

How Resilient is the White Mountain Apache Tourism Sector?

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Introduction

The concept of resilience has recently developed into an important tendency within the tourism sector. Especially in regards to tourism impact on communities, resilience will eventually determine whether a community will survive as a tourism destination. Lew refers to community resilience as “the ability of a community to effectively respond to unanticipated changes in its situation.” (Lew, 2014)

Case Study Tourism Industry of the White Mountain Apache Tribe in Arizona

The White Mountain Apache Reservation is located in east central Arizona, south of the Mogollon Rim, and spreads over approximately 1.7 million acres (White Mountain Apache Tribe Office of Tourism, 2014). Until the arrival of U.S. troops in the late 1860's, the tribe lived in family groups and bands along waterways approximately in the area of today's reservation boundary. The original mission of these U.S. troops was to kill all Apache. However, wise leadership of the White Mountain Apache prevented the killing. Instead of giving order to fight the intruders, the leaders asked to welcome them and offered the troops a site to build a military post that was named Fort Apache in 1879 and eventually used as Boarding School. In 1891 the Fort Apache Indian Reservation was established with boundaries that extended into today's San Carlos Apache Reservation. As of today, the tribe consists of approximately 15,000 members with the Tribal Headquarters located in Whiteriver (Northern Arizona University, 2005).

The main industry for the tribe consists of tourism. To determine how resilient the tribal community is regarding this source of income, it was assumed that visitors to the reservation seized to come. This can be considered a fast change, sudden impact on Lew's Resilience Event Scale due to the tribe being a community based tourism (Lew, 2014). However, the White Mountain Apache Tribe has a varied tourism industry that includes sites as well as activities. For example, recreational sites such as the Hon Dah Casino and Sunrise Park Resort, or historic sites such as Fort Apache and the Kinishba Ruins. Activities include recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, and skiing or cultural activities such as Pow Wows and concerts at the casino. The casino is located along a major highway and is therefore connected to nearby non native settlements.

This variety in potential tourism activities attracts diverse groups to the recreational and cultural sites. For example, retirees visit the reservation during summer months to escape the heat of the metropolitan areas in the valley such as Phoenix and Tucson. Hunters constitute a large visitor community during the fall, so do families that may go camping in the summer months. Thus, it is very unlikely that all visitors to the reservation would completely stop to come at once.

Actual Resilience Issue

However, there is a more obvious change issue with the White Mountain Apache Tribe tourism that requires a resilience response. It is a decline of facilities and services that is of concern. For example, signage needs to be upgraded or improved to enable visitors to find their way to the recreational sites. Or, the deterioration of rental cabins at one of the major recreational lakes after leases for non-tribal members were discontinued.

The Seven Resilience Principles determined by the Stockholm Resilience Center could be addressed to increase tribe's tourism industry resilience (Stockholm Resilience Center, 2014). Out of the seven principles, four could be applied to improve the White Mountain Apache Tribe tourism industry resilience. First, to manage connectivity, a public transportation system could be established. Second, to manage slow variables and feedback, such as the maintenance issue, it would be necessary to maintain and improve existing structures. Third, encourage learning by improvements in education and staff training. And last, to broaden participation, entrepreneurship should be encouraged.

Conclusion

Although a complete halt in visitors may seem like a potential resilience issue, diversity in tourism population and tourism attraction may soften the sudden impact effect for the White Mountain Apache Tribe. Rather, the slow change of maintenance issues may affect tourism in the long run.

