

An exploration of Agency within Organisational Change in the 21st Century

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Track

Organisational Transformation Change and Development

Abstract

Organisational change remains a key leadership challenge, intensified by the emergence of AI, hybrid working, and the accelerating pace of disruption. While existing literature acknowledges agency in change processes, it predominantly adopts a hierarchical lens - emphasising leaders as initiators of change and employees as resistant recipients. This perspective neglects the full spectrum of agency, including dispersed and positive forms of agency enacted by non-leader actors (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Hasbi, 2024; Delbridge et al., 2013).

This paper reviews 21st-century literature on agency in organisational change, highlighting persistent hierarchical conceptions and limited focus on positive or enabling agency by non-leader actors. In response, we propose a conceptual model that broadens agency beyond top-down change, recognising all actors' influence. This inclusive framework offers theoretical and practical insights for leveraging distributed and positive agency - crucial for adaptive, inclusive change amid global challenges and rapid AI-driven transformation.

Introduction

Despite its widespread use, the concept of agency remains underexplored and lacks conceptual clarity, particularly in organisational contexts (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Campbell, 2009; Cavazzoni et al., 2022). Existing research on agency in organisational change is limited, often focusing on agency of leaders and depicting change recipients primarily as resistant actors, rather than recognising a full spectrum of agentic behaviours that individuals can enact, ranging from resistance to proactive support. Furthermore, little attention is given to collective forms of agency. This narrow perspective constrains understanding of how agency influences organisational change and limits insights into how leaders can effectively engage with diverse agentic behaviours.

Recent perspectives expand these views, challenging leader-centric models (Tourish, 2014) and highlighting collective agency (Tuominen & Lehtonen, 2018). Despite these advancements, existing literature often links agency to leadership roles, overlooking a broader range of agentic responses and collective actions (Caldwell, 2003; Todnem By, 2020).

This study addresses these gaps by broadening the conceptualisation of agency in organisational change. It recognises change recipients may exhibit diverse responses, including acceptance, rejection, or proactive influence (Potosky et al., 2023). In the context of rapid technological evolution, dispersed teams, and globalisation, this study argues for the need to revisit agency within organisational change to better harness positive agentic behaviours.

This study seeks to answer two research questions:

Research Question 1: How has the concept of agency been theorised and represented in organisational change literature since 2000?

Research Question 2: What conceptual gaps remain in understanding agency in organisational change and how might a broader framework support scholars, practitioners and policymakers?

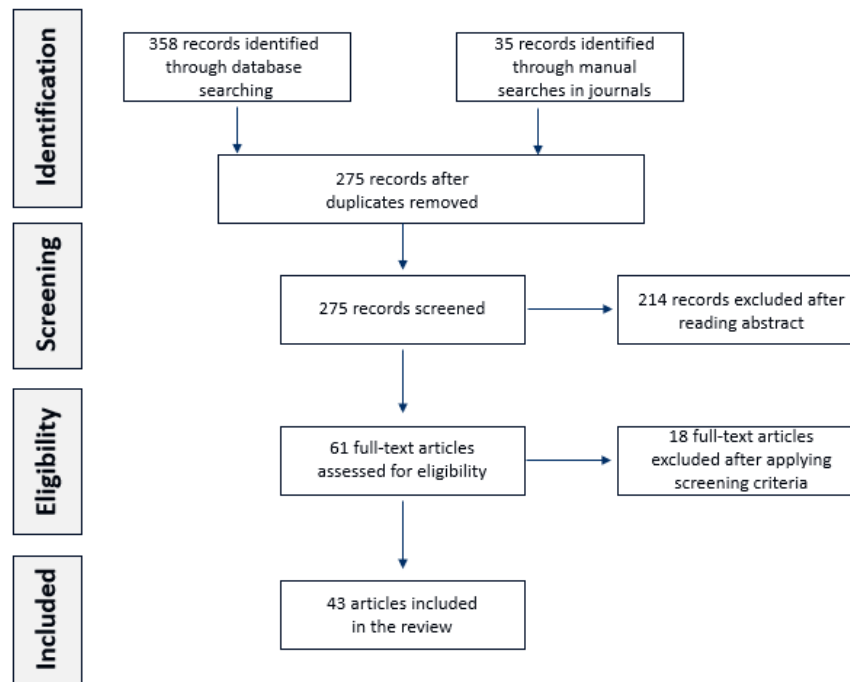
Methods

This study employed a systematic literature review to examine research on agency within organisational change from 2000 to 2025, following PRISMA guidelines (Wang et al., 2024). A structured search was conducted in EBSCO, limited to Academic Search Complete, APA PsycInfo, APA PsycArticles, and Business Source Ultimate. Additional manual searches were carried out in Sage, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. Key search terms included ‘agency’ and ‘organisational change’, as well as ‘human agency’ combined with ‘organisational change’. To maintain focus, broader synonyms were not included.

This search yielded 358 total papers, with a further 35 identified through manual searches. After duplicate papers were removed there were 275 unique papers. 214 records were removed following reading of the abstracts and a further 18 were excluded following application of eligibility criteria (in table 1) resulting in 43 articles to be included in this study. These findings were further assessed to identify empirical or conceptual discussions of agency.

Table 1: Eligibility Criteria

The publication must have explored, conceptually or empirically, the construct of agency within organisational change setting;
Papers key focus relates to agency from individuals, specifically human agency, not change agents or organisational agencies
Studies were available in English, peer-reviewed and published (unpublished or non-peer-reviewed materials were excluded).



