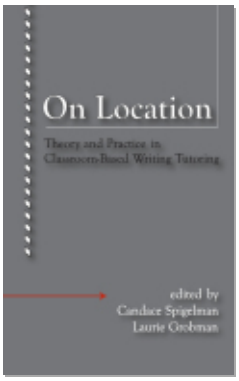
1 Diplomatic Relations: Peer Tutors in the Writing Classroom



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DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Peer Tutors in the Writing Classroom

Teagan Decker

Of the many things that define a writing center, one of the most crucial is the relationship it has with those who assign the writing in the first place. Some centers, especially those connected with basic writing programs, are thoroughly intertwined with the classroom and may serve as labs that students attend as an extension of their composition classes. Others are more autonomous and may have spun away from their home departments altogether, housed in a central location such as a library or undergraduate center. Many are connected with a department, usually English, but are autonomous within that relationship, free to practice forms of pedagogy that diverge from the writing program they are associated with. This type of center attempts to provide students a place separate from the classroom, a place where they can find a different perspective, an interested audience, a place to be free from the authority of the instructor.

In 1984, Stephen North articulated the frustrations and desires of many writing centers by declaring independence from the writing classroom and the writing instructor: "In short, we are not here to serve, supplement, back up, complement, reinforce, or otherwise be defined by any external curriculum" (440). As directors of writing centers, those of us who share his views try to maintain a separateness from the classroom, which serves to strengthen our authority and allows us to offer an alternative learning experience to students. Writing centers don't want independence because of animosity toward instructors. Most writing center directors have been or are instructors, and many tutors plan on making a career in teaching. The real reason for our quest for autonomy has to do with our fundamental belief that students can become better writers and learn from writing better if they have a place to practice writing and share writing that is separate from a writing classroom.

DECLARATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE

For many centers, this desire for separateness has resulted in a place that is, in fact, separate. Far from being combative about autonomy, many

writing center directors no longer have to think about these issues: others in the department, although they may not all fully understand or appreciate what goes on in the writing center, leave it alone. The writing center may even operate under a different pedagogical theory than the writing program. Writing centers have achieved an institutional independence that is no longer in need of defense—we are constantly fighting small battles, but the larger one has for the most part been won.

However much we value this independence, we must allow that a strict approach to autonomy can create a climate of poor communication between center and instructors. We lament on listservs, at conferences, and in print that some instructors don't understand what we do, send us their students for the wrong reasons, or don't recommend us to their students at all for equally wrong reasons. We must admit that this is partly due to our declarations of independence. We exist apart from the classroom, so we are misunderstood by instructors. We try to bridge this gulf with flyers, brochures, and presentations, but until they see for themselves what goes on in the writing center, instructors will never really understand what we are doing.

The writing center I work in is independent, autonomous, and has the freedom to experiment. The manner in which we are experimenting, however, seems at odds with the autonomy we have worked so hard to maintain. We have begun sending tutors into the writing classroom. The tutors are not simply visiting the classroom to give an informational speech about the writing center—they are becoming part of the instruction. This bringing together of the writing center and the classroom, on the instructor's turf, may cause writing center advocates to cringe. How can a writing center maintain its integrity when its tutors are being sent to the classroom to do the bidding of an instructor? Doesn't this compromise the autonomy, the separateness, of the writing center and do exactly the opposite of what North advocates: reinforce an external curriculum?

I believe that there is a way to send tutors into the classroom without compromising integrity. Further, I have found that far from compromising the writing center, peer tutoring in the classroom can forge a diplomatic partnership between the center and the instructors that is healthy and supportive. Inviting instructors to work with us allows for a dialogue between instructor and writing center director that is much richer than the usual exchange of information. Tutors visiting the classroom can act as emissaries, sharing their perspective on writing collaboration with instructors and students. If the relationship between the writing center

and classroom is built upon a diplomatic model, with careful negotiation and a mindfulness of the role of the tutors, not only is the integrity of the writing center spared, the classroom becomes a fertile ground, with writing center theory infusing the curriculum and instructors witnessing collaboration in action.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON'S ENGLISH DEPARTMENT WRITING CENTER

The climate at the University of Washington is the epitome of autonomy: the UW has no central writing center; instead, various departments have created their own centers to serve their students exclusively. The English Department Writing Center, where I am the assistant director, is the only center open to anyone on campus. One main group of the students who visit us are taking lower-division English classes, another significant component consists of those seeking help as second-language students, and a heavy sprinkling come from departments that don't have writing centers of their own.

