

In Memoriam: Dr. Chris Lee Coryn

Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation
Volume 19, Issue 45, 2023

JMDE
Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation

ISSN 1556-8180
<http://www.jmde.com>

John Akwetey
Western Michigan University

The late Dr. Coryn will always have a special place in my heart and in my life's journey. His guidance and support were essential in helping me make the best decision I have ever made, which was to transfer from Claremont Graduate University to Western Michigan University. His belief in my abilities and unwavering encouragement gave me the courage to take this new path.

I am forever grateful for the opportunities that came from that decision. Dr. Coryn's guidance not only shaped my learning journey but had a profound impact on my character and future goals. His wisdom and guidance left an indelible mark on my soul.

As I say goodbye to a dear mentor and friend, I take comfort in knowing that his legacy remains in the lives of the countless lives he touched. May his soul rest in perfect peace, knowing that his inspiration continues to reverberate in the hearts of all he touched.

Lyssa Wilson Becho

Principal Research Associate, The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University

I first met Chris in person on my first day of class in the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation at Western Michigan University in September 2013. His beard was trimmed at that time (later to grow longer and longer); he was wearing square glasses and a Budweiser graphic tee, showing off his tattooed arms. Not quite what I had expected after talking to him on the phone and moving across the country to study with him. After a year of being rather intimidated by him, his profound wealth of knowledge, fast reading pace, and high expectations, I had the opportunity to work with him directly as a graduate and teaching assistant. Through my interactions with Chris as a teacher, colleague, and friend, I came to realize that Chris cared deeply about his students, his family, and the field of evaluation.

Chris was a deep and critical thinker, who was often two steps ahead in the conversation. He was a profound advocate for the role of understanding philosophical orientations in evaluation, as well as how good measurement and design principles informed evaluation conclusions. He pushed me and others to consider the bounds of evaluation – what was “in the tent” and what should be considered “adjacent” to the tent. His commitment to valuing and systematic methods bled into all his teachings and conversations around evaluation.

I learned just as much from listening to Chris’ lectures as I did from debating with him. Conversations with Chris always challenged me to back up my claims with evidence and warrants. Chris always described his teaching method as Socratic, posing big questions and asking students to justify their rebuttals. He said he wanted to teach his students to *think*, not just the content on his syllabus. Chris often talked about how proud he was of the thought leaders his students were and their many achievements and contributions to the field of evaluation.

Chris was generous with his knowledge, advice, and connections. I try to follow his legacy of encouraging young and emerging evaluators, his excitement for evaluation methods and methodology, and his commitment to writing. I am the evaluation scholar and practitioner I am today because of him.

Thank you, Chris.

Nicole Bowman (Lunaape/Mohican)

President, Bowman Performance Consulting

Associate Scientist, University of Wisconsin–Madison

Anushiik njoos (Thank you friend/colleague) alokiian waak sh'xeeham eelu miiluyeengw aaptoonaakan Wunjiin Eelaangoomaatiit (for being in service to and supporting Indigenous voices in research and evaluation). Kiiloonaa kmshaalehna (we will remember you). Nii pahtamaweew ooshaweelundam (I pray as we grieve and have been sad during this time) waak nii pahtamaweew wuliit kii ha alaangweekwak (and also pray that you have good travel among the stars).

Janet Clinton

University of Melbourne

Chris was an intense scholar who believed in the significance of Evaluation as a discipline. I met Chris when he visited the University of Auckland while completing his PhD. During this time, Chris quickly became my critical friend; over the years, we were able to trial many ideas, he had a really kind yet direct way of saying, 'that's not going to work'.

Our friendship and collegiality continued over many years, he often served as an advisor on matters relating to the Centre for Program Evaluation at the University of Melbourne or as an expert advisor on substantial evaluation projects or grants. Along the way, Daniela became part of this friendship and collegiality, always chatting, debating, lecturing about Evaluation and commiserating about the place of Evaluation in universities. He and Daniela visited down under a couple of times and seeing them and Lily, of course, annually either in Kalamazoo or at conferences interacting in the world of Evaluation was a highlight. Each time seeing Lily grow year in and year out and commenting about how tall she was getting became a standard event. John Hattie and I tried hard to convince Chris and Daniela to come to Australia and, at one point, New Zealand but to no avail. They seemed to love the vibe in Kalamazoo.

We both had a great desire to see change in evaluation practice and increase the quality of education in Evaluation in our institutions and we both understood that research 'in evaluation and on evaluation' was the answer.

Chris's work in understanding the amount of research in Evaluation was ground-breaking; his focus on collecting concrete evidence from journals internationally was also the foundation of significant changes in the Australian Journal of Evaluation.

Chris's ideological views about Evaluation always came to light in our discussions; he constantly challenged the depths of our thinking, whether through simple discussions about Evaluation, review of articles or proposals. His knowledge of experimental design and, in some sense, 'creative statistics' always came to the fore. His depth of understanding of research methods was phenomenal. When talking about the science of Evaluation, Chris would always take it one step further and consider the philosophy of the science of Evaluation.

Bringing this knowledge and thinking to Evaluation to this day has had and will continue to have a tremendous impact on our discipline. His loss has created a deep crevasse in evaluation thinking. He is sorely missed as a colleague and, most importantly, a friend.

J. Bradley Cousins

Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa

I did not know Chris well, but well enough to appreciate him as a dedicated, enthusiastic and talented evaluation scholar. His legacy is undoubtedly multi-faceted but for me two accomplishments come to mind: his contributions to the review and integration of research on evaluation and his exceptional support and guidance for students.

Chris was a prolific contributor to evaluation scholarship. Much of his work was collaborative and a healthy proportion was empirical. Salient among his contributions were systematic reviews of research in such areas as theory-driven evaluation, participatory evaluation in international development, and research on evaluation. The methods employed were as imaginative and innovative as they were systematic and defensible. These studies help to chart to landscape of evaluation knowledge in significant ways.

A number of years ago I recruited Chris to assist me with a massive multi-year evaluation capacity building initiative in India. It was during that three-year period that I came to appreciate his commitment to students. He involved two of them – Kelly Robertson and Carl Westine – in the project. Both travelled with us to Delhi and made valued contributions. But they also, as was the case with most of Chris' students, coauthored several publications with Chris and pursued important and influential careers in evaluation.

I have little doubt that Chris' legacy will live on through his students.

An Impactful Leader of the Evaluation World: A Tribute to the Legacy of Chris L. Coryn

Stewart I. Donaldson

Claremont Graduate University

Chris' untimely passing sent me into deep reflection. How could one of our most impactful leaders of evaluation in the world leave us at such a young age?

