

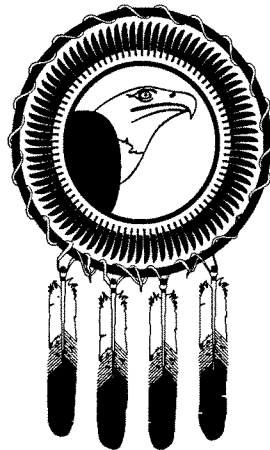
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*Sociohistorical Factors in  
American Indian Economic Development:  
A Comparison of Three Apache Tribes*

by

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Harvard Project on  
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Sociohistorical Factors in American Indian Economic Development:  
A Comparison of Three Apache Cases

by

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<sup>1</sup>. The listed order of authorship is solely alphabetical: this has been a joint effort. We have drawn heavily on extended collaborative research and numerous conversations with Joseph P. Kalt; he is virtually a co-author of this paper. Our thanks go to Manley Begay, Karl Eschbach, and Charles O'Hara for research assistance and frequently penetrating commentary, and to Richard Perry, Philip Greenfeld, Martha Henderson, and Elizabeth Brandt for information and perspective we could not have obtained elsewhere. We also wish to thank the White Mountain Apache Tribe, the San Carlos Apache Tribe, and the Mescalero Tribe, and in particular Ronnie Lupe, Wendell Chino, Buck Kitcheyan, Reno Johnson, Steve Titla, Marilyn Endfield, Edgar Perry, Richard Walter, and Butch Blazer for their time on several occasions. We bear responsibility for remaining errors and omissions. The research reported here was undertaken as part of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development under the direction of Stephen Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt. We are grateful to the Ford Foundation and the Northwest Area Foundation for their support of the Project. A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the annual meetings of the Western Social Science Association, Albuquerque, April 1989.



## Sociohistorical Factors in American Indian Economic Development: A Comparison of Three Apache Cases

Over the last decade and a half the sociopolitical and economic situation of American Indian tribes has been changing in important ways. At the root of that change lies the federal policy of self-determination. This policy, which first began to emerge late in the 1960s in response to extensive Indian political mobilization, sets tribal control of tribal affairs as a federal objective, replacing earlier policy orientations that placed primary decision-making power in tribal affairs in the hands of the federal government and its agents. While it often has promised more than it has delivered, the self-determination policy, along with supportive court decisions and legislation, created conditions in which tribes that aggressively attempt to do so can take significantly greater control of their affairs than at any time since the nineteenth century (Deloria 1986; Bee 1981; Cornell and Kalt 1988; Schusky 1975).<sup>2</sup>

Among the opportunities thus opened to Native Americans is the possibility of pursuing their own economic development agendas in lieu of those proposed and often administered by outsiders. Many tribes — often for the first time — are pursuing development strategies of their own, measuring them by their own criteria of performance, and paying the costs and reaping the rewards of failure and success. This has led to two very general results: an increased diversity of attempted development strategies, and considerable variation in outcomes.

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<sup>2</sup> While this remains true at the present time, the future of self-determination is at best uncertain. Recent years have seen serious erosion in tribal rights. The Supreme Court in particular appears to be increasingly antagonistic to tribal sovereignty and has shown a growing inclination to defer decisions on tribal jurisdiction and some other issues to Congress, where support for tribal sovereignty is by no means certain. See, for example, Cubberly (1991), Singer (1991).

Three Apache tribes in the Southwest offer an illustrative example of the latter effect. The White Mountain Apaches of the Fort Apache Reservation in Arizona, the San Carlos Apaches, also in Arizona, and the Mescalero Apaches in New Mexico are descendants of the Apache peoples who gained notoriety in the nineteenth century for their fierce resistance to subjugation by Mexico and the United States. Today all three are engaged in determined efforts to escape a twentieth-century history of persistent poverty, typical of many Indian reservations, and to build viable reservation economies. But their performances vary. By most economic measures both the White Mountain and Mescalero tribes are doing relatively well — in comparison, that is, to Native American groups generally — and both are doing significantly better economically than the San Carlos Apaches.

In these cases — and more generally in Indian country — an appropriate question is: At a time when most tribes are struggling with economic development issues, why are some tribes doing better than others? This is a complex topic, and we cannot claim to answer it definitively here. A large number of factors clearly play a role, and their systematic examination is itself a daunting research task (for two reports on one attempt at such explanation, see Cornell and Kalt 1990, 1991).

Our objective here is more modest: to make a plausible case for the significance of organizational and institutional factors in development outcomes, and for the substantial role that sociohistorical forces play in shaping those factors. Our argument is that any adequate explanation of the differential performance of these tribes and, by implication, other societies, must take sociohistorical forces and their institutional consequences into account.

## Analyzing Indian Economic Development

Much of the analytical work on Indian reservation economic conditions has tended to concentrate on two sets of factors that constrain or otherwise shape reservation economic development: (1) historical and contemporary relations between Indian nations and external economic and political actors that drain Indian resources, discriminate against Indians in capital and labor markets and other arenas, and severely undermine effective tribal sovereignty (e.g., Jorgensen 1978; Ruffing 1979; Snipp 1986); (2) reservation resource endowments or access, in particular natural resources, human capital, and financial capital (e.g., Ewasiuk 1973; American Indian Policy Review Commission 1976; Pottinger 1992).

The concentration on these factors is understandable. Their significance is obvious and intuitively compelling. The extent of historical land losses and the weight of long-standing external controls on tribal freedom have crippled tribal development efforts. As for natural resource endowments, human capital, and financial capital, it is certainly the case that most Indian tribes are disadvantaged in one or more of these areas. Furthermore, such factors offer concrete measures of development potential and lend themselves readily to analysis and prescription.

On the other hand, while clearly important, these factors are insufficient on their own to account for differential success in economic development. Most Indian tribes either occupy or have occupied similarly subordinate positions in the larger political economy, deal with a common federal Indian policy, and have experienced similarly constrained access to financial capital and high quality education, yet some are more successful at development than others. Furthermore, recent increases in capital availability and education do not necessarily correlate with patterns of reservation development (see

Cornell and Kalt 1991), nor do natural resource distributions. Snipp (1988) has pointed out, for example, that while reservations with substantial natural resources are doing better, on the whole, than those without, the aggregate differences are small. Furthermore, there are cases of tribes with significant natural resources that are doing poorly (e.g., Crow) and of tribes with few such resources that are doing relatively well (e.g., Mississippi Choctaw). None of this argues that such factors don't matter — clearly they do — but it suggests that there is more involved than these alone.

