

# The Role of Curiosity in Global Managers' Decision-Making

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*The on-going transformation of business from domestic to global can have a significant impact on managers in terms of their lack of experience (i.e., tacit knowledge) and, frequently, in terms of their level of formal training relative to global issues (i.e., codified knowledge). This lack of knowledge can be expected to engender an unacceptable level of lack of decision-making self-efficacy, with attendant difficulties, with regard to successfully converting domestic managers into successful global managers. This paper examines the role that curiosity plays in initiating the learning process in newly appointed global managers. **Key Words:** globalization, global management, curiosity, assessing the level of curiosity in global managers.*

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“I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.” (Albert Einstein)

The general unawareness of the rate and impact of change on businesses as globalization their operations is particularly hazardous to global managers decision-making (e.g., managers, facing compression of decision-making time under the conditions of hypercompetition, lack complete knowledge necessary for effective decisions) (Dunn, 1997; Kessler, 1998). Little is known about the factors that influence managerial awareness of what they need to learn when organizations compete in a global landscape. Therefore, it is critical to identify the main factors that can aid in improving learning and the decision-making effectiveness of global managers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Drucker, 1995).

It has, in fact, been argued that curiosity may provide the primary foundation for effective decision-making in a global context

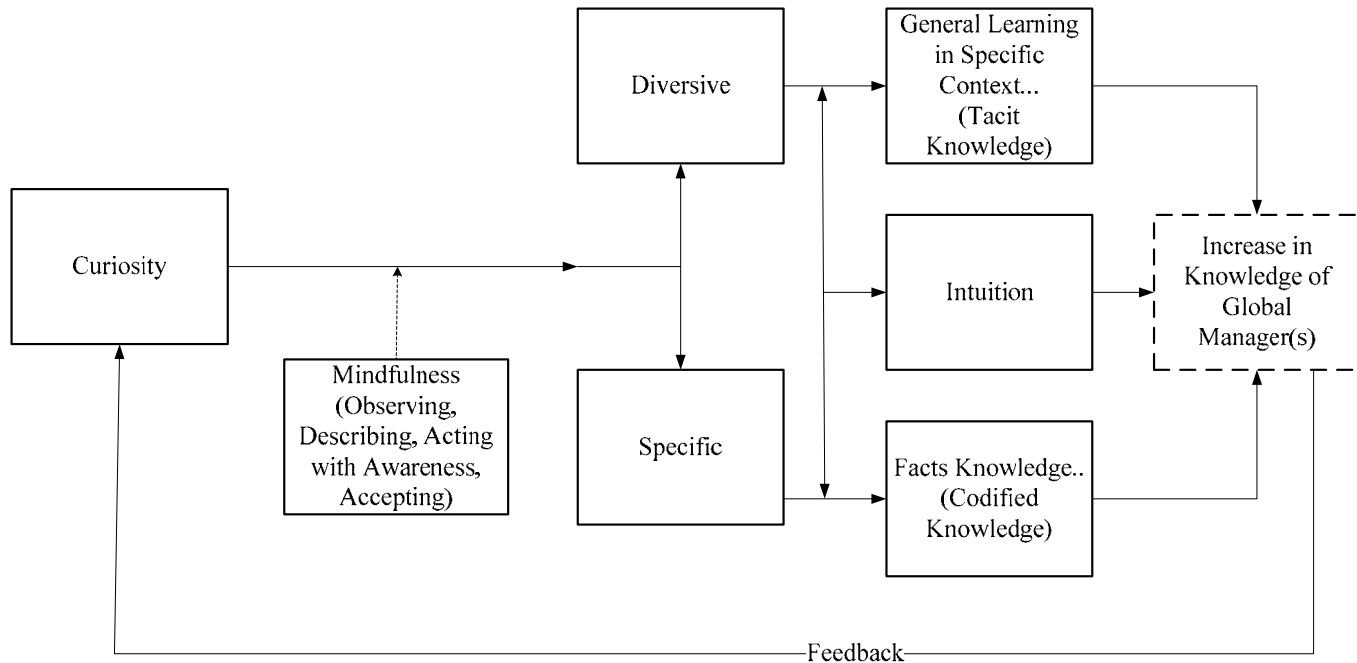
(Harvey & Buckley, 2002). Specifically, curiosity might be the key to the underlying foundation that stimulates learning and, concurrently, increases the effectiveness of decision-making and quality of management in the global marketplace (Miller & McFarland, 1987; Smithson, 1989; Shamir & Shamir, 1997; Stocking, 1998, 1999). Curiosity is one of the antecedents that triggers learning and provides the improvement in the decision-making processes in global managers. Curiosity is “that factor which underlies the willingness of an individual to expose him/herself to information” (Day, Langevin, Haynes & Spring, 1972: 330).

This paper explores the realm of managerial curiosity and its role in global decision-making. Figure 1 lays out the critical dimensions of the curiosity construct to demonstrate the potential role of curiosity in increasing knowledge and improving global managers' decision-making. The primary goal of the paper is the development of an assessment process for determining the level of global managers' curiosity. Each of these issues will be addressed in the paper.