In short, we are a small center in a very large university. Ten to twelve tutors make up the staff, each working an average of fifteen hours per week. They are almost all undergraduate English majors in their third, fourth, or fifth year. We require all new tutors to enroll in a full-credit training course that provides plentiful theory and practice, preparing students for the complexity of their roles as tutors in the writing center and, more recently, as writing center tutors who occasionally visit classrooms. I try to engage tutors in some of the theoretical problems writing centers face, including the debate over definition. I feel it is especially important for tutors to have a sense of the complexity of their place in the university when they leave the writing center and visit the classroom. If they are able to define themselves as tutors, as opposed to helpers or preteachers, they are better able to maintain their roles as writing center representatives when they enter the classroom.

My motives for initiating a classroom-based tutoring service were twofold. Our relationship with the English department's expository writing program (which offers composition courses that fulfill general education requirements for undergraduates) is positive and complementary, but we operate independently of one another. Most of the composition instructors are graduate students, many of whom are teaching their first or second year. They are introduced to the writing center at their orientation and again through e-mails detailing our specific services. Part of my

job description is to act as a liaison between the writing center and the teaching assistants (TAs), but one short presentation and a few e-mails never seem like enough to me. My social skills are simply not advanced enough to develop relationships and engage in fruitful professional dialogue with ninety busy graduate students, most of whom are studying literature and don't have a natural interest in writing center theory. Since there are few formal links between the classroom and the writing center, I began searching for a new way to connect with instructors.

Another goal of mine was to incorporate group tutoring into what we do at the writing center. As an undergraduate tutor, I worked in a curriculum-based lab connected to a basic writing program. One of the instructors occasionally used lab time for peer response groups with tutors as group facilitators. I always enjoyed these groups because I was able to encourage students to tutor each other, which gave them confidence in their own abilities as writers and critics. Although committed to this idea, I couldn't devise a way to bring groups of students into the writing center regularly enough for this new group tutoring program to work. So I decided instead to try sending tutors into the classroom. A group of two or three tutors would attend class during peer response group day and sit in on the groups, helping them respond to each other's work. Not only would students benefit from an experienced peer group facilitator, the TAs (especially the TAs new to teaching) could get help with conducting successful peer response groups, and we would be able to do all this during slow weeks (the first weeks of the quarter), when often tutors are underworked. As a purely practical matter, this idea seemed like it would benefit everyone, but I felt that we were wading into dangerous waters theoretically. How could I send tutors into the classroom without compromising our center's independence? What stakes are involved in such a venture?

THE DEBATE OVER CENTER/CLASSROOM RELATIONS

Since Stephen North's initial declaration of independence, many writing center theorists have engaged in the struggle to define a writing center's relationship with the classroom. As Thomas Hemmeter points out in his review of the literature, "These repeated calls for self-definition form a distinct segment of writing center discourse" (1990, 36). What he finds is that we routinely define ourselves in terms of difference: we are different from the classroom, different from the institution at large, different from expository writing programs. This habit of perception, he maintains, is to

our detriment: "The metaphorical contrast of writing center with classroom has been expressed so literally as an environment that the discourse becomes constricted, inhibiting effective communication" (38). The communication he is addressing is that between composition instructors and writing center staff. When writing centers pursue the path of isolationism, setting up a polarity between center and classroom, communication and collegiality are put at risk. The real losers in this communication block are students: instructors may distrust a place they have no ties with, wondering just what goes on in there, and not recommend us to students. Alternatively, they may misunderstand us and misconstrue our agenda to students, who will either not visit or visit under false expectations.

In "Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center,'" North agrees that his original polemic, while useful to writing centers as they have worked to define themselves over the years, is heavy-handed and "presents its own kind of jeopardy," limiting the role of writing centers with its polarized conception of the relationship between writing center and classroom (1994, 9). He now advocates a writing center that is more integrated with the instructional end of things: "I want a situation in which we are not required to sustain some delicate but carefully distanced relationship between classroom teachers and the writing center, not least because the classroom teachers are directly involved with, and therefore invested in, the functioning of that center" (16).

