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Reflection-on-Juncture within Composition: The Promise of Transfer

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REFLECTION-ON-JUNCTURE WITHIN COMPOSITION:
THE PROMISE OF TRANSFER

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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A provincial definition of reflection has taken root within the discipline of Composition. The discipline's initial conception of reflection was inspired by the writing of John Dewey from the early 20th century. As the teaching of Composition within higher education subsequently became more widespread, ways in which mainstream Compositionists taught reflection, ironically, became narrower. The narrowing of the definition of reflection has led most Compositionists to value the reflection that occurs on a product associated with the curriculum being taught over reflection occurring within the process of writing.

In order to better understand an alternative approach toward teaching reflection, I present a teacher-research case study of my own writing class which took place over a two semester, Stretch Composition course. I analyzed the writing four students produced throughout both semesters, provided a context for their writing through analysis of their responses to prompts on a classroom discussion board, and triangulated these data with classroom observations.

From my analysis of the data, I determined the curriculum I define as "Reflection-on-Juncture" yielded four differing depths of reflection: *surface*, *superficial*, *submerged*, and *immersed*. Although these differing depths of reflection emerged out of a Reflection-on-Juncture curriculum, I determined they also apply to other forms of reflection taught

within the discipline. The focus of the second semester was research writing with a passing stress on reflection. I analyzed the writing of the same four students to judge if the transfer of skills learned in the prior reflection-based class occurred.

I conclude that the conversation regarding reflection within the discipline has stagnated, but argue that calling upon alternative approaches toward reflection can yield new insights. An approach toward teaching reflection on a juncture which emerges subjectively from the writer, as opposed to reflection which is forced upon the student by the instructor, has the potential to reach deep, meaningful levels. When this meaning emerges from within the writer, the skills which led to the meaning occurring have a high potential for transfer outside of the classroom in which the skills were taught.