Findings

Following analysis of the retained articles, we examined their contextual focus and theoretical foundations. Papers drew on Bandura’s social cognitive theory (e.g., Yoon, 2019; Fearon et al., 2013; Potosky et al., 2023; Sadaric & Skerlavaj, 2023), which conceptualises agency as individuals’ capacity to influence their actions through the interplay of personal, behavioural, and environmental factors. Others were grounded in Bourdieu’s theory of practice (e.g., Bouckennooghe et al., 2023; Safavi & Omidvar, 2016; Battilana, 2006), emphasising the dynamic between habitus, individual agency, and social structures.

Content analysis revealed three dominant contextual lenses through which agency is represented in organisational change: digital transformation, institutional theory and entrepreneurship, and general organisational change. From this, we identified three overarching themes in representations of agency since 2000: narrow conceptions of enactment, an overemphasis on resistance, and the neglect of agency’s social dimensions. The following section elaborates on each theme.

Limited conceptions of agentic enactment

A dominant theme in the literature is enactment of agency, *who* has agency (Kaganer et al., 2023; Law, 2009) and *how* does agency emerge (Bandura, 2006; Sharp, 2019; Tuominen & Lehtonen, 2018).

Who enacts agency?

Traditional perspectives on who enacts agency emphasise formal leaders and designated change agents, often sidelining the role of middle managers or change recipients (Law, 2009).

In response, several scholars argue for a more inclusive and distributed view of agency. Burnes, Hughes, and Todnem By (2013) and Caldwell (2003, 2005) challenge overly individualistic and managerial framing of agency by advocating for collective and team-based approaches. Leadership studies similarly support this shift toward collective forms of agency (Clegg et al., 2021). Empirical findings reinforce this trend. Letierce, Mills, and Arnaud (2023) illustrate how middle managers actively enable collaboration and adaptation, while Barratt-Pugh et al. (2013) demonstrate the influence of informal HR practices as mechanisms of change agency. Todnem By (2020) also critiques the dominant leader-centric paradigm, proposing a conceptual shift from agents (nouns) to agency (verbs), thus reframing change as an ongoing, collective process distributed across organisational roles. Existing research tends to depict agency through hierarchical frames, with leaders as primary change agents and recipients as passive or resistant. This depiction fails to bring attention to the criticality of agency enacted by individual change recipients, peers or middle managers therefore ignoring the view that change can be shaped from middle-out or bottom-up, not always top down. In the context of rapidly changing business contexts these may be the key types of agency to harness.

How is agency enacted?

A key theme in enactment is how agency functions during organisational change. Bandura (2006) distinguishes three forms: individual (direct action), proxy (mobilising others' resources), and collective (coordinated efforts). However, much of the literature remains focused on individual agency, often neglecting proxy and collective forms (Leonardi, 2011; Delbridge & Edwards, 2013).

Recent studies begin to address this gap. Sharp (2019) shows how rhetoric fosters shared values for collective action, while Tuominen and Lehtonen (2018) highlight the role of reflexivity and temporary power structures in enabling group-level agency. Stollberg et al. (2013) find that threats to control can prompt collective commitment when framed as a shared goal. Battilana (2006) demonstrates how lower-status individuals use social ties to exercise proxy agency.

Still, collective agency remains under-theorised. Bouckenooghe et al. (2023) found fewer than 5% of organisational change studies (2008–2018) adopt a collective perspective, underscoring the need for broader, more relational conceptualisations.

Overemphasis on resistance

A recurring critique in organizational change literature is its overemphasis on resistance, often overshadowing the broader range of agentic actions employees may undertake (Todnem By, 2020; Ford et al., 2008; Arroy, 2012). Ford et al. (2008) argue that management research marginalizes employee agency, assuming resistance to managerial directives as the default response. This resistance is typically framed negatively (Todnem By, 2020), reinforcing deficit-based views of employees.

In contrast to the lens of negative agency or resistance, Burnes, Hughes, and Todnem By (2013) call for a shift toward recognizing employees as active. Stouten et al. (2018) and Arroy (2012) support this by emphasizing employee participation as an active form of agency.

Some research supports expanding the view of agency beyond resistance. Yeo and Marquardt (2015) and Eteläpelto et al. (2013) highlight agency's potential to shape change both positively and negatively. Broadening this perspective enhances understanding of professional agency and shifts focus from resistance toward supporting employees through change (Potosky & Azan, 2023).

Neglect of Social Aspects

The final theme emerging from this literature review is the role of social context in shaping both individual and collective agency (Boudreau & Robey, 2005; Kakavelakis & Edwards, 2012; Tatlı & Özbilgin, 2009; Eteläpelto et al., 2013). Within a technological context Boudreau and Robey (2005) suggest while agency is increasingly emphasized, the influence of surrounding social networks is often neglected. They stress that agency does not occur in a vacuum but is embedded in broader relational dynamics. The notion of change agency as individualistic or autonomous is challenged (Tatlı and Özbilgin, 2009; Todnem By, Burnes & Hughes, 2018). Proposing attention to collaborative agency (Todnem By et al) or focus on situatedness, power, and identity (Tatlı and Özbilgin). Empirical work by Tucker et al. (2016) and Kakavelakis and Edwards (2012) reinforces this view, illustrating agency unfolding in response to evolving social narratives and temporal contexts. Raelin (2023) further argues that agency is shaped by situational cues, though individuals retain autonomy to accept or reject these influences. This presents an opportunity for agency to be reframed as a relational, co-created concept.