Analytical efforts have paid a good deal less attention to organizational and institutional factors in development.<sup>3</sup> However, as recent research on reservation development shows (Cornell and Kalt 1990, 1991), these factors are crucial to the development process, and all the moreso in a federal policy environment that at least acknowledges the legitimacy of — and claims to promote — tribal control over tribal affairs. This change in the policy environment shifts attention not only toward tribes' varied resource endowments or access, but toward their institutionally-based dispositions and abilities to direct community energy and resources into productive kinds of activity.

This focus on institutional factors is reinforced by the fact that tribes are "latecomers" in the development process. As Gerschenkron (1962) points out, for less developed nations trying to catch up with earlier developers, development itself often becomes a conscious, purposive, collective task. Certainly this is the case today with American Indian tribes, where development has moved to the top of most tribal policy agendas.

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<sup>3</sup> Such factors are occasionally noted but seldom analyzed. See, for example, Presidential Commission on Indian Reservation Economies (1984).

Furthermore, the leadership of such nations faces challenges unknown to earlier, more "spontaneous" developers, such as deliberately choosing appropriate strategies from a vast array of options, dealing with an external environment dominated by early, more experienced developers, and, above all, mobilizing the energies of group members in effective pursuit of consciously-selected, strategic development goals. Such tasks require not only determination but institutional efficacy. Among other things, tribes have to:

- *Assert tribal sovereignty over tribal affairs.* While the unextinguished, *de jure* sovereignty of Indian nations has long been recognized, in fact the major decisions affecting tribal affairs have been in the hands of outsiders, most importantly the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in the U.S. Department of the Interior. These outsiders generally have lacked incentives to serve the Indian constituency to whom they are theoretically responsible. They have sought to maintain their own position of power and, often enough, to achieve objectives other than those of the tribes they oversee (Nelson and Sheley 1985; Barsh 1979; Champagne 1983). The federal policy of self-determination offers the clearest opportunity to date for Indian tribes to reassert control over their own affairs. However, the policy alone does nothing other than formally recognize the desirability of *de facto* tribal sovereignty. Its realization requires collective action on the part of tribes themselves: the assertion of not only the right but the practice of self-control.
- This in turn requires tribes to *develop effective governing institutions.* Most Indian tribes have long been handicapped by governing structures that were not designed for the effective, contemporary management of sovereign

societies. The tribal governments of the 1930s, for example, most of which were established under the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934, or its influence, and are still in place, typically were designed with little attention to indigenous group organization or normative practice. Most have brief terms of office for both executives and legislators, lack independent judicial institutions or other mechanisms of dispute resolution, have poorly specified separations of powers, and inherit a lengthy history of powerlessness before the federal government. As a result of these and other factors, many have become arenas for the more or less constant recycling of local political factionalism, and have difficulty establishing a stable political environment for development or articulating and prosecuting a consistent set of tribal goals.<sup>4</sup>

The construction of effective governing institutions is a complex task. To be effective, governing institutions must not only be technically efficient: i.e., organizationally capable of processing information, producing decisions, and implementing policy, all of which is challenging enough. They also have to have legitimacy with their constituents: i.e., they have to be in consonance with the normative schemes of the groups they represent or claim to serve. This does not mean that effective governance must replicate indigenous designs. To quote Meyer and Scott (1983, p. 200), "Actors engage in cultural innovation, but such changes are easier and more likely to have influence when they are linked to patterns of cultural authority that are already available and institutionalized." To be effective, in other words, the formal design of

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<sup>4</sup> The relevance for economic development of tribal assertions of sovereignty and of effective governance institutions is discussed at length in Cornell and Kalt (1990, 1991).

governance institutions must meet not only the technical demands of execution, but also the informal criteria thrown up by the cultural and social organization of the community.<sup>5</sup>

The cultural and social organization of the community thus becomes a critical element in the governance process and in economic development, in the sense that it becomes a set of factors influencing — via the organizational match or mismatch — the relative efficacy of governing institutions. All other things equal, the efficacy of institutions will increase to the extent that such institutions match or build upon prevailing notions of, for example, the appropriate ways of organizing human interaction, the appropriate relationships between leaders and led, and the appropriate distributions of power across community members and activities (Cornell and Kalt 1991). Note that what matters here — from the point of view of legitimacy — is not so much what those specific notions are (although such particularities may have consequences for efficacy in the sense that some ways of organizing human behavior are surely more efficient at certain tasks than others) as the degree of fit between such notions and the formal organization of governance institutions.

Several propositions emerge as consequences of this reasoning. Institutional legitimacy will be easier to build, we would argue, where the

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<sup>5</sup> As Meyer and Scott (1983, p. 201) put it: "We take the view that organizational legitimacy refers to the degree of cultural support for an organization — the extent to which the array of established cultural accounts provide explanations for its existence, functioning, and jurisdiction, and lack or deny alternatives." See also the discussion in Hamilton and Biggart (1988), especially pp. 75ff. Using somewhat different terms, Cornell and Kalt (1991) explore this issue in relation to Indian economic development generally. We should add here that we do not mean to separate issues of legitimacy from issues of organizational design. Clearly organizational design frequently is a source of legitimacy or of the lack of it (and "legitimate" organizations are more likely to get things done, i.e., to be efficient, than non-"legitimate" ones). What we wish to emphasize is simply that institutions of governance must meet cultural as well as technical criteria if they are to be effective.

constituent community is more or less culturally homogeneous; where the institutions are under indigenous control; and where those institutions are perceived to have genuine power. The first of these propositions — cultural homogeneity — argues that cultural diversity, by definition, reduces consensus over appropriate forms of organization and behavior and thereby makes the fit between formal institutions and informal cultural conceptions more difficult to achieve.<sup>6</sup> The second proposition — indigenous institutional control — argues that governing institutions controlled by outsiders will have difficulty gaining support from constituents. The third — genuine power — argues that the claims of toothless institutions will have little legitimacy with constituents.