References

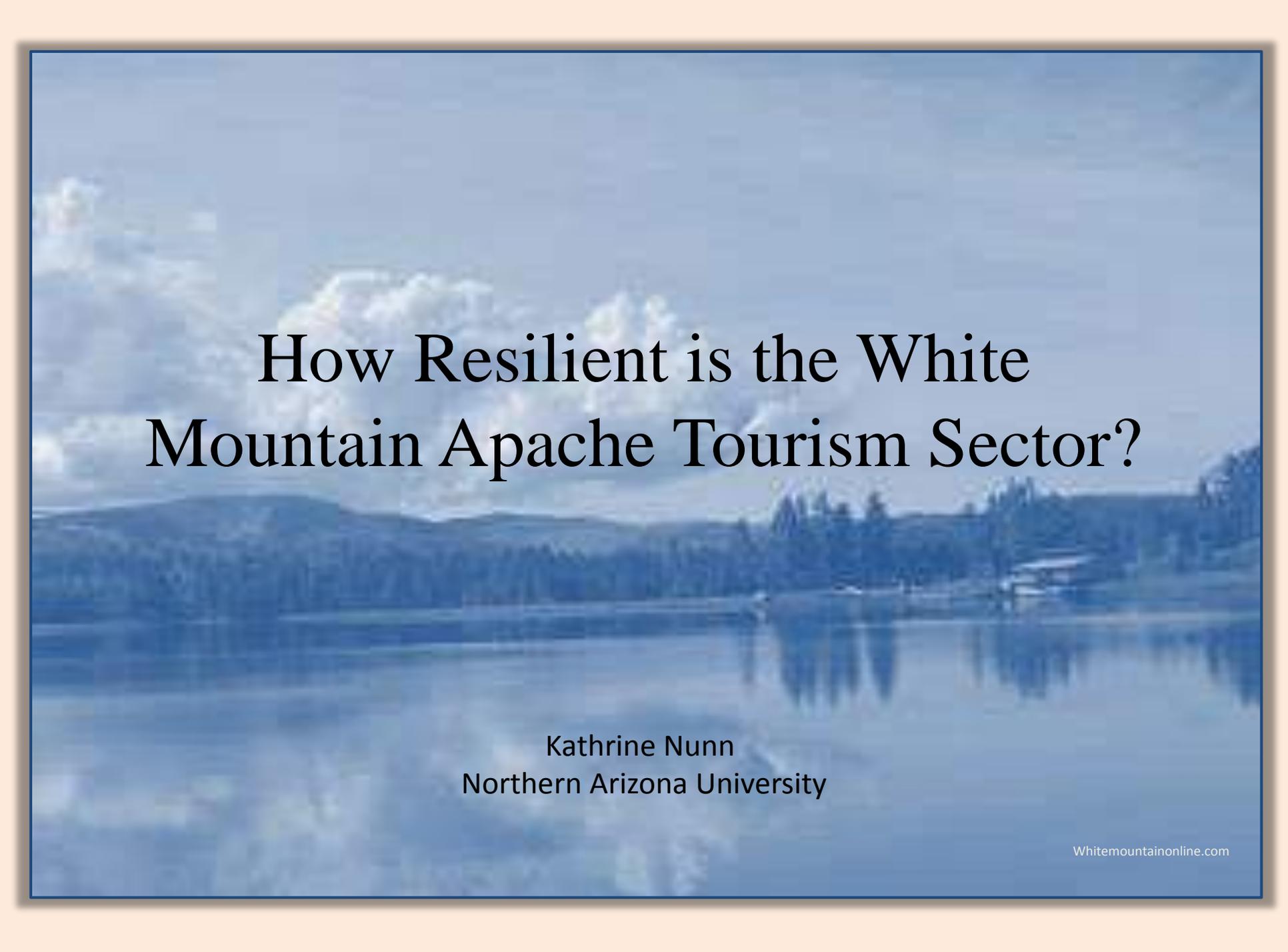
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