Discussion

Findings from this study support Tatlı and Özbilgin's view that change agency literature suffers from "a lack of theoretical rigour and empirical grounding" (2009, p. 246). While emerging work challenges traditional models and acknowledges collective agency, the field still lacks a comprehensive framework capturing diverse, dynamic, and context-dependent enactment of agency across organisational levels.

This study responds by repositioning agency in organisational change as multifaceted - individual and collective, passive and proactive, hierarchical and dispersed - particularly relevant in the context of post-pandemic, digital, and global transformations.

We identify three key gaps in current research:

- (1) limited understanding of enactment (who and how), suggesting the need to move beyond leader-centric models toward multiple organisational actors with individual, proxy, or collective agency;
- (2) narrow conceptions of agentic behaviour, with overemphasis on resistance, neglecting a broader spectrum of responses including apathy, neutrality, and positivity;
- (3) insufficient attention to social contexts of agency, including relational dynamics and situational influences.

We expand on enactment and the agentic response spectrum in the following section, introducing a typology to support a more inclusive understanding of agency in organisational change.

Building a typology of Agency

Viewing agency in organisational change solely through an individual and resistance-focused lens is problematic, as it reinforces hierarchical boundaries that frame leaders as active agents and employees as passive or resistant recipients. This perspective oversimplifies change dynamics and overlooks the full spectrum of employee agency. By framing employee actions primarily as resistance, traditional models neglect proactive, adaptive, and creative contributions to change.

To address these gaps, we propose a typology of change agency as a foundation for further research and discussion. The typology presents agency along two axes: the **X-axis**, representing the spectrum of employee responses, resistant, neutral, supportive, adapts Wittig's (2012) Spectrum of Employees' Reactions to Organisational Change (SEROC), which places resistance and acceptance as polar opposites, with neutral or indifferent reactions in between. The **Y-axis** draws from Bandura's modes of agency: *personal agency* (individual action), *proxy agency* (achieving goals through others' resources), and *collective agency* (coordinated, joint efforts to effect change). This dual-axis framework provides a more nuanced understanding of how agency is enacted in varied organisational contexts.

Figure 1 – typology of agency

		Spectrum of agentic response to change		
		Negative (Resistance)	Neutral	Positive (Support)
Modes of Agency	Individual			
	Proxy			
	Collective			

Table 2 classifies agentic responses by type and mode, illustrating a broader spectrum of employee agency informed by research and practitioner experience.

Table 2 – Framework of agency responses by typology

Negative Response to Change (Resistance)	Neutral Response to Change	Positive Response to Change (Support)
Individual		
Individuals resist organisational change through their own action • Sabotage (e.g. removal of signs, failing to save data into new systems) • Intentional or wilful inaction – ignoring meeting invites • Fake Acceptance – accepting not attending	Individuals disregard or check-out of organisational change • Disengagement / no response • Apathy • Passive response	Individuals support organisational change through their actions • Adoption of new tools / processes • Sharing of experiences with cohorts (advocates for change) • Attending training • Inviting others to training • Sharing own learnings formally or informally (communities of practice / social media posts / intranet posts) • Public support
Proxy		
Individuals act through another person (with influence / resources) to resist organisational change • Engaging Union Representation • Engage Senior Leader or those with higher social status to block / overrule change	Not applicable	Individuals act through another person (with influence / resources) to support organisational change • Engage support from Senior Leader / those with higher social status
Collective		
Groups act together to block / resist organisational change • Tools down / Walk outs / strikes • Work to rule	Not applicable	Groups support organisational change through their collective action • Team sharing with peers • Team initiated change

Conclusion

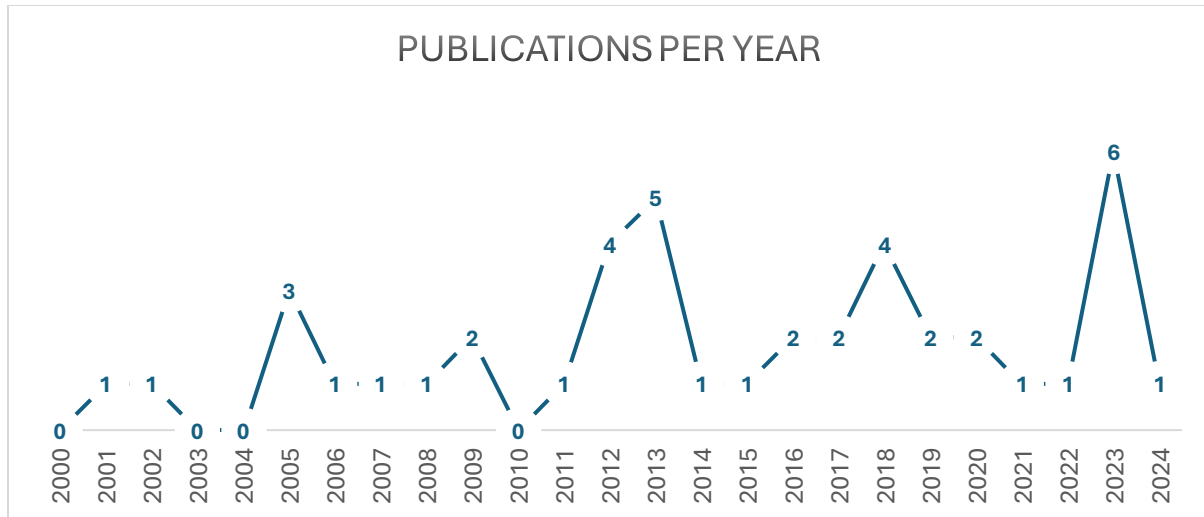
This study advances the conceptualisation of agency in organisational change by addressing two key gaps in the literature: dominance of individual-centric, typically leader, perspectives and overemphasis on resistance. The proposed model broadens the scope to include proxy and collective agency, recognising that agency may be exercised collaboratively or through others. It also introduces a continuum of agentic responses - from passive resistance to proactive engagement - reflecting the complex ways employees engage with change, shaped by leadership and social context.