In a nutshell, then, the argument is this: (1) institutions of governance are key factors in successful economic development; (2) effective institutions, in turn, depend on legitimacy with constituent communities, which is itself a matter of the goodness-of-fit between formal institutions and informal cultural repertoires; and (3) such legitimacy will be easier or more difficult to construct depending on the historically-developed nature of those communities, the derivation of the institutions, and the degree of power they are free to exercise.<sup>7</sup>

In the remainder of this paper we use the cases of three Apache tribes in the Southwest to illustrate — and test the plausibility of — this argument.

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<sup>6</sup> This is not to argue that culturally heterogeneous societies cannot effectively build institutional legitimacy, but only that the process will be trickier for them than it will be for societies which enjoy a more homogeneous normative repertoire and set of assumptions about how the world works.

<sup>7</sup> For more elaborate discussion of the first two of these points, see Cornell and Kalt (1990, 1991).

## Variable Performance on Three Apache Reservations

There are four major Apache reservations in the Southwest, three of which form the subject of this analysis: the Fort Apache Reservation, home of the White Mountain Apache Tribe, in eastern Arizona; the San Carlos Apache Reservation, adjacent to Fort Apache to the south; and the Mescalero Apache Reservation in south central New Mexico.<sup>8</sup>

These three reservations were established in the early 1870s as part of the effort by the United States to control the southwestern Indian nations on behalf of rapidly growing white settlement in the aftermath of the Civil War. All three are physically large reservations, although Mescalero is considerably smaller than either of the Arizona ones. It is smaller also in population: in 1989 the BIA reported a Mescalero population of about 3200, the Indian population of the Fort Apache Reservation at about 8700, and the San Carlos population at about 7800 (U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs 1989).<sup>9</sup> All three reservations have significant natural resources, although Fort Apache and Mescalero, with major stands of timber and excellent alpine recreational resources, stand out as particularly resource-rich. Nonetheless, San Carlos, at a lower elevation, is by no means resource-poor. It has modest timber resources, substantial grazing lands, some agricultural land, water, and significant recreational opportunities.

There are major differences among these tribes, however, in the performance of their reservation economies, as measured by standard

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<sup>8</sup>. Lack of research resources has forced us to exclude the Jicarilla Apache Reservation in northern New Mexico from this analysis.

<sup>9</sup>. These figures may well be undercounts. For a number of reasons, including both inaccessibility and intentional avoidance by portions of target populations, it is very difficult to carry out accurate census counts on large, rural Indian reservations. According to Richard Perry (personal communication), several years ago — at about the time of the census referred to here — the chairman of the the San Carlos Apaches estimated the San Carlos on-reservation population at 10,000, nearly thirty percent higher than the BIA figure. Our guess is that BIA figures for all three reservations are low.

socioeconomic indicators. While the data vary, by most indicators San Carlos is, and has been, in worse shape than either of the others. For example, according to the BIA, in 1979 unemployment at Mescalero was at 40%, at Fort Apache at 30%, and at San Carlos at 41% (U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs 1979).<sup>10</sup> While the Mescalero and San Carlos figures are essentially identical, Mescalero has done a better job of providing on-reservation employment than has San Carlos, which appears to be somewhat more dependent on intermittently available off-reservation employment. San Carlos also had the highest poverty rate and the lowest per capita and median household incomes among the three reservations, and the largest percentage of households in which no one was listed as working at all (see Table 1).

While reliable data for the 1980s are scarce, BIA figures indicate that the relative position of San Carlos vis-a-vis the other two reservations has not significantly changed. In 1989, for example, San Carlos had a substantially smaller percentage of persons 16 and over earning at least \$7000 per year, and its unemployment remained the highest of the three (see Table 1). Interviews at all three reservations and an examination of tribal, BIA, and other information indicate that San Carlos's per capita and median household incomes remain lower today, and its transfer economy larger as a porportion of the overall economy, than at either Fort Apache or Mescalero.

In addition, both the White Mountain Apaches and the Mescaleros have compiled stronger records than the San Carlos Apaches of running large, for-profit, tribally-owned enterprises. The Fort Apache economy includes a number of tribal enterprises of some duration, among them a highly

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<sup>10</sup>. Given the large number of discouraged workers on most Indian reservations — i.e., those capable of work who have given up looking, are no longer in the labor force, and therefore are missed by unemployment counts — these figures almost certainly underestimate the full extent of unemployment.

productive sawmill, a ski resort, a sophisticated, for-profit, commercial hunting operation, and a growing manufacturing company; Mescalero also runs a number of significant, successful enterprises, including a timber operation, an alpine ski center, and an impressive recreational resort. There is little of comparable size or tenure at San Carlos. Indeed, aside from livestock, an intermittently operated on-reservation sawmill, a lakeside store and a few other small-scale activities, much of the non-transfer portion of the San Carlos economy has been dependent for a long time on fluctuating but generally meager off-reservation wage labor (Adams 1971; Krutz 1971; Perry 1992).

Finally, there is impressionistic evidence. Even a relatively casual visitor to these reservations is likely to notice economic differences: the number and nature of enterprises, including retail activity; the quality of housing; evidence of gainful employment; and so forth. San Carlos simply appears to be less "successful" in economic terms than either of the others.

How are we to account for this? Why do Fort Apache and Mescalero do better than San Carlos? Certain conventional explanations of Indian poverty are of little relevance here. The contemporary policy environment, for example, is essentially the same for each tribe. Their locations are approximately similar: none is near a major metropolitan area; all are more or less equidistant from major transportation hubs and markets; all are located in recreationally attractive regions of their states. As already argued, while natural resource endowments certainly differ among these three reservations, the differences are not extreme. There are significant differences in human capital, as measured by the percentage of adults who were high school graduates in 1979, but the differences are not in the expected direction, given economic performance. Fifty-two percent of Mescalero adults were high school graduates in 1979. San Carlos was markedly lower, at 37%, but the

single reservation where civil-military authority could be organized for effective control. Early reservation life reflected this concern with control, including daily roll calls and close supervision of the Indians by the military and civilian administrations. Particularly during the 1870s and 1880s, as the military struggled with recurrent Apache raiding and resistance, San Carlos was a hot-bed of suspicion, intrigue, and military activity, while Apache leaders and non-Indian administrators competed for control of the various Apache constituencies that made up the reservation population (Thrapp 1967; Clum 1936; Spicer 1962). The turmoil was increased by recurrent civilian-military disputes over reservation administration (Everett 1973).