## Developing a Typology of Curiosity and Global Decision-Making

In an effort to gain insight into the role of curiosity in gaining information/knowledge to make decisions in a global context and its importance in addressing global managements' lack of experience in making decision in the global marketplace, Figure 1 is presented. This representation of global decision-making highlights the key components of curiosity and their relationship to each other. Each of the components will be discussed in the following section of the paper.

**Figure 1**  
**The Role of Curiosity in Global Managers' Decision-Making**

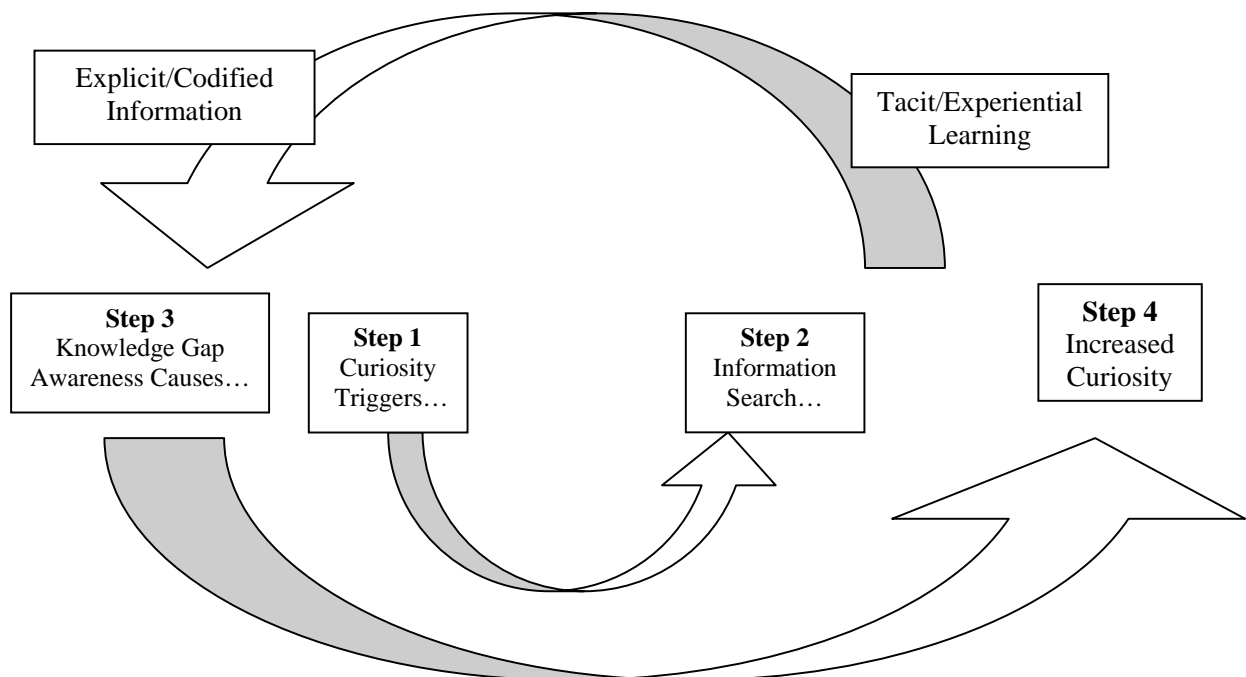


*I. Curiosity:* The more curious one is, the more information one acquires. The more information one acquires, the more knowledge gaps one experiences. Therefore, the more knowledge gaps one has the more curious one becomes and the more information one seeks and so forth. This ‘spiral’ of curiosity encapsulates both tacit (experiential learning) as well as explicit/codified information that can be learned without personal experience and is depicted in Figure 2.

There is an innate characteristic of humans that varies in its level of intensity but is always present to some degree in each person: curiosity. Curiosity is a desire for acquiring new sensory experience and/or knowledge that motivates exploratory behavior (Berlyne, 1949, 1950, 1954, 1960; Speilberger & Starr, 1994). Given the importance of search for information and/or knowledge, it would appear that curiosity is central to motivation to overcome the lack of knowledge given the context of global decision-

making. Further, curiosity is a key element in the knowledge search process, as well as in the process of collecting this new information concerning the differences associated with making decisions in a domestic versus a global context (Blustein, 1997; Mau, 2000; London, 1998). Curiosity is the foundation or the willingness/desire to move through the learning process to obtain the information gap between what one knows and what one wishes to know about the differences in decision contexts (Loewenstein, 1994). Information and/or knowledge are gained through observation, consultation, cognition (thinking) or some combination of the three.

The concept of curiosity is generally divided into two broad categories: *perceptual curiosity* and *epistemic curiosity*. Perceptual curiosity is defined as increased perception and/or reaction to visual, auditory, or tactile

**Figure 2: The Spiral of Curiosity**

stimulation (Berlyne, 1954; 1960). Epistemic curiosity is the motivation, desire or drive to know and to learn; this curiosity is aroused by conundrums or perceived gaps in knowledge that is needed or desired in the decision making process (Berlyne, 1954; Litman & Spielberger, 2003). While it is conceivable that perceptual curiosity could play a role in increasing global knowledge of management, it is envisioned that the epistemic dimension of curiosity will be instrumental in the quest for new knowledge and the corresponding development of better decision-making criteria. This belief is based in the knowledge that epistemic curiosity is motivated by conceptual conflict or conflict between mutually discrepant symbolic response tendencies (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, conceptions); this conflict must be resolved by the global managers learning about making decisions in a global context (Berlyne, 1954, 1965).

