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College Student Empowerment and Impact through Community Mentoring: An Evaluation of Strong Women, Strong Girls

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**College Student Empowerment and Impact through Community Mentoring:
An Evaluation of Strong Women, Strong Girls**

Amanda Moser-Shick

Winston School of Education and Social Policy, Merrimack College

2022

MERRIMACK COLLEGE

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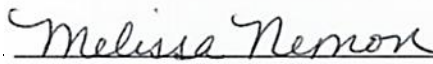
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Abstract

The contributions made by college students as volunteer mentors are incredibly valuable in building our communities; and it is equally valuable to recognize the outcomes experienced by college students through such experiences. This experience positions college student mentors as learners and leaders, and examination of such roles must consider such complexity. This paper examines the outcomes experienced by college student mentors through the nonprofit organization Strong Women, Strong Girls (SWSG). A mixed methods program evaluation was completed that utilized secondary data from SWSG to examine outcomes experienced by the college student program participants. The three key evaluation questions were: (1) *Do mentors increase their sense of value of service and civic engagement?*, (2) *Do mentors develop professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers?*, and (3) *Do mentors develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society?* Through this evaluation, data supported positive outcomes experienced by college student mentors including acquisition of leadership skills and increased learning associated with developing a critical lens to address social issues. Future program evaluations should recognize the depth of the college student mentor experience and promote positive outcomes for these key mentoring program participants.

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**College Student Empowerment and Impact through Community Mentoring:
An Evaluation of Strong Women, Strong Girls**

The power in mentoring relationships comes from their ability to be influential and transformative both for mentees and mentors. This is particularly the case with structured community-based mentoring programs that recognize the opportunity that exists for long-term engagement and development of mentor participants. The importance of engaging community youth with mentors and the associated benefits have been widely highlighted (Castro & Cohen, 2021; Raposa et al., 2019). These identified benefits gained from the presence of a mentoring relationship are desirable for all young people, yet there exists a mentoring gap in which one out of three adolescents do not have someone they identify as a mentor outside of their family (MENTOR, 2021). With this perpetual challenge to augment the number and quality of community-based mentoring relationships, college and university students are increasingly sought as volunteers to fill this mentor gap (Weiler et al., 2013).

Community-based organizations are stepping up to facilitate engaging mentoring programs that actively engage young people and college students as volunteer mentors in meaningful relationships. While such program designs are intentional in their engagement of college student mentors, the organizational missions and program outcomes of such community-based nonprofit organizations focus primarily on community benefits experienced by youth participants rather than also explicitly identifying the outcomes seen by college student mentors. When organizations actively and intentionally engage college students as mentors to work with young people, they must also concern themselves with promoting positive outcomes with these college-aged participants. Often this evaluation of college student outcomes is determined

through university-operated service-learning programs or courses; yet if students are not engaged in these avenues through the institution, these evaluative measures are often missed.

One such organization working in Boston, Massachusetts and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is Strong Women, Strong Girls (SWSG), a “a nonprofit organization championing the next generation of female leaders through our innovative, multi-generational mentoring programs” (SWSG, n.d.-c, para. 1). SWSG provides weekly mentoring sessions to third through fifth grade students who identify as female, non-binary, and gender non-conforming youth utilizing a curriculum that shares the stories of women from history and the present moment. Mentors from local colleges and universities lead these sessions for elementary youth. These college student mentors are themselves part of this chain of mentoring, working collaboratively in a college chapter and connecting to professional women in support of their own personal and professional development. SWSG recognizes the benefits and opportunities to create “cycles of mutual empowerment” (SWSG, 2021). The emphasis placed through the organization on mutual empowerment calls attention to the impact experienced by community youth as well as the college mentors.

College student mentors are situated at a nexus and a crossroads, and their experience should be examined with particular attention paid to that positionality - as mentor and mentee, leader and learner. While the evaluation for elementary youth development outcomes through mentoring relationships is more prevalent, research related to the outcomes for college student mentors is limited. As program participants, these outcomes should also be recognized and taken into account. This project will evaluate the outcomes experienced by college student mentors of the Strong Women, Strong Girls program, to include knowledge and skill acquisition, civic

attitudes, and personal development, through an assessment of available program data and evaluation tools.

Literature Review

There exists a broad range of relationship structures and program designs that enhance intergenerational relationships that support and promote positive youth development. Mentoring programs draw on a foundational model that promotes positive youth development through close, caring relationships that are established with non-parental adults that support social-emotional, cognitive, and identity formation processes (Raposa et al., 2019). Through these relationships, young people benefit in some of the following ways: gaining positive examples of social support systems, benefitting from engagement in meaningful conversation and cognitive processes, and seeing demonstrated models of success.

These mentoring relationships can take place in one-on-one and group settings. Group mentoring activities engage young people in building their social networks by creating a positive social setting for peers that encourages meaningful relationships (Kuperminc et al., 2020). Group mentoring is identified by Kuperminc (2016, p. 2) as a distinct mentoring model:

“Group mentoring refers to a broad array of “natural” or programmatic contexts in which mentoring activity takes place involving one or more mentors and at least two mentees... The activity involved must involve group process (that is, interactions among group members). Group mentoring is thus differentiated from other types of group activities, such as didactic skills training classes that do not incorporate significant opportunities for meaningful, two-way interactions between the mentors and mentees or among the mentees.”

Within group mentoring spaces, mentors must foster positive peer interactions while also modeling healthy communication skills, positive social behavior, and conflict resolution (Kuperminc & Thomason, 2013). Additionally, programs that engage youth and mentors in sustained relationships through repeated interactions encourage mentors to develop recognition and understanding of the broader environmental factors and social context that influences the development of their youth mentees (Hughes et al., 2009). Utilizing college students in the mentoring role to help meet the needs of young people by fostering positive near-peer and adult relationships can lead to stronger outcomes for youth participants. College mentors can provide significant guidance and motivation for mentees (Larsen, 2006) that lead to improved academic performance (Circle, 2003; Destin et al., 2018), and greater self-efficacy (Clarke-Midura et al., 2018).

Youth development outcomes in community mentoring programs often refer to empowering their participants. Empowerment theory is discussed by Zimmerman (2000) in the following way, “empowerment theory connects individual well-being with the larger social and political environment and suggests that people need opportunities to become active in community decision making in order to improve their lives, organizations, and communities” (p. 58). It is further described as “a process by which people gain control over their lives” (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995, p. 570). Empowerment includes both processes and outcomes (Zimmerman, 2000; Ledford et al., 2015) and can be seen through the individual level, organizational level, and community level (Ledford et al., 2015). For individuals, empowering processes include developing decision-making skills, critical awareness, ability to manage available resources, and learning teamwork skills so they are better prepared to be change agents. Empowered outcomes for individuals include acquisition of a sense of control, participatory

awareness, and critical awareness (Ledford et al., 2015). Adolescent youth and college students benefit significantly from opportunities to develop these skills through experiences in intentional mentoring programs.

Volunteer Engagement

Most mentor roles are filled by volunteers. Nonprofit organizations often rely on volunteers to implement programs and provide services that are critical to their mission delivery model. Incorporating volunteer engagement and management practices into a nonprofit organization's operations supports the program by providing a positive volunteer experience, leading to longer-term engagement with the organization.

Volunteers' sense of relatedness and connection to the organization positively contributes to their engagement with the work, their satisfaction with the project or role, and their intention to continue volunteering (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009). Further evidence supports the positive impact on relationship quality of volunteers as a predictor of future intended behavior.