This framework offers both theoretical and practical value by shifting from resistance-focused interpretations toward a more inclusive understanding of employee behaviour, enabling leaders to identify and support diverse agentic responses. Table 2 provides a practical tool for designing more targeted change strategies based on agency types. Reframing agency through a positive lens is especially relevant in today's context of global disruption and AI transformation. Hoffman & Beato, 2025, highlight this need to unlock agency of employees to become achieve "superagency" where individuals, empowered by AI, super-charge their creativity, productivity and positive impact.

By clarifying how individuals enact agency, the model contributes to employee empowerment, particularly important given negative impacts of change on well-being (Lundmark et al., 2022). Limitations include the exclusion of pre-2000 literature and possible omissions due to search terminology. Future research should empirically test the model and examine how agency evolves across different organisational contexts.

Appendix

Trends in publication numbers



Journal sources

Journal	
Academy of Management	1
Academy of Management Annals.	1
Academy of Management Collections	1
Academy of Management Journal	1
Advances in Developing Human Resources	1
Annual Review of Psychology	1
British Journal of Management	1
Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences	1
Communication Research	1
Economic and Business Review	1
Educational research review	1
European Journal of Training and Development	1
Human Relations	1
Human Resource Management Review	1
Journal of Accounting and Organisational change	1
Journal of Business and Technical Communication	1
Journal of Business Research	1
Journal of Change Management	5
Journal of Organizational Behavior	1
Journal of organizational change management	7
Journal of the Association for Information Systems	1
Leadership	1
Management learning	1

MIS Quarterly	1
Organization	1
Organization science	2
Organization studies	2
Perspectives on psychological science	1
Social Cognition	1
The journal of strategic information systems	1
The journal of workplace learning	1

Conceptual	25
Empirical	18

Themes	Count
Agency (education context)	1
Agency (efficacy)	1
Agency (org change)	12
Change Agents	3
Collective agency	1
Institutional Entrepreneurship	3
Leadership / agency (incl. managers)	6
Learning (within Change)	2
Technology / Agency	9
Theories (Agency v structure)	5

Results tables

Author	Year	Article / Book title	Journal	E / C	Approach	Theme	Purpose of paper	Discussion on agency	Theoretical underpinnings
Arroy	2012	Management accounting change and sustainability: an institutional approach. Journal of Accounting & Organizational Change, 8(3), 286-309.	Journal of Accounting and Organisational change	C	Literature Review	Institutional Entrepreneurship	Propose an institutional entrepreneurship approach to examining management accounting change triggered by social and environmental concerns.	Change in management accounting has been based on combination of OIE (Old Institutional Economics) and NIS (New Institutional Sociology) - both tend to underestimate the role of agency of organizational actors in the process of accounting change. Notes - one of the main shortcomings (of research on changes in management accounting) is the neglect of the role of agency and interests in shaping the action of organizational actors, which has been mainly depicted as a reactive/passive process of resistance instead of a proactive process of agency.	
Bandura	2001	Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. Annual review of psychology, 52(1), 1-26.	Annual Review of Psychology	C	Conceptual	Theories (Social Cognitive Theory)	Explanation of Agency / Social cognitive theory	Bandura presents Social cognitive theory which adopts an agentic perspective toward human development, adaptation and change.	Social Cognitive Theory
Bandura	2018	Toward a psychology of human agency: Pathways and reflections. Perspectives on psychological science, 13(2), 130-136.	Perspectives on psychological science	C	Conceptual	Theories (Social Cognitive Theory)	This article reviews the core features of human agency and the individual, proxy, and collective forms in which it is exercised.	Demonstrates the critical nature of agency, through presenting the relationship between agency and efficacy. Bandura states that the exercise of agency through meta-cognitive self-reflection is related to one's judgment of one's efficacy. Stating this core self-belief is the foundation of human aspiration, motivation, and accomplishments (Bandura, 1997). Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties.	Social Cognitive Theory