Of course, he worked day and night to honor our field while he was here with us, and amassed a wide range of contributions rarely offered over much longer successful evaluation leadership careers. For example, as Director of the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation (IDPE) program at Western Michigan he was involved in and led approximately 100 research studies and evaluations, funded by the Department of Justice (DOJ), National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institutes for Health (NIH), nonprofits, and others. He also published approximately 100 scholarly peer-review publications, led the *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*, and supervised and mentored more than 40 evaluation doctoral students at a time, many of whom were involved in one or more research on evaluation studies, whether independently or in collaboration with Chris (or, more importantly, as part of their doctoral dissertations).

How do I know this? Chris gave me the honor of reviewing his materials and writing letters supporting many of his applications for promotions and career achievement awards. I admired the quality and quantitative of his contributions so much I tried to do my best at telling the rest of world what a unique and productive evaluation leader, scholar, and practitioner he had become.

I will always remember the stories Michael Scriven would share about Chris as his graduate student, and especially about the amazing gifts he possessed for advancing the transdiscipline of evaluation. My visit to Western Michigan to spend time with him, his team and students, and his young family when I was AEA President in 2015 was real highlight of my career. We spent much time together talking about the big issues related to the future of evaluation, and how our two Evaluation Centers might collaborate to improve the field's trajectory. This was a time when I clearly felt his passion that was driving his many accomplishments, and realized what a huge positive impact he was having on the next generation of new and emerging evaluators.

Thank you Chris for your stellar and impactful review of the practice of theory-driven evaluation (one of his most widely cited publications; Coryn et. al., 2010; with more than 660 citations in Google Scholar), and for leading the Evaluation Ph.D. program at Western Michigan University in a way that improved our field, and enriched the lives of your many doctoral students and research/evaluation colleagues across the globe. Your legacy lives on in all of us.

Your friend, Stewart

Cheryl Endres

Principal Consultant, Kaleidoscope Evaluation

Chris said he was a polymath, and he had a great depth of knowledge about evaluation, philosophy, and many other subjects. His contributions to the field of evaluation were many, and the students he mentored will serve as one of his legacies. His contributions to the IDPE program elevated it, and the program also serves as a legacy of his contribution. His depth of knowledge and continuous integration of new ideas allowed him to meaningfully contribute to students and to advise them regardless of their core subject area. As an advisor, he was a great cheerleader, but wouldn't hesitate to challenge your ideas to get you to think deeper, and to clarify your thoughts. I came to the IDPE program to pursue a PhD after a number of years away from the pursuit of a dissertation, and his support provided me with opportunities that I would never have considered otherwise. I am grateful to have known him.

Remembering Chris Coryn (1969-2021)

Gregory D. Greenman II

Independent Nonprofit Management Consultant

During our first meeting, I knew that Chris L. Coryn would profoundly affect my life, and I subconsciously started stowing away anecdotes for his eventual tribute. One glaring difference between my expectations and reality exists: recognizing Chris's work and influence is happening decades before I had imagined. That said, I am deeply saddened that my teacher, boss, colleague, mentor, friend, and stalwart champion died unexpectedly on October 24, 2021, in Kalamazoo, Michigan, at the age of 52.

Chris L. Coryn was a Professor of Evaluation at Western Michigan University. He received his bachelor's degree in psychology (2002) and master's degree in social and experimental psychology (2004) from Indiana University under the guidance of Catherine Borshuk. Between these two degrees, Chris left his roles as a teaching assistant and research assistant at Indiana University and became a research assistant with The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University. Chris was half of the second cohort of students in the innovative Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation (IDPE) program at Western Michigan University, where he studied with Jane Davidson and Michael Scriven. After earning his doctorate in 2007, which was funded by the National Science Foundation, Chris became a faculty member of the IDPE and assumed the role of Director.

When I started writing this memorial, I intended to detail Chris's many accomplishments and honors to illustrate his productivity as a scholar, his expertise as an evaluator, and his versatility as an educator. Rather mechanically and with little thought, I chose the three pillars of the professorate as criteria. As I was searching databases to identify all the articles, chapters, and books Chris authored, co-authored, or edited, I had a realization. Not only were my criteria (and subsequent standards) poorly suited to this context, but they were also probably poor indicators of success. Detailing his legacy in the field of evaluation is important, but it is not how I knew Chris, or how I want to remember him.

We met in the spring of 2013, shortly after I got my acceptance letter to the IDPE for that fall. In just a few minutes that afternoon, I learned we both had careers as musicians, albeit in vastly different genres, before climbing the Ivory Tower. Though I completely missed it at the time, my command of economics impressed him, and he brought it up regularly. I used to get embarrassed when he did, like a teenager with a gloating parent. Much the same, I wish in retrospect that I understood it as the compliment it was intended as.

I fully admit to being a little skeptical of some of the claims he made during our first meeting. Before getting to know Chris, I thought nobody could read that much, be that well-versed in methodologies from multiple fields, and have worked on evaluations literally around the world. Nobody could, except Chris it turns out. That first meeting was also the first (and last) time I called Chris, "Doctor Coryn." Being on a first-name basis was not uncommon; he preferred it. In his mind, a doctorate or a professorship did not make someone better or more worthy of respect than anyone else.

Early in my doctoral studies, Chris gave me some advice that I often reiterated to him: "Don't try to do it all." That advice took many forms through the years we worked, learned, and taught together. Mostly it was a reminder, either about delegating tasks (tied closely with a reminder to let other people learn how to do it for themselves), considering whether I had time for an additional project, or taking time to relax and listen to a great recording. I do not think either of us perfected the balancing act, but the results of ignoring the advice are not lost on me.

When an economic evaluation opportunity showed up in Chris's email, it quickly appeared in mine. Corey Smith and I convinced Lyssa Wilson Becho to submit a bid, with Chris as the primary investigator per WMU policy. Chris made it very clear to us that he had total faith in our abilities, and he only had time for very high-level oversight. We got the contract and started after a somewhat arduous and lengthy formal

contract negotiation process. Some contentious issues arose about three weeks before presenting the findings to the funder. The funder needed us to defend all our choices and explain some data issues. As an extra level of assurance, I asked Chris to sit in on the call and, if necessary, save us from disaster. Instead of throwing us a life preserver, Chris got to watch three of his students enter an adversarial environment and not only have their stance accepted by the other side but also return the relationship to a cooperative environment. I have a vague recollection of the stress and challenges of that week, but I have a clear image of Chris smiling at the three of us after the call and saying something like, "I didn't need to be here, but thanks for letting me see you work."

