

Put Into Perspective

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Visiting Students' Perception of Course Experience at Harvard College and their Home Institution

Research Paper

SOCIOL 1104: "Higher Education: Institutions, Inequalities, and Controversies"

Instructor: Dr. Manja Klemenčič

Submitted by Simon Handreke, HUID 51375556 | Fall 2018, 12/17/2018

The research paper investigates visiting students' perception of course experience at their home institution – the University of St. Gallen – and their host institution – Harvard College, compared to their peers at the home and host institution respectively. First, individuals were surveyed to state their priorities of different factors of course experience. The analysis of the differences in responses between groups gives strong evidence that students' priorities for the evaluation of course experience differ conditional on institutional exposure. Also, the analysis suggests an acculturation process of exchange students, in which they adapt their priorities according to which they evaluate experiences to the ones of their host peers. Second, individuals were surveyed to state their evaluation of course experience at both institutions. The analysis of the different responses between groups suggests that visiting students' perceptions of course experience is conditional on their exposure to both institutional environments. This gives evidence that exchange students – who were exposed to two institutional environments – are in a unique position to compare institutions, experience quality in a relative and comparative manner, and ultimately adapt their perceptions of their home and host institutions respectively. With respect to both parts of the analysis, the data suggests that the processes of acculturation and relative perception do not follow simple logics but are dependent on the individual experience made with respect to different factors of course experience in different institutional contexts.

I affirm my awareness of the standards of the Harvard College Honor Code.

Simon Handreke, 16/12/2018

1. Introduction and Research Question

“Harvard is an overrated institution.”, said one of the resident tutors I met at a party he was supervising at Mather’s House, during the first weeks of my stay at Harvard. Talking about the stories his advisees shared about their courses and about things that happen to them in the academic environment of Harvard, he was pretty sure that Harvard College (HC) could not keep up with the myth that was sometimes created around it – a myth of higher education that I as visiting student had in my mind already before coming to Harvard and had experienced in the first days after my arrival. I could not understand what he told me. But strangely, this conversation was not the only of its kind during my first weeks at HC as visitor from the University of St. Gallen (HSG). A lot of the students regularly studying at HC perceived their environment differently than I did – applying other logics when talking about their experiences and seeming to witness the exact same circumstances in a different way. At the same time, conversations with other visiting students showed me: I was not the only one feeling that the academic environment at home was framed and was retrospectively “put into perspective” by the experiences we made here. The described observations made me ask myself how visiting students at HC perceive the student experience at both their home and host institution, compared to their peers who have not been exposed to the environment of another higher education institution.

For this research paper, this question is narrowed down in three steps. First, it is important to acknowledge the variety and incomparability of experiences made within a higher education institution. Still, almost every institution shares the characteristic of offering courses, in which students learn and interact in different formats and qualities. Due to this fact, this study focusses on course experience only. Secondly, it only investigates the differences in perception between students of HSG, visiting students from HSG at HC, and regular students at HC: Currently, 16 visiting students from HSG are at HC. Only choosing these two institutions for the study allows for the possibility to identify patterns within a sample large enough, but without having to consider different home environments of visiting students. To ensure comparability of the HSG visiting students – coming from a university focused on Business Administration and Economics – and the courses they take with students from HC, the research paper is thirdly focused on the comparison with HC students majoring in Economics. This leads us to the following research question: ***How do visiting undergraduate students from HSG at HC evaluate course experience at both their home institution – relative to their peers there – and HC – relative to the regular students majoring in Economics?***

The paper is organized as follows: In the context of a literature review, the following chapter localizes the research question within the field of sociology of higher education and derives to hypotheses for the study. The third chapter describes in detail the characteristics of individuals studied, the survey

design, the methods the survey data is analyzed with, and the challenges to the validity of the research design. The fourth chapter performs the described analyses with respect to the research hypotheses. The fifth chapter contains a statement on author positionality, the fifth chapter discusses the results and concludes.

2. Literature Review and Development of Hypotheses

2.1. Localization of the Topic Within Field of Sociology of Higher Education

The research conducted in this paper can be assigned to the 'studies of college impact' as subfield of the sociology of higher education, early defined as stream of study by higher education researcher Clark (1973, pp. 5f.; Andres, 2016, p. 29). The research is explicitly differentiated from the subfield of 'organizational studies of higher education institutions': It is beyond the scope of the paper to compare the objective characteristics of HC and HSG or apply organizational models, they are handled as given in the analysis. It is important to acknowledge nevertheless, that "structural features" or "institutional characteristics" of colleges play an important role in students' interactions, attitudes and behavior (Hurtado, 2007, p. 101).

As comparative international study, this paper is tied to the broad literature on higher education as globalized and internationally interlinked phenomenon. This literature acknowledges the need to study remaining questions "about the extent to which higher education should be appraised as a coherent global phenomenon or a nationally variable one" and the paradox that "quite visible forms of national organizational and cultural distinctiveness [in higher education] remain" (Stevens, Armstrong and Arum, 2008, pp. 139ff.).

At the intersection of 'studies of college impact' and the 'study of higher education as globalized phenomenon' lies a line of inquiry that can be described as 'study of international students'. In his review on the previous research on international students Bista (2016, p. I) – the Journal of International Students' Founder and Editor-in-Chief – points out the "temporary identity" of an international student and points out definitory difficulties concerning the term: "In the context of US higher education, there are many terminologies that classify international students. Some examples are foreign students, non-immigrant students, mobile students, transnational students, inbound/outbound students, guest students, and so on." In this paper, the term 'visiting student' and 'exchange student' will be used. It refers to the subgroup of international students who participate in a short-term "international education exchange", defined as international movement of scholars and students (Harari, 1992, p. 69).

Bista (2016, p. V) also acknowledges the emergence of a broad literature on international students and summarizes: "Previous research studies have focused on international students' academic and social aspects of college experiences, their cultural differences and the adjustment process, college access and success, and academic careers after the completion of degree programs." According to Messer and Wolter (2007, p. 650), most of the studies conducted on exchange students as subgroup of international students focus on the analysis of the ERASMUS program in Europe: The studies aim to give a more comprehensive view on the students, their programs, experiences, and living conditions abroad, their motivations to participate in an international exchange, and their perceived academic progress.

A series of these ERASMUS-related studies were conducted by Maiworm and Teichler and their findings are brought together in a report published by the European Commission (Maiworm and Teichler, 1997). Their findings include that apart from the academic, exchange students in the ERASUMS context participate in a variety of cultural and social activities on campus and in their host country (p. 106). From that, it can be inferred that student experience and college impact during an exchange varies widely across individuals, supporting the idea that the exchange students' experience in courses is the thing most likely lending itself for a comparative study within the scope of this paper.

2.2. Perception and Evaluation of Course Experience in Existing Literature

Existing literature provides a variety of frameworks to assess the experience students make in courses. Most of them have been developed in the context of attempting to understand student course evaluations and instructor ratings.

In his review of previous research, Feldman (1978) identifies that studies have centered around five course characteristics related to "course context" that influence how students rate courses. Namely, 1) class size, 2) course level, 3) the "electivity" of the course, 4) the time of day that the course is held, and 5) the subject of the course are factors which effects on course ratings were studied.

Feldman (1976) collects the body of research focused on students' evaluation of teaching and assessment of instructors' attitudes. He finds that a variety of 19 criteria were studied with respect to their relevance for teaching quality. In later studies (e.g., Feldman, 1984) he added more criteria to this list, related to personality, and perceived outcome or impact of instruction.

Marsh (1987) reviews methodological approaches to and research findings on students' evaluations. On one hand, he calls for a "multidimensional view" on how students perceive their courses and criticizes the lack of this view in universities' evaluation instruments (Marsh, 1987, p. 263). In that

sense, he recognizes the above named 19 categories of Feldman (1976) as “most extensive and, perhaps, the best set of dimensions that are likely to underlie students’ evaluations of effective teaching” (Marsh, 1987, p. 265). On the other hand, he recognizes the validity and importance of research on few “higher-order factors” that the dimensions are related to (p. 267). He highlights his own research related to the “Students’ Evaluations of Educational Quality (SEEQ) instrument” developed by himself (Marsh, 1982), in which evaluation items can be assigned to the factors of 1) learning/value, 2) enthusiasm, 3) organization, 4) group interaction, 5) individual rapport, 6) breadth of coverage, 7) examinations/grading, 8) assignments, and 9) workload/difficulty.

Research in various contexts has identified the importance of student-student interaction as part of learning experience. Johnson (1981, p. 8) refers to student-student interaction as “neglected variable of higher education” and emphasizes: “The appropriate use of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic goal structures is an important instructional strategy allowing teachers to simultaneously promote high achievement, effective socialization, and healthy student development.” Various other research has confirmed that student-student interaction should be acknowledged as crucial part of course experience, for example Tinto’s paper “Classrooms as Communities” (1997) and Samiullah (1995), studying the effect of student-student interaction on the learning in a college physics course.

In the context of this research, the term ‘course experience’ will be used and surveyed in a strong relation to the factors defined in Marsh’s SEEQ instrument, because these factors provide a holistic perspective on course experience rather than being narrowly focused on teaching quality and instructor rating (Marsh, 1987, p. 266). Also, they keep the appropriate balance between detail and clarity within the scope of this paper and enable to incorporate a focus on student-student interaction through the category “group interaction”. The ‘external factors’ having an impact on perception of courses (Feldman, 1978) are explicitly excluded from the concept of course experience, as they are highly dependent on objective institutional factors like curricula, timetables, and major requirements. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that these ‘external factors’ – especially class size – also affect course experience according to the concept the paper applies (Feldman, 1984).

