

# **AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF CLASS PRESENTATIONS AND PEER EVALUATIONS: DO STUDENTS PERCEIVE THE BENEFITS?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study examines students' perceptions of how class presentations and peer-evaluations contribute to their learning and skill-building, and whether their perceptions significantly differ by gender. The data were collected from marketing students at two universities in the United States. This study found that students generally perceive that class presentations contribute to their learning and skill-building. The results indicate that students seem to benefit from peer-evaluations through more active engagement in class presentations. No consistent patterns of variance in perceptions of presentations and peer-evaluations were found between males and females at both universities as well as across universities, suggesting that class presentations and peer-evaluations are equally beneficial for all students regardless of their gender and/or university they are at.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Student presentations are a common part of many courses at colleges and universities as they are one of the ways to improve learning of course material. The potential benefits of student presentations include greater class interaction and participation, increased interest in learning, new perspectives not covered otherwise, and improvement in communication and presentation skills. Students can gain knowledge not only from the research they and other students perform, but also by observing the other presenters' strengths and weaknesses to develop better communication and presentation skills. Despite the positive aspects of using student presentations in the classroom, some students may show resistance to do extra work, have fear in public speaking, and display boredom while sitting through others' presentations if they are not engaged with the experience. Therefore, such students may have generally negative beliefs about giving classroom presentations.

In addition to the expected potential benefits of class presentations for presenters, the question is whether the audience (non-presenting students) benefits from class presentations. It is hoped and expected that non-presenting students in the class could also benefit from student

presentations. These potential benefits for non-presenting students include learning different perspectives about the course material and improving communications skills by observing others. As with any presentation, the challenge is to get non-presenting students to pay attention and to be engaged in the learning experience. One way to overcome this challenge is to ask non-presenting students to evaluate the presentations (peer-evaluations). We believe that peer-evaluations could be a good way to get non-presenting students involved and engaged in the presentations in order to get the most benefit from the learning experience. Specifically, asking students to list what they learn from presentations through taking notes will promote (or force) greater involvement with the presentations. As a result of being actively engaged in the presentation, the students should benefit much more than if they had merely been passive viewers. Undoubtedly, as most marketing and business students will witness many presentations throughout their careers, effective listening skills will improve; thus, they will increasingly become better listeners. Moreover, since students might be evaluating their peers in their future positions after graduation, this practice may also prepare them for that potential aspect of their work.

Despite the known benefits of communication skills for students (e.g., de Beer, 2007; Gaedeke & Tootelian, 1989; Goldgehn, 1989; Kelly & Gaedeke, 1990; Joby & Needel, 1990; McCorckle *et al.*, 1992), a thorough search of the literature did not reveal any study that has examined the potential benefits of student class presentations from either the presenter or audience (non-presenter) perspective. The knowledgebase on student perceptions of presentation benefits has not been adequately developed and remains a huge gap in the marketing (and business education) pedagogy literature. This study is a first attempt at filling this gap, where the main goal is to examine the perceived benefits of class presentations for presenters as well as non-presenters. It is generally assumed that class presentations help students develop public speaking and communications skills. However, this assumption has not been investigated. Also, what is not known is how non-presenting students benefit, if any, from class presentations, and how to get them engaged in class presentations. As marketing educators attempt to prepare marketing students to become self-sufficient and well-spoken professionals in the work place, it is important that these educators know from the students' perspective whether or not class presentations actually benefit the student, and whether diversity in the student body based on gender makes any difference in their perception of presentation benefits. We believe that the results of this exploratory study provide some insights into this area.

## **BACKGROUND**

It is reality that no matter what one's job is, presentation skills ultimately will come into the picture during his/her career (de Beer, 2007). There is no doubt that good presentation and communications skills are essential for all business and non-business majors to be successful in their careers. This is especially true for students in the marketing area who usually start off their

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careers in sales positions. Indeed, marketing educators have long emphasized the importance of communication skills with respect to career opportunities and success.

