

Book Review

Book Authors: Perry Zurn and Dani S. Bassett **Book Title:** *Curious minds: The power of connection* **Year of publication:** 2022 **Publisher:** MIT Press **ISBN hardcover:** 978026204736 **ISBN electronic:** 9780262370301 **Pages:** 293 pages **Price:** \$27.95 USD

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Curious Minds: The Power of Connection

Inquiring minds want to connect. At least that is what the authors of *Curious Minds: The Power of Connection* argue in their book which is steeped in research and often reads like prose. These authors make the argument that curiosity is about much more than an inclination for, or an act of, seeking information. They frame curiosity as the systems and networks of ideas and thoughts with an intent to creatively weave and build understanding and knowledge.

This book is surprisingly refreshing. At a quick glance, it appears a bit gimmicky and trendy with the packaging of their findings into distinct and personified curiosity styles. However, this book has both depth and heart. Written by identical twins, Perry Zurn and Dani S. Bassett, who are professors of Philosophy and Bioengineering (respectively), they found that the topic of curiosity was riveting and applicable to both their fields of study. Working together, their technical and disciplinary diversity gives the examination of the topic more breadth and depth than is typical and makes this book not easily definable because it truly offers broad applicability and interest. How the authors construct their story is also notable as they practice what they've learned and each chapter pulls you along as they ask questions, connect the dots of ideas, and bring the reader into the web of knowledge and inspiration that curiosity naturally develops.

The argument for curiosity as the superpower of connection is artfully undertaken and starts with the science of curiosity and they unpack their argument with a deep dive into network building and knowledge structures. To test their hypothesis, the authors conducted an empirical study of *Wikipedia* users to determine patterns and establish the premise for their model of curiosity styles. In this context, they define curiosity as edgework, and they ask us to imagine what curiosity would look like if we changed our assumptions about its aims and nature: "Imagine a curiosity that aims less to know X, to find out X, or to cognize X than to make connections, build constellations, find links, and follow threads." How they construct this aspect of the book is worth the read in itself.

For the primary scaffolding of their ideas, they examine patterns of human and idea connection and define three curiosity types including (1) *the hunter* who intentionally explores and hunts for new concepts pulling them into a matrixed storehouse of ideas, (2) *the busybody* who is an opportunistic collector of ideas and stories holding them loosely as a collection of fluid ideas, and (3) *the dancer* who follows the creative path of casting a net of imagined ideas and then explores newly imagined ideas and those collected along the way. Underpinning all of these types, the authors anchor their premise in an interdisciplinary approach including psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, and behavioral science.

Several categories of readers could benefit from this book because it is both soundly academic in substance, and delightfully engaging in story. The obvious audi-

TRICIA MAYER

ences for it are students of any type of psychology, organizational development, innovation, or education. That said, it is likely that this book will, in time, garner a cult-like following within the corporate consulting and emerging people strategy circles because it offers a helpful blueprint to understand how diverse people work and ideate in distributed and matrixed environments. The timing of this book could not be better as the working world grapples with the hybrid paradigm and needs this sort of wisdom to help organizations and individuals develop meaningful connections. The authors offer their own application of their findings as the book concludes with the implication of their premise applied to “Reimagining Education” which they tackle by closely examining a case study involving the dynamics of complex relational systems and giving room to do so with neurodiverse populations. Notable about this book is the intentional and compassionate way in which the authors take care to ensure that their approach is fully inclusive.

Conclusion

This book does stop short of considering how the curiosity dynamics and connections apply within transpersonal experiences or transcendent states. This is a slight disappointment because they make such a great case for connections, but in this sense, they limit their arena of study. However, what they did take on was highly ambitious and they provide an excellent theoretical framework for the research community to build upon and to further expand the ideas of curiosity to the edges of consciousness and transcendent experience.

These authors ultimately ask us to consider the dynamics and science of curiosity, yet more importantly, they ask us to appreciate the process of curiosity as a common thread across humanity and one that joyously connects us all.

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