Curiosity is the motivational aspect of learning that triggers the search for information in an effort to reduce the tension/stress from not having the experience to make a decision (Flower, 1965; Deci, 1975, 1985; Giambra, Camp & Grodsky, 1992; Fisher, 2000). There

are both biological as well as social dimensions of curiosity (Langevin, 1971, 1976). The biological dimensions of curiosity are almost 'hard-wired' into the species with three basic drivers of curiosity (Hidi, 2000): *self-preservation*, *greed*, and *sex*. First, self-preservation incites curiosity; individuals have the desire to survive and to do so must concentrate on gathering information on changes taking place in the environment to guide short-term as well as long-term survival decisions.

The second driver of curiosity is greed; the desire to possess more benefits and/or reduce the cost of obtaining/maintaining such benefits is a driving force in most primates. Curiosity, then, can be described as the force that drives individuals to gather/keep valuable resources. The final driver of curiosity is the desire to reproduce. Finding a suitable mate is a foundation desire and is directly related to the curiosity to search for that mate. The fundamental aspects of sex are captured in the biological elements of curiosity (Maw & Maw, 1977; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The social dimensions of curiosity are tied to a personality trait that is concerned with exploration. The dispositional tendency to

explore social situations/relationships is the root of social curiosity and is considered to be a relatively stable dispositional tendency to engage in exploration (Reio, 1997). Curiosity is commonly considered to be a prime example of intrinsic motivation (i.e., a process of arousal and satisfaction in which the rewards of exploration are derived from doing the activity itself, rather than merely searching for the desired information) (Ainley, 1987; Voss & Keller, 1983; Zuckerman, 1994; Collins, Litman & Spielberger, 2004). Learning to be accepted within a group/social class is a critical social dimension of curiosity and helps to stimulate the exploration of social context of individuals (Lloyd & Barenblatt, 1984).

These observations of the role of curiosity in developing global managers' decision-making capabilities leads to the following research propositions:

**Research Proposition 1:** *Curiosity is an antecedent to learning and can be viewed as one of the primary elements in the learning process.*

**Research Proposition 2:** *The basic 'drivers' of curiosity are innate and are augmented by additional social determinates of curiosity.*

**Research Proposition 3:** *Curiosity is activated by perceived gaps in the knowledge of global managers.*

II. *Mindfulness:* Moderating curiosity is the level of mindfulness of an individual. Mindfulness is concerned with the adaptive management of expectations in the context of the unexpected (Swanson & Ramiller, 2004). It is related to curiosity as a means to focus the motivation of an individual to learn and absorb personal/environmental stimuli (Langer, 1989; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness is the focus of one's attention in a nonjudgmental way or accepting with purpose the experience occurring in the present. It can be contrasted with other behavior such as focusing attention elsewhere, including preoccupation with memories, fantasies, or worries (Linehan, 1993; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Langer, 1989, 1997; Marlatt & Kristeller, 1999).

Mindfulness is conscious attention and awareness in a state of high awareness which can be used to increase learning, creativity, and productivity. At the same time, mindfulness has

been attributed to increased positive personal qualities such as awareness, insight, wisdom, compassion and equanimity (Kabat-Zinn, 2000; Goldstein, 2002; Baer, Smith & Allen, 2004). The qualities of a mindful state are: alertness, openness, and sensitivity to different context (Swanson & Ramiller, 2004). Mindfulness is a critical prism through which curiosity is focused. It provides the attention to bounded curiosity which is helpful in keeping the individual from absorbing all the stimuli in their environment.

The multidimensional nature of mindfulness can be illustrated by examining the four skills need to maintain a high level of mindfulness (Baer, Smith & Allen, 2004): *observing, describing, acting with awareness, and accepting without judgment.* Observing is the first skill necessary to maintenance of a high level of mindfulness. It is the action of noticing, or attending to both internal (i.e., bodily sensation, cognition, emotions) and external (i.e., sounds, sights, smells) stimuli and their sources, intensity, and duration (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Dimidjian, Linehan, 2003; Baer, Smith & Allen, 2004). Describing, the second necessary skill of mindfulness, is the recognition of the type of stimuli and the commensurate labeling or noting of the observed phenomena by the use of descriptive terms (Gunaratana, 2002). Acting with awareness requires acting with undivided attention (e.g., throwing one's self into the experience) and the retention of critical elements of the stimuli/learning that is taking place (Hann, 1976; Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002). The fourth and final skill needed for high levels of mindfulness is non-judgmental acceptance. This requires a non-evaluative assessment (e.g., absence of evaluative labels such as good/bad, right/wrong, current/outdated and the like) of the present stimuli or information being internalized and learned by the individual (Segal, William & Teasdale, 2002).