2.3. Hypothesis I: Prioritization of Different Factors of Course Experience and Acculturation

My observations regarding course experience include the impression that it is evaluated differently at HSG and HC. Students at both institutions seem to prioritize different aspects when talking about their experience in courses. For HC students, interactional aspects of course experience seem to play an important role. At HSG, aspects that enable the students to learn for examinations individually

seem to be the most relevant. These observations suggest that standards of evaluation and judgement are part of an institutional environment and are reflected in the priorities and perceptions of students.

This suggestion aligns well with the theory on institutional culture of universities. In her broader work on management of university culture, Sporn (1996, p. 42) recognizes: "Different objectives and standards in teaching, research, and service as well as lack of agreement on guidelines for goal achievement result in an ambiguous decision-making process." This implies that although they are not necessarily the same in all the university's subcultures, the prioritization of factors of course experience should be considered a part of a university's or college's culture.

In their review, Smith and Khawaja (2011, p. 701) state that the psychologist John Berry and various co-authors have defined acculturation as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members". They identify that among the various models of acculturation, none has been "specifically designed to describe the acculturation experience of international students" (p. 702) and call to explore whether these models fit into the literature on them.

Related a) to personal observations, b) the concept of evaluation as part of institutional culture, c) the idea of acculturation of international students to an educational environment, and d) the concept of course experience defined above, it can be asked whether the individual prioritization of different factors of course experience is subject to acculturation in different institutional environments. Therefore, the first hypotheses to be tested in the paper is the following: ***I) Over the three studied groups, the stated priority of different factors along which course experience is evaluated varies conditional on the institutional background. Economics majors at HC prioritize categories of interaction, students from HSG prioritize factors enabling them to learn and prepare for exams in self-study. Visiting students from HSG will adapt to the logic of prioritization of HC students.***

2.4. Hypothesis II: Relative Perception and Evaluation of Course Experience

My observations regarding the evaluation of course experience furthermore entail that it is dependent on the point in time and the context the perceiving individual has been and is currently exposed to. For HSG visiting students, the perception of their course experience seems to have downgraded with the exposure to the HC environment. At the same time, HSG visiting students seem to be very enthusiastic about the experiences they make at HC in comparison to regular students there, who have not yet been exposed to another institutional environment.

In their call for the collection of qualitative data on student experience of ERASMUS students, Klemenčič, Žnidaršič, Vavpetič, and Martinc (2017, p. 926) acknowledge: "During the mobility,

Erasmus students continuously and often seamlessly compare the education practices, learning environments and student life conditions.” The authors claim that exchange students have a “unique position [...] to compare the quality of education practices, learning environments and student life conditions between their home and host institutions.”

Diener and Lucas (2000, pp. 47-52) review theories on subjective well-being, among others, the theory of relative standards, arguing that “objective conditions only affect SWB [subjective well-being] indirectly through comparisons with other possible conditions. According to this view, all judgments are inherently comparative [...] and objective conditions have no absolute meaning.” The authors elaborate further that “discrepancy that entails an upward comparison (when the comparison standard is higher) should generate lower satisfaction, whereas a downward comparison should lead to higher satisfaction” and present empirical evidence on temporal, interpersonal, organizational, and local dimensions of relative judgement standards.

Related a) to personal observations, b) the notion of visiting students constantly comparing their home and host institution, c) the theory of relative standards, and d) the concept of course experience defined above, it can be asked whether visiting students evaluate their course experience conditional on the fact that they have been exposed to two institutional environments. Therefore, the second hypotheses to be tested in the paper is the following: ***II) The evaluation of course experience by HSG visiting students differs from the one of their peers at the home and at the host institution and is conditional on their exposure to both environments. They downgrade their evaluation of course experience at HSG relatively to their peers who stayed and give a higher evaluation to the course experience at HC compared to the regular students.***

3. Description, Explanation, and Discussion of the Data Collection Process and Research Design

3.1. Sampling and Information about Survey Takers

Related to the research question and hypotheses, three groups of subjects were surveyed, whereas the survey and its parts are described further below.¹ The characteristics of the respondents to the survey are compared in Table 1.

	First Group: “Peers at home institution”	Second Group: “Visitors”	Third Group: “Peers at host institution”
Explanation	Regular students from HSG	HC visiting undergraduate students from HSG	Regular students from HC
Size of Group	15	12 / 11 (survey part 1 - 2.1 / survey part 2.2, descriptions of parts below)	6
Major	Business Administration (9) or Economics (6)	Business Administration (11 / 9) or Economics (1 / 2)	Economics (6)
Home Institution	HSG	HSG	HC
Institutional / Exchange Experience	No experience in a higher education institution other than HSG	Currently on international academic exchange at HC	No experience in a higher education institution other than HC (2 with participation in summer study abroad programs)
Year of Studies	Third / Junior (12), Fourth / Senior (2), Fifth or more (1)	Third / Junior (8 / 7), Fourth / Senior (3 / 3), Fifth or more (1 / 1)	Third / Junior (5), Fourth / Senior (1)
Gender	8 males, 7 females	8 / 7 females, 4 / 4 males	1 male, 4 females, 1 other

Table 1: Comparison of Groups of Subjects Surveyed. The numbers in brackets describe how many of the respondents counted in row “Size of Group” have the mentioned characteristics. As the second group had to complete two parts of the survey with time lag (see below), two numbers are provided for each category.

Of the 15 visiting undergraduate students currently studying at HC and coming from HSG except me, 12 answered the first, 11 answered the second part of the survey. To verify or falsify the hypotheses stated above, it is crucial to put the perceptions of them into context with the perceptions of the first and third group. Consequentially, the first and third group of subjects share experience of minimum two years in higher education, whereas the first group made them at the visiting students’ home institution HSG, and the third made them at HC – the institution the second group now experiences as visiting students. Both groups were not exposed to another institutional environment than their initial one yet, except for two of the individuals from HC: They participated in summer study abroad programs, which are not understood as ‘international education exchanges’ in the context of this paper. Both the first and the third group share similar fields of study with the second group, which allows the assumption of at least some similarities and comparability in curricula, formats of studying, and individual attitudes.

¹ The survey dataset is available from the author on request.

Survey participants of the first group were recruited by addressing them personally or through a snowball system, in which especially one survey taker at HSG approached multiple other students. Survey participants of the second group were all addressed personally. Possible survey takers belonging to the third group were addresses personally and through an email list, whereas it is unclear through which of the channels the actual survey takers were recruited.

The approach chosen can be described as critical case sampling, whereas it was the goal to have most of the second groups' population as sample and random samples from the whole population the first and third group belong to. The three groups of subjects are differentiated based on the theories and hypotheses outlined above. The goal of that is to have a previously defined variation between the three groups with respect to the categories of institutional background and exposure, and a previously defined homogeneity with respect to the categories of major and amount of experience in the higher education environment. This limits the generalizability of the results but allows to maximize explanatory power even if only a small number of people is surveyed

3.2. Design of Survey and Empirical Analysis

A summary of the different survey parts the subjects completed, and their relation to the research hypotheses can be found in Table 2. The survey questions can be found in Annex I.

Survey Part	Survey Method	First Group	Second Group	Third Group	Relation to Research Hypotheses
part 1: survey on prioritization of different factors of course experience	ranking of factors and optional text input	✓	✓	✓	hypothesis I
part 2.1: survey on evaluation of course experience at initial institution	evaluation of Likert items and optional text input	✓ (HSG)	✓ (HSG)	✓ (HC)	hypothesis II
part 2.2: survey on evaluation of course experience at host exchange institution	evaluation of Likert items and optional text input	✗	✓ (HC)	✗	
part 3: general information on survey takers	multiple choice: gender, year of studies, major	✓	✓	✓	assurance that survey takers belong to the desired group, generation of control variables

Table 2: Survey Parts and Their Relevance for Study. Ticks and crosses indicate whether the respective survey parts were answered by the group. Institution names in brackets indicate with respect to which institution the survey part was completed.

Part 1 asked for a ranking of the above defined factors of course experience. In the following chapter, the individuals' rankings are evaluated through boxplots by group. This allows for the analysis and comparable graphical representations of median and mean rankings, as well as variations of rankings within each group. In addition to the ranking, respondents were invited to reflect on prioritization of different factors of course experience prior to the ranking. In the next chapter, the answers provided in short texts are content-coded along the defined nine factors of course experience and analyzed in relation to the quantitative insights provided.

Part 2 of the survey consisted of the evaluation of the different factors of course experience in an institutional environment. The method of surveying the evaluation of the factors followed on one hand the common methods for aggregated rating scales in educational contexts (Harpe, 2015), and on the other hand Marsh's (1987) approach, who also assigned multiple survey items to the nine factors he defined: The factors of course experience were rated on a Likert scale, which is constituted by taking the arithmetic mean of the answers to three Likert items for each factor. To ensure that the evaluation of specific factors of course experience was not influenced by the order of survey items, the sequence of rated factors and of rated items within the factors was randomized for each survey taker. To ensure that the answers were related to the specific institutional environment in question, the Likert items were individualized to contain the name of the respective institution. In the following chapter, the evaluations by institution and by group are again analyzed through boxplots, because they provide the advantages mentioned above. Like in part 1 of the survey, respondents were invited to provide written reflections prior to their evaluation. The analysis following in the next chapter categorizes them as being overall positive, neutral, or negative and identifies the most important patterns appearing in the texts.

The second group of subjects – the “visitors” – had to complete part 2 (and consequentially also part 3) of the survey twice, to gather information about their course experience at both HSG and HC. To ensure that the rating decisions are taken independently from each other, survey part 2.2. was sent out to the subjects with a time lag of approximately one week.

