CONTESTATION OF PLACE: BEAR BUTTE AND THE STURGIS MOTORCYCLE RALLY

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by

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1: Thesis Goals

My journey into researching the aspects of place, and what I call subjective-identity, emanated from a long standing interest in issues of social justice, activism, economic colonialism, and more recently, neoliberalism. My research involving the contestation of the sacred American Indian place Bear Butte and the encroaching biker-themed campgrounds of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally began with an exploration into the concept of place and placelessness, developed in the early 1970’s by humanist geographer Edward E. Relph. But the research eventually expanded beyond this concept to include elements of militarism and identity, looked at through the ever present lens of an intimate subjectivity. This expansive approach has facilitated an understanding of the facets of economics, power and place that make this study area tremendously rich for a social geographic endeavor. This course of study was unavoidable, as Relph’s concept, while significant in its utility, only served to open up other important avenues of understanding the complex events occurring at this place.

One of the avenues surfaced out of an inability to separate the personal experiences of my encounters during the research with the objects of my work. The physical place, as well as the people I encountered could not be studied with the objective principles that seem to exist in the ideal vacuum of certain proposed methods.
of research. The further I tried to distance myself from the research, the less impactful and more lackluster became the results. When this approach was abandoned, the richer certain observations and experiences became. The integration of militarism and entertainment at the campgrounds, for example, became a prominent part of the research once a more experiential approach to understanding the phenomena was taken. What started as simply attending a concert to cap my time at the rally became an eye-opening event that framed a major segment in this thesis.

The autobiographical aspect of my thesis became problematic, however, especially when certain expectations of academia is to limit, if not eliminate, this from social scientific research. This experience evolved similarly to what Ian Cooke described as he “passed through and was connected with all kinds of other locals (physically and otherwise)” (2001, p. 101). Trained in the scientific method of objective analysis, and gradually weaned off of the temptations to include myself in research activities, I became perplexed as the research developed. How could I eliminate myself from aspects of understanding the work that were driven, to various circumstantial degrees, by experiences from both my past, and the present? The decision I made, to limit but not avoid certain autobiographical/experiential elements in my research, was needed. What may be perceived as a compromise on my part may still be seen as an inappropriate method by some, but this was the only way that this research, in my opinion, remained vibrant, important, and unique. The field of study became “expanded” (Katz, 1994). The field is not a separate space, aloof from the study
(Clifford, 1997). It became infused with aspects of a “reflexive, multilocal ethnography” (Cooke, p.104). It is also a process that is not finite. Much like Bear Butte and the various forces, including the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, that create the place, the absorption of this research is an ongoing process for both the writer and the reader.

The objectifying of research subjects is always a problem, one that is particularly true in the case of feminist researchers. The “space of betweenness” (Haraway, 1998; Katz, 1992) that occurs when studying disadvantaged groups, much like my work here on American Indians, can be effective if you don’t succumb to “easy relativisms and holisms”, and recognize the negative and positive aspects of your “partial perspective” (Haraway). This was particularly evident to me on the one occasion in 2008 where my plans to meet my Indian informant were changed when she found the need to leave the noise and activity of The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally for the spiritual restoration of a Sun Dance. I waited patiently and hopefully for an invite that did not come, cementing my position as an outsider. A similar experience occurred in 2000, when I stumbled upon a local swimming hole, near the Crazy Horse Memorial. Devoid of tourists and bikers, and few non-Indian people, the atmosphere instantly screamed, “You are not like us, you are not from here!” These experiences illustrate the socially constructed differences and boundaries that we must be aware of, but we must also recognize the power relationships that assemble individual and group classifications. There are other choices that fall between the lines of exploitation and patronage (Patai, 1991). My research
attempted to break down these lines of division, infused with a personal perspective that could not be ignored, or omitted.

1.2: Introduction of the Research

Contestations over place are not unique. They have occurred throughout prehistory and occur today in various forms. Conflicts range in frequency, scale, and type in response to various economic, political, cultural, and legal pressures. The recent history of the North American continent, since the arrival of European settlers, has seen the establishment of modes of land entitlement that was shockingly foreign to the inhabitants who lived on the land for centuries (Hannah, 1993; Wishart, 1997; Gonzalez and Cook-Lynn, 1998; Leavelle, 2004). These modes have now escalated to become entrenched battles over land use, filtered through the complex matrix of private property rights, multiple levels of government, variable economic and social conditions, and ever-changing interpretations and enactments of law. This research looks at how western concepts of leisure, and the tourism industry, is overwhelming American Indian sacred landscapes, resulting in an affront to the identity that is reinforced through prayer at these religious places. The focus will be on Bear Butte, South Dakota, a laccolith located in the Black Hills, the spiritual home of several American Indian nations. The advance of biker themed campgrounds on Bear Butte, related to the Sturgis
Motorcycle Rally, and the transformation of this sacred place by militaristic neoliberalism, and aspects of subjective identity will be the focus of my thesis.

The first concept used is Edward Relph’s work on authenticity, specifically his exploration of the concept of place and what he has coined placelessness. This is looked at from the perspective of the bikers’ relationship, or lack thereof, to Bear Butte. How the bikers relate to certain, defined facets of authenticity with resultant inauthentic attitudes and actions is explored.

The second focus will be on the establishment of subjective identity from both the bikers and the American Indians perspective, along with my personal experiences before, during, and after the research was conducted.

The third focus will be on the aspects of place formation at two campgrounds near Bear Butte, specifically the role of militarism as an extension of nationalism and neoliberalism.

1.3: Methodology

The qualitative approach used in this research consists of an experiential approach, looking at place from the perspective of what Yi-Fu Tuan describes as “a center of meaning constructed through experience” (1975, p.152). The construction of place will be examined through a combination of the historical and present experiences of both the American Indians as well as the patrons of the biker festival. In turn, my personal encounters and reflections on the present experiences will serve both as a
filter of as well as an augmentation to the events surrounding Bear Butte. This approach blends experiences gathered during three field seasons in the ever growing expanse of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming. These experiences include semi-structured interviews at the biker campgrounds, casual conversations at a biker concert, non-biker campgrounds, coffee shops, the sidewalks of Sturgis and other Black Hills towns, and observations at all of these places. The research also includes personal discussions with American Indians that I met at a previous visit to Bear Butte, before I entered the Master’s program at Kent State University. All of this research is then looked at through the qualitative lens of theories rooted in the geographical concepts of place, subjective identity, colonialism, neoliberalism, nationalism, and militarism.

1.4: Research Inspiration Part 1- Early Personal Encounters with First Nations People

My interest in issues related to aboriginal life began when I was very young. My father owned a small grocery/hardware store in east central Saskatchewan, bordering dense parkland to the north, and rich farmland to the south. Interspersed in this region were several Indian Reservations, now referred to as First Nations. It was, and still is, a deeply segregated society, such that people that lived 20 miles away might as well have been hundreds of miles away. There were rare occasions of interaction, and these were uncomfortable for my parents, and confused me as a young boy. My father would drive
into Yorkton every Thursday to pick up stock for the store, leaving my mother to mind the business. Occasionally the First Nations people would take advantage of these days and attempt to buy vanilla extract, and Lysol spray, knowing my mother was intimidated by them, unlike my father. My first visions of First Nations people was an extremely old and beat up car, filled with drunk individuals, attempting to buy alcohol filled items. Often terrified, my mother would sell a small amount, in an effort to satisfy them and send them on their way. This instigated a lifelong quest to understand these and other strange events.

Other encounters included rare visits to Reservation life during minor hockey games as a young boy. Our fathers would make frightening racist jokes about us getting scalped after the game and us needing to leave the area as quickly as possible. What intrigued me was the dynamic skill of several of the boys we played against. A few could take the puck and go through our whole team with ostensibly little effort. They never beat us however, as they had no discipline and played the game without any team based approach. Near the end of the games, these phenomenal young athletes would be disorganized, seemingly waiting for the game to end so they could get out of there. Looking back I wonder if the decades of loss that they experienced at the hands of our ancestors, and the blatant racial discrimination that occurred then and remains today, has resigned them to a life of losing and eventual alcoholism, despair, and poverty.
Later as an older teenager, I found myself strangely in alliance with the First Nations people, or Indians as we called them back then. I began to get bullied, and one of the hurtful nicknames that were hurled at me was “Indian”. Because of my dark complexion, this name joined others, including the n-word, black-boy, and even George Keewatin, a radio host of a local First Nations program. I began to hate my dark skin, and felt a strange camaraderie with people who have been discriminated against based on how they looked. This was the start of a lifelong connection to those who have been looked down upon, and mistreated by the dominant culture. This inspired me to look at the underlying reasons and structures of power relationships that I observed in my life. I began to be very good at observing and analyzing, at first people, and later the arrangements and hierarchies around which our lives function.

1.5: Research Inspiration Part 2- A Personal Introduction to Bear Butte

My initial interest in Bear Butte and the effect of the Sturgis Motorcycle Festival came about through a combination of frustration and chance. Having been enamored by the beauty of the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming since first visiting in 2000, I proposed to study the National Monument, Devil’s Tower, in northeast Wyoming. Devil’s Tower is an American Indian sacred site whose function is being contested by recreational rock climbers. Finishing a 3 day, 1400 mile drive, I turned onto Highway 24 north of Sundance, the heavy rain stopping enough to offer me a radiant double
rainbow as I make my way on the last 9 miles of my trip. The beautiful site of Devil’s Tower amid the suddenly rocky and evergreen landscape is wondrous and inviting. Nearing the end of the day, the crowd at the first National Monument, declared by Roosevelt in 1909, is sparse. After taking in the exceptional obtrusive view of the sky that the eroded igneous rock structure confronts, I survey the surroundings, nestled in the tree lined valley of the Belle Fourche River, a waterway that is connected to Bear Butte. Upon further exploration, however, the atmosphere at Devil’s Tower leaves me cold and with a feeling of irreversible loss, much like it did on my first visit. The main emphasis of the site was rock climbing. All of the exterior displays exalted the wonders of the climbing experience, as well as the geological formation of the volcanic intrusion. The only reference to the American Indian belief of the creation of the mountain is found inside the gift shop, in the form of a drawing in a glass encasement. Discussions with climbers about to ascend Devil’s Tower affirmed the lack of willingness on their part to respect and adhere to a voluntary ban on climbing the structure. Several climbers, some of them with alcohol in their backpacks, ridiculed the anti-climbing perspective, calling the proponents of a ban “lunatics and freaks.” As the rain began to fall I returned to my car and drove to the campground. Expecting to see a large gathering of Indian nations and others celebrating the summer solstice, I instead found a few campers, huddled against the rain. The now steady downpour reflected on and entrenched the tired and defeated status of Devil’s Tower as a place of cultural and
emotional importance. Perhaps other years past have been different, or will be yet, but I left to seek a hotel room in nearby Hulet, utterly disenchanted.

Browsing the internet in my hotel room, I came across a declaration of National Prayer Day occurring at various sites across the United States, including a gathering the next afternoon at Bear Butte State Park, situated on the northeast edge of the sacred Black Hills of South Dakota. The next morning I left Hullet, Wyoming, and crossed the border back into South Dakota for the gathering. I arrived at the mountain before noon. Located in Bear Butte State Park, the mountain stands out grandly amidst the vast prairie sky and emerging grassland plains, beyond the northwest edge of the historically significant Black Hills region. The drive beyond the park entrance is a winding narrow gravel road that climbs gradually upward, past a few scattered bison amidst nearly dry ravines with small clusters of sinewy brush. Some of the bushes have small pieces of cloth tied to the branches. Although small snippets of vibrantly colorful pieces remain, the material is predominantly now faded and frayed, the pieces in varying stages of decay brought on by time in this land of environmental extremes.

The parking lot is sparsely occupied, a half dozen cars and a few tour buses clustered along the edge of the lot, vying for shelter from the sun. With pockets stuffed with audio and video recording devices, I sheepishly ventured towards one of the buses, curious as to the composition of the passengers. One by one, several American Indians emerged from the bus on to the hot tarmac. A general impression of the people is one
of frailty, many moving slowly or with the help of those also departing the bus. After getting a friendly greeting from one individual, I initiated some small talk and am informed that the group is at Bear Butte as part of a treatment program for substance abuse. The first chord of interest in the meaning of this place is struck. I wished the person well, and continued to explore the welcoming area of the state park.

Unlike Devil’s Tower National Monument, the emphasis on Bear Butte as a symbol of importance in American Indian culture, historically and presently, is evident immediately. A large multifaceted sign briefly describes the physical properties of the laccolith, but focuses on the ritualistic spiritual activities that occur on the mountain. “This mountain is a place of worship”, declares the heading on one section of the display sign. Describing the significance of the prayer cloths, the different colors signify the four directions, the sign also warns against the touching and removal of the cloths. Another warns against all photography of any and all symbols and spiritual activities along the route to the top of Bear Butte. This instantly puts the visitor, especially one with an ethnographic agenda, in a position of questioning the direction that the research will undertake. Suddenly the importance of the recording devices is put into question, as is the course of method that needs to be taken in this study.