Prior studies found that oral communication skills were the most important hiring criteria for entry-level marketing positions (Kelly & Gaedeke, 1990), including entry-level marketing research positions (Joby & Needel, 1990) or entry-level sales positions (Tomkovick & Erffmeyer, 1993, cited in Wunsch & Tomkovick, 1995). Also, a study by Gaedeke & Tootelian (1989) shows that employers list communication abilities, interpersonal communication skills, speaking abilities, and writing skills among the qualities they always consider when screening new college graduates. Similar findings about the importance of communication skills for marketing students looking for professional employment after graduation are reported by Goldgehn (1989) and McCorckle *et al.* (1992).

The research also shows that two of the six competencies needed for salespeople and sales agents are the abilities to listen and communicate effectively (More *et al.*, 1986). Based on a national survey of sales managers, a study by Ingram *et al.* (1992) found that listening skills were one of the factors accounting for differences between failure and success in salespeople. According to Feiertag (2002), good listening skills are one of the two characteristics that distinguish successful salespeople from the rest. These studies further demonstrate the importance of communication and presentation skills for students in the marketing area option in order to have a successful career in their field. In fact, de Beer (2007) states that success in delivery of effective presentations can open a whole world of opportunities for one's career; it can help him/her conquer new frontiers, as well as broaden his/her horizons through personal development, influence, and advances in one's profession. Clearly, the ability to effectively communicate is a powerful asset for a professional.

While class projects that involve oral and written communication assignments are one of the ways to improve students' business communication skills (Wunsch & Tomkovick, 1995), class presentations specifically provide students with the experience they need to develop and/or improve their presentation and communications skills. As students give more presentations, they can become better presenters and improve their communications skills. Non-presenting students also benefit from class presentations, including learning course material, learning to listen for the key points of presentations, and bringing different perspectives to the discussion. To promote additional benefit on the part of the audience, non-presenters can be required to evaluate the presentations. This participation would increase the cognitive involvement of non-presenting students, and in doing so, should improve the learning benefits of the presentations. The presenters themselves offer the opportunity to non-presenting students to learn through the observation of their presentations (i.e., modeling/vicarious learning), thus promoting the development of better presentation skills.

Karns (2005, p. 165) states, "Students' willingness to engage fully in learning through a particular pedagogy is an important element in a pedagogical approach's ability to foster learning." Because of its centrality to academic success, social status, and workplace

effectiveness, oral and listening skills development has been increasingly emphasized in business education. In that effort, student involvement in peer assessment has been increasingly practiced by educators worldwide, and empirical studies confirm that peer-evaluation promotes active learning by engaging students (Boud, 1988; Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000). In essence, a low-involvement cognitive learning situation can become high-involvement through the use of a required response, with the outcome of additional accretion, tuning, and restructuring (Rumelhart & Norman, 1978) of course material in the mind of the audience member. The question though remains: Do students see the benefit?

Gender differences have also been researched in various studies examining individual listening skills, group production, and self-efficacy (Hunter *et al.*, 2005), classroom interactions (Canada & Pringle, 2006), peer evaluations of student presentations (Girard & Pinar, 2009), class performance (Nouri & Clinton, 2006), student evaluations of teaching (Centra & Gaubatz, 2000), and learning style preferences (Wehrwein *et al.*, 2007). The findings of these studies are mixed. For example, Hunter *et al.* (2005) reported that a 1998 Canadian assessment of students' speech communication skills revealed that all male groups lagged significantly behind that of all female groups. Wehrwein *et al.* (2007) found significant gender differences in learning style preferences among undergraduate physiology students. Approximately 54 percent of females and 13 percent of males preferred a single mode of information presentation. Overall a majority of female students preferred single mode instruction with an emphasis on using all five senses, while a majority of male students preferred multi-modal instruction, namely visual, auditory, reading and writing, and using the five senses.