Barratt-Pugh, L., Bahn, S., & Gakere, E.	2013	Managers as change agents: Implications for human resource managers engaging with culture change. <i>Journal of Organizational Change Management</i> , 26(4), 748-764.	<i>Journal of Organizational Change Management</i>	E	Empirical - Case study	Change Agents (HR)	Examine role of managers during organisational change	Research into the merger of two large State departments and the cultural change program Understanding HR manager's role as change agents, and their use of formal and informal agencies of to accelerate cultural change. Cite Pfeffer - It is these personal relationships between change agent and recipient that are crucial to affecting lasting change (Pfeffer, 1994).	
Battilana	2006	Agency and institutions: The enabling role of individuals' social position. <i>Organization</i> (London, England) 13:653-676.	<i>Organization</i>	C		Institutional Entrepreneurship	Explore paradox of embedded agency and institutional entrepreneurship	Focus on institutional entrepreneurs, "actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who mobilize resources to create new institutions or transform the existing ones (DiMaggio, 1988)" All individuals who display some degree of agency do not qualify as institutional entrepreneurs. Only individuals who somehow break with the rules and practices associated with the dominant institutional logic(s) and thereby develop alternative rules and practices can be regarded as institutional entrepreneurs	institutional entrepreneurship / Bourdieu
Bayerl, S.P. <i>et al.</i>	2013	The role of macro context for the link between technological and organizational change.	<i>Journal of organizational change management</i>	E	Empirical	Technology / Agency	Importance of integrating analysis of macro context to understand complexity of technology driven organisational change	Based on extensive data on two different technological innovations we showcased how variations in social, legal, political, technological and economic conditions resulted in systematic variations in practices and structures concerning the implementation of technologies across European police organisations. Present an expanded view whereby organisational change is influenced by interplay between human agency and organisational properties to include external factors and within these material agency (technology)	

Besson & Rowe	2012	Strategizing information systems-enabled organizational transformation: A transdisciplinary review and new directions. The journal of strategic information systems, 21(2), 103-124.	The journal of strategic information systems	C	Literature review	Technology / Agency	Explore what extend Information Systems (IS) have influence Organisational Transformation (OT)	Discuss how agency in the Organisational Transformation (OT) literature is polarized between the managerial stream and traditional academic approaches. First, the managerial stream views the question of agency as a prime consideration Second, the treatment of agency is the more traditional academic literature on OT, which falls into three categories: first, agency may be subsumed by the process, which is particularly the case in the institutionalist approach. Second, agency may be treated superficially by focusing on transformational leaders and innovation champions, which mirrors the literature of the strategic change stream. Third, studies may seek to demonstrate the existence of local emergence arising from interaction among the actors, as in the evolutionist perspective. Distinguish between 2 types of agency: specifically G-Agency (Governance Agency) and W-Agency (Work-Agency) as a key theme in how Information Systems(IS) enabled Organisational Transformation (OT), illustrating attention to these agencies within existing IS /OT research.	Giddens
Bouckenooghe et al	2023	The multiple faces of collective responses to organizational change: Taking stock and moving forward.	Journal of Organizational Behaviour	C	Conceptual	Theories (Agency v structure)	Exploring collective responses to change	Explore how responses to change are shaped in the collective proposing a framework based on Bourdieu's theory of practice as a platform for bringing together perspectives on agency and structuralism.	Bourdieu
Boudreau, M-C. and Robey, D	2005	Enacting Integrated Information Technology: A Human Agency Perspective.	Organization science	E	Empirical case study / Grounded theory	Technology / Agency	Explore human agency during technology implementation (v technological imperative)	Interpretive case study of an ERP system implementation. Conclude that although information technologies have potential to support organisational transformation, evidence increasingly points to the	Emirbayer & Mische

								importance of human agency in converting potential into practice.	
Burnes, Hughes, By,	2018	Reimagining organisational change leadership. Leadership 14:141–158.	Leadership	C	Conceptual	Leaders agency	Posit that leadership is still in crisis. Propose that organisational change leadership is reimagined as a utilitarian consequentialist process.	Propose change leadership should be reimagined to emphasise collective and collaborative agency, rather than strong individualistic and masculine agency. Additionally propose that Organisational change leadership reimagined should regard the views and opinions of all organisational members as informative and dissensus as creative, rather than depicting such people as resisters who have to be overcome.	
Caldwell	2005	Things fall apart? Discourses on agency and change in organizations.	Human Relations	C	Conceptual	Change Agents	Explores the shift towards potentially more inclusive and team-based models of leadership, agency and change in organizations.	Examines new discourses on agency shift away from rationalist discourses e.g dispersalist discourses, learning organisations, sensemaking. Discourses offer possibilities for clarifying the future theoretical and empirical research agendas essential for the exploration of agency and change in organizations, they do not hold out the possibility of a convergence of research pathways and certainly no synthetic 'theory' or unified model.	
Caldwell	2012	Systems Thinking, Organizational Change and Agency: A Practice Theory Critique of Senge's Learning Organization.	Journal of Change Management	C	Conceptual	Learning (within Change)	Highlights the flaws within Senge's proposed learning organisation concept, particularly note failure to define social practices.	Discusses agency within practice theory in which the goal is to establish a distance from agency as action or purely actor-centred, cognitive and individual explanations of human practices. From a practice theory perspective, agency as practice is a form of 'doing and saying', of learning and knowing in practice, rather than the purely reflexive activity of a contemplative actor who thinks, then acts (Schatzki, 1997; Reckwitz, 2002; Caldwell, 2012).	
Clegg, Crevani,	2021	Changing Leadership in Changing Times. Journal	Journal of Change Management	C	Conceptual	Leaders agency	Explore leadership as a process	Propose the study of agency through collective leadership in	

