

Interactional Power in Colonial Yucatán

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Abstract

In the present study, I articulate an interactionist model of power relations using the sociological framework of Symbolic Interactionism. After presenting a model of power relations, I identify instances of power in colonial and early post-colonial Yucatán, analyzing colonial and contemporary texts on Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula.

I define power as a process, rather than a latent capacity or the mere *possibility* of action. Interactional power is demonstrated through 1) processes or interactions, such as discourse and communication, 2) negotiation, 3) the control or manipulation of resources, and 4) legal and social rule-setting, or the construction of systems within which interaction occurs. In the context of colonial Yucatán, Maya communities experienced the loss of physical and cultural resources, and the imposition of non-Maya social, legal, economic, and religious systems. I argue that the interactions leading to this divestment and the replacement of indigenous Maya systems must be understood as interactions of power, or the manifestation of power vis-à-vis interaction.

On occasion, Mayas in colonial Yucatán successfully negotiated legal contracts or other civil disputes, using non-Maya legal systems to their own benefit and mitigating the impact of conquest and colonization. Nevertheless, non-Maya colonials more frequently—and more successfully—demonstrated the use of power

through negotiation. With regard to resource use or appropriation, non-Maya colonials utilized an array of methods to divest Maya individuals and communities of physical and cultural resources. Forced labor, religious and secular oversight of Maya community funds, tribute requirements, and ownership of commercial enterprises characterized the interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas throughout the colonial period. Finally, regarding social, religious, legal, and economic structures, non-Maya systems largely displaced those of the Mayas by the end of the colonial period.

The inequalities evident between Mayas and non-Mayas in colonial and early post-colonial Yucatán did not result from inherent differences or the superiority of non-Mayas during the conquest and colonization of the Yucatán Peninsula. Rather, dynamic interactions between individuals and groups demonstrated varied expressions of power throughout the colonial period and beyond. Yucatec Mayas were not, at all times and in all places, disadvantaged by their interactions with non-Mayas, and neither were non-Mayas always the beneficiaries of those interactions. Nonetheless, non-Mayas did leverage resources and systems to their benefit more often than Mayas in both the colonial and post-colonial periods. Non-Mayas throughout the colonial period generally controlled or had greater access to resources, more successfully negotiated terms of contracts or disputes with Maya individuals and communities, and firmly established their own social, religious, economic, and legal systems over and above those of the Mayas.

Preface

Dedication

To Michelle and Nyah Jazz

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Introduction

Interactions of power shaped the nature of relations between Mayas in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula and the Spanish conquerors, settlers, and other non-Mayas who inhabited the region during and immediately after the colonial period. Collective and individual interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas in Yucatán cannot be understood apart from a discussion and analysis of power, as interactions between various groups invariably relate directly to power and its implementation. The exercise of power during and after colony was not unilateral, in the sense that the actions of both non-Mayas and Mayas exhibited power at different times and places. Mayas were not always disadvantaged as a result of their interactions with non-Mayas, though this was a distinct pattern of interaction and an important trend to note.

How power is defined and operationalized will determine the methodological framework for understanding interactions of power in the colonial and post-colonial periods. In the present study, I use the sociological approach of symbolic interactionism to construct a working model of power, before identifying examples of colonial and post-colonial power relations in Yucatán. Interactionism proves useful in the colonial context of Yucatán because of its contextualized, 'bottom-up' approach to human interaction and the construction, maintenance, or de-construction of social systems or structures. Importantly, symbolic interactionism

incorporates analysis of symbolic meanings (ideological, religious, social, or other, be they personal or collective) that are associated with objects (anything that can be 'indicated') as the basis for understanding the complex motivations for interaction and the construction of social systems. In the colonial context of Yucatán, this is particularly relevant, given the dramatic encounters between Spanish explorer-conquerors and indigenous Mayas. The critical importance of understanding different symbolic frameworks that directed or informed individual and joint action during and after the colonial period should not be understated.

I outline symbolic interactionism and its philosophical forerunner, pragmatism, in chapter one. The distinctly American school of pragmatism and the works of theorists like Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey led to the twentieth-century sociological explorations of George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, and others, whose work was later expanded from a principally individual scope to include structural analysis, as well. Peirce, James, Dewey, and others addressed such concepts as 'truth', 'reality', 'meaning', and everyday experience from the basis of empirical inquiry and social scientific methods. Moving from esoteric and theological discussion, these early pragmatists shifted philosophically toward evidentiary research and empirical observation and documentation. In contrast to earlier notions of universality and the universal applicability of theory, pragmatists articulated the relative, contextually-oriented nature of truth and ideas. Their analysis of meaning, truth, and reality shifted toward common-sense approaches to social problems, to the exclusion of any debate not rooted in the observable experiences of individuals and groups.

Pragmatists fostered a commitment to applied theory, promoted the contextualization of research, and emphasized the relative nature of social inquiry. Pragmatism is not positivism, the philosophical idea that only sensory experience may be considered 'true' or valid. Any experience or perception that impacts personal or collective meaning and action is considered valid and useful for understanding social interactions between individuals and groups. In other words,

the *validity* of certain ideas is not the focus of a pragmatic approach. Rather, the *social impact* of such ideas becomes the central concern for pragmatists. Pragmatists have consistently argued for coherent models that explain and evaluate human experiences and interactions, emphasizing the rooted cultural and social context in which all experiences occur.

Interactionists, beginning with Herbert Blumer, developed a pragmatic sociological framework of individual agency and action in society. Fundamentally devoid of structural systems analysis, early symbolic interactionism would be altered by later interactionists who broadened the approach to include all levels and interactions within social systems, from individual thought, perception, and action to joint action and the development of systems and social structures. I argue that interactionism provides a flexible, interdisciplinary framework from within which Maya and non-Maya interactions may be analyzed and understood. The framework includes an emphasis on the symbolic representation of objects (physical objects, other people, groups, or institutions, ideas, or anything else that may be 'indicated') as the basis of individual social interaction and the construction of social systems. Interactionists pragmatically approach common, everyday experience as the focal point of research, and have affirmed a bottom-up approach to the study of individuals, culture, and society. Most importantly, the epistemology of symbolic interactionism provides sound research methods for the analysis of power relations within various social systems and historical periods.

In chapter two, I begin with a presentation of several important economic, political, and sociological models of power and power relations. Weber, Marx, Parsons, and others have variously identified components of power in society. Symbolic interactionists have drawn, in part, from these older models in presenting analyses of power; established models of power are a necessary starting point for an assessment of power structures in the Maya context. However, as interactionist theorists have pointed out, traditional models of power relations often fail to address all levels of social interaction, including individual, group, and institutional levels of

interaction. Older disciplinary models of power generally emphasize macro-level, structural components of society, but often neglect the individual, interpersonal nature of societal interaction and power dynamics. Due to their structural focus, many models fail to adequately reflect the complexities of power dynamics in everyday life for individuals or small groups and the variety of ways in which power is expressed, demonstrated, or exercised. Accordingly, power relations theories will more effectively represent social interaction if cultural components are also considered at the individual and group levels. All of these aspects of power relations must be assessed in order to produce comprehensive and representative models of social realities.

The methodological approach of interactionism comprehensively assesses power at the individual and societal levels; a symbolic interactionist framework is therefore adequate for assessing power and power relations at all levels in culture and society. After a brief synopsis of structuralist, exchange, and feminist interpretations of power, I turn to the few available interactionist definitions of power in the social context. I then present my own interactionist framework of power, in which I argue that power may be demonstrated through 1) process or interaction, such as discourse and communication, 2) the control or manipulation of resources, 3) negotiation, and 4) legal and social rule-setting, or the construction of systems within which interaction occurs. According to my interactionist interpretation of power, power is a process, not a latent capacity or 'ability', independent of action and interaction. The active processes and interactions through which Mayas of Yucatán were divested of resources, cultural 'text', and the ability to create social systems or contexts for their own interaction demonstrate the active use of power by non-Mayas in the colonial and post-colonial periods.

In chapters three to six, I utilize the interactionist framework of power outlined in chapters one and two to identify specific interactions of power and inequality in colonial Yucatán. I examine entrenched patterns of power relations that began during Spanish conquest and colonization of Yucatán, many of which

continued well into the post-colonial period, after the success of the independence movement in Mexico in the early nineteenth century. Though the language and ideas of interactionism permeate the existing literature, nothing approximating an interactionist evaluation of power in colonial and post-colonial Yucatán has yet been attempted.

In chapter three, I note that the language and methods used by early-twentieth century researchers reinforced early colonial models of power, contrasted with late-twentieth century authors who tended to more sympathetically portray the Mayas of Yucatán, emphasizing their disenfranchisement or relative lack of resource control. I continue with a presentation of symbolic representations during the colonial period, representations by both Maya and non-Maya individuals and communities. These representations form the basis of interaction and the exercise of power. I argue that although the Mayas of Yucatán were not always and at all times victims of power relations, the dynamic relations between Mayas and non-Mayas most frequently advantaged the latter at the expense of the former.

In chapter four, I emphasize discourse and negotiated interactions as examples of colonial-era power relations. Despite the occasional example of Maya success through negotiation over land use or ownership, non-Mayas consistently demonstrated a more effective use of power through negotiation throughout the colonial period. At the same time, Maya mitigation of the non-Maya exercise of power through negotiation and discourse lessened the negative impact of power relations on indigenous communities, reducing the overall impact of conquest and colonization through the negotiation of meaning and the intentional use of interaction. Regarding the various forms of colonial discourse available in the written record of Yucatán, I identify examples of both Maya and non-Maya discourse-as-power, demonstrating the effective use of language and discourse to alter relations between various groups.

I use chapter five to emphasize the clearest form of interactional power, namely the control of, access to, or manipulation of resources. The dramatic and

unprecedented shift of resources from indigenous Maya communities to non-Maya colonists and communities provides a striking example of the interactional basis of power in Yucatán, beginning in the colonial period and continuing well beyond. The methods of resource appropriation were varied and broad, ranging from outright control of commercial production and trade and the oversight and management of community funds, donations, and tribute, to forced labor requirements imposed on Maya communities throughout Yucatán. I present multiple perspectives of resource control, including cases where Maya individuals or groups maintained or re-gained access to land or other resources through legal action or intentional self-assertion during the colonial period. Maya control of, access to, or manipulation of resources notwithstanding, non-Mayas of colonial Yucatán overwhelmingly exhibited greater power throughout the colonial period as evidenced by the use of various resources.

The final component of interactional power, legal and social rule-setting or the definition of systems, comprises my final chapter on colonial interactions of power in Yucatán. In chapter six, I argue that despite a relatively complex and fluid exchange of cultural and social structures between Mayas and non-Mayas in Yucatán, non-Maya systems predominated by the end of the colonial period and into the post-colonial period, as well. At the start of the colonial period, largely out of necessity, Maya social systems and communities remained intact, and non-Maya colonials largely adapted to the indigenous landscape, inasmuch as it provided needed raw materials, labor, and other resources for the burgeoning colonial infrastructure. As the colonial era progressed, however, non-Maya systems and structures displaced those of the Mayas, and Maya communities became increasingly dependent upon non-Maya legal, social, political, and religious systems.

In my conclusions, I revisit the interactionist framework of power as a method of inquiry in research of colonial Yucatán. Ultimately, the framework that I present here and its application to the colonial period provide avenues of future research, and I argue for potential applications of the present model of interactional power in colonial Yucatán, contemporary Yucatán, and beyond.

One: Methodology

Human society is complex, made up of innumerable interfacing systems and exchanges of communication. Any social theory or framework must be capable of representing that complexity while also minimizing distortion in the representation of social systems. The sociological framework of symbolic interactionism is capable of producing theoretical models that satisfy both of these demands.

Symbolic interactionist researchers espouse a pragmatic and all-encompassing approach to everyday human interaction and social systems or structures. Beginning with the work of George Herbert Mead and continuing with Herbert Blumer and subsequent theorists, interactionists developed their approach out of the distinctly American philosophical tradition of pragmatism. The pragmatic school of thought focused philosophical debate more on practical effects of human action and experience than esoteric schema. Herbert Blumer coined the term 'symbolic interactionism', though he disliked the clumsy wording of the phrase that he never thought would come to define the approach. For brevity, I alternate between 'symbolic interactionism' and 'interactionism' when discussing the approach.

In the present chapter, I aim to situate my research within a symbolic interactionist framework, to identify my strategy in reading and interpreting contemporary Mayan 'text', and to acknowledge various theoretical influences in my work. (Here and elsewhere, I use the term 'text' to refer not only to materials in

written form, but also any document, object, or source of information that is related to the culture or cultures in question. Anything that indicates meaning or meaningful symbols in a particular culture or society may be considered 'text'). In the present section, I articulate my research methods within the context of symbolic interactionist, pragmatist and sociological theory and methodology. I begin the chapter with an overview of symbolic interactionism and its historical pragmatic roots. I conclude the chapter with an outline of my chosen methods for analyzing power and power relations in colonial Maya contexts.

Pragmatism: Theoretical Foundation of Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionists take a 'bottom-up' approach to the study of culture. This emphasis on everyday experience distinguishes interactionism from traditional historical and social scientific approaches to society and culture, with the exception, perhaps, of the contemporary field of Cultural Studies. Interactionists approach culture and the study of human behavior in society pragmatically, and with sensitivity to subtle nuances that differentiate lived experiences from culture to culture, and from society to society. The overwhelming emphasis on the social construction of meaning and the use of symbols to convey meaning also distinguishes interactionism from alternative frameworks. In the final section of chapter 1, I outline the major tenets of symbolic interactionism, including its early formulation by Herbert Blumer and subsequent revisions that include additional attention to social systems or structures extending beyond the individual and small-group interactions.

Before looking at interactionism in detail, it is important to understand the pragmatic roots of the approach. Interactionism cannot be understood apart from its pragmatic foundations. Peirce, Dewey, James, and other pragmatic philosophers pioneered what is considered to be the only philosophical school originating in

North America. It is from this uniquely North American school of thought that interactionism arose.

Pragmatism's Early Theoretical Influences

Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey influenced pragmatism more than any other philosophers. These philosopher-theorists addressed the ideas of truth, reality, meaning, and everyday experience. Their common-sense approach to problem-solving and lived experience resonated with later theorists like George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, who would shape sociological theory using the perspectives and tools of pragmatic philosophy.

Charles Peirce approached the question of truth from the basis of inquiry. Peirce coined the term 'pragmatism', and was interested primarily in clarifying philosophical ideas and making them more scientifically verifiable. To do this, he focused on the use of language and relationships in language, and is considered by some to be a forerunner of semiotics. Like Dewey, Peirce saw inquiry as a collective process in society, in which ideas were to be rigorously tested in order to prove their worth (Putnam 71). For Peirce, authority or belief would not determine the value of ideas. Rather, the merits of ideas based on their applicability to human experience and social interaction would determine the value of each idea or truth.

William James popularized the ideas of pragmatism, delving into questions of belief, faith, and truth in community. James is perhaps best known for his focus on the 'cash value' of beliefs, though his arguments are often misunderstood and misconstrued to support a conservative argument for supporting only those ideas that prove profitable. James' pragmatism has been criticized for its use to defend *any* belief, perspective, or idea that can be logically defended, and for its apparent support of the conservative business class in the United States. James was both criticized and praised by Bertrand Russell for his approaches to truth and empiricism, though Hilary Putnam points out that many criticisms of James—

including those by Russell, for instance—are based on flawed readings of James' writing that distort and overly simplify his work (8-9). Putnam emphasizes the difference between 'thematic' and 'dogmatic' usage, in which the former indicates a trend or speculation and the latter, an iron-clad belief or way of thinking. James and Wittgenstein, he proposes, presented *thematic* philosophical statements, not iron-clad statements of belief and universality.

In fact, James developed the idea of the 'cash value' of ideas during the years of the gold standard, when gold reserves backed the value of printed currency. He created a simile in philosophy, arguing that theories ought to be similarly 'backed' by their empirical grounding in everyday, practical realities. James explained truth as 'what works', but not in the sense of what is true for one individual or another. James centered his definition of truth in the context of community, where ideas, beliefs, and truths must be rigorously tested in order to determine what is best for the community in the long term. "Truth, [James] insists, is a notion which presupposes a community, and, like Peirce, he held that the widest possible community, the community of all persons (and possibly even all sentient beings) in the long run, is the relevant one" (Putnam 24). For pragmatists, then, the value of ideas and the value of truth are decided, in part, in the context of community.

James' pragmatism allows for the negotiation of meaning in the context of community. Ideas and "truths" are no longer valued for their universality, but only in relation to the community or culture in question. That is, truth is humanized, defined by the social setting in which ideas are formed and acted out. According to Thayer, James understood pragmatism "...as a way of mediating claims and determining the legitimate scope and expression of preferences among individuals" (17). In terms of cultural study and interactionism, James' pragmatism allows for diversity of thought and expression, with the ultimate goal of negotiating meaning and building culturally-relevant truth.

