IMPLEMENTING THEME-BASED WORKSHOPS TO INCREASE EFFECTIVE FACULTY-STUDENT INTERACTION

Faculty Academy Research Project 2017

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FACULTY-STUDENT INTERACTION LITERATURE REVIEW

- The importance of faculty-student interaction is well documented:

  - "Engagement Insights: Survey Findings on the Quality of Undergraduate Education Annual Results." *NSSE* 2016

  - "Development and Adaptation of the Seven Principles for Good Practices in Undergraduate Education," Chickering and Gamson

  - "Starting the Conversation: An Exploratory Study of Factors That Influence Student Office Hour Use," Griffin, et. al.

  - "Is the Professor In? Faculty Presence during Office Hours," Pfund, et.al.

  - "Relations with Faculty as Social Capital for College Students: Evidence from Puerto Rico," Dika

  - "Weaning Off of Email: Encouraging Students to Use Office Hours over Email to Contact Professors," Jackson, and Knupsky

LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY

- Faculty-Student Interaction which is "students interacting with faculty in the classroom, the laboratory, office hours, or other venues inside and outside of the academy" (Kim and Sax 1):

  ➢ Provides a strong predictor of "increased student retention and graduation rates, satisfaction, and performance" (Griffin et.al. 1).

  ➢ Allows students "an opportunity to seek extra help, discuss course related material, examine related interests, and receive career guidance" (Pfund et. al. 524).

  ➢ "[F]acilitates relationship building, which personalizes the [students'] educational experience and provides a foundation for the student-faculty collaborations in the future."

  ➢ "Encourages [faculty] mentoring roles, especially for underrepresented students" (Jackson and Knupsky 1).

PROBLEM:
FAILURE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OFFICE HOURS

- The lack of faculty-student interaction that occurs because students do not take advantage of an instructor's office hour is rampant.

- In one study, only 8% of 600 students reported they had frequented their instructor's office hour at least once. (Weimer).

PROBLEM:
FAILURE TO SEE THE VALUE OF FACE-TO FACE INTERACTION

- Some students recognize that their instructor can offer specialized and firsthand knowledge in course questions.

- However, they fail to recognize the value of face-to-face faculty-student interaction that an office hour visit could provide.
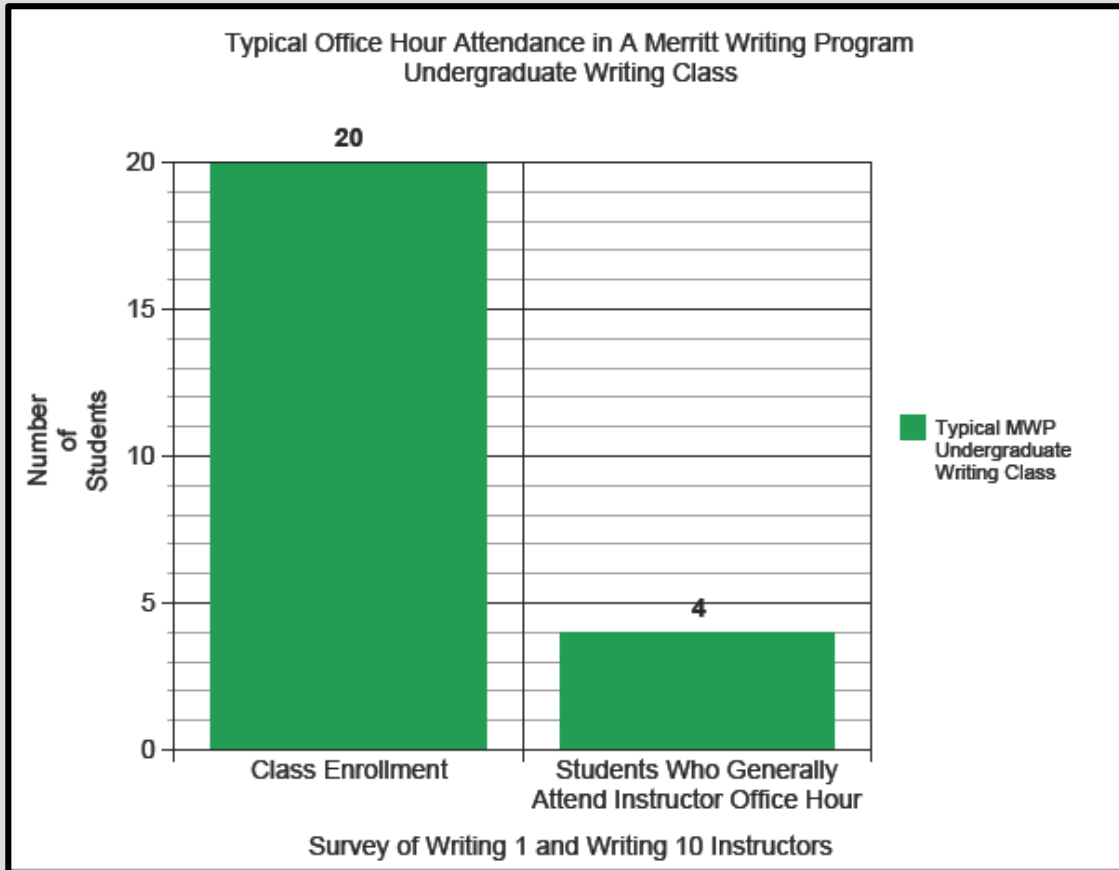
PROBLEM:
STUDENTS TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT

- When it comes to asking for help or guidance with academic matters, course concerns, or assignment questions, email rather than a face-to-face instructor-student interaction seems to be the venue of choice.

- While any type of faculty-student interaction is welcomed, many of the questions that are asked via emails are more effectively and efficiently answered in face-to–face interactions (Jackson and Knupsky).

PROBLEM:
CAN'T GET THE HORSES TO WATER

- Moreover, a large number of students do not even seek help.

- "No matter how many office hours […] we offer, there are always students who need help, but almost seem determined not to get it" (Chung and Hsu 253).

UC MERCED WRITING 1 CLASSES

Typical Office Hour Attendance in A Merritt Writing Program Undergraduate Writing Class

- Only 20% of UCM Writing 1 students voluntarily visited their instructor's office hour at least once during the semester (Finley).

- This percentage could translate to at least four students in each Writing 1 section.

INTERVENTION MODELS: THEME-BASED WORKSHOPS

- Holding theme-based office hours (Jackson and Knupsky)

- Supplementing office hours with course centers (Chung and Hsu 253)

INTERVENTION MODEL EXPLAINED

- Jackson and Knupsky propose offering "theme-based" office hours wherein "teaching that goes on in an office hour can be tailored to each student's individual needs" (par. 12).

- Chung and Hsu advocate augmenting office hours with a course center defined as a "one- or two-hour block of time in which [instructor] help was available from away from the [scheduled] office hour" (253).

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

- Faculty-student interaction during instructor's office hours can be enhanced and increased by offering theme-based office hours.

GROUNDWORK FOR THE THEME-BASED WORKSHOPS

Provide	clear directions to the instructor's office
Offer	alternate forms and times
Consider	clear policies limiting email to specific functions (Jackson and Knupsky 183)
Explain	the importance of office hours (Griffin et. al. 98)
Extend	personal invitations to students, either verbally or in writing (Acitelli et. al. par. 8; "Face" 2)

THEME-BASED WORKSHOPS

INTERVENTION DESIGN

WEEKLY WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

- Weekly one-hour sessions consisting of:

  ➢ mini-lecture reviewing related topical handout

  ➢ demonstration of the skill,

  ➢ hands-on workshop using the students' own work.

