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Charles Nolley

The University of Montana

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF TRIBAL INDUSTRY ON FORT PECK RESERVATION

BY

CHARLES NOLLEY

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ABSTRACT

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Director: Katherine Weist

The study examines the attempts made in recent years to promote economic development in the Fort Peck Reservation community through the establishment of Tribally owned industry. Two types of questions are central to the problem: (1) the purely economic constraints involving isolation from raw materials and markets and the shortage of capital and skilled labor, and (2) the question of cultural conflict involved in attempting to adapt a form of industrial social organization to work within a different cultural milieu. Fort Peck Reservation provides an appropriate setting since industry has been established quite successfully after a number of unsuccessful attempts.

Five months of intensive fieldwork and another year of residence with more casual observations provided the data. Observations focused on two factories operating on the reservation during the fieldwork period. Extensive interviews were conducted with people both inside and outside the factories, both formally and informally. Records were collected and examined wherever possible so material gathered through observation and interviews could be checked against statistical information. Much important information was collected through lengthy intimate associations and participant observation involving people with varying kinds of relationships to the factories.

Historical and economic analysis illuminate the reasons for developing industry in such a remote area since the agricultural resources of the area are under effective domination by local White population. Effective implementation of industry has required adjustments between the kinship centered ethos of the Indian community and the norms and structure of an American factory organized around the notion of the maximization of profit without regard for personal attachments. Resulting cultural conflict has been effectively managed through the development of an intimately balanced set of structural relationships which define the factories' position vis-a-vis the tribes as well as providing a system of internal organization which meets the economic demands of productivity and manages the tensions which threaten to destabilize the operations of the factories. It is concluded that the adjustment has been successful enough to provide good prospects for long range stability which could in turn be an important element in the broader overall strategy for economic development in the Reservation community.
I feel in a very awkward position in trying to acknowledge the many debts I have to the people of Fort Peck who made this study possible. To single out those who have contributed so much might unjustly expose them to criticism which should rightly be directed at me. Therefore, I have chosen not to mention individuals and I hope that those of you who should be mentioned here and are not will understand should you ever read this. Some of you I have thanked privately but many more I have not. I would like to extend special thanks, however, to Tribal Chairman Norman Hollow and the Tribal Executive Board for granting permission for the research and for so kindly making the arrangements for me to gain access to the factories. I must also publicly thank the factory managers who were completely helpful and supportive both in the generous sharing of their own time and in allowing me to poke around the workplace and take the time of so many members of their staffs. I was uniformly impressed by the kindness, honesty and dedication of the management, both Indian and non-Indian and this should be kept in mind when examining the cultural conflicts with which they all are struggling.

Thanks also are due to those faculty members who nurtured and prodded. Over the years, Dr. Frank Bessac has done more to teach me to think about social phenomena than he knows and Dr. Katherine Weist has provided much help through a judicious combination of stern criticism and timely words of encouragement. Thanks also to Becky Lorentzen for her efficient typing and editorial assistance. Finally, I must thank the family who endured patiently and most of all my wife Saba who was a true co-investigator in the field, helpful critic in the analysis, and without whom the entire project would have been abandoned long ago.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This is a study of two factories on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in northeastern Montana. In a broad sense, it can be said to fall into that large category of anthropological literature which discusses the tremendous changes which Native peoples have been forced to make in order to adapt to the juggernaut of western culture and modern technology. The *raison d'être* of these factories is primarily to provide employment for any economically dislocated and depressed people.

The general story is familiar. The Assiniboine and Sioux tribes of Fort Peck Reservation are both descendants of people whom the BAE Handbook of American Indians states "are universally conceded to be of the highest type, physically, mentally, and probably morally of any of the western tribes" (1907:377). These are the Plains Indians who saw within the period of scarcely more than a generation, the virtual extinction of the buffalo, an animal central to their way of life, the settling of the plains by whites and their own confinement to reservations. The near total destruction of the familiar means of livelihood required the development of new ways to obtain the material requirements.
of life in an environment which has been rapidly changing ever since. The arrival of new technology and the imposition of new restrictions were accompanied by new relationships, notably an important relationship with a complex bureaucracy with the capacity and tendency to make decisions of far reaching impact for the tribes. While a detailed history of the Fort Peck Tribes has yet to be written, the general story is well documented. The gradual settlement of Indian lands, the establishment of the reservation in the Fort Laramie treaty in 1851, continued white encroachment, the shrinking of the reservation to a fraction of its original size, the Indian wars of the 1870's which were followed by strict militarily enforced confinement, the allotment of 160 acre parcels to individuals under the provisions of the Dawes Act of 1887, the subsequent opening of remaining reservation land to white homesteaders and stockmen eager to exploit the potential of reservation grazing land north of the Missouri River following some nearly disasterous winters, the sale of allotted Indian lands to Whites by individual Indians unaccustomed to European concepts of land ownership; these are essential elements in the story of how the Assiniboine and Sioux have come to be largely dispossed from their land.

Like many other reservation communities, the transformation of these peoples into sedentary farmers which had been envisioned by the government did not occur and these people have only been very marginally successful in adopting agricultural production as a means of livelihood. The record of the interactions between Whites and Indians in the west has left a legacy of bitterness, disappointment,
mistrust, and most of all, misunderstanding. There is little about which general agreement can be found with the exception of the general evaluation that most Indian people are living under difficult and undesirable economic conditions as well as facing challenging problems of cultural adjustment and social adaptation. While the specific situation of each native community is unique in many ways, they tend to have many things in common. Among the important factors contributing to this common experience of tribes throughout the Plains is the fact that they remain under the custodianship of the Federal Government which establishes blanket policies which will be applied to many different groups of native peoples.

In the wake of the destruction of the economic and material bases for the lives of the tribes, the basic government strategy for economic re-development for the Assiniboine and Sioux presumed that they would become self supporting through the adoption of farming and ranching. This was a premise underlying various government policies from the time of the Indian Allotment Act (Dawes Act) until recent years. In view of the failure of a variety of these programs to rejuvenate the economic life of Indian communities as planned anywhere on the Plains, in recent decades there has been a growing feeling that something else must be done. Reasons offered for the difficulties were varied. Some attributed failure to the poor quality of Indian lands or lack of capital while others have claimed that cultural factors have significantly hampered economic adaptation. (Macgregor 1969, 1961, King 1969, Schusky 1975, Sasaki & Basehart 1961)

One alternative proposal that found considerable support from
various quarters suggested that business and industry should be established on the reservations in hopes that this type of economic enterprise might prove to be a means that would enable these people to carve out a reasonable existence within the boundaries of the existing socio-economic system. As a result, a variety of programs aimed at economic development through industrialization have been instituted in Indian communities. While it has already become abundantly clear that industry is no panacea for the manifold economic difficulties besetting reservation communities, it is still too early to evaluate what the long term effects might be and the results are rather mixed. The few reports on attempts to establish business and industry in reservation communities indicate that there has been a high degree of failure (Duran & Duran 1973, Nurge 1970, Schusky 1975, Sonnenberg 1969, King 1969) but they also point out cases where there has been some success (Stoffle 1975, Bigart 1972, Edwards 1961). A number of these ventures failed for reasons of poor planning and faulty conception from the very beginning and their failures say nothing about the general suitability of industrial development as a tool for economic development in Indian communities.

The much noted attraction of the Mohawks to high steel construction work served as a model and inspiration for many of these schemes, and many a planner of reservation development wondered just what sort of activity might have the same sort of attraction for the people of that area. Stoffle (1975:221) and Hough (1967:193) have both suggested that many Indian groups were "preadapted" to certain types of industrial production work and are well suited to the demands of precision hand
work. A number of these reports indicate that the social organization of the factory as it has evolved in the non-Indian society cannot function well without adaptation to the value structure of the local Indian community and those cases which report success cite examples of adjustments to factory organizational and operational patterns.

The Fort Peck Reservation has seen a number of attempts to establish business and industry among the tribes resident there. The reservation was designated as a redevelopment district by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) in 1961, making it possible for the community to qualify for various programs oriented toward the development of industry. The history of these programs is chequered by various short term projects and several failures, but there are now two industrial plants on the reservation which have been in operation for five years or more, and, having survived beyond an initial grant or contract period, show signs of becoming relatively permanent. Having reached this stage, it is now possible to evaluate what has happened, to examine the present role of the factories in the reservation society and to begin some assessment of the effects of the interaction of the Sioux and Assiniboine of Fort Peck with these industrial institutions.

The Fieldwork

The original idea for this research was planted during my first visit to the reservation in late 1975, when I also had my first contact with the factories and an invitation to return and study the developments there in detail. The majority of the research upon which this report is based was carried out while in residence upon the Fort Peck
Reservation between February 1977 and July 1978, and except where noted otherwise, this period will be the ethnographic present. A period of five months between February and July 1977 was devoted primarily to gathering ethnographic data in relation to the development of the factories on the reservation and their effects. During the following year, I was employed in one of the public high schools on the reservation to teach Indian history and culture as well as to counsel Indian students and serve as a sort of general cultural liaison person. Observations related to the factories were carried on at a much lower level during this period but this additional length of stay served several purposes by allowing me to recheck some of my initial observations as well as providing the length of time that is necessary in order to get a feel of the rhythmic seasonal changes of life in that community and to more accurately sort out the patterned from the idiosyncratic in the flow of events.

The methodology employed was basically that eclectic and oftentimes dangerously unstructured technique of participant observation which is probably more of an art than a science. Most of the information was collected through unstructured or semi-structured interviews with a wide variety of persons who had different types of relationships and perspectives on the factories. These included, but were not limited to, tribal leaders, BIA officials, all of the factory managers, workers in all types of positions below those of management, former employees, relatives of factory workers, non-Indian community leaders and businessmen, and administrators of various other tribal programs concerned with economic development. Of course the kinds of questions asked of these
different parties varied a great deal. For example, in interviewing non-Indian bankers and businessmen, I was particularly interested to see if they had observed any changes in patterns of consumption or in use of money which might be associated with the factories. Upon learning about the continuing importance of kinship ties and their effects within the factories, I was able to chart most of the kin relationships among workers and made a special point to interview key people at the center of some of these groups. While many of my acquaintances with factory workers came about in haphazard fashion and could thus be biased by any number of factors, near the end of the fieldwork period, I reviewed the list of workers I had interviewed against a list of all the workers in the company of knowledgeable informants who made suggestions for some additional interviews which were conducted until we all were satisfied that I had contacted a reasonable cross-section of the work force and sampled the diversity within the factory work force.

In addition to the interviews and direct observation, a number of written records were collected. These included BIA reports on a variety of subjects, reports of the Fort Peck Planning District, some records from the factories themselves, census data, and some records and statistical reports from other governmental and tribal agencies. Records were particularly useful in documenting the history of the development and utilization of resources which were observed on an individualistic level.

Although it often seemed that the deepest and most intimate insights into reservation life would come as a result of unplanned,
unsystematic activities, I have restricted the reporting of conversations to those which I was able either to record at the time or to write down very quickly after they took place. Of course I have changed names and altered details in order to conceal identities, but it would be impossible to conceal them all completely, particularly those of the non-Indian managers, without substantially altering the entire presentation.

The study was carried out with the knowledge and consent of the Tribal authorities who not only granted the first interviews but arranged entry to the factories and secured the cooperation of the management which was really indispensable.

Theoretical Perspective

Developing a theoretical framework for the organization of the study and the interpretation of the results was a difficult challenge before, during and after the fieldwork. On the level of down to earth practicality, the problems were real and clear enough. On my first visit to the reservation, I visited an old friend who had become one of the Indian managers in one of the plants. His experience there had changed him a lot, raising many puzzles but also providing him new opportunities. At the same time, the factory was struggling to meet production quotas and was still operating at a loss. The problems were not technical, or the result of the inability of individuals to produce at a sufficiently high level, but rather problems of keeping the workforce on the job, problems with adjusting to the demands of the social organization of the workplace. They were looking for answers and these answers seemed important. The larger of the factories was at that time
the largest single employer in a community plagued by unemployment rates reported by the BIA as nearly 50%. The survival of the factories appeared to be a very important factor in the economic development of the reservation community where private sector economic opportunities for Indian people were virtually non-existent. Perhaps the factories could succeed where farming and ranching had failed.

Examination of the small body of literature on reservation factories yields little help. Virtually all of the reports are almost completely descriptive and are more in the nature of reports on the practical problems encountered in trying to establish industrial activities or promote economic development on the reservations and do not discuss these matters in the context of anthropological theory. The analysis which does occur tends to be of two types. There are frequent discussions of how to increase economic opportunities, to find avenues for employment or other productive work that will improve the material quality of life. Much of this analysis could be carried out by an economist or even a businessman as well as an anthropologist. The second kind of discussion tends to focus on what are often called cultural factors. Bigart who made one of the only attempts to bring some anthropological theory to bear on the question, states the problem with considerable precision as follows:

"The factory as a social institution has been developed over the centuries, along lines that would make it function effectively in Western society. How the social organization within a factory can be changed to work effectively in an American Indian society is a question of practical importance for those bringing plants and jobs onto the reservation." (1972:1180)

"Since factories were developed by and for Western culture,
the continuance of Indian communities would appear to require that reservation factories be adjusted to fit into the nonwestern social and cultural milieu. Such alterations would not of course assure success, any more than using another form of factory organization would mean predetermined failure. But adjusting a factory to Indian culture offers a promising way to increase the worker's personal rewards from employment and the social advantages of the factory to the community. (1972:1181)

The assumptions upon which Bigart formulates his statement of the problem are shared by many who have written on the subject. Based on his own findings among the Flathead (1971) as well as those of Hallowell with the Ojibwa (1955), Wallace with the Tuscarora (1952) and Tax et al. for the Fox (in Gearing, Netting, and Peattie 1960:173), Bigart states his "belief that some form of Indian culture is likely to survive acculturation to Western technology" (1972:1180). The most fundamental of these cultural elements according to Tax and Stanley (1969:75-76) is the preservation of a strong sense of identity that is neither individual or racial (i.e. Indian) but specifically tribal.

Others have reached conclusions with strong assimilationist implications and assume that the social norms required for successful participation in a modern economy are quite fixed and are fundamentally incompatible with traditional tribal values. At times there is some attempt to mask these implications by saying that there is nothing incompatible between industrial values and the retention of native crafts, dances, costumes, ceremonies and other leisure time activities which are "cultural". For example, Firth (1967) assumes that successful participation in the modern economy requires that people conform to the characteristics of the economist's model of "economic man" whose behavior is rational, calculating, impersonal and
motivated by the desire for the maximization of individual gain. He suggests that participation in the economic sector of modern society should weaken kinship and other local social bonds as these become sacrificed in the pursuit of individual profits (or, in the jargon of the economist, for the margins in productivity).

From this latter perspective, much economic behavior by Indians is irrational. This is certainly the view held by most whites on the reservation and many people in charge of Indian programs as well. There are many types of proposed remedies depending upon the individual's sympathy for the plight of the Indian community ranging from "remove all government assistance and let them sink or swim" to proposals for training and education programs which will teach people to make more "rational" economic decisions.

In spite of the fact that much of the published work on economic development for Indian communities tends to be programmatic and has little theoretical content, each of these two conflicting views of the mutual impact of the modern economy and Indian culture on each other has some theoretical justification so it is important not to take one interpretation or the other simply out of personal preference. The view of Bigart and Tax is supported by empirical evidence from a variety of studies, mostly projective tests in the tradition of culture and personality studies. Moreover, there is evidence from highly industrialized countries such as Japan that there is room for considerable sociological and cultural variety in successful industrial societies. The second view tends to draw its support from long held views fundamental to economic theory, the notion of "rational economic
man" which is a theoretical construct that is fundamental to much of a body of theory in a discipline widely regarded as the most developed of the social sciences. Furthermore, there is no shortage of examples of the enormously corrosive effects which contact with modern western societies has had upon simple societies, not only in terms of economic disruption but in terms of social and cultural disintegration as well.

An important goal of this study was to try to examine this question in the light of an actual ethnographic situation. If the factories were surviving and beginning to run more smoothly, presumably either the Indians working there were acquiring some of this economic rationality and disposing of some of the "irrational" economic behavior or else the industrial social structure was being reshaped so that the technological demands of production could be met within the existing value structure of the community.

These two views about the requirements of economic development and whether or not this involves the sacrifice of essential elements of indigenous culture are much more than a theoretical discussion between social scientists however. Each view is held passionately by reservation residents with virtually all Indians inclined to the view of Tax and Stanley, while Whites on the reservation are virtually unanimous in their opinion that economic development for the Indian community requires the adoption of "rational, impersonal, individualistic, and profit maximizing" modes of economic decision making in place of the traditional communal orientations and attachments of kinship.

In spite of the rather sharply differing conclusions about the implications of economic development for culture change, these two views
are not diametrically opposed. They reason from different premises and different bodies of unrelated evidence in two disciplines to draw conclusions about the same phenomenon. Dalton characterized it this way: "Economists are concerned with inducing real output increases, anthropologists with reducing the social decimation inherent in rapid institutional departure from indigenous forms." (1961:21) Both concerns are of great importance at Fort Peck so it is important to attempt to integrate these two orientations within one overall perspective for purposes of this study.

Karl Polanyi, in his distinction between the two independent meanings of the term economic, provides useful framework for the integration of these perspectives which will serve as a guide within which the presentation of the field observations will be organized. He states:

"... the term economic is a compound of two meanings that have independent roots. We will call them the substantive and the formal meaning.

The substantive meaning of economic derives from man's dependence for his livelihood upon nature and his fellows. It refers to the interaction with his natural and social environment, insofar as this results in supplying him with the means of material want satisfaction.

The formal meaning of economic derives from the logical character of the means-end relationship, as apparent in such words as 'economical' or 'economizing'. It refers to a definite situation of choice, namely, that between the different uses of means induced by an insufficiency of the means. If we call the rules governing choice of means the logic of rational action, then we may denote this variant of logic, with an improvised term, as formal economics.

The two root meanings of economic, the substantive and the formal, have nothing in common. The latter derives from logic, the former from fact. The formal meaning implies a set of rules referring to choice...The substantive meaning implies neither choice nor insufficiency of means; man's livelihood may or may not involve the necessity of choice and, if choice there be, it need not be induced by the limiting effect of a 'scarcity' of means; indeed some of the
most important physical and social conditions of livelihood such as the availability of air and water or a loving mother's devotion to her infant are not, as a rule, so limiting. The cogency that is in play in the one case and in the other differs as the power of syllogism differs from the force of gravitation. The laws of the one are those of the mind; the laws of the other are those of nature." (1968:216-17)

He goes on to establish his contention that the conflation of these two meanings was a detriment to the social sciences and would make economic theory unusable outside of the framework of the socio-economic context of the last two centuries in Europe and North American where the dominance of a system of price making markets in the economy resulted in a special situation where "the formal and substantive meanings would run parallel" (1968:217). He further suggests that economic theory should be developed solely out of the substantive meaning and the study of the empirical economy which he defines as "an institutionalized process of interaction between man and his environment, which secures him material want satisfaction" (1968:220).

What Polanyi refers to as "formal economics" is, in his terms, one aspect of what he calls the logic of rational action.

"Rational action is here defined as choice of means in relation to ends. Means are anything appropriate to serve the end, whether by virtue of the laws of nature or by virtue of the game... It is not assumed, for instance, that it is more rational to seek a long life through the means of science than through those of superstition. For whatever the end, it is rational to choose the means accordingly; and as to the means, it would not be rational to act upon any other test than that which one happens to believe in. Thus it is rational for the suicide to select means that will accomplish his death; and if he be an adept of black magic, to pay a witch doctor to contrive that end.

The logic of rational action applies, then, to all conceivable means and ends covering an almost infinite variety of human interests. In chess or technology, in religious life or philosophy ends may range from commonplace issues to the most recondite and complex ones. (1968:218-19)
The study of the "laws of the game", beliefs about the world, and understandings of the laws of nature that exist in a given society is what anthropologists do in the study of culture. One criterion by which the quality of an ethnography can be judged is the degree to which it makes the subject people's actions and decisions "rational" within that context.

To return to our immediate problem, that is the study of the attempts to promote the economic development of the Fort Peck Reservation community through industrialization, and the placing of this study in some useful theoretical context, we are now in a position to outline our strategy. First we might note that the widely held belief that economic development on the reservation absolutely requires that Indians become acculturated into the economic logic of American culture rests to a great degree upon the fusion of the two meanings of economic and there is no necessary connection between economic development and economizing behavior as defined in cultural terms of Western society and subsequently embodied in many concepts found in economic theory such as that of the rational economic man. At the same time, one must not misinterpret Polyani's statement that the formal and substantive meanings of economic are independent to mean that there is therefore no connection whatever between these laws of nature and laws of the mind, or between man's material relationship with his environment and culture. In our own case, it is obvious and undeniable that the drastic alteration of the institutionalized relationships between the tribes and their environment precipitated not only an economic but a cultural crisis and has had profound effects upon virtually all social
institutions. At the same time, it is clear that the persistence of distinctive Indian patterns of thought and their continuing effect in shaping the social institutions of the reservation community is a very important factor in explaining why the Indian community lives today in a very different kind of relationship to its environment than does the white community which co-exists within that same environment. The important question is not the primacy of the culture or the economy but rather the confluence of the two to provide for fulfillment of both the need for material satisfaction and the need for meaning in life.