Volunteers who trust the organization, feel satisfied with the organization and their role, feel a sense of committed to it, and feel that they have adequate power to influence the organization are more likely to continue in their volunteer capacity (Bortree & Waters, 2014; Traeger & Alfes, 2019; Studer, 2016). This is also emphasized by the incorporation of reward and recognition efforts into volunteer engagement programs (Cho, Wong, & Chiu, 2020). It is important to consider how this influences volunteers when they are simultaneously recognized as program participants.

Maker Castro and Cohen (2020) add to the research on college student volunteer mentors and identify three characteristics of highly effective mentors, personal connection, mission aligned, and constantly honing their craft. They emphasize the need for structures that support

volunteers throughout their mentoring experience. Without intentional selection and support structures, volunteers will be underprepared and ill-equipped to engage with their adolescent mentees (Maker Castro & Cohen, 2020; Duncan-Andrade, 2007). Community organizations have a responsibility to engage and encourage effective mentors throughout their programs to maximize the outcomes for all participants.

Experiential Learning and Critical Service-Learning

The programmatic inclusion of college students as volunteer mentors necessitates consideration of experiential learning and service-learning pedagogy to further understand how such experiences lead to positive outcomes for college volunteer mentors. In early literature on experiential learning, Kolb (1984) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 41). Kolb and Kolb (2005) identify six key propositions to experiential learning theory. First, learning is a process and should not be defined in terms of outcomes. Second, all learning will be *relearning* in that students must consider their currently held beliefs and ideas to be able to integrate their current understanding with newly acquired information and ideas. Third, learners must find resolution in conflicts, moving between modes of learning through reflection, action, thinking, and feeling. Fourth, learners undertake a holistic process that integrates cognitive thinking with real world behavior. Fifth, learning comes from interactions between a person and their environment whereby new experiences are integrated into current concepts and vice versa. Sixth, and finally, learning is a process through which knowledge is created. As the authors state, “social knowledge is created and recreated in the personal knowledge of the learner” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194). The process of experiential learning is iterative and repetitive, where each experience leads to reflection followed by

thinking and leading to action. Experiential learning theory is foundational in recognizing the opportunity that exists to support meaningful learning with college student mentors.

Wilson and Beard (2003) further expand the understanding of experiential learning through the learning combination lock. They emphasize the importance of a variety of environmental and social factors that influence the learning process through the integration of action and thought. “We must consciously or subconsciously engage with the experience and reflect on what happened, how it happened, etc.” (Wilson & Beard, 2003, p. 89). They recognize experiential learning as “the insight gained through the conscious or unconscious internalization of our own or observed interactions, which build upon our past experiences and knowledge” (Wilson & Beard, 2003, p. 89). The learning combination lock theory then integrates these experiences within the broader environment and recognizes that people interact with these experiences through their senses. It is through this experience, taken in through their senses, that an individual incorporates it with their internal environment and solidifies the learning. It is this ongoing cycle of experience, reflection, and action that encourages meaningful learning experiences that can lead to positive outcomes for participants at all levels of mentoring programs including youth participant mentees and college student volunteer mentors.

While experiential learning theory and the learning combination lock theory focus on creating learning on the individual level, critical service-learning encourages a focus on community-centered social change while engaging in action and reflection in and outside of the classroom. As Mitchell explains, “critical service-learning programs encourage students to see themselves as agents of social change and use the experience of service to address and respond to injustice in communities” (2008, p. 51). It requires a balance of student learning outcomes with a sustained emphasis on community-centered social change. For college students, this includes

recognizing and understanding the ways that service can make a difference as well as those ways that it can perpetuate systems of inequality. Critical service-learning fosters a critical consciousness in students that encourages them to take action and also engage in reflection to “examine both the historical precedents of the social problems addressed in their service placements and the impact of their personal action/inaction in maintaining and transforming those problems” (Hudgins, 2020, p. 54). Critical service-learning looks to create long-term change in students’ thinking and should:

“empower students to see themselves as agents capable of acting together with others to build coalitions, foster public awareness, and create social change. Our goal is to avoid the trap of the cultural safari, instead discussing and demonstrating the tools the students will require to pursue the objectives they set forth within the engaged parameters of their own diverse lives and concerns. At the very least, this should short-circuit the stance of charitable pity that traditional volunteerism often produces” (Forbes et al., 1999, p. 167).

While service-learning most often refers to academic credit-bearing coursework, these key concepts are similarly applicable, and crucial, in programs designed and operated by nonprofit organizations. Incorporating historical context and implications for relevant social issues, engaging in meaningful reflection, and encouraging action and engagement beyond a volunteer’s service role will encourage a growing critical consciousness in volunteers that supports their development as agents for social change.

Civic Knowledge and Engagement

As is often the case with service-learning programs, increased civic knowledge and engagement are recognized as positive outcomes associated with the college student mentor experience (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009; Finley, 2011; Weiler, 2013). The

understanding of civic knowledge and engagement is complex and can differ depending on the context and goals. There are three aspects to identify here: civic knowledge, civic identity, and civic engagement. Civic knowledge is considered within its immediate domain-specific context. This may include understandings of political decision-making processes, grantmaking and nonprofit operations, current and past social movements, or social service agencies (Hatcher, 2011). Like in experiential learning contexts, within civic learning programs, civic knowledge must underscore that knowledge is co-created in community and that it should lead to action and social change. Civic identity is defined as “when people see themselves as active participants in society with a strong commitment to work with others toward the public good” (Hatcher, 2011, p. 85). The formation of a civic identity is a personal matter, focusing on an individual's sense of themselves and their connection to others. Civic engagement, however, centers on action. Musil defines it in the following way, “civic engagement is acting on a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities that encompasses the notions of global citizenship and interdependence, participation in building civil society, and empowering individuals as agents of positive social change to promote social justice locally and globally” (2009, p. 59). These understandings of civic knowledge, identity, and engagement emphasize the importance of understanding our engagement in community, through our individual motivations, interactions with civic institutions and systems, and action taken for social change. These skills and motivations are built on experiences throughout one’s lifetime.

Strong Women, Strong Girls

Strong Women, Strong Girls was founded in 2000 in Boston, Massachusetts as a student group of college women who provided weekly mentoring sessions to local elementary students. Since that first year of six college mentors and 30 elementary students, SWSG incorporated as a

nonprofit organization in 2004; expanded to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2006; and has grown to provide mentoring programming annually to more than 1,200 girls across both cities (SWSG, 2021). Central to SWSG is their emphasis on multi-generational mentoring that creates mutual cycles of empowerment. The program structure engages girls and women in three phases. First, elementary school girls from over 80 partner sites participate in weekly group mentoring sessions during the school year. Through their participation, girls are expected to “build supportive-growth fostering relationships with strong female role models and their peers; practice skills like leadership, teamwork, and critical thinking; gain exposure to varied academic and career paths” (SWSG, 2021, para. 7). Second, college mentors facilitate the weekly mentoring sessions for local elementary girls and participate in a college chapter affiliated with their college or university. In college chapters, mentors collaborate with their peers to prepare mentoring sessions, participate in reflection activities, and take on leadership roles in the chapter. These core experiences of weekly mentoring workshops and chapter meetings serve as critical opportunities for mentors to learn as they make meaning from their sessions and reflect in supporting environments, pieces that are central to successful experiential learning and critical service-learning. Through these experiences, college mentors should “build positive relationships with girls and encourage their aspirations; develop as leaders and professionals through facilitation and networking; and receive mentorship and guidance from professional women” (SWSG, 2021, para. 8). Finally, professional women engage in SWSG in the role of strong leaders. Strong leaders provide one-on-one or small group mentoring and advising for the college mentors and chapters. SWSG strives for professional women to “invest in the next generation through Group Mentoring and one-on-one mentoring matches; network and share experiences with a diverse community of women; and build capacity as role models and leaders.” (SWSG,

2021, para. 9). It is this cycle of mutual empowerment connecting elementary school girls, college mentors, and professional women that SWSG utilizes to continue to empower girls and women to “realize her inner strengths to dream and do.” (SWSG, n.d.-d, para. 3).

