

Hero Culture and Silo Mentality: a Systematic Literature Review

Nadia Molek*

Faculty of organizational studies in Novo mesto, Ulica talcev 3, 8000 Novo mesto, Slovenija
nadia.molek@fos-unm.si

Juan Esteban de Jager

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina
juandejager@gmail.com

Maja Pucelj

Faculty of organizational studies in Novo mesto, Ulica talcev 3, 8000 Novo mesto, Slovenija
maja.pucelj@fos-unm.si

Abstract:

Research Question (RQ): Is there a correlation between hero culture and silo mentality? Which are the potential dysfunctionalities that arise from this "hero-silos" paradigm?

Purpose: We conducted a systematic review of scientific literature in order to gain insights into the "hero-silos" paradigm.

Method: A systematic review of scientific literature was conducted in the following academic search engines: Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, Springer Nature, ScienceDirect, SAGE, Wiley Online Library, Web of Science, and Base (Open Access), as well as Google, ResearchGate.

Results: We detected some emerging patterns that shed light on the correlation between hero culture and silo mentality. We stress that this correlation must be further investigated, as well as conceptualizing the term "hero" in a proper way.

Organization: The research sheds light on how the dynamic hero-silo resembles an iceberg, giving managers tools to make the problem visible and to examine the issue in organizational culture from another perspective.

Society: The findings evidence that the hero-silo mentality is an unconscious phenomenon influencing the work environment negatively. The visibility of this problem helps to increase productivity as well as to elevate the engagement/motivation of the employees.

Originality: The originality of the research is reflected on the initially detected potential correlation among hero culture and silo mentality, as well as dysfunctionalities that arise from this linkage, which have to be further researched.

Limitations / further research: We found a limitation in open access to published academic literature, that could enrich the research. The divergence in the definition of "hero" has been also limitation for conducting research. We suggest further quantitative research on the correlation of hero culture and silo mentality in organizations.

Keywords: hero culture, silo mentality, cross-collaboration, organizational culture, leadership.

1 Introduction

Organizational cultures that heavily reward heroic behavior, prioritizing individual performance over collaboration and teamwork, are prevalent in many workplaces (Denison, 1990, p. 268). However, this culture may hinder positive organizational development and a healthy team identity by assuming that everyone should aspire to be a hero. This can lead to compartmentalization and silo mentality, where different departments or groups within an organization become focused solely on their own goals and do not share information or knowledge with others in the same organization (Tett, 2016). As a result, employees may become more focused on their own success than the success of the organization as a whole, leading to inefficiencies and missed opportunities. While this approach may have worked in the past to a certain extent, the contemporary scenario of the Covid-19 pandemic and the VUCA environment has shown that this silo-hero model is no longer applicable, as it hinders organizational performance (Mangan and Pietroni, 2019).

To shed light on the relationship between hero culture and silo mentality, we conducted a systematic review of scientific literature across various academic search engines. Specifically, our research questions were: Is there a correlation between hero culture and silo mentality? What are the potential dysfunctions that arise from this "hero-silos" paradigm? This article presents the findings of our research, which aims to bring attention to the unconscious phenomenon of the "hero-silo" paradigm and its negative influence on the work environment. Our study highlights the need for organizations to move away from this paradigm towards a more collaborative and inclusive culture. By making this phenomenon visible, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of its impact and encourage organizations to take proactive steps towards building a more effective and sustainable workplace culture.

2 Theoretical framework

The impact of hero culture and silo mentality on organizational success and functioning is widely recognized and studied in the fields of organizational and leadership studies. Understanding these phenomena is essential for developing a comprehensive theoretical framework for organizational performance in today's uncertain and complex business environment (Mangan and Lawrence-Pietroni, 2019). In the following sections, we will outline key concepts that can aid in the construction of such a framework.

The prevalent "hero" culture in the corporate world is rooted in a conventional dominant cultural outlook that prioritizes individual performance while downplaying the significance of collaboration and teamwork (Denison, 1990, p. 268). This mindset is closely intertwined with representations of masculinity and the heroic ideal (Ford, 2008).

Some less extreme perspectives suggest that organizations that highlight the hero paradigm and share stories of employee accomplishments can yield positive outcomes. Individual heroes can serve as sources of inspiration, motivation, and innovation (Szabla and Teece, 2021).

Clatworthy (2019) argues that success stories, heroes, and internal rituals can foster frontline employee empowerment. Recognizing their value and heroic status through public recognition and showcasing success stories can be instrumental in motivating and inspiring employees. Similarly, De Chernatony (2010) supports this viewpoint, proposing that regularly sharing stories of heroism through a company's intranet can instill pride among employees and encourage them to strive for greater achievements. By highlighting examples of exceptional performance and celebrating the accomplishments of individuals or teams, organizations can cultivate a passion for success and foster a culture of excellence.

Although there are some perspectives that see value in hero culture, current theories tend to support post-heroic paradigms (de Zulueta, 2015) due to evidence that heroic efforts can lose momentum over time (Steinberg, 2014). Post-heroic approaches view hero culture as a hindrance, as it places undue emphasis on personal accomplishments and individual expertise that stems from Western societies' perception of exceptional performance equating to great leadership (Carayannis, 2020). This mindset can foster negative attitudes towards teamwork, collaboration, and collective efforts. Overreliance on star performers can lead to a lack of institutional knowledge and create a competitive culture that hinders teamwork, collaboration, and communication between units (Tett, 2016). Excessive admiration of individual heroes can also result in an unhealthy dependence on them (Szabla and Teece, 2021). Recognizing the negative effects of hero culture is crucial for promoting collective effort and teamwork in organizations.