Polanyi describes the empirical economy as an institutionalized process. Culture as well, or at least that part of culture which one would encounter in what Polanyi calls formal economics, has a dynamic processual quality and is institutionalized. Much anthropological and sociological work is concerned with mapping this institutionalized process and defining social structure and social institutions. Thus, to borrow an image from Geertz (1973:144-46), we might suggest that cultural processes and economic processes are like two interpenetrating spheres, each with its own independent type of integrating principles. Socio-economic institutions can be thought of as lying in the intersection of these two spheres. From this perspective, one can suggest that the transition between these two important yet separate dimensions lies in the complementary analysis of phenomena like the factories which may be conceived of as both social and economic institutions.

This image provides the general framework for the organization and presentation of this study. Chapter two begins with a description of the environment, the economy and the demographic characteristics of the
reservation. Chapter three attempts to create an understanding of the empirical process of industrialization of Fort Peck through an account of the history of the development of industry in that community including some account of the logic that was used in arguing for these developments at the time of their inception along with the account of the failure of a number of earlier attempts to establish factories on the reservation. Chapter four might be thought of as the intersection between the substantive and the formal, between the economic and the cultural. The factories are discussed both as economic and as social institutions. Their internal organization and external relationships are discussed both as part of an economic system and from the point of view of the demands of productivity and economic survival as well as their place within the social structure of the reservation community and the internal social organization of the factories. Chapter five, entitled modalities of interaction, moves out of the sphere of economic analysis to discuss matters such as the social rules which govern behavior in the factories and some manifestations of what Polanyi calls the logic of rational action which can be identified through examination of some common patterns of Indian response to the social structuring of the factory environment. Chapter six pushes even further in this direction in that it attempts some tentative assessment of the possible effects of the factories upon those involved with them beyond the bounds of the factories themselves in an attempt to assess the broader cultural and social ramifications which might be observable including the effects upon the views which reservation Indians and Whites have of themselves and each other. None of these discussions
can be considered comprehensive but it is to be hoped that when viewed together, they may provide a reasonably coherent and well-rounded picture of the impact of the factories on the reservation community.
CHAPTER II

THE SETTING

Fort Peck Reservation is located in extreme northeastern Montana. The total area is about 2,500,000 acres (approximately 4,000 square miles), and it lies just to the north of the Missouri river which forms its southern border, extending over one hundred miles from east to west and some forty miles from north to south. The land rises slightly as one moves northward out of the bottomland of the Missouri Valley into gently rolling prairie that is characteristic of the Northern Great Plains. Several streams, tributaries of the Missouri, carve wide shallow valleys through the prairie landscape.

The climate is generally dry, with an average annual precipitation of about thirteen inches. Seasons are pronounced with summer temperatures that exceed one hundred degrees Fahrenheit while the winters are accompanied by frequent periods of sub zero cold. Snow accumulation is generally light but punishing blizzards are not uncommon occurrences. Sufficient moisture is a frequent problem, particularly in the later summer months when the only precipitation may be in thundershowers, frequently accompanied by hail.

- 20 -
The most important resource on the reservation is the land itself. The Missouri bottomlands are fertile and easily irrigable. They contain timber which provides cover for game and fence posts and firewood for the local population. The upper bench lands, which once supported large quantities of wild game, initially attracted white settlers who were in search of more high quality range land. The land has also proved amenable to modern agricultural techniques, and a large portion of the land within the reservation boundaries is now under cultivation with wheat being the most important commercial crop. Cattle are the most important livestock raised on the reservation, but some sheep and poultry are also raised. During the early part of the nineteenth century, large quantities of furs were taken from the area and there is still a small amount of trapping of various fur bearing animals, largely by individuals rather than organized companies. The intensity of this activity varies according to the size of the animal populations and the prevailing market prices.

There are two known oil fields on the reservation of moderate size that have been in production since the 1950s. There are known deposits of lignite coal and potash which are overlaid by deposits of glacial till. These have not been exploited but could be of importance to the economic future of the area.

**Demography**

It is difficult to be precise when speaking about the demographic characteristics of the reservation. There is a general consensus of opinion that the U.S. census tended to undercount the Indian population on the reservation. The census bureau estimates that the native
population was undercounted by 7.7% in the 1970 census but the general opinion of Tribal and BIA officials is that the undercount at Fort Peck may have been higher. The discrepancy between census figures led to a joint BIA/HUD house to house survey taken in the period of October 1974 to April 1975. This is the most recent data and is presumably the most accurate. In general terms, it is possible to say that the approximate population of the reservation is 10,000 of which 50 to 60% is non-Indian. Figures from various sources are summarized in table 1.

### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALL RACES</th>
<th>INDIAN POPULATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>ON RESERVATION</td>
<td>9898</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADJACENT TO RESERVATION</td>
<td>20,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>30,698</td>
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</table>

* The adjusted figures in this column have been increased 10% for those presumed missed in the census count. This has been inserted for comparison with the BIA/HUD survey results since the reported results of that survey included 10% added for households "presumed missed".

According to BIA estimates, slightly less than half of the enrolled membership of the tribes actually resides on the reservation, but there are several hundred Indians resident at Fort Peck who are not enrolled members of Fort Peck Tribes. Some of these are spouses and relatives of enrolled members, but there is also a sizable group of Chippewa-Cree who have moved to Fort Peck from the tiny Turtle Mountain reserva-
These figures are deceptive however since they fail to disclose the amount of mobility in the Indian population. Though exact figures are impossible to come by, as many as 5,000 or more Indians may reside on the reservation during a year's time as there is a great deal of movement in and out. This is indicated by the large numbers of people who can be counted in various programs, such as those of the Bureau of Work Training which maintains high estimates of the local Indian population based upon the people they service in a year. (Their estimates of about 6,000 Indians on or near the reservation do not account for migration.)

In recent years there has been a gradual shifting in the population balance of the area. A gradual but steady decline in the non-Indian population of the area has occurred, paralleling that which has been taking place throughout the rural areas of eastern Montana. The Indian population has been experiencing a high birth rate and gradually increasing life span so the population may soon be predominantly Indian. (Census data indicates that 46% of the Indian population was under fifteen in 1970.) The increased availability of housing and economic opportunities for tribal members has also resulted in some migration back to the reservation.

The population is concentrated along the southern edge of the reservation in the Missouri valley where the Great Northern Railway and U.S. Highway two follow the river and provide the principal transportation routes. The largest town, Wolf Point, is the center of commerce on the reservation. Its population of about 3300 is
predominantly White and it is the seat of Roosevelt County. Poplar is the seat of the Tribal Government and is the other principal town on the reservation. It has a handful of stores and businesses, a public school system and the offices of the BIA, Tribal Government, Indian Health Service, and various other agencies as well as the factories which are the subject of this paper. Official population is scarcely over 1,000 due to gerrymandered town boundaries which assure the maintenance of white control in the town government which operates independently of the Tribes. The population within the natural boundaries of the town is probably twice this amount and in recent years has become predominantly Indian. The majority of the rural population, particularly in the upper bench lands is non-Indian, and there are very few Indians living in the northern areas of the Reservation. The northwestern corner of the reservation is populated by a Mennonite Community which has its own private school and is socially isolated from the rest of the population.

Economy

Agriculture. In general, the economy of the area within the boundaries of Fort Peck Reservation is similar to that of the rest of rural eastern Montana and the northern Great Plains. Ranching and wheat farming form the backbone of the economy and the Montana Department of Intergovernmental Relations (1975:9-10) estimates that the area derives about one third of its total spendable income directly from agriculture with the associated services providing much of the rest. Most of the agricultural production is shipped out of the state so the entire area is highly dependent for its economic well being on both
natural climatic factors that affect agricultural output and on the economic climate in the national and international markets for agricultural products. Farms are generally quite large and are worked with modern techniques employing giant equipment. Using these methods, a single man can farm several thousand acres with only a little outside help at harvest time. It is an increasingly capital intensive industry that depends relatively little upon traditional kinds of farm labor. Increasingly referred to as agri-business rather than farming, modern agriculture bears little resemblance to the homesteads or labor intensive family farms of earlier times. On the whole the agri-business industry on the reservation has done well in recent years and the area economy has provided those who are connected with it with a fairly substantial income. Along with farming, some livestock are raised, principally cattle along with a few sheep.

**Land ownership.** The land use and ownership patterns are an important key to understanding the economic position of the Fort Peck Tribes. Reservation land that was not allotted to individual Indians under the provisions of the Indian Allotment Act of 1887 was declared as excess land and opened up for homesteading by non-Indians in 1907. In addition, tribal members were allowed to sell their allotments. The result was that the majority of the land on the reservation passed to non-Indian ownership, and the losses of prime agricultural land were extremely high. Today, the land actually owned by the Tribes is only about 15% of the total reservation and much of this is of little value as it includes all of the land that was returned to the government by homesteaders whose particular parcel of land proved to be unprofitable.
Roughly another 20% of the land on the reservation still remains in the ownership of the multiple descendents of the original Indian allotees. Thus, the largest share of the agricultural productivity is totally outside of the Indian community. In addition, a number of factors, including the lack of the large quantities of capital necessary for modern agri-business, have resulted in a situation where even the majority of the remaining Indian-owned land is being leased and operated by non-Indians. (OEDP 1977:19-21) In recent years the Tribes have been trying to stop the further erosion of Indian land holdings through an aggressive land purchase program.

As a result of ownership and leasing patterns, the Indian community on the whole receives only a minimum amount of income from the principal resource on the reservation. There are a mere handful of Indian farmers who have been able to establish successful agricultural operations and a few more who farm and ranch on a small scale with very limited success. It is not meaningful to average out gross income figures from agriculture on the reservation across the population since these returns are so unevenly distributed. A select few have quite large incomes and extensive holdings in land and equipment. More typically, an individual who has inherited an interest in allotted land receives a small amount of lease income once a year or is landless. Approximately 82% of the total land on the reservation is being used by the non-Indian population either through ownership or lease.

The other non-agricultural land based resource of some importance is oil. Individuals and the tribes take no part in either exploration or production and really have no active role in relation to oil other
than to sign periodic leases, the terms of which have, up to the present been determined almost completely by the oil companies and the BIA. Thus, the only income to the Indian community from the oil activity is the money paid for oil leases which passes directly into the white owned consumer areas of the local economy with no secondary effects. Thus while oil provides some needed income, it does nothing to provide jobs or stimulate the development of the Indian sector of the local economy. Rather, the oil money generally turns just once in the Indian community as it is spent in white owned business, thus doing at least as much if not more for the local non-Indian economy as it does for the Indian economy.

**Business.** The local business and service industries are almost all owned by non-Indians. Wolf Point has a shopping district with a couple of dozen businesses and there is a smaller shopping area in Poplar. While people will occasionally travel off the reservation for shopping trips, most of the every day items are purchased locally. Only a handful of Indians are employed in these businesses. There are many obstacles that work to bring an early end to most attempts to establish Indian owned business and those few that exist have remained small and unstable. The number of Indians employed in local business is so small, in fact, that there is no listing at all in the BIA records for Indian employment in local business on the reservation. One consequence of this situation for the Indian community is that income to the Indian community tends not to circulate but to pass immediately through. This limits greatly the effects of all kinds of programs since virtually all of the secondary benefits of any infusion of money go to non-Indians.
In sum, one would have to say that in the business sector, as well as in the resource based productive sector of the economy, Indians play a minor role with the single exception of their role as consumers in the business sector. Employment in the reservation economy is highly segregated by ethnicity and there are relatively few areas where Indians can be found in significant numbers.

Public Sector. A look at the BIA employment statistics (table 2 and 3) points up two facts. First, many Indians are unemployed or underemployed, and second, the majority of the Indian population is employed in the public sector. Various Tribal Programs, Health Services, the schools and the BIA together make up the largest and most important sector for Indian employment. The only other sizable employer of Indians on the Fort Peck Reservation is tribal industry, the factories of which are the object of this study. Thus, success or failure of the factories is an important economic matter. The factories are not connected in any way to the local resource base. Instead, they are dependent on the conditions outside of the local economy. It is still

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER OF PERSONS IN INDIAN LABOR FORCE LIVING ON OR NEAR THE RESERVATION (April 1976)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of persons earning more than $5,000 per year - 744

Source: BIA Fort Peck Agency
TABLE 3

PRINCIPAL EMPLOYERS OF INDIANS ON THE RESERVATION
(April 1976)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>No. Indian Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tribal Programs</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Peck Tribes</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Work Training (CETA)</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Native American Programs</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Food Program</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Basic Education</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detox Center, Alcoholism, etc.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headstart</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal Enterprise</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Health Representatives</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highway Safety</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Peck Manufacturing</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A &amp; S Tribal Industries</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Peck Housing Authority</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Ranch</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Indian Affairs</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Health Service</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Schools</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Employed Farmers, Ranchers, Businessmen</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BIA: Fort Peck Agency

not clear whether or not these factories will become permanent. Many similar ventures at Fort Peck and elsewhere have failed. This matter will receive further attention when we return for a more detailed look at the factories presently operating on the reservation. For the present, it will suffice to note that the factories, along with certain
areas of public sector employment constitute the sphere of economic opportunity for Indians on the reservation. They will purchase little from fellow Indians apart from craft items and will patronize non-Indian businessmen for most of their needs. Furthermore, it can be seen that they are much less dependent than the non-Indian population on reservation land and resources, so that a severe drought (barring major Federal relief) would have a much more severe impact upon the non-Indian community than upon the Indian community.

The Indian community, on the other hand, is subject to many other kinds of external uncertainties resulting from the ever changing nature of various government programs which come and go with great frequency. This contributes to a high degree of turnover and frequent changes in jobs or periods of unemployment for most of the population. Thus, in order to properly appreciate the meaning of the 40-50% unemployment figures that are frequently reported, one must realize that during the course of a year, perhaps as many as 75% of the people will experience a period of unemployment or be transferred to a new job. One of the stated goals of the programs which have worked to establish tribal industry on the reservation is to provide jobs (1) in greater numbers and (2) with prospects for long term stability. According to the official logic of the BIA, this kind of program is of the highest priority. A publication of the local agency states that the major problems of the reservation are "widespread unemployment, alcoholism, child neglect and juvenile delinquency." (Broomfield 1976:19) These problems are attributed primarily to the loss of economic independence by the tribes and as a result, economic development and vocational
training are the two top priorities on the list of official goals of the BIA. The factories, while by no means the only target of economic development efforts, are clearly one of the major end products of these endeavors.
CHAPTER III
THE LOGIC AND DEVELOPMENT OF RESERVATION INDUSTRY

The development of industry on the Fort Peck Reservation is neither new nor novel. The BIA has been encouraging and promoting economic development in this way for over a decade, and the Fort Peck Reservation has been looked upon as a good candidate for this type of development for a number of reasons. First, the development of reservation industry represents an attempt to find a niche for Indian economic activity that is not under the control of the reservation Whites who control the land base and virtually every other aspect of economic activity on the reservation. For decades, a long term goal of Federal Government policy was to convert these former hunting peoples into entrepreneurial farmers who would ultimately be absorbed into the economic mainstream of the country. In large measure, the desire to establish factories represents a recognition of almost wholesale failure of these plans plus an implicit acknowledgement of the resignation of the area's agriculture to local White control.

Typically, the official reasoning that has gone into the analysis of the feasibility of establishing industry on the reservation has been phrased in formal, mechanistic economic terms with little consideration
for cultural factors that are involved or the implications for the social structure of the reservation. It is not infrequently remarked that the Plains Indians were in some way culturally unsuited to the demands of farming (for example, Macgregor 1961: 238-39, 1969: 61-63), but I have encountered no arguments which would in any way suggest that the same problems do not exist in relation to industry. For example, it is mentioned that Indian concepts of time are much more loose and flexible and this is cited as a reason for failure at meeting the time demands of farming. Industrial work, however, is even more demanding in this way. Planners have generally assumed that people on the reservation need and want employment most of all and that it is therefore self-evident that with proper training, the local Indian population would quite naturally adjust to the conditions of industrial work, the benefits of which are seen as obvious.

Proponents of reservation industry in seeking to attract industrial investors cite a number of potential advantages. The first advantage is always that there is a large supply of cheap labor available. The local office of the BIA keeps regular employment statistics which typically show that 40-50% of the Indian labor force is unemployed and the great majority of these are listed as actively seeking work. The extremely low per capita figures for annual income (under $2000) also bolster this incentive as labor costs in urban areas keep climbing. A corollary advantage which is always mentioned "off the record" is the fact that the industrial manager does not have to worry about the burdensome problems of unions on the reservation.

In recent years, there have been a number of other factors which
could help attract industry to the reservation. The Federal Government has established regulations requiring that firms holding government contracts must employ a certain percentage of minority workers. Furthermore, there are now regulations which provide that companies which have more than a certain percentage of minority employees can overrun contract bids by up to 20%. For a corporate manager who wishes to take advantage of these provisions and to raise the number of minority workers, the reservation is attractive in several ways. In addition to the fact that they appear to provide inexpensive non-union labor, the unique status of Indian reservations as administered communities makes them particularly easy to contact and to work with (King 1969:67) whereas it may not be as easy to locate and establish working relations with other minorities. In order to be effective, these artificial incentives must be attractive enough to overcome the natural economic liabilities attending this type of enterprise. The most widely recognized drawbacks are the isolation of the reservation from raw materials and markets and the fact that the labor force is basically untrained and untested. As for the "cultural" problem, it is generally rationalized that as Indians acquire the technical skills and become accustomed to being paid for their labor, they will quite naturally behave in basically the same ways that labor behaves in other parts of the country. It is thus just a management problem to be handled by the personnel department.

Whites on the reservation, for their part, tend to welcome the establishment of industry for Indians though they play no active part. For one thing, efforts at this type of development tend to divert
attention and relieve some of the pressures that are involved in the ongoing dispute over the White economic exploitation of Indian land. It is significant that the plans for industry on Fort Peck reservation never posed any competitive threat to any existing White business of industry. Reservation Whites are quick to voice support for a program that will, in their view, raise the standard of living in the Indian community while simultaneously inculcating the virtues of the Protestant ethic. In short, they see no potential harm and numerous potential benefits from the establishment of these industries so their support comes as no surprise.

Historical Development of Industry on Fort Peck Reservation

The reservation has been targeted for "economic redevelopment" by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for nearly twenty years and the local planning district office is now firmly entrenched as one of the principal agencies under the direction of the Tribal Board. The Fort Peck Planning District office periodically updates the **Overall Economic Development Plan** (OEDP) which is published after approval by the Tribal Board. The EDA, through direct intervention and coordination, was largely responsible for the establishment of an industrial park adjacent to the town of Poplar and the construction of the physical facilities which house two of the industries now operating on the reservation. The forty acre area consists of a flat cleared area with provisions for utilities, a rail spur off the Burlington Northern Line and a paved road to town which lies just across the tracks to the north. The industrial park was developed with the assistance of a $370,000 EDA grant and was constructed between 1968 and 1970.
C & M Construction. The first attempt to establish industry began at this time. A small eastern Montana Company, C & M Construction, set up operations at the new industrial site in order to build modular homes. During this period, the Fort Peck Housing Authority was laying plans for the construction of several hundred homes under HUD and Turnkey III programs for Indian families living in overcrowded and substandard conditions. C & M Construction had hoped to establish a market for these modular homes in the surrounding area but was not successful and the venture did little but capitalize on the federal funding available for the housing projects which had begun springing up around the perimeters of Poplar and Wolf Point. The company, which had no Indian ownership or management, is not fondly remembered on the reservation and declared bankruptcy in 1973. In spite of having the inside track on the government housing contracts, C & M Construction was still unable to compete in the regional construction market upon which it ultimately depended. The contracts from the Housing Authority were sufficient to get it established initially but not enough to maintain the operations. There is some indication that there was mismanagement in the company, but apart from that, it is highly questionable whether C & M would have been able to survive on a competitive basis in the private construction market of that region, especially given the general climate of mistrust that area Whites have for almost anything that is done by Indians. Perhaps the chief contribution of this venture to the economic development of the Tribes was that it resulted in the construction of the first physical plant in the newly constructed industrial park and it was later possible to utilize this building for a more permanent manufacturing facility.
Incidentally, the housing projects, which have been widely 
condemned as ill conceived and poorly executed, have contributed 
considerably, albeit unintentionally, to the creation of an environment 
where industry was possible. The government refused to fund housing in 
rural areas without common utilities so the Indian population, which 
formerly was largely rural, has, because of the housing projects, moved 
into the towns, eliminating most transportation problems between home 
and factory. At the same time, the move to town meant the end of 
gardening and new problems of social control of children and youth.

