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The Impact of Parent-Teacher Relationships on Student Behavior During Intervention and One Year Later

Amanda L. Witte and Susan M. Sheridan

Background

- Children with social-behavioral concerns are at high risk of developing long-term, pervasive problems.
- Interventions which aim to decrease negative behaviors and increase social and adaptive skills across both home and school settings have the potential to be particularly effective.
- However, families of students with social-behavioral problems also tend toward disengagement from, or limited connection with, schools or other service-delivery systems (Dishion & Stromshak, 2006).
- Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC; Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2008), is a family-school partnership intervention designed to reduce child behavior problems and increase child adaptive skills.
- The quality of the parent-teacher relationship may critically influence the connection between CBC and student outcomes.

Purpose

- To evaluate whether improvement in parent-reported quality of the parent-teacher partnership moderated the long-term efficacy of CBC on parent- and teacher-reported student adaptive skills and externalizing problems.

Research Question

- Does parent-teacher partnership quality moderate the effectiveness of CBC for improving student behavior?

Significance

- This study provides important insight into the long-term implications of parent-teacher relationships on student behavior.

Method

Participants:

- 132 kindergarten through 3rd grade students, their parents, and their teachers.
- Students were mostly male (78%) and Caucasian (86%).
- Parents were mostly female (89%) and Caucasian (91%).
- Teachers were predominantly female (96%) and Caucasian (100%).

Measures:

- Parent-Teacher Relationship Scale-Parent Report (PTRS; Vickers & Minke, 1995).
 - Collected at enrollment (pre-intervention/wave 1) and 12-weeks after enrollment (post-intervention/wave 2)
- Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC-2; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004).
 - Collected at enrollment (pre-intervention/wave 1), 12-weeks after enrollment (post-intervention/wave 2), fall and spring of following academic year (maintenance period/waves 3 and 4)

Research Design and Study Variables:

Teachers were randomly assigned to a treatment group (received CBC) or control group (treatment as usual), and participating students within a classroom were assigned accordingly.

- Independent Variables: Experimental condition and Time
- Dependent Variables: Student externalizing problems and adaptive skills
- Moderator Variable: Change in the parent-reported quality of parent-teacher partnership from wave 1 to wave 2 (defined as the presence of a half standard deviation above or below the average change scores)

Analysis

- A three-way ANOVA was used to determine whether experimental condition (treatment, control), Time (waves 1-4 of data collection), and partnership quality change (high, low) interact to influence students' adaptive skills and externalizing behavior.

Procedure

Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

- Students assigned to the treatment condition received (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2008), a structured indirect intervention focused on improving student behavior and enhancing family-school partnerships to promote continuity and collaboration in support of student functioning across systems.
- The CBC process lasts 8-12 weeks.

Objectives of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation Stages

Stage	Objectives
Needs Identification/ Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jointly identify and define student's needs Determine a primary behavior to address (target behavior) for initial intervention Collaboratively develop appropriate goals for target behavior across home and school Discuss what is happening before and after the target behavior, as well as specific patterns that occur, during the focused time/setting Jointly establish a procedure to collect baseline data across settings
Plan Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboratively develop a plan built upon strengths and competencies to address the target behavior across home and school Learn plan implementation skills as necessary
Plan Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement agreed-upon intervention across home and school settings Make immediate modifications to plan as necessary Assess immediate changes in student's behavior
Plan Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine if goals for the priority behavior were met Discuss effective elements of the intervention plan Discuss continuation/termination of plan Schedule additional interview if necessary, or terminate consultation

Results

Teacher-Reported Adaptive Skills and Social Skills

- On average students who experienced CBC and whose parents reported a high level of improvement in the quality of their partnership with teachers showed a greater rate of improvement in teacher-reported adaptive skills, $F(3,74) = 6.11$, $p < 0.0009$, and social skills, $F(3,74) = 4.23$, $p < 0.008$, than students in the other groups.

Figure 1. Interaction Between Time, Partnership Quality, and Teacher-Reported Adaptive Skills.

