

THE FUNCTION OF LITERACY IN THE LIFE OF A FORMER MEMBER OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY: A RHIZOANALYSIS

by

TARA ALICE RICHARDSON

(Under the Direction of Donna E. Alvermann)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to map the personal literacy experiences of a former member of the Black Panther Party—Afeni Shakur. Mostly, I explored the function of literacy in the life of Afeni Shakur as a way to better understand how she experienced literacy at different times in her life. In particular, the term *literacy* was not defined as simply reading and writing. The definitions of literacy used in this study were contingent upon the discourse in which they were constructed (Bové, 1990; Butler, 1995; Derrida, 1966/1978; Foucault, 1969/1972). However, for purposes of clarity, eight different conceptions of literacy were used in the study. The formulation of these conceptions came about as a result of the profound statements by Afeni Shakur, “Reading works for me, reading gave me dreams, reading gave me weapons” (Guy, 2004, pp. 40-41) and by reading and (re)reading works by Gilles Deleuze (1993/1997) and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1975/2000, 1980/1987). I also provided a brief description of literacy within six contemporary perspectives (1) *Conventional Literacy*; (2) *Functional Literacy*; (3) *Cultural Literacy*; (4) *Critical Literacy*; (5) *Fugitive Literacy*; and (6) *Literacy as Mots d’ Ordre*. A hybrid of theoretical frameworks including Poststructural Theory, Black Feminist Theory, and Literacy Theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980/1987) were applied. Methodological insight from the work of Deleuze and

Guattari (1980/1987) guided the steps that I took to complete a rhizoanalysis. Drawing on the concept of the rhizome resulted in a variation of methods such as fragmented narrativization, interviews, and the use of archival data. This study aims to inform the growing body of literature in the field of language and literacy education.

INDEX WORDS: Afeni Shakur, Black Feminist Theory, Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale, Discourse, Exteriority, Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Literacy, Poststructural Theory, Rhizoanalysis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER	
1 BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM.....	1
Statement of the Problem and Research Questions	6
Significance of the Problem.....	7
Fragmented Self- <i>Narrativization</i>	9
Definition of Terms.....	26
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	31
The Function of Literacy: Discourse in the Field	31
Six Contemporary Perspectives on Literacy	49
Rhizomatic Literacies in the African American Tradition: David Walker, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Vernon Jordan	54
The Black Panther Party: A Historical (Re)presentation	61
3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	72
A Hybrid of Theoretical Frameworks.....	73
Theoretical Subjectifications: Theoretical Bodies <i>With</i> Organs	75
Definitional Work: Postmodern/Poststructural.....	80
Poststructural Theory	83

	Black Feminist Theory.....	89
	Literacy Theory Appropriated by the Work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari within the Field of Language and Literacy Education	95
4	METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN	100
	Afeni Shakur	101
	Qualitative Methodological Procedures for this Study: A Review.....	105
	Using Interview in Qualitative Research	106
	Using Narratives in Qualitative Research.....	114
	Data Collection	117
	Data Analysis	121
	Qualitative Inquiry and Irreducible Fold[s]	127
	Qualitative Practices of Validity and the Novice Researcher	128
	Researcher Ethics.....	129
5	DATA ANALYSIS AND REPRESENTATION	135
	Organizing the Chapter	135
	Investigating Sites <i>of</i> and <i>within</i> Rhizomic Topography	139
	Natty Theory and Knotted Data.....	141
	Summary	173
	Working the Rhizome: Plateaus, Plateaus, and more Plateaus	179
	Summary	206
6	SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION.....	209
	The Study	209
	Conclusions.....	213
	Limitations of the Study.....	217

Recommendations for Future Research	218
Implications for Teacher Education.....	219
REFERENCES	222
APPENDICES	266
A PROTOCOL FOR FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW ONE.....	267
B PROTOCOL FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEW ONE	268
C PROTOCOL FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEW TWO.....	270
D PROTOCOL FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEW THREE.....	271
E PROTOCOL FOR FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW TWO	272
F PROTOCOL FOR FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW THREE.....	273
G THREE SITES OF RHIZOMIC TOPOGRAPHY	274
H COMPLETE LIST OF RULES OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY	278

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: A hybrid of theoretical frameworks	74
Figure 2: Photograph of Tara and family with Afeni Shakur	101
Figure 3: Rhizome of the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender	177
Figure 4: Rhizome of the function of literacy in Afeni Shakur's life	178
Figure 5: Photograph of Afeni Shakur's 1969 arrest	180
Figure 6: Photograph of Afeni Shakur and Joan Bird	193
Figure 7: The N.Y. 21's mug shots taken in 1969	194
Figure 8: Photograph of Afeni with son Tupac (1994)	205
Figure 9: Rhizome of Afeni Shakur's <i>becomings</i>	208

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

The Blackest thing you can be is literate.
(Henry Louis Gates, Jr.)

I constantly fought with myself as I debated whether the subject of this study should be former Black Panther Party member Afeni Shakur, or her son the late rapper Tupac Shakur. There were times when I was deep in reflection, pondering who to select as the subject of this study which sometimes meant that I would literally talk out loud for each of them a list of “whys” and “why nots.” I found myself in a midst of deeper confusion because I usually ended up with a longer list of reasons supporting why I should study Afeni Shakur. And although issues relating to gender, particularly Black feminist theory, were one of the theoretical perspectives that framed my work (Collins, 2000a; hooks, 1990, 2004; James, 1999, 2003; Morgan, 2000; Walker, 2001) it was not this theory that brought me to my final decision—to focus this study on the function of literacy in the life of Afeni Shakur.

I am a child of the Hip-hop generation and Afeni Shakur’s son Tupac Shakur made me want to know more about the woman who he rapped about in a song titled *Dear Mama*. Tupac Shakur (1995) wrote the following:

I’m runnin’ from the police, that’s right, mama catch me, put a
wuppin’ on my back side./ And even as a crack fiend, mama, you
always was a Black queen, mama./ I finally understand for a
woman it ain’t easy tryin’ to raise a man./ You always was

committed, a poor single mother on welfare, tell me how you did

it./ There's no way I can pay you back,

but the plan is to show you that I understand./

You are appreciated.

I had always thought the lyrics he wrote were very telling, but this song totally blew me away.

When I first heard *Dear Mama*, I could not believe that he put his mother's business out there, in the public, for everyone to hear. Surely, Tupac's audience would begin to judge the roads that Afeni Shakur's life has traveled. In a matter of six bars Tupac managed to tell us, that in his eyes, his mother was the family disciplinarian, had an addiction to a crack, a Black queen, a poor, single mother on welfare raising his sister and a Black male son, and appreciated. Although as a young girl I was taught that it was not nice to talk about someone else's mother, which some might call playing the dozens (Chimezie, 1976; Dollard, 1939/1973; Garner, 1983; Morgan, 2002; Smitherman, 1994, 1997, 1998), I still cannot grasp the idea of sharing such personal and intimate details about my *own* mother's life. Yet, Tupac did.

As a rapper, Tupac Shakur spit lyrics that were fiery, raw, and sometimes brutally rude. However, as an avid listener of Tupac Shakur's music, I know that not all of his songs about his mother focused on her troubled life as a former crack addict. I remained intrigued by the narratives that Tupac has put forth concerning events in his mother's life. The stories he told in song and during interviews made me want to know more about Afeni Shakur—a woman who appeared to be a *chameleon* of sorts. Tupac's songs made me ask who is Afeni Shakur? However, there was some preliminary work that I needed to do before I could make any conclusions about Afeni Shakur.

It is here that self-reflexivity (Chaudhry, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Denzin & Norman, 1997; Lather, 1991; Pillow, 2003) urged me as a researcher to delve into my own personal politics and ask “What do I want wanting to *know* you or me?” (Trinh, 1989, p. 76). The relevancy of this question became even greater when I read Afeni Shakur’s autobiographical sketch in *Look for me in the Whirlwind: The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21*, Murray Kempton’s *The Briar Patch: People of the State of New York v. Lumumba Shakur*, and Jasmine Guy’s (2004) biographical work on the life of Afeni Shakur titled, *Afeni Shakur: Evolution of a Revolutionary*. From the moment that I picked up this biography, I could not put it down. One particular passage in the book will always remain in my mind because it connected with my own passion for studying literacy. In this passage Afeni Shakur gave an account of the function of literacy in her life during the time she was trying to defend herself against charges brought against her and several other members of the Black Panther Party’s New York 21, by the State of New York for an alleged plan to bomb several New York State landmarks. Afeni Shakur recalled this tumultuous time in her life:

All the time I’m out on bail I’m working on my case, too.
I’m reading and studying and building my mind. Fidel Castro’s closing statement in his trial, ‘History will absolve me,’ gave me the tone of my defense. Which was that you admit to what you’re going to admit to. You straight up say: This is what I’m responsible for, and I can stand on this, and the rest of this is irrational. That was the first time I had read anything that powerful, and it touched me. Because I was in that position of being accused of stuff I didn’t even understand. (pp. 108-109)

Afeni Shakur reflected on the function of literacy in her life as a member of the Black Panther Party. It was participating (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in literacy practices such as studying Castro's closing statement that reminded me of a Bakhtinian view of language. Bakhtin (1981/2001) suggested that "the word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intentions" (p. 293). Afeni Shakur indicated in the passage above that Castro's speech gave her the tone of her defense. She faced criminal charges as a member of the Black Panther Party in which she and several other members known as the New York 21 were brought up on charges by the State of New York for conspiracy to bomb several New York landmarks. Afeni Shakur acted as her own lawyer and managed to win her case. She was found "not guilty," and all charges against her were eventually dropped (Balagoon, Bird, Cetewayo, Dharuba, Harris & et al., 1971; Guy, 2004; Haskins, 1997; Jones, 1998; Kempton, 1973).

Needless to say, I found Afeni Shakur's story very compelling. I chose to include these biographical insights at this point in the study because they are a part of existing data that greatly influenced why I decided to carry out this study. Afeni Shakur found the resolve to tap into the ways in which literacy could be used to directly influence her life. The intrinsic motivation (Alvermann & Phelps, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Guthrie, 2001) that she tapped into was one that allowed her to fight for her personal freedom by thinking critically (Freebody & Luke, 1993; Freire, 1970/2000; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Richardson & Alvermann, 2003; Street, 1993, 1995, 1996,) about the dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981/2001) messages that she felt were conveyed in the speech of Fidel Castro. The way that she described the influence of literacy functioning in her life is an experience that I wish that every poor, Black person in America could someday

experience. Therefore, it was important to highlight the idea of thought and language as connected phenomena (Vygotsky, 1986) that work together. It was not a neutral act, but one that was political on the part of Afeni Shakur to study Castro's speech and be greatly influenced by his philosophy because members of the Black Panther Party were known to engage in Marxist discourse, especially during the late 1960s (Jones, 1998; Seale, 1991). Afeni Shakur relied on a literacy practice such as independent reading to develop strategies and tactics (de Certeau, 1984/2002) to manage what was happening in her life. And it is almost impossible to ignore the idea that *discourse* such as the speech by Fidel Castro function to produce subjects (Benhabib, 1992; Bové, 1990; Butler, 1987, 1990; Davies, 1999; Derrida, 1967/1980; Foucault, 1969/1972, 1977/1995) who are forever changed.

Having offered these details of the background of this study, I conclude this section by addressing the question that I presented earlier, "*What do I want wanting to know you or me?*" Although I am comfortable with the idea that I will probably never be able to provide a "true" answer to this question, I do think that it is critical to examine my understanding of how I am constructing knowledge about the *researched* and the *researcher* (Pillow, 2003). After I read Afeni Shakur's biography, I thought about the many literacy experiences she mentioned that took place throughout her life, which have shaped her in different ways (Britzman, 1994; Foucault, 1977/1995; Lather, 1991, 1997; Smith, 1993; Spivak, 1987). I read the entire book in just a few hours, and I left the book reflecting on my own literacy experiences. I learned that I shared some similar sentiments for literacy as Afeni Shakur. I also believe that "reading works for me, gave me dreams, and gave me weapons" (Guy, 2004, p. 41). But the way it works for me, my dreams, and the ways that I choose to use literacy as a weapon does not make me and Afeni Shakur one and the same. I understand that the function of literacy varies in the life of each individual and

for this reason I am attracted to this particular topic. Eight different conceptions of literacy guided my thinking:

1. The ability to read and write.
2. The ability to use language, to read, write, speak, listen, and view.
3. Literacy has the power to ignite, free, and bring awareness.
4. To speak and write using the conventions of Standard American English.
5. A power structure.
6. A linguistic variable.
7. Regimes of interactive conjunctions of collective assemblages of dissemination. Most importantly, these regimes make possible *discursive heterogeneity*.
8. Literacy is made up of words, but issue *mots d'ordre* and therefore, possibilities. Its function is to effect a *becoming*.

I personally found that definitions five through eight were closely aligned with my thinking of literacy because they were the least conventional uses of how literacy functions and therefore, presented more of a challenge to conceptualize. However, each of these meanings helped me gain a better understanding of the potential that literacy has to function in people's lives.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

In this qualitative study, I used Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) rhizoanalysis as a method of analysis to examine how the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender, and the function of literacy worked together to produce Afeni Shakur's subjectivities at different times in her life. I set out to answer three research questions:

Research Questions

1. How did the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender make *shifts* possible in Afeni Shakur's life?
2. How did Afeni Shakur define literacy? In what ways did literacy function throughout her life?
3. What different subjectivities did Afeni Shakur describe? How did her subjectivities enable different lived experiences?

Significance of the Problem

Whenever I am asked the topic of my dissertation, I typically respond like this, "I'm focusing on former Black Panther, Afeni Shakur's, literacy practices, you know, Tupac's mother." I noticed that people would often look at me askew after I shared with them my topic. *Some* of my white peers seemed to have a bit of disdain for me and *some* of my Black peers often commented "why would you want to focus on that, you will never get a job in academia writing about that Black stuff." However, I think of myself as a *nonstandard* researcher that chose to study a *nonstandard* subject (Pillow, 2003). I also view my work as a discursive shout-out to all people of the African Diaspora (Kamalu, 1990; Morgan, 2000). I understand that Black people [particularly in the academy] have "created a body of cultural knowledge that transcends disciplinary lines in science, social theory, art, philosophy, and other fields, still, our work receives marginal use of only a few categories of thought" (Gordon, 1990, p.12). Also, people who really know me and understand my research know that I approached my work with intellectual seriousness (Hamilton, 2004; hooks, 1990). And "it's not like I'm going to talk about writing and thinking about [literacy, Afeni Shakur, poststructural and Black feminist theory, and the work of Deleuze and Guattari] with other academics and/or intellectuals and not discuss these

ideas with underclass non-academic Black folks who are family, friends, and comrades” (hooks, 1990, p. 30).

Furthermore, this study was important because not only did it examine the function of literacy in the life of Afeni Shakur, by researching what literacy is and what it *do*, it expanded on what we already understand about the function of literacy in people’s lives—their practices and experiences. This study was also significant because it worked to extend a newly developing field in which researchers are beginning to link poststructural theory, Black feminist theory (or other areas of feminist thought), and the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. For example, Bradiotti (1994a, 1994b) described intersections between poststructuralism, feminism, and Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “the *nomad*.” Buchanan and Colebrook (2000) wrote about the implications of Deleuze and Guattari’s work, specifically the idea of “*becoming-woman*” for feminist thought. Collins (2000b) urged us to question the relationship between Black Feminist thought and the politics of postmodernism. Also approaching this topic was Grosz (1994) whose work focused on the benefits of Deleuze and Guattari’s work in developing feminist methodologies. Yet another approach was taken by bell hooks (1990) as she discussed postmodernism and its relevance to Black people and the “Black experience.” Kamberelis (2004) wrote about *rhizomatic* formations and the resistant literacy practices of African American slaves. Kaplan (1988) examined postmodernism and its theories concerning female as subject in literature and film. Kelly (1997) related culture, feminist studies, and literacy education in a discussion about the practices of schooling. Olkowski (1999) and St. Pierre (2000a) stated the importance of understanding how poststructuralism, feminist thought, and the work of Deleuze and Guattari can be made to work for the purposes of developing theories and methods. Mohanram (1999) and Tamboukou (2004) wrote specifically about the usefulness of

poststructural theory in relation to Black women, and the concepts of identity and *space*. Still, there is a strong need for more scholars in the field of language and literacy education to examine the function of literacy in the lives of Black people especially the ways that literacy has functioned to help Black people use counterdiscourses, and counternarratives to combat the pervasive politics of identity, and White supremacy (Auer, 1998; Fecho, 2004; Johnson-Jones, 2004; Kamberelis, 2004; Kunjufu, 1989; Willis, 1995; Woodson, 1933/1990).

I felt that I was particularly qualified to do this work because I (a) was committed to researching the lives of people in the African Diaspora; (b) was willing and able to “stimulate, hasten, and enable alternative perceptions and practices dislodging prevailing discourses and powers [within the field of language and literacy education]” (West, 1985, p. 122); (c) want to promote a critical Black presence in the culture, scholarship, and writing within the academy, and (d) was open to exploring a radically different subject. hooks (1990) stated:

If radical postmodernist thinking is to have a transformative impact then a critical break with the notion of “authority” as “mastery over” must not simply be a rhetorical device, it must be reflected in habits of being, including styles of writing as well as chosen subject matter. (p. 25)

I like to think that my work personified a “radical postmodernist thinking” reflected in my writing, subject matter, and the *becoming* of my own radical Black *subjectivity* (hooks, 1990).

Fragmented Self-Narrativization

Can researchers really know who they are and state it up front to research subject(s) (Denzin, 1989, 1997; Dey, 1993; Peshkin, 1988; Pillow, 2003)? This was a question that I

reflected on as I carried out this study. I thought it would be important to examine what makes me who I am. As the researcher, my *subjectivity* always influenced the research (Appiah & Gates, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Gates, 1988; Gilroy, 1993; Klein, 1983; Lather, 1986, 1991; Smith, 1993) and, therefore, I used fragmented self-*narrativization* to (re)present my *subjectivity* (Benhabib, 1992; Johnson, 2001; Parry & Doan, 1994; Varadharajan, 1995). My writing is personal and, therefore, it is political (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, Lyotard, 1979/1984). These narratives were also written in a *minor language* (Bogue, 1998; Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/2000,) which entailed a linguistic *detrterritorialization* and a purpose that was two-fold: (1) to take *lines of flight* within the confines of the dominant language and culture of the academy (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/1986), and (2) to “push toward an unfamiliar, towards the uncomfortable” (Pillow, 2003, p. 192). My stories have an immediate social and political function (Bogue, 1989). As I was writing, I reflected on the idea that my work “cannot be a simple story of subjects, subjectivity, and transcendence or self-indulgent tellings” (Pillow, 2003, P. 192).

Therefore, I have written two fragmented self-*narrativization* (Chaudhry, 2000; hooks, 1990; Lather, 1997; Pillow, 2003; Visweswaran, 1994) as a way of *mapping* my own *becomings* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987), in relation to the function of literacy in my life which I believe to be linked to my own *subjectivity* (Blumenreich, 2004; Chaudhry, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lather, 1986, 1991; Patton, 2002; Pillow, 2003). I made the decision to use fragmented self-*narrativization* because my stories did not form as a result of a “transparent linearity and dependency on modernist ideologies of subjectivity” (Pillow, 2003, p. 183). My stories formed as a result of the “movements of detrterritorialization” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 270) that permitted me to not only politicize my experiences but to examine the multiple ways in

which I have been constituted, formed, and [re]presented and [post]represented through my own experiences with literacy (Appiah & Gates, 1995; Blumenreich, 2004; Bové, 1990; Chaudhry, 2000; Geertz, 1983; Johnson, 2001, Scott, 1991; Varadharajan, 1995).

However, documenting my stories was just the first step. I did not feel “condemned to any margins” (hooks, 1990, p. 31) as I wrote my stories because I thought about all of the ways in which “reflexivity can act as a methodological tool” (Pillow, 2003, p. 192). Therefore, I felt the next step should be to address the discourse in the stories that allowed me to have certain experiences with literacy and not others. By doing this not only was I able to arrive at what the stories were and what they meant to me but also what they *do*. I asked myself, Why did I have these experiences with literacy and not others? I also asked What discourse allowed me to have these experiences with literacy and not others (Bové, 1990; Davies, 1999; Derrida 1967/1980; Foucault, 1969/1972, 1977/1995, 1980)?

These were two questions that I constantly struggled with because I did not think I would ever have any concrete answers—answers beyond the standard and familiar *discourse* of the function of literacy as a means of gaining word recognition and comprehension as often discussed in the field of language and literacy education. My stories provided an understanding of the multiplicity of the purposes of the function of literacy. I found that I had these experiences with literacy and not others because my literacy experiences were formed by language itself, my immediate social world, peers, parents, community, and teachers (Adjaye & Andrews, 1997; Alvermann, 2002; Csikszentmihaly, 1990; Delpit, 1995; Guthrie, 2001; hook, 1994; Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996; Vygotsky 1986, Smitherman, 1994, 2000; Woodson, 1933/1990). The *discourse* that allowed me to have these experiences and not others were the *discourse* of being Black, female, young, poor, bad, literate, an avid reader, and educated in public schools, which

for me were all good things (Bové, 1990; de Certeau, 1984/2002; Derrida, 1967/1980; Foucault, 1969/1972; Gilyard, 1991). Each *discourse* in itself had an identity that I needed to discover, define, and understand in order to look at the meaning of things, specifically my stories and the function of literacy in my own life. I learned that researchers had to move beyond just telling stories (Lather, 2000; Scott, 1991) and that *discourse* were not just linguistic but material things that produced subjects (Bové, 1990; 1987; Foucault, 1984/1997; Spivak, 1976/1998). Please learn from and enjoy these “unfamiliar and likely—uncomfortable tellings” (Pillow, 2003, p. 192).

Aside One: Bad Girl

Having A-S-T-H-M-A is not all that bad. It often meant staying home from school—so it had it perks. Don't get me wrong, I liked school but I was way more advanced than the other fifth graders in my class. So when my mother would tell me to stay home from school, I wouldn't fight it. She would always have some adventure for us to do during the day. I mean what seemed adventurous to me, a fifth grader, may just as well prove B-O-R-I-N-G to most people my age but remember I wasn't the average fifth grader.

I wondered where we were going today. My mother told me to get dressed a long time ago but I'm not ready and any minute now she will be checking to see what's taking so long.

"Girl, you not ready yet! You know Ann will be here to take us to see the house," my mother said.

"What house? Why we gotta move anyway," I said.

I didn't want to move. I H-A-T-E-D moving. Why we have to go look at another house anyway. All of them just filled with a bunch of roaches. I hated roaches and I hated new places to live. New places always smelled like the people who stayed there before purposely sprayed a

can of Old Basement. That's right—Old Basement. I hated the smell of old basements. How they gather up that smell? I don't know. But I don't like it!

"Are you ready?" my mother asked.

"Yeeeeeeeeeees", I said.

"Is Ann Pollard bringing Lenard?" I asked.

Ann Pollard is my mother's best friend and we saw her all the time. We were never allowed to call any adults by only their first name—that's how we were raised. My mother would always receive praise about how well she raised her seven kids. I'm number four. That's four out of seven. Five boys and two girls.

Anyway, Ann Pollard was different. Yes, I call her by her first name but also her last. This was fine with my mother so it was fine with me. But I could never just call her A-N-N. That would mean trouble. And I H-A-T-E-D trouble too.

"I don't think Lenard is coming this time. He had to go to that school to work on his speech. Remember Ann told us he would be in that new school?" my mother said.

"Oh yeah!" I replied.

"Why he gotta go to that school anyway?" I asked.

"You know Lenard is retarded," my mother told me.

"No he ain't!" I groaned.

"Yes he is, now bring your ass on, Ann is outside," my mother groaned back.

A man with a black patch over his left eye was in the driver's seat of an old dusty car. I think it was a Cadillac but the emblem was torn off the hood so I wasn't sure. Black and dusty. Black and dusty with a muffler that seem to speak to the world. It was so loud. It was an old dusty

Cadillac with a missing emblem and a muffler that could wake up the dead. I hated old dusty cars too. And I hated old dusty cars with loud mufflers even more.

"Heeeey ya'll!" Ann Pollard wailed.

She had a big voice. And she had an even bigger butt. Her butt was so big she could hardly fit in the passenger seat. How could someone's butt be so big? I thought about what she would look like if she were skinny. At least that's what my mother said. My mother told me that Ann Pollard used to be real skinny when she was younger. I found it hard to believe when I looked at her. I never wanted a butt that big. I H-A-T-E-D big butts too.

"Hey girl", my mother said.

"Hi Ann Pollard", I whispered.

We got into the car and headed to see the house that would possibly be our new home.

I kept my eyes on the driver. And he kept his eye on the road.

The only eye he had. Why was he wearing that patch? How could he drive with just one eye? I thought about all of this as I sat in the back seat listening to bits of conversation my mother was having with Ann Pollard about her visit to the Section 8 office last week.

I couldn't hear everything because of the sound of the muffler.

PCCCK! PCCCK! PCCCK! PCCCK! PCCCK! PCCCK!

PCCCK! PCCCK! PCCCK! PCCCK!

I hated new places to live and the smell of Old Basement. But I hated the sound of a bad muffler even more, more, more!

"Mom who is that man?" I asked.

"His name is Sneak-a-peek," my mother said.

"Sneak-a-peek?" I repeated.

What kind of name is that? It must have something to do with that patch on his eye.

"Excuse me, what's wrong with your eye?" I asked.

He looked in the rear view mirror.

"Somebody shot me," he said.

"Is it missing?" I asked cautiously.

"Yep, they had to take it."

"What they do with it?"

"I don't know. Maybe they still have it at the hospital."

I H-A-T-E-D hospitals. And I hated hospitals that took people eyeballs.

"This is the house right here 2809 Capitol," he said in a rough voice.

"Oh girl, this is nice if you can get it!" Ann Pollard said.

"If that Section 8 get approved, I can afford it, but if it don't, this damn house will be sitting."

"Tara, do you like it?" my mother asked me.

"What does it look like on the inside?" I said.

"We gotta wait until the landlord gets here. He's the one with the Keys. Remember Mr. Burton? He owns this house too." I know the rent is high but I ain't paying him that much, especially if I don't get that Section 8.

I really hoped we get Section 8 too. My mother would have more money from her check to spend on F-O-O-D and C-A-N-D-Y and S-T-U-F-F.

Plus I was tired of looking at a bunch of houses.

The house on Beckman Street was exposed to lead.

The house on Decker Avenue did not have enough bedrooms for all of us.

The house on Frederick had a smell of Old Basement that even my mother hated enough to live without.

The house on Quebec was located next door to a woman that once dated my father.

The house on Folsom was too close to my mother's sister. They did not get like each O-T-H-E-R.

The house on Quincy was painted an ugly yellow and my mom did not like it and the house on Platt was really nice but we could not afford it.

Mr. Burton finally showed up with the keys. A short, round, dark man with overalls and a blue jean hat on greeted us. He unlocked the door. We went inside.

The house was nothing special but my mother really liked it.

I always liked to go inside the houses to look around and read the walls.

Reading the walls was a lot of fun. I L-O-V-E-D reading. I would read everything I could get my hands on. Cereal boxes. Milk cartoons.

But cans of air freshener were my favorite.

The words always seemed extra long on those cans.

Octyl decyl dimethyl ammonium chloride.

Dioctyl dimethyl ammonium chloride.

Pseudomonas aeruginosa. Salmonella choleraesuis.

Who can say those words? Where did they come from?

Anyway, reading the words on the walls of the houses was fun to me because they were N-A-S-T-Y words. B-A-D words. C-U-S-S words.

I wasn't allowed to say them but I could R-E-A-D and W-R-I-T-E them.

And read and write them is exactly what I did.

Voices could be heard from the next room.

My mother, Ann Pollard, Sneak-A-Peek, and Mr. Burton all came into the room where I stood. I tried to act like I did not see the two words written on the wall next to what appeared to be the top to an old plastic garbage can. But they always were written on the walls of almost every house we visited even the house on Platt that my mother liked, but could not afford.

"Oh, these walls will be repainted," said Mr. Burton.

"I hope so. What color?" my mother asked.

"Huh?" said Mr. Burton.

He responded like he had forgotten that he just told my mother that the walls would be repainted.

"If I move in here, I want to know if you plan to keep the walls this color."

"Oh, right. Well, I think I'm gonna use a glossy walnut or almond color."

My mother was pleased. She liked those colors. But she hated yellow kitchens. And the color yellow—she hated even more.

It had been a month since we found out that we would receive Section 8 housing. This meant all my mother would have to pay was fifteen dollars a month for rent and the government paid the rest.

As soon as my mother found out she called Mr. Burton to tell him that she wanted to move in his house.

He told my mother that he needed time to get the house in good enough condition and that we could move in the house on August 19th.

AUGUST 19TH came around and we were getting ready to move.

My mother, sister and I had been packing for the past two nights.

My brothers did not have to help pack because they needed their strength to move us the following day.

Moving day arrived and I was excited. The day before, I had stolen a black and a red marker from art class. Well, I had planned to take them back, but for now they were S-T-O-L-E-N property.

I was planning on writing something on the walls. I wanted to leave something for the people to read. Something people wanted to R-E-A-D. But what should I write? I thought.

I had most of the day to think of something. It would be a while before my brothers loaded and unloaded our furniture on that tiny U-haul truck.

I knew I had to have some privacy. For whatever I wrote would not be okay with my mother. She would not approve of any of her kids doing anything like that. I had to be strategic. I had to be smooth. I had to find a way to be one of the last people to leave the house so that I could have P-R-I-V-A-C-Y.

I got it! I would volunteer to stay behind and watch the remaining furniture. People in the hood were always stealing. Not like I stole the markers though—I planned to return them. They would steal and you would never see your stuff again. So my mother agreed to let me stay behind while they made trips to drop off furniture at our new house.

I have to include that I was glad to hear that my sister would be watching our new born baby brother. Had she stayed behind with me, she would surely have S-P-O-I-L-E-D my plans.

And I did not want that to happen.

I still needed to come up with something to write.

"Okay, we going over to the new house. We going out of the back door. Lock up. Don't let anybody in here, you hear me?" my mother said.

"Yeeeeeeeeeees!" I yelled from the living room.

Several more trips were made. I was getting tired because all day long, I had been thinking about something to write on the walls.

My brothers had been lugging furniture and boxes. They complained because my mother said they would not be getting paid for their efforts.

They were so L-A-Z-Y. Maybe they should try packing for two days then decide if they wanted to trade.

But I can't say that I would want to lug boxes either and not get P-A-I-D.

Hmmm...

Time grew nearer and nearer. They were just about finished with moving everything out of the house. All that was left was a couple of boxes and the living room television. I had insisted the TV should stay behind because I needed something to keep me company. I also thought I could come up with some ideas of what to write on the walls by watching television.

I reached into my pocket as my brothers moved the last of the stuff into the truck. They had moved the TV.

There I stood alone, in the living room about to write on the walls of what would soon be the O-L-D house.

As soon as I thought the house was empty I pulled out my markers. A black one and a red one. I decided to keep things the same. Not change them. I decided to write the two words that I had seen written on the wall next to that old plastic garbage can lid at Mr. Burton's house. Our N-E-W house.

The same words that I read on the side of abandoned houses.

The same words that I read on the side of old garages.

The same words that I read scribbled on kids' notebooks.

The same words that I read spray painted across rusty old billboards.

In big bubble style letters I wrote the word D-I-C-K with black marker on one wall and the word P-U-S-S-Y with a red marker on another wall.

I stood there for a second looking at what I had done. I guess I was one of T-H-E-M now. The people who wrote, what I had once read, and now myself have written.

"What the hell!" my mother said.

"Uh." was the only thing I could say.

Apparently she had not left. I thought she was gone.

"Bill get in here!" she called to my father.

My father came in through the back door. As he made contact with us in the living room, my mother's hand made contact with my face.

SMAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAACK!

Needless to say, I got my ass B-E-A-T! My mother hit me right across my mouth. I was introduced to P-A-I-N that night. But not before my mother called all my brothers and our cousin into the house to see what I had done.

"Girl what would make you do some shit like this?" my father asked.

"Uh." was all I could say.

I thought about faking an A-S-T-H-M-A attack. But for some reason I did not think it would work with, or matter to, my mother if I was dying because she was going to kill me.

Everybody stood around looking at me. It was weird. I knew what I had done was B-A-D. But I also thought that was what people did when they moved out of O-L-D houses and into N-E-W ones.

"I did it because I saw it in Mr. Burton's house." I said.

I knew this excuse would not work but I tried it anyway.

My mother was so M-A-D at me. Her eyes told it all.

"You gon' clean this shit up! Bill go get that bucket and a rag that I used earlier because she's gon' get this shit off these walls if it takes all damn night! I will leave your B-L-A-C-K ass in this house, so you better clean these walls!"

My mother continued to go on and on. She wasn't kidding when she said she would leave me in that house, our O-L-D house all night. Or at least it felt like it was all night long.

I had to clean the walls.

There I was in an empty house. It was cold now because there was no heat on—just electricity. A lone light bulb was shining from the middle room as I scrubbed the walls. My efforts to get rid of the word D-I-C-K did not prove as successful as cleaning P-U-S-S-Y off the wall. It turns out that the black marker was permanent.

I sat on the floor in the middle of the living room where I had become one of T-H-E-M waiting for someone to come get me, and thinking about how much I H-A-T-E-D moving.

Aside Two: School

School became my only hope for having a variety of books to read. I can recall being in elementary school and visiting its library. Interestingly, the first time I ever visited a public library was when I was in the third grade. It terrifies me to even write this. When I reflect on what I know about the importance of children being immersed in literature at an early age, I can only shake my head in shame. However, I was so excited to go—better late than never. Right?

Anyway, all of the students were given permission slips to be signed by a parent. I stalked my mother until she signed mine.

When we got there I had no idea what to expect. I knew nothing about library cards, and due dates. I did not even know how to properly find a book. Luckily, we were given an orientation which I listened to intensely. My worst enemy Rowena Johnson sat next to me. I don't know why our teacher Mrs. Jennings put her next to me. I think the entire school knew that we hated each other. Rowena almost cost me my chance to sign-out books. She pulled up her shirt sleeve slightly to reveal to me that she had a bag of pumpkin seeds, the kind in the red bag—the good kind. Nice and salty. Then she leaned over and whispered in my ear *you-can't-have-none-either!* My quick comeback was *I don't want any of your stinky pumpkin seeds.* I got caught talking. I guess I got myself caught because I have always been bad at whispering. Rowena was a better whisperer. Our teacher Mrs. Jennings, yelled at me and made me stand by her for the rest of the orientation, but not before I yelled back, **ROWENA SAID SOMETHING TO ME FIRST!**

When the librarian told us that all it took was a quarter to get a library card and that we would be getting our first card for free, I could not contain myself. When the class was given permission to select books to sign-out, I started grabbing all kinds of books. I remember choosing books with topics ranging from automobiles, reptiles, birds, windmills, and gardens, to books that had dreamy-eyed little white girls dressed in funny looking dresses. They usually had a pet sitting obediently by their side.

However, my most memorable recollection about visiting the public library this day was when I came across about a book entitled *All About VD*. I liked the title because I thought it told me something. I thought it told me that I was about to become an expert on something. I was so

excited to be in a space with sooooooooooooo many books. Plus, the thought of knowing all-about-something was very attractive. So, there I was doing my balancing act because by this time I had selected about fifth teen books. It might seem hard to imagine a skinny little third grader holding so many books but I still have the long octopus arms to prove it. Hey, just look at me.

Anyway, as I stood in the check-out line doing my balancing act, I noticed Rowena, giving me the eye—the evil eye. But this was not an ordinary I-can't-stand-your-black-butt look, it was more like I-can't-stand-your-Black-butt and I know something about Y-O-U look. Although I was preoccupied with my books I kept Rowena on my radar. I watched her and I watched the line move. There were a few people ahead of me. While standing in line, I anticipated what it would be like to have my own books to take home and read. I didn't care if the books had to be returned that just meant more visits to the library. At this time I'm still watching my enemy and I noticed that she was still watching me!

After we left the library our teacher instructed us to get on our school bus. I rode bus 643, my mother's lucky lottery number and my favorite bus number because Mr. Nelson was the bus driver. I had a crush on Mr. Nelson. I think all the girls had a crush on Mr. Nelson. Well, I got home that day and I began to sort through all of my books. I came across "All About VD" again. I started to flip the pages to see what VD was and what it was all about. It was then that I learned what VD was and most embarrassingly why Rowena was giving me the I-can't-stand-your-black-butt and I know something about Y-O-U look. The VD in the book title meant VENEREAL DISEASES!

When I arrived at school the following day, almost all of the girls came to me and asked me how it was that I got a venereal disease. D-A-M-N! I wanted to kill Rowena. She had gotten

to school early and told all the girls in our class that I had VD. Reflecting on this day, I thought I was going to die. I tried to avoid Rowena but I could not. When we lined up to go to the lavatory, all the girls gathered around me and Rowena. We were standing at the sink. It was then that I told everyone that I got the book because Rowena told me she had VD and that's why I wanted to read it. I told them that that was the reason I got into trouble at the library. I told them that's what Rowena told me when Mrs. Jennings caught me talking that day at the library. I was simply telling Rowena that I would get a book about VD, learn all about it, and tell her what to do. Lucky me, they bought it. Whew!

These stories are unlike traditional *testimonios* (Lather, 1997; Pillow, 2003; Scott, 1991; Tierney, 2000) because they are not presented simply for the purpose of interpretation and understanding but for a radical *detrterritorialization*. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) state that “detrterritorialization is the movement by which ‘one’ leaves the territory” (p. 508). The stories radically *detrterritorialized* because they move away from arborescent ideas of what academic writing should be. The stories were written in my native tongue which consists of Black English and standard American English. They make possible *lines of flight* such as infusing my own blackness into my work, which to some readers may be invisible or perfectly visible. Kamberelis (2004) referred to this act as the practice of “double coding” (p. 176). Including fragmented self-narrativization *detrterritorializes* the notion that objectivity is the dominant strength of the scientific method (Patton, 2002). I included my stories as a way to highlight “why I carried out my research [and how my research agenda was] compellingly tied to where I come from” (Slembrouck, 2004, p. 92). It was my hope that these stories would exceed their potential of simply entertaining readers. My aim was for readers to travel with me as I took a “self questioning turn” (Slembrouck, 2004, p. 92)—one that was undoubtedly reflexive and *rhizomatic*

in nature. These stories also allow readers to understand how I, as a researcher, “fac[ed] up to my *subjectivities* [by the unfolding of myself as *becoming-researcher*], my own research actions, and my social, historical, and political involvement in the researched worlds” (Slembrouck, 2004, p. 92).

The fragmented self-*narrativization* presented in this study was written for readers. I also caution readers to refrain from mistaking my stories as simple childhood memories because “memories [are] a virile majoritarian agency” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 293) representing a model of arborescence—a model connected to two distant points (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987). As stated earlier, I am *mapping* my own *becomings*. Deleuze and Guattari stated:

The line-system (or block-system) of becoming is opposed to the point-system of memory. Becoming is a movement by which the line frees itself from the point, and renders points indiscernible: the rhizome, the opposite of arborescence; break away from arborescence. *Becoming is an antimemory* ... From this point of view, one may contrast a *childhood block*, or a becoming-child, with the *childhood memory*: a molecular child is produced ... a child coexists with us, in a zone of proximity or a block of becoming, on a line of deterritorialization that carries us both off...” (p. 294)

My experience with literacy helped to produce my *subjectivity* (Britzman, 1994, 1995; Derrida, 1967/1980; Foucault, 1969/1972, 1984/1997; St. Pierre, 2000c). I view my experience not as simple everyday happenings but as “events” (Derrida, 1967/1980). I think my stories “allow readers to speak back to the text and engage in questioning that is different from the dialogue

possible in simple confessional-tale or truth claims” (Pillow, 2003, p. 190). I offer fragmented self-narrativization in the hope that my audience will react and respond to this as data (Cooper, 1991; Gates, 1998; Labov, 1997b). I believe that my stories will serve as examples of *discursive heterogeneity* in play (Derrida, 1967/1980) situated directly and indirectly to broaden the understanding of the ways in which narratives can be theorized in qualitative inquiry. I offer them in the spirit of my ancestors those that came before me, those who are with me now, and those that are yet to be named. Sankofa.

Aside 3: Definition of Terms

Afeni Shakur- Born Alice Faye Williams, in Lumberton, North Carolina, in January 1947, is a former Black Panther Party member and mother of the late rapper Tupac Amaru Shakur. On April 2, 1969, Afeni Shakur was arrested on charges of conspiring to bomb several New York department stores, police stations, and commuter railways. She was acquitted of all charges on May 13, 1971, and released from prison approximately one month before she gave birth to her son, Tupac Amaru Shakur.

Assemblages- A linkage or structure that is always already unstable and vulnerable. Made new through deterritorialization. Establishes connections between multiplicities.

Becoming- 1. A becoming lacks a subject distinct from itself. It has not term, since its term in turn exists only as taken up in another becoming of which it is the subject, and which coexists, forms a block, with the first. 2. A becoming is always in the middle. The intermezzo of being. 3. Becoming is the in-between or line of flight. 4. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, appearing, being, equaling, or producing. 5. Becoming is involutionary. 6. Becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree.

Black Feminist Theory- A framework for examining issues of race, class, and gender that are directly related to the experiences of women of African descent worldwide.

Black Panther Party- Founded in 1966 by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton. The Black Panther Party was an organization formed to guard against police brutality and provide social services in black neighborhoods.

Bobby Seale- One of the co-founders of the Black Panther Party.

COINTELPRO- COINTELPRO stood for Counter-Intelligence Program; which is an Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (under the direction of former director J. Edgar Hoover) term used as a code with local law enforcement agencies, to aggressively track all of the activity of the members of the Black Panther Party. Declassified and classified dossiers on former members still

exist. Declassified information can be retrieved from the FBI as a result of the Freedom of Information Act.

Deconstruction- Undermining the conceptual order imposed by a concept that has captivated imaginations and ways of seeing things. Constantly paying attention to how we come to meaning.

Deterritorialization- 1. A way of undoing structures. 2. The habitual movement by which a line frees itself from the point. A constant process of breaking away from arborescence. 3. Always folding, refolding, unfolding process of being.

Difference- 1. Being. 2. An always differentiating process of being. 3. Containing movement and stops that consist of zones of possible individuation.

Discourse- Practices obeying certain rules. Discourse is not just linguistic—but material things. All things are produced by discourse.

Discourse Economy- In relation to African American literacy practices, a discourse economy de-valorizes the unique history of African Americans through an inadequate account of the fact that Black people in America could not legally read or write until the abolishment of slavery. Therefore, Black people in the United States of America were denied the right to be literate for more than two-and-a-half centuries.

Discursive Heterogeneity- Deterritorialized structures of language. The unfolding of language.