The Rifle Factory. At about the same time (1968), the first 
tribally owned industry was established. The Tribes secured a contract 
with the Defense Department to rebuild rifles with the assistance of 
the Small Business Administration (SBA). The rifle factory was set up 
in the old National Guard Armory Building in Poplar rather than in the 
industrial park where there was no building. The original logic behind 
the SBA program was that once industry was established on the reservation 
with a government contract, the fledgling industry would be able to 
compete in the private marketplace and sustain its existence. This is 
clearly not a realistic assumption for a number of reasons. First, 
the remoteness of the reservation makes the maintenance of a 
competitive industry a challenging task at best. Secondly, there is no 
private market demand for the services of a factory skilled at 
rebuilding WWII vintage rifles. Then there were the complex challenges 
of cultural and social adjustment plus the whole set of relations between 
Indians and the Whites who dominate the economic scene. Many of the 
same problems which have continually operated to keep attempts to
establish Indian agriculture from achieving much success have posed similar challenges to the new industries. The futility of the SBA approach is cryptically stated in the summary of development efforts of the Overall Economic Development Plan (OEDP) issued by the office of the Fort Peck Planning district.

"Tribal Industries worked closely with SBA, Cambridge Marketing Group, and Land-Air Corporation to find other kinds of work that were in greater demand than rifles. Closure of Tribal Industries was forced due to Defense Contract Expiration." (OEDP 1977: 7)

Although the goals of this project were unrealistic and unattainable, there were some lasting effects that have contributed considerably to more recent ventures into industry on the reservation. First, this venture established the pattern of management-tribal relations that has characterized all subsequent ventures. The company was tribally owned but the Dynalectron Corporation was engaged to handle the business management. The original plan was to have the Dynalectron Corporation train an Indian management team to take over the management of the industry. Although there was a management training program, in fact, the operations remained under non-Indian top level management. This has become the pattern for all subsequent tribal industries on the reservation which have White general managers who are assisted by Indian managers at lower levels. Though this is the source of considerable grumbling and resentment at times, there is a general tacit agreement among the Indian leadership on the reservation, both inside and outside the factories, that Indian top management would not be workable at this time. The relationship between the management of the rifle factory and
the tribal government was tumultuous at times but it established a pattern that has persisted and proved to be workable. These matters will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Though there were many drawbacks to the Defense Department Contract, most notably its instability, it may have proved to be a fairly good starting place for reservation industry in some respects. Working on rifles is something that Indian reservation residents could relate to and the product was generally familiar to just about everybody. This familiarity was probably helpful in the process of socialization to industrial work habits and the demands of production work. This is especially true for men and hence especially important as it has been repeatedly noted that the disruption of the old ways of life have had particularly debilitating effects upon men more than upon women (Macgregor 1961:239, King 1969: 70-71). There is good evidence for this at Fort Peck as well. A BIA analysis of the labor force reports that the number of men who cannot be included in the labor force because they are physically or mentally disabled, institutionalized, retired, etc. is nearly twice the number of women. If these figures are adjusted for retirees by subtracting out those who are over the age of 65, the ratio of men to women suffering from work-incapacitating disabilities rises to more than three to one (statistics for April 1978).

In addition to product familiarity, military service is considered highly meritorious among the Assiniboine and Sioux and hence the military connection helped to make the work respectable. In one case, a young man who had a keen interest in firearms rose quickly to a position in management because, in his words, "I could take a rifle apart and put it
back together faster than anyone else." His interest grew beyond rifles and he has grown into a responsible and stable position in the years since. The rifle factory closed after about two years of operation.

**West Electronics.** It was established in 1970 and is the longest lived tribal enterprise. West Electronics produces electronic subassemblies and, like all reservation industries, is engaged in labor intensive technology. Also, like other tribal industries, it is not dependent upon local raw materials or markets with all of the advantages and disadvantages that this entails. The project began with about thirty to forty employees but demand again dwindled though it did not completely disappear. At the time of the fieldwork, there were only 7 or 8 steady employees who were remnants of what was once a larger work force. They were not located in the industrial park but in a portion of the old Armory building which once housed the rifle factory but now is divided up and serves as Poplar City Hall and the Public Library as well as housing West Electronics in a couple of rooms.

Throughout my eighteen months on the reservation, most of which was spent living within a block of West Electronics, I do not recall a single instance when West Electronics was ever voluntarily mentioned in a conversation and this notwithstanding the fact that my stated purpose for coming to the reservation was to study industrial development. Due to the small scale of this operation, it was decided to focus attention on the two larger factories on the reservation and no systematic inquiry was carried out relative to West Electronics.

At the time of the fieldwork, there were two principal industrial operations that were operating under the auspices of the Tribes and these were the main object of the study.
Assiniboine and Sioux Tribal Industries (A & S), may well be considered a descendant of the old rifle factory. It is the largest industrial organization and one of the largest single employers on the Reservation with a labor force that has fluctuated from a peak of nearly 200 employees to a low of just under one hundred. Like the rifle factory, it owes its existence largely to a contract with the Department of Defense but in this case, the demand is for camouflage nets rather than rifles. A & S Industries works in a cooperative relationship with another Indian owned factory in Fort Totten North Dakota on the Devil's Lake Sioux Reservation. The first steps of the process, construction of the basic net, take place at Fort Peck and the finishing steps, consisting of application of the camouflage material, called "garnish", are done in North Dakota. The netting itself is manufactured in bulk in North Carolina and shipped to Fort Peck in bales. A & S Industries has the labor intensive task of cutting and sewing the nets into the proper sizes and shapes, sewing the proper cord around the edge and attaching reinforcing strips to the corners.

A & S opened in January 1975 under the direction of a management team contracted from Brunswick Corporation. They established a second level of Indian managers and drew heavily upon the Indian management team trained in the rifle factory for this purpose. It was, at the time of the fieldwork, a one product plant, wholly reliant upon the Defense contract. At this time, the contract has been twice extended and prospects are good for at least the next few years. By early 1977, the factory had reduced its per unit manufacturing cost to a profit making level so there are no large cost overruns. One task of the Brunswick
staff is to develop other product areas in order to provide stability. There has been minor progress in this area but to date the work is largely speculative.

A & S was the target of the most intense observation and the majority of the interviews were conducted with people connected to A & S. It was the largest of the industries and seemed to have reached some degree of equilibrium in operations. It appeared to be developing a place within the community.

Fort Peck Manufacturing Company is the most recent industrial plant established on the reservation. In spite of the aforementioned difficulties, in many ways it has the potential to become the most stable and permanent. The company is jointly owned by the Tribes and the ESCO corporation of Portland Oregon, a large manufacturer of earth moving equipment. Upon finding it difficult to expand in their main plant area and wishing to take advantage of the provisions of employing minorities, the ESCO corporation began contacting reservations and other communities along the Great Northern Railway (now Burlington Northern) about the possibility of establishing a small plant for the purpose of grinding the slag off of cast cutting teeth for large earth moving equipment. After being rejected by Blackfeet and Fort Belknap reservations and the cities of Havre and Wolf Point, they found the Tribal Government at Fort Peck to be cooperative and interested as well as being able to contribute a facility that could be easily converted for this use. The ESCO/Fort Peck Manufacturing plant was established in the old C & M Building in the industrial park and employs between twenty five and forty people in the labor intensive task of hand grinding.
the castings to size within specified tolerances. Like the other plants which have been established at Fort Peck it has a non-Indian general manager. At the time of fieldwork, Fort Peck Manufacturing was going through a number of management changes and was operating with a small, unstable work force so its position was less well established than that of A & S.

In terms of its economic future, Fort Peck Manufacturing is unique in that it is the only venture of this type on the reservation to be relatively independent of any specific government program or contracts. In addition, its relation with the associated private industry is one of co-ownership where previous ventures were privately owned (C & M) or wholly owned by the Tribes and managed by an outside corporation that was under contract. Like the other industries, it imports its raw materials and exports its products so its interaction with the local economy is minimal. In strictly economic terms, however, it does have potential to be a fairly long term development that could be a stable source of employment for a small group of people outside of the public sector which is so unstable. While geographic isolation is a factor in most industrial proposals for the reservation, there is no problem in this case as the parts are shipped normally from Portland Oregon to Danville, Illinois and the principal rail route passes through the reservation.

Both Fort Peck Manufacturing and A & S Industries have developed a fairly stable relationship with the Tribal Government and have a good deal of autonomy from Tribal Government in terms of the general management of their operations. The pattern of this relationship had
developed out of the earlier efforts and the experience gained from them. In addition, over the years, the factories have ceased to be a center of public and political attention. They are not viewed by Indian leaders as the most important aspect of the reservation's efforts at economic development, and they are not particularly tied to the political activities within the community which helps to keep them from becoming centers of controversy. There is in this respect, a certain progression that has taken place since the first factory was opened which has led to the present set of fairly stable relationships. In spite of the relative stability that now prevails, it is important to note that virtually all parties involved with the factories envision further change in the relationships which now prevail. One important goal of the industries is the establishment of a more stable and permanent economic basis for these activities. Another goal is the gradual assumption of factory management by Indians. The achievement of either of these goals will be difficult and will involve substantial changes in both internal and external relationships for the industries. One way to go about evaluating the effects of the industries upon life on the reservation is to examine the kinds of relationships that have been established, strengthened, eroded or altered as a result of the factories. This analysis should help clarify how the factories work as a vehicle for economic interaction between the reservation community and the larger American economy. Equally importantly, these relationships provide clues to the processes of social and cultural interaction which are occurring with the factories. Hence, the analysis should help in the evaluation of more general effects of these developments upon reservation culture and socio-economic structure.
CHAPTER IV
THE FACTORY AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

The following discussion needs to be prefaced by some cautionary remarks. While it is useful to conceptualize the factories and other social and economic phenomena on the reservation in terms of social structure, it is important to be aware from the outset that in the contemporary Fort Peck Reservation society, social structure is often highly ambiguous and often contradictory. The language of social structure naturally leads us to the assumption of a well ordered, logical, fixed set of inter-relationships and in using it we must be cautious since many of the structural forms that can be identified in the reservation community are like a mirage in that they are perfectly well ordered and orderly when viewed from one point but when one looks from another, they may completely vanish. For example, the Fort Peck Tribes are legally a sovereign nation under U.S. law. They have treaty relationships with the Federal Government directly and are not under the jurisdiction of any state or local government. The Fort Peck Tribes are simultaneously (in fact in the same phrase) a dependent nation. The reservation is located within the state of Montana and various county
and local governments are established there extending their authority over the entire area. Likewise, the factories, the Tribal government, the BIA, the family, all have a chameleon-like quality when viewed from different perspectives. Many roles are very situation specific, and there is much less clustering into role sets than one might expect. These conditions are due in large measure to the existence of multiple, cross-cutting layers of organization which are largely indifferent to each other due to the fact that they are indexed to different cultural modes of thought, logic and perception. With these conditions in mind, we can proceed to further describe and analyze the relationships which connect the factories, to (1) the external societies and economies of the reservation and national socio-economic system as well as (2) the internal organization and structuring of the factories both as instruments of production and as sociological entities.

External Relationships.

In discussing the development of the factories on the reservation, we have already pointed out many of the external relations of the factories and it will not be necessary to dwell on the formal characteristics of these relationships at any length. Generally speaking, we may divide the basic kinds of relationships which the factory as an institution has into three broad categories; relationships with the Federal Government, relationships with industry and the economy, and relationships with the tribal institutions. This last category can be further broken down into relations which the factories have with the formal institutions of the Tribes, particularly the tribal government, which are of a formal legal nature, and the relations with the informal
and traditional elements of reservation social structure which are largely based upon kinship. The former relationships are governed largely by what Sahlins (1976:210-216) refers to as practical reason which is a culturally based style of thought characteristic of modern western civilization while the latter relationships, which are most important in determining how individuals within the Indian community actually perceive and feel about the factories, is based upon patterns of thought deeply rooted in a modern Indian culture.

The relationship of a reservation factory to the Federal Government can be complex and multi-faceted if for no other reason than the relationship of the Tribes to the Federal Government is extremely complex, often ambiguous and constantly changing, at least in its particulars. On the most basic economic level, for most of the reservation industry to date, the government has been the only buyer for the products; rifles, camouflage nets and electronic subassemblies. In the case of the ESCO factory (Fort Peck Manufacturing), while the government is not the only consumer of the products which are sold all over the world, the government connection is still important. The Federal Government had passed the legislation that made it advantageous for ESCO Corporation to establish a relationship with the Tribes in the first place. In addition to incentives arising out of the need to fulfill minority quotas and the advantages of being able to have higher cost overruns if employing more minority workers, there are other aspects of the special relationship between the Tribes and the Federal Government that act as incentives including the fact that there is no tax on income from tribal land. Furthermore, economic development has
been the first priority goal of the BIA and the promotion of reservation industry is at the top of the list of development activities of the BIA at Fort Peck Agency. The implications of this relationship, of course, include the fact that the future of industry on the reservation is in many ways at the mercy of the Federal Government which can cripple the industries not only by withdrawing contracts directly but even affect the relationship of the Tribal industries with private companies since a good part of the incentive to establish privately owned plants comes from indirect benefits which come to the company because of federal regulations.

There are other constraints and structuring factors that come from the Federal Government as well, and these contribute to the way in which the factories are perceived by the Indian people. First of all, since much of the planning and development comes from the strong stimulus of the BIA and is developed in terms of the economic logic of non-Indian planners, there is little sense of real Indian ownership of the factories or that they are truly Indian enterprises. In other words, the Indian ownership of the factories remains, in many ways, a legal matter in terms of federal, state and tribal law but not a social reality in the minds of the residents of Fort Peck who therefore do not identify these factories as something of their own in which they might take pride. At times, the relationship with the Federal Government has actively hindered efforts to adapt the factories to the reservation social situation. The A & S factory management as well as the employees wished to adopt a three or four day work week with longer hours during the season of summer celebrations so it would be possible to attend
these popular events without conflicting with the work of the factory, but federal regulations governing contractors made it impossible to go to a ten hour work day during the summer in spite of the desire of the factory personnel to do so. The result is higher absenteeism, lower productivity, greater alienation, and lower worker morale during the summer months. Incidents such as these reinforce the general perception that this is not truly an Indian factory in any meaningful sense.

The general relationship of the factories to the local economy or to the institutions of local White community needs little further elaboration. Generally, Whites of the area welcome Indian industry as long as it has no relationship to them other than the money which it will bring to the community through wages. This is basically the relationship that exists. In both cases, raw materials come from remote places, and the finished products are sent out again with no interaction with the local economy. The factories have no mortgages at the local banks and buy nothing more than perhaps a few office supplies through local suppliers. The factories would be on questionable legal grounds were they to discriminate in hiring practices against non-Indians. This question has not arisen, however, since the factories are not considered by local whites to be among the available or acceptable options for employment. There were a few non-Indians working for A & S, but they were all people who were in some way connected more strongly to the Indian community on the reservation that to the White community. In most cases they were members by marriage of predominantly Indian families and in one case, a minister in the Indian Presbyterian
Church (White Presbyterians have their own church) took a job as a production worker in A & S as his ministry provided him very meager compensation.

The factories are related formally to the tribal government through legal corporate arrangements. A & S is formally organized under a Board of Directors which is appointed by the Tribal Board and is made up largely of Tribal Board members, including the Tribal Chairman. Thus, the Board of Directors has little if any sense of corporate identity in relation to the factory, per se, since this is overshadowed by their position in the political leadership of the Tribes which, rather than any special expertise in a business enterprise of this nature, is the primary prerequisite for acquisition of such a position. Tribal Board members, as a result of the organization of the Tribal Government, each serve on a number of committees with names such as Land and Resources, Law and Order, Tribal Enterprise, Health Education and Welfare and others. The political power of an individual Tribal Board member rests to a considerable extent upon the influence he wields as a member of these committees. The members of the Board of Directors of A & S all belong to other committees of this type, all of which provide much greater opportunities for the exercise of power than membership of the Board of Directors of the factory. The reason that there is little political capital to be gained by such a position despite the fact that the factory is one of the major employers on the reservation is due to the fact that the Board of Directors has very little to say about the day-to-day operations of the factory and can only be of influence on the most general matters of policy. This in
turn, can be attributed to the fact that the Board of Directors does not hire the managers of the factory. The Tribes have signed a contract with Brunswick Corporation to provide management and, therefore, the direct influence of the Tribes upon management is highly curtailed. They can, of course, terminate the contract, which would mean the loss of all top management, but short of that, they have little direct power over the affairs of management. Their influence is limited to what they can achieve through consultation, persuasion and assistance.

One of the dominant modalities of life on the Reservation is crisis. The factory is one of the few organizations that is not oriented first and foremost to one kind of crisis or another and the use of an outside corporation for management provides considerable insulation against the seemingly endless series of crises that often dominate life on the reservation. Given this way of life, it should not be surprising that political power and influence come from the ability to respond to the crises that frequent the lives of individuals and families by some direct and immediate action. By comparison, a more diffuse role in long term planning and development is much less important and thus, as a position of power and influence, membership on the Board of Directors is of minor importance to its members, to the management team, to the employees and to the community at large. A Board member can not secure a job for someone in need by virtue of his position or intervene in any personal crisis that takes place in the factory. The managers themselves are primarily responsible to Brunswick Corporation and will be evaluated upon the efficiency with which they run the factory measured in terms of production output, cost per unit,
etc. with little if any regard for the kind of personal relationships that they may or may not establish with the reservation community. One typically expects that in moving up the hierarchy of management from managers to Board of Directors, one would find an increasing outward orientation, but the situation is reversed with the tribal industries. There is, in many ways, a more outward orientation among the managers than among the Board since the managers have no deep-rooted local allegiances. The goals and aspirations of the local community do not enter into their planning and decision making except insofar as these can be enlisted in the service of, or circumvented as necessary for, the requirements of production. The Board members on the other hand are on the whole little oriented to the outside connections of the plant except insofar as they provide benefit to the Tribes.

The relationship to Brunswick Corporation is primarily important for the insulation from the influence of Tribal authorities that it provides to the top management of the factory. In addition, the management may call for technical help from Brunswick, but the larger corporation does not take any further active role in the affairs of the factory. The products manufactured at A & S are not important to any of their other programs and at least in the initial stages, the main benefit to them was probably in providing openings for some excess management personnel. There have been some attempts to develop recreational products to be marketed by Brunswick in order to give the plant some diversification and ease its dependence upon a single defense contract through diversified corporate involvements. Thus the relationship between A & S and Brunswick may help in providing a little more stability than
previous attempts to establish industry have enjoyed. The marginality of the factory relative to the larger corporation is compounded by its geographical remoteness and results in a situation where the plant manager is largely on his own and has very broad executive powers. This is also true for the ESCO operation though to a slightly lesser degree since the output of this plant is shipped to an ESCO facility in Danville, Illinois for final assembly. Thus, other areas of the company's operations are affected by what happens in the plant on the reservation. In both cases, however, it is only the plant managers and not the Indian Board of Directors or the corporate executives whose lives will be affected in any significant way by what happens in these factories, and thus the manager is much more likely than anyone else to take a strong personal interest in it.

The formal structures of Tribal Government have been designed primarily as a mechanism through which the Indian community relates to the formal legal apparatus of American society, especially the Federal Government. It is only weakly related to other aspects of social structure in the Indian community, the most important of which is kinship which pervades all aspects of the community structure and is an organizing principle for the religious, ceremonial, political and economic life of the individual and the community as a whole. In addition to their formal legal relationships, the factories will inevitably, whether by design or by accident, acquire a place in the kinship centered, tradition based informal social structure of the Reservation and the qualities of this relationship are bound to have a great influence upon its future. This relationship is probably the least predictable
or controllable of all those discussed, but will certainly be an important factor in shaping the future role of industry on the reservation.

An official position might well be that there is no particular relationship between the factories and the traditional kinship centered social structure, but a closer look reveals that the actual relationship is one of rather careful and formal disengagement from the traditional social structure in which the factories attempt to operate strictly in accordance with the impersonal rules of the economic logic of American culture. The mechanisms whereby this disengagement takes place will be discussed in the following chapter. The plant managers have a central role here and this task is one of their major management challenges. They are confronted with a doubly difficult job since in addition to trying to root out all of the effects of kinship from the various aspects of production and management, they recognize a need to establish some sense of loyalty and commitment on the part of the workforce. In order to achieve this the factory must become a meaningful social reality as well as a purely economic one. In order to accomplish this, the managers try various methods to develop a feeling of belongingness and corporate identity. There is at this point, a great diversity of attitudes among factory employees and others about their individual relationship to the factories and the role of the factories in the community structure and it is difficult to see if the factories will eventually find what Geertz, following Sorokin, calls "logico-meaningful integration" (1973:145) into tribal culture and just what that sort of integration might entail. Alternatively, one might make the same
point in Polanyi's terms by saying that it is still not clear whether or not the ways in which the factory presents various situations of choice to members of the Indian community can be structured so that the particular "logic of rational action" characteristic of the reservation community will lead them to systematically make choices and engage in behavior that would promote survival of the factories in "substantive" economic terms.

