Shared conflict resolution

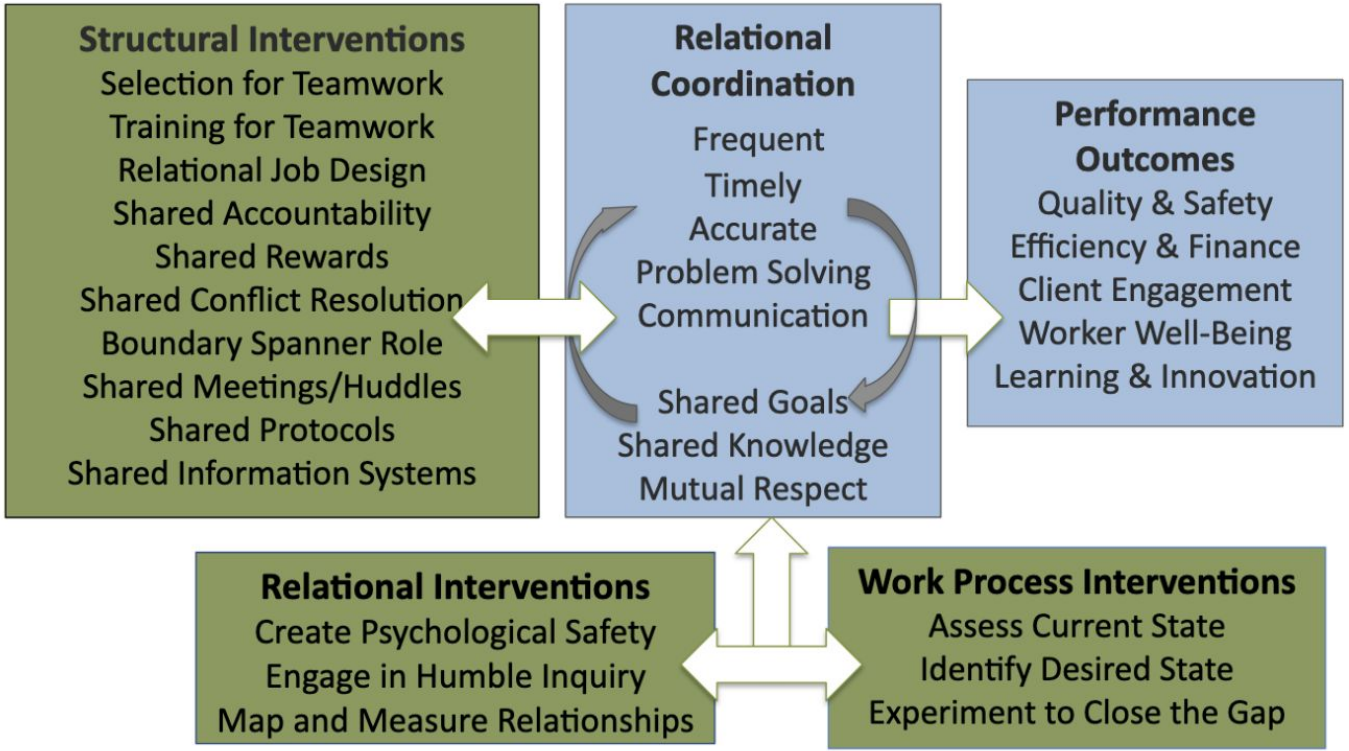
- **What It Is:** Conflict is a normal part of life. When managed well, conflict is constructive. It helps people to understand and resolve their differences. However, unmanaged conflict can harm relationships and outcomes. Conflict resolution structures determine how conflicts are reported, who they are reported to, who responds to them, and which processes are used to resolve them. In addition to conflict resolution structures, training programs can equip individuals with skills to manage disputes constructively and turn conflicts into opportunities for growth, both within and between departments/stakeholders.

- **Why It Matters:** Often conflict resolution structures are siloed and not able to resolve conflicts between different groups that need to coordinate their work. Unmanaged conflict can harm relational coordination and outcomes, while effective resolution strengthens collaboration.