John Dewey emphasized the situated or contextualized nature of inquiry, and expanded pragmatism in the areas of critical thought and social progress. Though

considered part of the pragmatic tradition, Dewey referred to his thinking as 'instrumentalism'. J. E. Tiles writes that Dewey "...abandoned the notion of truth in favour of 'warranted assertability'". Influenced by science and scientific methods, Dewey chose not to focus on the idea of ultimate truth, focusing instead on present and future reality, meaning in society, and common-sense approaches to social problem-solving. In John McDermott's estimation, Dewey and the pragmatic philosophy represent the possibility of an "ameliorative social philosophy," one that helps "avoid cynicism while simultaneously cautioning us against the seductions of ideology and final solutions" (70, 77). As an educator, activist, and philosopher, Dewey pioneered a philosophy that linked theory to practice and concrete action.

James, Peirce, and Dewey developed pragmatism early on, but other theorists shaped pragmatism well into the twentieth century, as well. At the turn of the century, F. C. S. Schiller's pragmatic humanism promoted "the doctrine that our cognitive efforts and human needs actually transform the reality we seek to describe" ("pragmatism", Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy). In the 1960s, Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* created a focus on paradigm shifts in the natural sciences that pragmatists saw as useful to pragmatic thinking and the implementation of practical solutions to social problems.

Hilary Putnam, a renowned late-twentieth century philosopher and logician with wide-ranging interests in mind-body research and pragmatism, has outlined his vision of pluralism and holism in the pragmatic context. Putnam suggests that pragmatism addresses "whether an enlightened society can avoid a corrosive moral skepticism without tumbling back into moral authoritarianism" in light of contemporary notions of tolerance and plurality (2). He strongly argues that pragmatism holds great promise of moving beyond philosophical and political logjams. He disagrees with neo-pragmatist Rorty on the subjectivist approach to pragmatism, while supporting an emphasis within pragmatism on pluralism in society.

Contemporary philosophers and legal theorists Richard J. Bernstein, Cornell West, and Joan Williams emphasize early pragmatists, in order to re-discover and expand early visions of pragmatism in the present context (Kloppenber). For Bernstein, West, and Williams, this approach leads to 'provisional agreements', rather than 'truth.' Provisional agreements are negotiated agreements, based on discussion and debate, equality, and mutual respect, rather than authoritarian pronouncements or enshrined 'truth'.

Pragmatism: Context and Content

John McDermott has proposed that the context of pragmatism be limited to the period between 1870 and 1920, when the original theorists were most actively developing pragmatism and its foundational tenets. Pragmatists, though, like later symbolic interactionists, did not operate in a theoretical or philosophical vacuum. They observed and incorporated historical and cultural trends in the pragmatic approach. In fact, according to Ernest Gellner, pragmatism drew heavily on biology and intellectual history of the nineteenth century. In the midst of developments in transcendentalism, idealism, British empiricism, and others, pragmatism emerged in response to the need for greater technical clarification, as a broker between various schools of thought in late-nineteenth century (Thayer 6). Thayer goes on to write that the "conditions of intellectual uncertainty and [a] predicament in competing norms and demands of conduct are among the formative dispositions and historical origins of pragmatism" (14). Intellectual uncertainty, together with the academic history of thought, informed the early pragmatists. Pragmatism thus became a bridge between philosophy and science, with utilitarian currents.

Robert Mulvaney and Phillip Zeltner suggest that the values-oriented, pragmatic approach should not be confused with the popular use of the term "pragmatic" on the one hand, or armchair philosophy on the other. Rather, it is a rigorous and particularly American branch of philosophy. Pragmatists earnestly

challenged the notion that truth claims represent a “logically consistent reflection of reality” (“Pragmatism,” Dictionary of Social Sciences). Accordingly, what is ‘real’ or ‘true’ must be understood according to linguistic, interpretative, and attributive conventions in use at a particular time and place. Meaning and its contextualized importance, clarification or interpretation, verification, and continuity are all central themes of the pragmatic approach. In Peirce’s tradition, pragmatists value the process of negotiation and logical argument; Peirce argued for inquiry leading to truth, defined as consensus in scientific terms.

Ernest Gellner has written elsewhere that pragmatists generally exhibit optimism and cheerfulness, as opposed to a sense of crisis and gloom, in spite of an awareness of human fallibility and the variability of meaning and knowledge. Awareness for the pragmatist, rather than leading to pessimism and cynicism, allows for the formation of logical, negotiated, and contextualized solutions to social and cultural conflicts. The pragmatist is thus focused on human action and experience, rather than esoteric philosophy or unapplied theory. For the pragmatist, theory abstracted is irrelevant to the practical application of knowledge in a situated context.

In terms of moral philosophy, pragmatists drawing from Dewey’s work emphasize quality enhancement in the social context. Morality and values are thus related to quality of life and ethical approaches to inquiry. Gouinlock reflects on the process of constructing values in society when he argues that the pragmatic approach to moral philosophy allows individuals and groups to systematically address their ‘interests’ in an attempt to create inclusive, secure social systems that enhance quality of life (101). Pragmatic moral theory or philosophy does not proscribe, but informs the decision-making process in the social and cultural settings. Ultimate choices are left for discussion, debate, and disagreement.

Dewey, in particular, defined social intelligence as moral method. He advocated the transformation of strife and social conflict into fulfillment and positive experiences or “integrated activity” that engages and fulfills human potential

(Gouinlock 106). The moral method is a social or collective—rather than individualistic—process, in which conflict may be reconciled through communication and the awareness of disagreement. Finally, the methods derived from Dewey's work depend on the exercise of plurality and tolerance and the eschewing of moral absolutism. On the rejection of moral absolutism, Gouinlock writes that "moral situations are often too problematic to be settled without ambiguity, doubt, and conflict" (116). For the pragmatist, then, conflict resolution in society and culture may progress tentatively from initial discussions and recognition of legitimate claims toward more substantive action and change.

Pragmatists generally reject claims to absolute certainty, or avoid them all together. In James' view, though, there is room for belief and truth, so long as belief is 'workable' or can be demonstrated to be useful in the widest social context. From a pragmatic perspective, knowledge and truth shift and are not fixed, depending on a number of contextual variables. The practical effects of a truth claim are the measure of said truth's value. In this way, all competing claims may be tested according to their practical effects, leaving room for negotiation in the social and cultural contexts. In the philosophical context, pragmatism provides a situational, contextualized approach to theory, recognizing subjective meanings in the definition of truth and moral philosophy. Interactionists later came to understand this to mean that ideas (objects, people, situations, concepts) and the subjective meanings attached to them inform behavior and action.

Putnam has written on the topic of truth and empirical testing in pragmatism. He limits the extent to which the pragmatic approach to value-based truth should be carried, arguing for its use in specific social contexts. On truth, value, and reality, Putnam says that it is the 'final opinion' that must be used to judge the value of truth, not merely what may presently be deduced regarding a truth claim. In other words, long-term empirical study and analysis must be taken into consideration when evaluating competing claims, in addition to the present assessment of the value of ideas, beliefs, and truths in question. Deciding what is true, for Putnam, is not a

metaphysical process, but an active approach to evaluating and testing truth claims. Truth is not *defined* solely by verification, but the two are closely related, dependent upon one another. According to Putnam, “What [James] believed was that, since our claims get their substance from the roles they play in our lives, an account of truth will gain its substance from the accompanying account of how to get to truth” (12). Ultimately, all members of a particular culture or society contribute to and participate in the creation, formation, and preservation or destruction of truth claims, whether they be inclusive and negotiated or fractured and contradictory.

As with competing notions of truth, pragmatism also deals with coherence and holism. Again, pragmatism is not positivism, or the assertion that only what can be sensed is true or valid. However, coherence—or a coherent system of thought, value, etc.—is important for the pragmatist. According to Putnam, meaning and the creation of meaning are important in the process of developing coherence, and both are socially-constructed and culturally-based.

Pragmatism relates to the present study in a number of ways. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, pragmatism is the foundation of symbolic interactionism, the framework I use to examine power in the Maya cultural context. Secondly, pragmatism anticipates the relative nature of inquiry necessary in symbolic interactionism. That is, pragmatists recognize that knowledge and meaning are culturally situated, contextualized in time and space. Thirdly, when evaluating the historical record and the experiences of Maya, non-Maya, colonizing, and colonized groups, competing narratives inevitably arise, begging questions of veracity and objectivity. Pragmatism provides a context for evaluating competing narratives and truth claims based on rigorous evaluation and empirical study, rather than an appeal to ideological or dogmatic criteria.

Symbolic Interactionism: Individual Agency within Systems

“...Symbolic Interactionism is a perspective that offers generalizations about how the individual develops a self and a mind, and the dialectical relationship of the individual who possesses a self and a mind to the society in which he or she lives” (Musolf 3).

Symbolic interactionism developed out of the work of James, Peirce, Mead, and other pragmatic philosophers into a distinct sociological approach. Drawing heavily on George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer laid out the framework of interactionism in the mid-twentieth century, focusing on individual action and agency in the social context. Later theorists (Stryker and Musolf, in particular) expanded Blumer’s vision of SI to incorporate larger social systems into the interactionist perspective. Contemporary interactionists note that interactionism continues to evolve, arguing for further exploration and development of the framework and its application to social contexts (Charmaz).

In the final section of the present chapter, I outline my conception of symbolic interactionism, linking it to pragmatism and the various theorists who have contributed to the interactionist approach. I present the key concepts in interactionism that I think are most relevant to the study of Maya culture and society, and I argue for a holistic approach to the study of social systems. I conclude the present chapter with a summary of my own methods for the study of Maya colonial experience and power relations, methods that draw from pragmatism and symbolic interactionism to create a methodology that is at once flexible, yet empirically valid.

Symbolic interactionists begin the study of individuals and society inductively, without appeals to grand narratives or universalism. The components of interactionism are relevant to the study of culture (generally) and the Mayas of Yucatán (particularly) because of the ways in which they uniquely frame the self and identity, human interaction, society, and culture. I now turn to symbolic interactionism—its tenets, methods, and philosophical foundations—in order to

frame my own methods for the study of Maya colonial experiences, with regard to interaction and systems of power.

Origins of Symbolic Interactionism: Pragmatism, Self, Identity, and Society

Symbolic interactionism is a framework or approach within sociology and social psychology. Models of interactionism developed primarily in the United States, under both the Chicago and Iowa schools of thought. Like pragmatism and cultural studies, symbolic interactionism did not develop in a theoretical vacuum. Musolf describes the historical context in which sociology and interactionism originated at a time of industrialization, massive immigration into the United States, and rapid urbanization during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Industrial growth led to the development and expansion of capitalist structures, and an early division developed between industry leaders and social reformers like Dorothy Day and others who advocated for and represented the poor, laborers, and other non-business interests. Conflict ensued between the proponents of unrestrained industrial growth and development, on the one hand, and proponents of social reconstruction, on the other. Most importantly, though, interactionists responded to nineteenth and twentieth century questions of self and human nature, rejecting determinism generally, and social Darwinism, in particular.

Interactionists reacted to the “hegemony of biological determinism”, arguing that behavior is largely *determining*, not determined (Musolf 15). They acknowledged social influences on behavior, rather than purely biological determinants. Early interactionists opposed the view that so-called ‘natural’ inequalities need not be remedied, challenging hereditarianism and discriminatory practices in immigration, unequal civil status in the U. S. South, and segregation based on biological determinism and eugenics. Interactionists and social reformers argued for intervention and change in situations of unjust inequality. They argued that if culture and context are largely responsible for shaping or cueing behavior, then one may

view inequalities not as biologically determined, but as unfair disadvantages to some due to historical, socially-constructed realities.

Pragmatists first laid out an approach that later symbolic interactionists developed further. Their pragmatic, interactionist approach challenged determinism, highlighting the socially constructed nature of behavior, interaction, and social structures. Musolf refers to this as the “social basis and indeterminate nature of behavior and human nature” (23). Pragmatists emphasized the unique evolutionary development that led to specialized use of symbols and language, as well as the ability to adapt and modify meaning and language. Mead focused more on behavior than the mental processes underlying behavior, but he did not agree with social Darwinists that human experience may be explained through primarily biological analysis.¹

In addition to specific social realities, sociology and interactionist models developed in the United States in response to the perceived need for scientifically valid interpretive or subjective approaches to the study of social behavior. Drawing from pragmatic principles and ideas, symbolic interactionists thus created an empirical and inductive model of society, based on observation, introspection, and analysis of human behavior in the social context.

Interactionists have acknowledged parallels between interactionism and pragmatism, and also between interactionism and other philosophical, literary, and sociological schools. Scottish moral philosophy foreshadowed interactionism, in that Adam Smith, David Hume, and others discussed individuality and collectivity, looking at human activity empirically (Stryker). The Scottish philosophers viewed individuals within the social context, and contextualized their discussions of habit,

¹ “As Turner notes, [Mead] took from behaviorism the principle of reinforcement, but he rejected behaviorism’s denial of the possibility of investigating scientifically the internal dynamics of the mind; he took from pragmatism the notion that organisms are practical creatures who adapt to conditions of their worlds; and he took from Darwinism the argument that behaviors facilitating survival are retained, applying that argument not only to Man as a species but to individual human beings” (Stryker, *Symbolic* 34-35).

custom, and mind. Denzin also associates symbolic interactionism “with the Left romanticism of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Karl Marx and William James”, suggesting that interactionism exudes a type of cultural romanticism (83-4).

Functionalism, itself influenced by pragmatic thought and derived from the work of Dewey, also impacted symbolic interactionism. Beginning in the 1950s and 60s, though, symbolic interactionists reacted to Talcott Parsons’ presentation of functionalism based on shared values and norms, arguing that volition and agency played a much greater role in social systems than the degree to which Parsons allowed. Critics within interactionism argued that Parson’s AGIL model of social systems (Adaptation; Goal-attainment; Integration; and Latency) used an overly theoretical approach to human behavior in the social system. Specifically, the model emphasized social coherence and order, rather than power structures or conflicts readily evident in the social context.² Nevertheless, functionalism and systems theory influenced later developments within interactionism that expanded the scope of analysis to include larger social systems. In spite of evident disagreements, some of the Parsonian concepts are manifest in the interactionist framework. Parson’s ‘unit act’ (an individual actor with a goal) and ‘action systems’ made up of organized collections of unit acts are mirrored in the interactionist conception of the individual and joint action, as outlined in the following sections.

Pragmatism is the largest single influence on the interactionist perspective. Moral philosophy, cultural romanticism, and functionalism are only a few of the additional varied influences on symbolic interactionism. Nevertheless, many other theorists and theories have contributed to present-day symbolic interactionism, lending concepts, methods, and perspectives to what has become a major branch of sociology and social psychology. With regard to the origins of symbolic interaction, I

² Neo-functionalists have revitalized Parsonian structuralism by addressing conflict and social change. For Niklas Luhman, ‘systems’ are reductionist and merely symbolic; communication is, for Luhman, the locus of study, and coding or decoding are of utmost importance (“systems theory” n.p.).

believe there are three main areas of influence and development that are relevant to Herbert Blumer's work and subsequent revisions to interactionism:

- i) Pragmatism;
- ii) Theories of self and identity formation; and
- iii) Theories of social systems and society.

All of these categories overlap, and leading theorists like George Herbert Mead and William James dealt with more than one single area. I will now briefly introduce each of these areas of development before outlining the major components of symbolic interactionism.

Origins of Symbolic Interactionism: Pragmatism

Pragmatism is the definitive, early influence on symbolic interactionism. Pragmatism in the context of interactionism refers not to the common definition of 'pragmatic' (expedient or practical), but to the situation and contextualization of philosophical and social issues. Skidmore defines the pragmatic contribution in this way: "...pragmatism was a movement which used the traditional concerns of philosophy as a point of departure from which to defend a somewhat novel way of looking at these problems" (in Holstein and Gubrium 21). Pragmatism, as a forerunner of symbolic interactionism, situated philosophical questions in the lived experience of individuals in the social context. Truth, values, historical interpretation, and knowledge are defined and understood not according to universal narrative, but relative to specific social and cultural contexts, situations in which the meaning of knowledge, values, and cultural narrative arose.

In the context of symbolic interactionism, pragmatism does not only represent a shift toward greater contextualization of theory. Within interactionism, pragmatism also represents a shift from transcendental philosophical ideas of self (and thus, of morality, values, and so on) to an empirically supported account of human lives, values, and experiences. Prior to pragmatism, mistaken ideas of shared identity and

universal experience emerged from philosophical perspectives. Pragmatism challenged this trend, allowing for variance and multiplicity at both the individual and societal levels.

According to Joel Charon, pragmatism influenced interactionism with the following four foundational concepts:

- i) Humans interpret their environment, rather than passively reacting to it;
- ii) The usefulness of human belief in situational context is important in understanding behavior;
- iii) Humans selectively pay attention; and
- iv) Human action ought to be the ultimate focus of study for the social scientist.

Pragmatists re-centered the focus of study on the individual in context, and interactionists refined the approach further, emphasizing the social construction of self, meaning, and joint action in society. The collective works of William James, Charles Horton Cooley, James Mark Baldwin, William Isaac Thomas, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead shaped the direction of symbolic interactionism from its inception to the present day.

