

CREATING SINGERIAN INQUIRING ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

Singerian Inquiring Organizations (Courtney, et al., 1998; Courtney, 2001) are knowledge-based enterprises based on Churchman's theory of Singerian inquiring systems (Courtney, 2001). Singerian organizations emphasize ethical behavior and seek "exoteric" knowledge that goes out to all societies in order to improve the human condition, and the environment in which humans, and all living things on the planet, exist. Knowledge creation and decision making in Singerian organizations are diffused and disparate; in the ideal, everyone is a decision maker, designer, and client of the organization's output. Cooperation, communication and freedom of expression are vital in Singerian organizations because knowledge creation and sharing are dependent upon a common vision, language and worldview. One viable platform for studying Singerian Inquiring Organizations are social enterprises, which operate under the premise of meeting social needs, such as healthcare or education, that might not adequately be addressed in a capitalistic

organization focused on profits and shareholder wealth (Dees, 1998). Social enterprises are similar to non-profit organizations in that they must adopt certain business principles to run efficiently while raising capital through donations, fundraising, or the trade of services (Dees, 1998; Richardson et al. 2009). Congruent with the emphasis of Singerian organizations, social enterprises also inherently approach decision-making as a collaboration of various stakeholders as seen through the lens of ethics. The question becomes, how do we foster the creation of such enterprises?

For Singerian organizations to thrive, employees must feel unfettered to quest for knowledge, share what knowledge has been found, and express opinions about the findings of others. In short, employees must feel empowered to act in order to foster the well-being and development of the organization and its stakeholders. Both the psychology and organizational behavior literature have vastly examined psychological empowerment as a way to challenge individuals and/or employees to taking control of and interest in situations. Empowerment has been examined in the research as a multi-dimensional concept—including meaning, self-determination, impact, and competence—as a way to examine and explain the driving forces behind how and why this construct affects individuals (Spreitzer 1995; Spreitzer et al. 1997; Thomas et al. 1990). The applications of psychological empowerment are not strictly limited to the management and psychology disciplines; however, there has been limited research examining the amalgamation of empowerment and IS research constructs. The purpose of this research is to extend the empowerment stream of research into IS and examine the potential positive influence that empowered employees can have on the information assurance of an organization, and ultimately, the ways in which these principles can foster Singerian Inquiring Organizations.

Furthermore, this research examines the influence of employee empowerment and applies those principles through discussion and empirical analysis regarding the creation and support of Singerian Inquiring Organizations within social enterprises. Empirical analysis will be aimed at investigating the circumstances regarding the development and implementation of security policies, procedures, and systems to protect proprietary information of social enterprises. Finally, a discussion surrounding the empowerment of employees as a means to promote a sense of fairness, increase intentions to follow security protocol, and ultimately support the Singerian Inquiring Organization paradigm are examined.