The notion of separation that North's 1984 article advocates has been revised and questioned by North himself and others, but its opposite, integration, has its own pitfalls. In an integrated, or curriculum-based, writing center, tutors are part of the classroom instruction for a full term. They are usually attached to a specific class and perform various duties, including one-to-one tutoring, group tutoring, responding to papers in writing, and even giving presentations to the class. The curriculum-based model has met with enthusiasm and success by writing center practitioners like Mary Soliday, who, although frank about problems she encountered and that may be looming in the future, considers her program beneficial to all involved and argues that it "popularize[s] the writing center's services . . . so that classroom tutors also function as 'gateways' to the writing center" (1995, 70).

Although these curriculum-based programs may be effective in meeting certain pedagogical and practical goals, they undercut important aspects of writing center identity. As Harvey Kail and John Trimbur warn, "the curriculum-based model makes the peer tutors an extension of the

faculty" (1987, 6). This violates one of the main tenants of writing center ideology: the absence of professorial authority. Although it is difficult for tutors to truly be peers, most of us can agree that a tutor should not serve as a teacher. When tutors do become teachers, they "suppress the crisis of authority precipitated when students work together, domesticate it, and channel the social forces released by collaboration into the established structures of teaching and learning" (11). In other words, the writing center is often conceived as (and this is true for my writing center) a site of liberation from the traditional regimes of the academy. It is a place to question and investigate the seemingly untouchable expectations, goals, and motivations of the power structures within which undergraduates (and those at all levels in the university) operate. Combining writing centers with classrooms retains the more obvious benefits of peer tutoring and provides much-needed help to overworked instructors, but leaves the political and social energy of the autonomous writing center behind.

Writing center theorists often position autonomy and integration at opposite ends of the pedagogical spectrum, each extreme having its costs and benefits. Writing centers like mine, which try to be what Kail and Trimbur advocate—a site of political awakening, a place where students can "remove themselves from the official structures" and "reengage the forms of authority in their lives by demystifying the authority of knowledge and its institutions" (1987, 11)—suffer from a loss of communication between center and classroom. Curriculum-based centers, however, lose the very "crises of authority" Kail and Trimbur describe by merging the writing center with the classroom, compromising the separateness that allows students to become aware of institutional assumptions about writing and learning in the academy.

Dave Healy, who, like Kail and Trimbur, argues for the political benefits of a separate classroom and center, nevertheless urges us to "recognize the fluidity of both classroom and center" (1993, 26). He suggests a solution much like the program my writing center has been experimenting with: "On writing workshop days, tutors could join the instructor in circulating around the room and doing short conferences." Even an advocate of dualism like Healy is comfortable with tutors in the classroom if the visits are isolated, not every day. With the instructor in the classroom, and the structures of the classroom in place, it is probably too much to expect that students will experience a "crisis of authority" when tutors visit the classroom, but if tutors are able to retain their identity, certainly students will experience something of what the writing center is able to offer them.

Also, if tutors visit only once per term, the writing center itself remains the primary locus of the tutor. Handled properly, then, my program can bring instructors closer to the writing center and reach more students, while still retaining writing center integrity.

A DIPLOMATIC PARTNERSHIP

If the goal is to promote stronger relationships between classroom and center while closely guarding the benefits that only an autonomous writing center can offer students, then a model of diplomacy can work well to structure this relationship and offer a theoretical framework to operate in. This type of structure also allows us to transcend the duality that pushes us to one extreme or the other. Instead of fostering a strained, cool relationship, or, conversely, uniting the two into one homogenized entity, we can make connections and negotiate agreements across institutional borders that we all feel comfortable with. In this model of diplomacy, classroom and center are analogous to nations sending representatives across borders to forge a mutually beneficial relationship. Both states keep their identity but are able to share ideas, services, and responsibility to citizens (in this case, students).

Tutoring in the classroom allows for two diplomatic events. First, the negotiations between instructor and center: before sending tutors to the classroom, a conversation takes place between the instructor and the writing center staff, planning when and how the visit will happen. If handled properly, this conversation can communicate the pedagogy of the writing center without alienating the instructor. At the same time, the instructor can communicate his or her goals, and together the instructor and center can work out a lesson plan that reflects the pedagogy of both. Second, when the actual visit occurs, tutors function as emissaries. If what the tutors do in the classroom is reasonably consistent with what they do in the writing center, then instructors and students are educated about the writing center in a far more immediate and experiential manner than an informational class visit could ever hope to achieve.