3.3. Challenges to the Survey and Research Design

The research design's validity can be questioned related to four aspects. First, the possibility of confirmation bias of the visiting undergraduate students. Nickerson (1998, p. 175) describes confirmation bias as “one-sided case-building process” referring to “unwitting selectivity in the acquisition and use of evidence”, in which “one selectively gathers, or gives undue weight to, evidence that supports one's position while neglecting to gather, or discounting, evidence that would tell against it.” If visiting students come to HC with certain expectations about the environment, they might unconsciously assign special weight to experiences confirming these. Also, they might unwittingly shape their everyday experience to confirm their expectations, for example by choosing specific courses.

The second challenge to the research design lies in the possibility of selectivity in unobservable individual characteristics relevant for the study, regarding the sample of HSG visiting students coming to HC. These characteristics include for example being especially open to processes of acculturation, generally evaluating things more positively, or over proportionally adapting

perceptions retrospectively. The comparison of the visiting students to their peers at home partly relies on the assumption that these criteria vary randomly among them all, making their visit a 'natural experiment'. This assumption does not hold anymore, if people with some of the named characteristics over proportionally choose to apply or get accepted to Harvard.

Third, the research design is challenged by the first part of the survey only being able to ask for stated preferences, being unable to reveal the true ones. In the context of the study, this could be a problem in two ways: On one hand, people might wittingly not state true preferences, for example because they are influenced by societal norms dictating what makes a valuable course experience. The fact that the survey is anonymous mitigates that partly. On the other hand, studied subjects might unwittingly state preferences that do not overlap with their true ones, because the ranking is also shaped by institutional experience: For example, if students did not experience criteria being staying unfulfilled in some cases, they might underestimate their true priority for them. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is avoided by studying subjects with over two years of experience in the higher education environment. This makes it likely that the taken courses fulfilled the factors to different extents, and accurate priorities could be developed by experiencing these differences.

Fourth, the research design is challenged by the second part of the survey generalizing course experience on the institutional level. Asking the survey respondents to rate the variety of their course experiences in a whole institution on one scale might distort the results, as it requires some form of 'internal aggregating and averaging'. Still, generalizing on this level is likely to produce the most accurate results. On one hand, because it would not make sense to ask individuals to rate on the level of a shorter time interval: Differences in the study programs' and individuals' planning of compulsory parts in curricula cause course experience to vary strongly by semester dependent on the individuals major and course choice. On the other hand, because it is not feasible to focus on the rating of specific courses: The HSG visiting students' course choices varies substantially among the visiting students.

Lastly, the small sample challenges the validity of results. Especially for the group of peers at the host institutions, it was difficult to collect responses and high efforts resulted in a total number of six people that answered the survey. This small sample raises challenges with respect to the quantitative handling and interpretation of the data. In summary, the named four challenges to the research design must be considered in the process of analyzing and interpreting the results of the survey.

4. Analysis: Conditionality of Evaluation of Course Experience on Institutional Exposure?

4.1. Hypothesis I: Stated Priorities on Factors of Course Experience

Figure 1 shows the ranking outcomes for the nine defined factors of course experience in boxplots by group. While the bold line in each boxplot indicates the median rank, the number below that bold line describes the mean. The number above describes the sample size for the boxplot.

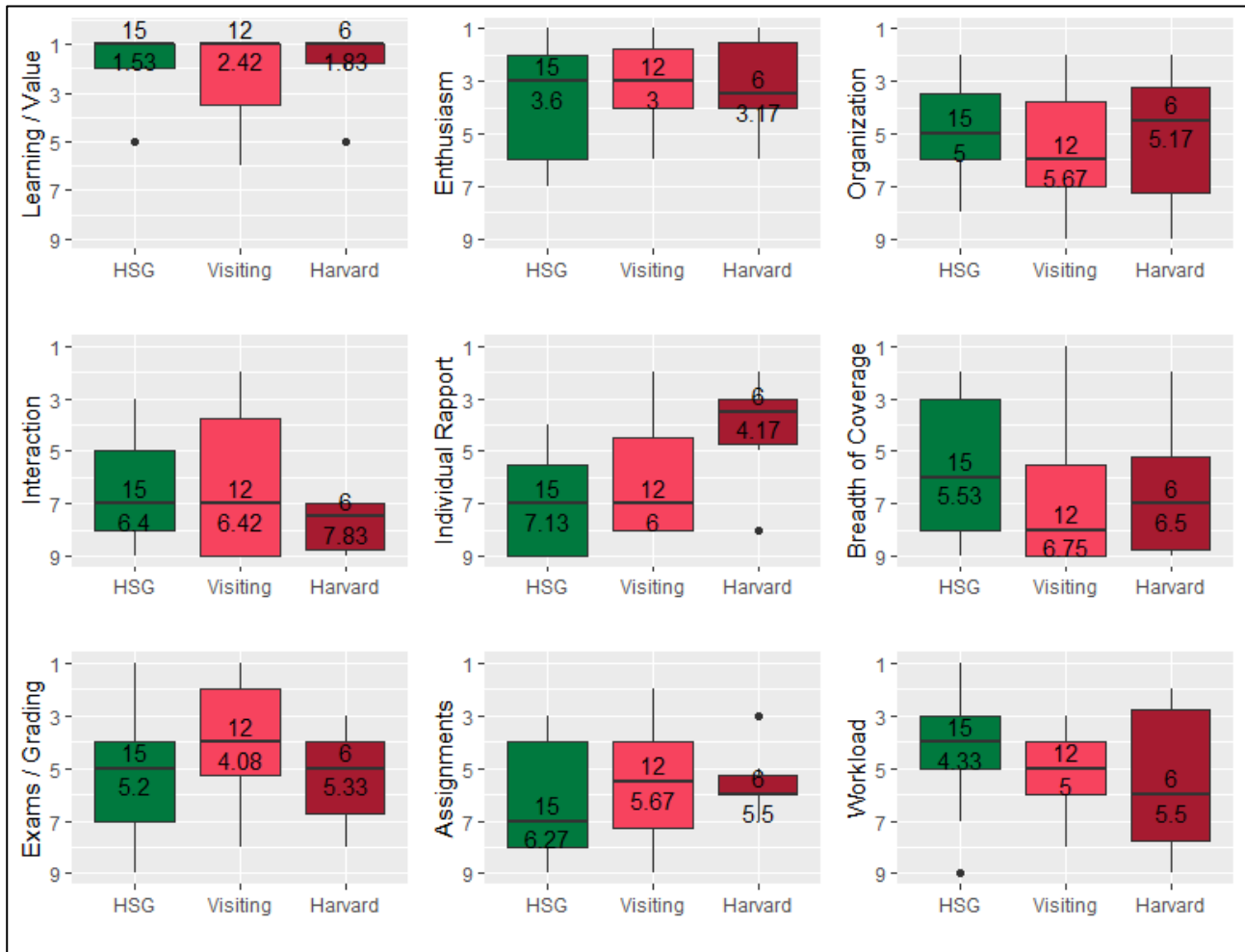


Figure 1: Boxplots of Ranking of Different Factors of Course Experience by Group. The nine factors were ranked on a mutually exclusive scale from 1 (high) to 9 (low). In each boxplot, the number above the indication of the median describes the sample size for the boxplot, the number below describes the mean. A description of each factor was provided to the survey takers.

The partly wide spans of the second and third quartile and the boxplots in total illustrate the high variety of rankings within the same group: There does not seem to be a stable ranking of factors that all people belonging to one group share. Still, general trends can be observed regarding more important (e.g. “Learning / Value”) and less important (e.g. “Interaction”) factors over all groups. The partly large differences of the rankings between groups provide evidence for the notion that the ranking varies conditional on the institutional experience. Differently than expected, HC Economics majors do not generally seem to prioritize factors related to interactive learning: Rather, they highly prioritize interaction with professors and teaching staff and seem to prioritize less the interaction with their peers – indicated by the relatively high priority assigned to “Individual Rapport” and the lowest

mean ranking assigned to “Interaction” by the third group. Also, regular HSG students do not state significantly higher priorities to factors contributing to the ability to learn and prepare for exams in self-study: They only assign slightly more importance to the factor “Organization” on average. What stands out is the higher priority they give appropriate effort (“Workload”) and a variety of perspectives covered in the course (“Breadth of Coverage”).

Strikingly – except for the factor “Exams / Grading” – the visiting students’ mean ranking compared to the mean ranking of their peers at home is always shifted in the direction of the mean ranking of HC students or even above in absolute terms, for example: The first groups’ mean ranking for “Assignments” is low with 6.27, the third groups’ is higher with 5.5, and the visiting students’ lies in between them both with 5.67. For the factor “Breadth of Coverage”, the first groups’ mean ranking is higher with 5.53, the third groups’ is lower with 6.5, while the visiting students’ mean ranking is even lower with 6.75. This contributes to the notion that the visiting students’ priorities seem to adapt or even over proportionally adapt to the ones of HC students, eventually also contributing to the notion of an acculturation process. The fact that the factor “Exams / Grading” is an exception to that can be explained by characteristics the sample of visiting students might possess: The exposure to the HC environment is arguably a challenge for exchange students. The second groups’ individuals’ active decision to be exposed to this environment could indicate a more competitive character, which eventually also explains the priority assigned to ‘fairness in competition and challenge’, corresponding to the factor “Exams / Grading”.

Figure 3 and Figure 4 in Annex II and Annex III provide graphical representations similar to the one in Figure 1, but for each of the three groups differentiated by gender and year of studies. The ranking by group seems to be similar even if it is differentiated by male and female respondents, and third and fourth year students respectively. Still, with respect to some factors, differences in the rankings can be observed by gender and years of study, even if survey takers belong to the same of the three groups. This can be due to actual variation in rankings by gender and year of studies or due to random variation between individuals. Overall, these differences cannot be reliably interpreted, as the sample size per boxplot gets even smaller through further differentiation by demographic criteria.