The degree of disengagement of the factories from the institution of kinship that presently exists and which is reinforced and maintained by the management, is an important factor in determining the position of the factories in the informal status hierarchy that exists among the various jobs that are available to Indians in the reservation community. Relative to most of the other principal employers of Indians of the reservation (Table 3), work at the factories provides one with low prestige. While it is possible to earn a wage higher than that of many other jobs, production work at the factories ordinarily does not prove a person's status.

Only the work training program (CETA) participants have lower occupational status than factory workers. Trainees in the CETA program are generally people who are unskilled and mostly unemployable. According to the Director of these programs, the most important work skills that these programs attempt to inculcate are basic habits of going to work regularly and carrying out instructions. There is little training in specific occupational skills for various reasons. There is great local pressure to get as much of the money from these programs as possible into direct avenues of support for needy tribal members so
there is little left for the longer range development of facilities and staff for training. This is another reflection of the kind of crisis management that is characteristic of most reservation programs, and the participants see these positions as income producing jobs rather than as traineeships.

Although many of the positions in various tribal programs, the BIA and Indian Health Service offer less in the way of remuneration than the factories, there is much more competition for these jobs. This is also true to a considerable degree of the management positions in the factories. There are five Indian managers in A & S and they are in relatively stable, responsible and good paying positions. They are not, however, leading figures in the community and little importance is attached to their positions in the factory. One of them is a well known member of the leading Indian singing group on the reservation but this status is quite independent of his association with the industry. Because of their disassociation from Tribal control, the industries are not part of the mainstream of community activity but exist on the fringes of things. They tend to be staffed by people who for one reason or another can not or will not participate in the more central economic and political activities which are under tribal control.

In general, tribal programs provide a field not only for economic activity, but are arenas where one can build status and participate actively in the political social and economic activities of the Tribes. This is an arena where there is a bewildering mix of bureaucratic forms which may be seen as something of a veneer covering the kinship based social organization which, though much more loosely structured than it
once was, is still the dominant force in the social life of the Indian community. People who are not tribal members can take little active role in the Tribal activities and many others have a relatively limited capacity to participate because of membership in a small or politically unimportant family. Some persons may be in an adversary relationship to the current administration and others may simply have a distaste for the constant shifting and manoeuvring that takes place near the center and do not wish to be involved with "Tribal politics". Since kinship or political connections are quite unimportant to securing jobs in the factory, it is a refuge for persons who may want to stay on the reservation but lack access to or have a distaste for jobs in the tribal arena in which personalistic relationships play such an important role. In this, the factories are somewhat like the public schools and hospitals which are White-controlled but employ a substantial number of Indians for various positions. Access to these jobs is relatively unaffected by one's familial or tribal relationships. While these positions do in some measure provide a greater degree of job security to the individual than is typically the case in Tribal programs, they tend to isolate those who hold them from many of the most meaningful and status conferring activities in the Indian community. This is a liability that makes the factories unattractive for many Indian people.

Bill King (1969:68-70) discusses this matter as a rather general problem facing reservation industries and provides additional clues to the reasons why the factories at Fort Peck rank low on the list of preferred employment options. He notes that in Federal and Tribal employment, Indian concepts of time, production standards and
absenteeism become the norm. Even the BIA, which is mostly non-Indian in the upper echelons of administration is subject to much Indian control under the surface, a fact which non-Indian officials of the BIA at Fort Peck were quick to admit. This is largely because their performance is rated by employee and client satisfaction. King comments:

"These jobs do not demand cost to be balanced against efficiency...Federal and tribal employment under these conditions represents the roughest possible competition for a struggling new industry offering its workers minimum wage." (1969:69)

The factories at Fort Peck offer the opportunity to earn considerably more than minimum wage and their relatively low status and desirability are more related to the fact that they are only weakly subject to Indian control.

Internal Organization of the Reservation Factories.

Both factories have a basic general set of roles within the organization. At the top is one or more non-Indian managers. Under them are a group of Indian managers who supervise the work of the production processes. In addition to the production personnel, there are various support people for quality control, maintenance, accounting, purchasing and supply, security, etc. These roles are evident in both A & S and Fort Peck Manufacturing (ESCO) but were more clearly defined at A & S. This is probably due to a combination of factors including its larger size, longer period of operations and the personality of the general manager. These clearly defined roles contrast rather sharply with the overlapping and frequently tenuous role structure of positions in the mainstream of Tribal employment.
This definition of roles begins with the physical structuring of the industrial environment. The factories are located in the industrial park which is just outside Poplar. While it is over the bank and across the railroad tracks, a distance of not over 100 yards from town, there is a clear isolation of the industrial park from the town as one has to drive for nearly a mile to reach it by road. One cannot help but be struck by the impression created as one enters the factories, particularly A & S. One is immediately confronted by the closed and regulated atmosphere that surrounds the plant and which stands in sharp contrast with just about everything else in the environment. The two large stark plain metal buildings are each surrounded by a high security fence topped with several strands of barbed wire of the type common to prisons and military compounds. Large signs announce that these are the factories and the entrance is festooned with flag poles carrying U.S. and Fort Peck Tribal flags. One must park outside of the compound and proceed to the guardhouse which regulates all entry onto the premises. To gain admittance, one must sign in with the uniformed guard and state one's purpose, after which one receives a badge which must be worn at all times while on the premises. Every employee wears a photographic identification badge at all times and is required to have it before entering the premises. This is only the first stage. One then enters the plant door and emerges into a small, empty waiting room with two locked doors and a single window to the inside. Here one must speak to the receptionist seated behind the glass and again state the purpose of one's visit. Only when she has checked with her superiors will she flip the switch for the electrically controlled lock that allows one to finally enter the factory itself.
One would have imagined from all of the security precautions that the plant was producing some kind of secret military hardware. My first impression was that all of this security rigmarole must have been related to the fact that the factory was fulfilling military contracts, though I could not see what should be so secret about camouflage netting. The management area was likewise separated by locked doors from the production area which takes up over three-fourths of the 40,000 square feet of enclosed space within the plant. My initial assumption that such security measures must have been imposed by some ridiculous government regulation did not quite fit however, since the management seemed to be taking it all very seriously as well, and the evident concerns with security seems to indicate something more immediate than what initially came to mind regarding the totally improbable scenario of some spy trying to sneak into the plant to find a very ordinary piece of chemically treated netting.

Still, I was not prepared for the answers I received in response to my inquiries about such elaborate security arrangements. In fact, there was absolutely nothing classified about the nets and the Defense Department required nothing whatsoever in regard to these products which could be distributed anywhere without restriction if there was a market. All of the elaborate security had nothing to do with keeping out spies, rather, it was designed for the sole purpose of keeping out kin. The general manager told me how in the early days of the operation of the plant, children, wives, husbands, brothers, sisters, friends and even pets would come and go creating a constant stream of diversions and interruptions. Not only would this create an interruption
for the individual but for others around him and not infrequently, he would feel that it was necessary to leave work at that time in order to tend to whatever large or small crisis was at hand. Managers found that merely making rules and policies about such behavior had little effect so they began to take measures to physically and symbolically isolate the employees from the outside environment during the hours of work. The fence was the first step but people would still slip in and out frequently. Guards were added but management found that it was very difficult for the guards to enforce the rules which in many cases would involve their own kin. They would also be subjected to personal threats if they did not allow people in. They were provided with uniforms in an attempt to invest them with greater authority and to detach them in their roles as guards from their individual kin-based identity. The system was further braced by establishing a two stage security system and the institution of the badge system. The identification badge procedure was designed specifically to create a sense of separate identity for employees while at the plant, to constantly remind them that this was an environment where the rules of kinship and other aspects of Indian social relations must be temporarily suspended in favor of other rules of behavior which are designed to maximize production apart from any personal considerations or relationships. The photographic ID specifies just what a person's title is in the plant and might have some small metal stars attached to it which are awarded for remaining on the job beyond a specified length of time. All of this serves as a graphic and constant reminder to reinforce the message that this factory is not part of a world where kinship pervades all spheres
of social activity, but rather a world where economic activity must be differentiated from the personal aspects of life and conducted through the application of "rational" principles in order to maximize profit and productivity.

The General Manager. The primary architect of all of this elaborate structure is the general manager who, as has already been pointed out, is in a very powerful position in relation to the operations of the factory. The Tribes, who own the factory, are not in a position to impose sanctions upon him and cannot fire him from his job. The managers of the two factories exhibited quite different personal characteristics, but there was a great degree of agreement between them on the nature of their role, the challenges they face, and their strategies for achieving results. All of the top management people (ESCO has one and the Brunswick management team at A & S consists of three people), are from outside of the reservation community and had moved to the reservation specifically to take the management jobs at the factory. All are non-Indians and their tie to the reservation is purely professional since none of them had any previous personal ties linking them to the area. They do not therefore live in an Indian environment in any real sense and for all practical purposes, their contact with Indians is limited to eight hours per day at the factory. They all live some 25 miles to the west of Poplar in the predominantly White town of Wolf Point and drive their own vehicles to work every day. Though there was a bus which would take employees of the factories living in Wolf Point and other western communities on the reservation to work and back home in the evenings, it was never used by the non-Indian managers.
They were never observed at dances, wakes, hand games, bingo, or any other social activities in the Indian community.

The managers reported that they had been faced with many problems which they had not anticipated or experienced previously but also were quick to point out the absence of certain other kinds of problems which are common to other managerial positions. Their stated goals were quite clear and unambiguous and involved a conscious dissolution of all personal attachments.

The following extract from an interview illustrates how a White general manager of one of the factories sees his task.

"I came here with no thought of failure. If I hadn't been convinced that I would succeed I never would have accepted the job -- but it has been pretty rough to get things to where they are now.

Indian workers are highly productive, they are excellent workers but we have a big problem with absenteeism and turnover. About 30% of our work force is steady, that is, they have worked here for one year or more. Last year's turnover rate was 500%, higher than the first year, but we are gradually making progress.

I think that industry is definitely the answer to the Indian economic problem, they are good workers and we only have to make them steady. You've got to get them hooked on material things...cars, homes, televisions, refrigerators. Then they will begin to value that weekly paycheck and will get on the damned treadmill just like the rest of us. Little by little they will get used to the finer things in life. Just look out there in the parking lot at all of the new cars. When we started up there were hardly any cars and most of them were old and beat up. Now there are very few that are not very new...big cars too...you don't see many compacts out there. I hope that we can get them attuned to buying on credit, to acquire mortgages, etc. That will eliminate the problem of turnover.

I work to try to get them to see the management philosophy...we've got to get the product out the back door...that's the name of the game...no personal attachments, no personal involvements. No Indian manager could do this because of
family ties. Its not that they don't have the technical knowledge. John White Horn (a member of the tribal board) has the knowledge to run this factory just as well as I do but he is smart enough to know that the family ties and favors would ruin it.

In a few years an Indian will sit in this desk...but that Indian will not have family ties."

It should be clarified that in asserting the demand that family relationships must be suspended in order to have a successful business venture, these managers were referring specifically to Indian familial relationships. This is evident from the fact that the manager quoted above was, at the time of the interview, starting another private business in his spare time. His primary reason for doing this apart from his entrepreneurial instincts was in order to provide employment for his wife and brother-in-law. The fact that this was not perceived as a contradiction provides strong evidence that it is not family ties per se but Indian family ties which are judged to be inimical to economic progress.

Managers were in agreement that absenteeism and the rate of turnover were the most difficult and challenging problems they faced. They were also in agreement in attributing a great deal of the absenteeism and turnover to the inability, in their terms, of the Indian people to divorce themselves from personal ties in order to work. The White managers had the perception that they alone were able to resist the personal requests for favors that ran counter to the demands of rational management and which in their opinion must be eliminated in order for the factories to survive and be profitable. They were generous in their praise for the Indian managers in all areas save this one and all reported that they had had repeated difficulties arising from the
granting of personal favors or special treatment on the part of the Indian managers which they felt would threaten the discipline and order of the entire operation.

They also reported that they had been approached for "favors" by Tribal leaders at times past and had politely but firmly stated that they would not tolerate interference in the management of the plants from the Tribes. They seemed to have established rather formal and distant relationships by the time of my fieldwork that were fairly stable for the time being though any change in the management could require renegotiation of the terms of the relationship. The managers clearly felt that, if they could inculcate the attitudes of impersonal rational maximization within the Indian community in relation to the factories, they would have few other serious problems.

Indian Managers. Beneath the White general managers whose only connection to the reservation was contractual and economic, there are a number of Indian managers who headed the various departments of production, maintenance, supply, accounting and quality control. All of these are stable employees who have been involved since the early attempts to establish factories in one capacity or another. Most of them have spent some time off of the reservation where they have gained some experience in business and industry. They are, on the whole, better educated than most of the community although this is quite variable. They share generally positive attitudes toward the factories and all show a good degree of pride in their work. They are intimately familiar with the technical requirements of the production work they are engaged in and have been frequently involved in management training
seminars and other kinds of programs to sharpen their managerial and professional skills. Though I found them generally committed to the factories in which they work, they are in the most difficult positions as they are constantly beset by conflicting expectations from the staff below and the management above. While they recognized a logic in the management philosophy of putting all personal considerations aside in order to "get the product out the back door at the cheapest price", they have also been frequently inclined to grant legitimacy to requests for leave or some other special consideration that frequently arises in response to one kind of personal crisis or another. All of them considered their Indian identity important and were sensitive to criticism that they were violating important norms of the Indian community. At the same time, they felt they must try to abide by the rules of "rational management" as laid out by the White general managers for whom they all had considerable professional respect and regard in spite of a lack of personal affection on the part of most. The Indian managers live in all of the communities of the reservation, both Sioux and Assiniboine, and cannot be easily characterized as a group. They are generally people of capacity and initiative who for one reason or another, are not involved in the mainstream of the Tribal political-economic sector.

One of these Indian managers, a Tribal member, was raised off of the reservation and had only recently returned there to make his home. He is therefore still trying to establish his place in the community in the face of criticism that he was not a "real Indian". His job at the factory does not help much in this respect, but he has plunged himself
into many traditional activities in order to establish his authenticity and seems to be finding a place.

Another was not a member of the Tribes but had married a girl from Fort Peck. One of the small group of Indians on the Reservation with college degrees, he would likely have been heading one of the major tribal programs were he a tribal member. As an accountant, he was most isolated in his position from the personalistic requests and demands, an isolation that was further reinforced by virtue of his single line of connection to the Fort Peck community through his marriage. He was highly respected by virtually everyone at the factory, Indian and non-Indian, but strangely enough, I found him to be cordial, friendly and helpful but the least enthusiastic about the operation and the least hopeful for its future.

"I don't think this factory is the answer to our problems or that it will prove to be of lasting importance. It doesn't mean anything to the people...it hasn't come from the people...those nets don't mean anything to them; they just come and get a paycheck and go. We need something where the people have planned it and are really behind it, something we can really identify with."

While a portion of this reaction can be attributed to the problems of adjustment and alienation that result from the extreme specialization which Herskovits (1968:207-209) characterizes as a principal difference between machine and non-machine cultures, this explanation is in itself insufficient. Beneath his calm and cooperative behavior was a deep sense of resentment toward the policies of the White managers. To my knowledge, they were never openly expressed but they emerged in our conversations once we had talked for a long time. Eventually he left the reservation. Though he was the most educated of the Indian
managers and was admired by the others for this, he was more deeply committed to a kind of close-knit community life built on interdependent, cooperative relationships. Economic activities were simply not satisfying for him unless they were integrated into the domain of kinship. He told of how he had gotten a position in the BIA area office in Billings with responsibility for establishing a new program. He laughingly told me how he had hired his mother, his sister and another relative to fill various positions and then resigned because "I couldn't be their boss" but they could keep the jobs and "three jobs for one isn't bad". He felt confident he could find other work and considered this action to be honorable. Although he was fully aware that such behavior is contrary to policies of the BIA, and the twinkle in his eye showed his own awareness of the irony of his actions, he would be most likely to choose similar action in the future. Neither did he suffer in the eyes of others but had a reputation in the community for his high moral character.

In the other Indian managers, there was considerable internal personal conflict. They were faced with a genuine dilemma regarding the policies of "rational management" as defined by the non-Indian management and were honestly trying to do this while at the same time, they all felt attached to the Indian community and felt the necessity and obligation to respond to the many appeals that were made to them to make exceptions to the established policies to meet one kind of crisis or another. This internal conflict could lead to ambivalent reactions in a variety of different situations as they often feel strong negative reactions against the conclusions about Indians which are often derived
using the "logic of rational management" taught by the White managers. The following two examples illustrate this ambivalence in quite different contexts.

Question: "Do you think that Indian managers could control these operations or are there advantages to white management on top?"

Answer: "Yes, of course! That would be the ideal situation. Well...just a minute. What am I saying? I don't really believe that. An Indian (general manager) would be under tremendous pressure from the Tribal Board and I don't know anyone who could stand up under that...pressures to hire this person and fire that person."

Question: "Do you think it would be possible then with an Indian manager from off this Reservation who doesn't have family ties here?"

Answer: "No, I don't think that would make a difference."

A second Indian manager related the following story to me one evening.

"I had a rough day today. I threatened to fire someone when he said that Indians had been spoiled by handouts. I felt really strange afterwards because deep down I feel that it's true and in many cases he's right. Still I couldn't tolerate him saying so and was so mad I was ready to belt him one."

He felt even worse about the incident as he felt that his threat to fire the person was not justified since he should be aloof from such feelings as a manager.

Indian managers agreed with the assessment of the White managers that absenteeism and turnover were the biggest problems but they were much less inclined to link these problems to Indian culture or kinship. Rather, they tend to attribute them to a lack of the experience necessary to the development of these habits. While the non-Indian managers saw the weakening of Indian patterns of kin relationships, sharing and social obligation as a desirable and inevitable result of adjustment to modern life and the factories in particular, no Indian,
and, in particular, none of the Indian managers voiced anything even remotely like this view.

"Family ties will not change - if anything they will get stronger - The family gets larger each generation."

They were equally united in the opinion that industry would not change their "culture" or their patterns of social relationships. This is not to say that they do not feel that kinship oriented behavior does not play an important part in the pattern of absenteeism and turnover. Quite the contrary, they told me that whenever people quit, it was because of some personal conflict, often between family members, who were not able to put aside their difficulties while at work. They also told me that people "tend to be absent in pairs". If a child is sick, both employed parents may stay home. If a person walks out in anger over some conflict in the factory (which may well have originated elsewhere), there is a good chance that their friends or relatives will go too. Both Indian and non-Indian managers are agreed about the central importance of Indian kinship and its great impact upon the workings of the factory, but they have different perceptions of what the effects of the factory will be upon the Indian family and what the root causes of the problems that plague managers are. White managers share a set of attitudes common to most Whites on the reservation, that much of the kinship oriented behavior of Indians is detrimental to their well-being and progress, but they share the belief that it will quite naturally disappear as the Indian people "join the dominant society". Indian managers on the other hand, have an alternative interpretation in that they feel that Industry exercises a beneficial influence insofar as it relieves some of the poverty, frustration and feelings of helplessness
and economic paralysis that lead to despair and cause the disintegration of Indian families. Indeed, commitment to the family was an important motivation for many of the factory employees who felt that the economic improvement of the community would strengthen rather than weaken traditional relationships which were threatened, not by the factories or other kinds of employment, but by poverty, lack of economic opportunity and alcoholism which are responsible for precipitating many of the crises which characterize the everyday life of the community and to which most government programs provide little other than fleeting and temporary relief. In other words, they see some hope in the industries of breaking loose from that same "structural paralysis" described by Gearing for the Fox. (1970)

Structurally, the Indian managers play a very important role as mediators between the people of the Indian community who work under them and the non-Indian management at the top. In varying degrees, they feel attracted to both and bear the brunt of trying to reconcile the lack of mutual understanding that is common. A number of them are people who have been prepared through their lifetimes for such a role, either by life off of the reservation or by virtue of membership in bi-racial families. For these, especially the offspring of interracial marriages, the struggle to define their own social selves is there whether or not they work in the factory and they may find that the understandings they have gained through having both Indian and non-Indian parents and grandparents, or perhaps a non-Indian spouse, would serve them well in trying to juggle the conflicting demands placed upon them as managers.
Production Workers and Service Personnel. There are really two remaining categories of people in the factories which can each be subdivided even further. They are the production workers and the service personnel. The production workers are, of course, the basic element of the labor force in any factory and they make up the single largest employee category in each of the factories. It is not easy to characterize these groups of people except in terms of the work they do since they are very diverse in many ways. The median age for example is in the mid twenties but the age of production staff ranges from 18 to the mid sixties. The factories will not employ any youth for other than summer employment before he reaches eighteen unless he has finished high school. Young people can legally quit school at sixteen and some effectively quit before that but the factory managers agreed to a request from educators on the reservation to deny employment to any student of high school age as they felt that the availability of relatively good paying employment would increase the dropout rate.