WORKSHOP TOPICS

- "Overcoming Writer's Block"
- Writing Introductions, Conclusions, and Thesis Statements"
- "Essay Organization and Structure"
- "How to Effectively Integrate Quotes and Borrowed Information"
- "Revising Like a Pro"
- "Editing Like a Pro"
- Open Q&A Sessions

METHODOLOGY

DIRECT EVIDENCE ASSESSING THEME-BASED WORKSHOPS

- Student Workshop Attendance
- Essay Grades
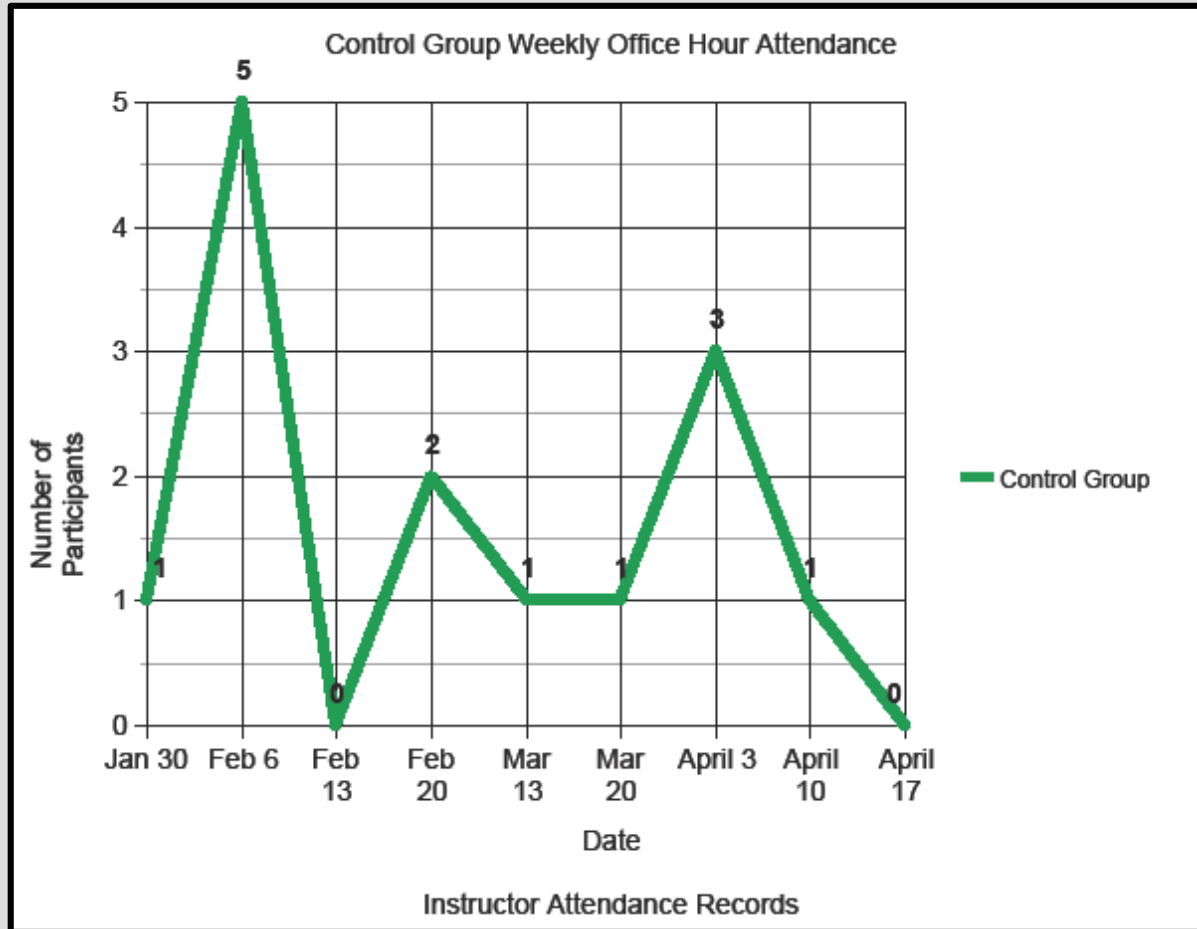- Mid-Term Grade and Final Grade Comparison

INDIRECT ASSESSMENT OF THEME-BASED WORKSHOPS

- Midterm Reflections
- End-of-Semester Comments
- Skills-Based Assessment
- Gains-Based Assessment

RESULTS

ATTENDANCE CONTROL GROUP
YOU BUILD IT. BUT THEY DON'T COME

Control Group Weekly Office Hour Attendance

Instructor Attendance Records

- In a group of 19 students, the weekly participation in the instructor's office hour was very limited.

- Most weeks, only one student from the control group participated.

- The spike in participation rates usually occurred when a major paper was due.

ATTENDANCE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP
# YOU BUILD IT BETTER AND SOME COME
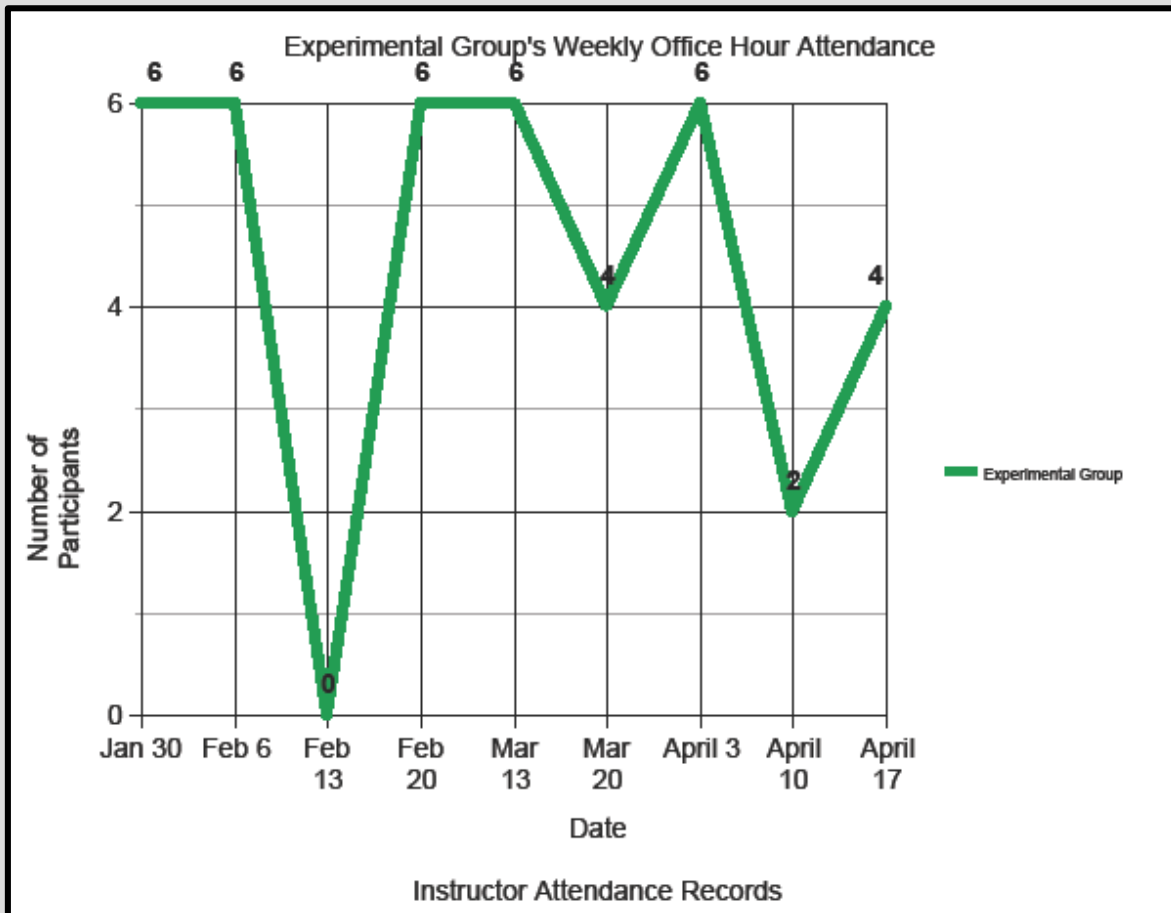
- The experimental group's participation was usually consistent and often above the research and the MWP's undergraduate office hour attendance averages.