- **How To Do It:** Based on results from the Org Structures Assessment Tool, redesign conflict resolution structures to support conflict resolution between the groups that need to coordinate their work. In addition, identify conflict resolution capabilities as a selection criteria, and add them as a training priority. Partner with experts or facilitators to design interactive training sessions, teach techniques like active listening, reframing, and collaborative problem-solving, and provide ongoing opportunities for practice and reinforcement through role-playing or coaching.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Shared conflict resolution is part of the Relational Model of Change



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Other structures in the Relational Model of Change

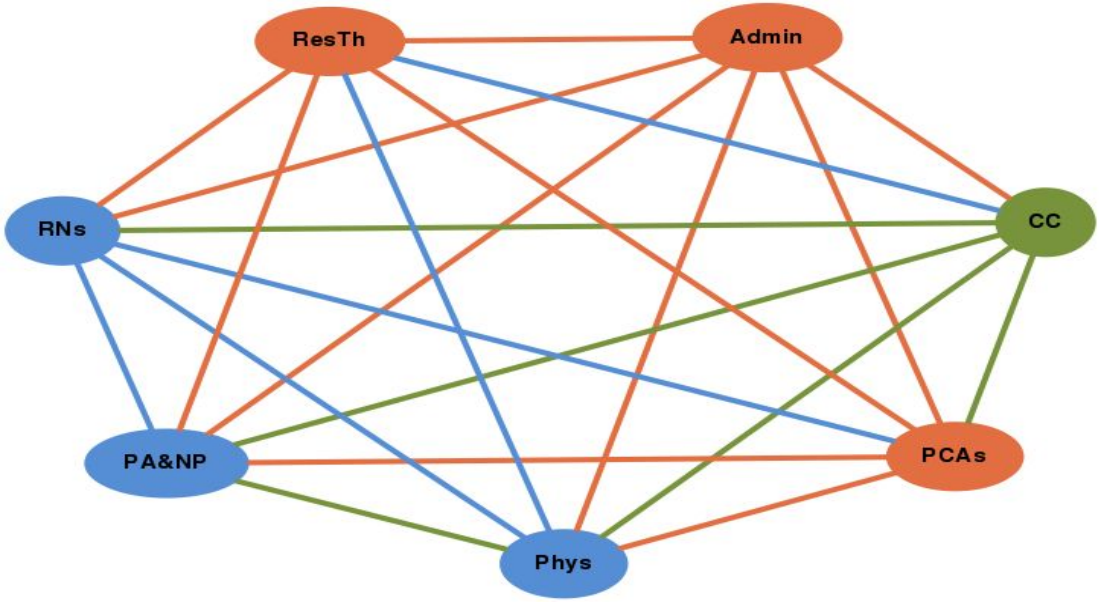
- Selecting & training for teamwork
- Relational job design
- Shared accountability & rewards
- Shared conflict resolution
- Boundary spanner roles
- Shared meetings & huddles
- Shared protocols
- Shared information systems
- Shared space

A summary of the evidence:
Bolton, R., Logan, C., & Gittell, J. H. (2021). Revisiting relational coordination: A systematic review. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *57*(3), 290-322.

Gittell, J. H. (2016). Structural interventions in *Transforming relationships for high performance: The power of relational coordination*. Stanford University Press.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Use relational mapping to discover where conflicts are occurring



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Note this map shows the current state of relational coordination from the perspective of participants. It can be created using the RC Survey.

	Within Workgroups	Between Workgroups
Weak	<4.1	<3.5
Moderate	4.1-4.6	3.5-4.0
Strong	>4.6	>4.0

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Identify needs using the Org Structures Assessment Tool

Structures	Nurses	Case managers	Physicians	Residents	Physical therapy	Respiratory therapy
Selection for Teamwork						
Training for Teamwork						
Relational Job Design						
Shared Accountability						
Shared Rewards						
Shared Conflict Resolution						
Boundary Spanner Role						
Shared Meetings & Huddles						
Shared Protocols						
Shared Info Systems						
Shared Space						

WEAK SUPPORT **MODERATE SUPPORT** **STRONG SUPPORT**

Constructive conflict

- Conflict is potentially constructive but it depends how we approach it
- Three ways to solve conflict
  - Domination
  - Compromise
  - Integration

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Constructive vs. destructive conflict

"We should not be afraid of conflict, but shall recognize that there is a **destructive** way of dealing with such moments and a **constructive** way."

Mary Parker Follett (1926) "Constructive Conflict"

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Conflict resolution through domination

"**Domination** is the victory of one side over the other. This is the easiest way of dealing with conflict, the easiest for the moment but not usually successful in the long run."

Mary Parker Follett (1926) "Constructive Conflict"

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Conflict resolution through compromise

"**Compromise** is the way we settle most of our controversies; each side gives up a little in order to have peace, or more accurately, in order that the activity which has been interrupted by the conflict may go on... It is the accepted, the approved, way of ending controversy. Yet no one really wants to compromise, because that means a giving up of something."

Mary Parker Follett (1926) "Constructive Conflict"

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Integrative conflict resolution

"When two desires are **integrated**, that means that a solution has been found in which both desires have found a place, that neither side has had to sacrifice anything… We both get what we really wanted."