The concept of "silo" mentality has been studied and discussed in various fields, including organizational behaviour, management, and psychology. Silo mentality is a cultural phenomenon that arises in organizations when different parts of the organization are divided into departments or units, creating barriers to communication, information sharing, and collaboration. As Neebe (1987 in Cilliers and Greyvenstein, 2012, p. 2) noted, silos can be compared to grain silos, which operate in a rigid and hierarchical manner that is disconnected from other parts of the organization. Silo mentality can negatively impact an organization in several ways, such as hindering innovation, reducing efficiency, and decreasing employee morale. It is therefore important for organizations to recognize and address this issue to ensure effective collaboration and communication across all departments. Tett (2016) argues that silos are a cultural phenomenon that arises from the way we classify and organize the world, while Caseiro and Meneses (2019) define silo mentality as a belief held by individuals or groups within an organization that perpetuates barriers to effective communication, information sharing, and collaboration.

Silos within organizations can take shape both vertically and horizontally. The horizontal dimension of silos arises from the functional configuration of departments within an organization, such as production, sales, marketing, and human resources (Barmyer and Sachseneder, 2013). Meanwhile, the vertical dimension refers to the hierarchical levels within the organization (Stone, 2004). Depending on where they are situated within this hierarchy and

departmental structure, employees may develop different views and attitudes towards others, perpetuating a siloed mentality (Szabla and Teece, 2021:570). This mentality reinforces the fragmentation that exists between departments, which develop their own cultures, work methodologies, goals, values, and time management practices over time (Caseiro and Meneses, 2019). Furthermore, physical environments and organizational architecture can also contribute to the development of a siloed mindset (Cilliers and Greyvenstein, 2012; Tett, 2016). Overall, silos shape identities and create barriers between individuals or groups that perceive themselves as different from others within the organization.

According to Coutts (2017), a lack of trust between departments or individuals can contribute to the development of a silo mentality within organizations. This mentality creates barriers, compartmentalizes work, generates interprofessional frictions, and leads to stressful situations that reduce motivation, create redundancies, frustrate clients, and hinder problem-solving and project success (Caseiro and Meneses, 2019). As noted by Tett (2016), silo mentality can result in missed opportunities to leverage new models that could drive growth and innovation, ultimately impeding an organization's ability to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing marketplace.

In summary, both hero culture and silo mentality can have negative effects on organizational performance and effectiveness. As a starting point for our research, we have formulated the following research questions:

- RQ1: Is there a correlation between hero culture and silo mentality?
- RQ2: Which are the potential dysfunctionalities that arise from this "hero-silos" paradigm?

3 Method

We conducted a rigorous and systematic search of the literature on the topic of the hero-silo paradigm in organizations (See Figure 1). Our literature search used specifically two keywords: "hero culture" and "silo mentality", using in the search the symbol "+" between both notions. We utilized multiple scientific databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, Springer Nature, ScienceDirect, SAGE, Wiley Online Library, Web of Science, and Base (Open Access), as well as Google, ResearchGate and among the references of the found publications (reference mining) in order to find other texts that could be relevant to our study and that we may have missed when searching for literature. We meticulously combed through numerous case studies, empirical studies, and theoretical frameworks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the correlation between "hero culture" and "silo mentality" within organizations.

As it can be seen in Table 1, we were able to identify a comprehensive set of literature. Our research included a diverse range of types of publications, including research articles, reviews, handbooks, conference papers, case studies, books, and book chapters. We placed no restrictions on the age, gender, or nationality of the study participants or authors. By

incorporating a diverse set of publications, our study aimed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the relationship between hero culture and silo mentality in organizations.

In the first stage of research we proceed to assess the relevance of these publications setting up evaluation criteria for what would be included or excluded from the literature review. Our selection criteria were designed to identify publications that implied or pointed at a “possible” direct or indirect correlation between hero culture and silo mentality within organizations and their potential implications and consequences. To achieve this, we limited our search to publications from January 2010 to January 2023, in English language only. We excluded duplicated research and non-peer reviewed materials. In cases where multiple publications reported on the same study, we included only the publication with the most comprehensive coverage of the results. Other information that helped us in assessing the value of the findings was the author(s) institution and the impact factor of the publication. Additionally, we excluded research that we did not have full access to for reading. To ensure the relevance of our search results, we also excluded studies that solely focused on the silo mentality without any connection to the hero culture and vice versa.

