. 83).” Miller developed the Four Corners Breakthrough model (see *Figure 3*) to help clients recognize that, to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex and changing environment, they need the wisdom of everyone, not just leaders; greater speed in knowledge transfer and knowledge application across the organization; and breakthroughs, not just incremental change. The model grew out of consulting work with Digital Equipment Corp. in the 1980s, when Japanese competition was threatening U.S. market leadership. The Four Corners Breakthrough suggested that the wider

diversity of perspectives, thinking styles and skills among U.S. workers, if sought out and valued, would allowed for a 360-degree vision of business problems and created conditions in which innovation could flourish, providing a strong competitive advantage over what Japanese companies could accomplish with their value on sameness.

Conscious Actions for Inclusion

Miller believes that, fundamentally, organizations are only as productive as the interactions between people. Significant organizational change requires an adjustment in the quality of interactions between people. With others in KJCG, he co-created Conscious Actions for Inclusion (see *Figure 4*), behaviors communicated in simple, common language that describe and open the door to greater clarity and enhanced ways of interacting.

One example of a Conscious Action for Inclusion is “state your intent and intensity: notions, stakes, boulders and tombstones,” language that helps people both signal their intent to join with the other person and clarify intent at the onset. When people clearly state what they mean and how committed they are to an idea—ranging from a low level of commitment or “notion” to a level of greatest investment or “tombstone”—others are better able to act quickly, decisively and correctly. This simple model has been adopted as standard work by client organizations globally, to eliminate the guesswork that creates so much waste in effort, resources and time in people’s interactions. Its application has resulted in organization behavioral change at all three levels of system: individual, group and system.

New Insights
Client-Focused Models and Tools Grounded in Multiple Change Ideologies

Many of Miller's insights come from observing and learning from his clients, engaging with peers on corporate and not-for-profit boards, and studying what is happening in the world. Most often in collaboration with Katz, he derives actionable theories from these experiences, then develops simple models and practical tools and processes that make it easier for clients to move towards the desired "TO" state, a workplace in which people can do their best work in service of the organizational mission, vision and strategic objectives.

As a practitioner, his approach is grounded primarily in OD, described most often as part of the teleological or planned change theoretical tradition, but the models and change technologies he co-creates reflect many different ideologies of change, each with its own assumptions about the nature of human beings and social systems. In addition to the theories of planned change, these include dialectical or political theories; social cognition; environmental theories such as contingency, open systems and chaos theory; and cultural theories (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

The Inclusion Breakthrough Cycle model and the KJCG methodology for strategic culture change added to the conceptual knowledge base of OD by providing the first comprehensive framework and set of interventions that leaders and change agents can utilize to position, implement and sustain culture change related to leveraging differences and Inclusion as the *HOW*. Both models reflect the application of teleological theories, specifically planned change, in that the organization is presented as purposeful and adaptive and relies on leaders and change agents to plan and implement change in a

manner that is aligned with the organization's external environment, vision, mission and goals, and enables people to do their best work.

The methodology also draws from dialectical or political theories that include change processes such as persuasion, influence and power, and social movements. Embedded in the approach are many strategies for positioning the effort with senior leaders through consciousness-raising education; defining the business case for inclusion, which links the change to stakeholders' self-interest; developing a critical mass of agents of change; and creating networks to spread influence and support the change effort. The approach rejected "diversity for diversity's sake," making the case for the investment in culture change only if the new state supports and advances the mission, vision and strategies of the organization.

New Language, New Mindsets, New Actions

In numerous client engagements, Miller and his colleagues in KJCG have demonstrated that significant culture change requires a change in the conversational dialectic. The rhetoric that emerged in the field of diversity in the 1990s replaced the term "diversity" with "inclusion." This created substantial confusion: in many organizations, "diversity" became synonymous with U.S. Affirmative Action, which by definition excluded white men. In other cases, there was no material change in diversity management practices that continued to focus on how to assimilate the newcomers into the current culture. A new definition of inclusion was offered that differentiated it from diversity. The term "leveraging differences" was also introduced, allowing for a broader range of differences beyond race, color, age and gender, such as thinking style, background, skills and experiences.

The Conscious Actions for Inclusion is a model of inclusive language and behaviors, introduced and refined over the course of many years. It provides people with an easy way to signal their intent to “be different.” The model supports the emergence of new meaning and helps re-channel people’s energy to create more inclusive partnerships on individual, group and system levels. In this way, it represents a blend of the dialectical and cultural perspectives described by Shein (1985) and others.

Meg Wheatley’s application of chaos theory to organizational change (Wheatley, 2006) informs the Four Corners Breakthrough model, which describes environmental complexity as “unknowns and unknowables” and offers simple language like “street corner” as a metaphor for different perspectives, world views and experiences that can be brought to bear on the complex problems faced by organizations. The idea that all organizations are fractal in nature is applied in a new way in the Pockets of Readiness strategy, i.e. one business unit or function not only represents a microcosm of the culture, but also can initiate a new and repeatable pattern of behaviors to help accelerate whole system change.