Origins of Symbolic Interactionism: 'Self' and Identity

Early pragmatists and interactionists spent considerable time discussing various concepts of 'self' and identity. Just as cultural studies shifted the focus of research from elites to common individuals, the focus of study for interactionists shifted from overarching structures toward the individual. For pragmatists and interactionists, the individual, rather than the social system, became the primary unit of investigation. For these new theorists, social structures emerged from interpersonal relations between individuals and meaning derived in the social context. Given the person-centered approach of pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, it is not surprising to find that the way in which the self is understood

relates directly to one's conception of social systems and cultural structures. Most of the forerunners of interactionism dealt with notions of self, and the concepts of self and self-identity are crucial components of interactionism today.

Prior to pragmatism, Max Weber focused on human actors, de-emphasizing an historical approach to the study of behavior. For Weber, action, behavior, and motivation were interwoven. Behavior is a result of the complex interplay between motivation, non-motivated factors, and conditions. Most importantly in the present context, Weber understood social behavior (or social action) as behavior guided or affected by subjective meaning (Stryker 44). This connection between meaning and action would become a central tenet of interactionism as outlined by Herbert Blumer. James Mark Baldwin influenced both Cooley and Dewey with his social analysis of self, arguing that 'self' derives from social relations or 'self-other' relationships (Stryker). His stages of the development of self included: awareness of others, imitation of others, and awareness of the feelings of others.

Charles Horton Cooley looked at the origins of 'self' in the familial and social contexts, emphasizing introspection and imagination in his analysis. His most important contribution to formulations of self is undoubtedly his "Looking-Glass Self", in which he understands the self only in the social context. Self in the social context is derived from others' perceptions and how one imagines others perceive him or her. Cooley's definition is solipsistic, in that it requires thinking about thought, or reflecting on the ways in which one imagines others perceive one's actions and behaviors.

William James understood the self as an object at the center of one's consciousness. According to James, as many 'selves' exist as the number of one's social relationships. James' empirical self further clarified his notion of various 'selves', looking at the interactive process of self-in-society (Denzin; Holstein and Gubrium; Stryker). Building on Cooley's initial conception of the self, James posited that the self is defined by the recognition of others. The self is an empirical object of reference, changing, shifting, and developing in relation to others. Self is more than a

cognitive or even physical distinction. It has to do with a broad array of social interactions, objects, and others with whom one interacts. Self-esteem and self-worth are made up of both external recognition and internal motivations or subjective interpretations (Stryker).

Widely considered the most important influence on interactionism, George Herbert Mead spent considerable time working on the concept of self. His extensive teaching and research focused on the individual in society, even as he pioneered theories of social psychology. He examined the emergence of self in society and conceived of the self and mind as processes, contextualized in social realms. Thus, Mead outlined the social nature of human behavior; for Mead, self is created in and defined by social interaction. Furthermore, the self and society are not static, but malleable, and they can be re-constituted. Because the nature of human experience is social, consciousness arises out of human group life. The self is based in experience and socially constructed. It is grounded in the routine social interactions that arise in society.

William Isaac Thomas, an early sociologist at the University of Chicago, formulated a re-definition of the adult self, focusing on subjectivity in social settings. According to Thomas, individual subjectivity and assigned meanings explain variations in behavior when other factors are held constant. Another Chicago researcher and student of Herbert Blumer, Erving Goffman, developed labeling theory and the "socially-situated self". For his concept of the self, Goffman used the analogy of theater and stage to illustrate the ways in which individuals "act", using scripts, scenes, performances, etc. in their everyday lives and interactions (Holstein and Gubrium). Like Thomas, Goffman operationalized the self, though he emphasized the social, empirical, and circumstantial aspects of self more than subjective interpretation of self.

As the University of Chicago interactionists developed their understanding of the self based on Cooley, James, and others, Manford H. Kuhn and George McCall similarly advanced their own conceptions of self, based on the Iowa school of

interactionism. Kuhn defined self and role-taking in his “self-theory”, defining the self as a set of attitudes and a structure of various components. Though certainly less influential in SI than Blumer, Kuhn looked at meaning attached to one’s core self, and identified complex links between conceptions of self and behavior. He measured self-attitudes using a combination of SI frameworks and conventional social scientific methodology (Stryker, *Symbolic*). George McCall expanded on Kuhn’s work on the self, discussing the dualism of ideals and deterministic realities that affect behavior. Like Goffman, he discussed the phenomenal aspects of self, looking at self as character, actor, and audience. He also included a systems focus in his analysis of the self, arguing that systems define parameters and options for self-definition. Ultimately, Herbert Blumer adamantly challenged Kuhn’s assertion that the self could be defined as a set of attitudes (*Symbolic*). Blumer considered this a weak premise that could not be reasonably defended, one that would not hold up to rigorous scientific scrutiny. Blumer’s own conception of the self, individuals, action, and joint action will be explored further in the present section.

In summary, pragmatists and early sociologists (including later interactionists) shifted the study of society from a structural emphasis toward individuals and the subjective definition of self that affects behavior in society. Self is seen as a social construction, and subjective meaning is helpful in understanding behavior. Working from this definition of self, interactionists built a comprehensive model of society that is inductive and person-centered, rather than a top-down structural model that incorporates individuals as secondary components of a larger system.

I include conceptions of self and identity in my approach to Yucatec Maya culture and experiences, because self-identification and internalized group narratives about the self shape interactions within and between individuals and groups. Identity and self in the cultural context are much more than individualistic notions of introspection and reflection. Self and identity shape inter-group relations, and impact the structuring of social systems and society at large.

Origins of Symbolic Interactionism: Social Systems and Society

Although a comprehensive outline of social structures is a relatively recent development in symbolic interactionism, interactionists have always drawn on social theory that emphasizes macro structures. The interactionist approach to society, though, always begins with the individual before enlarging the scope of research to include groups, institutions, and society as a whole. Regarding society, Cooley emphasized the interconnectedness of organic units, individuals who together made up the social system. According to his 'organic' view of society, social life may be seen as "...a vast tissue of reciprocal activity, made of innumerable differentiated systems, all interwoven and unified so that what takes place in one affects all the rest" (Stryker 28). Accordingly, the individual and society are mutually-reinforcing; society is made up of individuals interacting, yet individual action is influenced by the totality of the system.

Mead, like Cooley, described social interaction, the social act, as the basic unit of society. Unlike Parsons, who focused on shared values, Mead insisted that society was made up of diverse acts that did not necessarily fit together because of their commonality or homogeneity. Cooperation—not shared values—is necessary for survival. Cooperation forms the basis for ongoing social interaction and society. Society is therefore made up of individuals coping with, reacting to, and integrating themselves into various social situations. At the same time, cooperation is not without struggle and conflict. Herbert Blumer agreed that "society is one built on the play of power, interest, group position, collective action, and protest" (Denzin 84). Thus, action, interaction, and struggle are all integral parts of the social system. Actions or individual acts are constructed out of what is observed and taken into account by the individual, even as what is taken into account defines personality and behavior patterns in the social setting. Blumer also points out that uncertainty, contingency, and transformation are all aspects of society ("Symbolic" 72).

John Dewey suggested that habits, personality, and society are intimately connected, that 'customs' are merely a form of collective habit (Stryker 24). Dewey understood social systems to be made up of associations and shared actions, and these formed the basis of society. Georg Simmel likewise interpreted the study of society and social systems as the study of interaction and collective actions. Concessions, active engagement, and association framed for Simmel the creative, dynamic flow and exchange between the individual and society (Stryker 41). Though he tended to rely more heavily than other interactionists on deterministic arguments, Manford H. Kuhn evaluated social structure as networks of positions and roles, examining the ways in which interaction may be constrained within social networks (Stryker 101).

Anselm Strauss is another in a long list of theorists who viewed society as a process, rather than a static set of institutions or concepts. For Strauss, interpersonal negotiation produced social organization. Emergence, change, power relations, and fragmentation all were important terms Strauss used to describe society and social organization ("Negotiated"). Similarly, Eugene Weinstein conceived of social structure as something that 'happens,' rather than simply 'being'. Accordingly, society could be understood as "an unending stream of interaction process" (Stryker 124).

Sheldon Stryker, an influential theorist in structural interactionism, suggests that society may best be defined as an "ongoing social process", rather than a static or stable construct (35). Stryker's conception of social structure, along with that of Gil Richard Musolf, will shape the remainder of the present section on methodology. Combined with Blumer's formulation of interactionism at the individual level, the social structural components of interactionism as laid out by Stryker and Musolf developed from the early work of Mead, Cooley, Dewey, Kuhn, and other interactionists.

Symbolic Interactionism: Micro and Macro Conceptions of Social Systems

Symbolic interactionism is a pragmatic sociological approach to the study of society, in which the practical applicability of ideas determines the framework's success. Sheldon Stryker and others caution against a dogmatic approach to interactionism, advancing instead a perspective that encourages change, revision, and adaptation of the framework and interactionist approaches. Symbolic interactionism is varied in its application, tailored to the unique situations, groups, and individuals studied. As with pragmatism, interactionists also implement methods and perspectives judged to be expedient or practical in the contextualization of social research, discarding those that are not useful in a given study.

Although interactionism allows for a great deal of flexibility in terms of the framework's application, there are, nonetheless, central concepts, ideas, and guiding images that are common among interactionists. Generally speaking, interactionists are concerned with the symbolic meanings attached to the so-called 'facts' of a situation, as well as subsequent behavior, behavioral choices, and how individual behavior affects (and is affected by) society as a whole. According to Denzin, "symbolic Interactionism offers a generic theory of action, meaning, motives, emotion, gender, the person and social structure" (86). In other words, the interactionist framework provides analysis of everyday interactions and human relations that build to form social systems.

In an interactionist framework, culture, organizations, and other 'groups' create parameters for acceptable or 'normal' behavior, but individuals act in the context of situations and not necessarily within the established parameters. For Blumer, actions carried out by individuals are different from—though components of—culture, but they are not one and the same. Furthermore, impersonal forces do not determine behavior. Acting units construct systems that are determined by the interpretative action of the acting units themselves ("Symbolic" 76). Later

interactionists have emphasized cultural and societal restraints that do, in fact, limit behavioral choices or options available to individuals. When viewed alongside the structural formulation of interactionism, Blumer's behavioral argument is neither deterministic nor entirely non-deterministic. In the present interactionist framework, behavior is seen in society and culture as *determining*, yet constrained at the same time by the very system that individual action helps to create.

Outline of Symbolic Interactionism

Manis and Meltzer have outlined a number of core components common to most interactionist approaches (in Stryker 88). They identify seven critical aspects of any interactionist framework, including:

- i) The central focus on meaning in the social context;
- ii) An understanding of 'humanity' as derived from social sources;
- iii) A process-oriented approach to society;
- iv) A non-deterministic philosophy of behavior;
- v) A logically-constructed and socially-situated conception of 'mind';
- vi) The notion that human behavior is fluid, constructed, and creative; and
- vii) The necessity of sympathy and reflective attitudes in research.

According to Manis and Meltzer, then, symbolic interactionism is a bottom-up approach to the study of social systems that focuses on individual contributions to the formation of meaning and groups, cultures, and societies. Denzin accurately points out that "[c]ontemporary symbolic interactionists emphasize the reflexive, gendered, situated nature of human experience" (85). Most importantly, interactionism consists of a set of ideas that direct attention to particular experiences or expressions within society, what Stryker labels a "frame of reference" (9).

Much like Manis and Meltzer, Norman K. Denzin has outlined the key assumptions of Blumer's version of interactionism (82). According to Denzin, the following assumptions are integral components of an interactionist approach:

- i) Agents (individuals) act based on meanings associated with objects of action;
- ii) Social interaction creates meaning;
- iii) Self-reflection and interaction modify meaning;
- iv) Experienced worlds are created by agents;
- v) Experienced worlds are created and modeled by interaction and reflection;
- vi) Self-interaction and social interaction are in constant flux together;
- vii) 'Joint acts' make up a society, including various stages of interaction;
- viii) Meanings are shaped by complex, evolving interactions in society; and finally,
- ix) The consequences of 'truth' define its value; there is "no final or authorized version of the truth" (85).

Herbert Blumer provided the definitive introduction to symbolic interactionism in his 1969 text, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. In what has become a foundational text in symbolic interactionism, Blumer outlined three principles of interactionism that continue to frame the perspective today. As will be seen, Stryker and Musolf have expanded these three basic arguments to include a structural approach to interactionism, but Blumer's basic premises remain intact.

In the first place, Blumer argued that "...human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them" (*Symbolic* 2). Meaning, therefore, is central when looking at human activity and behavior. Humans create and manipulate symbols, and actions provide clues as to intentions or thoughts underlying behavior. Individuals communicate feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and values via symbolic representations. Symbols are not merely words, but also include commonly understood forms of nonverbal communication, such as facial and body gestures, sounds, or other communications.

In the second place, Blumer posited that "...the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows"

(*Symbolic 2*). In other words, the source of meaning is important, and meaning originates in the social setting. Meaning is socially constructed and defined. It is not intrinsic to the object, or an individualized cognitive or psychological response to an object. The creation and transmission of culture and history stem from this symbolic world that is a direct result of social interaction and the creation and maintenance of meaning. Meaning, in Blumer's view, shifts, changes, and develops in context.

Thirdly, Blumer proffered that "...these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters" (2). Blumer explains interpretation further, conceptualizing the interpretation of meaning as an evolving process that is useful in guiding and forming action. 'Process' and 'emergence' relate closely to Blumer's definition of interpretation, principally due to the dynamic web of social interactions that impact the decoding of socially-constructed meaning. The creation of social meaning and symbolic representations, together with their interpretation, involve constant fluidity, meaning negotiation, and change. Negotiation, fluidity, and "streams of activity" define the interpretative process in the social setting ("*Symbolic*", *Dictionary of Sociology*).

These three premises underlie all symbolic interactionist frameworks, in spite of the plethora of perspectives that use the interactionist label. Blumer expanded his foundational work to explain a number of root images or central concepts that are increasingly important to interactionism. The following section includes elaboration of each of the root images developed by Blumer, Stryker, and Musolf. I begin with interactionist definitions of objects, symbolic meaning, individual action and joint action, social structures, and society. In terms of Maya colonial and post-colonial experiences, each of the interactionist concepts will be useful in my investigation of social interactions, demonstrations of power, and the varied interpretation of historical and contemporary events. Symbolic interactionism provides useful operationalized definitions of social processes that I use in my reading and evaluation of Maya texts.

Root Images in Symbolic Interactionism: Objects and Symbolic Representations of Meaning

For the interactionist, an object is defined as anything that can be indicated or referred to, whether concrete and physical or abstract and theoretical. Objects may include physical, social, or other abstract objects or thoughts. Blumer wrote that “[t]he meaning of objects for a person arises fundamentally out of the way they are defined to him by others with whom he interacts” (*Symbolic* 11). Meaning and its attribution are negotiated and defined through social interaction, and socially constructed meanings for objects guide behavior toward those objects.

Objects are social creations, in that the meaning and symbols used to identify meaning are socially defined. Social interaction changes or perpetuates particular meanings, and society is “a process in which objects are being created, affirmed, transformed, and cast aside” (Blumer, *Symbolic* 12). Blumer addressed the conceptual flaw of some philosophers by identifying an object as anything that can be indicated, rather than anything that can be sensed or observed using sensory data. In this way, he makes the conceptual bridge from physical objects to non-physical ideas or abstractions as relevant to the process of meaning formation for individuals in the social world (Putnam 57-81).

Concerning meaning and symbols, Blumer suggested in his 1969 work that meaning is negotiated, constructed, and acted upon. Furthermore, objects and their meanings are “human constructs and not self-existing entities with intrinsic natures” (*Symbolic* 68). Therefore, selective attention and human interaction in the social environment create meaning; the meaning or significance of objects does not exist independently of one’s ability to create and recognize meaning.

With regard to objects and the symbolic representation of meaning, symbolic interaction is closely related to semiology and the related structural linguistic work of Charles Peirce, Ferdinand de Saussure, and French structuralist Roland Barthes. Semiologists may investigate signs, symbols, and related systems in language usage.

In some cases, semiologists address socially negotiated meaning associated with particular signs or symbols, and how language is used to interpret, create, reinforce, or alter meaning. In this context, speech refers to speech acts, such as vocalization, whereas language refers in this context to the structure of signs underlying speech. Most importantly, symbols and meanings attached to objects can be assessed to interpret and understand social patterns.

Similarly, George Herbert Mead also looked at the use of symbolism in language within the social context. He tied the use of language and associated meanings to agency and individual action, all key components of interactionism today. According to Mead's formulation, individuals create and respond to meaning in the social realm. Individuals are both influenced by and influencing culture, society, and the meanings attributed to language, experiences, and objects. 'Symbolic' in this context refers to conceptual representations of meaning in reference to objects. Language and usage are critical components of the interactionist understanding of the meaning and symbolism attached to objects.

The social environment consists only of objects that can be referred to or indicated. Importantly, though, as illustrated in the hypothetical case of the rural school project, individual perception and meaning attribution is often varied. This is due, in part, to the fact that symbolic representations of meaning focus attention on important, salient features of an object. Some individuals and groups may focus on a particular aspect of an object, while selectively ignoring other aspects. In this way, individuals inhabiting the same space, indicating or referring to the same objects, will often interpret objects differently.