Dreadlocks- 1. Ropes of matted, knotted, natty, and twisted hair that form by themselves if the hair is not brushed, combed, washed, cut, etc. 2. A significant characterization of the rhizome. 3. Dreadlocks are rhizomatic intensities composed of plateaus but are not plateaus themselves. Instead, dreadlocks takes lines of flight from plateaus. 4. A combination of circumstances. The dreadlocks in this study worked to survey the nomadic thought of Afeni Shakur as movement moving freely in an element of interiority.

Elaine Brown- In 1974, Elaine Brown became the first and only woman to lead the Black Panther Party.

Elmer “Geronimo” Pratt- Godfather to the late Tupac Shakur. A former member of the Black Panther Party who was wrongfully incarcerated for crimes he did not commit. Pratt served twenty-seven years in prison.

Exteriority- The site located outside of all multiplicities. Situates thought in a smooth space. Nomads are characterized by exteriority.

Félix Guattari- (1925-1995) Former professor at the University of Paris at Vincennes and co-author of *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

Gilles Deleuze- (1930-1992) Former psychoanalyst and lifelong political activist. Co-authored *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

Haecceity- A mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. Haecceities consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected.

Individuation- The most deterritorialized state of being. The habitual, habitual BE.

Hip-hop- A term used to denote a specific culture or collective consciousness. It can be characterized as an awareness, a feeling, a state of mind, a style of dress, and a genre of music, etc.

Huey P. Newton- Co-founder and former member of the Black Panther Party.

Indirect Discourse The reporting of someone else's words.

Intensity- The culmination of circumstances. A domain of qualitative differentiation.

Interiority- Situates thought in a striated space.

J. Edgar Hoover- Served as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for forty-eight years.

Line of Flight- Part of the rhizome. It is a becoming. Has its own breaks and ruptures.

Literacy- 1. The ability to read and write. 2. The ability to use language to read, write, speak, listen, and view. 3. Literacy has the power to ignite, free, bring awareness. 4. To speak and write using the conventions of Standard American English. 5. A power structure. 6. A linguistic variable. 7. Regimes of interactive conjunctions of collective assemblages of dissemination. Most importantly, these regimes make possible discursive heterogeneity. 8. Literacy is not made up of words, but issue mots d'ordre and therefore, possibilities. Its function is to effect a becoming.

Literacy Theory- Theory that indicates how people *become* "literate" through various experiences and practices. The study of linguistic variables.

Mapping- 1. A part of the rhizome. 2. Mapping fosters connections in-between fields through multiple entryways.

Minor Language- A concept that Deleuze and Guattari extracted from an extended diary entry of Kafka. A modified or deterritorialized major language made into one's own. Putting linguistic variables in a state of continuous variation. Nonstandard language. Changing language. A minor language has an immediate social and political function.

Mots d' Ordre- French for 'words of order'. Orders and commands which enforce an order—law and order. Mots d' ordre regards all language-acts (i.e. discursive formations) as acts of power. Its function is to effect a becoming.

Movement- In this study, movement is access to nomadic consciousness. Nomads must have movement in order to think.

Narrativization- Stories as narratives containing their own discursive effects.

Nomad- The life of the nomad is the intermezzo. Nomads have no points, paths, or land. The nomad reterritorializes on deterritorialization itself.

Nomadic Thought- 1. A form of political resistance which promotes difference as a strategy to navigate grounded logic and rule-governed structures. 2. Nomadic thought moves freely in an element of exteriority. 3. It does not repose on identity; it rides difference. 4. Is not situated in an ordered interiority. It requires movement and space.

Plane of Consistency- Plane of consistency only has haecceities for content, it also has its own particular semiotic to serve as expression for nomadic consciousness.

Plateau- 1. A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. 2. Plateaus are multiplicities connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems. 3. Plateaus are rhizomatic intensities that form in relation to a multiplicity of circumstances. The plateaus in this study worked to map the becomings of Afeni Shakur as a desiring nomad moving freely in an element of exteriority with a focus on space and its relation to a constant process of becoming. They can be read starting anywhere and can be related to any other plateau.

Poststructural Theory- A framework for rethinking the subject, binaries, non-progressive/nonlinear history, totalizing narratives, discourses, power, theories, and narrative analysis. Theory that critiques the structures and foundations of Enlightenment Humanism. A response to structuralist's claims to understand entire underlying structures. As with poststructural theory, there is no one underlying structure, but many ever changing and chaotic structures and forces. It refuses all semblance of the totalizing and essentialist orientations of modernist systems of thought. It abandons the epistemological basis for any such claims to truth.

Power- In this study, power is used in relation to language, specifically the concept of Mots d' Ordre.

Rap- A vocal form of cultural expression that emerged from Hip-hop and consists of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music.

Reflexivity- A method in social science research that places emphasis on the practices of the researcher. A form of self-critique. A relationship that defines both the subject written and the writing subject.

Reterritorialization- The process of opening only to close again. Re-structuring of structures.

Rhizoanalysis- A deconstructive method of analysis that emphasize breaks, ruptures, new linkages, middles, and discontinuities.

Rhizomatic- No one point. That which re-visits the rhizome.

Rhizome- 1. A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, science, and social struggles. 2. A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. 3. A rhizome is made of plateaus.

Rhizomic- Of the rhizome.

Smooth Space- 1. Space of populated multiplicities of thought. 2. A space of repetition where things can be taken up at any point. 3. The exteriority of thought.

Space- Space allows movement. In other words, space allows access to nomadic consciousness.

Subjectivity- Unstable category of identity produced by discourses, produced by discourse.

Topography- The mapping of sites *of* and sites *within* the rhizome.

Tupac Amaru Shakur- Born Lesane Parish Crooks, in Brooklyn, New York, on June 16, 1971 and renamed after an eighteenth-century Incan chief and revolutionary. Tupac Amaru Shakur became one of (if not the most) recognized rap artists of the twentieth century. He made his solo rap debut in 1992 with the rap group known as Digital Underground and went on to sell millions of albums as a solo artist. In 1996, Tupac was shot several times while riding in a car down the Las Vegas Strip. He died six days later at the age of twenty-five. In 2005, a MTV produced documentary about his life was nominated for an academy award.

The following chapter is a review of literature related to the function of literacy. It consists of various fields of thought, all which helped me impose the vision for and concepts of this study. The purpose of the chapter was two-fold. First, I discussed the various fields of thought concerning the function of literacy including six contemporary perspectives on literacy. Then I discussed *rhizomatic* literacies in the African American tradition, and concluded with a discussion about the history of the Black Panther Party particularly the role of women, many of whom became key historical figures within the organization.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Function of Literacy: Discourse in the Field

The vision for this study was to examine the issues outlined in my statement of the problem which focused on the function of literacy in the life of a former member of the Black Panther Party—Afeni Shakur. This study focused on enabling conditions such as race, class, and gender, the function of literacy, and how all of these things worked together to produce Afeni Shakur’s *subjectivities* at different times in her life. I organized this literature review to show how the function of literacy (particularly for poor, African American students being “educated” in contemporary classrooms) has been ordered by a *discourse economy*, a term that I have coined to discuss totalizing functions of literacy. In a *discourse economy*, totalizing functions of literacy are often the cause for the de-valorization of African American literacy practices. These practices as later discussed in this chapter as *rhizomatic literacies* in the African American tradition, should be acknowledged as having valuable implications for teaching literacy in contemporary classrooms.

My thoughts on a *discourse economy* were influenced by reading Lankshear and Knobel’s (2002) *Do we have your attention? New literacies, Digital Technologies, and the Education of Adolescents*. The authors discussed the idea of an *attention economy* (as cited in Goldhaber, 1997), as an economy that competes for the attention of young people by having systems in place to keep their interest. Lankshear and Knobel’s work suggested that there is a consequent price if teachers in formal school settings do not create a space in their lessons for

students to explore literacy beyond the traditions of in-school-literacies. It is my assertion that a *discourse economy* functions, particularly as it relates to African American students in formal school settings, as an economy that de-valorizes the *discourse* of African American students by having systems in place to keep their disinterest. As Foucault (1969/1972) would suggest, this is a system of power relations because its function is to ensure the reproduction of a certain educational system. Systems of this kind do not value the lives of African American students and therefore make it almost impossible for teachers to prepare African American students for the world (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Lanehart, 2002; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Shujaa, 1994; Watkins, 2001).

A *discourse economy* can be found in those classrooms where teachers do not set high expectations for African American students. It is also found on the pages of every history book that provides an accurate account of slavery in America, specifically accounts of slave laws that denied Black people in America the right to become literate for more than two hundred years (Berlin, Fields, Miller, & Reidy 1995; Butchart, 2002; Williams, 2005; Willis, 2002; Woodson, 1919/1998, 1933/1990). A *discourse economy* can also be found in those classrooms where teachers do not understand that some African American students might enter the classroom with their home language (Delpit, 1995; Delpit & Dowdy, 2002). Instead of positively fostering an understanding of informal and formal uses of language in the classroom, these teachers create conflict by making African American students feel the language that they use is bad and improper (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 1993). A *discourse economy* is found on the pages of many so-called scholarly works specifically work in the field of language and literacy education that do not address the crisis in public education where poor African American students are primarily educated. The *discourse economy* can be found within the assessment of the 2000

Report of the National Reading Panel in which the Panel regrets that it “did not evaluate all of the reading instructional topics that were identified by Panel members as well as by parents, educators, and policymakers” (National Reading Panel, 2000. P. 19). The failure of the Panel to address socio-cultural perspectives of literacy learning was a grave oversight. Most disturbing, it can be found within educational policy such as the No Child Left Behind Act—a policy that governs how and what students learn. Clearly, a *discourse economy* is a malignant *discourse* produced and regulated almost everyday in classrooms across the United States (Kozol, 1992, 1995). It affects the academic progress of some African American students causing them to achieve at a much slower rate than their white counterparts (Comer & Poussaint, 1992; McAdoo, 2002; Tatum, 2005; U. S. Department of Education, 2007; Wilson, 1990, 1991). As stated earlier in the chapter, I organized the first fold of this review to show how I think the function of literacy is ordered in the field of language and literacy.

This review was organized in two parts because the goals of this literature review were two-fold. The first goal was to focus on discourse from three specific classifications that detailed the function of literacy: the 2000 Report of the National Reading Panel, socio-cultural perspectives in literacy education, and the growing body of work in the area of New Literacies. Next, I described six contemporary literacy perspectives that foster the discussion of critical positions and broaden notions of the function of literacy. Finally, I presented a discussion of historical accounts of literacy learning and practices in the African American tradition. The second goal to achieve in this literature review was to conclude with a discussion of the history of the Black Panther Party in which I highlighted women who were members of the Black Panther Party, and became key historical figures in the organization. The literature on the Black Panther Party provided a basis for the discussion into the life of Afeni Shakur.

While organizing this literature review, my focus remained on the *rhizomatic associations* existing between each layer of literature that I selected for this review.

This literature review offers a pastiche of various ideas concerning the function of literacy. It is intentionally organized hierarchically in order for readers to see new possibilities for thinking about the function of literacy. Also, its order is hierarchal because each field of thought, beginning with the Report of the National Reading Panel and continuing through to literacy learning and practices in the African American tradition, was presented in a linear order ranging from what I thought were the most common or traditional articulations of the function of literacy to the least common and non-traditional articulations of the function of literacy. Hierarchies are inherently neither good nor bad. However, hierarchies are *power*-laden structures, all consisting of preexisting gaps, separated categories, and orders of segmented thinking (Kamberelis, 2004). Also, the hierarchical arrangement may allow readers to understand how it is possible to politically resist arborescent models of thinking about the function of literacy because they “amount to restrictive economies of dominance and oppression” (Kamberelis, 2004, p. 164). As stated by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), “the arborescent form preexists the individual, who is integrated into it at an allotted place” (p. 16).

Therefore, it is possible to politically resist arborescent models of thinking by creating a way for the individual to integrate herself into her own place. I did this by writing a dissertation with a primary focus on the function of literacy in the life of Afeni Shakur. I found that her experiences with and practices of literacy were less common and non-traditional and took *lines of flight* that disrupted the very hierarchy in which this literature review was presented. As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) would put it, I *deterritorialized* (disrupted or operated a *line of flight* across) the hierarchy by researching what I thought was not commonly discussed or

studied in the field of literacy education. This literature review informed this study significantly because each layer of literature produced different ways to articulate the function of literacy. It is important to understand that when read, the organization of this chapter may appear not to fit or to read like a hodge-podge of thoughts. However, the *real* point of this literature review should remind readers to be suspicious of hierarchies. I begin with a discussion of the 2000 Report of the National Reading Panel.

The Report of the National Reading Panel

The National Reading Panel was formed due to a 1997 request that Congress made to the Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). In consultation with the Secretary of Education, the Director of NICHD convened a panel to assess the status of research-based knowledge that included assessing the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read. Members of the panel ranged from leading scholars in the field of reading research to educational leaders and parents. Its charge was to provide Congress with a comprehensive report of the panel's findings that would include "an indication of the readiness for application in the classroom of the results of this research, and, if appropriate, a strategy for rapidly disseminating this information to facilitate effective reading instructions in the schools" (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 1). Congress also charged the National Reading Panel, if found warranted, to "recommend a plan for additional research regarding early reading development and instruction" (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 1).

The report of the National Reading Panel continues to be received with mixed views—some that are scathing and some that fully support the report of the panel.

For example, *Big Brother and the National Reading Curriculum: How Ideology Trumped Evidence*, a book edited by Richard Allington (2002) included several scholars who oppose the

report of the panel. Many of the scholars do not favor of the composition of the panel, the methodology that was used in the study (largely quantitative), and the report's findings.

Alvermann (2001a) suggested that caution be taken interpreting the report's findings because the panel "did not include research on second language and reading to learn subject-specific areas ... nor did it include studies using qualitative research designs" (<http://www.nrconline.org>). Coles' (2003) book *Reading the Naked Truth: Literacy, Legislation, and Lies* suggested that the National Reading Panel's report was distorted and misrepresented information. Coles also asserted that the report had been included in the Reading Section of the No Child Left Behind Act without any changes or critiques. Krashen (in press) questioned the panel's claims that "systematic phonics instruction is more effective than less systematic phonics instruction and that skills base approaches are superior to whole language approaches in helping children learn to read" (<http://www.cal.org/natl-lit-panel/comments/krashen-phonics.pdf>). In a paper commissioned by the National Reading Conference, Michael Pressley (2001) criticized the report of the National Reading Panel for its narrow focus and failure to "report a great deal of science that can and should inform policy debates about beginning literacy instruction" (<http://www.nrconline.org>).

However, the report of the National Reading Panel has received positive reviews. In the book *The Voice of Evidence in Reading Research*, editors Peggy McCardle and Chhabra Vinita (2004) featured several essays in defense of the panel's report. The essays, written by researchers, educators, policy experts and members of the panel, support the idea that scientific research in reading as explained by the panel is the best approach for teaching children to read. One of the members of the National Reading Panel, Timothy Shanahan (2000) held the position that the panel's report "is likely to provide the field with its clearest mandate for applying

research to practice, for showing the way to use research to make our schools better” (<http://www.readingonline.org/critical/shanahan/panel/html>). And finally, policy expert Lyon, and researchers Fletcher, Torgesen, Shaywitz and Vinita (2004) agreed with the mostly quantitative methodology used by the panel. Lyon et al. asserted the idea that educators must have basic information about scientific knowledge and that quantitative research is the only kind that can establish the effectiveness of reading programs. Although this was not an exhaustive discussion of the opinions held concerning the report of the National Reading Panel, one can assume that the findings of the report will continue to be received with mixed reviews.

In its findings, the National Reading Panel (2000) provided five categories of literacy learning:

- Alphabetics
 - Phonemic Awareness Instruction
 - Phonics Instruction;
- Fluency;
- Comprehension
 - Vocabulary Instruction
 - Text Comprehension Instruction
 - Teacher Preparation and Comprehension Strategies Instruction;
- Teacher Education and Reading Instruction; and
- Computer Technology and Reading Instruction. (pp. 2-3)

Most of the categories border the traditional view of literacy that is often described as the ability to read and write. Research has shown that these five foundations of literacy learning are essential to children becoming successful literacy learners. Phonemic awareness and phonics

instruction have been written about extensively and approached in various ways. Yopp (1995) developed a test for assessing phonemic awareness in young children and suggested that “it is the awareness that speech consists of a series of sounds” (p. 20) that determines children’s success during early literacy learning. Juel and Minden-Cupp (2000) also supported the idea that phonics and phonemic awareness helped children successfully develop knowledge of written texts. Juel and Minden-Cupp identified three instructional strategies for teaching children how to read:

1. Differential instruction may be helpful in first grade;
2. Children who enter first grade with low literacy benefit from early and heavy exposure to phonics; and
3. A structured phonics curriculum that includes both onsets and rimes and sounding and blending phonemes within rimes appears to be very effective. (p. 459)

Stahl (1992) took a comprehensive approach to discussing phonics instruction by drawing from the work of other scholars in the field. Stahl identified nine guidelines for exemplary phonics instructions and concluded that exemplary phonics instruction “builds on a child’s rich concepts about how print functions, builds on a foundation of phonemic awareness, is clear and direct, is integrated into a total reading program, focus on reading words—not learning rules, may include onsets and rimes, may include invented spelling practice, develops independent word recognition strategies, and develops automatic word recognition skills” (pp. 618-624). Trachtenburg (1990) discussed using literature to enhance phonics, an idea based upon two rationales. The first rationale explained the importance of “early, intensive phonics instruction,” and the latter rationale drawing on research that described a “literature-driven curriculum” as a key instructional strategy.

However, Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, and Duffy-Hester's (1998) research noted the need for understanding more about the controversy in the field concerning phonics and whole language. Many scholars often refer to this as the "Great Debate" because it is an issue that has managed to remain in the forefront of early literacy learning initiatives. Baumann et al., (1998) surveyed elementary school teachers and administrators in order to gain an understanding of their instructional beliefs about reading. They found that "a majority of teachers embrace a balanced, eclectic approach to elementary reading instruction, blending phonics and holistic principles and practices in compatible ways" (p. 640). In his book, *Three Arguments Against Whole Language & Why They Are Wrong*, Krashen (1999) presented the following: (1) in all eye-fixation studies, texts are selected by the experimenter, with no consideration to readers' interests; (2) in all fixation studies, readers are asked comprehension questions or are asked to summarize the passages after they read them; and (3) in eye-fixation studies, readers are placed in an awkward physical position for reading (pp. 3-5). Krashen refuted each argument and in his work examined more salient issues such as "real solutions" and equity in schools. He concluded his book by suggesting that all children must have access to reading materials they find engaging, and it is then and only then that children will learn.

Blevins (1998) extended the discussion of phonics by examining its importance in relation to helping children become fluent English language learners. In his book, *Phonics from A to Z: A Practical Guide*, Blevins focused on "automatic word recognition or fluency" to assert the idea that "to become skilled readers, children must be able to identify words quickly and accurately" (p. 7). Gillet and Temple (2000) compared building fluency to learning to balance on a bicycle—"the more you do it, the more automatic it becomes" (p. 36). Here, fluency was only talked about in the context of reading. In their book, *Understanding Reading Problems:*

Assessment and Instruction, Gillet and Temple (2000) suggested that there were “problems that children experience in the beginning reading stage [that] usually center on wording decoding, sight vocabulary, and comprehension” (p. 35), and consequently children struggle with becoming fluent readers. Those problems pose serious implications for teachers of early literacy learners because research has shown that emergent literacy is important for young children (Clay, 1967; Teale & Sulzby, 1989). Gillet and Temple (2000) argued:

If children haven’t learned to recognize many words automatically by early second grade, they will not fully experience the spurt in reading rate and fluency that we associate with this period. The gap between these lagging readers and their classmates will be growing. Unfortunately, they often begin to feel like failures, and that attitude itself may compound the problem. (p. 38)

Although their argument presents a sense of doom, children have proven to be very resilient in their efforts to learn to become literate. However, educators must meet this challenge because they have the responsibility to help foster these skills.

It is clear that fluency and comprehension must go hand and hand because children must be able to understand what they are reading. Bringing comprehension into the discussion of building fluent readers offers teachers a broader perspective on those practices that are most effective in teaching children to become readers. Adams’s (1990) *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print* indicated that “direct vocabulary instruction is generally shown to result in an increase in both word knowledge and reading comprehension” (p. 29). Here the conversation moved away from a rigid timeline as to when children should learn to read, to windows of opportunities and ways that teachers can address reading problems.

Walpole and McKenna (2004) studied seven of the National Reading Panel's sixteen categories of text comprehension instruction: comprehension monitoring, cooperative learning, use of graphic and semantic organizers, questioning and answering, question generation, story structure instruction, and summarization (p. 57), all of which are based on scientifically-based research into how comprehension develops. Snow, Burns, and Griffin's (1998) research for the National Research Council asserted that comprehension is an essential element in combating reading problems. They suggested children be taught specific skills characteristic of "skilled readers" and described "skilled readers" as "good comprehenders" (p. 62).

Still, getting children to become "skilled readers" requires the efforts of a "skilled" teacher—one who understands her own pedagogy and practice. Therefore, the focus here is to explore the role of teacher educators and the ways they approach reading instruction. Baumann and Duffy (2001) discussed in their analysis of methodologies used by teachers "what it means to be a teacher researcher" and how that question was explored in the classroom (p. 614). Baumann and Duffy's findings showed a "variation within themes" that led them to conclude that teachers were influenced in different ways theoretically. Therefore, there were a "variety of choices teachers make in exploring questions within their own classrooms" (p. 608). Bean (2004) provided insight into the role of reading specialists and what they do to help children become successful readers. According to Bean (2004) the reading specialist's responsibility is to carry out a site-based effort to improve children's ability to read. Reading specialists should possess an in-depth knowledge of reading instruction and assessment extended beyond past notions of what specialists do. Bean also noted the importance of educators as "competent users of technology" and "employing technology as a tool" (p. 130) in order to improve reading instruction. Teale, Leu, Labbo, and Kinzer's (2002) CTELL Project (Case Technology to Enhance Literacy

Learning) suggested that literacy learning could be enhanced by using multimedia cases of best practice instruction to prepare pre-service teachers. For Teale, et al. computer technology and reading instruction were parallel forces in the equation of fostering skilled readers.

Labbo, Sprague, Montero, and Font (2000) suggested that early literacy educators should also use technology in the classroom. They provided an example in which teachers used computer centers with kindergartners—centers that were connected to themes and to the literature read in class. Allington and Cunningham (2002) advocated for technology development for both students and teachers for literacy learning. They argued that in order for teachers to meet the needs of students they need to be competent users of technology themselves and that one effective way for students to become “literate” was through coupling literacy learning with technology.

Clearly, the Report of the National Reading Panel offered a good amount of insight into what it means to be literate and the ways in which literacy functions. However, like all research efforts, the report had its limitations. Cited in the report is the fact that “the Panel also did not address issues relevant to second language learning”

(p. 3) and expressed regret that “it could not evaluate all of the reading instructional topics that were identified by Panel members as well as by parents, educators, and policymakers” (p. 19). Some of the topics that the panel did not study were the “effects of predictable and decodable text formats on beginning reading development (Jalongo, 2000; Strickland, 1990; Tompkins, 2003) “motivational factors in learning to read” (Alvermann & Phelps, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie, 2001; Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999) and “the effects of integrating reading and writing” (Atwell, 1998, 2002; Baines & Kunkel, 2003; Beers, 2003).

Socio-cultural Perspectives in Literacy Education

Extending the *discourse* of the field as it relates to the function of literacy is the work of an often cited sociolinguist James Gee. According to Gee (1990/1996), studying Discourses is the foundation of language and literacy education. Gee stated, “apart from Discourses, language and literacy is meaningless” (p. 190). Gee (1990/1996) suggested that literacy has been used to maintain a “social hierarchy, empower elites, and ensure that people lower on the hierarchy accept the values, norms, and beliefs of the elites...” (p. 36). To support his theory of language and literacy, Gee provided several examples of Discourses used by three high school students. Each student represented a specific group. Gee chose one working class African American, a working class White, and an upper class student. The students were given a short story about a woman named Abigail and a man named Gregory to respond to. Gee examined the responses of each student and found several differences among the ways they responded. He concluded that “each of the students [was] giving a performance ... appropriate for a school task” (p. 180). Gee dismissed the traditional, status quo purposes of schooling and argued that schools “ought to allow students to juxtapose diverse Discourses to each other so that they can understand them at a meta-level through a more encompassing language of reflection” (p. 190). Similarly, Arlette Willis, a scholar in the field of literacy education who is known widely for her work on the historical aspects of educating African Americans (1995), stated:

To fail to attend to the plurality and diversity within the United States—
and to fail to take seriously the historic past and the social and political
contexts that have sustained it—is to dismiss the cultural ways of
knowing, language, experiences, and voices of children from diverse
linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This is not to imply that programs

based on such theories need to be scrapped. It does mean that social constructivist theories need to be reworked to include the complexities of culture that are currently absent. (p. 39)

Lee and Smagorinsky's (2000) research on Vygotskian perspectives on literacy suggested that learning more about [socio-cultural] as well as cultural-historical literacy practices can expose those traditional practices and assumptions about the function of language. They argued that "cultural practices and beliefs contribute to the practices and the learning of literacy" (p. 3). Fecho's (2003) book *"Is this English?": Race, Language, and Culture in the Classroom*, focused on socio-cultural perspectives in literacy learning by exploring his work as a former public school teacher in a Philadelphia high school. Fecho, drawing on the work of Brazilian educator and critical theorist, Paulo Freire, expressed the idea that students' experiences were inextricably linked to the language they used in the classroom and therefore teachers should enact a "critical inquiry stance" toward language learning. In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970/1990) theorized how many educational systems functioned to "oppress" those students within it through "an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (p. 53). Freire specifically indicated that students were responsible for thinking for themselves, which would help them develop a "critical consciousness" and enact "education as the practice of freedom" (p. 62).

Freire and Macedo (1987) extended the idea of education as a practice of freedom by highlighting the importance for students to not only be book literate but also able to "read the word and the world." Reading the word and the world as noted by Freire and Macedo can foster students' ability to become critical thinkers through questioning and politicizing dominant ideologies relating to culture. In the context of both cultural and political aspects of learning,

Nieto (2002) noted that “sociocultural and sociopolitical theories emphasize that learning is not simply a question of transmitting knowledge, but rather of working with students so that they can reflect, theorize, and create knowledge” (p. 7). Nieto linked language, literacy and culture to discuss ways that teachers could improve reading, writing, and language use in the classroom. For Rebecca Powell (1999), linking language, literacy, and culture was imperative. She identified five basic criteria for examining literacy programs in schools:

1. Literacy instruction ought to promote freedom of thought through encouraging diverse populations and welcoming productive critique;
2. Literacy instruction ought to enhance students’ communicative competence by considering the social, cultural, and hegemonic dimensions of language use;
3. Literacy instruction ought to be consciously political;
4. Literacy ought to be taught in ways that make students aware for the power of language for transformations; and
5. Literacy ought to be taught in ways that nurture a culture of compassion and care. (p. 65)

Mahiri’s (1998) research of youth culture in what he refers to as “new century schools” supported Powell’s criteria for examining literacy programs. Mahiri argued that literacy was linked to students’ cultural identity both inside and outside of the classroom. He also suggested that schools that viewed literacy learning as culturally based had the greatest potential to help students become successful learners and the most potential to engage in advancing an agenda of “cultural diversity” and “cultural change” (p. 159).

New Literacies

A scholar in the field of literacy education, Brian Street (1984), is often credited with initiating some of the first discussions around new literacies. In *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, Street (1984) discussed new literacies as a move away from autonomous views of learning and communicating literacy. In his discussion of new literacies Street used the phrase “literacy practices” “as a means of focusing upon social practices and conceptions of reading and writing” (p. 1). According to Street (2003), new literacies “entails the recognition of multiple literacies, varying according to time and space, but also contested in relations of power”

(<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/cice/archives/5.2/52street.pdf>)

For Street, the social aspects of literacy learning cannot be thought of in isolation of a social act. For example, Street (1995) argued that engaging with literacy is always a social act because the mere practice of literacy involves the engagement of relations of power. Street (2003) asserted that “literacy is a social practice, not simply technical and neutral skills”

(<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/cice/archives/5.2/52street.pdf>).

Another forerunner in the discussion of new literacies, is often cited sociolinguist, James Gee. Gee’s (1990/1996) work focused on describing how sociocultural perspectives of language and literacy have been influenced within the field of anthropology. Gee was most interested in the ways that literacy is learned and practiced. He provided several perspectives on approaches to language and literacy and used those approaches to show how “traditional views of literacy as the ability to read and write rips literacy out of its sociocultural contexts and treats it as an asocial cognitive skill with little or nothing to do with human relationships” (p. 46). Gee emphasized that the social is an essential element or condition of practicing literacy and therefore, literacies are socially situated. Gee (2000) described the “situated” approach to

literacies as an approach that enables a wider conception of what literacies can do in certain places and times. His notion of new literacies debunks what it means to be literate and how the term itself can be used.

Lankshear and Knobel's (2003) explored in their book, *New Literacies: Changing Knowledge and Classroom Learning*, how the term literacy has been used throughout history. According to Lankshear & Knobel (2003), the term has evolved to mean very different things depending on its perceived function. Although they do not provide a concrete definition for the term "new literacies," they did say that the term was offered as an addition to the ways that literacy scholars "use 'new' in relation to 'literacy' and 'literacies'" (p. 16). They also discussed "the idea of 'new literacies' as ones that are relatively new in *chronological* terms or, perhaps, that are new to being thought about as literacies—and, particularly, as literacies that schools should take into account" (p. 17).

A similar viewpoint is represented in Alvermann, Hagood, and Williams' (2001) research about out-of-school literacies. Their research honored the concept of popular youth culture and the importance of media in the lives of adolescents. For example, an examination of the life of an African American eighth grade student named "Ned" showed that his interest in rap music, particularly the use of Web, lyric, and song texts, helped him define and describe his own subjectivities. Ned demonstrated in several emails with a researcher that he was establishing his own understanding of literacies that were often overlooked in a classroom setting. Luke (1997) suggested that cultural studies should become an integral part of school-based media studies and that computer education, specifically the use of ICTs, should be broadened to support a variety of skill levels in the classroom and made available to all students. Alvermann (2002) noted that research has shown that "it is easy to imagine a widening gap between youth who have ready

access to digital technologies and those who must struggle to get a foot in the door” (p. viii). Luke (2002) also asserted that media literacy and information and communication technologies need to be reconceptualized by literacy educators in order to move beyond “skill and drill literacy pedagogy and a largely acritical public and government attitude toward new information technologies” (p. 146). Luke and Elkins (1998) reiterated the idea that media literacy should be “reinvented” so students can learn at the most appropriate level based on the skills they already possess and can demonstrate in the classroom.

Collins and Blot (2003) discussed the concept of new literacies in relation to “texts, power, and identity.” They describe the new literacy studies as “the shift to plural approaches” (p. xi) and discussed what they refer to as “local, everyday, and home literacies” that allow people to make meaning in their everyday lives. Knobel (1999) described in four case studies how students’ everyday literacies, literacies experienced mainly outside a classroom setting, greatly informed school-based literacy experiences. For Knobel, educators need to re-vision their notions of literacy in a formal school setting and find ways to include students “everyday” literacy experiences in the classroom. Cope and Kalantzis’s (2000) theory of multiliteracies and social futures also highlighted the importance of understanding the role of students’ literacy experiences outside the classroom. And some scholars, (Reinking, McKenna, Labbo, & Kieffer 1998; Semali, 2001) called for a reconceptualization of new literacies in a “post-typographic” era and agreed that students should be able to comprehend and communicate through both traditional and emerging technologies.

In summary, I have provided the *discourse* in the field of language and literacy education that is often valued the most by researchers in the field. However, this *discourse* is not limited only to those mentioned above as there are so many academic interests in the field that can be

included in this section of the review. What is important to think about here is the assertion that there is a history—perhaps of history of reading education that has its roots deeply embedded in the basic functions of literacy that has ordered such things like a debate of whether teachers should teach phonics or whole language in the classroom.

Six Contemporary Perspectives on Literacy

It can be argued that all forms of literacy have limitations. Yet, most importantly, they all promote variation in literacy learning. However different each perspective may be, they are connected in the sense that having knowledge across each perspective is crucial for engaging in literacy learning. In this sense literacy can be seen as rhizomatic in nature (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987; Hagood, 2004; Kamberelis, 2004; Jackson, 2003, Semali, 2001)—a concept I described later in this study.

As a point of clarity, in no way do I suggest that these are the only perspectives on literacy (Alvermann, 2001b, 2002; Fecho, 2000; Freire, 1970/1990; Gee, 1990/1996; Guthrie, 2001; Knobel, 1999; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Lee, 1993; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Luke, 1997; Luke & Elkins, 1998; Nieto, 2002; Street, 1993, 1995) because research has shown that there are many ways to conceptualize literacy. Therefore, the six perspectives on literacy discussed below are as follows: (1) conventional literacy; (2) functional literacy; (3) cultural literacy; (4) critical literacy; (5) Fugitive Literacy; and (6) literacy as *mots d'ordre*. Each perspective has varying implications relating to the function of literacy educationally, politically, and ideologically and functions differently in a person's everyday life.

Conventional Literacy

Conventional literacy indicates who can read a book but not whether the reader can comprehend the information presented within the book itself. For example, a conventionally

literate person is able to read and write that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. Yet, this person may not understand who Dr. King was, what it means to be assassinated, or the implications of being a Black man in the South during 1968. In this sense, conventional literacy reduces itself to the ability to *only* read and write. Conventional literacy is mostly associated with a historical American ideal of what it meant to be literate (U.S. Census Bureau, 1959). However, many scholars in the field of education find that this notion of literacy is problematic because it limits the ability to participate in certain aspects of life, especially if the person's first language is not English.

Functional Literacy

Functional literacy is the ability to read and write only for the purpose of completing a task (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). For example, a functionally literate person is able to read and write that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. This person can apply this information as an answer on a multiple choice test yet might not be able to read further works about Dr. King and write an essay discussing his life and the events that led up to his death. In this sense, functional literacy is a means to an end and not an end in itself because it is oriented around that which makes a person able to function under specific circumstances. This form of literacy is often found problematic by scholars because it has the capacity to work against a person's ability to use literacy as a way of creating a better life. Functional literacy is also associated with the ability to fill out a job application, read a list of ingredients, and successfully navigate through a telephone book.

Cultural Literacy

Cultural literacy is the ability to read, write and understand the meaning of a text. For example, a culturally literate person is able to read, write and possess the background knowledge

that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. This person will be able to understand that Dr. King played a key role in the Civil Rights Movement and fought to promote social justice through nonviolent tactics. Cultural literacy will also enable this person to apply this information contextually for the purpose of making meaning.

Educational scholar, E. D. Hirsch, is often cited for his discussions about this form of literacy. Hirsch (1988) noted that being able to read a magazine or newspaper article is not enough. He asserted that it is essential to expect that not all the information needed to understand the context of the written word will be included. For Hirsch, readers must be able to make meaning of what they read. However, Hirsch's view of what is culturally relevant is not embraced by scholars who focus on broader notions of culture. There are scholars that view Hirsch's notion of culture as a narrow focus. In the book, *School and Society: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Tozer, Violas, and Senese (1998) asserted that "Hirsch's argument for the need to employ language and cultural knowledge and understandings in reading suggests that there is only one culture, one language, and one set of knowledge and understanding needed for a person to become culturally literate" (p. 257). Two often cited Black intellectuals Anthony Appiah, Princeton professor, and Henry Louis Gates, Chair of the Afro American Studies Department at Harvard University, wrote a book in 1997 titled, *The Dictionary of Global Culture*. In this book Appiah and Gates critiqued E. D. Hirsch's definition of cultural literacy as lacking a focus on a world that is made up of diverse groups of people. They suggested that Hirsch's notion of cultural literacy was based on a cultural history that is predominately White and male. They want the conception of cultural literacy to be more transformative than conservative and suggested that contemporary culture in the United States has multicultural roots.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is the ability to read the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). For example, a critically literate person is able to reflect on and think critically about the fact that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. This person will also be able to understand the purpose of the Civil Rights Movement and the need for social justice in American society and how politics relate to the world. The idea that literacy is not power-neutral and may allow certain groups to have more influence over others is an essential aspect of critical literacy. The late Paulo Freire is often associated with this literacy perspective because of his work in the field of adult education in Brazil. Freire's (1970/2000) writings expressed the idea that there is a relationship between literacy and the power of humans. For Freire (1970/2000), a dialogical encounter between humans must take place and be situated in a "profound love for the world and for people" (p. 70) before actual dialogue can take place.

Fugitive Literacy

Fugitive literacy is the ability to understand and interpret slave narratives (Meacham, 2003) and the narratives of descendants of slaves as collective memories of people in the African Diaspora located in other times, places, and situations (Gordon, 2000). These narratives or "philosophies of existence" (Gordon, 2000, p. 10) can only be understood and interpreted by "recognizing the situation or lived context of Africana peoples' being-in-the-world" (Gordon, 2000, p. 10). For example, a person making connections through an understanding and interpretation of fugitive literacy is able to recognize Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee as an existential *situation* experienced by a man who fought for the abolition of racial segregation with other members of the Civil Rights Movement in America. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life would be understood and interpreted

beyond his assassination, and his role as a civil rights leader will serve as a historic event that has enabled people globally to regard civil rights as a primary “perspective in the world” (Gordon, 2000, p. 10).

Literacy as *Mots d’ Ordre*

Literacy as *mots d’ ordre* indicates the ability to regard *all* language-acts as acts of *power* (Bogue, 1998; Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/2000; 1980/1987; Foucault, 1969/1972). For example, a person using literacy as *mots d’ ordre* can *deconstruct* the fact that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee and see it as a statement or discursive fact (Foucault, 1969/1972) and as text (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/2000, 1993/1997) that functions and “connects with other things (including its reader, its author, its literary and nonliterary context” (Grosz, 1994, p. 199). This person also recognizes that this discursive fact (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee) cannot be “interpreted or understood in a traditional way (Alvermann, 2000). Literacy as *mots d’ ordre* issue words of order (Bogue, 1989) that “have intralinguistic, endogenous, internal minorities” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 103). These minorities or minor language have “an immediate social and political function” (Bogue, 1989, p. 116). A person who uses literacy as *mots d’ ordre* are encouraged to execute an ““a-signifying intensive usage of language”” (Bogue, 1989; p. 118).

The six perspectives of literacy discussed above are not the only concepts of literacy offered in the field of literacy education. However, I chose to focus on these to show how definitions of literacy have developed and will continue to develop over time. Also, I want readers to know that there is not one fixed perspective of literacy and, most importantly, that there are a multiplicity of ways to be literate. So, where do I align myself? Well, I purposely did

not align myself with any one particular literacy perspective that I have described, although I do think that I have occupied the spaces of each perspective at some point in my life. I would go as far to say that I continually move in and out of each perspective depending on my literary desires at any given time. The ability to move in and out of each perspective has helped me understand that literacy experiences are diverse and have meaning for everyone depending upon the circumstances.

*Rhizomatic Literacies in the African American Tradition:
David Walker, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Vernon Jordan*

Looking back at the past to understand the future is wisdom that guides my life. As an African American whose ancestors were brought to America as slaves, I feel it was very important that I reflect on stories within the African Diaspora. These stories on which I reflect are representative of the past and the present. The stories made possible the ability to use narrative to examine my own life and the life of Afeni Shakur. Most importantly, these stories are examples of *mots d'ordre* because they show how “language-acts are acts of power” (Bogue, 1989, p. 137) and how people’s lives can be produced by their literacy experiences. I used the term “*rhizomatic*” to describe literacy learning in the African American tradition because, with the exception of the section on Vernon Jordan, which is the most contemporary example provided here, slave laws made it illegal for Black people in America to be literate. However, what the people telling their story all have in common is the fact that each of them had to reconfigure an understanding of their reality to strategically resist oppression. This resistance made it possible to be strategically political by discovering what Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) referred to as “*lines of flight*” within the *space* of their existence. For example, David Walker (1830/1993) a political activist and committed citizen of social justice, wrote the book, *David Walker’s Appeal* in 1830 in which politicized his story by producing anti-slavery

literature. Walker wrote about the necessity of abolishing slavery without being sentimental. His work serves as an example of what Foucault (1983/2001) called the practice of *parrhesia*. Parrhesia is a Greek notion that translates to “fearless speech” or “frankness in speaking the truth” (Pearson, 2001, p. 7). I applied the concept of *parrhesia* to describe the contents of Walker’s work because it was illegal for Black people to read and write during the time he wrote his book. I would argue that *David Walker’s Appeal* is what Deleuze and Guattari (1975/2000) referred to as writing a *minor literature* or writing in a *minor language* because of two very important characteristics of *minor literature*: (1) “a minor literature in any case is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization” and (2) “everything in them is political” (pp. 16-17). As Bogue (1989) stated, “a minor language has an immediate social and political function” (p. 116). In writing the appeal, it is undeniable that David Walker took a very dangerous step in his commitment to the social and political conditions surrounding Black people during this time in American history.

David Walker (1830/1993) wrote:

It is expected that all coloured men, women and children,
of every nation, language and tongue under heaven, will try
to procure a copy of this Appeal and read it, or get someone
to read it to them, for it is designed more particularly for them.
Let them remember, that though our cruel oppressors and
murderers, may (if possible) treat us more cruel, as Pharaoh
did the children of Israel, yet the God of the Etheopeans, has
been pleased to hear our moans in consequence of oppression;
and the day of our redemption from abject wretchedness draweth

near, when we shall be enabled, in the most extended sense of the word, to stretch forth our hands to the LORD Our GOD, but there must be a willingness on our part, for GOD to do these things for us, for we may be assured that he will not take us by the hairs of our head against our will and desire, and drag us from our very, mean, low, and abject condition. (p. 20)

There is a very compelling message in this passage. Walker was encouraging Black people to have faith in God, to exercise self-responsibility, and to act. For the slaves who did not know how to read and therefore could not read his appeal, Walker suggested they “get someone to read it to them” (p. 20). Clearly, he felt that literacy and being literate was extremely important. For Walker, being literate determined the kind of life that the slaves would live. He also saw literacy as a means to develop a Black political philosophy—a philosophy that would help slaves understand that they had the right to be free and to gain their freedom by any means necessary. And there is no doubt that he understood that language is inextricably linked to *power* (Abrahams, 1974, 1976 Chinweizu, 1967; Cleaver, 1968/1991; Davies, 1999; Fecho, 2004). The mere fact that David Walker (1830/1993) advocated for Black self-reliance during a time in American history when Black people were not politically identified as “Black” but politically identified as slaves shows that a radical Black *subjectivity* can be produced out of *discourse* and that *discourse* helped shape the lives and experiences of others.