The immediate contrast with Devil’s Tower is again, striking. There, the descriptive signs emphasize the geological structure, and the popularity of rock climbing as the primary, economically encouraged, recreational activity, dwarfing any American
Indian sacred perspective. Similarly, the focus of the gift shop and accompanying welcome center building at the base of Devil’s Tower contrasts with the welcome center at Bear Butte, which features an overview of physical geographical information without minimizing the spiritual significance that the mountain has to American Indian people.

The International Prayer Day gathering is held a short distance up the path, on a grassy clearing. I come across a small group of about 30 people, a gathering of mostly local Lakota activists. I meet people from the nearby Indian Reservations of Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Cheyenne, as well as First Nations people from my home province of Saskatchewan, and the leader of the resistance to the biker rally, Pamela, an Indian from California now living at the base of Bear Butte. (It is during my discussion with the various folks at this gathering that I decided to refer to ‘Native Americans’ predominantly as ‘Indians’. Without fail, they preferred this to Native Americans. Things become more problematic when referring to Canadian indigenous people who prefer ‘Aboriginal People’ or ‘First Nations’. I discuss this further in Ch.3). I instantly felt that this place would make a fascinating geographical case study, with many aspects to choose from, and the opportunity to focus from a socially significant perspective with a “touch” of activism.

During this visit a generous lunch is served of ham sandwiches, beef stew, fruit and cake. Being a vegetarian, I was used to the uneasiness of declining meat dishes, and thought of the joke, “What do you call an Indian vegetarian? A poor hunter.” While
eating my orange, I am reminded of other, more heightened difficulties that would likely occur when researching Indian people. Although I was made to feel more than comfortable, I understood the problems that have occurred during scholarly and non-academic forays by non-Indian people into Indian affairs. In fact, Pamela, with a chuckle, stated that if I was an anthropologist, instead of a geographer, she probably would not even speak to me. The many years and countless studies of Indian people, well-meaning or not, have mostly resulted in broken promises, heartbreak, and resentment. My personal naiveté and arrogance surfaced when I asked, and was declined, permission to film portions of a drum circle ceremony that followed our lunch. I instantly knew what I did was wrong, but my instincts as a researcher overtook my sense of appropriateness and humility. I was blessed to have had such forgiving hosts that day. The experience, however made me realize that this research project would have to take a direction that could have a positive impact without intruding on the lives of Indian people. I did not want to become ‘just another white guy’ trying to tell people about Indians.

1.6: Introduction to the Conflict at Bear Butte and the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally

The discussion with Pamela that day turned to her concern over the effect that the Sturgis Motorcycle Festival was having on the sacred activities of Indian people at Bear Butte. Both Indian and non-Indian people inform me of the stress that the biker
festival, specifically the biker-campgrounds, is having on this historically and spiritually important place. Describing the noise created by the roaring bikes as “awful and mind-numbing”, Pamela also described the social activities as “disgusting and disgraceful” saying most of the people “really are pigs”. She then related how the biker themed campgrounds are getting larger and closer to Bear Butte, despite efforts by her and others to have a buffer zone created around the mountain that would keep the raucous festivities at a decent distance from the sacred place where Indian people from all across North America come to pray. The plans for a new music stage at Broken Spoke Campground, the closest biker themed facility to Bear Butte gets the activists gathered particularly upset. A rough measurement places the stage less than ½ mile from the base of Bear Butte. The noise from the classic rock bands that will play here, they say, will undermine, and possibly destroy the aural environment that is needed for prayer at Bear Butte. The loud music is combined with activities that include the sexual depiction of women, and heavy alcohol and drug use, something particularly offensive to those who come to Bear Butte in a spiritual quest to remedy themselves from the afflictions of alcohol and drug addiction. I am reminded of what I saw in the parking lot; faces drawn, tired, pained, and suffering, with bodies struggling to negotiate the way down the steps of the bus onto the hot tarmac. It becomes clear that there are opposing forces contesting the use of the place that is Bear Butte.
1.7: Introduction to the conflict at Broken Spoke Campground

Bear Butte is located in the rolling prairie 8 miles north east of Sturgis, South Dakota, a small city of 6400 people that hosts The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally every year in the 1st week of August. The festival, which has recently attracted over 500,000 people, runs for 7 days, but contributes to increased traffic and noise for days before and after the official dates. The normally sedate and unpopulated rolling prairie landscape becomes engulfed by roaring motorcycles, and a culture dominated by loud bikes, loud music, sex, leather, alcohol, and drugs. The festival is a fiscal goldmine for the majority of local businesses, delivering an enormous financial enrichment to the increasingly seasonally specific economy.

Broken Spoke Campground, 1 mile from Bear Butte State Park, was the idea of local South Dakota entrepreneur Jay Allen. Complete with a huge bar and concert facility, the campground is another in a line of several large venues that surround Sturgis. After the campground was completed, Allen’s request for a liquor license was denied by Meade County officials on, ironically, moral grounds; the offense being his failure to pay the local contractors for the work that had been done on Broken Spoke (Informant #1). This illustration of the power that economic factors have in government decisions is further demonstrated by the subsequent chain of events concerning the campground. Allen was instructed to sell all of his stakes in the campground, and settle his debt to the contractors before a decision could be made on the liquor license
application (Informant #1). Allen sold his investment, less 30%, to Target Logistics (Informant #1), a concessions and temporary facility Boston based company that has catered military ventures in the Middle East, as well as concert events such as the Bonnaroo music festival. The county board not only allowed Allen to maintain a reduced share of the campground, but quickly granted the liquor license when Target Logistics brought in high ranking U.S. military officials to vouch for the legitimacy of the new owners (Informant #1). The county government, with large economic and social ties to the nearby National Guard post, once again looked out for its interests over the objections of the Lakota people, continuing centuries of the oppression of Indian people through selective interpretation and enforcement of laws and regulations. While the style and particulars of this oppression have changed since the days that Fort Meade was the home to the 4th, 7th and 10th cavalries, the effects on Indian people remain as troublesome as ever.

1.8: Legal Summary of the Battle for American Indian Sacred Places

While a strong U.S. military presence near Sturgis has impacted Indian people for over 120 years, the impact of intrusionary non-native tourism ventures at American Indian sacred sites occurs at Bear Butte and throughout the United States. Prominent examples include rock climbing at Devil's Tower (Mato Tipila - Bear Lodge Butte, Lakota) in northeast Wyoming, where the National Park Service has beaten lawsuits from
American Indian rights groups, and skiing at San Francisco Peaks (*Doko’ oo’ slid* - It Was Not Melted Off, *Navajo*), where the National Forest Service built an invasive new road and later desecrated the revered mountain peaks with snow made from sewer water (Nabakov, 2006). Legal actions in support of American Indian sacred places have been conducted under the perception that the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) of 1978 would protect these culturally significant landscapes from economic and social desecration (Brown, 1991; Hertz, 1993; Hooker, 1993; Gooding, 1996; Silvern, 1999; Hargo, 2004; Vicenti et al., 2004).

In the San Francisco Peaks case, while a circuit court ruled in favor of halting the road, the Supreme Court later ruled that AIRFA does not trump the government department’s right to do with the land as they see fit (Carpenter, 2006). A legal battle was won in the Yucca Mountain case, although the years of dumping radioactive waste has dramatically changed the place for the Eastern Shoshone people (Houston, 2012).

Devil’s Tower has been the subject of various court cases (Bonham, 2002; Burton, 1999; Linge, 2000; Freedman, 2007). The most recent Supreme Court decision ruled convolutedly that an earlier voluntary ban decision on the climbing of the mountain during the holy month of June was acceptable as long as it did not ban any citizen from exercising their right of access to public land (Carpenter, 2006).
1.9.1: Legal Summary of the Protection Battle of Bear Butte

The situation at Bear Butte has been looked at from a litigious standpoint by Forbes-Boyte (1996, 1997, 1999). Forbes-Boyte chronicles the ineffective impact that the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) has had in the Lakota and Cheyenne River tribes’ battle with the South Dakota Game, Fish, and Park department. Carpenter looks at the role that federal, state, city, and county regulatory bodies play, as well as the local and national corporate interests (2003, 2006).

Between 2006 and 2008 several bills were introduced in the South Dakota state legislature that proposed buffer zones around Bear Butte. House Bill 1309, that called for a 1 mile buffer zone, was defeated, and the house denied even to discuss a ½ mile buffer. A proposal to call a state wide referendum on this issue was denied. Observants described the attitude in the state chambers as rude and dismissive during discussions regarding the proposed Bills (Forbes-Boyte, 2011 AAG). This complete disregard for even considering the concerns of those trying to protect their sacred space was something that came up frequently during my research. Pamela and Forbes-Boyte relayed the attitude of local Meade county representatives as “dripping with racism” when efforts to secure buffer zones and to restrict liquor availability near Bear Butte were brought up during council meetings. Audible snickers and racist comments from representatives were commonplace (Informant #1).
1.9.2: Historical Background of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally

The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally began in 1938, when a local racing enthusiast named Clarence “Pappy” Hoel wanted his motorcycle club to sponsor a race that would bring in fellow bikers from the surrounding area. Hoel had purchased an Indian motorcycle franchise in 1936 and formed the Jackpine Gypsies Motorcycle Club as a means to promote regional biking as well as his new business. The first event in 1938 of what was then called “The Black Hills Classic”, consisted of nine participants and around 200 spectators, gathered on a dirt track to watch a half mile drag race (August 11, 2010, Rapid City Journal). Sturgis, South Dakota was a fitting location for the event.

Sturgis originated as a “R and R’ location for U.S. cavalry members from the adjacent Fort Meade station, and was named after a one time commander, Colonel Samuel D. Sturgis. Fort Meade was home to the 4th, 7th, and 10th cavalry, whose main function was to protect homesteaders and new settlers to the Black Hills area (Terry et al., 2009). Fort Meade to this day is an important military base, housing the economically, socially, and politically influential National Guard base. The tradition of the town catering to the functional and recreational amenity needs of military members, has over the years also welcomed and catered to, at times begrudgingly, the needs of what would become a behemoth biker festival. This balancing act between commerce and public duty, private enterprise and social responsibility has been played out in various acts over the 72 years of the rally.
The sound of thousands of bikes that fill Sturgis and the Black Hills towns and valleys today is accompanied by the pervasive smell of the exhaust emanating from the gas consuming motorcycle engines. In 1942, in the midst of World War II, the rally was cancelled in order to comply with gasoline rationing caused by the conflict overseas. It is interesting to consider the scalar and societal changes that have occurred from the days when a few hundred motorcyclists were unable to get gasoline for a one day festival because of a war, to today when 500,000 bikers in the Black Hills have no problem obtaining recreational fuel at the same time that United States military operations consume 500,000 gallons of fuel each day (Sanders, 2009). (Although the drop in attendance at the 2008 rally to 415,000 from a peak in 2000 of 633,000 is mainly attributed to the high gasoline costs of that summer, up approximately 300%) (Terry et al., 2009).

This growth in recreation and consumption was reflected in the years after WW II in every aspect of American society, and the Sturgis rally slowly grew. In 1946, Millie Humphrey, a member of the Key City Riding Club along with Clarence and Pearl Hoel, was granted the first beer and wine vending license by the city (August 11, 2010, Rapid City Journal). Clarence Hoel insisted this was a great way of making more money. This early act of cohesion between economic and government entities was not the last for the Sturgis rally.
In 1949 the town of Sturgis became officially involved with the rally, blocking off Main Street for the first time and handing out awards to winners of races and stunts (Terry et al., 2009). In the 1950’s the rally began to give out large cash prizes for the 5 Mile Race around the ½ mile dirt track at the Fairgrounds grandstand (http://www.sturgisrallybiker.com). By 1964 the official rally expanded to 3 days and to 5 days by 1965. In the sixties, the rally began to grow, albeit in an unofficial, unsponsored way, and the cultural aspects began to rival the racing element of the rally. The “events” increasingly consisted of impromptu races in the streets on the outskirts of Sturgis, often accompanied by the igniting of lines of poured gasoline on the roads (Informant #2). The later 1960’s and early 1970’s saw the rally continue to grow, and this scalar change contributed to a growth in organized illegal activity, primarily involving drugs. In 1974 the city began renting city owned lots to venders to sell their goods, and the following year the rally expanded to its official length of 7 days, which it remains today. The increase of brawls, near riots, gang feuds, drug and alcohol abuse, and sexual assaults became such a problem in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s however, that the future of the rally was put to a plebiscite vote in 1982. The people of Sturgis voted to continue the rally by a mere 88 votes (Forbes-Boyte, 2011). What the elected officials decided to do changed the nature of the rally. In cooperation with Meade County officials, Sturgis city council decided to take control of the rally, including sponsorship, promotion, and the economic aspects of the event. The city wanted control of the festival and decided that economic control was the key to eliminating the
illegal underground activities that were out of control and threatening the well-being of their citizens every year in August.

