

Evaluator Skill Acquisition: Linking Educational Experiences to Competencies

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Literature Review

- Evaluator Competencies
 - Technical skills, conceptual knowledge, interpersonal & communication skills, administrative skills
 - Taxonomy presented by Stevhan, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005
 - Canadian Evaluation Society—Credentialed Evaluator Designation
- Evaluator Training
 - Empirical work to catalogue and describe what training programs *are*
 - Conceptual work describing what evaluation training *should be*
- Evaluator Skill Acquisition

Literature Review

Perhaps our concern may shift from “Where will the next generation be trained?” to “How can we best prepare the next generation for the challenges they will face?”

Research Questions

1. What are the educational experiences of new and graduate student evaluators?
2. How do new and graduate student evaluators perceive the relative contributions that different educational experiences make to developing their evaluation skills?

Instrument

- Internet Survey:
 - work experiences
 - educational background
 - evaluation confidence
 - Perceived contributions of educational experiences to evaluation competency development
- Developed over 6 months with assistance from seasoned evaluators and measurement experts
- Piloted with graduate students
- 55 items across 16 pages
- Survey completion took between 10 and 15 minutes

Instrument Constructs: Educational Experiences

Educational Experiences	Examples from Survey	
Coursework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• quantitative methods• qualitative methods• mixed methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• evaluation theory• evaluation procedures• research design
Mentorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• mentored by an advisor• mentored by other faculty/staff• mentored by a more advanced student	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• mentored by other professional• served as a mentor to someone else
Fieldwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• engaging stakeholders• describing the program• designing an evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• gathering evidence• analyzing data• justifying conclusions• communicating findings
Participation in Professional Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• member of AEA or other professional organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• attend conferences• attend workshops

Instrument Constructs: Evaluator Competencies

Evaluator Competencies	Examples from Survey	
Contextual Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• evaluation use• respecting uniqueness of client/site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• understanding political influences• involving stakeholders
Project Management Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• budgeting• working with clients/stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• writing agreements• supervising• training
Effective Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• communicating with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• conflict resolution• negotiation
Methodological Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• research design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• collecting and analyzing data
Theoretical Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• history of evaluation• evaluation models	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• evaluation trends• evaluation philosophies• theories of evaluation

Participants: Recruitment

- 572 members of the New and Graduate Student Evaluator Topical Interest Group (TIG)
- Each TIG member was sent 2 emails inviting participation in the winter of 2011.
- Participation was incentivized with an opportunity drawing for a \$50 gift card.
- Of 568 delivered emails, 179 people completed the survey, representing a 31.5% response rate.

Findings – Education Experiences

Evaluators Rankings of Educational Activities that Contribute to their Skill Development

Activity	Rank										Totals	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N	%
Coursework	43	25	30	17	14	4	1				134	87%
Fieldwork	56	51	8	10	1	1					127	82%
Conferences	4	11	22	24	25	6	7	1			100	65%
Working with a mentor	27	20	14	12	8	5	2	1			89	58%
Self-directed learning	8	11	21	14	15	15	3	2			89	58%
Thesis/dissertation	7	13	12	18	4	5	3	1			63	41%
Work placement	13	16	17	6	2	1	2				57	37%
Group work	2	3	7	7	4	4	2	4		1	34	22%
E-learning	1	1	2	2	5	5	2	3			21	14%
Working as a mentor			1	1	2	2	4	1	2		13	8%
Other	1		1	1							3	2%

$n = 154$

Note. Numbers and percentages in the Totals column reflect the total percentage of participants who chose this option. The bolded and highlighted numbers represent the most frequent common rank for that activity.

Paired-Comparison Analysis

For each of the following questions, please select which of the two educational experiences was **more important** in developing your:

CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATION SKILLS

(evaluation use, respecting uniqueness of client/site, understanding political influences, involving stakeholders)

In the next six questions, only two of the educational experiences appear. This allows a direct comparison of each experience against every other.