In his narrative, Frederick Douglass (1840s/2003) wrote about his literacy experiences as a young boy growing up as a slave and the role literacy played in his life. Douglass wrote:

Very soon I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she was very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned

this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling me, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, ‘If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should not know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world.’(p. 63)

Interestingly, Douglass tells a story that sums up the overall sentiment of the day; ironically, the belief that Blacks should not learn to read and write lingers in some spaces today. Douglass’s narrative also speaks to the notion that an educated Black person is a dangerous person (Akbar, 2004; Delpit & Perry, 1998; Gordon, 2000; hooks & West, 1991; West, 1993; Willis, 1995; Woodson, 1919/1998, 1933/1990). However, in “learning a language one must to some extent accept the codes—codes of privilege, power, domination, exclusion, and so on—inherent in the language” (Bogue, 1989, p. 136) and in doing so can become even more aware and sensitive to the relationship between language and *power*. Douglass’s story is one of the most well-known narratives of an American slave. I found it ironic that as I mentioned in Chapter One, that Afeni Shakur expressed that “reading works for me, reading gave me dreams, reading gave me weapons” (Guy, 2004, pp. 40-41). I found it ironic because Frederick Douglass (1840s/2003) expressed the same thing about reading more than 167 years ago. His story demonstrated that the Blackest thing that a slave could be was literate.

Harriet Jacobs's (1861/2001) memories about teaching an older Black man his ABCs are reminiscent of Frederick Douglass's experience with literacy. Because knowing how to read and write was forbidden by law for Black people in America, Jacobs, a slave herself, had to teach in secrecy. In her 1861 book, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, she wrote the following:

I selected a quiet nook, where no intruder was likely to penetrate,
and there I taught him his A, B, C. Considering his age, his
progress was astonishing. As soon as he could spell in two
syllables he wanted to spell out words in the Bible. The happy
smile that illuminated his face put joy in my heart. After spelling
out a few words, he paused, and said, "Honey, it `pears when I
read dis good book I shall be nearer to God. White man is got
all de sense. He can larn easy. It ain't easy for ole black man like
me. I only wants to read dis book, dat I may know how to live;
den I hab no fear `bout dying. (p. 63)

Here readers were presented with the story of an elderly Black man who wanted to learn to read in order to read the Bible so that he could live his life according to the word of God. Still, the thought that reading and writing were prohibited by law to Blacks in America is a fact that many people cannot wrap their minds around because of the *spoils of freedom* that many of us in America have access to everyday. Harriet Jacobs' (1861/2001) narrative is fascinating because it is one of the few existing slave narratives written by a woman. Throughout the book Jacobs provided stories that recognized the importance of being literate and how literacy was a gateway to define one's self and to gain freedom from the shackles of slavery—be it physical freedom or metaphysical freedom.

And finally, I came to know of Vernon Jordan and his literacy experiences by reading a featured article that chronicled his work as a young lawyer fresh out of Howard University Law School, who worked to desegregate the University of Georgia in the early 1960s. However, mainstream America came to know Vernon Jordan as the confidante of former President Bill Clinton who helped him navigate the legal terrain he faced during his fiasco with Monica Lewinsky. In his memoir, *Vernon Can Read!*, Jordan wrote about his life as a young Black man in America who sought to make a successful and meaningful life. One of the stories that stood out was a story he told about a time in 1955 while as a young college student on summer vacation he worked as a chauffeur for Robert Maddox, “one of the leading figures in Atlanta’s white elite, former mayor of the city in 1910, [former] president of First National Bank, and the [former] president of the American Banking Association” (Jordan, 2001, p. 3). During his down time as a chauffeur, Vernon Jordan would spend all of his time in Maddox’s home library reading everything from Shakespeare to Emerson to books of speeches. Jordan expressed this about his experience:

I sat there day after day, drinking in the atmosphere of the place—the smell of the books, the feel of them, the easy chairs. The way of life that the library symbolized—the commitment to knowledge and the leisure to pursue it—struck a chord in me that still resonates. I wanted all of this for myself and my family. This was what going to college was for, to become a part of a community that appreciated and had access to a place like this. I knew I belonged there. (pp. 5-6)

But one day while enjoying reading in the library, Robert Maddox walked in on him and asked what he was doing and after Vernon Jordan told him that he was reading, Maddox said, “I’ve

never had a nigger work for me who could read” (p. 6). Needless to say that Maddox statement was certainly inflammatory and very much anachronistic, still it shed light another story in Jordan’s memoir.

Jordan told the following story:

The story is told, and I am not sure it is true, that in 1961, when I escorted Charlayne Hunter through the mobs at the University of Georgia to desegregate that institution, Maddox was watching the well-publicized event on television. By that time he was no longer living in the house (in 1963 he would sell the property to the state of Georgia, where the governor’s mansion now stands), and he was living in a smaller place in Atlanta attended by a nurse. The nurse recognized me and said, “Mr. Maddox, do you know who that colored lawyer is?” “I don’t believe I do.” “It’s your chauffeur, Vernon.” Maddox looked hard at the screen and said, “I always knew that nigger was up to no good.” (pp. 9-10)

Being “up to no good” to Maddox meant that Vernon Jordan was doing something *bad* because he was an educated Black man who fought to tear down walls of segregation.

And after reading all of the stories that I have presented by David Walker, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Vernon Jordan, it is not difficult to understand how *rhizomatic literacies* in the African American tradition is about being political and *mapping spaces* that make possible *lines of flight* that disrupt hierarchies in place to keep Black people in America from using literacy to resist the ills of American society.

The Black Panther Party: A Historical (Re)presentation

The Black Panther Party was founded in 1966 by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton. It was originally called the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. Its formation came about as a result of police brutality and murder of Black people and the lack of social services around the United States. Influenced by the *discourse* of African and African American history, its members developed a platform known as the Ten-Point Platform. In *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, Chair of the African American Studies Department at Georgia State University, Charles E. Jones (1998) outlined the following ten points the party supported (see Appendix H for complete rules):

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black community;
2. We want full employment for our people;
3. We want an end to the robbery by the capitalist of our Black community;
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings;
5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society;
6. We want all Black men exempt from the military service;
7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people;
8. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, country, and city prisons and jails;
9. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in a court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States; and
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations—supervised

plebiscite to be held throughout the Black colony in which only Black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of Black people as to their national destiny. (pp. 473-474)

This platform outlined the demands that the Panthers fought for including an immediate end to police brutality and decent housing (Cleaver, 1968/1991; Cold War Series, 1996; Courtright, 1974; Haskins, 1997; Jeffries & Jeffries, 2002; Jones, 1998; Lockwood, 1971). Much of their rhetoric was designed by the party's founders and high rank-and-file members. For example, the Black Panther Party was governed by its own rules such as "No party member can have narcotics or weed in his possession while doing party work ... All Branches must submit weekly reports in writing to their respective Chapters" (see Appendix F for a complete list). What they called "Eight Points of Attention" served as a guide to govern the behavior of members as they carried out assignments beyond the walls of their local chapter. All members were expected to adhere to the following points of attention:

1. Speak politely;
2. Pay fairly for what you buy;
3. Return everything you borrow;
4. Pay for anything you damage;
5. Do not hit or swear at people;
6. Do not damage property or crops of the poor, oppressed masses;
7. Do not take liberties with women; and
8. If we ever have to take captives do not ill-treat them.

Also, the Black Panther Party's rhetoric included three main rules of discipline:

1. Obey orders in all your actions;

2. Do not take a single needle or piece of thread from the poor and oppressed masses; and

3. Turn in everything captured from the attacking enemy.

(<http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/unknown-date/party-rules.htm>)

The Panthers, however, derived their rhetoric from reading works that they thought resonated with their purpose—improving the social, political, and economic conditions of Black people in America. For example, the Black Panther Party was influenced by the rhetoric of economics from W. E. B. DuBois (DuBois, 1969/1982), which led them to study the Marxist philosophies of former Cuban revolutionary leader Che Guevara and one of the founding members of the Chinese Communist Party—Mao Tse-tung. In an interview with CNN, Bobby Seale commented:

We had read a little Che Guevara prior to that, but we weren't that highly influenced by [him]. In terms of the concept of economics at that time, what I developed best was a concept of community-controlled cooperatives in the black community, which I largely picked up from W. E. B. DuBois. So I mean, I sort of go there from [DuBois] and a few other reads. But Marxist-Leninism per se was really a latter development; not until 1968 that we really considered the Red Book required reading.

(Cold War Series, 1996)

The Black Panthers led one of the most militant movements during this time, and in 1968 they were labeled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as “the greatest threat to internal security of the United States” (James, 1999, p. 112). Hence, the FBI established COINTELPRO

which was their way of policing the activities of members of the Black Panther Party (Churchill & Vander Wall, 2002a, 2002b; Guy, 2004; Heath, 1976; James, 1999; Jones, 1998).

The Black Panther Party consisted of thousands of both young men and women. Their first male recruit, Bobby Hutton, was only sixteen years old when he joined in December of 1966. His untimely death-- he was shot twelve times in a standoff with police officers in Oakland, California, came two days after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Consequently, the Black Panther Party's membership grew tremendously and shortly thereafter the party grew to over five thousand full-time working members who were former college students (over 60 percent) who "postponed" their education and joined the Panthers as a reaction to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Cold War Series, 1996; Coombs, 1997; Jones, 1998). Known for their aesthetic style, many of the members of the Black Panthers dressed in a military style of dress that included wearing black berets, black leather jackets, black gloves, buttons with a picture of a black fist that represented black power, and the logo of a charging black panther—a logo that eventually became symbolic of their strong protest. Just as they were for their strong protest against injustices of Black people in America, the Black Panthers also supported the White Panther Party, the Brown Berets, and the American Indian Movement (Courtright, 1974; Churchill & Vander Wall, 2002a, 2002b). They organized several chapters of the Black Panther Party around the United States that established Preventative Medical Health Care Clinics, Black Panther Schools, Free Clothing Program, Free Food Giveaway Program, and the Free Breakfast for Children Program.

The Free Breakfast for Children Program began in January 1969 in Oakland, California. Its aims were to provide nourishing food to children every morning, before they attended school. It was funded by donations from local merchants and concerned citizens across the country. Each

chapter of the Black Panther Party was responsible for establishing partnerships in the community and staffing kitchens with party members. However, because of the political climate of this time, not all people (particularly the American government) interpreted the Free Breakfast for Children Program as something possible for the country. In a 1996 interview, Bobby Seale expressed:

Then big news came about the Breakfast Program. J. Edgar Hoover jumped up and said: ““The Breakfast for Children Program of the Black Panther Party is communist-inspired, and we need to get rid of it!”” This was laying the foundation. Remember, the FBI, with COINTELPRO (COINTELPRO stood for Counter-Intelligence Program; that’s an FBI term, not our term) ... they set it up, working with local law enforcement agencies, to attack every Black Panther Party office in the year of 1969. (Cold War Series, 1996)

Still, the program remained and over 10, 000 children were fed breakfast every morning before attending school. Each morning, the children would recite what the Black Panther Party refers to as the Black Child Pledge:

I pledge allegiance to my Black People. I pledge to develop my mind and body to the greatest extent possible. I will learn all that I can in order to give my best to my People in their struggle for liberation. I will keep myself physically fit, building a strong body free from drugs and other substances which weaken me and make me less capable of protecting myself, my family and my Black brothers and sisters. I will unselfishly share my knowledge and understanding with them in order to bring about

change more quickly. I will discipline myself to direct my energies thoughtfully and constructively rather than wasting them in idle hatred. I will train myself never to hurt or allow others to harm my Black brothers and sisters for I recognize that we need every Black Man, Woman, and Child to be physically, mentally and psychologically strong. These principles I pledge to practice daily and to teach them to others in order to unite my People. (<http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/unknown-date/party-rules.htm>)

This pledge served to connect children with the core values of the Black Panther Party. Each headquarter posted the pledge along with images of Black children enjoying themselves at the table in camaraderie with their fellow brothers and sisters of the struggle.

The Oakland, California headquarters was among the most well-known chapters. Names such as Bobby Seale, Huey P. Newton, Bobby Hutton, Eldridge Cleaver, George Jackson, Stockley Carmichael, H. Rapp Brown, Kathleen Cleaver, Angela Davis, and Elaine Brown, have been associated with the Oakland headquarters (Bobo, 1988; Haskins, 1997; Jackson, 1994). All members of the Black Panther Party (those that were well-known and those that remain unknown) contributed greatly to improve the plight of black people in America and the Black Panther Party “remains the organizational icon (with Malcolm X the individual icon) for black militant resistance to white domination and terror” (James, 1999, p. 98).

With regard to icons, a select group of women gained national prominence and rose to the status of high ranking officers (a position mainly held by men) within the Black Panther Party. James (1999) noted “the most celebrated [women of the Black Panther Party] achieved their international iconic stature as revolutionaries through the militancy of their racial not gender

politics—and their real symbolic connections to armed struggle” (p. 99). They became as well-known for their role as Black activists as they did for their tumultuous relationships with some of the high-ranking members of the Black Panther Party (Brown, 1992; Cleaver, 2001; Davis, 1974/1987; James, 1999; James & Davis, 1998; Shakur, 1987). Kathleen Cleaver (married Eldridge Cleaver), Angela Davis (had a relationship with George Jackson), Elaine Brown (former lover of Huey P. Newton and first woman to become Chair of the Black Panther Party), and Assata Shakur became household names among many African Americans (Knapper, 1996). These women, along with many unknown women of the Black Panther Party, worked to obtain justice for Black people.

At a very young age (many of the members of the Black Panther Party were under the age of thirty) these women “worked with and served in the Black Panther Party, comprising the rank and file that implemented the medical, housing, clothing, and Free Breakfast and education programs” (James, 1999, pp. 99-100). Before becoming involved in the Black Panther Party, these young women had been members of organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), and the Organization of Afro-American Unity (AAOU), (James, 1999). These organizations had already been established prior to the Black Panther Party and they served as a springboard for the commitment that many of the women had for advancing the movement of the Black Panthers. However, the gender politics that existed during this time has left history to recount the women of the Black Panther Party as iconographic (James, 1999; Knapper, 1996; Roberts, 1997).

Many of the women who were members of the Black Panther Party wore their hair natural in the style of braids and Afros. Today these images can be seen everywhere and have

been mass produced on t-shirts and posters to celebrate and recognize the important contributions the women made to make possible the social, economic, and political liberation of Black people in America (Adler & Beckman, 1991; Baker, 1993; Haskins, 2000; Jones, 1994; Kitwana, 2002; Morgan, 2002). Nevertheless, phallocentricism has also caused their contributions to be narrowly viewed through their romantic or personal relationships with their male counterparts (James, 1999). The women were also subject to unwanted sexual advances from their male counterparts and often treated as sexual spectacles. In her biography, Afeni Shakur recalled an incident that occurred when she flew out to the Black Panther Party's Oakland headquarters to meet with one of the founding members Huey P. Newton: Guy (2004) wrote:

I flew to Oakland to talk to Huey Newton about East-West disagreements in the party. That night I was asleep in my bed, and I woke up to somebody dipping between my sheets. I said, 'Excuse me, What are you doing?' And Huey [Newton] explained to me that I should be honored to sleep with him because he is the king, the boss, the president, and the mastermind of the Black Panthers. I said, 'Nigga, you better get that thing away from me before I tell Lumumba what's really going on'. (p. 77)

This intrusion was clearly, a violation of the seventh point of attention which says "do not take liberties with women" (which meant specifically Panther women). Still, these kinds of "relationships" were commonplace amongst members of the Black Panther Party (Brown, 1992; James, 1999; Shakur, 1987). James (1999) also noted that "except for an autobiographical essay

by a former Panther issues of sexual harassment and domestic violence by revolutionary leaders of the past are not significantly explored” (p. 102).

Today, many women of the Black Panther Party mentioned above have fallen into obscurity, become a part of academia, or are exiles because of their political activities that were monitored through COINTELPRO. For example, Afeni Shakur’s close friend, Assata Shakur fled the country after breaking out of prison in 1979 and remains in Cuban exile. In her autobiography, *Assata Shakur: An Autobiography*, Shakur maintains that she is innocent of charges against her for the killing of a New Jersey Turnpike state trooper. Shakur, along with two other men, had been stopped on the turnpike for an alleged broken taillight. Shortly after they were confronted by the state troopers, gunshots rang out, killing one of the men with Shakur and one of the state troopers. Assata Shakur also sustained two gunshot wounds that medical experts at the trial said left her immediately paralyzed and unable to pull the trigger of a gun. Yet an all-white jury found her guilty, and she received a life sentence for the crime. Still, during the time that she was in the hospital after being shot in the incident on the New Jersey Turnpike. Shakur recalled this memory in her autobiography.

Assata Shakur (1987/1999) wrote the following:

The one who gave me the call button was a German nurse; she had a German accent. Some of the Black nurses sent me books which they really saved my life, because that was one of the most difficult times. One was a book of Black poetry, the other was *Siddhartha* [italics by author] by Herman Hesse, then a book about Black women in white America. It was like the most wonderful selection that they could have possibly

given me. They gave me poetry of our people, the tradition of our women, the relationship of human beings to nature and the search of human beings for freedom, for justice, for a world that isn't a brutal world. And those books—even through that experience—kind of just chilled me out, let me be in touch with my tradition, the beauty of my people, even though we've had to suffer such vicious oppression. (pp. 206-207)

Still, not even books can comfort Assata Shakur, because she can never return to her homeland to visit family, even her daughter who resides in the United States. And on May 2, 2005, the United States government issued a one million dollar bounty for the return of Assata Shakur to the United States.

In summary, Chapter Two served as a means to review literature related to the function of literacy and the ways that literacy is discussed in the field of language and literacy education. The literature review consisted of carefully selected layers of literature related to literacy education because I wanted to support my assertion that there were more common articulations of how literacy functions. My assertion was based on the thought that within the field of literacy education there was *discourse* that produced hierarchies that placed more of a focus on conventional ways of discussing the function of literacy. There is no one specific way to theorize what it means to be literate and how literacy functions. Chapter Two did not include a review of the literature for the theories that guided this study. Following this chapter is Chapter Three in which I expanded on the three theories that guided this study. I used a hybrid of theoretical frameworks. It is in Chapter Three that I bring readers closer to understanding how I used a

hybrid of theoretical frameworks for this study, and I discuss the steps that I took in deciding how to apply the theories both with and without data.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter begins with a brief rationale for the use of the hybrid of theoretical frameworks that guided this study—poststructural theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. This rationale is followed by a section that is headed, Theoretical Subjectifications: Theoretical Bodies *With* Organs in which I write about rethinking conventional types of triangulation. I discuss how each of the theories in the absence of data made it possible to interrogate my theoretical positions in order to (a) to understand what assumptions I held (before analyzing data) about each framework's potential to affect the findings of the study (Lather, 1986; Patton, 2002); (b) describe where they intersected; and (c) to better develop (after analyzing data) in Chapter Five the ways in which the theories affected the findings and interpretations. This discussion of triangulation is followed by some definitional work for and explanations of the terms *postmodern* and *poststructural*. I concluded with a discussion of each of the three theoretical frameworks that helped me answer the following research questions:

1. How did the enabling conditions such as race, class, and gender make *shifts* possible in Afeni Shakur's life?
2. How did she define literacy? In what ways did literacy function throughout her life?
3. What different subjectivities did Afeni Shakur describe? How did her subjectivities enable different lived experiences?

A Hybrid of Theoretical Frameworks

I applied a hybrid of theoretical frameworks (Figure 1) for this study because poststructural theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari offered me different ways of making meaning. The interaction of the theories that guided this study is presented in (Figure 1), which is a visual representation of the ongoing cycle in which the theories were applied. I particularly wanted to know how a hybrid of theoretical frameworks both without and with data could help to generate knowledge in the data analysis and representation stages of this study. Although it can be argued that almost any theoretical framework is a hybrid, my focus was to show how each framework spoke to the other in the absence and presence of the data. I also use the concept of “a hybrid of theoretical frameworks” as a way to use both traditional and nontraditional ways of conducting research. For this study, the term hybrid itself was used simply to mean a mixed or diverse composition of theory. Applying a diverse composition of theory required me to move beyond a surface level understanding of theory. I employed poststructural theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (Alvermann, 2002; Bogue, 1989, Deleuze, Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/2000, 1993/1997, 1980/1987; Hagood, 2004; Kamberelis, 2004; St. Pierre, 2000b).

I employed poststructural theory because it is a framework that encourages rethinking the subject, binaries, nonprogressive/nonlinear history, totalizing narratives and discourses, power, theories, and narrative analysis. I chose Black feminist theory because it is a framework that made possible the examination of women in the African Diaspora and the thought of a radical Black *subjectivity*. I theorized the work of Deleuze (1993/1997) and Deleuze and Guattari

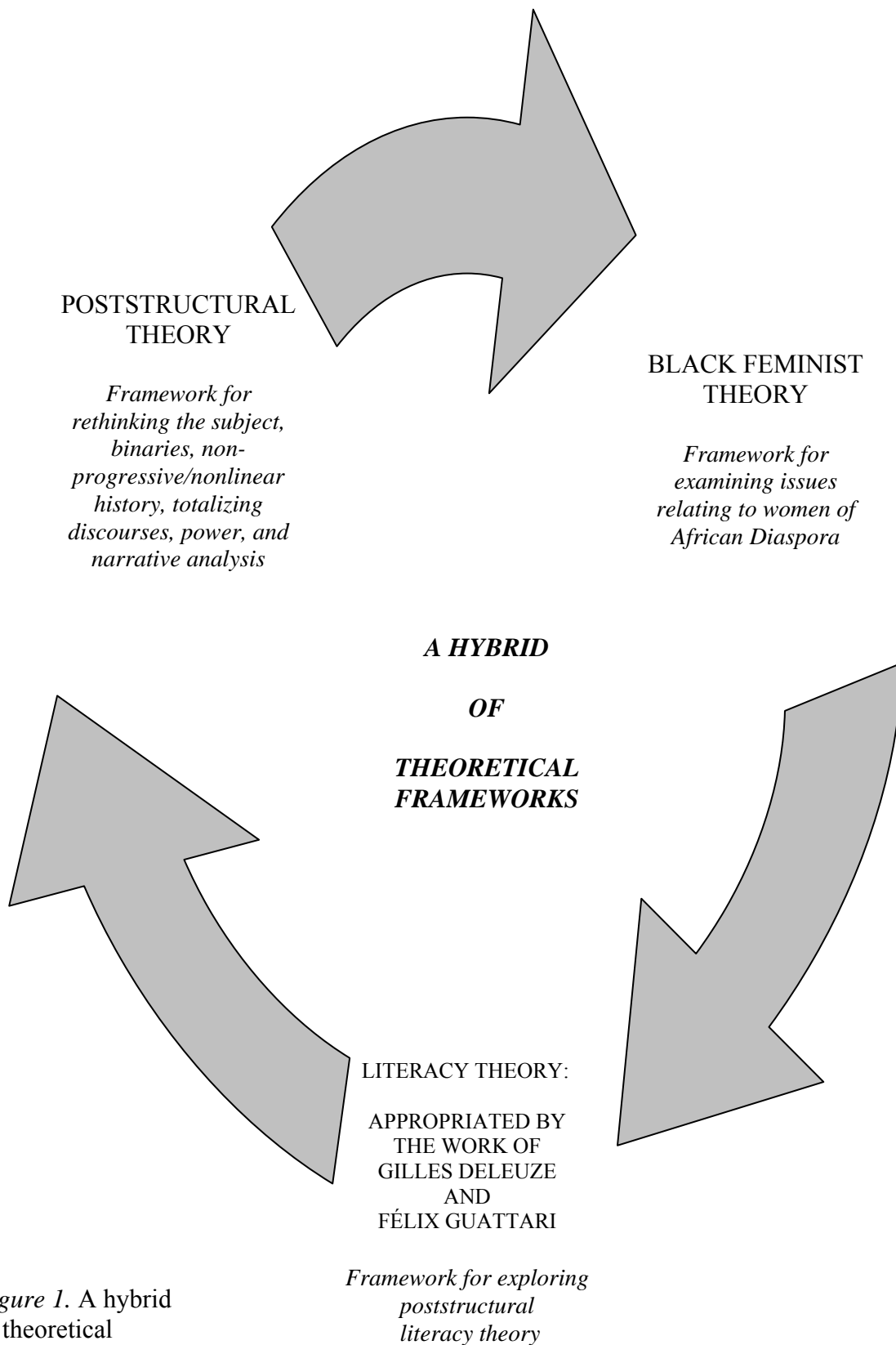


Figure 1. A hybrid of theoretical frameworks

(1975/2000, 1980/1987) because they appropriated poststructural literacy theory through concepts such as *rhizome*, *rhizoanalysis*, *deterritorialization*, *reterritorialization*, *minor language*, *mots d'ordre*, *mapping*, *indirect discourse*, *nomadic thought*, *becoming*, *movement*, *space*, *haecceity*, and *plane of consistency*. I related each concept to literacy theory in the data analysis and representation chapter (Chapter Five) by applying them to the discussions generated in my attempt to answer the three research questions that guided this study.

Theoretical Subjectifications: Theoretical Bodies With Organs

One might question why a practice like “triangulation” of theoretical frameworks makes sense in poststructural research (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p. 10). My response to this question would be that I began to rethink the conventional ways of triangulation which often limit the qualitative researcher to using multiple methods to collect data and to use multiple theories to analyze data. Patton (2002) cited that Denzin (1978) identified four basic types of triangulation: (1) “data triangulation, the use of a variety of data sources in a study; (2) investigator triangulation, the use of several different researchers or evaluators; (3) theory triangulation, the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data, and (4) methodological triangulation, the use of multiple methods to study a single problem or program” (p. 247). Wolcott (2001) wrote about triangulation in relation to data and defines it as the “practice of checking multiple sources” (p. 30). Glesne (1999) defined triangulation as “the practice of relying on multiple methods” (p. 31). Glesne further described the purpose of triangulation in relation to methods and as a way to “increase confidence in research findings” (p. 31). Fielding and Fielding (1986) suggested that when using triangulation the researcher should begin from a theoretical perspective. Beginning from a theoretical perspective was exactly what I did. In rethinking the conventional ways of triangulation as mentioned above, I realized that I needed to act before I

started analyzing data. I needed to act because I found myself going into this study wanting to use multiple theories to analyze the data but questioning whether the theories would work. The type of theory triangulation that I applied in this study made it possible to discuss the assumptions that I held of each of the three theories—poststructural theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and describe the ways that the three theories intersected in the absence of data. I also considered this type of triangulation to be a practice that provided more freedom to move away from the limits within the framework of humanism because its foundations were not contingent but instead transgressive as it pushed the limits of subjectification. This type of theory triangulation pushed the limits of subjectification by *detrterritorializing* the concept of “frameworks” which allowed me to avoid relying on logic that would have required me to engage in a less freeing, more structured way of navigating the research process. For example, finding the “right” theoretical framework is something taught in many qualitative research classes. However, I think that both the theory and I found each other.

One must question the reliability and validity of selecting theory based upon the epistemological views of a well manufactured chart in a college textbook. I know that I have questioned this and as a result, it has led me to create my own category containing a hybrid of theoretical frameworks (Figure 1) or what St. Pierre (1997) has characterized as troubling categories because creating a category is creating a structure. Clearly, there is no escaping structure, however, rethinking the conventional ways of triangulation allowed some extra *space*. Yet, I also wanted to know how far the theories would provide a valid and reliable means of data analysis and representation, particularly with my subjectifications in constant play.

I took Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) concept of Body without Organs (BwO) which they applied to the human body and applied it (*with* organs) to theoretical bodies. I refer to three Theoretical Bodies *with* Organs (TBwO), specifically the three theories (poststructural theory, Black feminist theory and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari) that I used in this study. This was a different way of triangulating theory because it proposed another way to think about researchers' assumptions as well as the intersections of theory in the absence of data. Triangulating theory in the absence of data is not the closing off of theory because it "represent[ed] both a crisis in values and an opening of new possibilities" (Braidotti, 1994b, p. 2). Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) wrote that "the Body without Organs is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, significances, and subjectifications as a whole" (p. 151). However, in relation to Theoretical Bodies *with* Organs (TBwO), I held the position that it was not possible or necessary to take everything away. As a researcher, I like phantasy, significances, and subjectifications; however, I do think we must find ways to reinscribe the organs because "the organs are not the enemy" (p. 158). The enemy, as we are reminded by Deleuze & Guattari (1980/1987), is the organism or in the case of TBwO, the enemy is the concept of "framework" because it is grounded in the logic of rules that says only certain theories can work together and that a certain kind of knowledge can be produced. I suggest that the interrogation of my assumptions without the presence of data was a "simple idea thought in a hard way to undo simplistic thoughts" (class notes, Dr. Ronald Bogue, 2003).

So what simplistic thoughts did I hold before collecting data? First, let me state that most of my assumptions were based upon what I learned to be differences between each of the theories that I studied in many of my qualitative research courses. I assumed that poststructural

theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari could not make “meaning” together. I was taught that epistemological viewpoints of each theory differed so much that it would be too risky (St. Pierre, 2000a) to *not* know how I know what I know. In other words, it would be too risky to *detrterritorialize* the inherent epistemology (Crotty, 1998) that grounds each theory, and this led me to assume that I was not capable of being content with not knowing.

Therefore, the thought of not knowing caused me to become a machine, if you will, and I found myself voicing assumptions about each of the theories. For example, I voiced the notion that poststructural theory did not welcome the interrogation of the lived experience of people in the African Diaspora. Ironically, I voiced that poststructural theory *did* welcome the interrogation of the lived experience of people in the African Diaspora, *but* it would be a challenge trying to defend a theory that I also opposed. bell hooks (1991) wrote “my defense of postmodernism and its relevance to Black folks sounded good but I worried that I lacked conviction, largely because I approach the subject cautiously and with suspicion” (p. 23). I voiced the notion that Black feminist theory would both help and hinder me because although Afeni Shakur is a Black woman, I was aware before analyzing any of the data that she does not refer to herself as a feminist of any kind. Another assumption was that I thought interviewing a Black woman who did not identify as a feminist this would be problematic because Black feminist theory was being used to analyze the data. I also voiced that the ideas and concepts put forth by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) would be much too abstract and complicated to grasp. Their *discourse*, which I situated in poststructuralism, appeared to be coded for a certain audience—not a poor little Black girl like me who grew up reading the back of cereal boxes, milk cartoons, and cans of air freshener. I soon discovered that I was being *detrterritorialized*

because I was becoming-theory—I was *becoming*-researcher and more and more mindful that “every becoming is a block of coexistence” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 292), which was something that I needed to do, and what I needed the theory to do, in order to carry out this study. Coexisting with theory also made it possible to see how each of the theories intersected.

Focusing on how theories intersect was a quality of the deconstructive method of *rhizoanalysis* that I found to be very informative. The theories and I actually became more alive when I learned how they intersect. I concluded that each theory *detrterritorialized* itself and each other. I set out to answer three research questions (1) How did the enabling conditions such as race, class, and gender make possible *shifts* Afeni Shakur’s life?; (2) How did she define literacy? In what ways did literacy function throughout her life?; and (3) What different subjectivities did Afeni Shakur describe? How did her subjectivities enable different lived experiences? I was able to provide answers for these questions as a result of the intersections of the theories. All of the theories highlighted the importance of undoing binaries in order to understand how people and things are produced. I found that each theory critiqued notions of identity/*subjectivity*, relationships between race, class, and gender, *power*, language, and lived experience. All of the theories intersected in that they all had gaps or what Deleuze & Guattari (1980/1987) would call “smooth spaces” (p. 474). At times I felt the limitations of each theory because every *discourse*, regardless of how much freedom they allow us, had essentializing and totalizing *discourses*. Therefore, the *smooth spaces* of each theory made possible variations of phantasy, significances, and subjectifications.

Definitional Work: Postmodern/Poststructural

Before I begin my discussion of poststructural theory, I will explain the use of the terms *postmodern* and *poststructural*. These terms *postmodern* and *poststructural* have often been said to have similar but very different meanings. However, each term is often used, sometimes interchangeably, and applied in various ways by many scholars. Rajchman (1987) says the term “postmodernism” emerged between the years of 1975-1976 when “postmodernism started to become the name of conflicting social theories and philosophies” (p. 49). For example, Braidotti (1994) “understands postmodernism to be a moment in which in-depth transformations of the system of economic production are also altering traditional social and symbolic structures” (p. 2). Jameson (1984) described postmodernism as a “discourse that emerged at the beginning of World War II and becoming a cultural dominant in post-industrial society” (p. xiv). Kaplan (1988) offered that postmodernism refers to “the new stage of multinational, multiconglomerate consumer capitalism, and to all the technologies it has spawned” (p. 4).

Similarly, Collins and Blot (2004) wrote about postmodern as a period in time when “the cultural and political revolts of the sixties were not simply national but international scope ... [which brought about] a change in the organization of contemporary societies” (p. 99). Jean-François Lyotard (1979/1984), called it the postmodern “condition” and discussed it in relation to science, literature, and the arts. For Lyotard, the postmodern “puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; ... not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable” (p. 81). Addressing this term during an interview Cornel West (1999) commented that “what we call postmodern philosophy today is precisely about questioning the foundational authority of science. Jane Flax (1987) wrote that “postmodern philosophers seek to throw into

radical doubt beliefs still prevalent in (especially American) culture but derived from the Enlightenment” (p. 624).

In their book, *Postmodern Education: Politics, Culture, and Social Criticism*, Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) focused on the American educational system and defined postmodernism as “a move away from an exclusive preoccupation with the high-cultural canon” (p. 17). They used the term “postmodern education” in their work to discuss the need for rethinking educational theory and suggested that postmodern education “deconstructs the canon in crucial ways and that postmodern criticism shows that the category of aesthetics presupposes a social hierarchy” (p. 17). They also wrote about *emancipatory postmodernism*, which they described as a reflexive approach to knowledge, and *right-wing postmodernism*, which “verges on a nihilistic renunciation of engaged intellectual and political activity” (p. 19). Peters (1999, ¶ 1.1) referred to both postmodernism and poststructuralism as “movements” and stated that “there is an important set of theoretical and historical differences that can be most easily understood by recognizing the difference between their *theoretical objects of study*”. He argued that “poststructuralism takes as its theoretical object ‘structuralism’, whereas postmodernism takes as its theoretical object ‘modernism’ and that the two movements—poststructuralism and postmodernism can be distinguished by a peculiar set of theoretical concerns most clearly seen in their respective historical genealogies” (¶ 1.1).

Foucault (1983) troubled the use of both terms. He asks “what are we calling postmodernity?” and comments that “I do not understand what kind of problem is common to the people we call post-modern or poststructuralist” (p. 205). Lather (1993) suggested that the differences between the two terms is that postmodernism “raises issues of chronology, economics, and aesthetics ... poststructuralism is often used in relation to academic theorizing

‘after theorizing’” (p. 688). The National Research Council (2002) noted in one of its reports that “some extreme ‘postmodernists’ have questioned whether there is any value in scientific evidence in education whatsoever” (p. 20). In relation to qualitative inquiry Patton (2002) commented that postmodernism “asserts that no language, not even science, can provide a direct window through which one can view reality” (p. 100), whereas Silverman (2000) asserted that “postmodern sensibilities deals with deconstruction of a single authorial voice to enable multiple readings of text and data” (p. 171). Patricia Hill Collins (2000b), a noted scholar of sociology and African American Studies, approached the term postmodernism by suggesting that its relationship with Black Feminist Thought was one filled with “tensions” and that postmodernism “questions the taken-for-granted nature of categories such as race, gender, and heterosexuality and suggests that these seeming “biological truths” constitute social constructions ... and focus on marginalized, excluded, and silenced dimensions of social life” (p. 41). bell hooks (1990) expressed a similar viewpoint in relation to the tensions between Black Feminist Thought and the discourse of postmodernism. hooks wrote:

It is sadly ironic that [postmodernism] which talks the most about heterogeneity, the decentered subject ... still directs its critical voice primarily to a specialized audience, one that shares a common language rooted in the very master narratives it claims to challenge and that radical postmodernist practice should incorporate the voices of displaced, marginalized, exploited, and oppressed black people.” (p. 25)

This quote by hooks specifically addressed some of the issues that I examined throughout Chapter Five (data analysis and representation) and Chapter Six (summary and discussion) of the study. In the following sections I engage in an in-depth look at each of the three theories that I

used, poststructural theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

Poststructural Theory

Poststructuralism is a French term that represents twentieth-century philosophical thoughts of French critical theorists in Europe (Huyssen, 1990). The theory itself is associated with specific works that offer various reactions to structuralism. Poststructuralism is often linked to theorists Jacques Derrida and his critique of the subject, Michel Foucault's philosophy of power and language, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's writings about being, and Julia Kristeva's work in feminism particularly her thoughts concerning gender difference and psychoanalysis. Many scholars referred to poststructural theory as theory that critiques the structures and foundations of Enlightenment Humanism (Bové, 1995; Crotty, 1998; Flax, 1987; Rajchman, 1987). The *discourse* of the Enlightenment has been characterized as situated in certain *discourses* about truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language (Flax, 1987). Within poststructuralism the discourses of the Enlightenment can be troubled by asking specific questions to understand "how discourse functions, where it is to be found, how it gets produced and regulated, what are its social effects, and how it exists" (Bové, 1995, p. 54). Poststructuralism provides a framework for rethinking the subject, binaries, non-progressive/nonlinear history, totalizing narratives, discourses, power, theories, narrative analysis. It is a theory that helps maintain a constant process of questioning and raises concerns about pre-existing notions of how things function. Poststructuralism, like all theory, cannot escape structure, but quite possibly can consist of many underlying, ever changing structures that unfold and re-fold (Derrida, 1967/1980; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000).

Poststructural Theory as *Smooth Space*

Smooth space makes variation possible (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987). Therefore, poststructural theory as *smooth space* can function as a deconstructive method to critique many things (Derrida, 1967/1980). Poststructural theory's critique of *discourse*, essentialism, and the subject is a critique of humanism and helps in understanding *power*—*power* existing in relationships (Foucault, 1984/1997). Poststructural theory as *smooth space* makes possible the examination of meaning-making through its multiple perspectives of the ways that both knowledge and people are produced. Characteristics of such smooth space are qualities such as self-reflexivity, fragmentation, *différance*, ambiguity, discontinuity, and appropriation. Crotty (1998) added that it is also a theory that “delights in play, irony, pastiche, excess—even mess” (p. 185). Poststructural theory can also be seen as space located in developments of philosophy, and social science (Baudrillard, 1988; Butler, 1992; hooks, 1990; Lyotard, 1984; Rajchman, 1987). Poststructural theory as *smooth space* connects all *discourse*, not just linguistic but material things and exposes the structure in which the epistēmē is comfortably situated.

The *Smooth Space* of Discourse

Bové (1995) defined *discourse* as an interdisciplinary method of literary criticism which seeks to interpret a text by examining it through various ideological, social, and historical perspectives. Bové (1995) suggested asking the following set of questions as it relates to *discourse*: “how discourse functions, where it is to be found, how does it get produced and regulated, what are its social effects and how does it exist?” (p. 54). He wrote that “discourse provides a privileged entry into the poststructuralist mode of analysis” (p. 54) or what Derrida (1967/1980) referred to as logocentrism.

Similar to power, *discourse* is dispersed everywhere and produces people and things as subjects—subjects that are acted upon and subjects who acts. Foucault (1969/1972) characterized *discourse* as groups of statements. Foucault’s characterization of *discourse* led Deleuze (1986/2000) to ask “what system of language is used to disperse these statements” (p. 63). For example, Braidotti (1994) asserted that “a new rhizomatic mode is crucial to feminism” (p. 176). It is Braidotti’s argument that the discourse of feminism is a system of language oftentimes produced within “baggage of phallo-logocentric premises” (176). In this case, the *discourse* of feminism has produced [woman] as a category in opposition to the category of [man] therefore, creating statements that function to situate [woman] in a lesser category than [man]. Foucault (1969/1972), as a way to describe the relations between statements he categorized them as discursive formations. These categories, always reflexive in nature are “facts of discourse that deserve to be analysed beside others; of course, they also have complex relations with each other, but they are not intrinsic autochthonous, and universally recognizable characteristics.” (p. 22). Therefore language is interconnected with *power* relations (Foucault, 1962/1972).

Mots d’ordre, which means words of order, is a French term that expresses the idea that language is a *power* structure. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) language is “the transmission of order-words, either from one statement to another or within each statement, insofar as each statement accomplishes an act and the act is accomplished in the statement” (p. 79). Language is a privilege. It is embedded in systems of *power* and forms and shapes the world. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) asserted that language was an interactive conjunction of collective assemblages of dissemination. It is language that “is based on regimes of signs, and regimes of signs on abstract machines, diagrammatic functions, and machinic assemblages that

go beyond any system of semiology, linguistics, or logic” (p. 148). Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) argued that it is not necessarily in (say)ables and (see)ables that language should be examined. Language is not always linguistic nor is it visible or invisible. They suggested that “behind statements are only machines, assemblages, and movements of deterritorialization that cut across the stratification of the various systems and elude both the coordinates of language and of existence” (p. 148). From this, it can be said that language has imminent forces of *deterritorialization* although there is always a forcing to structure language. St. Pierre (2000a) asserted that “poststructural theories of discourse, like poststructural theories of language, allow us to understand how knowledge, truth, and subjects are produced in language and cultural practice as well as how they might be reconfigured” (p. 486).

The *Smooth* Space of Essentialism

Reconfiguring how knowledge, truth, and subjects are produced can also be a way to understand how the structuring of language is dangerous. The forcing to structure language causes it to be enforced by *power* relations—relations that determine what should be said, how it should be said, and who can say it. Language then becomes rigid and laden with statements that do not allow people to make meaning for themselves. de Saussure (1916/1986) stated that meaning is not wanting to know what a thing is, but understanding what a thing is not. For example, news language is becoming the *lingua franca* for English. Anyone who watches the evening news is being told “what to think, retain, and expect” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 79). News language transmission of *mots d’ordre* (order words) subjects viewers to forms of essentialism and produces non-thinking subjects by transmitting essential qualities of what news is. However, the questions that should be asked, as Bové (1995) suggested is “how news language functions, where is it to be found, how does news language get produced and regulated,

what are its social effects, and how does it exist” (p. 54). News language is just one of many examples of forms of essentialism. Other examples include identity categories such as race, class, and gender. Appiah and Gates (1992) looked at race as a “meaningful category in the study of literature and critical theory” (p. 1) They suggested that the category of ‘race’ has often been taken-for-granted because much of the literature, particularly until the early 1980s, did not focus on race at all. This can lead one to think that categories are thought to be constant. However, de Saussure (1916/1986) characterized the categories as fluid with sublevels of essentialism in the form of binaries. Derrida (1976/1998) suggested that language is not constant and should be placed *sous rature* or under erasure as a way to rethink meaning. Sublevels of essentialism such as White/Black, rich/poor, and man/woman constructs meaning through difference. Each of the sublevels of essentialism is set in opposition to one another. The category on the left side of the binary is always seen as superior to the one on the right side of the binary. Essentialism closes off what stories can be told, heterogeneity, and variation therefore leaving the subject constructed in only one *reality*. Edward Said (1979/2003) made a similar assertion in his book *Orientalism* that examined the binary relationship of the West and the East. In his book, Said says that in relation to the West, there is a uniformed presentation about the East that situates the West in a position of *power*. This kind of relationship, riddled with *power*, speaks to the fact that it is not only someone or something that acts, but which gets acted upon.