Girard and Pinar (2009) found no consistent gender bias in peer assessments of student presentations and suggested that peer assessment could be utilized in grading by teachers without any concern. However, Pinar and Hardin (2006) find that presenter's and/or evaluator's gender could affect the evaluation of presentations. Prior research focuses on understanding the gender effect in student evaluations of teachers (Centra & Gaubatz, 2000) but not specifically in the context of gender effect/bias in student perceptions of presentation contributions. Centra & Gaubatz (2000) found gender similarity bias in student evaluations of teaching. Other research examines gender bias in the context of recruitment and/or job interviews (Arvey & Faley, 1988; Gallois *et al.*, 1992; Graves & Powell, 1995; Hardin *et al.*, 2002; Powell, 1987), and customer bias toward a salesperson's gender (Dwyer *et al.*, 1998; Jones *et al.*, 1998; Lucas, 1996). These studies produced mix results regarding a consistent gender effect on recruiting and/or sales performance. Although gender differences can be measured easily, to the authors' best knowledge, there is no research that tests the gender differences/bias in student perceptions of presentation contributions to their learning and skill-building and their involvement with peer-evaluation of presentations in an attempt to increase student engagement.

## Study Objectives

The overall purpose of this study is to examine the potential benefits of student class presentations and peer-evaluations of the presentations for presenting and non-presenting students, as well as the contribution of presentations to the learning of course material. Specifically, this research will:

- Investigate whether or not students perceive that student presentations and peer-evaluations improve their communications skills and contribute to various aspects of learning of the course material;
- Examine if there is any relationship among presentation benefit variables, as well as between student engagement in the class presentation and perceived presentation benefits;
- Compare if male and female students perceive the class presentation and peer-evaluation benefits differently, and if so, in what ways they differ, and
- Compare if students at two different universities (mid-western vs. eastern) perceive the presentation benefits differently, and if so, in what ways they differ.

## METHOD

Undergraduate and graduate marketing students at two American universities participated in the study over several semesters. In order to accomplish the research objectives, the data were collected in two stages: (1) a peer-evaluation rubric was utilized to involve the students in the individual presentations, and (2) a survey was later used to measure their perceptions of presentation contributions to their knowledge and skill-set, as well as engagement with the presentations. During the first stage, each student prepared and gave a 7 to 10 minute presentation of an analysis of a current business news article from a major newspaper (e.g., Wall Street Journal) or business magazine (e.g., Business Week) as a part of the course requirements. The second stage involved a survey given at the end of each semester covering the potential benefits of class presentation.

### Stage One

The rubric served as a peer-evaluation tool in order to engage students in other students' presentations by having them evaluate each presenter's performance and assign scores to four aspects of the presentations (see Appendix A for rubric). A maximum of 20 points could be assigned by an evaluator to each presentation based on the four presentation attributes adopted from Pinar and Hardin (2006). The attributes employed were: (1) Quality of the article content (max. - 6 pts.); (2) Relevance to the course material (max. - 5 pts.); (3) Content of the presentation (max. - 5 pts.), and (4) Quality of presentation (max. - 4 pts.). Students were also asked to write down three new things that they learned from each presentation. The gender of each student was

captured from the students' names on the evaluation forms. The peer-evaluation scores from this rubric were not used in the analysis; rather, they were used to improve students' engagement in class presentations. Also, the non-presenter students were not graded based on the main points they listed in the rubric because each non-presenter would be evaluating each of his/her classmate's presentation ( $N \times (N-1)$ ); therefore, grading non-presenters on understanding or learning the material presented may not be practical for relatively large class sizes. However, in order to keep the non-presenter students accountable for the material presented by their peers, they were told by the instructors that the scores they assign to each presentation were going to be utilized in grading of the presenters' presentations. This way, non-presenter students knew that their peers' evaluation scores of their own presentations were eventually going to be incorporated into their own grades when "they" presented. Also, this practice would encourage the non-presenter students to be fair in their peer-evaluations knowing that they themselves were going to be evaluated in the same fashion.

Using the rubric for peer-evaluation not only allowed the students to be able to answer the last three questions in the second-stage survey instrument that measured the students' perceptions of the value of their involvement in the presentations (see Appendix B), but also served as reinforcement (i.e., through operant conditioning) to students to better prepare for their own presentations. Students were provided the evaluation criteria before their presentations. In order to avoid introducing external bias by the authors (teachers), the students were not informed of the purpose of the study until all presentations were completed and all data were collected with the survey instrument.