The work at ESCO involves the grinding of heavy cast iron parts and is physically quite demanding so not surprisingly, few women are employed in production there although there are some who have given it a try and a few have remained. The work force at A & S is quite equally divided between men and women. There is some division of labor according to sex though there are no hard and fast divisions made by the personnel or other management departments. The sewing department is dominated by women though a couple of men have tried their hand at it. Likewise, men predominate in the maintenance department whose chief responsibility is to repair the sewing machines when they break down.
There appears to be little formal division of labor by sex in other areas of production. Much of the work is done in teams and these are integrated by age and sex. Although the assignments are made by the managerial staff, their chief criterion for making such assignments is productivity and the integrated work teams do not seem to hamper that. This is not to say that the managers could make such assignments at random. In one case a husband and wife were separated because they did not work very hard together and did better when separated. This caused problems and an eventual blow-up when the husband became jealous over his wife's conversation with an old boyfriend who happened to be on the new work team. Still there was no definable pattern of conflict revolving around either age or sex. Rather, the person making work assignments had to be well aware of the full panoply of personal and familial relationships in the community in order to minimize conflicts and distractions in the workplace. There were no women security guards that I know of, though I am not at all sure that it is significant since there are many women working for the Tribal Police Force in various capacities and they oftentimes proved to be as adept at handling physically threatening situations as anyone else and the guard positions at the factory involve more psychological pressure than anything else. Clerical help was all female.

One important factor that distinguishes the production people from those involved in various support activities (quality control, maintenance, security, janitors, clerical, supply), is the fact that production people work under an elaborate system of incentives whereas the support people are paid a straight wage. The basic pay of a production worker
was $2.30 an hour, the minimum wage at that time. Within six to eight weeks, the new worker was expected to reach a certain level of productivity or was subject to termination. This was rarely a problem and many people who had worked there previously would reach this level in a matter of days. According to everyone's assessment the Indian work force is not lazy and the production floor is the scene of busy activity. There are fairly elaborate incentive plans for both productivity and regularity of attendance with bonuses for periods with no absence at both factories. Actual salary levels for production employees ranged from the minimum wage to over $7.00 an hour, with the average falling between three and four dollars per hour. There was a good measure of competition in some areas but in others there seemed to be little interest in being either the fastest or in making the most money. There were actually a few production workers who asked not to be put on the incentive program and preferred the more relaxed pace of a job that called for something less than the maximum they could produce. Of course other people of this temperament might well take jobs as custodians, guards, or quality control inspectors. There were definitely some production jobs where one could make more money than in others due to the structure of the incentive program. This was pointed out to me by the management staff who said that it was not fair and needed to be corrected and adjusted, but they noted that there had been little if any complaint from the production personnel about this in spite of the fact that the earnings of everyone in production were posted in the work area every week. The General Manager noted the lack of protest over these disparities with some surprise and said that one
could never go on so long with such inequities in the incentive system with a non-Indian work force.

The production workers are thoroughly segregated from the management area and individual work areas are clearly demarcated. A person is not permitted to trade jobs with another without permission even though many of the workers have performed various parts of the operation at different times. One of the important characteristics of this group is that few of them actually are full time steady employees, a fact that becomes clear when we call to mind the 500% turnover rate per annum. It is estimated by many people that as much as half of the available Indian work force on the reservation has worked for the factories at one time or another and many of them have worked there on a number of different occasions. There is always a good chance that a person who is rehired will be put in a different position so the actual labor pool is rather fluid and considerably larger than actual employment figures at any single point would indicate. Though A & S employs only about 100 people at a time, they have employed 350 people in the previous twelve months, many of these more than once (hence the 500% turnover rate). Some of the more stable female employees have been offered positions as clerical help and have accepted even though they can not make as much in these positions as they could in some phases of production. In accepting these positions they moved out of the production areas and began working in the managerial areas. The chief benefit seems to be the increased status of the new position and perhaps lighter and/or more interesting work.

The majority of the production force appear to have few opportun-
ities for employment on a regular basis other than the factories. For many, the skills they have acquired in the factories are the basic trade skills which they possess though some of them have some skills in areas such as carpentry, construction and the like. The large majority of them have spent little time off the reservation though some have returned from other places specifically to get jobs in the factories. They do not occupy the lowest rung of the economic ladder in the community by any means in spite of the fact that factory work ranks very low in terms of occupational prestige. The personnel managers say that they have weeded out the really unreliable applicants for jobs, those who have serious and chronic problems with alcohol or other disruptive factors. Among those less regular workers who occasionally work for a short period at either of the factories, quite a number of them might be found participating in the Employment Training Programs (CETA) or in public service employment, punctuated with periods of unemployment.

The factories have clear goals and expectations of the workers and the structure of role relationships between workers and managers, Indian and non-Indian is clearly spelled out and reinforced by a clear chain of command. While there is occasional grumbling about this, it is relatively minor and there is no organized movement to provide labor a greater voice in running the affairs of the factory. The workers simply do not feel very dependent upon the factory for the most part and do not mind quitting for a while if they become tired, irritated or bored with the situation. Factory work provides additional income which is desired, sought after eagerly and much needed in most
cases. Yet, there are very few who could not manage somehow without the factory, and they feel a good amount of independence from the factories even though there might be a considerable amount of belt tightening required at the loss of the job. The Indian community on the reservation is very heterogeneous and a great deal of this diversity is reflected in people who work in the factories. Thus, in order to further understand more about these factories and the part they are playing in reservation development and the changing patterns of social life, we must go beyond the description of role categories of people relative to the factory and begin to examine some relatively role-independent patterns of interaction which are played out within the boundaries of this structure. This is the topic of the following chapter.
CHAPTER V

MODALITIES OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

While it is possible to describe a good deal of the social interaction in the factories in terms of the role relationships and this analysis provides important insights into this social environment where a great deal of conscious structuring takes place, there are certain patterns of interaction that seem to transcend particular role relationships and stand out as important modalities of social interaction. An examination of these patterns of interaction provides more microscopic insights into the way that individuals confront various situations of choice in the everyday conduct of life and how these situations are interpreted in different ways by the Indian and White participants. These dominant patterns of interaction thus provide an important basis for understanding the cultural dimensions of the problem of economic development of the reservation community as the factories embody many of the elements of the larger confrontation between Indian and White societies in microcosm.

Of course it must be recognized that the social, economic and cultural interaction that takes place in the factories represents a
rather new dimension of that larger process of social interaction and change and its character is somewhat different from the other kinds of relationships which the Indian community has with the social institutions of the broader American society. Much of the other interaction that the Indian community of the Reservation has with the mainstream of American society is through the bureaucratic institutions of the Federal Government. There is little interaction between the Indian community and the private sector economy except that Indians patronize White owned retail businesses as consumers which is a highly limited and formalized kind of interaction. There was once some small scale, yet sometimes rather close interaction with local White farmers and ranchers who used to employ Indians as occasional help but this practice has largely died out in recent years. Thus, the factories provide a rather unique setting insofar as they are virtually the only place on the reservation where the Indian community and the private economic sector interact directly. Though the bureaucracy of government and the private economic sector are both quite highly "rationalized" systems in terms of Western cultural logic, they differ in important ways. Only in the private economic sector does one find the strong emphasis upon the impersonal allocation of resources in order to maximize profit and productivity. This is clearly the case with the White management of the factories who would most certainly agree with Firth in saying that one of the most distinguishing characteristics of societies with modern industrial economies is the presence of the notion of economic man who "allocates resources by references to impersonal criteria which disregard personal ties and social ends in
favour of an immediate principle of profit making". (1967:5) Firth contrasts this with the "traditional economy" where there is no concept of an impersonal market and where it is impossible to consider any economic transaction apart from the corresponding social relations which it entails. He then goes on to suggest that participation in the modern industrial economy necessarily involves the erosion of traditional social relations and the acquisition of the attributes of economic man. This is precisely the assessment of the non-Indian managers who have structured the factories on this premise. While we have already noted that the casual inferences about the necessary effects of participation in the modern economy upon traditional social structure lose much of their force when viewed in the light of Polanyi's distinction between the two meanings of economic, it is important to realize that the belief in the necessity of this cultural transformation as a prerequisite to economic development on the part of Whites is a constant factor in the factory social environment. Sahlins uses a somewhat different set of arguments to arrive at a conclusion similar to the one we have derived from Polanyi. He attacks the notion that modern society is unique in that it is organized according to strict material rationality and suggests that the uniqueness of Western societies lies not in this but in the "illusion that...the economy and society are pragmatically constructed" (1976:210). Thus he argues it is not simply the requirements of production that determine the social organization of the Western factory (the qualities represented in Polanyi's substantive economics) but rather the "economic symbolism that is structurally determining" (1970:211). Western society, structured by this economic symbolism
stands in sharp contrast to the Sioux and Assiniboine of Fort Peck who are, in this respect, like a large percentage of human societies. To quote Fortes who was writing about the Tallensi:

"...the ideology of kinship is so dominant...and the web of genealogical connections so extensive, that no social relations or events fall completely outside the orbit of kinship. In this respect the Tallensi resemble very many other primitive societies among whom, as Firth puts it, kinship is the articulating principle of social behavior in every aspect and department of social life...as many studies on Africa, Oceania, and America have shown...

"...kinship relations are a major determinant of the pattern of organization of all activities through which the ruling interests of the people are satisfied. This holds true for all departments of...social life—for the activities concerned with the production and consumption of food and all other material goods, for those involved in the reproduction and rearing of offspring, for those concerned with maintaining the right and duties of individuals and corporate units toward one another, and for religious and ceremonial activities". (1949: 338-40)

Given this apposition of two systems of symbolic structuring, it is not at all surprising that the overarching modality of social interaction to be found in the factories centers on the question of whether the symbolism of kinship as developed within the Indian community or the economic symbolism of the White managers will emerge as the structuring principle.

These basic cultural differences are enhanced in the factory situation because a number of factors operate to bring actual behavior of many of the participants in fairly close correspondence with the ideal. As much as Whites may often deviate from the cultural ideal of profit making with complete disregard for personal ties and social ends, in relation to the factories they approximate it quite closely. The suppliers and consumers of materials for the reservation industries have no formal interest in or connection to the social and economic
conditions of the Indian community but are almost exclusively concerned with obtaining the finished products in the desired quantities on a dependable basis at a price which is at or below what they would have to pay elsewhere. Even the White managers who are physically present do not really live in the Indian community and have no personal ties or social ends to disregard in relation to the Indian community. This situation contrasts with the Federal government which has both moral and legal obligations to the Tribes which shape the character of the relationship. Though the Tribal/Federal Government relationship is also fraught with strain and misunderstanding, it does not throw basic cultural differences in as sharp a relief as the "purely economic" relationships represented by the factories. Thus, the interactions in the factories serve to highlight and accentuate some basic cleavages that distinguish the Indian community as a separate socio-cultural entity from the surrounding non-Indian society.

The confrontation between Indian and White modes of perception and interaction is very apparent in the factories. It is so prominent in fact that it dominates the attention of the management more than any of the logistical problems which are certainly not inconsiderable. Some of the manifestations of this confrontation have already been mentioned; specifically, the fact that it was very difficult to get Indian people to set aside eight hours of their day when they would not interact with their friends and relatives for any personal reasons but would devote their attentions exclusively to the work of production. The security measures were of course undertaken to physically isolate the factory from the rest of the community in this way. This is only one
aspect of the larger problem however which confronts the non-Indian manager in his attempts to have a factory that will run on "sound management principles" as these are conceived in American culture. There are many ways in which the personal relationships of the Indian people constantly enter the activities of the factories and the non-Indian managers see it as their task to try and eliminate or at least minimize these intrusions. One of the most important strategies for accomplishment of this task is the establishment of a highly structured and rationalized set of rules for governing conduct and behavior in the factories.

Factories Run By Policy

Non-Indian managers see it as their responsibility to depersonalize relationships and to assert the logic of production in the face of the continual intrusions of the kinship based community into the factory relations from virtually all of the members of the Indian community who are associated with the factory whether they are members of the Board of Directors, Indian managers or employees. In order to accomplish this, the management has undertaken a plan whereby the factory is to be run by a book rather than by people. The policies and procedures manual attempts to rigidly codify every decision that might arise and it is held up to be the final supreme authority in the factory beyond which there is no appeal. While the rules contained in the policies and procedures are made by the general manager, he does not appeal to his position as manager as the source of their authority. Rather, he makes what is, at least within the context of American culture, an appeal to a higher authority, that is the rational demands of production, the
principle of maximization. The rules are designed to promote the maximization of productivity and profit and they are considered to be unchallengable unless it can be demonstrated that some alteration would lead to greater efficiency. Thus, when one enters the factory, one is expected to relate to others by no means other than the book. This policy has been enacted in such a way as to create the impression that the rules exist over and above everyone including the General Manager himself. One can appeal to the General Manager over the decisions of the other managers if one feels that they have dealt unfairly, but the appeal must be made within the guidelines of the policies in order to be heard, i.e. one may argue that the manager violated proper procedures. There is no authority by which a rule can be legitimately waived for either the managerial staff, the Board of Directors or the Tribal Government.

By adopting this kind of plan, the General Manager has some way in which to justify and defend his actions, particularly the refusal to grant special requests from any source. Within the Indian community, it is expected and assumed that the obligations of kinship will be a factor in any affairs over which an individual exercises discretionary powers. Thus, part of the strategy for disassociating the factories from influences viewed as inimical to economic growth according to the logic of contemporary Western culture, is an attempt through the systematic institution of policies and procedures to eliminate the exercise of individual discretion to the greatest possible degree.

This elaborate system of rules was not simply arrived at through a rational analysis of the situation on the part of the General Manager.
however. Rather, it grew gradually and developed into a pattern in response to a variety of situations which in one way or another called for regulation in order to insure efficient production in the plant. Examples of these are the matters of whom to hire, how to place employees in a position in the factory and under what conditions they might be removed from a position or fired. Charges of favoritism were frequently leveled against the plant in regard to hiring practices, particularly in the first couple of years of operation. To properly evaluate these however, one should be aware of the fact that such charges are almost axiomatic in the Indian community at Fort Peck where it is automatically assumed that there is favoritism in virtually all hiring practices. Thus, while the personnel manager himself stated that it was difficult for him to be completely impartial at all times, I suspect he performed his job rather well from the beginning and was convinced of his sincerity and integrity. Nevertheless, complaints, justified or not, were filed with the Tribal Board. Though the Board of Directors and the Tribal Board are largely composed of the same people, individuals would invariably take their complaints directly to the Tribal Board rather than to the factory's Board of Directors which is not an active group in anyone's estimation. The Tribal Board in general and the Tribal Chairman in particular are the usual recipients of such complaints and they are expected to act upon them. One way in which the General Manager of the plant could successfully turn aside these complaints and preserve managerial autonomy from the Tribal authorities was through the institution of a detailed set of rules for hiring whereby it would be possible to demonstrate in the face of any criticism that
there was no favoritism or unfairness taking place in the hiring and operating policies of the plant.

**Early Paychecks**

Both factories experienced a great number of requests for early paychecks and found this to create a great deal of difficulty. If they gave out the check, they found that people would often miss the last half day or more of work in addition to the general disruption that was caused by the persistent requests. The strategy used to deal with this problem is one of the more dramatic examples of the lengths to which the management would go in order to depersonalize relationships in the factory. One reason this problem is so difficult to deal with is the fact that many of the requests reflect genuine needs in a community where many families face frequent financial crises. On the other hand, it was not infrequent that such requests would be made for what the management would not consider to be legitimate grounds; for example, so that someone could leave early to go to a dance or other event happening on another reservation. The general managers, who are outsiders to the community are completely unable to pass judgement on the legitimacy of such requests since actual intentions are often concealed. In such situations they rely heavily upon the Indian managers who have intimate lifelong knowledge about most of the employees and can more accurately judge special requests. The requests for early checks however were too numerous and too persistent for such treatment and would also lead to great conflict and charges of favoritism against the Indian managers. At first, there was an attempt to solve the problem by making regulations against giving out checks prior to the
end of the work week and attempting to rigidly enforce them. This proved to be very difficult to manage since occasionally a very serious emergency situation would arise that was legitimate and the managers would make exceptions, general manager included. This would invariably result in a rash of such "crises" and charges of favoritism by those whose requests were denied. The final solution taken in the larger plant was to have the entire payroll process transferred to an accounting firm in an off reservation community some seventy miles away. The payroll checks were prepared there by a computer and were not delivered to Poplar until late Friday afternoon, just prior to the end of the work week. All authority to issue checks was transferred to this computerized operation so there was no possible way for anyone at the factory, including the General Manager himself, to issue a special check or arrange for early receipt. There was no way to write checks in the factory and the regular checks were not even in town until the actual time of delivery, thus relieving the management of all responsibilities for judging the legitimacy of various crises by totally isolating itself from the capacity to respond to such requests, regardless of the magnitude of the crisis.

While this policy has succeeded in largely eliminating the problem of early checks, such extreme isolation of the factory from the affairs in the lives of the workers makes it more difficult to build a sense of loyalty to the factory. It tends to sacrifice a long term goal for short term gains in that it will tend to decrease the rate of absenteeism but may increase the rate of turnover and contribute further to the isolation of the general manager from the community. The
smaller factory was still attempting to control these requests in less drastic ways, but was considering adopting the computer system as well since requests for early checks were creating too many problems.

Patterns of Indian Response - Quitting

Through the use of this and other policies, the factory management was able to bring about certain kinds of changes in the behavior patterns of the work force. If turnover was higher at the time of the fieldwork than it had been in the first year, at least it was more predictable. Bonuses were paid for a week without missing any work with additional bonuses and raises for longer periods. Tardiness and early leaving were reduced greatly by these policies. The turnover was therefore more structured relative to the incentives and therefore a little more predictable. What has remained largely unchanged is the general pattern of quitting which has posed something of a dilemma for both factories. Both reported that they had tried to get exit interviews with workers who were quitting and found it virtually impossible to do so. Almost without exception, workers in the factories would quit in one of two ways. Either they would simply not come to work, or if they quit while on the job, it was in a state of agitation making it impossible to discuss the matter with them. Most of the time, there was some kind of interpersonal conflict that led immediately to one or more workers leaving in anger or protest. While occasionally these incidents may have arisen out of some conflict with the management, on many other occasions it was an interpersonal conflict between friends or relatives who were working together on the production floor. One of the factories had several cases of fighting breaking out among workers in the plant.
which generally led to a group leaving in anger. There had also been some smaller violent incidents in the other factory. These were not necessarily confined to relationships in the factory and many of them began outside. Oftentimes, there was alcohol involved. Quarrels, not job dissatisfaction were nearly always the cause. The following example is typical.

Seven members of the Brown family work in the factory. The nucleus of this group is Mrs. Brown who works in the sewing room. Her daughter and a niece work cutting nets and a son works in the maintenance department. A daughter-in-law is employed as a secretary. One warm summer afternoon, an argument breaks out between her son and one of the assistant managers with whom he has quarreled in the past. By the time a manager arrives on the scene, the two are at the stage of coming to blows and the assistant manager shouts that he wants to fire the Brown boy who was his classmate a few years ago. The Brown boy will not back down and the manager, though he feels his assistant has overreacted, feels he must still give him some support. A group has gathered around and there is no way for young Arvel Brown to gracefully back down so he shouts at the manager and his assistant to go to Hell and stalks out. Along with him go all of the members of his extended family including Mrs. Brown and several of his friends. According to the rules of the factory, the manager has no choice but to place them on suspension. Several months later, Mrs. Brown appears and applies for a job. There is an opening and she is hired. Nothing is said about the previous incident. Over the next several months all but one of the relatives who left that day return and are rehired. The secretary was one of the first. She wanted to return right away but was told she would have to return to the production floor which she did after several more weeks of staying away.

Mrs. Brown laughed when recalling the incident some months later and related that she has quit a number of times.

"I can get a job easily outside of here and besides, I can easily get hired back here so when something bothers me I just walk out for awhile. I have a temper you see and sometimes I get bad headaches...my children are the same way.

"I enjoy working here but I quit once in a while just for a change. I worked before at the tribal building but I like it here better because there was so much politics up there. I sometimes get upset with some people who don't do their share of the work but its a pretty comfortable working place...you can even joke with the big bosses."
These are some of the more steady workers in the factory. Many of the employees are young, and often have loose ties to one or more households without being tied to great responsibilities with any of them. They may or may not be married though marriages are often unstable during the early years, and especially when the young couple is unable to establish a separate household. The case of Susan and Willie is not atypical.