The *Smooth* Space of the Subject

Essentialism of any kind has totalizing effects on the subject. These totalizing effects are dispersed in *discourse* that functions to erase, conquer, and assimilate the subject while trying to produce sameness. Totalizing *discourse* organizes categories that are unstable because they always go back to the ‘same.’ The subject is produced as being inherently stable, one-

dimensional, and linear. Still, there is conflict among subject positions because the subject occupies many subject positions (Alcoff, 2000; Butler, 1990/1999; Gordon, 2000). Spivak (1987) argued that Western culture says there is an essential self and that we must rethink the humanist subject. The humanist subject is often thought of inside of an epistemology that closes off variation and limits how the subject can exist. Judith Butler (1995) wrote:

To deconstruct the subject is not to negate or throw away the concept; on the contrary, deconstruction implies only that to which the term, the subject, refers, and that we consider the linguistic functions it serves in the consolidation and concealment of authority. To deconstruct is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question and, perhaps most importantly, to open up a term, like the subject, to a reusage or redeployment that previously that has not been authorized. (p. 49)

This quote by Butler speaks to the idea that the subject is not foundational and to an immediate need to (de)center the subject. The (de)centered subject is not stable and fixed in regimes of order (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987). The (de)centered subject is, however, without a center (Derrida, 1967/1980), *nomadic* and *rhizomatic* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987), and can be produced in many different ways. Understanding the *smooth space* of the subject requires a new set of questions. Collins (2000a) argued that “postmodern claims to decentering introduce one important question: Who might be most likely to care about decentering—those in the centers of power or those on the margins?”(p. 44). Still, Derrida (1967/1980) reminded us that there are no ‘real’ centers of power that the center is not the center because “contradictorily coherent” (p. 279). And although the center does not escape structurality, the subject always has *power* regardless of where they are located. Most importantly, because *power* is disperse everywhere,

there is *power* on the margins. Therefore a ‘true’ poststructural approach to critiquing the subject must reject ontological ideas of being and reject totalizing *discourse* of negation.

Black Feminist Theory

The history of feminism in the United States has been well documented, and it is a well known fact that the ideas, knowledge, and consciousness (Collins, 2000a) of Black women had been ignored and therefore, excluded from mainstream *discourse* of liberal feminist thought (Collins, 2000a; Davis, 1974/1989; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; hooks, 1990, 1984/2000; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Lorde, 1984; Roberts, 1997; Sharpley-Whiting, 1997; Walker, 2001). Even today it is rare to hear feminist scholars talk about *first wave feminism* and mention the names of Sojourner Truth and Mary Church Terrell alongside Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Of course, there are some books of feminist theory that include these women as sisters, but there is no denying that inclusion came about as a result of Black women fighting not only for their rights as human beings but also for the right to be recognized as critical voices in feminist thought (Collins, 2000a; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; hooks, 1984/2000; James, 1998, 1999; Lemert & Bhan, 1998; Lorde, 1984; Sharpley-Whiting, 1997; Walker, 1967/2003). These critical voices came to be known as Black feminist theory.

Black feminist theory dates from the mid 1970s. It is a theory of theories that not only addresses the lives of Black women in the African Diaspora but also encourages ongoing dialogue concerning *discourse* that marginalize and sometimes blatantly exclude women of color—particularly Black women. For example, noted scholar Audre Lorde often wrote about the need for white feminists to understand that “there are different choices facing Black and white women in life ... because of our experiences and our color” (p. 103). Lorde also highlighted the

need for all women to understand the effects of racism in America in the hope that women who identified themselves as “feminist” would challenge racism.

Black feminist theory brings to the forefront issues that animate the experiences, concerns, and thoughts of Black women—that not as an essentialist theory but as an acknowledgement that women have many commonalities as well as differences. As a result, many Black feminists are cautious to not embrace the ideals of a common sisterhood. And contrary to popular belief and the many misconceptions of Black feminist theory, not all women who identify themselves as Black feminists, situate themselves in opposition to Black men. In fact, many Black feminists encourage the coming together of women and men to organize politically to combat racism, classism, and genderism in America.

Some of the key theorists in the field of Black feminist theory emerged during the first and second waves of Black feminism. The first wave dating from the early to late 1800s introduces Black feminist theory from women such as Maria Stewart who is said to be the first African American woman “to speak in public about women’s rights [and] urged [Black women] to develop their intellects, become teachers, combine family and work outside the home, oppose subservience to men, and participate fully in all aspects of community building” (Guy-Sheftall, 1995, p. 25). Another key theorist was Sojourner Truth, best known for her 1854 speech “Ar’n’t I A Woman) delivered in Akron, Ohio, where she “linked abolition and women’s rights and demonstrated the important need to recognize Black women’s gender and race identities” (p. 35). In 1859, Frances W. E. Harper, was a member of the underground railroad and a prolific writer whose work focused on the struggle against racism in America. Another outstanding theorist in the field of Black feminist theory was Anna Julia Cooper who was born sometime around 1859 (to a slave mother and her white master) and died in 1964, and who “published the first book-

length Black feminist text, *A Voice from the South*, in 1892” (p. 43). Her book, offered a broad perspective on the ills of slavery and its relationship to issues of race, class, and gender.

Cooper’s book also “espouses a cultural feminist position which posits that women, because of their superiority, have the responsibility and capacity to reform the human race” (p. 43).

Mary Church Terrell, also became a key figure during this time. As president of the Colored Women’s League, and founding member along with Harriet Tubman and Josephine Ruffin, of the National Association of Colored Women, Terrell was known to be “one of the few Black women reformers with international connections” (p. 63). The final first-wave feminist will be Ida Wells-Barnett who was known largely for her work as an anti-lynching crusader and “militant” journalist. Her writing has been credited to have been responsible for “enlightening the nation and the world about the powerful connection between lynching, patriarchy, racism, and cultural notions of white womanhood and Black sexuality” (p. 69).

The second wave of Black feminism dates from the early 1920s to early the 1990s. There were several key theorists from this time period who contributed greatly to Black feminist theory. Two important examples from the earlier part of this period were Alice Dunbar-Nelson (briefly the wife of famed poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar) and Amy Jacques Garvey, (the second wife of activist Marcus Garvey). Although Dunbar-Nelson is better known for her work during the Harlem Renaissance, she is credited for essays on women suffrage. Like Wells-Barnett, she also was an anti-lynching crusader. Political activist Amy Jacques Garvey was directly involved in her husband’s vision, which called for Black people to become self-determined and self-actualizing. She also wrote for a weekly newspaper. Through her writing, Garvey “promoted the notion that it was essential for Black women to develop a political consciousness to uplift the

race” (p. 89). Garvey is also credited for adding to Black Feminist Thought the concept of Black Nationalism.

In 1967, Alice Walker, one of the most prolific writers of her time, wrote the essay, “*In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens.*” In this essay, Alice Walker brought attention to the importance of “naming” by suggesting that the term “womanist” could serve as a way for Black women to describe themselves in relation to the discourse of feminism, particularly those Black women who felt “marginalized by the discourse of mainstream white feminist discourse” (p.37). Continuing in the spirit of activism was Frances Beale, whose 1970 essay, “*Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female*” became widely known for addressing “the double burden of race and gender that Black women confronted” (p. 145). Former Black Panther Party member, Angela Davis wrote (while in prison on false charges of conspiracy and murder) one of the most critical essays in feminist theory entitled, “*Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves.*” In this essay, Davis dispels myths related to Black female resistance to slavery.

Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, and Demita Frazier were three of several Black feminists who were members of a Black feminist group called, The Combahee River Collective. In 1977, a statement drafted by these three women anchored concepts within Black feminist theory such as the eradication of homophobia and “acknowledging the role of lesbians in the development of Black feminism” (p. 231). Celebrated scholar and author, bell hooks, has one of the most identifiable names in Black feminist theory. She has published several books on the topic of Black feminism. *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, the first book that she published in 1981 remains one of the most pivotal works to date. hooks’ work sheds light on the implications of sexism on Black women. In the book, hooks suggests that “slavery not only oppressed Black men, but defeminized slave women” (p. 269).

Just a year later, scholars Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (mentioned earlier), served as editors of a book that focused on works by Black women scholars so that students in higher education could have access to key figures in Black women's studies. This book, one of the first of its kind, opened the door for other Black women scholars to envision and make available similar texts currently used in higher education. In 1984, Audre Lorde's collection of essays in her book, *Sister Outsider*, offered a discussion about Black lesbian feminism and critiqued notions of "difference between white and Black feminist communities" (p. 283). Finally, to close out this era is Patricia Hill Collins, whose book, *Black Feminist Thought* published in 1990, provided an in-depth analysis of Black feminism and a framework used to apply concepts of feminism to all women regardless of their race and class.

Many scholars have taken on the task of producing work that expands upon the *discourse* of Black feminist theory. Clearly, this is not an exhaustive list; however, I suggested the following books regarding Black feminist theory:

Collins, P. H. (2000a). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Guy-Sheftall, B. (Ed.). (1995). *Words of fire: An anthology of African American feminist thought*. New York: New Press.

hooks, b. (2000). *Feminist theory: From margin to center* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: South End Press. (Original work published 1984)

Hull, G. T., Scott, B. P., & Smith, B. (Eds.). (1982). *But some of us are brave: Black women's studies*. New York: Feminist Press.

Lemert, C., & Bhan, E. (Eds.). (1998). *The voice of Anna Julia Cooper*. New York, NY: Rowan & Littlefield. (Original work published 1892)

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches by Audre Lorde*. Freedom: The Crossing Press.

Walker, A. (2003). *In search of our mother's gardens: Womanist prose*. New York, NY: Harvest Books. (Original work published 1967)

The significance of all of these books extends beyond the fact that all of the authors have earned a place in history as forerunners of the Black feminist movement in America, but the fact that all of the books provided diverse ways of understanding the lives of women in the African Diaspora. The *discourse* of Black feminist theory interrogates established binaries that place race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc. in neat little categories.

According to Collins (2000a) there were also six distinguishing features that characterize Black feminist theory. These features are the following: (1) the presence of Black women's collective consciousness; (2) the act of linking experiences and ideas; (3) stating that a legacy of struggle exists; (4) acknowledging difference among Black women; (5) recognizing that Black women encounter the same challenges as women of African descent within the Black Diasporic context; and (6) understanding that Black feminist theory [encourages] a social justice project. Black feminist theory also made possible a language for Black women to define themselves. (p. 22)

With the emergence of Third Wave Feminism in the early 1990s, specifically the voices from the next generation of Black feminist, the theory itself continues to develop and evolve. This theory supported the viewpoint that Black women are unique in that they experience life differently and therefore, should not be studied through mainstream discourses (Collins, 2000a). As I have documented in Chapter Five, Black feminist theory helped me resituate issues of race, class, and gender as crucial spaces of investigation. Black feminist theory "cannot challenge intersecting oppression without empowering African American women" (Collins, 2000a, p. 36). Black feminist theory also helped in examining the connections between race, class, and gender, showing how the three remain inextricably linked. Other characteristics of this theory that I

found useful in this study included the importance of respecting elders, engaging in dialogue, acknowledging one's spirituality, and the validation of the lived experience.

Literacy Theory Appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari within the Field of Language and Literacy Education

There is a growing body of research appropriating the work of Deleuze (1968/1994, 1988/1993, 1993/1997) and Deleuze and Guattari (1975/2000; 1977/1983; 1980/1987) within the field of education. Alvermann (2002) used the concept of *rhizoanalysis* in a study about an after-school literacy program with adolescents. Bogue (1989) explored the concepts of “*difference*” and “*schizoanalysis*” in the discipline of comparative literature. Braidotti (1994a), Buchanan and Colebrook (2000), and Grosz (1994) traced Deleuzian thought and its intersection with feminist theory. Hagood (2004) used the theory of the *rhizome* to examine adolescents, popular culture, and identity politics. Jackson (2003) applied their work to deconstruct “voice” and offers *rhizovocality* as a concept to investigate the concept of voice as it is often discussed in qualitative inquiry. Kamberelis (2004) made connections to the concept of the *rhizome* and literacy formations of adolescents. St. Pierre (1997) urged us to consider different methods of inquiry in qualitative research by applying the concept of the *fold*. Similarly, Tamboukou (2004) investigated the potential in working the concept of “*nomadology*” [italics added] as a way to look at the lived experience of young women. Tamboukou and Ball (2002) took the concept of the *fold* and apply it to their work that examined the personal narratives of young Black women in the United Kingdom.

The work of Deleuze and Guattari, specifically *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* and *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975/2000) introduced a variation of concepts that had implications for literacy theory. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) introduces concepts such as the *rhizome*, *rhizoanalysis*, *deterritorialization*, *reterritorialization*, *minor*

language, mots d'ordre, mapping, indirect discourse, nomadic thought, becoming, movement, space, haecceity, and plane of consistency.

Although I applied each of these terms in this study, I would like to further elaborate on the concept of *minor language*, which I found to be very useful while researching the function of literacy in the life of Afeni Shakur. For example, Deleuze and Guattari describe a *minor language* as “the linguistic deterritorialization of language” (Bogue, 1989, p. 119). A *minor language* has an “immediate social and political function” (Bogue, 1989, p. 116). A *minor language* puts linguistic variables in a state of continuous variation (Bogue, 1989). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) a *minor language* does not exist in itself but exists only in relation to a major language—language consisting of conventional content. A *minor language* is an investment of a major language for the purpose of making it minor, but it is not opposed to a major language (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 105). It entails a “linguistic deterritorialization” (Bogue, 1989, p. 119) that makes it possible for researchers in the field of language and literacy education to become aware of the breaks, ruptures, (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987; Derrida, 1967/1980) and discontinuities (Foucault, 1969/1972) of studying literacy.

In this sense, literacy can be theorized as a structure without limits. In other words, literacy contains imminent forces of *deterritorialization*. For example, in the field of language and literacy education, there are ideal notions of sound systems such as the phonemes /p/ /a/ /t/; however, within a poststructural sense there is no pure essence of /p/ /a/ or /t/. It is not necessary to believe that language is a rigid structure. Literacy can be thought of as a collection of variation that is sometimes forced into a regime of *power, reterritorialized*, only to *deterritorialize* again. (Bogue, 1989; Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/2000, 1980/1987). Literacy is an interactive conjunction of collective *assemblages* of dissemination (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987);

however, it is not a single *thing*. It is however, connected to *power* and can be thought of in terms of its *difference* and heterogeneity.

Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) argued that it is not enough to be “Black” one must *become* “Black” (p. 291). For example, Black English (which I hold to be my *minor language*) is used by many people in the African Diaspora and has been studied and written about since the early 1970s (Delpit & Perry, 1998; Dillard, 1973; Labov, 1972, 1973; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2000; Willis, 1995) and is often said to be a nonstandard or improper form of American English. Yet, it can also be said that Black English is a *minor language* that “set American English in variation” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 102-103) because of its *difference* and *discursive heterogeneity*. Linguist William Labov’s (1997a) earlier research on African American Vernacular English during the 1960s in predominantly Black schools in Harlem, New York highlighted the importance of owning one’s minor language. His study revealed what he referred to as a symbolic devaluation Labov of African American Vernacular English. Labov’s work summarized an event that happened almost thirty years later in the case of Oakland Unified Schools in California during the late 1990s when the school board passed a resolution that required all schools in the Oakland school district to integrate Black English in the classroom. Highlighting the significance of the distinct linguistic features of Black English to increase academic achievement amongst Black students was the vision behind the resolution. Still, this vision was not shared by those who stood in opposition. Many of those who opposed the resolution interpreted it as a call to replace Standard English with Black English. However, African American members of the task force behind the resolution stressed the need for all Americans to understand that “Black Americans do not oppose Black to English, they transform the American English that is their own language into Black English”

(Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, pp. 104-105). In this sense, Standard English in the Oakland School District would be *reterritorialized* not replaced. The resolution could have enabled Black students to be *reterritorialized* as well and embark upon a *detrterritorialized* state of becoming “Black” by embracing their *minor language*—Black English. I agreed with Bogue’s (1998) summation that “it is at the level of critical theory rather than practical criticism that Deleuze and Guattari have the most to offer students of literature” (p. 162). His summation speaks to the significance of this study. It would have been almost impossible to discuss literacy in the ways that I have in this study without the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) that opened up the possibilities of talking about the function of literacy in various ways. Their work also allowed me to understand language as something that was fluid and constantly changing. And most importantly, their work made it possible to explore the interrelationship of literacy and issues of race, class, and gender and *subjectivities*.

This chapter introduced the three theoretical frameworks that guided this study: poststructural theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The discussion about rethinking the way that conventional scientific research uses triangulation offers new ways that triangulation can be done in qualitative research that is not as closely aligned with traditional theoretical positions. It is also possible that researchers can interrogate their own theoretical positions as a way to better understand what assumptions that might have brought to their work.

Chapter Four, which follows, is the methodology and research design section of this dissertation. It is in Chapter Four that I discussed the process of selecting Afeni Shakur as a participant for this study, provided a literature review of the methods literature that I applied, and

described the fieldwork process, particularly the data collection process in which I used interviewing as a primary source for collecting data.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p.7)

This chapter was organized to present four important discussions. I begin with a discussion about the process that I used to select Afeni Shakur as a participant for this dissertation with details about why I thought she could represent the theoretical constructs of poststructural theory, Black feminist theory and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1975/2000; 1980/1987). Secondly, I provide a literature review of primary and secondary methods literature. The primary methods literature consisted of interviewing. I also included some literature on the use of narratives because as I started to analyze the data, I learned that I was collecting several stories of Afeni Shakur's life experiences and that it would be my responsibility to make meaning from the stories and theorize them in order to produce knowledge about Afeni Shakur. I knew that it would also be my responsibility as a researcher to move beyond making meaning of the narratives and find out why Afeni Shakur had these experiences and not others. The secondary methods literature consisted of a discussion about the use of existing documents such as a biography, a poem, and a reading list. Also included within this discussion of secondary methods literature was the use of archival data such as letters, photos, newspaper articles, books, and a reading list of books read by Afeni Shakur during the time she was a member of the Black Panther Party. Next, I described the field work process of data collection by including a timeline for the collection of each interview, its purpose, and the

questions that I asked to generate responses from Afeni Shakur. I also wrote about my thoughts about the data that I collected and how I felt about myself as an interviewer and what I learned from the process of interviewing. I conclude this chapter with a description of the *rhizoanalysis* that I used. I also describe what I learned from doing a *rhizoanalysis*, and summarize the ways that doing a *rhizoanalysis* informed my practices of validity and researcher ethics.

Afeni Shakur

I first learned about Afeni Shakur's affiliation with the Black Panther Party through the music of her late son Tupac Amaru Shakur. Tupac was a young rapper whose lyrics consisted of social and political messages. One particular 1995 song about his mother, titled *Dear Mama*, made me want to learn more about the woman that in one bar he managed to construct as a "crack fiend," and a "Black queen." The surface polarization of the way in which he introduced his mother's addiction to crack to the world made me want to know more about the life of Afeni Shakur. The photograph in (Figure 2), was taken during one of my trips to visit Afeni Shakur. She was always very welcoming to me and my family. As a result, we developed a good rapport as researcher and participant.



Figure 2. Photograph of Tara and family with Afeni Shakur.

In preparing for this study, I began to learn more about Afeni Shakur from reading the first biography ever written about her life titled *Afeni Shakur: Evolution of a Revolutionary* (Guy, 2004). The biography was filled with information about her life as a mother, and what life was like as a high-ranking member of the Black Panther. After reading her biography I concluded that she could represent the theoretical constructs that I used in this study—poststructural theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1975/2000; 1980/1987). I thought that she could represent the theoretical constructs of poststructural theory because of the way that she described herself and her experiences. She talked about her life experiences which seemed to be intersected by issues of race, class, and gender, her love for reading, and her diverse life experiences. She described herself in so many different ways that I concluded that she was somewhat of a chameleon because her life was never stable and always changing. I knew that once I interviewed her that I would be able to argue that the woman whose son introduced to her to the world as a “crack fiend” and a “Black queen” was a subject dispersed in *discourse* (Foucault, 1977/1980a), constituted in *discourse* (Foucault, 1961/1965), and constituted in practice (Foucault, 1977/1980a).

I also learned from reading Afeni Shakur’s biography that being a Black woman subjected her to the *discourse* of race in America (Cleaver, 2001; Collins, 2000a; hooks, 1990, 2000; James & Davis, 1998; James & Sharpley-Whiting, 2000; Shakur, 1999). The *discourse* of race in America has produced many subject positions for Afeni Shakur. These subject positions were always contingent upon the situation and context in which she lived. I sensed that there was conflict among the subject positions in which she lived because she occupied many subject

positions simultaneously. Her involvement as a member of the Black Panther Party, an organization known for its radical politics for Black liberation (Blackstock, 2004; Jones, 1998; Seale, 1970/1991) landed her in jail for an alleged plan to bomb several New York State landmarks with several other members of the Black Panther Party's New York 21. She later discovered that she was pregnant and was released from jail a little more than a month's time before giving birth to her son Tupac Shakur. Afeni Shakur avoided a lengthy jail sentence by studying law books that she obtained in jail and serving as her own lawyer during the trial. Several scholars have argued that race was undeniably a factor in the way that the Black Panther Party and its members have been produced as Black extremists and seen as a threat to the United States of America (Blackstock, 2004; James, 1999; Jones, 1998). Although Afeni Shakur never identified herself as a Black feminist (Collins 2000a; James & Sharpley-Whiting, 2000) or what Alice Walker (1967/2003) called a "womanist," she loves Black women and Black men and has dedicated her life to advocating for a political philosophy of Black unity. Therefore, I argued that Afeni Shakur could represent the theoretical constructs of Black feminist theory.

The third and final theoretical constructs that I thought Afeni Shakur could represent was literacy theory appropriated by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1975/2000; 1980/1987). The work of Deleuze and Guattari (1975/2000, 1980/1987) connects language, *subjectivity*, social and political issues, and *power*. They argued that language was a *deterritorialized space* that "connects immediately to politics (Deleuze and Guattari, 1975/2000, p. 17). In her biography, Afeni Shakur provided three very powerful statements about reading. She said that "reading works for me, reading gave me dreams, and reading gave me weapons" (pp. 40-41). Essentially, it was the practice of reading that made it possible for her to take command of her own life and work toward strengthening the lives of others. These statements or discursive formations as

Foucault (1969/1972) would describe, have relations enforced by *power*. According to Bogue (1989) statements, which are a function of language, issue *mots d'ordre* or words of order (Bogue, 1989; Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/2000, 1980/1987) that connect both the political and social. Because language has played such an important role in Afeni Shakur's life, it is easy to make connections between her political and social experiences. As a member of the Black Panther Party, she was always engaged in reading, writing, and speaking. Before becoming a member of the Black Panther Party, Afeni Shakur expressed "I never knew what to do with my mind, my mouth, and my anger—I didn't have a place for it" (Guy, 2004, p. 40). Clearly, her statements about reading indicated that it was a practice that helped her develop her mind, mouth, and use her anger to act by fighting for social, political, and economic justice for Black people in America. And most importantly, her statements about reading were expressed in a politics of difference (Derrida, 1967/1980; hooks, 1991) that cannot be separated from race, class, gender, her literacy practices, and her subject positions. From this point I set out to answer the following research questions:

1. How did enabling conditions such as race, class, and gender make *shifts* possible in Afeni Shakur's life?
2. How did she define literacy? In what ways did literacy function throughout her life?
3. What different subjectivities did Afeni Shakur describe?
How did her subjectivities enable different lived experiences?

After having the opportunity to meet and interview Afeni Shakur for this dissertation, I was able to move beyond the contents of her biography in order to gain new data to help me

answer my three research questions as mentioned above. I have come to learn more about Afeni Shakur through interviews and also from talks that we have had about each other's lives. I would describe her physically to be a very small woman with expressive eyes that seem to have seen a lot in her life (Researcher notes, August 2005). Even though the eleventh grade was the highest grade that she completed, I thought that she was a very smart woman. Afeni Shakur is well-read in disciplinary areas from philosophy to art. She recited poetry and extensive passages from the work of William Shakespeare (Researcher notes, August 2005). At times she was very funny and willing to talk about some very private experiences in her life. At other times she was very serious and seemed to hold back almost withdrawing from our discussions (Researcher notes, August 2005). Still, I thought she was an ideal interview subject because she was very helpful. Although there were times that she digressed and talked about things that were totally unrelated to the aims of this dissertation (Field notes, July 2005).

Qualitative Methodological Procedures for this Study: A Review

I organized this review of literature around the key literature in the field of educational research documenting primary methods of interviewing and narrativization and secondary methods which consisted of a discussion about using existing documents and archival data such as letters, photos, newspaper articles, books, etc. I thought it was crucial to have a well-formulated research topic and research questions that complemented the methods that were applied in this study (Denzin & Lincoln 1995, 2000; Gay, 1996; Glesne, 1999; Peshkin, 1993). Yet, it was equally important to think of the research topic, questions, and methods as tools to collect data (Alvesson, 2003; Gay, 1996; LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 2003; Patton, 2000; Peshkin, 1993). The research topic and research questions as well as the methods served as guides for developing what I wanted to know as I carried out the study. Next, I will discuss

interviewing as a method, how it has developed, and the means by which it can generate information rich data. I also weaved within this discussion the ways in which narrativization can be as equally effective in generating very useful data. Since interviewing was used as a primary method of data collection, it was here that I decided to start the review.

Using Interview in Qualitative Research

There are several kinds of interviews for researchers to consider. The most commonly used interviews are the informal conversation interview, the standardized open-ended interview, and the closed, fixed-response interview (Gay, 1996; Glesne, 1999, Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2000). Some other forms included creative interviewing (Carin & Sund, 1978; Douglas, 1985; Rapley, 2001), postmodern interviewing (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003), gendered interviewing (Lather, 1991, 1997; Reinharz, 1992), and combined interview approaches (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kvale, 1996). Regardless of the type of interview being used, what they all shared was the common goal of obtaining information by asking questions to the interviewee. Fontana and Frey (2000) suggested that “asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem” (p. 645) therefore, the strategies applied to conducting interviews must be planned to meet the goals of the research design. Generating information rich data is the objective of all researchers.

However, data collection is not a neutral process in which good data will automatically emerge (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Roulston, Baker, & Liljestrom, 2001; Siedman, 1991; Silverman, 2000). Researchers have to work strategically as they prepare their research and understand that it is important to develop skills for designing good interview studies. One way to do this is by learning how to formulate well-thought-out interview guides. Researchers should study ways to approach their research. It is crucial that interview studies be complemented by

well-formulated questions. According to deMarrais (2004) in preparing an interview guide the researcher should be clear about the purpose of the interview, know who you will interview, and how you will select participants.

Researchers often use interviewing as a method to collect data. According to Fontana and Frey (2000), the process of interviewing is a common practice that has been used for many years—especially in the fields of sociology and anthropology. However, earlier interviewing processes were mostly used in clinical trials and psychological counseling (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Patton, 2002). These interviews took the form of either survey research or opinion polling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and are still widely used by quantitative researchers (Glesne, 1999, Patton, 2002). Conducting interviews remain a widely used method among qualitative researchers, many whose objective is to “enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2000, p. 341). According to Holstein and Gubrium (1995) interviewing can be described as an active process that involves “reality-constructing, and meaning-making occasions” (p. 4). deMarrais (2004) defined an interview as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (p. 54). Charmaz (2002) suggested that an interview is an “in-depth exploration of an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial experience” (p. 676). For Charmaz (2002) interviewing should be coupled with grounded theory methods because it helps researchers gather and analyze data more effectively. Yet, these are just a few perspectives out of many that researchers have available to consider.

Furthermore, it was implicated by Roulston, deMarrais, and Lewis, (2003) that “as a research method, interviewing has been approached from a multitude of perspectives” (p. 644) because the process of interviewing present different challenges to both the interviewer and the

interviewee. Heyl (2001), building on the work of ethnographic researchers, suggested that researchers have a task beyond sitting down and conducting face-to-face interviews. Researchers must take on the challenges of “establishing respectful, on-going relationships with their interviewees” (p. 369). The idea of building rapport with interviewees was prevalent throughout the literature on interviewing. Seidman (1991) offered the following on building rapport to enhance interviewing:

Rapport implies getting along with each other, a harmony with, a conformity to, and an affinity for one another. The problem is that, carried to an extreme, the desire to build rapport with the participant can transform in the interviewing relationship into a full “we” relationship in which the question of whose experience is being related and whose meaning is being made is critically confounded. (p. 80)

The idea is suggested in the quote by Siedman (1991) that there is a thin line between having good intentions to build rapport with interviewees and the possibility of putting oneself into the study to a point that all efforts are not beneficial to the interviewee or the interviewer. However, Scheurich (1995) suggested in his postmodernist critique of research interviewing, that the process of interviewing itself is indeterminate and that it is not possible to plan what kind of interaction will take place between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Still, there are researchers who suggest that interviewers must be cautious of the way that they develop a relationship with the interviewee, especially if they plan to carry out a long-term research agenda (Kvale, 1996; Slembrouck, 2004; Spradley, 1979/1997;). Many researchers who have conducted ethnographic interviews know all too well why it is important to build

appropriate relationships with participants. Wolcott (2001) argued that researchers working in the field doing ethnographic work have to consider the implications of simply thinking, “ethnography itself is synonymous with ‘going to have a look around’” (p. 40). Heyl (2001) identified four goals that ethnographic researchers should consider before going out into the field:

1. Listen well and respectfully, developing an ethical engagement with the participants at all stages of the project;
2. Acquire a self awareness of our role in the co-construction of meaning during the interview process;
3. Be cognizant of the ways in which both the ongoing relationship and the broader social context affect the participants, the interview process, and the project outcomes; and
4. Recognize that dialogue is discovery and only partial knowledge will ever be attained. (p. 370)

Interestingly, similar goals were also shared by feminist researchers (Davies, 2000). In an article entitled, *Feminist Interview Research* by Reinharz (1992) emphasis was placed on the interviewing process between women. In a section called, *Women Interviewing Women*, Reinharz suggested that “for a woman to be understood in a social research project, it may be necessary for her to be interviewed by a woman” (p. 23). Oakley (1981) also argued that “social science researchers’ awareness of those aspects of interviewing which are ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ an embedded in a particular research protocol ... this protocol assumes a predominantly masculine model of sociology and society” (p. 31). In this sense, interviewing is critiqued as a “masculine paradigm” (Oakley, 1981). However, Finch (1984) looked at interviewing women

from a very different perspective. Finch theorized the ethical problems that she experienced during her own work involving interviewing women. These ethical problems were discussed in terms of “the development of trust in the interview situation (p. 70). Finch (1984) found that interviewing between women is a complex relationship. The relationship established between women during interviewing has both “moral and political” implications. As a result of this, Finch brought our attention to the need for reconceptualizing the ways that we have come to consider the interviewing process, not only between women, but for the field of educational research as well. Influenced by Oakley’s (1981) position on approaching interviewing, Finch (1984) suggested the creation of a sociology that articulates the life experiences of the people we research rather than creating data for oneself as researcher.

There are also researchers that offered reconceptualizations of interviewing (Alvesson, 2003; Mishler, 1986; Scheurich, 1995; Slembrouck, 2004). Slembrouck (2004), drawing on the work of French scholar Pierre Bourdieu, took on the idea that reflexivity in qualitative interviewing is an important step to be considered by qualitative researchers. Slembrouck’s argument was centered on two Bourdieuan concepts, the first being that of *Le franc parler* (open speech or candid speech) and the other as *Le silence respectueux* (situated to a silence of respect). He highlighted these two concepts as key assumptions that surround interviewing (Slembrouck, 2004) because interviewers are often encouraged to take themselves out of the research and maintain a certain amount of objectivity (Gay, 1996; Glesne, 1999; Janesick, 2000; Patton, 2002) when interacting with participants. And although objectivity is often said to be “the essential basis of all good research” (Patton, 2002, p. 93), it is not the only basis of “good research.” As a result, Slembrouck (2004) interrogated the positions of the interviewer as the “candid speaker” and the “silent observer” who waits for interviewees to eat

question after question which he refers to as a kind of symbolic violence. According to Slembrouck (2004) “subjects can be expected to develop and interactionally express a position towards the role of being an interviewee” (p. 93). Slembrouck (2004) provided five questions that interviewers should consider before conducting qualitative interviews:

1. When research interviews are seen as linguistic markets, what guarantees for *le franc parler* can they be argued to offer?
2. Do interviews instead have to be seen primarily as a source of symbolic violence, with the recorded narrative accounts being strategically self-censored in ways still ill-understood by researchers?
3. Are interviewers primarily representatives of an inquisitive and dominant public order—however well-intended their self-presentation and however humble their pursuit of knowledge, starting from a genuinely experienced “one down” from the interviewee?
4. Is this true in the same way for all interviews?
5. Does this apply in situations where interviewers are counter-hegemonically oriented and research is critically oriented to laying bare the workings of power and ideology? (p. 96)

Similar to Slembrouck’s work, Alvesson (2003) also discussed applying a reflexive approach to the practice of interviewing. In this article, he challenged neopositivists’, romantics’, and localists’ ideals of interviewing. He also discussed the importance of developing a framework for thinking about the research interview. Alvesson suggested eight metaphors that offer reconceptualizations of the interview (1) local accomplishment; (2) establishment and perpetuation of a storyline; (3) identity work; (4) cultural script application; (5) moral

storytelling; (6) political action; (7) construction work; and (8) play of the powers of discourse (p. 15). The idea about the interview here was that interviewing should be theorized in a way that opens up new ways to interpret and carry out the process itself. Guided by a postmodernist critique of the subject, Pillow (2003) challenged interpretive models of reflexivity and discussed the problematics of applying reflexivity in qualitative research. She was mainly concerned with the “role of reflexivity as a methodological tool as it intersects with debates and questions surrounding representation and legitimization in qualitative research” (p. 176). Pillow posed the question “what is reflexivity?” (p. 177) and suggested that although reflexivity may be linked to the idea of reflection, that the two were not the same. She made distinctions between the two terms by arguing that reflexivity, unlike reflection, required a relationship between the subject and the object—a relationship where knowledge would be produced. This relationship between the subject and object raised issues surrounding the idea that researchers could fully know and represent their subjects and cautioned researchers to understand that both the interviewer’s and the interviewee’s subjectivity was open to be examined. Pillow concluded that researchers must come to live with a reflexivity of discomfort because it is not possible to find truths regardless of the desire to want to know about one’s self and someone else. She also suggested that researchers develop strategies of reflexivity that will complement their methodology and continue to be aware of the ways that we set out to produce knowledge and find meaning.

Scheurich (1995) challenged what he calls “modernist assumptions” (p. 239) about the interviewing process. Scheurich’s work closely examined the role of the researcher as well as the researched. In an article entitled, *A Postmodernist Critique of Research Interviewing*, Scheurich (1995) challenged the notion that research interviewing is “a reasonably straightforward method for gathering information” (p. 239). The article began with a critique of ‘conventional

interviewing,' then moved to a critique of Mishler's (1986) work where he "criticized the traditional approach to interviewing [by providing a discussion about the role of narratives in qualitative interview studies]" (p. 239), and concluded with Scheurich's own thoughts of how the interview as a method itself can be reconceptualized. Scheurich also provided his own definition of a conventional and a postmodernist perspective of research interviewing. Scheurich (1995) clearly focused on the role of researchers and the questions they ask, which are crucial starting points for reconceptualizing ways of interviewing. The role of the researcher in relation to the conventional perspective of research interviewing was described as the following:

The researcher is purposeful and knows what she or he is doing.

The researcher can devise questions whose meaning is bounded and stable. The questions can be stated in such a way that different interviewees understand the question in the same way. The researcher can deliver those questions so that the interviewee is not influenced by the delivery or by the particular researcher asking the questions. (p. 240)

However, the postmodernist perspective of research interviewing described the role of the researcher as the following:

The researcher has multiple intentions and desires, some of which are consciously known and some of which are not. The same is true of the interviewee. The language out of which the questions are constructed is not bounded or stable; it is persistently slippery, unstable, and ambiguous from person to person, from situation to situation, from time to time. (p. 240)

This is clearly a different kind of way to theorize the process of interviewing. Scheurich's work developed an alternative approach to interviewing that encouraged researchers to begin to think about ways in which the process of interviewing can be reconceptualized beyond a modernist perspective. Although Scheurich (1995) critiqued Mishler's book on interviewing entitled, *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*, for "retain[ing] thoroughly modernist assumptions" (p. 239), Mishler's work was recognized by Scheurich for criticizing and suggesting new ways to conduct and understand the research interview" (p. 239). Mishler (1986) focused on the purposes of survey research interviewing and its relationship to narrative analysis. Drawing on work in the areas of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, Mishler (1986) argued that researchers should develop multiple methods for collecting and analyzing narratives as a way to present narrativization in qualitative research.

Using Narratives in Qualitative Research

Narratives can be represented in many ways. Researchers often collect data consisting of personal stories, life histories, life stories, memoirs, historical accounts, autobiographies, and lived experience. Patton (2002) suggested that "much of the methodological focus in narrative studies concerns the nature of interpretation" (p. 116). A critical step to achieve in using narratives in qualitative research is to understand how people understand themselves, others, and themselves in relation to others. Many scholars have argued that an interpretive challenge exists when using narratives. Denzin (1997) posited that trying to retell someone's stories could present many problems in the meaning-making process because of the politics of interpretation.

Atkinson and Silverman (1997) asserted that researchers should refrain from taking narratives at face value. They challenged the idea of the "self-revealing speaking subject" (p. 13). Their assertion was similar to poststructural critiques of narratives that bring to researchers'

attention the crisis of representation, the problems with finding truth, and the importance of examining the subjectivity of both the researcher and the researched. bell hooks (1991) suggested that although narratives could be helpful in understanding and making meaning of the experiences of others, trying to tell other people's stories was a very difficult thing to do. hooks argued that researchers should not assume that they can capture someone's voice and tell their story with authority and decide what would be constituted in the story itself. Lather (2000) troubled the idea of voice by suggesting researchers develop a counter-discourse for deciding who speaks for the subject. Further, Witherell and Noddings (1991) argued that capturing someone's voice can be achieved by respecting the speaker and valuing the speaker by creating spaces that fostered continuous dialogue.

Narratives also have the potential to take on a reflexive tone. Chaudhry (2000) offered the idea of a reflexive form of narrative that can be beneficial to both the researcher and the researched. She suggested that narrative could be told in fragments. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) asserted the importance of the researcher developing a relationship with the researched and suggested that this could be achieved by listening closely and paying close attention to the aesthetics of the subject. Scott (1991) discussed narratives in relation to what she called the evidence of experience and suggested that researchers must redefine what counts as experience because experience is never self-evident and should always be contested.

Narratives can also be told through the collection of photos and documents which are also considered by some researchers to be a form of storytelling (Banks, 2001; Banks & Morphy, 1999; Becker, 1986; 1998; Chalfen, 1998; Collier & Collier, 1986). Howard Becker (1998) equated documentary photography with the act of storytelling by suggesting that photos "record events which people who did not read newspapers and magazines do not get" (p. 94) but are able

to get the story through pictures. Chalfen (1998) also suggested that photos are modes of communication that “presents selves” (p. 215). Many stories can be told through photography that touches on issues of culture, race, and ethnicity (Hamilton, 1997; Harper, 1988; hooks, 1995; Mitchell, 1992; Prosser, 1998; Suchar, 1997). And paying attention to the setting of photos is very important for understanding how issues of culture, race, and ethnicity can take on different meanings. Photos can potentially deepen the interviewing process because they make it possible to ask “questions about social, cultural, and behavioral realities” (Suchar, 1997, p. 34).

Photos should not be used in research only because of the images they present. It is important that researchers understand that certain images can be fixed and only appeal to a specific audience (Kuhn, 1994). Meaning in photos may be shifted, challenged, and renewed, therefore, making stories unstable. Photos contain images that evoke history—a history that regulates moments *in* time (past), moments *of* time (present), and moments *between* time (future). Kuhn’s (1996) work on using photos in research presented the idea that the memories that photos evoke “are generated in an intertext of discourses that shift between past and present” (p. 472). Understandably, it is these moments that make it possible to examine the diverse meanings that photos may offer. In summary, photos are no longer thought of as having a parallel meaning in its images. Therefore, photos can be used for different purposes such as history inquiry, re-mapping cultural history, and re-reading events (Kuhn & McAllister, 2006).

Hodder (2000) argued that collecting documents is a way of beginning the process of storytelling because all documents have a story to tell. Items such as birth certificates, letters, diaries, journals, personal writings, driving licenses, banking statement, etc. all constitute forms of documents. He also cautioned researchers to learn various ways to assess documents by

asking the right questions (Brenner, Brown, & Carter, 1985; Briggs, 1986; Sudman & Bradburn, 1989).

These are just some of the many views concerning the use of narrative in qualitative research. Researchers have at their disposal a variety of ways to think about the ways that narratives can inform their work (Geertz, 1983, Grumet, 1991; hooks, 1990, Kramp & Humphreys, 1993, Lavob, 1973, Lather, 1997, Pillow, 2003, Polkinghorne, 1995, Richardson, 2000, Riessman, 1993, Scott, 1991, Visweswaran, 1994). There are really no limits to the ways that narratives can be developed to represent data because narratives can be “constituted on many levels, and in terms of discursive effect, their application can vary” (Søndergaard, 2002, p. 192).

Data Collection

Collecting data for this study was a fragmented process of coming to know. The data for this study consisted of both primary and secondary data sources. Interviewing was used as a primary source for collecting data. Secondary sources of data consisted of field notes, existing documents such as a recent biography about the life of Afeni Shakur, song lyrics, photos, a mournful poem that Afeni Shakur wrote for her late son Tupac Shakur, and a current reading list that guides her life today. I also included interviews by other people in which she participated prior to this study, other people’s writings about Afeni Shakur and archival data from her days as a member of the Black Panther Party such as letters, photos, newspaper articles, books, and a reading list of books read by Afeni Shakur that were considered to be required reading for all members of the Black Panther Party. The entire process of collecting data was approximately nine months and produced approximately 125 single-spaced pages of transcribed interview data.

Timeline

Date	Type of Interview	Duration
July 30, 2005	Face-to-Face Interview #1	1 hour
August 18, 2005	Telephone Interview #1	1 hour
August 27, 2005	Telephone Interview #2	1 hour
September 17, 2005	Telephone Interview #3	1 hour
April 12, 2006	Face-to-Face Interview #2	1 hour
April 13, 2006	Face-to-Face Interview #3	1 hour

I conducted a total of three face-to-face interviews and three telephone interviews over a nine-month period. I designed three interview protocols, one for each of the three research questions that guided this study. The first interview (Appendix A) was a face-to-face conversational/semi-structured interview (Patton, 2000). It was conducted July 30, 2005 and was approximately 1-hour in length. The purpose of the first interview was to collect data that would provide information for my first research question which was *How did the enabling conditions such as race, class, and gender make shifts possible in Afeni Shakur's life?* I asked Afeni Shakur questions about issues that touched on race, class, and gender. I specifically asked her to describe specific ways that the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender have shifted her life. I also asked her to discuss how she feels about herself as a Black woman in America and what role did she thinks history played in her life experiences.