## **Stage Two**

During the second data collection stage, a survey instrument was developed to measure the perceptions of presentation contributions to learning and skill-set building. It was adapted from Pinar *et al.* (2005) for our study objectives. Specifically, the survey instrument was designed to evaluate students' level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements utilizing a five-point Likert scale: (1) Presentations contribute to learning of class materials; (2) Presentations improve public speaking skills; (3) Presentations develop listening skills for key points; and (4) Presentations bring different perspectives for class learning; (5) Evaluating presentations by students is not a good idea (reversed for analysis); (6) Listing what I learn from the presentation is a good way to learn; and (7) I become more involved when I evaluate the presentations. The first four questions measured overall student perceptions toward the contribution of presentations to their learning and skill-set building for presenters. The second set of three questions measured how much they appreciate their involvement with peer-evaluation of the other students' presentations for non-presenters by having to actively listen and pay attention, in other words, their engagement. It is important to note that the survey instrument asks students only about their perceived benefits of the giving class presentations, listening to the presentations, and their contribution to learning the course material. It does not ask any thing about the benefits of

preparing for presentations and using class time. Because of its relevancy to the study, and the anonymous nature of the data collection, gender was the only demographic question that was asked. We are aware that other demographic information could be helpful for the reader had students came from different ethnic/religion, age, or income backgrounds. However, the student profiles at both universities were homogeneous. The survey questions are presented in Appendix B.

### **Sample**

The survey respondents were students enrolled in marketing courses with required presentations at two universities (one mid-western and one eastern university). This allowed comparisons of the student perceptions of class presentation benefits from two universities. As stated before, each student gave a presentation of an article about a current business and marketing issue related to the course material covered in a given week during the semester that came from a major business publication. The second-stage survey was conducted upon the completion of all presentations, which was near the end of the course. This was a convenience, but intended sample because the study required students to give presentations in order to take the survey. Therefore, students in the authors' classes were included in the study. The study included a total of nine classes from both universities, where the class sizes ranged from 18 to 30 students, except one with 8 students. The sample consisted of a total of 220 students in seven undergraduate and two graduate classes. Three undergraduate (89 students, 40.4 percent) and two MBA classes were from mid-western university (39 students, 17.7 percent). Four undergraduate classes were from eastern university (92 students, 41.9 percent). Out of the 220 students who completed the survey, 51 percent were male and 49 percent were female. Since the sample size for MBA classes was relatively small, a separate analysis was not conducted for them.

## **RESULTS**

### **Discriminant and Convergent Validity**

In order to assess the discriminant validity of the seven items, a Principle Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was performed. The results revealed two clear dimensions with high loadings ranging from .63 to .77 (Table 1). The first set of four questions loaded on the underlying dimension, presentation benefits, and the second set of three questions loaded on the engagement (peer-evaluation) dimension as expected. The total variance explained was 94 percent, of which 35 percent was associated with the first dimension and 59 percent with the second dimension. In order to assess the convergent validity (internal consistency) of the items under each dimension, reliabilities were tested by examining Cronbach's alpha coefficients. With standardized reliability coefficients of .76 for the first dimension and .62 for the second

dimension, which exceed the recommended level of 0.50 for an exploratory study (Hair *et al.*, 1995), the scale items show a high level of convergent validity with each factor.