Root Images in Symbolic Interactionism: Individual Action

Action more generally describes the manifestation of self based on symbolic representations and meanings that individuals create for objects. Actors (individuals) do not act solely as determined by internal or external forces. Rather, they construct

action based on a combination of meanings, needs, motives, and other influences. Habitual behavior does not necessarily require active reflection and construction based on meaning, but changing situations require dynamic definitions and meaning attribution. This is not to suggest, however, that there are no constraints to behavior and behavioral repertoires. Socially-constructed restraints and systems of power often restrict the behavioral options available to actors. At the same time, variance in meaning attribution explains variation in behavior under similar circumstances.

Agency and interpretation relate directly to the interactionist conception of action, in that the interpretation of meaning and agency drive the social act. Denzin describes agency as the "locus of action", whether it be located in the individual, structures of language, or other processes (82). With the inclusion of agency, interactionists signal their understanding of individuals as 'selves', and not merely passive actors moved upon by external forces (Blumer, "Symbolic" 73). The person in society is not a passive component of a larger system that shifts and moves predictably under specific circumstances. On the contrary, individuals with agency, acting on the basis of the meaning they hold for objects, demonstrate a wide range of behaviors in similar situations. Blumer points out that agency is the key to understanding variation in human systems. Again, this does not necessarily reject or ignore other factors that may, in fact, limit behavioral choice or agency.

Interactionists do, however, acknowledge the presence of human agency and interpretative behavior in society. Musolf recognizes the dichotomy between agency and limits to behavior when he discusses "...the fact that we make culture, history, and policy though not under conditions of our own choosing" (8).

Though action generally arises from a combination of individual agency and the interpretation of meaning (admittedly within certain boundaries or constraints), there are instances in which action is almost entirely restricted or controlled. When evaluating the self in the social context and limits to action, Stryker points out that "if the social person is shaped by interaction, it is social structure that shapes the possibilities for interaction and so, ultimately, the person" (66). Erving Goffman

demonstrated this interaction between the self, action, and social structure. He studied psychiatric patients as examples of individuals in a “total institution”, where ‘self’ is imposed by others (in this case, doctors and staff) (Musolf 128). In his 1963 case study, *Asylums*, Goffman illustrated the struggle of individual actors against what Musolf calls an “oppressive social situation” (128). Goffman effectively demonstrated how institutions and power structures can dramatically alter social exchanges and communication through a lack of empathy, rigid structures, rules, norms, and divergent narratives in which meaning is neither agreed upon nor negotiated.

In instances such as the one evaluated by Goffman, institutional structures, norms, and systems of power may block action, preventing the expression of agency and interpretation in the social setting. However, this type of ‘total institution’ is not limited to the controlled setting of an in-patient psychiatric hospital. Particularly in the colonial period, Yucatec Maya communities found their options for action and agency severely curtailed as a result of non-Maya dominance and control. I contend that the Mayas experienced the type of “oppressive social situation” that Goffman identified in a 1960s psychiatric hospital, one in which rigidity, control of resources by non-Mayas and long-established norms disenfranchised Maya groups, leaving them impoverished and in a state of dependence that persists today.

In the present study of colonial and post-colonial Maya experience, the intersection of agency and its constraints will be of particular interest. I look specifically at instances in which non-Maya colonial authorities limited behavioral choices and individual agency. I also examine scenarios that demonstrate agency and action in the service of productive change. In this context, the interactionist interpretation of individual action provides a clear framework for evaluating action and agency among the Mayas of Yucatán.

Root Images in Symbolic Interactionism: Joint Action

Within an interactionist framework, humans are socially connected, not operating or acting independently. Like objects, the 'self' exists in relation to other 'selves', and is defined in the social context. Joint action is made up of the combined actions of individuals, yet it is greater than the sum of individual actions. Joint action, writes Blumer, refers to more than a random collection of individual acts, and must undergo a formative process in order to be considered 'joint' in the interactionist sense (*Symbolic* 17). Joint actions, then, are cohesive, integrated, and purposeful. Moreover, new joint actions always arise out of past actions. They are situated and dependent, not spontaneously emerging apart from their social contexts.

Mead described two types of interaction in the social setting. Symbolic interactions include an interpretation of others' actions, whereas non-symbolic actions consist of non-interpreted response to the actions of others, or reflex actions. Similarly, social interaction may be divided into unfocused v. focused action, or casual and unintentional v. intentional action. Joint social interactions are fluid, changing, and sensitive to the actions of others. Joel Charon outlines four aspects of joint action (social interaction) in the context of interactionism. He surmises that social interaction creates and defines human qualities, affects individual responses to situations, creates identity, and builds society. For Charon, cooperation characterizes social interaction.

Joint action that is "repetitive and stable" includes action that is expected and based on agreed-upon meaning (Blumer *Symbolic* 19). This suggests the expectation of certain behavioral patterns, together with potential change and negotiation. Thus, social interactions renew or alter repeated joint action. For example, many rural Mayas base agricultural practices on predictable, established patterns of interaction between families, non-Mayas, and other individuals. Planting schedules, harvesting methods, the storage and processing of *maíz*, and other subsistence practices continue

with minor adaptations to seasonal weather patterns, availability of land and other resources, and changing family needs. Rapid cultural change due to assimilation, depletion of arable land, loss of acreage, and conflict with non-Maya neighbors all pressure Maya groups to re-negotiate joint actions, often to their detriment. As resources become scarcer because of population growth and extended periods of drought, individuals and their joint action must adapt to changing realities. As Maya individuals and families in the social setting assess their changing situation, social-structural constraints and the subjective meanings attached to 'objects' (situations, resources, and other factors influencing change) will determine future joint action.

A definition of joint action is critical to a formulation of symbolic interactionism because it expands the individualistic, person-centered approach into structural and social systems analysis. Much of my analysis of Maya experiences will evaluate joint action and its effects, historically and presently. I understand joint action as the intermediate-level unit of analysis that bridges individual experience with society as a whole. When evaluating Maya texts, I identify subjective meaning attached to objects that led to joint action during colony and the period immediately following independence. As I identify joint action, I also analyze the impact of that joint action on larger social structures and society as a whole.

Root Images in Symbolic Interactionism: Society and Structures

Traditional models in the social sciences often depicted society as either structural (external and imposed) or dynamic (dynamic, individualized, and changing). Early symbolic interactionism, for its part, took a dynamic view of society, neglecting its structural components. Into the 1970s, Blumer and other interactionists faced increasing criticism for symbolic interactionism's failure to address systems of power and other social structures. In the post-1970s context, this led to a renewed focus in interactionism on both agency or action and structure, including interest in

such concepts as cultural domination, resistance, agency, the reproduction of power and inequality, and so on (Musolf 97).

The addition of a structural focus is the most important addition to SI since Blumer first outlined the approach between the 1930s and 1960s. Critical to present conceptions of symbolic interactionism is a comprehensive framework that allows for both individual and structural analysis. As Stryker points out, "...a focus on the person without a correlative focus on social structure, or vice-versa, is necessarily partial and incomplete" (53). Interactionists presently focus on individual and joint action, as well as macro-level structures, in order to understand and examine power, hierarchies, and other systems that disenfranchise or oppress.

'System' is defined by interactionists as the interactive relationship between mutually dependent 'parts' or 'units' (Stryker). Differentiated relationships exist between various parts of the system, and all groups in society are considered systems of interaction. However, not all systems of interaction are necessarily groups, and the system as a whole is made up of more than the sum total of all groups. Political institutions, religions, and other institutions also contribute to the whole, as well as the interaction between groups.

Musolf identifies limits to agency within systems of power when he defines 'structure' as "...the innumerable social facts over which the individual qua individual, does not have much control and which he or she cannot escape" (6). He goes on to discuss 'meta-power', identifying powerful actors who make political, religious, or other decisions that affect other actors more dynamically than in normal, person-to-person interaction. In this way, Musolf begins to outline a theory of power relations in the social setting. He frames change and justice in terms of collective struggle rooted in the agency of the individual, suggesting that individual agency often defies structure, through negotiation and power struggle (99). They are not opposites, he claims, but intertwined aspects of society, in which agency is constrained by structures and structures are affected and shaped by individual agency. Constraint is facilitated through roles and rules, and encoding helps

maintain power. Social reproduction—what Musolf labels stability—stands in stark contrast to social transformation or change. Regarding the question of determinism, Musolf recognizes that external factors and structures are critical and provide meaning and constrain actions, but they do not *determine* final outcomes. Most importantly, though, structure and agency interplay constantly, and the tension between them shapes the social system.

Sheldon Stryker has also outlined a leading structural theory for interactionism, building on Blumer's work, yet departing from Blumer's vision on several key points. Specifically, Stryker writes that Blumer's version of interactionism could not be adequately operationalized, could not be tested empirically, and lacked a clear focus on structures beyond the individual and basic groups in society. Nevertheless, Stryker's expansion of interactionism is just that: he builds on the foundational work of Blumer to create a more comprehensive and complete model of society and social interaction based on a pragmatic, person-centered approach to the study of social systems. He addresses self and mind in the social context vis-à-vis Mead, and he defines 'structure' as "patterned regularities" that make up most social interactions (65). Society creates 'self', and 'self' organizes social behavior. Like Musolf, Stryker identifies the interplay between individuals and structures, arguing that 'society', 'individual', and 'person' are abstractions that depend on each other for definition. The individual *and* structure or society are both necessary to understand social interaction. Structural themes are actually an integral part of interactionism and organically derive from Blumer's work, writes Stryker. They simply must be identified and developed further.

In his enlargement of Blumer's work, Stryker has outlined a more complete interactionist framework that includes both individual and structural components. According to Stryker, interactionism ought to include the following premises:

- i) Behavior depends on named, classified, and meaning-laden objects (these are all aspects of the environment);

- ii) Symbols indicate 'positions', which are social structural components. Shared behavioral expectations (roles) are derived from these positions;
- iii) People in social systems identify one another and have expectations of behavior because of positions;
- iv) People also reflexively identify themselves, and this creates expectations for one's own behavior;
- v) People label other individuals, situations, and themselves in order to organize behavior;
- vi) All of this does not determine behavior, but it may constrain behavior. Behavior emerges in the role-making process, in which individuals engage in subtle, tentative, and probing exchanges;
- vii) 'Open' and 'closed' structures may allow for behavioral flexibility (or not), but all pose some limits on definitions of behavior; and
- viii) When roles are flexible and "made rather than only played", changes in behavior can lead to wider social change (55).

The emphasis in Stryker's outline of an interactionist framework still overwhelmingly emphasizes the individual and agency, yet it also contains the formulation of social systems and structural components as they interact with and impact individual experience, interaction, roles, and behavior.

Interactionist definitions of 'society' are equally symbolic, also emphasizing the symbolic nature of interaction and communication. Unlike Talcott Parsons, interactionists assert that society does not cohere because of shared 'core values' or values systems. Musolf points out that "[o]n the surface it may appear that people must share values to interact, but power, convenience, self-interest, and the like may be the magnet rather than a presupposed value consensus" (117). Strife and antagonism are part of complex systems, and joint action constitutes society. Joel Charon defines society more positively, as "social interaction that is symbolic, that is characterized by cooperation, and that develops culture" (162). For Charon,

cooperation, not conflict, binds individuals in the collective act of society. Whether one views society as fundamentally cooperative or conflicting, interactionists claim that society is, nonetheless, made up of individual interaction and agency and the systems that emerge from those interactions.

Society and social interactions are not random, but patterned. Blumer reiterated the non-deterministic stance of interactionism when he suggested that society is the frame for action, but does not ultimately determine action. He postulated that "...such organization and changes in it are the product of the activity of acting units and not of 'forces' which leave such acting units out of account" (*Symbolic* 87). Consequently, interactionism emphasizes the constructed nature of social systems and society, basing analysis of society on individual meaning, communication, and interaction. Structures and systems in society may constrain individual behavior, but they are the creation and result of human interaction and agency.

The expanded interactionist approach has allowed interactionists to re-assess the question of agency in the dichotomous social setting, a setting in which one encounters both individual agency and structural constraints on behavior. Denzin, for instance, has asked whether agency and meaning should be localized in individuals, experience, or in the social structure itself (82). Questions of "which came first?" aside, the expansion of symbolic interactionism and subsequent focus on power and social change provide the cultural studies researcher with a comprehensive framework from which to assess social dynamics at any and every level. In my presentation and reading of Maya experiences and interactions with non-Mayas, I utilize a dual focus on micro- and macro-level social interaction based on the meanings that individuals create and assign to objects. Using case study and individual perspectives alongside structural analysis, I show patterns of interaction, communication, and symbolic interaction that link colonial experiences with post-colonial conditions for Yucatec Mayas. Finally, I use the comprehensive framework of symbolic interactionism to analyze systems of power, hierarchies, and systems

that have historically disenfranchised and detrimentally affected various Maya groups in Yucatán.

Procedure and Method in Symbolic Interactionism

Herbert Blumer, though he opposed traditional quantitative research methods in social science, outlined a number of methodological positions for interactionism in *Symbolic Interactionism*. For Blumer, interactionist research falls either into the category of exploration or inspection. Exploratory research, narrative accounts, open-ended questioning, and conversations all ground research in the empirical social world, while also refining and narrowing the scope, purpose, and questions of study. Inspection, on the other hand, widens exploration in the sense that the exploratory material may be developed further using any number of qualitative (or quantitative) methods available to the social scientist. The difference between exploration and inspection is the difference between descriptive and analytical research.

Blumer also insisted on the selection and adaptation of methods to suit the “empirical world” (*Symbolic* 60). Accordingly, “[s]ymbolic interactionism recognizes that the genuine mark of an empirical science is to respect the nature of its empirical world—to fit its problems, its guiding conceptions, its procedures of inquiry, its techniques of study, its concepts, and its theories to that world” (48). Abstract, theoretical models would not substitute for the practical, concrete analysis of lived interaction that Blumer sought for interactionism. As a result, symbolic interactionists embed themselves in the social world, engaged, present, and observational in their methods of data collection and analysis.

Blumer introduced a number of “if/then” scenarios to consider for interactionist research. Firstly, if individuals “act on the basis of the meaning of their objects”, then one must view objects as the people in the social context see them (50). Doing this avoids the creation of a fictitious world that does not reflect the cultural perspectives of the individuals and societies in question. The perspective of the

acting individual or unit matters for effective and accurate analysis. Secondly, if society is made up of people acting toward one another and interpreting one another's actions, then one's approach to behavior and society must be carefully developed to assess the construction of meaning and its interpretation. Multiple forms of assessment may be necessary, as "the process of social interaction is not constrained to any single form" (*Symbolic* 54). Thirdly, if social action consists of individual and collective actions, then joint action becomes the focal point of research. Action is constructed, not passive. External factors influence action but do not determine behavior, and action is a fluid, interpretive, and reflexive process by individuals. Because of this nature of action, its formation and development are of interest to the interactionist. Fourthly and finally, if large social complexes are made up of individual actors and the interactions between them, then large complexes cannot be seen as entirely separate entities or forces beyond the scope of action. Stability and stable forms of joint action are not fixed, but depend on continued assent and support by individual actions and actors. Hence, "...large-scale organization has to be seen, studied, and explained in terms of the process of interpretation engaged in by the acting participants as they handle the situations at their respective positions in the organization" (*Symbolic* 58).

Like Blumer, Denzin argues that descriptive accounts or narratives are the most effective and useful ways to get at the perspectives of the people and groups being studied. Narrative and contextualization are paramount, what Denzin calls the "narrative turn" (85). Narrative represents experience, while coherence and meaning may be extracted from narratives and other cultural text. Denzin describes narrative in interactionism as "various stories about the social world, stories people tell themselves about their lives and the worlds they live in, stories that may or may not work" (85). Discourse often relates to power, truth, and whose version of truth will predominate. Narrative is clearly of central importance as a method in symbolic interactionism.

Stryker criticized Blumer's rejection of quantitative methods in favor of qualitative ones; dogmatic refusal to consider particular methods is not a necessary component of interactionism. Stryker and other interactionists have advocated a broad array of both quantitative and qualitative methods, chosen to suit the research question. In selecting methods to suit the empirical social world, interactionists avoid the forced use of methods from the physical sciences in the social context. Interactionist questions, approach, and methods come from familiarity with the group being studied, rather than from a pre-conceived model or theoretical scheme. This is perhaps one of interactionism's clearest uses of a pragmatic approach, in which the researcher relies on the reading of text, observation, and empirical validation, rather than on abstracted theories or models. Later criticism notwithstanding, Blumer argued not for standardization of research methods, but for an improvement of "their capacity as instruments for discovering what is taking place in actual group life" ("Symbolic" 69). Regardless of the specific methods chosen for investigation, interactionist research methods must be capable of accurately reflecting social conditions as much as possible.

Generally speaking, interactionists limit general theories and generalized theories of 'the whole'. Interactionists also limit theories that remove the experiences of people interacting, or those that focus entirely on macro systems. Theorists also dislike disembodied experience, what Denzin calls —"objectif[ied] and quantif[ied] human experience" (83). The creation and application of progressive, positive solutions to complex social problems is also an abiding concern of symbolic interactionists (Musolf 113). Thus, interactionism does not necessitate a rejection of all scientific methodology, but does impede the imposition of one particular type or method. Interactionists attempt to allow diverse methods of inquiry within a comprehensive frame of study.

