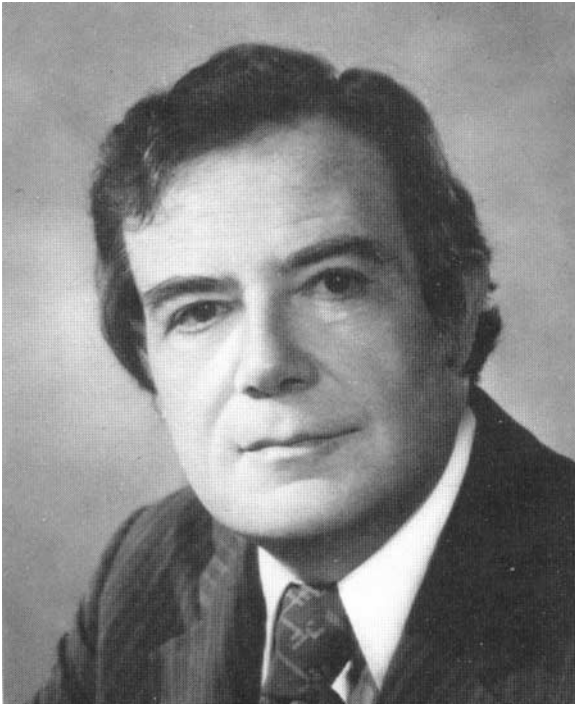


Obituary

James Grier Miller, 1916–2002

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James Grier Miller, MD, PhD, the founding director of the University of Michigan Mental Health Research Institute, died at the age of 86 at his home in La Jolla, CA, on November 7, 2002. He was also a founding member of the ACNP, and had become a Life Fellow, Emeritus.

Jim's formidable intelligence and energy became evident early in his education. After attending Columbia Bible College in South Carolina briefly in preparation for the ministry, he successfully convinced his father that he was headed for a secular education, and transferred to Harvard. Within a 6-year span, he accumulated four degrees: a baccalaureate (summa cum laude) in 1937, MA in psychology in 1938, MD (cum laude) in 1942, and PhD in psychology in 1943. Following military service in World War II, he served as Chief of the newly formed Clinical Psychology section of the Veteran's Administration central office in Washington. In 1948, he accepted the position of Chairman of the Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago, which he held until 1955. In order to understand his subsequent career move, it will be useful to review his developing scientific interests.

Miller traced his lifelong interest in the merging of biological and social sciences to his undergraduate days as a member of the Harvard Society of Fellows, and to the influence of Alfred Whitehead. At Chicago, Miller said he was further stimulated to integrate the biological with the social sciences by discussions with nuclear physicist Enrico Fermi, who felt that such interactions were important for the survival of the human race in view of the destructive force of nuclear weapons, which he had helped to develop.

Miller organized and catalyzed discussion groups on 'behavioral science', a novel catchphrase at the time, which was given new significance by his efforts. His ultimate goal was still more ambitious — to bring together scientists from a variety of disciplines to freely exchange ideas, and to reveal commonalities in the functions and information processing of cells, organs, individuals, and societal groups and organizations. Thus, beyond the concept of a behavioral science, Miller envisioned the application of general systems theory to living organisms, as had been applied to the physical sciences.

It is then understandable that Miller enthusiastically accepted an invitation from Dr Raymond Waggoner, Chairman of the University of Michigan Medical School Department of Psychiatry, to establish an interdisciplinary institute at Michigan in 1955, dedicated to the behavioral sciences. Miller brought with him from the University of Chicago the eminent neurophysiologist Ralph W Gerard and Anatol Rapoport, a well-known mathematical biologist. Later, others from Chicago joined the group. The broad interdisciplinary nature of the Institute was reflected in the areas of expertise of Institute members, who were jointly appointed in diverse University units, including the Law School and the Departments of Political Science, Psychology, Biological Chemistry, Sociology, Urban Planning, and Psychiatry. Miller had proposed that 'behavioral science' be a part of the Institute's name, but was persuaded by the University of Michigan President Harlan Hatcher to incorporate 'mental health' as more suitable for continued financial support for the fledgling institute. In 1956, Miller also initiated and was for 30 years Editor of the journal *Behavioral Science*, published at the Institute. The Journal continues now as *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*. It is clear that the Institute was both a refuge and a mecca for investigators whose research would not fit neatly into an academic department. The Medical School Dean referred to the Institute's 'bright but unfocused image'. Today, we might say a bit more sympathetically that many of its investigators were 'outside the box'. The Institute scientists, each talented and vigorous in his or her research area, were productive and successful in obtaining and sustaining outside grant support, a measure of MHRI's success. Whether there was actual interdisciplinary interaction outside their individual areas of expertise at the level to which Miller had aspired remains a question.

Miller left the Institute in 1967 to pursue an administrative career, first as provost of the newly founded

Cleveland State University, and then in 1973 as president of the University of Louisville, from which position he retired in 1980. Miller was succeeded at the Mental Health Research Institute by the late Gardner Quarton, then by the undersigned, and, since 1995, by Co-Directors Stanley Watson and Huda Akil. Over the years, the Institute has remained interdisciplinary, but in a more restricted way, emphasizing the neurosciences.

In 1978, together with his wife and collaborator Jessie, Miller made his case for a unified approach to the biological, psychological, and social sciences in the book *Living Systems*, a compilation and synthesis that he regarded as the capstone of his career, 25 years in the making. Miller was regarded by his colleagues as learned, witty, and at times controversial. He foresaw the role of computers as academic research tools, presaging the academic uses of the Internet by at least 20 years. Miller founded an educational computer network entitled EDU-COM in 1964, which was eventually incorporated into EDUNET. Following his move to California, he became the co-chairman of the Robert Maynard Hutchins Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, held adjunct professorships at the University of California

campuses at Santa Barbara and San Diego, and founded the University of the World, an international educational organization.

Clearly, Jim Miller was an innovator and futurist who in some ways may have overreached, but lived to see many of his predictions about the direction of research in the brain and social sciences and about the nature of information exchange fulfilled. The University of Michigan's Mental Health Research Institute continues as a major component of his legacy.

He was preceded in death by Jessie, his wife of 63 years, who died in July 2002. They are survived by their sons, Dr John Miller of Indianapolis and Dr Thomas Miller of San Clemente, CA, and by three grandchildren. Some information on the life of James Grier Miller has been deposited in the ACNP International Psychopharmacology Archives at Vanderbilt University.

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