<b>Table 1. Results for the Discriminant and Convergent Validity</b>		
	Presentation benefits	Engagement
Presentation benefits – Cronbach’s alpha = .76:		
Presentations contribute to learning of class materials	.77	
Presentations develop listening skills for key points	.74	
Presentations bring different perspectives for class learning	.73	
Presentations improve public speaking skills	.73	
Engagement – Cronbach’s alpha = .62		
I become more involved when I evaluate the presentations		.76
Evaluating presentations by students is not good idea(R)		.75
Listing what I learn from the presentation is a good way to learn		.63

### **Student Perceptions of Presentation Benefits**

The first objective of this study is to examine how student presentations and peer-evaluation contribute to the various perceptual aspects of student learning and improvement of communications skills. Descriptive statistics of the responses are provided in Table 2. The results indicate that the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed (combined) that presentations contributed to their learning of class materials (79.8%), developed listening skills for key points (62.5%), brought different perspectives for class learning (84.6%), and improved public speaking skills (89.9%). These findings show that the most important benefits students perceive to obtain from the class presentations are “improving public speaking skills” (mean of 4.32), “bringing different perspectives for class learning” (mean of 3.98), and “contributing to learning of class materials” (mean of 3.81). These results show that students have overall positive beliefs about the contributions of class presentations.

The second part of the first objective deals with peer-evaluations or student engagement with the class presentations. As shown in Table 2, the mean scores of student perceptions of their engagement through peer-evaluation were not as high as the scores for their perceptions of presentation benefits. However, the averages were still above the mid point of “3” on a 5-point scale. A majority (54.3%) agreed or strongly agreed (combined) that they became more involved when they evaluated the presentations. After reversing the scale for analysis, 50 percent agreed or strongly agreed that evaluating presentations by students were a good idea (or 50 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed that evaluating presentations by students was not a good idea). Finally, 48.4 percent agreed or strongly agreed that listing what they learned from the presentations was a



good way to learn. These findings show that students do have positive beliefs, although not very strong, about the benefits of peer-evaluations and presentation engagement. It seems that 26.4 percent students were not in favor of being forced to engage in presentations; maybe those preferred to be passive listeners.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Student Perceptions of Presentation Benefits**

Measurement items	N	Mean	SD	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
Presentation benefits: Presentations contribute to learning of class materials	N=218	3.81	.82	1.8%	7.8%	10.6%	67.0%	12.8%
Presentations develop listening skills for key points	N=219	3.52	.96	2.7%	15.1%	19.6%	52.5%	10.0%
Presentations bring different perspectives for class learning	N=216	3.98	.73	0%	6.0%	9.3%	65.3%	19.4%
Presentations improve public speaking skills	N=219	4.32	.81	1.4%	2.3%	6.4%	42.9%	47.0%
Engagement: I become more involved when I evaluate the presentations	N=219	3.30	1.1	6.8%	19.6%	19.2%	45.2%	9.1%
Evaluating presentations by students is not a good idea (Reversed for analysis)	N=216	3.26	1.1	6.0%	20.4%	23.6%	41.7%	8.3%
Listing what I learn from the presentation is a good way to learn	N=219	3.21	1.0	4.6%	24.7%	22.4%	41.6%	6.8%

### Engagement and Presentation Benefits

The second objective of the study is to examine the relationships among the presentation benefits, and between presentation benefits and peer-evaluation (i.e., student engagement) of presentations. Table 3 presents the results of correlation analysis. The correlation coefficients among the presentation benefit variables (Q1 – Q4) range from a low of .365 to a high of .497, all of which were significant at the  $p < .01$  level. These findings indicate that, in addition to specific benefits of class presentations (as presented in Table 2), these benefits seem to be correlated with each other. These findings further support the benefits of class presentations. The non-significant correlation between “evaluating presentations by students is not good idea (Q5)” and other variables indicate that some students do not seem to understand the potential benefits of peer-evaluations, or they may not like the practice of evaluating their peers and may prefer to be passive listeners. However, significant correlations ( $p < .01$ ) between two other peer-evaluation questions (Q6 and Q7) and presentation variables indicate their involvement through peer-evaluation and listing the main points had a positive relationship with their learning from the