Mary Parker Follett (1926) "Constructive Conflict"

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

How does integrative conflict resolution work?

- An integrative process requires humble inquiry and *really listening*
- Works best when there is mutual respect
- But an integrative process can also *build* mutual respect
- How do some companies develop integrative processes?

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Managing workplace conflict

- Workplace standards
- Disciplinary process
- Legal remedies
- Union contracts
- Conflict resolution

THESE ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Conflict resolution structures

- Peer panels
- Training for peer to peer conflict resolution
- “Pledge to my peers”
- Supervisor led process
  - “Come to Jesus” meetings at SWA
  - “Tiger Teams” at JetBlue
- Internal grievance process
- Outside mediation or arbitration

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Integrative conflict resolution as an early intervention

- Proactive conflict resolution can be used to prevent the need for discipline
- Used to solve problems that haven't yet risen to the need for discipline
- Presumes there are at least two legitimate perspectives to be explored
- Conflict resolution as a way to build relationships

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Example: Issue Resolution Process

1. ISSUE RESOLUTION AND CORRECTIVE ACTION PROCEDURES

An effective procedure for resolving issues is fundamental to the long-term success of the Labor Management Partnership. Solving workplace concerns quickly and by those most directly involved is essential to reducing conflicts, grievances and patient/member complaints. It will also contribute to better relations and a more constructive work environment. Issue Resolution and Corrective Action work in tandem to achieve these outcomes. **To that end, the procedure has two components:**

- a system for raising and quickly resolving workplace issues using interest-based problem solving by those directly involved with the issue; and
- a method of resolving performance and behavior issues in a non-punitive fashion in which employee, supervisor and union representatives work together to identify the problem and craft the solution.

From Kaiser Permanente Labor/Management Partnership

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Example: Issue Resolution Process

a. Issue Resolution and Corrective Action

Summary of Issue Resolution. Issues are raised at the work-unit level and the stakeholders within the work unit will meet to attempt to resolve the concern. Issues unresolved at the work-unit level are reviewed by the local Partnership team. If the concern remains unresolved, the issue may be referred to the senior union and management regional strategy group, council or equivalent for resolution. Issue resolution is an alternative to, but does not replace, the grievance procedure.

Summary of Corrective Action. Corrective action is designed to be a non-punitive process. It is divided into two phases. The first phase, problem solving, follows a joint discovery process. Problem solving consists of levels one and two, which are neither adversarial nor disciplinary in nature. The goal of this phase is to determine the root cause of the problem by identifying all of the issues affecting performance and to collaboratively develop options to resolve them. The first phase is informal, with no documentation in the personnel file.

From Kaiser Permanente Labor/Management Partnership

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Example: Issue Resolution Process

The second phase, containing levels three through five, constitutes discipline. While there is no punishment, such as suspension without pay, the consequences of failure to resolve the issues may ultimately result in termination of employment. An employee who disputes any action at any level under this procedure shall have the right to file a grievance.

An Issue Resolution/Corrective Action User's Guide is available through the OLMP to provide a thorough orientation on successful utilization of the procedures for all covered employees.

From Kaiser Permanente Labor/Management Partnership

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Evidence from research

Find summary here:

Bolton, R., Logan, C., & Gittell, J. H. (2021). Revisiting relational coordination: A systematic review. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *57*(3), 290-322

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Int. J. of Human Resource Management 11:3 June 2000 517-539

Organizing work to support relational co-ordination

Jody Hoffer Gittell

Gittell, J. H. (2000). Organizing work to support relational co-ordination. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *11*(3), 517-539.

Abstract Service operations that are highly uncertain, interdependent and time constrained require a competency that I call relational co-ordination – co-ordination that is carried out by front-line workers with an awareness of their relationship to the overall work process and to other participants in that process. Relational co-ordination is characterized by frequent, timely, problem solving communication, and by helping, shared goals, shared knowledge and mutual respect. Previous work reports significant positive effects of relational co-ordination on performance in such settings. This paper addresses how organizations achieve, or fail to achieve, high levels of relational co-ordination. I find significant correlations between relational co-ordination and the use of cross-functional liaisons, IT, supervisors, cross-functional performance measurement, employee selection, conflict resolution and flexible work roles. I explore the implications for team effectiveness and organization design, and for the theory of organizational social capital.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Conflict resolution is another way to develop attitudes and skills that support the co-ordination of work that is highly uncertain, interdependent and time constrained. In such settings, conflict resolution provides an opportunity to build a shared understanding of the process among participants who may not understand each others' perspectives. Organizational theorists have argued that conflicts can be expected to occur in processes that are highly interdependent (e.g. Walton and Dutton, 1967). Jehn (1995) demonstrated further that conflict can improve performance when it takes place in a group that values task-related conflict. But few have tested empirically the effects of conflict resolution on co-ordination. This paper therefore tests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3b: Cross-functional conflict resolution strengthens relational co-ordination.