One November, Daniela Schröeter and I had a paper accepted to the American Public Policy Analysis and Management's Fall Research Conference that happened to be in Miami. Simultaneously, the American Evaluation Association's annual conference was in Chicago, where Daniela, Chris, and I all had papers to present. The only sensible way to make it work was to arrive in Miami a day early and then leave immediately after our presentation and fly to Chicago. The highlight of that jet setting was the day in Miami with Daniela, Chris, and Lilly. My favorite memory of Chris is sitting on an airboat with his family, listening to our Everglades National Park guide, and trying to find the animals blending into their natural habitat. It was like being in a Highlights seek-n-find in 3-D. We all had an almost childlike experience of wonder and joy.

Cigarette breaks were the one consistent exception to the tendency that Chris and I shared to work too much and not take enough time for ourselves. In the truest sense of the word, the breaks were "time apart" from the rest of the day. Any tension, confusion, annoyance, boredom, giddiness, or excitement, would cease to exist long enough for us to walk down four flights and across the street, smoke a cigarette (or two), and walk back to Ellsworth Hall's fourth floor. I need to say that having a cigarette was not strictly required, but we never tried quitting at the same time.

Thinking back to those conversations still brings me to tears. I knew then that I was getting to experience a side of Chris that few others did. The combination of Chris's wealth of life experiences and his brilliant analytic and synthetic mind resulted in pearls of wisdom I probably should have written down, but they were meant to be internalized, contemplated, and wrestled with to the point of becoming more something I discovered than just learning something Chris said.

I must mention a couple of Chris's accomplishments before I wrap up. The IDPE program was successful because of Chris - in part because he was brilliant, and in part because he always made time for students who needed it and who asked. Under his direction, the *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation* remained a free-to-read, free to publish in (open access) high-quality, peer-reviewed journal in evaluation. And though I did make that list of more than 100 publications, it lacks his humanity and humility, his unparalleled respect for and the importance he placed on other's lived experiences, and the boundless support and encouragement he gave his students.

Thanks for letting me see you work, Chris. You are truly missed!

Michael Harnar

Western Michigan University

I remember the moment I met Chris Coryn. It was at the 2005 joint conference of the American Evaluation Association and the Canadian Evaluation Society. He and I were both graduate students of evaluation, so I had heard of him; he was at Western Michigan University, and I was at Claremont Graduate University. Our first meeting was unforgettable. He had a copy of one of our scholar's newest book in his hand, and I said something like, "oh, what'd you think of their new book?" And his response was, to me quite striking. He said something to the order of "I don't know why he wrote a new book, there's nothing new in this, the same stuff he's been saying." I was struck by the arrogance...from a grad student. I came from a tradition where a grad student wouldn't openly criticize a senior's writing. Yet, this fellow student, who was only a year ahead of me in grad school, was doing just that. He had a reputation at that point of coming across as arrogant, and it certainly showed through in my first interaction with him. Little did I know that he wasn't so much as arrogant as he was brilliant.

Through the years, I saw him at the annual conferences. We would meet each other in the hall or at conference social events. So, we had a collegial, distant relationship through the years. As I read more and more evaluation research literature, I began to see the brilliance that was there. His work was of the highest caliber, making important contributions to the field. I respected him, from a distance.

In 2016, when I considered applying for a faculty position in the Interdisciplinary PhD in Evaluation at Western Michigan University, I spoke to colleagues about working with Chris and I encountered mixed feelings. While the idea was challenging for some, it was not so for me. So, I applied, got the job, and I came to Western in 2017 as only the second full time faculty for the IDPE program. When I arrived, he was carrying a heavy load...teaching full time, administering the IDPE, editing JMDE, and advising anywhere from 10 to 15 doctoral students at a time. Meanwhile, he was still a prolific researcher! Despite the load, he worked hard to protect me as his junior colleague from the demands he carried.

We taught one course together, just as the COVID pandemic was starting up in early 2020. It was a wonderful class; I still remember it. We designed a philosophy of science for evaluators class where the students studied the various evaluation approaches through a philosophy of science perspective. I relished the experience. Chris had such a rich visceral understanding of the philosophy of science and was able to expound at length in response to all our questions. It was mostly his course with me taking an organizational role. That experience was critical, because when I taught the course 2 years later, I was able to lean on so much that I learned from him in that course.

Now, looking back and holding the reigns he left in my hands, I am cognizant of how little I knew of his genius and how heavy his load was. Chris was brilliant; he was prolific. And I don't think I understood how brilliant and how prolific, until he left, and I had to step into shoes that were bigger than I could ever have imagined. I am hopeful that I have done those shoes justice to a degree that he would find respectable. I miss all his arrogant brilliance!

John Hattie*University of Melbourne*

Chris called and asked if I could pick him and Daniela up from the motel. He looked well-dressed despite the hot Auckland afternoon, and he raised his eyebrows at my shorts and flip-flops. We had numerous email exchanges after he and my good friend Michael Scriven invited me to join his dissertation committee from Kalamazoo. At that time, I was overseeing the NZ Performance Based system, and Chris had prepared an impressive review of performance measures for research allocation to universities. He had developed scenarios based on models from approximately 12 countries and conducted a full-day workshop in Auckland with many academics to evaluate them. This formed the foundation for an excellent thesis, a great book, and propelled his academic career forward.

Chris's measurement skills were remarkable, his knowledge of philosophy of science was profound, his evaluation skills were keen, and his curious eye was astounding. We enjoyed discussing obscure topics (at least obscure to others), engaging in spirited debates about his methodologies, and sharing articles and knowledge abundantly. He wasn't just a passive recipient of knowledge; he actively sought to construct his own beliefs and make an impact through his understanding. The depth of his intellectual pursuits sparkled like a river, flowing in new and exciting directions.

Lilly became the centerpiece of Chris's joy and pride, and was someone we all had the pleasure of meeting at AEA and other events. For many years, with Daniela they formed a trio that played a pivotal role in many memorable occasions. Having supervised over 220 theses in my career, I can confidently say that you recognize when you have one of the absolute best. I miss you, my dear friend.

Tom Lyzenga

Western Michigan University

I'm still working on completing my dissertation, but I would not have gotten this far without years of support and direction from Chris.

Chris was encouraging from the start of my Ph.D. process and throughout the many classes and conversations I was fortunate to have with him. He was an excellent balance of critic and coach. His infectious laugh accompanied his utter seriousness about improving the field of evaluation and the scholarly abilities of his students.

He is much missed but will not be forgotten.

Pedro Mateu

Universidad del Pacífico

I am Pedro Mateu, Associate Professor at Universidad del Pacífico in Lima (Peru). Chris Coryn's contribution to my academic and professional development was crucial.

