

wouldn't sleep through the night and not enough money to afford full-time daycare. Since becoming a mother, I'd encountered a range of experiences on campus that completely floored me—sometimes in a positive way, but more often in a demoralizing, I-can't-believe-that-just-happened kind of way. In a word, I was struggling. I'm not sure I even realized how much I was struggling—and then, the email notification came across my screen. It was simple: “How are you? Let's do lunch!” I responded, we set up a time.

The first few minutes were filled with small talk, but she quickly launched into what must have been a prepared speech, or at least, a series of things that had been firmly in her mind. She knew what was going on with me, she'd been paying attention. At first, I protested— not wanting to admit to feeling weak or powerless. But she didn't let up. She laid it out for me: specific observations about balancing motherhood with graduate school, the concepts I'd been wrangling in my new dissertation prospectus, the blows that had shaken my self-confidence. It was brutal, and honest, and I knew I couldn't deny the truth behind her words. And then, she shared with me parts of her own story, things she had experienced, lessons she'd learned. She let me know I wasn't alone.

After that meeting, and through an intentional series of very small steps, she helped me to rebuild— my dissertation, yes, but really only as a byproduct of learning how to trust myself again. In a time when I felt too defeated to put any kind of meaningful words on paper, she gave me the courage to write a bad first draft. She printed out a calendar and we mapped out a plan— times to meet, times to turn in work. When we met, she would help me draw out my ideas, pushing me to connect with them on a deeper level. Somewhere, I have a folder filled with her writing—notes on papers of all sizes, full of diagrams and arrows and big-picture questions. A love

language of enthusiasm and excitement and scribbles.

The last semester she was at UNM, I was teaching my own class, and had a student who was giving me a really hard time. When I'd planned the class originally, she'd been excited to do a guest lecture on Ottoman rule in Turkey. Once the semester was underway, however, her strength had begun to falter, and I instead incorporated some of the materials she gave me into my own planned lecture. But after she witnessed some of my difficulties with the student directly, she changed her mind. I could see how drained she was— but she insisted it was more important that she come to class. It wasn't sufficient, she said, to believe in my ability to teach the class; it was necessary to *show* the students that she respected me and to confer her approval of me publicly. She not only validated the difficulty I was having, she wanted me to know it wasn't my fault. She went out of her way to tell me that she knew how much I cared about teaching and my students, and then she put herself on the line for me. It was one hell of a lecture.

The last time I saw her, I was with my colleague, Fiorella Vera-Adrianzen. Kendra was at home in hospice care. At first, the heavy air was filled with awkward musings about food and politics. She asked about our families, our work, a conference presentation I was scheduled to give at Notre Dame. She reiterated positive comments about the paper— she called it the “shadow institutions” paper, although it was never as cool as that name implied. She apologized that she hadn't given me feedback on the most recent draft. Even in that space, in that time, she was giving us advice, encouragement, support. We wanted to tell her how much she meant to us, how amazing we thought she was. But it was too hard; we couldn't do it. Instead, we told her we'd do our best to make her proud, to share what she'd taught us. Her response was certainty—of course we would. She believed in us. There was no doubt.

## On the Loss of a Dear Friend

Erin Kimball Damman  
*University of Idaho*

**K**endra was one of my best friends. She was a brilliant scholar and a wonderful collaborator, but she was so much more than that. She was warm and generous, with an open-hearted acceptance of people that always amazed me. I miss her terribly.

When I showed up at Northwestern, I was the only woman in my cohort. My male colleagues were great, but I was slightly adrift with no female counterparts. A year ahead of me, Kendra quickly took me under her wing, and we became fast friends. During my second and third years, we shared an office in Scott Hall. Though

we spent time studying together and bouncing ideas off one another, we spent a lot more time talking through personal problems and joking around. We may have acted more like adolescents at a sleep-over party than serious graduate students, but the light-heartedness kept our spirits up.

I don't think Kendra was afraid of anything. In our first co-authoring experience, James Mahoney asked us to present the paper that we had written with him to a special breakout session at the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR). Though early in our graduate careers, we had both experienced presenting at conferences, so an informal presentation should not have been a big deal. However, when we got up in front of some of the biggest names in qualitative research, I froze. Kendra had given an eloquent introduction, but when she turned to me, I just stared dumbly back at her. In quintessential Kendra fashion, however, she saw what was happening, gave me a quick smile and took over my part of the presentation without missing a beat. Afterwards, many co-presenters would probably have been annoyed with their partner for this. Kendra was not. She simply made a joke about how intimidating this audience was, solidifying our partnership and brushing off my apologies and gratitude. This was Kendra to a tee: graceful, unfailingly kind, and fiercely intelligent with a quick wit.

Towards the end of her life, Kendra was sometimes confused by all of the praise she was receiving for her scholarly work. She didn't think she deserved it, but she could not have been more wrong. Her ability to think through the logic of a methodological problem was expansive. She was comfortable debating theory and techniques in an abstract sense, but extraordinary at seeing how these techniques should be applied to substantive projects. Her work on organized crime was thus exciting not just for its contributions to scholarly literatures on state building, but also for its clean and well-identified use of within-case analysis and comparative methods. Kendra was also willing to extend herself to understand perspectives and tools that she herself did not use. When we wrote "Qualitative Variations," she took on the

section about interpretive methods. Though neither of us operated from this ontology, nor had much training in its epistemological grounding, she worked her way through the literature and ably found the parallels and differences to our other qualitative schools of thought.

Kendra was also exceptional at helping others think through their projects systematically. It was as if she could see a project from beginning to end, and help craft everything from the question to the research design. I can only imagine what an excellent dissertation advisor and teacher this made her.

As a single parent trying to make it through grad school, Kendra had a lot more challenges in her life than I did and faced some serious discrimination (both structural and individual), but she never gave up. When I had children later during the dissertation stage, I got through it mostly by thinking about Kendra. I remembered watching her balance single parenting while earning her degree, and being amazed by her simple acceptance of all the added pressure and time. I honestly don't know if I would have finished writing my dissertation without her example of perseverance to turn to. Indeed, though I never shared this with her because I'm pretty sure it would have embarrassed her, thinking about Kendra's tenacious spirit continues to motivate me. After she became an assistant professor, she had a second baby, faced cancer, and still got tenure. When I think a current project is hard or feel less than motivated, I often think, how would Kendra have handled this?

After Kendra passed, I was deeply, deeply sad. I still am. I never truly accepted that her diagnosis was terminal. Even when sitting beside her in her last weeks of life, I kept feeling that she would somehow beat this. Her indomitable spirit had bested so many other challenges in life that it seemed like cancer couldn't possibly take her from us. Nothing about losing her so young was okay, and this world is less bright without her. She left behind an amazing legacy of two beautiful and talented children, a host of well-trained students, and many, many friends and colleagues that will miss her spirit and intelligence. Once again, in trying to manage my own grief at her loss, I am left thinking, how would Kendra have handled this?

## Kendra Koivu: One of My Favorite People

Christopher Day  
*College of Charleston*

**K**endra Koivu was one of my closest friends and most influential intellectual playmates. We met in 2006 at Northwestern University. I was an incoming graduate student in political science, and she was a more seasoned veteran in her third year.

From the beginning, Kendra and I became fast friends, both members of the "Will Reno Mafia," that shared love and respect for our mentor while exploiting the vast material which he regularly provided us with to roast him. Will made the crucial mistake of letting us use his