The first telephone interview (Appendix B) took place August 18, 2005. It was a conversational interview (Patton, 2002) and was approximately 1-hour in length. During the first telephone interview I wanted to gather data that would help me answer my second research question which was *How did Afeni Shakur define literacy? and In what ways did literacy*

function throughout her life? I specifically asked Afeni Shakur to provide her own definition of the term “literacy” and to describe the role of literacy in her everyday life. As mentioned in Chapter One, there were eight different meanings of literacy that guided this study. However, I was mostly attracted to definitions five through eight because they were the least conventional ways of thinking about literacy and therefore, presented a greater challenge to reconceptualize what constitutes data. During this interview, I read the following definitions of literacy to Shakur:

5. A *power* structure. 6. A linguistic variable. 7. Regimes of interactive conjunctions of collective *assemblages* of dissemination. Most, importantly, these regimes make possible *discursive heterogeneity*.

8. Literacy is not made up of words, but issues *mots d’ordre* and therefore, possibilities. Literacy’s function is to effect a *becoming*.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1975/2000, 1980/1987)

Then I asked her to discuss the connections, if any, that she was able to make between her own definition of literacy and those that I had provided.

The second telephone interview (Appendix C) was a semi-structured interview, approximately 1-hour in length and took place August 27, 2005. The purpose of this interview was to collect data to help answer my third research question: *What different subjectivities did Afeni Shakur describe? and How did her subjectivities enable different lived experiences?* The protocol that I used for this interview consisted of questions such as Do you feel you’ve been different people in your life? and If you had to describe five different people that you had to be, wanted to be, were told to be, were forced to be, resisted to be, who would you describe?

The third telephone interview (Appendix D) took place September 17, 2005 and was 1-hour in length. The purpose of this interview was to follow-up with additional probing questions (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2000) for my third research question concerning *subjectivities*. After reviewing the transcripts from the second telephone interview, I decided to ask more specific questions using the actual term “subjectivity.” I asked questions such as: What is your understanding of what it means for people to be subjected and produced? I also told her that I used the term *subjectivity* to discuss how people are positioned in the world.

The second and third face-to-face interviews (Appendix E and F, respectively) both took place successively on April 12, 2006 and April 13, 2006. Each interview was 1-hour in length. I did not have any scripted protocols for these interviews. I used all three of my research questions as a catalyst to help me generate conversation. However, I did decide to use narrative approaches as I conducted both of these interviews. The gap in the timeline between the first face-to-face interview and the second and third face-to-face interviews allowed me to examine the data that I had collected between July 2005 and September 2005. Through a process of on-going analysis, I learned that much of the data that I had previously collected consisted of stories of various life experiences of Afeni Shakur. Therefore, the purpose of the second and third face-to-face interview was to gather additional data that could possibly help me theorize not only what the stories meant but how they were produced. Taking some time to collect data for the last two face-to-face interviews also allowed me to experience firsthand what Afeni Shakur was like during different times in her life.

For example, when I sat down with Afeni Shakur for a face-to-face interview in July 2005 she was in the process of planning a trip to South Africa. Shakur, along with her sister Gloria and daughter Set, were going to Soweto, an urban area in the city of Johannesburg, South

Africa to deliver her son Tupac's ashes on the tenth anniversary of his death. Shakur wanted to spread his ashes in Soweto because it is the birthplace of South African struggle for democracy against apartheid (Field notes, July 30, 2005). When meeting again with Shakur in April 2006, she was finalizing her itinerary for South Africa in September 2006. I later learned while conducting a member check via the telephone with Afeni Shakur that the trip had been postponed and she eventually ended up traveling to South Africa in June 2007, but she was happy that in addition to her sister Gloria and her daughter Set, she was able to be joined by other family members and friends. She even sponsored the trip for several people that she employed at the Tupac Amaru Shakur Foundation (Researcher notes, September 9, 2007). Needless to say, she was very happy.

Data Analysis

The primary source of data consisted of interview data. A total of six interviews were completed. I transcribed each interview then organized and coupled (Poland, 2002) my three research questions with the three research protocols (Appendix A, B, and C, respectively) to complement the characterizations of the rhizome as described by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987). Although I attempted to "represent" the rhizome, I found that the "rhizome is nonrepresentable, and only understandable through the concept of multiplicity, and destroying the unity of the subject" (Bosch, 2003, p. 137). Choosing to do a *rhizoanalysis* proved to be an effective method for this particular study because I did not feel that I had to try to control the data, it simply continued to unfold.

I analyzed and represented the data by investigating sites *of* rhizomic *topography* and mapping sites *within* rhizomic *topography*. The sites *of* rhizomic *topography* represented the research questions of this study. The sites *of* rhizomic *topography* were located at the heart of

qualitative inquiry because its purpose was to keep me focused on what I wanted to know—a step essential for any researcher (deMarrais, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kvale, 1996; Lincoln, 1995; Patton, 2002; Peshkin, 1993; Silverman, 2000; Spradley, 1979/1997; Wolcott, 2001). The sites *within* rhizomic *topography* were represented through mapping Afeni Shakur’s *becomings* or middles—because “maps have only middles” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 25).

Therefore, for this study, I applied Deleuze & Guattari’s concept of “mapping” (Bogue, 1989; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987) as a concept for *mapping* sites *within* rhizomic *topography*. Through my research questions, I have investigated three sites *of* rhizomic *topography*. These sites are: *topography* of enabling conditions, *topography* of the function of literacy, and *topography* of *subjectivities*. Each of the three topographies were categorized as major topographies and assigned a number ranging from one to three (Appendix G). The topographies of enabling conditions of race, class, and gender, the function of literacy, and *subjectivities* were categorized and coded into three major topographies, each containing its own sub-topographies that extended from the collected data (Appendix A,B,C,D, E and F). The sub-topographies were numbered according to their major topography category and its chronological position. There are a total of 26 sub-topographies for enabling conditions, a total of 30 sub-topographies for the function of literacy, and 70 sub-topographies for subjectivities (Appendix G).

I also followed five very important steps of any traditional analysis, I; (1) identified and grouped information (Glesne, 1999; LeCompte, 2000; Patton, 2002; Wolcott, 2001) by reviewing data relevant to the three sites *of* rhizomic *topography*; (2) anticipated the emergence of “frequent, omitted, and declared items” (LeCompte, 2000, p. 148); (3) created stable and

unstable data sets; (4) looked for patterns (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Gay, 1996, LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 2003; Patton, 2002) to see how the sites of *rhizomic topography* manifested in the interviews; and (5) categorized and coded data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; LeCompte, 2000; LeCompte et. al, 1993; Wolcott, 1994, 2001) by mapping sites *within* rhizomic *topography*. Using a *rhizoanalysis* made it possible for me to use conventional practices of qualitative research such as coding (Appendix G) and think *rhizomatically* in the same head. Although on a surface level the notion that conventional practices and those that are *rhizomatic* cannot occupy the same space, I think the contrary to this notion (Appendix G). I chose to start at a point of inquiry similar to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) when they suggested it is a question of method and asked “[d]o not even lines of flight, due to their eventual divergence, reproduce the very formations their function it was to dismantle or outflank?” (p. 13). They further wrote that “the tracing should always be put back on the map” (p. 13). Therefore, both conventional and *rhizomatic* practices of coding data informed my work. Guided by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), I found that *rhizomatic* practices of coding data required three distinct steps outside of conventional ways of coding data, and therefore, I; (1) established a logic¹ of the *AND* by generating connections amongst (dis)unified data (enabling conditions of race, class, and gender); (2) located spaces *between things* (the function of literacy), and (3) applied the concept of multiplicity (*subjectivities*) (Appendix G). Unlike conventional practices of coding data, these three distinct steps required me to include within my role as researcher the role of a topographer too. My role as researcher and topographer became increasingly important as the “struggle between the conjunction (and) and the verb (to be)” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 98) constantly shifted, leaving spaces “between things” in constant play.

¹ The logic of the AND means to overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, and to nullify endings and beginnings (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 25)

Deleuze & Guattari (1980/1987) applied the *topography* of the *plateau* as a concept to begin theorizing the *rhizome*. They described a rhizome as “a network or entangled knots of movements and stops” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/2000, p. xii). I described the *rhizome* as sharing a relationship between both *dreadlocks* and *plateaus*. According to Deleuze & Guattari (1980/1987) a *plateau* is “any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome” (p. 22). Each *plateau* has its “own themes and concepts which are interrelated with those of other plateaus and which appear in other plateaus, but which are not reducible to any abstract system or ‘plateau of plateaus’” (Bogue, 1998, p. 125). I used the concept of *plateaus* as a way to theorize the data that I collected. The data generated to provide answers for my third research question [What different subjectivities did Afeni Shakur describe and How did her subjectivities enable different lived experiences?] was represented as *plateaus* in Chapter Five. The *plateaus* were as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) described them, intensities connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems. I associated the *rhizome* with a hairstyle known as *dreadlocks* that is often worn by many people of African descent. *Dreadlocks* are naturally knotty, chemical-free hair that connects randomly and continuously. African American hair is ideal for growing *dreadlocks* because our hair is usually, with a few exceptions, naturally spiraled, and coarser in texture, therefore, making it easier to have a tighter curl when forming *dreadlocks*. For example, Rastafarians are often associated with wearing dreadlocks. Bob Marley, a well-known Rastafarian, and Jamaican-born reggae icon, wore his hair in *dreadlocks* as a symbol of his African heritage and religious beliefs. Like the rhizome, *dreadlocks* also “assume very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs, tubers, [natty, knotted, ropelike, locks, curly knobs, tiny plaits, and intricate weaves]” (Deleuze & Guattari,

1980/1987, p. 7). Similar to Deleuze & Guattari's (1980/1987) description of a *rhizome*, *dreadlocks* can also be seen as "a network, an entangled knot of movements and stops of impulses and immobilizations to experience interminably" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975/2000, p. xii). There is not a "strong principal unity" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 5) to *dreadlocks* which might support why it is often found to be an undesirable hairstyle to don in corporate America, because it is not a hairstyle determined on a neatly, careful pattern to form a unified structure. The hairstyle is a counter-*discourse* in the sense that it constructs its own standard of beauty—a standard much different from that of the Breck Girls in the 1970's shampoo commercials where the "girl next door" had straight, long, thick, healthy hair that bounced as she walked and flipped on demand from the slightest toss of her head. *Dreadlocks* share a common relationship with the *rhizome* in that they "may [also] be broken, shattered at a given spot, but will start up again on one of its old lines, or new lines" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 9). I used the concept of *dreadlocks* to represent the data that I collected for my first research question [*How did enabling conditions of race, class, and gender make possible shifts in Afeni Shakur's life?*] and for my second research question [*How did Afeni Shakur define literacy? and In what ways did literacy function throughout her life?*]. It was the formation of *dreadlocks* that helped me better understand Deleuze and Guattari's characterization of the *rhizome* which they described using six underlying principles.

The six principles were the following:

- Principles 1 and 2- Principle of connection and heterogeneity where any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be;

- Principle 3- Principle of multiplicity is that it never allows itself to be overcoded, never has available a supplementary dimension over and above its number of lines, that is, over and above the multiplicity of numbers attached to those lines;
- Principle 4- Principle of asignifying rupture: against the oversignifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure. A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines; and
- Principle 5 and 6- Principle of cartography and decalcomania: where the rhizome is not amenable to any structure or generative model. It is a stranger to any idea of genetic axis or deep structure. It is our view that genetic axis and profound structure are above all infinitely reproducible principle of *tracing* [authors' italics]. (pp. 7-13)

I found it important to note that dreadlocks and plateaus take on a circular form that may cause readers to ask how I decided what to call *dreadlocks* and what to call *plateaus*. First, I used Deleuze and Guattari's principle of connectivity and heterogeneity to distinguish *dreadlocks* from plateaus. I also offered the following distinction: a rhizome is made up of both dreadlocks and plateaus. A dreadlock is composed of plateaus but is not a plateau itself. Dreadlocks take lines of flight from plateaus. Plateaus are superficial underground stems whereas dreadlocks take lines of flight from plateaus. Whereas Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) used plateaus to begin theorizing the *rhizome*, I began with *dreadlocks* because they were significant in deciding how to represent data in a *rhizoanalysis*.

Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) provided six principles that outlined what they referred to as "approximate characteristics of the rhizome" (p. 7). However, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) made clear distinctions between the concepts of tracing and mapping. According to

Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) “the rhizome is altogether different, a *map and not a tracing*”

(p. 12). Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) argued the following about each concept:

What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real ... the map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back “to the same” ... the map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged “competence.” (p. 12-13)

Qualitative Inquiry and Irreducible Fold[s]

Qualitative research proved to be very messy. It was not possible to structure research (Misherler, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1995) void of ruptures, breaks, and unforeseen interruptions (Britzman, 1995; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987; Derrida, 1966/1978; Søndergaard, 2002; St. Pierre, 1997, 2000a). For example, in the summary and discussion chapter (Chapter Six) of this study, I expressed that I was taken aback when Afeni Shakur wanted to move on quickly or stop talking about her experiences as a member of the Black Panther Party. I had to ask myself, what do you do when the participant does not want to discuss a topic crucial to the outcome of my dissertation? I found myself in what Visweswaran (1994) referred to as “politics of despair” (p. 99). I relied on poststructural ideas of the fold to recover whenever Afeni Shakur did not respond to certain interview questions. The irreducible folds of qualitative inquiry helped me understand that I could not textualize everything and that the spaces of detextualized frameworks, data collection, data analysis and data representation can be a good thing (St. Pierre, 2000a). The folds allowed me to see how structures would be disrupted and as a result, the ways that knowledge can be produced. As a result of this, I have gained a stronger sense of what a

rhizoanalysis can do (Alvermann, 2002; Bosch, 2003; Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987; Hagood, 2002; St. Pierre, 2000a; Taylor, 1995). For example, a rhizoanalysis as a methodology allowed me to “map connections and disconnections between and across different theories and various forms of data (Honan & Sellers, 2006). I learned not to be afraid to rethink the ways that I could approach writing by including vocality.

Qualitative Practices of Validity and the Novice Researcher

As a novice researcher it was very important to me to take the role and responsibilities of being a researcher very seriously. I set out to use both traditional and nontraditional methods of analysis. The traditional methods of analysis involved triangulating theoretical perspectives (Patton, 2002) and the nontraditional method consisted of analysis using the deconstructive method of rhizoanalysis (Alvermann, 2002; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987; Hagood, 2002). This study provided rich information because I used triangulated theories to analyze the data, which is considered to be a credible strategy in qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kvale, 1996, Patton, 2002). After the data has been collected and analyzed, I used member checking (Gay, 1996; Glesne, 1999; LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 2003; Patton, 2002) and peer review (Janesick, 2000; Patton, 2002), which allowed me to share my work and to be critiqued by other doctoral students in the process of conducting research and writing. As I moved further in the research process “conclusions [were] drawn and reviewed on an on-going basis” (Gay, 1996, p. 229). I continued to hold the position that there was no single point of view of validity (Wolcott, 2001). As a novice researcher, I thought it would be essential to have multiple points of views. Lather (1993) supported the idea of multiple points of views of validity in what she called “transgressive validity” (p. 676). She identified four types of validity:

- Ironic validity- Foregrounds the insufficiencies of language and the production of meaning-effects, produces truth as problem;
- Paralogical validity- Fosters differences and heterogeneity via the search for “fruitful interruptions”;
- Rhizomatic validity- Unsettles from within, taps underground, works against constraints of authority via relay, multiple openings, networks, complexities of problematics; and
- Voluptuous validity- Goes too far toward disruptive excess, leaky, runaway, risky practice, brings ethics and epistemology together. (p. 686)

All of these concepts were viewed as a way of opening up the spaces in the discussion of validity (Lather, 1993). Lather’s (1993) work offered various ways of thinking what it means to produce a “valid” research study. My work is closely associated with that rhizomatic validity. It was crucial for me to be able to recognize the characteristics of rhizomatic validity because it informed my work. This form of validity spoke to my research study because my analysis in Chapter Five did not present neatly structured categories.

Researcher Ethics

An on-going analysis of the data for this study was always taking place. After conducting Face-to-Face Interview #1 (July 30, 2005), I continued the process of analysis by listening to the recording of the interview several times. Each time I listened to the recording, I did not know what to listen for, so I concluded that “just listening” was a sufficient part of analysis (Fontana & Frey, 2000). I continued to do the same for Telephone Interview #1 and Telephone Interview #2 respectively (August 18, 2005 and August 27, 2005). However, when I had the opportunity to talk to [not interview] Ms. Shakur when I attended an event that she was having at the Tupac Shakur Foundation for the Arts on September 10, 2005 to commemorate the ninth anniversary of

Tupac's death, I realized that I was "in the field" and took the opportunity to observe Ms. Shakur in an environment filled with family and friends. I made several observations and recorded them in a notebook that I kept for researcher notes—notes that would eventually merge with some of my personal thoughts.

For example, I noticed that Ms. Shakur loved to smile. (Researcher notes, September 10, 2005) This was not something that I could always observe during our interviews because of the seriousness of the topic at hand. She has a really great smile—one that expresses the joy that she is feeling in that very moment. I also made notes about her size. She is a small framed woman and when I hugged her she felt fragile. (Researcher notes, September 10, 2005) After our following interview (Telephone Interview #3) was over I asked Ms. Shakur what made her most happy in life. She talked about how happy she was to be alive and around her family especially her daughter and grandchildren. (Researcher notes, September 17, 2005) Upon my return to Stone Mountain, Georgia to conduct Face-to-Face Interview #2 and Face-to-Face Interview #3, I decided to ask her about a mural of Tupac that was painted on the wall of her great room. I wanted to ask her about it the first time that I had visited to conduct Face-to-Face Interview #1 in July 2005, but I felt it was too early to initiate conversation about Tupac. (Field notes, July 30, 2005) I finally asked about the mural and we talked about the artist. Ms. Shakur told me that the artist who did the mural was a young artist from New York, but originally born in Thailand and a fan of Tupac's music. It turns out that he had gifted this mural to the Shakur family as a way to honor Tupac's spirit. (Researcher notes, April 12, 2006)

Talking to Ms. Shakur was always a pleasure. It reminded of the talks that I have with my own mother and people who have mentored me since I was a young girl. I particularly enjoyed talking with Ms. Shakur because there is a certain "something" that happens when Black women

sit down to talk (Collins, 2000a; Henry, 1995; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Lanehart, 2002; Tamboukou, 2004; Tamboukou & Ball, 2002). It was not the kind of “sister circle” that Juanita Johnson-Bailey (1998) wrote about in her interview with Sonia Sanchez, because I consider Ms. Shakur to be my elder and therefore, I respect her on the level that I respect my own mother. So I felt that there were certain conversations that I could not have with Ms. Shakur, perhaps because I would not be able to relate or because I simply did not think it would be appropriate. However, we were able to talk about some things that we have both experienced as Black women. For example, in Telephone Interview #2, Ms. Shakur turned the interview on me and asked me about my awareness of intra-racial conflict amongst Black people. In this interview Ms. Shakur shared with me that she once struggled with her self-image because she was dark-skinned. I told Ms. Shakur that I was all-too-aware of intra-racial conflict in the Black community firsthand because I used to be teased when I was a little girl because I was dark-skinned. I told her that other kids in the neighborhood, at school, and even my own siblings called me names like “Blackie” and “Black Tar Baby.” As hooks (2003) stated, “most black Americans, from slavery to the present day, along with white Americans, and other nonblack folks, have passively accepted and condoned color caste” (p. 38). We both thought it was tragic that we had shared a common experience of this nature.

There was also a moment when we were discussing Tupac’s passing (Telephone Interview #2) that we both began to cry. Perhaps crying with a participant might not add to the validity of academic research especially because I was the first one to cry. Using a *rhizomatic* methodology provided the *space* for me to be human and feel emotions that I could not suppress if I wanted to—death has that effect on people. Perhaps the *space* of novice researcher is one in

which researchers can take *lines of flight*—lines that make it possible for the researcher and the participant to be who they are in that given *space*.

There was another time (Face-to-Face Interview #2) that Ms. Shakur turned the interview on me when she asked me the question: Do you understand how important it is to stand in the footprints of your ancestors? My short response to this question was: Yes. Then I further expressed how my mother taught me the West African term “Sankofa” which means: We must go back and reclaim the past in order to know the future and how we come to be today. I shared with her that I have a very small family and my wish is to be able to trace my family’s genealogy especially with all the new advances in the science of DNA. I also talked about the African Slave Trade and the Middle Passage and that I believe that I get my strength and resiliency from my ancestors especially those who made it alive across the Atlantic Ocean.

Member Checking: The Unfolding of Subjectivity

In September 2007, I called Ms. Shakur’s assistant to see if Ms. Shakur had read the analysis of this study (Chapter Five) that I sent to her via email. When I initially sent the almost eighty-plus-page document, I received an email from Ms. Shakur that said: What do you want me to do with this? This reaction was similar to one that she had in the early stages of this study when I told her that I would like for her to read the final analysis. At that time I did not have a clue as to what I was going to do with the data that I was collecting, so I was not discouraged when I read further in the email and where she said: I am not reading anything, I do not like reading stuff about me. Can you just tell me what you said? Of course, I did not know how to respond. How do you respond when participants tell it like it is? Well, I did not know what to say, so I just sent a smiley face as my reply. Therefore, it was a good thing (for me) that several months had passed between my initial request for her to read my work and the actual time that

she did. Upon speaking to Ms. Shakur in September 2007, I learned that she was feeling really good because she had made her journey to South Africa to spread her son's ashes in Soweto. This was a trip that she had been planning for a very long time and was overwhelmed with joy that she had made it to the Motherland. She told me that she had read my work and "like the stuff about becomings" (Researcher notes, September 22, 2007). She brought to my attention that I had not included as one of her *becomings* that she had remarried (Researcher notes, September 22, 2007). Thus, I went back to the transcripts and discovered that she had told me in a September 2005 (Telephone Interview #3) that she was married and referred to herself as "Afeni Shakur-Davis". I included this "new" *becoming* as a sub-topography (Appendix G) in the analysis of the data. Ms. Shakur also expressed thanks for talking about both of her children in the study because "most people are only interested in Tupac that they forget I have a daughter too" (Researcher notes, September 2005). I actually reread what I wrote about her daughter and felt good that I had done research that did not reinforce the interest of most people.

[Post]ethics

Not trying to solve a *problem* that is really a *problem* is a form of [post]ethics that I employed for this study (Garrick, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Scheurich, 1994). My aim was to focus on the [post]cogito—I thought, therefore I thought some more. In other words, it was the afterthought or that which was yet to be, that guided my ethics for this study. Because I was very much involved in my research (Fine & Weis, 1996) I viewed this as an ethical attitude that befitted my postmodern *subjectivity*. A postmodern *subjectivity* provided the *space* to welcome fragmentation and hybridity. My postmodern *subjectivity* made it possible for me to take *lines of flight* and (re)question in order to make connections between intersecting data. I also made the conscious decision to (re)listen to audio recordings of interviews when I thought that I had not

“heard” something in the data. (Re)listening to the recordings informed my understanding of the ways that *rhizomatic* approaches to qualitative research helps to make sense of the notion that even that which is not heard can be valuable data. I found that it was very important for me to engage in thinking because there were times when I was not able to sit down and write, so thinking helped me. However, when I would engage in the process of writing, I found that it was my thoughts that helped me write in a way that was what Davies (1994) referred to as “palimpsest” because my writing consist of several layers of *discourses*.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND REPRESENTATION

Writing has nothing to do with signifying.
It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.
(Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, pp. 4 – 5)

Organizing the Chapter

Each word or phrase in this chapter was thoughtfully produced (Honan & Sellers, 2006). Its organization was deeply influenced by the concept of the *rhizome*. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) “the rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo” (p. 25). This chapter was written as a *rhizoanalysis* in that it takes on diverse forms such as *dreadlocks* and *plateaus*. Although I asserted these two diverse forms as characterizations of a *rhizome*, the forms of a *rhizome* can only be approximated and cannot be reduced to any specific forms. Therefore, this analysis is composed of *dreadlocks* and *plateaus* which take on circular forms that may cause readers to ask how I decided what to call *dreadlocks* and what to call *plateaus*. I made the following distinction: *dreadlocks* are a significant characterization of the *rhizome* that I have asserted and *plateaus* are a significant characterization of the *rhizome* asserted by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) in their book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Whereas, Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) used *plateaus* to begin theorizing the *rhizome*, I started with *dreadlocks* since the *rhizome* has multiple entryways. Both *dreadlocks* and *plateaus* are multiplicities of *rhizomatic intensities*. Yet, there are connections and disconnections between *dreadlocks* and *plateaus*. The connections and disconnections between them helped me think rhizomatically and write a non-linear analysis

that can be read and interpreted from multiple entryways. And although *dreadlocks* communicate with *plateaus* they are not *plateaus*. In relation to each other *dreadlocks* and *plateaus* “ceaselessly establish connections between semiotic chains” (Deleuze & Guattari, p. 7). *Dreadlocks* takes lines of flight from *plateaus* which themselves are “connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems” (Deleuze & Guattari, p. 22). *Plateaus* also take lines of flight from *dreadlocks* establishing new *intensities* from which *dreadlocks* shoots arise. Without *plateaus* and *dreadlocks* the *rhizome* would take on other forms because it is the communication between *intensities* that make doing a *rhizoanalysis* possible. *Dreadlocks* and *plateaus* share a common relationship with the *rhizome* because not only are they multiplicities of *rhizomatic intensities* they “constantly construct and dismantle themselves in the course of their communications, as they cross over into each other at, beyond, or before a certain threshold” (Deleuze & Guattari, p. 33). *Dreadlocks* and *plateaus* work the same in that they both present what Bogue (1998) referred to as “indirect discourse, the reporting of someone else’s words” (p. 137) which in this study were presented as fragmented *narrativization*.

Aside Four: Also, the words reported (including my own) in this study function to show that “language is the transmission of the word[s] functioning as *mots d’ordre*, and not communication as a sign of information” (Bogue, 1989, p. 137). I decided to present the *dreadlocks* and *plateaus* as fragmented *narrativization* because fragmented *narrativization* deals with the relation of movement between *deterritorialized* stories that have both political and social meanings. The stories have breaks and stops, and entryways and lines which have neither beginnings nor ends. In this case, it is no longer necessary to question why these stories and not others, because there is no such thing as major stories and minor stories. However, it is necessary to understand that the stories presented in this study are closely related to the *becomings* of Afeni

Shakur. The fragmented *narrativization* consists of direct quotes taken from the transcripts that were made by Afeni Shakur, written observations from my field notes, direct quotes about Afeni Shakur by other people, direct quotes from historical documents such as news articles, and even photos.

Dreadlocks and *plateaus* also work the same in that they ride difference by distinguishing themselves as a characterization of the *rhizome* without being distinguished from that which is not distinguished from them. And they both critique relations of *power* between events, language, and *subjectivity*. However, *dreadlocks* and *plateaus* also work differently. For example, in this study, the *dreadlocks* worked to survey the *nomadic thought* of Afeni Shakur as *movement* moving freely in an element of *interiority* with a focus on the circumstances of her *becoming* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987). *Interiority* situates thought in striated spaces creating *lines of flight* that through reterritorialization assures a continuum of multiplicities and therefore, the composition of *smooth spaces*. And the *plateaus* worked to *map* the *becoming* of Afeni Shakur as a desiring *nomad* moving freely in an element of *exteriority* with a focus on *space* and its relation to a constant process of *becoming*. The element of *exteriority* situates thought in a *smooth space*. *Dreadlocks* and *plateaus* also work differently because the *interiority* of *dreadlocks* causes them to be susceptible to closing off. Yet, this is not the case with *plateaus*. The exteriority of *plateaus* allows them to remain open and unfixed because they are always already in a constant state of *detrterritorialization*. As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) stated, “in a becoming one is always deterritorialized” (p. 291).

Like in most interview studies data were drawn from across interviews. Yet, I also want to be clear that the data represented as *dreadlocks* are mostly the data that I collected for research question number one *How did enabling conditions of race, class, and gender make possible*

shifts in Afeni Shakur's life? and research question number two *How did she define literacy?* and *In what ways did literacy function throughout her life?*. And the data represented as plateaus is mostly the data that I collected for research question number three *What different subjectivities did Afeni Shakur describe? How did her subjectivities enable different lived experiences?* I did not line up the questions with the data; doing so would go against doing a poststructural dissertation. What I did was make a map. *Mapping* was an important process while doing this *rhizoanalysis* because it made it possible to follow *lines of flight* stemming from issues of race, class, and gender, the function of literacy, and the concept of *subjectivities*. I made a map by *mapping* each of the research questions with a specific interview protocol. I thought that *mapping* would be crucial to this study because it is focused on Afeni Shakur, a person whose history and everyday experiences have shaped her to be a (de)centered subject. *Mapping* also allowed me to draw data within and across interviews. This strategy made it possible to write Chapter Five as a non-linear analysis with multiple entryways—open and connectable in all of its dimensions. Therefore, I caution readers to throw away any notions of what this chapter *should* be and how it *should* read because I did not acquiesce to any deep structure of how this analysis should be read nor organized.

In this analysis, I focused on Afeni Shakur's life as a product of *discourse* interwoven with issues of race, class, and gender, ideas about the function of literacy, and theories dealing with the concept of *subjectivity*. I revisited the research questions through a brief conversation about the ways that I coded the data (Appendix G) in a rhizomatic process that I refer to as investigating sites *of* and *within rhizomic topography*. I began the analysis and representation of the data under the headings *Natty Theory and Knotted Data* and *Working the Rhizome: Plateaus, Plateaus, and more Plateaus*. The *dreadlocks* and the *plateaus* (as mentioned in Chapter Four)

were represented through both primary and secondary methods. Interviewing was the primary method used for collecting data. Secondary methods consisted of already existing documents. These documents consisted of a recent biography about Afeni Shakur, letters that she wrote while in jail, a poem she wrote to her son Tupac, interviews with Afeni Shakur by other people, three photos of poignant historical events in which Afeni Shakur was involved, two reading lists, one was a 1968 Black Panther Party list of required reading that she read during the time that she was a member of the Black Panther Party, and the other a current reading list of books that she has “two copies of each, one copy for my bedside and the other I keep in my bag to read while traveling.” (Telephone Interview #1) Afeni Shakur credited the books for “helping me become a woman and guiding my life each and every day.” (Telephone Interview #1) Also, two summaries were included as a way of theorizing Afeni Shakur’s responses related to each research question. A summary was provided for the heading *Natty Theory and Knotted Data*. This is where I summarized the data for the first two research questions concerning issues of race, class, and gender and the function of literacy in the life of Afeni Shakur. I closed with a summarized section under the heading, *Working the Rhizome: Plateaus, Plateaus, and more Plateaus* where I summarized the data for research question three in order to discuss her subjectivities as *becoming*.

Investigating Sites of and within Rhizomic Topography

The three sites of *rhizomic topography* were representative of the research questions that guided this study:

1. How did enabling conditions such as race, class, and gender make *shifts* possible in Afeni Shakur’s life?
2. How did Afeni Shakur define literacy? In what ways did literacy function

throughout her life?

3. What different subjectivities did Afeni Shakur describe? How did her subjectivities enable different lived experiences?

These sites were essential to this study because asking questions is at the heart of qualitative inquiry. I coded the topic of each site of *rhizomic topography* under the heading “major topographies” in which the following three sites of *rhizomic topography* emerged: (1) *topography* of enabling conditions of race, class, and gender; (2) *topography* of the function of literacy; and (3) *topography* of subjectivities. Then I coded the sites *within rhizomic topography* which are located under the heading “sub-topographies.” These sub-topographies were just as important as the “major topographies” because they represented the data generated from the investigation of the sites of *rhizomic topography*. In other words, the sites of *rhizomic topography* are where the research questions were mapped and the sites *within rhizomic topography* are where the data were mapped and helped me provide answers for my research questions. Another point worth mentioning is the fact that this analysis—a *rhizoanalysis*—required adhering to and deviating away from traditional steps of analysis. There are several reasons why the organization of this chapter is different from an ordinary data analysis chapter. The following reasons that I suggest were influenced from my rereadings of St. Pierre and Richardson’s (2005) work entitled *Writing: A Method of Inquiry* in which they discuss how writing can be a form of analysis and Honan and Sellers’s (2006) paper discussing approaches to *rhizomatic* methodology. I offer the following suggestions:

1. The connections between the data were not forced (S/R)².
2. I *mapped* connections and disconnections between and across *topographies* (H/S)

² (S/R) = St. Pierre and Richardson (2005) and (H/S) = Honan and Sellers (2006)

3. My thoughts were *rhizomatic* as well as my writing (H/S).
4. I constructed *dreadlocks* and *plateaus* through *lines of flight* and across and within various *assemblages* (H/S).
5. I represented knotted data through *dreadlocks* because *dreadlocks* intersect, overlap, converge, twist, and weave through infinite folds of *discourse*. (H/S)
6. I consciously chose to write in a way that supports the idea that writing can be a method of analysis (S/R).
7. I traveled in thought. I wrote. I traveled in thought. I wrote (S/R).

Natty Theory and Knotted Data

As mentioned earlier, the *dreadlocks* in this section surveyed the *nomadic thought* of Afeni Shakur as *movement* moving freely in an element of interiority with a focus on the circumstances of her *becoming*. The *dreadlocks* also presented the *indirect discourse* (the reporting of someone else's words) from a biography about Afeni Shakur, interviews with Afeni Shakur by other people, news articles, etc. Much of the *nomadic thought* of Afeni Shakur was told in the form of personal stories and (re)presented in this study as fragmented narrativization. Theorizing Afeni Shakur's stories as *nomadic thought* was based on the analysis that her stories were located in a multiplicity of circumstances. The circumstances surrounding her stories were constantly *detrterritorialized* by new stories that took several *lines of flight* that spoke to the ways that Afeni Shakur thought about her own thinking. Because *nomadic thought* is rhizomorphic, her stories crisscrossed and were *reterritorialized* by her own thoughts which resulted in the theory becoming natty and the data becoming knotted, hence the formation of *dreadlocks*.

Dreadlock 1

I wanted to be a journalist. Maybe write for a newspaper or TV. That was expensive though. I made good grades in school. But that was expensive. I remember one time I was trying to be an actress and a dancer, but again, too expensive. We were poor. I grew up poor and access equals money. And when you're poor and Black in America.

Whew! (Face-to-Face Interview #1)

This response by Afeni Shakur reaffirmed the sentiments of Langston Hughes's famous poem *A Dream Deferred*. In this poem Hughes brilliantly used metaphors and similes to ask the question "What happens to a dream deferred?"—a question that captures what Shakur expressed about wanting to be a journalist. She will be the first person to tell you that being poor was not the only thing that kept her from pursuing her dreams: "I was my own worst enemy during this time in my life, eventually, I just dropped out of school" (Telephone Interview #3). However, there is no denying that growing up "poor and Black" posed major obstacles in her life: "Poverty anywhere eats at the soul and has the power to dominate the spirit" (Telephone Interview #1). Black feminist theory cautions women to not fall into the traps of "victimology." However, issues of poverty merit much examination because it is very much a reality to be victimized by poverty. And for many Black feminists, there is a difference between "victimology" and being victimized—not only by poverty, but racism, classism, and misogyny (Collins, 2000a). As Linda Alcoff (2005, ¶ 3) pointed out in an interview "the media has defined feminism as a victimology." The term victimology does not stem from the discourse of Black feminist theory. It initially found its way into the mainstream women's movement then shifted into the discourse of Black feminism. The term itself functions as what Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) referred to as "*mots d'ordre*" (words of order) or Bogue (1989) called language-acts because the term situates advocates of feminism as injured parties that blame their fate on outside forces. Afeni Shakur's response is not that of a victim, but someone who understands the direct effects of poverty. It is obvious by the details of her life that she had agency because she was very much a self-defined and self-determined woman.

Dreadlock 2

You have to understand I was 20, 21 when I joined the party

doing shit that most young people today cannot imagine. Well, they can imagine doing the things I did but they have so many distractions today that it would not be attractive. If anything, I encourage young people to stay in school no matter what. I left school. Pac left school. When I qualified for the High School for Performing Arts in midtown Manhattan ... there with all those rich white students, with their own cars, and some had limousines. Going out to eat a fancy lunch wasn't an option for me. Noooooooo. And I really could not relate to that kind of an environment.(Telephone Interview #1)

However, the Black community, which is what Shakur referenced when she said, “and when you’re Black and poor in America” (Telephone Interview #2), has its own unique set of problems when it comes to issues of race, class, and gender (Collins, 2000a; hooks, 2003; Lorde, 1984; Sharpley-Whiting , 2002). It was almost impossible to isolate the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender because they play a major role in identity politics. For Shakur to acknowledge that she was an “honor student” and qualified for the “High School for Performing Arts,” but “dropped out of high school” was very compelling to say the least. Critical social theory, specifically, poststructural theory, made possible the examination of race, class, and gender as a way to understand how people produce themselves and how they are produced by being situated in specific contexts. From her response, it is possible that Afeni Shakur, viewed her lived experience through binary thinking—a concept that both Black feminist theory and poststructural theory interrogates. Binary thinking encourages people to conceptualize their reality into two categories. For example, Shakur described the students at the High School of the Performing Arts as “rich,” and “white.” In an earlier interview, Shakur described herself as “poor” and “Black” (Face-to-Face Interview #1). These are very dangerous statements because in order to understand the relations of power (Foucault, 1969/1972) between these statements Shakur must also understand “it requires a change of viewpoint and attitude to be recognized and examined in itself” (p. 111). These statements only operate to territorialize existence. They were

also powerful enough to affect Afeni Shakur's *becomings*. They affected Shakur's *becomings* by influencing how she coexisted in a society flanked by a history of legal racial segregation and white supremacy.

Aside Five: Society reluctantly but strategically recognized Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as the father of the social justice project and the voice of Black America. There is no doubt that Dr. King was a great leader who promoted social justice through nonviolence. But he was not the father of social justice movements in America, particularly those with the mission of racial solidarity among Black people in America. What has happened is that history has been used as the catalyst for promoting Dr. King as a leader of all leaders which might provide answers to why so many Black people are still waiting for another Dr. King to come and save Black America. There is a relation of power connected to the idea that one man can save a nation. It is my opinion that this relation of power caused Dr. King his life. Binary thinking set Dr. King in opposition to Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) and therefore, many people saw Dr. King as less threatening than Malcolm X because of the ways that the two men advocated for social justice. However, this was a taken-for-granted assumption that seemed reasonable because no one could conceive the assassination of a man who was the walking personification of nonviolence. I would argue that Dr. King was viewed as a threat because even though he was not viewed by the masses on the same level as Malcolm X, he was deemed a threat by the federal government particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation under the direction of J. Edgar Hoover, who illegally had Dr. King and his wife under surveillance for years (Carson, 2001).

Dr. King was even under surveillance the day that he was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

Dreadlock 3

When I picked up a book to read I would read for salvation. Yeah, it's

good to have a nice, good, easy going, not too heavy on the mind book sometimes, but not that often for me. I read to take information to the people. I read for salvation. I read King's "Why We Can't Wait" for my salvation and the salvation of my people. His words get twisted all the time. They want us to think that King was anti-Black Panther. That's not true. Don't be fooled. King met with Stokely [Charmichael]. He went to Oakland. (Telephone Interview #1)

Afeni Shakur's response indicated that literacy functioned in her life as a way of delivering herself and her people from the ills of racial segregation. "We needed to be free from the mental chains of slavery." (Face-to-Face Interview #1) Her words also shed light on the concept of essentialism and how it worked to produce the way many people perceived the messages of Dr. King and those of the Black Panther Party. Shakur talked about Dr. King's words being "twisted" and the fact that he was not "anti-Black Panther." The theories working in this study, poststructural theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, intersected because all three theories promoted the interrogation of essentializing and totalizing discourses. They also intersected through their critique of the relations of power between race, class, and gender and the function of literacy in everyday life. The theories tell us that there is no one "voice" of Black America but a *rhizome* of voices (Alvermann, 2002; Deleuze, 1968/1994; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987; hooks, 1991; Jackson, 2003; St. Pierre & Pillow, 1999). Setting up a binary between Dr. King's philosophy of social justice and that of the Black Panther Party confused many members of the Black community which led people to believe they had to choose a side. "Don't be fooled" was the advice given by Afeni Shakur. Shakur's remark brought attention to the fact that many Black people were under the impression that they could not follow teachings of Dr. King and the Black Panther Party, particularly because Dr. King's and the Black Panther Party's strategies and rhetoric for Black liberation were very different. Dr. King advocated for nonviolence, while the

Black Panther Party possessed weapons and vowed to protect themselves (by any means necessary) in the company of harm. Black people do not think the same, however, it is possible through essentializing discourses to think the opposite. “Black people in America benefited from both Dr. King and the Black Panther Party. Both of them address the “class struggle” among Black people in America”. (Telephone Interview #1) However, both the politics of Dr. King and the Black Panther Party ruled that race not gender would be the dominant factor of their politics, an issue that I also discussed in the study. “I was a Panther, but deeply, deeply touched by King’s words ... he was a great man, a great orator and a great writer.” (Telephone Interview #1)

Dreadlock 4

I’ve heard that I’m credited for that [writing for the Black Panther newspaper and leading the federal government to believe that the party was going to dismantle] but when your focus is on a collective, solidarity with your people, class struggle, starving children, and the racist, fascist actions of the American Government seemed to be prevailing at an alarming pace, you don’t have time to focus on the individual. The Panthers motto was power to the people, not the individual. (Telephone Interview #1)

Dreadlock 5

Hours were spent reading. Many hours. I did that. I did that because I wanted to be informed. I wanted my thoughts to be based on what I knew. When I wrote any for the Panther newspaper I wanted it to have substance. I wrote a poem called, The Lesson. The Lesson was let’s see 1969, no 1970. Anyway, I wrote this poem after reading Sun Tzu’s, The Art of War. I starting reading that book and it blew my mind with all this stuff about having a strategy in place whenever there was an encounter with an enemy. Sun Tzu wrote about strategies that could make you strong and those that have the power to make you weak. (Telephone Interview #1)

Perhaps King’s writing influenced Shakur in that she often contributed to the Black Panther, a newspaper that communicated the mission, purpose, and events occurring within the party itself. This too is an example of the way that literacy functioned in Shakur’s life. She often wrote pieces to inform members at other headquarters located around the country about the success of the Free Breakfast Program for Children, a community-based, program that aimed to

provide a nourishing breakfast to poor children before they went to school. Shakur also contributed several poems that appeared in a section called, “revolutionary poetry.” Many of her longer articles led the federal government to believe that the Black Panther Party’s membership was on the decline and that the party was thinking about dismantling. “I wrote stuff like Brothers and Sisters, I’m sad to bring news to you that many of our people no longer value the efforts of the party and our numbers are seriously declining ... then I cited some phony statistics, they bit, yes even with FBI members within the party, they bit.” (Telephone Interview #1) Shakur was very modest about her excellent writing ability, never placing the focus on her individual contributions but what they meant for the preservation of the Black Panther Party and the fate of disenfranchised Black Americans living in impoverished neighborhoods.