Uhl-Bien, By		of Change Management 21:1–13.						practice rather than the traits and skills of formal agents and leaders.	
Dacin et al	2002	Institutional theory and institutional change: Introduction to the special research forum.	Academy of Management Journal	C	Conceptual	Institutional theory	Review of studies in the special interest issue looking at drivers of institutional change, factors that influence how organizations respond to organizational change (by resistance or legitimation) and initiation of institutional change? With focus on both on the role of agency and the need to legitimate institutional change.	Within context of institutional theory look at themes including agency, noting that a significant critique of early neo institutional theory was the focus on homogeneity and persistence and its relative inattention to the role of interest and agency in shaping action (DiMaggio, 1988).	Institutional theory
Delbridge & Edwards	2013	Inhabiting institutions: Critical realist refinements to understanding institutional complexity and change. Organization studies 34:927–947.	Organization studies	C	Conceptual	Theory (agency / structure)	Builds on recent contributions to understanding conditions of institutional complexity - to reassess the 'paradox of embedded agency' by advancing understanding of the historically grounded and multilevel nature of structures and agency in institutional processes	Over the years, the dominant approach of institutional scholars has been a 'downward' reading of action, which treats agency as a second-order concept; the result is an ontology that prioritizes structure over agency. To rectify this, and elaborate how actors can respond to institutional complexity, we must give full explanatory weight to agency and conceive the full gamut of human action in relation to plural social structures.	Emirbayer & Mische
Eteläpelto, A., Vähäsantanen, K., Hökkä, P. and Paloniemi, S.	2013	What is agency? Conceptualizing professional agency at work. Educational research review, 10, 45-65.	Educational research review	C		Agency	The purpose of this article is to provide a critical review of the multidisciplinary concept of agency, and to suggest a fruitful conceptualization of professional agency at work.	Set in an education context they present a conceptualisation of professional agency - e.g. force for change , suggestions for developing practices or critical stance, struggle against reforms. Focus is on how agency can be conceptualized from a subject-centered socio-cultural perspective.	Giddens
Fearon, McLaughlin, and Morris	2013	Conceptualising work engagement: An individual, collective and organisational efficacy perspective. European Journal of Training and Development 37:244–256.	European Journal of Training and Development	C	Conceptual	Agency (efficacy)	Explore the role of multi-level forms of efficacy and organisational interactions necessary for promoting effective work engagement.	Conceptual paper focused on Bandura's concept of human agency, asserting that individual, collective, and organisational efficacy that can be exercised for employee engagement at different organisational levels.	Human agency theory (Bandura)
Ford et al	2008	Resistance to change: The rest of the story. Academy of management	Academy of Management	C	Conceptual	Agency (org change)	Examination of resistance within organizational change - aim to address the failure	Assert that management research tends to ignore employees' agency and instead focuses primarily on	

		review. Academy of Management 33 :362–377.					of researchers to consider the role that change agents play in resistance	employees' responses to managers' plans and directives, generally assuming that employees will resist change.	
Hasbi, M.M. and van Marrewijk, A.	2024	Navigating Tensions in the Organizational Change Process towards Hybrid Workspace.	Journal of change management	E	Empirical	Technology / Agency	This article examines the change process of implementing hybrid workspace within organizations	Case study of a French bank implementing hybrid workspace. View hybrid workspaces and organisational change as mutually constituted in a process connecting technology and human agency.	
Hughes	2022	Reflections: How Studying Organizational Change Lost Its Way.	Journal of change management	C		Leaders agency	This paper focuses on an explanation of how and why change and transformation have been and continue to be depicted as failing (notes failure rhetoric remains academically fashionable.)	Discuss the 'who' of change agency (leaders and managers) and the reasons for attribution of change agency to leaders.	
Kaganer, E. <i>et al.</i>	2023	A Process for Managing Digital Transformation: An Organizational Inertia Perspective.	Journal of the Association for Information Systems	E	Case study - Grounded theory	Technology / Agency	Look at how to overcome organisational inertia during digital transformation. Questioning how members of an incumbent firm exercise agency to overcome organizational inertia in digital transformation?	Case Study in Asian Bank looking at digital transformation and how change is achieved by overcoming organisational inertia. Find Digital Transformation processes as elements of organisational agency wherein managers and workers create conditions for and engage in behaviours that interact with elements of the firm's deep structure.	
Kakavelakis, K. and Edwards, T.	2012	Situated learning theory and agentic orientation: A relational sociology approach.	Management learning	E	Empirical case study (long)	Learning (within Change)	Present a case study of situated learning during organizational change from a relational sociology perspective	A relational sociology perspective on situated learning during organisational change. View agency as a process encompassing iterative, projective and practical evaluative dimensions which unfold in relation to the temporal and structural contexts within which situated learning is embedded.	Emirbayer & Mische
Law, S.	2009	Learning from employee communication during technological change.	The journal of workplace learning	E	Case study - Grounded theory	Technology / Agency	Research examining stories of and by employees as they implemented a transformative organisational change.	Study into change participants role and perceptions of agency during change. Using Kenneth Burke's "dramatistic pentad" looking at the agent, act, scene and agency and purpose. Findings showed that participants know what to do but there is a sense of uncertainty about their "agency" and the change results.	Burkes dramatic pentad