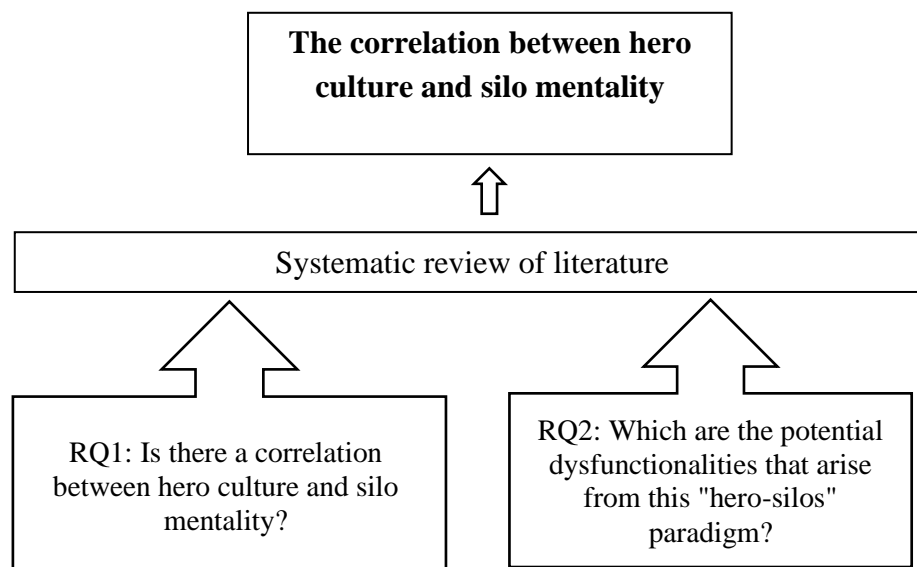


Figure 1. Research model

Our systematic literature review was conducted through a multi-step process to ensure a comprehensive and rigorous analysis (see Figure 2). In the first place, we proceeded to carry out an effective reading strategy. We initially screened the titles and abstracts. After reading these sections, we determined if the paper was relevant for our research. If the text was relevant, we inscribed it in an excel spreadsheet, if not, we excluded it. In the second stage we superficially review the introduction as well as the results and discussion section, as well as, if necessary, the full content. We read and organized a selection of articles, book chapters, and books in an Excel spreadsheet for analysis and synthesis.

The first ranking enabled us to exclude publications, but also to identify surrounding themes and familiar concepts, as well as “synonyms”. In the case of “silo mentality”, were identified principally the categories of “units”, “departments”, “compartments”, “fragments”, “tribalism”, “professions”. In the case of "hero culture" this was more difficult since we did not identify many synonyms in the research. Thus, we appealed to the category "individual" and considered of course the limitations of this category. In this sense, here we will make our first methodological consideration. Some authors did not specifically use the concepts mentioned. In cases like these we added the search with the identified synonyms or familiar keywords in the raking.

Table 1. List of reviewed papers through use of exclusion factors

Academic search engine	Search key	Nr. of articles found	Exclusion factors used	Nr. of articles chosen for examination
Google academic	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	18000	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no correlation with silo-hero culture; duplicated articles)	9
ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	2360	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no correlation with silo-hero culture)	0
JSTOR	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	174	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no correlation with silo-hero culture; duplicated articles)	0
Springer	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	618	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no correlation with silo-hero culture, duplicated articles)	1
Scientific Academic Publishing	& “hero culture” + “silo mentality”	0	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no findings about silo-hero culture)	0
Scientific research	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	0	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no findings about silo-hero culture)	0
DOAJ	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	0	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no findings about silo-hero culture)	0
SCOPE	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	62174	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no correlation with silo-hero culture, duplicated articles)	0
Science Open	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	0	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no findings about silo-hero culture)	0
Base (Open Science)	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	0	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no findings about silo-hero culture)	0
SAGE	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	106	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria	0
Science Direct	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	25	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no correlation with silo-hero culture, duplicated articles)	1
Wiley Online Library	“hero culture” + “silo mentality”	194	The content of the article did not match the inclusion criteria (no correlation with silo-hero culture, duplicated articles)	1
Total				12

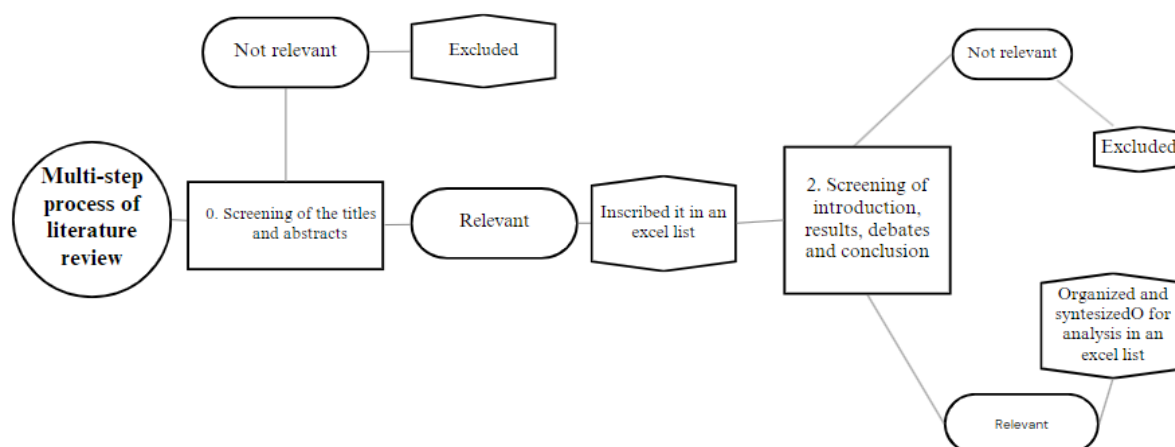


Figure 2. Multi-step process of literature review model

After this meticulous screening process, we identified twelve publications that met our inclusion criteria, from which we have extracted relevant data from the selected studies (See Table 2).