Dreadlock 6

Being both Black and a woman, well that’s your double-jeopardy right there. It certainly did not help to display that I was overly concerned with women’s rights, specifically, of course, the liberation of Black women. Race was the ruling factor with the Panthers. Now, we had classes of our own, but we had to become advocates to get those things. (Face-to-Face Interview #1)

Yet, Shakur was very candid when talking about being a “Panther Woman.” Earlier she stated that she was 20, 21 years old when she joined the Black Panther Party. Many of the women that joined the party joined at a very young age. Needless to say, life is complicated enough, but what does it bring you when you are fresh out of your teens and a high-ranking officer of the Black Panther Party? For Shakur, race, class, and gender were ruling politics in her involvement as a member of the Black Panther Party. Shakur said “women needed to know how to defend themselves, we were out there, right, just like the men. They were learning all kinds of shit, martial arts, how to use a gun, all kinds of shit, but not us.” (Face-to-Face Interview #1) “I set up classes for women to learn Tae Kwon Do and Karate ... we learned about the proper use of weapons too. It hit me very early as a Panther member that I wasn’t in a position to think that I

had the choice to not do, I had to do. Black women always had to do, it's just like that" (Face-to-Face Interview #1). Black feminist theory and poststructural theory theorizes Shakur's actions as what bell hooks (1991) referred to as a possessing a "radical Black subjectivity" (p. 15). In this example, Shakur did not allow herself to be subjected by the totalizing discourses of the Black Panther Party. Possessing a radical Black subjectivity meant that Shakur did not seek freedom, specifically, liberation for fellow Panther women, through the lens of patriarchy.

I resisted, I did. Women were not always respected. I resisted that shit about a woman's place and a woman's role. You know people think that just because we were the Panthers that we did not have our own stuff, and I mean stuff to deal with, we did. We were soldiers. Yes, women were soldiers too, but we were not told that as often as the men. I knew that I stood on the shoulders of my ancestors and strong women like Harriet Tubman and Queen Mother Moore. (Face-to-Face Interview #1)

Shakur was speaking about the circumstances surrounding a *becoming—becoming-woman*, *becoming-Black* as Deleuze & Guattari (1980/1987) wrote "even Blacks, as the Black Panthers said, must become Black" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 291). "The Panthers were not perfect, we were not mentally free from colonization. Physically free, but not mentally, no. I became more and more aware that women everywhere in the world struggled against blatant forms of sexism" (Face-to-Face Interview #1) Shakur's response touched on the reality of societal norms concerning gender and specifically how women were viewed within the Black Panther Party and the world-at-large. Having noticed the worn copy of Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* in a nearby stack of books, I asked Afeni Shakur about what she learned from his work.

Dreadlock 7

I did. I did. Fanon gave me the tools to look at the plight of Black people internationally. He said you have to write more than a song to be a revolutionary. Yes, he did. I learned so much about Africa and I felt the urge to help my sisters and brothers. He taught us all just how alive colonialism was and still is... He taught us, yes he did. (Face-to-Face Interview #1)

It was not until reading *Franz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth*, did Shakur express having a true understanding of colonialism in America. "I thought we were not slaves anymore." (Face-to-Face Interview #1) The influence of Fanon's work in the life of Afeni Shakur, particularly the ways that the book helped to shape her own philosophies of what it meant to be free is another finding that demonstrates that literacy was a part of Shakur's everyday life. As Shakur stated, "you might not have a man, but you can count on that book being there for you, always." (Telephone Interview #1) I took this quote to mean that literacy, specifically the act of reading provided Shakur with the tools to nurture her own garden (Alice Walker, 1967/2003) and *become*-woman, independent and self-actualized. This statement can also be analyzed to mean that Shakur was fully aware of the importance to have an agenda "beyond sexually acting out" (hooks, 2004, p. 67) and that the Black body should be perceived beyond gender (Mohanram, 1999).

Dreadlock 8

Afeni Shakur's Letter from Jail- June 14, 1969

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE

In every struggle of liberation, in the history of the world, certain particulars remain the same. We can always be certain that reactionaries will react to the masses demands with acts of suppression. And most important, reactionaries and all other paper tigers will underestimate the amazing creative strength of the people. Hogan and his hogs are surely no exception. In their devious minds they did not know and could not know that the people would mobilize behind their suppression.

They failed to consider the fact that 90% of New York City's prison population is Black and Puerto Rican. If I am incarcerated for the rest of my life, someone from this prison is going home. I am sure that the U. S. concentration camps will do their best to contain us, but I am not so sure that we will allow ourselves to be carted away again. Four hundred years ago we were unfamiliar with his ways. Today we are all too aware of his blind justice. We knew the sting of oppression, exploitation and degradation.

For this reason, I feel no bitterness on being kidnapped. My people have heard the call of liberation. They will not ignore it today. In 1969 they will not watch another Black person's plea of self determination go unheeded. We have had our martyrs. I do not wish to be one. I only want my people to know and understand exactly why I am here. Why I am being held for a ransom of \$100,000. Why Hogan will not allow a bondsman to accept our cases. Why a judge refuses to give us constitutional bails. Then, when my people understand, and only then will I be at peace. The spirit of the people is greater than the man's technology. In revolution you either win or die. If we cannot win then death will be my tormentor. But the people will win for theirs is a just cause.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE
PANTHER POWER TO THE VANGUARD

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Contrary to some of the many negative things that have been said and written about Afeni Shakur (I discussed some of these things later in the study), "... I know, people have thrown all kinds of shit at me" (Telephone Interview #3) she spent much of her life committed to a lifelong mission of bettering the lives of Black people in the African Diaspora. *Dreadlock 8* is a letter that Afeni Shakur wrote in June of 1969, two months after her April 1969 arrest for allegedly conspiring to bomb several New York State landmarks. Writing was (still remains) an essential practice of Shakur's everyday life. "I had the will to write. I could not imagine going a day without expressing myself in writing. I've kept a journal of notes, and reflections for years now. Before I went to prison, I really thought I knew what was happening behind the walls. I learned quickly that it was worse than I could have ever imagined. I had to write and let my comrades know the deal with our people locked up." (Telephone Interview #1) Shakur's letter from jail and her will to write can be theorized in multiple ways. First, as a member of the NY 21 Black Panther Party, Shakur remained focused on the liberation of Black people even when she was placed in prison. Shakur understood that racism, classism, and genderism were divisive apparatuses (hooks, 1984/2000; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Memmi, 1964/2000; Sharpley-Whiting, 2002) and functioned to keep her physically away from her brothers and sisters on the outside of the prison walls continuing the fight for Black liberation. "Being in jail allowed me to think a lot, sometimes I thought too much about too many things. I thought about the [Vietnam] war, folks being killed left and right. I thought about my momma, my daddy, everything. My eyes opened to so many things. I was incarcerated with my people and there was never any doubt in my mind about the importance of keeping the struggle going, to empower my sisters and brothers locked up behind bars with me, no doubt whatsoever" (Telephone Interview #1) Second, Shakur's will to write can also be theorized by a concept in poststructural theory that

suggests that the (de)centered subject does not adhere to the notion of having a fixed identity. Being locked up behind bars did not confine her to only that space. Based on Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) writings on the (de)centered subject, my assertion is that Afeni Shakur "never cease[d] to roam upon a body without organs" (pp. 276-277) because someone who roams upon a body without organs is constantly *deterritorializing* and extending *lines of flight*. Finally, her letter from jail was an example of nomadic thought because her writing was a political act that functioned to produce a *becoming* and being locked up behind bars was simply one of the many circumstances that she would experience. Shakur's physical body was imprisoned but her mind and spirit took *lines of flight* that allowed her to escape through writing. Shakur remained committed to promoting solidarity in the struggle, and she truly believed that she would one day get out of prison and continue the cause. Shakur said, "I knew that I was innocent, I wasn't guilty and I later proved that. I wasn't a criminal." (Telephone Interview #3)

Third, Shakur understood that language was a powerful tool. That language could be used as a tool to produce ideas and people. Although Shakur did not physically resist being subjected as a "criminal" (some Black Panther Party members have left the country to avoid jail time), she resisted being subjected mentally. "Those of us [16 members of the NY 21 were arrested for conspiracy to bomb several landmarks in New York] allowed to write did, and if we were not allowed we found a way to get things done, to get the message out to the people." (Telephone Interview #2)

Dreadlock 9
Black Panther Party Reading List: 1968

Author	Title
Malcolm X	The Autobiography of Malcolm X and Malcolm X Speaks
Frantz Fanon	Wretched of the Earth and Studies in a Dying Colonialism
Kwame Nkrumah	I Speak of Freedom and Ghana
Basil Davidson	The Lost Cities of Africa and Black Mother, the Years of the African Slave Trade
Herbert Aptheker	The Nat Turner Slave Revolt and A Documentary History of the Negro People in the U. S.
Lerone Bennett, Jr.	Before the Mayflower
Arna W. Bontemps	American Negro Poetry—Story of the Negro
E. D. Cronin	Black Moses: The Story of Garvey and the UNIA
W. E. B. DuBois	Black Reconstruction in America, Souls of Black Folk, and The World and Africa
John Hope Franklin	From Slavery to Freedom
E. F. Frazier	Black Bourgeoisie
Michael Harrington	The Other America
Marcus Garvey	Garvey & Garveyism and The Philosophy and Opinions of Garveyism
Melville J. Herskovits	The Myth of the Negro Past
C. L. R. James	History of Negro Revolt
John Janheinz	Muntu: African Culture and the Western World
LeRoi Jones	Blues People
C. E. Lincoln	The Black Muslims in America
Albert Memmi	The Colonizer and the Colonized
William L. Patterson	We Charge Genocide
J. A. Rogers	World's Great Men of Color: 3000 B. C. to 1946 A. D.

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Dreadlock 10
Afeni Shakur's Current Personal Reading List

Author	Title
Alcoholic Anonymous	The Blue Book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
Kahlil Gibran	The Prophet
Claude Brown	Manchild in the Promised Land
Tupac Shakur	The Rose that Grew from Concrete
James Clavell	Shogun
n/a	Holy Bible
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.	Why We Can't Wait
Toni Morrison	All titles
James Baldwin	All titles
Maya Angelou	The Complete Collected Poems
Sonia Sanchez	Shake Loose My Skin
Alice Walker	In Search of Mother's Garden
Various Authors	Collected works of poetry
Sylvan Barnet (Ed.). William Shakespeare	The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare
C. Moraga, G. Anzaldúa, & T. Cade Bambara (Eds.)	This Bridge Called My Back

“Some people crave donuts or whatever, I crave books. I can't remember a time in my life when I wasn't reading something, something to feed my mind, my soul.”

(Telephone Interview #1) *Dreadlock 9* represents the 1968 required reading list of the Black Panther Party. And *dreadlock 10* represents a list of books Afeni Shakur gave when she was asked to share the titles of works that she was currently reading. The reading list of the Black Panther Party primarily represented authors whose writing concentrated on both philosophy and African and African American history. Another point would be to highlight the absence of any women authors on the Black Panther Party's reading list. “We hardly ever, if ever we did I cannot think of the name. No, I don't remember any female authors that we were *required* to read, but we were required to read all the books on the that list and I believe most of us did.”

(Telephone Interview #1) A critique of the Black Panther Party's reading list can be made by relating the absence of Black women authors to the six distinguishing features that characterize

Black feminist theory. Because the reading list was dominated by male-centered philosophies and genealogies of African and African American history (Sharpley-Whiting, 2002), I found that the authors represented on the list (1) lacked the presence of Black women's collective consciousness; (2) did not link the experiences of Black women to their philosophies and genealogies; (3) discussed the concept of struggle but often failed to elaborate on the role that women would play in the struggle; (4) failed to acknowledge difference among Black women; (5) did not greatly recognize Black women locally or in the African Diaspora; and (6) placed the actions of men at the center for bringing social change (Collins, 2000a).

Dreadlock 11

Tara: The two reading lists that you talked about, the list of required reading established by the Black Panther Party and your own personal reading list of books that you are currently reading are books that have greatly influenced the lives of many Black people and especially some of the best African American thinkers of our time such as Audre Lorde, Cornel West, bell hooks, Asa Hillard, Na'im Akbar, umm, etc. It's also obvious as I talk to you that you love reading and that you hold literacy to be of the utmost importance.

Afeni: I do.

Tara: Well, I want to ask you after sharing how I define literacy or even better how I see literacy in terms of this research study, I would like for you to maybe comment on the ways that I am looking at literacy for this study and if you can provide your own definition of literacy and describe its role in your everyday life.

Afeni: So you want me to tell you what I think about your definition then talk about literacy in my everyday life, right?

Tara: Yes.

Afeni: Let me get a pen or pencil. Okay. Alright.

Tara: Okay, ready? A power structure. Literacy is a power structure. A linguistic variable. Regimes of interactive conjunctions of collective...

Afeni: Slow down, slow down (laughs).

Tara: ...of collective assemblages of dissemination. Most, importantly these regimes make possible discursive heterogeneity. Literacy is not made up of words, but issue *mots d'orde* and therefore, possibilities. *Mots d'ordre* that's a French term meaning words of order. And finally, literacy's function is to effect a becoming.

Afeni: First, let me say that I have never defined literacy the way that you are talking. I've never heard... Damn. You just blew my mind with that. I've never heard the exact definition that you just said, but I want to say this. What you just said, the definition reminded me of the ideas that the Panthers used to formulate the Ten-Point Platform. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Tara: Yes, I do.

Afeni: Well, the Ten-Point Platform pretty much governed the Panther's political stance and people knew us from our platform. Well, people learned about what we stood for from our platform. It clearly expressed what we wanted and what we believed. We want freedom, point one, one of the most if not the most important of them all. You got to be free if any change is gonna happen. Black people understood this, well I think most Black people understood that we had been freed from the chains of slavery but that was the first of many needed steps in our true emancipation. And the ten points also helped us understand that we needed to help all Black people and all oppressed people who wanted, no who yearned to be free. So, I understand the ideas of the definition that you talk about when you talk about literacy. I do. I do. And I think you're on to something when you said, uh, uh, that oh, when you said literacy is a power structure.

Tara: Why do you say that?

Afeni: I was reading Siddhartha...

Tara: Hermann Hesse.

Afeni: Yes. I was reading that book and it made me think, and think, and think. You know what I mean?

Tara: Yes.

Afeni: Well, you said literacy is a power structure and it is because that book was about how people got to find themselves, how people get lost in life not once, or twice, but many times people get lost, but have to eventually find their way. Who am I? That's what Gibran [Khalil Gibran] makes me

ask. Who am I? What am I doing in life? What am I doing in the lives of others, my daughter, my grandbabies. What can this book help me become? Ray Bradbury said, people don't have to burn books to destroy a culture, just get people to stop reading. I wish young people would read more. That's one of our major goals at the foundation [Tupac Amaru Shakur Foundation for the Arts], to keep kids reading. You know what I'm saying?

Tara: Un huh.

Afeni: And that's what I love about books. You become free. They help you find your way. You know. And reading has always helped me find my way and find me. And that's what literacy is for me I guess because I can find myself from the stuff that I read. I'm in every book that I read. And when you look at our society it becomes crystal clear that if you do not have book knowledge, I mean especially if you can not read and write, and there's so many, so many folks out there without the skills to read and write. You need those skills in order to play the game successfully. If you don't have them, society will swallow you, quick, fast, and in a hurry. Because you can't play the game, you don't have power to play the game at least not the kind of power you need to play the game in America. And it ain't just Black people who can't play the game, but I think we are in bad shape, in a bad position in so many ways when it comes down to it. We have yet to have an even playing field. I mean Black people got power, but we don't. So that power structure that you talk about don't allow the game to be played by our people. Does this make sense to you? I know it makes sense to you.

Tara: Exactly. You're on it. And when you say the game...

Afeni: Playing the game. I'm talking about the game of life, the game of I got to pay my bills, the game of who do I vote for, the game of how can I be free, the game of putting food on the table to feed mouths, the game of how can I best help my community, my immediate environment and how can I begin to help Black people who are staring in the face of oppression each and every day and wondering when they gon' get some help. That's the game. The game of where do I fit in a world that worship power and those with power. You got me?

Tara: I got you.

Afeni: Okay. (Telephone Interview #1)

The *indirect discourse* presented in *dreadlock* 11 comes from interview transcripts when I asked Afeni Shakur a very specific question about literacy, which was represented by the

second site of *rhizomic topography*, the *topography* of the function of literacy. I shared my working definition of literacy that guided this study, then I asked Shakur to discuss her thoughts about the definition that I had provided and to share her own thoughts about what literacy means. I asked this question because it addressed the overarching focus of this study and because I had prior knowledge that literacy, particularly reading and writing were two very important practices in Shakur's life. However, I wanted to know more about the ways that she understood literacy in relation to her own life. I found that many of her responses reminded me of what Bogue (1989) wrote about language when he expressed that language has an immediate social and political function. When Afeni Shakur said the phrase "play the game," I knew exactly what she was talking about, however, I really wanted her to elaborate on what she understood the "game" entailed. Shakur made it very clear that "the game" that she talked about was a game that excluded or *othered* people by placing them on the sidelines of life and most importantly she asserted that people need to have the skills of reading and writing in order to "play the game," play it well and ensure their own freedom.

In this analysis of *dreadlock 11*, I find that the intersections of poststructural theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Deleuze and Guattari, can help best in the analysis of Shakur's response. Each of the three theories deals with issues of power and particularly power in relation to the lived experience of people. And they also bring forth the idea that *who you are* and *what you do* is very much connected to the way that you see yourself and the way that others see you. Afeni Shakur demonstrated the type of thinking that says that power is always in play and is very much situational when she made the statement, "I mean Black people got power, but we don't."

Shakur talked about the importance of literacy by describing it as a means of gaining one's freedom and as a means of helping people find themselves and find their way in life. She expressed that she had to find her way in life and find herself and gives credit to the books that she has read for helping her do so. She emphatically stated that she "loves books" and that she can find herself in what she reads and that she is in every book that she reads. She said that reading makes her ask three questions: *Who am I?*, *What am I doing in life?*, and *What can this book help me become?* Guy's (2004) biography about Afeni Shakur is fittingly titled, *Afeni Shakur: Evolution of a Revolutionary* because the word "evolution" signals readers and lets them know before opening the book that they would learn so much more about Afeni Shakur beyond her legacy as a high-ranking member of the Black Panther Party. Also in this biography, Shakur expressed her love for books by saying that reading gave her dreams.

Drawing on literacy theory appropriated by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1908/1987), is where I focus on the idea that literacy's function is to effect a *becoming*. Shakur's three questions are concerned with who she is as an individual and who she can become. I think the three questions that she asks are very powerful because they made it possible for her to move away from fixed notions of herself by establishing the possibility of being able to change and not be closed off by previous lived experience. The intersection of poststructural theory and Black feminist theory lends a critique of the de-centered subject as being produced in many ways—often going through a constant process of change. Afeni Shakur's questions suggest that she thinks of herself as a person who expects change and that change happens in relation to things.

Dreadlock 12

Well, first of all, what it looks like now or what it turned into is not the original ideology of the Panthers. Their belief was that women should not be treated as sex objects. In fact, the party gave me a platform

to fight sexism. I learned to become a leader, I had leadership ability, and I made good use of that. I didn't feel like I was being sexually discriminated against because I used the tools they gave me. I spoke up for what I believed in. I spoke up for myself ... Look, the women that got used in the party set themselves up to be used. They played pussy games. They used their bodies to get next to the power. (Quote by Afeni Shakur as cited in Guy, 2004, p. 77)

So how were female members of the Black Panther Party to become recognized members and leaders within a male-centered party? Afeni Shakur's view was that the Black Panther Party actually provided her with a platform to advocate for women and to fight sexism. "If that's what you wanted to do, that what you did. I think the assumption was that all of the women had their head on straight, that wasn't the case for the most part. I know there were times that I didn't." (Telephone Interview #2) Shakur's comment about the women that got used as sexual objects by their comrades in the Black Panther Party and those that "played pussy games" connected with the theorizing of bell hooks' (2004) ideas on the Black male body and the iconography of Black male sexuality, which often subjects Black men to an image that depicts them as being overly aggressive and overtly sexual. Depictions of this nature stereotype Black men and gloss over the complexity of gender politics by ignoring the role that women play in governing their own lives. Shakur's assessment of the gender politics carried out by some of the female members of the Black Panther Party undoubtedly pointed out that sex and power were closely associated. Even more interesting, Shakur credited the Black Panther Party for providing her with a platform to fight sexism within and outside of the party. Shakur's assessment of the complex power relations between some of the male and female members of the Black Panther Party and her ability to establish a platform to fight sexism attest to her willingness and ability to create a space of empowerment for herself and for other members as well.

Dreadlock 13

I would like people to study *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, and *The Prince* by Machiavelli, so that they have a better way of looking

at things. (<http://www.daveyd.com/afeni.html>)

Dreadlock 14

Just because the Panthers had women as members they did not always see us, the men did not always see us. Well, some of them did not see us. I don't want to say all men, but a lot of them. They saw us, but they did not immediately recognize that we were there and what we were there for. We were there to represent and change the world for our people on the home front and nationally. Only a few of us joined Women's Liberation groups. I did not, but a handful did. But there had been a lot, and I mean a lot of talk about chauvinism by the time I became a Panther. Hell, Eldridge [Cleaver] went around talking shit about pussy power (laughs). If that's not political, I don't know what is. So, it was really important to know where we fit in. I read books to build my mind. I read to free my mind and I encouraged my sisters to do the same by reading any and everything that could help them understand our concerns and how we fit into the scheme of things. (Telephone Interview #1)

Afeni Shakur was adamant about the fact that she felt it was important for her to share and give to her sisters in solidarity. "It was my personal goal to get sisters reading. I always had books with me. I had small books in my pocket or in my bag. I wanted sisters to learn how to be strategic." (Telephone Interview #1) As noted in *dreadlock 13* Shakur thought that these two books, *The Art of War* and *The Prince* were essential reading because each of the books focused on the importance of leadership in relation to politics and political philosophies and power. In *dreadlock 14* the role of gender politics as they played out within the Black Panther Party was a salient issue as Shakur pointed out that the women who participated in the Black Panther Party were not always recognized. She was careful not to essentialize the male members of Black Panther Party by acknowledging that not all of the men failed to recognize the role that women played in the party. However, she did stress that by the time she became a member of the Black Panther Party that she was well aware that there had been a lot of talk about the chauvinism within the party. "I just kept myself focused on the issues at hand. I immediately addressed

anything and anyone's actions that I felt could possibly hinder me and keep me from doing what I wanted to do." (Face-to-Face Interview #1)

Dreadlock 15

The sister's struggle for survival inside the Women's House of Detention is what women's liberation should be about. Freeing them from the filth, the rotten food, the isolation, and the loneliness of existence behind bars. And it's the most concrete and realistic way I can think of for Black women to relate to the Women's Liberation Movement.
(<http://www.proquest.umi.com>)

Shakur wanted to help Black women who were imprisoned to understand the importance of becoming free even if they were locked up behind bars. The *indirect discourse* in *dreadlock 15* is from a 1970s news article where Shakur talked about the ways that Black women, particularly those who were incarcerated could relate to the Women's Liberation Movement. Although the Women's Liberation Movement had ideological influences on the lives of women during this time, it was a movement made up of predominately white women. Because of this many Black women, especially Black feminist activist did not feel that the agenda of the Women's Liberation Movement could substantially influence the social, political, and economic conditions of Black women (Collins, 2000a; hooks, 1984/2000; Lorde, 1984/2001). Shakur wanted the women who were in jail to relate to the Women's Liberation Movement by setting an agenda behind bars to become unified in their struggle to survive the harsh conditions of imprisonment. Shakur's commitment and contribution to Black women as a member of the Black Panther Party is connected to a history of Black women activists such as Sojourner Truth and Mary Church Terrell. Even though Shakur did not join any feminist organizations, she was concerned with experiences of Black women. Also, her efforts were aligned with the distinguishing features that characterize Black feminist theory because she encouraged Black women to think collectively and link their experiences as they worked to gain their freedom. "I

can relate to them. I spent time behind those bars and the most important thing that you can do when you're locked up is to keep your mind free. I told the women that they had to free their mind from the pollution of being on the inside of those walls. We cannot afford to allow the walls to define us." (Face-to-Face Interview #1)

Dreadlock 16

I was pushing and pushing for women to have rights in the party. I felt we were all soldiers, together. I pushed for weapons training classes for women. My section always had weapons training class. I would lead the Political Education classes to ensure that we were learning the same thing the men were learning. (Guy, 2004, p. 102)

Shakur continued to advocate for women on all fronts. As a member of the Black Panther Party she taught classes to fellow comrades of the NY 21 chapter as well as to those members who would travel from other states. The classes typically took place over a six-to-eight week period and focused on the Ten-Point Platform outlined by the founding members of the organization. Attendees also learned techniques in self-defense and became well versed in ideological discourse situated in Black Nationalism, Marxism, and Leninism (Cleaver, 2001; Jones, 1998; Seale, 1991). Shakur was fully aware of the gender politics within the organization and she was concerned that the women were not always receiving the same information and being trained in a way that would allow them to be most effective. She understood the importance of the political education classes because the classes served as a major part of the way Black Panther Party members were recruited. It did not take much time for Shakur to move up in ranks from the time that she first became a member of the party. She became a section leader, which was a position that held her responsible for making sure that the people attending the political education classes were there for the purpose of joining the party as a committed member and not under the auspices of federal agencies. The Black Panthers made several

discoveries of local, state, and federal agents who infiltrated the party in order to provide inside information to federal agencies, particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Dreadlock 17

Afeni Shakur, who warned her fellow Black Panther Party members that one of their supposed comrades was a policeman, yesterday cross-examined the man she suspected. The man had indeed turned out to be a policeman, and the evidence he gathered as an undercover agent had helped indict Mrs. Shakur and 12 codefendants on trial in State Supreme Court for an alleged bomb conspiracy.

(<http://www.nytimes.com>)

Education played a vital role in the life of Afeni Shakur. Although she dropped out of high school, she did not take for granted what she had learned in school. She applied the skills that she acquired in school to help her become an effective leader within the party. When she became a section leader for the Black Panther Party, much of her time was spent reading books from the required reading list that the Black Panther Party provided to all its members. Shakur kept herself up-to-date on what was being published in newspapers concerning how people perceived the Black Panther Party. And most importantly, she read everything that she could get her hands on to keep herself informed on the ways that local, state, and federal agencies were monitoring the actions of the Black Panther Party. She wanted to get a message to her people, and to always stay informed in order to remain a viable member of the Black Panther Party. Eventually, Shakur, who represented herself during the trial, was successful in her efforts acting as her own attorney. She was acquitted of all charges and released from jail. "I read every law book that I could get my hands on." (Telephone Interview #1) If she had been found guilty, Shakur would have been sentenced to spend the rest of her life in prison.

Dreadlock 18

What we learned in the political education classes prepared us for much of the bullshit that we knew we would face anytime the law became involved and they became involved at most times. The law never left us alone. COINTELPRO was established to destroy the Panthers and other

movements that was thought to be too radical. The government had files on everything that we did and they knew way too much. The police infiltrated us over and over again, most times we knew who the pigs were, but it was hard to know all of the time. I think the government thought that all Black people posed a threat to the government not just the Panthers.
(Face-to-Face Interview #2)

The *indirect discourse* in *dreadlock* 18 attests to the fact that the American government was heavily vested in destroying the Black Panther Party. It was concerned mostly that the Panthers would try to disrupt American politics by forcing local, state, and federal agencies' hand by way of militant force. Federal agencies perceived the Panthers as lacking a "real" agenda and labeled members of the Party as trouble-making thugs prone to criminal acts (Blackstock 1975/2004; James, 1999). However, the agenda for the Black Panther Party focused on the liberation of Black people across the country. The Panthers worked to advance the social, political, and economic conditions for poor Blacks—many who did not have access to proper healthcare and did not know if they could afford their next meal or pay the rent. So when you take all of this into account it becomes very clear that the politics of issues surrounding race and class in America run deep. Shakur's opinion was that the American government thought that all Black people posed a threat. Historically, Black people in American have a very complicated relationship with its government that dates back to the time of the enslavement of Blacks in America. Therefore, everything that the Black Panther Party had experienced with the American government—such things as using the police to infiltrate the party or illegally wire tapping their telephones—resulted from the historization of race and class (Lacan, 1977/1982). Although the government only had suspicions about Black activists, those suspicions fueled enough concern which that was then used to justify their actions (Blackstock, 1975/2004; Bobo, 1988).

Dreadlock 19

We recruited people to join us, people who attended the political education classes. That's how I became a member. I attended one of the classes. But

I already knew when I walked in the door that I would take Cleaver's [Eldridge Cleaver] challenge and not only attend class but join too. I started teaching the class just before I became a section leader. The classes were required, meaning if you wanted to become a member you had to attend for at least six weeks or more, no ifs, ands, or buts. In a typical class, you would learn self-defense, go over the rules, discuss the Ten-Point Platform, anything of that nature. In the classes that I taught, I would talk about anything from Black Nationalism to healthcare and personal hygiene. I also taught all female self-defense classes. (Face-to-Face Interview #2)

Education was very important to the Black Panther Party. In this interview, Shakur talked about the fact that she taught political education classes. She actually talked about the role she played in teaching the classes in every interview. I thought this was important to discuss because the classes were a place to learn the fundamentals of the Black Panther Party. It was a place to select the most committed people and to train them to carry out the mission of the movement. There was need for Black Panther Party members to be able to protect themselves from outside forces that tried to prevent the Panthers from doing things such as holding a public assembly where they would promote revolutionary activism to setting up places to house their Free Breakfast Program and the Free Health Clinic that they established. In every office of the Black Panther Party the Ten-Point Platform would be written on a huge poster board and placed on the wall and a copy of the Platform was provided to every member. Members were required to read and memorize the Platform. It was a Platform that spelled out exactly what the Black Panther Party wanted to achieve for Black people in America. Each of the ten points began with the phrase "we want" and was followed by demands such as ending police brutality in Black communities, and insisting that the federal government make a stronger effort to provide decent housing for poor Black people. The Ten-Point Platform was more than just words. It was a platform linked to the African Diaspora in that its discourse was greatly influenced by African

and African American history. Within literacy theory appropriated by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987; 1975/2000), the Ten-Point Platform can be theorized as an example of *mots d'ordre* (meaning words of order) because the language used to establish the “wants” of the Black Panther Party is a power structure. The demands that they make have an immediate political and social function, which is a characteristic of exercising one’s minor language—a language connected to a political immediacy.

Dreadlock 20

See the government did not understand us one bit. First, the government was and still is racist and sexist and wanted Black people to know that they would only be allowed to occupy a certain space in society. The government wanted us to know our place. In their eyes we were rowdy militants trying to overthrow the government. They wanted Black people to wallow in their pity. They wanted us to cry about the fact that we were poor, but expected us to do nothing about it. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Afeni Shakur’s life as a member of the Black Panther Party was one filled with a lot of drama. Much of the drama that took place was a result of the constant presence of local agencies such as the police. Local policemen would make routine stops at various Black Panther Party offices for the sole purpose of harassing its members. Her involvement with the organization expanded several years and what she was most disturbed by was the way that the police would try to [and sometimes succeed] provoke the male members of the party to lash out in a violent manner so that they could be arrested. Shakur said that the government wanted Black people to know their place, which meant that Blacks were not expected to organize and fight for their rights. Again, this is another example of the way that history comes into the scenario because Blacks were forced to be subservient during slavery or they would face grave consequences like whippings and even death. Shakur understood the social relations of power that existed between the police and the Black Panthers. She was well aware that she could face

similar punishments by the law, yet she like many of the Panther men and women did not acquiesce.

Dreadlock 21

The Breakfast Program was ran by women. We held leadership positions and maintained things on the daily housekeeping end of things. So, yes it is a myth that women did not play a key role in the Panthers. Elaine Brown was appointed Chairperson of the party while Huey [Huey P. Newton] was in exile in Cuba. Many of us would be on the circuit giving speeches around the country. We were very visible. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Gender relations within the Black Panther Party remain an important topic when it comes to closely examining the historical value of the organization. Without a doubt the Black Panther Party fostered a legacy that only a few political organizations can claim. Shakur, who joined the Black Panther Party at the young age of twenty-one years old, expressed in *dreadlock 21* that it was a myth that women did not play a key role in the Black Panther Party. Only a quick glimpse at world history would prove that women have always played a major role in building the foundation for a society to flourish. Women were at the forefront of every aspect of the Black Panther Party (James, 1999; Jones, 1998). Many of the Panther women who held high-rank-and-file positions worked closely with each other and established an agenda to improve relationships between the male and female members of the organizations. However, the Black Panther Party was only a microcosm of a larger society saturated in sexist attitudes toward women. There are stories of harassment and intimidation where Panther women were propositioned by male members to engage in sexual intercourse. Shakur had her own story to share about a time that Huey P. Newton, one of the founding members of the Black Panther Party, tried to get her to have sex with him during a trip she made to the Oakland, California headquarters (Guy, 2004). Still, she wanted to make it clear that “everyone remained open to having dialogue about some of

the stuff that we knew had been taking place, it was imperative because we could not allow this to distract us from doing what we set out to do.” (Face-to-Face Interview #2)

Dreadlock 22

We still have political prisoners exiled from this country. The United States government planned a direct assault on us. They designed a plan to have us forced out of this country or have us killed, and they succeeded quite well getting us out of here and killing us. We were not safe in our country. We were welcomed in Cuba, Africa, Brazil, but not our own damn country. (Face-to-Face Interview #2)

Dreadlock 23

If the government doesn’t want you here in this country, they can make it happen. You can disappear just like that. They will find anything to get you out of here. The police and the feds honeymooned all the time. They set so many of us up it’s not funny. They really made things very hard for us, just like they planned. (Face-to-Face Interview #2)

What the Panthers set out to do was help Black people around the country in their struggle against a racist and sexist government. Surely, any distraction would hinder them from their mission. The Panthers needed to remain focused on the issues at hand by making sure its members were safe both within and outside of the organization. Similar to the American government’s suspicions of the Black Panther Party, members of the Black Panther Party were given strict directives, one that told them that they should never trust the government. In *dreadlock 22* and *dreadlock 23*, Shakur shared her assessment of the United States government. She said the Black Panthers had their own intelligence operation set up in order to stay one step ahead of the government. It was no secret that the government was watching their every move. As a way to combat the government’s surveillance, the Panthers were connected to people on the inside of law enforcement that would provide them with inside information. “We never felt safe and we knew at any moment we could be ambushed or learn that one of our comrades was found shot dead somewhere.” (Face-to-Face Interview #2).

Dreadlock 24

What I wanted to know mostly was how to establish an international agenda for the Panthers. We had several members working on this. We actually had a lot of success in this arena because the government experienced difficulties trying to penetrate our international brothers and sisters. Even to this day there's Panthers living in Africa, Brazil, Cuba, you name it. (Face-to-Face Interview #2)

This quote by Afeni Shakur, when examined in the context of social relations of power spoke to the fact that the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender extended beyond the activism of Black liberation movements in America. Several members of the Black Panther Party found themselves forced out of the country because of their activism. Sometimes the charge to have a member exiled from the United States was legitimate, but most often the charge was a result of a strategic plan designed by the government (Blackstock, 1975/2004; Heath, 1970/1976). To counter these actions of the government, the Black Panthers worked diligently to establish allies around the country and abroad. They were successful at building relations with political leaders in places like Cuba, Africa, Brazil, France, North Korea, and China. Needless to say, the American government frowned upon the relationships that the Black Panthers had developed with these leaders and often tried to convince them to reject all propositions the Panthers made for trying to establish an office.

Dreadlock 25

The spirit of the day, of that time, that's what I remember the most. I learned how to love myself and to love my people. I did not learn how to love growing up, but the Panthers taught me how to love. We were a unit. Don't believe the hype that there's no unity in our community. Please don't believe that because we established a spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. Yes we did. I learned to love being Black. (Face-to-Face Interview #2)

Dreadlock 26

It meant everything to be a part of the Black Panther Party. I made some lifelong friends. I made some friends who are no longer alive. Our efforts will never be forgotten. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

People often question whether there can be unity in Black communities, and race is

often tied to that discussion. The Black Panther Party could not have flourished if its members were unsuccessful at fostering unity amongst its members and other nonmember Blacks who shared the same vision as the Panthers. The Panthers also established a great rapport with other Black community leaders. They knew that it would be crucial to build relationships within the community because they often called on non-members to help them in the local community. Afeni Shakur credited the Black Panther Party for helping her learn to love herself and other Black people. She also said that the Panthers taught her to love being Black. This, I think was a very powerful statement because it is linked to the history of racism in America. Systematic oppression of Black people in America worked to erase any sense of self-love that Black people had starting with the exploitation of African people.

Dreadlock 27

I learned, truly, truly learned what it means to be a revolutionary from reading books about Toussaint Louverture. I did not know a thing about being a revolutionary. I was capable of resisting and protecting myself, but I didn't have a clue as to how I was supposed to protect a race of people. I learned that from reading about Louverture. Anytime I pick up a book to read, I hope to experience a rebirth. I have experienced first-hand what a book can do for you. God as my witness, I probably would not be alive today if I had not read somewhere that I'm worthy. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

This *dreadlock* is another example of the many ways that Afeni Shakur has said literacy function in her life. It is probably not every day that someone attributes literacy with a personal rebirth. According to the fourth edition of the American Heritage Dictionary (2000), the word rebirth means "a second or new birth, reincarnation, a renaissance, revival" (p. 1032). I found Shakur's response to be very powerful data because literacy practices, particularly the practice of reading, are often associated with gaining access to higher education and obtaining a good job. But in Shakur's life she has experienced literacy to function as a way to prepare her to *become-a* revolutionary. The reality is that there is no class that can teach a person how to become a

revolutionary. For Shakur, *becoming*-a member of the Black Panther Party led to her *becoming*-a revolutionary. Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) Shakur's *becoming*-a revolutionary deterritorialized her because she moved away from thinking that she did not have any self-worth to working toward a collective effort as a member of the Black Panther Party to fight for the rights and humanity of Black people in America. It can also be inferred from Shakur's response that reading about Toussaint Louverture (April 13, 2007) provided her with the language to begin to redefine herself in relation to the circumstances surrounding her life. Although it is in the *plateaus* that I talk about Afeni Shakur as a desiring nomad, the concept also applies here because her life experiences demonstrate that she is in a constant process of *becoming* and transformation (Braidotti, 1994a; Mohanram, 1999; Tamboukou, 2004).

Dreadlock 28

What I tried to do in my writing was to get a message across to my people about the importance of fighting for our rights. I wanted to instill a sense of urgency because we needed things to change and I believed that it could be done with words. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Dreadlock 29

I had the rage. I had the anger. I used to be so angry. I wanted things to change. I wanted the condition of poor Black people in America to change. I wanted my brothers and sisters in Africa to know that we had not forgotten them. I wanted to change our condition. This is what I tell young people today. If you want change, create change. I tell them that the first thing they must do is finish school. I didn't finish high school, but I know there's value in education. I tell them that they must graduate from high school and go to college. There's too many young Black youth dying at the hands of other Black youth. The only way to make it out of all of this nonsense is through education. Keep your face in a book, and another book, and another book. That's the recipe for staying off the streets and staying out of trouble. Because it ain't nothing but trouble in the streets. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

It is in *dreadlock 28* and *dreadlock 29* that Afeni Shakur expanded on her assessment of ways that literacy has functioned in her life and how it can function in the lives of others, particularly Black youth. As expressed in *dreadlock 28*, writing played a very important role in

her life as a member of the Black Panther Party. She used her writing to promote solidarity amongst her fellow comrades and Black people in her community. She believed in the written word and thought that she could use her writing to communicate that it was urgent for Black people to understand that they did not have to live in terrible conditions or tolerate police brutality. Writing helped her control her rage and channel her energy towards creating change. For Shakur, the function of literacy in her life seemed to be linked to who she is and the things that she has done and the things she continues to do in life. As an encouragement to Black youth, Shakur stressed that literacy could function in their life as a means to keeping them off the streets because of the overwhelming number of accounts of how young Black people are dying at the hands of their own peers. She suggested that education was the way for young people to ensure a better lives for themselves—the kind of life that she fought to ensure for poor Black people as a Black Panther member.

Summary

I want to briefly summarize the data that emerged from the *dreadlocks* to show how I began to answer research question one which asked: *How did enabling conditions such as race, class, and gender make shifts possible in Afeni Shakur's life?* In order to answer these questions, the importance of the *dreadlocks* must be explained. I have provided multiple *dreadlocks* surveying the *nomadic thought* of Afeni Shakur. The *dreadlocks* represented in this study by fragmented narrativization, are made up of natty and knotted data. This data consisted of *indirect discourse* that linked the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender and the ways that literacy functioned in Shakur's life. The *dreadlocks* showed how the crisscrossing of stories reterritorialized the ways that literacy functioned in Shakur's life based upon many different circumstances. Therefore, as a way of addressing the overarching focus of this study which

examined the function of literacy in the life of a former member of the Black Panther Party, it was imperative to understand that the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender made *shifts* possible in Afeni Shakur's life by producing circumstances—circumstances that allowed her movement. This movement, as I discussed in the following section *Working the Rhizome: Plateaus, Plateaus, and more Plateaus*, effected Afeni Shakur's *becoming* because it is only through *becoming* that Shakur could be deterritorialized (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987). I found a *rhizome* of enabling conditions was inextricably linked to Shakur's everyday life (Figure 3). This figure is a visual presentation of a *rhizome* that shows that there was never a time that Shakur was not reminded that she was a poor, Black woman in America struggling with issues of race, class and gender. Each of the enabling conditions *reterritorialized* Afeni Shakur's life, which resulted in multiple shifts. She experienced life in many ways because the politics of race, class, and gender forced her to identify as Black, poor, and woman and to navigate all that came with being produced as all those things.