ATTENDANCE
YOU BUILD IT BETTER AND MORE COME

Comparision of Experimental and Control Group's Weekly Office Hour Attendance

Instructor Attendance Records
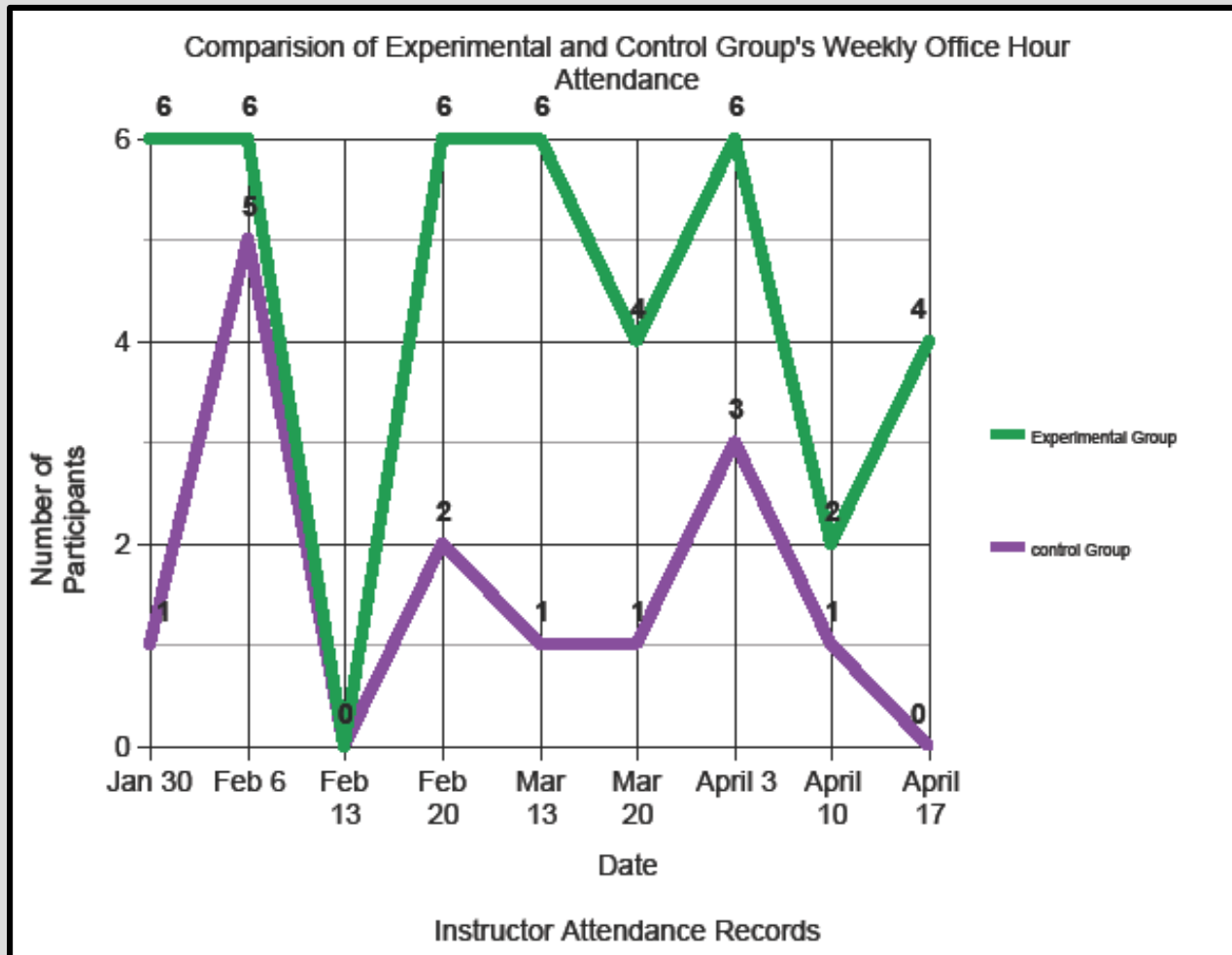
- With the implementation of the theme-based workshops, the experimental group's attendance was significantly higher than the control group's attendance.

REASONS FOR ATTENDING OFFICE HOUR YOU BUILD IT BETTER AND MORE COME

Experimental Group's Office Hour Attendance Without and With Theme-Based Workshop Participation
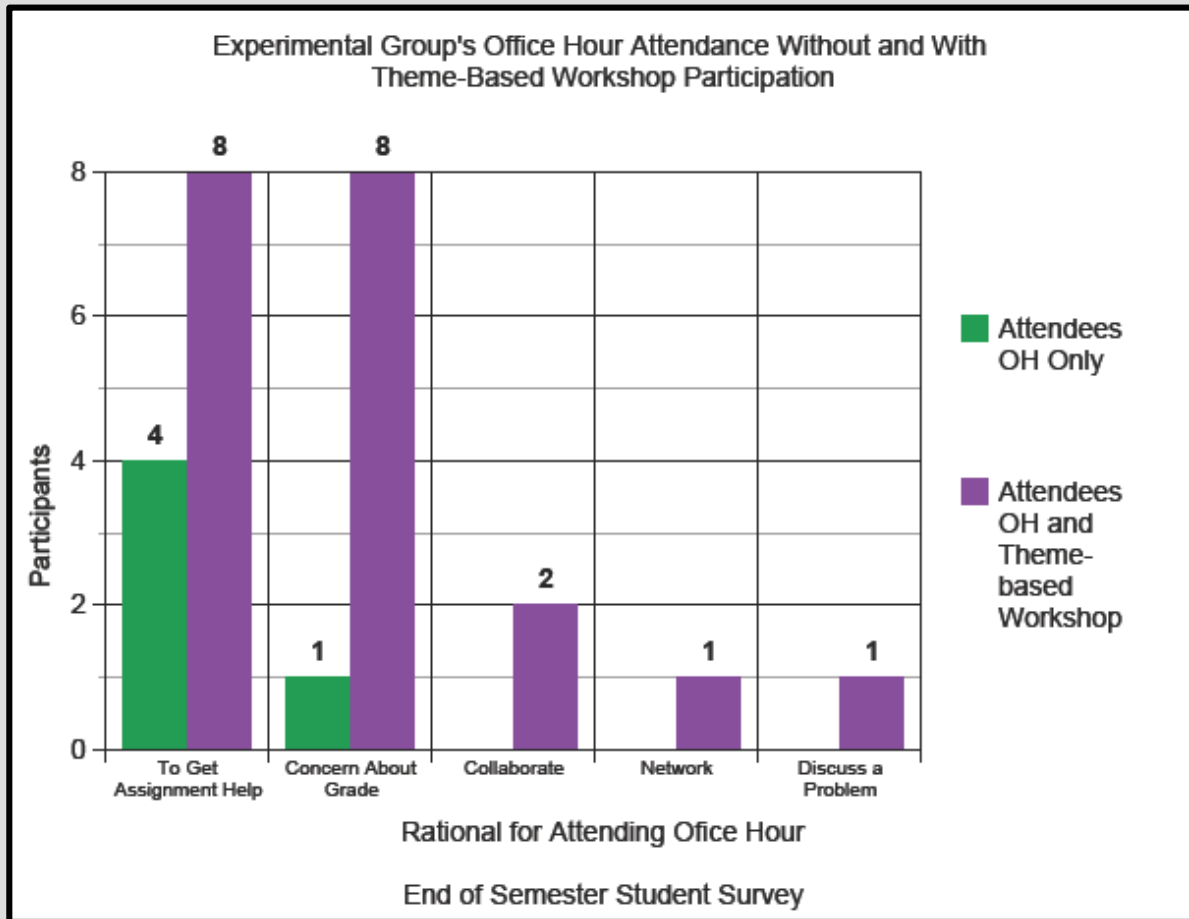
- With the implementation of the theme-based workshops, the experimental group's students' participation increased and focused on their "need to know" about an assignment or their grade.

