Rachel E. Meisinger, M.A. | Susan M. Sheridan, Ph.D. | Lisa L. Knoche, Ph.D. | Hannah M. Kerby, B.A.

Amanda L. Moen, M.A. | Courtney E. Boise, M.A

NEBRASKA CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES & SCHOOLS

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA LINCOLN

Introduction

Relationships between, and with, supportive adults are essential for promoting young children's academic success and emotional competence, and reducing the risk for school failure (Denham et al., 2012; Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Parent-Teacher Relationships

*Partnerships are **especially** important during preschool years as parents are forming their roles in their children's education* (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999)

- Positive relationships characterized by mutuality, warmth, and respect are associated with young children's improved academic performance and positive social-emotional and behavioral outcomes (Elicker et al., 2013)
- Collaborative practices promote parent engagement in school activities (Powell et al., 2010)

Student-Teacher Relationships

Positive student-teacher relationships provide children with a base for adapting to their social environment (Pianta & Nimetz, 1991)

- Closeness promotes higher levels of school adjustment (Birch & Ladd, 1997), is associated with improved language skills (Birch & Ladd, 1997), and partially ameliorates the negative impact of poor executive functioning on school readiness (Graziano et al., 2016)
- Conflict is associated with more problem behaviors and can increase the possibility of school failure for at-risk children (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001)

The Getting Ready Intervention

Getting Ready (GR; Sheridan et al., 2008) is a strengths- and relationship-based intervention designed to promote school readiness for young children at-risk

- Strengthens Relationships
- Cultivates Engagement
- Creates Consistency
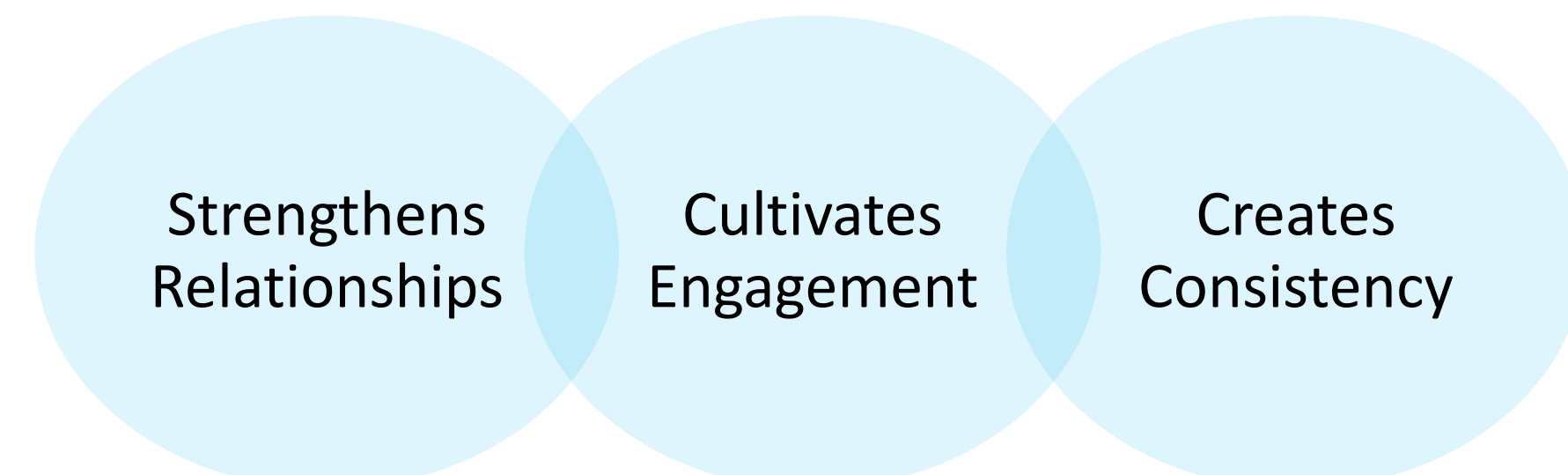
Participating in GR is associated with a host of positive outcomes for children (Sheridan et al., 2010; Sheridan et al., 2011; Sheridan et al., 2014)
- enhanced levels of attachment behavior with adults
- increases in initiative over time (i.e., working independently)
- reduction in anxiety and withdrawal behaviors
as well as parents and teachers (Edwards et al., 2009; Knoche et al., 2012)
- increased use of positive parenting practices
- improved teacher support of parent-child interactions and behaviors related to parent-teacher collaboration

Study Purpose

To examine the effect of GR on relationships (parent-teacher, student-teacher) over two years of preschool for at-risk children and families.