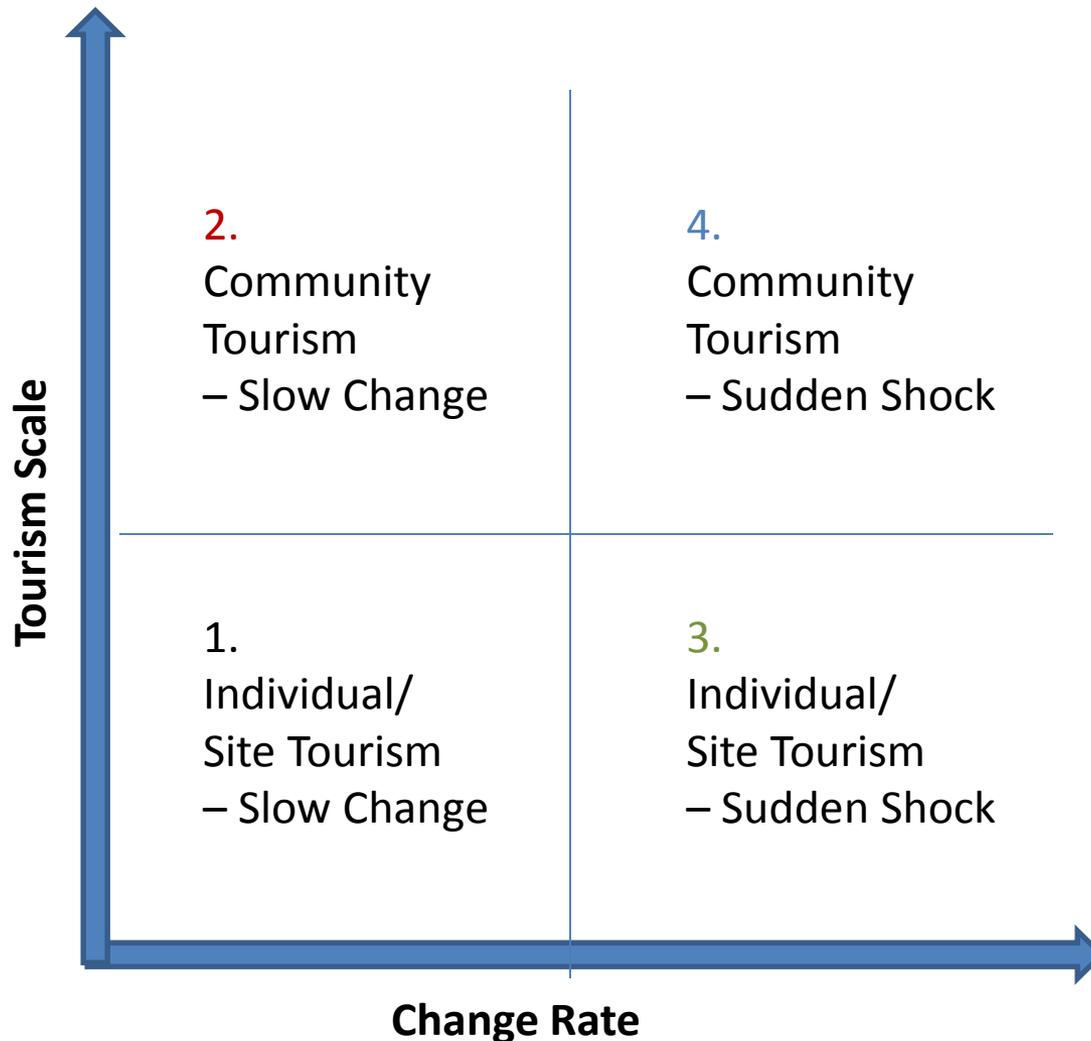
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What would happen if tourists stopped to come?