NEGOTIATION IN ACTION

The word *negotiation* can carry the implication that two parties are at odds and need to solve a problem. "The Middle East peace negotiations" is an example. In the case of classroom and writing center, however, we can begin with the assumption that we are peaceable neighbors hoping to work together on a mutually beneficial project. Initiating a negotiation

gives us a chance to have a meaningful conversation with instructors as we work toward an agreement. In their book *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In* (1981), Roger Fisher and William Ury describe negotiation as a process of mutual gain, even when the two sides are adversaries. In their program, negotiation begins with each side learning about the other and then using this information to find solutions to problems. This stance seems especially helpful to classroom/writing center relationships since one of our goals in promoting tutoring in the classroom is increased communication. The very act of negotiating the visit can begin to accomplish that goal.

We have been in negotiated diplomacy with instructors at the University of Washington for four quarter-long terms and have visited quite a few classrooms. Some visits have been successful, some have not (at least from the point of view of tutors). The actual goal of our visits, of course, is to help students respond to each other's writing. I can't say for certain how effective we have been in the long term, but since instructors who have participated often ask for us to visit again the next quarter, there is at least a perceived benefit. What I have noticed from my desk in the writing center, though, is a marked increase in the frequency and quality of my interactions with instructors.

I begin the negotiation process with an offer of help. I know from my own experience as a graduate student TA that the first term especially can be overwhelming. TAs are taught about peer response groups in their training course but may be wary of the potential for unsupervised, unfocused groups. An offer of help in this area can be very attractive.

I sent this e-mail to all first-year English instructors: "Writing Center tutors are now available to help you make peer response groups more effective. A group of two to three tutors can come to your class on peer response day and join the groups. The tutor's function in this case is not to be a tutor, but to be a facilitator—sparking group conversation about a student's writing, encouraging constructive feedback by asking questions, and modeling appropriate comments and questions. This works especially well for students new to response group work."

This e-mail offers our assistance with peer response groups but at the same time defines the role of tutor, which is the one point we are not prepared to negotiate. Beginning the conversation with a definition of tutors' roles helps ensure that TAs understand from the beginning what we are offering.

When an instructor replies to the e-mail, either requesting the service or wanting more information, I send them this second e-mail, which introduces negotiable items:

Thanks for your interest in peer response group facilitation. Based on our prior experience with these sessions, we have come up with a few suggestions for ways to structure your class time in order to make the session successful.

During the class period before the peer response day:

- ask students to bring in multiple copies of their paper
- introduce class to the idea of peer response groups;
- have students form groups of three or four and pass around copies of their papers;
- ask them to read the papers at home (or during class time);
- also for homework ask them to write down comments;
- discuss appropriate types of comments.

On peer response day:

- set aside an entire fifty-minute class period for response;
- introduce tutors, explain their role;
- ask students to form their groups and get started.

We suggest having the students read the papers beforehand because we have found that otherwise much of the fifty minutes is spent reading. Also, the students have the chance to think about what responses they might make ahead of time.

These are some basic guidelines, but feel free to experiment. Just let us know what you are thinking, and we will discuss the possibilities.

This set of guidelines informs TAs that we intend to be involved in the planning and that this will be a joint venture. It also is designed to allow for negotiation: the word *suggest* is repeated, and the last sentence makes it clear that we aren't laying down the law on how this visit will be conducted. We are opening up the conversation and setting the stage for a negotiation.

The next step in this process is to invite the instructor to the writing center to meet with me and the tutors who will be visiting the classroom. They bring copies of the assignment the students are working on and the readings they are working with. This is where we hash out the details, where the true negotiation takes place. This negotiation has both obvious and underlying purposes. On the overt side, we must figure out some logistics: How many tutors should go? How big should the groups be? Will the session follow the above plan or diverge from this in some way? The underlying, less obvious, purposes of the negotiation are to bring the instructor physically into the writing center in order to develop a good working relationship and promote understanding of our purposes and methods. (I have also conducted this conversation via e-mail with good results.)

It is interesting to try new things, so we are willing to brainstorm with the instructor and work with the ideas that come up. Fisher and Ury tell us that "joint brainstorming sessions have the great advantages of producing ideas which take into account the interests of all those involved, of creating a climate of joint problem-solving, and of educating each side about the concerns of the other" (1981, 65). Being receptive to ideas generated by the brainstorming and demonstrating a willingness to develop new approaches to the logistics of the peer response group sessions show the instructor that the writing center is a partner. As Fisher and Ury write, "communicating loudly and convincingly things you are willing to say that they would like to hear can be one of the best investments you as a negotiator can make" (26).