Presence Consulting

In chaos theory, “you can never tell where the system is headed until you’ve observed it over time (Wheatley, 2006, p.132).” This holds true within the newer dialogic OD practices, as well. As organizations become composed of more diverse people operating in a more dynamic environment, the assumption that there is some singular social reality “out there” to be diagnosed and changed becomes less useful for OD practitioners (Bushe, 2009). Miller developed Presence Consulting, an intervention in which external change agents become fully integrated into the day-to-day work life of the

people inside the organization, “being present” at meetings, on the shop floor, etc. to support them as they learn and experiment with new inclusive mindsets and behaviors in their daily interactions (DaRos & Pfeffer, 2011). By being present in this way, consultants learn from the variety of realities that exist in the system, then intervene to help create the enabling conditions for successful interactions to take place.

As a point of illustration, several presence consultants were deployed during a five-year cultural transformation of the manufacturing division of a global pharmaceutical company, under Miller’s direction. It became evident that continuous quality improvement, reduction of waste and safety were strongly held values in this organization’s Lean environment. One of the most impactful interventions was the introduction of inclusive mindsets and behaviors that enhanced the quality of day-to-day interactions and reduced the waste typically generated by unresolved conflict, nonproductive meetings and a pervasive fear of being blamed for errors.

As the new mindsets and behaviors took hold, people gained the sense of emotional safety needed to speak up, make problems visible more quickly and leverage different people’s ideas to come up with innovative solutions. Leaders attributed the accomplishment of a major global corporate business objective to the culture change effort. Inclusion linked to what mattered most in the organization: corporate values and goals of quality, reduced waste and safety, resulting in a positive impact to the bottom line for a key division and the overall corporation.

Legacies and Unfinished Business

Creating a New “We” in Society and Organizations

Miller has changed how leaders and OD practitioners conceptualize and implement diversity and inclusion as a strategic lever for large-scale organizational change. The KJCG framework and methodology, co-created with Katz, provides clients with the means to identify cultural barriers to inclusion, establish the organizational imperative for change, build critical mass and accelerate the adoption of new mindsets and behaviors needed to sustain the new culture.

When asked about “unfinished business,” Miller speaks first about the need for people to create a new *we* in society and in our organizations. History is rife with examples of how not to approach differences. All too often, we have identified with a narrow version of *we*: immediate family, village, clan, social identity group and—in our organizations—department, function, level, team. Differences continue to be met with mistrust, isolation, fear and oppression. Miller challenges this mindset and initiates social change as part of every role he holds: OD consultant, member of the boards of directors for numerous corporate and not-for-profit organizations (e.g. Ben & Jerry’s, Day & Zimmermann, Sage Colleges and One World Everybody Eats) and as a business owner and citizen leader in community, church and civic groups.

In 1990, he led one of the first major diversity efforts in a large U.S. municipality, City of San Diego, Calif., that focused on the inclusion of white women, people of color, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) people in the police and fire departments. During his firm’s consulting with Mobil in 1997, it became the largest company to implement domestic partner benefits, setting the precedent for many

FREDERICK A. MILLER

companies to follow. In ODN, Miller initiated the first people of color conference and gained board sponsorship for what is now the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer) affinity group. As a board member of One World Everybody Eats Foundation, he contributes his thinking to the sharing economy through the “pay what you can café” model as a way to address hunger. And in Troy, N.Y., where his firm is located, he founded the Troy 100 Forum, which brings together leaders in different sectors of the community to share perspectives on topics of public concern to the city.

He raises the question of how OD practitioners can help organizations go beyond traditional social responsibility initiatives to create a new *we* that includes their local communities. Safer, more inclusive and sustainable communities benefit organizations in many ways, including attracting and retaining the best talent, which will continue to be a competitive advantage for most organizations.

Artificial Intelligence

Looking into the future, Miller sees artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on organizations and organizational change as the next frontier for the field, both in terms of theory development and practice. While AI applications are increasingly being integrated into the workplace, we know little about their impact on work processes, organization design and culture. Compared to previous technology-driven social changes, AI is expected to transform how we work at a rate that is exponentially faster. AI will present significantly new challenges for OD theorists and practitioners who will need to mediate between humans and intelligent machines to create more inclusive workplaces where everyone (and everything) can contribute their best thinking.

FREDERICK A. MILLER

A final thought about unfinished business is the need to develop more heretics. Miller said, “We just can’t have enough of them, given the changes we need to make to move to a much better state for all humans.”

Miller’s work reflects a lifelong commitment to being a heretic, pushing back on the status quo to change organizations into places where human beings can be fully human and where each person can grow, do their best work and have a meaningful experience. A black activist, he chose to be a change agent working *inside* major United States corporations.

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FREDERICK A. MILLER

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