Mindfulness is thought to go beyond mere consciousness or awareness to a much more focused attention or heightened sensitivity to personal and environmental stimuli (Westen, 1999). Alternate perceptions of mindfulness include that mindfulness is enhanced awareness and attention to and awareness of current emotions/experiences that an individual is experiencing (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Therefore,

mindfulness is a critical element in moderating or governing curiosity: without focus one would randomly go from one stimulus to another without internalizing those that are pertinent to learning. Mindfulness is thought to add clarity and vividness to experiences of curiosity, while directing the information search to vital data/information (Tart, 1994; Brown & Ryan, 2003). In addition, mindfulness is thought to be an essential element reducing stress, increased creativity, decreased burnout and higher levels of performance (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). Mindfulness is of particular importance in the search process for information/knowledge that is critical to global decision-makers. The following research propositions are derived relative to the concept of mindfulness:

**Research Proposition 4:** *Mindfulness serves to focus the curiosity of global managers to help direct the search process for new information.*

**Research Proposition 5:** *There are multiple skills (i.e., observing, describing, acting with awareness, and accepting without judgment) of a mindful state that are necessary to effectively focus curiosity.*

**III. Two Types of Exploratory Behavior:** Directed curiosity can form one of two patterns in the pursuit of new information, *specific* and *diversive* search patterns. Global managers can select from these patterns in their quest for salient information about global decision-making. Specific exploration involves a detailed investigation of novel stimuli to acquire new information/knowledge about a perceived gap in one's knowledge (i.e., accessing information on salaries relative to present position, as well as career alternatives) (Giambra, Camp & Grodsky, 1992). Diverive exploration entails an examination of alternatives due to boredom. It also can have its origin in a desire for general stimuli caused by the need for motivation, the drive to learn, regardless of the source or content of the input (i.e., seeking knowledge from public sources such as business publications) (Kashadn, Rose & Fincham, 2004). Table 1 provides a classification of specific and diverive exploration in both the perceptual (i.e., curiosity that leads to increased perception of stimuli) and epistemic (i.e., the basic drive to 'know' aroused by gaps in knowledge) realms of information

seeking (Berlyne, 1954; Litman & Spielberger, 2003) (see Table 1).

Table 1 depicts the intersection of diverive curiosity and perceptual exploratory behavior; this intersection results in an increase in receptivity/awareness of stimuli in general just to stimulate the individual (i.e., lack of specific attention to a particular problem or gap in knowledge). Diverive curiosity united with epistemic knowledge search yields a desire to learn in general, regardless of the source of information of the stimuli. A combination of specific curiosity and perceptual exploration increases the awareness and ultimately the search for knowledge from unique and/or novel stimuli. The source becomes of paramount importance in determining the value of the information to reduce specific information and/or knowledge gaps of the individual. The final quadrant of the matrix depicts the intersection of specific curiosity and epistemic knowledge search behavior. This combination yields motivation to know specific information due to the lack of information on the part of the individual. These types of curiosity and information gathering methods lead to obtaining more general knowledge in a specific context, while at the same time increasing the potential for learning specific, codified facts/knowledge that reduce knowledge gaps.

In an effort to better understand curiosity and the search for information and/or knowledge of global managers, it is important to understand how the skills of mindfulness tie to the types of exploratory behaviors (e.g., perceptual and epistemic). Table 2 illustrates the relationships between observing, describing, acting with awareness and accepting without judgment and the two primary forms of exploration. It is important to note that while the skills of mindfulness remain constant, the resulting exploration for information/knowledge shifts for each type of mindfulness skill. For example, acting with awareness in a diverive search would entail attention to stimuli in general; while the specific search pattern would search for specific stimuli to gain knowledge relative to a specific problem (see Table 2). General research propositions can be derived from the type of search behavior:

**Table 1**  
**Typology of Curiosity**

| Types of Curiosity | Types of Exploratory Behaviors  |  |
|--------------------|---|--|
|                    | Perceptual  | Epistemic  |
| Diversive          | Increased Awareness of Stimuli in General due to Boredom                | Drive to Learn in General Regardless of Source Due to Boredom                        |
| Specific           | Increased Awareness/Search for Information Resulting from Novel Stimuli | Drive to Know Specific Information/Learning Aroused by Ignorance/Lack of Information |

**Research Proposition 6:** *Diversive exploration due to curiosity is non-directive and is concerned with general level of boredom and curiosity is used to reduce the feeling of isolation.*

**Research Proposition 7:** *Specific exploration for knowledge is directed at a known gap in the knowledge of the global manager and helps to reduce the level of not knowing of the global manager relative to some specific aspect of his/her job.*

**Research Proposition 8:** *Diversive curiosity and perceptual exploration will yield heightened receptivity to stimuli in general but not directed at specific perceived gaps in global managers' knowledge.*

**Research Proposition 9:** *Specific curiosity and perceptual exploration are directed at known information gaps and the acquisition of*

*tacit knowledge to improve global manager decision-making.*

IV. *General and Specific Learning Outcomes of Focused Curiosity:* Since the early 1990s, knowledge management relative to enhancing management/organizational learning and knowledge transfer has continued to generate an enormous amount of interest, with some proponents contending that the knowledge-based view represents a fundamentally new theory of the firm (e.g., Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). So far, a great deal of the knowledge management debate has evolved around Japanese and Western multinational firms. While acknowledging the importance of Nonaka's (1994) work on the conversion of knowledge, we argue that the challenge for global managers is to achieve the