Finally, in our approach to analysing the literature, we utilized interpretive methodology and semantic analysis to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and their relationship.

4 Result

To organize our findings, we gathered evidence from various sources that shed light on the topics of hero culture and silo mentality, as well as the effects that can arise from this relationship. Our research has identified relevant studies in healthcare (Alves and Meneses, 2018; de Zulueta, 2015), humanitarian work (Anthes, 2019), business and organizations (Clatworthy, 2019), and other areas. Some studies have approached the issue from a leadership perspective (Horth and Vehar, 2020; de Zulueta, 2015; Rummler and Brache, 2022), organizational culture (Graham *et al.*, 2023) or organizational psychological safety (Dudau and Fischbacher-Smith, 2016). Still, other research has investigated its impact on brand development (de Chernatony, 2010) or the challenges of the silo-hero paradigm in IT organizations (Steinberg, 2014). Anthropological analysis of the silo effect in organizations was also present (Tett, 2016). The 12 results of our findings are organized and summarized in Table 2.

One of our initial findings is that there are no systematic reviews or research studies that specifically examine the link between these two phenomena. Nevertheless, although each of the selected papers may differ in their approach, they all concur that the silo mentality needs to be addressed and transformed, as it can significantly impede organizational performance.

There is not enough comprehensive research that explores the intersection of hero culture and silo mentality. Only 41,66% of the reviewed academic literature, which consists of Horth and Vejar (2012), Rummler and Brache (2012), Steinberg (2014), Tett (2016) and De Zulueta (2015), suggest that there may be a correlation between the two, stressing that heroic culture has indeed been found to be one of the factors that may contribute to the development of silos in organizations.

Table 2. List of selected literature

Author	Title
Anthes (2019)	Institutional Roadblocks to Human Rights Mainstreaming in the FAO: A Tale of Silo Culture in the United Nations System
Alves and Meneses (2018)	Silos mentality in healthcare services
Carayannis (2020)	Encyclopaedia of Creativity, Invention, Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Cilliers and Greyvenstein (2012)	The impact of silo mentality on team identity: an organisational case study : original research
Clatworthy (2019)	The experience-centric organization: How to win through customer experience.
De Chernatony (2010)	From Brand Vision to Brand Evaluation: The Importance of Organisational Culture on Brands
De Zulueta (2015)	Developing compassionate leadership in health care: an integrative review
Dudau and Fischbacher-Smith (2016)	The unsung heroes of welfare collaboration: Complexities around individuals' contribution to effective inter-agency working in LSCBs
Ford, <i>et al.</i> (2008)	Gendering Leadership. Leadership as Identity: Constructions and Deconstructions
Graham <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Corporate culture: The interview evidence
Horth and Vehar (2012)	Becoming a leader who fosters innovation.
Rummler and Brache (2012)	Improving performance: How to manage the white space on the organization chart.
Steinberg (2014).	Implementing Itsm: From Silos to Services: Transforming the It Organization to an It Service Management Valued Partner
Szabla and Teece (2021)	The Palgrave Handbook of Organizational Change Thinkers
Tett (2016)	"The Silo Effect: The Peril of Expertise and the Promise of Breaking Down Barriers!"

58,33 % of the studies, which consists of De Chernatony (2010), Dudau and Fischbacher-Smith (2016), Alves and Meneses (2018), Anthes (2019), Clatworthy (2019), Graham *et al.* (2023), and Szabla and Teece (2021), have linked hero culture or silo mentality to larger organizational challenges, either separately or indirectly. However, one particularity stood out among these works that caught our attention: authors such as De Chernatony (2010), Dudau and Fischbacher-Smith (2016), Clatworthy (2019), and Szabla and Teece (2021) emphasize the significance of

hero culture, specifically heroic leadership, as a unifying and motivating strategy that transcends individual departments and aligns them with the mission of the organization or brand. On the other hand, the remaining of the authors focused on the downsides of heroism.

100 % of the reviewed and analysed literature points towards the need to "break down silos" by addressing the prevailing organizational culture and leadership. Ultimately, the authors agree that success of any organizational strategy aimed at breaking down silos depends on strong leadership and a culture that prioritizes collaboration, communication, leadership, and teamwork.

In summary, while the relationship between hero culture and silo mentality is often mentioned in the literature, there has been a lack of systematic investigation into the correlation between the two. Although some studies suggest that they may reinforce each other, none of the literature reviewed has provided evidence that the correlation between them is significant. Nonetheless, certain recurring concepts emerge from both phenomena, suggesting a shared pattern which can be referred to as the hero-silo paradigm (See Figure 3). The literature suggests that hero culture and silo mentality are characterized by individualism, fragmentation, narrow perspective, lack of communication and collaboration, resistance to change, competition, redundancy, and hindered innovation. Furthermore, incentives such as rewarding individual performance with a short-term and narrow perspective can fuel both phenomena, ultimately leading to deterioration in organizational performance.