I met Chris for the first time on August 30, 2010, at The Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University (WMU). We shook hands and he gave me a very nice welcome smile. Looking retrospectively, Chris first shaped my academic development gradually. During my first year of doctoral studies, he allowed me not to participate in any of his classes to get settle with the English language. Since my cognate area was applied statistics for evaluation, he encouraged me to take all my stats courses offered by the Department of Statistics at WMU. When finishing the second year, Chris gave me the chance to apply for the MSc in Applied Statistics, also at WMU. I got my master's degree one year later. To celebrate, Chris took some friends (Barry Noakes and Abhik Roy) and me to Metallica's Orion Festival on Detroit's Belle Isle on June 11, 2013. One year later, right before the 2014 Spring break I took my comprehensive exams. Meanwhile, Chris helped me to organize my dissertation committee (himself, Dr. Brooks Applegate, and Dr. David Hartmann). By the end of May I was ready to start working on my dissertation. On March 20, 2015, I finally defended it successfully.

All these pieces of moments are just a convenient sample of all possible situations when he helped me to grow academically speaking. Each sampling unit helped me to enhance my evaluation and statistical skills. But you might wonder what his contribution to my professional development was. He encouraged me to participate in conferences (e.g., American Evaluation Association, European Evaluation Society, among others), not only by attending sessions but also by taking an active role, as a chair or presenter. I was his research assistant for two years and I was exposed to several evaluation projects, local, national, and international. I worked with him and my friend Kristin Hobson to get my first published research article in a peer review journal¹. Eleven years later, Brooks, Chris, and I got another publication². In total, Chris and I have interacted to generate three publications. But what critically marked in my professional life is an informal conversation we had on campus in January 2015. I always thought Chris was not shy at all because when he was lecturing, he managed the classroom environment so well in a way that everyone was connected to his lectures. Sometimes, he used to call your name when he was going to start a topic of your interest. However, when chatting he told me the opposite. He was shy. This single piece helped to overcome a personal barrier I had since I was an undergraduate student. Without any teaching assistant expertise, I finally started my professor career in September 2015, lecturing Statistics mainly for undergraduates in Spanish and English. In 2020, I got tenure. Chris' contribution never stopped. So far, I have returned to Kalamazoo four times (in February 2017, in July 2019, December 2021, and February 2023) and I used to set up a meeting with him to share my research ideas or ask him about some questions I had regarding experiments or quasi-experiments. A one-hour meeting was never enough to capture all his insights and points of view.

Thank you Chris for all your support and patience!

¹ Hobson, K. A., Mateu, P., Coryn, C. L., & Graves, C. D. (2012). Measles, mumps, and rubella vaccines and diagnoses of autism spectrum disorders among children: A meta-analysis. *World Medical & Health Policy*, 4(2), 1-14.

² Mateu, P., Applegate, B., Coryn, C. L. (2023). Towards more credible conceptual replications under heteroscedasticity and unbalanced designs. *Quality & Quantity*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-023-01657-0>

Remembering Dr. Chris Coryn: His influence on my life as an IDPE student and beyond

Satoshi Ozeki

Western Michigan University

Without Chris, I believe that I could not have achieved what I have accomplished so far, especially my PhD in Evaluation from Western Michigan University (WMU).

It was a nice Michigan summer day in 2012 when I first met Chris. After contacting him by email, I visited The Evaluation Center to see him and explore the possibilities of the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation (IDPE). At the time, I was a bit stuck, not knowing where my life would go, and my life in the United States would possibly end sometime soon.

Chris was very welcoming and listened gently to me, an international student from Japan. Both of us had a master's degree in the area of psychology, which made it easier for me to communicate with him about my research ideas that I would potentially like to work on in the IDPE program. Genuine conversations with him convinced me that this was the program I would like to pursue further study, and Chris was surely someone I would like to study under and with. I applied for the IDPE program and was very fortunate to be accepted. I still vividly remember when I first received a notice of acceptance by email. I was somewhere outside near the WMU main campus and checked my email there, and then I looked up at the sky with joy. The Michigan sky at that time was very beautiful at dusk, so beautiful that I took a photo of it with my cell phone. My life in the United States, which I dreamed of for a long time, would have been most likely to end if I had not been accepted.

My life as an IDPE student was always stimulating because Chris was there in his office to answer any questions I had, and he always answered my questions with calm yet logical thinking and substantial knowledge in evaluation. In addition, interacting with the motivated, yet fun students around me at The Evaluation Center was also exciting to me. In 2013, I was also very fortunate to be a Doctoral Associate in the IDPE program, working under Chris and with other Doctoral Associates at The Evaluation Center. This increased my opportunities to interact with Chris more often and learn from him.

Chris was one of the brightest persons and scholars I have ever met. One of the phrases I heard from someone in the IDPE program, which is still in my mind, is, "Any paper will be published if Chris is involved." I believe that this phrase did not come from just a single student, but also many of us agreed on. Working as one of his Doctoral Associates, I was able to witness how he approached the writing of an academic paper. When we worked on a research project, I saw Chris almost have completed writing the paper before the data were collected and analyzed. I seem to remember that the result section of the paper did not change much even after the data analysis necessary to fill in the result section was completed. Since then, I have always had a desire to follow his method. It has not happened yet, but I will.

It is very hard to believe that we lost Chris. However, his influence on his former students, like me, will last forever because everything I learned from him has had a tremendous impact on my professional life.



Lastly, I would like to share the photo of the Western Michigan Sky I took after I received a notice of acceptance into the IDPE program in the summer of 2012. The photo reminds me of the excitement of my new journey into the IDPE program, studying under Chris.

I will never forget him.

Remembering Interactions with Chris Coryn

Michael Quinn Patton

Utilization-Focused Evaluation

Seven qualities stand out for me in remembering my interactions with Chris over the years.

First, he loved to discuss evaluation as much as anyone I've known or worked with. When I did presentations to the doctoral program, he would pick me up at the airport and we would talk evaluation incessantly until he dropped me off again a couple days later.

Second, he was a consummate evaluation generalist, which contributed to his editing prowess. His writings span theory, methods, practice, subject matter specializations (education, health, development), and professionalization. I saw him while he was working on the 2nd edition of the *Evaluation Theory, Models & Applications* book with Dan Stufflebeam, and he was consumed by and totally immersed in the content of that critical contribution to the field.

Third, he was a valued collaborator. He published over a hundred peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and monographs, the bulk of them co-authored. One of my favorites, that I have quoted often was, "What's in a Scriven Number?" (Roy, Hobson, & Coryn, 2012), paying homage to evaluation's great pioneer philosopher and his doctoral adviser.