During much of the reservation period, reservation superintendents at San Carlos micro-managed major aspects of community life, usurping indigenous authority at not only the band but even the familial level (Goodwin 1942; Spicer 1962). They broke up much of the scattered, band-based settlement pattern and forced band members to cluster near the agency. BIA officials removed children from families and placed them in a reservation boarding school. They planned and supervised all major economic activity. Food-gathering activities were stopped and movement off the reservation was restricted, with the result that the Apaches quickly became dependent on BIA-issued food rations. The superintendents ran the tribal court, assigned all lands, and dictated who worked where (Spicer 1962).

Some efforts pointed briefly in the opposite direction. In the mid-1870s, John P. Clum, the BIA agent at San Carlos, established a modicum of self-government through an Apache police force and a set of Indian judges, but after the 1870s, as Army and BIA control of the reservation grew, administrators increasingly ignored indigenous leaders and authority (Spicer 1962; Clum 1936).

followed established channels, and has not significantly undermined the functioning of the tribal government, while enterprise problems have eventually been solved through institutionalized means. In short, the institutional structures have weathered the political and economic storms better in these two cases than at San Carlos, with predictable results for economic development.

Of course this raises a further question: Why is it that the White Mountain Apaches and the Mescalero Apaches appear to do a better job at developing and maintaining effective governing institutions?

### **Sociohistorical Variation in the Apache Cases**

An examination of the history of these three reservations and of the peoples that occupy them suggests that sociohistorical factors may play a significant role in their respective histories of institutional performance. These factors are hardly likely to tell the whole story, but they play a major part in it. Three deserve particular attention: the degree of cultural homogeneity within each reservation, the early economic experience on each reservation, and the extent of federal intervention in reservation internal affairs.

**Cultural Homogeneity.** The population of the Fort Apache reservation historically has been dominated by two related groups of Western Apaches: the White Mountain and the Cibecue, known collectively today as the White Mountain Apache Tribe.<sup>11</sup> Closely linked in history and culture, these groups historically have provided a relatively high degree of ethnic homogeneity on

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<sup>11</sup>. On the divisions and geographical distribution of Apachean groups, see Goodwin (1942); Basso (1970).

the Fort Apache Reservation. This in turn has meant that the population of the reservation has shared more or less common patterns of social organization and cultural conception.

Mescalero likewise has had a high degree of ethnic and cultural homogeneity. This is less obvious at first. The reservation originally was populated by Mescalero Apaches, probably with intermarried Lipan Apaches. In 1905 the government allowed additional Lipans, who had been living in Mexico for some years, to move onto the reservation, and in 1913 placed some Chiricahua Apaches and, for a time, some Warm Springs Apaches there as well. But the Mescaleros and Lipan Apaches had been associated with each other for a long time in eastern New Mexico and west Texas and seem to have viewed each other as close allies (Sonnichsen 1973; Ball 1980); intermarriage between them appears to have been common. The Mescaleros and Warm Springs Apaches also had some history of association, and there was apparently some intermarriage between Mescaleros and Chiricahuas, although these groups also shared some history of conflict (see Basehart 1967; Dobyns 1973). Mescalero and Chiricahua dialects and culture are closely related, according to Opler (1955), facilitating the mutual adaptations of pre-existing and immigrant social organizations. Finally, the Mescaleros seem for the most part to have welcomed these other, smaller Apache groups who were moved to their reservation. The primary exception is the Jicarilla Apaches, who were temporarily located on the Mescalero reservation in the 1883. They greatly outnumbered the Mescaleros themselves at the time, which aroused Mescalero antagonism, and there were cultural and linguistic differences between the two groups as well. Neither tribe was happy with the situation, and after a few years federal authorities allowed the Jicarillas to return to northern New Mexico (Ball 1980, pp. 281-282; Opler 1983).

In contrast, the San Carlos Reservation has been a melting pot. Beginning in 1873 San Carlos became home, at various times, to Aravaipa Apaches, Tonto Apaches, White Mountain Apaches, some Chiricahua Apaches, some Warm Springs Apaches, even some non-Apache groups — Yavapais and Yumas — and perhaps others. By 1878 some 5000 Indians were concentrated at San Carlos, many of them never before associated with each other and some of them mutually hostile. Some had been friendly with the United States for years; others had been at war with whites for equally long. Antipathies among them were common (Thrapp 1967; Goodwin 1942; Spicer 1962; Getty 1963). While some of these groups — or portions of them — eventually were removed to other locations, San Carlos remained much more of an ethnic mix than did either Fort Apache or Mescalero (Spicer 1962; Basso 1971).

The result has been significantly greater cultural and organizational diversity at San Carlos. Unlike the other two reservations, there was no indigenous social organization at San Carlos that could readily command the allegiance of the whole of the reservation population, either in resisting impositions from outside or in mobilizing behind new initiatives.

Historically, then, the population of the San Carlos reservation has been more fragmented in social organizational and cultural terms than has the population of either of the other two Apache reservations considered here. Today, according to several Apache and non-Apache informants, these historical divisions still surface in some of the persistent intragroup conflict at San Carlos.

**Economic Experience.** Daklugie, son of the eminent late nineteenth-century Chiricahua leader Juh, described San Carlos in the following terms (Ball 1980, p. 37):

San Carlos! That was the worst place in all the great territory stolen from the Apaches. If anybody had lived there permanently, no Apache knew of it. Where there is no grass there is no game. Nearly all the vegetation was cacti; and though in season a little cactus fruit was produced, the rest of the year food was lacking. The heat was terrible. The insects were terrible. The water was terrible. What there was in the sluggish river was brackish and warm. Pools alongside the channel afforded places for insects to hatch. They served, as I know now, as breeding places for clouds of mosquitoes.... At San Carlos, for the first time within the memory of any of my people, the Apaches experienced the shaking sickness [malaria]. Our Medicine Men knew of herbs that would reduce bodily temperature but had nothing effective against the strange and weakening attacks that caused people to alternately suffer from heat and cold.