**Table 2**  
**Mindfulness and Types of Curiosity**

| Mindfulness Skills                  | Diversive  | Specific   |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Observing                           | Seeking Information through Observing a Variety of Stimuli (Internal and External) | Noticing a Specific Stimuli in a Particular Location, with Specific Intensity/Duration |
| Describing                          | Labeling and Categorizing General Stimuli to Identify Characteristics              | Defining and Labeling Specific Stimuli and/or Information                              |
| Acting with Awareness               | Individual Attention to Stimuli in General (Avoiding Stimuli Overload)             | Becoming 'One' with the Search for a Specific Stimuli to Gain Knowledge                |
| Accepting/Allowing without Judgment | Not Inferring Evaluation Labels &/or Judgments                                     | Accepting Stimuli from Specific Source(s) without Judging the Source(s)                |

diffusion of knowledge as it manifests itself in a number of ways. Such knowledge might be tacit, codified or a combination of both, hence 'explicit' (Clark, 2000). For the sake of argument, we characterize knowledge as comprising two inextricably intertwined components: explicit knowledge and tacit.

- *Codified Knowledge: a known set of systems/processes and an integrated approach to develop and manage the firm's information needs. Within the context of HRM, this includes data bases, policies, practices and procedures (i.e., standard operating procedures...SOPs).*
- *Tacit Knowledge: knowledge that is unique to the situation, time and organization that*

*has value due to the contextual nature of the information/knowledge (e.g., Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998).*

Codified knowledge can be articulated in formal systematic language and represented through grammatical statements, mathematical expressions, manuals, company rules, operating procedures and so forth. It would seem that for this form of codified knowledge (see also Spender, 1994; Kogut and Zander, 1993), the challenge of learning and subsequently transferring knowledge is articulation: how well defined it is and how succinctly it is conveyed. Tacit knowledge on the other hand is said to be hard to articulate. Global managers' tacit

knowledge is manifest in action (i.e., through application, in specific contexts). For Grant (1996), the critical distinction between the two types of knowledge pertains to their transferability and the mechanisms for transferring across individuals, space and time.

Research proposition that relate to the learning and the transfer of information and/or knowledge are as follows:

**Research Proposition 10:** *Codified knowledge is more easily identified and transferred due to the explicit nature of the information and the 'easy' with which the global manager can obtain the information/knowledge.*

**Research Proposition 11:** *Tacit knowledge is 'sticky' and therefore difficult for the global manager to obtain from others or to personally transmit to others in the organization.*

V. *The Role of Intuition Global Management:* Global managers have to address multiple sets of environmental differences while attempting to balance the organizational anomalies found between countries. They almost need to have a sixth sense and act with what has been deemed 'street smarts' (da Cunha, da Cunha & Kamoche, 1999; Khatri & Ng, 2000). While the traditional manager has to have 'street smarts,' having a self-diagnostic focus on performance, global managers need to be street smart having a task-diagnostic focus on learning (Porter & Tansky, 1999).

The organizational benefits of using the intuition of global managers are numerous. The first benefit is that an expedited decision-making process in complex environmental contexts can be generated. Second, a qualitative improvement of decisions by relying on an experiential base of informal knowledge that is not generic to the organization or past experience may occur. Additionally, facilitated personal development may be achieved by building personal self-efficacy of the global manager or decision-maker (i.e., having insights and confidence that others do not have in making decisions in the complex global environment). The final benefit of global managers' use of intuition is the promotion of decision compatibility between the global managers' choices and the headquarters' goals/mission; this occurs as a result of the shared experiential insights into complex global issues between these constituencies. The intuitive global managers can provide specific

experiential insights relevant for increased quality of decision-making in new environmental contexts. These insights are rooted in the global manager's intuition, given past experience and success in making decisions with less than perfect information.

The difficulty of assessing a global manager's intuition is its unconscious origin. Its tacit nature makes it very difficult for the global manager to justify his/her recommendations (i.e., "I don't know why or how, I just know that it works"). The global manager draws upon innumerable successful experiences that have been stored for automatic retrieval and thus cannot be well articulated (Agor, 1990; Parikh, 1994). In many ways, intuition suspends the bounds of rationality in unstable and complex environments like the global marketplace. It permits the decision-maker to intuitively frame particularly complex problems with which they have not been previously confronted and, at the same time, intuition allows for the proposal of potential effective solutions (Kleinmuntz, 1991). Global managers learn to trust their judgments and overcome their fear of using intuition. Intuition should not be regarded merely as an emotional reaction to complexity, but rather should be viewed as an evolved means to estimate how to address "unknowns" in the environmental framework (Vaughn, 1990). The most important element of using the intuition of the global manager in corporate decision making processes is the speed with which decisions can be made and the recognition that intuition is critical for agility in hypercompetitive situations (Harper, 1990; Khatri & Ng, 2000).

Intuition complements curiosity. It is a form of accumulated diverse and specific curiosity that is stimulated when creativity is needed to make decisions and when there is a knowledge gap that could inhibit a decision being made by the global manager. Intuition is the outcome of a well developed curiosity and increased levels of self-efficacy of the global manager, both of which help increase their general as well as specific knowledge base. The research propositions relative to the role of intuition in global decision-making are as follows:

**Research Proposition 12:** *The quality of global managers' tacit knowledge provides the*

*foundation for the development of global decision-making intuition.*

**Research Proposition 13:** *Global managers' intuition is helpful in addressing the complexity and/or the novelty of the foreign environment in which decisions are to be made.*

Given the importance of curiosity in making global decisions, it would seem appropriate to develop a means to assess the level of curiosity of global managers prior to assigning them to a global assignment.