One of the first things that the city did was close Sturgis City Park to camping. This was the center of the riots in 1982 where fire trucks were shot at and fires were started in the streets. The same year, Buffalo Chip Campground opened in a pasture a few miles outside of town, with only about 200 campers (http://www.buffalochip.com). Over the next few years, however, the city’s plan to turn the rally over to private initiative and to spread the accommodations aspect of the rally to campgrounds near the city as well as the surrounding Black Hills region saw tremendous growth in the festival. While only nine vender licenses were issued for the city in 1979, by 2008 this had grown to 1191 (Terry et al., 2009). A hardware store owner concedes that he makes more money in the 2 week period in and around the rally by renting his large parking lot to several venders than he does for the rest of the year in total (Informant #3). The event spread throughout the Black Hills. Today you can buy t-shirts and hats that promote “The Black Hills Motorcycle Festival”, even though there is technically no event of that name. People I met on the motorcycle lined Main Street of Hot Springs, 100 miles south of Sturgis, claiming they don’t even go to Sturgis anymore. “It’s just too crowded. I can get what I want here”, claimed one biker (Informant #4).

This geographical expansion across the Black Hills region is evident by The Ham ‘N Jam, an event at Hulett, Wyoming, located 66 miles north-west of Sturgis and only 10
miles from the United States’ first National Monument, and American Indian sacred monument known as Devil’s Tower. Once a year, during the Sturgis rally, several hundred bikers gather for an event put on by the town and merchants where 1000 lbs. of free pork are cooked, along with gallons of beans and chips. 35 miles to the south in Sundance, a “burnout” cookout occurs, where the city relaxes its liquor laws such that open containers are allowed all over the streets, anywhere in town (August 11, 2010, Rapid City Journal). The streets and parking lots of Deadwood are filled with cars and R.V.s, in addition to motorcycles. The roads that connect the towns and cities in the Black Hills, which lead to attractions such as Mt. Rushmore, Devil’s Tower, Crazy Horse Memorial, The Badlands, and others are lined with motorcycles, cars, and motorhomes exploring the beautiful scenery of steep valleys and waterfalls, back dropped by stunning Precambrian era eroded mountains.

Back in Sturgis, the vendors cater to all the needs of rally goers, from sunglasses to showers. You can get your bike washed by bikini girls, or you can take the kids to a special kid zone section blocked off where games, rides and clowns entertain. The transformation from a small but dangerous local event catering to a narrow group has exploded to an enormous far flung internationally renowned money making machine. In 2008 vendors took in over $13 million in sales, with the various governmental tax departments raking in almost $900,000 in revenue (Terry et al., 2009). The government and city officials and business people who took control of the rally have turned a mainly adult-themed event at its core into a family friendly tourist destination. The bikers are
no longer only outlaws (although that image often persists), but are also doctors, lawyers, urban professionals, some of whom ship their bikes by airplane to the Black Hills where they can enjoy the rally without riding hundreds, or thousands of miles to get there. The variety of lifestyles of those who now enjoy the rally is vast. Clubs and events include Bikes for Books, Rally for Miracles Poker Run, Alcoholic Anonymous Serenity Ride, Bikers for Christ, and Ride for Hope to Bear Butte. The Ride for Hope draws attention to the depression, suicide, poverty, and alcoholism that occurs on Indian reservations, particularly the Pine Ridge reservation located south of the Badlands and east of the Black Hills. The event was inspired by the injustice that Indian people have experienced in the area, drawing from the horrific United States Cavalry attack at Wounded Knee on 1890, an event that lingers as a symbol of the injustices occurring upon Indian people to this day. The Pine Ridge reservation sits entirely inside Shannon County, South Dakota, for years one of the poorest counties in the United States (53.5% of inhabitants live below the poverty level, compared to 13.7% in the whole of the state (http://www.quickfacts.census.gov)). It is the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations that house many of the American Indians that come to their sacred mountain of Bear Butte for spiritual and social guidance and affirmation.
2.1: Place in Human Geography: A Brief Summary

Human and cultural geography has long been concerned with the concept of place. In fact, all geographers deal with the word “place” to some degree. Tim Cresswell directly states that “Human geography is the study of places” (2004, p.1). Any study regarding physical or human aspects of the earth is grounded in some sort of relationship with “where this is”, whether it is a meteorological event, a past geomorphological formation, or a present crisis in the human condition. Place is also relational. One place is comparative, literally and figuratively, to another. Furthermore, the word place is used in the everyday, referring to an area of presence, by an individual, or a group, past or present. Socially produced space, that which is in between literal places, also plays the same role as place (Lefebvre, 1991). In this context place is a way of understanding the social world in as deep a context as understanding the geomorphology and geology of a particular landform area is. It is in this realm that my research lays.

Early notions of place consisted of conclusive, fixed, and firm descriptions of spatially defined geographic areas. Environmental determinism was a philosophy that said places had an exclusive character in relation to geographical features and how
human beings related to the space within these locations (Semple, 1911; Huntington, 1915; Hartshorne, 1939). Carl Sauer and his Berkely disciples at Chicago in the 1950’s were the first to suggest that human beings played a massive role in the formation of the meaning of an environment. By the 1960’s, many human geographers (Heidegger 1958; Lowenthal 1961; Wagner and Mikesell 1962; Lukerman 1964) continued to reject an absolutist viewpoint, and by the mid 1970’s, others started to look at and interpret how a “sense of place” is created and, more importantly, how a sense of place is interpreted (Relph 1970, 1976; Tuan 1974, 1976; Ley 1977; Buttimer 1971, 1976, 1980; Entriken 1976).

As Peet (1998) points out, there is a divide in how geographers, and particularly, human geographers, may see place in their research. According to Peet, positivist geographers, those that believe that “facts” can be attained through objective analysis, research “environment and see space” (p.47). Human activities can be projected and understood as a relationship between the measurable physical and human conditions that are created by the space within objectifiable areas. Qualitative and particularly humanistic geographers look at the environment and see place, a condition or state of being whose meaning is formed by the experiences and interpretation of similar, yet often widely varying events, thoughts, and human endeavors.

Place in human geography can be looked at as something that is created in a relational, contingent, emotional, and historical context. A meaning of a place is not
created in a vacuum, but is dependent on not only the objects that inhabit that place, but on who is interpreting the place, at various times. Acknowledging the subjectivity of place analysis is essential to a humanist geographer. The assumption that an objective undertaking in researching place can occur leads to a dead end. The convergence of the components of a place: social, political, economic, historical, are too complex in their shifting variability to grasp through a positivistic perspective. Positivistic elements are not unessential, however, but to get a look at “what is going on here” requires more.

Humanistic research, however, can be contentious. This is to be expected when “social relations are profoundly heterogeneous and unendingly divisive” (Adams et al., 2001, p.xiii). As Tim Cresswell says, “we live in a world of meaning. We exist in and are surrounded by places” (1996, p. 13).

Much of the work done involves understanding a sense of place, what Entriken describes as a “center of meaning and the external context of our actions” (1991, p.7). Subsequently, the focus has at times been on the preservation of a certain sense of place, one that has a historical tradition with a reified moral authority (Wasserman, 1998; Cuba, 1993; Hayden, 1995; Massey, 1995; Cresswell, 1996; Entrikin, 2002; Sack, 2002, 2003). It is not as important to debate the rightness or wrongness of how a place is represented as it is to explain how these “right” or “wrong” elements of a place occur. In delving into this you can easily find aspects of human territoriality that Sack explores (1986), or, more, importantly, the pervasive role of power relations in every aspect of social relations that scholars of Foucault explore (Deluze, 1987; Jesop, 2007; Marcus,
Here you will find the ethical as well as the corrupt decisions that are made in the name of the economics, the state, the religion, and the nationalism that create and change places.

My research attempts to look at a place, Bear Butte Mountain and a few biker campgrounds near it, through this blend of human geographical analytical techniques. The experiential approach that came to define this research is a tool, not a strict philosophy. As such it may seem that there are, at first glance, divergent approaches in this study. A tinge of critical post-modernism mixed with a heavy dose of humanism was how the research evolved. The use of some autobiographical material in this research is congruent with a reflexivity, or positionality that is used as a “mediating relation in the interpretation of information gathered through the research process” (Moss, 2001, p. 15). The amalgamation of personal situation with investigation has occurred in feminist geography (Bonnett, 1994, 1996; Routledge, 1996; Katz, 1992). While my research is not feminist per say, these instances of personal integration with the subject matter must be acknowledged.
2.2: Authenticity: Unself-Conscious and Self-Conscious

The geographical concept of authenticity is one that is complicated, especially when related to place, and one that is ripe with judgments begging to be challenged, especially if one views it with the ever looming presence of social construction analysis. Edward Relph (1976) sees authenticity as a mental approach combined with a conviction, both unself-conscious and self-conscious, that will ultimately lead to an awareness of a person’s appropriate and “good” actions and beliefs, filtered through an intense subject/object relationship. When associated to place, authenticity has a physical medium available that is at once impressionable in its perceived meaning, while very much having the power to create meaning of its own based on intrinsic properties such as location and efficacy.

An unself-conscious sense of place is something that is taken for granted, and plays a prominent role in affecting the cultural, political, and economic identities, in various degrees, of the past, present, and future inhabitants. Simply, it is home. Relph correctly states that while sacredness of certain places was unselfconsciously extremely important to non-modern cultures, the sense of nation is an example that has tremendous power in modern sensibilities; where place is home in a mutually multi-relational experience of comfort. A self-conscious awareness of sense of place involves the collision of a subjective and objective perception, with an outcome where reflection of experience is crucial. Bear Butte is an example where American Indians have, in pre-
modern as well as modern society, unself-consciously and self-consciously established a sacred place. I will discuss in chapter 3 how American nationalism, and particularly the reinforcement of military pride, is a modern self-conscious mechanism for changing the sense of place at Bear Butte; an example of the conflicting visions, significance, and implications of place-making.

2.3: Subjective Identity

There is a long standing debate in the social sciences and the humanities in particular as to what ‘we’ as individuals or a group are, and how we identify and comprehend ourselves. The term ‘identity’, which began being used in traditional sociology, has long been used in geography. Akin with the word ‘sameness’, ‘identity’ in traditional geography is used to define and categorize person(s) according to a consistency and similarity of social actions and mores. Self identity through place was the basis of Anne Buttimer’s early work (1976, 1980). Her assertion that forced identities will be resented (1980) may be true in the case of some American Indians, yet not true in the case of those coerced to trumpet a nationalistic tone of military worship at the biker campgrounds near Bear Butte. Other geographers (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 1987, 1994; Baudrillard, 1983, 1996) argue that we are comprised of multi-identities that are fragmented and decentered. Influenced by Foucault, these post-structuralists looked at identity from a subjective perspective, focusing on the multi
layered power relationships that occur during the shaping and changing of how people are perceived by others as well as themselves. Today, some have begun to use the term ‘subjectives’ when trying to discern the composition of people’s sense of who and what they are. While I lean heavily toward the principle behind the use of the term ‘subjectives’, I find it a bit awkward in idiom only. In this research I will use the term ‘subjective identities’. By using this term I differentiate from the traditional view that identity is fixed, both in self-understanding and in outside perception. I make it clear, by using subjective identity, that this is not my view, yet acknowledge the use of the terms ‘identity’ and ‘subjectives’ as a means for understanding ‘who’ and ‘what’ a person or group of persons is.

2.4: Subjective Identity and Place: Insideness and Outsideness

Relph describes humans’ relationship to place reflecting various levels of two distinct zones of attachment; those of insideness and outsideness (1976, p.49). The strongest and closest level of attachment, existential insideness, occurs when a person feels a tremendously strong attachment and feeling to a place without a deliberate, conscious, and active mechanism for reflection. Again, home is the most basic example of this. It is a place where the individual knows they belong, and the rest of the inhabitants of the place know and accept the individual as belonging to the place. The other three levels of insideness are empathetic insideness, behavioural insideness, and
vicarious insideness. Empathetic insideness involves an individual’s conscious effort to deeply understand and reflect on the importance of a place and its meanings, as well as to identify with it through self-experience. Behavioural insideness involves the physical maintenance of a place; organizing and displaying objects and events in a manner that, above all, looks appropriate and reinforces the agreed upon identity of a place. Vicarious insideness is an experientially physically distant attachment to a place; often strong, yet transmitted via a secondary association. Art, in the form of paintings or film, are examples of a medium that channels this remote relationship to a place.

Outsideness of a place, again according to Relph, has three levels. Existential outsideness, is a deliberate estrangement and conscious separation from understanding the aspects that characterize people and places. This level of identity to places would be the closest to seeing no distinct sense of place; essentially all places are perceived as the same, void of uniqueness and insignificant. The two other, slightly less dissonant levels are objective outsideness, and incidental outsideness. Objective outsideness embraces a positivistic, scientific ideology of process in understanding place that classifies experience into what the observer believes to be facts that are independent of said onlooker. Incidental outsideness is an unselfconscious experience, where place has little to no importance to the activities, other than as background. What distinguishes these activities from those of incidental insideness, Relph clarifies, is that they occur away from our home (1976, p. 52).
2.5: Inauthenticity and Placelessness

*Inauthenticity* is an outlook towards place that is infused with “no awareness of the deep and symbolic significance of places and no appreciation of their identities” (Relph, 1976, p. 82). When such disconnect occurs in relation to places having no independent, special, or deep rooted cultural and historical identity, a sense of *placelessness* develops. People have no opportunity, and often no desire, to establish a closeness to places because of the homogeneity of the appearance and function of places. Auge(1999), Tuan(1974, 1977, 1980) similarly talked about how modern urban landscapes portray a coldness in uniformity that serve a functionality of purpose for urban life yet are interchangeable; indistinct in establishing the specialness that creates authenticity. Tuan’s term *topophilia* refers to an attachment between place and people. Like Relph, he contends that there is a variation in the level of intensity that people have with place, ranging from home to nation (Tuan, 1974).