Table 1 shows the analysis of the qualitative input texts provided by the survey takers. Text inputs were provided as answer to the question: “When you think about your experience in courses, what is especially important, what is less important to make you perceive it as a good or bad course?” It is important to interpret the provided percentages in the light of the substantially higher average number of factors mentioned in the texts of the visiting students.

	Number of qualitative inputs	Mean number of factors contained	Learning / Value	Enthusiasm	Organization	Interaction	Individual Rapport	Breadth of Coverage	Exams / Grading	Assignments	Workload
First Group	11 of 15	2.82	100,0%	63,6%	27,3%	9,1%	0,0%	9,1%	45,5%	9,1%	18,2%
Second Group	10 of 12	3.20	60,0%	80,0%	30,0%	70,0%	20,0%	0,0%	10,0%	30,0%	20,0%
Third Group	4 of 6	2.75	75,0%	25,0%	0,0%	25,0%	25,0%	50,0%	0,0%	50,0%	25,0%

Table 3: Analysis of Qualitative Input on Priorities of Different Factors of Course Experience. The first two columns give general information on the qualitative inputs provided by group. The following columns provide the percentage of qualitative inputs by group that included an explicit or implicit mentioning of the factor. The colors mark the group in which the factor was mentioned relatively often (red), rarely (green) or in between (yellow). The qualitative input was demanded before making respondents familiar with the nine factors through the ranking.

The overall trends regarding more important and less important categories are similar to the ones observed in the ranking, except for some outliers: For example, visiting students over proportionally mentioned criteria related to the factor “Interaction”, but did not rank it substantially different to their peers at HSG or at HC. In contrary, the third group does not over proportionally mention the factor “Individual Rapport” but ranks it substantially higher than the first and the second group. These differences can be explained by past experience: If the experience related to some factors was unsatisfactory in some of the taken courses, these factors will be mentioned over proportionally, even if they do not play a role as important in the personal overall experience (e.g. “Interaction” for the visiting students). In contrary, if the experience related to one factor was generally positive in past courses, the survey taker might not mention the factor in the text but get aware of its importance when provided with the nine factors (e.g. “Individual Rapport” for third group). In summary, the big differences in the frequency of factor mentions expressed in the percentages again provide evidence that priorities regarding course experience vary conditional on the institutional experience.

The above-mentioned shift of priorities observed in the mean rankings by group in the boxplots is in this context represented by a) the relative frequency of factor mentions of the second group lying in between the relative frequency of the first and third group (= second group has yellow coding), or b) the relative frequency of factor mentions of the second group being shifted over proportionally in the direction of HC students relative frequency (= second group can have green or red coding, third one has yellow one). This is the case for six of the nine factors, which provides mixed evidence regarding a possible acculturation process. Nevertheless, this interpretation should be made cautiously, as only four people of the third group provided text inputs and the text inputs were provided before respondents were made familiar with the different factors.

What stands out is the higher average number of factors mentioned in texts of visiting students. While permanent HSG and HC students mentioned about 2.8 factors in their qualitative input, visiting students mentioned 3.2. This provides evidence for another kind of acculturation, which cannot be

studied through a mutually exclusive ranking: Rather than discarding some priorities in a process of adapting to the prioritization logic of HC students, visiting students broaden the scope of their priorities. They don't ignore the standards of evaluation and judgement in the institutional culture at home when being exposed to HC but incorporate new standards of evaluation without neglecting the old ones. Overall, their way of perceiving and evaluating courses gains in dimensionality and their set of priorities is larger.

4.2. Evaluation of Course Experience by Institution

Figure 2 pictures the evaluations of the nine factors of course experience in boxplots by group.

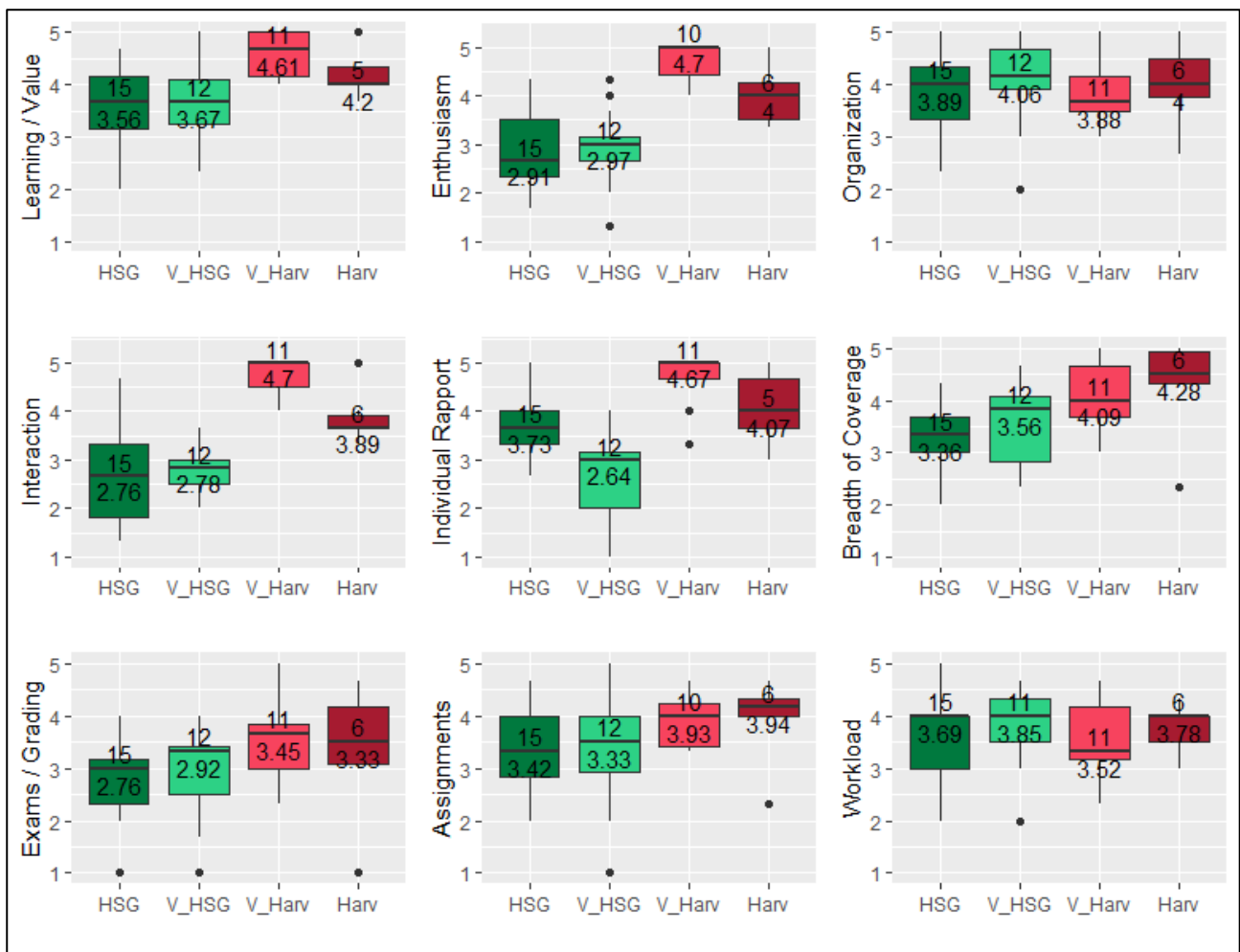


Figure 2: Boxplots of Evaluation of Course Experience by Group. "HSG" stands for the first, "V" the second, and "Harv" the third of the groups described above, the additions "_HSG" and "_Harv" indicate which institution's evaluation of visiting students is pictured in the boxplot above. The ratings were obtained through three-item Likert scales. Each item providing a positive statement was rated on a scale from "strongly disagree" (= 1) to "strongly agree" (= 5). Everyone's rating per factor was obtained by averaging the answers to the three items belonging to that factor. In each boxplot, the number above the indication of the median describes the sample size for the boxplot, the number below describes the mean.

The lower spans of the second and third quartile – compared to the spans observed for the rankings in the last chapter – show that the evaluation of experiences seems to be more stable within each group. Also, it can be observed that there are large differences between the visiting students' evaluation of course experience at HSG compared to their peers at home, and large differences

between their evaluation of course experience at HC compared to their host universities’ peers. This supports the hypothesis that the HSG visiting students’ perception is conditional on their exposure to both environments.

The differences observed over the four boxplots per factor can be grouped into four patterns. These patterns are described in Table 4. Also, a possible explanation for each pattern is provided, related to the experience of visiting students in both institutional environments.

	Pattern 1: “Overenthusiasm”	Pattern 2: “Home, Sweet Home”	Pattern 3: “Valuing the New”	Pattern 4: “Put Into Perspective”
Applicable to the factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning / Value • Enthusiasm • Interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization • Workload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Rapport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breadth of Coverage • Assignments • Exams / Grading
Description	Visiting students evaluate course experience at HSG similar to their peers there. They evaluate course experience at HC way better than their peers there. In absolute terms, the HC peers’ evaluation is higher than the HSG peers’ evaluation.	Visiting students evaluate course experience at HSG slightly better than their peers there. They evaluate course experience at HC slightly worse than their peers there. There are no large absolute gaps between the evaluation of HC peers and HSG peers.	Visiting students evaluate course experience at HSG substantially worse than their peers there. They evaluate course experience at HC substantially better than their peers there. There are no large absolute gaps between the evaluation of HC peers and HSG peers.	There is a fairly large absolute gap between the evaluation of HSG peers and HC peers, with the HC peers evaluating their course experience better. Visiting students close this gap by evaluating the HSG course experience slightly better and the HC course experience slightly worse than the respective peers.
Possible explanation, considering the perception of course characteristics related to above-mentioned factors	When being exposed to positive course characteristics at HC, visiting students value them. Still, they do not feel that these characteristics were fully absent at HSG, but value a stronger emphasis on them at HC compared to HSG. Peers at HSG and at HC lack the possibility to compare to a different institution, but still have a feeling for the relative weakness of HSG and relative strength of HC.	Visiting students are exposed to course characteristics at HC that do not largely differ from the characteristics at HSG. Still, they value slightly more the characteristics at home, either because they are used to them or they are a bit better. Because there are no large absolute differences and they lack the possibility to compare to another institution, peers at HSG and HC have a similar absolute evaluation.	When being exposed to positive course characteristics at HC, visiting students value them. In retrospective, they feel the absence of them at HSG and thus substantially downgrade their course experience there. Because they lack the possibility to compare to another institution, peers at HSG do not feel the absence of these characteristics and peers at HC do not value their presence as high.	HC peers assume a relative strength of HC. HSG peers assume a relative weakness of HSG. Visiting students can put these assumptions into perspective and feel that the absolute differences are eventually not that substantial: After being exposed to course experience in both environments, they upgrade the evaluation relative to the HSG-peers and downgrade it relative to the HC-peers.