Fourth, his incisive intellect, deep knowledge, and engaging wit are on display most powerfully in his individually written articles. Two of my favorites:

- "The holy trinity of methodological rigor: A skeptical view" (Coryn, 2007).
- "The fundamental characteristics of research" (Coryn, 2007).

Fifth, as editor of *JMDE* he read and reviewed across the full range of evaluation issues and became an insightful published reviewer himself. A model of how to do a book review is: "Revisiting Realistic *Evaluation*" (Coryn, 2007).

Sixth: speed. Speed? Yes, speed. Unprecedented speed. Consider these two *JMDE* interactions.

- On June 4, 2020, at 7:36 AM, I submitted a potential article for review. I wrote:

I'm writing to get your review of a possible article for *JMDE*. As you know, Marv Alkin has been the thought leader on evaluation theory. He continues to pursue the issue of influences on theorists' theories as first explored in *Evaluation Roots*. This Spring he interviewed me about influences on my work for his graduate seminar. He then polished and contextualized the transcript. The result, attached, is an article largely in interview format, with an introduction and conclusion about evaluation theory. We thought it might be of interest to *JMDE* readers.

In any case, this gives me the opportunity to express appreciation for the journal. Your work on it makes a difference to our field.

On June 4, the same day, at 10:57 AM, Chris responded:

Michael and Marv,

I could not help myself and have already created a proof for your review. I also did some very light copy editing for consistency. Please review the attached proof and let me know of any needed corrections or other revisions....Thank you for a fine contribution!

3 1/2 hours from draft submission to copy-edited article ready for publication may well be a world record for scholarly publication. Guinness, are you listening? Here's a new category for world records!

*The article was published **that same day**, June 4, the day it was submitted. [The Birth and Adaptation of Evaluation Theories | Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation \(sfu.ca\)](#)*

- On May 20, 2021, I submitted a draft article updating Developmental Evaluation for potential publication. In my email to Chris I complained about how long it takes to get articles published in print journals, especially the *American Journal of Evaluation*. I added: “*JMDE* is the field's real-time publication. Kudos to you. And sincere thanks. You're doing important and good work. Hopefully this attached submission will resonate.

On May 26, 2021, six days later, Chris wrote: “I have attached a copy-edited proof of your article.” Six days! Not sure what slowed him down.

Published June 1, just 10 days after submission. [Emergent Developmental Evaluation Developments | Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation \(sfu.ca\)](#)

These speed examples are not meant to suggest that such rapid turnaround ought to be expected or be the norm. But compared to the typical 9-month to two-year lag between submission and publication in print journals, speed is worth acknowledging and celebrating in our dynamic, rapidly changing world.

To conclude, seven being a number signifying wholeness, the seventh thing that stands out to me in remembering my interactions with Chris is how much he cared – and how open he was about his caring – for Lilly, for family, for doctoral students, for colleagues, for *JMDE*, and for evaluation.

Seven prized interaction memories and, sadly, no longer counting.

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Memories of Chris Coryn

Mary Ramlow

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The interdisciplinary Ph.D. in evaluation (IDPE) program at Western Michigan University was developed by Daniel Stufflebeam in 2003. The first director was E. Jane Davidson and I was assigned to do the administrative work needed for the program. Chris Coryn was one of students in the first year of the program. That was the beginning of my 18 years with Chris.

Chris, and his beloved dog, came to Kalamazoo from Indiana. As a student, Chris absorbed the information and knowledge that his instructors shared with him. He took that ability and applied it to working on projects at The Evaluation Center under the direction of Daniel Stufflebeam and Arlen Gullickson. These opportunities continued through Chris' entire doctorate studies time at Western.

After the first year of IDPE, Michael Scriven became the director of the doctorate program for four years. Chris and Michael would consistently have meetings and discussions about everything evaluation. In the logical progress of Chris' doctorate journey, Michael became Chris' dissertation chair. Chris completed his doctorate in four years. I believe Chris' success was because of his photographic memory of everything he ever read.

This led Chris to a wonderful career opportunity. Michael Scriven was resigning and Daniel Stufflebeam was looking for a new director for the IDPE program. One year after Chris received his doctorate, he was offered the directorship of the interdisciplinary Ph.D. in evaluation program. By that time, Chris had already written a book on *Evaluating research: Theory, methods, and applications*, over 20 articles, and numerous book reviews and technical reports. As the only other staff person with the program at that time, Chris and I shared many conversations about our lives, the students, and the program over the years.

Several students were like Chris in the beginning where they relocated to Kalamazoo to get their doctorate, some with families and some without. Chris strove to make students feel welcomed and did this by holding social gatherings at his house or at The Evaluation Center. He would show off his culinary talents at the home events by grilling—one of his favorite joys. These were events that we all looked forward too, staff and students alike.

The social gatherings were a time to watch families grow while the students completed their degrees. It was that way with Chris too when he welcomed his lovely daughter Lily. Beaming as he shared pictures of her in the beginning and then as a father when Lily many times joined him at the office.

During his directorship, Chris successfully guided an astonishing number of students through their doctoral studies and led IDPE to have one of the highest graduation rates at Western Michigan University. He even chaired dissertations outside of IDPE sharing his knowledge where ever he could. When asked for research advice from a colleague or student, he never hesitated to give them his full attention and best thinking. This included several conversations about my own doctorate journey.

Chris shared his expertise outside of Western Michigan University as well. He received several awards for his professional achievements including the American Evaluation Association's Marcia Guttentag Award, American Educational Research Association's Research on Evaluation Distinguished Scholar Award, Western Michigan University's Emerging Scholar Award, and Michigan Association for Evaluation's Friend of Evaluation Award. Chris was an accomplished author, coauthoring the textbook *Evaluation Theory, Models, and Applications* with Daniel Stufflebeam and coeditor (with Carl D. Westine) the four-volume *Contemporary Trends in Evaluation Research*. Being a prolific writer, Chris published more than 70 journal articles and furthered the reach of evaluation as one of the founders and the executive editor of the *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation (JMDE)*.

The impact of Chris' personal achievements, writings on evaluation, research on evaluation, and his guidance to many others, will leave a void that will be hard to fill not only in the vast field of evaluation but in our hearts as well. We will greatly miss his leadership and friendship that many of us have valued during his time with us.