This consideration of the variability of attachment to place could be looked at as a reaction in part to the “superorganic” view of culture as theorized by Wilbur Zelinski (1992). This theory proposes that culture is a force that exists beyond human control; not independent of it, but powerful in its ability to confine and limit. Interestingly, this slant, and Carl Sauer’s cultural possibilist approach, could be used to explain an American Indian perspective of sense of place that will be discussed later.
2.6: The State, Neoliberalism, and Militarism

2.6.1: The State

The state as a geographical concept has historically been looked at as an entity that reinforces the strengths of a society, more often than not bound by location, economic forces, and social mores and practices. While Mackinder’s deterministic notion of the state as an organic force is well and truly dated, the effects of the dominance of such simplistic political philosophies were felt for decades in the post-colonial, new expansionist militarism of most of the twentieth century. Structuralists of the late twentieth century sought to compose a theory of the state based on the state’s role in ensuring the continual production of capital and the accompanying social factors that emerge from this process (Bradbury, 1980).

More recently, some geographers have focused on looking at the state as a unit that is both a focal gathering point of economic and social ideas and practices, as well as an integral participant in the various incarnations of power relationships involved in these practices (Harvey, 1976; Johnson, 1979; Taylor 1978; Jessop, 1990, 2002, 2007; Castre, 2008; Kalyvas, 2001). Drawing on Foucault, Jessop (2007) summarizes these power relationships as fluid, with the capability of mutually beneficial interaction, or the potential for resistance and friction between the innumerable layers of forces that come into bearing with each other. Out of this intertwined reality of forces comes the notion that the state is an ever present and unfixed construct, a discourse that bends and
moves in accordance to either the availability, or lack thereof, of accommodating economic, political, and social elements. A militaristic state, for example, cannot simply apply actions it deems suitable without being aware of its place in a relationship, and its underlying responsibilities. It does not function in a vacuum. It must govern in accordance with an ever-changing balance of commitment to both private, public, and increasingly, international concerns. It can, however, use tactics to undermine these concerns. The blurring of lines between government policies and media responsibilities, modeling public opinion to negate antiwar sentiment as “un-American”, and creating military-economic alliances are ways to ensure that private concerns are eliminated from public view and discussion. The state is “the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is” (Abrams, 1988). The state performs the role of an “imagined collective actor partly through the telling of stories of statehood and the production of narrative accounts of state power” and speaking for the people (Painter, 2006, p. 761). Creating places of harmonious support for militaristic ideology is a part of this. Entrenching the pro-military attitudes onto a place, and the visiting malleable populous is evident by the corporate, neoliberal structure that is in place at Broken Spoke Campground.
2.6.2: Neoliberalism

Liberalism as a concept assumes that a capital market and the state have a relationship that has gradually increased production, promoting growth, rights, and equality. Neoliberalism emerged in the 1980’s as an explosive response to the Keynesian welfare state, where economic and social agreements between the governing bodies, owners of capital, and labor also included provisions for those who were unable to thrive or even survive economic hardships. The governments of world economic powers Great Britain and the United States, and secondary powers such as Canada, took a merciless political turn to the right at a time of harsh economic conditions. Included in this turn were governmental policies that reduced labor rights, dismantled many social welfare policies, deregulated industry, reduced environmental protection, and began the dismantling of protectionist trade policies (as long as they benefited said countries).

Neoliberalism has been defined variously, but always includes a “valorization of private enterprise and suspicion of the state... the advocacy of tariff elimination, currency deregulation” (Ferguson, p. 170), and models that influence the state to operate like a business (Ferguson). The thirty years since neoliberalism took flight has seen profits for large global corporations increase dramatically. The above playing conditions, created by governmental agencies at the request of corporations, has led to environmental degradation and major territorial shifts in labor and production, unsettling nature and society in both the First and the Third World. Castree (2008)
relates that O’Connor’s ‘second contradiction’, the “passing on of the environmental costs of production to society” (1998) has left capitalist societies with ecological and cultural crisis.

The power relationship between interest groups is reinforced, or changed by a governmental agency. The reinforcement, however, usually takes the form of a continuation of practices that benefits the economically dominant faction. Deluze’s deconstructionist work looks at assemblages as emerging forces, not always in agreement, but based on hierarchy and scale (Marcus, 2006). This hierarchy can be employed in a way as to reinforce, manipulate, and in some cases reinterpret and reinvent what and who are acceptable and deviant forces in society. Scale, when looked at through both extensive (macro) assemblages such as race, nation, sex or class, and intensive (micro) assemblages such as “the other” (Deluze, 1987), may be a considered a structural approach if you fail to incorporate the complex, different, and ever-changing power relationships that are involved. Foucault’s work, in fact, emphasizes that the power forces that work at a micro scale can be uncovered at a macro scale as well (Jessop, 2007). Progressively powerful and biased economic entities search for increasing profits from both within customary local, regional, and state boundaries, as well as beyond the borders that governmental powers have traditionally controlled. This has manifested itself in what has been come to be labeled neoliberalism. Perhaps neoliberalism is simply the economic and social arrangements that occur in ALL instances where power is used to obtain a benefit for individuals, as well as groups
ranging from familial units, to school boards, to small businesses, to the various levels of government, to large multi-national corporations. The impact of neoliberalism on Bear Butte, and the campgrounds that surround it will be looked at in this research.

2.6.3: Militarism

Militarism and its relation to place is an area of geographical study that has seen a rise in prominence in recent years. Flint (2005, 2006, 2008), Tyner (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010), Woodward (2004, 2005), Stahl (2010), and Mamadouh (2005) are scholars who have taken a critical approach to the rise of militarism in areas of economics, geopolitics, space and gender. Though these scholars are few in numbers, their influence continues to grow as the influence and pervasiveness of militaristic features in our culture expands as well. Enloe outlines 12 core aspects of a militaristic society:

- that armed force is the ultimate resolver of tensions;
- that human nature is prone to conflict;
- that having enemies is a natural condition;
- that hierarchical relations produce effective action;
- that a state without a military is naïve, scarcely modern, and barely legitimate;
- that in times of crisis those who are feminine need armed protection; and
- that in times of crisis any man who refuses to engage in armed violent action is jeopardizing his own status as a manly man
- that soldiers possess certain values and qualities that are desirable in civil society
- that military superiority is a source of national pride
- that those who do not support military actions are unpatriotic
- that those who do not support military actions are anti-soldier
that for a state to engage in armed conflict is to serve the will of God” (Enloe, 2004, p.219)

The one question that continues to surface is who benefits from the militarization of society and how? The neoliberal, economic aspects of a militarized society have been obvious for a while. More war is good business for those that purvey their arsenals of destruction. But another aspect is the acceptance of militarism as part of nationalism in the form of military entertainment, combined with the establishment of very little criticism or rejection of these aspects by the general public. The role of spectacle that flourished during the media coverage of the Persian Gulf War in 1991, had by the 2003 invasion of Iraq, become part of the “militainment” industry of the United States (Stahl, 2010). This industry includes high tech video games of war, war toys, the continual militarization and nationalism of sporting events, and the pro-military hoopla at rock and country music concerts, like those at the biker campgrounds near Bear Butte.

It’s become “un-American” to even question the role of militarism as it slowly seeps into our lives. Embedded reporting, where authorized media members were allowed deep access into combat situations during the Iraq war, has now blossomed through the infiltration into many elements of society, including the entertainment industry. Four star generals are now willingly imbedded into a Kid Rock concert, and by association at a Bob Dylan concert as well. The times they are a-changing, indeed. This
will be looked at further in documenting the activities at the two campgrounds in my research.
CHAPTER 3: AMERICAN INDIANS- NOMENCLATURE, SUBJECTIVE IDENTITY, BEAR BUTTE.

“See, when they got off the boat they didn’t recognize us. They said, ‘Who are you?’ We said ‘We’re the people, we’re the human beings.’ They said, ‘Oh, Indians’ because they didn’t recognize what it was like to be a human being. I’m a human being, this is the name of my tribe, this is the name of my people, but I’m a human being. But the predatory mentality shows and starts calling us Indians, and committing genocide against us as a vehicle of erasing the memory of being a human being. You go into our communities, how many of us are fighting to protect our identity of being an Indian. Yet 600 years ago that word Indian, that sound, was never made in this hemisphere. That sound, that noise, was never made, ever. And we’re trying to protect that as an identity. So it affects us all.” (2009, from Reel Injun)

-John Trudell, Santee.

3.1: American Indian Nomenclature

The paradox described by American Indian activist, actor, musician, and poet John Trudell illustrates the absurdity and frustration that arises when delving into the complex, intertwined, and persistently changing aspects of American Indian subjective
identity. As Trudell points out, the disconnection between the name Indian, enforced by colonial conquerors, and the evolving cultural reality of his people is arduous. Cultures run deep, and the implication of using Native American, American Indian, Indian, aboriginals, Sioux, Lakota, or First Nations in self-description is immense. For the ethnographer, and when relating a people to the landscape, the geographer, the observation of what the local community call themselves is important.

Many academics, especially those of non-native ancestry have tended to use the word Native American in describing the first peoples of North America and their living descendants. Non-Indian linguist and cultural ethnographer Keith H. Basso, respected for his work on the meaning and constructions of indigenous language to landscapes, tends to use ‘Native American’ when discussing the people in the broadest, all-inclusive sense, yet uses tribal names, e.g., Apache, when referencing a specific group. It is significant that Basso, in his book *Wisdom Sits in Places*, introduces a passage by N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), an Indian environmental scholar, and refers to him as Native American. Momaday then proceeds to use the word ‘Indian’ three times in the passage from his essay, interestingly titled, “Native American Attitudes to the Environment” (Basso, 1996). Is Momaday consciously making a political statement by using Native American in the title of his paper, while referring to the people of the land as Indians? Was there pressure to use Native American in the title from peers and/or the publisher?
Many of the people I talked to in my research overwhelmingly despised the term Native American. For thousands of years, as Trudell mentions, America, along with the term Indian, also didn’t exist for the people on the continent. In many anthropological and geographical academic works, the terms Aboriginal or Indigenous is used. A fellow student from France found Aboriginal offensive, yet in Canada the term has taken root, as evidenced by the television network APTN (Aboriginal Peoples Television Network). The term First Nations has rapidly replaced Indian and Natives in Canada as the preferred term by political groups aiming to evoke a powerful sense of sovereignty and political ambition. While Natives is still common within and outside of First Nations groups, the term Indian, is still used among some younger First Nations people in Canada in much the same self-consciously proprietary manner as the ‘N-Word’ is used by many African Americans, particularly young males, in the United States. Further mudding the linguistic waters are archaeologists who use the term Amerindian, though this term usually refers to past cultures, often implying that all of the people of the prehistoric groups were exterminated while ignoring the relationship of these past cultures to the descendants who are scattered across North America. The archaeological use of pre-history as a terminological reference point of divisional importance illustrates the chasm that has been created between the ontological worlds of academics and First Nations.

This continuously changing paradox in academics as well as the general public exposes the schizophrenic nature of the naming of cultural groups, both from within
and outside the group, and is reflective of the frustrating task of establishing subjective identity that John Trudell so passionately describes. Walter Fleming (Kickapoo) discusses the difficulty of terminology, concurring that although Native American is commonly used in academics, he uses Indian or American Indian in conversation. Fleming likes to refer to others by their tribal names to emphasize that an Apache and a Hunkpapa have little in common to warrant the all-encompassing terms Native American, Indian, or American Indian (2007). In a similar way, the people of what is now called The Philippines have to identify with a name that was also initially thrust upon them by a Spanish explorer (Bankoff, 2002; Tyner 2008). Malcolm X questioned the term “black” and “blackness” in much the same spirit of awareness of outside-imposed identity, as well as self-identity.