Table 4: Patterns of Differences Between Course Experience Ratings. Every pattern identified in the quantitative data pictured by the boxplots above is described and a possible explanation for each pattern is provided.

The stated hypothesis assumed a downgrading of the visiting students’ perception of their course experience at home, and a relatively higher evaluation of the HC environments’ course experience compared to the HC peers. This notion cannot be supported, as it is only true for the factor of “Individual Rapport”. Rather, the quantitative data, the identified patterns, and the provided possible explanations for them suggest more nuanced and diverse dynamics regarding relative perception of course experience after the exposure of HSG visiting students to HC.

Figure 5 and Figure 6 in Annex IV and Annex V provide graphical representations similar to the one in Figure 2, but for each of the four categories differentiated by gender and year of studies. Some of the patterns identified above can also be found if the analysis is differentiated by male and female respondents, and third and fourth year students respectively. Some other patterns cannot be observed anymore. This can be due to varying perceptions between genders and year of studies, or random variation between individuals. Again, these differences cannot be reliably interpreted, as the sample size per boxplot gets even smaller through further differentiation by demographic criteria.

The notion of more diverse dynamics regarding relative perception of course experience – rather than simple logics of down- and upgrading – is supported by the analysis of the qualitative text inputs shown in Table 5. The texts were provided by survey takers before rating the course experience at the respective institutional environment and are answers to the following question: “How do you evaluate your overall course experience at the University of St. Gallen / at Harvard College? What patterns of students' attitudes towards learning and teachers' attitudes towards teaching do you observe?”

	Number of qualitative inputs by overall impression	Most frequent patterns appearing in answers
First Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 positive • 3 neutral • 4 negative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • insufficient enthusiasm and care of professors (mentioned by 7) • heterogenous experience between different lecturers and courses (mentioned by 7) • orientation towards exams and grades (mentioned by 6)
Second Group, Evaluation HSG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 positive • 4 neutral • 4 negative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of attendance and involvement of students (mentioned by 6) • insufficient enthusiasm and care of professors (mentioned by 5) • heterogenous experience between different lecturers and courses (mentioned by 5)
Second Group, Evaluation HC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 positive • 1 neutral • 0 negative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dedicated and enthusiastic teachers (mentioned by 4) • involvement and participation of students (mentioned by 3) • important role of interaction (mentioned by 2)
Third Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 positive • 2 neutral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more engagement only in higher level courses (mentioned by 2) • focus on grades or "getting through" lower level courses (mentioned by 2) • professor interaction (mentioned by 1)

Table 5: Analysis of Qualitative Input on Evaluation of Course Experience. Overall positive, neutral, and negative texts are counted by group in the first column. The three most frequently observed evaluation patterns observed within the texts of each group, as well as their relative frequency are summarized in the right column.

Overall, the qualitative evaluation of HSG between peers at home and visiting students does not seem to differ substantially: Only one more neutral instead of positive text is being provided, and two of the three most frequently appearing patterns in the answers are the same between both groups. What stands out is the very positive evaluation of HC by visiting students, with most of the answers being overall positive. The visiting students' texts also give evidence that the evaluation of both the HC and the HSG environment is related to each other: Two of the three most frequently mentioned patterns in these two categories are exact opposites of each other. Additionally, it stood out that three of the nine respondents explicitly related their evaluation of HSG course experience to their experiences in the HC environment, without explicitly being asked for that.

In summary, the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data does suggest that the perception and evaluation of courses differs conditional on institutional experience. But different than expected, the visiting students' perception of HSG and HC does not necessarily follow simple logics of retrospective downgrading of the experience at HSG and generally higher ratings for the experience made at HC – compared to the respective peers. Rather, the process of adapting and obtaining perceptions follows different logics for each factor, conditional on the experience made with regard to each of the nine factors of course experience at home and at the host institution.

5. Author Positionality

I am aware that my position within the study and the study itself was far from being an external observer. I am a visiting student at HC from HSG myself and share the community of visiting students. Furthermore, I share the field of studies of the surveyed subjects, as I am majoring in Economics.

Thus, I cannot fully ensure process objectivity, because the study and hypothesis were derived in an inductive reasoning process influenced by personal observations (Reiss and Sprenger, 2017). Still, I have derived the hypotheses not only based on subjective perspectives but enriched them by the objective scientific work of scholars in various fields.

What I commit to – according to the best of my ability – is the objective design of the process for verifying or falsifying the hypotheses. I designed the research methods based on the aforementioned objective work and actively attempted to exclude personal biases. Additionally, I committed myself to the objective presentation of the findings in the research paper. By avoiding the discussion of institutional differences, I wanted to achieve that my opinions on HC and HSG do not influence my analysis. Also, I discussed and analyzed the survey results with a commitment to an objective perspective. Thus, I am committed to product objectivity to the extent it is possible when process objectivity is not fully given (Reiss and Sprenger, 2017).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The first part of the analysis gives strong evidence that students' priorities for the evaluation of course experience differ conditional on institutional environment, as these priorities seem to differ between the three studied groups. This reaffirms findings on evaluation standards being a part of institutional culture of universities. Also, the analysis gives evidence for an acculturation process of exchange students, because the HSG visiting students have seemed to adapt or even over proportionally adapt their priorities to the ones of HC students. The fact that evidence for this acculturation could not be found for all nine factors suggest that a possible acculturation process must be understood in the light

of each factor individually, being highly dependent on the experience made with respect to that factor in the different institutional environments. Also, visiting students might not discard the evaluation culture from their home environment, but rather enrich their priorities with the ones in the culture of their host environment – developing a broader view on important factors for good course experience.

The second part of the analysis suggests that HSG visiting students' perceptions of course experience is conditional on their exposure to both the HSG and HC environment, because their evaluation of course experience at both HSG and HC differs from the one of their respective peers. This suggests that in fact, exchange students – who were exposed to two institutional environments – are in a unique position to compare institutions, experience quality in a relative and comparative manner, and ultimately adapt their perceptions of their home and host institutions respectively. Still, the expected simple processes of down- and upgrading differences in evaluations between the three groups were not found in the data. Instead, the analysis suggests that the dynamics of “putting things into perspective” are nuanced ones, again dependent on experiences made with respect to each of the nine factors: Regarding some of them, the exposure to the HC environment seems to make HSG visiting students value what is good at home or decrease the perceived absolute weaknesses of the home environment.

This research paper contributes to the understanding of how exchange students experience their international educational exchange, and their home environment after coming back. Because of the challenges the research design faces and the very specific context of the study, further research should try to enrich the findings by trying to reproduce them in other contexts.

Whether experiences abroad are ‘better’ or ‘worse’, studying abroad seems to help students contextualize the higher education environment at home and enable them to understand higher education in a broader, international context. As this can be viewed as having a value as such, higher education institutions should further develop international education exchanges and enable students to participate in them. Also, higher education institutions should begin to actively integrate students who studies abroad in discussions on teaching innovation and institutional development: Their comparative perspectives provide valuable resources, possibly inspiring new ways of learning, interacting, and administrating.

So, is Harvard an overrated institution? If we want to know the answer to this question, we must focus on the perceptions of visiting students, because they are able to apply a comparative perspective. And the answer is: Possibly. In fact – for some factors – the course experience of HC seems to be of similar quality than at other places. Still – for others – HC seems to provide a transformative experience, different from other institutions. Strikingly, HC students do not seem to be fully aware of that: For

some factors, they seem to either underestimate the absolute quality of their institution or overestimate it – not being aware that HC might be overrated. Maybe it is time for more international student exchanges?