presentations. As students get more involved in presentations, they learn more and develop better communication skills. These results suggest the additional benefits of class presentations if all students are engaged in presentations; thus, proving the importance of engagement or involvement in presentations for student learning.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
<b>Presentation benefits</b>						
Q1. Presentations contribute to learning of class materials						
Q2. Presentations improve public speaking skills	0.410 <sup>a</sup>					
Q3. Presentations develop listening for key points of presentations	0.490 <sup>a</sup>	0.401 <sup>a</sup>				
Q4. Presentations bring different perspectives for class learning	0.497 <sup>a</sup>	0.365 <sup>a</sup>	0.487 <sup>a</sup>			
<b>Engagement</b>						
Q5. Evaluating presentations by students is not good idea (R)	0.066	-0.010	0.058	0.122		
Q6. Listing what I learn from the presentation is a good way to learn	0.318 <sup>a</sup>	0.225 <sup>a</sup>	0.435 <sup>a</sup>	0.254 <sup>a</sup>	0.198 <sup>a</sup>	
Q7. I become more involved when I evaluate the presentations	0.282 <sup>a</sup>	0.192 <sup>a</sup>	0.382 <sup>a</sup>	0.242 <sup>a</sup>	0.331 <sup>a</sup>	0.527 <sup>a</sup>
<sup>a</sup> p<0.01 (2-tailed)						

### **Gender Differences in Student Perceptions of Presentation Contributions**

The third objective is to investigate whether student perceptions of presentation contributions and engagement with presentations through peer-assessment significantly differ between males and females. As presented in Table 4, an independent sample t-test revealed no differences between females and males in their perceptions of presentation contributions except for one statement. Males agreed more than females that listing what they learned from the presentations was a good way to learn ( $t = 3.2, p < .01$ ). Males valued writing down what they learned from the presentations more than females did. This may imply that male students may be more interested in getting involved or engaged in (class) presentations actively and visually due to the differences in learning styles of each gender as Wehrwein *et al.* (2007) suggest.

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	T-test
<b><u>Presentation benefits</u></b> Presentations contribute to learning of class materials	Male	109	3.85	.83	1.0
	Female	104	3.74	.81	
Presentations improve public speaking skills	Male	109	4.38	.74	1.2
	Female	105	4.25	.87	
Presentations develop listening skills for key points	Male	109	3.56	.95	.77
	Female	105	3.46	.98	
Presentations bring different perspectives for class learning	Male	106	3.96	.70	-.28
	Female	105	3.99	.75	
<b><u>Engagement</u></b> Evaluating presentations by students is not good idea (R)	Male	107	3.34	.99	1.2
	Female	104	3.15	1.14	
Listing what I learn from the presentation is a good way to learn	Male	109	3.42	.99	3.2 <sup>a</sup>
	Female	105	2.98	1.02	
I become more involved when I evaluate the presentations	Male	109	3.26	1.10	.71
	Female	105	3.33	1.08	
<sup>a</sup> p<0.01					

### **Differences in Student Perceptions of Presentation Benefits between Two Universities**

Furthermore, the study investigates whether or not differences exist in the perceptions of presentation contributions between the students at the two universities. The independent sample t-test results indicated that significant differences exist between the students at the two universities on two measures. The students in the mid-western university agreed significantly more than the students in the eastern university that “presentations contributed to learning of class materials”, and “improved public speaking skills” (Table 5). No significant differences between the two universities were found in the student perceptions of other benefits. Therefore, the interaction effect of gender and school was further investigated.

<b>Table 5. T-test Results for Differences in Students' Perceptions at Two Universities</b>					
	University	N	Mean	SD	T-test
<b><u>Presentation benefits:</u></b> Presentations contribute to learning of class materials	Mid-western	128	3.91	.77	2.03 <sup>b</sup>
	Eastern	90	3.68	.87	
Presentations improve public speaking skills	Mid-western	128	4.43	.80	2.42 <sup>b</sup>
	Eastern	91	4.16	.79	
Presentations develop listening skills for key points	Mid-western	128	3.52	.93	.05
	Eastern	91	3.52	.99	
Presentations bring different perspectives for class learning	Mid-western	127	4.06	.65	1.79
	Eastern	89	3.88	.80	
<b><u>Engagement:</u></b> Evaluating presentations by students is not a good idea (R)	Mid-western	125	3.30	1.04	.59
	Eastern	91	3.21	1.09	
Listing what I learn from the presentation is a good way to learn	Mid-western	128	3.13	1.00	-1.39
	Eastern	91	3.33	1.07	
I become more involved when I evaluate the presentations	Mid-western	128	3.33	1.06	.43
	Eastern	91	3.26	1.14	
<sup>b</sup> p<0.05					