Conclusion

Symbolic interactionism rejects biological determinism while recognizing social structural constraints to behavior and individual action. Interactionism focuses principally on symbols and the construction of meaning, including the use of language and other communication to indicate meaning. Meaning is negotiated, created, maintained, or altered through an interpretive, interactive process. Therefore, interactionism centers on both individual and joint action, and includes social systems as emergent processes originating in action. That is, society is seen as a process, rather than a fixed institution or structure. Social systems begin with organic units (individuals and interpersonal relations) before expanding to larger systems, structures, and society as a whole. Current definitions of interactionism include emphases on individual actors and social structures, though the interactionist approach begins with the individual and moves toward progressively larger systems. Cooperation and joint action form the basis of society, and the 'self' for the interactionist exists as a social construction, based on interaction with others.

The methods and approaches used in interactionism allow for subjectivity and the de-construction of universalism, yet interactionists typically emphasize power and power structures, providing a response to perceived inequality in the social system. Interactionists select methods based on their usefulness, choosing methods that are best suited to the research questions at hand. Multiple forms of assessment focus on joint action and systems as the creation of individual and joint action. Regardless of the methods chosen for an interactionist approach, the selection process advances pragmatically, rather than dogmatically or ideologically.

My Methodological Framework

For my analysis of colonial and post-colonial interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas in Yucatán, I have developed a comprehensive interactionist matrix of social systems (see figure 1.1 below). I use the symbolic interactionist framework, in

particular, to approach and evaluate power and power structures in the Maya context. I focus on subjective meaning and interpretation of events, experiences, and situations, and how meaning varies from Maya to non-Maya groups. I evaluate the ways in which language, symbols, and joint action have linked colonial and post-colonial Maya experiences, and how subjective frames of reference have perpetuated the status quo for the Mayas of Yucatán. Finally, I explore systems of power that have disenfranchised the Maya, based on the active exercise of power by non-Mayas through their interaction with Maya individuals and communities across the peninsula. As I survey these and other issues in the present study, I evaluate my results using the interactionist matrix (figure 1.1), also using the methodology matrix as an instrument of analysis. In terms of other research methods, I use a combination of case study and narrative analysis. I also use techniques from Critical Discourse Analysis to evaluate the construction of meaning in text, as it relates to Maya experience and power structures. The following figure further illustrates my methodological approach in the present study.

Figure 1.1 illustrates a symbolic interactionist framework. The upper half of the diagram illustrates the variable scale of cultural studies, including the three-fold interactionist focus on individuals (actors), joint action (groups), and structure (society). Within interactionism, social systems begin with the individual (and Cooley's "organic units") before expanding to systems and structures.

Interactionists eschew universalism, and some reject the relativism of neo-pragmatists. This leads one to a contextualized approach that is culturally-relative. The matrix emphasizes the bottom-up materiality of social interaction, as well as marginalized individuals or groups. Structures that have emerged as a result of interactions of power or power relations, inequality, and hierarchical structures that affect peripheral groups are likewise of interest to the interactionist.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST FRAMEWORK

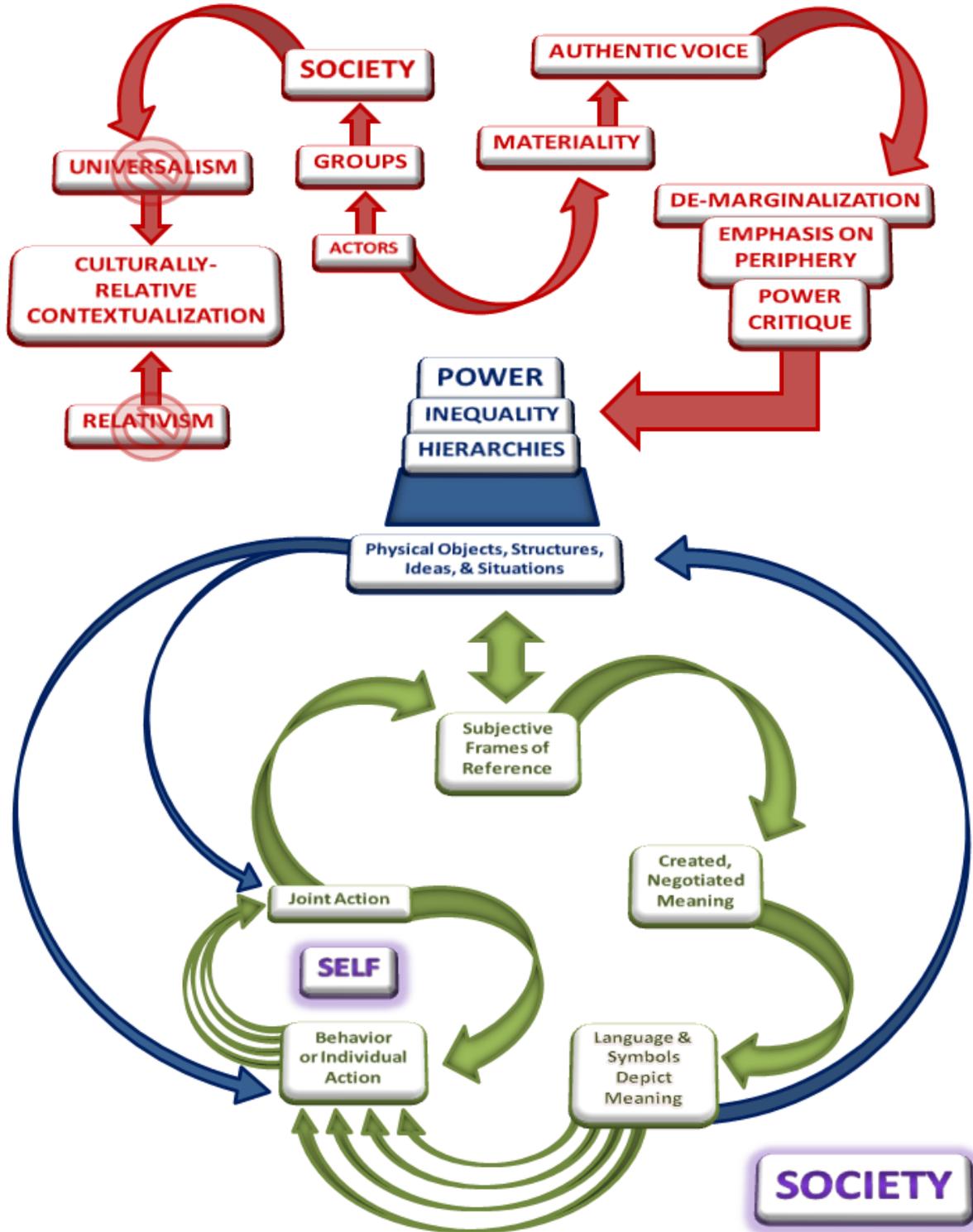


Figure 1.1: Symbolic Interactionist Framework

The bottom half of figure 1.2 demonstrates an interactionist conception of self, action, and society. Subjective perspective leads to negotiated meaning in the social context. Meaning is constructed through the social process, and individuals take action on the basis of the meaning that they hold for objects (anything that may be indicated or referred to). Language and symbols link subjective meaning to action. As Blumer has noted, variation in subjective meaning leads to behavioral differences in similar situations, under similar conditions. Multiple arrows in the diagram between “Language and Symbols” and “Behavior or Individual Action” reflect the different behaviors and actions of individuals that result from subjective interpretations. This also reflects the individual focus in interactionism and the interactionist commitment to reflecting social realities as accurately and comprehensively as possible.

Note also the use of multiple arrows between individual action and joint action. According to Mead, cooperation forms the basis of society, and Dewey intimated that shared action and associations build to form society. In light of this, the multiple arrows coming from individual action represent the multiple streams of action in society that come together cooperatively to form joint action. Joint action in interactionism is more than the sum total of disparate actions. Cooperative individual efforts form joint action, even though such joint action is not necessarily free of conflict.

The blue (dark) arrows in the symbolic interactionist context represent the renewed focus vis-à-vis Mead and Stryker on both individual agency and structure in society. The arrows depict feedback from the created system toward the individual and joint action, indicating constraints or limits to action. That is, although social structures emerge from individual and joint action, structures also, in turn, limit or frame action. In this way, interactionism maintains a non-deterministic stance while allowing for structural constraints and limits to action.

As meaning in society forms through interaction and negotiation, symbols maintain systems of power and the status quo. That is, the language and symbols

used to depict meaning directly contribute to the maintenance or de-construction of structures, hierarchies, and power systems in society. The blue (dark) arrow on the right-hand side of the diagram illustrates this link between symbols used by individuals and the overarching social system. The two blue (dark) arrows on the left-hand side indicate the reciprocal nature of action between individuals and the social systems. Specifically, just as individual and joint action shapes the system, so, too, are individual actions shaped and constrained by the social system. Individuals and groups are not free to act without constraint within the social system, but neither is behavior determined by the system. Thus, the social system and individual behavior progress in constant flux, shaping and affecting one another in innumerable ways.

Figure 1.1 also indicates 'self' inside the loop between individual and joint action. According to Baldwin, 'self' is a social construction, and Cooley wrote that the social context determines the perception and reflection of 'self'. In the diagram, self exists only in the interplay between individual and joint action, all within the social context. 'Self' and 'society' in this diagram are processes, according to the interactionist view.

Symbolic interactionism offers a pragmatic framework for social research, allowing for subjectivity, individual agency, and the construction of meaning in the cultural context. Interactionism provides a bottom-up approach to the study of individuals, groups, culture, and society. Theorists within the framework reject universalism and embrace a structural analysis of power and power structures. Before using my interactionist framework to assess Maya and non-Maya interactions during the colonial and post-colonial periods, I now turn to an interactionist definition of power.

Two: Power Relations

Theories of power and power relations are paradoxical: they are plentiful in the social sciences, yet surprisingly vague and poorly articulated. Discussions of power or relations of power can be found in most disciplines related to society, culture, politics, and economics, yet many authors struggle to identify the source, nature, or characteristics of power in society (Borgatta and Montgomery). In order to understand the diverse experiences of various Maya individuals and groups, grappling with the idea of power and the unequal nature of historical power relations between Maya and non-Maya groups seems crucial. Understanding power, its uses or manifestations, and its effects will ultimately highlight inequalities or disadvantages between Mayas and non-Mayas. Power, whether structural, individual, or a combination of the two, must be clearly identified and understood before critical social and cultural analysis may be considered complete. That is to say that a critical approach to the experiences of individuals and groups should not be divorced from analyses of power relations.

In my interactionist analysis of Maya and non-Maya interactions, understanding the transaction of power at each level of interaction is of central concern. Interactions between individuals, groups, and institutional representatives are imbued with intimations of power, but just what does that signify? What does it

mean to suggest that power infuses the daily interactions between Maya and non-Maya individuals or groups?

I begin my analysis of power relations theory with an overview of several sociological conceptions of power. I then present an interactionist approach to the experiences of power in the social and cultural context. I propose a four-part understanding of power within the symbolic interactionist framework that I diagrammed in chapter 1 (see fig. 1.1):

- i) Power is a *process* or *interactional transaction*, such as discourse or communication;
- ii) Power is the control or manipulation of resources;
- iii) Power is negotiation; and
- iv) Power is legal and social rule-setting or the definition of situations.

From a contextualized interactionist perspective, each of these observations ground the definition of power in the lived, experienced world. Access to (and the ability to control or manipulate) resources, and the ability to set up or control social parameters are two concrete ways to understand and define power. The use of negotiation and communication also illustrate power in a transactional sense. Interactionism emphasizes the subjective, created meanings associated with objects, and I rely heavily on this framework in my analysis of power and negotiation or interactional transaction. I will explore each of these in detail, and I argue that power is best defined and understood contextually as the access to and control of resources, regardless of the type of resource in question.

Historical Development of Sociological Power Relations Theories

General Theories of Power and Power Relations

Sociology contains various theoretical schools of thought. As a result, definitions of power are often contested and vague. Tellingly, Borgatta and

Montgomery's substantial five-volume 2000 reference work for sociology does not contain an entry for 'power'. The listing for *Power* refers the reader to *Bureaucracy*, *Interpersonal Power*, or *Social Organization*. Interpersonal power, as defined by the authors, is quite similar to an interactionist understanding of power, and 'resources' are defined broadly, including physical, social, emotional, or other resources, and not simply physical possessions. The sociological discussion of power largely centers on alternate definition of power and its manifestations. Power may be seen within a sociological approach as either oppressive and controlling or 'empowering' or strengthening, or a combination of the two. Weberian, Marxist, and Parsonian sociologists all have unique approaches to the questions of power in society, and I use many of their diverse contributions in my own interactionist framework of power in the Maya context.

Weber provides a foundational understanding of power frameworks in sociology, and Hurst summarizes Weber's approach to power as the realization of one's will in spite of resistance. Despite the shortcomings of this definition of power, it hints at a more important aspect of power from an interactionist framework: power is an *act*, or is exhibited through interaction. The exercise or realization of one's 'will' implies action, and it is in this context of action that interactionists concern themselves with power. Within a traditional Weberian framework, power is defined as the likelihood of successfully imposing one's 'will' in a social setting, without regard for resistance. Domination, then, may be understood as the probability of a group obeying a particular command. Individuals exercise power with agency, and power is seen as negative and restricting, something that deprives the powerless. Resistance or conflict may result due to the nature of social relations and social hierarchies, because those with or without power maintain their respective, differing interests and goals. Critics of a Weberian approach to power argue that an emphasis on choice and conscious decisions to exercise power ignores or downplays the reality of structural constraints on agency or behavior.

According to a traditional Marxist sociology, power is structural, not dependent on will or influence, and results from class structure. Nicos Poulantzas explained power in terms of the ability to achieve goals, and he relied heavily on Gramsci's idea of hegemony. A Marxist understanding of power necessarily includes a critique of economy and class, and differs somewhat from other sociological schools in its clear structural approach to the nature and expressions of power.

Within U.S. sociology since Talcott Parsons, power has been defined broadly, and not necessarily as conflict-based or involving coercion. Parsons defined power as a positive 'capacity' in the social setting, the ability to achieve communal goals. In this view, and in that of R. Dahl, power and influence are indistinguishable. For Parsons, power represents the potential to achieve goals or successfully exert influence, and power results from i) collective expectations or goals, ii) the degree of variance allowed within a system, and iii) resource control (*Essays* 391).

Parsons similarly defines 'authority' as influence on others based on institutionalized expectations and group-level interactions. He defines authority as "the legitimized right (and/or obligation) to control the actions of others in a social relationship system" (*Essays* 409). It seems that in describing the development of power and authority in a system, Parsons naively conceptualizes an amiable social environment where despotic leaders or individuals resisting the status quo would be restrained by 'collective valuation' or 'permitted' deviance within the system. This also seems to ascribe a significant degree of choice to the actors, when, in the case of the Mayas, individuals and groups often face a very restricted set of 'choices', if they can even be considered 'choices' in any meaningful way. The implementation of government education and infrastructure programs in rural Maya regions may not reflect the 'choices' of Maya communities, for instance, but the 'imposition' of non-Maya goals, strategies, or interests in regions where Maya groups predominate (numerically, if in no other way).

Whereas Weberian and Parsonian theorists emphasize choice and the individual, Marxist theorists focus primarily on the group or class, to the exclusion of

the individual. The ideological impetus of Marx and the Marxist tradition would seem to limit the capacity of Marxist models to deal with regional, societal, or civilizational variations, due to the universal nature of Marxist claims regarding power and its manifestations. The same could also be said of traditional Weberian and Parsonian theorists, in that they neglect important structural aspects of social systems while generalizing their models of power across cultures, societies, and systems. This is one of the reasons I think it is necessary to formulate an applied model of power relations in the Maya context, rather than attempting to expound on theories of (supposed) universal application. An interactionist model of power relations integrates all levels of social interaction—individual, joint, and collective—into a comprehensive framework of power that is grounded in a particular social and cultural setting.

Structuralism and Foucault

Structuralists generally conceptualize power in terms of the social systems in which power resides (Barnes). Anticipating the interactionist framework, though, Foucault developed the idea of power as interaction—even structural—and as a system of relations (Foucault 93). Power, he suggests, is produced interactively, and is intentionally wielded according to specific goals or objectives. One cannot ‘obtain’ power, but power may be ‘exercised’, all within the context of social interaction. Power relations embed themselves in various political, economic, religious, and social systems, as confrontation and “cleavages” demonstrate at all levels of social interaction (94). Most importantly, though, power does not reside in structures or institutions.

For Foucault, repression is the nature of power, in the sense that power and resistance are simultaneously present in the interplay of unequal relations. This interplay of power depends, in fact, on resistance and an “adversary” (95). Resistance or challenges to established societal norms subvert the power paradigm, “defying

established power” (6). Furthermore, resistance is not always reactionary or neutralized by the ‘established power’; like power, resistance can be diffused, multiple, and processual (96).