### A Step-by-Step Assessment of Global Managers' Level of Curiosity

Figure 3 illustrates a step-by-step process for examining and assessing the level of curiosity that potential global managers possess (see Figure 3). While the level of curiosity varies among potential candidates for overseas assignments, the process for examining and hopefully developing the level of curiosity can be standardized. Each of the steps in the process will be discussed to illustrate their relative importance in determining the level of curiosity of global managers.

**Figure 3**  
Step-by-Step Means to Assess Global Managers' Level of Curiosity



**Step 1: Assessment of Innate Level of Curiosity of Potential Global Managers:**

There are a number of assessment tools available to determine the 'raw level of curiosity' of candidates for global assignments. But, research indicates that one should first determine the type of knowledge base and the type of curiosity (i.e., intellectual, cognitive, emotional, or social curiosity) that is being tested. Additionally, one must determine which of these types of knowledge base and curiosity are of the greatest importance to the success of the global manager (Note: the test used to ascertain level of curiosity may change by manager, position and environmental context) (Loewenstien, 1994). The tests for curiosity can vary, but the most common standardized tests appear below.

- *Imaginal Processing Test* (Giambra, Camp & Grodsky, 1992)
- *Academic Curiosity Scale* (Vidler & Rawan, 1974)
- *Melbourne Curiosity Inventory* (Nalyor, 1981)
- *Ontario Test of Intrinsic Motivation* (Day, 1971)
- *State-Trait Personality Inventory* (Spielberger, 1979)
- *Proverbs Test* (Maw & Maw, 1975)
- *Sensation Seeking Scale* (Zuckerman, 1979)
- *Novelty Experiencing Scale* (Costa & McCrae, 1988)
- *Openness to Experiences* (Costa & McCrae, 1988)
- *Curiosity and Exploration Inventory* (Kashdan, Rose & Finchman, 2002)

**Step 2: Assessment of the Political Context of Global Managers' Assignments:**

When one considers the level of newness, ambiguity and complexity of most global assignments that are focused on exploring and exploiting opportunities in emerging economies, it would appear that, coupled with curiosity, global managers' political competence is essential. Decomposing the concept into its key dimensions to better understand its potential benefits for global assignments, note that Ferris, Hochwater, Kolodinsky, and Frink, (2001) have identified four basic dimensions of the political competence construct. These are discussed

below with respect to their contribution to curiosity:

*Self and Social Awareness.* This is the ability to ascertain from social interactions the meaning of one's actions and the reactions of others. Being a keen observer of what is and/or is not taking place in a particular social setting enables the politically astute global manager to impact outcomes/performance. The higher the level of social awareness and the greater the success in influencing the behavior of others, the higher the self-awareness of the self-efficacy of global managers tends to be. These highly self-aware individuals can then translate their success into new situations, problems, and environments in which they must make operative decisions without first-hand experience. Knowing how to "read" social situations provides the global manager with political competencies that many of his/her counterparts do not have.

*Interpersonal Influence and Control.* Socially competent global managers have the ability to get others to believe in them as individuals that can get results and who, in the broadest sense of the word, can lead. The global managers must have the ability to adapt their behavior to the social context of the foreign organization and to the cultural/social norms of the host country. The political competence of these global managers allows them to have influence beyond his/her hierarchical position in the organization.

*Genuineness and Sincerity.* Closely coupled with the level of influence one has in social settings is the perceived genuineness of the global manager. The ability to merge the social norms of the host country into the personification of their actions distinguishes global managers who have inordinate political abilities/skills/knowledge. A key in building this type of reputation is to ameliorate the concerns of the organization's members that the actions of the global manager are for his/her own benefit. Objectivity in dealing with others, so that the global manager is viewed as being a "straight shooter," is a fundamental aspect of gaining political competence and security.

*Established Social Capital Inside/Outside the Organization.* Political competence is built through the use of preexisting social capital of global managers. One of the fundamental

problems with global managers is that they are unceremoniously “dropped” into the host country organization with a more or less “take it or leave it” message from headquarters. Social capital denotes the organizational ‘chits’ that a global manager has built-up in an organization where reciprocity in assistance is expected due to past interactions. In the foreign organization, global managers will have limited social capital due to their newness to the organization and the transitory nature of their assignment. Therefore, the critical means of “transporting” social capital is through the personal/professional networks of the global manager.