This was a Chiricahua viewpoint, and not entirely correct. Certainly parts of the San Carlos reservation had been home, at least intermittently, to some Apaches prior to reservation confinement. But there is little question that San Carlos was both less attractive to the Apaches and less promising as economic space than the high grasslands and forested mountains of the Fort Apache and Mescalero reservations.

Events beyond Apache control further complicated the problem. The federal idea was that the Apaches would take up farming, and some did so successfully. But circumstances kept working against them. The discovery of

significant deposits of copper, silver, and gold on the San Carlos reservation in the 1870s led to major encroachments by miners; eventually chunks of the reservation were sliced off to accommodate Anglo mining needs. At the same time Mormon farmers southeast of the reservation appropriated Gila River water, reducing the flow on which downstream Apache irrigated farming depended, leading to recurrent crop failures (Spicer 1962; Perry 1991). One result was growing dependence on the BIA for food, a dependence that lasted well into the twentieth century (Spicer 1962; Getty 1964).

Apache land and water losses were capped in the 1920s by the federal government's construction of Coolidge Dam on the San Carlos River. The dam, built on the reservation and intended to provide irrigation water for downstream, non-Indian farmers, flooded much of the reservation's finest agricultural land, including "many of the best and most prosperous Apache farms" (Perry 1991, p. 186). While the BIA initiated a new plan for Apache farming elsewhere on the reservation, the Apaches themselves were left out of the preparation and planning stages. Under the circumstances, and thoroughly embittered by the dam experience, few Apaches were willing to try farming again, and for thirty years agriculture disappeared as a reservation economic activity (Perry 1991; Spicer 1962). With farming failing and subsistence hunting and gathering curtailed, many Apaches at San Carlos had few choices but to abandon living off the land and enter the uncertain, off-reservation market for wage labor, a move encouraged by the federal government (Everett 1973).

The BIA also tried to promote livestock on the reservation, and established a number of herds of cattle under either individual Indian or tribal ownership, or on lands leased by the BIA to white ranchers. However, as late as the 1930s, most livestock operations were either Anglo owned on leased reservation land, or Indian owned but Anglo operated (Getty 1963; Buskirk

1986, p. 227). Only in the 1930s did the Apaches actually get control of the range. Once they did, they often received bad advice. According to one student of the situation, the BIA encouraged the tribe to "chain" portions of the range, a drastic and potentially damaging method of clearing trees and shrubs. The result was deterioration of the range and, eventually, overgrazing.<sup>12</sup>

The experience at Mescalero and Fort Apache was in some ways similar, in some ways quite different. Economic life was certainly difficult at Mescalero, particularly in the early reservation years. For some time white ranchers grazed herds of cattle on Mescalero land, neither obtaining permission nor paying compensation. Part of the problem was clouded title; Mescalero title to the reservation was not finally confirmed until the 1920s, injecting great uncertainty into reservation economic activity. In addition, some Mescalero lands were lost to white miners in the 1880s, although in compensation the tribe eventually gained additional grazing lands east of the reservation (Sonnichsen 1973). The food supply was a chronic problem. Corruption reduced rations needed by the Indians, leading in some cases to starvation (Opler 1983). While distant federal officials insisted that the Mescaleros become farmers, even the reservation superintendents recognized that little of the high, mountainous terrain was suitable for agriculture. Plans for Mescalero livestock and timber industries ran into numerous obstacles through the early part of the twentieth century, and economic progress remained painfully slow.

Despite these and related problems and uncertainties, what the tribe seems to have escaped is the dramatic ups and downs and resultant discouragement that San Carlos, with its forced concentration on decreasingly

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<sup>12</sup>. Elizabeth Brandt, personal communication.

viable agriculture, went through. Eventually, both stock-raising and timber became significant economic activities on the reservation, and the tribe launched a number of other economic initiatives, especially in the recreational tourism area, that have proven successful.

The experience at Fort Apache was better still. Interference in economic activity appears to have been least extensive, among the three reservations, at Fort Apache. Hunting and gathering continued to provide some Apaches with significant amounts of food (Spicer 1962). Subsistence agriculture, long an important element in Western Apache economy (Buskirk 1986), remained both viable on the reservation and important in Apache life well into the reservation period, and continues to some degree to the present day.<sup>13</sup> Efforts to turn reservation residents into either full-time farmers or wage laborers were muted at Fort Apache. Some Apaches did take up livestock, and today cattle and timber are among the mainstays of the reservation economy.

**Federal Intervention.** All three of these reservations suffered severely from federal controls and impositions during the reservation years, but there are indications that San Carlos experienced a substantially greater degree of intervention with more drastic results than either Fort Apache or Mescalero.

The federal government established the San Carlos Reservation in 1872. It was perceived at the time, more so than either of the other reservations, as a focal point in the effort to overcome Apache resistance to growing white settlement. The idea was to concentrate the various Apache groups on a

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<sup>13</sup>. See Buskirk (1986) and Everett (1969). We base this conclusion also on observation and on personal communications from Charles O'Hara and Philip Greenfeld.

single reservation where civil-military authority could be organized for effective control. Early reservation life reflected this concern with control, including daily roll calls and close supervision of the Indians by the military and civilian administrations. Particularly during the 1870s and 1880s, as the military struggled with recurrent Apache raiding and resistance, San Carlos was a hot-bed of suspicion, intrigue, and military activity, while Apache leaders and non-Indian administrators competed for control of the various Apache constituencies that made up the reservation population (Thrapp 1967; Clum 1936; Spicer 1962). The turmoil was increased by recurrent civilian-military disputes over reservation administration (Everett 1973).

During much of the reservation period, reservation superintendents at San Carlos micro-managed major aspects of community life, usurping indigenous authority at not only the band but even the familial level (Goodwin 1942; Spicer 1962). They broke up much of the scattered, band-based settlement pattern and forced band members to cluster near the agency. BIA officials removed children from families and placed them in a reservation boarding school. They planned and supervised all major economic activity. Food-gathering activities were stopped and movement off the reservation was restricted, with the result that the Apaches quickly became dependent on BIA-issued food rations. The superintendents ran the tribal court, assigned all lands, and dictated who worked where (Spicer 1962).