My initial assumption that the pursuit of appropriate terminology regarding the labeling of groups of people was minor, instead became extremely illuminating. On June 21, 2008, before I had even committed to studying Bear Butte and the activities surrounding the sacred mountain, in a conversation with American Indians at a gathering at the base of the mountain, I carefully brought up the issue of the name of ‘your people’ to some of those assembled. A gentleman, probably in his late fifty’s, remarked that “I am an Indian, that’s what I’ve always been called. Or is it Dakota?” he joked and laughed. “Lakota,” insisted Pamela (Ute), the organizer and activist originally from California. “I don’t know. Just call me Johnny, and not late for supper,” joked Johnny. The renowned Indian humor notwithstanding, this demonstrates the complex
and often incongruent dimensions of American Indian nomenclature and the resultant fluctuating subjective identity. What is particularly interesting and revealing was that Pamela, from California, but now living at the base of Bear Butte, was the leader and catalyst behind the protest against The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, and the expansion of biker themed campgrounds occurring in the shadow of the spiritually and historically important mountain. Was it presumptive of her to politely correct Johnny, whose Lakota ancestors came from near Bear Butte and who now lived at the nearby Rosebud Indian Reservation, who has self-identified as an ‘Indian’ his whole life? Additionally intriguing was the response when I self-deprecatingly referred to myself as a ‘dumb white guy’ when I had mistakenly referred to Bear Butte as Matȟó Tipila, the Lakota name for Devil’s Tower, when the correct Lakota name for the mountain is Matȟó Pahá. A very blonde couple from the Cree nation of Lac La Ronge, Saskatchewan assured me that it was alright, that what was important is that we all care about the sacred mountain. So the paradox of Pan-Indianism (which can even include this “white man”, if useful to a cause), parlaying strength from a powerful unity, collides against the prolongation of the idea of Indians as one stereotypical, uniform group. This is played out under the shadow of a sacred place that was indeed, used by several Indian tribes over the centuries, and now rests as the unwitting backdrop to a monstrous motorcycle festival. This microcosm of Pan-Indian activism set me on my way to dive in and try and elucidate the many contradictions and anomalies that comprised the events and circumstances surrounding Bear Butte. It is here that I begin to take a consciously sharp
turn away from using the term Native American and, depending on circumstance and point of reference, use American Indian, Indian, First Nations, or the tribal name, such as Lakota in referencing said people.

3.2: A Brief History of the Lakota

The Lakota, who today reside in South Dakota, have a vast history centered on elaborate rituals and a deep connection to the land and their ancestors. These connections are reinforced at physical sites that have great spiritual importance.

The Lakota were a nomadic people who lived on the northern Great Plains, yet were a powerful presence whose influence stretched from the Rocky Mountains to central Kansas to the Great Lakes. Relatives of the Dakota and the Nakota, who linguistically differed only in dialect, the Lakota were the largest of the seven tribes who formed a loose coalition called the Seven Council Fires or Oceti Sakowin. The Lakota were themselves divided into seven tribes: the Oglala, Sincangu, Mnikowaju, Hunkpapa, Sihasapa, Itazipco, and Oohenunpa. These subdivisions were sometimes again divided into seven bands. The number seven was sacred to the Lakota, and their social and political structures often split into divisions of seven (Walker, 1980).

The ancestors of the Lakota originally lived in the forests of the Eastern Woodlands, the western Great Lakes region. They survived as hunters and fishers,
surviving off the abundant resources of the lakes and forests. Though first mentioned by white explorers around 1640 (Steinmetz, 1990) they likely lived there decades if not centuries earlier. Pressure from Algonquian people forced the Lakota to move to the Northern Plains in the early 1700’s. These Algonquians, such as the Chippewa, had themselves been forced west during the Iroquois expansion. Armed with guns they obtained in trade with European settlers, the Chippewa were too strong for the Lakota and other Indian nations. On their way to the Plains, the Lakota encountered sedentary farmers who belonged to such tribes as the Mandan and the Arikara, and lived along the Missouri river. In another example of this domino effect of invading nations, the Lakota raided these tribes, forcing them westward. In what is today central North Dakota, the Lakota again forced the relatively peaceful Cherokee further west to the western Black Hills.

This move to the western Plains occurred on the eighteenth century and the westernmost of the Lakota speakers are today referred to as the Teton, which means “prairie dwellers”. On the Plains they hunted bison and fought as allies of the Cheyenne for the area of land between the Black Hills and the upper Missouri river.

The Lakota eventually moved to the Black Hills region of what is now South Dakota. The seven tribes had no central government, allowing the individual tribes and bands to command the respect and allegiance of its people. However, similarities in language, kinship, and customs, as well as historical allegiances in response to outside
threats, created a coalition, if not in action, certainly in spirit (Utley, 1963). Thus resulted the term coined by the white man – the Sioux Nation. The term Sioux was a French derivative of the word serpent, or snake. Its original use by Christian missionaries meant to emphasize the godless nature of the people, and as such was a basis for unspeakable acts of murder, cruelty, and racism, that to some degree continue to this day.

Most early recorded documents show the initial contact with Europeans was the result of interactions with these Christian missionaries. The first contact occurred in the Wisconsin and Minnesota areas around 1605 with the Jesuit missionary explorers Allouez and Marquette (DeMallie, 1987). Although little additional contact with missionaries occurred in the eastern range of the Lakota through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by the mid-nineteenth century several missions had been established. The western Lakota did not have to endure the presence of the missionaries until the 1870’s and 1880’s, by which time they were accompanied by settlers with a rather non-secular agenda.

3.3: Indians as Non-Humans

Two particular facets are important when analyzing the historical roots of the European/Indian relationship in this region. One is the Aristotelian attitude of the Europeans, and the long battle to de-Indianize the indigenous people; the other is the
neoliberal dissemination of weapons due to the continent wide colonial expansionism that was occurring.

Scholars (Hanke, 1959; Callicot, 1989) have attributed European attitudes to be rooted in Aristotelian beliefs based on the principle of man being at the top of the world order, with the rest of the earth available for man’s use. Hanke examines the origins of this hierarchical mindset with an overview of the intellectual battle in the 16th century between Spaniards Bartolome de las Casas and Juan Gines de Sepulveda in the debates at Valladolid in 1550 and 1551 (1959). Sepulveda invokes the belief that the Indians of the new world were not real persons and therefore were not worthy of compassion and fairness. The only way that they could become real persons was to convert to Christianity. Las Casas, a bishop in what is now Mexico, objected and although he won a rousing debate at the time, the attitude of Sepulveda was adopted by future conquerors to justify their actions of imperialism.

While these actions could be as horrifyingly blatant as mass murder and near genocide of Indian people, they also included structural social engineering such as the implementation of residential schools and religious indoctrination, including the banning of Indian religious practices and the desecration of their places of spiritual worship.

Indian people of North America lost their rights for exclusive worship on their traditional sacred areas during the rush for land by European settlers in the 18th and 19th centuries. From broken land treaties to the imposition of reservation based life, a way
of life was turned upside down, and the resultant loss of places for spiritual expression has had enormous consequences for Indian people. Native religious ceremonies were outlawed for decades and policies of assimilation were undertaken for those who were not killed during the Indian Wars. The continual land grab mentality of the North American economic system has today taken the form of a rush to control all resource based aspects of the land; not only water, oil, coal, natural gas and minerals, but also aesthetically valuable areas used for recreation, relaxation, and festivals, such as the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. This continues to put considerable strain on the few areas where American Indians actively and physically go to practice their spirituality.

3.4: American Indian Sacred Places

There is a fundamental philosophical difference between the Indian perception of the sacred and that which is sacred in Judeo-Christianity. While Christian services occur in a church, an abstract venue that can and often is constructed virtually anywhere, American Indian worship is fundamentally based on place experience. Their religious structure is established by a direct encounter with what they experience around them and their interaction with all forms of objects, both animate and inanimate. Often, but not always, this relationship with the immediate surroundings culminates with a religious experience with the object. During this encounter, a transfer of power occurs, and the object then becomes sacred. The basis of the experience is
observational, and the context is fundamental for understanding their reality (Hallowell, 1975). Vine Deloria (1992) points out that the places where these revelations occur are remembered, and through ceremonials and rituals they become sacred. Deloria states that this sense of direct physical and spiritual understanding of places is rooted in years of experience. Although these places are at present often difficult for American Indians to directly experience because of intrusions by colonialists, one hundred and fifty odd years is not a long enough time to completely destroy that spiritual relationship to the sacred place.

3.5: The Struggle for Bear Butte- The State Park

An informal interview with an informant in August 2009, hereto after known as “Jay”, revealed aspects of the political and economic forces that shape the struggle over the sanctity of Bear Butte, as well as revealing interesting spiritual components of conflict that have occurred in the area due to its status as a State Park. Jay, as both a Lakota Indian and a State Park employee, views the struggle in maintaining Bear Butte’s sacred status as difficult but not impossible. He related the events of closing off a section of the parking lot that had become an area where tourists were filming and photographing Indians during their prayers and rituals. After a ten year battle with officials this section was finally closed and the invasive acts of the tourists were halted.
Jay’s relentless efforts and positive and patient perspective are an example of the slow, but continual struggle for the reinforcement of an American Indian subjective identity.

Additional information gathered from Jay dealt with specific regulations regarding behavior at the State Park. The banning of dogs beyond the parking lot is, to outsiders, a reasonable measure that ensures the integrity of the park’s natural state. Jay, however, emphasized that to Indians, dogs potentially have a spiritual power that can interfere with the prayer ceremonies and the results. When discussing the behavior of the bikers who visit the park, Jay is buoyed by the newfound respect that most of the visitors have for the mountain and the rituals that are practiced. With regards to the encroaching biker campgrounds, Jay seems resigned to their continual existence but emphasizes an important point. There is only one Bear Butte, and its historical as well as its present identity remains. It existed before biker campgrounds and bars, and will exist after. The fight for its integrity must continue, according to Jay, even if the battle seems difficult. As Jay said, “The Mountain will remain long after the bikers and such have left. To us it will always remain sacred.”
CHAPTER 4: THE JOURNEY AND THE RESEARCH

4.1: Authenticity of Place: The Route into Rapid City; Along Highway 90

The drive down Interstate 90 in South Dakota reveals long stretches of gradually rolling glaciated areas in the Missouri Couteau of the eastern half of the state, now composed of rich farmland. This landscape gives way westerly to the northern portion of the Great Plains, dissected by the spectacular Missouri River and the east flowing rivers that created it during glaciation, including the Cheyenne, White, and Moreau rivers. With the exception of sporadic river channels, both wet and dry, most of the western half of the state is relatively flat, and in the summer usually arid, despite often severe flooding along the Missouri and its tributaries.

Along the sparkling four lane interstate, whose smooth surface is occasionally interrupted by stretches of dusty, single lane construction and ever-present state troopers, one can travel at tremendous speeds. Mere hours chew up hundreds of miles.

The scenery of cattle and hog farms amid perpetual prairie grasses is punctuated by spectacular white windmills, power catalysts that take advantage of the relentless wind that blows across the barren landscape. Large professionally produced roadside billboards loom along smaller homemade signs that, in addition to advertising ice cream shops, gas stations, motels, western-themed museums, and tacky tourist attractions like
the Corn Palace at Mitchell, reveal social messages that don’t just hint, but often bludgeon one with a view of the cultural makeup of this sparsely populated region. On one hand you see the rather innocuous, yet continually present signs for the kitschy, plastic, souvenir filled Wall Drug store that seem to appear every ten miles with either a rooster, fish, horse, or dinosaur accompanying a cheesy pun. On the other hand you come upon billboards that relay non-commercial messages containing Christian proverbs, graphic anti-abortion visuals, and pro hunting, fishing, meat-eating, and fur-wearing slogans. This is conservative country and they let you know it. You’re not likely to find a veggie burger, or an abortion clinic, and you’re not likely to conjure up the nerve to ask where you could find one.

The number of American Indian ventures are few and far between along Interstate 90. There are a several western themed shops that also contain tacky Indian trinkets and art, usually made in China. There are a couple small signs that lead to the Akta Lakota Museum and Cultural Center in Chamberlin, on the Missouri River. The museum is run in conjunction with St. Joseph’s School, an outreach of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, a congregation of Roman Catholic priests who run social rehabilitation programs. In Wall, S.D., home of the infamous Wall Drug, resides the Wounded Knee Museum. In contrast to Wall Drug, the museum is advertised by one modest sign on Interstate 90. The outside of the museum is in rough shape. Inside, however is a treasure of history, with powerful displays that contain more than enough text to fully educate the visitor about the horrific massacre that occurred on December 29, 1890,
where as many as 300 starving and freezing Lakota Indian men, women and children were killed while fleeing and then subsequently buried in a mass grave along Wounded Knee Creek by United States Cavalry soldiers (Fig 4.1). The museum takes a historical narrative, holding back little in recounting the horrors of that time. Likewise, the museum’s website (http://www.woundedkneemuseum.org) takes a similar activist approach, including petitions to rescind the medals given to the cavalry soldiers that day, along with tackling modern issues like the racism depicted by the use of mascot Chief Wahoo of the Cleveland Indians baseball team.

So what does the trip along Interstate highway 90 into Rapid City, South Dakota reveal about authenticity and place? The first thing that is evident, in regards to the non-commercial billboards, is that there is a self-conscious effort being made to reify a socially conservative ethic of values and actions that many people of South Dakota feel are important. Interpreting Relph’s analysis of the identity of places, this is a “deliberate attending to” (1976, p.53) of a moral code that is deemed worthy enough for groups to spend money on billboards in attempting to reinforce their belief system. Emphasizing anti-abortion and pro-Christian views for passing motorists is a physical, visual association with the prevailing ethical-religious beliefs of the people. Likewise, pro hunting, trapping and meat eating signs consciously promote these activities with a financial goal in mind; these activities are good for the local economy. This is a \textit{behavioural insideness} that tells visitors and locals that “This is South Dakota. This is what we believe in.” The subject of abortion is undoubtedly an emotional one, and also
Figure 4.1: Mass grave monument at Wounded Knee Cemetery, South Dakota.
one where the body figures prominently, figuratively and literally. Jones and Evans (2012) nicely summarize the emotional connection to place and how bodies and places are co-constructed. Anti-abortionists in South Dakota feel that “If you are thinking of moving here, this is what we will allow you to do with your body”. It is worth noting that Relph did not say that there are fixed lines between the seven categories of outsideness and insideness, but that there is often a blur between categories. The behavioural insideness, revealed in erecting physical structures depicting certain morality, could be simply the evidence of a much deeper empathetic or even existential insideness of the meaning of place.