Table 3. Key findings by reference

Author	Findings
Anthes (2019)	While Anthes does not explicitly connect silo and hero cultures in the context of the FAO, the text suggests that a traditional leadership approach, which emphasizes individual "heroic" leaders and a top-down decision-making process, together with the prevailing bureaucratic organizational model, can reinforce silo thinking .
Alves and Meneses (2018)	According to Alves and Meneses (2018), the functional and professional divisions within healthcare organizations can create a lack of communication channels and redundancy, leading to a silo mentality . This mentality can impede the organization's efficiency, generate conflicts, and frustrate clients. Although the article does not explicitly reference " hero culture ," the concept is reflected in the notion of decentralized management , where leaders are responsible for their own departments and are focused on driving departmental goals. This reinforces a culture of insufficient cross-functional collaboration, communication, and teamwork.
"Clatworthy (2019)	The book highlights the importance of creating a culture of collaboration and teamwork to provide exceptional customer experiences. Silos within an organization hinder collaboration and teamwork , resulting in poor decision-making, low morale, and decreased efficiency and profitability. These silos can develop based on different functions within the organization, leading to rivalries and power struggles. Leaders must champion a transformation towards a more collaborative and cohesive culture using success stories, heroes, and internal rituals to reinforce the desired behaviors and values. Recognizing and rewarding these often- unsung heroes can motivate and inspire other employees to emulate their efforts.

“continued”

De Chernatony (2010)	De Chernatony discusses the importance of avoiding silos in brand management, where coordination is crucial. The author advocates for a hero culture to connect and overcome barriers, promoting pride at work and stimulating a passion to achieve more.
de Zulueta (2015)	De Zulueta's article discusses the impact of silo mentality and hero culture within healthcare organizations , which can impede effective teamwork and communication, leading to duplication of efforts and complicating treatment for patients. The article suggests that healthcare organizations need to move away from a heroic leadership approach and towards shared and distributive programs to improve the quality of care for patients.
Dudau and Fischbacher-Smith (2016)	The article emphasizes the significance of collaboration between agencies, organizations, professions, and individuals in the field of welfare of children. Professional silos are common in these hierarchical and rigid organizations, which can hinder effective teamwork due to a lack of understanding, mistrust, and objection to sharing information. The authors highlight the role of "unsung heroes" in promoting effective inter-agency collaboration by building relationships, promoting shared goals and objectives, and fostering a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility .
Graham et al. (2023)	In the realm of financial performance, silos can impede the development of a cohesive culture. If departments, as for example, the financial department, are not integrated with the rest of the organization, it can harm overall performance. While they do not see a problem with highlighting individual stories of heroism to build a sense of shared beliefs, they emphasize the importance of fostering a culture of collaboration and teamwork to promote sustainable success.
Horth and Vehar (2012)	The book discusses, among other issues, the negative impact of silos on innovation processes and cautions against the implementation of "innovation ghettos. Managers play a critical role in breaking down silos and promoting collaboration to drive innovation. The authors warn against the hero culture often associated with silos , which can lead to internal competition and complexity. They propose collaborative inquiry and emphasize the value of team efforts over individual heroes .
Rummeler and Brache (2012)	The authors discuss how silos in organizations can hinder overall performance, as individual departments focus on their own goals rather than those of the organization as a whole. This can lead to a lack of focus on process improvement and a reliance on individual or team heroes to overcome weak processes instead of fixing them.
Steinberg (2014).	According to the author, the silo mentality remains prevalent in the IT industry , which can undermine efforts to improve IT service management (ITSM). Individual IT professionals may occasionally achieve success on their own, such isolated ("heroic") efforts tend to lose momentum over time . Nevertheless, on the long-term the lack of communication and collaboration among departments and individuals can impede the successful implementation of ITSM practices, which require a focus on delivering IT services as a whole.
Szabla and Teece (2021)	While the book doesn't explicitly draw a connection between hero culture and silo mentality, both concepts are addressed and discussed separately. The authors emphasize the importance of breaking down silos within organizations and adopting a systemic perspective to achieve effective outcomes . Regarding hero culture, the book suggests that while individual heroes can inspire and innovate, relying solely on heroic leadership can create an unhealthy dependence on individuals. True heroism lies in having the strength and humility to tolerate the tensions that arise from collaboration and promote engagement, rather than reinforcing siloed thinking or creating a culture of dependency.

“to be continued”

“continued”

Tett (2016) Tett sheds light on the issues caused by compartmentalization and silos in organizations. Large organizations are often divided into numerous departments that fail to communicate and collaborate, leading to mental and social "ghettos." Tett uses various metaphors to describe this sense of fragmentation, such as "ghettos," "buckets," "tribes," "boxes," and "stovepipes." However, she finds the metaphor of "silo" most useful, which **can refer not only to a physical structure or department but also a state of mind**. Regarding the phenomenon of "**hero culture**," where organizations rely excessively on individual experts to drive innovation, rather than promoting teamwork and collaboration, Tett argues that this can be detrimental to an organization's collective intelligence and lead to a lack of institutional knowledge.

5 Discussion

Hero culture and silo mentality are distinct concepts. Hero culture is characterized by organizations that highly value individual achievement and heroic acts, sometimes to the detriment of collective effort and teamwork. Heroic culture, characterized by individual initiatives of a select group of experts in pursuit of personal recognition, can contribute to the development of fragmentation and divisions within organizations. Organizational cultures that value isolated efforts, create competition, mistrust, complexity, and stress. Such cultural environments foster isolated teams and poor communication, leading to duplication of effort and hindering successful implementation processes and innovation (Horth and Vehar, 2012; Steinberg, 2014). In addition, knowledge silos hinder the sharing of expertise, resulting in a lack of resource sharing and cross-communication breakdowns (Tett, 2016).