One of our more interesting meetings with an instructor resulted in a substantial departure from the recommended guidelines. He asked the tutors to identify the biggest problem that they had when facilitating peer response groups. One tutor told him that students are often so worried about offending each other that they won't say anything critical about other students' work. After discussing this situation for a few minutes, one of the tutors had an idea: using an anonymous paper for a practice response group session and then, later in the week, having the tutors work with the current writing assignment. This would allow students to experience a response group without the anxiety of sharing their work. When they did actually share their essays, they would be more skilled and comfortable with the format. We tried this approach, and the tutors thought it was highly successful. The instructor was pleased and from then on had a close relationship with the writing center. This negotiation allowed the instructor to get what he wanted out of the visit and to feel involved in the planning. Furthermore, even though the writing center deviated from the standard plan, the tutors' role was consistent with our original definition. They remained writing center tutors acting as facilitators, not classroom assistants, and the writing center remained autonomous while creating a positive relationship with a classroom instructor and his students.

TUTORS AS EMISSARIES, TUTORS AS FACILITATORS

The core of a writing center is its tutors, and so any deviation from their standard role must be investigated carefully. I have referred to the importance of a well-defined role for tutors as they cross the borders of writing center and classroom, and here I will explain more fully

what the tutors in my writing center have been doing when they visit classrooms.

The best term I have come up with so far to describe what tutors do in the classroom is *peer response group facilitation*. This is cumbersome but, I hope, descriptive enough to help tutors and TAs navigate this new territory. In this facilitative role, tutors help students in peer response groups use writing center skills, such as open-ended questions, comments such as "I don't quite understand how this connects to your main claim," and specific rather than general praise and criticism. In other words, they show students how to tutor each other.

The pedagogy of peer response groups is similar to that of writing centers: focused on collaboration, student-centered learning, and students keeping authority over their work. In many ways, what instructors expect of students in response groups amounts to what we expect of tutors in one-to-one sessions. Often, though, students are unable to manifest the skills of an effective group collaborator, even with examples and practice offered by the instructor. Tutors have the benefit of being practiced responders, with an understanding of the types of questions to ask and the types of dialogues to encourage. This helps students to take themselves seriously as writers and to see their written work's potential for revision. Tutors can share this experience and training with students by sitting in on response groups and prompting students to ask questions of each other. They facilitate the conversation, encouraging the group to focus on the larger concerns of thesis and organization rather than punctuation, modeling appropriate questions and comments, asking the responders to offer revision suggestions to the writer. They become meta-tutors, encouraging students to tutor each other. In this capacity, tutors are not doing what they would be doing in a one-to-one conference in the writing center—they are showing students how to do it. Their role, then, does change, but at the same time remains consistent. A tutor, Todd, writes about his role in a class visit: "I definitely felt like a tutor showing students how to respond to each other's work."

This is, of course, an ideal that is not always easy for tutors to live up to amid the individual demands of students and instructors and the general chaos that peer response groups create. Todd continues his comments: "There were a few students who had specific questions for me, and I did my best to answer them without usurping classroom authority from [the instructor]." Here Todd is carefully monitoring his role, trying not to be a teacher, as students often expect from anyone placed above them in the

academic hierarchy. What the tutors are encouraged to do in this case is to quickly either answer the question or pass the question on to the teacher, then turn the group's attention back to peer response. Tutors must be aware that they are entering a climate in which anyone who is not a student is traditionally a teacher, and they must be confident enough in their roles to resist that climate. Mary Soliday uses the metaphor of cultural assimilation to describe the choices tutors have when they enter the classroom: "A stranger can assimilate to a new place by shedding old values, identifying with the 'other,' but this is only one possibility. Another might be to resist identification with the new culture, thus experiencing continuous conflict, or, more daringly, revolutionizing the dynamics of the culture. A third way could be to assimilate critically, holding differences in tension so that a dialogue between individuals from different cultures can occur" (1995, 68).

Soliday encourages her tutors to pursue the third way, but I believe it is better for writing center integrity if tutors take the second path. Since they visit any particular classroom only once or at most twice per term, they are more able to avoid assimilation than tutors in Soliday's curriculum-based program, which expects tutors to attend a class every day. Even though students, instructors, and tutors (who are often aspiring teachers themselves) will automatically rank each other in terms of teacher/student, if tutors are aware of this climate, they can actively resist their own urge and the students' expectations to assume a teacherly role and instead share their skills as responders. Tutors in our program try to maintain their identity as writing center tutors, resisting assimilation into the classroom culture; instead, they introduce writing center culture into the classroom for a day.

