



*Summer Newsletter*

*June 2020*

## **Greetings from President-Elect, Tom Williams**



Thank you, members of OPEG, for electing the latest group of members to the OPEG Board. Thank you so much to Lana Rucks who has provided the guidance and support to OPEG as president during the past several years in the ever-changing landscape of our professional support organization. We experienced a successful hosting of AEA in Cleveland. We have shared and learned with each other at our OPEG workshops and information exchanges. We have all experienced the shift in the past three plus months that will change the way we share with each other in the near term. I ask you to consider and join in creating the new methods and procedures that will help us all continue to learn and grow in becoming better evaluators. Join the OPEG Program Committee to help organize information exchange. Join the Membership Committee to continue efforts to reach out and include others in Ohio and nearby states with whom we can share and learn with each other. Identify and create new committees to address important issues where we, as evaluators, can play an important role in guiding our state and region moving forward.

Do not be surprised if you receive a call from me, one of the other OPEG Board members, or an OPEG committee member asking for your thoughts about issues of concern. We will have fun in these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Tom Williams, President Elect

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## VIRTUAL MEET UP



OPEG is sponsoring its first virtual Meet Up in July. Join fellow OPEG members for meaningful conversations while making valuable connections. Bring your voice and experiences as we describe evaluation projects and how we are adapting our evaluation practices in the COVID-19 environment. Registration for the event is [on the website](#).

When: Thursday, July 23

Where: Zoom

Time: 5:00 - 6:00 PM EST

Please join us!

We hope to see you for this informal Zoom gathering!

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## SUMMER STATS

Did you know that your membership in OPEG entitles you to a free summer workshop? This year, OPEG happily hosts Dr. Anirudh Ruhil of Ohio University for this highly regarded Online/Virtual training. Join us for the afternoon workshop: Introduction to and Exploration of Data Visualizations with R on Friday, July 10th from 12-2pm.

Dr. Ruhil is professor of leadership and public affairs in the Ohio University Voinovich

Dr. Rathi is professor of leadership and public affairs in the Ohio University Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. To help you refine your R data analysis skills, the virtual workshop covers a variety of topics and members who [pre-register](#) to the event date will have a tailor-made workshop aimed at covering the needs of the attendees. Pre-registrants are to be on the lookout for a brief survey to gauge R ability. Interested in learning more about our Summer Stats facilitator, click the following link <https://aniruhil.org>.

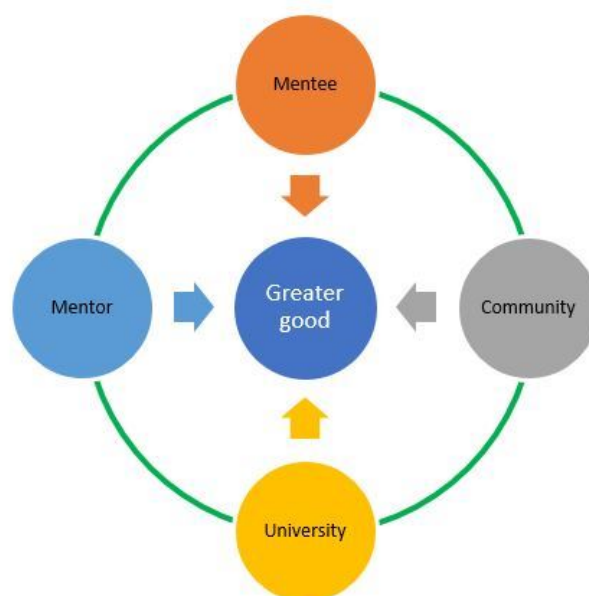
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## It's Mentoring Time...

By Seema Mahato

Since we started exploring OPEG's initiative in November 2018, we have experimented, researched and presented (at AEA and OPEG) to carve a mentoring framework that works for OPEG members and Ohio's evaluation landscape. Some incentives around the mentoring program are: building networks, enhancing evaluation capacity, giving leadership to the profession (evaluation), navigating stressful conundrums around evaluation and the evaluand, and sharing of ideas and strategies.

From research, experimentation, and exploration of the concept of mentoring, we articulate the mentoring program as a synergistic alliance between four key stakeholders: mentor, mentee, university and community (illustrated below).



*Illustration of the key stakeholders for OPEG's mentoring program*

Evaluation, as a transdiscipline (Scriven, 2008) and evaluators as change agents, have an important role in promoting "social justice and the public good" (American Evaluation Association, 2018, para 3, point 1.8). So why not design our mentoring program to enhance evaluation competency while serving greater good? We propose the use of experiential learning to diversify and enrich our evaluation skills. As an example, a mentor-mentee pair may work with community service organizations on short term projects where the mentor-mentee pair shares evaluation insights and in turn gains content and contextual knowledge from the community-based organizations. Another example could be to exchange technical knowledge, quite like our Summer Stats program, but on a more regular and in an informal basis. These are just a few of the many possibilities the mentoring program can offer. So, please watch out for more information in the near future...we hope to set up the mentoring infrastructure in the coming months.

Till then...please take care and stay safe!

#### References:

American Evaluation Association. (2018, April 5). AEA Competencies.  
<https://www.eval.org/page/competencies>

Scriven, M. (2008). The concept of a transdiscipline: And of evaluation as a transdiscipline. *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*, 5(10), 65–66.

