DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all of my former students in Detroit. Although you called me teacher, I was the one who was learning. Thank you!

I also dedicate this work to my mother and father, Joyce and Jim Stockdill, who first taught me the value of education and critical thought.

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ABSTRACT

Disjuncture, Design, and Disruption:
Bridging the gap between students' everyday and academic knowledge through historical inquiry

by

Darin B. Stockdill

Chair: Elizabeth B. Moje

This dissertation presents my findings from the design study, Teen Empowerment through Reading, Research, and Action. In this study, I designed and implemented both an after-school and in-class historical research program on a local problem with students in one high school in a Midwestern city during the 2009-2010 school year. I used Constant Comparative Analysis with a range of data sources including field notes, student work, surveys, and student achievement data from the school, to explore the following research questions:

- What decisions were made during the process of designing this program and what principles drove my design process?
- What decisions and changes were made in the process of implementing this instructional design and why were they made?

- What were the affordances and challenges provided by this particular instructional design and what did I learn from them?

Analyzing data from the development and enactment of the design, I found that the instructional design introduced a different cultural model of learning into the classroom, one that did not always align with, and even disrupted, students' deeply ingrained patterns of classroom learning. As a result, and despite the fact that I had considered factors such as student interest, student skill and knowledge, and text complexity, I still faced a range of instructional dilemmas during implementation. To resolve emerging problems, I made a range of interactive decisions which attempted to shift the structure of learning activities. These choices often targeted the interactive space between readers, texts, activity, and context (Rumelhart, 1984; Snow, 2002) and attempted to reframe their interaction.

In particular, the instructional design challenged students at times with texts and activities which came into conflict with their past experiences of, and expectations for, history learning. Nevertheless, the design also offered students many important opportunities to engage with texts in a process of inquiry they found interesting and engaging. Through this analysis, I discuss the types of choices and dilemmas experienced teachers face when implementing innovative curricula and argue that new designs must actively seek to disrupt pre-existing cultural models and practices of learning with which they do not align.