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Annex I: Survey

	Text	Response
0	<p>1. My name is Simon, and I am asking you to take part in my class research project for the course “SOCIOLOG 1104 Higher Education: Institutions, Inequalities, and Controversies”, in which I am an enrolled student this Fall 2018.</p> <p>If you choose to participate, I ask you to complete the following survey. This survey will help me learn more about the different perception and evaluation of course experience of students at Harvard College, USA, and the University of St. Gallen (HSG), Switzerland. I am currently visiting Harvard College as a visiting student, the University of St. Gallen (HSG) is my home institution.</p> <p>The survey is anonymous, and no one will be able to link your answers back to you. Please do not include your name or other information that could be used to identify you in the survey responses. You can skip questions that you do not want to answer or stop the survey at any time. Being in this study is voluntary. By completing the survey, you consent that the data you provide is saved and analyzed anonymously.</p> <p>If you want to participate in this study, click the small arrow below to start the survey.</p> <p>Questions? Please contact me, Simon Handreke (simonhandreke@college.harvard.edu), or the course instructor Dr. Manja Klemencic (manjaklemencic@g.harvard.edu).</p>	Continue
0	<p>2. One question before we start: Which of the following category applies to you exactly?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am a regular student at Harvard College and have not yet participated in a study abroad/exchange program during my time in college. 2. I am currently a visiting student at Harvard College, my home institution is the University of St. Gallen (HSG). 3. I am a regular student at the University of St. Gallen (HSG) and have not yet participated in a study abroad/exchange program during my time at university. 4. Other, please specify: 	One Option Multiple Choice
1	<p>1. The first part of this survey tries to capture your priorities when you assess your experience in a course in college/at university.</p> <p>Optional: When you think about your experience in courses, what is especially important, what is less important to make you perceive it as a good or bad course?</p>	Textbox and Continue
1	<p>2. See below eight different factors that belong to the notion of course experience. Please first read the descriptions of the factors carefully, before providing your ranking of them.</p> <p>What is the most important factor for you? What is the least important factor to you? Please rank each of the nine factors in the order from 1 (= most important factor for the evaluation of course experience) to 9 (= least important factor for the evaluation of course experience).</p> <p>[Display of following items was randomized.]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning/Value (personal feeling of learning something valuable, level of stimulation by course content, level of increase of subject interest through course) 2. Enthusiasm (teaching staff's level of enthusiasm about teaching, contribution of teaching style to hold students' interests, level of energy/humor in teaching) 3. Organization (clearness and preparation of explanations and course materials, structure of lectures, extent to which course objectives are stated and pursued) 4. Group Interaction (importance of class discussion, extent to which student share ideas and are encouraged to do so, level of encouragement to participate) 5. Individual Rapport (teaching staff's accessibility and friendliness, openness to students seeking advice/help, disinterest or interest in individual students) 6. Breadth of Coverage (provisioning of background information on ideas/concepts, coverage of different points of view, discussion of current developments) 7. Examinations/Grading (appropriateness and fairness of evaluation methods, value of feedback to examinations, extent to which tests emphasize course content) 8. Assignments (value of readings, contribution of assignments to understanding of course content, selection of assignments) 9. Workload/Difficulty (appropriateness of difficulty and pace, manageability of course workload, appropriateness of work amount on the course outside of class) 	Ranking of factors on a mutually exclusive scale from 1-9
	<p>Annotation: The following questions were displayed personalized, dependent on the answer to question 0.2. The default option displayed below is the one HSG visiting students and HSG regular students were shown, the annotations in brackets show what was displayed for regular HC students (Opt. 2) and those, who specified “Other” above (Opt. 3).</p>	

2.1	1.	<p>[Opt. 3: If you are a visiting undergraduate student from the University of St. Gallen at Harvard College, please answer the rest of the survey thinking only about your course experience in St. Gallen.]</p> <p>The second part of the survey tries to capture the evaluation of your course experience at the University of St. Gallen (HSG) [Opt. 2: at Harvard College / Opt. 3: at a particular university/college]. For the following questions, please do think of your overall course experience at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: at the institution] and try to not focus on individual courses.</p> <p>Optional: How do you evaluate your overall course experience at the University of St. Gallen? What patterns of students' attitudes towards learning and teachers' attitudes towards teaching do you observe?</p>	Textbox and Continue
2.1	2.	<p>[Opt. 3: Again: If you are a visiting undergraduate student from the University of St. Gallen at Harvard College, please answer the rest of the survey thinking only about your course experience in St. Gallen.]</p> <p>For the following questions, please rate your experience at the University of St. Gallen (HSG) [Opt. 2: at Harvard College / Opt. 3: at Harvard College/the University of St. Gallen (HSG)] on the scale provided: strongly disagree – somewhat disagree – neither agree or disagree – somewhat agree – strongly agree</p>	Continue
		Annotation: The order of the following questions was randomized for survey takers, as well as the Likert items within each question.	
2.1	3.	<p>Learning/Value</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] make me learn something valuable. 2. The content of the courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] stimulates me. 3. The courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] increase my interest in the subject. 	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.1	4.	<p>Enthusiasm</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teaching staff at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] is enthusiastic about teaching. 2. The courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] are taught dynamic/energetic/with humor. 3. The teaching style at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] holds my interest. 	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.1	5.	<p>Organization</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teaching staff at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] provides clear and prepared explanations and course materials. 2. The objectives of courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] are stated and pursued. 3. The lectures at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] follow a clear structure. 	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.1	6.	<p>Group Interaction</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] facilitate class discussion. 2. Students at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] share their ideas and knowledge and are encouraged to do so. 3. The teaching staff at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] encourages me to participate. 	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.1	7.	<p>Individual Rapport</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teaching staff at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] is friendly and accessible. 2. Students seeking advice/help from the teaching staff at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] are welcomed. 3. The teaching staff at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] is interested in individual students. 	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.1	8.	<p>Breadth of Coverage</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] give background information on ideas/concepts. 2. The content of courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] covers different points of view. 3. Current developments are discussed in classes at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –]. 	Likert-item scales with five categories

2.1	9.	Examinations/Grading <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The evaluation methods in courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] are appropriate/fair. The feedback to examinations is valuable at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –]. The tests in courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] emphasize the course content. 	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.1	10.	Assignments <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The assigned texts and readings in courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] are valuable. Assignments at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] add to my understanding of the course content. The assignments at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] are generally well-selected. 	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.1	11.	Workload/Difficulty <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The course's difficulties and paces at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] are well-adjusted. The workload of the different courses at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –] is manageable. The hours I have to spend on the courses outside of class are appropriate at HSG [Opt. 2: at Harvard / Opt. 3: –]. 	Likert-item scales with five categories
3.	1.	We are almost done! Lastly, I only need some information about you as survey taker. As mentioned, the data is saved and analyzed anonymously.	Continue
3.	2.	What is your gender? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Male Female I identify myself with a different gender identity I prefer not to say 	One Option Multiple Choice
3.	3.	In what year of your studies are you? Please include only your time of study, not the time of leaves (e.g. for an internship). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> First/Freshman Second/Sophomore Third/Junior Fourth/Senior Fifth and more 	One Option Multiple Choice
3.	4.	What is your major? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Economics Business Administration Other, please specify: 	One Option Multiple Choice
3.	5.	Thank you very much for participating in the survey. If you are interested in receiving the analysis of the results in the research paper, write an email to simonhandreke@college.harvard.edu .	None
		Annotation: The following part was only for the second group of respondents and was sent out as separate survey with a time lag of one week.	
0	1.	Q3 My name is Simon, and I am asking you to take part in my class research project for the course "SOCIOLOGICAL 1104 Higher Education: Institutions, Inequalities, and Controversies", in which I am an enrolled student this Fall 2018. I hope you choose to participate in the second survey after I sent you the first one a while ago. This survey only has to be completed by visiting students at Harvard College from the University of St. Gallen and is shorter than the first part. The survey is anonymous, and no one will be able to link your answers back to you. Please do not include your name or other information that could be used to identify you in the survey responses. You can skip questions that you do not want to answer or stop the survey at any time. Being in this study is voluntary. By completing the survey, you consent that the data you provide is saved and analyzed anonymously. If you want to participate in this study and confirm that you are a visiting student at Harvard College from the University of St. Gallen, click the small arrow below to start the survey.	Continue

		Questions? Please contact me, Simon Handreke (simon.handreke@college.harvard.edu), or the course instructor Dr. Manja Klemencic (manjaklemencic@g.harvard.edu).	
2.2	1.	This second survey tries to capture the evaluation of your course experience as visiting student at Harvard College. For the following questions, please do think of your overall course experience at Harvard and try to not focus on individual courses. Optional: How do you evaluate your overall course experience at Harvard College? What patterns of students' attitudes towards learning and teachers' attitudes towards teaching do you observe?	Textbox and Continue
2.2	2.	For the following questions, please rate your experience at Harvard College on the scale provided: strongly disagree – somewhat disagree – neither agree or disagree – somewhat agree – strongly agree	Continue
		Annotation: Again, the order of the following questions was randomized for survey takers, as well as the Likert items within each question.	
2.2	3.	Learning/Value 1. The courses at Harvard make me learn something valuable. 2. The content of the courses at Harvard stimulates me. 3. The courses at Harvard increase my interest in the subject.	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.2	4.	Enthusiasm 1. The teaching staff at Harvard is enthusiastic about teaching. 2. The courses at Harvard are taught dynamic/energetic/with humor. 3. The teaching style at Harvard holds my interest.	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.2	5.	Organization 1. The teaching staff at Harvard provides clear and prepared explanations and course materials. 2. The objectives of courses at Harvard are stated and pursued. 3. The lectures at Harvard follow a clear structure.	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.2	6.	Group Interaction 1. The courses at Harvard facilitate class discussion. 2. Students at Harvard share their ideas and knowledge and are encouraged to do so. 3. The teaching staff at Harvard encourages me to participate.	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.2	7.	Individual Rapport 1. The teaching staff at Harvard is friendly and accessible. 2. Students seeking advice/help from the teaching staff at Harvard are welcomed. 3. The teaching staff at Harvard is interested in individual students.	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.2	8.	Breadth of Coverage 1. The courses at Harvard give background information on ideas/concepts. 2. The content of courses at Harvard covers different points of view. 3. Current developments are discussed in classes at Harvard.	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.2	9.	Examinations/Grading 1. The evaluation methods in courses at Harvard are appropriate/fair. 2. The feedback to examinations is valuable at Harvard. 3. The tests in courses at Harvard emphasize the course content.	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.2	10.	Assignments 1. The assigned texts and readings in courses at Harvard are valuable. 2. Assignments at Harvard add to my understanding of the course content. 3. The assignments at Harvard are generally well-selected.	Likert-item scales with five categories
2.2	11.	Workload/Difficulty 1. The course's difficulties and paces at Harvard are well-adjusted. 2. The workload of the different courses at Harvard is manageable. 3. The hours I have to spend on the courses outside of class are appropriate at Harvard.	Likert-item scales with five categories
3.	1.	We are almost done! Lastly, I only need some information about you as survey taker. As mentioned, the data is saved and analyzed anonymously.	Continue

