

# Trickle Down Engagement in First-Year Common Reading Programs

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## K-State Book Network

The K-State Book Network (KSBN) is part of K-State's first year experience program, K-State First (KSF). KSF was established to help first year students transition to campus by providing them with the elements necessary to create a solid foundation that will help students be successful in college. These elements are mentoring, small interactive classes, community, and a shared academic experience.

KSBN is designed to provide a common experience to help first year students transition from high school to college, grow academically and socially, and share something with all other first year students. It also sends the message that people in college read books, even ones that are not in their area of study, and that college is fun. The experience of reading a common book gives faculty and staff the opportunity to engage and connect with students inside and outside of the classroom, and allows them to model academic behavior and intellectual discussion to students, particularly those in their first year of college, who may not have experienced it before (Ferguson, 2006; Laufgraben, 2006; Mallard, Lower-Hart, Andersen, Cuevas, & Campbell, 2008; Moser, 2010).

The 2015 common book was "The Other Wes Moore" by Wes Moore. The book tells the story of two boys named Wes Moore. Both grew up in the same area of Baltimore, in a single parent homes, and made similar bad choices, yet one became a decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence.

## Research Objectives

- **Experiences and Engagement:** Evaluate instructors' and students' experiences and engagement in participating in KSBN
- **Trickle Down Engagement:** Examine how students' engagement in KSBN, and their retention for the books' content, were associated with their perceptions of the levels of engagement in KSBN demonstrated by their instructors

## Method Overview

We sampled from various populations to assess experiences and engagement in KSBN as well as retention for the KSBN book content.

**Sample 1 Faculty:** We invited teachers and staff members associated with KSF and KSBN to complete an online survey of their experiences, engagement, and retention.  $N = 36$

**Sample 2 KSF Students:** We invited students enrolled in Fall 2015 KSF classes to complete an online survey of their experiences, engagement, and retention.  $N = 104$

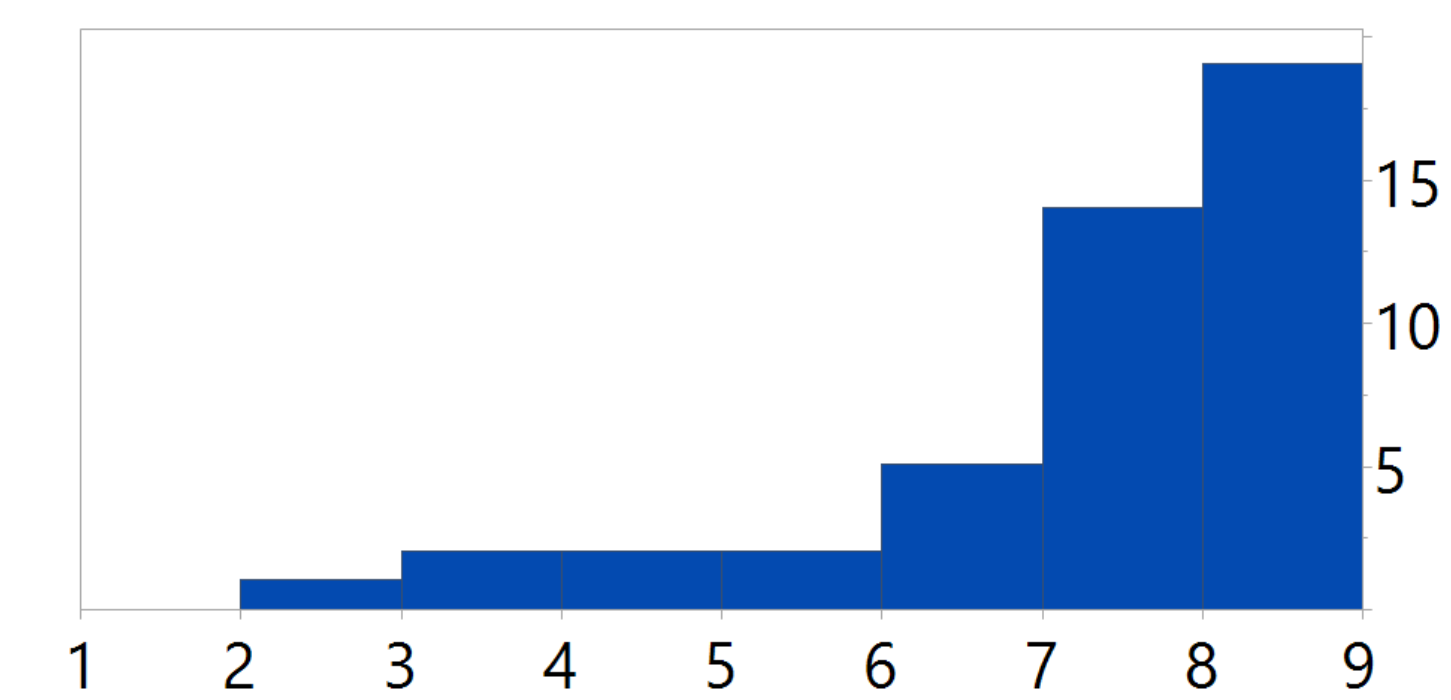
**Sample 3 Gen Psych Students:** We invited students enrolled in Fall 2015 General Psychology classes to complete an online survey of their experiences, engagement, and retention. KSF student  $N = 86$ ; non-KSF student  $N = 104$ .