Methods

Participants (See Table 1)

238 at-risk preschool families and their teachers
- Low income families eligible for two years of publically-funded preschool
- All children received a standard score of 90 or below in cognition, language, and/or social skills on a screening assessment

	Family Demographic Characteristics (N=238)		Teacher Demographic Characteristics (N=93)
	Children	Parents	
Gender	47% Female 51% Male	82% Female 18% Male	98% Female 2% Male
Ethnicity/Race	43% White/Non-Hispanic 34% Hispanic/Latino 23% Other	62% White/Non-Hispanic 25% Hispanic/Latino 13% Other	94% White/Non-Hispanic 2% Hispanic/Latino 4% Other
Average Age	3.5 years (range=3-4)	25 years (range = 12 – 49)	
Other	Home Language: 85% English 15% Spanish	Marital Status: 59% Married/With Partner 22% Single/Never Married 19% Divorced/Separated	Education: 52% 4-year degree 32% Graduate coursework/degree 14% 2-year degree 2% High school diploma or GED

Measures and Procedure (See Table 2)
- Parent-teacher and student-teacher relationships were assessed in the fall and spring across two years of preschool

Parent-Teacher Relationship Scale (PTRS; Vickers & Minke, 1995)
24-item parent & teacher self-report; 5-point Likert-type rating scale

Joining (Cohesion) The degree to which both parties demonstrate dependability, support, availability, shared expectations, and communication	19 items α = .93 Score range: 19 - 95	Control: M=78.98 (13.00) TXT: M=80.47 (12.17)
Communication to other (Adaptability) The degree to which both parties are able to change how they interact as needed	5 items α = .89 Score range: 5 - 25	Control: M=19.20 (4.02) TXT: M=19.58 (3.83)

Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Pianta, 2001)
28-item self-report; 5-point Likert-type rating scale

|		
Conflict The degree to which a teacher perceives his or her relationship with a particular student as negative and conflictual	12 items α = .91 Score range: 12 - 60	Control: M=21.00 (8.79) TXT: M=21.98 (9.35)
Closeness The degree to which a teacher experiences affection, warmth and open communication with a particular student	11 items α = .81 Score range: 11 - 55	Control: M=42.43 (6.15) TXT: M=41.63 (6.60)
Dependency The degree to which a teacher perceives a particular student as overly dependent	5 items α = .56 Score range: 5 to 25	Control: M=10.90 (3.06) TXT: M=10.10 (3.28)

Analytic Approach
- Multilevel modeling analyses tested the development of the parent-teacher relationship and student-teacher relationship as a function of the GR intervention
- The nested nature of the data (multiple children in a single classroom) was taken into account
- Analyses also used overall, or total, scores from each measure

Results

Teachers' report of the teacher-parent relationship revealed greater rates of improvement in overall parent-teacher relationship for GR participants relative to controls (F(1,543) = 3.92; *p* = .048).