3.	2.	<p>What is your gender?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male 2. Female 3. I identify myself with a different gender identity 4. I prefer not to say 	<p>One Option Multiple Choice</p>
3.	3.	<p>In what year of your studies are you? Please include only your time of study, not the time of leaves (e.g. for an internship).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First/Freshman 2. Second/Sophomore 3. Third/Junior 4. Fourth/Senior 5. Fifth and more 	<p>One Option Multiple Choice</p>
3.	4.	<p>What is your major?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Economics 5. Business Administration 6. Other, please specify: 	<p>One Option Multiple Choice</p>
3.	5.	<p>Thank you very much for participating in the survey. If you are interested in receiving the analysis of the results in the research paper, write an email to simonhandreke@college.harvard.edu.</p>	<p>None</p>

Annex II: Boxplots of Ranking of Different Factors of Course Experience by Group and Gender

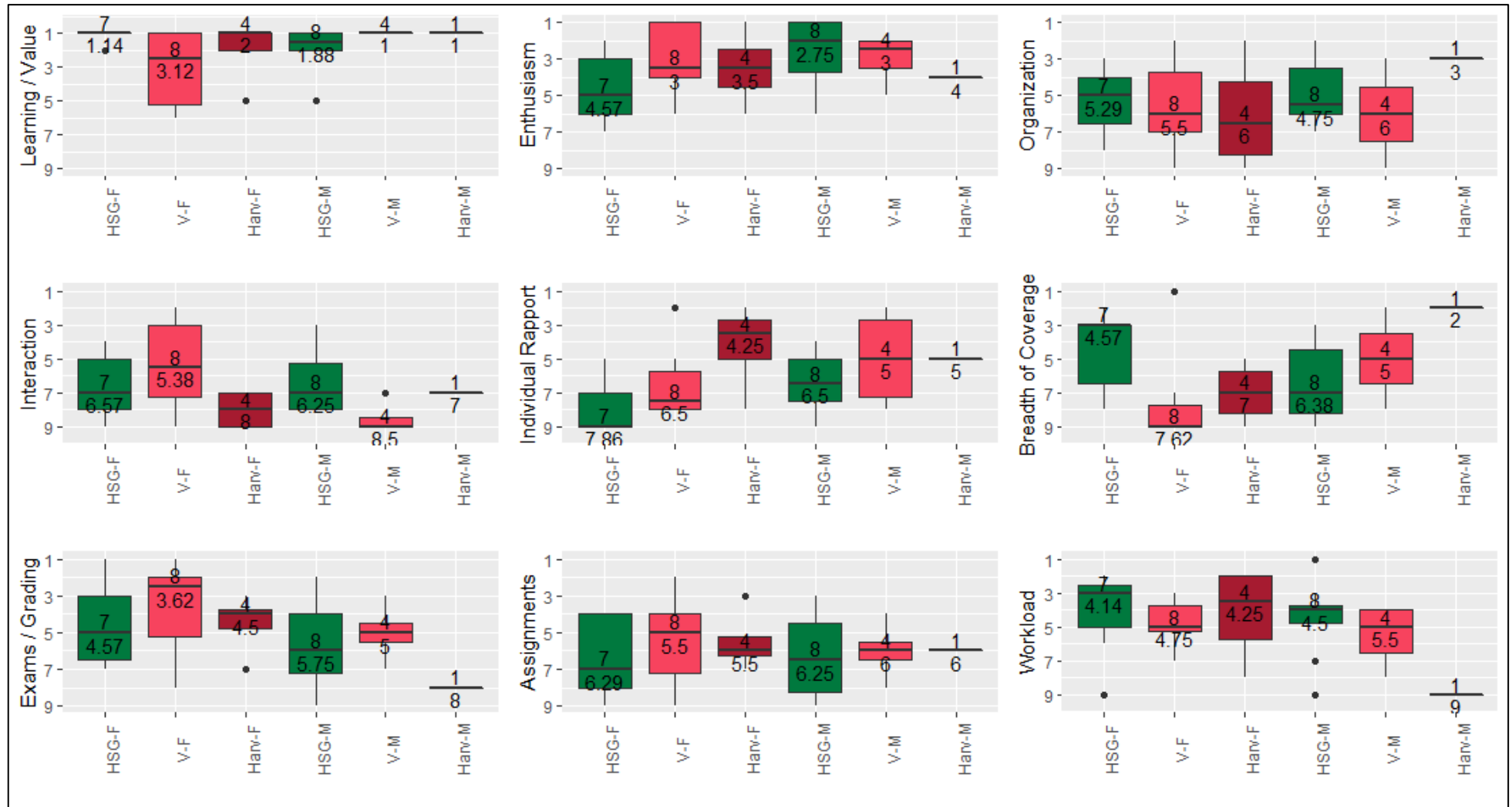


Figure 3: Boxplots of Ranking of Different Factors of Course Experience by Group and Gender. "HSG" stands for the first, "V" the second, and "Harv" the third of the groups described above. The addition "-F" indicates that the boxplots' sample only consists of females, the addition "-M" indicates that it only consists of males. The nine factors were ranked on a mutually exclusive scale from 1 (high) to 9 (low). In each boxplot, the number above the indication of the median describes the sample size for the boxplot, the number below describes the mean. A description of each factor was provided to the survey takers.

Annex III: Boxplots of Ranking of Different Factors of Course Experience by Group and Year of Studies

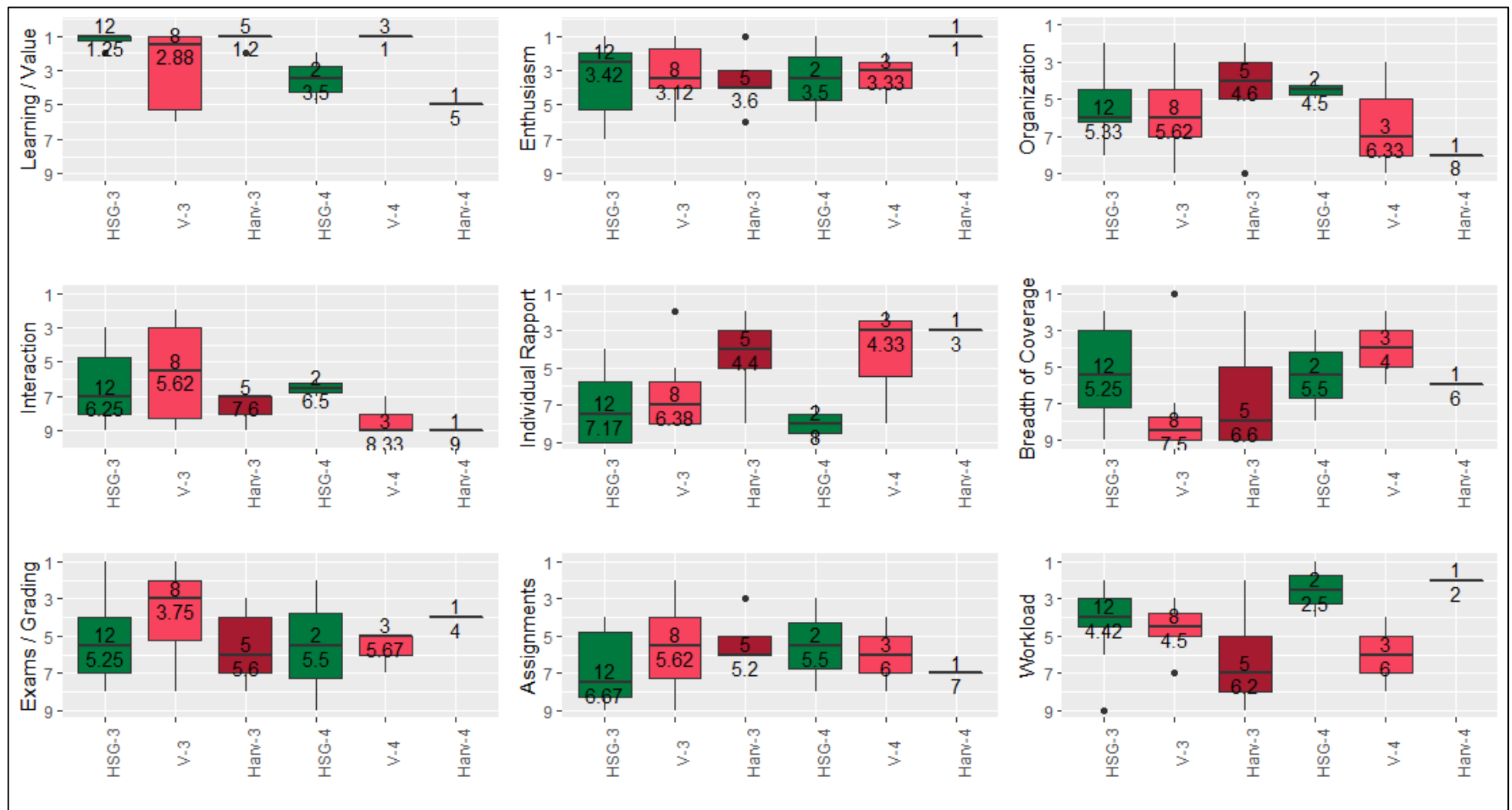


Figure 4: Boxplots of Ranking of Different Factors of Course Experience by Group and Year of Studies. "HSG" stands for the first, "V" the second, and "Harv" the third of the groups described above. The addition "-3" indicates that the boxplots' sample only consists of the students in their third / Junior year, the addition "-4" describes that it only consists of students in their fourth / Senior year. The nine factors were ranked on a mutually exclusive scale from 1 to 9, with 1 being the highest ranking. In each boxplot, the number above the indication of the median describes the sample size for the boxplot, the number below describes the mean. A description of each factors was provided to the survey takers.