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## SAVE-THE-DATE - September 25, 2020

<b><u>OPEG FALL CONFERENCE – EVALUATIVE THINKING</u></b>
<b>KEYNOTE SPEAKER</b>
<p>Dr. Michael Quinn Patton</p> <p>Michael Quinn Patton is Founder and CEO of Utilization-Focused Evaluation, an independent organizational development and program evaluation organization. He authored numerous <a href="#">books on evaluation</a>, including <i>Principles-Focused Evaluation</i> (2018), <i>Facilitating Evaluation</i> (2018), <i>Developmental Evaluation</i> (2010) and <i>Utilization-Focused Evaluation</i> (2008) and also edited or contributed articles to numerous books and journals, including several volumes of <i>New Directions in Program Evaluation</i>, on subjects as diverse as culture and evaluation, how and why language matters, HIV/AIDS research and evaluation systems, extension methods, feminist evaluation, teaching using the case method, evaluating strategy, utilization of evaluation, and valuing. His creative nonfiction book, <i>Grand Canyon Celebration: A Father-Son Journey of Discovery</i>, was a finalist for Minnesota Book of the Year.</p>
<b>PRESENTERS</b>
<p>Rob Moore</p> <p>The Eightfold Path: A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis</p>
<p>Seema Mahato &amp; Kris Machtmes</p> <p>Setting Up for Evaluation to Catalyze Evaluative Thinking</p>
<p>Rocki Basel</p> <p>Using Experiential and Operational Data to Evaluate After School Programming: A Description how Evaluation Thinking Improved a Program</p>
<p>Kelli Qua &amp; Clara Pelfrey</p> <p>Five Strategies for Using Bibliometrics to Evaluate Scholarly Performance</p>

Kris Machtmes

Using Evaluative Thinking to Teach Research Methods to Doctoral Students

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## Evaluation in the Era of COVID-19

OPEG is pleased to reprint with permission from Michael Quinn Patton, a blog post he published on March 27, 2020. The piece entitled "Evaluation Implications of the Coronavirus Emergency" offers 15 ideas regarding implications on evaluation during this global pandemic. Michael Quinn Patton is in Saint Paul, MN and can be reached at MQPatton@Prodigy.net. Follow the link and enjoy the ideas in [this blog](#).

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## Member Feature - Meet OPEG Member, Dr. Megan Johanson

OPEG is a vibrant organization of evaluators representing diverse agencies, organizations, and fields. It is also a place where friendship and community abound as its members seek ideas and strategies that enable practitioners to network and improve the quality of evaluation.



The Ohio Program Evaluators Group and its members are often described as a community of learners. Blonder (2014) with the Weizman Institute of Science defined a community of learners as a "group of people who share values and beliefs and who actively engage in learning from one another." Our member feature section is a great way for OPEG to deepen that community by gaining insight and knowledge about one another. In this newsletter, we are pleased to highlight Dr. Megan Johanson, the organizer of our Columbus-based Meet-Ups and Mom to baby Lumina! Let's start by describing Megan Johanson and her relationship with OPEG.

**Q: How long have you been a member of OPEG?**

A: Since 2015

**Q: How would you describe your relationship to the organization?**

A: Very shortly after joining I was asked to be part of the membership committee. It's definitely made me feel more connected to the organization through my interactions with the committee members and the people I've met at the meet-ups I've organized.

**Q: As one who is known for coordinating Meet Ups, what lessons have you learned about the OPEG Meet Ups?**

A: Getting the word out early is important, as is choosing a chill location with drinks available. Also, even if only a few people show up, it's still a good chance to connect and learn about current eval projects in the area.

**Q: What value has OPEG contributed to you as an evaluator?**

A: At the conferences and meet-ups it has been great to hear other evaluators talking about their challenges and experiencing the solidarity of those struggles. Also, many of the conference sessions have taught me best practices for eval strategies like developing a survey or conducting different kinds of analyses.

**Q: What is your relationship with the field of evaluation?**

A: I was first exposed to evaluation during my postdoc position at OSU. I audited a few classes and then joined a project evaluating an OSU course on informal science education. After my postdoc, evaluation continued to be a subset of the work I did, though not the entire focus. I found that many of the skills learned in the eval courses, OPEG events, and project transferred to other applied research projects I became involved with, so I continued to be a part of OPEG to grow my knowledge.

**Q: Has the coronavirus impacted your work as an evaluator? If so, how?**

A: It hasn't affected how I do my current work much, as I can work from anywhere with a computer. However, the data I'm working with now are often related to coronavirus or how schools and districts are dealing with coronavirus, but otherwise the processes are similar. The biggest aspects of evaluation I currently focus on (even prior to the pandemic) are strategies to turn data into clear, visual summaries that my coworkers and leadership team can use to better understand the impact of their work or the status of the schools/districts they support.

**Q: As an evaluator, what questions, if any, have gone unanswered for you?**

A: One evaluation challenge I haven't found a great solution for is how to get evaluation clients to be accepting of the evaluation results. Level-setting at the beginning of a project often made me think we were on the same page and that the client was open to suggestions for improvement, but many times clients would argue with the results, even if they were overwhelmingly positive. I'm still not sure how to manage that better.

**Q: Please add any other information that would help the OPEG community better know Megan Johanson.**

A: I have a data visualization blog ([www.meganjohanson.com](http://www.meganjohanson.com)) where I demonstrate different ways of visualizing data to tell a compelling story/share Excel tricks/visualize personal data. I think evaluation reports can often benefit from improving and streamlining the way data are presented and by doing so you make it more likely that people will make use of the work you've done rather than just filing the report away.

## New Board Officers

Tom Williams, President

Kris Machtmes – Vice President

Secretary – Vacant

Margaret Hutzal – At Large

Amanda Klein – At Large

Gwen Donley – Student Member

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