In Memoriam: Chris Coryn

Daniela Schroeter

School of Public Affairs and Administration, Western Michigan University



Photo: IDPE students, ~2005: Cristian Guguu, Otto Gustafson, Ryo Sasaki, Amy Gullickson, Daniela Schroeter, Chris Coryn, Brad Watts, Kristin Richardson, Wes Martz, Brandon Youker, Lori Wingate, and Krystin Martens



Photo: Michael Scriven shaking hands with Chris as the first graduate of the IDPE, June 2007

Chris Coryn was my colleague, peer, friend, husband, and co-parent for many years. He challenged me academically, professionally, and personally until his passing. I met Chris in 2003 when I became a doctoral student in the first cohort of Western Michigan University's (WMU) Interdisciplinary PhD in Evaluation (IDPE) program, housed at the Evaluation Center (EC).

Chris was a researcher at the EC working on the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) project, an NSF-funded grant, then run by Arlen Gullickson. At that time, Chris was also a student of Social Psychology at Indiana University, where he completed his master's degree in Social and Experimental Psychology under Catherine Borshuk in 2004.

EC faculty, students, and staff formed a close network of colleagues and friends with boundaries between work, study, and play blurry at best. With some convincing by the IDPE director E. Jane Davidson and myself, Chris joined the IDPE in Spring 2004, while finishing his master's thesis at Indiana University. We spent many hours in the *University Roadhouse* debating evaluation theories and discussing optimal and most sophisticated solutions to evaluation challenges. We also worked on a needs assessment to identify the market space for a new evaluation journal, which later became the *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation* (JMDE) with Michael Scriven at the helm as the editor in chief.

When Michael Scriven joined WMU, we also spent many hours at his or our residence, dining and debating the evaluation discipline's past, presence, and future. In all, given Chris' intellect, work ethic, and approachability, he was the evaluation superstar from the beginning. Chris could read faster, write faster, absorb faster, and debate anyone about anything anytime. We took many classes together, shared an office as ATE graduate assistants, and got to frequent the Hawaiian Islands for data collection on a great project that Gary Miron had with Kamehameha Schools. Tough life! Time in graduate school flew by and in 2007, Chris emerged as the first graduate from the IDPE program.



Photo: WMU price 2013 Emergent Scholar Award

Chris was always a true scholar, an amazing methodologist, and an avid reader with somewhat of a photographic memory. He always worked on several articles at the same time. As he had an idea, he would immediately identify a target journal and begin to outline the paper, identifying headers and subheaders, and drafting sections. As a result, many papers were in good shape much before the data were fully analyzed and once drafts were completed, Chris submitted them immediately to the given journal. Chris' latest CV lists 60 peer-reviewed articles, 6 book chapters, 2 special issues of journals, 6 encyclopedia entries, and 10 book reviews in addition to prepublication reviews of books and research reports, white papers, and a statistical tool. Outlets for his work included the Albanian Journal of Agricultural Sciences, American Journal of Evaluation, Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal, Chronic Illness, Computers & Education, Current Research in Social Psychology, Energy Efficiency, Evaluation & The Health Professions, Evaluation and Program Planning, Evaluation Journal of Australasia, International Criminal Justice Review, Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice, Journal of Materials Education, Journal of Mixed Methods Research, Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, New Directions for Evaluation, The Journal of Social Psychology, The Qualitative Report, and World Medical & Health Policy. Chris also coauthored a book with Daniel Stufflebeam, the second edition of *Evaluation Theory, Models, & Applications*, and he coedited a the four-volume text *Contemporary Trends in Evaluation Research* with Carl Westine.



Photo: At Kasetart University, Thailand 2011

Additionally, Chris served on over 50 grants, consulted on projects, supported nonprofits with research and evaluation services, and was the sole IDPE faculty for most of his career, serving on 35 dissertations mostly as the chair. He also wrote or contributed to hundreds of technical reports, technical presentations, workshops, and lectures. Note that his academic career only stretched a bit over a decade, that is 13 years as the IDPE Director.

Chris' work was funded by many international federal, state, and local organizations totaling more than \$3,000,000 over the years. He served as the Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigator, or Methodologist for numerous research and evaluation grants allowing him to visit Albania, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, India, Japan, Kosovo, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Nepal, New Zealand, Russia, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom, and United States. From 2010 to 2011 he provided instruction at The Evaluators' Institute, held annually in Chicago, Ottawa, San Francisco, and Washington. He also worked and published with many of the field's leading scholars including Tom Cook, Bradley Cousins, Jane Davidson, John Hattie, Patrick McKnight, Robin Miller, Michael Patton, Jim Rugh, James Sanders, Michael Scriven, and Daniel Stufflebeam, among others.



Photo: Lilly's pre-school graduation, 2016

Some of my fondest evaluation project memories have been those that allowed us to travel as a family and which included fieldwork with our daughter Lilly onboard. Our project with the Swiss National Science Foundation brought us repeatedly to Switzerland where Lilly learned to crawl. Another foundation project included several trips to Moscow, where Lilly was being carried with all her gear up and down the stairs for street crossings. At home, Chris loved to read and to cook. Although our relationship crumbled over the

years, we always maintained a good friendship and co-parented Lilly. Both Lilly and I still cherish our memories of his cooking. I particularly loved his Pad Thai and Lilly wishes I was as good a steak chef as he was. Even though Chris is gone for almost two years at this time, we talk about him often and keep the good he brought to our family alive. We will forever miss him and wish he could have stayed with us for much longer. The evaluation world has lost an amazing researcher.

Fish Bicycles and Pleasant Hauntings: a Chris Coryn memorial

Zach Tilton

"I have benefited from Chris Coryn's strong opinions and axiomatic statements about evaluation. His brief statements of belief interspersed in his dialogue carry the weight of mini mantras . . . [and provide] me with refrains of evaluative knowledge that haunt my thoughts in the most pleasant way."

Aside from unintentionally portending the future, this quote from my Spring 2019 semester notes sheds light into studying under Chris Coryn. He was opinionated-cum-dogmatic in his beliefs about evaluation—though it seemed he could back up all his claims with an empirical warrant. The surrogate son of evaluation's philosopher king, Chris was an intimidating figure for a new doctoral student like me. Years of evaluation practice and scholarship honed his ability to critique, which was not held in reserve for any Eval Café, class presentation, or scholarly work. Though, through time I learned that Chris Coryn was a bespeckled pineapple; on the outside he was prickly, if not prickly—a 2nd generation curmudgeon, yet deeply sensitive if not insecure and caring on the inside. Behind the Gandalf beard, the tattoo sleeves, and the slightly offensive Christmas sweaters was a person who cared about his craft and about preparing the next generation of, not just evaluation practitioners but, evaluation thought leaders.