Leonardi	2011	When flexible routines meet flexible technologies: affordance, constraint and the imbrication of human and material agencies.	MIS Quarterly	E	Ethnographic case study	Technology / Agency	Examines how human and material agencies—the basic building blocks common to both routines and technologies—are imbricated.	Presents a human agency perspective that suggests that people's work is not determined by the technologies they employ, referencing Orlikowski to demonstrate people can 'choose to do otherwise' rather than follow a technological imperative. Highlighting that many authors have treated human and material agencies as having a unidirectional relationship.	Orlikowski / Giddens
Letierce, C., Mills, C. and Arnaud, N.	2023	Empowering middle managers to free their strategic capabilities.	Journal of organizational change management	E	Embedded Case Study	Leaders / managers (agency)	This article aims to better understand how empowered middle manager engage in change translation.	Empirical study in French banks undergoing organisational change, exploring agency of managers to translate organizational change relying on both building and dwelling strategizing. Conclude managers are enable to adapt the prescribed strategy to local circumstances and foster front-line empowerment, therefore enact a real agency in the organizational change process.	
Mendy	2020	Staff preferences in four SMEs experiencing organizational change.	Journal of organizational change management	E	Case study	Agency (org change)	Investigate the role of preferences when small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are confronted with the practical problems associated with implementing frequent and large-scale changes to their working policies and practices.	Qualitative case study based on change agency and positioning theories to examine the extent to which staff and management experienced practical difficulties and challenges in change and what resolution actions they took.	
Potosky et al	2023	"Leadership Behaviours and Human Agency in the Valley of Despair: A Meta-Framework for Organizational Change Implementation."	Human Resource Management Review	C	Conceptual	Agency (org change)	Assemble a meta-theoretical framework using human agency theory, the valley of despair model of organizational change and Full-Range leadership theory	Referring to Human Agency theory (Bandura) suggest that in the context of organisational change, employees' agency partially mediates the relationship between managers' and employees' behaviours during change. Elevating employees' agency as a critical component in the execution and accomplishment of organisational change.	Human agency theory (Bandura)

Raelin	2023	Leadership-as-Practice: Its Past History, Present Emergence, and Future Potential. Academy of Management Collections 2:19–30.	Academy of Management Collections	C	Conceptual	Leaders (agency)	Curation of articles drawn largely from the archives of the Academy of Management guides readers through the early foundations, principles, and theory of the new field of leadership-as-practice or L-A-P.	Highlights emerging literature within the Leadership-As-Practice field that sees agency as a collaborative endeavour mobilized by social interaction. Noting that although individuals retain their sense of self, their identity and potential agency are often socially constructed by behavioural expectations and situational cues, such as may be represented by roles, incentives, uniforms, feedback, or symbolic references	LAP
By, Rune Todnem	2020	Organizational Change and Leadership: Out of the Quagmire. Journal of Change Management 20:1–6.	Journal of Change Management	C	Conceptual	Change Agents	Proposes change leadership is stuck in a quagmire peddling a dominant orthodoxy that is somewhat lacking in progress, initiative and imagination. Becoming unstuck requires reframing of the challenges faced.	Within the broader assessment of change leadership myths or illusions bring attention to agency by noting: 1) Successful organizational change is led by individual change agents often being the managers; and 2) that 'Change resistance amongst 'employees' is cause of much change failure and as such must be better managed by managers'.	
Sadarić & Škerlavaj	2023	Giving Sense to Change Leadership: Towards a Narrative-Based Process Model.	Economic and Business Review	C	Conceptual	Leaders agency	Our central theoretical contribution focuses on the ways in which linking the findings from different research areas that deal with storytelling and persuasive communication can contribute to understanding the underlying mechanism of change leaders' influential behaviour	Review current research to examine underlying mechanism for change leaders' influential behaviour during organisational change. Drawing on social cognitive theory, argue for the need to explore change leader's persuasive communication efforts and how these influence change recipients emotional reaction to organizational incidents	Social Cognitive Theory
Safavi & Omidvar	2016	Resist or Comply: The Power Dynamics of Organizational Routines during Mergers.	British Journal of Management	E	Empirical - Case study	Agency (org change)	The role of power and agency in the development of organizational routines is under-theorized. In this paper, we draw on an in-depth qualitative case study of a merger between two academic institutions, a college of art and a university, and examine the diverging responses of two organizational routines	In-depth qualitative case study of a merger between two academic institutions. Findings suggest that the differences in routines' responses to a merger initiative can be explained by applying Bourdieu's theory of practice and by employing the concepts of field and symbolic capital to unpack power relations in the context of organisational routines, and to disclose why some	Bourdieu

							(admissions and budgeting) during the course of the merger to understand how power dynamics contribute to resistance/compliance of routines.	routine participants can exercise their agency while others cannot.	
Sharp	2019	Agency, Authority, and Epideictic Rhetoric: A Case Study of Bottom-Up Organizational Change.	Journal of Business and Technical Communication	E	Empirical case study	Agency (org change)	Posits that studies demonstrate that organizational members have the agency to successfully resist the rhetoric of top-down organizational change, however there is no evidence of studies that indicate whether organizational members themselves have the agency to rhetorically effect organizational change. The paper aims to address this gap and respond to Faber's (2002) critique of management-centric studies of organizational change.	Analysing a case study of organisational decision making propose that the agency to make a difference within organisations is not exclusive to those in positions of authority. Organisational members can gain agency by reproducing certain values and identities through epideictic rhetoric to encourage collective action and effect organisational change from the bottom up.	Giddens
Stollberg et al	2017	The Groupy Shift: Conformity to Liberal In-Group Norms as a Group-Based Response to Threatened Personal Control.	Social Cognition	E	4 Quantitative Studies	Collective agency	Testing a model of group-based control, we hypothesized that, as a response to threatened control, people strive for collective agency, leading to increased in-group norm conformity.	Hypothesize that, as a response to threatened control, people strive for collective agency adding to increased in-group norm conformity.	
Stouten, Rousseau, De Cremer	2018	Successful organizational change: Integrating the management practice and scholarly literatures. Academy of Management Annals, 12(2), 752-788.	Academy of Management Annals.	C	Conceptual	Agency (org change)	Reviews both key tenets of widely used practitioner-oriented change models and findings from scholarly research on organizational change processes.	Discuss change agency from individuals as form of participation and the role of change agents.	