INDIRECT EVIDENCE OF THEME-BASED WORKSHOPS

- Midterm Reflections

- End-of-Semester Comments

- Skills-Based Assessment

- Gains-Based Assessment

CONTROL GROUP'S MID-SEMESTER REFLECTIONS

- "I need to go to office hours when it comes to feedback for my essays."

- "I think that I can achieve success if I continue working hard. I'm also planning on going to more office hours because I can get advice that will help me improve my essays."

- "I have always struggled in writing, so I have always had the motivation to make myself a better writer."

- "Although I have put extra time into the class such as going to the writing center, I still am encountering some troubles improving my writing abilities. Nevertheless, I will continue to seek resources that will hopefully help me become a better writer."

- "When I don't understand something about an assignment, I always make sure to ask my professor for guidance."

- "My goal for the rest of the class is to become a better writer."

- "Success is one of my priorities, but my skills for writing are not that strong. However, I definitely want to improve in the class. I see myself getting an A in the class because I will make sure to attend office hours if I need any help."

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP'S MID-SEMESTER REFLECTIONS

- "[One] thing that has really helped me is attending office hours and the topics discussed during office hour workshops."

- "I learned effective ways to revise my essays."

- "Looking at the big picture is helpful when revising my essay."

- "I learned how to construct clear topic sentences and clear thesis statements"

- "Grammar is not the most focused part of revision. The big thing is making sure my ideas are clear and organized."

- "I would like to see more collaboration in the workshops."

- "I think I should go to the instructor's office hours to get some help on the essays."

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP'S COMMENTS FROM END OF SEMESTER SURVEY

- "Knowing how to integrate quotes and commentary is a valuable skill I learned."
- "It's the first time I've ever done workshops, and I don't regret it. It opened my eyes to my skills and abilities."
- "One-to-one help as well as help from my classmates added to my learning."
- "One-on-one collaboration added to my learning."
- "The time outside of class to ask questions or get comments helped feel more prepared and motivated to write."
- "I felt more confident about writing my essay assignment."
- "The one-on-one help and my peers' comments helped me see my writing in another way."

REFLECTIONS AND COMMENTARY: METACOGNITIVE SUMMARY

CONTROL GROUP

- The students have high expectations for success in the class.
- The students understand the necessity of visiting the instructor's office to obtain advice and help with their essays.
- However, these students did not utilize the office hours as much and the experimental group.

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

- The students understand the importance of visiting the instructor's office hour and followed through and utilized the office hours offered.
- The students attribute their motivation and preparedness to write to the one-on-one instructor feedback and the collaboration with peers during the workshops.

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WHY DID THEY COME?

Comparison of Rationale for Office Hour Attendance

End of Semester Student Survey
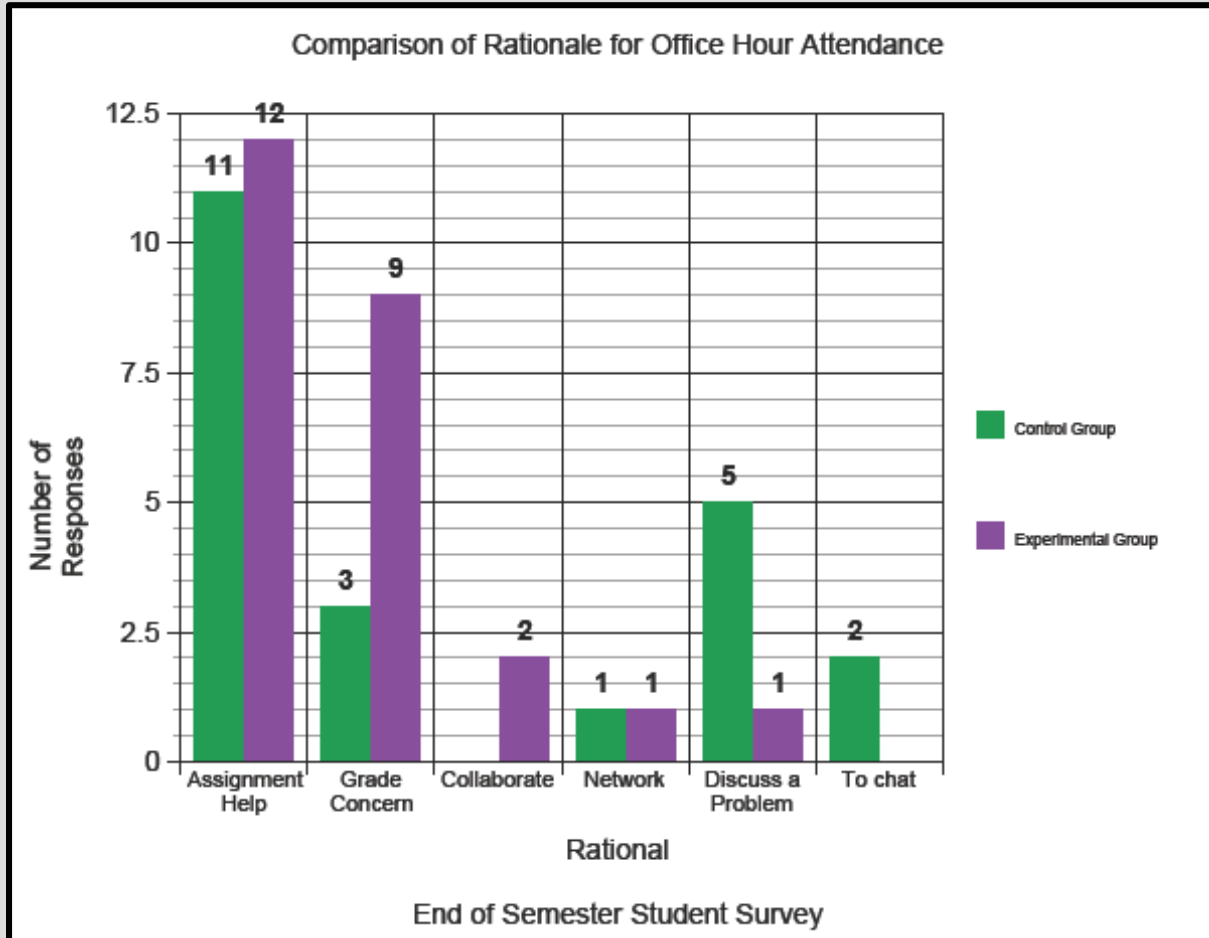
- While the number of responses seem to be equal for some of the rationale, some students responded to more than one rationale.