For some, Foucault’s understanding of power connects it with knowledge, insomuch as knowledge contributes to the exercise of power (Adams and Sydie). In Discourse Analysis, power is seen as a circular network. Power shifts and changes constantly, and may be seen to have positive uses. Foucault, in particular, expanded the definition of power from the Marxist interpretation, in which power is always exploitative. Nevertheless, the discursive relationship defines parameters and regulates behavior, in order to manage systems of power and norms. Discourse connects knowledge and power, while silence or censorship in discourse implies power.

Foucault examines power in terms of relations within systems, emphasizing the impersonal, non-individual aspects of rifts and divisions in society (92-3). In spite of the differences between a structuralist approach to society and that of an interactionist, Foucault’s influence on the latter is undeniable. Foucault did renew focus on individuals and social actors, unlike earlier structuralists who ignored this completely (Dennis and Martin). He also focused on institutional processes of power and subjectivity or the social context of self. Much like later interactionist understanding of subjective ‘frames’ and created, negotiated meaning, Foucault identified opposing ‘definitions’ and struggle (resistance to power) underlying social organization. In my own interactionist perspective, I use aspects of Foucault’s definition of power while analyzing the impact and use of power in interpersonal relationships as they build to form systems through joint action.

Exchange Theory

Exchange theorists orient their work behaviorally, focusing on social interaction and reward from a behaviorist framework. Power may be seen as

interaction and control, and resource control and manipulation figure prominently in exchange theories of power. Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, and Virk write that “Power rests fundamentally on the ability to control access to a particular good” (83). Social interaction and relationships are seen as ‘goods’ or ‘units’ of exchange, and in exchange theory, I perceive an inherent bias toward economic functions and economic definitions of society. Like rational choice analysts, exchange theorists seem to over-emphasize the role of individual choice and behavior while de-emphasizing structural constraints in the social setting. Cook and Rice define exchange theory as an interpersonal approach to sociology, and they highlight the work of Richard Emerson and Peter Blau to substantiate their claim.

Richard Emerson emphasizes structure and process in his theory of power-dependence relations. He focuses on balance of power and power’s relational basis, and also power as potential that is not necessarily exercised (Cook and Rice 703). Although interactionists would not define power as the potential to act (preferring, instead, to emphasize actual interactions), the relational basis of power resonates with an interactionist definition of power.

Emerson also defined networks of exchange, which he envisioned as individual units connected because of competition or other variables. Emerson looked at the (supposed) tendency for power imbalances to move toward balance and equilibrium. I would contest this from an interactionist standpoint, given numerous examples in the Maya (and non-Maya) contexts in which power was not freely ceded, nor were imbalances in power equalized over time. Despite what I see as significant problems with Emerson’s exchange theory on power, I do think that he illustrates the social nature of power, and the fact that power is exhibited within the social context as a process.

Peter Blau examined power and conflict at the institutional level. He compared economic v. social exchange, and focused on the emergent characteristics of interaction. He surmised that economic exchange made negotiation more explicit, but that social exchange would create greater inequality and room for

misinterpretation or misunderstanding (Cook and Rice). Like interactionists, he proposed that interactions lead to relations of power. For instance, Blau suggested that “A person who commands services others need, and who is independent of any at their command, attains power over others by making the satisfaction of their need contingent on their compliance” (101). In this way, Blau outlines power in the context of interaction, something central to my own definition of power from an interactionist approach. According to Blau, power executed fairly serves to reinforce the position of the superior, but actions seen by those less powerful as unfair or out of proportion prompt disapproval, which may be exhibited through negative actions such as revolt, rebellion, or other social resistance. Blau pointed out that the difference between individual feeling and group action matters, because “collective approval of power legitimates that power” (101). That is, if the perceived benefits of compliance within a system of power outweigh demands, this will translate into benign or positive comments about the person or group in power, further legitimizing the power structure.

I think Blau’s approach is useful in some ways for my own analysis, because he connects the interaction of power in society with larger social systems and structures. Though his approach is more theoretical than the interactionist approach I will outline in the following section, the exchange theory he presents does share some characteristics with interactionism. Most importantly, Blau attempts to connect his theoretical discussions of power with lived experience, aligning him with a more pragmatic (and perhaps even interactionist) approach to the study of power in society. Power differences are not merely defined as imbalance, “but also are actually experienced as such...” (102). In this way, Blau acknowledges the experienced, human impact of inequality and power relations in society, a hallmark of interactionist interpretations. Finally, the imbalance of power results in the impetus for change, another component of the pragmatic and interactionist approaches.

Feminist Sociology and Power

Parsons outlined a highly theoretical and de-contextualized definition of power, one consistent with abstracted mid-twentieth century sociological theory. As social struggle during the 1960s and 1970s came to the fore, sociological approaches to power and dominance also adapted to a changed social setting in the U.S. and Europe. Then an emergent perspective in sociology, feminist theory addressed two specific aspects of contemporary experience, according to Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, and Virk: inequality and the results of gender-based categories and their construction (11). Feminists called into question Foucault's masculine approach to the subject of power.³ Foucault suggests that power is everywhere in society, manifest both malevolently and benevolently. Feminists asked how, if this were the case, inequality and oppression may be undone, particularly if an explanation of power were not to address the inherent differences between powerful and powerless. Their critique of Foucault was a challenge to his rather uniform and uni-dimensional conception of power in society and a general view of power that would simply excuse or accept the status quo without critical reflection or periodic review. Ultimately, emancipatory ethics infused the feminist critique, and feminists argued for social change based on an analysis of power and power structures that oppressed some for the benefit of others.

Patricia Hill Collins, renowned feminist author and sociologist, emphasizes hierarchical relationships and oppression, with a particular emphasis on domination and inequality. Her work represents a challenge to the Euro-centric and male-oriented conceptions (and productions) of knowledge, and represents a new epistemology grounded in marginalized black women's experiences. She outlines the complex relations between domination and resistance, and identifies the "matrix of

³ Based on Herbert Blumer's work with industry in the U.S. during the mid-20th Century and his speculations on power, I think the same criticism may be leveled at Blumer, as well. In spite of this narrow approach to power that feminists rightfully challenged, interactionism and feminism are very closely related, in that they both address marginalized voices and perspectives using an intimate, contextualized approach.

domination” that acknowledges the interplay between dominating and being dominated (Adams and Sydie 231).

Dorothy Smith, another leading feminist sociologist, approaches social experience much like an interactionist, using bottom-up, contextualized approaches while avoiding universalist conceptions of ‘the whole’. Her relational, situated, person-centered approach develops from women’s experiences, rather than an objectification or abstract conceptualization of reality. This is what Smith calls “the embodied ground of our experiencing as women” (“Sociology” 89). In her approach, Smith does not require elaborate theoretical constructs, but develops relative formulations based on the felt, lived, experienced conditions of everyday or ‘everynight’ life.

In terms of power analysis, this leads Smith to question and problematize the “objectified institutional order” that includes every system—from government and education to cultural and social institutions—perpetuating the status quo (“Schooling” 1147). For Smith, the feminist distinctive sounds like an interactionist script, when she writes that “...the standpoint of women situates inquiry in the actualities of people’s living, beginning with their experience of living, and understands that inquiry and its product are in and of the same actuality” (“Sociology” 90). Furthermore, Smith challenges the idea of free agency within systems and hierarchies, emphasizing clear limits to agency in a range of social experiences.

In her important work, *The Conceptual Practices of Power*, Smith examines the “relations of ruling”, or the process of knowledge production and the perpetuation of power (4). Specifically, she focuses on the processes of language construction and language usage, and how these constitute ‘knowledge’. Thus, the seemingly ‘factual’, objective representations of reality portrayed through media, organizations, and other groups are anything but factual; structural relations of power dominate and permeate such ‘impressions’ (or “textual surfaces” [83]), and affect the presentation of text so created. This skewed construction and presentation of ‘knowledge’ results

in the displacement and marginalization of under-represented parties among those in a position to create such knowledge.

Smith outlines power relations between management and labor groups in industry, identifying instances of maneuvering, negotiation, and scheming between groups. She notes that power relations are fluid, changing, and somewhat unpredictable (*Conceptual* 238). Power relations involve compromise and re-evaluation, and depend on feedback loops between parties involved. As I will demonstrate in my interactionist approach to power, resources are a central focus of power relations. Similarly, Smith argues that “the marshaling and manipulation of resources” figure centrally in discussions of oppositional relationships and power relations (235).

According to Patricia Hill Collins, Smith’s work evaluates social structural constraints in discourse, and, in turn, the use of power in social relations. That is, Smith explores the connections between power, social structures, and the construction of cultural texts. In her paper on Rigoberta Menchú, for instance, Smith discusses the deconstruction of Menchu’s account by Stoll, and the practical effects that Stoll’s challenge to Menchu’s ‘facticity’ has had in perpetuating dominant, conservative meanings, ideas, ideologies, and conceptions (and, in turn, actions and policies based on such meanings and ideas). In this and other ways, ‘powerful’ people exercise power through the creation of ‘text’ that supports their status and position, ensuring its longevity. (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley). Furthermore, the ‘powerful’ define terms or conditions for others, (similar to what Peter Hall describes as “meta-power”⁴), arranging, dictating, and controlling situations while manipulating or controlling information and knowledge (McCarthy). In McCarthy’s reading of Smith, discourse and the use of meaning and symbols are integral in the exercise of power. The creation of cultural text and the

⁴ Peter Hall’s conception of ‘meta-power’ is a central component of an interactionist framework of power relations, and will be explored in detail in the following sections.

exercise and experience of power are also foci of the present study, albeit in the Maya context.

As I have shown, there is a natural symbiosis between Smith's formulation of sociology and the interactionist perspective. Through her grounded, embodied approach, Smith privileges lived experience over abstract theory, and seeks to present that experience as fully as possible. This is not to suggest false universalisms or ultimate, objective realities, but comprehensive frameworks that account for the nuances in perspective, experience, and social relations. Feminist sociology, though not necessarily considered interactionist, does, in fact, share a number of characteristics with symbolic interactionism, which I have highlighted here. Smith has disavowed the exclusive use of particular labels or approaches, yet I find her feminist framework to be very similar to interactionist approaches to sociology and social experience.

A Cultural Interactionist Framework of Power

Power is not often explicitly defined in interactionist research because discussions of power tend to be principally theoretical, whereas the pragmatic interactionist perspective emphasizes individual and joint interaction and experience (Dennis and Martin). Interactionists are less concerned with abstracted theory and more concerned with the practical effects of interactions that materially position one group over another or that privilege an individual or group in some way. An interactionist approach to power may focus on the lived, experienced effects of unequal power interactions on a relative scale. An interactionist 'theory of power' must be contextualized, because of the way in which power affects individuals and groups according to their situations, interpretative meaning, and social interactions.

No ultimate or absolute statements are made about the effects or nature of power within an interactionist perspective. Likewise, interactionists can assess past and present texts without framing them in the false dichotomy of right v. wrong or

similar reductionist perspectives. This moves the discussion beyond such statements as “power exercised by non-Mayan groups toward the Maya was wrong” toward a demonstration of the effects of power interactions over time and analysis of outcomes. That is, the subjective interpretation of situations emerges from a contextualized analysis of experiences and perspectives. More to the point, my subjective interpretation of colonial and contemporary Mayan experience builds, not ideologically, but out of a critical interpretation of cultural texts. My analysis of cultural texts necessarily develops from my own perspective and experience, both of which profoundly shape my writing and analysis. I do not attempt an ‘objective’ analysis that is final, complete, or absolute. Rather, using cultural texts and voices, I highlight patterns of interaction, individual and joint experiences, and the stories of marginalized individuals and groups. All of this I outline based on the interactions of power evident in textual representations of culture. At the end of the present chapter, I discuss my own perspective as a cultural ‘outsider’ with relation to the Maya. This is important to reflexively address in my research, particularly as my own social and cultural experiences affect and influence my analyses.

Interactionism provides a general, applied approach to the interactions between individuals and groups. This allows for analysis of how power is exhibited in context, through interaction. At the same time, I think there are a number of useful descriptions of power that may be useful in understanding power relations in a variety of settings. Thus, while avoiding universal claims regarding my interactionist conception of power relations, I will present a number of definitions of power that will apply at different times to different situations in the Maya setting. My conceptions of power as a process, as control or manipulation of resources, as negotiation, and as legal and social rule-setting may be seen in different contexts either individually or collectively, or perhaps not at all. I do think that each of the four principle areas of power relations that I outline in the remaining sections of this chapter is useful in understanding Maya experience, both colonial and contemporary. In chapters 3 and 4, I continue to build these definitions of power as I

examine cultural texts in the Maya context and lay out contextual evidence for my conceptions of power relations.

Power and Interactionism: General Considerations

Before laying out the ways in which power is exhibited as a social process (as negotiation, discourse, control of resources, and rule-setting), I now turn to a few general considerations regarding power in the social context. For the interactionist, power is not an abstract, metaphysical construct. Power, for the interactionist, is relational, embedded in context. The interpretation of power must be understood in the social, political, and historical context (Luckenbill; Hall and Wing in Musolf). The focus of research on power relations, then, ought to begin with the system in which power occurs, and on the processes which constitute power in context.

Pfohl compares and evaluates power, culture, and history as an interrelated network, or “a field of forces within which cultural practices are historically situated” (196). The exercise of power, he suggests, is inseparable from culture and cultural practices that develop within the network of relationships that are themselves imbued with varying degrees of power. With regard to culture, Pfohl writes that “...we have in mind social practices which are both symbolic and deeply material—the rituals of everyday life; the economic production and consumption of language, images, and discourse; the spatial and temporal mediation of subjective experience; the psychic and bodily impact of communicative technologies; and the historically-situated enactment of what we are attracted to or repulsed by” (191-2). It is my contention that Pfohl’s definition of culture is holistic and contextual, and it sums up the notion of culture within an interactionist framework. Luckenbill asserts that power is not a ‘capacity’ or human attribute, but a social process. If this is the case, then power may build, diminish, ebb and flow, or otherwise change, depending on the circumstance. Power is not fixed and immovable, but is negotiated, challenged,

contested, and debated. In these processes, individuals acting or participating in joint action demonstrate and exercise power.

To date, Luckenbill has outlined the most complete interactionist perspective on power and power relations. I agree with his evaluation of power as a social process, one that takes place in the lived environs of everyday life and experience. In his important outline of the processes of power and interaction, however, he suggests that “Power is characterized by open awareness” (104). I disagree with his assessment on this point, because though individual interactions may be straightforward and easy to interpret or understand (and I emphasize may), joint action may demonstrate power in ways that individual actors are unaware of. This relates to my earlier discussion of agency and structure, and the tension between individual action, joint action, and social systems.

Agency and Structure in Relations of Power

In chapter 1, I discussed the fluid nature of interactions between individuals, as well as joint action, the creation of the social self, structures or systems, and the feedback loops between each of these. When analyzing power relations, this framework of interaction provides useful tools for understanding and interpreting power as it is manifest in social interactions. How individuals or groups experience power in everyday experiences, and how structures limit or constrain possible outcomes are immediate concerns of an interactionist analysis of power. Furthermore, an interactionist framework replaces the false dualism of agency versus structure with a holistic approach that incorporates both agency and structure in the social analysis (Musolf; Hall, “Meta-Power”; Dennis and Martin). Symbolic interactionism addresses power and relations of power in all types of social interaction. Accordingly, power is present in all interactions, not only in interactions between elites and non-elites, or in other discreet, artificial categories such as ‘macro’ or ‘micro’.

Rejecting accusations that interactionists lack a structural focus, Dennis and Martin contend that symbolic interactionism contains the theoretical basis from which structures of power may be defined and studied. Athens argues that Mead's concept of the social origins of institutions implicitly suggest the interactionist commitment to 'the whole', and Low posits that Simmel's work on society as interaction or joint action influenced Blumer's development of interactionism as much as Mead's work on the self and action.

Hall, in particular, has provided useful interactionist ideas about social organization and the interplay between agency and structure, or the individual and larger groups or systems. Drawing from Blumer, Strauss, and others, Hall describes a complex relationship between actions, consequences, and the subsequent "conditions for future action" ("Meta-power" 400). His examination of educational legislation demonstrates how action can set conditions and parameters for future action, and how individuals in a position to create social rules, practices, conditions, and so on can frame future action for others. Hall insists that the interactionist analyzing power must deal with both individual interactions and these types of structures or systems that emerge and engage in meta-power. When looking at social organization, for example, individuals often find that the apparently benign social situations in which they find themselves are actually intentional effects of previous action and definition by others. Hall notes that "...many of the situations they face are, to some degree, the conscious, intended consequences of previous actors and collective activity... Given a concern with symbols, situated activity, and agency, interactionists have developed their understanding of power from the study of episodic contests and struggles over definitions of reality. They have not examined its links to social organization and how it is utilized in the construction of situations and conditions for distant and future actors" (415).

For my presentation of an interactionist framework of power, I incorporate definitions that address both agency and structure. I emphasize throughout the unity of systems and the idea that power is not exhibited or experienced in discrete

categories. Pragmatism and interactionism demonstrate “a perspective which seeks to *empirically* overcome dualisms—including...the structure-agency and macro-micro dilemmas that currently obstruct the sociological analysis of power” (Dennis and Martin 205). Categories such as ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ are somewhat useful in understanding the various approaches that interactionists have taken with regard to power in society, but do not suffice to reflect the complex relationships between individuals, groups, and the larger systems that constrain individual action and are shaped by individual and joint action.