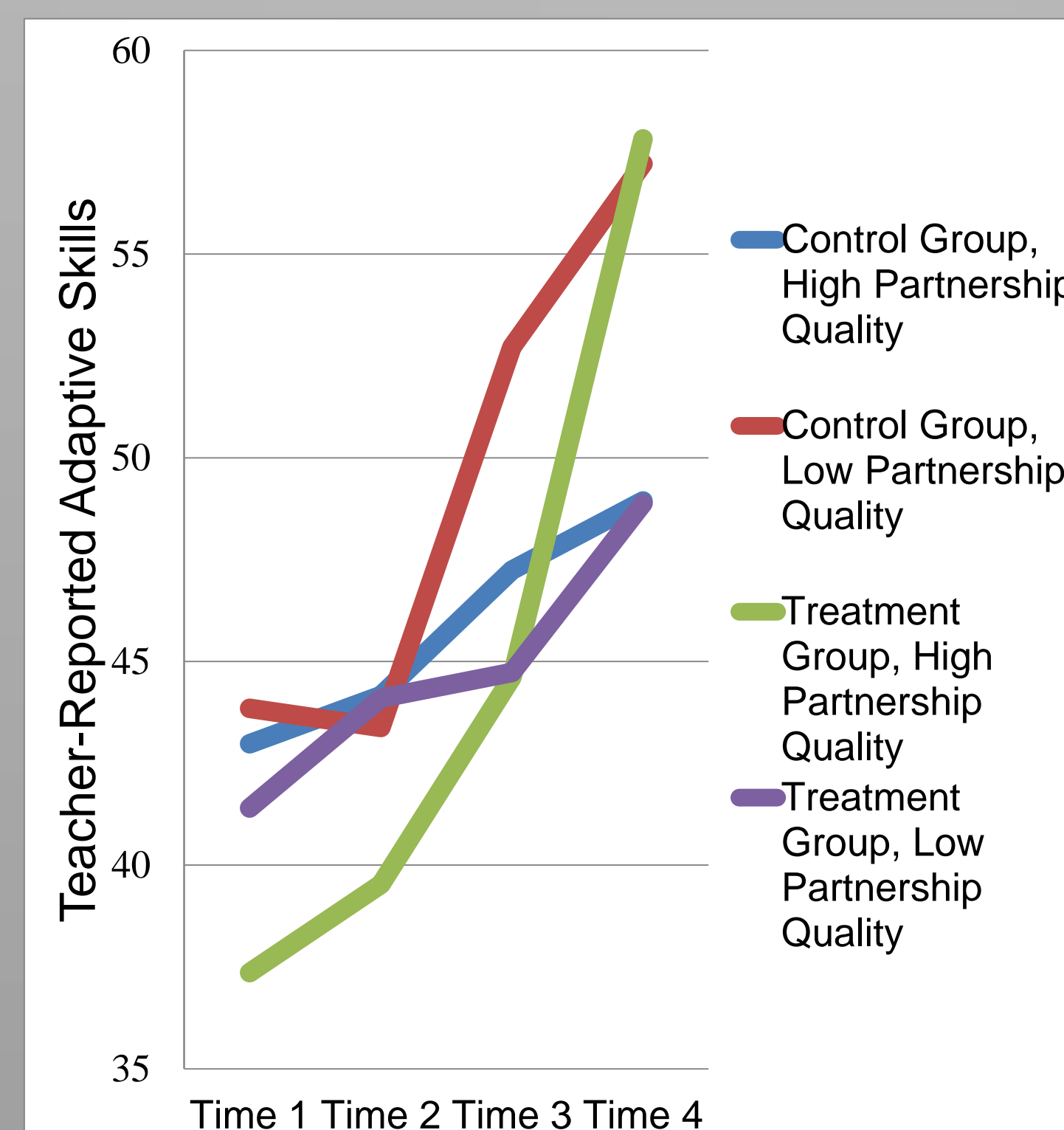
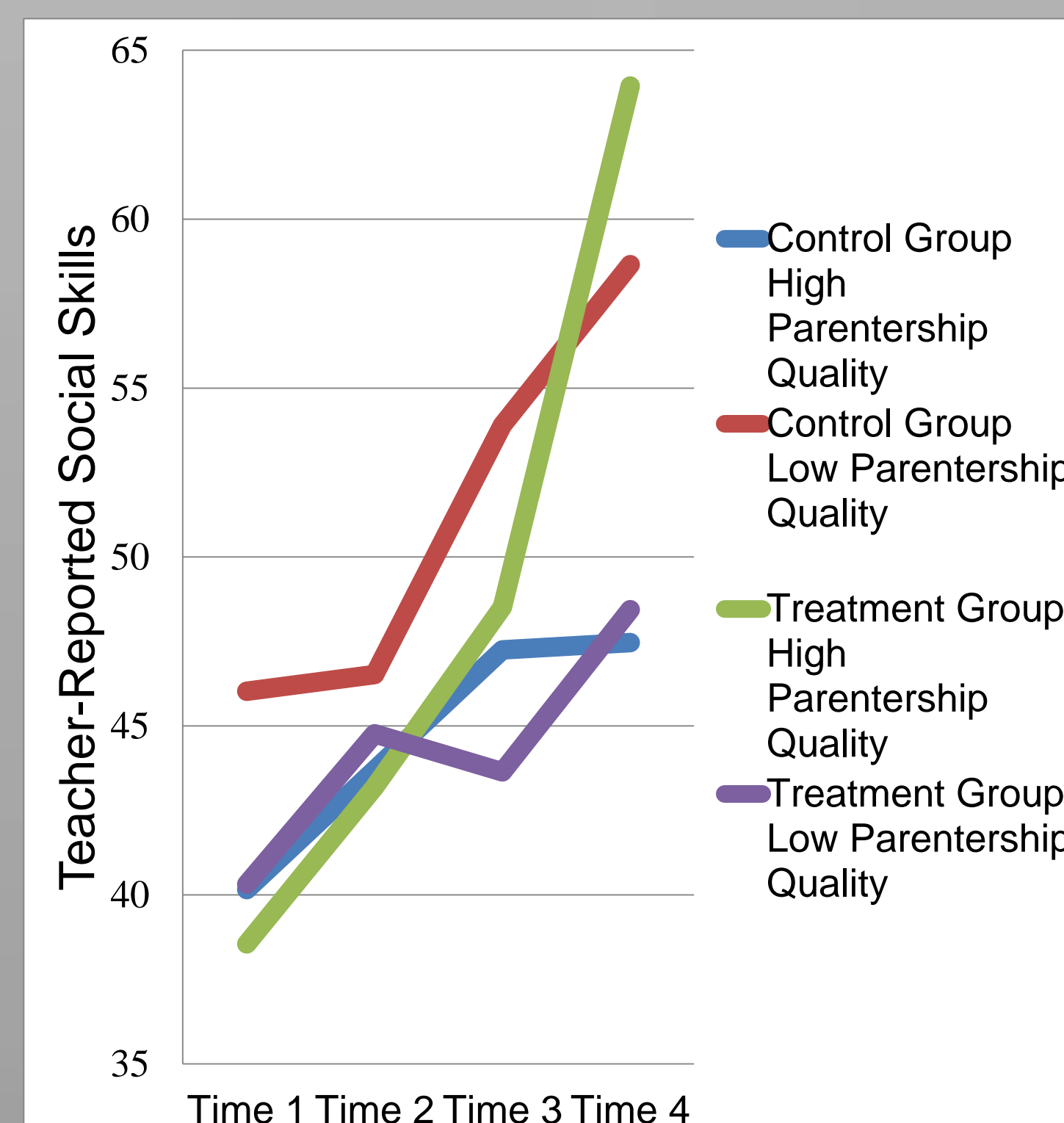