## Conclusions

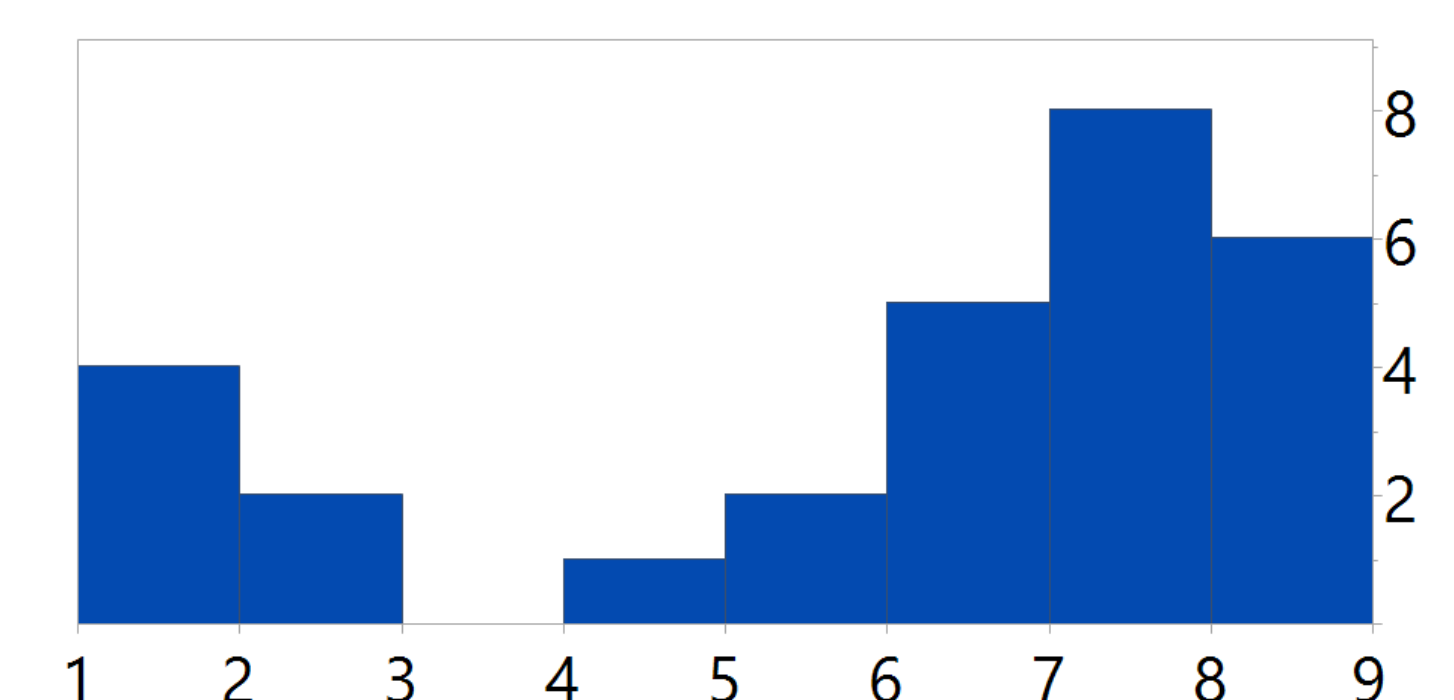
The results of our research demonstrate that participation and experiences in KSBN are generally, but not universally, high and positive. Both instructors and students reported positive experiences with the book. However, instructors reported that the fit of the book to their classes was variable, and this was mirrored by students' reports that the book produced moderate to good classroom experiences and variable degrees of classroom community. The positive experiences of participation in KSBN extended beyond, but was more pronounced for, KSF students. Perhaps most importantly, our results showed support for our trickle down engagement hypotheses. Higher levels of students' perceptions of their teachers' engagement were associated with their own engagement with the book in their classes, which were associated both with their increased experiences of classroom community and retention for the book's content. Our data suggest that infusing common reading programs in first-year experience classes may inspire students' engagement in their learning, and this process may be driven by instructors first engaging in their teaching of the common book.