They met at one of the summer Indian Celebrations. Willie had come to the Iron Ring Celebration from his home reservation in South Dakota and met Susan. He was 19 and had quit school three years earlier. She was almost 18 and had just finished high school. He decided to stay around for awhile to see if he could get work as he had heard that there would be jobs in construction and he had had some CETA training in construction work. They were soon married and they stayed at the house that belonged to her mother along with another sister, two brothers, and her father. The construction work did not materialize so Willie and Susan both got jobs at the factory making nets. He was a little slower than Susan at reaching the incentive level but they managed to reach the level where they were receiving some bonuses within about a month. They had wanted to work together but the manager stopped it as he felt they were not getting the work done and there were some complaints from others. He moved Susan to another position and things seemed better for a while but Willie wasn't happy. Susan was now with her old friends, and Willie got angry when she would talk to some of them one of whom had once been a boyfriend of Susan's. Finally Willie came over to stop this friend from talking to his wife and a fight broke out. Willie was fired. This created other problems since they had just bought a used car but had to make another payment on it at the end of the month. Susan kept on working and Willie went on over to ESCO. He went to work on the night shift but the second night, he got a piece of slag in his eye and could not go back for a couple of weeks. He was very unhappy, especially when Susan was at work since he wasn't comfortable to be at her mother-in-law's house when his wife was not home. He spent most of his days uptown and began to drink fairly frequently. One weekend, they took their car and went to Billings to see some friends. They had car trouble and did not get back until 4 a.m. Monday morning. Susan didn't go to work and Willie encouraged her to go back so she didn't. On Wednesday, she went to the BIA to apply for General Assistance payments (GA) and their relation-
ship improved for a while. Willie went back to work at ESCO but did not like the heavy work and said he could not get along with the people so he quit in two weeks when he got a call from South Dakota saying that his father was very ill and they needed help to take care of him. Upon returning about ten days later, he decided to apply for a CETA job in construction work. In his CETA interview, he was encouraged by reports that they were going to hire 75 new people for construction. A few days later, he found out that he had not been hired. Susan's family said that it was because he was not a tribal member and indeed, every work position in that program had to be personally approved by the Tribal Chairman. One of Susan's brothers called him lazy and said that he was freeloading. He didn't respond but went down to A & S the next day to see if he could get a job there again. He was put on the waiting list. In the meantime he tried to make himself invisible around the house. He talked to Susan about going to South Dakota but she argued that there were no jobs there. Though she did not say it to him, she did not want to leave her family and go to South Dakota. In order to stave off further complaints about freeloading and since he had no money to buy gas anyway, Willie began loaning his car to his brothers-in-law. One night while they had been drinking with a group of friends in Wolf Point, the car was involved in an accident, the fenders bent and the windshield broken out. They limped back home and said it was not their fault. It mattered little since neither party had insurance or money to fix the car. Willie and Susan were both very angry but there was nothing they could do... except go back to work and start over again.

Susan's older brother Calvin had also worked at the factory for varying lengths of time. He was not married and at 24 was still living at home. He spent much of his time with friends, many of whom were not working but he was pretty regular about attending work. He would generally give about $30 in cash out of his check to his mother which helped her with household expenditures though there were no formal arrangements. Often he would take one of the small children of another married brother and buy them a meal or some new clothes if he had the money. At times he would eat at home but more often would eat uptown or at the house of another friend or relative. He had been reprimanded and even terminated on occasion for coming to work while intoxicated but this was rare and generally he did not drink too much unless it was a weekend. Though he did not like the factory, he felt it was important to work and since he had quit school after tenth grade, he didn't feel he could apply for many better jobs. He felt particularly uncomfortable around Whites, had little use for the managers, the general manager in particular, but kept it all to himself. Though he loved his family, nearly all of his aunts and uncles were very heavy drinkers and were rarely employed, somehow managing to eke out a living on GA (General Assistance payments), a small amount of oil royalty money and occasional
short periods of work. He bought them food often after he got a paycheck and spent a lot of time with them but he kept working. He said he did not want to end up in "Detox" (the alcoholism treatment center) as one of his uncles recently had. That winter was very hard for him and the family since his father lost his job at the Tribal Building when funds for the office were terminated in the Department of Education. Last Friday when he came home from the bank after cashing his check, his sister asked for some money so she could get gas to go to Wolf Point. On his way home, his father asked him to save the family television he had had to pawn. He made no promises but gave his father ten dollars from the amount which he had divided and distributed in three of his pockets and in his boot. His mother asked for nothing but he gave her $40 as he knew she was providing most of the groceries for several grandchildren as well as having other expenses. He was glad to be able to help out but within a day he was almost broke and people were still looking to him for help. He tried to refuse but they accused him of being stingy so at last he broke down and gave away the rest of his pay. He was angry and frustrated at so many demands and went downtown returning home many hours and many beers later. The next morning, he woke up only half sober, confused, depressed and angry with himself, his family and the impossibility of his efforts. Slowly he pulled on his clothes and began to get ready for work. He father was relaxing on the couch and said "you'd better hurry up or you'll be late for work." Suddenly something snapped and he shouted back, "Why should I work, when all anybody else does around here is sit around." He stomped out of the house and went downtown, not returning home for three days. When he did, nothing further was said about the incident and no one blamed him for not going to work. A week later he went back to the factory and applied for work.

Not everyone quit over family problems. One man quit after oil was discovered on his land. A number of people quit A & S in the earlier days because of respiratory problems caused by the chemicals which were used to protect the nets from rot in humid environments. Stories of the bad effects of these chemicals which tended to dry the nasal pasages and could cause bleeding, were common among people who did not work at the factory and persisted long after a new and highly efficient air circulation system was installed to alleviate the problem. It is notable though that in these and other instances, people quit working
for a complex set of reasons, most of which were outside of the control of the management of the factory.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that instances of quitting are usually not the result of having enough money and quitting to enjoy spending it as is so often imagined by most non-Indians on the reservation. While this may happen, particularly at the time of the summer celebrations which are times of great festivity, very often people quit under quite the opposite circumstances; in response to some crisis which is often not only beyond the control of the factory but beyond the control of the individual himself. These crises demand his attention and put him under such strain that he quits in rebellion against the situation or simply gives up the struggle for a while.

Joking With The Big Bosses

The factory workers are isolated from interaction with the non-Indian general managers in a formal sense. There is a clear chain of command which inserts the Indian managers between the work force and the top managers. This isolation is reinforced by the physical arrangements as well. The non-Indian managers are isolated away from the production areas so that even on those occasions when workers enter the management area for some purpose, they will go to the area where the Indian managers are located which is apart from the main management area.

In spite of this structural and physical isolation, there is fairly frequent interaction between workers and the non-Indian managers. The non-Indian managers make fairly frequent visits to the productions areas and will stroll through the plant from time to time chatting with various
workers. In addition, there are occasional "pep talks" during the lunch hour or occasionally over the public address system. A & S holds occasional picnics or parties for all factory personnel and their families where there is a relaxed atmosphere. In all of these activities a pattern of interaction has developed which characterizes the interaction between the non-Indian managers and the workers. There is an easy banter characterized by joking and mild teasing between workers and the non-Indian managers. While some of the production workers do not take an active part in this banter and remain largely uncommunicative to the non-Indian managers, most take some part in the joking and a substantial number related that they enjoyed these interchanges which they felt made the factory a more pleasant place to work. The same easy joking relationship does not exist however between workers and Indian managers in any comparable degree. Neither are there frequent joking interactions between Indian and non-Indian managers.

Figure 3

RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FACTORY

Board of Directors

-- extreme respect & avoidance --

White Managers

formal

Indian Managers

joking

formal

Production Workers

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This pattern of interaction between workers and non-Indian managers exhibits the characteristics of joking relationships as described by Radcliffe-Brown in his classic articles on the subject (1940). He advances the argument that joking relationships "are modes of organising a definite and stable system of social behavior in which conjunctive and disjunctive components, as I have called them, are maintained and combined" and cites the conjunction and disjunction of kinship and age between children and grandparents as one among several examples. Another is the relationship between a child and mother's brother in patrilineal societies where he states:

A person's most important duties and rights attach him to his paternal relatives, living and dead. It is to his patrilineal lineage or clan that he belongs. For the members of his mother's lineage he is an outsider, though one in whom they have a very special and tender interest. Thus here again there is a relation in which there is both attachment, or conjunction, and separation, or disjunction, between the two persons concerned. (Radcliffe-Brown 1940: 200)

There is a similar combination of conjunctive and disjunctive components in the pattern of social behavior that exists between the general manager and the workers. Because of the administrative structuring of the plant he does not himself exercise direct authority over the workers or engage in disciplinary activities which are the province of the Indian managers under the provisions of the manual of policies and procedures. Thus, the relationship of the workers to the General Manager does not have the characteristics one would expect of a contractual relationship which is usually specific and definite but rather is a joking relationship which is symmetrical to a large degree in that either party can initiate the banter and neither is forced to
bear it without response. For the General Managers there is the conjunction of common membership in the plant and a need for there to be an allegiance and sense of belonging among the staff which is maintained alongside the fact that the General Managers are members of the White community who are not actually employed by the factory of the tribes, but by outside corporations located in the non-Indian world and to which their primary business and personal affiliation belongs.

Perhaps even more important for the White managers is the combination of sincere interest with cultural misunderstanding. On the one hand, the non-Indian managers show a degree of interest and compassionate concern for the Indian workers as people, not merely as tools of production and believe that with proper management and training, they will eventually take over and run a profitable operation. On the other hand, there is a great cultural barrier that impedes the development of deep understanding which manifests itself in the belief of the managers that the Indians are the ones who have to change and "get on the damned treadmill". That barrier is reinforced by their aloofness from social interaction outside of the factory in anything other than middle class non-Indian terms. One manager described this aloofness from Indian community life in this way.

"No, I don't go where most of the Indians go. If I want a drink, I'm going to go to a place where I like the atmosphere, a nice quiet lounge. I'm not a racist in my own opinion. If an Indian wants to come in and behave in a respectable manner, that's just fine with me. I say, 'you are welcome where I am...but I am not coming where you are.'"

For the workers, these conjunctive and disjunctive elements also exist though they tend to have a slightly different meaning for the Indian workers. The "big bosses" often give encouragement in the form
of visits to the working floor or pep talks at other times as well as hosting occasional picnics and feasts. All of these do have an effect upon the Indian workers for whom feast giving is a particularly important way of creating a social bond. At the same time, there is a lot of ambivalence since people know that underneath it all, the general managers are responsible for the policies and procedures and could make exceptions if they wished, even though the Indian managers bear the brunt of these conflicts and exercise direct authority over the workers. There is also a degree of resentment at having non-Indian top management in spite of the concurrent feeling in many that it is necessary. Just as the jokes between grandchildren and grandparents may make a "pretence at ignoring the difference between the grandparent and grandchild", (Radcliffe-Brown 1940: 200) the jokes between Indian workers and non-Indian managers frequently make a pretense at ignoring the fact that they live in two different social and cultural worlds as well as the superordinate subordinate relationship. The workers always address managers by first name and may jokingly ask one if he is going to go out drinking tonight as if they were all going to go together which of course never happens.

Eggen suggests that for the Cheyenne and Arapaho, the joking relationship is strongest when there is need to defuse a situation where conflict is inevitable and notes the widespread distribution of this method of neutralizing built-in social tension among the Plains tribes (1955:77-81). Such relationships are familiar to both the Assiniboine and the Sioux so it is not surprising that it has developed in this situation where there is a social necessity to provide a mechanism to divert a virtually unavoidable conflict in a way that the order of the
group can be maintained. There appears to be an additional element however. Radcliffe-Brown goes on to note that "teasing is always a compound of friendliness and antagonism." (1940: 208) This was clearly so in this situation. There was one non-Indian manager who was very unhappy on the reservation, and by his own admission as well as the observations of others, has a great deal of difficulty in social relationships. He had no friendly relationships with the Indian workforce and they had no real joking relationship with him. While he had frequent personal conflicts, some Indian employees privately expressed sympathy and understanding for his social difficulties. I did not observe them joking with him however and this situation served to increase his alienation. He eventually was able to get another position and left the reservation.

It is interesting to contrast the features of the joking relationship with those of a true contractual arrangement. Radcliffe-Brown states:

"(contractual relations) are specific jural relations entered into by two persons or two groups, in which either party has definite positive obligations towards the other, and failure to carry out the obligations is subject to a legal sanction."

"The joking relationship is in some ways the exact opposite of a contractual relation. Instead of specific duties to be fulfilled there is privileged disrespect and freedom or even licence, and the only obligation is not to take offence at the disrespect so long as it is kept within certain bounds....Any default in the relationship is like a breach of the rules of etiquette; the person concerned is regarded as not knowing how to behave himself.

"In a true contractual relationship the two parties are conjoined by a definite common interest in reference to which each of them accepts specific obligations."

By way of contrast:
"in the joking relationship and in some avoidance relationships, such as that between a man and his wife's mother, one basic determinant is that the social structure separates them in such a way as to make many of their interests divergent, so that conflict or hostility might result. The alliance by extreme respect, by partial or complete avoidance, prevents such conflict but keeps the parties conjoined. The alliance by joking does the same thing in a different way." (1940:207)

There is little in the way of direct and specific obligations between the factory workers and the "big bosses" and the joking relationship covers this lack of agreement. The Indian workers know that the managers are trying to break up the traditional pattern of relationships between members of the Indian community and that they would have no association were it not for the factory, but they joke as if the managers were part of the community. The manager knows that many of the Indian employees take his policies very lightly and will try and get around them in all sorts of ways. He knows that many will quit when they please, and in spite of all his attempts to impose sanctions, they will come back pretty much when they please and will be hired since he needs workers. Yet he walks through the plant, acting and joking as if none of that struggle to gain compliance existed. Of course, the non-Indian managers are not subject to many sanctions from either the individuals or institutions in the Indian community and there are relatively few sanctions which the factory can effectively impose upon the workers, a fact that is lamented particularly by the Indian managers. Furthermore, the non-Indian managers have placed themselves apart from this matter of sanctions and look upon worker absenteeism, turnover and other disapproved behavior as the actions of people who do not know how to act properly, a breach of proper business etiquette by people who either do not know better or lack the training rather than
as a real violation of contract. Indeed, the actions of the non-Indian managers are something like those of grandparents as they see Indian workers not as immoral or in violation of contract but as basically good workers who are undisciplined, not yet socialized but gradually growing up with proper training. Like a grandparent who never has a cross word with the child but will put pressure on the child's parents if the behavior is too undisciplined, so the General Manager will not chastise a worker directly but will put pressure upon the Indian managers to bring matters under control. Significantly, there is not a joking relationship between non-Indian managers and Indian managers whose relationships, while not unfriendly, are much more formal and businesslike and in which the hierarchical relationships are apparent.

In reality, the interests of Indian workers and non-Indian workers are so divergent that there is a constant potential for conflict. Patterns of quitting are one manifestation of how this conflict asserts itself. Very often, the conflict is so great that no relationship is ever really established. This shows up in the response of some of the Indian workers to the efforts of the managers to train the work force in "good work habits". A general manager reports:

"I hold frequent pep talks with the workers. I tell them that this is your factory, not a welfare program. I try to get them to understand the management philosophy. I tell them that we have a choice. Either we get the product out at a competitive price or we close the doors.

"Some say 'white honky' and walk out. Others get the point and stay."

Those who "get the point" are the ones who develop a joking relationship with the manager and are the ones most likely to become..."
fairly permanent employees.

It is interesting to contrast this joking relationship briefly with two other patterns of relationships. First, there is the relationship between the non-Indian managers and the tribal authorities which has already been discussed. This relationship has the same potential for conflict but in this case, the mechanism that prevents conflict and keeps the parties conjoined is not the joking relationship but formal expressions of extreme respect and a high degree of avoidance. Second, in other kinds of Tribal programs such as housing, manpower training, law and order and the alcoholism program, employees are under the direct control of a supervisor or program director and all of these are accountable to the Tribal Board, particularly the Tribal Chairman, much as the Indian managers are accountable to the General Manager in the factory. Though the Tribal Chairman is at least one level removed from the workers in Tribal programs, he and the Board, unlike the top management in the factory, can and do intervene directly and the workers do not hesitate to appeal to them directly with grievances. When the Tribal Chairman enters an office or other workplace, there is no joking whatsoever and employees are tense, respectful and eager to create a good impression. This is the case whether the individual involved likes or dislikes the Chairman and there is nothing of the "privileged disrespect" that workers are free to show to the White factory managers. The Tribal Chairman might call a low level employee of one of the Tribal Programs directly into his office to answer for some misbehavior on the job rather than calling the department head. In such a case, the employee could generally save his
job by demonstrating proper respect and expressing willingness to change his behavior. There were instances where the miscreant would respond to the Chairman by trying to make a joke out of the situation. This reaction was viewed with great distaste by the Chairman and the person who joked would almost inevitably lose his job. It was as if this joking involved more than a mere breach of the rules of etiquette. Rather it seems to be interpreted as a confirmation that the person had not only made mistakes on the job but had made a willful breach of contract. In the factory, on the other hand, true relationships of contract are in effect ruled out between non-Indian managers and workers. The existence of deep cultural misunderstandings resulting from the combination of what Braroe (1975:176-85) calls a dual moral universe and pluralistic ignorance makes specific jural relationships between White managers and Indian workers with definite positive obligations for both parties a virtual impossibility.

The dominant modalities of behavior in the factories then, all relate in some way to the tension that derives from the attempt to run a factory according to the depersonalized, highly rationalized principles of maximization of productivity and profit which forms the cultural framework in which the American economy is structured within a reservation community which is highly ambivalent in its feelings and its relationship to that cultural framework and the institutions in which it is embodied. The logic of employing non-Indian managers with a good deal of independence from the Tribal Board, the strain resulting from the management strategy, the rigid policies and procedures, the patterns of quitting and absenteeism and the joking relationship
between workers and non-Indian managers are all manifestations of this ambivalence in one way or another. In response to over a century of tremendous upheavals not only in the economic sphere but in all spheres of life, the Indian community of Fort Peck has been trying to re-establish a more solid foothold that will provide for a life that satisfies cognitive, emotional and physical requirements and aspirations. Consciously, at least, it is to the physical, material needs and aspirations that the factory makes the most direct appeal. Though there are many reasons for which people either like or dislike the factories, one of the major attractions comes from the perception on the part of workers that it is "an easy place to make a lot of money". yet questions remain. To what extent is the factory succeeding in effecting either a specific or a general socialization that would alter the cognitive and emotional outlook of workers in relation to work and material things generally? Are they getting hooked? Are they getting on the "damned" treadmill? From what has happened in the factory, we can only say that there is evidence of some change within the environment of the factory itself, but one wonders how long it would last if removed from the unrelenting eye of the non-Indian managers and their rule book. More importantly, to what degree are there effects in the rest of life which occur outside the factory? Are there other signs of such a change? Is there any lessening of the pluralistic ignorance, or to use Gearing's term, the mutual estrangement\(^1\), that

\(^1\)Pluralistic ignorance and mutual estrangement are terms used by Braroe (1975) and Gearing (1970) respectively to describe the relations between Indian communities (the Canadian Cree and the Fox) and their White neighbors. They arrived at remarkably similar conclusions about many fundamental qualities of this relationship using

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exists between the Indian and non-Indian communities as a result of factory experience? In order to better answer these questions, let us turn to an examination of some of the non-work behavior patterns that might be occurring as a result of the factories as well as looking at how these behaviors are interpreted and understood by Indians and reservation Whites.

widely separated and dissimilar tribes and different styles of ethnography and analysis. Many of the same attributes of Indian-White relations are apparent at Fort Peck which is not far removed either geographically or culturally from the Short Grass reserve described by Braroe.
An analysis of the impact and effects of the factories on the reservation community would be incomplete without some examination of their effects upon the lives of people apart from the time they actually spend in the factory environment. This is a complex and difficult task that would, if one wished to pursue its ramifications to any length, require a full length ethnography and necessitate the description of many other aspects of social, economic and political life on the reservation. Since such an exposition is beyond the scope of this work, I will confine the discussion of this chapter to the more direct and salient aspects of the question which can be identified.

In order to properly assess the impact of the factories, of course it was necessary to ascertain the character of the community to be affected. This proved to be a large part of the research process although only a small and highly distilled fragment of that work will be presented here. Interviews were conducted with numerous Tribal and BIA officials, area businessmen, and persons who had no direct relationship to the factories as well as present and former employees. A great
deal of effort was put into trying to become intimately familiar with some typical families who have members working in the factories with a particular interest in use of economic resources, budgeting, planning and distribution of income in an effort to determine whether the factory experience was causing changes in these patterns. Anyone who has tried to conduct similar research will likely not be surprised that this proved to be an exceptionally difficult task. There are choices to be made and each has its own set of compromises. In order to get a real picture of how economic resources are used within a family, one has to practically live with them since there is generally no record keeping whatsoever and people cannot accurately tell you how much or in what ways they have allocated economic resources over a period of time. The only way to establish this is through intimate association over a considerable period of time and there are limits and dangers in generalizing from this kind of microscopic observation.