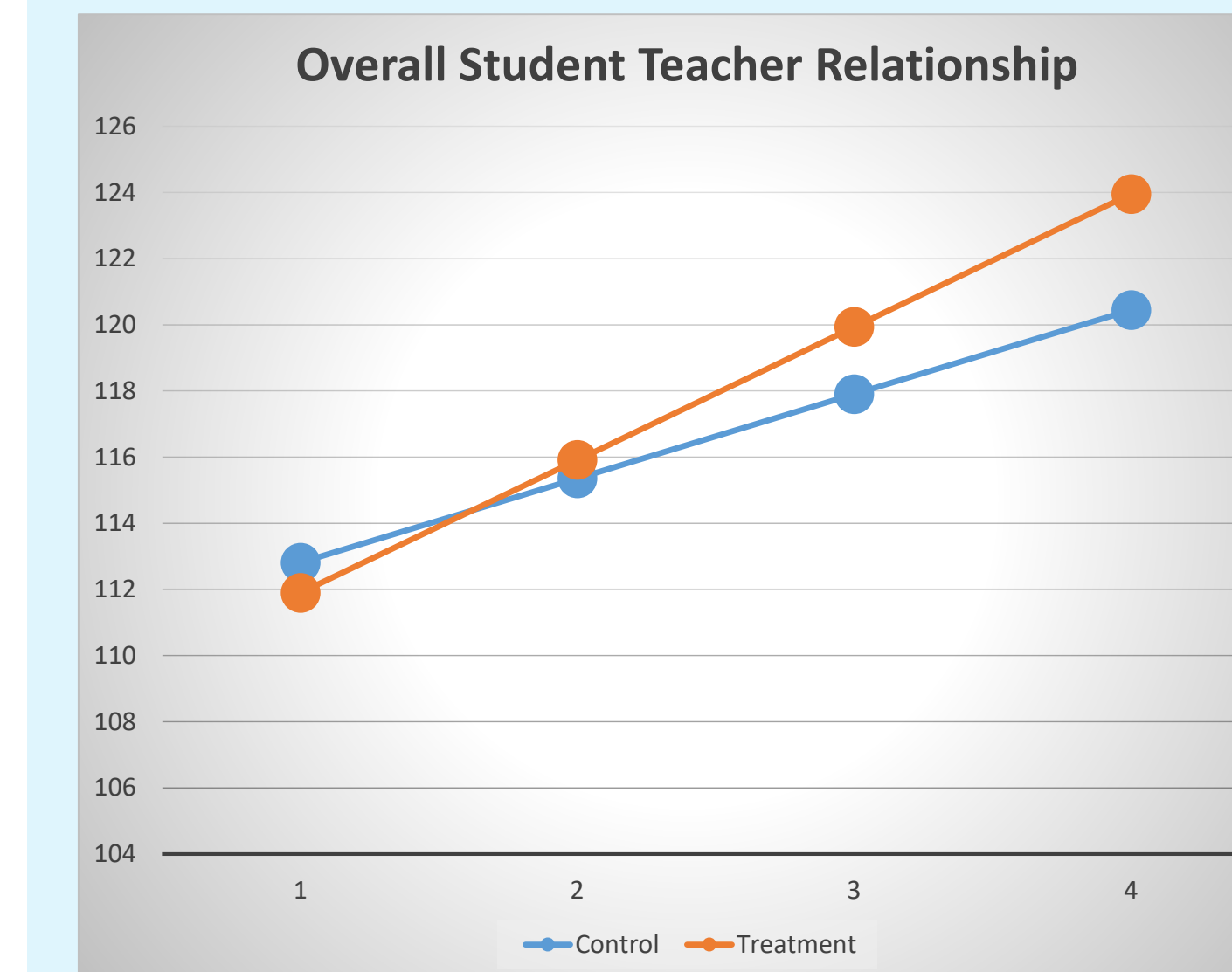Teacher's Perceptions of the Parent-Teacher Relationship
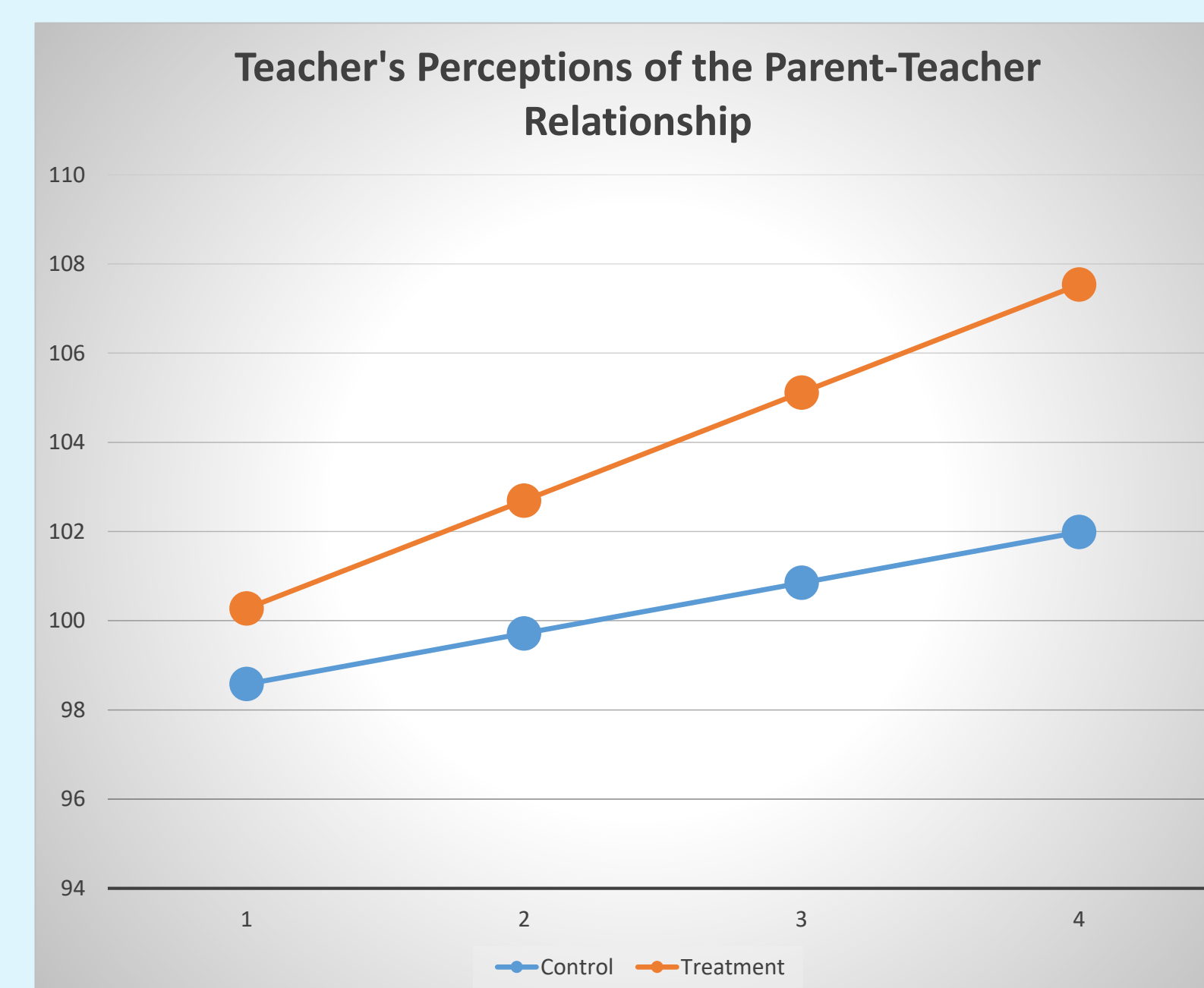
Parents' report of the parent-teacher relationship did not yield significant changes over time for those participating in GR compared to controls (F(1, 468) = .07, *p* = .80).