- Both the control and the experimental group's main focus for coming to the instructor's office hour seemed to center on the students' need for help with an assignment.

- The experimental group's responses indicated needs for collaboration and networking seem to indicate a focus on a writing concern.

- The control group's indicated needs may have been more focused on concerns of a personal nature.

SKILLS GAINED BY ATTENDING THEME-BASED WORKSHOPS FROM THE STUDENTS' POINT OF VIEW

Skills Gained By Attending Theme-Based Workshops

End of Semester Student Survey
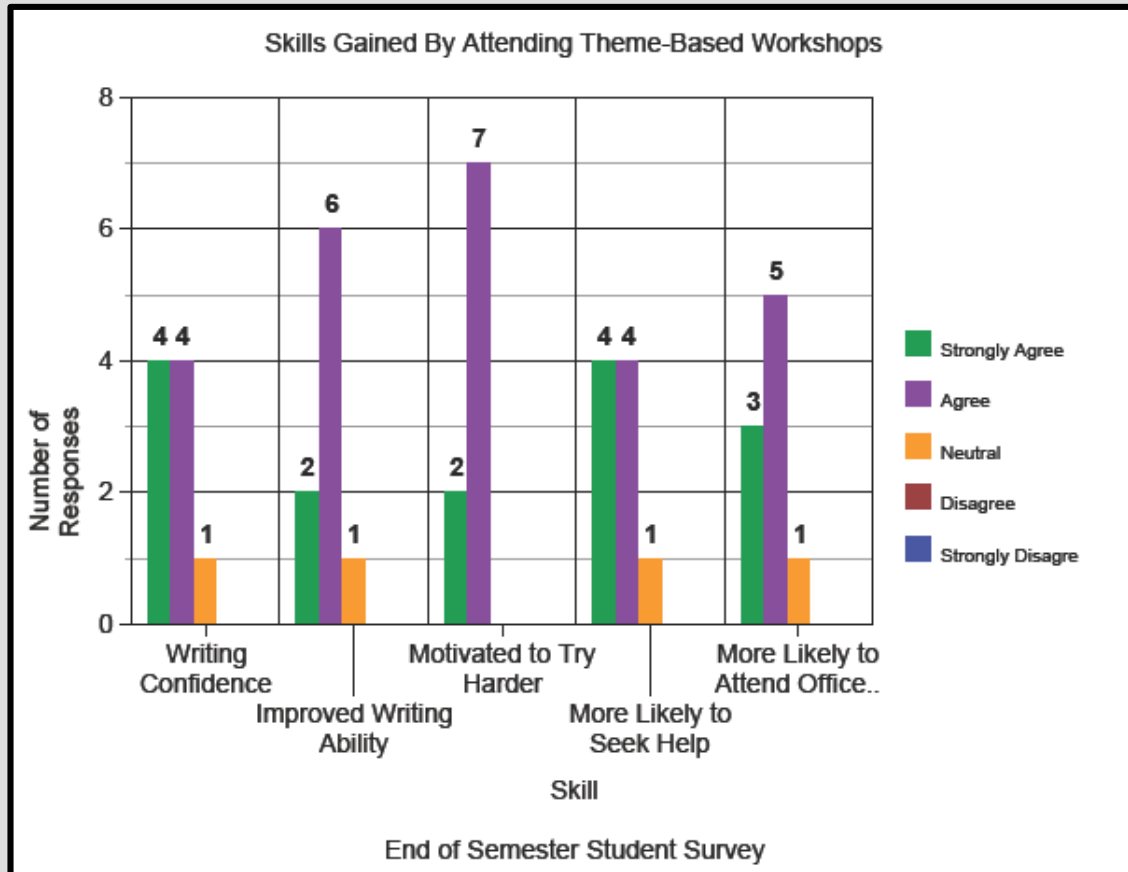
- The workshops were beneficial.

- Overall motivation to use the instructor's office hour was increased.

- Writing abilities and confidence when writing were enhanced.

OTHER GAINS FROM ATTENDING THE THEME-BASED WORKSHOPS

Other Gains By Attending Theme-Based Workshops

End of Semester Student Survey
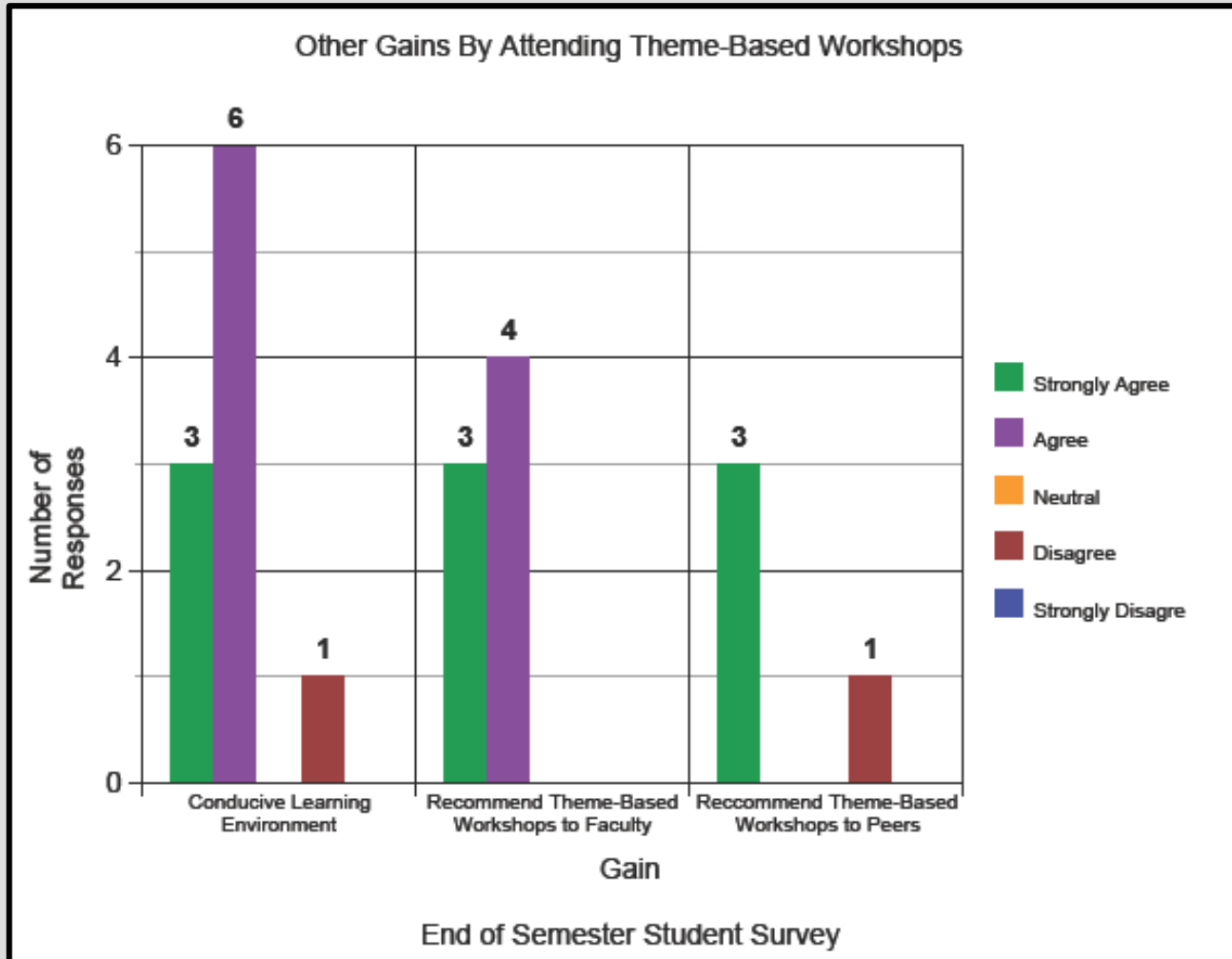
From the students' point of view:

- The environment enhanced their learning;
- The theme-based workshop method should be shared with both peers and instructors in other courses.