Annex IV: Boxplots of Evaluation of Course Experience by Group and Gender

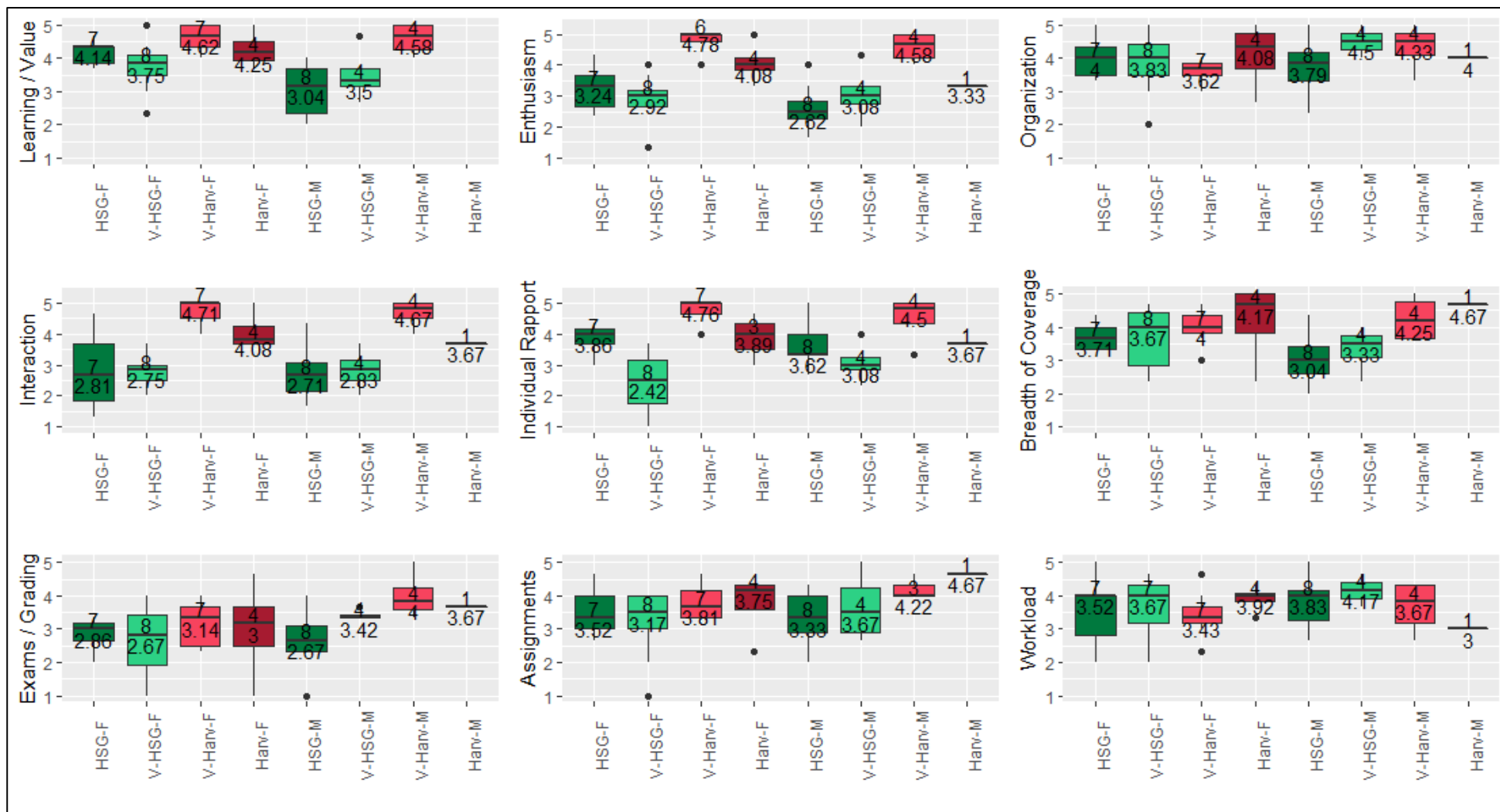


Figure 5: Boxplots of Evaluation of Course Experience by Group and Gender. "HSG" stands for the first, "V" the second, and "Harv" the third of the groups described above, the additions "_HSG" and "_Harv" indicate which institution's evaluation of visiting students is pictured in the boxplot above. The addition "-F" indicates that the boxplots' sample only consists of females, the addition "-M" indicates that it only consists of males. The ratings were obtained through three-item Likert scales. Each item providing a positive statement was rated on a scale from "strongly disagree" (= 1) to "strongly agree" (= 5). Everyone's rating per factor was obtained by averaging the answers to the three items belonging to that factor. In each boxplot, the number above the indication of the median describes the sample size for the boxplot, the number below describes the mean.

Annex V: Boxplots of Evaluation of Course Experience by Group and Year of Studies

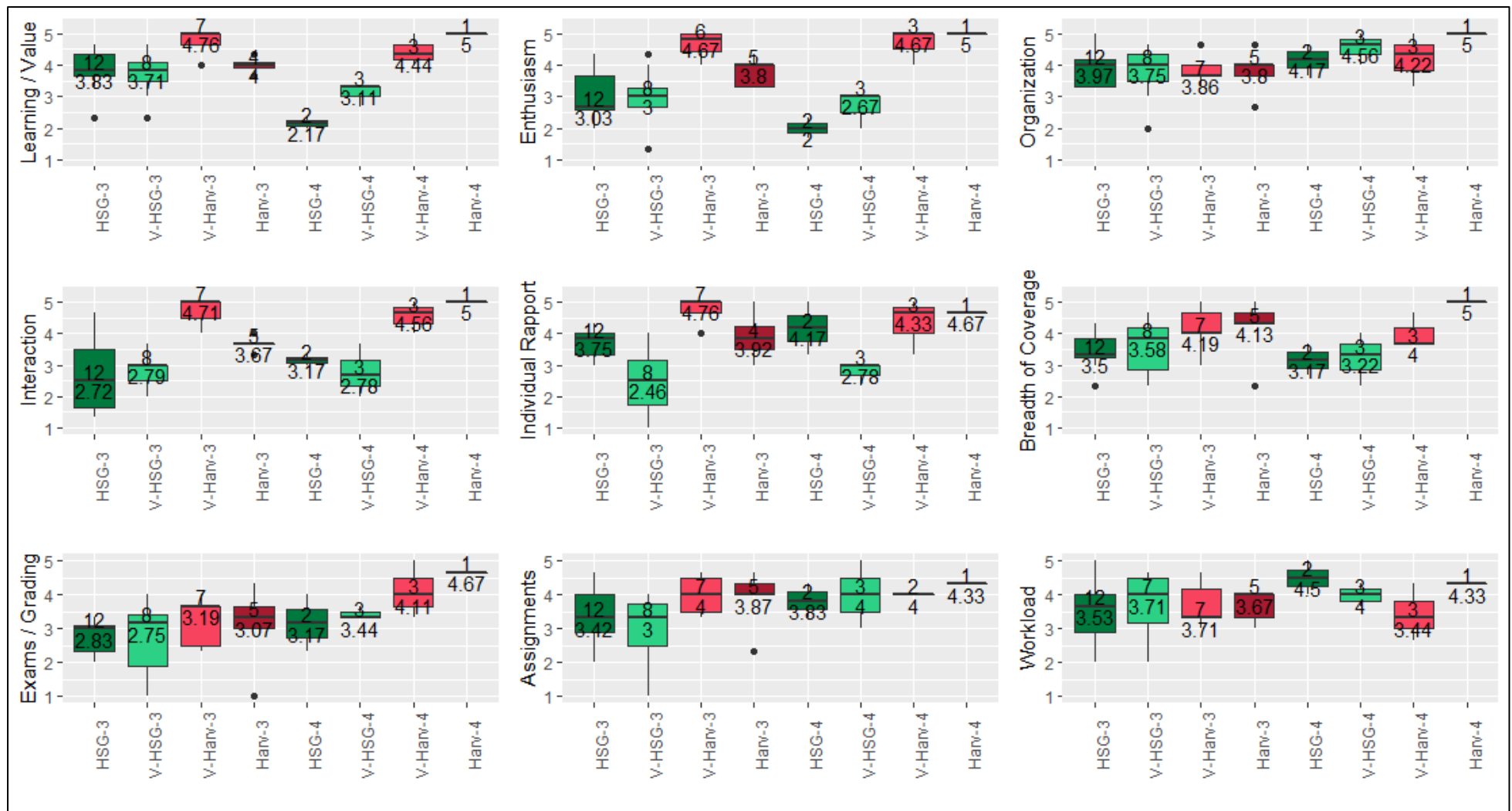


Figure 6: Boxplots of Evaluation of Course Experience by Group and Year of Studies. "HSG" stands for the first, "V" the second, and "Hanv" the third of the groups described above, the additions "_HSG" and "_Hanv" indicate which institution's evaluation of visiting students is pictured in the boxplot above. The addition "-3" indicates that the boxplots' sample only consists of the students in their third / Junior year, the addition "-4" describes that it only consists of students in their fourth / Senior year. The ratings were obtained through three-item Likert scales. Each item providing a positive statement was rated on a scale from "strongly disagree" (= 1) to "strongly agree" (= 5). Everyone's rating per factor was obtained by averaging the answers to the three items belonging to that factor. In each boxplot, the number above the indication of the median describes the sample size for the boxplot, the number below describes the mean.