GettingReady

#GettingReady0-8
@UNL_CYFS
cyfs.unl.edu

Overall Student Teacher Relationship

Conflict in the Student-Teacher Relationship

Closeness in the Student-Teacher Relationship

Significantly greater rates of improvement in the student-teacher relationship were noted for GR compared to control participants
- Overall relationship (F(1,541) = 7.19; *p* = .008)
- Conflict (F(1,531)=6.54; *p*=.011)
- Closeness (F(1,557)=6.56; *p*=.011)
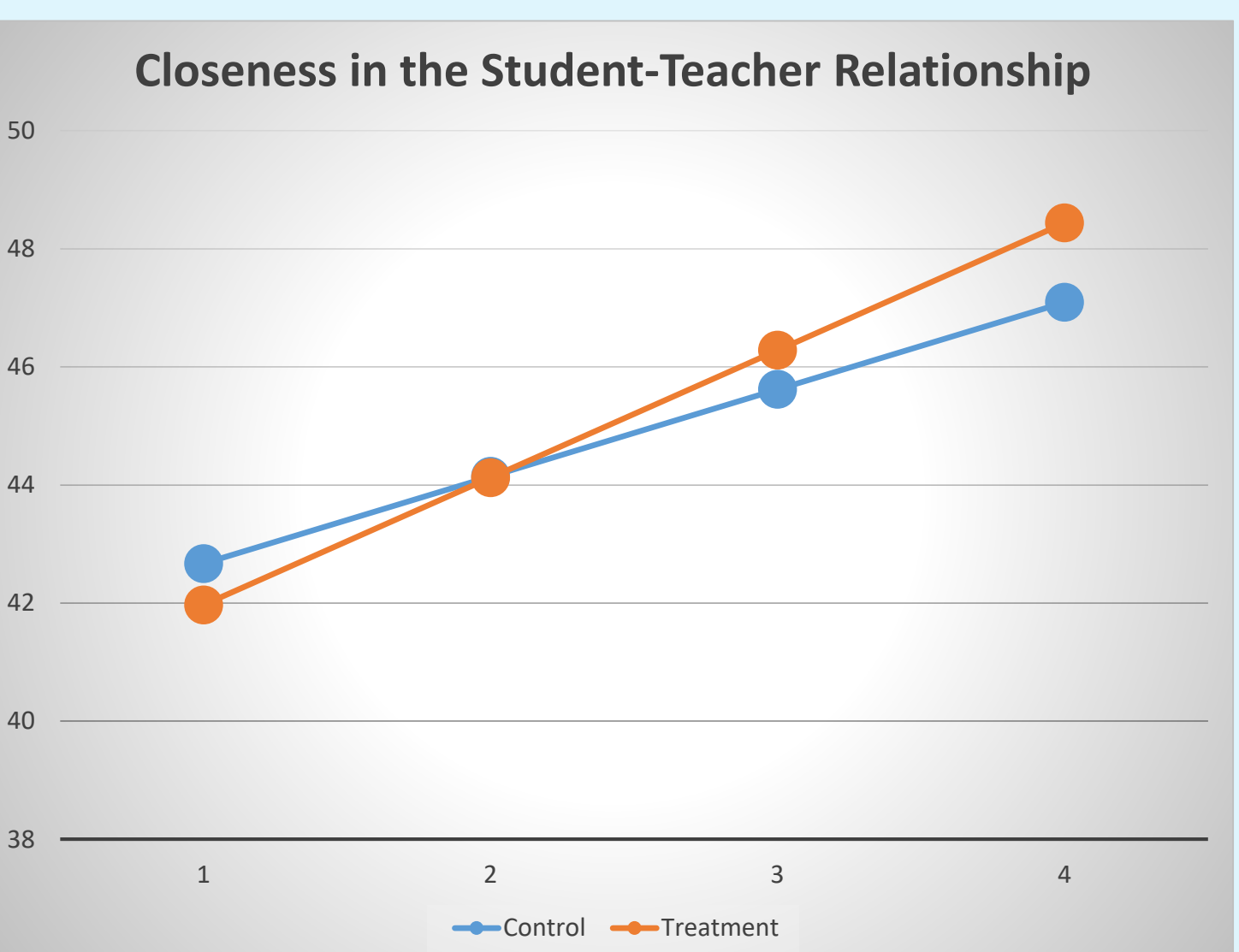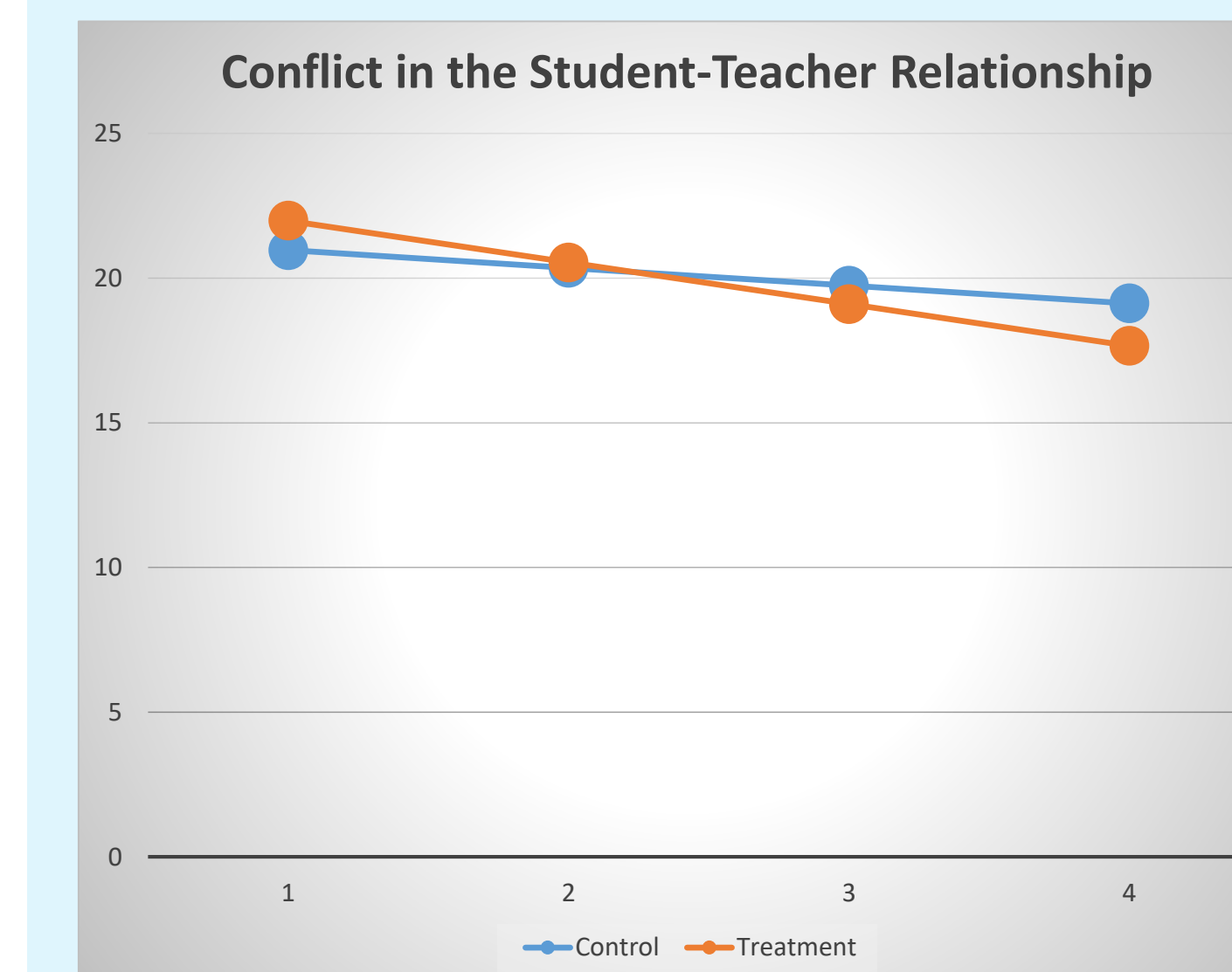
Discussion & Implications