4.2: Creating Place: Bob Dylan, Kid Rock and Military, Economic, and Political Nationalism at The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally- Research at the Buffalo Chip Campground

“Around here, we don’t wear sandals, eat tofu and drive a foreign car. We wear our boots, eat a steak, and drive a fucking Chevrolet!”


4.2.1: The Setting

Buffalo Chip campground, on the corner of South Dakota state highways 79 and 34, sits 3.5 miles east of The United States National Guard post of Ford Meade, and 5 miles south of Bear Butte State Park. The campground is a massive 560 acre plot of
grassland, mostly flat, consisting of tiny intermittent Cottle Creek that runs into Deep Lake, which serves as a natural blockade in framing an entrance lane to the gated grandstand at the eastern edge of the site. The campground can hold over 25,000 campers who ride or tow their motorcycles behind often massive R.V.’s from all across North American. R.V. spots, tiny air conditioned cabins and sprawling tents turn the pastoral land into a small self-contained city for 7 official days in early August. The sacred American Indian mountain Bear Butte stands out to the north, although it is barely visible from inside the campground, its view obstructed by massive signs and the trailers that supply the amenities of the site. The Classic-Rock concerts are the major attraction of the campground, with acts such as John Fogerty, ZZ Top, and Aerosmith among bands that have recently played “The Chip” as it is dubbed by locals and regulars.

While I sometimes appreciate this musical genre, I wasn’t tempted to pay $70+ dollars to visit the campground until Bob Dylan was booked for a show on Aug 10, 2010. Without losing perspective on my personal feelings regarding the events that occur in the shadow of Bear Butte, I ordered and printed my online ticket and looked at the event as a nice way to cap off a week of research. I was pleasantly surprised at the insight that was gained by the experience at the campground.

4.2.2: Creating Landscape and Place of Militarism

James Duncan has been prominent in exploring the role of text and landscape (1993), wherein the places of the landscape are created by authors, but also interpreted
by the readers (Cresswell, 1996, p.13). As I quickly learned, the campgrounds I researched have consciously produced an image to the general public that goes beyond, and masks the sex, drugs, rock and roll, and roaring bikes. I will contend that this creation of place is not only an aid to place making based on the makeup and needs of the “readership”, but is a politically based maneuver aimed at fortifying an economic objective through the use of militarism.

Militarism has played an increasingly larger role in all aspects of American society over the last half century. Militarism is usually regarded as a system of beliefs that is continually reinforced through the practice of preparing for war. This is accomplished by encouraging and enforcing certain cultural mores that fall in line with supporting the practice of war (Becavich, 2004; Woodward, 2004; Bernazolli and Flint, 2009). During times of war, the role of the military is obviously front and center, but it is also very prominent during peace time, used in a form of pageantry and grandeur during war memorial holidays, sporting events (American football uses displays of lustrous military might that compliments the militaristic jargon of the game’s strategy and terminology), county fairs, even religious ceremonies (one of the prayers in a Roman Catholic service “blesses” our armed services and military).

In the first decade-plus of this century, largely due to the bombing of the World Trade Towers in New York City, and the resultant wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the nationalistic militarism has been highly successful in the production of weapons for
profit. What it has also done has created a whole offshoot of militaristic economic avenues in civilian society based on the fear and reactionary elements of people’s need for safety and protection. No one wants their own countrymen and women to suffer at the hands of war and terror. This fundamental survival element is understandable and increasingly difficult to be critical of in the age of governmental wiretaps and the like, initiated by the George W. Bush administration, and continued under President Barrack Obama in the form of The Patriot Act. This leads to an acceptance of everything military, and is displayed in the facet of society that Americans have rarely faltered at; the aspect of making a profit. Whereas Tyner (2006) accurately reveals the corporate militarization of the United States in its war in Iraq as another neoliberal aspect of global capitalism, this use of war for profit as the embodiment of American identity on the home soil is also strikingly obvious to observe. This was more than evident at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, from the patriot-themed clothing, flags, and souvenirs available at the countless venders, to the military and patriotic shine that the biker campground owners put on their establishments, wrapping the sex, alcohol, and rock and roll elements in an acceptable “red, white, and blue” coat.

4.2.3: Military Tributes at Buffalo Chip Campground

As I had observed in the previous year, at the entrance to the campground, along the gravel road that runs off of 131st Ave, is the Healing Field display. The powerfully
patriotic display of American flags, each one representing at least one dead soldier lost in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, is a travelling display that has had a modified display at the Buffalo Chip campground for several of the past years since the attacks on The U.S. on September 11, 2001. These displays have commonly been linked and supported by the Patriot Guard Riders, a group of motorcycle enthusiasts who term 'respect' as their goal in honoring American victims of war and their families, primarily by attending military victims’ funerals and shielding the family from protestors (http://www.patriotguard.org). In a very similar way that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Moving Wall does at the entrance area at The Broken Spoke campground, this display immediately places the visitors experience in a context; most bikers are extremely patriotic citizens, and fighting for their country and honoring the killed soldiers of war is of great importance to many. Anderson refers to American soldiers fighting insurgency in the forms of terrorist actions and uses the term ‘popular support’ which “is given the same quasi-spiritual characteristics as morale, involving a combination of belonging, pride, confidence, and belief in a future” (2010, p.228).

While here he is referring to a military tactic used to quailm feelings of unrest and anger among people, I believe as a psychological tool, it can be looked at as a tactic in building a sense of togetherness among any group affected by war, including veterans and supporters at home, far removed from the battleground.

The emotional involvement of remembering dead soldiers plays an enormous part in creating a camaraderie and mutual experience. When bikers come to these
campgrounds and experience these displays with each other, this shared experience is a subjective creation of experience. Relph uses Dardel (1952) to propose that “space can be arranged or dismissed, but always has meaning in terms of human task or lived-experience” (1976, p.17). The spatial position of these war memorials are not random. In both campgrounds near Bear Butte, they are located before the paying entrance to the sites, meaning that every visitor to the area can view them for free. Tourists may overlook what goes on inside the campground, and are left with an imprint of these sites as guardians of patriotism, and experience a communion that comes with the emotional response to visions of suffering of those who are “on our side”. The first impressions of the campsites are caught by visual news reports advertising the events at the campgrounds, often with the campground publicists proudly explaining the memorials, before giving the prices and availability of tickets to upcoming rock shows. Without seeming to come across as judgmental, callous, or cold, I believe this sense of nationalism is pandering to a group who are more than willing to accept the intent, and to skeptical and ever-cautious locals who balance the financial benefits with the social negatives of an adult themed festival.

Subjective identities that are created, changed, and shaped within nationalism are coordinated and portrayed through “heroic deeds” and where “landscapes, whether focusing on single monuments or framing stretches of scenery, provide visible shape; they picture the nation” (Daniels, 1993, p.5). Interestingly, these monuments at the campgrounds are mobile, non-permanent. One week they are near Sturgis and the
next week they are in Butte, Montana, and the photo (Figure 4.2) becomes a symbol of Bear Butte, after all of the flags and bikers are long gone. So, as Relph contends, that if “the spirit of a place lies in its landscape” (1976, p. 30), is that spirit a form of vicarious insideness, because the memorials are reproductions or temporal? Is it incidental outsideness, because the place where people experience the emotional tribute to war dead can be anywhere the mobile displays are set up? Doesn’t the fact they these temporary displays actually return, often on a yearly basis, to the same place not mean that they ARE part of the landscape and non-fixed subjective identity of the place? I would contend that the answer to all of these questions is yes.

As Relph points out, the lines between his categories of insideness and outsideness are often blurred, and location is not a compulsory or sufficient condition of place (Cresswell, 2008). Places can have temporary meaning, and different meanings, at different times. These meanings are created by the subjects and the objects. They also remain in the consciousness of individuals long after the physical ornaments of that space are removed or changed. People who return years later to a place where they lived still recall the meanings that their memories are relaying. There are intensities of meaning and of memory, and the degree of change in the physical environment they return to influences the depth of their ability to comprehend this historically induced sense of place. Relph, in his discussion on placelessness, may be correct in contending, for example, that a trip back to a former place once called home that is now a paved Wal-Mart parking lot is a loss of place, much more than a trip back to a former home to
Figure 4.2: Bear Butte and The Healing Field at Buffalo Chip Campground, South Dakota.

observe a decaying vacant farmhouse with the same hickory tree in the back. To this individual though, taking the same bus route past the same park and over the same river crossing, may invoke similar memories, albeit in the context of a broader place.
4.2.4: The Concert at Buffalo Chip- “In Place, Out of Place”

The Buffalo Chip campground has a tradition of saluting the United States military that goes back 20 years. Owner Rod Woodruff’s concert venue held an expanded ceremony for the 70th anniversary of the Sturgis Rally, one that included high ranking officials from the U.S. army, navy, National Guard, and marines. The lengthy ceremony included speeches from the military elite along with words from the rank and file members, relating their recent experiences in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The well heard themes of freedom, courage, and commitment were understandably well received by the predominantly leather clad audience.

The concert I attended was likely unique given the double bill of Bob Dylan and Kid Rock. Dylan, the veteran folk and rock troubadour, has been on the road for most of the last 30 years, on his Never-Ending Tour. His fans were quite visible on this night; the mix of old and young hippies, and anonymously dressed non-bikers like me mixing in with the biker majority to cause more than a few looks from the biker throng. One could feel a slight cautiousness from all members of the audience before Dylan’s show began. Was this an encounter over control of place? Cresswell relates Agnew’s idea (1988) that “place always exists in a state between objective fact and subjective feeling” (1996, p.156). Nature, social relations, and meaning are three branches of influence that make up the phenomenological-experiential organism (p.157). This conflict of ideologies, manifest at the campground by the relatively shallow mediums of dress and demeanor, is perceived by me. My preconceptions of who in the crowd belongs where,
and the judgments implicit in such, make the possibility of the existence of Relph’s objective outsideness seem inane, as he similarly suggests. There is no “deliberate adoption of a dispassionate attitude” (Relph, 1976, p. 51) available. There never is in the endeavor to seek understanding of meaning in social relations. A lack of preconception doesn’t exist. Certain mental and physical procedures taken may alleviate concerns of overt bias, yet these too are socially constructed creations. If I arrived from Mars and was plucked down in the middle of this concert, I would likely not even notice that there was a slight tension between Dylan fans and Kid Rock fans. Perceptions come pre-loaded. To say some are more factual than others is an argument that is made, though one must consider where and how these facts are obtained. The facts of counting the number of bikers present versus the number of hippies present will tell you a little, but certainly not everything. All bikers or hippies are not the same, and even the most similar are not programmed to act the same all of the time. The main idea is that observers, and the observed, create and respond to a social situation. Objectivity is at best overemphasized, at worst it doesn’t exist.

About halfway through the Dylan show, when his seamless, slightly hypnotic buzz of loud blues rock had vanished any feelings of unease in the audience (as live music, a shared experience, often does), I moved my position in the crowd and ended up beside a group of denim jacketed men. They looked at me, in my shorts, sandals, and non-descript t-shirt, and raised their beer cans to mine. A discussion with one about how he was surprised how good Dylan was, turned, at my initiative, to my
obvious lack of biker credentials. The 44 year old male looked at me and told me not to worry, that he could tell I was “okay”. Taken aback, I wondered what I had done to deserve such comfort. Further conversation revealed that we came from similar backgrounds and place. I was from a farming community in the northeastern prairies of Saskatchewan and he was from the more barren prairie near Plentywood, Montana, 190 km. south of Regina, Saskatchewan, where I lived for 10 years after leaving home.

Learning this, I immediately saw in this stranger’s face the representation of dozens of young men that I grew up with, played hockey with, and socialized with. “We’re from the same place, we understand each other,” he said. Apparently, almost 30 years of change, both within and outside of my influence, has not finished defining the characteristics that have branded and continue to brand my relationship with persons both present and past.

When Kid Rock came on and delivered his doctrine of behavior regarding boots, grilled meat, and car preference that is quoted at the beginning of this chapter, I quietly giggled and smiled as my new friend and the crowd roared their approval with hoots, hollers, and the revving of motorcycles. Kid Rock, a one-time rapper from a northern suburb of Detroit, Michigan was making an emphatic statement about acceptable behavior on the temporarily transformed once pasture land of the usually sparsely populated western prairie. There was no way I was going to ask my recent acquaintance if they sold veggie burgers at any of the booths, or comment that my Hyundai was the best car I’ve ever owned. In an act of self-deprecating bravado I did kick my leg in the
air, revealing my dusty Teva sandals. My new friend laughed and told me not to worry, that I was safe.