1: Power as Process and Interaction

Each of my subsequent definitions of power begin with a central assumption: power is an interactive process, not a concrete, static ‘entity’ or characteristic. Fluid social interactions between individuals and groups change and develop, and it is in these interactions that power is exhibited (Motazafi-Haller). Real life experience is the context in which these interactive processes occur, and it is in the social context that power occurs (Dennis & Martin).

Schippers identifies several instances of power as process and interaction between individuals. Vocalizing, articulating, emphasizing, or otherwise indicating differences between individuals may be used as a method of procuring relative social position or other material benefit. Interactionist frameworks of power are not limited only to individual exchanges, though. Herbert Blumer analyzed the U.S. steel industry in the post-war period of the 1950s. He identified the processes of power in the industry as demonstrated by strategic mobilization of resources, conflict and conflict resolution, and the interaction between competing groups with different interests and goals (Hall, “Meta-power”). Hall notes that Blumer classified power as “intentional, dynamic, and interactional,” a theme that I want to emphasize in my own outline of power in the context of Yucatán (403).

Like that of Blumer, Luckenbill's analysis focused on the interactive nature of power, though Luckenbill's outline lacked analysis beyond the scope of the individual. For Luckenbill, relations of power are transactional, in the sense that those in a position to create rules, give orders, or structure interactions do so in a way that results in compliance and reinforcement of status, resources, etc. Thus, power relations are oriented towards a goal or goals, and interactions of power bring some goal to fulfillment.

Power as a process is best illustrated in discourse or communication. Cultural and media studies first drew attention to symbolism and language in the social context, and interactionism continues to emphasize communication as an integral component of action and the formation of social systems. Communication and discourse are important components of social systems, but what of communication as power? Musolf goes so far as to suggest that communication is power, reflecting the perspective and outlook of the speaker (113). Control over methods of communication and the ability to shape perceptions or influence others through communication are examples of the exertion of one's perspective over that of another (Dennis and Martin; Croucher; Bonilla-Silva and Embrick). Becker simplifies this further, insisting that "What things are called always reflects relations of power. People in power call things what they want to, and others have to adjust to that..." (Becker in Dennis and Martin 200). Those with access to—and control of—communication define and construct reality, to the point of controlling the very thoughts and perceptions of those less powerful (Hall, "Asymmetric" 316). Through communication and discourse, hierarchical social structures are either reinforced or challenged, yet those in a position of control have a distinct advantage over those who are less in control of communication and discourse (Musolf 179).

Hollander and Gordon discuss power and the social construction of discourse when they emphasize the creation of symbols that relate to identity and "consensual meaning" (185). That is, through discourse, meaning is negotiated and social systems generated from subjective interpretations. In conversation, ideas and statements may

be supported, challenged, or receive an ambivalent response, and these types of exchanges shape shared meaning and eventual action. Reviewing hundreds of studies on the social construction of meaning, the authors demonstrate how language is used to construct and facilitate meaning. This creation of symbols and shared meaning can easily translate into joint action that privileges one group or individual over another. In other words, communication is the point at which subjective meaning begins to develop into action, and is the point at which power begins to manifest in the interactional process.

Peter Hall notes that one's subjective perception and interpretation of events impact the process of power. Figure 2.1 below reproduces Hall's diagram of communication and subjective interpretation, in this case, in the exchange between "Tony" and "Sally" ("Asymmetric" 322). In this case, perceptions of one's self and the 'other' determine the balance of power in interaction. Depending on the combination of perceptions, power may be exerted by one individual, the other party, both, or neither. In the group setting, collective expectations or perspectives could influence outcomes in a similar manner. Interestingly, Hall notes the tendency to overestimate one's own success in influencing relations. More importantly, the converse has also been demonstrated, that "people harm each other more than they intend because they do not see how their actions will impinge on others" (Hall, "Asymmetric" 324).

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PETER M. HALL

Let us briefly explore the initial consequences of differential perceptions about power in a situation.

<i>SALLY'S PERCEPTIONS</i>	Tony's Perceptions			
	<i>Tony Over Sally</i>	<i>Tony = Sally, Both Powerful</i>	<i>Sally Over Tony</i>	<i>Neither Powerful</i>
Tony over Sally	Domination by Tony	Tony's Advantage ?	Avoidance	Failure of Tony to take advantage
Both powerful Tony = Sally	Moderate conflict	Negotiation	Sally's Advantage	?
Sally over Tony	Surprise and intense conflict	Moderate conflict	Domination by Sally	Default to Sally
Neither Powerful	Default to Tony	?	Failure of Sally to take advantage	Symmetry

Figure 2.1: Power Relations between Two Individuals and the Role of Perception

In Maya experience, long-held stereotypes and official policies regarding non-European groups have affected perceptions of all parties in Mexico and Central America. Such perceptions influence interactions between individuals and groups, in many cases reconstituting social hierarchies and reaffirming stereotypes through self-fulfilling prophecies. The perception of rural Mayas as lazy or unwilling to work hard impacts non-Maya interaction with Maya individuals and groups, leading to punitive legislation or derogatory language, mistreatment or abuse, and discriminatory practices in business and other relationships. These same negative perceptions may also be internalized by Mayas themselves. Once these patterns of perception, action, and interaction have been established, it becomes very difficult to alter the systems and relationships thus fashioned. In chapters 3 and 4, I present a number of examples of this type of interaction between Maya and non-Maya groups that I think illustrate power as interaction in the social context.

According to Molotch and Boden, power may be exhibited through the use, construction, and control of language and communicative structures. Conversation and discourse effectively “accomplish” power, inasmuch as the communicator or communicators control topic development, interrupt, manage conversations, and determine the linguistic norms of discourse (273, 284). Asymmetrical relationships also reinforce imbalances of power and the ability of one communicator or group of communicators to exercise power through discourse. In legal settings, individuals with knowledge of established protocols (and, in fact, those in a legislative or judicial position to determine such protocols) exercise advantage over those with less knowledge of—or familiarity with—those norms. In land dispute cases in Mexico and Central America, for instance, rural Maya groups experience considerable disadvantages in defending their land claims when challenging corporate or governmental entities with vastly greater legal resources and knowledge of the legal system. In such cases, the uses of legal terminology, communicative systems, and protocols exemplify the transaction of power and inequality between actors or

groups. Communication and the tools of discourse, then, may be seen as resources that, when controlled, demonstrate power processes.

Rhetoric and discourse can lead to action and either the maintenance of the status quo or the creation of new realities and experiences. Lio et al. studied the use of rhetoric and discourse to maintain support and shape experiences for other groups (meta-power), in the sense of building consensus leading to legislative and social action. Focusing on conservative social and political movements in the United States (the National Rifle Association and the English-only movement), the authors conclusively demonstrated how rhetoric and discourse led to the mobilization of resources and social action, particularly as a result of a perceived threat to the status or social position of a particular group in relation to other groups or individuals.

Leaders in the two associations studied by Lio, Melzer, and Reese implemented rhetorical strategies depicting a perceived threat to status and position while appealing to a set of dominant values, beliefs, and feelings. In this way, leaders framed dialogue that appealed to a particular group with a controlling share of resources, in an attempt to preserve their position and access to resources, or to prevent the loss of resources and social position. Though veiled in values-oriented rhetoric, such discourse actually reflects status anxiety and feelings of threat or change that could potentially affect status and resource control. Subsequent action based on this type of discourse thus becomes an exercise of power in the struggle to maintain the status, social position, or resources of a particular group or individual. As the authors indicate, the mobilization to action through fear-based discourse reinforces and reinvigorates stereotypes and mischaracterizations, leading to actions that demonstrate power exercised by one group or individual over others.

2: Power as the Control and Manipulation of Resources

Most interactionist authors writing about power emphasize the control or use of resources as a principle expression of power in the social setting (Luckenbill;

Visano; Blumer; Dennis and Martin; Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, and Virk; Hall; Stolen; Thye). I argue that using access to and controlling resources constitute the primary transactions of power in the socio-cultural context. The use of resource leverage in relations with other individuals, groups, or systems clearly and effectively demonstrates power as a process and transaction. Importantly, power as the control and manipulation of resources closely relates to social conflict and the struggle for resources (perceived as scarce) by competing groups.

Hall confirms that power may be defined within the interactionist framework as control of resources. As I have suggested, power may be exercised through the control of resources by monitoring, determining, or otherwise controlling information, language, communication, and other available symbols. "Symbolic mobilization" and impression management involve the control of and use of information to create consensus, passivity, or a desired reaction by others ("Asymmetric" 332).

Lukenbill argues in his interactionist approach to power that conflict is the nature of society. Social systems are rife with conflict, which Lukenbill describes as conflicting goals, due to scarce resources. Power, then, is manifest in conflict, as conflicts of interest lead to contests over resources. It can be argued that Lukenbill's assumption as to the nature of society is accurate and satisfactory as a basis for analyzing the transaction of power in social contexts. Yucatec Mayas, for instance, compete with non-Maya groups for land access, agricultural resources, legal recognition and representation, and other non-tangible 'resources'. Lukenbill is not alone in suggesting that conflict over resources underlies social systems. Visano compares conflict, competition, and hierarchies with cooperation, consensus, and symbiosis as the varied processes that ultimately contribute to a functioning society (231). Conflict and opposition are not, Herbert Blumer argues, merely aberrations or 'flaws' in an otherwise harmonious and progressive social system. Conflict, strife, and other forms of opposition are a part of the relations between individuals and groups, and are foundational to social systems ("Social Structure" 232).

Like Blumer, Visano, and Lukenbill, sociologists generally define conflict and power as the violent or non-violent competition over resources, and power is sometimes described as an available resource (“Conflict Theory” 76). I do acknowledge the presence of conflict in society, though I prefer to conceptualize power as a process, rather than the actual resource in question. I base my definition of resources on that of Hall, in which a resource may be understood as “any attribute, possession, [or] circumstance that can be used by its claimant to achieve his/her ends” (“Asymmetric” 318). Lukenbill’s definition of resources strikes me as more theoretical and abstract, and much less useful or less pragmatic than Hall’s: “A resource is any property or possession which the source can make available to the target as a means of satisfying the target’s needs” (106). Power, in my estimation, entails the use, control of, or access to such resources. Resources, in turn, are central to the interactionist understanding of power. Hall supports this assertion when he writes “Resources and power should be seen in dynamic, processual, and contingent terms” (“Interactionism” 125).

Each of the above theorists uses the term ‘resource’ to refer not only to objects or physical resources in a traditional sense, but also to individual, collective, or institutional characteristics or abilities, such as intelligence, credit, media control and development, and control over knowledge production. I think this distinction is important, particularly when analyzing social interactions that demonstrate power, but that may not involve the explicit exchange of an object or physical resource. Peter Miller, for instance, describes power as using intimate knowledge of a person or group to one’s advantage. In this case, knowledge is the resource, and its use becomes a demonstration of power interaction. Importantly, in my definition, the resource itself is not power. The use of, control of, or access to the resource constitutes power in a transactional sense.

Hall identifies asymmetric relations “as processes of control and communication” (“Asymmetric” 312). The creation and maintenance of unequal relationships (in this case, between ‘powerful’ and ‘less powerful’ or ‘super-ordinate’

and 'subordinate') exemplify control over a resource, inasmuch as social hierarchies are considered to be non-tangible resources. Hall addresses asymmetry in relationships as a resource when he outlines the differences in autonomy and constraint experienced by different individuals in similar circumstances. The options and choices people have available to them in social settings are not the same. This distinction results in some degree of social control, and represents an exchange of power between those with greater autonomy (powerful) and those with less (less powerful). Hall, drawing on research by Kipnis, Franks, and others, lays out the result of interactions in asymmetric relationships. The 'super-ordinate' increases self-esteem while simultaneously devaluing the subordinate and decreasing awareness of (or sensitivity to) the subordinate. The subordinate experiences the opposite: in such asymmetric relationships, the subordinate's self-esteem decreases, even as the subordinate internalizes devaluation and experiences increased sensitivity to the actions of the super-ordinate ("Asymmetric" 315). Furthermore, norms, beliefs, fears, and expectations imbue the interactions between 'powerful' and 'powerless' with a sense of apprehension and reticence.

As asymmetric relationships in society become entrenched, control of both tangible and non-tangible resources (social position, access to financial systems or other institutions, and so on) continues to increase among those already in a position to take advantage of their relatively more powerful position. Hall writes, and I agree, that "[o]ne measure of an asymmetric relationship is that material or symbolic rewards go disproportionately to the superordinate. Those rewards become the bases and reinforcement for the maintenance of the asymmetric relationship" ("Asymmetric" 317). The active control of resources maintains asymmetry. Control of resources, as such, typifies power in the social context.

3: Power as Negotiation

At this point, I have defined power in my interactionist framework as a process or transaction and the control of, access to, or manipulation of resources. Negotiation is another important way in which individuals or individuals on behalf of groups and systems exhibit power. Rules, norms, laws, and other formal or informal customs come about through some degree of negotiation and compromise (Dennis and Martin). Norms, customs, rules, and laws emerge from discussion, debate, negotiation, and compromise, even under duress or violence; even dictatorial political regimes find it necessary to “negotiate” their power through various means (Musolf; Strauss). As I will show, such negotiation does not always consist of mutually-beneficial or egalitarian methods, but may include any number of exchanges that result in changed outcomes.

In terms of an interactionist framework of power, symbolic interactionists are concerned with the reproduction of power and inequality. The negotiation of reality by all actors and the political construction and definition of symbols and situations to “maintain hegemony and power” figure prominently in the interactionist approach (Musolf 109). Negotiation, in my interactionist conceptualization, includes the contests over the definition and articulation of symbols, the struggle between individual agency or autonomy and structural constraints, and negotiation in a formal sense, in which parties representing divergent objectives seek to institutionalize their beliefs and practices, either through persuasion or coercion.

As I previously noted, interactionists acknowledge conflict and struggle as part of social systems. The recognition of negotiation as power also implies that conflict, disagreement, and divergence contribute to the social processes of meaning creation, action, and structural development. Musolf and Strauss identify negotiation in nearly all systems, from individual interactions to institutional settings such as maximum security prisons. Ultimately, they view negotiation as a fundamental component of interaction, and thus, as a primary aspect of power relations.

Farberman and Perinbanayagam carry this even further when they assert that "...all social orders are results of...negotiated events" (266). Though this perhaps violates the interactionist commitment to eschewing universalism, I do think that some form of negotiation may be seen as a contributing factor to most social interactions.

Herbert Blumer explicitly addressed negotiation in his outline of power relations between management and labor groups in U.S. industry. Assessing the strategic maneuvering, scheming, and interactions between groups, he noted that power relations in that context were notoriously fluid, changing, and somewhat unpredictable ("Social Structure" 238). Interactions in this context of power involve compromise and re-evaluation, and depend on feedback loops between the parties involved. Blumer suggests that political development, even at the levels of individual and joint action, is not far removed from the exchange of power, because of the practice of "fortifying the security of one's own interest" (239). In other words, Blumer perceives similar practices of negotiation and interactions of power at all levels, whether individual, joint, or structural. He discusses 'power play' and the exercise of power, not only between individuals, but also at the corporate and national levels, as well. Blumer defines "points of power" as the very 'points' of negotiation and lobbying, where perspectives and ideas are exerted and contested ("Social Structure" 234). Eventually, Blumer describes the following three processes of power relations in the interpersonal context, based on his work with management and labor groups in U.S. industry:

- i) Conflict and opposition mark the initial interaction, and power relations involve conflicts of interest or opposing goals;
 - ii) Instead of cooperative approaches, competing groups emphasize areas of relative strength in an attempt to achieve a particular goal or set of goals;
- and

- iii) Power relations create the space for manipulation, scheming, and other tactics that may lead to a desired outcome for the individuals or parties involved in negotiations (“Social Structure” 235).

For Blumer, negotiation consists of exercising power “at innumerable points in seeking to maintain position, to achieve goals, and to ward off threats” (232).

Blumer’s outline of power in the industrial context provides a useful formulation of negotiation in the interactional social setting. I think, though, that caution should always be used when generalizing from case studies like Blumer’s. In seeking to describe power at the societal level, Blumer comes close to promoting and developing a universal theory of power, something that he himself warned against. As with Foucault’s approach to power, I find Blumer’s formulation to be overtly patriarchal and representative of a particular, historical, male-oriented approach to sociology from the mid-twentieth century in the United States. At the same time, this suggests to me that male-dominated or male-oriented systems do, in fact, demonstrate the power-as-conflict paradigm that Blumer describes. I do not think that these observations should be casually generalized to all systems and societies without justification or demonstrated rationale. Nevertheless, the type of power-as-conflict Blumer describes may be useful in understanding disadvantaged post-colonial groups or inequalities in a social system because of the historical imposition of such systems by patriarchal elites. I think that Blumer’s overall approach to power and negotiation could serve as a guide to power relations in other settings, even if the final outcomes and analyses are modified by significantly different contexts.