- “Community resilience refers to the ability of a community to effectively respond to unanticipated changes in its situation.” (Lew, 2014)
- Fast change impact – Sudden shock? (Lew, 2014)
- No individual entrepreneurship.
- Tribe manages everything that is tourism related – therefore # 4 on Resilience Event Scale.

Scale, Change & Resilience in Tourism

(Lew, 2014)

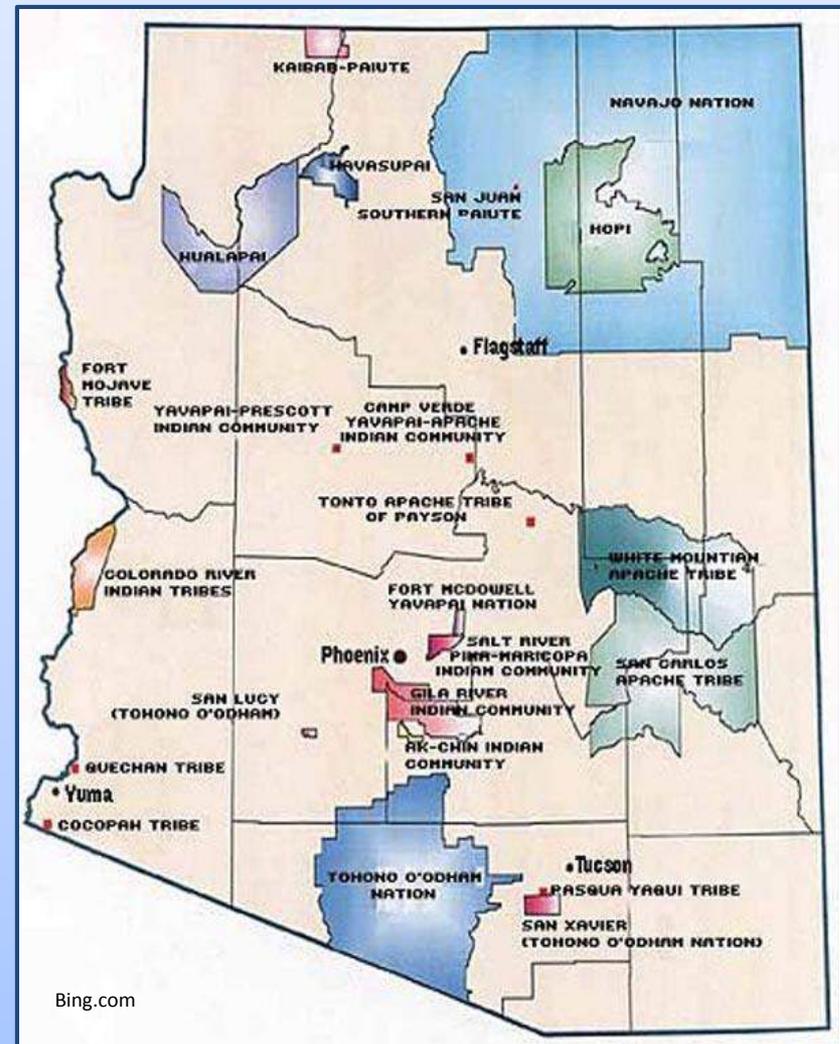


Resilience Issues / Indicators

1. Facilities & Service Decline / Maintenance Programs
2. **Climate Change & Globalization / Natural & Cultural Conservation**
3. Major Attraction or Market Loss / Training & Diversification
4. Major Crisis & Disasters / Social Support Systems: Welfare & Infrastructure

White Mountain Apache Tribe

- Lived in family groups and bands along waterways.
- In the late 1860's U.S. troops came to Whiteriver with the intent to kill all Apache.
- The killing was prevented due to wise leadership that welcomed the troops and offered them a site to build a military post.
- The post was named Fort Apache in 1879 and eventually used as a boarding school.
- In 1891 the Fort Apache Indian Reservation was established.
- Today, the tribe consists of approximately 15,000 members with the Tribal Headquarters located in Whiteriver.



What Constitutes the White Mountain Apache Tourism Industry?

☐ Sites

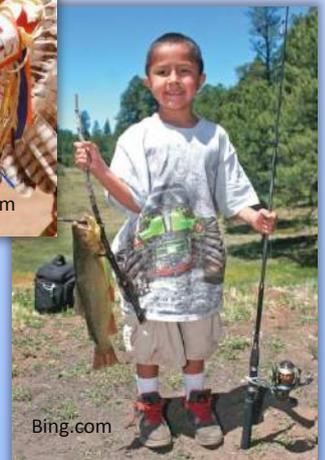
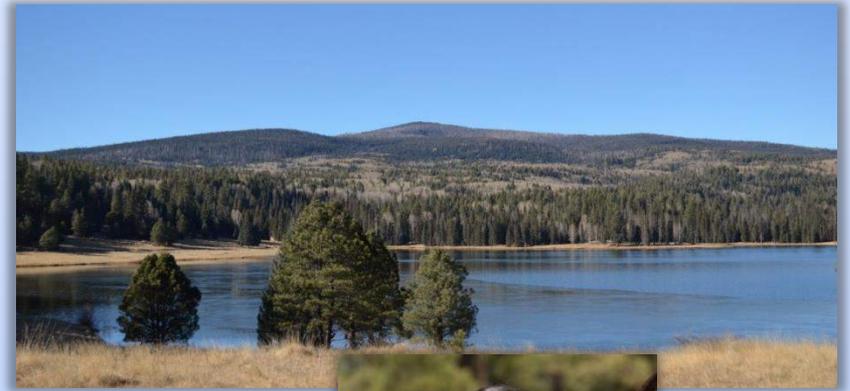
- Hon Dah Casino
- Sunrise Park Resort
- Fort Apache Historic Park
- Nohwike'Bagowa – House of our Footprints
- Kinishba Ruins National Historic Landmark
- Hawley Lake Recreation Area