For me and many other doctoral students, that preparation came through lectures, class discussions, hallway conversations, and one-on-one guidance in his office. As indicated in the excerpt above, his words had a certain weight to them. I'd like to share some of those refrains of evaluative wisdom with the readers of this special edition. They appear as statements about how the world of evaluation is, and in some instances how the world of evaluation ought to be. They are lines in the sand, pleasant hauntings, and as will become apparent, sometimes fish bicycles.

A brief note on methods and limitations, as Chris would have insisted. The following quotes of Chris Coryn were recorded during two in-person classes from January to April 2019, Philosophy of Science for Evaluators and Research on Evaluation. While I typed copious near-verbatim class notes in real-time, I did not use a voice recorder and therefore acknowledge I could have mis-heard or mis-typed the exact delivery of his words. Nonetheless, I present these class notes as direct quotes (organized by category with the occasional contextual commentary in italics) and surely those who knew Chris will hear his voice as they read them.

On the Nature of Evaluation

"Problems inform the questions and values inform the problems, ergo, no science can be value-free." Ever the loyal disciple, Chris often warned us of the specter of 'value-free doctrine' his mentor forcefully eschewed.

"If not considering cost in context in evaluation, are we actually determining worth?"

"We are not ecologists" *Referencing what he viewed as the faddish approach of systems and complexity-informed evaluation.*

"No value-free evaluation, no culture-free evaluation."

"Competence—can anyone be culturally competent in any one culture? You cannot say that you are competent in a culture, or any culture. Culturally pluralistic. Cultural proficiency."

"An evaluation will not transform the lives of marginalized populations." *I used to bristle more at this quote, but I have come to interpret it as an invitation to be humble about our work.*

On Reasoning

“Inference is fundamentally the most important thing. Inference leads you to a conclusion. A conclusion is an acceptance of a knowledge claim.”

“Editors and reviewers want 'therefores' or expounding because the editors and reviewers want interpretations.”

“There is a tendency to extend poorly from a small amount of information to say it explains everything. May as well teach me how to read a crystal ball.”

“Inferences that we are making, not making, being explicit about, or trying to hide is something you need to think through and understand.”

“There cannot be a Bayesian solution to Hume's problem of induction.” *I had no idea (and still don't) what he was talking about here, but I knew he did, and I wrote it down to find out later. Maybe I still will one day.*

On Method

“I am a neo-positivist. There are things we can know, but we need to understand the limits of that knowledge.”

“People spend entire career just studying sampling.”

“There are no 'therefores' with poor methodology.”

“Web surveys need to go out on Wednesdays.” *A classic example of how serious Chris took his craft down to the smallest detail, where this recommendation to increase survey response rates was grounded in RoE. Another example is when Chris and colleagues published an actual experimental design to determine the most cost-effective form of material incentives for survey response rates among AEA members—it's a lottery.*

On Recommendations

“Evaluations without recommendations are like a fish without a bicycle.” *Quoting Scriven, he would call these pithy one-liners about evaluation ‘Scriven Nuggets.’*

“I am not going to come in and tell you how to make a business. A recommendation is a prediction. If you do this, you can expect this. I have no way of knowing this.”

On Causation

“Causation is like a mosquito bite.” *This was another Scriven nugget he was passing on.*

“Evaluation is historically concerned with outcomes, impact, effects—these are attributional or contribution statements. Contribution is not knowable.”

“The moment that you start doing evaluation, you are making causal inference whether they are implicit or not. I don't care what the approach is. We talk about outcomes. If you say ‘cause’, you better say reasonably certain.”

“My basis for reasoning does not deal with RCTs, but on the counterfactual. A mathematical basis for reasoning. Rubin formalized the causal model. Rubin formalized work of others. He is the giant in this.”

On prescriptive theories, models, and approaches

“Many approaches are not explicit, but there will need to be inferences. Once you get outside of RCTs or Guba and Lincoln, anything in the middle is messy and can be defined as pragmatism.”

“They are technically theories, hypotheses untested. They mostly don't have an empirical basis, other than Patton.” *Though Chris had strong feelings about the limited replicability of Patton's charisma by other evaluators, he acknowledged Utilization-focused Evaluation was grounded in research on evaluation.*

“We should not be operating on hunches or beliefs but based on empirical evidence. There should be a body of research for why we should do things this way.”

“We don't need any more models! It's just a repackaging of everything and a “buy my new thing” but it was the same as the one before it, and so on and so on.”

“Some evaluators will say “I have this idea for an evaluation model.” Great. Can you empirically test it and say it does what you say it will? If not, no thanks.”

On Research on Evaluation

“Systematic and empirical. Preplanned. Purposeful. You are setting out with questions. Not reflection post hoc. We are very particular in wording.” *Chris speaking about his definition of RoE that was previously voted the official definition endorsed by the RoE TIG. This is not it, and neither is the current TIG definition, but you should still look it up.*

“RoE should have some kind of generalizability. Self-reflection has no generalization to others beside yourself.”

“If I am an evaluator and I read this, will it affect my evaluation practice? It should not be just ‘let's do a study.’ What are the implications?”

“Within the auspices of program evaluation, we attend too little to research that would benefit our practice.”

“Every RoE contribution means we know a little bit more. Your dissertation should be viewed as one of those contributions. You are not going to change the world with your dissertation or side RoE hustles.”

“We won't get to evaluation outcomes (might be holy grail).” *Speaking of RoE that investigates evaluation consequences—Mel Mark's subject of RoE—to see if evaluation does what we think it does.*

On Theory-driven Evaluation

In 2011, Chris lead-authored his most cited publication, a systematic review on theory-based evaluation, which put empirics to his mentor's claim that program theory is “a luxury for the evaluator.” The findings from this landmark study led him to one of his most strident opinions about evaluation, which personally shook me as theory-based evaluation was and is the dominant paradigm for the sub-fields of evaluation I come from, namely international development and peacebuilding evaluation.

“There is no empirical evidence to suggest a program theory is a necessary precondition to do an evaluation or that theory-driven evaluation is more efficacious than other forms of evaluation.”

“I don't like theory-driven evaluation. We don't have theory-driven evaluations to base these [theory-driven evaluation as an approach] on. We don't replicate.” *This rhymes with his mentor's quip in 2008 asking Tom Cook why no randomista had yet to conduct an RCT to determine the efficacy of RCTs.*

“Theory of change is not prima facie demonstrable. I can do the exact same work in absence of a ToC or a log frame. They are a waste of time, resources, and energy. People try to sell you on it. Until I have evidence to say it improves the quality of evaluation, I don't buy it.”

“Root of term of evaluation is 'value.' There is nothing evaluative about it. It is descriptive research. There is nothing wrong with descriptive research, but it is not evaluation.”