Kid Rock was advertising for the already paid and admitted throng with his quoted statement. “The creation and mobilization of such images of place” (Massey, 1994, p. 112), also needs the reinforcement of acceptable behavior at places. Kid Rock comes from a family of car dealers, so a case could be made for the sincerity of his “Buy American” sloganeering, though I doubt many car dealers have turned down the chance to make some money by reselling a Toyota that they received in a trade. Many of the bikers in that stadium undoubtedly owned foreign labeled cars (“labeled” used here, as opposed to built; many of these are built or assembled in the United States), much like the foreign labeled motorcycles that roar through the Black Hills, burning up Canadian and Middle Eastern oil products, stopping occasionally to beat the heat by drinking a Coors beer, a 50% Canadian owned product. Perhaps, as Harvey states, the notion of place as nostalgia is ripe for a mobile capitalism, and the aesthetics of place is a useful tool for a nationalistic and political construction that belies the reality of globalization and time-space compression (Harvey, 1989, pp. 283, 303).

Kid Rock also plays the first few songs of his shows, as he did on this occasion, with an enormous Confederate rebel flag as a backdrop. The Confederate States of America, during the United States Civil War of 1861-1865, used the flag of a blue x-cross with white stars against a red background as a symbol during the southern states drive
for independence. To many at the time and today, the flag meant southern pride, wrapped in the economic system of the enslavement of African-American people. Today the flag is extremely controversial; many see it as a painful reminder of a racist past, while others see it as a symbol of southern pride and a reminder of the human pain and economic suffering that white southerners experienced during and after the war. To many today however, it means something different. During the Kid Rock performance, a biker expressed to me that it represents the rebel, the outlaw, and nothing more. To a white, middle aged biker from Minnesota, the Confederate flag becomes the Rebel flag. In a fitting bit of irony that reflects the subjugation and sexualization of women prevalent at the rally, during this conversation, a petite young Asian woman appeared in front of us wearing a minuscule two piece bikini with the Confederate flag x-cross and stars.

The perception of what is offensive varies from group to group. Kid Rock would not likely get away with flying that flag in a predominantly African-American crowd, but at the Sturgis rally he and the flag are cheered mightily. The flag has no objective fixed identity. It’s just a piece of cloth with an emblem. The identity that is placed on it is subjective and changes over time and from place to place, much like the subjective identity of the individuals in the crowd at Buffalo Chip Campground do. That does not mean that to some the flag is not very offensive. It represents a time of evil and suffering, but it did not cause the evil and suffering, people did; and while a racist element has attached itself to the flag throughout the last 150 years, others have as
well. Southern rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd used the flag in the early 1970’s at the same time they sang about the beautiful sound created by black bluesmen. Kid Rock has claimed that they were the inspiration for his use of the flag, not the south, and certainly not racism. The use of a symbol is an element of, and analogous to, the creation of subjective identity. It would not surprise me if in the near future a black hip hop group used the flag as an ironic symbol to reclaim the past, much like young blacks have retaken the N-word as a symbol of the reclamation of power.

4.2.5: Militarism and Politics at Buffalo Chip Campground

It was on the very stage that Mr. Rock spouted his words of wisdom in 2010 that 2008 U.S. presidential candidate John McCain campaigned over the approving sound of dozens of roaring Harleys (and Triumphs, Yamahas, Suzukis, etc.) about drilling for oil anywhere possible on American soil. While mocking opponent Barrack Obama’s triumphant reception in Berlin, Vietnam veteran, captive, and war hero McCain trumpets, “the sound of 50,000 Harleys” as “the sound of freedom”, the audience as “the heart and soul” of America” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sK-LEyyf7d). His young, blond daughter Meghan gets a noticeable reaction from the crowd, while his other daughter, an adopted Bangladesh girl is nowhere to be seen. Interrupting his speech to suggest that his wife Cindy should enter the Miss Buffalo Chip competition, a contest that includes buxom young women in bikinis, wet t-shirt contests and pole dancing, McCain again mocks Obama’s suggestion of inflating tires as a means for fuel
efficiency; this to a gathering whose devotion to mechanical precision is legendary. The speech concludes with the continuation of the veteran worship that the Buffalo Chip is renowned for.

In using Buffalo Chip as a place of political purpose, both McCain and the proprietors are well aware of the benefits. A devoted audience is being used in a place that is a fortress for “outsiders”, as McCain has repeatedly called himself, a place that they can call their own. Wasserman et al. labels this as place attachment as oppositional (1998), where the common man can get together and stand together against the elites that aim to control their lives. Yet much like the hypnosis of militaristic nationalism, this is a con; a ploy used by wealthy politicians and businessmen who are not outsiders. They are the elites. The common man doesn’t enjoy $8 watered down beer, but is less likely to complain about it in a place that has been created where the atmosphere of solidarity is overwhelming. It is much easier to complain about $4 a gallon gas and blame it on terrorism and liberals who don’t want to drill in the Arctic Ocean. And they roar their approval by revving the engines of their idle gas burning motorcycles.

4.3: Broken Spoke Saloon Campground- Placelessness, Militarism, Hegemony

4.3.1: Setting

A militaristic tone has been prominently on display for 5 years at the entrance to Broken Spoke Saloon Campground, the rural counterpart of the Broken Spoke Saloon in
downtown Sturgis. Located 10 miles from the bar in the city, the campground houses the touring Vietnam Wall Memorial, which sits at the southwest corner of the property, on a peak of one of the many slowly rolling but deceptively large hills on the eastern edge of the Black Hills along state highway 79. Amid an entrance area filled with logistics trailers, a dusty parking lot, and a welcome and security check-in, the wall is free for all passersby to view, in a spacious area of the property in the foreground of a view that includes the sacred American Indian laccolith, Bear Butte.

The wall is mentioned prominently in the local media as a wholesome aspect of the Sturgis Motorcycle Festival, promoting the proudly American nationalism associated with war veterans. Non-biker tourists can stop by and share the visually emotional reminder of the mutual service given by the many now aging Vietnam vets and their dead counterparts. They can avoid the less than family friendly aspects of the campground, the wet t-shirt contests, and the free beer hour enjoyed by many of the paid attendees of the site, and share in the definitive temporal association of the dichotomous outlaw and patriot biker personas created in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s.

4.3.2: Subjective Identity as Racism

The manager of Broken Spoke Campground, Jay Allen, had originally wanted to have a tribute to appease American Indians, located at the entrance, after a group of
tribal people had protested the very existence of the campground in the shadow of their sacred mountain, Bear Butte. This tribute would have consisted of a massive “cigar store” type Indian, a historical caricature and an insulting reminder of the misguided tributes long considered offensive to Indian people. According to one source who has confronted Mr. Allen both in person and in Meade County council proceedings, this gesture was an “insulting and ignorant” last minute attempt to smooth things out with the Indian community when Allen was attempting to retain the liquor license for the campground (Informant #1). After objections from both the Indian and non-Indian community the plan for the huge wooden Indian was shelved. In an interview at the outdoor bar in August 2009, Mr. Allen related that he saw nothing wrong with the proposed large, cigar store Indian. In the same interview, he outlined his position that Bear Butte was created “by God for all of us.” “Every night I look out at where the sky meets that mountain and I see the beauty that God has created for everyone. I tell you, we have some people; there’s this one woman who is always protesting out here. She’s nuts. I think every camper who comes here should be able to enjoy that mountain like I and the Indians do.”

With this introduction to the campground, and with the permission of the manager/part owner, I began my interviews with the campers at Broken Spoke Campground, seeing what they felt about Bear Butte, how it affected them, or if they even knew or cared about its significance to Indian people.
4.3.3: Interviews at Broken Spoke Campground/ A Relph Analysis

I conducted the majority of the interviews along the outer edge of the campground, with those who were camped with the clearest view of Bear Butte. While I originally intended to document these discussions with an audio recorder, this proved to be troublesome. Many of the campers were intimidated by the recorder, and most strictly refused to answer any questions if they were being recorded. I quickly gave up and simply remembered the answers to my questions, and jotted down the main outcomes after each interview was over.

After a quick questioning into the residency of the interviewee, the questioning began each time with, “Do you know about the Bear Butte mountain behind you, and if so, what do you know about it?” Out of 50 interviews, only 2 individuals said that they had heard about the significance of Bear Butte to Indian people. This led to me repeatedly informing them of the historical and present situations regarding the mountain. The information relayed included the spiritual significance to past and present Indian people, along with historical information such as the summit meeting of Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull and other Indian leaders in 1857. I then informed the interviewees that the noisy campground activities that they are participating in was causing the Indian people great distress, as it infringed on their ability to hold religious ceremonies. The next question was, “Knowing what you now know about the American Indian’s objection to the campground, would you think about not visiting the campground in the future out of respect for the wishes of Indian people?” Every single
person interviewed said that they would not change their plans, nor did they think that their stay at the campground was an infringement on the activities of Indian people. Only 2 people, who I talked to in the outdoor tented bar area near the entrance, said that they felt that the presence of the bikers near Bear Butte was an issue that they had problems with. One couple from Colorado was so dismayed by what I had told them that the woman responded that “It wouldn’t bother me if this whole campground burned to the ground.”

A simple Relphian analysis of these interview results would categorize the biker’s sense of their place at the campground as somewhere between existential outsideness and incidental outsideness. The incidental outsideness categorization fits the attitudes of the campers in that their activities have no sense of the activities that occur at Bear Butte, and could be categorized as existential outsideness, a deliberate and conscious separation of their activities to the place. None of the interviewees were even remotely concerned with their position in the outlying area of the campground, with a view of Bear Butte. When I asked whether it mattered to them if they had a view of the mountain, every single one said that it did not. I was informed that they were not asked where they wanted to camp, and all indicated that they would not have insisted on a spot with a view of the mountain. The main attraction of the campground was its easy access to highway 87, and the cheap price for the whole package, including the live entertainment and free beer hour every day.
I was very quickly dismayed at the lack of diversity in the results of my interviews, which may seem odd considering that this was what I had proposed might be the case with my initial hypothesis. It was too easy and unsatisfying and was exactly what a former professor said would occur. I found what I came to find; now what? This led to identify what was actually happening at the campground, and to question Relph’s concept of placelessness, and the whole idea of a permanent identity of a place.

While Relph’s seven levels of insideness/outsideness can be used as good tools to categorize degrees of engagement/disengagement with a place, and does a good job of emphasizing the subjectivity that is an essential aspect of place understanding, it runs into trouble because of its fixation with a need for a definitive fixed identity of a place. Nothing is fixed, everything changes. There is a new establishment of a subjective-identity occurring at these campgrounds that surround Bear Butte. They may be under-established, recent, or even shallow and relatively meaningless compared to the deep historical and spiritual meaning of Bear Butte to American Indians. We don’t have to agree with what the new forces are imprinting on the place, but we can acknowledge that these impressions are real and powerful. Their power is such that the protests against the campground have been significantly reduced in the last years. During my last trip in 2010, the informant who sparked my interest in Bear Butte was nowhere to be found, and their protest sign on their property was gone. I saw no protest of any kind. All of the campgrounds in the region have more permanent and more prominent infrastructure, including Broken Spoke and Buffalo Chip.
The growing subjective-identity of these campgrounds as places of militaristic nationalism is not something that grew organically. There has been a conscious effort to use this approach to shape the aura and sense of community of an ever diverse biker community. Many of the bikers are war veterans. A tradition of returning to Sturgis to reunite with comrades of the Vietnam War was immense in establishing a sense of pilgrimage during the rally. Many of those individuals are now older, in their mid to late 60’s, and their numbers at the rally have dropped in recent years. There is a younger generation of veterans from the Persian Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm) of 1991, and the more recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan of the last ten years.

It was hard not to sympathize with the veterans as I observed them searching for names at the faux Vietnam Memorial wall erected at Broken Spoke Campground (Fig. 4.3). After one individual’s wife had found the name of someone that they knew, a grizzly looking biker just stared, nodding his head in recognition. No tears were shed, or any emotion was demonstrated; just a blank look, as if the memories were too painful to bring to the surface again. “Those were bad times”, said an old biker from Minnesota.
4.3.4: “Militainment” as Spectacle and Cultural Hegemony

Contrast that deeply personal feeling on the consequence of war with the overtly patriotic pep rally atmosphere that occurs before every concert at the Buffalo Chip Campground. The military leaders that are brought in rile up the crowd into a fervor with slogans extolling the virtues of those who serve their country so we can keep our freedom. The crowd, many of them veterans, but many more who are not, laps up the spectacle that is dotted with fireworks and music. It’s easy to imagine the
difference in the attitude of the crowd if many of the younger people in the crowd would be facing the military draft that their fathers or perhaps their grandfathers did in the era of the Vietnam War.