**Step 3: Assessment of Environments in which Global Managers will be Relocated:**

The variety and varying levels of complexity of the environments that global managers may face is a critical dimension to consider when assessing the level of managerial curiosity. It is also essential due to the need for learning and deciphering the complex social/political/economic ‘codes’ in each environmental setting. The external macro-environment of a host country in which the global company operates will vary from that of the home country along several dimensions. First, the level of ‘novelty’ or the magnitude of the difference between the home and host countries’ cultures can be a determining factor of what is acceptable managerial behavior. For example, in the United States, there is a much different attitude towards punctuality than in some Latin American countries; being “on time” can be radically different in each country. Further the length of the distance of the host country from that of the home country can be dramatic, thereby impacting the definition of the parameters of appropriate and inappropriate activities in an organization. Second, the external culture may set the societal level of tolerance of the global managers’ behavior in the local context. Indeed, these guidelines provide the foundation for the global organizations’ policies relative to acceptable and unacceptable behavior and actions of the global manager. The more divergent the macro-cultures of home and host countries, the more likely the global manager will have to learn to adapt his/her behavior to understand the behavior of those indigenous to the host country. The greater the cultural

differences, the higher the level of curiosity that will be needed to learn/understand the cultural and social context of decision-making in the host country.

Within the macro-culture, there can be a multitude of subcultures derived over time that can also have an impact on the global managers’ behavior. An increase in diversity in the macro-culture will result in an increase in the likelihood of having a divergent set of cultural perspectives on what global managers should/should not do. Cultures that are more collective in their orientation will more than likely be less tolerant of disruptive behavior; for example, the group would not allow the global manager to disrupt group cohesiveness (Triandis, 1994; Bond, 2004). In individualistic cultures, however, the individual takes a more idiosyncratic orientation to behavior and is less likely to be protective of others in the group (Triandis, 1995).

The culture of an organization can also have a direct impact on the environment of the global manager (Kotter & Heskett, 1992). An organization’s culture is the definition of reality as far as the organization is concerned and is reflected in the organization’s: 1) standard operating procedures (SOPs); 2) norms of behavior; 3) rules of conduct; 4) values held as being important; 5) symbols and totems in the organization representing things of value and importance; 6) taboos both symbolic as well as real; 7) heroes or key personalities that define the nature of the organization; and 8) the daily climate or civility within the organization (Schein, 1992; 1999). Deviation from organizational norms can undermine the basic foundation of the organization’s functioning and/or survival.

Organizational cultures are generally categorized into three groups: *role cultures*, *task cultures* and *power cultures*. Role cultures are very formalized, rule and/or process oriented cultures where acceptable as well as unacceptable behavior is prescribed. In organizations with task cultures, the organization has as a foundation a strong sense of the basic mission of the organization and the team is the fundamental common denominator of the organizational culture. Power cultures are organizational cultures based on the hierarchical distribution of power which controls rewards/sanctions. Depending on the basis of the

corporate culture, one can gain insights into the tolerance for bullying behavior. Moreover, given the amalgamation of cultures when global organizations expand overseas (e.g., joint ventures, strategic alliances, acquisitions, and the like), the resulting differences or gaps in the cultural fabric can provide ideal opportunities for bullying behaviors to exist (Hofstede, 1994).

**Step 4: Assessment of Assignment and Task(s) that the Global Manager will Undertake:**

Assessment must take into consideration the demand characteristics of the assignment and tasks of the global manager. This is important because a mismatch between the curiosity of the global manager and the need for novel or unique solutions can result in either a stifling of innovation (too much curiosity for the context) or a lack of innovation that could lead to success (too little curiosity for the context). Tasks that global managers face relative to the global assignment can be categorized into three types: *coordinative tasks*, *computational tasks*, and *creative tasks*.

Coordinative tasks are tasks that are integrative in nature (e.g., developing a marketing plan, initiating an organizational change in a foreign subsidiary, or selecting foreign suppliers). These tasks require a finely orchestrated interaction between the domestic organization and the subsidiary where the global manager is located at their boundary, and where speed, accuracy, and reliance on others are essential for the global manager to accomplish such tasks successfully.

Computational tasks are more structured tasks that require utilization of an established body of knowledge and techniques for successful accomplishment. There is less ambiguity in these tasks and there is a known beginning and ending point in the set of activities comprising these tasks. While most computational tasks are fairly procedural, and may require a great deal of effort on the part of the global manager, their demand for coordination with others is lessened.

Creative tasks are tasks that do not have “proven” answers or processes to find their solution and are dependent on the creative insights of the global manager to find acceptable solutions. These tasks can be approached and/or framed in a number of different ways because a

wide variety of information sources are to be scanned for creative task accomplishment (Hambrick, Davison, Snell & Snow 1998). Therefore, it is particularly difficult to measure the result/outcomes of performing such tasks.

An additional relevant attribute of a task is the difficulty of the task that the global manager is attempting to resolve. In the determination of the relative “difficulty” of the global manager’s assignment, there are three dimensions of the task that have to be taken into consideration: *the complexity of the task structure*, *the ambiguity of task content*, and *the form of task presentation*. The complexity of the task structure is a product of the array of potential alternative solutions, the number of cues/information sources relative to the task, the relationship between cues and criterion for solutions of the task, and the number of steps or phases to the task.

The ambiguity of task content results from having unknown or unavailable organizing principles of the task, limited or nonexistent previous experience with the task, a high likelihood of failure/partial failure, and unclear cues as to how to frame the problem or organize the information to solve the task. The form of task presentation is the task dimension designating whether only a brief time span will be available for judgment and requiring the judgment of cues dependent on the perceptual predisposition of the global manager. The greater the overall complexity of the task, the more skilled and “intelligent” global manager must be to address the cognitively demanding nature of global assignment tasks (Sternberg 1996).