Tatlıo, A. and Özbilgin, M.F.	2009	Understanding Diversity Managers' Role in Organizational Change: Towards a Conceptual Framework.	Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences	C	Conceptual	Agency (org change)	presents a conceptual framework charting the agency of diversity managers in organizational change. Evaluating and critiquing the contemporary models of organizational change management, we identify three concepts, which are situatedness, relationality, and praxis, for understanding the diversity managers' agency in the organizational change process. provide insight to the question: "can diversity managers engender the organizational change which they envision?"	Explore the scope and content of the diversity managers' agentic power, resources, and strategies which manifest in their organizational change efforts. Contend that diversity managers' agency can only be judged through their situatedness, relationality, and praxis, challenging the mainstream view of change agents as autonomous, de-contextualized, and apolitical beings.	
Tsoukas, H.	2005	Afterword: why language matters in the analysis of organizational change.	Journal of organizational change management	C	Conceptual	Agency (org change)	This invited article aims to show how the papers in the special issue highlight the advantages of using discourse analysis in order to contribute to our understanding of organizational change.	Highlight the advantages of using discourse analysis to contribute to our understanding of organisational change. offering greater potential for understanding the nature and complexity of organisational change including construction of stability and change, and the role of agency.	
Tucker et al	2016	The dynamic nature of social accounts: An examination of how interpretive processes impact on account effectiveness.	Journal of Business Research	E	Longitudinal	Agency (org change)	Using an example of large-scale organizational change, moving from one hospital facility to another, we explore the dynamic and contextual interpretation of social accounts over time.	Examination of effectiveness of social accounts, considering how more individualized, interpretive and agentic responses to social accounts have been found to influence effectiveness. Findings expand social account theory by examining how potentially successful change communications are derailed by the relevance of the account in relation to an individual's past, by the individuals' ability to express agency and by temporality.	

Tuominen & Lehtonen,	2018	The Emergence of Transformative Agency in Professional Work.	Organization Studies	E	Case Study - 5 professional services firms	Agency (org change)	Apply critical realist theories to explore transformative agency in different types of temporary service development groups in professional service organizations.	Explore 'transformative agency' - individuals' ability to purposefully transform the structures in which they are embedded (Battilana, 2006; Garud, Hardy, & Maguire, 2007), which we refer to as transformative agency. Findings suggest that how individuals' transformative agency emerges from their reflexivity and bargaining power conditioned by resource distributions, and how collective agency subsequently emerges from different combinations of these individual properties in temporary agentic groups.	
Volkoff et al	2007	Technological Embeddedness and Organizational Change.	Organization Science	E	Empirical longitudinal study	Technology / Agency	Indicate that studies of how technology leads to organizational change have in general focused either on the technology and ignored the influence of human agency, or on social interaction and ignored the technology. Then propose a new theory of technology-mediated organizational change that bridges these two extremes.	From a Grounded theory approach and critical realist perspective, present a 3 year study to enterprise system implementation, proposing a new theory of technology-mediated organisational change which identifies that embeddedness is central to the process of change. Propose a new theory that addresses the specific role of technology, while also incorporating the effects of agency.	
Weber et al	2017	Industries in Turmoil.	Communication Research	E	Empirical - Qual	Agency (org change)	Study into the importance of organisational agency in affecting long-term organisational change.	Through a study on organisational shifts to digital media in the communication industry provide insights into the important role of individual and organisational action in the transformation process	
Wetzel, R. and Van Gorp, L.	2014	Eighteen shades of grey? An explorative literature review into the theoretical flavours of organizational change research. Journal of Organizational Change Management, 27(1), 115-146.	Journal of organizational change management	E	Empirical	Agency (org change)	The purpose of this paper is to explore, how organization theoretically diverse research on Organizational Change Research (OCR) is actually grounded, since insights into the organization theoretical foundations of OCR are completely lacking.	Within their OCR review consider how agency has been portrayed in various types of Organizational Theory and Organizational Change Research (OCR)	

Yeo, R.K. and Marquardt, M.J.	2015	Think before you act: organizing structures of action in technology-induced change.	Journal of organizational change management	E	Case study	Technology / Agency	The paper addresses the following questions: How does the introduction of technology influence organizational change during an e-government implementation? How does organizational actors' interpretation and enactment of technology influence organizational performance?	The study reveals the power of human agents as carriers of positive and negative change. Supports view that with an understanding of their capacity to organize and manage change, actors become more proactive in implementing, facilitating, and adapting to change	
Yoon, Hyung Joon.	2019	Toward agentic HRD: A translational model of Albert Bandura's human agency theory. Advances in developing human resources 21 :335–351.	Advances in Developing Human Resources	C	Conceptual	Theory (Bandura)	Despite its relevance to human resource development (HRD), human agency theory has not been explored or effectively utilized in HRD research and practice.	Extending Bandura's human agency theory and building on the human agency-based individual transformation (HABIT) model meta-theory for HRD that encompasses individual, career, organization, and social development is proposed. This HABIT model brings a visual representation of the core properties of human agency and an understanding of how they may interact internally as well as with the environment.	Human agency theory (Bandura)

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