Some efforts pointed briefly in the opposite direction. In the mid-1870s, John P. Clum, the BIA agent at San Carlos, established a modicum of self-government through an Apache police force and a set of Indian judges, but after the 1870s, as Army and BIA control of the reservation grew, administrators increasingly ignored indigenous leaders and authority (Spicer 1962; Clum 1936).

Among the more destructive impositions was the so-called "tag band" system. Owing to the difficulty for English-speakers of pronouncing Apache names and to the complexity of indigenous group organization, government personnel introduced a classification system designed to identify individual Apaches. The population was divided into tag bands, identified by letter, and every married man in a tag band received a number. The government selected a "chief" for each tag band, given the number 1, to whom it assigned modest administrative authority and whom it treated as senior representative of the tag band. Wives were assigned the same numbers as their husbands. While in some cases the tag bands more or less coincided with pre-existing local groups, boundaries were often arbitrary and combined groups, while the governmental selection of chiefs ignored traditional systems of authority and decision-making within Apache society. Some "tag-band" chieftainships eventually were made hereditary, but via a patrilineal system alien to traditional, matrilineal Apache social organization. One of the effects was to undermine an entire layer of traditional leadership, separating leadership itself from indigenous group organization (Goodwin 1942; Getty 1963).

While the tag-band system was implemented at Fort Apache as well, thanks perhaps to greater ethnic homogeneity, a deeply entrenched clan system, and generally less severe non-Indian administrative controls, it appears to have been less destructive there.

In the 1920s, in response to a BIA request that reservation superintendents form groups of some sort to represent tribes in dealings with non-Indians, the San Carlos superintendent appointed cooperative, English-speaking Apaches and Yavapais to serve as a "business committee." Little effort was made to ensure true representation, nor was this body given substantive authority; the point was simply to have an organization that could

sign agreements on the tribe's behalf. "By the 1930s," writes Edward Spicer (1962, p. 409), "the result was an extreme breakdown in traditional forms of authority with the substitution of no authority except that of the superintendent and his staff." Autocratic rule by the superintendent continued even after the San Carlos Apaches adopted an IRA constitution — written by the BIA — in the 1930s. The superintendent when the new constitution was adopted was a man named Kitch. He indicated his continuing power when he simply excluded from the first, popularly-elected tribal council, on arbitrary grounds, a member with whom he had had an ongoing dispute (Taylor 1980, p. 99).<sup>14</sup> Clarence Wesley, one of the early tribal council members at San Carlos, related his own experience when he later was elected tribal chairman: "Ernest McCrea was the superintendent at that time. He told us that he still was in charge of the agency and nobody was going to tell him what to do" (Wesley et al. 1986, p. 143).

This pattern of intervention and intrusive control was widespread in Indian country, but it was especially severe at San Carlos. Spicer (1962, p. 408) concludes that, within the Southwest, the San Carlos Apaches and the Gila Pimas "may be considered as examples of the extremes in the destruction of the native forms of local group organization."<sup>15</sup>

These severe effects were mitigated somewhat at Fort Apache and Mescalero. Michael Everett (1969, p. 11) argues that at Fort Apache, "Anglo domination proceeded along markedly different lines" from those at San Carlos. While federal controls were often highly destructive (see, for example,

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<sup>14</sup>. Accounts of the evolution of the tribal council at San Carlos differ. See Spicer (1962, p. 259) and Taylor (1980, pp. 98-99 and footnote 14, p. 178).

<sup>15</sup>. However, he notes (p. 409), "Unlike the Gila Pimas, the [San Carlos] Apaches were forced immediately with the creation of the reservation into a new kind of life."

Kessel 1976), more of the indigenous social organization remained intact, and there was less interference in the day-to-day activities of tribespeople. Spicer (1962, p. 256) points out that when some 2000 White Mountain Apaches were allowed to return to Fort Apache from the San Carlos reservation in the 1880s, they were able to take up many of their old, pre-reservation economic activities, "namely, hunting, gathering, and intensive small-scale agriculture," avoiding much of the subsistence dependence that long characterized reservation life at San Carlos. This in turn helped to sustain the clan system at Fort Apache, foundation of much of Western Apache social organization, which was rooted to a large degree in agriculture and the distribution of farming sites (Kaut 1957; Buskirk 1986).<sup>16</sup> Not only traditional subsistence activities but much of the traditional settlement pattern also survived. Apaches retained considerable freedom of movement within the large reservation, and their dispersed settlements inhibited close administrative supervision. "In general," says Everett (1973, p. 254-55), "early attempts by soldiers, teachers, doctors, farmers, and missionaries to bring about changes in White Mountain Apache life styles appear to have met with limited success."

A second factor mitigating the impact of federal interventions at Fort Apache was continuity in leadership. Pre-reservation chiefs such as Alchesay retained considerable authority in White Mountain Apache society after reservation confinement, and for years served as intermediaries between their own tribespeople and outsiders, capably asserting Apache interests in interactions with the BIA and others. Alchesay's successor, Baha, remained as Head Chief at Fort Apache even after the formation of a constitutional tribal government in 1938, working with the elected tribal council to maintain the

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<sup>16</sup>. On Apache clan systems in general, see Goodwin (1937); Kaut (1957).

integrity of the group and as a living representative of the traditional political order (Dobyns 1971). The presence and continuing importance of such individuals and their cooperation with the elected tribal government helped give that government legitimacy and standing within the tribe.

In contrast, at San Carlos, where traditional leaders were systematically subverted and bypassed and the ethnic heterogeneity of the population hindered the emergence of widely supported successors, tribal government had great difficulty in winning the allegiance of the population. Richard Perry (1971) argues that at least in the early years after the establishment of the San Carlos tribal government in the 1930s, it was perceived by many Apaches as simply an extension of the BIA (a perception supported by Clarence Wesley's story reported above), a situation that led to a high degree of distrust and political apathy on the reservation. Everett (1969) argues that as late as the 1960s, the tribal government at San Carlos remained considerably more alienated from the people than it was at Fort Apache.