A level of hero discourse can be a positive force in organizations. For example, leaders can champion a transformation towards a more collaborative and cohesive culture using success stories, heroes, and internal rituals to reinforce the desired behaviours and values (Clatworthy, 2019). Often-unsung heroes can motivate and inspire other employees to emulate their efforts. Nevertheless, it should not undermine efforts to dissolve compartmentalization and promote collaboration (Szabla and Teece, 2021).

As highlighted in the methodology section, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that the concept of hero culture within organizational contexts carries various meanings, which, in our case, posed limitations to our research efforts. This observation is based on our literature review, and it calls for greater scrutiny and clarification of the term's usage to facilitate more precise and meaningful investigations in the field. On the other hand, the diverse interpretations and applications of the concept hero culture in the literature, with some authors portraying it as negative and others as a positive strategy, leads us to suggest that a more specific and agreed-upon definition is necessary to accurately capture the phenomenon under investigation. This approach will enable researchers to better understand the concept and avoid confusion or misinterpretation of its meaning.

In regards to silo mentality, the concept refers to a situation where departments or units within an organization work independently, without effective communication or collaboration. Silos, which are commonly observed in hierarchical and inflexible organizations, are linked to traditional management approaches (Dudau and Fischbacher-Smith, 2016; Alves and Meneses, 2018). They can hinder systemic thinking, prevent the development of a comprehensive organizational strategy, and impede overall performance (Rummler and Brache, 2021; Szabla and Teece, 2021; Tett, 2016; Graham et al., 2023). Specialist units that prioritize their own objectives over the organization's goals can cause information bottlenecks, overlooked risks, and limited innovation. Silos may also lead to tunnel vision, mental blindness, and a lack of institutional knowledge (Tett, 2016). Furthermore, functional and professional divisions can create redundancy, insufficient communication channels, and waste resources, ultimately resulting in poor customer service and frustration (Alves and Meneses, 2018; Rummler and Brache, 2012). This siloed mentality can impede efficiency, breed conflicts and power struggles, and negatively affect decision-making, morale, and profitability (Clatworthy, 2019). To achieve a cohesive brand identity and consistent messaging, it is essential to involve the entire brand team, representing different departments, in brand management (De Chernatony, 2010; Clatworthy, 2019). In summary, silos create isolated compartments within an organization, with individual departments developing their own culture, language, and mindset. This can result in a prioritization of departmental goals over the broader organizational objectives, ultimately impeding the organization's growth and success.

The common denominator between hero culture and silo mentality is their emphasis on individualism, where the needs and goals of a specific individual or group take priority over the greater good of the organization as a whole. While hero culture typically involves individual actions or small groups, silo mentality typically occurs on a larger scale, such as within departments or teams.

While a certain level of individual achievement and recognition can be positive for an organization, it is important to strike a balance between this and collective success (Szabla and Teece, 2021). Organizations that prioritize individual achievements at the expense of collaboration and communication risk developing silos that can impede progress, hinder innovation, and damage overall performance. On the other hand, organizations that place too much emphasis on collective success may discourage individual initiative and innovation, leading to stagnation and complacency. Therefore, it is essential for organizations to find a healthy balance that promotes both individual and collective success, a culture of shared responsibility (Dudau and Fischbacher-Smith, 2016), together with breaking down silos and promoting collaboration and communication.

After reviewing the literature, we have observed certain shared patterns and negative impacts of what we have denominated "hero-silo paradigm" on organizational performance (as shown in Figure 3). Silos within an organization can hinder performance by prioritizing individual department goals over the goals of the whole organization. This can lead to a lack of focus on

process improvement and a reliance on individual or team heroes to compensate for weak processes (Rummler and Brache, 2012). Traditional leadership approaches that emphasize individual "heroic" leaders and top-down decision-making, along with bureaucratic organizational models, can reinforce silo thinking (Anthes, 2019, p. 52). As a result, individual accomplishments are prioritized over collective success, incentivizing individuals or teams to prioritize their interests over those of the organization.

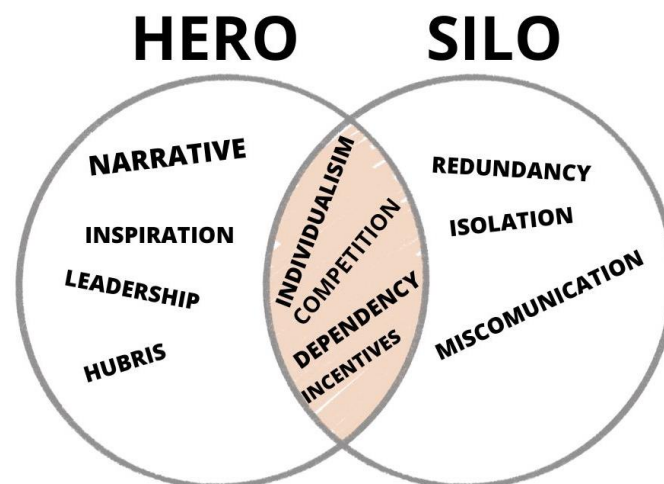


Figure 3. Interconnection between silo mentality and hero culture. Separate and shared patterns.

In summary, although the literature suggests that silo mentality and hero culture can be interconnected and exhibit similar patterns of individualism, isolation, and resistance to change, dependency, competition, we acknowledge that concrete evidence must come from quantitative research, which we plan to conduct in the future to further validate our findings.