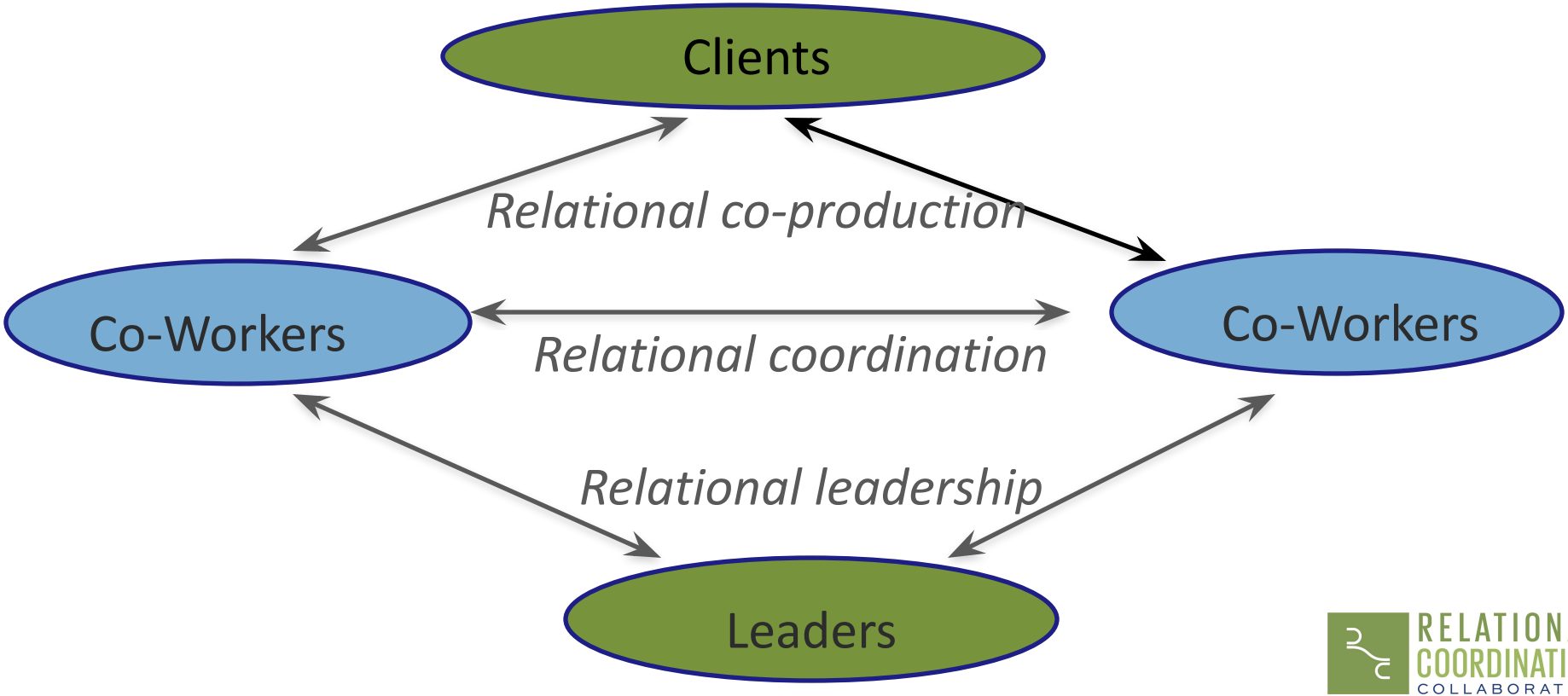
Findings supported this hypothesis.

Conflict resolution can be a constructive process for building relationships through sharing of perspectives

Gittell, J. H. (2000). Organizing work to support relational co-ordination. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *11*(3), 517-539.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Findings: Integrative conflict resolution helps to build high quality relationships between leaders, co-workers and clients



RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE

Support shared conflict resolution through selecting for teamwork

Practice using this role play.

For 5 minutes: Interview your partner for a new job with a focus on conflict management: "Tell me about a time when there was a difficult conflict at work. What role did you play? Walk me through it."

Take notes, ask follow up questions - rate your partner's conflict management approach as *domination, compromise or integration.*

For 5 minutes: Change places and repeat.

Explain to the larger group what happened and what you learned.

RELATIONAL COORDINATION COLLABORATIVE