Nonprofit organizations like Strong Women, Strong Girls have an opportunity to serve, engage, and empower multiple generations of individuals in meaningful mentoring relationships. Such program designs must take into account the needs of each of these stakeholder groups. Therefore, an evaluation of SWSG’s outcomes should explore the intersections of these fields to understand the outcomes for college student mentors.

Current Project

This project’s focus will be an evaluation of the impact of the SWSG program with college student mentor volunteer, with particular attention to outcomes experienced such as their sense of the value of service and civic engagement, developing professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers, and developing a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society. To do so, this evaluation will incorporate present understandings of mentoring, volunteer management, experiential learning and critical service-learning, and civic knowledge and engagement. Doing so will increase the understanding of the college student mentor experience as it builds toward lasting personal development and social action.

Evaluation Plan

While the importance of youth mentoring programs and the richness that they bring to communities are widely recognized, the value of the mentor experience as a transformative learning space is often missed and rarely investigated. Not only do mentors contribute to nonprofit outputs by leading mentoring sessions and serving as role models, by the program serves to benefit their development through the experience as well. However, without intentional

evaluation of the mentor experience, these outcomes can be easily overlooked. College student mentors, particularly within the context of a multigenerational mentoring program, are situated as both mentors and mentees; evaluative measures of this experience must take this complex experience into account. This evaluation will focus on the program outcomes experienced by college student mentors in the Strong Women, Strong Girls program. In doing so, I hope to provide the organization with information regarding how mentor alumni understand their experience with SWSG and the lasting impact of the program.

Describe the Program

Strong Women, Strong Girls (SWSG) is a multi-generational mentoring program that works to empower women and girls to build confidence, leadership skills, and supporting relationships through mentorship (SWSG, 2021). SWSG aims “to empower girls to imagine a broader future through a curriculum grounded on female role models delivered by college women mentors, who are themselves mentored by professional women” (SWSG, n.d.-d, para. 2). SWSG engages participants at three levels: first, are youth participants who are female-identifying people in third through fifth grades who participate in mentoring sessions and events; second, are College Mentors who are students at SWSG partner colleges and work in small teams to deliver the mentoring curriculum; and third, are professional women who participate as Strong Leaders serving as role models and advocates for College Mentors. These layers of mentoring contribute to the SWSG cycles of mutual empowerment that encourage and empower participants at all levels.

SWSG operates with community and college partners in two geographic areas, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Boston, Massachusetts and surrounding communities. The College Mentor experience centers their work delivering the SWSG curriculum in weekly sessions with

girl mentees throughout the academic year. This curriculum includes histories of female role models as well as opportunities to practice skills through activities and discuss their successes and challenges as a group. Outside of the mentoring sessions, college mentors join with their peers in campus chapters associated with their higher education institution. Through these weekly meetings, mentors prepare for mentor session, discuss challenges, and build community with one another. Chapters rely on college student leadership to operate and allow members the opportunity to practice and stretch their skills to build a supporting student culture of inclusion (SWSG, n.d.-a). College student mentors are also provided with the opportunity to work with a Strong Leader who is a professional woman who serves as a role model and provides a professional touchpoint for chapter members (SWSG, n.d.-b). Being matched with a Strong Leader and participating in this aspect of the program is open to all, though not all college mentors choose to participate in these one-on-one mentoring matches.

College mentors connect with SWSG through key activities across a program year which aligns with the higher education and elementary school calendars with a Fall and Spring semester. All mentors participate in enrollment and training activities. These serve to orient mentors to the SWSG model as well as provide skill-based training to prepare them to facilitate the weekly mentoring sessions. One of the most significant touchpoints of the college mentor experience is the weekly after-school mentoring sessions with the girl mentees. The mentor sessions encourage trusting relationships between participants and with college mentors as they explore the role models highlighted through the curriculum. In parallel to the mentoring sessions are chapter meetings which occur weekly with peers from their higher education institution. Chapter meetings provide community building spaces with their peers while preparing for and reflecting on their after-school mentoring experiences. College mentors may participate in

SWSG for one semester, though most participate for at least one academic year. And many continue with their college chapter throughout the college career.

Key Evaluation Questions

This study seeks to respond to specific outcomes experienced by college student mentors through the Strong Women, Strong Girls program. Program staff are interested in identifying the lasting impressions of SWSG mentor experience. In addition, to inform their alumni engagement opportunities, SWSG is looking to identify ways to reconnect alumni to the organization. Key questions of this study include the following: Do mentors increase their sense of value of service and civic engagement? Do mentors develop professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers? How can mentor alumni contribute to the continued success of the SWSG?

Define Your Evaluation Goals

- Goal 1: Does a mentoring experience with SWSG increase the college student mentors' sense of the value of service and civic engagement?
- Goal 2: Does SWSG contribute to college student mentors' development of professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers?
- Goal 3: Does Strong Women, Strong Girls meet its anticipated outcome that college student mentors will develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society?

Target Audience

The key stakeholders of this evaluation include those closely associated with SWSG, including central staff members. The Chief Executive Officer and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Director are two key administrative and leadership roles that touch all aspects of the SWSG organization across both geographic locations. Additionally, by providing a closer look

and more evaluative examination of previously collected data, this project will provide valuable measures and recommendations that would otherwise take limited staff time primarily from the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Director. In addition, the Program and Community Engagement Coordinators have responsibilities related to the engagement of SWSG alumni from all levels of program involvement, including girl participants, college student mentors, and Strong Leader mentors. This evaluation can provide information that will inform the future alumni engagement efforts which are identified as an important measure of engagement in the current strategic plan.

While the SWSG administrative leadership and staff are primary stakeholders for this project, the Board of Directors provide strategic leadership for the organization and will be able to utilize this evaluation as a measure of the current outcomes for college student mentors as well the potential for future improvement and investment in the program. Campus partners and external funders should also not be overlooked. As the organization seeks to leverage the work that it is doing and the outcomes that it sees, the recommendations from this project can be utilized to garner support in buoying current partnerships or expanding to fill identified needs and opportunities.

Data Sources and Information Available for Evaluation

DATA SOURCE	WHEN WAS IT COLLECTED	METHOD	INDICATORS / MEASURES
Alumni Outreach Report and Survey Data	Spring 2021	Report; Survey	Responses re: critical lens for viewing social issues; value of service and civic engagement; professional and leadership skills developed
Mentor Demographic Data	2019, 2020, 2021	Survey	General demographic data
Mentor Alumni Focus Group(s)	Jan 2022	Focus Group	Questions will be primarily developed by the SWSG staff; I will include questions (TBD) related to sense project goals
Mentor Survey Data	Spring 2021	Survey	Baseline data related evaluation goals

Responsibilities Chart

NAME	ORGANIZATION OR AFFILIATION	RESPONSIBILITIES	CONTACT INFORMATION
Amanda Moser	Merrimack College	Act as evaluator; provide communication to SWSG as project progresses; share completed evaluation and recommendations with SWSG	mosera@merrimack.edu 484-433-9266
Patricia McGuiness	Strong Women, Strong Girls	Serve as primary contact for SWSG; provide data sources	pmcguiness@swsg.org 617-459-1500
Program and Community Engagement Coordinator: Allison Andreola and Michi Heckler	Strong Women, Strong Girls	Coordinate and Facilitate focus groups	aandreola@swsg.org mheckler@swsg.org