Please select which was more important:

- *Coursework*
- *Fieldwork/Practicum*

Please select which was more important:

- *Coursework*
- *Participation in Professional Activities*

Please select which was more important:

- *Mentorship/Advising*
- *Fieldwork/Practicum*

Please select which was more important:

- *Mentorship/Advising*
- *Participation in Professional Activities*

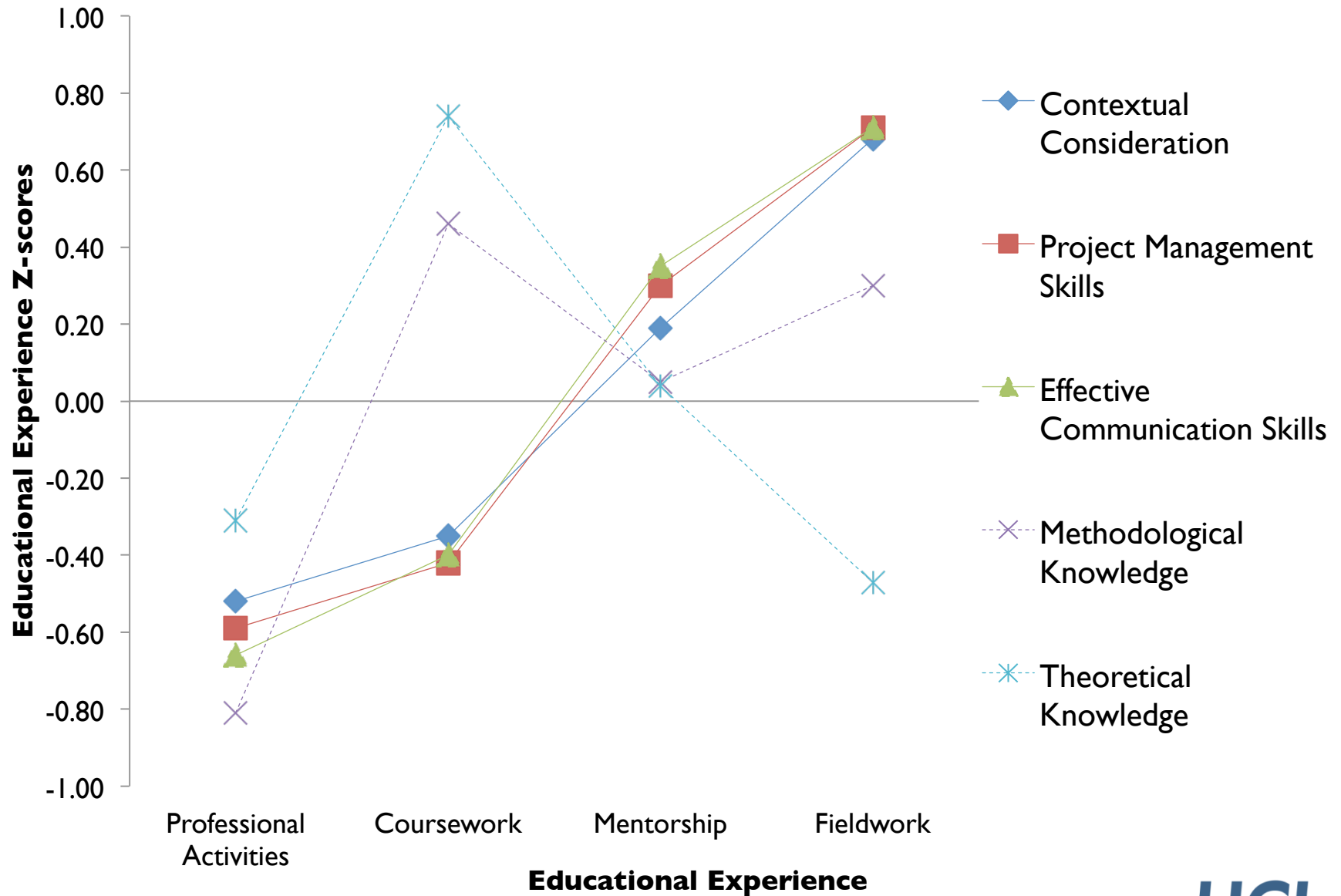
Please select which was more important:

- *Participation in Professional Activities*
- *Fieldwork/Practicum*

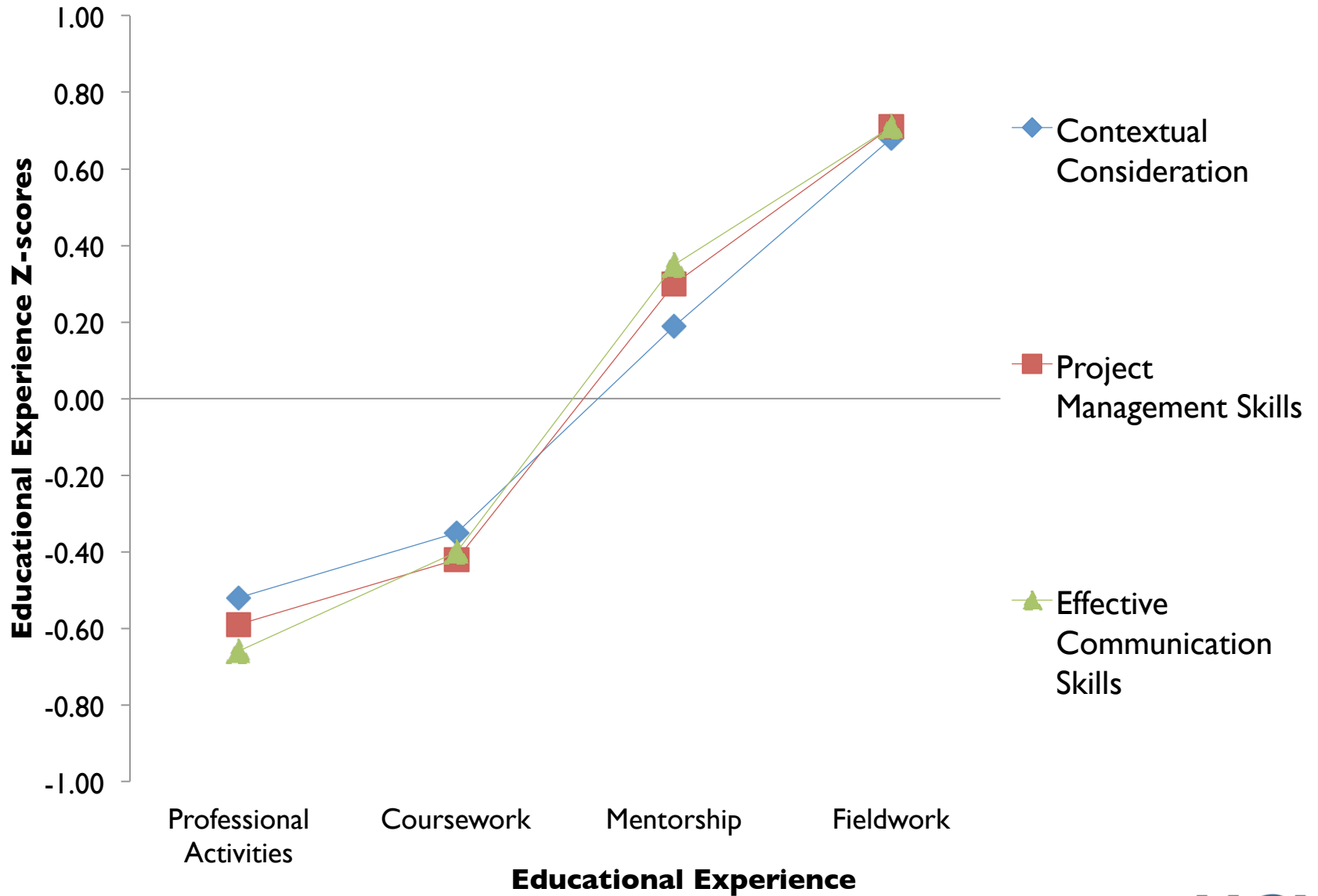
Please select which was more important:

- *Coursework*
- *Mentorship/Advising*

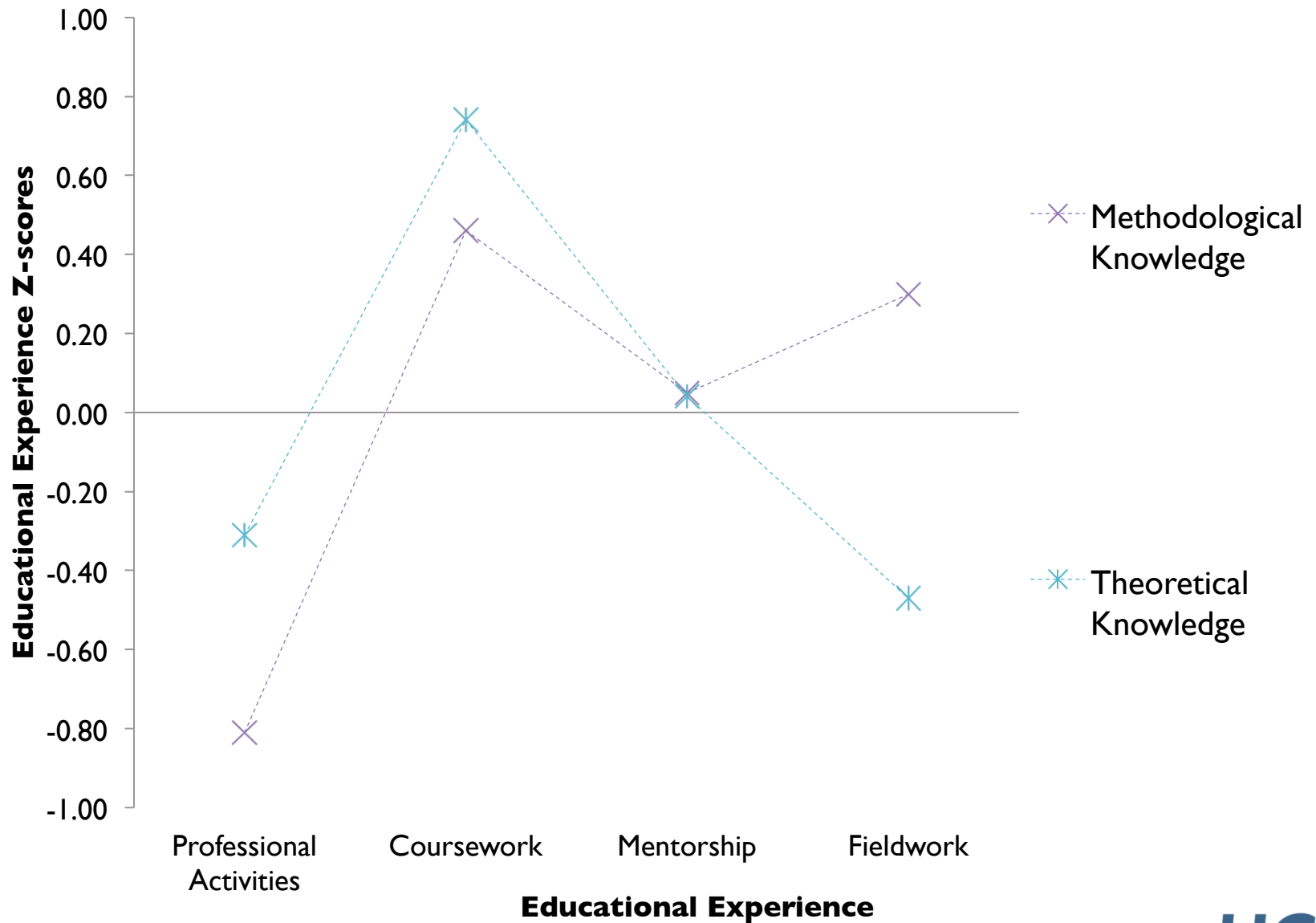
Paired-Comparison Analysis



Paired-Comparison Analysis