DIRECT EVIDENCE ASSESSING THEME-BASED WORKSHOPS

- Student Workshop Attendance
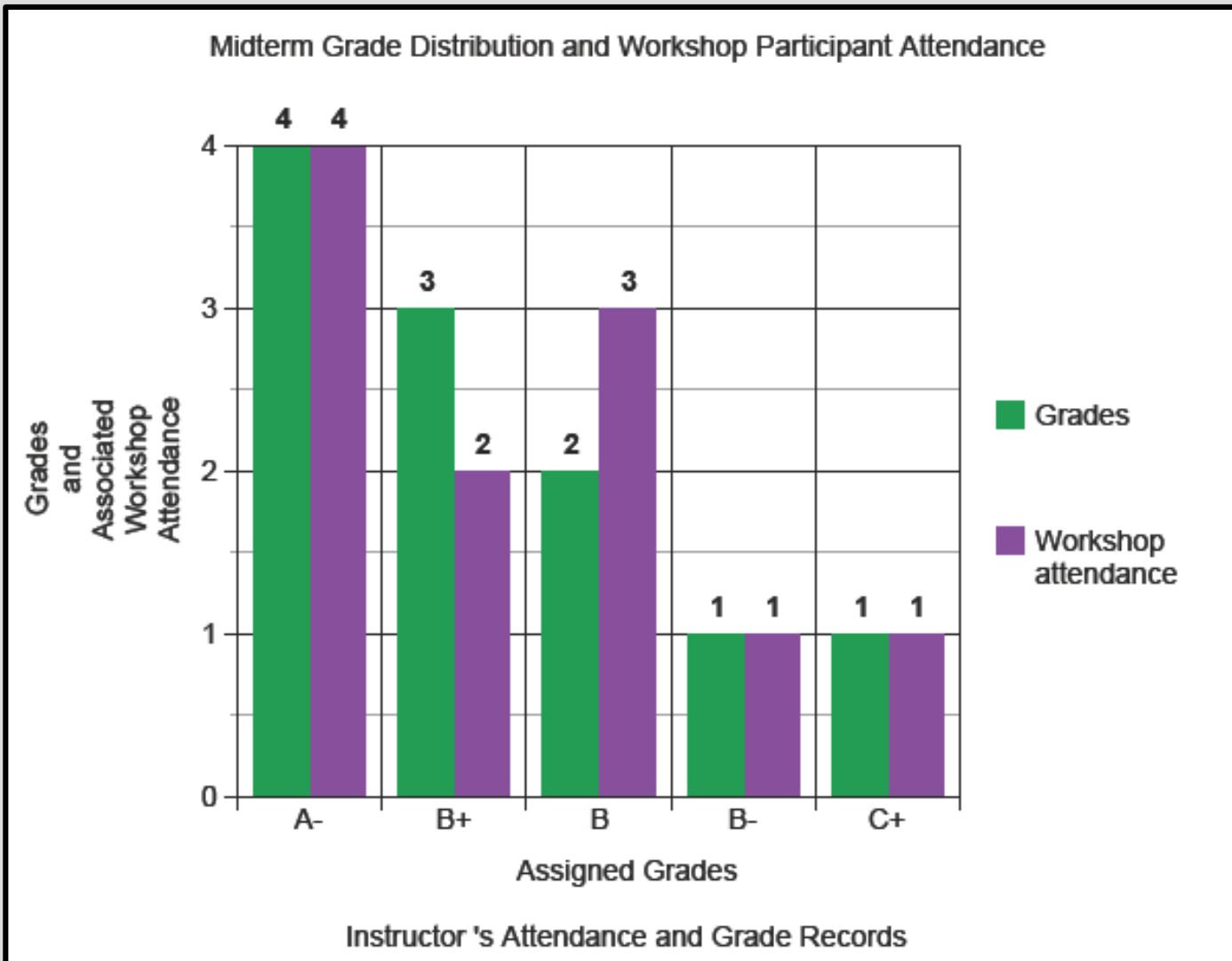- Essay Grades
- Mid-Term Grade and Final Grade Comparison

WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE

Theme-Based Workshop Attendance

Instructor's Attendance Records
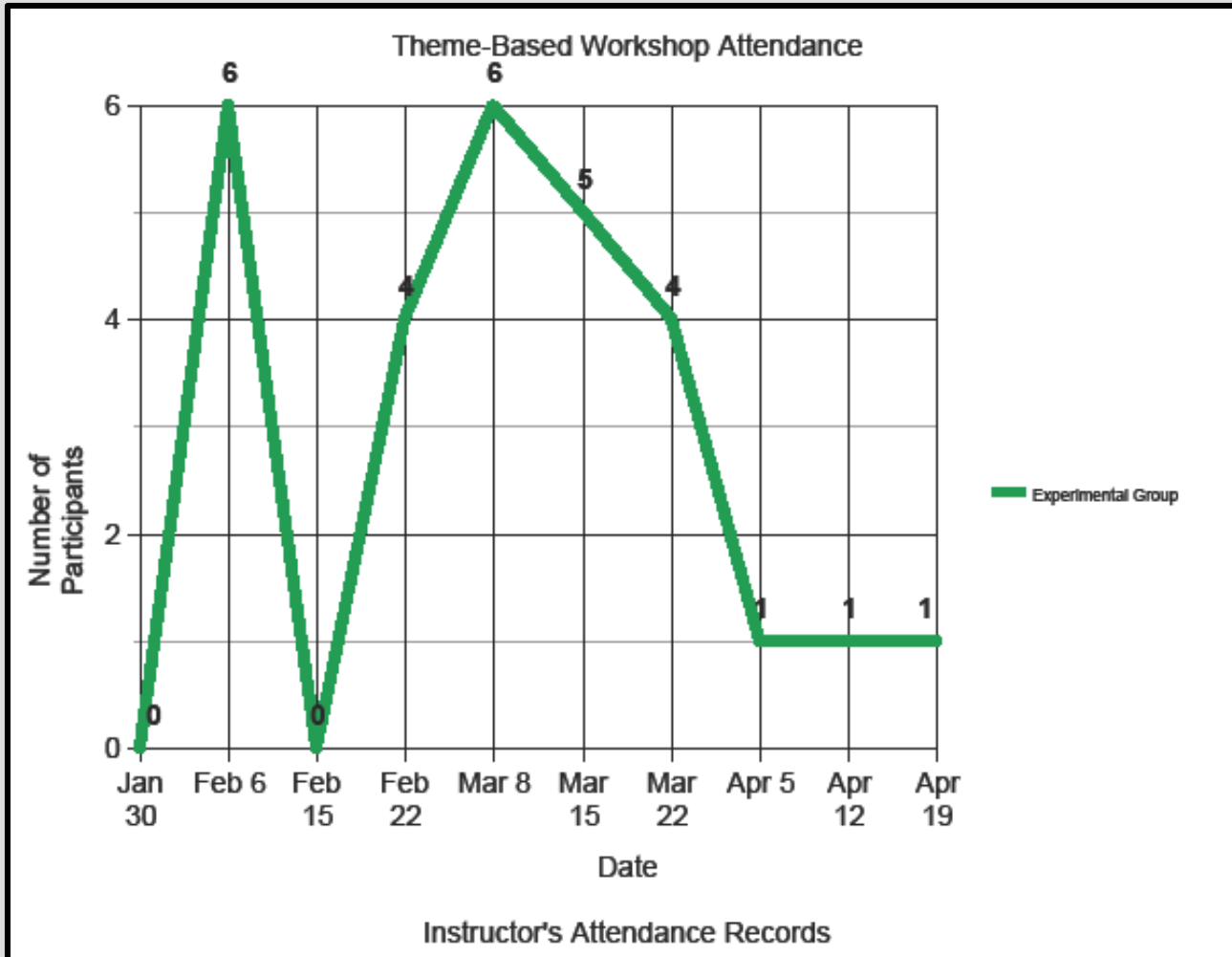
- The workshop attendance was somewhat consistent, but attendance often increased based on the workshop topic or when a major writing assignment was due.