The enabling conditions also made possible shifts in Shakur's life by allowing her to engage in acts that promoted improving the conditions of Black people in the African Diaspora. She became a member of the Black Panther Party because she wanted to contribute to improving the lives of poor Black people in America. She often expressed in her writings and during the interviews a need to improve the conditions of her people by teaching them about the struggle and showing them ways to make liberation a reality. The conditions of race, class and gender also made shifts in Afeni Shakur's life by helping her produce an identity within the Black Panther Party. She said that she did not love herself before joining the party and credited the Panthers for helping her learn to love. As a section leader, Shakur became very involved with working with the female members. This was very important to Shakur because she was aware of

the social relations of power that existed between the male and female members of the party. She knew that the party was perceived as being dominated by a male-centered voice and although this proved true in some case, she did not want other female members to get discouraged. Shakur wanted to bring about change for women within the party and she did by establishing classes for women that were previously only taught to men. She never referred to herself as a feminist; nor did *she* ever verbalize the term, however, she never neglected to discuss the plight of women or what she referred to as “helping my sisters in solidarity.” (Telephone Interview #3)

Although I provided in Chapter Six a summary and discussion that focused on the overarching topic of this study which examined the function of literacy in the life of a former member of the Black Panther Party, I want to briefly discuss here some of the findings that emerged from the data in order to answer research question number two, *How did Afeni Shakur define literacy? What ways did literacy function throughout her life?* The data showed that Shakur did not provide a formal definition of the term literacy but instead she always talked about literacy in relation to what was going on in her life. She also talked about literacy in relation to books that she had read and how those books helped her find her way in life. Shakur always related literacy and particularly the acts of reading and writing to *becoming* free, building her mind, and achieving salvation. She provided two reading lists, one from her days as a member of the Black Panther Party and another that she said was her current personal reading list. Shakur read all of the books on the Black Panther Party’s 1968 required reading list and the books on her current personal reading list. I found that literacy functioned in Shakur’s life in a variety of ways. I created a rhizome (Figure 4) of the function of literacy to show how literacy had many functions in Shakur’s life that extended beyond basic acts of reading and writing. A few examples would be that literacy functioned to help Shakur control her rage. Its function also

helped her define herself, help others, understand local, state, and federal agencies, play the game, dream, and become an activist. All of the ways that literacy functioned in her life connected to different circumstances—circumstances of her *becoming*.

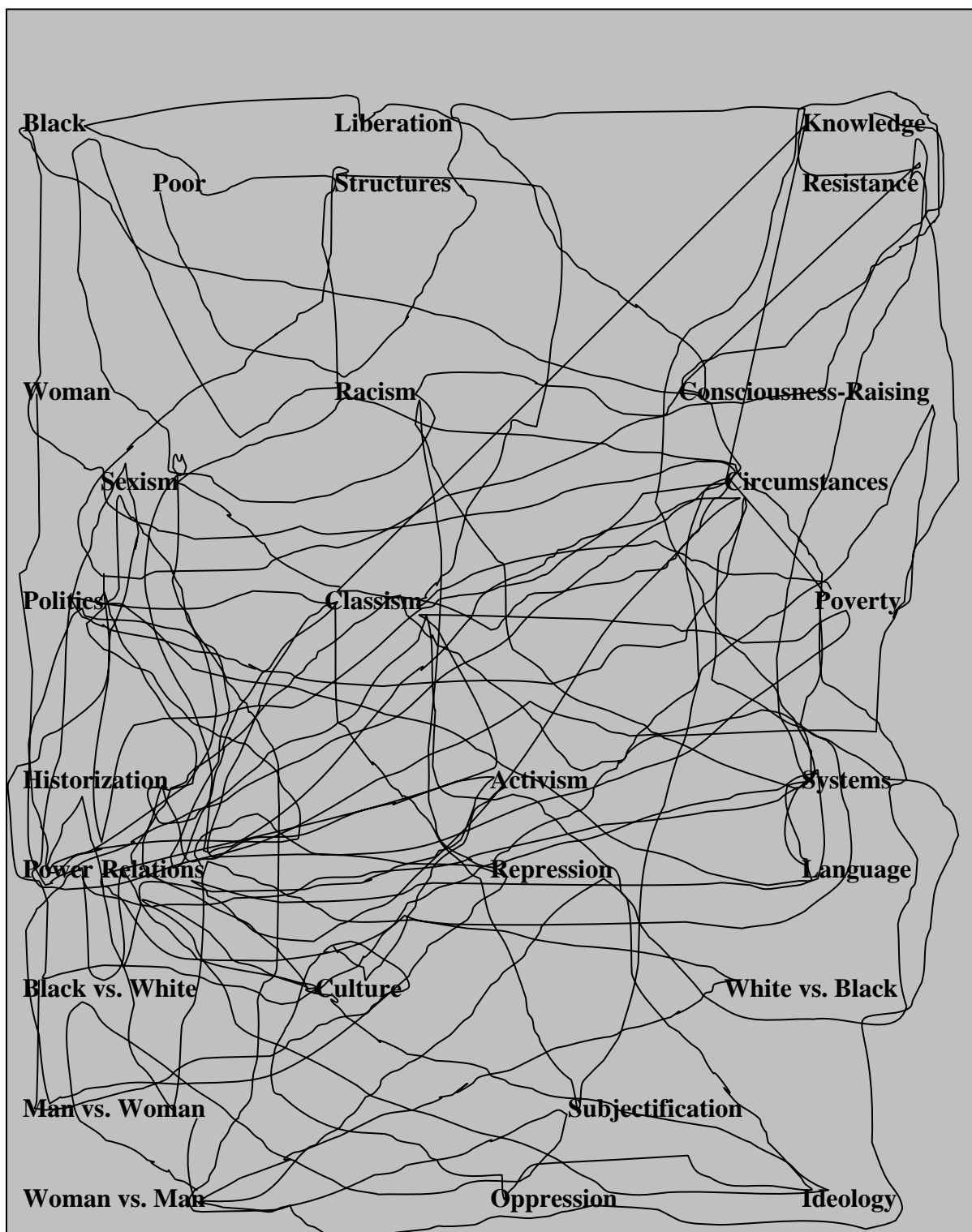


Figure 3. Rhizome of the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender.

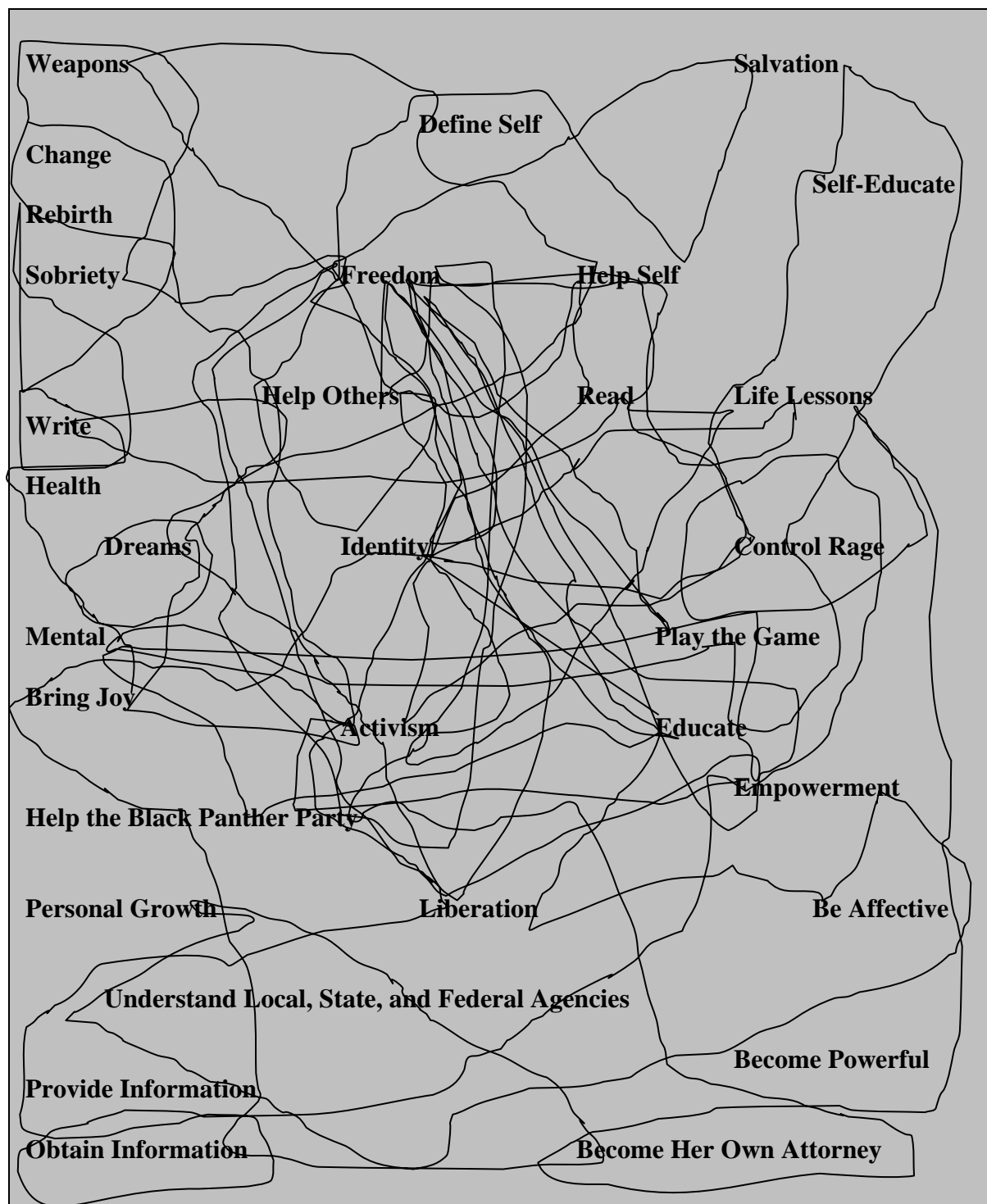


Figure 4. Rhizome of the function of literacy in Afeni Shakur's life.

Working the Rhizome: Plateaus, Plateaus, and more Plateaus

The purpose of this section was to address research question number three that asked: *What different subjectivities did Afeni Shakur describe? and How did Afeni Shakur's subjectivities enable different lived experience?* I set out to do this by using the *plateaus* that emerged from the data. *Plateaus*, unlike *dreadlocks* map the *becoming* of Afeni Shakur as a *desiring nomad* who moves freely in an element of *exteriority* with a focus on *space* and its relation to a constant process of *becoming*. In an element of *exteriority* a *desiring nomad* occupies a *smooth space*—a *space* where the *desiring nomad* becomes external to herself and to others. Therefore, the *plateaus* presented in this chapter worked to show how Afeni Shakur has produced herself and how she has been produced by others.

This leads me to explain how I decided to answer research question number three by using the term *becoming*. Although *subjectivity* is a very useful concept in poststructural theory that connotes continual changing, thinking rhizomatically, I found that Afeni Shakur's *subjectivities* were constantly changing. As a result of her constantly changing *subjectivities*, I arrived at the thought that *I will always already know who Afeni Shakur is, but I will not always already know who she be*. This kind of theorizing has its roots in Black English because in Black English, an “uninflected form of *be* is required if the speaker is referring to habitual action” (Dillard, 1973; Fromkin and Rodman, 1974/1993). Also, using the habitual *be* allowed me to show how the concept of *space* proved to be important when discussing Afeni Shakur's constant process of *becoming*. Therefore, I decided to use the term *becoming* taken from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) to address research question number three. By doing this, I was able to address the overarching concept of this study that focused on the function of literacy in the life of a former member of the Black Panther Party.

Plateau 1



Figure 5. Photograph of Afeni Shakur's 1969 arrest.

Images like the one above forces me to ask some key questions about the uses of photos in this study. Questions such as how do photos function? How do photos not function?, and What functions does photos have with this study (Kuhn, 1994). The photo in (Figure 5) represents the first *plateau* of this study. This *plateau* provided evidence of the ways that Afeni Shakur produced herself as well as how she was produced by others. In this photo, Shakur and her former husband Lumumba Shakur were arrested at their home for allegedly conspiring to bomb several New York City landmarks. This photo was selected because it is a form of *discourse* that contains a certain fixed image of Afeni Shakur and the Black Panther Party (Kuhn, 1994). Certainly, this fixed image of Shakur during this time in history appealed to those powers-to-be who were detractors of the Black Panther Party (James, 1999; Jones, 1998). It is perhaps a very dangerous language-act (Bogue, 1998, Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, Foucault, 1969/1972) because it produces an image of Black Panther Party members as being on the opposite side of the law. This photo contains an “intertext of discourses” (Kuhn, 1996) that produces both Afeni

and Lumumba as accused, arrested, criminal, and a threat to society. It produces them in all of these ways because they were being taken out of their home by two policemen. Oftentimes, when the police have to come to people's homes to arrest them, it usually sends the message that something very bad has happened and that the people being apprehended are very dangerous. The image of her with her head down was in stark contrast to the esteemed, Panther Woman, who was supposed to keep her head up. And the expression on her face will probably remain an untold story, regardless of how many biographies are written about her or the countless number of interviews she give to those wanting to know more about her life.

Plateau 2

Lumumba, being a moral man, wasn't going to have sex with me unless we were married. Because he was Muslim, he did not need the white man's acceptance of our union. What we needed to be married in the eyes of Allah and our brothers and sisters was to proclaim three times in front of a witness that it was done. So his brother was our witness, and he just proclaimed to this three times that I was his wife. That is the least requirement in the Koran to get married. I didn't say shit. He said it. This is my wife. This is my wife. This is my wife. I didn't know a thing about the Koran when I married him. All I knew is what he told me. (Biography, 2004, pp. 71-72)

In this *plateau* Afeni Shakur's former husband has produced her as *wife*. What I found interesting about this story is that Afeni Shakur became his "wife" even though she did not fully agree with the idea that two people could become husband and wife by simply proclaiming "this is my wife" three times. She acknowledged that she did not say "shit." Typically when two people are married both of them participate by exchanging vows or asking the bride-to-be parents for her hand. Being a "moral man" Lumumba told Afeni Shakur that he was not going to have sex with her unless they were married, yet he failed to tell her that he was already married to another woman—the mother of his twin children. So, in this *plateau* there was a very unique connection to the function of literacy in Shakur's life because she said that she did not know a

thing about the Koran when she married Lumumba who himself was a Muslim. Assuming had she read the Koran she would have learned that the Koran does not allow a woman to say I divorce you three times which would have come in handy later on when Lumumba had Afeni Shakur sleep in the same bed with him and his wife.

Plateau 3

Yes, it's like that. My teacher, who introduced me to the Yoruba beliefs, said my orisha was Oya. She rules the wind, the tempests, and the Niger River ... And I do believe in my name, which was also given to me at this time, Afeni, 'dear one' and 'lover of people.' (Biography, 2004, p. 56-57)

Plateau 3 serves as another example of the way that Afeni Shakur has been produced. Her birth name is Alice Faye Williams but she was given the name Afeni by a teacher of Yoruba. "My birth name is Alice Faye Williams, and there's people who still call me that, my mother never learned to pronounce the name Afeni correctly." (Telephone Interview #3) who introduced her to Yoruba—a traditional African belief system that dates back to the Atlantic Slave trade. The teacher also told Shakur that her orisha was Oya. An orisha in the Yoruba belief system is a spiritual god that guides you through everyday life. African slaves often called upon their orisha to help them survive the harsh conditions of slavery. The acceptance of her name and her orisha is linked to the African Diaspora. The Diasporic experience is an important concept of Black feminist theory because it links the experiences of Africans and African Americans by connecting our history in America American our ancestors who died during the middle passage and those who were forced into slavery in America. Shakur felt that connection and used the spirit of her ancestors as a member of the Black Panther Party and continued a movement that celebrated and honored the past. Sankofa.

Plateau 4

I thought I was ugly. No, I did not think that I was pretty. Yes, let me state that clearly. I did not think I was pretty. I was Black, dark, with short hair when the thing, the standard, you know, was a big afro or long hair.

I had neither. (Telephone Interview #3)

Shakur struggled with her self-image. She produced herself as *ugly, Black, dark with short hair*. “Men did not go for me that often, I was *awkward*.” (Telephone Interview #3) In *plateau* four, Shakur expressed thoughts about her physical appearance. There were times in her life that she thought she was ugly because she was dark-skinned with short hair. Unfortunately, her response echoes the feelings of many African American girls and women today who because of their dark skin do not think that they are good enough. This kind of self-hatred is a direct result of the color caste system that exists in America due to years of slavery where white slave masters privileged lighter-skinned Blacks over dark-skinned Blacks (Akbar, 2004; Comer & Poussaint, 1992; hooks, 2003). In *The Bluest Eye* Toni Morrison, one of Shakur’s favorite authors, focused on the fact that young Black girls struggle with their self-image. Her postmodern story introduced us to a little Black girl named Pecola. Pecola was Black, dark, and had short hair. Pecola also thought that she was ugly. She grew to believe that if only she had blue eyes she would like herself and others would like her too. “I think I read that book two or three times before I really got it. I love Morrison, the girl can write.” (Telephone Interview #3) Black feminist theory offered the concepts of “self-love” (hooks, 2004), “black womanhood” (Collins, 2000a), “self-pride” (James, 1999), and “being courageous” (Walker, 1967/2003). The “standard” in which Shakur referred goes back to the ideas of racism in America (Appiah & Gates, 1995; Davis, 1989; Gordon, 1990; hooks, 1991; Lorde, 1984; Memmi, 1964/2000). As a result of hundreds of years of legalized slavery in America and the constant degradation of all things Black, many Black people in the African Diaspora continue to suffer from feelings similar to those that Shakur and Pecola expressed.

Plateau 5

... sometimes I just want to move on. I want to move on because the Panthers

was a part of my life from 1968-1971. I know people have questions, it was a very important period of history for me. I joined in 1968. I have lived beyond 1968. I'm still living. I have my son's legacy to preserve. I have grandbabies I'm still living. That's right, purpose outside of being a Panther. So, let's move on. (Telephone Interview Interview #3)

However, Afeni Shakur was certain that she did not want to be produced solely as a *member of the Black Panther Party*. This should not be interpreted that she was not proud of her role as a Black Panther because she was, however it is fair to say that she has had many *shifts* in her life that produced a history beyond her days as a Panther. It is my assessment that Shakur holds her experiences as a Black Panther Party member in high reverence. Still, she believes that she is “more than that, I am. It will remain a part of history that will be connected to me until the day that I die and probably many years after that, but that don't mean I always have to own it.” (Telephone Interview #3) So, we moved on.

Plateau 6

People can sometimes make you think that you are all bad. Not good.
Just bad. I never bought what they were selling. I was an addict.
But never a damn fool. Arrogant sometimes, but never foolish.
I've caused some hurt in my life, especially to my children.
(Telephone Interview #3)

Here is where we got into what I thought would be a very sensitive discussion because Shakur commented on the fact that she had an addiction to alcohol and crack-cocaine for a number of years, however, she responded freely and actually initiated the topic. Shakur talked about the importance of “owning up to your shit.” (Telephone Interview #3) Much of the talk centered on the fact that she struggled with her addiction for a number of years, then “Pac brought it to the masses, yes he did.” (Telephone Interview #3) Shakur also thought that because of Tupac's celebrity, the media “took the story and ran with it, from a few bars in *Dear Mama*.” (Telephone Interview #3)

Plateau 7

I once read a book about Frida Kahlo and I thought, look at this bitch, she's bad. Her art work. Her attitude. And surviving everything that happened on that bus. Bad. Now that's bad. I don't mind being that kind of bad. (Laughs) (Telephone Interview #1)

I asked Shakur to name or describe the women that influenced her life. Shakur talked about being very close to her sister Gloria who she affectionately calls, "Glo." (Telephone Interview #3) She also surprised me by mentioning Frida Kahlo. I do not know why I was surprised, perhaps I did not expect Frida's name to pop up in this study. However, Afeni identified with many women that she says, "resisted suffocating societal impositions." (Face-to-Face Interview #1)

Plateau 8

Robert Birnbaum: The most interesting person in the book for me, or most mysterious, is Tupac Shakur's mother. Is there more of a story there?

Arthur Kempton: Well there is a whole era to talk about there. Afeni Shakur had the starring role in the Panther 21 trial...if you look at the arc of her life, it really describes what has happened to this country between 1968 and today. I have never met her. My father [much admired journalist Murray Kempton] knew her and always spoke highly of her. In fact, she came to my father's funeral. I think he would have found tremendous irony in this, a revolutionary who ended up turning her aggressions on the tending of her son's estate. Tupac—and I don't own a Tupac Shakur record—for whatever reasons, was the James Dean of his generation. He's a poster on walls all over the world.

Robert Birnbaum: I want to talk a little more about Tupac's mother. She was a revolutionary, then she was a busted-out, crack head street whore.

Arthur Kempton: I don't know about the street whore part, she had a crack cocaine problem, you know. And she is now the executor of a very lucrative estate.

Robert Birnbaum: Does it strike you that she has concerns about the purity of Tupac's legacy?

Arthur Kempton: I think it is more like a franchise. I suspect and I don't know that she is concerned with promoting the mythology of his life. That is after all commercially useful. I didn't get a sense that they were

close. I suspect she might suggest that there was a purity to his life, but I don't know what that could have been.

(<http://www.identitytheory.com/interviews/birnbaum130.html>)

AND

Plateau 9

For Tupac-
When you're not here
I measure the space
You used to occupy
Large areas become
vast and endless
deserts of you
not there.

Afeni Shakur
(Shakur, 1999, p. xiv)

Plateau 10

A Letter to Jamala, Lil Afeni, and the Unborn Baby within my Womb

First let me tell you that this book was not my idea at all (as a matter of fact I was hardly cooperative). But I suppose that one day you're going to wonder about all this mess that's going on now and I just had to make sure you understood a few things.

I've learned a lot in two years about being a woman and it's for that reason that I want to talk to you. Joan and I, and all the brothers in jail, are caught up in this funny situation where everyone seems to be attacking everyone else and we're sort of in the middle looking dumb. I've seen a lot of people I knew and loved die in the past year or so and its really been a struggle to remain unbitter.

February 8th when Joan and I came back to jail I was full of distrust, disappointment and disillusionment. But now the edges are rounded off a bit and I think I can understand why some things happened. I don't like most of it but I do understand. I've discovered what I should have known a long time ago—that change has to begin within ourselves—whether there is a revolution today or tomorrow—we still must face the problems of purging ourselves of the larceny that we have all inherited. I hope we do not pass it on to you because you are our only hope.

You must weigh our action and decide for yourselves what was good and what was bad. It is obvious that somewhere we failed but I know it will not—it cannot end here. There is too much evilness left. I cannot get rid of my dream of peace and harmony. It is for that dream that most of us have fought—some bravely, some as cowards, some as heroes, and some as plain old crooks. Forgive us our mistakes because mostly they were mistakes which were made out of blind ignorance (sometimes arrogance). Judge us with empathy for we were (are) idealist and sometimes we're young and foolish.

I do not regret any of it—for it taught me to be something that some people will never learn—for the first time in my life I feel like a woman, beaten, battered and scarred maybe, but isn't that what wisdom is truly made of. Help me to continue to learn—only this time with a bit more grace for I am a poor example for anyone to follow because I have deviated from the revolutionary principles which I know to be correct. I wish you love.

Afeni Shakur, March 20, 1970

Guy, 2004, pp. 86-88

Plateau 11

But at Tupac's I witnessed a single-parent, greatly impoverished family scenario that was still powerfully positive ... Tupac and his mother communicated openly and unashamedly; that's why he wasn't afraid to express himself. (Bastfield, 2002, p. 61)

AND

Plateau 12

Carefully, she listened to every word as I responded. She said nothing negative or at all condescending. There was no pessimism or parental overbearing in her words. She offered only strong encouragement, telling me to fearlessly pursue my dreams until fulfillment. There was raw truth in her eyes and a calming warmth about her person. It ignited in me a certain feeling of bliss and belonging the way she spoke to me as if I were her very own, this amazingly strong woman. I felt like family. (Bastfield, 2002, p. 62)

Plateaus 8 through 12 map *lines of flight* stemming from several *plateaus* that showed evidence that Afeni Shakur was constantly being *detrterritorialized* through the ways that she viewed herself and the ways that she was viewed by others. The *plateaus* were represented by an interview in which Afeni Shakur became the subject, a poem and a letter written by Shakur, and the indirect discourse of Darrin Bastfield, Tupac's childhood friend. The *becoming* of Afeni Shakur in these five *plateaus* are examples of discursive formations because they function to establish subject positions for Afeni Shakur. However, the statements, whether flattering or not, when examined within the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) work to produce Afeni Shakur as a Body *with* Organs because they prohibit her from moving in an element of exteriority.

For example, In *plateau* 8, Robert Birnbaum, the editor-at-large for a popular internet journal interviewed the son of one of Afeni Shakur's biggest followers during her years as a member of the Black Panther Party—Murray Kempton. Kempton, who followed the NY21 Black Panther Party, during their entire trial was a famed essayist for the New York Review of

Books. He actually wrote about the Black Panther Party entitled, *The Briar Patch: The People of the State of New York vs Lumumba Shakur*.

In a statement to Arthur Kempton, the interviewer Robert Birnbaum referred to Afeni Shakur as a “*revolutionary*” and a “*busted-out crack street whore*.” Arthur Kempton’s responded I don’t know about the street whore part, she had a crack cocaine problem. Then Birnbaum continue by asking Kempton if it strikes him that [Afeni Shakur] has concerns about the purity of Tupac’s Legacy.” Kempton responded, “I never meet [Afeni Shakur], I don’t own a Tupac record, and [I] don’t know what purity to [Tupac’s] life that [Afeni Shakur] could offer” (Birnbaum, 2003). Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault (1969/1972) *unsaid* statements effect just as much as those statements that are said. One of the most obvious *unsaid* statements would be that it must have been difficult for Afeni Shakur to lose her first born and only son to such a tragic death, but neither of the men expressed any kindness. Therefore, the unsaid statements function as a power structure that work to ignore the fact that Afeni Shakur’s life has changed and that she is capable of occupying a very different space.

I also found *plateau 8* to be very striking because this interview took place in 2003, seven years after Tupac was murdered and almost eight years Afeni Shakur’s sobriety date. It is one of the best examples of how Afeni Shakur has been produced by others. The *indirect discourse* in this interview *detrterritorialized* Afeni Shakur several times. She went from being a *revolutionary* and *busted-out crack head street whore*, to *someone who had a crack cocaine problem*, and an *executor of a very lucrative estate* (Birnbaum, 2003). Unfortunately, the historization of race in America has privileged the voice of white men—men who think it is acceptable to sit around and call Black women derogatory names. Afeni Shakur has always admitted to being an addict,

however, as keeping with the African American tradition, it is very disrespectful to insult someone's parents, especially someone's mother (Abrahams, 1962, 1976; Smitherman, 1994).

Even more interesting is that this interview took place so that Arthur Kempton, a former radio disc jockey and senior administrator with Boston Public Schools, could promote his new book entitled, *Boogaloo: The Quintessence of American Popular Music*. Ironically, Kempton's book focused solely on what he referred to as Black American Music. I personally found it strange that someone with his background did not "own a Tupac record," but claimed to be an expert in Black American Music. To add injury to insult, when asked about Afeni Shakur's concerns about the purity of Tupac's legacy, Kempton said that "she might suggest that there was a purity to his life, but I don't know what that could have been" (Birnbaum, 2003). How could a mother *not* find purity to her child's life? Perhaps, *plateau 9*, a poem that Shakur wrote to her son after his death, can help Kempton imagine the purity of Tupac's life.

In *plateau 10*, Shakur also wrote a letter to her unborn child that expressed how she felt being pregnant and in jail at the same time "it is no secret that I was found not guilty and released from jail about a month before Tupac was born." (Telephone Interview #3) In this letter, Shakur admitted to making mistakes and expressed her desire for her unborn child [which was Tupac] to learn from her life.

In *plateau 11* and *plateau 12*, Bastfield (2002) a friend of Afeni Shakur's son Tupac, edified Shakur as a warm person that communicated openly with her son. Bastfield (2002) wrote about the first time Tupac introduced him to his mom, "before we sank any further into small talk, Ms. Shakur produced ten dollars and told Tupac to run out and fetch her a sack" (p. 54). The word "sack" meant a bag of marijuana to smoke. Clearly, he did not try to sugarcoat his statements about Afeni Shakur, but he also did not aim to subject her in a derogatory way as did

Robert Birnbaum. Black feminist theory expanded on the fact that Black women have been called derogatory names throughout history (Collins, 2000a; hooks, 2003; Sharpley-Whiting, 2002). However, in stark contrast to Birnbaum are the statements that Afeni Shakur wrote for her late son Tupac. The poem in *plateau* nine produced Afeni Shakur as a caring mother lamenting greatly the loss of her son's death. On the act of writing, poststructural theory informed this study by suggesting that "to write is to show oneself, to project oneself into view, to make one's own face appear in the other's presence" (Foucault, 1984/1997, p. 216) and this was exactly what Shakur achieved by writing a poem for Tupac.

Plateau 13

All I wanted was protection. That's all every woman wants.
To feel secure. To be able to go through life knowing that a
man in the street ain't gonna beat you up. Having a man to
watch my back if I needed that. And all my life I have had
to be the man. Then what happens is I get in trouble for being
the man. That's the catch-22. (Biography, 2004, p. 37)

Shakur, who recently remarried talked about the importance of what Nikki Giovanni (who has a tattoo of Tupac on her arm) called "Black love" and bell hooks (2001) referred to as "salvation." Her response revealed that her *becoming* included that of "woman-unprotected," and that she had to be "the man" all of her life. Black feminist theory addressed the issues of "Black women's love relationships" and the idea of "woman-being-man" by stressing the importance of understanding the role that oppression has subjected people of color to adopt "trouble tradition" (Collins, 2000a, p. 151). Trouble tradition subjects Black women to resent their self-reliance as a way to please the desires of men. Collins (2000a) asserted that this kind of thinking leads to a complicated love" (p. 157).

Plateau 14

My daddy was a *street* nigga, and he was *loved* by the people in the
streets ... My dad was a truck driver. He made deliveries. In between
truck runs he would be home. He'd wait for us to go to school, and

he'd start fighting with my mom and beating her. My mama married to stay married, you know? That's all she knew. She was a *good* girl, and he treated her as if she were a person from the street.
(Biography, 2004, pp. 16-17).

Interestingly, Shakur discussed what I found to be another example of “complicated love.” In *Plateau* 14, Shakur talked about her relationship with her father. Shakur's father physically abused her mother and this left a lasting impression on her especially when it came down to the act of choosing a mate for herself, “I thought I would never know a man who did not hit a woman, that is how bad it was.” (Telephone Interview #3) bell hooks (2003) offered something very powerful in her book, *Rock my Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem*, where she wrote “in reality black children would be far better situated to develop healthy self-esteem if they had loving fathers in their lives, whether those fathers work or not” (p. 155). Another becoming of Shakur's was produced by her home life because she did not have a loving relationship with her father. Shakur described her father as a “street nigga.” A “street nigga” was a man that famed novelist Chester Himes wrote about in his early pulp-fiction novels. A street nigga always had a job that required him to work outside the home usually for an extended period of time and when he returned home, he did not connect with his family. Similarly, Shakur's father who returned home and physically abused their mother. Unfortunately, her parent's relationship made a lasting impression on her and its effects produced her as a resentful daughter. Shakur also said that her parent's relationship prevented her from developing healthy relationships.

Plateau 15



Figure 6. Photograph of Afeni Shakur (right) and Joan Bird (left).

Plateau 15 was selected from a New York Times article that through its heading produced Afeni Shakur and fellow Black Panther Party member, Joan Bird as “self-styled soldiers.” Afeni Shakur said “Black folks got to look good, you know that (laughs).” (Telephone Interview #3) The Black Panther Party was highly recognizable due to their tradition of dressing in all black, black leather jackets, gloves, and even berets. Many of the Panther Women became iconic for their “sense of style” (Figure 6). Today, it is very easy to walk into a department store that sells “underground” urban gear and find former Panther Women like Afeni Shakur, Joan Bird, Assata Shakur, or Angela Davis’s face silk-screened onto a t-shirt. However, even more important is that Afeni Shakur became Joan Bird’s *friend* upon meeting at a function held by the Black Panther Party. However, they got to know each other really well because they became *codefendants* for alleged conspiracy charges brought by the State of New York. In the article it was stated that the District Attorney’s office label Shakur and Bird as *dangerous persons*. It is also stated that both of them were *honor students* and although Afeni Shakur did not graduate from high school like Bird did, they both had a lot in common. They built a relationship based on

solidarity amongst sisters. Each of them dedicated her time and to bettering the lives of Black people who faced oppressive forces within American society.

Plateau 16

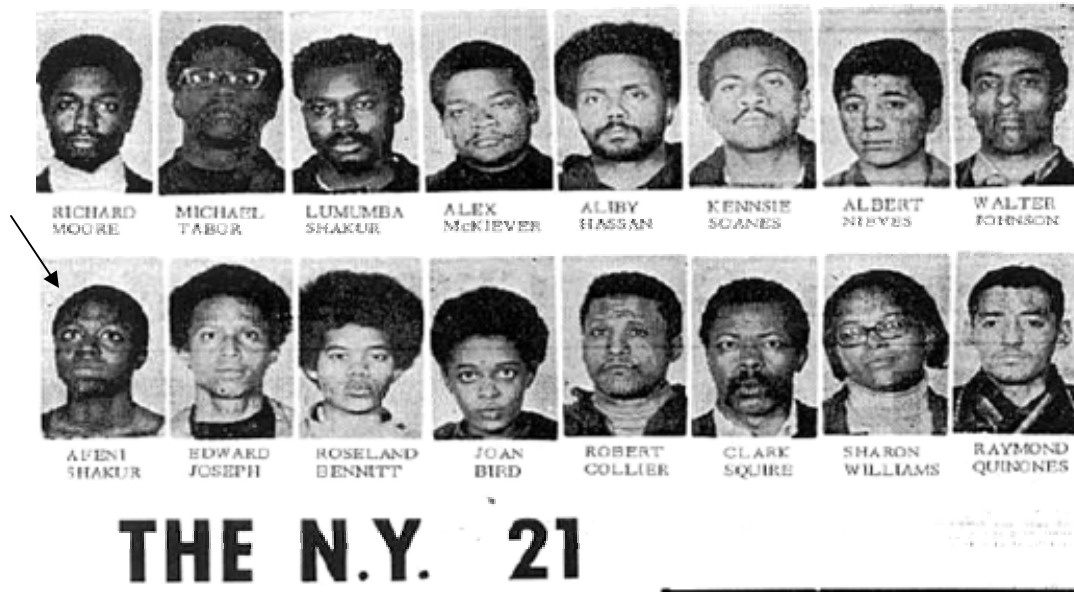


Figure 7. The N.Y. 21's mug shots taken in 1969.

This *plateau* was selected because it is a photo of Afeni Shakur's mug shot taken as a result of her 1969 arrest. Shakur was arrested at the tender age of twenty for allegedly conspiring to bomb several New York landmarks. The photo produced Shakur as the *accused* and as a *criminal*—a sharp contrast from the “self-styled” soldier in (Figure 6). However, the blank stare on her face (Figure 7) offered a glimpse into her experience as she probably felt *hopeless* and *unprotected* (Appendix G). The arrest will always be a part of Shakur's history. It is a history rooted in a racist government that has used its power to falsely incarcerate members of the Black Panther Party for the purpose of surveillance and to make sure that they were not free to continue their movement of Black liberation (Blackstock, 1975/2004; Brown, 1992; James, 1999; Jones 1998).

Plateau 17

I joined [the Black Panther Party] in 1968. When I joined, I wasn't a student. I did not come off the college campuses like a lot of Panthers did. I came from the streets of the South Bronx. I had been a member of the Disciples Deads, which would have been the women Disciples in the Bronx. (<http://www.daveyd.com/afeni.html>)

In this interview with Davey D, Shakur talked about the fact that she joined the Black Panther Party as she was in the process of “learning to love myself and my people.” (Telephone Interview #3) She shared that she became a *gang member*. She joined the Disciples Deads, for the same reasons as many young Black youth join gangs today. Shakur wanted to know what it was like to have a connected family. She yearned to know what it was like to be loved and she thought the Disciples loved her like family. Like a *desiring nomad*, Shakur was in search of a new territory because she left the Disciples just before *becoming* a member of the Black Panther Party.

Plateau 18

I didn't do nothing but disappoint my mother. I broke her heart over and over again. (Biography, 2004, p. 48)

Plateau 19

I talk to God all the time. I understand who I am more and more after each conversation I have with Him. (Telephone Interview #2)

Plateau 18 and *plateau 19* presented two very different becoming—that of the *disappointing daughter* and the *God fearing* woman. How does a *desiring nomad* move into the *space* of a *disappointing daughter* and the *space* of a *God fearing woman*? The intensity of the *plateaus* helped me better understand how these *spaces* became possible for Shakur to occupy because they mapped Shakur's different lived experiences. The *becoming-disappointing daughter* made Afeni Shakur's heart very heavy. Although her mother did not directly express what she was disappointed in, Shakur wanted to do her best in life. She knew that her mother did not agree with some the things in which became involved. She started to run the streets like her father and

as stated earlier, she eventually joined a gang. At times I observed that Afeni Shakur appeared to be very *fragile* and at times she seemed to be a very *strong woman* (Field Notes, July 30, 2005). Shakur said that she still “struggles with issues of self-love but she is working on learning to love herself more and more everyday.” (Telephone Interview #1) She has overcome a crack addiction and continues to live with the fact that her only son—Tupac Amaru Shakur was murdered more than ten years ago at the age of twenty-five years old. Like many people, Shakur has a strong sense of faith and believes wholeheartedly in God.

Plateau 20

[The Black Panther Party] is the most active and dangerous [black extremist organization] from an internal security standpoint. (Quote by J. Edgar Hoover, FBI Director, Testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, March 5, 1970)

Plateau 21

We were a very diverse group of people. I think that fact is often overlooked when the legacy of the Panthers is considered. I met some of my very best friends during my time as a member of the party. I had male friends, I had female friends. Some of my friends had parents that graduated from law school, but that wasn't a reality for others. It certainly wasn't my reality, but it didn't matter. What mattered most, at least in my opinion, was that we all strived to work toward a common destiny for Black people. In fact, I think our individual differences and experiences helped us because we brought what we knew to the table and that really helped us define ourselves. As a Panther, I became Afeni Shakur, I wasn't born Afeni Shakur. I became a woman, a thinker. (Face-to-Face Interview #2)

These two *plateaus* 21 and 22 provided some very good data because on one hand Afeni Shakur was produced as a member of a *Black extremist* organization and other the other hand she becomes a *member of a very diverse group*, a *friend*, a *woman*, and a *thinker*. The Black Panther Party was under the constant scrutiny of the American government. Many liberation movements during the 60s and 70s were targeted by the police who used their power to intimidate. The government's aim was to divide and conquer. The local, state, and federal agencies were a machine that worked to turn Panther members against each other by causing a rift in their central

committee (Blackstock, 1975/2004; Jones, 1998). J. Edgar Hoover, then Federal Bureau of Investigations director constantly investigated the movement of the Black Panther. Shakur expressed, “that man was crazy, and he seemed almost obsessed with the Panthers, damn!” (Telephone Interview #3)

Plateau 22

The panthers taught me how to love myself. I never thought anything different other than that I was ugly. I never thought of myself as beautiful. Being Black was never equated with being beautiful. I didn’t learn different until I joined the party. It’s sad, but that’s the truth. I grew up with people who called me Blackie, and told me that I was Black as tar. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Plateau 23

I never thought of myself as a brilliant person. I know some brilliant people, people who I consider to be brilliant, but I don’t think of myself as brilliant. When I became a section leader, I fought it, I fought, I fought it. I never thought of myself as a leader. I sort of fell into that position. But I did not want it. I came into the position when we [the Black Panther Party] put a freeze on accepting new memberships. The freeze lasted a few months. Everyone had to take on more responsibilities until we were able to get a grip on the infiltration of the police, especially the party’s branches in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Plateau 24

I love to talk. I have always loved to talk. I thought I would become a journalist. If you’d asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, that’s what I would say, a journalist. I like investigating and getting into the deeper end of things. I did much of this for the party, so you can say that I somewhat fulfilled that dream. (Face-to-Face Interview #2)

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) the *desiring nomad* travels many points. In *plateaus* 22 through 24, Shakur occupied many territories because she was produced in many ways. She always maintained movement due to the circumstances of her life experiences. In these *plateaus* Shakur expressed that she was ugly, and that she was called Blackie and referred to as Black as tar as a young girl growing up in North Carolina. She also thought that she did not think of herself as a brilliant person. During the time that she became a section leader for the Black Panther Party, she did not think of herself as a leader. However, when you talk to Shakur

today, it is hard to believe that she thought about herself in this way. When she shared with me her dreams about wanting to be a *journalist*, I thought about Langston Hughes's poem, *A Dream Deferred*. Shakur felt that she deferred her dream when she became a high school dropout. However, I found that Shakur is a woman who continues to live a life of many possibilities.

Plateau 25

I think most people would say that I'm a stand-up person. I hope that's what they would say, but for the most part I really don't pay much attention to other people's opinions. (Face-to-Face Interview #2)

Plateau 26

Becoming sober was one of the toughest things that I decided to do. I made the choice for me. I knew that I needed to clean myself up. It got to a point where I did not know Afeni anymore. I had to get clean. I'll always be an addict, I'm a recovering addict, but once an addict always an addict. That's what I learned during recovery. I take it one day at a time. I've been clean for over ten years. I have a copy of my AA [Alcoholic Anonymous] book with me now. I keep it with me all the time. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Plateau 27

It's hard to explain why and how I became so angry. No, I think rage is a better word to describe my feelings. Feelings of rage. I grew up in North Carolina, and growing up in the south during the 40s was hard. Pure hell. Racist girl, I'm talking straight up you Nigger this, you Nigger that. Shit, we left and moved to New York around the time that I turn eleven years old. Happy as hell to get away from Lumberton [North Carolina]. Happy as hell! Now, I love going back. You can't keep me from there. But back then, no, no, no, no, no. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Plateau 28

I didn't see my father much because he ran the damn street. His was a mean, mean man. I can't say that I miss him. I don't. He treated my mother like a dog. Hell, he'd treat a dog better than he would treat me and Glo [Shakur's sister]. I never liked when he came around. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Plateau 29

It's not worth my time to pick up anything written about me because I have lived that life. I'm living my life now, you know. I give so many interviews and a lot of my time is spent traveling and speaking to people around the world. I want to be better. I want to know a different life. What I mean is, you are put in this world

for a reason and I don't know if any of us will truly know just exactly why we are here, but I'll tell you this, I feel deep, deep down in my heart, I feel that Tupac came very close, closer than I'll probably ever get, he came very close to knowing his purpose and why God put him here. I've been blessed to live a life of many ups and downs. I like to think that I've been put here to be a voice, to use my big mouth, my loud mouth to bring people closer to knowing their own truth and reaching their full potential. That's why I love being at the center with the kids [Tupac Amaru Shakur Foundation for the Arts] because they want it, you know, they want to find their truth and to be the best that they can be. (Face-to-Face Interview #2)

I wanted to assess Afeni Shakur's *becoming* that was related to some very sensitive issues in her life. Most people do not want to feel vulnerable under any circumstances but Shakur communicated very openly. She did not want to act as if she had not had certain experiences. Although she has participated in many interviews conducted by myself and others, she approached each question with a great amount of thought. Some of the *becoming* that emerged in the data was in relation to Afeni Shakur's awareness that there is a great amount of public opinion surrounding her life that was made public through the lyrics of her son's music. Although she expressed that she did not pay much attention to other people's opinions, it was obvious that she cared about what people had to say. One of her biggest hurdles that she experienced in life was breaking her addiction to alcohol and crack cocaine. Her son Tupac introduced her to the world as a *crack fiend* and a *Black Queen*—two very contradictory *becomings*. Perhaps her dependency on drugs and alcohol stemmed from her childhood, who knows. Shakur talked how angry she was growing up in Lumberton, North Carolina, and the rage that she felt most of her life. She said that she believed a lot of her anger was a result of the constant tension in her home as a little girl. Her father physically abused her mother and she never liked when he came around as she stated in *plateau* 28. Today, she tries to keep herself involved with helping young people feel good by organizing arts programs to build their self-esteem.