## Did faculty and staff buy into the common reading program?

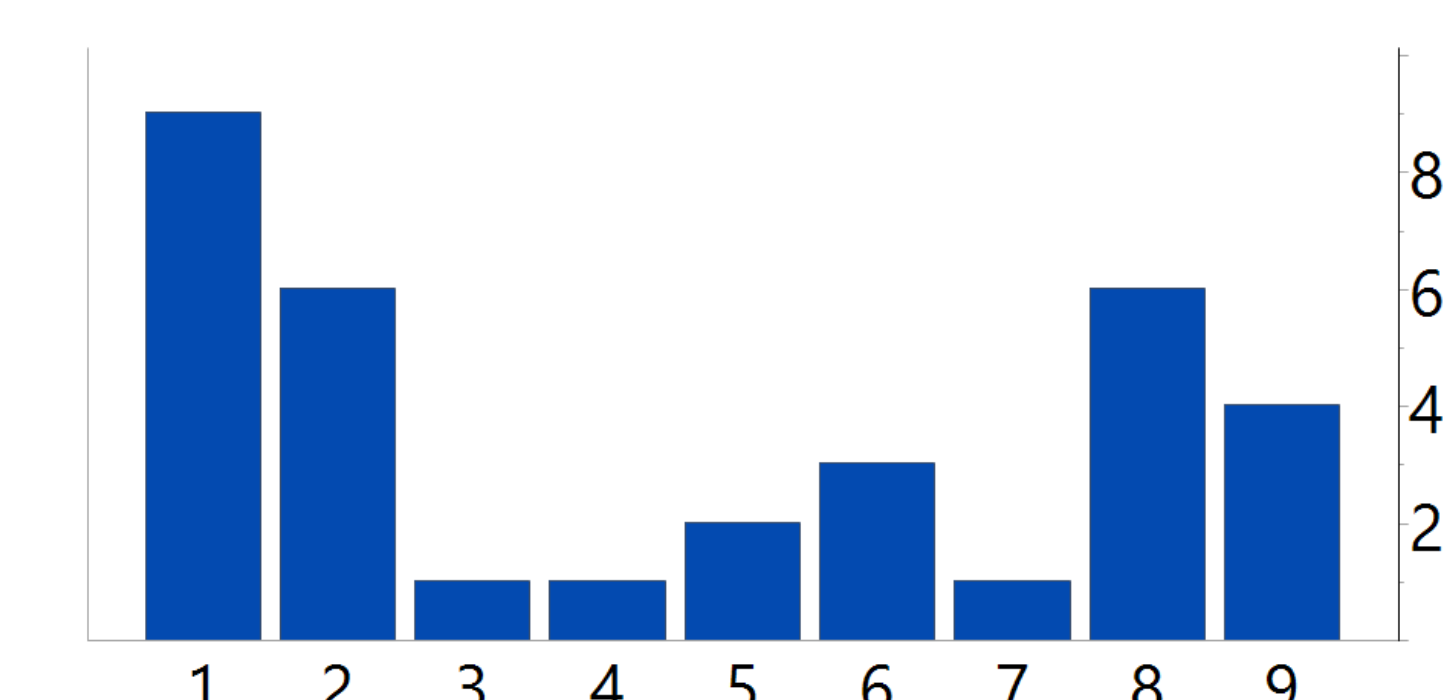
Book Rating



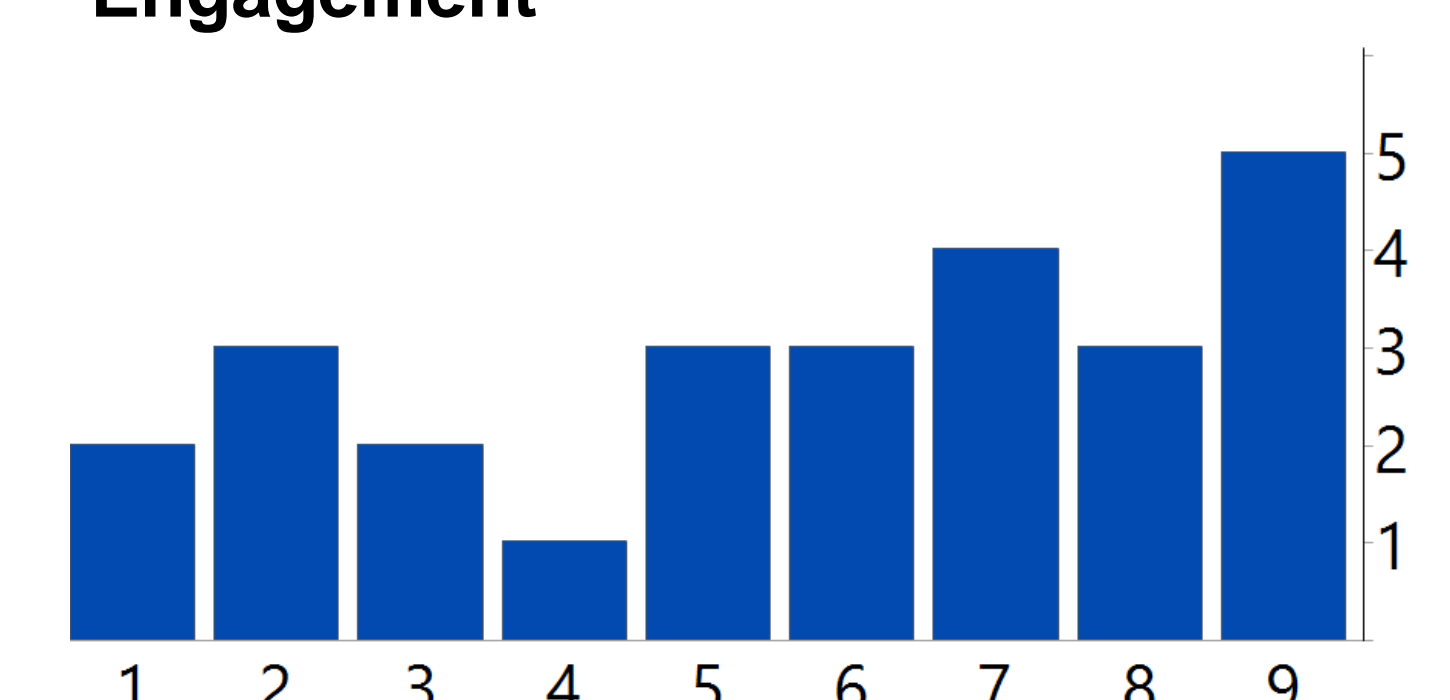
Teachers' Positive Expectations



Book Content Didn't Fit

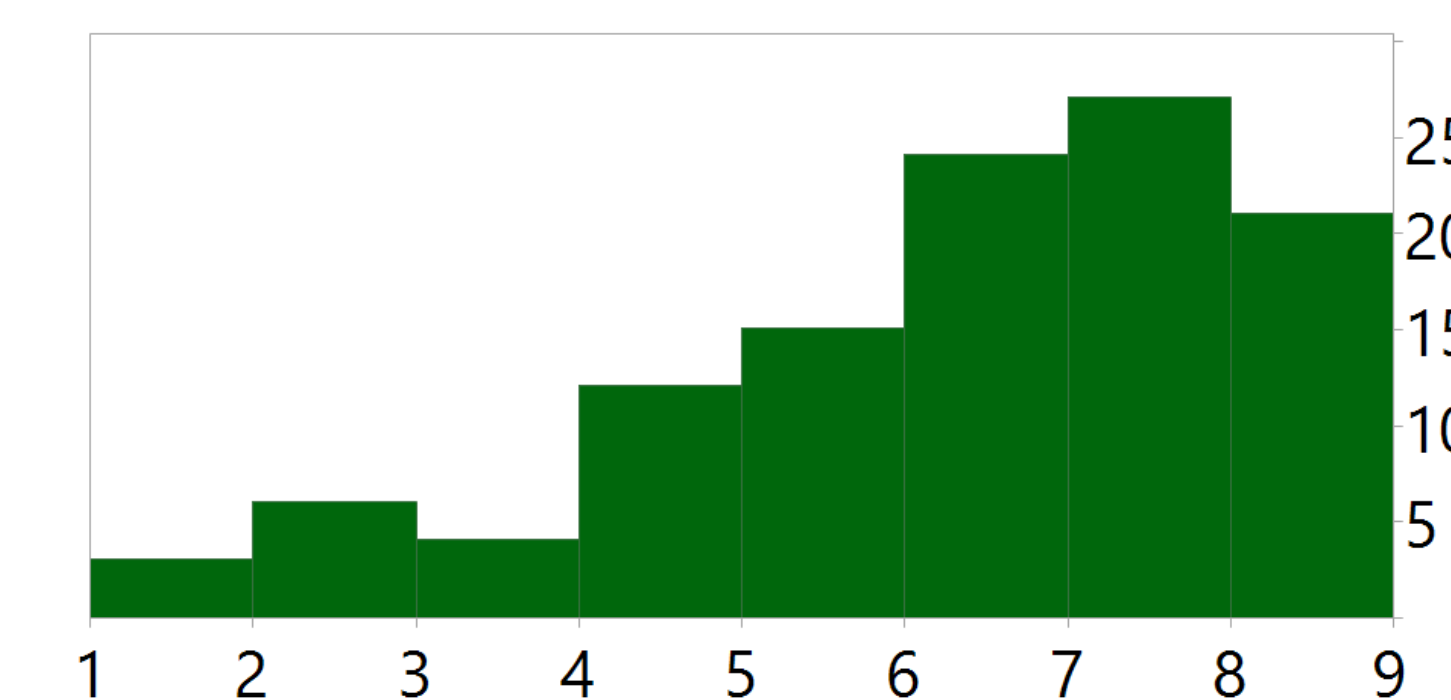


Teachers' Perceptions of Student Engagement

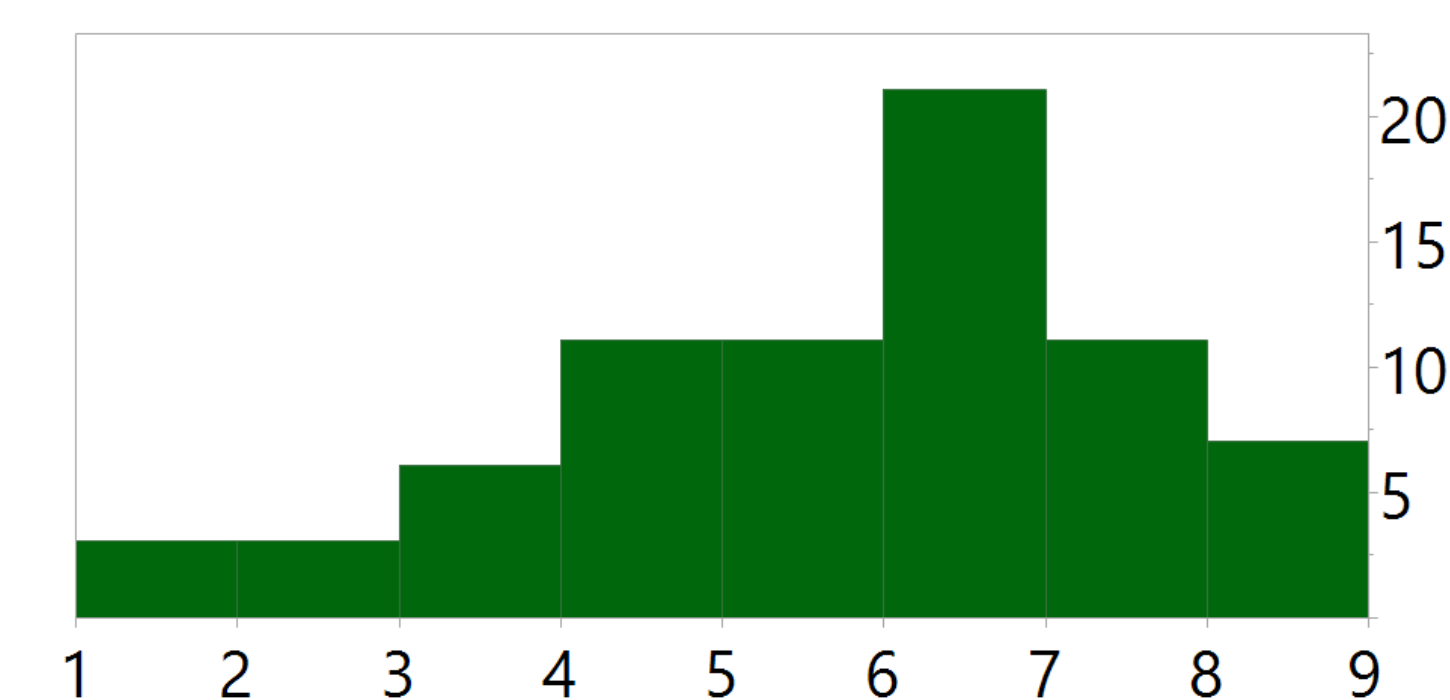