On Writing

“Do not overwrite. It can be explained clearly.”

“Postmodern forms of writing—too long didn't read. TLDR. Overly wordy and unnecessarily wordy.” *Chris did his best to disabuse me of an overwrought writing style I imported from a European master's in critical peace studies. However, he only deepened my appreciation from that tradition for a “ruthless criticism of all that exists.”*

“I know I am really dogmatic about this. The more verbose, the more interpretation required.”

“I love unicorns that fart glitter, but don't give me something you can't do. Give me something realistic and feasible.” *This was instruction to us about our dissertation designs and good advice for any writing endeavor.*

On Measurement

“Measurement is assigning symbols to objects following a system of rules to represent, not exactly quantify.”

“If it is not operationalized, you can't measure it. Everything has to be operationalized. Conceptual definitions and operational definitions are crucial.”

“Measurement is an inference—an inference to a construct.”

On Evaluator Education

“Should all evaluators have PhDs? No.”

“We should be studying theories and not theorists.”

“The value of this class always comes back to methodological choices. Ontology and Epistemology lead to methods. Real value is not just making methodological choices, but informed choices. There are no right and wrongs, but greys. You can see I'm not a positivist, but very close.” *A preamble to our Philosophy of Evaluation Science class and a bid to ground our philosophical work with the implications for practice.*

As I re-read these quotes, I can still hear the conviction in his voice, though, as evidenced in the quotes, Chris knew what he knew, knew the limits of his knowledge, and was cautious not to infer beyond what the evidence supported. He was committed to pushing the frontiers of our knowledge about evaluation practice, especially by applying the same systematic, disciplined, transdisciplinary evaluative logic we advocate for in other practice-based fields to our very own profession. I will always be grateful for his mentorship and friendship and look forward to carrying these axioms with me throughout my career.

Remembering Chris Coryn

Carl D. Westine

Associate Professor, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

When I joined WMU's Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation (IDPE) program, I took a chance on Chris Coryn— a recent graduate and newer faculty member somehow in charge of most everything IDPE – and he took a chance on me as his Graduate Assistant. At first glance, Chris didn't come across as your typical academic (whatever that may be.) His appearance was always a bit intimidating to most, but I was drawn in immediately by the confidence he exuded. He took me in, viewed me as a colleague, allowed me time for discovery, and helped me to carve a path through to completion. In my experience, Chris was that type of mentor. Almost immediately there was an established level of respect and trust between us, and for me it was so empowering.

One of the many opportunities I was fortunate enough to be a part of with Chris involved hosting a delegation of education policy-makers from India, and then traveling to India (with him, along with Brad Cousins and Catherine Elliott) to assist with a training workshop on program evaluation and research methods. The trip was an amazing opportunity for a young evaluation student and helped me to understand the far reach of evaluation and its ever-emerging role. But it also helped me develop a closer relationship with Chris that extended beyond the classroom. We started playing golf together, grabbed our daily coffees, had play dates with our kids, and shared ideas for research on evaluation and debated the nuances evaluation theories and practices long after class ended. And even after I graduated, we kept in touch regularly, working on new ideas, and planning our next projects. I wish every graduate student could have a similar experience.

Like many of his students, I have fond memories of time spent in Chris' classroom where he would lead inspiring discussions and reference key readings that he always remembered so precisely. However, one of my favorite memories of Chris was from our time together in India. He was presented with a special plate of fried chicken and fries after finally confessing on one of the last nights of the trip that he just didn't like the taste of curry. It was certainly good for a laugh, but it somehow also captured so many key evaluation concepts in one moment: context, values, standards, synthesis (just look at his giddy smile!)



Seeing things now from the other side, as an evaluation faculty member, it's clear Chris shouldered so much more for the good of the program and the benefit of his students. Our journeys were in many ways linked, though it was clear the stakes were always much higher for Chris given his role. Interdisciplinary programs don't quite fit the mold at many institutions, but Chris always tried to protect the program, all while providing more opportunities for students (through JMDE, seeking new projects, teaching a variety of evaluation courses, and being a prolific collaborator). I'm forever grateful.

Over the years Chris will of course be remembered as an evaluation scholar each time we cite his influential books and articles, but his influence will also carry on through the many students he mentored and trained. That's the beauty of academia, the journey will always continue.

Kurt Wilson
Effect X, LLC
Regis University

In class, Chris often said that ‘anything can be evaluated.’ Inspiring as this was, my internal contrarian responded by trying to think of exceptions. What about love? Hope? Motivation? Those thoughts planted seeds that would ultimately bear fruit with my own motivation, and over the past several years I have spent considerable time exploring new theory and methodology for evaluating the intangible dimensions of human life. Reflecting now on the contribution of Chris’s life adds urgency to these efforts to include and even prioritize the intangible aspects of life within evaluative practice. While I was impressed to the point of intimidation by the considerable visible and countable successes he achieved (e.g., degrees, positions, academic articles published, etc.), what I recall now is much more intangible. The tremendous loss I still feel from his passing is the loss of his remarkable combination of insight, encouragement, and inspiration. Those were the qualities of my relationship with Chris that contributed to his being the pivotal force in my life as an evaluator – the point around which my evaluation journey turned from vague interest into life passion. Despite my initial resistance, it turns out he was right: anything can, in fact, be evaluated. When I reflect on the considerable impact that Chris made on my life, I find my thoughts turning toward life dimensions like insight, encouragement, inspiration, and thoughtful relating: qualities I want to prioritize in my own life – and increasingly in my evaluations.

Remembering Chris Coryn

Lori A. Wingate

Western Michigan University

First, Chris was my coworker – his office was across the hall from mine when he started working at The Evaluation Center. Then we were peers in our Ph.D. program. He was in the first cohort of students in Western Michigan University's Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation; I joined the following year. He finished his Ph.D. in record time, and then he was my professor and dissertation advisor. He was always my most trusted advisor on measurement and methodology matters. He was never too busy for an impromptu question. He gave his time generously to review drafts of materials and engage as a thought partner on sticky issues.

When I received the news of Chris's death, it felt surreal. I walked down the hall to his office and just sat there a while to allow myself to feel the true weight of the loss. I considered the objects in the room that spoke to who he was: tall bookcases filled with meticulously organized books on evaluation, methods, and measurement; several awards and diplomas; a small assortment of personal items – photos, art, etc. But what struck me was the palpable, residual energy of the countless conversations he had with students and colleagues in the confines of that office – advising, challenging, counseling, commiserating, debating, guiding, helping, ideating, questioning, supporting, teaching. He was always there for us. And then he wasn't.