The term “spectacle” was first used to describe how visual bombast is used to distract and placate the public by Guy Debord (1967). This spectacle involves a three part evolution in the cooperation between the military and the culture industries that began during Desert Storm but flourished during the invasion of Iraq in 2003 according to Roger Stahl (2010). The control and state integration of the media played a huge part in this change. The 1991 Desert Storm “living room war” began the desensitizing of the populous to the actual horrors of conflict. A few years into the 2003 Iraq War, aided by embedded reporting, people no longer looked at the images of death and destruction with shock; they had become accustomed to them. The second part involved what Stahl calls “technofetishism”, the “worship of high-tech weaponry”, which exulted the “divine right of high-tech civilization to conquer and defeat low-tech barbarianism” (2010, p.28). The third aspect of the spectacle, which has the most relevance to this research, is the jingoistic catch phrase, “support the troops”. Stahl acknowledges my earlier sentiment that at the surface, it is difficult to argue, especially publicly, against commending volunteers who serve and die in war. This difficulty is compounded with the realization of the poor treatment the survivors receive, from issues of wages to post-conflict care. The blending of lines between empathy for the soldier and aggressive military policy is carefully crafted, says Stahl. This has created situations
where, for example, the beleaguered old Vietnam vet at the Kid Rock concert buries his objections to the glorification of war that arise from his painful, personal, and experiential knowledge because the emotional climate created during the “spectacle” is overwhelming.

What is occurring at these campgrounds is a militaristic geography of hegemony. The military culture is creating place. Not organically, but through the deliberate actions of the campground owners and managers, in tandem with an overwhelming trend enforced by the interconnectedness of state militarism and information culture.

Enloe’s 12 points of a militaristic society outlined in Chapter 2 fit in with many of the attitudes that are expressed, and catered to at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, particularly at the “militainment” (Stahl) activities at the campgrounds. You would have to be a very brave individual to try and start an anti-war chant at these places, wear clothing with an anti-war motto, or even wear clothing with a peace slogan. There are rules for action and attitude at these places. Rules that conform to standards that reflect a militaristic society’s enforced expectations.

The character Brian in Monty Pythons satirical film Life of Brian gets on a hill to encourage the masses to rebel against the Roman invasion into their lives and minds. “You have to learn to think for yourselves. You are all individuals”, shouts Brian. “I’m not”, mutters a singular voice (Handmade Films, 1979). The unfolding of this scene could be at a Kid Rock concert, or many other places where economic and social
structures assemble individuals. Places where thousands could chant in unison, “We’re not!” And beyond the stage, Bob Dylan, on his “Never-ending Tour” since 1988, is on the bus to his next show, and perhaps like many placeless performers and audience members that night, unaware of what he was a part of.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1: The Power of Neoliberalism on Place

Control of a place is the culmination of economic and social ideas and practices, as well as a product of and participant in the various incarnations of power relationships involved in these practices. Drawing on Foucault, Jessop (2007) summarizes these power relationships as fluid, with the capability of mutually beneficial interaction, or the potential for resistance and friction between the innumerable layers of forces that come into bearing with each other. Out of this intertwined reality of forces comes the notion that the controlling state is an ever present and unfixed construct, a discourse that bends and moves in accordance to either the availability, or lack thereof, of accommodating economic, political, and social elements.

Change often occurs when the practices of a population coincide with economic factors. The power relationship between interest groups is reinforced, or changed by a governmental agency. The reinforcement, however, usually takes the form of a continuation of practices that benefits the economically dominant faction.

Neoliberalism is more than social-spatial relations, natural agency, the ‘arts of government’, the role of the market and the state. It is all of this and more.

Neoliberalism is a state of mind. That state involves the ability to use every means
possible, within the current and malleable social and political landscape to maximize economic capital. The understanding of the interconnections of forces that build this landscape is essential to coming to terms with, and perhaps fighting against the power. These displays of power are not relegated only to the boardrooms of multinationals, or the cabinets of governments. Power flows in every thread of social reality; from father to son, from boss to worker, from teacher to student, from man to animal, from white man to Indian, from the earth to your automobile. Neoliberalism is the grand expression of power, and its force and impact show little signs of slowing down.

Without sounding too defeatist, it is safe to say that Bear Butte as a spiritual entity has little chance of remaining as it was. The campground owners, and more recently, the energy industrialists, have tremendous power and the support of the dominant players in society. It is in this environment that small concessions to those who fight against dominant economic forces are large victories indeed. The place is changed. While Entrikin points out that there is a tension that exists between an objective conception of place and a “relatively subjective” sense of place (1991, p.7), an extreme subjectivity here is winning, and through the processes is destroying the old and creating the new. One sense of place is losing at Bear Butte to another sense that is either seasonal (militarism at the campgrounds) or unwarily minimal (placelessness). The marginalization of American Indian interests at Bear Butte leaves them patiently waiting for small victories.
5.2: Militainment and Subjective-Identity

In episode 5, season 3 of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally reality show Full Throttle Saloon, rock music performer Ted Nugent stands at one edge of the stage with a flaming arrow drawn toward a target. In full Plains Indian headdress, Nugent takes aim at his guitar, shouting “I’m gonna sacrifice my Buffalo for Sturgis. I smell freedom, attitude, and spirit” (Full Throttle Saloon, November 9, 2009). As the arrow hits the guitar, the crowd cheers wildly. The tacky appropriation of culture notwithstanding, the background to Nugent’s performance is remarkable.

The military presence in Sturgis and Mead County is immense. Hundreds of National Guard personnel inhabit the area, and on this particular day, the owner of Full Throttle Saloon campground decides to take advantage of this. For free tickets to an already sold out show, the promoter manages to get military personnel to devote hours of their free time to the stage and logistics setup for Nugent’s performance. Not only do the campgrounds play up and take advantage of the military atmosphere that is pervasive at the rally, this particular establishment managed to obtain free military labor in large part to Nugent’s very public pro-gun, pro-hunting, and pro-military stance. This is a small scale, but very telling example of the blending of the culture, the militarism and the neoliberalism that pervades the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. It was once a small but vibrant festival, where the love and skill of motorcycle performance and maintenance interspersed with outlaw social elements to express a wide range of perceived freedom. Levels of lawlessness reigned until the 1980’s, when local
government, business, and military forces created a dominant economic and social apparatus.

But a crude nationalism has existed for years. “I’d rather push my Harley than ride a rice cycle” (Rapid City Journal, August 10, 1978) becomes “Drill baby drill”, during a time of war with an oil producing adversary. *Crude nationalism*, from an etymologically subjective perspective, is a less constrictive term that factors in assumed racial as well as non-racial elements. When American Indians kill and die in the wars of the United States, sadly the ultimate manifestation of power is unveiled. A physical war of pain that had the ultimate expression in the Black Hills region during a period of great displacement and death, had imaginary borders placed on a representation called a map and had the place “Christened” South Dakota. The massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 was a horrific exclamation point to the attempted genocide of the indigenous people of the plains Indians.

My first encounter at Wounded Knee in 2000, in the heat and dusty gravel roads of early August, was initially framed with a reminder of the northwestern plains and prairie that I had experienced in southern Saskatchewan working as a land surveyor. A stop at a scenic curve in the road, just beyond the apex before descent into the Wounded Knee Creek valley overlooking the tiny Indian Reservation community that sparsely surrounds the creek, is rattled with the discovery of glass from countless broken beer and liquor bottles. The glass envelopes the road while glistening in the hot
sun, smiling a trickster smile. This is a special place in present Lakota culture, the
evidence intermingled with the dusty gravel. It is special for the wrong reasons, for
many people. Alcoholism, poverty, gang violence are endemic in what is now Pine Ridge
Reservation, a place near the last refuge for humiliated, starving, and freezing people
fleeing the U.S. 7th Cavalry in late December 1890

5.3: Future Research-Recent Developments in the Bear Butte area.

While the campgrounds in the Sturgis area, including those near Bear Butte,
continue to expand their facilities with more permanent structures (cabins, bars,
showers) and offer more services to their patrons (off-sale alcohol, bigger musical acts,
longer camping stays), recent developments in the oil, gas, and wind power sectors have
the potential to rival the impact of the biker rally on Indian activities on Bear Butte. In
2011 the South Dakota State Board of Minerals and Environment granted Nakota Energy
permission to drill oil wells near Bear Butte, on private land, with the closest well within
1.5 miles of the base of the sacred mountain (http://www.dailykos.com, February 2,
2012). The oil is situated in a relatively shallow formation. While the lucrative oil and
gas that comes from the rock in the Bakken shale formation of North Dakota misses
South Dakota, another formation, the Minnelusa shale has potential to turn the area
around Bear Butte into an active drilling center (http://www.huffingtonpost.com, July
19, 2012). The abundance of oil in North Dakota is slowing this development, but given the market for energy in the United States, this is likely to change.

The major concern by those that use the mountain for spiritual purposes is apparent. The increased activity near their mountain would again impact the religious ceremonies, as well as blight the view of those who climb the mountain for the sun dance ceremony. The increased traffic on Highway 79 that passes Bear Butte is a concern that is surprisingly shared by the ranchers in the area, who are worried about the impact of oil equipment and trucks on the roads that they use (http://www.rapidcityjournal.com, November 10, 2011).

In a similar way, wind power would visually impact those at Bear Butte. The wind blows mightily throughout this region, and a wind power facility is being proposed, 5 miles from Bear Butte (http://www.preservationnation.org). It seems inevitable that wind power will be the next intrusion upon the sacred landscape.

5.4: Future Research: American Indian War Memorial Proposal

American Indians have participated in the wars of the United States for decades, and at a rate much higher than the total populous of the country. In World War II, 44,000 out of a total population of 350,000 served in Europe and the Pacific (http://www.history.navy.mil). 82,000 served in the military during the Vietnam War
(http://www.history.navy.mil), many in battle. Holm attributes the enormously high number of American Indian enlistees to a determination to prove themselves to their local communities (1994, p. 21). In total, 190,000 American Indians have served in the wars of the United States since World War I, 3 times higher than any other ethnic group (http://www.history.navy.mil).

One of the major reasons for the suspension of the official government banning of American Indian spiritual rituals was the war service of Indians during WW II. Many came back with severe post war depression and an addiction to alcohol. The purification rituals such as the sun dance began to be performed with regularity at places like Bear Butte, where the people connected with their ancestors, including friends and relatives recently killed in battle. Whether one believes in the spiritual elements, the psychological benefits of group therapy under the extreme physical conditions set up by the sun dance, or the sweat lodge, are evident (Silver and Wilson, 1988). The consequences of the aural and visual destruction of places like Bear Butte to those who use it for healing are immense, and disturbing. “Places that help us become more aware can increase our capacity to do the right thing, and places that diminish awareness can reduce this capacity.” (Sack, 2002, p.115).

While the termination of intrusive, economically driven activities at American Indian sacred sites unfortunately seems unlikely, there are ways to reverse the attitudinal largess that characterizes the behavior of many tourists, like the bikers

Bear Butte State park officials, together with one or more of the campgrounds, can come together to erect a permanent structure that honors the American Indian veterans that have lost their lives in the wars of the United States. This could entail the creation of a newly designated place where the temporary political and economic boundaries near Broken Spoke Campground meet Bear Butte State Park land. In a newly created impartial zone, biker rally tourists, United States veterans of war, Fort Meade National Guard personnel and American Indian war veterans can be among those that intermingle in the shadow of the mountain. Out of a place of conflict, a common ground can be created that would benefit both sides of the dispute. Whether the campground owners would find this threatening is unsure, but a sense of public awareness, where the military worship mentality is turned on its head, could make the project attainable. The reclamation of moral authority in the form of a visible reminder of service would be enormous for American Indian people. The chasm that exists between the dominant group and American Indians is large. The neoliberal economic factors that have further widened this gulf have created permanent and painful
situations for many. Perhaps endeavors such as this, as small and symbolic as they are, can lessen future impacts.

5.5 Epilogue

Apathy, misunderstanding, and unawareness of American Indian sacred places are not new phenomena in the United States. This unawareness now has an economically driving force behind it near Bear Butte in the form of neoliberal and military supported economic and social forces. The lack of acknowledgement of these places can be tied back to the historical events that molded the areas through social, military, and economic control. Kenneth Foote argues that to acknowledge and surrender control of these places has been difficult for the United States in that it validates Indian concerns at the same time it delegitimizes the past and present actions of the United States (1997). This is not to say that the special places of memory have no chance of regaining the respect that Indian people feel they deserve. Many of these spots are designated as historical sites that celebrate American victories. These can be rebranded to tell the whole story. A few, like Wounded Knee Massacre site, do describe and relate the horrible, historical near genocide that occurred during the establishment of the United States as a new country. Yet even here, the sign that directs visitors from the main rode to the Wounded Knee Memorial is faded, pocked with bullet holes. A grim reflection, much like the broken glass on the gravel road, that life in the 21st
century for many American Indians near this place is as difficult as it was on the frozen tear filled day in December 1890. As my informant Jay mentioned after he stepped off of Bear Butte State Park land in an assertion of his Indian identity, “Bikers and white man will come and go, but that mountain will be there forever, and so will we”.


Full Throttle Saloon. 2009, November 9. TruTV.


Indians 101: Bear Butte and the Struggles for Religious Freedoms.


National Trust for Historic Preservation.


OLC Honors 12 Artists, Oglala Lakota Veterans.


South Dakota Crude Oil Boom Is Nothing Compared to North Dakota.


Steinmetz, P. *Pipe, Bible, and Peyote Among the Oglala Lakota: A Study In Religious Identity* The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.


Veterans wall in Schaumberg honors Indians’ service.


Wounded Knee: The Museum.