## Did K-State First students have positive KSBN experiences?

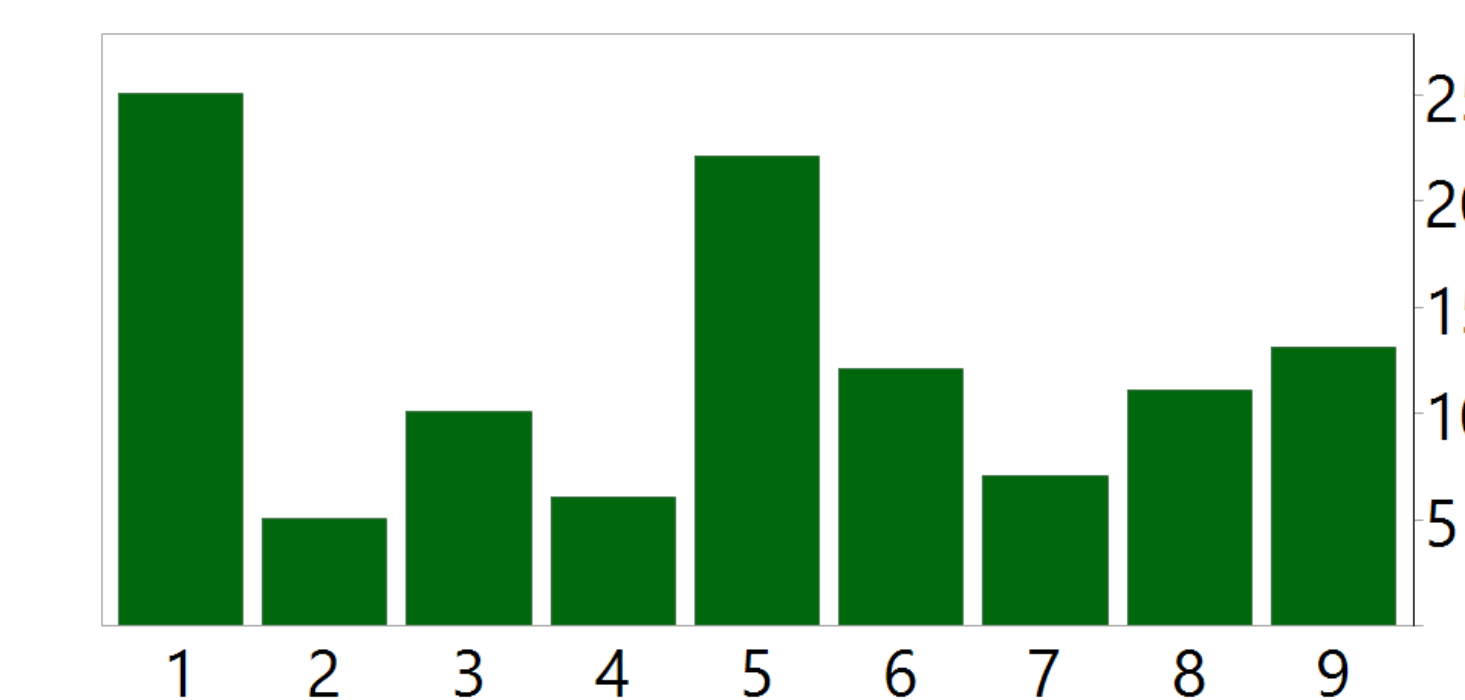
Book Rating



Positive Classroom Experiences



Community



## Key Variables

**Book Rating:** Average of 1 to 9 ratings of whether the book was *thought provoking, relatable, engaging, and valuable* ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