Mescalero offers an interesting counterpoint, a combination of the other two cases. Federal intervention at Mescalero resembles San Carlos more than it does Fort Apache: significant intervention in community life, particularly in the 1870s (the reservation was established in 1873) and early 1880s (Opler 1983; Sonnichsen 1973). Nonetheless, Basehart (1971, p. 46) argues that there was continuity in the styles of Mescalero leadership from prereservation to postreservation periods, suggesting continuity in leadership itself. Opler (1983, p. 424) points out not only that the Mescaleros "sought to maintain their traditional sociopolitical organization as well as they could" within the confines of the reservation, but that continuity in the traditional dispersed pattern of settlement facilitated such maintenance. In clear contrast to San Carlos, federal authorities did not break up indigenous communities and force the

Mescalero to cluster near the agency, but seem to have encouraged the dispersion of the Indian population. Local groups continued to thrive as sociopolitical units, with local group leaders serving as spokespersons and mediating between their communities and the reservation administration. Eventually, over a period of some years, the Mescaleros did increasingly concentrate near the agency, but on their own volition and in response not to coercion but to the easier access to services and economic opportunity that the center of reservation activity afforded (Opler 1983).

This continuity in social organization may help to explain the Mescalero response to external interventions, which appears to have been quite different from that at San Carlos. While the fragmented San Carlos population had difficulty responding effectively to the assault on indigenous social organization and culture, at Mescalero a group of shrewd and agile leaders quickly appeared who turned out to be unusually resilient and adept at making the best of deteriorating conditions. Surely the relative homogeneity of the reservation population helps also to account for this. One observer in the late 1950s reported that political factionalism at Mescalero appeared to be issue-based and temporary: deep political divisions were absent (Kunstadter 1960). With fewer fixed constituencies to please or appease, the tribe was better able to innovate in response to changing conditions. Certainly in the 1930s, when the Indian Reorganization Act encouraged tribes to organize constitutional governments, the Mescaleros quickly took advantage of the opportunities it offered (Dobyns 1973; Sonnichsen 1973). The same factor may also have made it easier for the tribe to sustain the sort of long-term individual leadership characteristic of recent Mescalero history.

In short, at San Carlos indigenous leadership appears to have been severely and systematically undermined, while the history of comprehensive

federal intervention and repression and the heterogeneity of the population hindered the emergence of widely-supported successors. At Fort Apache and Mescalero, on the other hand, the controls were less severe, allowing much greater degrees of continuity in traditional social organization and leadership.

**Consequences.** These historical factors had several consequences. Until recent decades San Carlos has been a more extreme example of the "administered community" (Castile 1974) than either of the other two reservations. More at San Carlos than elsewhere, the systematic repression of indigenous leadership and social organization and the imposition, into at least the 1930s, of tight non-Indian controls over numerous aspects of reservation social, political, and economic life prevented the tribe from maintaining or developing a social infrastructure capable of supporting sovereign decisionmaking and collective action. In the 1930s, when the system of constraints was to some extent relaxed, organization still took place under largely non-Indian auspices. Much the same was true of the new government organizations at Fort Apache and Mescalero, but in both cases some continuity with the past was maintained through indigenous leadership, allowing tribal organization to retain at least some degree of cultural support.

In addition, it appears that, because of the different patterns of ethnic consolidation, economic activity, and federal intervention, a more substantial and cohesive culture survived at Fort Apache and Mescalero than at San Carlos. The importance of this probably has less to do with how "traditional" that culture was than with its relative coherence and homogeneity.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>. We mention this to make clear that our point has to do not with the relative advantages or disadvantages of "traditional" tribal cultures in coping with the demands of contemporary economic development, but with the fact that cultural coherence, whatever its specific form, may provide a critical foundation for effective institution-building. See, for example, the discussion of Cochiti Pueblo in Cornell and Kalt (1991), as well as the much more

Culture does a number of things relevant to economic development. Critical among them is its service as a strategic guide to action. It serves in this role insofar as it consists of a set of paradigms of self, of surrounding natural and human environments, of appropriate modes of action and interaction that in turn guide individual and collective activity (Cornell and Kalt 1991, and see Swidler 1986). Thus it serve as a paradigmatic part of a system of social controls, constraining destructive political and economic behavior and facilitating concerted action. In this sense culture is a critical component of institutional capacities. Where culture is more or less homogeneous and coherent, it becomes more capable of shaping action in coherent and consistent ways, providing models of action that have legitimacy with the community and providing community members with a consistent sense of who they are and what that particular identity means. Where it is less homogeneous and coherent, both individual and collective action become more problematic. As identities fragment, shared interests become more difficult to identify. Strategies of action are more difficult to develop, and they lack the legitimacy with the community that culturally-supported strategies — by definition — possess (Meyer and Scott 1983).

One of the striking things about the White Mountain Apache Tribe is the confidence with which they approach development opportunities and tasks, and their sense of knowing who they are and how they wish to approach the larger world. This surely has several roots, including a history of ethnic homogeneity that has reduced intragroup conflict and provided strong indigenous social organization, and the reduced severity of federal

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general discussion in Rudolph and Rudolph (1967). Thanks to Karl Eschbach also for his reflections on this point.

interventions. Both have helped to sustain a broad cultural consensus capable of guiding action.

This is apparent in much of the tribal leadership. Ever since Alchesay, White Mountain Apache leaders have tended to emphasize incorporating the best of what the larger society has to offer as a means of empowering and sustaining the Apache tribe itself (Dobyns 1971). Alchesay urged young Apaches to seek education, learn English, and acquire skills that would be usable in the new tribal environment; Chief Baha urged the tribe to open the reservation to tourists so as to gain the revenues they had to offer; Ronnie Lupe, chairman during the 1970s and early 1980s, and again in the early 1990s, talks openly of teaching at one and the same time "the Apache Way and the Wall Street Way," and of the necessity of combining the two on behalf of tribal survival.<sup>18</sup>

Similar orientations are apparent at Mescalero, where major efforts have gone into education, and the tribe — at least since the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 — has aggressively pursued opportunities and tools offered by the surrounding society, using them to protect and expand its own sovereignty (Sonnichsen 1973; Dobyns 1973).<sup>19</sup> There, too, a history of relative ethnic homogeneity and cohesion produced a cultural consistency that is reflected in Mescalero strategic responses to rapidly changing conditions (see Basehart 1967; Henderson 1992).

