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\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

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1. [Introduction](#introduction) \n \t
2. [Women and Minority mentorship programs](#women-and-minority-mentorship-programs) \n \t
3. [Conclusion](#conclusion) \n \t
4. [References](#references) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

## Introduction

Mentoring programs for women and minorities exist in nearly all institutions, in America. However, the manner in which it is conducted is what differs from one institution and facility to another. For example, in the health care industry, minority mentorship is provided to clinicians and scientists who are still young in their careers. Mentorship is very important for smooth academic experience and transition to the career world. Medical and research facilities usually select a team of senior and experienced personnel who then works with a group of young scholars in order to develop their attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for career progression and development. Women have been mentored to take on science and technology related courses. However, women have also been considered as a minority group. Montelone, Dyer, and Takemoto (2003) argue that some minority groups receive less mentoring compared with the non-minority group. Mentorship has been found to be effective for women and especially underrepresented minority groups who commonly encounter unique challenges in their academics and career.   
In other institutions, male gender, certain races, and specific group of persons are considered a minority. Thus, whereas one institution may have a female mentoring program, another may have a male mentoring program (Hairston et al., 2013). However, what matters is whether such mentorship programs achieve their goals and objectives. In other words, do mentees feel helped by the mentorship program? Mentorship programs can be done via one-on-one conversation, group meeting, seminar, or conference sessions. Berk et al. (2005) indicate that the mentorship can be conducted to an individual or group. However, the effectiveness of the mentorship in achieving intended transformation in the individual(s) is most important.   
The majority of the minority mentorship programs are headed by a “ coach” who coordinates activities of the program and a cohort of mentees. In Institutions of learning, the majority of the mentorship session concentrates on career guidance, counseling, and how to achieve academic excellence. One of the benefits of mentorship is access to professional career guidance and advice, increased network of professionals, enhance completion of one’s studies, and promote participation of women and minority groups in policy making among other development initiatives. Mentorship programs also aim to retain the underrepresented population and promote tolerance for cultural and ethnic diversity. Despite these benefits, some scholars have doubted the effectiveness of mentoring programs especially for women and minority groups.   
Effectiveness of mentoring programs can be measured by evaluating several things. For example, the presence of continued funding, period the program has existed, and professional development evident among successful participants. However, Keating (2012) argues that very few programs report their criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the mentoring process. This submission aims to explore the effectiveness of women and minority mentorship programs in producing individuals who can perform in the job market.