Implementation Timeline

December 2021	Collect and review initial data sources Develop evaluation measures including variables Develop focus group questions
January 2022	Support Focus Group implementation with SWSG staff Code qualitative data sources
February 2022	Implement evaluation tools Develop initial findings and recommendations
March 2022	Present findings and recommendations to SWSG stakeholders Finalize paper
April 2022	4/12: Full capstone draft due 4/27: Submit final capstone paper for publication

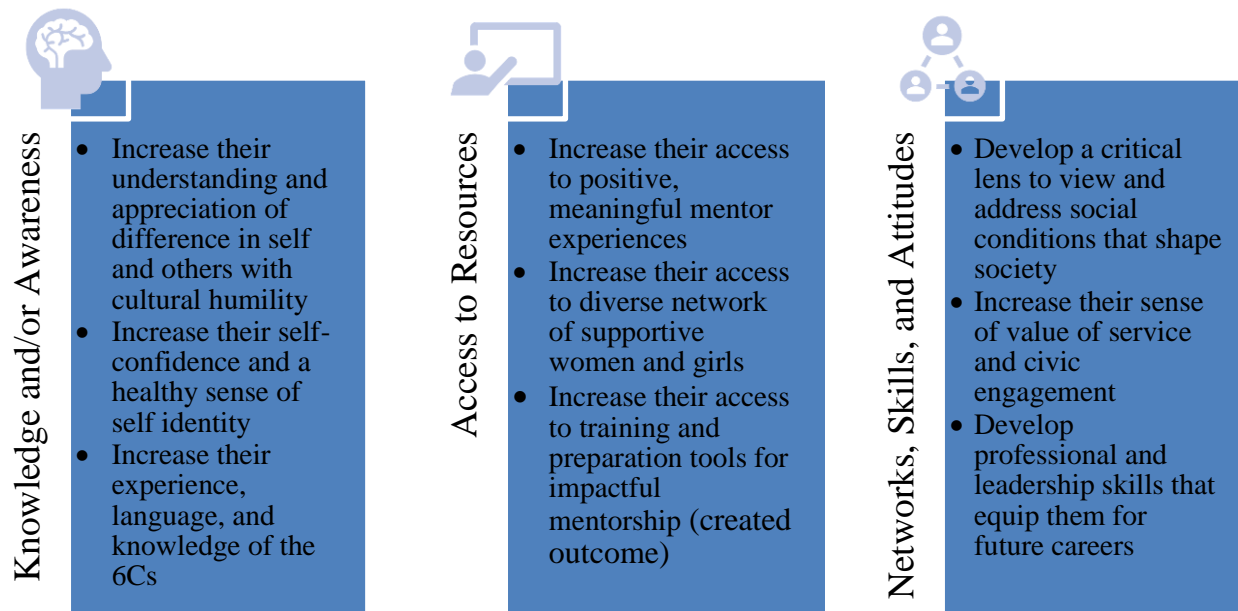
Program Logical Framework

The logical framework included below draws from the SWSG program materials and logic model shared as part of this project. These outcomes are particular to the involvement of

college student mentors involved with the program. This evaluation will focus on the increase of networks, skills, and attitudes by developing a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society; increasing a sense of value of service and civic engagement; and developing professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers. These have been identified by SWSG to contribute to their organizational mission and strategic plan initiatives.

Figure 1: Strong Women, Strong Girls Key Outcomes

Through Strong Women, Strong Girls, college student mentors will...



Individual Impacts

- Increased participation by college student volunteers
- Understanding of college student volunteer motivation
- Increased professional and leadership skills that equip mentor alumni for success in future careers
- Increased sense of value of service and civic engagement
- Renewed volunteer commitment to organizational mission and programs

- Increased sense of belonging and connection through volunteer experiences
- Improved training opportunities/workshops for returning/continuing college student volunteers

Community Impacts

- New volunteer opportunities created for long-term volunteers
- Improved volunteer management systems enacted
- Increased number of college student volunteers who continue with a nonprofit organization longer than one academic semester
- Increased connection between college student volunteer alumni and organizations
- Increased awareness on college campuses of organizational missions and program and volunteer opportunities
- Increased network of individuals who value service and civic engagement

Structural Impacts

- Improved collaborations between nonprofit organizations and colleges/universities
- Shared commitment to college student development and effective, critical community engagement
- Improved program delivery supported by long-term college-student volunteer engagement
- Deeper connection to organizational missions that last beyond active program involvement
- Increased partnerships between campus organizations/personnel and nonprofit organization staff

- Increased awareness and understanding of best practices related to sustainable college student volunteer engagement
- Recognition of nonprofit staff/administrators as community educators, playing an important role in college student development experiences

Implementation Notes

Upon entering into this evaluation project, the researcher and organization agreed upon a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the responsibilities of the participants and the anticipated deliverables of the project. Additionally, the anonymity and security of the data is respected through a confidentiality agreement. These documents support an effective implementation of the evaluation and provide all parties with a common understanding of the project. Researchers undertaking a similar evaluation are encouraged to enter into similar agreements before implementation.

Methodology

The Strong Women Strong Girl (SWSG) organization works to increase access for young girls to engage with and learn from strong, adult female mentors. This is done through a mix of weekly mentoring sessions between young girls and strong, female adults that follow a prescribed curriculum that fosters empowerment and leadership skills. The primary mentors for the young participants are college students who participate as volunteers through their local college chapters. Both groups of girls and women are seen as participants in the SWSG program benefitting from the curricular implementation. Through annual and semesterly training sessions as well as weekly chapter meetings, college student volunteer mentors prepare to implement the mentoring sessions for the elementary students while also developing skills and relationships through their college chapter. Using existing datasets at SWSG, a mixed methods program

evaluation was conducted to examine specific aspects of SWSG. In this case, the key focus was on how mentor alumni contribute to the continued success of SWSG.

Research Questions

The primary goals of this evaluation are to examine the impact of the Strong Women, Strong Girls program on college student volunteer mentors. Research questions include:

1. Do mentors increase their sense of value of service and civic engagement?
2. Do mentors develop professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers?
3. Do mentors develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society?

Materials

Three secondary data sources were used in this project included the SWSG Alumnae Survey - Mentors, FY21 Spring Mentor Survey, and Mentor Alumnae Focus Group.

The SWSG Alumnae Survey – Mentors was performed by Strong Women, Strong Girls in the spring of 2021 to collect data from former college student mentors. The survey included questions around the impact of the Strong Women, Strong Girls program experienced by mentor alumnae, including mentor reflections on what they learned from their experience with SWSG; the influence of SWSG on their personal, academic, or professional lives; and how participation in SWSG helped at their current stage of life.

The FY21 Spring Mentor Survey was distributed at the conclusion of the 2021 spring program semester to mentors who had completed at least one semester of mentoring. The survey asked questions about a variety of topics, including: the mentoring experience, program site and sessions, curriculum implementation, and the college chapter.

The final data source utilized was a focus group of SWSG college mentor alumnae which was held in January 2022. Participants provided responses to questions reflecting on their SWSG mentoring experience, such as the skills gained by SWSG mentors; the influence of SWSG on mentors' personal and professional careers; alumnae connection to mentoring; how SWSG influenced their sense of the value of service and civic engagement; and their connection to the SWSG community.

Procedure

To begin this project, Strong Women, Strong Girls was identified as a partner organization for their programmatic engagement of college student mentors and identified mentor outcomes. The organization was approached and asked to participate in the process. A memorandum of understanding (see Appendix A) and confidentiality agreement (see Appendix B) were agreed upon and signed by the involved parties outlining the expectations of the project and availability of information. This included anticipated project outcomes, such as an exploration of the outcomes experienced by college student mentors of the SWSG program, to include knowledge and skill acquisition, civic attitudes, and personal development, through review of program data and evaluation tools, and improved understanding of mentor motivations and retention. Meetings were held with SWSG staff to review and identify the project's evaluation questions.