### **Interaction Effect of School and Gender on Student Perceptions of Presentation Contributions**

Lastly, the study investigates whether there was an interaction effect of school and gender on the student perceptions of presentation contributions. A one-way ANOVA was performed (the results are not presented in Table) after recoding the data to create four groups (males at the mid-western university, females at the mid-western university, males at the eastern university, females at the eastern university), which allowed for more specific comparisons. The significant one-way ANOVA and LSD Post Hoc test results did not reveal any interaction effects. Specifically, male students at the mid-western university agreed significantly more than male and female students at the eastern university that presentations contribute to learning class materials ( $p < .05$ ) and improving public speaking skills ( $p < .01$ ). Male students at the mid-western university also agreed significantly more than male students at the eastern university that class presentations introduced different perspectives for class learning ( $p < .05$ ). Male students at the mid-western and eastern universities agreed significantly more than female students at the

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mid-western university that listing what they learn from the presentation were a good way to learn ( $p < .01$ ). Thus, no consistent effect of gender and university variables on students' perceptions of presentation benefits and engagement through peer-evaluation was found. These results were also confirmed by testing the interaction effects of gender and school using general linear modeling in SPSS.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The first objective of this study is to examine how student presentations and involvement with peer-evaluation contribute to the various aspects of student learning and improvement of their communications skills. The results show that students perceive benefits from class presentations and overall have positive beliefs about the contributions of the class presentations. Based on student perceptions, as expected, "improving public speaking skills" is the most important benefit of class presentations. Given the importance of communication and presentation skills in students' future careers, including marketing, (e.g., de Beer, 2007; Gaedeke & Tootelian, 1989; Goldgehn, 1989; Kelly & Gaedeke, 1990; Ingram *et al.*, 1992; Joby & Needel, 1990; McCorckle *et al.*, 1992; More *et al.*, 1986), the class presentation is an important dimension in preparing students for success.

The results also suggest that students generally perceive their involvement with peer-assessment of student presentations positively. Even though students did not seem to necessarily like the practice of peer-evaluation, the significant correlations in Table 3 support the notion that students may receive more benefit from class presentations through direct involvement. For example, a correlation of .435 between Q6 and Q3 indicates that listing what they learn from a presentation improves their listening skills, especially listening for the key points. These results confirm the findings of prior studies (Boud, 1988; Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000; Karns, 2005) that peer assessment promotes active learning by engaging students. Moreover, getting students engaged in presentations allows students to develop good listening skills that are the important for marketing area (and all students) for their careers (Feiertat, 2002; Ingram *et al.*, 1992).

This research also investigates the potential gender effect on student presentations. Specifically, the study examines whether differences exist between male and female students' perceptions of presentation benefits and their involvement with peer-evaluation of presentations. Since there were no significant differences between the perceptions of male and female students for all but one of the presentation and peer-evaluation benefits, both genders appear to equally benefit from class presentations. The only difference found was that males agreed significantly more with the statement that listing what they learn from the presentations was a good way to learn ( $p < .01$ ). While the study's purpose did not include investigating why such a result exists, it might be explained by the difference in learning styles of male and female students as found by Wehrwein *et al.* (2007) where male students preferred auditory, reading and writing, and using

their five senses, whereas female students preferred visual, printed words, and using their five senses.

Differences in student perceptions of presentations and their involvement with peer-evaluation were also tested between the students at two universities in order to see if there is any effect by school. The students at the mid-western university agreed significantly more than those at the eastern university that presentations contribute to learning of class materials and improve public speaking skills ( $p < 0.05$ ). Because no significant differences between the two universities were found in the student perceptions of other benefits, the interaction effect of gender and school was further investigated. However, no consistent interaction of gender and school was found with student perceptions of presentation benefits and involvement with peer-evaluation. These findings are supported by those of Girard and Pinar (2009) in that there is no consistent pattern of gender differences. Specifically, this study finds that male students do not consistently perceive the benefits of class presentations significantly different than female students or vice versa.