The evolution of the Mescalero cattle industry provides one illustration of this pattern. In the 1930s, livestock raising at Mescalero, long encouraged by the BIA, took place largely in small, family operations that were only

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<sup>18</sup>. In conversation with Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt, Whiteriver, Arizona, March 1988.

<sup>19</sup>. This orientation was apparent in an interview with Wendell Chino, current tribal chairman, by Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt, Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 1990.

marginally successful. In the 1940s, however, most Mescalero cattle producers decided to combine their operations, establishing a Mescalero Indian Cattle Growers' Association, and hired a cattle manager to manage what became, in effect, a tribal herd. After some early difficulties, the new operation has moved into a period of extended success lasting at least into the mid-1980s, as measured by calf crops, average calf weights, and yearly dividends (Henderson 1992). The overall scheme replicates an old Mescalero economic strategy, what Basehart (1967) calls the "resource holding corporation," a characteristic feature of Mescalero economy prior to reservation confinement. As Henderson (1992, p. 26) comments, the contemporary Mescalero cattle industry "maintains a large-scale, extensive form of agriculture based on communal ownership and corporate decision-making characteristic of pre-reservation Apache culture."

San Carlos, with its melting pot history, its greater legacy of intervention and dependency, and its historically developed distrust of both tribal and federal governments, has lacked much of the foundation that would have facilitated such responses to economic need.<sup>20</sup> Today, the tribe still faces the challenge of developing an institutional environment that can encourage both tribal members and potential investors — large or small, from within the tribe or outside it — to have confidence not only in current leaders but in the institutions of tribal governance themselves.

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<sup>20</sup>. By way of anecdotal support, one Anglo individual who has worked with a large number of tribes on strategic planning and economic development commented to one of the authors that, among the Apache tribes, the San Carlos Apaches seemed to him to be most aloof, suspicious of outsiders, and lacking in confidence in their own ability to make things happen (in conversation, August 1987). Given their unusually oppressive historical experience, this seems understandable.

## Sociohistorical Factors in Economic Development

Economic development is an extraordinarily complex process, and in many ways an enigmatic one. As Albert Hirschman (1978 [1958]) pointed out several decades ago, the study of development has produced a lengthy laundry list of prerequisites and obstacles, such that one might wonder how any development ever occurs at all. Hirschman's own take on the issue was somewhat different. "Development," he wrote (p. 5), "depends not so much on finding optimal combinations for given resources and factors of production as on *calling forth and enlisting for development purposes* resources and abilities that are hidden, scattered, or badly utilized" (emphasis added). In the same essay he draws attention to "the need for a 'binding agent' which is to bring together various scattered or hidden elements..." (p. 7).

We interpret this "calling forth" and "bringing together" as the tasks of formal and informal institutions<sup>21</sup>: the formal mechanisms by which groups organize and regulate individual and collective action, and the informal mechanisms — culturally-derived norms and interpretations — that support and sustain the more formal mechanisms of social control. It is the particular mix of these two — the more formal organizational forms and the informal cultural supports — that forms a pivotal relationship in the development process (Cornell and Kalt 1990, 1991). To the extent that these two elements match, the formal institutions of the society gain legitimacy, and thereby become more capable of shaping individual and collective action in ways that are economically productive and that contribute to the realization of group

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<sup>21</sup>. As, apparently, does Hirschman, who quotes Harry Pearson: "There are always and everywhere potential surpluses available. What counts is the institutional means for bringing them to life." See Hirschman, footnote, p. 5, and Pearson (1957, p. 339 and *passim*).

goals.<sup>22</sup> In short, to the extent that they match, social control (in its classical sense) becomes more effective.

What we are talking about, fundamentally, is the ability to organize effectively for development — or for anything else. But what is at issue is not simply technical organizational design or performance. Training, skill, and efficient hierarchies are not the critical elements in this argument. What matters most is the ability to establish institutional legitimacy so as to effectively mobilize and channel the sentiments, resources (including skills), and support of the community itself.

Like other societies, the Apache nations face multiple obstacles as they pursue self-determined economic development. Sociohistorical factors of the sort we have reviewed here are unlikely on their own to be able to explain the differential economic performance of these three tribes. This is hardly the whole story. But in these different reservation histories one can find consequential factors that appear in one way or another to help or to hinder tribal efforts to build effective institutions with which to shape their own futures. The kinds of factors reviewed here — fragmentation vs. solidarity, the survival of indigenous social organization, cultural coherence capable of guiding and legitimating action, the capacity to generate and support indigenous leadership, and so on — are conditional aspects of collective mobilization. Within the limits set by contemporary circumstance — the constraints imposed by policy, jural status, resource distributions, and the like — these sociohistorical factors shape the ability of groups to establish their own governing institutions, provide them with legitimacy, and endow them

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<sup>22</sup>. For some further discussion of these issues, see Hamilton and Biggart (1988, especially pp. 75ff.); Meyer and Scott (1983); Cornell and Kalt (1991).

with genuine power. Such institutions, in turn, are then able to exert considerable influence over development strategies and outcomes.

What the Apache cases suggest is that to understand patterns of economic development we need to look not only to the external political and economic constraints tribes face or to the natural and human resources they control, but to their historically-shaped institutional capabilities as well.

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Table 1  
Economic Data on Three Apache Reservations

	Mescalero	Fort Apache	San Carlos
1979 % of work force unemployed <sup>a</sup>	40	30	41
1980 % of persons in households with incomes below federal poverty line <sup>b</sup>	44	49	55
1980 Median household income <sup>b</sup>	\$10,607	\$9,854	\$7,704
1980 Per capita income <sup>b</sup>	\$2,962	\$2,309	\$2,262
1980 % of households with no one working <sup>b</sup>	7.8	9.4	12.3
1989 % of persons 16 yrs or over earning \$7,000 or more per year <sup>a</sup>	18	33	16
1989 % of work force unemployed <sup>a</sup>	58	21	62

Sources: <sup>a</sup> U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Local Estimates of Resident Indian Population and Labor Force Status, April 1979 and January 1989 (Washington: Bureau of Indian Affairs)

<sup>b</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of the Population, 1980, Volume 2, Subject Report: American Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts on Identified Reservations and in the Historic Areas of Oklahoma (Excluding Urbanized Areas) (Washington: Bureau of the Census, 1986).