**Teachers' Expectations:** Average of 1 to 9 ratings of teachers' expectations that using the book in class would *engage students, help students learn course content, and create a sense of community* ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Content Fit:** Teachers' perceptions that the *content of the book didn't fit with the content of their classes*.

**Teachers' Perceptions of Student Engagement:** 1 to 9 ratings of teachers' perceptions that using the book *helped students be more engaged with the course material*.

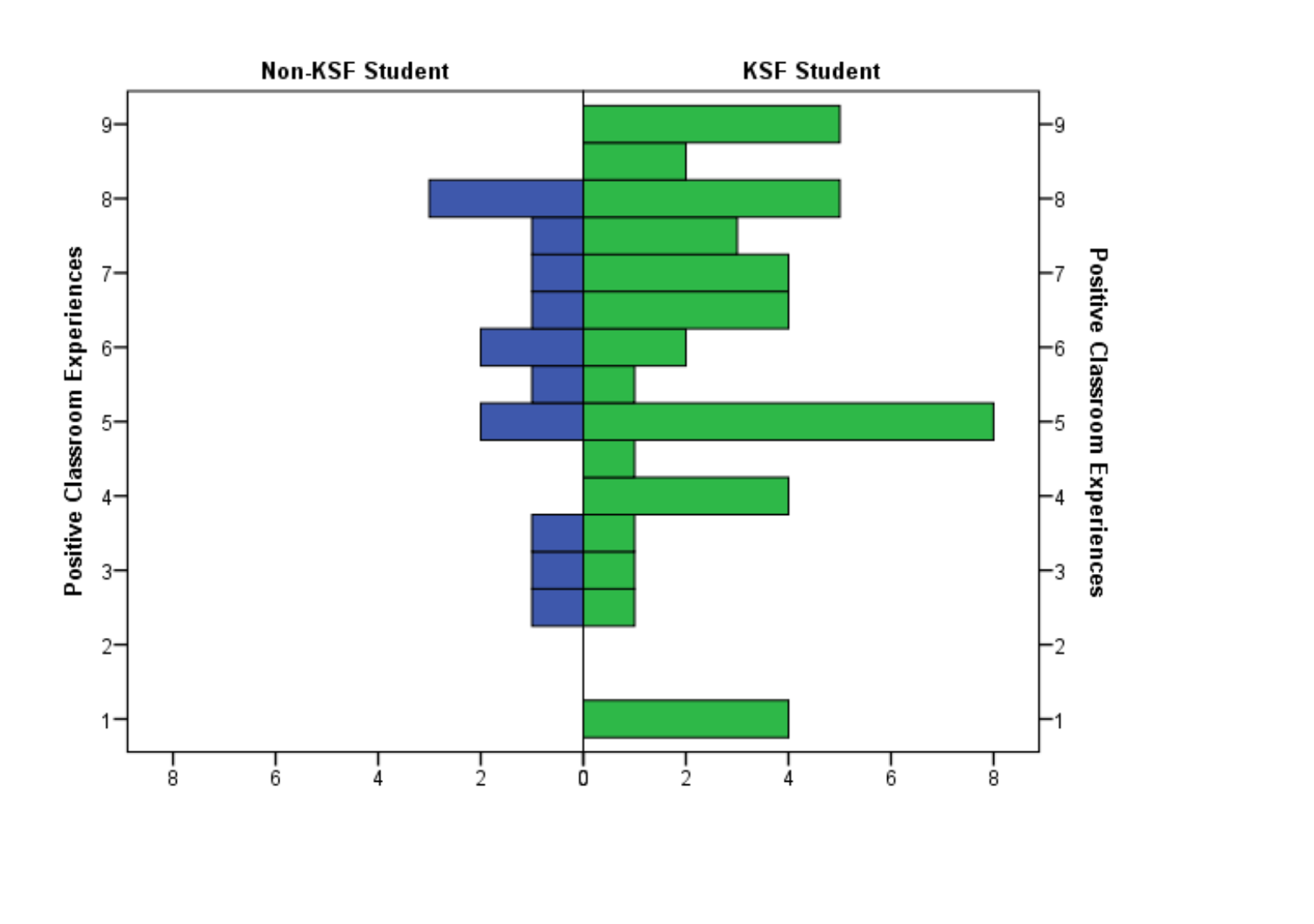
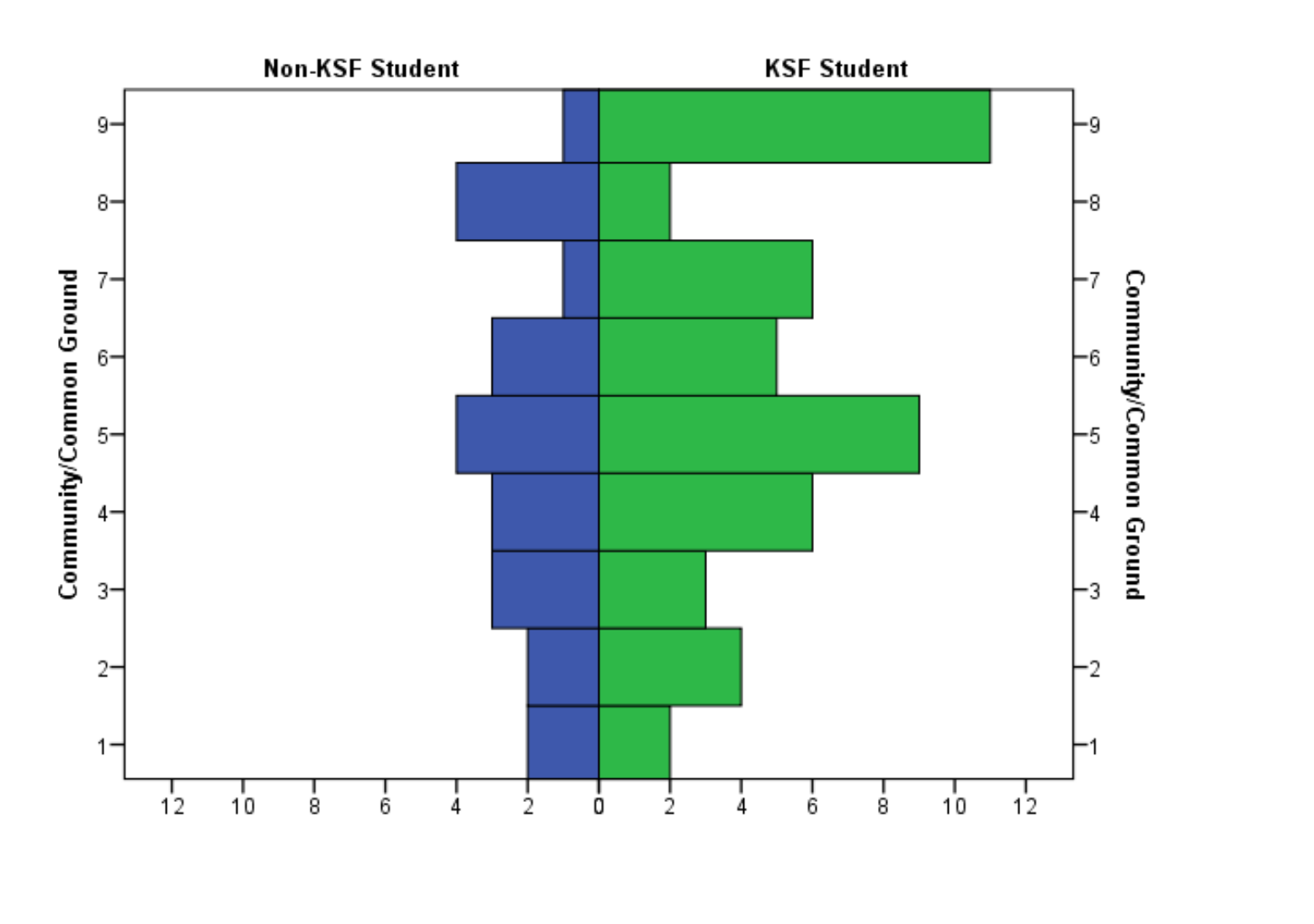
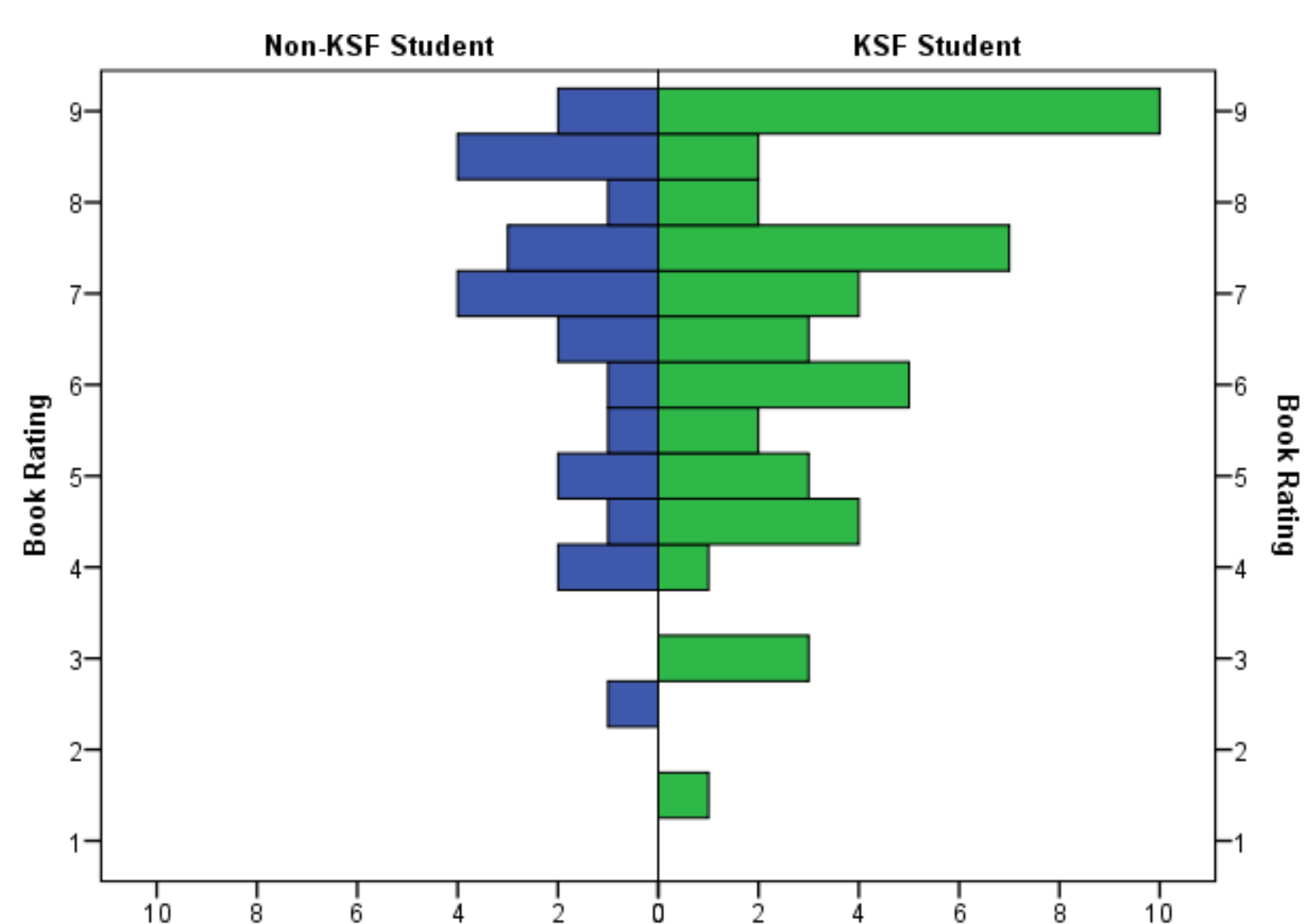
**Classroom Experiences:** Average of 1 to 9 ratings of students' classroom experiences being *enjoyable, engaging, and valuable, and helping to learn the course content* ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