Organizational data was then identified and acquired, and analysis began using Google spreadsheets and survey analytics. All three data sources (SWSG Alumnae Survey - Mentors, FY21 Spring Mentor Survey, and Mentor Alumnae Focus Group) were examined using thematic qualitative analysis. It is important to note that the qualitative data had already been thematically coded by SWSG staff, however they were not assessed in light of these evaluation questions.

Quantitative analysis was used in review of the survey questions, as well as respondent and mentor demographics, pulling out key demographic and descriptive findings.

Using a dynamic mixed methods approach, both the qualitative and quantitative data was examined collectively to determine insights regarding the evaluation questions. Relevant questions and response themes were identified that most closely related to the evaluation questions of this project.

Once this data was assessed against each evaluation question, the findings were presented in a PowerPoint slide deck (see Appendix C) and shared with SWSG staff including organization leadership and program team members. Feedback provided by the organizational staff was utilized to craft a set of recommendations to inform SWSG programmatic operations and future evaluations.

Results

The three data sources analyzed provided information related to the evaluation questions of this project to speak to the outcomes experienced by college mentors with SWSG.

Evaluation Question 1: Do mentors increase their sense of value of service and civic engagement?

In examining this question, the Alumnae Survey and Focus Groups datasets were utilized. The questions from the Alumnae Survey were “*What did you learn from your experience with SWSG?*”, “*How, if at all, did SWSG influence your personal, academic, or professional life?*”, and “*How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life?*” The two questions from the Focus Group that supported this evaluation question were “*How is mentoring still a part of your life?*” and “*Did the value of service and civic engagement increase through your participation in SWSG?*”

In response to the first question, “What did you learn from your experience with SWSG?”, there were 54 total respondents. There were 14.81% (n=8) who explicitly stated that community investment/service was something they learned. Further, 18.52% (n=10) stated that they learned the importance of mentors/role models/friendship. There were 54 total responses to the second question, “How, if at all, did SWSG influence your persona, academic, or professional life?” with 14.81% (n=8) who stated valuing mentoring, volunteer, and service was influenced by SWSG. Responses to the third question, “How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life?”, totaled 65. There were 16.92% (n=11) of responses that referenced community service (i.e., engagement with community, getting involved, importance of public service). In addition, 16.92% (n=11) of respondents indicated mentorship (i.e., seeking out strong, like-minded women and mentors, the importance of positive role models, and being a role model).

The focus group engaged three participants and provided supportive, though limited, data. Through the focus group, when asked how mentoring is still a part of their lives, two respondents shared that they are not currently volunteering but are open to or looking for opportunities. One participant stated that the values and tenets of service and mentorship are critical to her approach to her career:

“I never approach anything as an ‘I have all the information. I’m giving you information generously.’ That’s not. It’s always collaborative. And that’s how I approach my current job... Mentoring shaped everything and is how I approach all of my conversations with young people. How I build trust with young people. And my kind of outlook and my theory of change has definitely been impacted by that because everything is always a conversation.”

In response to the question “did your sense of the value of service and civic engagement increase through participation in SWSG?”, two participants stated learning and recognizing the value of consistency in volunteering. As one participant stated, “For me, this idea of consistency was super important. And showing up and then showing up again and again and again; I realized how important that was and that really came from kind of for the first time in my life showing up consistently in a volunteer capacity at the same place.”

Evaluation Question 2: Do mentors develop professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers?

All three data sets were included in reviewing this evaluation question. The three questions were identified from the Alumnae Survey were “*What did you learn from your experience with SWSG?*”, “*How, if at all, did SWSG influence your personal, academic, or professional life?*”, and “*How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life?*” Questions from the Mentor Survey were “*I am able to voice my concerns to my chapter and be heard*”, “*My professional skill set has developed as a result of my time in SWSG*”, and “*My experience with SWSG has helped me clarify my personal and/or professional goals.*” The included questions from the Focus Group were “*What are some of the major skills you took with you and continue to utilize?*” and “*Did participation as an SWSG mentor increase your confidence?*”

Responses from alumnae to the first question, “What did you learn from your experience with SWSG?”, totaled 54, with 12.96% (n=7) of respondents identified confidence/using their voice. In addition, 27.78% (n=15) stated leadership and responsibility were acquired and 11.11% (n=6) learned facilitation/conversation skills. Further, 14.81% (n=8) respondents explicitly stated they learned mentoring skills while 20.37% (n=11) acquired youth development/teaching skills.

Learning professional skills was referenced by 27.78% (n=15), and 3.70% (n=2) identified learning about their career path.

When asked about the influence of SWSG on their personal, academic, or professional life, there were 54 total respondents. About 14.81% (n=8) shared that leadership/identifying as a leader was an influence of SWSG. Another 7.40% (n=4) responses referred gaining confidence and 3.70% (n=2) included job related/professional skills.

In response to the third question from the Alumnae Survey, “How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life?”, there were 65 total respondents. About 30.77% (n=20) of responses referenced professional influences, including help with getting a job/networking, impact on career path, and public speaking. Additionally, 18.52% (n=10) identified leadership (i.e., opportunities, identifying as a leader, or leading by example) as being helped by their participation in SWSG. Responses also included 10.77% (n=7) who identified acquisition of professional skills, including public speaking, facilitation, conflict management, problem-solving, behavior management and adaptability. Relationship building skills, such as the importance of showing up, identifying boundaries, and listening/learning, were discussed by 7.60% (n=5) of responses, while 6.15% (n=4) stated that creating a positive learning experience and youth development experience were influential.

The Mentor Survey included three questions related to this evaluation questions. A four point agree to disagree scale was utilized to gather mentor respondents to the follow questions. When asked to respond to “I am able to voice my concerns to my chapter and be heard”, there were 159 total responses, where 98.74% (n=157) responded agree or strongly agree. Encouraged to reflect on their SWSG experience, 158 mentors responded to the prompt “My professional skill set has developed as a result of my time in SWSG” with 94.30% stating agree or strongly

agree (n=149). Further, there were 159 respondents to the prompt “My experience with SWSG has helped me clarify my personal and/or professional goals” and 88.05% (n=140) responded affirmatively.

Focus group respondents identified skills such as leadership, cultivating a network, coaching, and administrative skills. One respondent shared how her experience with SWSG impacted her career:

“I was very immersed in the administrative side of things and I think that’s something that, in a very logistical way, was incredibly helpful as I thought about transitioning into a classroom and working with the different needs of students... And then I think something else that, the warmer, more empathetic side of things, was just the... finding the thing that makes people most proud about themselves and really celebrating them for that.”

Additionally, when asked if participation in SWSG increased their confidence, two respondents shared they found a community and network; two responses noted growth in their confidence and sense of their own empowerment.

Evaluation Question 3: Do mentors develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society?

Survey questions from the Alumnae Survey to inform this evaluation question were “What did you learn from your experience with SWSG?”, “How, if at all, did SWSG influence your personal, academic, or professional life?”, and “How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life?”. The Mentor Survey provided four questions related to this evaluation question. These questions were “I have further explored concepts of DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion] on my own”, “I feel more confident having race-based

discussions”, “*I have increased my knowledge of strong female role models*”, and “*As a result of my experience with SWSG, I better understand social justice issues (i.e., race, class, gender)*”.