6 Conclusion

The process of classification is integral to human culture as it allows us to comprehend the world around us (Tett, 2016). However, it's important to recognize that classifications and categories differ between societies and can be shaped by various factors such as values, beliefs, and experiences, thus highlighting the universality and particularity of human experiences. This awareness can prompt us to re-examine and challenge the normalized understandings of the world, particularly in a rapidly changing and uncertain context. As organizations are composed of individuals with unique cultures, values, beliefs, and rituals, it's crucial for them to shed outdated, individualistic and compartmentalized 19th-century thought patterns (Rummler and Brache, 2019), instead of shifting towards effective communication, cross-collaboration, and leadership strategies that seem better to adapt to current challenges and achieve their objectives.

Informal participant observations in organizations led us to the emergence of two research questions: Is there a correlation between hero culture and silo mentality? What potential dysfunctions arise from this "hero-silos" paradigm? To explore this, we conducted a

thorough review of the existing academic literature. This analysis was aimed at identifying any evidence supporting the presence of isolationism, hubris, and inter-functional resentment resulting from these cultures, and how they can erode solidarity and empathy within organizations. Through this process, we were expecting to challenge our preconceptions and gain a deeper understanding of the issue at hand. The insights gained from our analysis were then interpreted and synthesized to develop a more comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the topic.

Although we conducted a thorough literature review, we did not find any empirical evidence that directly demonstrates the correlation between hero culture and silo mentality in organizations. However, we did identify common denominators that suggest a link between these two phenomena. These shared characteristics include individualism, isolation, narrow perspectives, dependency, lack of communication and collaboration, resistance to change, competition, redundancy, and hindered innovation. These factors may pose challenges or obstacles that organizations need to address in terms of communication, collaboration, and leadership, which could hinder their ability to achieve their goals and objectives. As a result, one of our primary findings is that a quantitative research study is necessary to provide concrete evidence and validate our observations, which we plan to conduct in the future.

An essential discovery of our study is the existence of various interpretations and applications of the hero culture concept in the literature. Some authors view it as a negative attribute, while others see it as a positive strategy. Therefore, we suggest that an agreed-upon and specific definition is necessary to precisely capture the phenomenon under investigation. This approach will aid researchers in gaining a better understanding of the concept, preventing confusion or misinterpretation of its meaning.

To address these issues comprehensively, it is also crucial to consider broader societal factors such as the paradigms of individualism and short-term performance goals that contribute to hero culture and silo mentality. This suggests the need for cross-disciplinary research, as the concept of "hero" and "silo" cultures necessarily involve anthropological insights to deconstruct its meaning, as well as psychological and organizational research. Combining these disciplines can provide a more holistic understanding of the underlying causes and effects of these phenomena and inform strategies for fostering a collaborative and empathetic organizational culture. A comprehensive quantitative study would provide valuable insights into the best practices, strategies, and approaches that organizations can adopt to overcome these challenges and improve their overall performance.

References

1. Alves, João, & Meneses, R. (2018). Silo mentality in healthcare services, 65–79.
2. Anthes, C. (2019). Institutional Roadblocks to Human Rights Mainstreaming in the FAO: A Tale of Silo Culture in the United Nations System. Springer Nature.
3. Barmyer, C., Sachseneder, C. (2013). From silo mentality to 'angularity' of the departments. The contribution of departmental cultures to diversity in companies. Paper presented at the European Academy of Management 2013, Istanbul, Turkey.
4. Carayannis, E. G. (Ur.). (2020). Encyclopedia of Creativity, Invention, Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Springer International Publishing.
5. Cilliers, F., Greyvenstein, H. (2012). The impact of silo mentality on team identity: An organisational case study. SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 38.
6. Caseiro, J., Meneses, R. (2019). Is Silo Mentality Relevant in Healthcare? The Healthcare Professional's View. Strategica conference Romania 2019, 636-642. Retrieved from: <https://strategica-conference.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/68.pdf>.
7. Clatworthy, S. D. (2019). The experience-centric organization: How to win through customer experience. O'Reilly Media.
8. Coutts, M. (2017). Stepping Away from the Silos. Elsevier. Retrieved from: https://www.scribd.com/read/330784486/Stepping-Away-from-the-Silos-Strategic-Collaboration-in-Digitisation#__search-menu_316513.
9. de Chernatony, L. (2010). From Brand Vision to Brand Evaluation. The Importance of Organisational Culture on Brands. V From Brand Vision to Brand Evaluation (p. 157–191). Elsevier.
10. de Zulueta P.C. (2015). Developing compassionate leadership in health care: an integrative review. J Healthc Leadersh, 18(8), 1-10.
11. Denison, D. R. (1990). Corporate culture and organizational effectiveness. Wiley.
12. Dudau, A., Fischbacher-Smith, D., McAllister, L. (2016). The unsung heroes of welfare collaboration: Complexities around individuals' contribution to effective inter-agency working in LSCBs. Public Management Review, 18(10), 1536–1558.
13. Ford, J., Harding, N., & Learmonth, M. (2008). Gendering leadership. Leadership as identity: Constructions and deconstructions. Springer.
14. Graham, J. R., Grennan, J. A., Harvey, C. R., Rajgopal, S. (2023). Corporate culture: The interview evidence. Journal of Applied Corporate Finance.
15. Horth, D. M., & Vehar, J. (2012). Becoming a leader who fosters innovation. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership. Retrieved from: <http://dfcoaching.com/articles/BecomingLeaderFostersInnovation.pdf>.
16. Mangan, C., Lawrence-Pietroni, C. (2019). More Rave Than Waltz—Why the Complexity of Public Service Means the End for Hero Leadership. V H. Dickinson, C. Needham, C. Mangan, & H. Sullivan (Ur.), Reimagining the Future Public Service Workforce (p. 81–92). Springer Singapore.
17. Rummler, G. A., Brache, A. P. (2013). Improving performance: How to manage the white space on the organization chart. Jossey-Bass.
18. Sonenshein, S. (2010). We're all heroes now. Harvard Business Review, 88(6), 7-8.
19. Steinberg, R. A. (b. d.). Implementing Itsm: From Silos to Services: Transforming the It Organization to an It Service Management Valued Partner. Retrieved from:

<https://www.scribd.com/book/387816830/Implementing-Itsm-From-Silos-to-Services-Transforming-the-It-Organization-to-an-It-Service-Management-Valued-Partner>.

20. Stone, F. (2004). Deconstructing silos and supporting collaboration. *Employment Relations Today*, 31(1), 11-18.
21. Szabla, D. B., & Teece, D. J. (Ur.). (2021). *The Palgrave Handbook of Organizational Change Thinkers*. Springer International Publishing.
22. Tett, G. (2016). *The Silo Effect: The Peril of Expertise and the Promise of Breaking Down Barriers*. Simon & Schuster.

Povzetek:

Kultura junaka in mentaliteta silosa: sistematični pregled literature

Raziskovalno vprašanje (RV): RV1: Ali obstaja povezava med kulturo junaka in mentaliteto silosa? RV2: Katere so potencialne disfunkcionalnosti, ki izhajajo iz te paradigme "junak-silo"?

Namen: Izvedli smo sistematični pregled znanstvene literature, da bi dobili vpogled v paradigmo "junaki-silos".

Metoda: Izvedli smo sistematični pregled znanstvene literature v mednarodnih bazah podatkov: Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, Springer Nature, ScienceDirect, SAGE, Wiley Online Library, Web of Science in Base (Open Access) ter Google, ResearchGate.

Rezultati: Ugotovili smo nekaj nastajajočih vzorcev, ki osvetljujejo povezavo med kulturo junaka in silosno miselnostjo. Poudarjamo, da je potrebno navedeno korelacijo dodatno raziskati, prav tako pa tudi ustrezno konceptualizirati izraz "junak".

Organizacija: Raziskava osvetljuje podobnost dinamike junaka in silosa ledeni gori, kar omogoča menedžerjem dodatna orodja, s katerimi lahko identificirajo oba fenomena in ga na takšen način preoblikujejo kulturo orgnizacije.

Družba: Rezultati raziskave kažejo, da je mentaliteta "junak-silo" nezavedni pojav, ki negativno vpliva na delovno okolje. Vidnost tega problema pripomore k večji produktivnosti ter k večji zavzetosti/motivaciji zaposlenih.

Izvornost: Izvornost raziskave se kaže v prvotno ugotovljeni potencialni povezanosti med kulturo junaka in mentaliteto silosa ter v disfunkcionalnostih, ki izhajajo iz te povezave in jih je treba dodatno raziskati.

Omejitve / nadaljnje raziskave: Ugotovili smo omejitve pri odprtem dostopu do objavljene znanstvene literature, ki bi lahko obogatila raziskavo. Razhajanja v opredelitvi pojma "junak" so bila prav tako omejitve pri izvajanju raziskave. Predlagamo nadaljnje kvantitativne raziskave o povezavi med kulturo junaka in silobranksko miselnostjo v organizacijah.

Ključne besede kultura junaka, mentaliteta silosa, navzkrižno sodelovanje, organizacijska kultura, vodenje.

Nadia Molek is an assistant researcher at the Faculty of Organisation Studies. She graduated as an anthropologist from the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras at the Universidad de Buenos Aires. She completed her doctorate in Anthropology in the same house of studies. Her research interests include identity processes, migrations and mobilities, transnationalism, intergenerational relationships, sustainable development, sustainable pedagogy, sustainable tourism, heritage, diversity and inclusion; wellbeing and mental health at the workplace.

Juan Esteban de Jager studied Anthropology at the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires. After having worked over two decades in the educational field and in tourism, he took an interest in organizational culture, especially within blue-collar environments. He is currently working in a shipyard, working as technician/

company culture consultant. He shares several interests with Nadia, especially in the fields of organizational culture and tourism. He has also conducted research on ethnomusicology.

Maja Pucelj completed her first PhD at Alma Mater Europaea - ISH in the field of Humanities and is currently completing her second doctorate at the Faculty of Government and European Studies in the field of International Studies with a focus on Human Rights. Prior to joining FOŠ, she worked as an advisor to the Minister of Education, Science and Sports in the areas of pre-school education, primary education, secondary and higher education, adult education and quality of education, and as an undersecretary in the Service for the Implementation of Cohesion Policy at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports. She is the author of numerous works on various current social challenges, connected with the topic of human rights.

Copyright (c) Nadia MOLEK, Juan Esteban DE JAGER, Maja PUCELJ



Creative Commons License

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.