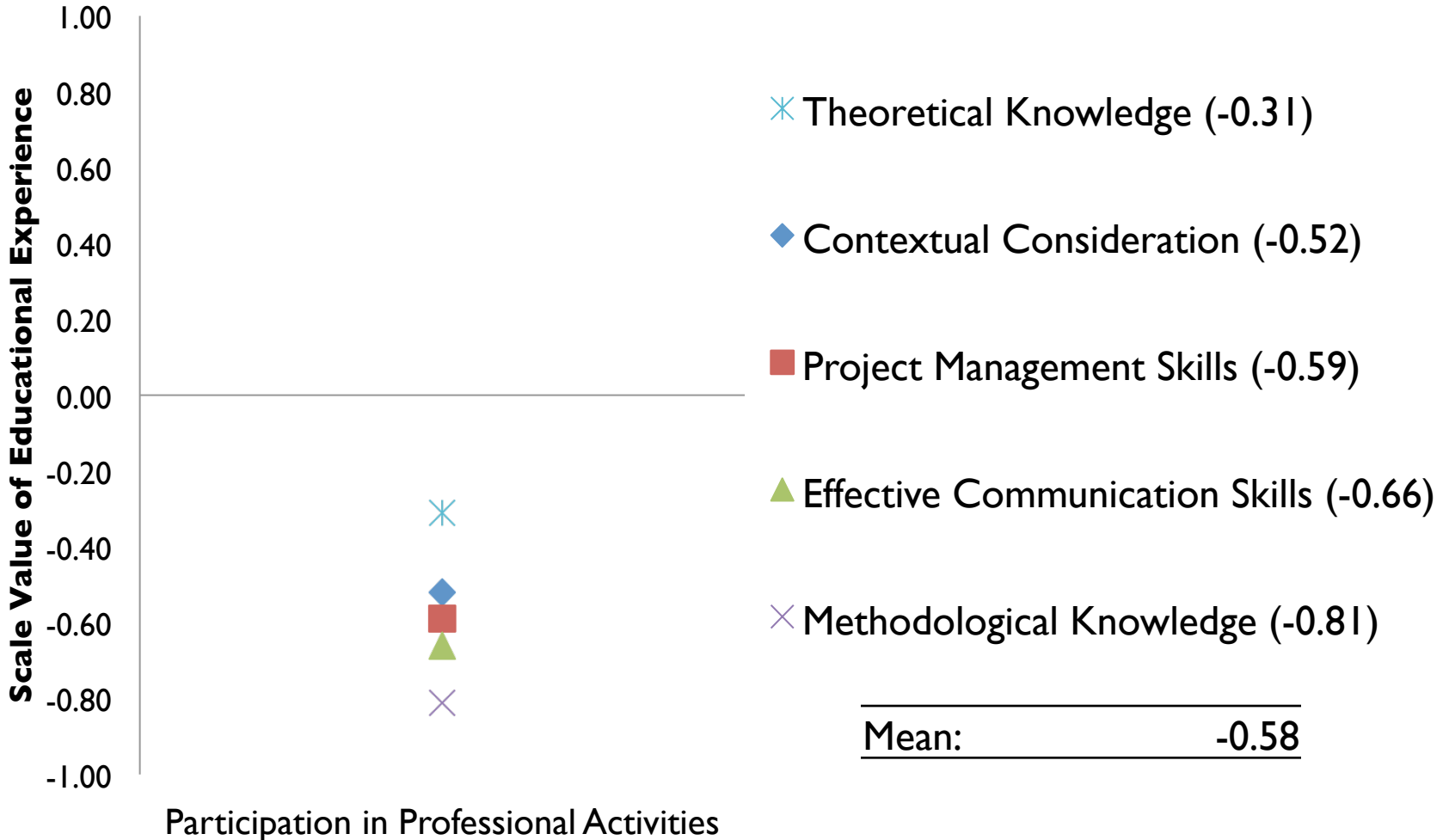


Paired-Comparison Analysis



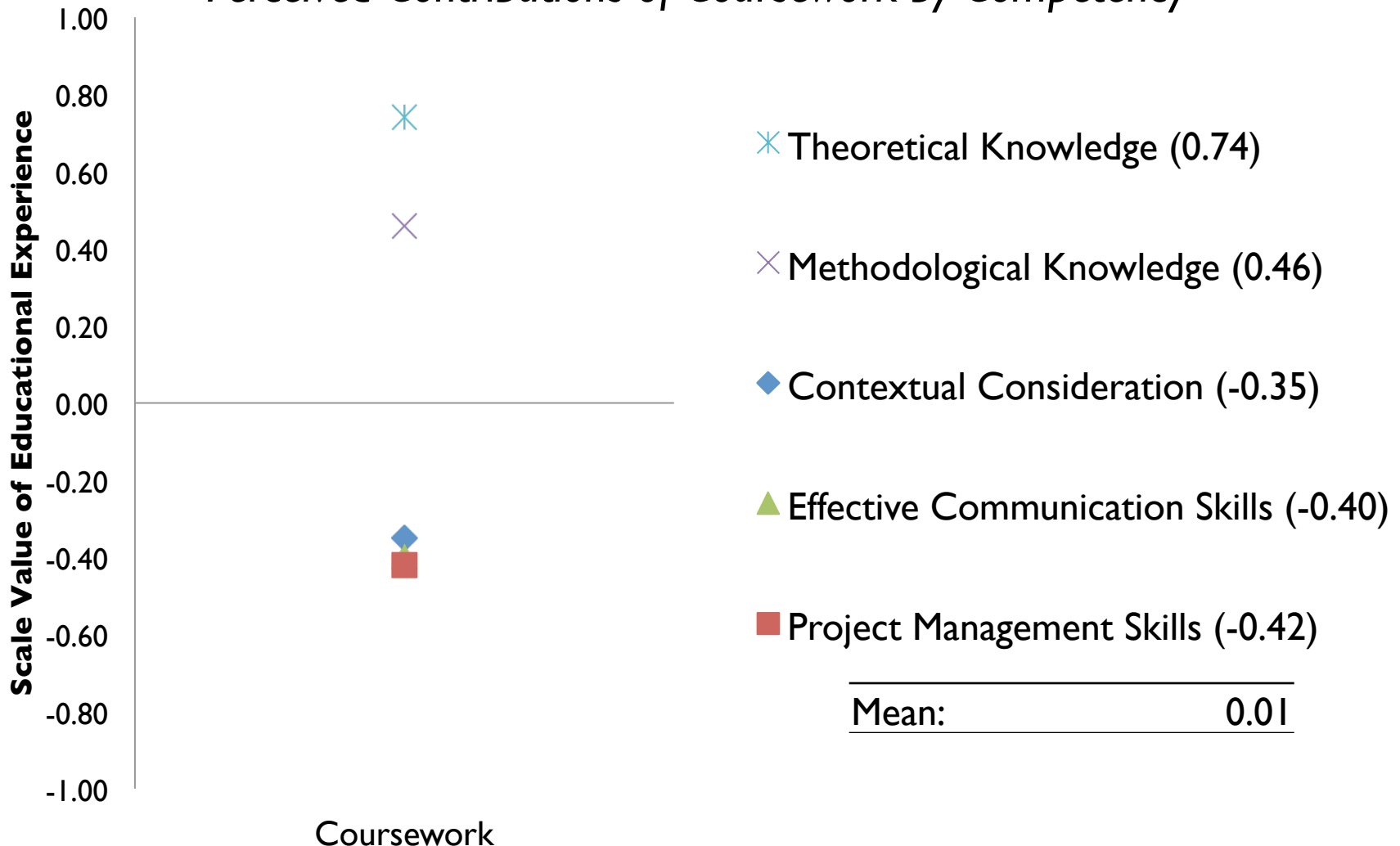
Participation in Professional Activities

Perceived Contributions of Participation in Professional Activities by Competency