Figure 2. Interaction Between Time, Partnership Quality, and Teacher-Reported Social Skills.



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Teacher-Reported Externalizing Problems and Conduct Problems

- On average students who received CBC and whose parents experienced a high improvement in their partnership with teachers demonstrated a marginally greater rate of reduction in teacher-reported externalizing, $F(3,74) = 2.58$, $p < 0.06$, and conduct problems, $F(3,73) = 2.36$, $p < 0.08$, over time than the students in the other groups.

Figure 3. Interaction Between Time, Partnership Quality, and Teacher-Reported Externalizing Problems.

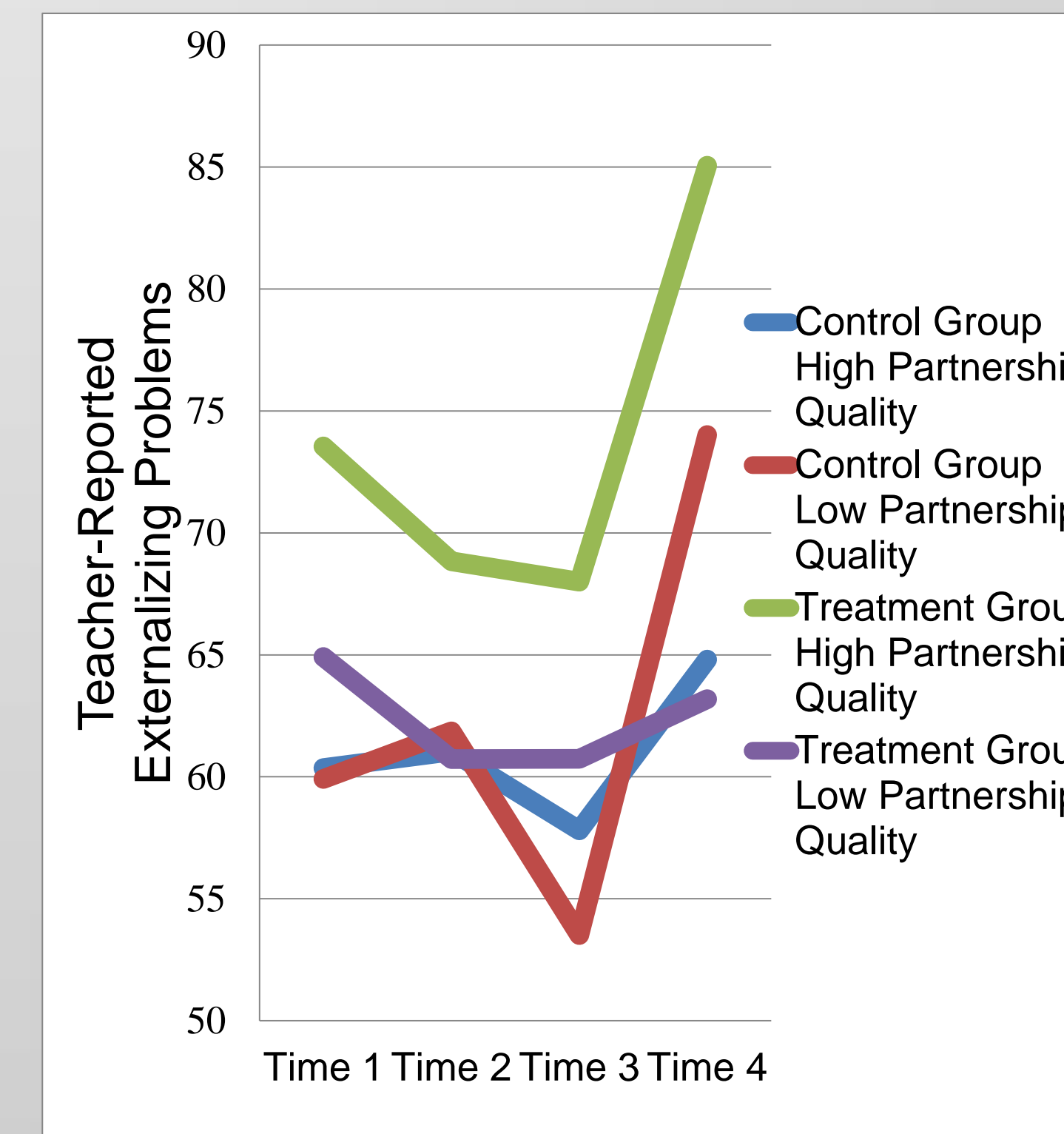
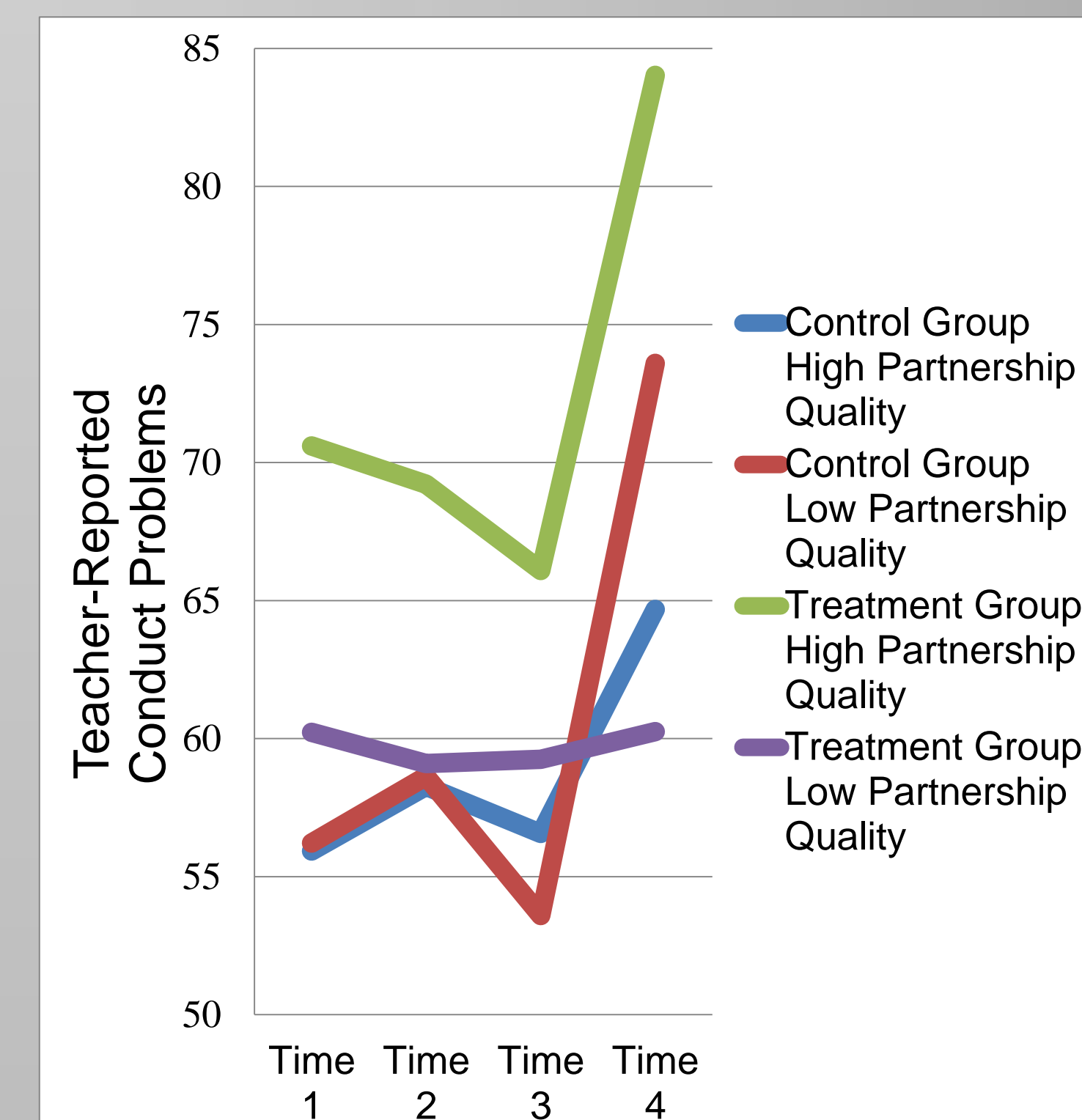