MIDTERM GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE

Midterm Grade Distribution and Workshop Participant Attendance

- The level of the mid-term grades of the workshop participants closely corresponded to the number of workshops the students attended.
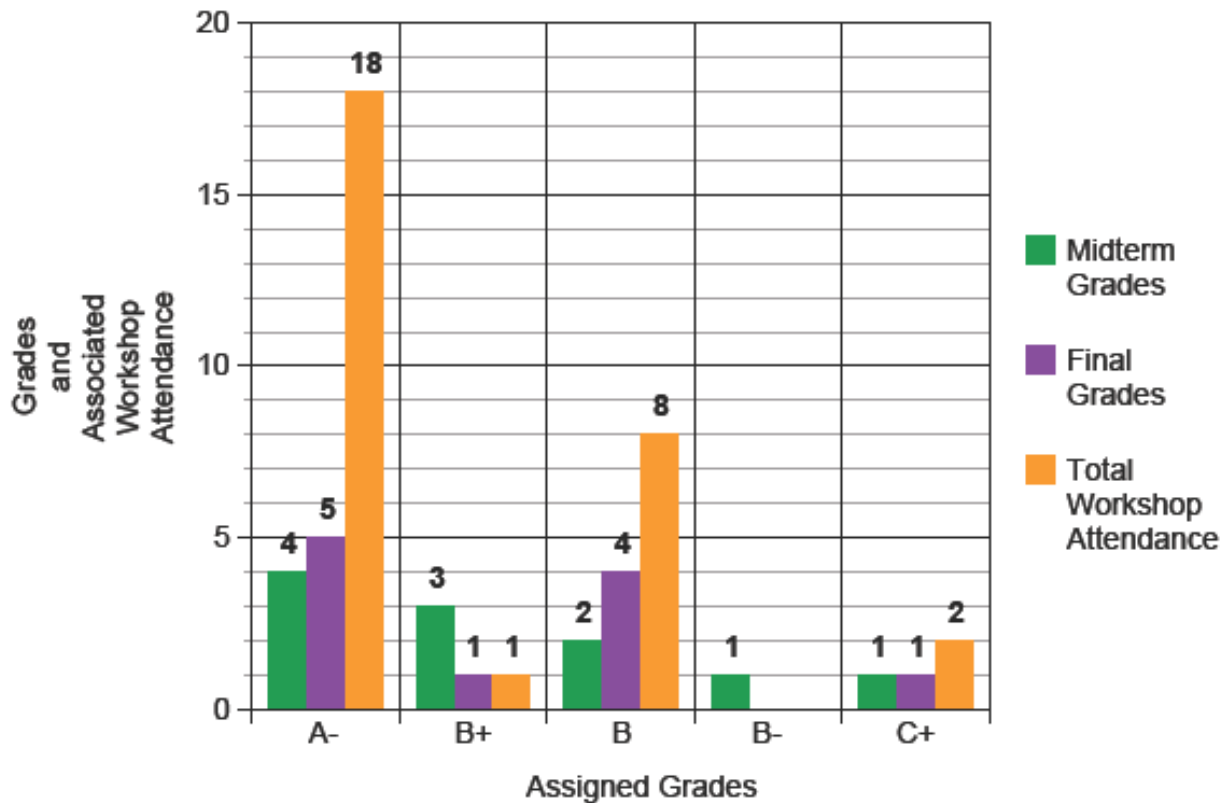
SEMESTER ESSAY GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Experimental Group's Semester Essay Grades

Instructor 's Attendance and Grade Records
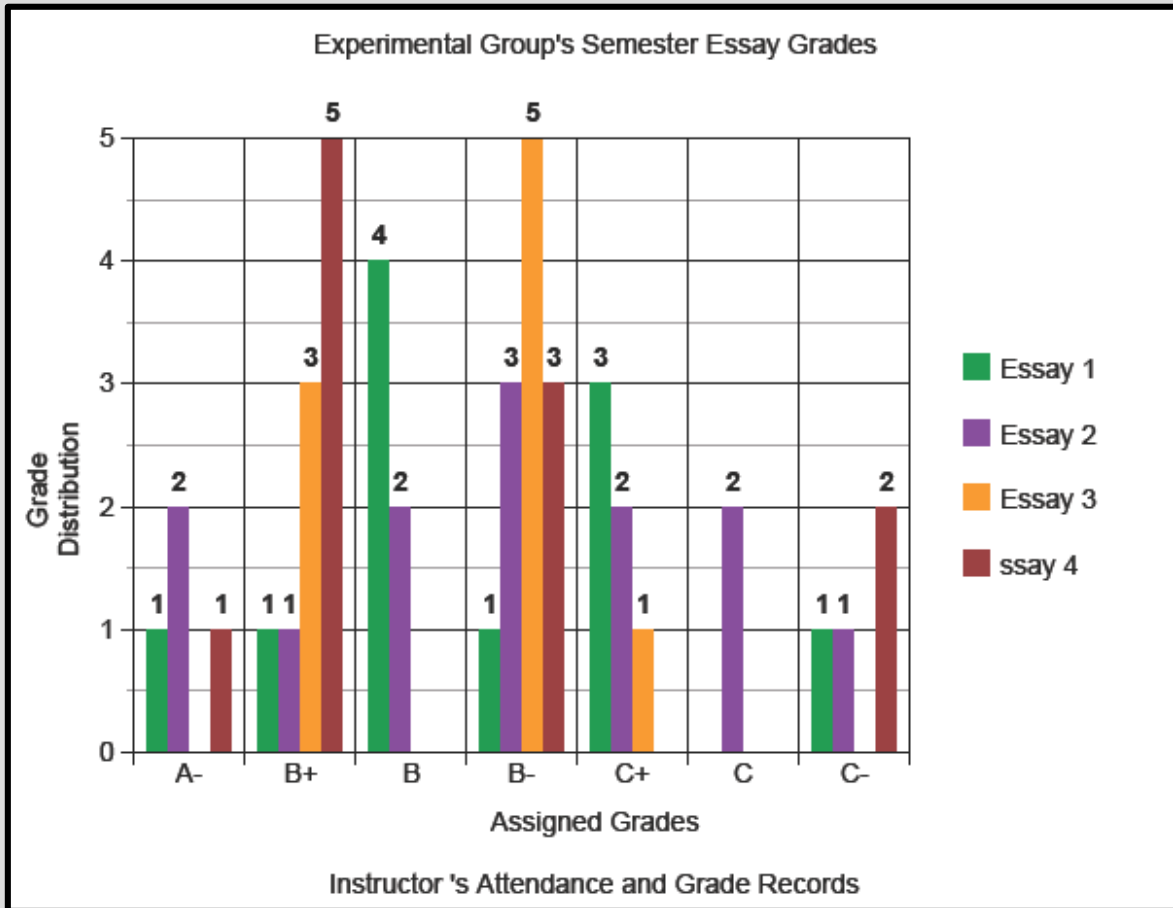
- The workshop participants' essay grades formed a bell curve with a relatively even number of grades at each end of the spectrum.
- Most of the essay grades were in the B range.