Results demonstrate the efficacy of GR for improving both the teacher-parent and student-teacher relationship at a greater rate than those in the control group.

Take Away #1: Teacher-parent relationships in early childhood are essential for student success, and set the stage for empowering parents as integral players in their child's education
- GR directly targets this relationship via the use of strategies that support parent engagement and participation in a collaborative problem-solving process
- GR also aims to create stronger connections and greater continuity between home and school systems

Take Away #2: Student-teacher relationships also play an important role in supporting the healthy learning and development of young children
- GR indirectly supports the student-teacher relationship by ameliorating other concerns (Sheridan et al., 2010; Sheridan et al., 2011) that may place stress on the student-teacher relationship
- GR also helps teachers learn more about participating families and children, which may facilitate the development of a positive relationship with the student

Implications for Practice
- Children and families at-risk are in need of supports that promote young children's healthy development and learning. GR is an effective model for creating stronger connections between parents, teachers, and children in early childhood, and particularly for children who are at socioeconomic and developmental risk.
- School psychologists can learn more about GR and introduce the model to early childhood educators they work with. Additionally, school psychologists could provide coaching and continued support for the implementation of GR and partnership-oriented approaches.

Limitations & Directions for Future Research
- All measures were self-report and may be biased
- All one participants were from one geographic area
- Future research should corroborate these findings with observational measures of parent-teacher and student-teacher relationships as well as with families and teachers in other geographic areas
- Future research is also needed to monitor GR's long-term effects over time