In addition, it is important to distinguish perceptions of the effects of the factories that are held by various elements of the community from observable behavioral changes that might have come about due to the socializing or acculturating effects of the factory experience since there are considerable discrepancies here which are in themselves meaningful and illuminating.

Non-Indian perceptions.

There is considerable uniformity in the perception of non-Indians about the effects of the factories whether they are connected to the industries or not. They are in agreement that the factories have had a positive, beneficial impact upon the community though they have difficulty
in giving a great deal of precise content to support the opinion. This is largely due to the fact that there is astonishingly little real interaction between Indians and non-Indians on the reservation and a great deal of mutual ignorance. Upon my first visit to one of the factories, a non-Indian manager gestured expansively toward the parking lot and said, "Did you see the number of new cars that are in the parking lot? There are very few that are more than one or two years old, and there aren't many compacts either." This was the most concrete change that could be clearly documented since there were many fewer new cars when the factories opened. As I moved amongst the non-Indian community on the reservation, this was an observation that I was to hear over and over again. The factories had a positive effect and created a better life which was demonstrated by the fact that there were more new cars. Not only was it generally the first thing mentioned in response to questions about the effects of the factories, it proved to be just about the only thing that could actually be pointed to and documented by non-Indians.\(^2\) This is not to say that there were not other perceptions commonly held by non-Indians about the effects of the factories, but only that these perceptions could not be documented and many proved to be demonstrably erroneous. For example, it was frequently stated that Indian workers were beginning to change the ways in which they used money, to establish credit, buy on time, and were generally beginning to "join the dominant society" as

\[^2\]It should be noted that there were also more new cars around the Tribal Building, the BIA and elsewhere as well. New cars were often attributed to the factory income and this is certainly true for many factory workers but there have been other significant sources of increased income to buy new cars in recent years.
they became accustomed to "the having some of the finer things in life." It is believed that the people who are becoming accustomed to working in the factories are beginning to establish bank accounts and other practices which in non-Indian eyes are signs of financial responsibility. A bank officer in Poplar told me that he felt this was the case and pointed out that there was a long line of workers from the factory at the bank each week after payday and that he felt the number of Indian accounts was increasing though he could not provide any figures in support of this impression. An actual survey in the larger of the two factories gave a rather different picture. There were a number of individuals who had savings accounts with the bank however this is not particularly unusual. Savings accounts are quite common, especially among women who are often saving over extended periods for memorial feasts, giveaways and other things which demand that one accumulate money over a period of time. A savings account is one way of hiding away an amount of money when one feels that too many demands are being made by members of one's family. Sometimes this would become a rather humorous game of hide and seek and in some cases, women told me that they kept multiple savings accounts so that even if their savings in one were discovered, they could still maintain the majority of their savings. It is possible that there were greater amounts being deposited in savings because of the increase in general income from the factories but I could detect no particular change in this respect and there was no evidence whatsoever that factory workers were more likely to have savings accounts than others. What was particularly striking in view of the non-Indian perceptions, including those of the
bank officer, was that there were only two people among more than 100 Indians employed at A & S that had checking accounts so far as I could determine. One of these was one of the Indian managers and he had maintained a checking account before he began working for A & S. The line-up of factory employees at the bank on payday was largely due to the fact that it was the easiest place to cash a payroll check and the majority of those who made a weekly trip to the bank did not have accounts there. I could not determine if there was an increased use of the bank by other segments of the Indian community in recent years but it was clear that there has been little substantive change in the habits of those people employed by the industries.

Actually, this is not surprising in view of the other barriers that make it difficult for an Indian to establish credit or use a checking account. The one manager who had a checking account said that it was three years before he could get his checks accepted in Poplar in spite of the fact that he grew up there, was well known, from a respectable family and even had a non-Indian parent. I was told that one of the managers had previously had a checking account but had gotten rid of it. According to his account, he had a disagreement with a local business-

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3 It should be noted that a majority of the banking type of services needed by the Indian community are still provided by the BIA. The BIA acts as trustee for most Indian land as well as a depository and dispersal agent for other monetary assets and people who own income generating property can often use it as collateral to obtain a loan from the BIA. People may not immediately claim royalties or lease income and in effect use the BIA for a savings account although they cannot make deposits or have checking accounts. The Tribes also make loans at times. Neither of these sources are of any great significance to this discussion. There is not evidence of any significant interaction between these activities and the factories generally. BIA and Tribal loans are generally less available to those who are not close to the political center, which the employees of the factory are not.

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man about a service rendered and was holding up payment of the bill until he received satisfaction. He reports that this businessman went to the bank and was able to convince the bank to give him the money from the Indian manager's checking account without his knowledge or consent. This incident combined with the mistrust that is expressed to virtually any Indian who wishes to write a check to convince him that the checking account was not only inconvenient but an unsafe place in which to keep his money as well. Although the bank's reported actions were patently illegal, there was little, in practical terms, that an Indian could do under the circumstances.

Whites tend to interpret savings accounts as a change from traditional practices and the adoption of a more future oriented and responsible outlook toward money which they feel is greatly lacking among Indian people. This too is an erroneous conception. First of all, Indian people on the reservation do a great deal of economic planning and saving. One needs to look no further than the elaborate ceremonial, celebrations and memorials that are commonplace in the Indian community, virtually all of which involve a year or more of saving and preparation. While a good deal of this "expense" involves the exchange of blankets, quilts, shawls and headdresses which tend to circulate within the community, there are large monetary outlays for food which is given in large quantities at all such gatherings. Furthermore, money itself has become one of the most important giveaway items at Fort Peck Reservation and every large giveaway contained sizable quantities of goods which were specifically purchased for the event apart from the hand made quilts and shawls. I could find little
tendency however to save simply for the virtue of saving, for purposes of thrift or to set aside something for a rainy day. Rather, people would save for specific purposes, be it a ritual obligation or down payment upon a new pickup truck. To do otherwise was to invite criticism since anyone who saved money just to be saving it was condemned as stingy and in violation of the moral norms of sharing which are extremely important in spite of the fact that people frequently make efforts to circumvent the obligation to share. Thus, it becomes clear that the mere presence of savings accounts says little about any kind of acculturation or socialization into the norms of western economic logic since they fit nicely into the traditional pattern of Indian community life. The use of checking accounts would seem to be a much more substantial indicator but, as we have seen, they have not come into any increased usage as a result of the factories operating on the reservation. Further evidence lies in the fact that there is little that is bought on credit except automobiles and major appliances, all of which are secured loans which are backed by substantial down payments. It is clear that the White perception of the effects of the factories are heavily colored by preconceived notions about the Indian community. Like the White neighbors of the Fox who were described so insightfully by Gearing (1970), White residents of the reservation believe the Indian kinship based community is soon to disappear and view such an eventuality as highly desirable. In fact, there is a strong organized group of reservation Whites who go so far as to claim that neither the Tribes nor the reservation have any legal right to existence and should be dismantled forthwith. While many
reservation Whites find this group to be embarrassingly racist, there are many sympathizers beyond the membership who feel that the Indian kinship community must be dismantled "for its own good" and often see signs of its imminent demise.

Outside of those non-Indian managers who are directly involved with the factories, who characterize the Indian workers as highly productive, there is a persistent White stereotype of Indians as lazy and undependable workers. Since work in the factory limits even further the interaction of Indians and Whites in the workplace, it is not surprising that this perception persists and that local Whites generally imagine that the factories are something less than really efficient plants capable of operating on anything like a competitive basis. In spite of these attitudes however, the non-Indian community is generally charitable in relation to the factories and with little wonder. The factories not only provide substantial amounts of income which support the non-Indian owned business sector but they also provide an economic outlet for Indians apart from the main source of wealth in the local economy, that is agricultural land, and help to maintain the status quo in a community where non-Indians work something in excess of eighty percent of the reservation land.

Indian Perceptions.

Indian perceptions of the effects of the factories on the community, in contrast to those of reservation Whites, are much less uniform and of a very different character. In general, Indians were more reserved in their evaluation of the factories, their effects, their importance and their desirability. Interestingly, while Whites
tended to stress the effects of the factories upon the behavior patterns of people, Indians tended much more to evaluate the impact of the factories in almost purely economic terms. As a whole, Indians felt that the primary effect was in creating jobs and income for a while.

Many people in the Indian community were also skeptical about the long term prospects. Non-Indians envisioned a day when people would become truly permanent employees of the factories and would look forward to retirement at the end of so many years. I never heard any similar references to the factories on the part of Indians. Upon inquiry, I reached the conclusion that the absence of any reference to retirement by Indians is not primarily attributable to indifference or lack of concern about the future as Whites are prone to allege. Rather, the Indian community, out of long and painful experience, has learned to evaluate all such "economic development" programs, the factories included, in light of the old Assiniboine proverb "Everything changes" which was often quoted to me. This proverb is especially applicable in the experience of the Indian community at Fort Peck to virtually all programs and means of gaining a livelihood which are tied to the non-Indian society. The Indian community is acutely aware of the fact that the largest government in the world does not plan more than one year in advance. From the vantage point of the reservation community, jobs, programs, factories, and even government agencies, are rather ephemeral and passing phenomena which one must take advantage of while they exist, but upon which one must not pin future hopes and plans. The more skeptical individuals view the factories as nothing
more than a temporary and passing phenomenon which provides no real security for the future. Even the most optimistic Indian supporters of the factories can manage little more than a wait-and-see attitude about the long term viability of the factories. This attitude is, from an analytical economic perspective, much more realistic than the blithe optimism of many Whites.

Nowhere in Indian perceptions were the factories associated with culture change. This is not because there is no sense that a process of culture change is taking place but, rather, because the factories are simply not viewed as a particularly relevant factor. Of course, the term "culture" carries a great range of meaning in popular usage on the reservation but in Indian usage one can quite safely say that in addition to whatever other semantic range it may have in a particular context, it virtually always connotes the maintenance of a distinct ethnic identity as people with a way of life that is distinctive. While non-Indians associate the factories with giving up these things, Indians tend to associate the factories with the maintenance and reinforcement of Indian culture. In the view of most members of the Indian community, poverty along with economic and political helplessness has the greatest corrosive effect upon Indian culture along with some of the unfortunate acquisitions from the non-Indian society such as alcohol which strains family relationships and worsens an already difficult economic situation. Habits and behavior patterns acquired in relationship to the jobs are viewed as specific to the job itself and largely incidental to other areas of life.

The relative prestige of factory work relative to other kinds of
employment available in the Indian community has already been mentioned. The relatively low status of factory employment correlates with the general assessment that the existence of the factories on the reservation is of limited importance and impact. While it is common for non-Indians to view much of the work in tribal programs and government service as something of a joke, part of federal "giveaway" programs and little better than welfare, the general perception in Indian eyes is that these are the areas with real potential to effect change and alter the future for the Indian people while the factories are viewed much more as a temporary stopgap, a shot in the arm for the most economically depressed part of the community. In spite of the fact that factory work can provide a fairly good income and one that may be more stable there than in much of the government and tribal employment, it does not provide role models which the Indian community seeks to emulate.

In pre-reservation times, neither the Sioux nor the Assiniboine had positions which would invest individuals with a great deal of authority over others. A leader would have to gain compliance through consensus or force of personality rather than coercion (Lowie 1909:35; Rodnick 1937:412; Dorsey 1893:221-223; Hodge 1907:378). This defiance of strong expressions of authority is still a common characteristic and may explain in part why there is a strong preference among the Indian residents of Fort Peck for white collar and professional jobs which require less deference. The leadership in the Indian community is much more pre-occupied with gaining control over Indian lands and resources on the reservation which involves a change in the status quo.
and an inevitable confrontation with some of the dominant interests of non-Indians on the reservation. Whites tend to see Indian culture as a barrier to be overcome while Indians feel it is a vital strength. This is not to say that lack of economic opportunity is considered to be the only problem facing the Indian community. There is a sense among many Indian people on the reservation that there is a need for a much greater degree of moral strength and discipline and it is this feeling that makes many non-Indian criticisms particularly stinging. The difference lies to a considerable degree however in the fact that moral weakness and lack of discipline are associated with Indianness in non-Indian eyes while in the minds of many Indians, they are associated not with Indianness but quite to the contrary, with the loss and weakening of Indian values and identity.

In the face of the paradoxical evaluations of the effects of the factories upon the community by the Indian and non-Indian segments of the population, it is not easy to arrive at unequivocal conclusions. While there is not much empirical behavioral evidence to support non-Indian conclusions and that which there is can be interpreted in different ways, it is also true that there may well be effects which have begun to accumulate and which pass unnoticed by the Indian community. Because the factories are largely outside of tribal political control, they tend to be ignored by the Tribal leadership. This could lead to a tendency on the part of tribal leaders and those who are politically active to overlook and perhaps underestimate the effects that the factories might have upon social behavior outside of the factory environment.
A few observations are possible during the period since factories have been established on the reservation. There has been a corresponding decline in the numbers of Indians employed by non-Indian farmers and other businessmen on the reservation. The net effect (not all of which can be attributed to the factories) is that there has been a decrease in the amount of Indian-White interaction in the work environment. What little interaction occurs in the factories is so highly structured and formalized that it makes relatively little contribution to inter-ethnic integration in the community. At the same time, the persistent application of policy and the operation of the factories in a systematic directed fashion rather than in the reactive, crisis oriented fashion of the majority of reservation programs seems to be having some effects which are substantial even though they may be difficult to quantify precisely. The daily repetition of certain regular patterns of interaction will certainly have an effect upon how people see themselves as individuals and in relation to one another. The factories have also made persistent efforts to try and have the work roles which they assign become of more general importance in the social identification of the employees. Every week, the Poplar paper contained a large section sponsored by A & S Industries. It contained photographs of individual workers in the plant identifying them by name and job title. Oftentimes there would also be a bit of news or a famous quotation that reinforced the value of work or some other aspect of the industry. The publicity was intended to increase a worker's sense of identification with the factory and was an attempt to increase the pride that people take in their positions.
These display ads are also aimed at increasing the general status of the factory and its employees in the community. They inform the rest of the community that these people have places in the role structure of the factory and encourage people who are not associated with the factory to associate these individuals with their roles as factory workers within the broader community life. The persistent use of this technique along with sponsorship of an annual basketball tournament and other identity-shaping activities that have been described previously, build symbolic ties with the factory and have succeeded in winning a fair measure of allegiance from at least some of the employees. The effect of these may eventually be reflected in lower rates of employee turnover.

There is another quality which is clearly observable but which is also unquantifiable. Among a great many of the factory workers, there is a strong sense of self-confidence and assurance that they know what they are doing. Work in the factories provides an opportunity to establish some feeling of accomplishment free of rationalization. This is important in a community where boasting expressions of self-confidence are common but which are often a veneer to hide fear and self-doubt. The confidence that is evident in the factory is of a different variety. It does not consist of boasting; in fact I can recall no one ever boasting about work abilities, but it is a quiet confidence that is the natural attribute of people who know what they are doing. The technical skills involved are not highly complex but the workers know that they have mastered them and that they have a specialized ability that is needed and which others, even the managers, do not have. Thus, they do not approach the work with reticence or timidity but with ease.
and confidence. There are other times in reservation life when one experiences this same confidence. It is particularly evident in ceremonial gatherings, dances, celebrations, feasts, wakes, funerals and hand games. It is much less frequently observed in the work environment. Significantly, it is hardly ever observed by reservation Whites who have no part in any of these activities.

The importance of this sense of self confidence should not be underestimated. There is ample evidence that higher incomes alone are not sufficient to improve the quality of life substantially or to stimulate economic growth and self-sufficiency. Oil was discovered on the reservation in the 1950s and it brought very substantial incomes to some people in the form of oil royalties. The overall amounts have decreased in the last twenty years but there is still some exploration going on and there are some people who still receive substantial amounts of money from this source, in a few cases, several thousand dollars a month. It should not be surprising to learn that a great deal of this money produced relatively little benefit except for immediate consumption, particularly since neither the tribes nor individual land owners had any active role in the enterprise. What was striking however was the fact that absolutely everyone I questioned about the matter said that not one single person had become financially successful and established through the investment or use of oil money. Since there are a few Indian farmers on the reservation who are very successful financially and have been able to make the large capital investments that are necessary for modern agribusiness enterprises, one would imagine that oil revenues would provide a way for at least
a few fortunate tribal members to develop the agricultural resources which are Indian owned but largely developed and worked by non-Indians. According to the many people whom I questioned on the subject, there was not a single successful Indian farmer who had financed the development of his business with oil money. It was the general consensus that those who had received the most in oil revenues were oftentimes in the most straitened circumstances with shattered domestic lives and the highest rates of alcoholism as a result of their "good fortune". In fact, the only positive, substantial and lasting effect that I was able to document out of the millions of dollars in oil revenues that had been received was the initiation of the first of the large summer celebrations. The Oil Discovery Celebration, was initially sponsored by one of the oil companies but has since become one of the largest annual events in the community and has spawned a number of other similar celebrations each with its own elaborate and efficient organizational structure within the community. Clearly then, economic development in the Fort Peck community involves much more than increasing income. The confidence and sense of accomplishment that are developing in the factories may ultimately prove to be highly significant and a stimulus to strengthening and developing the shattered economic infrastructure of the Indian community of the reservation.

It appears then that the factories are having effects which are not only smaller in magnitude, but different in quality from the conceptions which are held by most non-Indians on the reservation. Effects upon

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4 I am aware of the fact that this discussion does not deal systematically with the possible effects of the factories on the non-Indian
family relationships are not pronounced and may serve to strengthen the extended family structure as much as to weaken it. Similarly, it would appear that while it is true that Indians who are enjoying higher and more predictable incomes are able to enjoy more of the "finer things in life" in ways that they define these things. There is little evidence that they are "getting on the treadmill" or "joining the dominant society," in the sense that these expressions are used by White residents of the reservation. Rather, they may be finding it more possible to assert the viability and independence of the Indian ethnic community. At the same time, it appears that the factories may well be having gradual cumulative effects which could play a significant role in the solidification of altered yet traditionally based patterns of social relationships in the Indian community, effects which are largely unrecognized within the community itself. Among those who are community of the reservation. This represents something of an oversight which may be attributed in part to the fact that neither Indians nor Whites on the reservation imagined that there would be any effects on the White community. I did no systematic investigation of this question and am therefore unsure whether empirical inquiry into this specific question would reveal much more than my retrospective speculation. Some relevant observations have already been made, for instance, the decrease in the Indian White interaction in the workplace. The White perception that more Indians are banking, while shown to be incorrect, may still prove to be an important effect upon the White community and may, along with the company advertisements and other measures, have some effect on White attitudes toward Indians. There are other interesting and important possibilities which I did not investigate. One such question which could be affected by the shift in interaction patterns over the last decade or two could be the effects of such a shift in the patterns of interracial marriage. Fairly good reports exist since the degree of Indian ancestry is a matter of great legal importance. A casual examination of these records is enough to show that interracial marriage has been quite common in the past but there has been no study of the degree to which it may be increasing or decreasing and how this might relate to shifting patterns of Indian/White interaction in the workplace.
more aware of these effects within the Indian community, there is great diversity of opinion about them which is not surprising in a community which is still struggling to redefine itself in the wake of the steamroller-like encounter with the expanding American nation and the rapid destruction of virtually all of the ways of making a living that were previously known.

In an earlier chapter, I pointed out that the joking relationship between workers and non-Indian managers served to defuse the potential conflict inherent in a situation in which conjunctive and disjunctive elements were combined in a social relationship. In a larger and more general sense, the difference between White and Indian perceptions of the effects of the factories may be an essential element in the degree of stability and mutual acceptance that they have achieved. This appears to be a situation wherein what Braroe (1975:177-87) calls pluralistic ignorance arising out of the existence of a "dual moral universe" and a high degree of social segregation between two cultural groups is essential to the maintenance of a social institution in the same sense that Wallace (1961:39-40) has shown that cognitive non-sharing is an essential component to many social relationships within a given society. Non-Indians see the factories as a way to get Indians to accept cultural values which they feel are essential to progress and development and regard Indian rejection of these values as a reactionary and irresponsible attitude to change in general in the face of the necessary, desirable and ultimately inevitable collapse of Indian culture and assimilation into White society. In the operation of the factories Whites think that they can see this process in operation.
Indians see the factory as a vehicle to help achieve greater economic power and control over their own fortunes which is highly desirable as a means to ensure the continued existence of a strong Indian community. While they are extremely sensitive to any threats to the continued collective existence of the Tribes, there is, contrary to much non-Indian perception, a positive orientation towards change which is not viewed generally as any more threatening to the existence of the fundamental values of the community than it is to the non-Indian community. (This is not to say there is no fear of change. To some degree it exists in both societies.)