Figure 4. Interaction Between Time, Partnership Quality, and Teacher-Reported Conduct Problems.



Parent-Reported Behavior Outcomes

- All models with *parent-reported* student outcome variables (i.e., adaptive skills, social skills, externalizing problems, and conduct problems) resulted in non-significant three-way interactions.

Discussion

- Parent-teacher partnership quality appears to moderate the effectiveness of CBC.
- Positive changes in the parent-teacher partnership—as perceived by parents—may provide a catalyst for maximal uptake of the treatment (CBC) and the improvement in student behavior.
- Contrary to the hypothesis, parent perceptions of improvement in the quality of their partnership with teachers did not moderate CBC's effectiveness for addressing parent-reported behaviors.
 - Parents may not have perceived their children's behavior to be as problematic as did teachers and in turn did not observe change in their children's behavior over time.
 - Parent-teacher partnership may be most influential on in-school behavior because schools tend to be more rigid in behavioral expectations than homes.
- The longitudinal nature of the study suggests that parent-teacher relationships from the previous year moderated the effects of CBC on long-term student behavior even when rated by other teachers.
 - Once parents experience a high-quality parent-teacher partnership in the context of behavioral intervention (i.e., CBC) they may be more likely to continue to promote their children's in-school behavior in partnership with their children's new teachers

Limitations and Future Directions

- Future analyses should employ the more sophisticated, hierarchical linear modeling in order to account for cross-classification and the nesting of students within teachers and schools (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).
- The manner in which the partnership quality measure was dichotomized (i.e., half standard deviation above or below the average change score as cutoffs on the PTRS Joining subscale) resulted in those participants whose partnership quality change scores were closest to the mean being excluded from analysis.
- It remains unclear how parent-teacher relationships which were positive at baseline and remained positive (resulting in low change) influence student behavior change.