GRADES AND TOTAL WORKSHOPS ATTENDED SUMMARY

Experimental Group's Midterm and Final Grade Distribution and Total Workshop Attendance

- The workshop attendance seems to have positively influenced the participants' mid-term and final course grades.

- The workshops offered students opportunities and tools to enhance their writing skills that is reflected in their mid-term and final grades.

- The high rates of workshop participation seems to have assisted students in the experimental group to maintain their mid-term and final grades within the higher ranges.

Midterm and Final Grade Distribution Comparison
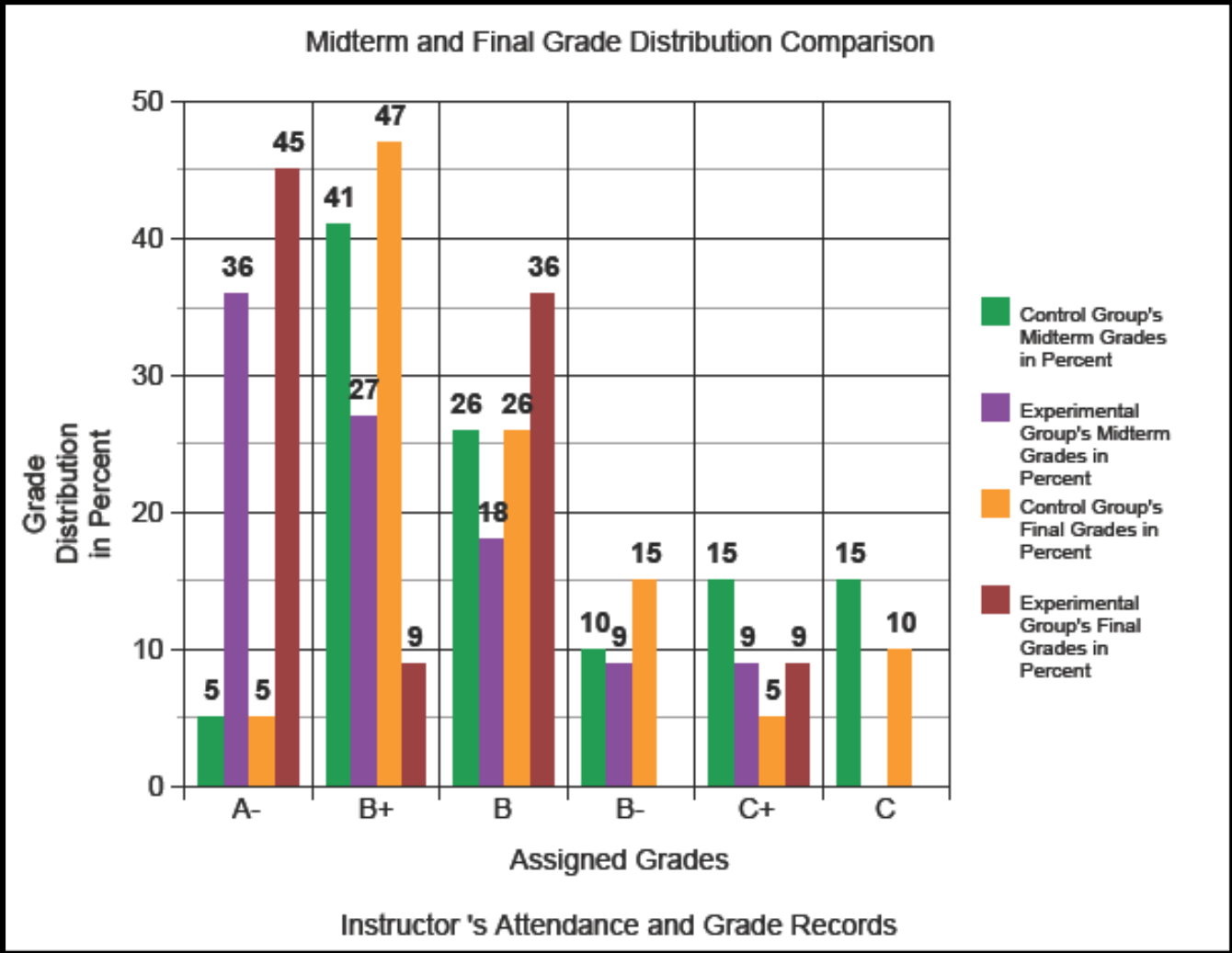
- The experimental group and the control group's midterm and final grades were at comparable percentages for the highest assigned grade – A-.

- The control group's midterm and final grade percentages were higher for the next assigned grade category – B+.

- Overall, the percentages of the assigned grades for both groups were above average and in the A- to the B- range.

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DISCUSSION

ONE RESULT LED TO ANOTHER

Anticipated Result: Increased Instructor Office Hour Attendance

Logical Result: Heightened Faculty-Student Interaction

Associated Results: Improved Writing Skills and Course Grades

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DISCUSSION

- The control group and the experimental groups' goal for the semester were similar.

- Overall, the implementation of the theme-based workshops added to the participants' writing skills and their motivation to become a better writer.

- The anticipated outcome of increased instructor office hour attendance was realized, but the result also led to associated outcomes of increased faculty-student interaction and its related benefits as suggested in the research.

- In some instances, the overall mid-term and final course grades of both groups were similar and within the higher ranges of the assigned grades.

- The scaffolding's influence on the students' attendance to the theme-based workshops was not measured or considered when measuring or discussing the intervention's results.

- The workshops gave the participants a vocabulary to discuss writing in a specific and direct way.

- The workshop format allowed more collaboration between peers and faculty whereas the office hour limited the responses a student could receive.

- While the addition of the theme-based workshop is a positive intervention to increase instructor office hour attendance, the small size of the study may have limited a suitable comparison of the control and the experimental groups.

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS: NEXT TIME

- The intervention of the theme-based workshops was beneficial to the students as well as to the instructor not so much in the initial expected result of increased instructor office hour attendance but more in the increased faculty-student interaction.

- The most effective theme-based workshop were those that assisted the students in revision and getting peer and instructor one-on-one feedback.

- The breadth of the workshops will be more focused on essay writing techniques and revision strategies coupled with more opportunities for collaborative formatted workshops.

- In the next incarnation of the project, the mid-term and final surveys will be similar so the results can be more effectively analyzed.

- The search for a place and time to hold the theme-based workshops must be immediate and convenient and more conducive to a greater number of students.

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