**Community:** 1 to 9 ratings of students' *sense of community and common ground with other students*.

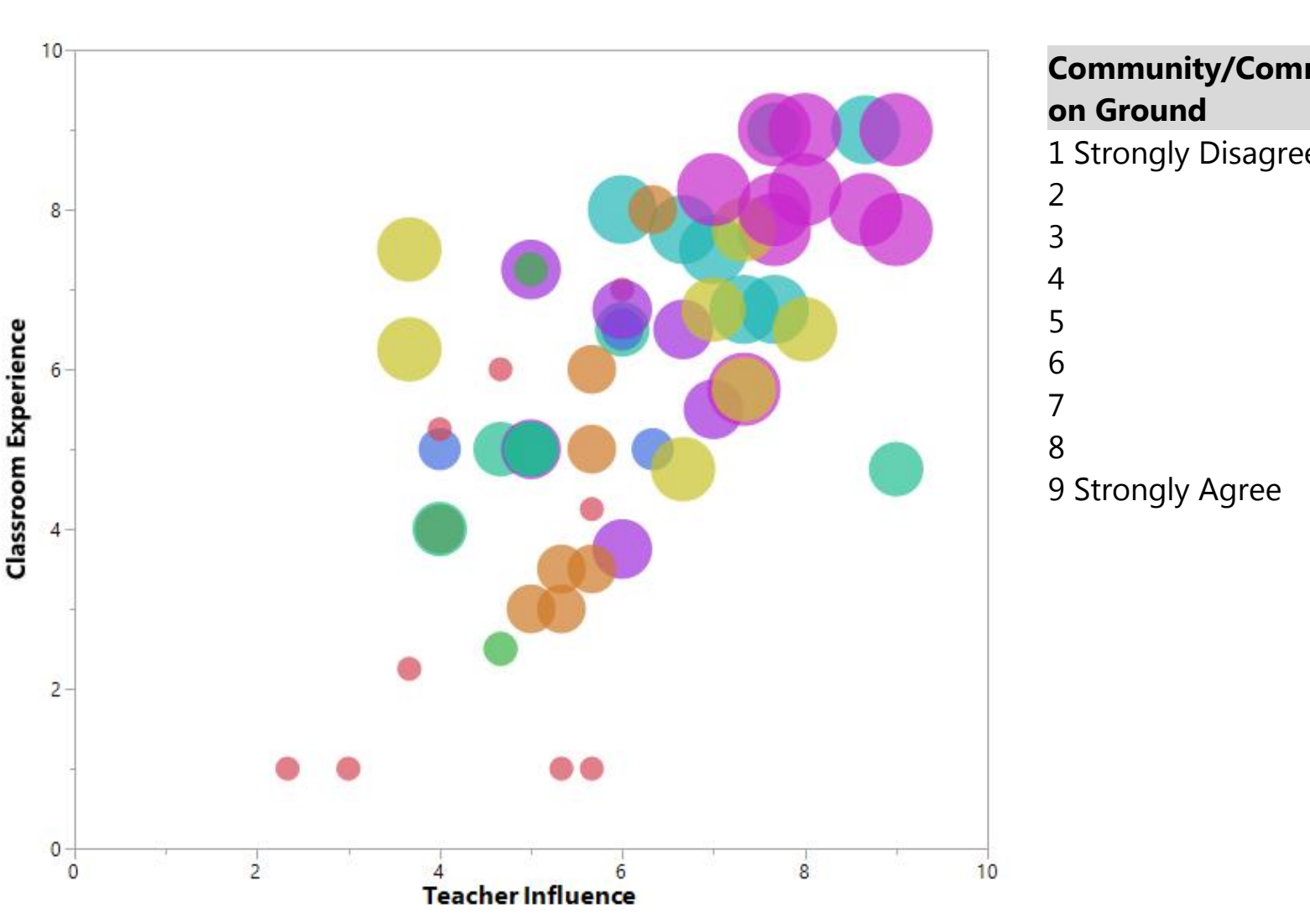
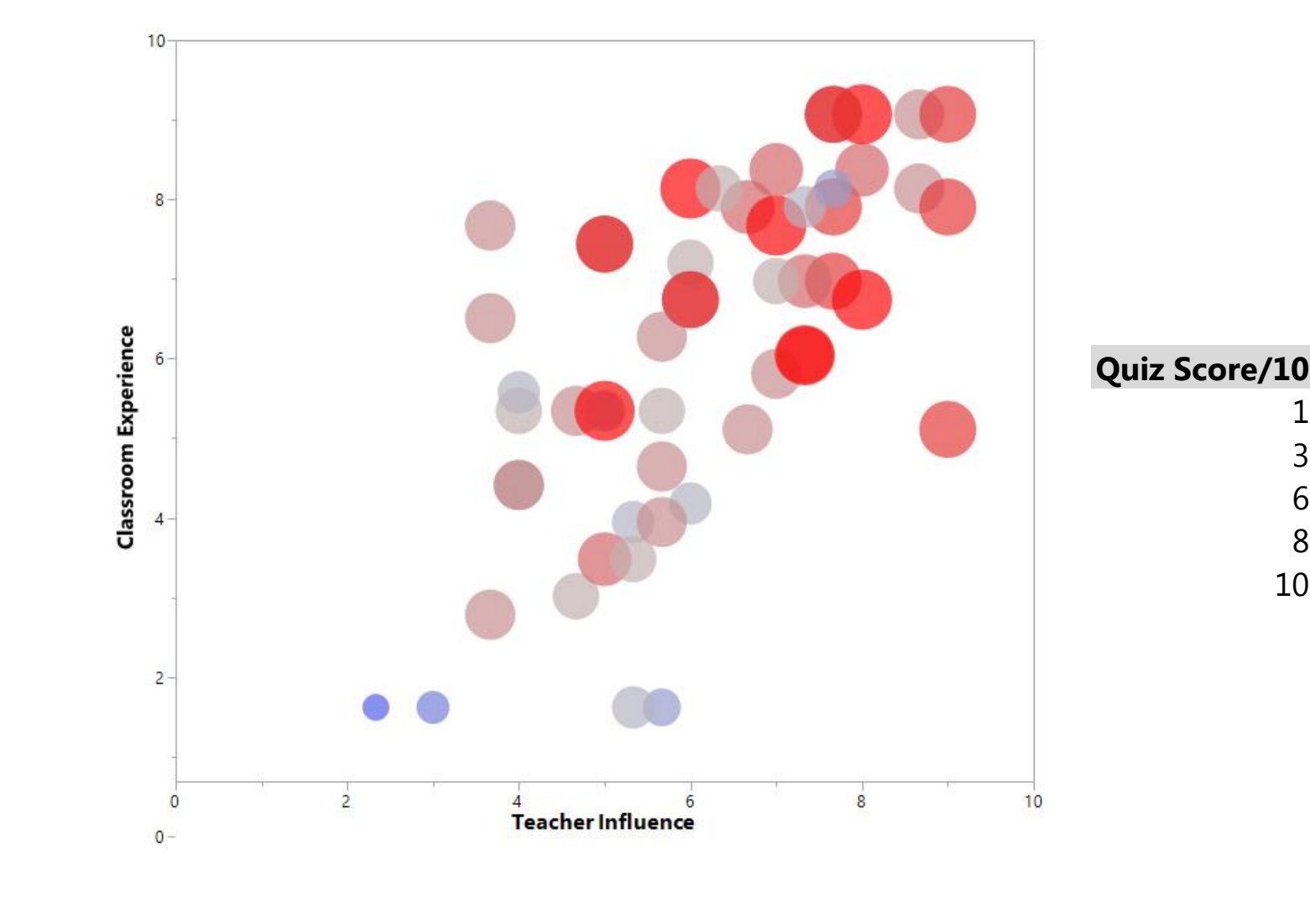
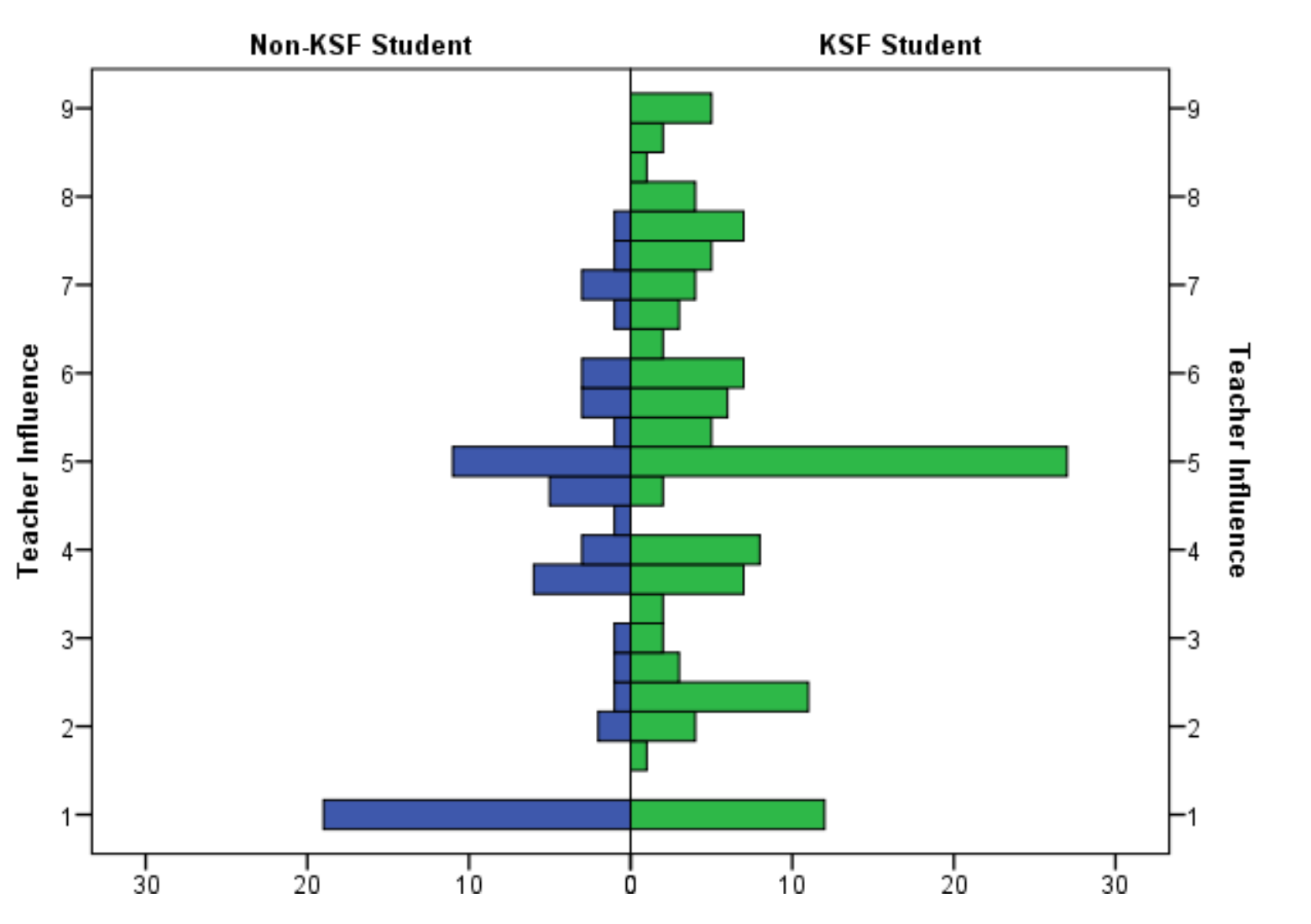
**Teacher Influence:** Average of 1 to 9 ratings of students' perceptions that professors *influenced their perceptions, enjoyed the book, and shared common thoughts with students* ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

**Quiz Score:** Score out of 10 multiple-choice questions about the book content.

## What about Non-K-State First students?



## Were students' perceptions of faculty engagement related to students' engagement?



Correlations	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Teacher Influence	--				
2. Classroom Experience	.65**	--			
3. Book Rating	.65**	.77**	--		
4. Quiz Score	.36**	.57**	.46**	--	
5. Community \	.77**	.72**	.58**	.38**	--