The Focus Group included two questions that provided relevant data. These questions were “*To what extent did participation in SWSG help you increase your awareness of social issues?*” and “*In what ways did SWSG contribute to your world view?*”

In response to the first question, “What did you learn from your experience with SWSG?”, there were 54 total responses. About 24.07% (n=13) stated that empowering others, female empowerment, or feminism were important lessons. An additional 12.96% (n=7) of responses referenced diversity, equity, and inclusion work or privilege. The question “How, if at all, did SWSG influence your personal, academic, or professional life?” had 54 responses. Of these, 7.41% (n=4) included understanding the importance of social justice and diversity, equity, and inclusion, while 12.96% (n=7) included the importance of feminism and empowering women and girls. The question “How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life?” had 65 total respondents. Whereby 12.31% (n=8) of responses mentioned feminism/empowerment, or social justice, and 7.69% (n=5) included perspective taking (i.e., recognizing difference, respect for all walks of life).

When these results were initially shared with SWSG staff, they encouraged looking at this data through a demographic analysis for alumnae respondents whose graduation year was 2017 to 2020 to reflect a programmatic shift that offered additional diversity, equity, and inclusion training and language in the curriculum. In response to the question “What did you learn from your experience with SWSG?”, there were 31 total responses from the years 2017 to 2020. Of those, 25.8% (n=8) stated that empowering others, female empowerment, or feminism were important lessons. An additional 19.4% (n=6) of responses referenced diversity, equity, and

inclusion work or privilege. The question “How, if at all, did SWSG influence your personal, academic, or professional life?” had 31 responses. Of these, 4.8% (n=2) included understanding the importance of social justice and diversity, equity, and inclusion, while 9.7% (n=3) included the importance of feminism and empowering women and girls. Advocacy (for myself and others) was also referenced by 12.9% (n=4); this represents all the responses with this theme from the survey. The question “How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life?” had 37 total respondents. For those respondents from 2017 to 2020, 13.5% (n=5) of responses mentioned feminism/empowerment, or social justice, and 8.1% (n=3) included perspective taking (i.e., recognizing difference, respect for all walks of life). Another 10.8% (n=4) also mentioned advocacy.

Responses from the mentor survey included the following items which were asked on a four-point agree-disagree scale. There were 157 total responses to “I have further explored concepts of DEI on my own”; 96.82% (n=52) stated they agree or strongly agree with an average score of 3.59. Also with 157 total responses, 97.45% (n=153) agree or strongly agree with the statement “I feel more confident having race-based conversations” with an average score of 3.57. Almost all, 99.37% (n=157), of the 158 total respondents, with an average score of 3.74, replied affirmatively to “I have increased my knowledge of strong female role models”. Finally, a total of 159 responses were gathered in response to “As a result of my experience with SWSG, I better understand social justice issues (i.e., race, class, gender)”; 97.48% (n=155) responded with agree or strongly agree with an average score of 3.59.

When asked about how SWSG increased their awareness of social issues, participants identified particular social issues such as intersectionality, racism, xenophobia, education equity including English as a second language, immigration, and white dominant culture. In response to

how SWSG contributed to their worldview, two respondents shared the importance of recognizing one's self-worth when approaching mentoring and community work. As one alumnae stated, "just recognizing how important it is to have a strong sense of self-worth in order to execute any vision you have of your life. And how hard you have to work in order to have that strong sense of self-worth and how important it is to have other people validating your sense of self-worth."

Discussion

The findings from this evaluation project sought to inform three evaluation questions to more closely look at the outcomes experienced by college mentors in the SWSG program: (1) Do mentors increase their sense of the value of service and civic engagement?; (2) Do mentors develop professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers?; and (3) Do mentors develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society? These research questions were developed from the college mentor outcomes identified by Strong Women, Strong Girls in order to better understand the experience of the college mentors through SWSG. With a demonstrated understanding of the outcomes achieved by girl participants of the program, this project examined the college mentor experience as they experience providing mentorship to young people through weekly workshops, participating in their college chapter with peers, and receiving support from SWSG staff, training providers, and adult mentors.

Though it is difficult to identify an increase in mentors' value of service and civic engagement, the value of mentoring, community investment, or volunteering/service was identified by one third of respondents to the Alumni Survey (33.3%) as something they learned or that had an influence on their lives from their experience with SWSG. In addition, when asked "*How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life?*", one

third of alumnae survey respondents referenced community service (i.e., engage with community, getting involved, importance of public service) or mentorship (i.e., seek out strong, like-minded women and mentors, importance of positive role models, being a role model). Given SWSG's emphasis on community-building and mentorship, these findings demonstrate this outcome is seen and understood by some through their experience, though perhaps a throughline is missing between these attitudes and their influence on one's career.

The finding that college mentors do identify the development of leadership and professional skills that support their career development was supported by mentor responses from across all data sources. Alumnae survey respondents indicated that the program impacted their development of leadership or professional skills across multiple avenues including skills specific to youth development or education as well as soft skills including facilitation, conflict management, problem-solving, and relationship building skills. These are critical skills that are particularly important in supporting the growth and development of mentors toward empowerment, as Ledford et al. (2015) discussed.

Most notably, respondents from the alumnae survey who identified their role in the organization as "mentor" without holding a titled leadership position in the organization (i.e., site leader, executive board member, chapter director) did not state the acquisition of leadership or professional skills as an influence of the program. From these respondents, none of the top themes related to mentorship were referenced. This indicates that leadership development through SWSG happens most through leadership experiences and includes training opportunities or staff support for those in these roles. This connection of hands-on experience to deep learning is supported by experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) which emphasizes the creation of knowledge through transformative experiences.

Findings indicating that mentors recognized positive development in their understanding of social issues and developing a critical lens to address such issues were positive. As a result of their experience, mentors identified as having a better understanding of social justice issues, feeling more confident having race-based discussions, and having explored diversity, equity, and inclusion concepts on their own. These responses show actions taken by mentors demonstrating a change in disposition toward social justice issues and action.

Additionally, alumnae survey responses from respondents who identified their year of graduation as 2017 to 2020 did respond with relevant diversity, equity, and inclusion themes with higher frequency than the larger data set. All of the responses that referenced “advocacy for myself and others” were from this time frame as well. This time period was referenced by SWSG as marking a shift in the mentor program to include a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion across the curriculum, including the inclusion of women and girl role models who were celebrated advocates for various communities and social justice causes. This data points to a positive correlation between this programmatic shift and the mentor outcomes. Critical service-learning theory encourages students to see themselves as agents of social change and to respond to instances of injustice in their communities (Mitchell, 2005). With a broadening of the role models utilized in the SWSG curriculum and the use of inclusive language through curricular materials and trainings, SWSG mentors build their identities as social change agents and advocates.

Recommendations

From this evaluation project have come a number of recommendations for SWSG to consider as the organization moves forward. The first recommendation is to engage program participants and alumni in more frequent focus groups as part of the evaluation process. While

the surveys included here provided strong evidence to gauge the outcomes of college student mentors, the qualitative questions and responses can be difficult to interpret. By including focus groups as a regular component of the program's evaluation measures for mentors and alumnae, SWSG will gather further information to understand the mentor experience, especially in reference to complicated themes like service and civic engagement, leadership, social justice, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. These ideas can be more fully explored through a focus group. The initial alumnae survey and focus group will serve as a strong starting point to expand the alumnae outreach and engagement initiatives.

A second recommendation for SWSG is for future alumnae evaluation efforts, the process should ensure representation of be sure to include college mentor alumni from all perspectives. Further outreach and follow-up may be necessary to engage alumni who participated as mentors, not only those who were more deeply involved in the program through leadership positions, such as executive board members or chapter directors, or who were involved with the organization for their entire college experience. Gathering a broader representation of alumni responses to include those whose primary role was mentor will provide information about this crucial experience to better inform the organization's progress.