## Women and Minority mentorship programs

The old-fashioned way of evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring program was to ask someone whether he/she had a mentor. If one had a mentor, he/she was then asked if the program was helpful. This lack of a good tool for measuring the effectiveness of a mentoring program often leads to inconsistency in reporting the outcome of the process.   
Minority mentorship programs (MMP) are part of most learning institutions in the United States. The MMP provides new and young students an opportunity that can enhance their stay and learning experience at the institution (Minor, 2007). Most newly admitted students are considered minorities because they are freshmen and women who need support and guidance from mentors as they start their academic journey. MMP makes the academic experience possible and enjoyable and thus the transition from academics to career practice becomes easier and achievable goal. Thus, the effectiveness of the MMP can be measured by evaluating factors like graduation grade(s), report of mentee’s behavior, attitude, and psychological functioning.   
According to DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper (2002), MMPs provide guidance and a sense of direction to minority university and college students. MMP develops in the participants’ skills like teamwork, leadership, and innovativeness, which add value to one’s employability. However, how effectiveness an MMP is depends on the impact it makes on mentees and evaluation of the skills necessary for professional development and socialization. Minor (2007) indicates that objectives of the MMP program can be determined by assessing whether the participant can demonstrate understanding of career management proficiencies, maintenance of professional relationships, and appreciation of the environment. According to Sonnino, Voytko, and Kosoko-Lasaki (2009), minority faculty members reported improvement in both academic and professional skills after taking part in a mentoring program.   
According to Keating, (2012), women mentorship into leadership and governance has been well adopted in both the public and private sectors. In the corporate world, women are mentored to become successful entrepreneurs and effective leaders in their organizations. Young girls and ladies also undergo professional mentoring in institutions of learning. This is usually conducted through peer learning, panel discussions, workshops, inspirational talks, and mentoring circles.   
According to Myers (2012) and Keating, (2012), former participants of women mentoring program for leaders have ended up becoming influential and respectable persons in the corporate world, non-governmental organizations, and even in the public sector. Such programs aim to build confidence, enhance communication skills, and coach participants of problem solving skills. One of the demerits of WMPs is having evaluation tools that only measure particular outcomes. The best tools should be able to measure a variety of functions, attitude, skills, and knowledge level (Haylett et al., 2008).   
The Young Women Christian Association (YMCA) in Canada indicates that the mentorship program is important for women since it connects professional and highly experienced females with young unemployed women who are new in the job market or young in their professions. The mentorship program has seen high ranking women who are leaders in the society and business engage with mentees in order to share experiences and provide motivation (Women in Leadership Foundation). According to Canadian Cooperative Association (Minor, 2007), the women mentorship program at the institution has seen over 170 women being mentored into effective leadership of financial cooperatives. This is an indicator that WMP not only provides learning opportunities through interaction and engagement with experienced women leaders. The tools that are currently used to measure the effectiveness of mentoring typically assess limited characteristics. That is the frequency of mentoring activities, and/or significance of mentoring roles. Such a tool may not apply to other categories of women or minority groups.   
Young Women Rock is one of the women mentorship program (WMP) in New York that has enabled women rise out of poverty attain socio-economic independence. This program among others empowers women with a variety of skills including leadership, critical thinking, creativity, communication, and self-confidence.   
WMPs have seen the rise of young females who are independent and confident leaders in their communities. Beneficiaries of a WMP also express high self-esteem, self-confidence, and innovation. According to Sonnino, Voytko, and Kosoko-Lasaki, (2009), WMP and MMP provide mentors with an opportunity to share their expertise, exchange ideas with mentees, and establish new professional networks and friendships. WMP and MMP and also provide mentees with an opportunity to exchange contacts and network with well established professionals as they jump start their careers.   
Mentoring programs have been found to produce individuals who are highly skilled and hence competitive in the job market. For women, this is a socio-economic empowerment that can address gender equality and women participation in leadership and governance (Keating, 2012; Minor, 2007). Mentoring is a form of progressive talent development initiative that also supports the individual to become a valuable person in the society. According to Haylett, Lewis, Storrs, and Putsche (2008), Women Mentoring Program is one of the unique models that act as a coping mechanism for women undergoing difficult life events. Besides WMP has been shown to be a global strategy with potential for preventing gender specific crime. However, the effectiveness of mentoring programs can be achieved when participants are willing to take part and have clear aims and objectives of the programs.   
Lack of clarity in communication among program participants, reduced contact time, and absence of obvious outcome measures has been associated with reduced effectiveness of mentoring programs involving women and minority groups. Nevertheless, having a robust questionnaire, for example, with questions meant to evaluate the effectiveness of mentoring program can be a good evaluation tool. However, the outcome measures should include parameters as mode of communication, frequency of meeting, duration of the relationship, skills learnt, and weaknesses of the program. Myers (2012) also adds that a rating scale (For example, Figure 1) can provide an efficient and comprehensive rating of the mentorship experience and from the findings; the program leaders can analyze the responses and conclude on the effectiveness of the mentoring program. Hairston et al. (2013) further recommends the establishment of a formula for termination of the mentoring relationship and/or referral of the same. This is the importance for continued good relations and can also act as a learning experience for the mentee.   
Continued and/or increased funding of the mentoring program is another indicator of the effectiveness. A program that is performing according to indicators will always continue to receive funding, and it may as well attract more financiers. However, less effective mentoring program would attract reduced funding or even termination and closure. Moreover, Montelone, Dyer, Takemoto (2003) indicate that the program coordinators should also have statistics of the dropout rate. Success of the mentoring relationship can be determined by the participant. Thus, as Berk et al. (2005) indicate mentees who are benefiting from the program would remain until termination of mentoring relationship. However, mentees who feel like a waste of time and resources may opt to withdraw because may be, the mentoring program is not beneficial.

## Conclusion

A mentoring program should have thoroughly tested evaluation tool to measure its effectiveness. Some of the indicators of effectiveness can be the “ drop out” rate, frequency and duration of mentorship session, retention of beneficiaries, and career postings among others. Besides, the aim of the program and mentorship activities should be shared and discussed between the mentee and mentor so that a consensus is reached. This not only promotes cooperation, but is also important for achievement of objectives. It is obvious that women and minority mentorship program(s) in both institutions of learning and workplace contributes to the development of the right attitude and tremendous skills necessary for completion of one’s course and advancement in career prospects. However, it is important for proper design of mentoring programs to reflect the nature of women and minority groups present in the post modern time. Besides, assessment factors should be identified and included in a well developed evaluation criteria/tool for effectiveness of the programs.

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Figure 1: Example of Mentorship Effectiveness Scale