There are several implications of these findings. First, because approximately 80 percent of students perceived that presentations contribute to learning of class material (Table 2), teachers could improve students' learning of class materials by using class presentations as part of their course assignments. Given there are no significant differences between male and female students, as well as between the students from two universities, class presentations seem to be beneficial for students regardless of gender and/or university. Second, peer-evaluations of student presentations enhance students' engagement with the presentations and promote active learning. Third, students perceive that presentations contribute to the improvement of public speaking skills. Fourth, teachers do not need to be concerned about gender differences in student perceptions of presentation benefits. Given the overall positive student perceptions of the benefits of class presentations and peer evaluations of the presentations, this study shows that peer-evaluation of student presentations should be incorporated as part of a course's presentation requirement. Finally, because the measurements used in the survey revealed discriminant and convergent validity; therefore, the survey and the rubric can be used as an assessment of learning tool which would be of interest to all educators in response to the need for accreditation documentation of learning outcomes in higher education institutions.

It is important to note that this study investigates the students' *perceptions* of the benefits of class presentations in improving their communications skills and contributions to learning of the course material; it was not intended to measure the actual improvement in their communications skills and contribution to course material. Future research should examine not only student perceptions, but also actual improvements resulting from class presentations. Moreover, the study does not aim at directly measuring and testing the learning styles of students based on gender. Future research should also investigate whether student perceptions of presentation benefits differ by specific learning style and gender. In addition, because this study was conducted with students from only two universities, a caution should be exercised in

generalizing the results. Future studies should include students from a larger number of universities and also from areas other than marketing. Also, given the variety of nationalities often found in today's classrooms, future research should include the cultural background of students in more cosmopolitan areas. Finally, this study examines a limited number of class presentation benefits that deal with communication skills and peer-evaluation; it did not cover the benefits of preparing for presentation and using class or presentation time. Future studies could include additional benefits and learning outcomes from student class presentations.

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### APPENDIX A

Course Number and Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Article Presentation Evaluation by Students--Please read carefully.

As a part of this class, students are expected to help in evaluating the quality of the article and presentations. This will be used in assigning the grade to each article presentation. Your responsibility is to rate each article presentation on the factors listed below and to assign the grade you think it deserves for each section and add them up for total points. For your evaluation, you are required to give at least three logical things that you learned from each article presentation. As a professional student, I will encourage you to be very objective with each evaluation for your own BENEFIT. Student CANNOT evaluate and vote on her/his presentation.

The Article Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

Quality of the article content (max.6 pts.) \_\_\_\_\_

Relevance to the course material (max. 5 pts.) \_\_\_\_\_

Content of the presentation (max. 5 pts.) \_\_\_\_\_

Quality of presentation (max. 4 pts.) \_\_\_\_\_

Total Points \_\_\_\_\_ /20 pts.

Please list three new things you learned from the presentation:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B - SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF PRESENTATION EVALUATION**

Student presentations are a common part of most courses at universities. We are interested in your perceptions and perspectives about the student presentations. All the information given will be kept confidential. Please indicate your opinion of student presentations regarding the followings:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	no opinion	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Presentations contribute to learning of class materials	1	2	3	4	5
b. Presentations improve public speaking skills	1	2	3	4	5
c. Presentations develop listening skills for key points	1	2	3	4	5
d. Presentations bring different perspectives for class learning	1	2	3	4	5
e. Evaluating presentations by students is not a good idea (R)	1	2	3	4	5
f. Listing what I learn from the presentation is a good way to learn	1	2	3	4	5
g. I become more involved when I evaluate the presentations	1	2	3	4	5

You are: a. Male \_\_\_\_\_ b. Female \_\_\_\_\_