☐ Activities

- Cultural Events
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Skiing
- Hiking
- Camping
- Canyoneering
- Rent a Lake

How Could a Drastic Reduction in Tourism Numbers Affect the Tribe?

- Tourism is diversified.
- Different population groups for activities:
 - Retirees
 - Hunters
 - Families that go camping
 - Cultural events at Hon Dah
 - Visitors for historic sites



What is the real resiliency issue for the White Mountain Apache Tribe?

- Facilities and Service Decline



What would increase resilience? (Based on the seven Resilience Principles)

7 Resilience Principles

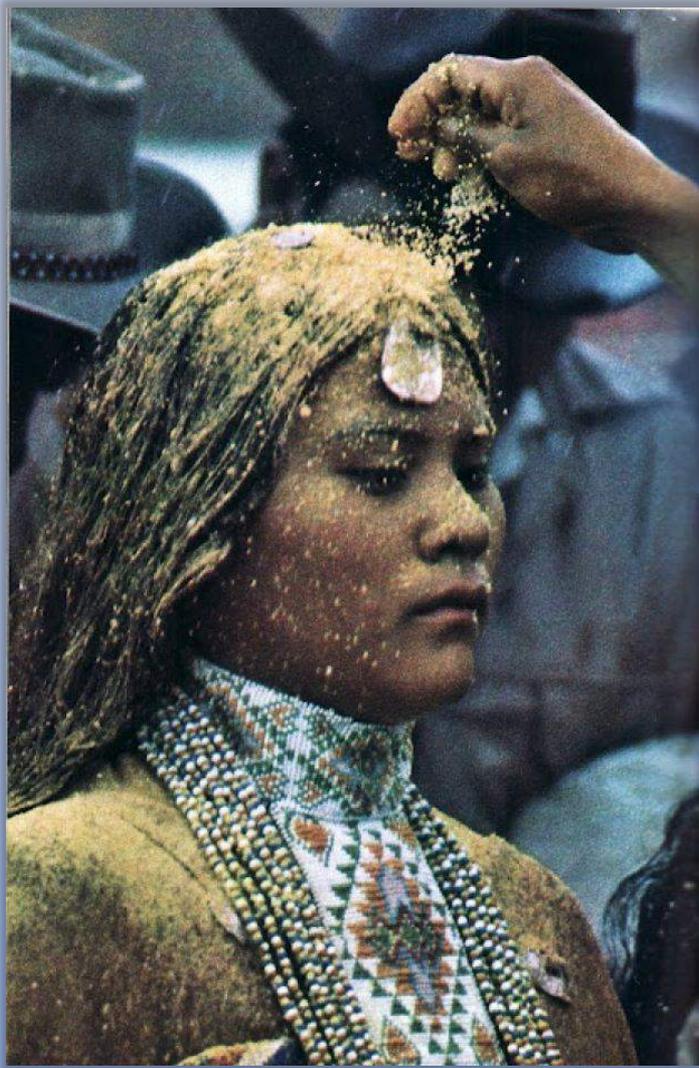
1. Maintain diversity and redundancy.
2. Manage connectivity.
3. Manage slow variables and feedbacks.
4. Encourage learning.
5. Broaden participation.
6. Promote polycentric governance systems.

- Public transit system
- Maintain and improve existing structures
- Improve education and staff training
- Encourage entrepreneurship

(SRC, 2014)

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Thank you!

Questions?