This is how tutors become emissaries in a diplomatic mission: bringing the writing center closer to the classroom without compromising the center's integrity. And here also lies the potential for tutors to "revolutioniz[e] the dynamics of the culture," as Soliday put it (1995), and create the type of event Kail and Trimbur describe. If tutors are resisting student's expectations of authority, then students may indeed experience a "crisis of authority" in perhaps even a more profound way than they do in the writing center, because it takes place right in the heart of the instructor-as-authority's domain: the classroom.

CONFUSION WITH AUTHORITY

Many instructors I have worked with value the revolutionary aspect of writing center/classroom collaboration. As advocates of student-centered instruction, they resist the authority that comes in a classroom but can

never truly escape the structures of hierarchy inherent in the classroom. In fact, in one class visit, the tutors and the instructor were so eager to give up authority that the entire visit backfired. One tutor laments: "He [the instructor] obviously didn't know what he wanted out of the session. . . . some students had 2.1 essays, others had 2.2, a few had no essays at all. . . . the students were all at different points in the writing process, so were really not into doing peer reviews. To make matters worse, we as tutors were reluctant to take control over the session, and over each other. . . . things were happening in sessions that were more instructive than facilitative, and because there was no real authority involved, I feel that the session was a flop."

Even with the benefits of short visits as opposed to extended stays, then, we have experienced some confusion in tutors' roles. Instructors and tutors are often not sure who should have authority. Some instructors prefer the tutors to run the class, introducing the lesson plan and organizing students into groups, whereas some tutors feel uncomfortable taking over a classroom while the instructor is present. In order to bring tutors and instructors into the same location, there must be an understanding between them first. If not, tutors and instructors lack confidence in their roles, which leads to awkward moments in the classroom; students notice, lessening their confidence in the whole plan. Like Mary Soliday's experience, our first few tries at sending tutors to the classroom met with some confusion. Soliday found that "several tutors said that teachers didn't know what to do with them or 'didn't know what my role is.' While a few noted that the teacher seemed to expect them to take the lead in defining their role in the classroom, others thought that their teachers exerted too much control over the role of tutoring" (1995, 63). This has been the case in our program as well, and tutors have reported similar feelings of dissatisfaction or anxiety, especially during the first few minutes of class when someone should be addressing the students.

New problems and challenges are bound to continue to crop up given the dynamic nature of this experiment. In the above case, we were forced to examine more closely the need for some authority, at least initially. The classroom is different from the writing center, and we must take that into account. Bringing tutors into a foreign context throws our own pedagogy into high relief even as we are sharing it with instructors and students.

CONCLUSION

In political terms, my writing center is making a transition from an isolationist to a globalist model. The danger of this is the possibility that

the writing center will become homogenized into the academy. By use of careful diplomacy and insistence upon autonomy, though, we can avoid being swallowed up by the classroom as we become more engaged. By use of negotiation that is focused on positive outcomes and building relationships, we can strengthen ties, thereby strengthening our positions in the academy. By sending tutors to the classroom under our pedagogical conditions, we can promote the writing center and foster communication while keeping our integrity intact.

Far from compromising the writing center, I suspect that tutors facilitating peer response groups may ultimately bring the more revolutionary aspects of the writing center into the classroom, showing students that even the most entrenched site of the academic hierarchy can be subverted—within its own borders—and all with the approval of the instructor. On a more basic level, students benefit from tutors' skills in peer response. The visit can give students the confidence to conduct response groups on their own for the rest of the term without a tutor facilitating. Also, a positive experience with a tutor/facilitator in the classroom often encourages students to make an appointment with that tutor for a one-to-one conference, initiating a relationship with the writing center that can last far beyond the term.

The relationship between the classroom and the writing center has been a major theoretical struggle for decades; there is no quick and easy answer. The peer response group facilitation program that I have described may not work for all centers, but I think that imagining the writing center as something like a nation-state making its way in a complicated world shows us that, through good use of diplomacy and negotiation, we can retain our autonomy while fostering ties with those whom we share interests. And the place to send our delegations is most logically the classroom. We have established our independence; now it is time to initiate a diplomatic relationship with instructors, sending tutors into the classroom as emissaries, creating stronger relationships with instructors through positive negotiation experiences, lending our expertise in peer collaboration to students and instructors alike.