I asked Afeni Shakur to complete a prompt that I created based upon her personal reading list that she provided for this study (Appendix B). I wanted to gather data that would allow me to examine how specific books on her personal reading list had effected *becoming* in her life, particularly the *spaces* that she occupies today. I asked her to provide the author's name, the title of the book, and express how that book helped her *become* who she is today.

Plateau 30

Reading James Baldwin's *Just Above my Head*, helped me become who I am today by teaching me about my rage. Baldwin had a lot of rage. I think the book came out in 77 or 1978, but I didn't read it until a couple of years after Pac's passing. So, I read it around 1998. I still had not worked on my rage even though I knew I had a lot of rage in me. This book freed me because it taught me not to worry about the past or what's to come in the future. I'm a big dreamer, I don't think I'll ever stop dreaming. That's what Baldwin's book did for me. Take the bitter, take the sweet see what you come up with. His work always made me believe that anything was possible. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Plateau 31

Reading Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*, helped me become who I am today because I was in need of connecting with my spirit. I didn't grow up in an overly religious household, but my mother was a very spiritual person and she instilled that in me. Gibran, let's see, I read Gibran probably around 1970, 71 but the book has been around for a long, long time. I used to be a selfish person, and his book freed me from that. I mean I'm still a work in progress, but I used to be real selfish. I learned the meaning of doing for others and doing right by others. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Plateau 32

Reading Sonia Sanchez's *Shake Loose my Skin*, helped me become who I am today because she wrote a love poem for Tupac. And she titled it that, A Love Poem for Tupac. She shared the poem with me about a few weeks after his passing, but I just love all of Sonia's stuff. It helped me know that it was okay to let him go, that's how it freed me. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Plateau 33

Reading James Clavell's *Shogun*, helped me become who I am today because it's just a book that I can relate to. I learned a lot about martial arts. I've never traveled to Japan, but I love history and he knows his history. It's a work of fiction but he knows his history. I think I read this book in the late 80s. I would have to say it freed me by making me aware of the similarities that Black people have when it comes to history with people in Japan.

The hell of colonization, the dirty politics played against brown people around the globe. I just enjoyed reading this book. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Plateau 34

Reading William Shakespeare's *Othello*, helped me become who I am today by teaching me how important it is to understand my own shortcomings and what makes me most vulnerable. I absolutely love reading Shakespeare. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Plateau 35

Reading Tupac Shakur's *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*, helped me become who I am today because I am at a place in my life where I am able to celebrate his life. Pac loved to write and he loved language. I think he got that from me. I believe in the power of the written word and he did too. (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Shakur selected work from six of the authors on the list: James Baldwin, Kahlil Gibran, Sonia Sanchez, James Clavell, William Shakespeare, and her son Tupac Shakur. What emerged from the data was that the function of literacy in Shakur's life was connected to *who she is* and *who she is yet to become*. In each of her responses to the prompts, Shakur credited the books for helping her control her rage, connecting her with her spirit, helping her let go of her late son, teaching her martial arts, making her aware of her shortcomings and vulnerabilities, and making it possible to celebrate her son's life.

Plateau 36

I don't think [my mother] wanted to change who I was, but she wanted to give me strength, backbone, even if I didn't use it. I could use it if I needed it eventually I did. When I needed it, I was able to dig down to the lesson my mother taught me. She told me pain is given. Suffering is optional. (Guy, 2004, p. 129)

AND

Plateau 37

An even as a crack fiend, Mama / You always was a Black Queen, Mama. (Tupac Shakur, 1995)

I found that what mattered most to Afeni Shakur were her children. (Researcher notes, April 2006) Her daughter Set, expressed in *plateau* 36 that she saw her mother as a teacher. A

teacher that taught her how to be strong when she needed. Set's *discourse* for this study was very important because children and siblings of high profile people like Afeni Shakur and Tupac Shakur often find themselves living in the shadow of their love ones. This *plateau* presents the intense relationship between a daughter and her mother—a relationship that proves that girls need their mothers (Comer & Poussaint, 1992; hooks, 2003). Even considering all of the *discourse* that has subjected Afeni Shakur, Set's assessment of her mother was that she was a mother who taught her how to be strong. The lyric data in *plateau 37* are lyrics that were cited earlier in Chapter One of this study from Tupac's songs entitled, *Dear Mama*—a song in which he wrote about and for his mother.

Aside Six: Renamed after an eighteenth-century Incan chief and revolutionary,

Tupac Amaru Shakur, was born Lesane Parish Crooks in Brooklyn, New York.

He was only twenty-five years old when he was gunned down by an unknown assailant while riding down the Las Vegas Strip in the passenger seat of a car. Tupac's song *Dear Mama* is one of the most well-know rap songs to date. Contrary to popular belief, many of his songs deal with issues of race, class, and gender. There was always a political and social message in his songs, even in songs where he expressed discontent for other rappers. He is recognized in the Guinness Book of World Records as the highest selling rap artist with over 75,000,000 albums sold worldwide. Because of his tireless work ethic in the studio, Tupac's music is still being produced and sold. He remains the *center* for many rap artists today. Rap artists often show their respect for Tupac by giving him shout-outs, for example one of the hottest rappers in the music industry today 50 Cent (2003) commented in one of his songs "I want them to love me like they love Pac." This statement is a *discursive formation* that expresses how Tupac has been positioned by others. Derrida's (1967/1980) theorizing that the center is not the center and suggested a focus on

the tension between play and history. However, I do not think that Tupac thought of himself as the *center* because there was always tension between play and history in his life (Derrida, 1967/1980). When Tupac screamed “Thug Life” in his songs or took his shirt off in his music videos displaying the words “Thug Life” tattooed across his stomach it was not done for the purposes of people to interpret his *discourse* as not having an explicit statement of the problem (Derrida, 1967/1980). “Thug Life” was an acronym that translated to The Hate U Give Lil’ Infants Fuck Everybody. Tupac’s explicit message was a message that highlighted certain aspects of society that ignore the plight of youth—a society that thinks young Black youth do not care or have the stature to be political and have a voice in the world. Therefore, for those people who criticize rappers like Tupac and his contemporaries are “falling back into an ahistoricism of a classical type, that is to say, into a determined moment of the history of metaphysics” (Derrida, 1967/1980, p. 291). Ironically, these people are some of the same critics who think problems of race, class, and gender no longer exist in America. Regardless of anyone’s philosophical stance on the idea of Truth, we all know that such a critique is not true.

This was an intense statement by Tupac because it produced Afeni Shakur as a “*crack fiend*” and a “*Black Queen*”—two very conflicting *becomings*. However, I think it is very important to examine the *discourse* in these lyrics through a close reading or a (re)reading of the lyrics in Tupac’s song. Although it might appear that Tupac is calling his mother a “crack fiend” he is not. What Tupac is doing is acknowledging the fact that his mother had an addiction to crack. Tupac was speaking of his mother’s condition not the way that he saw her. Tupac never knew his biological father (Guy, 2004) and like any Black boy, he needs his mother (Comer & Poussaint, 1992; Noguera, 2002). There is a sacred bond between Black boys and their mothers that is hard to explain (Brown & Cowans, 2000; Kunjufu, 1989). What is most engaging about these lyrics is

the fact that Tupac said that his mother was always a “Black Queen” always meaning even when she was addicted to crack she was, in his mind and heart a “Black Queen.” His soulful response to his mother is reminiscent of the 1973 song, *I’ll Always Love My Mama* by The Intruders. Theorizing the “always” in Tupac’s song suggest that his memories of his mother are actually memories of a *haecceity* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987). Both Set’s and Tupac’s assessments of their mother attest to the idea that they did not define their mother by form, substance, as a subject, or by the functions Afeni Shakur fulfilled. Instead, they defined her on a *plane of consistency*. In other words, the sum total of the *intensive* affects that Afeni Shakur was capable of at a given *power*—a relation of love between a mother and her children. This statement by Tupac *detrterritorialized* Afeni Shakur even though at the time he wrote it she said she “was still in the process of getting myself clean.” (Telephone Interview #2) In an interview given to Davey D, Afeni Shakur stated, “Let me first say that any of those songs that Tupac wrote was primarily the way he felt about something. I do not have to agree with them. I needed him to say how he felt about the pain that I caused him.” (<http://www.daveyd.com/afeni.html>) However, Afeni Shakur said that her relationship with her son improved tremendously “there was a great deal of tension in our relationship up until the time that I became clean and with his passing I am grateful that I did. I thank God everyday for His guidance and for giving me the strength to become me again.” (Face-to-Face Interview #3)

Plateau 38



Figure 8. Photograph of Afeni with son Tupac (1994).

Plateau 38 is not presenting how this study ends. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) made it very clear that “a plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end” (p. 21). It is a photo of Afeni Shakur and her son during happier times at a family gathering. Still, this photo in (Figure 8) is not to provoke a fixed image of nostalgia through their infectious smiles. However, this photo of Afeni Shakur and her son Tupac can be seen as a *rhizomatic* afterimage of *becomings* because it can function to (re)map the fixed images of Afeni Shakur and Tupac that have become discursive formations—limiting activity to that of meaning-making and signaling (Kuhn, 1996). It is a *rhizomatic* afterimage because it produces memories that are *deterritorialized* and carried off through *lines of flight*. It is impossible to generalize any “logical” conclusions about how this study should be concluded because “plateaus [and for that matter *dreadlocks*] can be read starting anywhere” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987). Tupac once commented that he may not change the world, but he would spark the mind that does. Therefore, I prefer to offer another *line* as a way to keep this analysis in play because “lines are constantly

crossing, intersecting for a moment, following one another” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 203). I offer the *line* to suggest the thought to *not* think of Afeni Shakur as “Afeni Shakur,” but rather as a person yielding to *haecceities* on a *plane of consistency*. **Aside Seven:** This study may not change the world, but perhaps it will increase our understanding of the role that literacy play in how people come to *be*.

Summary

The *plateaus* of the study helped to provide answers for research question three: *What different subjectivities did Afeni Shakur describe? and How did Afeni Shakur’s subjectivities enable different lived experience?* The findings showed that Afeni Shakur described multiple *becomings* (Figure 9). In this figure, I have attempted to map all of the *becomings* that emerged in the data. These *becomings* were a result of the many *lines of flight* in the life of Afeni Shakur. Shakur was constantly deterritorialized by her own opinions about her life, the ways that other people viewed her life, books that she read, letter and poems that she wrote, photographs that were take of her, music lyrics written by her son Tupac, and those things that have been left *unsaid*. *Becoming* enabled Shakur to be different people at very different times in her life. The *becoming* also allowed her the movement that a *desiring nomad* needed in order to occupy different *spaces*. Her life proved to be *rhizomatic* in the sense that she had relations with so many different kinds of people and events. What Shakur did was *become* different kinds of people in her life based upon the circumstances and the *space* that was mapped out for her to occupy.

In every *becoming*, literacy played a major role in the way that Afeni Shakur was produced. She was produced in books that she read, in interviews in which she participated or became the topic. She was also produced by the ideology and the rules that governed the Black Panther Party. She produced herself in letters that she wrote while in jail and in the articles that

she wrote for the Black Panther Party newspaper. Shakur produced herself in the poem that she wrote to lament the death of her son Tupac, and he produced her in a song that he wrote called *Dear Mama*. However, Shakur answered the overarching question best when she said “reading works for me, reading gave me dreams, reading gave me weapons” (Guy, 2004, pp. 40-41).

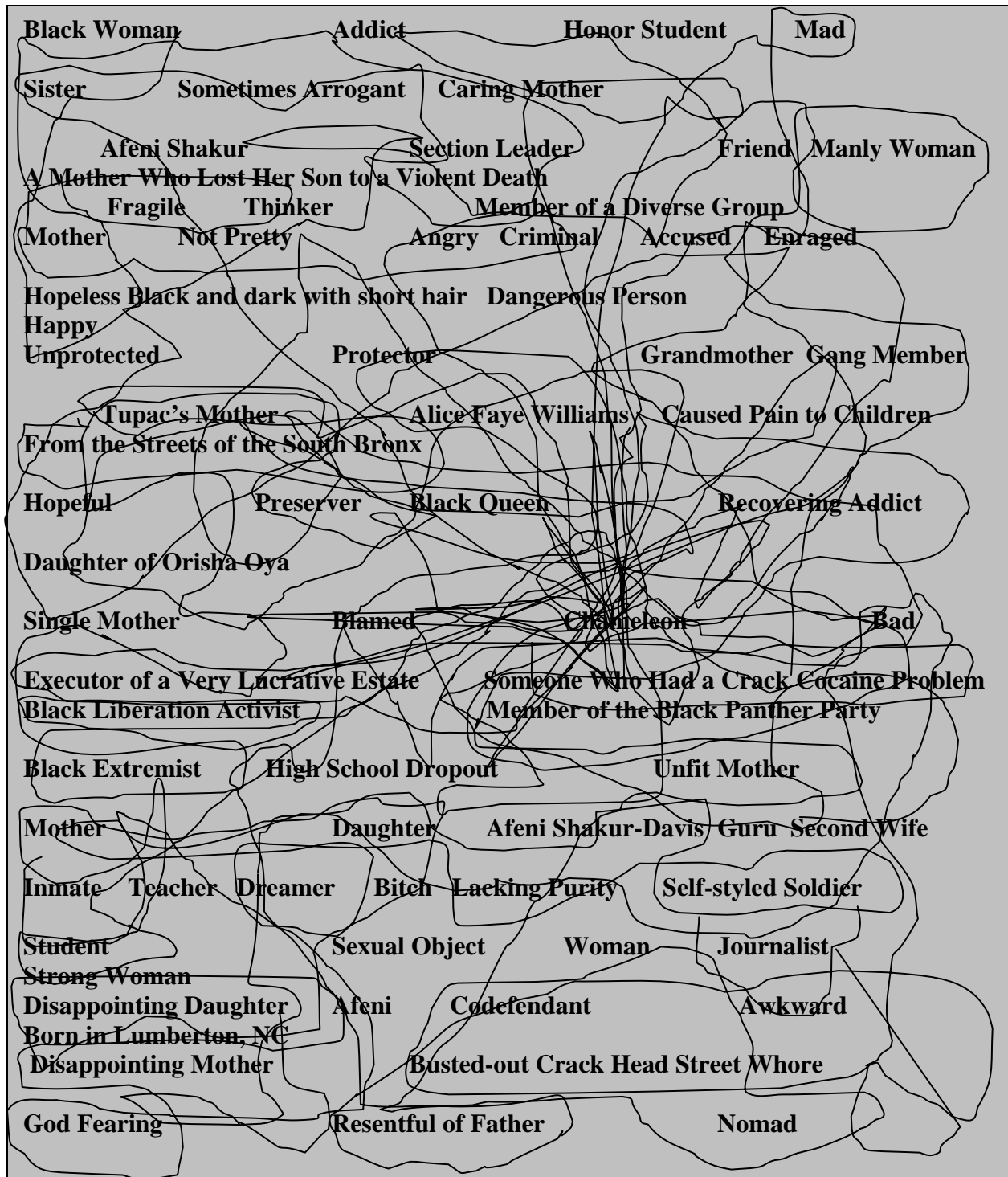


Figure 9. Rhizome of Afeni Shakur's *becomings*.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This chapter consists of a brief summary of the study and a review of the three research questions. It is followed by a summary of conclusions that share insight into the life of Afeni Shakur. I also include a discussion of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research. I conclude the chapter by highlighting implications for teacher education.

The Study

This research study is the result of my connection that I feel to the African Diaspora and my love for Hip-hop. Since that horrible day in September 1996, when the late rapper Tupac Shakur was murdered at the age of 25, I thought about doing this study. It felt like I had lost one of my own brothers when Tupac died. I knew that I had to do something to honor the spirit of a young man who appeared to be tenaciously unpredictable, and who had such a huge impact on Hip-hop culture. However, it was not until six years later that I actually had the opportunity to find out more about his life story. In doing so, I found myself drawn into one of Tupac Shakur's (1995) most notable songs entitled, *Dear Mama*. Ironically, *Dear Mama* was a song that I had heard all the time, and I considered it to be one of my favorites. Yet, it was not until I began thinking about doing this study that I actually analyzed the following lyrics:

I'm runnin' from the police, that's right, mama catch me, put a wuppin'
on my back side./ And even as a crack fiend, mama, you always was
a black queen, mama./ I finally understand for a woman it ain't easy
tryin' to raise a man./ You always was committed, a poor single mother

on welfare, tell me how you did it./ There's no way I can pay you back,
but the plan is to show you that I understand./ You are appreciated.

My analysis prompted me to want to know more about the story behind that which is presented in these lyrics. I decided that I wanted to know more about the woman that Tupac wrote about in his song *Dear Mama*, his mother Afeni Shakur. Although I had been familiar with Afeni Shakur's history as a former member of the Black Panther Party, there was still so much that I did not know. This prompted me to take a closer look at the life story of Afeni Shakur. When I read the first full-length biography of her life that was published in 2004, I knew that I was heading in the right direction. I was particularly struck by a statement that Afeni Shakur made in the book. Guy (2004) quoted Shakur as saying, "Yeah, but I read everything. Reading works for me. Reading gave me dreams. Reading gave me weapons" (pp. 40-41). As a result of this powerful statement, I wanted to know, more broadly, about the ways that literacy functioned in Afeni Shakur's life.

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways that literacy functioned in the life of Afeni Shakur, mother of the late rapper Tupac Shakur and a former member of the Black Panther Party. In particular, employing the deconstructive method of *rhizoanalysis* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987), I examined how literacy functioned in the life experiences of Afeni Shakur. Literacy, as used in this study, is inextricably linked to enabling conditions of race, class, gender, and issues of subjectivity. As applied to this study, the term literacy was defined as both a power structure and a linguistic variable that functioned to effect a becoming.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How did enabling conditions such as race, class, and gender make *shifts* possible in Afeni Shakur's life?

2. How did Afeni Shakur define literacy? What ways did literacy function throughout her life?
3. What different subjectivities did Afeni Shakur describe? How did her subjectivities enable different lived experiences?

I applied theoretical hybridity that included poststructural theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Poststructural theory provided a frame for rethinking the subject, binaries, nonprogressive/nonlinear history, totalizing narratives and discourses, power, theories, and narrative analysis. Black feminist theory provided a frame for examining women in the African Diaspora and the thought of a radical Black subjectivity. And literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari provided a frame for exploring multiple layers of personal literacy experiences. I applied concepts such as *rhizome*, *rhizoanalysis*, *deterriorialization*, *reterritorialization*, *minor language*, *mots d'ordre*, *mapping/surveying*, *indirect discourse*, *nomadic thought*, *becoming*, *movement*, *space*, *haecceity*, and *plane of consistency* to examine those experiences.

Within a poststructural theoretical frame the research study began with the recognition of how I constructed knowledge about the *researched* and the *researcher* (Pillow, 2003). I described the relationship of the researched and the researcher as one that enabled me to take a “self-questioning turn” (Slembrouck, 2004, p. 92) and ask, *What do I want wanting to know you or me?* This question allowed me to use fragmented self-narrativization as a way to face up to my own subjectivity and to explore the function of literacy in my own life as well as how it functioned in the life of Afeni Shakur.

Within a Black feminist theoretical frame the research study began with the recognition of the historical significance of feminism in the United States and the role that Black women had

in shaping a discourse known today as Black feminism (Collins, 2000; hooks, 2000). Black feminist theory brings to the forefront issues that animate the diverse experiences, concerns, and thoughts of Black women of the African Diaspora. This theory highlighted the relationship between the function of literacy and issues of race, class, gender, and subjectivity.

Shakur's knowledge of and experiences with these issues made possible various shifts in her life.

Within a theoretical frame appropriated by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), the function of literacy was extended beyond the basic skills of knowing how to read and write. This theoretical frame made possible the exploration of multiple layers of personal literacy experiences. Through the use of concepts such as the *rhizome*, *mots d'ordre*, *becoming*, and several others, I was provided with language that allowed me to assess and analyze the ways that literacy functioned in the life of Shakur. I believe this study will extend what we already understand about the function of literacy in people's lives. In particular, I believe this study will expand upon the function of literacy in relation to issues of race, class, gender and subjectivity. This study will also expand the ways that literacy has functioned to help Black people utilize counterdiscourses, and counternarratives to combat the pervasive politics of identity and white supremacy (Appiah & Gates, 1995; hooks, 1990; Woodson, 1919/1998). Also, this study has potential to demonstrate to young African American researchers like myself that it is okay to study a *nonstandard* subject (Pillow, 2003) within the walls of academia.

Conclusions

Afeni Shakur responded candidly to questions about the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender. For Shakur, these three issues were inextricably linked to how that she viewed herself as a literate person. The challenges she felt as a result of growing up Black, female, and poor in America were made explicit throughout the study. Each condition presented Shakur with its own unique challenge. But regardless of how challenging things became in her life, she managed to maintain and live a meaningful life. As a young girl, Shakur viewed literacy as an integral part of her life. Although she wanted to be a journalist or a writer for television, she cited being Black and poor in America as factors to why she did not fully accomplish these goals. Afeni Shakur often spoke her truth to the sometimes crippling effects of the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender. She clearly understood how each condition played out for many Black people in the African Diaspora.

However, Shakur did not see herself as a victim of these conditions. For example, she pointed out that at the time she became a member of the Black Panther Party, she felt extremely empowered to be Black, female, and poor in America. She attributed this to five factors: (1) the rhetoric of the Black Panther Party, specifically the Ten-Point Platform; (2) books that she read by Black scholars and other authors that addressed revolutionary ideology; (3) writing for the Black Panther newspaper; (4) actively participating in The Breakfast for Children Program; and (5) training fellow female members in self-defense and traveling across the country to speak to women who were imprisoned.

Shakur held strong convictions regarding the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender. She believed that race was the dominant variable for the male-dominated Black Panther Party. Shakur was fully aware that the Black Panther Party was perceived to be dominated by a

male-centered voice. Still, she did not consider this to be either good or bad. Shakur actually credited one of the founding members of the Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale, for bringing her into her “Africanness and loving herself” (Guy, 2004, p. 61).

Class and gender politics were as salient as issues of race. Shakur’s discussions regarding class and gender demonstrated that she was extremely aware of the importance of identifying with other women. She often traveled to different states to promote solidarity amongst those suffering from poverty. And although she never uttered the word feminism during the entire study, she talked about her work with other Panther women and often made reference to the need for women to stand in solidarity in their pursuit of freedom.

Shakur often described literacy, particularly the acts of reading and writing as a means to salvation. For example, she knew that her dream of being a journalist or writer for television could help her create a better life than the one she knew growing up as a young girl in Lumberton, North Carolina. Literacy was seen as a powerful tool that fostered Shakur’s dreams and provided the “weapons” that she needed to advocate for the rights of Black people. Shakur was humble about her contributions as a writer for the Black Panther Party newspaper. It was her skill of writing that convinced the United States government that the Black Panther Party was lacking in membership and dismantling—a notion that later was shown to be far from the truth. Shakur knew that the government was monitoring the Black Panther Party, and thus she used her writing skills to subvert the Hoover Administration in its mission to track and destroy Black organizations (Blackstock, 1975/2004).

Most often, Shakur spoke of the need to have access to books. In 1969, when she was arrested and taken to jail with several other Black Panther Party members of the

NY 21, she believed that it was her insistence in having access to books that made it possible for her to study law. She served as her own lawyer during the trial and successfully won her case. Shakur's personal literacy experiences functioned in her life as power structures that worked to effect her becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987). She became a free woman who was due to give birth to her son Tupac Shakur just a month after getting out of jail.

Shakur also stated that literacy remains to this day an essential element in her life. She recounted how reading Alcoholic Anonymous' *The Blue Book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, helped her to overcome her addiction to drugs. It is actually one of several books that she likes to have with her at all times. Shakur also said that she has kept a journal for several years as a way of learning more about herself. Clearly, she has always understood the importance of literacy and its function in her life.

Similar to her responses to the questions about the enabling conditions of race, class, and gender and the function of literacy in her life, Shakur spoke frankly about how she defined herself. What emerged from the data were *becomings* effected from statements that Shakur made about herself, things that she did, statements that other people made about her, and events that happened throughout her life. Several *becomings* emerged from the data, such as: student, poor, crack addict, member of NY 21 Black Panther Party, manly woman, activist, gang member, wife, disappointing daughter, high school dropout, accused, Black queen, single mother, blamed guru, weak woman, Black extremist, honor student, Afeni Shakur, busted-out crackhead street whore, recovering addict, teacher, resentful of father, God fearing, unprotected, inmate, Black woman, preserver of, unfit mother, bitch, bad, prisoner, woman, etc. These different *becomings* enabled different lived experience by making it possible for Shakur to be different people at different times in her life. Not all of the *becomings* presented her in the most desirable manner. I also

learned that Shakur would not have wanted them to be only positive because she operated with the understanding that the space she occupied was unstable (Bradiotti, 1994b; Mohanram, 1999).

Here I recount a few examples detailing the *becomings* that enable different lived experiences for Shakur. She recalled some of the events on the day that she was arrested on conspiracy charges in April of 1969. This event produced Shakur as a criminal. She also discussed being subjected as “the wife” of a fellow member of the Black Panther Party just by simply proclaiming “you are my wife” three times. Even her name, [born Alice Faye Williams] Afeni, which means dear one and lover of the people was given to her by a Yoruba priestess (Guy, 2004). However, Shakur did not always like herself, especially her physical appearance. She actually subjected herself as “ugly” because she was a dark-skinned woman with short hair. This kind of self-subjection, regardless of class, as hooks (1990) would say remains a part of the crisis that many Black women face—it is the crisis of meaning—it is the crisis of Black womanhood.

The findings of this study can potentially advance the field theoretically and materially. As I discussed earlier in Chapter Three, applying a hybrid of theoretical frameworks—poststructural theory, Black feminist theory, and literacy theory appropriated by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. I triangulated the three different frameworks in the absence of data as a way to interrogate my own theoretical positions. Taking this step was important because it prevented me from beginning my study with preconceived ideas about what the data might yield and from thinking about what might be possible to conclude from the data. I quickly learned that any foundations that I might have had for conducting this study would be shaken loose. I was forced to be honest about and consequently abandon any prior theoretical subjectifications that I held. This led me to explore why I chose to use each of the three

frameworks for this study because I did not want to take for granted the important role of theory in relation to the experiences of Afeni Shakur.

Exploring the experiences of a subject such as Afeni Shakur has the potential to advance the field of language and literacy education materially because the findings show, as I discussed in the literature review (Chapter Two), that literacy has many functions. Literacy, particularly in the lives of African Americans, has certain *rhizomatic* characteristics because of our unique history as descendants of Africans who were brought to America to serve as slaves. For hundreds of years, literacy was inaccessible to Black people in America. Many states made it illegal for Black people to become literate—hefty penalties such as beatings and even death awaited those who taught themselves and other slaves how to read and write (Butchart, 1987; Willis, 2002). Therefore, Black people had to employ strategies that would help subvert such prohibition. Stories such as those of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs (Chapter Two) are examples of the ways that *rhizomatic* literacies made it possible to become free—whether metaphysically or physically.

Limitations of the Study

Presumed limitations of the methodology of this study because I chose to develop a *rhizoanalysis*. There is no blueprint that describes what a *rhizoanalysis* is and how it works. Therefore, many qualitative researchers who embark on a journey to use *rhizomatic* methodologies journey into unknown territories. As I started my journey, I knew that I would be expected to answer questions such as the following: *what makes this a rhizoanalysis?* and *how is this different from the work of other qualitative researchers?* I learned from studying the research of others who have done similar work (Alvermann, 2002; Hagood, 2004; Honan & Sellers, 2006; Jackson, 2003; Kamberelis, 2004; St. Pierre, 1997) that a *rhizoanalysis* can yield various

interpretations of data that are valid and have implications for future practice. Thus, before I could begin to answer any questions about using *rhizomatic* methodologies, I had to decide how I wanted to approach my work. One of the things that I had to do as I approached this study was to rid myself of any notions of what makes sense. For example, I knew that it would probably make sense to think only certain things about the function of literacy—things that do not go against the status quo understanding of literacy in the field of language and literacy education. I also decided to approach my work with the understanding that although it would make sense to resist offering “clearly” stated methodological procedures in the name of poststructuralism, that I would not resist. I wanted to do away with the myth that in order to do the work of a poststructuralist, you have to be vague and avoid clarity. I did not resist because I believe failing to provide some answers about the ways that a *rhizoanalysis* works leaves nothing but more questions for future researchers. In order for future researchers to continue the work of using deconstructive methodologies, those who come before have the burden to provide some answers—not all, but some.

Recommendations for Future Research

There remains a necessity for scholars of the African Diaspora to establish epistemology for educational theory and practice (Gordon, 1990). The burning question of epistemology (how do we know what we know?) should be used as a theoretical springboard to increase the number of studies that examine literacy in the lives of people of the African Diaspora, particularly Black people in America. Future researchers should continue to focus on the role of race, class, gender, and subjectivity in determining how slavery in America helped shape the function of literacy in the lives of African Americans. Therefore, it is imperative that scholars be “real” about what they know about the achievement of African people before slavery. It is my assessment that

some scholars of the African Diaspora want to avoid talking about “Black stuff” in the academy because they fear being seen as too political. The harsh reality is that slavery worked to underdevelop the minds of people who descended from pioneers of math, science, and literature (DuBois, 1969/1982; Woodson, 1933/1990). Working with Afeni Shakur reminded me that the genius of our people cannot be fully taken away. I would also recommend applying the same theoretical framework and methodology of the study of other revolutionary activists of African descent who live on other continents, specifically, Asia, Europe, and Africa. It would be interesting to see how literacy functions in the life of someone like former South African President Nelson Mandela—a man who spent almost thirty years in prison for his role as an anti-apartheid activist in South Africa.

Similarly, on a much smaller scale, but with an even greater potential to make an impact on the educational system in the United States, I would recommend that future researchers develop a framework and methodology that would allow them to think about the ways that race, class, gender, and subjectivity are discussed in teacher preparation programs. Researchers could observe college-level classrooms of preservice teachers, specifically teachers who plan to teach in urban settings, to study how preservice teachers are taught to teach literacy. These data could be coupled with data obtained from interviews that can take place after the preservice teachers graduate and become certified teachers.

Implications for Teacher Education

Several implications for teacher education can be drawn from this study. Teacher education curricula must consist of activities that encourage future teachers to reconceptualize the functions of literacy beyond the acts of simply reading and writing. Preservice teachers should receive instruction in planning how to welcome discussions about race, class, and gender

in their classrooms and not be afraid to be political and historical. Strategies can be taught to students in teacher preparation programs that inform them of “safe” ways to be political. Afeni Shakur used writing as a way to be political. Her work helped the Black Panther Party convey a message to the federal government that the members of the Black Panther Party would not give up their fight for equality. In addition to teaching preservice teachers to be strategic, education programs will have to continue to broaden the canon in which texts are selected as required reading in order to expand upon issues of race, class, gender, and subjectivity. Students must learn that literacy functions in many ways, and particularly poor African American students need to know that literacy can be a bridge to both a metaphysical and a physical freedom.

The notion of the function of literacy should be expanded so that preservice teachers are taught to teach students the idea that reading can work for them, provide them with dreams, and give them the necessary weapons to build their minds. It is my belief that poor African American students in urban settings are not being exposed to this notion of the function of literacy. Professors must tell preservice teachers that teaching their students about the importance of learning to read and write must extend beyond talk of getting a “good job.” Although this may be true, it is also only one function of literacy.

Teacher education programs should require preservice teachers to fulfill not only a multicultural diversity requirement, but also take a course in urban education or Black Studies, especially for those preservice teachers who have never worked in an urban setting but plan to do so. Finally, preservice teachers should be introduced to research studies conducted by Black scholars that focus on African American literacy practices (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 1993; Mahiri, 1998; Willis, 1995). Such research can introduce preservice teachers to stories like that

of Afeni Shakur—stories that can help them develop a strong commitment to bettering the lives of young Black students in the classrooms where they teach and beyond.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PROTOCOL FOR FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW ONE

1. Let's discuss issues dealing with race, class, and gender. It appears to me that historically these three things have caused what I would like to refer to as shifts in your life. Can you describe specific ways that race, class, and gender have shifted your life?

Probing Questions

- On what was the Black Panther Party based? How did the party originate?
- Please describe when and how you became a member of the Black Panther Party.
- Which historical Black activists do you most identify?
- What role does race, class, and gender play in determining the outcome of people's lives?
- What role does history play in determining the outcome of people's lives?

APPENDIX B

PROTOCOL FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEW ONE

1. How do you define literacy? What do you think literacy is?
2. Describe ways that literacy has functioned throughout your life.
3. Provided the following way that I have chosen to define literacy: 5. Literacy is a power structure. 6. A linguistic variable. 7. Regimes of interactive conjunctions of collective assemblages of dissemination. Mostly, these regimes make possible discursive heterogeneity. 8. Literacy is not made up of words, but issue *mots d'ordre* [a French term meaning to regard language-acts as acts of power] and therefore, possibilities. Literacy's function is to effect a becoming. What connections, if any, can you make amongst this definition and what you have shared about the function of literacy in your life?

Probing Questions

- During the time that you were a member of the Black Panther Party, what kinds of literacy practices did you engage?
- What kinds of ideas and/or beliefs do you remember learning about literacy as a member of the Black Panther Party?
- How did you view the function of literacy as a member of the Black Panther Party?
- What role did literacy play in your life as a member of the Black Panther Party?
- What role did literacy play in your life before you became a member of the Black Panther Party?
- Were there any required literacy practices in which you were required to engage as a member of the Black Panther Party?
- Please describe some of the things that you have read, things that you have written, speeches that you have given, and/or listened to, as well as what you have viewed as a member of the Black Panther Party.
- What specific books have you read during the time that you were a member of the

APPENDIX B CONT.

Black Panther Party?

-What did you read/write during the time that you faced conspiracy charges as a result of your 1969 arrest?

-You acted as your own attorney and were successful in overturning the State's case against you. What did you read to help you win your case?

-What was your perception of reading as a member of the Black Panther Party?

-How did reading influence the way you view the world?

-What do you read while at home?

-What do you read while traveling?

-What do you read to relax?

-What do you read to your grandchildren?

-Do you keep a journal?

-What kind of music do you like? What kind of songs are you most interested? Why?

-What local/national news programs do you watch/listen to?

-What is your favorite book?

-What is your favorite topic to read about?

-How do you prepare for your speaking engagements?

APPENDIX C

PROTOCOL FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEW TWO

1. Do you feel you've been different people in your life?
2. If you had to describe five different people that you had to be, wanted to be, were told to be, were forced to be, resisted to be, who would you describe?

Probing Questions

-Can you describe the different identities in your life?

-Can you share with me a song, poem, picture, etc. that you think might represent different identities that you had to be, wanted to be, were told to be, were forced to be, or resisted to be?

APPENDIX D

PROTOCOL FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEW THREE

Follow-Up Questions

1. In relation to all that you have shared with me about identities or what I refer to as subjectivities, and specifically your life history, what is the next you? How would you describe your next becoming?
2. How do you talk about subjectivities? What is your understanding of what it means for people to be subjected and produced?

APPENDIX E

PROTOCOL FOR FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW 2

Objective: To follow-up on questions that I generated from reviewing transcripts from previous interviews.

Probing Topics

- Political Education Classes of Black Panther Party
- Recruitment
- The spirit of that period in time
- The history of the Black Panther Party
- What does she think about things that other people write about her
- Misconceptions about the Black Panther Party

APPENDIX F

PROTOCOL FOR FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW 3

Objectives:

- Finish discussion about the Black Panther Party
- Discuss its place in history
- Prompt activity based on Afeni Shakur's current personal reading list

Probing Questions Based on Previous Interview Data

- How did the Black Panther Party dismantle/come to an end?
- What is your legacy within the Black Panther Party?

PROMPT: Please complete the following prompt by providing the name of an author from your personal reading list that you provided to me, the name of the author's work, and how reading that book helped you become who you are today.

Reading, _____ Author's name, _____ Book's name, _____ helped me become who I am today...

APPENDIX G

THREE SITES OF RHIZOMIC *TOPOGRAPHY*

Major Topographies	1 Enabling Conditions of Race, Class, and Gender	2 Function of Literacy	3 Subjectivities
Sub- Topographies	1.1 Black 1.2 Poor 1.3 Woman 1.4 Racism 1.5 Sexism 1.6 Classism 1.7 Man vs. Woman 1.8 Woman vs. Man 1.9 Consciousness- Raising 1.10 Activism 1.11 Historization of Race, Class, and Gender 1.12 Circumstances 1.13 White vs. Black 1.14 Black vs. White 1.15 Liberation 1.16 Resistance 1.17 Language Enabling Conditions	2.1 Weapons 2.2 Health 2.3 Growth 2.4 Life Lessons 2.5 Identity 2.6 Self-educated 2.7 Building mind 2.8 Activism 2.9 Fulfill Dreams 2. 10 Read 2.11 Write 2.12 Sobriety 2.13 Educate 2.14 Empowerment 2.15 Affective 2.16 Provide Information 2.17 Obtain Information 2.18 Help Others Function of Literacy	3.1 Resentful of Father 3.2 God Fearing 3.3 Student 3.4 Recovering Addict 3.5 Daughter 3.6 Addict 3.7 Single Mother 3.8 Activist 3.9 Accused, Blamed, Angry, Bad 3.10 Sister 3.11 Grandmother 3.12 Member of New York 21 Black Panther Party 3.13 Guru 3.14 Inmate 3.15 Tupac's mother

	Cont.	Cont.	Cont.
	1.18 Knowledge	2.19 Bring Joy	3.16 Teacher
	1.19 Poverty	2.20 Understand Local, State, and Federal Agencies	3.17 Sexual Object
	1.20 Culture	2.21 Become Her Own Attorney	3.18 Nomad
	1.21 Power Relations	2.22 Help the Black Panther Party	3.19 Honor Student
	1.22 Repression	2.23 Control Rage	3.20 Chameleon
	1.23 Politics	2.24 Salvation	3.21 Unprotected
	1.24 Ideology	2.25 Freedom	3.22 Bitch
	1.25 Subjectification	2.26 Become Powerful	3.23 Second Wife
	1.26 Systems	2.27 Play the Game	3.24 Black Woman
		2.28 Define Self	3.25 Black Queen
		2.29 Change	3.26 Black Extremist
		2.30 Help Self	3.27 Black Liberation Activist
			3.28 Section Leader
			3.29 Alice Faye Williams
			3.30 Afeni Shakur
			3.31 Woman
			3.32 Single Mother
			3.33 Unfit Mother
			3.34 Hopeless
			3.35 Hopeful
			3.36 Protector

			<p>Subjectivities Cont.</p> <p>3.37 Journalist</p> <p>3.38 Disappointing Daughter</p> <p>3.39 Disappointing Mother</p> <p>3.40 Preserver</p> <p>3.41 Helpless</p> <p>3.42 Helpful</p> <p>3.43 Friend</p> <p>3.44 Mother</p> <p>3.45 Daughter of Orisha Oya</p> <p>3.46 Afeni</p> <p>3.47 Black and dark with short hair</p> <p>3.48 Not pretty</p> <p>3.49 Awkward</p> <p>3.50 Sometimes Arrogant</p> <p>3.51 A Mother Who Lost Her Son to a Violent Death</p> <p>3.52 Strong Woman</p> <p>3.53 Caring Mother</p> <p>3.54 Lacking Purity</p>
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			<p>Subjectivities Cont.</p> <p>3.56 Someone Who Had a Crack Cocaine Problem</p> <p>3.57 An Executor of a Very Lucrative Estate</p> <p>3.58 Self-styled Soldier</p> <p>3.59 Dangerous Person</p> <p>3.60 Codefendant</p> <p>3.61 Criminal</p> <p>3.62 From the Streets of the South Bronx</p> <p>3.63 Caused Pain to Children</p> <p>3.64 Member of a Diverse Group</p> <p>3.65 Thinker</p> <p>3.66 Fragile</p> <p>3.67 Happy</p> <p>3.68 Born in Lumberton, NC</p> <p>3.69 Remarried</p> <p>3.70 Afeni Shakur-Davis</p>
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APPENDIX H

COMPLETE LIST OF RULES OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

1. No party member can have narcotics or weed in his possession while doing party work;
2. Any part member found shooting narcotics will be expelled from this party;
3. No party member can be drunk while doing daily party work.
4. No party member will violate rules relating to office work, general meetings of the Black Panther Party, and meetings of the Black Panther Party anywhere;
5. No party member will use, point, or fire a weapon of any kind unnecessarily or accidentally at anyone;
6. No party member can join any other army force, other than the Black Liberation Army;
7. No party member can have a weapon in his possession while drunk or loaded off narcotics or weed;
8. No party member will commit any crimes against other party members or black people at all, and cannot steal or take from the people, not even a needle or a piece of thread;
9. When arrested Black Panther members will give only name, address, and will sign nothing. Legal first aid must be understood by all Party members;
10. The Ten-Point Program and platform of the Black Panther Party must be known and understood by each Party member;
11. Party Communications must be National and Local;
12. The 10-10-10-program should be known by all members and also understood by all members;

APPENDIX H CONT.

13. All Finance officers will operate under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance;
14. Each person will submit a report of daily work;
15. Each Sub-Section Leaders, Section Leaders, and Lieutenants, Captains must submit Daily reports of work;
16. All Panthers must learn to operate and service weapons correctly;
17. All Leaders who expel a member must submit this information to the Editor of the Newspaper, so that it will be published in the paper and will be known by all chapters and branches;
18. Political Education Classes are mandatory for general membership;
19. Only office personnel assigned to respective offices each day should be there. All others are to sell papers and do Political work out in the community, including Captain, Section Leaders, etc;
20. Communications--all chapters must submit weekly reports in writing to the National Headquarters;
21. All Branches must implement First Aid and/or Medical Cadres.
22. All Chapters, Branches, and components of the Black Panther Party must submit a monthly Financial Report to the Ministry of Finance, and also the Central Committee;
23. Everyone in a leadership position must read no less than two hours per day to keep abreast of the changing political situation;
24. No chapter or branch shall accept grants, poverty funds, money or any other aid from any government agency without contacting the National Headquarters;
25. All chapters must adhere to the policy and the ideology laid down by the Central Committee of the Black Panther Party;
26. All Branches must submit weekly reports in writing to their respective Chapters.

<http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/unknown-date/party-rules.htm>