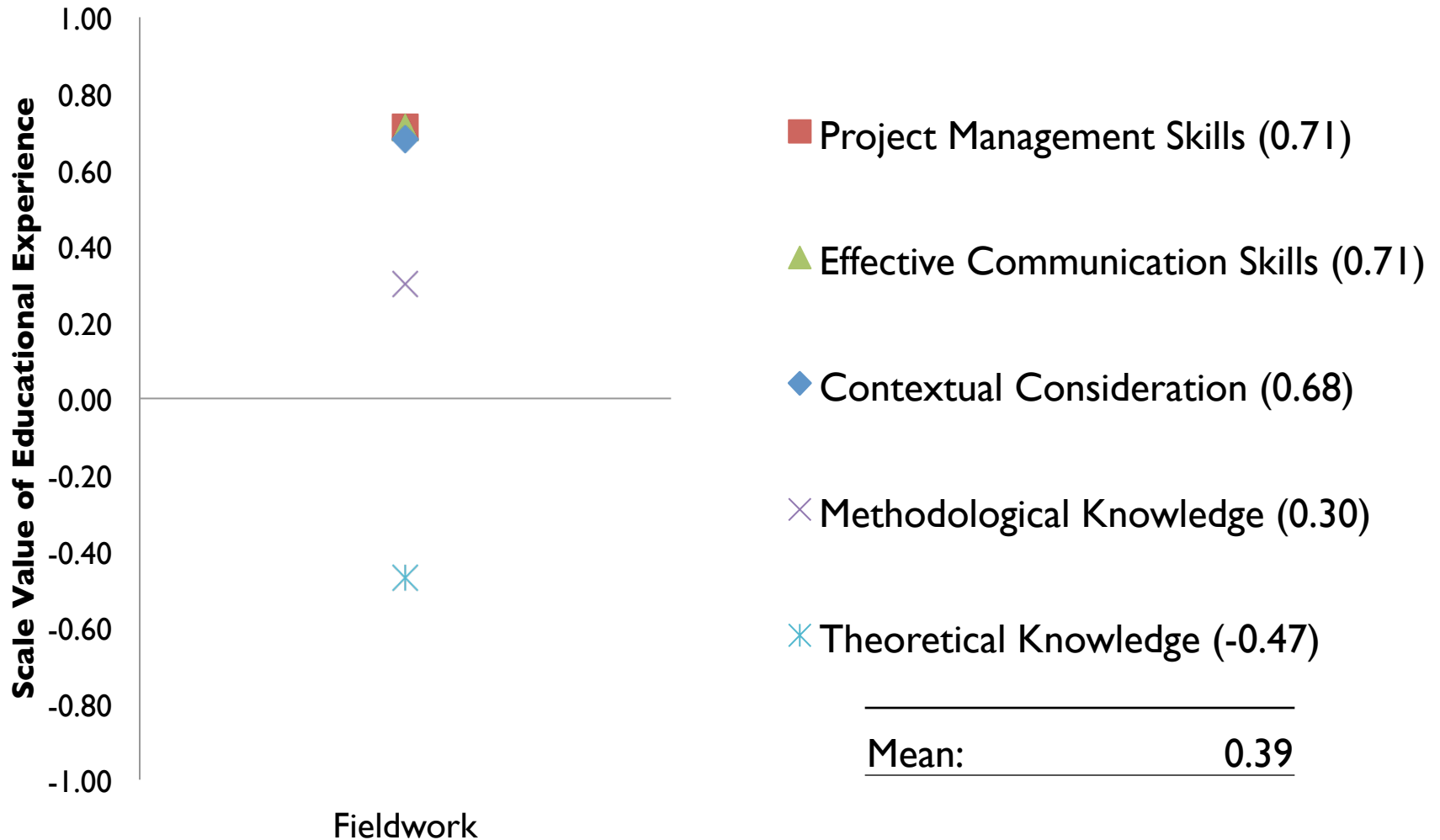
Coursework

Perceived Contributions of Coursework by Competency



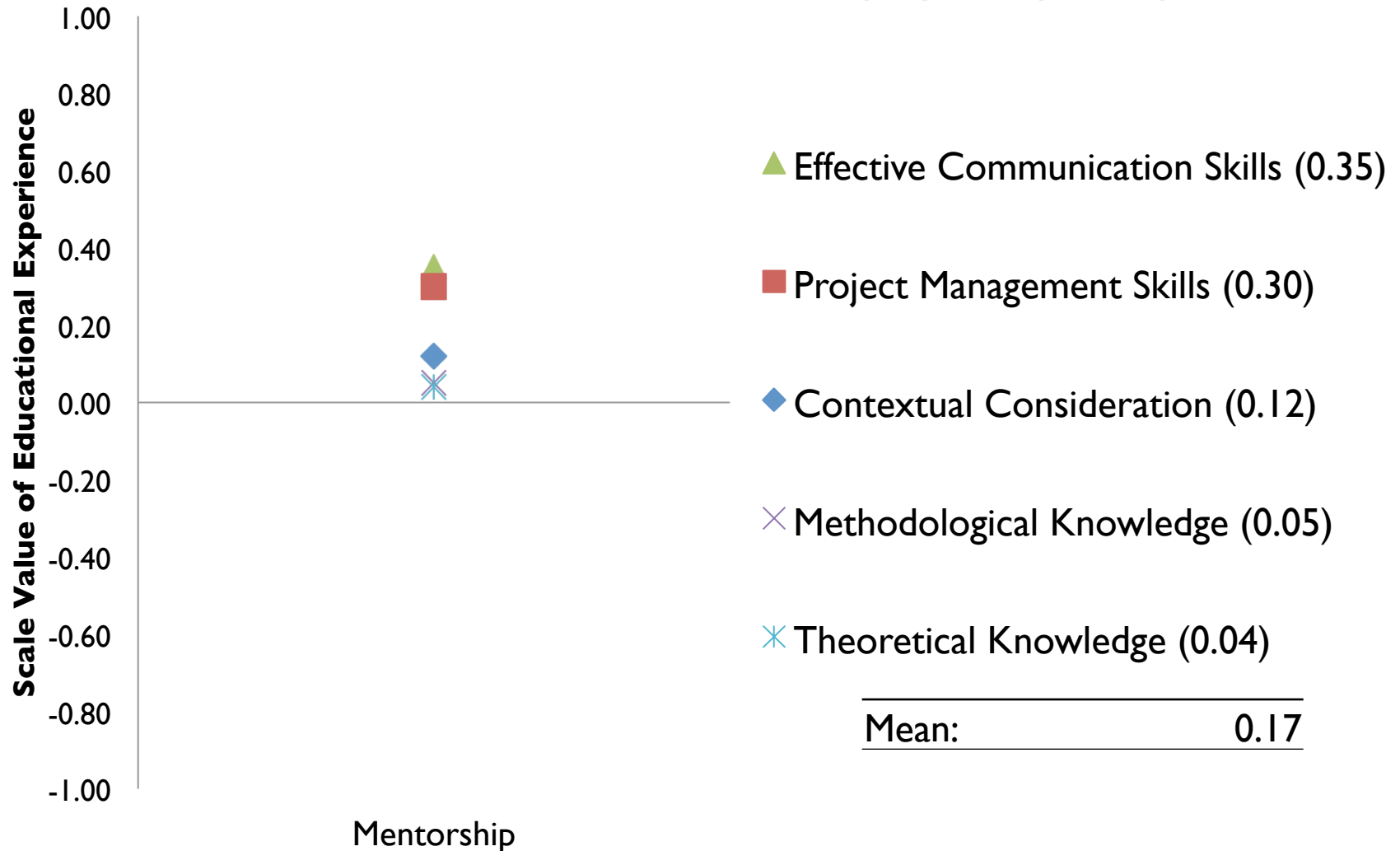
Fieldwork

Perceived Contributions of Fieldwork by Competency



Mentorship

Perceived Contributions of Mentorship by Competency



Limitations

- Small sample size for paired-comparison analysis
- Forced choices between educational experiences doesn't allow for exploration of how relationships between them might be complementary
- There are likely qualitative differences between respondents' educational experiences that were not captured in the study

Implications

We cannot simply teach about the ways and means of doing evaluation, we must also convey the idea of evaluation as a practical, intellectual disposition and outlook on social and political life.

Schwandt, 2008, p.145

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Thank you!

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