The final recommendation is that SWSG should consider implementing a mentor curriculum evaluation to identify key touchpoints related to the identified mentor outcomes. This should include identifying and continuing the development of leadership training and development opportunities across the mentor curriculum. Additionally, drawing a more direct connection between leadership development and social justice and action could position SWSG as a leading organization to promote the development of socially just leaders. Building a mentor curriculum that ties the SWSG program and its emphasis on women role-models with socially

responsible and socially just leadership development will support the SWSG mission to champion the next generation of women leaders.

Limitations of the Project

This evaluation relied on data derived from sources that were captured once during the program. Expanding the data set to include multiple years of data from the Mentor Survey in particular could benefit this project. Additionally, the Alumnae Survey provided responses from alumnae spanning the length of the program's operation since 2001. Shifts in the program's operation have contributed to changes in the mentor experience, though this was not accounted for in the data collection.

The Mentor Survey from Spring 2021 was completed during the COVID-19 Pandemic during which time the Strong Women, Strong Girls program was primarily operating in a remote capacity. This included the weekly mentoring sessions taking place via virtual classrooms and chapter meetings occurring both in-person and online. Previous implementation of the SWSG program focused on providing in-person sessions, training workshops, and meetings. This difference in program delivery modality may have influenced the college mentor experience, the effectiveness of the program, and, therefore, the outcomes gained by mentors.

In addition, the Focus Group had only three participants. These findings, therefore, are neither representative of the experience of SWSG mentor alumni nor are they comparative to the other datasets.

Implications for Future Projects

This project demonstrated the impact that participation in mentoring programs as a volunteer can have on mentors' development and success. The outcomes experienced by mentors should not be overlooked. Future projects should continue this research by examining the

relationship between mentor and mentee outcomes, including where they are similar and where they differ. Similar evaluations should be conducted with organizations implementing their programs through this model utilizing college students as mentors. Such projects should include survey questions that directly relate to the college mentor outcomes to provide a larger data source. In addition, pre- and post-tests could be utilized by programs to better indicate changes over time. Furthermore, similar projects should consider additional demographic analyses to examine the available data relevant to the participants' experience and positionality with the organization. Potential demographic analyses could include length of engagement with the organization, length of time with a community partner/service site, role in the organization (i.e., mentor, site leader, e-board member, chapter director), race/ethnicity, field of study/major, and length of time since active participation with the program. Such pieces would serve to deepen the understanding of the mentor experience as it relates to the college mentor outcomes.

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Appendix A



Strong Women, Strong Girls Project Memorandum of Understanding

Amanda Moser, candidate for Master of Education in Community Engagement in the Winston School of Education and Social Policy at Merrimack College will be completing a Capstone project in collaboration with Strong Women, Strong Girls.

Components of the project include the following:

- An exploration of the outcomes experienced by college student mentors of the Strong Women, Strong Girls program, to include knowledge and skill acquisition, civic attitudes, and personal development, through review of program data and evaluation tools.
- Literature review
- Assistance with developing and facilitating focus groups of SWSG stakeholders
- Scholarly article published via Merrimack College as a final product

SWSG will gain:

- A better understanding of mentor retention and motivation
- Support in connecting with stakeholder groups to elicit their experiences
- A report and recommendations on retention

SWSG will provide:

- Document access including:
 - an individual that will act as primary liaison between Amanda Moser and SWSG
 - Alumni Outreach Report and survey data
 - Mentor survey data
 - Mentor demographic data
 - Historical organization documentation
- Opportunity to talk with staff and volunteers

Sponsor Signature Patricia McGuiness Date 10/29/21

Partner Signature Amanda Moser Date 11/29/21

Faculty Signature Melissa Nemon Date 12/20/21

Supervising Faculty Member/email: nemonm@merrimack.edu

Appendix B

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www.swsg.org

Confidentiality Agreement

I understand that as an employee, mentor, volunteer, intern or partner of Strong Women, Strong Girls I may have access to private and personal information. This includes information about girls, families, partner organizations, volunteers, and employees. I may learn of this information verbally from a girl, a partner staff member, mentor, volunteer or SWSG staff member. I may also learn of this information through my access to the SWSG database system or hardcopy documents.

I acknowledge that all information, regardless of the way in which it is accessed, is confidential. Confidential information cannot be disclosed verbally, in a written document or by electronic means. Specifically, this means:

- I will not disclose confidential information to girls, parents/guardians, volunteers, mentors, employees not directly involved with the individual.
- I will not disclose confidential information in public areas.

Confidential information may be released:

- With proper consent by the individual or person legally representing that individual.
- To parents/guardians, mentors, volunteers, and employees directly involved with the individual.
- As required by federal, state and/or local laws and court order.

Where there is reason to suspect child abuse has or may occur, I agree to immediately notify SWSG program staff and partner site staff. I will not attempt to contact public officials on my own. SWSG and partner site staff are trained in handling issues of youth safety and are your first point of contact. Generally, child abuse is defined as evidence of sexual abuse, serious neglect and serious physical or mental injury not explained by available medical history as being accidental. Specifically, child abuse and neglect is defined by state law.

I understand that any unauthorized release or carelessness in the handling of confidential information is considered a breach of the duty to maintain confidentiality. I understand that any breach of the duty to maintain confidentiality could be grounds for immediate dismissal and/or possible liability in any legal action arising from such breach.

Print Name: Amanda Moser

Signature: Amanda Moser -- esignature

Date: 11/29/2021

Appendix C

College Student Empowerment and Impact through Community Mentoring: An Evaluation of Strong Women, Strong Girls

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Project Overview



This project grew from experience working with college students in community engagement settings, particularly with SWSG.

- ❖ I recognize the positive impact that long-term involvement has for mentors
- ❖ Curious to see and understand how these outcomes are experienced by college students and the impression that lasts with them after their engagement

We also identified an interest in identifying what motivates students to stay with SWSG across multiple years.

Evaluation Questions

These questions came from the mentor-specific outcomes from the SWSG logic model.

1. Do mentors increase their sense of the value of service and civic engagement?
2. Do mentors develop professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers?
3. Do mentors develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society?

Data Sources

This data was collected by SWSG.

SWSG Alumni Survey

- Distributed in Spring 2021
- 65 Total Respondents

End of Year Mentor Survey

- Distributed in Spring 2021
- 160 Total Respondents

Alumni Focus Group

- Held in January 2022
- Three participants

Initial Results

Mentor Outcome	Data Sources	Identified Response Themes
Increase their sense of value of service and civic engagement	What did you learn from your experience with SWSG? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Importance of mentors/role models/friendship: 18.5% (n=10) Community investment/service: 14.8% (n=8)
	How, if at all, did SWSG influence your personal, academic, or professional life? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valuing mentoring, volunteering, and service: 14.8% (n=8)
	How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community service: engage with community, getting involved, importance of public service: 16.9% (n=11) Mentorship: Seek out strong, like-minded women & mentors, importance of positive role models, being a role model: 16.9% (n=11)
	How is mentoring still a part of your life? (Focus Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not currently volunteering but open to or looking for opportunities (n=2) I need the values and tenets of service in career (i.e. collaboration, mutual responsibility, trust) (n=1)
	Did your sense of the value of service and civic engagement increase through participation in SWSG? (Focus Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Importance of consistency in volunteering (n=2)

Evaluation Question 1: Do mentors increase their sense of value of service and civic engagement?

Key Data Points

*Evaluation Question 1:
Do mentors increase
their sense of value of
service and civic
engagement?*

- About one third of respondents to the Alumni Survey noted the value of mentoring, community investment, or volunteering/service as something they learned or had an influence on their lives from their experience with SWSG.
- The strongest responses connected the importance of mentoring directly to service and civic engagement.
- There are not currently any questions directly related to the value of service and civic engagement on the end of year mentor survey.
- It's difficult to identify an increase based on the data available.