The final result is a kind of fairly stable integration in which the goals of each cultural group are different but which each sees as a mechanism for achieving ends which are desirable. As long as this relationship can be maintained in some kind of equilibrium, it will exercise some effects upon both communities. As members of the Indian community achieve some of their goals and the perception of the non-Indian gradually changes, there may be an increased potential for intercultural communication and mutual acceptance though the path appears to be a thorny one beset with many pitfalls.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Fort Peck Tribes have come a long way in developing industry on the reservation and much has been achieved since the first efforts began some twenty years ago. There is now an industrial park with a rail tie and modern physical plants. From a number of unpromising beginnings, there now exist industrial enterprises which are operating relatively smoothly and profitably and constitute one of the single largest sources of employment for Indian people on the reservation. Through their various experiences, the Fort Peck Tribes have worked out a kind of structure whereby the factories are able to communicate with the business world and maintain modern production efficiency while simultaneously providing employment for members of the Indian community. This has been accomplished through the use of non-Indian top management who work to promote the economic interests of the Tribes but who enjoy a great deal of autonomy from the pressures of the social structure of the Indian community in the general conduct of their affairs. These relationships have become quite stabilized with highly formal relations between managers and the Tribal Board which are
characterized by mutual respect and an acceptance by each of the role
structures which have developed.

Internally as well, the factories have managed to carve out a
place that is recognized as a separate and distinct kind of activity
with fairly clear cut purposes within the community. In the early
days, hiring one person meant hiring his entire family in the sense
that family obligations and communication would not be suspended in
order to work and many of the decisions by both managers and workers
served social purposes at the expense of the maximization of profit
and production. In contrast, there are now many fewer interruptions
for personal reasons and relatively few particularistic decisions made
by management on the basis of personal criteria that would interfere
with the maximization of production upon which the future viability of
these factories depends to a significant degree.

The Sioux and Assiniboine of Fort Peck have been able to adapt
to many of the requirements of modern industrial production. They
have achieved high degrees of productivity and quality. There have not
been the problems in getting high productivity that were experienced in
the AMIZUNI plant described by Stoffle (1975) in the southwest. The
kinds of production that have been undertaken to date are all labor
intensive activities which can be learned through training on the job
and do not require prior technical skills but there is evidence that
the Indian labor force is quite capable of being trained for a variety
of production tasks. A stable nucleus of trained Indian managers now
exists who are increasingly able to mediate effectively between the
rationalistic non-Indian managers and the work force for whom there is
little tendency to separate economic relationships from the personal relationships in which economic activities are embedded in the Indian community of the reservation. By being outside of any important political controversies on the reservation, the factories are further isolated from a potential source of disruptive influence. While absenteeism is still a problem and turnover judged by total numbers of hirings and terminations remains high, it has been possible to compensate somewhat by overhiring at times and by the increased ability of management to sense when difficulties of this type are likely to arise. Furthermore, the turnover now tends to take place within a partially closed system in that most people who are hired are former employees who need no training and will reach profitable levels of productivity in a very short time back on the job. While this strategy falls short of the economist's ideal in that there is something less than maximum utilization of theoretical labor potential, it may be less damaging to productivity than the labor unrest and strikes that plague American industries in other areas. These patterns have stabilized to the point that there appears to be no reason to expect that the factories at Fort Peck are likely to fail due to any internal crises within the near future and from this perspective, they show signs of considerable stability. The plants presently operating have, at the time of this writing, been in operation from five to ten years, a fairly lengthy period compared to most programs on the reservation as well as in comparison to similar programs which have been described on other reservations.

A more serious challenge to the continued existence of the
factories lies in their rather fragile and dependent relationship with
the larger economic system. By producing single products from resources
which are not native to the area and which are consumed by government
agencies or large corporate entities, the actions of which can scarcely
be predicted by the reservation community and over which they exercise
no control, places the factories in a potentially precarious position.
During the period of fieldwork, one reservation industry producing
electronic subassemblies was operating at such a low level due to the
fluctuation of contracts that it was not even included for study. In
retrospect, this is regrettable since large new contracts have been
obtained in the interval between the completion of the fieldwork and
this writing and the electronics factory will again assume a more
important place. Similarly, A & S is dependent upon a single large
Defense Department contract for almost all of its work and, in spite of
its association with Brunswick, little has been achieved in its
attempts at diversification. This relationship has helped in maintain­
ing contract levels, however, and while the long range prospects are
uncertain, the future of the next few years is quite secure. Increasing
governmental pressure upon private industry to have minority involve­
ment might actually strengthen the relationship between the tribes and
Brunswick corporation so that it could end up producing some of that
corporation's products in the way that Fort Peck Manufacturing is now
serving as a link in the manufacturing chain of the ESCO Corporation.
This represents a much stronger and more stable relationship that is
much less subject to sudden or unexpected fluctuations or closure. At
this point, it would seem that the major threats to the continued
existence of the factories lies largely in factors external to the reservation economy and society.

From the time that it was decided to try and establish factories as a means of economic development on the reservation, the principal concern has been with creating and maintaining the conditions for their existence. The fundamental question, however, is the economic development of the Indian community of Fort Peck. The factories have been established, therefore, not as an end in themselves but as a vehicle to be used in reaching another goal. As a result of this, in evaluating the effects of the factories, we cannot just look to see if they have been successfully established. Rather, we must look to see to what degree they can be judged to have promoted economic development in the area.

In many ways, the development of the factories has skirted many of the fundamental problems involved in economic development for the Tribes. As a result, the overall effect upon the community has been correspondingly small. First of all, it should be noted that the Federal Government designation of Fort Peck Reservation as an Economic Redevelopment Area conveys a fundamentally misleading impression of the overall economic picture of the area. The area of Fort Peck Reservation has seen a great deal of economic development and increased utilization of its resources with substantially rising income over the last two decades completely apart from the efforts of the EDA or other government agencies. The Reservation is not an area which is particularly poor in resources or economically undeveloped. Rather, the fundamental problem is that the resources, in spite of the fact of being legally
under the ownership of Indians, are exploited in such a way that the non-Indian population of the reservation is the principal beneficiary and the Indian community remains largely on the fringe. The factories have done little to alter this basic pattern. One reason the factories have aroused little opposition, is due to the fact that they also operate to the benefit of the White residents of the reservation and are in no way in competition with them. To the same extent that the factories provide income to Indian families, they also provide increased income to the White owned business sector of the reservation. Factories have done relatively little to stimulate growth that would have a multiplicative effect economically in the Indian community. There is no associated service industry. Furthermore, the isolation of the factories from all other areas of life, both in the Indian and non-Indian communities, does not help very much in altering the basic structure of interethnic relationships which operate so strongly in the maintenance of the status quo in both the social and economic relationships of Indians and whites on the reservation. As long as the other institutional structures remain as they are, the mere fact that there are fairly stable jobs available in the factories will not result in greater Indian participation on an individual basis in banking and credit operations or in investment activities such as real estate, business or agriculture which are probably much more important indicators of real economic growth than higher figures for annual income.

The industries have succeeded in providing a means of support for a substantial number of Indian families in a relatively short period to a degree that has not really been achieved in agriculture over the last
several generations. One reason for this success is that the industries have been able to find ways to operate which do not place individuals in positions of irreconcilable conflict between the demands of the enterprise and the requirements of membership in the kinship community. One can be a successful factory worker without the tremendous pressures and accusations of stinginess that one would have to endure in order to become a successful farmer. It does not require the individual accumulation of capital and the violation of norms of sharing. In spite of all these apparent benefits however, the factories still occupy a peripheral position in the Indian community and the workers generally hold modest status in the community. This is curious in the face of the centrality of economic considerations and the concern for jobs in virtually all discussions of the problems and challenges facing the reservation community.

There are several reasons for this. The success of the industries has been achieved only through the surrender of a large degree of Indian control. While it is true that the present arrangements have achieved a measure of stability, the presence of non-Indians as top managers is a source of deep seated resentment. While tribal leaders recognize the necessity at least for the time being, few people of high status in the Indian community would care to work there. The arrangement is a source of tension, which, though it is now latent and controlled through a combination of joking and avoidance relationships, is likely to become an issue again in the future. Secondly, Indian leaders recognize that some of the same factors that made it possible to establish the factories despite their remoteness from markets and raw
materials also place long range limits upon their benefits to the Indian community. The biggest factor that enables the factories to operate profitably is the fact that they can get cheap non-union labor. While it is true in the short run that even work at substandard rates of pay will raise the standard of living in a community where such a high proportion of the population is unemployed, the factories cannot provide an avenue to achieving economic equality for the reservation community if they can only survive because they pay less than factories must pay for comparable work in other locations. They provide short term improvement but an extensive long term investment in development of this kind would only seem to ensure a future standard of living at a level below the rest of the country and definitely below their non-Indian neighbors in the area.

Little wonder then that the Indian community has not shown the same enthusiasm for the factories that their non-Indian promoters have demonstrated. There may be other more indirect and subtle benefits however. Until the present, many of the efforts of the Tribes to develop their own resources into a more solid and integrated economic basis for the life of the Indian community have been frustrated by the fact that the conditions of poverty have continually created such an atmosphere of crisis that it has been impossible to direct many energies or resources to anything but the immediate needs of the community. Standards of living have risen considerably on the reservation within the last five years and while most Tribal and BIA programs are still largely crisis oriented operations, the crises have become somewhat less acute. The existence of stable factories could be an important factor
in freeing the Tribes to concentrate more energies upon the long term development of Tribal land and resources where the real economic future and autonomy of the Sioux and Assiniboine Tribes ultimately rest.

The factories are not, as many whites suppose, causing Indians to abandon their traditional patterns of social interaction or seriously eroding the structure of the extended family. On the contrary, they alleviate some of the conditions which produce anomie, lead to despair, and are not only aggravating to Whites but disruptive and destructive of Indian values and social structure.

The factories are certainly not a panacea for economic development on Fort Peck Reservation and their ultimate importance may well be minor. Still they have exercised more influence than many other "development programs" on the reservation and may continue to do so for quite a long time. They have been able to develop in rather sheltered conditions in that they are not thrown into the local competitive economic environment which has been successfully dominated by Whites. From this experience however, new kinds of organizational arrangements have gradually emerged. Though these seem to offer only a limited future in the kind of industry that is currently being developed, there is the potential for a much greater contribution if the tribes are able to adapt and use some of the strategies which have been successfully applied in the factories in formulating new approaches to the development of the resources of the reservation itself. In any case, the study of the mutual adjustments that the factory and the Indian community have made on the Fort Peck Reservation over the last
ten years provides important new insights into the kind of flexibility that exists within the Indian community as well as the kinds of constraints under which plans for economic development must operate. The effects of the factories upon the Indian community have differed substantially from the expectations of most observers whether Indian or non-Indian and the patterns of adjustment which have stabilized over the years could scarcely have been predicted in advance. If nothing else, this should suggest to future observers and planners that it is probably unwise to try and force plans for development on the reservation into any strict preconceived pattern. Neither the preconceived notions of the Tribes nor the preconceived notions of the non-Indians involved were ultimately fulfilled by the factories. Yet when allowed to grow without excessive interference, over a period of time, they developed new, unpredicted and stable patterns whereby the demands of production and efficiency could be met while maintaining the integrity of the cultural sphere of the Indian community. There is no reason to doubt that the Fort Peck Tribes have the capacity to display this same ingenuity and adaptability in the future in other ways as they work to rebuild a sound economic basis upon which the satisfactory functioning of the social and cultural life of the community necessarily depends.
POSTSCRIPT

Much has happened to Fort Peck Reservation industry in the long interval between the fieldwork and the final submission of this thesis. One of the most significant developments is described in the following article which appeared in the Wotanin Wowapi, a newspaper published under the auspices of the Fort Peck Tribes.

August 12, 1982, was a day of celebration for the 300 employees of A & S Tribal Industries, Brunswick Corporation and more than 1,000 residents of Poplar and Wolf Point in northeastern Montana, who joined with military and government dignitaries in the dedication of the expansion of A & S facilities on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation.

Since 1975 A & S, which is totally owned by the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of Fort Peck, has been manufacturing camouflage netting. The netting is a component part of the synthetic camouflage screening system produced by the Devil's Lake Sioux Manufacturing Company at Fort Totten, North Dakota, a Brunswick joint venture, and the company's Defense Division operation at DeLand, Florida....

In 1979 efforts to find new business opportunities for A & S resulted in the selection of deepdraw aluminum medical and food chests under contract from the U.S. Army Defense Procurement Supply Center (DPSC) and the U.S. Army Defense General Supply Center (DGSC). DPSC awarded A & S a facilities contract in late 1980 to provide industrial plant equipment, which were taken from government idle inventory at an acquisition value of $466,000.

A Program That Worked

At the dedication ceremonies, which included plant tours for visitors and a barbecue for almost 1,300 guests, Norman Hollow, Chairman of A & S Industries said: "We are proof that industrialization of Indian people is possible...removing the stigma that the American Indian can accomplish results only with give-away programs."
Sid Morris, Brunswick Operations Manager for A & S, told the audience: "We began in a 40,000 square foot building consisting of six offices and a dirt parking lot. We started with 40 employees. Today we have over 300 and employment is expected to reach 400. We started with a $200,000 Small Business Administration loan and $50,000 from the Tribes. Today we have a facility worth more than $7 million and it's all paid for.

"What you're witnessing today is a success formula: private enterprise working with government, utilizing the resources of a dedicated minority people. The formula is quite simple. The implementation, however, is not so simple. It takes a lot of cooperation, planning and hard work."

H.E. Ennis, General Manager of Brunswick's Defense Division, commented: "I think it's very obvious that a good job has been done here. As a businessman, if I look at this operation purely from a financial standpoint... in 1975 sales were $1.8 million, earnings were $97,000, equity was about $300,000. In 1981 we had sales of $5.2 million, earnings of $754,000 and equity of $4.8 million.

"Now, in 1982, Sid Morris tells me we will do $9 million in sales, about $1 million in profits and have almost $6 million in equity. If you calculate that out, that's a 20% compound growth in sales and a 40% compound rate in earnings. There are very, very few companies in the whole United States that can match that record."

Into Deep-Draw Production

The U.S. Army Defense Procurement Center has awarded contracts to A & S for the manufacture of 15,000 medical supply chests at $2.2 million. In addition, the firm has received a contract from the U.S. Army Defense General Supply Center for $1.1 million for 10,000 food chests. That production will begin in January, 1983.

Spinoff Technology

Using the technology acquired from the military camouflage, A & S now manufactures and markets small camouflage nets for commercial hunting, birdwatching and photographic concealment, an outboard motor cover that looks like natural vegetation, a bow cover, face mask and a carrier for the waterfowl hunter.

The products were first introduced in 1980, and at the end of 1981 had produces sales of $263,000. A scales force has been established throughout North America Europe and in 1982, the products are mass merchandised through retail outlets in the United States and Canada. It is expected that 1982 sales will exceed $500,000. A & S is searching for additional opportunities to manufacture leisure time products to complement the successful hunting market camouflage.
The Fort Peck Industrial Park, in which A & S Tribal Industries is located, was conceived and developed by the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes. Norman Hollow, Chairman of the Fort Peck Tribal Executive Board - the governing body of the Fort Peck Reservation - has been largely responsible for the growth of the industrial park. He has devoted time and effort to establishing the belief among the tribal consistency(sic) that a higher standard of living is directly associated with increased employment opportunities. The Tribes are constantly bidding on new manufacturing contracts to expand the industry in the park.

Norman Hollow told the audience at the dedication ceremonies: "Our people have come to know the joys of gainful employment, resultant paychecks and the ability to buy necessities for the family and especially those necessities children always look forward to."

Wotanin Wowapi, October 28, 1982

At long last, A & S Industries can claim some very important and hard won victories. The fragile situation of depending upon a single product and a single contract has been very significantly buttressed so that the survival of the industry is much more certain. Not only are the commercial products now achieving enough market success to provide some important extra diversity but the factory has been able to expand into a whole new kind of technology. This is no mean achievement as the new products require sophisticated technology and large investments in equipment. The industry has been able to finance these improvements themselves and they represent not only a source of greater diversity and the security that this provides but also a move out of the low technology labor intensive activities that have characterized the earlier stages of industrial development. With these developments, Assiniboine and Sioux Industries have become one of the largest and most sophisticated industries in eastern Montana and a model for economic development programs in Native communities.
A brief visit during September 1982 revealed a number of important changes that were immediately noticeable and which should be appended to this study. Of course the expansion of the facilities was striking. A & S had added a large addition to house the giant machinery used in the aluminum fabrication process. They had also taken over the facilities which housed Fort Peck Manufacturing at the time of the study. This small operation had fallen victim to the world-wide falloff in orders for heavy equipment which has seriously affected companies like ESCO, Caterpillar and International Harvester, all of whom have had to close plants and cut back operations. In the wake of the global economic recession, the work being done at Fort Peck was moved back to Portland, Oregon where ESCO has large facilities which are operating far below capacity.

At A & S, one most striking factor was the degree of stability that has been attained. The management staff has grown larger of course but all of the key people, the general manager and all of the Indian managers have persisted and grown together. They were all involved from the beginning and, as was noted earlier, most were part of the management trainee group from the old rifle factory. This is a remarkable degree of stability by any standard and they have persisted in the face of many difficult challenges which have been described in the foregoing chapters, several of which could have paralyzed the factory if not properly managed. Their professionalism, which was considerable at the time of the fieldwork, has also grown greatly so the organization now has the capacity to take on more challenging tasks.

Another striking change was in the structuring of the relationship
of the plant to the Indian community. At the time of the fieldwork there was an elaborate system of security and rules to formally disengage the factory from the domain of kinship and community. When I returned this summer, the fence surrounding the plant was gone. I entered a remodeled office area where the old security apparatus and electric locks had been removed. In their place was an attractive modern reception area. One could now gain access to the plant directly without going through the security guard. There was still a guard at the production area but the procedure was informal. Inside, I found that the identification badges which had formerly been required for everyone were no longer to be seen. I learned that they had gradually fallen into disuse although I gathered that the rule had never been formally suspended. That, in any case, is largely beside the point. The factory as a social institution in the Fort Peck Reservation community has found a place and now that its place is established, all of the artificial boundary maintaining mechanisms are not longer necessary. The long winding road from Poplar to the factory is even in the process of being supplemented by a new more direct road with a new bridge across the Poplar River.

In sum, it appears that Assiniboine and Sioux Industries have matured. The tensions between the various actors, while still undoubtedly present in some measure, seem to have been of the creative variety and seem somewhat less threatening than they were. The relationship of the Industries with the Tribes, with its combination of Tribal Board of Directors and contracted outside management at the top level, has endured and must be considered a major factor in the success. The Tribal Chairman and other leaders had insisted on total
tribal ownership at the beginning and this has proven to be a far-sighted decision as other tribes who entered into joint ownership ventures have encountered greater difficulties. Many of the potential benefits of the Brunswick contractual relationship have been actualized in the interim since the study. The Tribal Government has been quite stable and has maintained the delicate balance necessary to manage the inevitable conflicts which the factory must generate as an Indian institution which must run according to demands of an economic system structured by White American culture. No less critical of course is the role of the Indian managers who received considerable attention in the study. Much credit is certainly also due to the General Manager who has shown dedication and ingenuity. More experiences like those at Fort Peck will be needed to show to what degree that the specific personal qualities of key individuals like the Tribal Chairman, the General Manager and the Indian managers have shaped the form and determined the success of the outcome. I have focused on structural aspects of the relationships and avoided personalities for reasons of objectivity and propriety. Still, the contributions of individuals is undoubtedly very great and I think it unusual that so many people have remained committed to the project so long.

There are two final observations. I expected to find the reservation community in very difficult circumstances due to the many cutbacks in Federal programs which have hit very hard. There was evidence of this but less than I had expected. Some of this is doubtless due to the great resiliency of the community but, in addition, the expansion of A & S has been of the greatest importance in keeping the community
from very serious suffering. Suffice it to say that the rate of turnover has dropped from 500% during the year of the study to a reported rate of less than 5% at present. The second observation concerns the non-Indian General Manager and the Native community. Much of the cultural conflict generated by the factory quite naturally centered on him for reasons which have been enumerated in some detail. At the time of the study he was very much an outsider. Though I was not able to investigate thoroughly, I suspect that this has been modified somewhat. Though the tensions remain and are likely to do so indefinitely due to the very structure of the relationships, there appears to be some additional mechanism for mediating that tension. The joking relationship was mentioned and discussed at some length. Now it appears that the next logical step is taking place. In referring to these tensions, one of the Indian managers said to me that they no longer have the same connotations of racial division that they once did. After working together for so long, they have achieved much while going through emotionally trying experiences. He reported that, as a result, though the same tensions would still arise, they had become like a family and one does not turn one's back on one's family just because there is disagreement. It is a happy paradox that even while the General Manager has largely achieved his goal of ridding the factory of the intrusions of kinship, he has in another sense, become a part of that web of kin himself. Perhaps this is the surest sign of maturity.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