**Step 5: Assessment of Inhibitors to Global Managers Level of Curiosity:**

There are a number of means of inhibiting curiosity in global managers which can be placed into four broad categories: characteristics of the global managers, characteristics of the organization, characteristics of the assignment, and *characteristics of the environment*. First, there are a number of trait characteristics of global managers that are important when assessing the level of curiosity of global managers. These traits include openness to their environment and new experiences and tolerance of ambiguity in the environment. Additionally, the quest for autonomy and self-reliance is a trait

character of the manager, as well as the manager's willingness to take risks in the acquisition of new knowledge. Finally, an important trait characteristic is the manager's balance of multiple IQs (e.g., emotional, political, cultural, social, network and the like).

The second set of characteristics that could inhibit global managerial curiosity is the nature of the organization and its management. Recognition that 'results' may take time and that it is difficult to measure the intermediate stages of manager curiosity may vary among global managers. Further, the supportiveness of the environment within the organization for taking risk and questioning the *status quo* can have impact on managerial curiosity. Encouragement/rewards for learning and knowledge transfer among individuals in the organization are additional factors that shape the organization, its management and managerial curiosity. Recognition of individuals' insights/curiosity in solving complex problems facing the organization is another characteristic of the organization and its management that could affect managerial curiosity. Finally, managerial curiosity is affected by the provision of resources (i.e., time) necessary to examine issues and develop interpersonal relationships that can be instrumental in fostering a culture of curiosity, learning, and knowledge transfer in the organization.

Another set of organizational characteristic impacting managerial curiosity is the set of characteristics of the assignment itself. The task itself can lead to curiosity and creativity in global managers. New problems or tasks (i.e., lack of experience of the manager) that are assignment to the global manager and creative tasks that need insight and risk taking by the manager are tasks or facets of tasks that could shape curiosity. Additionally, tasks that are complex and need the input/support of others to resolve problems associated with the task, as well as tasks that are known for their difficulty and lack of success by other global managers in resolving the task can also impair or enhance curiosity.

The final set of elements that may affect the level of curiosity in management are the characteristics of the environment in which the organization operates. The external macro environment becomes one of the most important

elements in hindering global manager's curiosity due to the level of difference between known and unknown environment. This environment is also an important one as the lack of knowledge of the manager relative to the new context of decision-making may have an adverse effect on curiosity. The environment can hinder curiosity by in a number of ways. A lack of learning infrastructure (i.e., electronic, sources of credible data in the host country, libraries and the like) and complex legal/governmental requirements to modify the means of doing business in the country can be serious impediments to generating and satisfying curiosity. Too much data and too little time (e.g., hypercompetition) to make rational well measured decisions, as well as a retarded level of economic development in the host country as compared to the global manager's home country could also be causes of a failure of curiosity. Finally, the absence of support for the subsidiary by the organization's headquarters relative to the given level of opportunity in the host country market (i.e., not worth the risk to support curiosity and creativity to solve problems) can stifle interest in curiosity and its satisfaction.

#### **Step 6: Monitoring and Increasing the Level of Global Manager Curiosity:**

The management of a global organization should develop an on-going assessment of curiosity found in their global managers. These individuals should be tested on a regular basis and recognition given to curiosity on annual reviews. Global managers that increase their curiosity should be rewarded through performance reviews. The level of curiosity should be considered when developing global teams to insure that there is an adequate level of curiosity on the team to effectively address the specific task in a given environment. If possible, the curiosity of the management team should be benchmarked against other organizations management to determine the competitive strength of the team.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has reviewed the concept of global organizational knowledge and suggests that the role of curiosity in ameliorating global managers' lack of knowledge may be or should

be of significant, positive importance to the global managers' decision-making process. Table 1, depicting the relationships between two types of curiosity and two types of exploratory behaviors, allows us to visualize a multitude of recognition and motivation opportunities through which we can discover and understand new information/knowledge. It highlights the vast numbers of instances global managers encounter frequently that might give rise to curiosity and the need to satisfy that curiosity to the benefit of the organization.

The introduction of the concept of mindfulness to the curiosity mix allows us to hone skills such as observance, description, knowing action and non-judgmental acceptance of the environment and those who inhabit it. Further, the use of tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge and the application of human intellectual capital to these types of knowledge are vital to increase global managers' capabilities of making global decisions. The spiral of curiosity developed in Figure 2 clearly shows the relationship between curiosity, a quest for information to satisfy curiosity. The combination of curiosity and the tools we use to satisfy it and gain new information/knowledge is made even more effective in the battle to increase general and specific learning objectives. Finally, the role intuition is an important one in overcoming organizational the lack of knowledge that can be so harmful to global managers in new and unfamiliar contexts like host countries.

Using these concepts as a foundation, the authors have generated a six step process by which a global manager's level of curiosity may be raised. Assessments must be made as to the innate level of curiosity of the global manager and as to the political context of the manager's assignment. Additionally, both the global manager's environments and his assignment and tasks must be reviewed. Further, factors that can inhibit the global manager's level of curiosity must be identified and addressed. Finally, the global manager's curiosity level should be monitored and increased if possible. Via provision of ongoing feedback to the manager, the result of this last step should be continuous improvement of the use of curiosity and, hopefully, organizational and managerial performance.

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