"For me, this idea of consistency was super important. And showing up and then showing up again and again; I realized how important that was and that really came from kind of for the first time in my life showing up consistently in a volunteer capacity at the same place." – Focus Group Participant

Mentor Outcome	Data Sources	Identified Response Themes
Develop professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers	What did you learn from your experience with SWSG? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Skills: 27.8% (n=15) • Leadership & Responsibility: 27.8% (n=15) • Youth Development/Teaching Skills: 20.4% (n=11) • Mentoring Skills: 14.8% (n=8) • Confidence/Using my voice: 13.0% (n=7) • Facilitation/Conversation Skills: 11.1% (n=6) • Career Path: 3.7% (n=2)
	How, if at all, did SWSG influence your personal, academic, or professional life? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I found connections, a community, network: 27.8% (n=15) • Leadership/identifying as a leader: 14.8% (n=8) • I gained confidence: 7.4% (n=4) • Job related/professional skills: 3.7% (n=2)
	How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional influence: helped with getting job/network, impacted career path, public speaking: 30.8% (n=20) • Leadership: ops, identify as a leader, lead by example: 15.4% (n=10) • Professional skills: public speaking, facilitation, conflict management, problem solving, behavior management, adaptability: 10.8% (n=7) • Relationship building/skills: importance of showing up, connection with boundaries, listen and learn: 7.7% (n=5) • Positive learning experience, youth development experience: 6.2% (n=4)

Evaluation Question 2: Do mentors develop professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers?

Mentor Outcome	Data Sources	Identified Response Themes
Develop professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers	What are some of the major skills you took with you and continue to utilize? (Focus Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I found connections, a community, and a network Leadership, identifying as a leader Value mentoring, volunteering & service Job related/professional skills Coaching, mentoring (n=2)
	Did participation as an SWSG mentor increase your confidence? (Focus Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Found, connections, a community, network (n=2) Saw growth in confidence/my own empowerment (n=2) Leadership/Identifying as a leader
	From Spring 2021 Mentor Survey	Responses provided on a 4-point scale Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree
	I am able to voice my concerns to my chapter and be heard. (Mentor Survey - Your College Chapter) Responses = 159	Average = 3.75
	My professional skill set has developed as a result of my time in SWSG. (Mentor Survey - Your SWSG Experience) Responses = 158	Average = 3.47
	My experience with SWSG has helped me clarify my personal and/or professional goals. (Mentor Survey - Your SWSG Experience) Responses = 159	Average = 3.46

Evaluation Question 2: Do mentors develop professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers?

Key Data Points

Evaluation Question 2: Do mentors develop professional and leadership skills that equip them for future careers?

- Respondents from all data sources provided strong evidence and responded positively that they take away leadership skills and lessons.
- Those respondents from the Alumni Survey who described their role only as “Mentor” did not reference any of the top themes mentioned by others.
- Current mentors responded overwhelmingly in agreement that they have developed professional skills.

“I was very immersed in the administrative side of things and I think that’s something that, in a very logistical way, was incredibly helpful as I thought about transitioning into a classroom and working with the different needs of students... And then I think something else that, the warmer, more empathetic side of things, was just the...finding the thing that makes people most proud about themselves and really celebrating them for that.” – Focus Group Participant

Mentor Outcome	Data Sources	Identified Response Themes
Develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society	What did you learn from your experience with SWSG? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering others/female empowerment/feminism: 24.1% (n=13) • DEI/Privilege: 13.0% (n=7)
	How, if at all, did SWSG influence your personal, academic, or professional life? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of feminism & empowering women & girls: 13.0% (n=7) • Understanding the importance of social justice & DEI: 7.4% (n=4) • Advocacy - for myself and others: 7.4% (n=4)
	How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feminism/Empowerment, Social Justice: 12.3% (n=8) • Perspective taking: recognizing difference, respect for all walks of life: 7.7% (n=5) • Advocacy: 7.7% (n=5)
	To what extent did participation in SWSG help you increase (awareness of) social issues? (Focus Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersectionality • Racism • Xenophobia • Education Equity • White Dominant Culture
	In what ways did SWSG contribute to your world view? (Focus Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept of self-worth to achieve your vision (n=2) • How to affirm others (n=2)

Evaluation Question 3: Do mentors develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society?

Mentor Outcome	Data Sources	Responses provided on a 4-point scale Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree
Develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society	I have further explored concepts of DEI on my own. (Mentor Survey - Your College Chapter) Responses = 157	Average = 3.59
	I feel more confident having race-based discussions (Mentor Survey - Your College Chapter) Responses = 157	Average = 3.57
	I have increased my knowledge of strong female role models (Mentor Survey - Your SWSG Experience) Responses = 158	Average = 3.74
	As a result of my experience with SWSG, I better understand social justice issues (i.e. race, class gender). (Mentor Survey - Your SWSG Experience) Responses = 159	Average = 3.59

Evaluation Question 3: Do mentors develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society?

Mentor Outcome	Data Sources	Overall Response Themes	2017 to present
Develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society	What did you learn from your experience with SWSG? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowering others/female empowerment/feminism: 24.1% (n=13) DEI/Privilege: 13.0% (n=7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowering others/female empowerment/feminism: 25.8% (8 of 31) DEI/Privilege: 19.4% (6 of 31)
	How, if at all, did SWSG influence your personal, academic, or professional life? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of feminism & empowering women & girls: 13.0% (n=7) Understanding the importance of social justice & DEI: 7.4% (n=4) Advocacy - for myself and others: 7.4% (n=4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of feminism & empowering women & girls: 9.7% (3 of 31) [lower] Understanding the importance of social justice & DEI: 4.8% (2 of 31) [lower] Advocacy - for myself and others: 12.9% (4 of 31) [all of the responses from the survey]
	How, if at all, has your participation in SWSG helped you at your current stage of life? (Alumnae Survey) Responses: 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feminism/Empowerment, Social Justice: 12.3% (n=8) Perspective taking: recognizing difference, respect for all walks of life: 7.7% (n=5) Advocacy: 7.7% (n=5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feminism/Empowerment, Social Justice: 13.5% (5 of 37) Perspective taking: recognizing difference, respect for all walks of life: 8.1% (3 of 37) Advocacy: 10.8% (4 of 37)

Evaluation Question 3: Do mentors develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society?

Key Data Points

Evaluation Question 3: Do mentors develop a critical lens to view and address social conditions that shape society?

- Overwhelmingly positive responses from mentors in end of year survey regarding DEI themes
- Fewer responses referenced DEI themes in the alumni survey
 - Feminism and female empowerment were referenced most frequently
- Responses from alumni of 2017 to present did track higher than the average for most DEI themes
 - All of the responses related to *advocacy for myself and others* were from this time frame

Remaining Questions

Further Demographic Analyses

Potential demographic analyses include:

- Longevity of engagement with SWSG
 - Multiple semesters/years with same site/community partner or mentor team
- Role in the organization (i.e. mentor, site leader, e-board member, chapter director)
- Race/Ethnicity
- City – Boston, Pittsburgh
- *Specific to alumni* – length of time since involvement in the program

Recommendations for Consideration

- Engage program participants and alumni in more frequent focus groups as part of the evaluation process
- Ensure engagement and re-engagement of alumni (through focus groups and other avenues) includes mentor alumni
- Consider a mentor curriculum evaluation to identify key touch-points related to these mentor outcomes
 - Continue supporting leadership trainings
 - Build leadership training/opportunities for all mentors
 - Draw more direct connection between leadership and social justice/social action.
 - SWSG can be an avenue to create socially just leaders
- Include the Strong Leader program

Thank you

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