Blumer is not the only interactionist to write about negotiation in the context of power relations. Altheide discusses power, control, and the active development of a “negotiated order” (339). With regard to negotiation, he sums up the dilemma between individual agency and structural constraint, arguing that “the creativity to negotiate is an act of freedom, but the logic-in-use can be quite constraining” (353). Like Musolf, Altheide emphasizes the constraints to individual action within social

systems. Musolf emphasizes individual agency and resistance to domination or the subversion of authority in his analysis of negotiation and power. Accordingly, negotiation represents a tangible experience or expression of power, and the re-negotiation of meaning can change the course of events or alter experiences for certain individuals or groups (173-5). Social roles, norms, and rules act as constraints on behavior, while individuals and groups in a super-ordinate position use what Musolf terms “invisible encoding procedures” to maintain position or control of resources. I think that Musolf perceptively points out that just as in other areas of interactionist analysis, negotiation and power necessarily involve the tension between individual agency and structural limits to behavior and choice.

Anselm Strauss has perhaps written more about power and negotiation from an interactionist perspective than any other researcher. Strauss’ idea of society as negotiated order challenges the functionalist narrative based on structural forces or stable organizational features (Farberman and Perinbanayagam 267). For Strauss, social order is negotiated order, what he terms “getting things accomplished” (2). According to Strauss, negotiation is present in every social system. Coercive power differs from negotiation, but many instances of coercion involve some degree of negotiation, as well.

A number of case studies support Strauss’ approach to power and negotiation. Even highly codified systems (legal, procedural, institutional) involve processes of negotiation and the exercise of power. To begin with, legal process and stated laws do not necessarily reflect the negotiations that subvert the established, codified process. Strauss identifies the case of judges accepting or pursuing bribes as an example of covert negotiations that subvert legal systems and established laws. In the case of the Mayas of Yucatán, I interpret this to mean that colonial and post-colonial laws affecting Maya individuals and communities do not, in and of themselves, reflect the true nature of Maya experiences under said laws. That is, codified standards, procedures, practices, and the like do not guarantee their unbiased implementation, nor are written laws a fair representation of lived

experience at the time those laws were in effect. The subversion of law through covert negotiations represents an experience of power, and exemplifies yet another way in which power may be exerted by one group or individual over others.

Negotiation as power does not only occur in orderly systems that have been long established or implemented over time. Negotiation as power also occurs in antagonistic relationships or situations of conflict. In one case, Strauss identifies negotiation between the U.S. and Soviet Union over the Balkan States during the Cold War. Stated negotiations were subverted by other manipulative actions by both, including unofficial, covert discussions. In spite of stated goals of formal negotiations, both states acted “manipulatively, coercively, and persuasively within a wider political, economic, and geographic arena, in efforts to gain greater respective national power” (209). In this instance, both parties exercised power through negotiation using both covert and overt methods to extend their own position and relative advantage. Interestingly, Strauss points out that power *within* a particular set of negotiations is not necessarily related to the “power to coerce, to call on the resources of authority, to persuade, and to manipulate” (210). This is Strauss’ ‘David v. Goliath’ analogy, in which the less ‘powerful’ actor may actually exert greater bargaining power in a specific negotiation.

In the context of negotiation as power, little room for negotiation exists when one group (ethnic, political, social, etc.) maintains exclusive control of—and access to—resources. For most colonial and post-colonial Mayas, social and political negotiation was shaped by a lack of access to new resources and their nearly absolute lack of control over material and political resources. Thus, negotiation between the Maya and non-Mayan individuals and groups often reflected persistent inequalities and disadvantage on the part of most Maya groups. In this case, negotiation represented a lack of power, as much as its exercise. Power was, in fact, exercised in negotiations involving Maya groups. In many cases, though, the Mayas were not the ones exercising power, and they ultimately experienced increasing hardship as a result of this inequality.

Maines and Charlton build on Strauss' preliminary work on negotiation and power, developing a definition of negotiation that encompasses both individual and action and larger social structures. The authors situate individuals within what they call "organizational contexts", and negotiation consists of any and all types of demands, reciprocal or subversive actions, and interaction that entails bargaining (278). Maines and Charlton argue that the 'order' of societies depends on maintenance and reconstitution. That is, societal 'order' does not merely exist, but depends on active interaction for its construction, maintenance, or de-construction. I agree with the authors in that the maintenance and constitution of social structures depend on action and interaction. Systems are not only created through interaction, but also sustained or challenged through individual and joint action.

At the same time, I do not think that the emphasis Maines and Charlton place on action diminishes the reality of constraints to action present in social systems. In other words, action contributes to the social order, but the complexities of social systems effectively prevent quick or easy systemic changes based on individual or joint action. Hierarchical systems of governance, legislation, policing, and economy all contribute to social orders while (necessarily) restricting options or behavioral choices available for individual and joint actors. To further complicate matters, seemingly innocuous or unrelated systems may perpetuate unequal relations of power between individuals or groups. The inevitable overlap between various legal, economic, political, and social systems all but guarantees eventual conflict between the stated or de-facto goals of one system or another. Constitutional land reform, preferential trade agreements executed by high-ranking government officials, and law enforcement protocols all consist of highly formalized rules, regulations, processes, and procedures. These procedures and rules may be carefully constructed to ensure equality for all affected parties, yet their implementation may detrimentally affect one group or individual over another, due to a number of factors (internal inconsistencies, varied interpretations of intent or purpose, variance in implementation and enforcement, etc). More importantly, regardless of initial judicial

or political intent behind rules, laws, and so on, encoded meanings that affect the implementation of such rules may perpetuate inequality in practice. I reiterate that the stated policy, procedure, or law does not ensure its judicious application in such a way as to reduce inequality among various individuals and groups. In this case, negotiation represents power inasmuch as it reproduces inequality and existing relationships between groups and individuals.

Lawrence Bush (in Maines and Charlton) addressed this very thing when he coined the term “sedimentation” in relation to the negotiated order. According to Bush, “sedimentation occurs when the outcome of a previous negotiation becomes taken for granted or automatic. No one questions the origins; the meanings are accepted at face value” (Maines and Charlton 283). This sedimentation (or the unquestioned outcomes of previous negotiations) relates directly to the ‘social order’ in which present-day Maya groups find themselves. In that context, unquestioned outcomes of previous negotiations impact daily experiences for Mayas in everything from land access and agricultural technology to health services and education. According to Hall, unequal power (in this case, access to knowledge, control of terms of negotiation, agenda-setting, and amount of representation in final outcomes) affects and shapes every aspect of the process of negotiation. Understandably, those in a position to exercise greater power through negotiation experience much more positive outcomes (in terms of objectives achieved) than those who enter negotiations with less ability to exert influence or direct the process of negotiation.

4: Power as Legal and Social Rule-Setting

The fourth and final component of power in my interactionist framework consists of what Hall calls “meta-power”, the active, intentional development and management of social situations and conditions for one’s self and others. Dennis and Martin suggest that individuals and groups demonstrate this type of power through the establishment of definitions, rules, norms, or other realities that bind others to

particular behaviors or restrict the choices available to other individuals or groups. Musolf notes that this is often accomplished surreptitiously, so as to present the idea that the rules, norms, and definitions are universal, when, in fact, they support a particular group or individual and that group or individual's interests. Legal and legislative action are two instances of meta-power, though both are perhaps more formalized than many other instances of meta-power. The targeted use of media communications to shape perceptions of specific social issues or political figures represents meta-power, though in a less formalized way than legislative action.

In the case of meta-power, those exercising power define rules and determine the nature of relationships within a system. They essentially construct reality and shape the meanings "with which all interpret and act toward the world, including self-conceptions" (Hall, "Asymmetric" 315). Structuring situations in this way is an exercise of power. Interactionists emphasize the ways in which rules, definitions, and norms reinforce the status quo, inequality, and disenfranchisement. Through the creation of rules and norms, individuals and groups practice power in a transactional sense, acting in a way that demonstrates the use of power in society.

According to Hall, the control of culture and communication by elite actors constitutes power (Musolf 104). Meta-power consists of social organization, particularly the type of organizing that shapes or defines situations, thus affecting the daily lives of individuals. Musolf summarizes Hall's five types or processes of meta-power as follows:

- i) Policy-making by elite, high-stakes actors;
- ii) Establishing rules, norms, and conventions;
- iii) Structuring situations, relationships, and activities for others;
- iv) Shaping symbols in order to direct behavior; and
- v) Defending the exercise of power through delegation and enforcement.

The tacit acceptance of elites' construction of reality inevitably affects other actors' behavior and range of choices, whether or not non-elite actors have had a

choice in accepting that construction in the first place. That is, actors may be subject to a constructed set of norms and rules that they did not help create and from which they may not derive any benefit. Worse yet, the constructed norms, rules, and situational constraints may detrimentally affect these individuals and groups. All of this suggests that power is not only situated at the individual level, but at the structural level, as well. This does not mean, however, that power at the structural level ceases to be transactional. On the contrary, Hall's outline of meta-power indicates that individuals and groups actively exercise meta-power at the structural level. Meta-power is not a mysterious, impersonal force constraining action, but a motivated interaction between actors at structural levels in society.

Musolf's presentation of Hall's work and Hall's own conception of meta-power both provide useful interactionist conceptions of power, extending definitions of power beyond individualistic transactions between actors. I think Hall's work on meta-power, in particular, expands the interactionist understanding of power to adequately deal with structural instances of power relations, whether between individual actors, groups, or other systems. Meta-power, in Hall's definition, remains transactional and process-oriented, but takes into account the larger systems in which individual action takes place. Constraints to individual action may also be explained, in part, through the meta-power argument, and I think the notion of meta-power compliments the other transactional definitions I have outlined in this chapter.

Stolen provides a case study of interaction, asymmetric relationships, and meta-power among Argentine women. Her approach is not necessarily interactionist, in that she relies more on a Gramscian approach, but her study does illustrate interactionist themes of individual and joint action. She demonstrates meta-power at the individual level, in situations where Argentine husbands determine the context and setting of their wives' activity, as well as the behavioral choices available to their wives. Stolen argues that this represents a form of institutionalized power at the levels of individual and joint action. Power, for these men and women, is 'exercised' in interaction, and power consists of the control of resources such as communication

with peers and permitted daily activities. What is more, this exercise of power involves “the ability to shape perceptions, cognitions and preferences” (386). Power, in this case, extends beyond the control of resources into the realm of meta-power and the restriction of possible behavioral and social choices available to Argentine women.

I do not think that all of Stolen’s conclusions are accurate or culturally relevant, primarily because her European perspective and bias regarding ‘appropriate’ or ‘desirable’ gender roles clearly shapes her assessment of relationships between men and women in Argentina. She is quick to challenge and dismiss the traditional roles among the groups she researched without much discussion or rationale. Nevertheless, Stolen’s work does show how individuals can support established norms, reinforce inequalities, and contribute to ongoing status hierarchies through the use of meta-power, or by structuring the very range of choices available to others.

Another case study by Hosticka also illustrates the interactionist concept of meta-power. Hosticka examined lawyer-client negotiations in order to describe the process of negotiation and relations of power. He observed that all of the lawyers in the sample exercised “considerable control” over conversation topics and the timing or flow of conversations, while highly structured procedures (screenings, secretary engagement, scheduling procedures, etc.) further established the lawyers’ control of the situation (599). The lawyers demonstrated meta-power in the sense that they structured and guided every interaction with clients. In order to achieve desired outcomes in their court cases, clients found it necessary to act according to the rules of interaction established by the lawyers, even when significant details of their cases were neglected due to oversimplification and rigid categorization.

Much like the lawyer-client interactions documented by Hosticka, other social systems and rules serve to simplify and categorize complex social interactions. For my interactionist analysis of power, the most important aspect of this categorization has to do with the act of creating categories or defining terms of social behavior and

interaction. Individuals in a position to define situations, proscribe certain behaviors, or structure social conditions exercise power in doing so. Individuals and representative groups exercise power when they define social categories and negotiate the terms and conditions of social interaction. Enforcement of laws or other rules may exhibit a form of interactive power, but creating the very rules and laws in society demonstrates power, as well.

In summary, Hall distinguishes between two types of power, power that shapes behavior within situations (primarily interaction between individuals) and power that shapes situations themselves (structural meta-power). Meta-power entails defining possibilities for others, either through legislation, the manipulation of situations, or the control and use of resources to shape the experiences of others. I consider meta-power to be the final component of an interactionist framework of power, as I feel that Hall's transactional approach to structural power completes my definition of power as the control or manipulation of resources and negotiation.

Cultural Interactionist Framework of Power: Final Considerations

Anibal Quijano asserts that post-colonial global systems reflect a social hierarchy based on a colonial model of race. The very idea of race and its social construction emerged from the colonial system and the exercise of power over indigenous groups. Colonial representatives used racial categorization and racial identification to stratify and structure colonial society in a way that would provide European settlers and their descendents maximum access to and control over resources. In short, the colonial system became an interactional exercise of power. Indigenous groups, including the Mayas of Yucatán, experienced a dramatic and rapid loss of access to and control of resources as European colonials negotiated with force and established their own rules and laws governing indigenous territories.

From an interactionist perspective, power is not seen as an entity or characteristic that may be possessed, gained, or lost. Power is process, and the

wresting of land, resources, and social position from indigenous individuals and groups clearly demonstrates the processes of power in the colonial context. Communication, negotiation, control of resources, and social or legal rule-setting are all instances of power processes. Each of these impacted Mayas in both the colonial and post-colonial periods, and continue to impact Maya communities today.

In the following chapters, I outline instances of power in colonial and post-colonial Maya contexts, based on my four-fold cultural interactionist definition of power, though I emphasize the colonial period as the foundation for post-colonial interactions. My analysis represents my own interpretation of historical and contemporary texts, both Maya and non-Maya. As Dorothy Smith points out, we create discourse through the reading and interpretation of text. I have indicated in the present chapter that discourse and communication are processes of power. Research, interpretation, and presentation contribute to the construction of knowledge, the development of subjective meaning, and eventual action, both individual and joint. From action arise social structures, which, in turn, impact perception, meaning, action, and so on.

Smith argues that text—its creation, reading, and interpretation—forms the basis of power relations and interactions of power. Van Wagenen emphasizes that the very presentation of accounts (representations, research, etc.) exhibit power, a problematic paradox for researchers. Interactionist researchers attempt to ‘uncover’ and reveal marginalized experiences, yet in so doing, risk replicating the exploitative colonial relations of power that led to the marginalization of individuals and groups in the first place.

I find myself in this paradoxical position as an interactionist researcher and ‘outsider’ to the Mayas. Despite my awareness of historical inequalities and relations of power in the colonial context, my research and interpretation reflect my own cultural context within the United States, far removed from the daily experiences of Maya groups in Mexico and Central America. My effort to present an account of Maya experiences inevitably contributes to the ongoing relations of power between

Maya and non-Maya groups. As Smith and Van Wagenen have pointed out, my discourse and the presentation of my research contribute to the construction and reconstruction of knowledge, meaning, and action. At worst, this exercise in discourse could exacerbate the marginalization of Maya groups through the misrepresentation of their experiences or the exploitation of the socially marginalized position of the Mayas today for my own benefit. At best, my interpretation and production of discourse may foster constructive action (or the re-direction of action) that is of some benefit to various Maya groups, either through heightened awareness of historical inequalities and subsequent effects, or policy changes that produce more equity and access to resources for contemporary Maya groups.

I do not attempt to present a final, authoritative account of Maya experiences of power. To do so would be presumptuous and impracticable. I approach the topic of power relations in the Maya context as an interactionist concerned about inequality and the exercise of power, inasmuch as both have led to the marginalization of Maya individuals and groups and the destruction of traditional Maya cultures and societies. I am sensitive to the effects of my discourse, for better or worse, and the implications of writing about the experiences of others as an outsider. Nevertheless, I do think that well-documented research and discourse can provide an alternative to exploitative action, if such discourse illuminates or presents cultural text with a measure of authenticity and care. It is my intent to produce analysis of Yucatec Maya experience that fairly represents Maya perspectives and experiences with minimal prejudicial distortion. Reflectively approaching colonial and contemporary experiences of the Mayas of Yucatán, I attempt to construct an account of power in the cultural context based on an interactionist framework and a genuine sensitivity to inequality and the processes of power.

Three: Colonial Symbols and Meaning

The Interactionist Approach in Colonial Maya Studies

In the context of cultural, historical, and ethnographic studies of colonial Mayas, a number of researchers have implicitly validated interactionist methods of inquiry and an interactionist approach to colonial and contemporary Maya groups. In the prologue to her 1974 dissertation, for example, Marta Espejo-Ponce Hunt articulates what is essentially an interactionist approach to Latin American history. With an emphasis on individual and collective relationships, she argues that interpersonal interactions form the basis of society, and ought to be the continued focal point of historical and social study. Importantly, she identifies one of the central tenets of interactionism, the necessity of a particular, contextualized focus, rather than the presentation of grand narratives or the generalization of the experiences of elites. Her tone is decidedly interactionist when she writes:

Perhaps some of the most interesting work being done today among historians of Latin America is a kind of social history involving a close look at the individuals and groups of individuals whose relationships—mostly unarticulated and of a personal nature—provided the cohesive element in society. This work has been carried out through analysis of the daily activities of average citizens within a relatively small area, such as a city or a region, or within an economic,

religious or cultural unit, but with the focus changed from the institution to the individuals who comprised it.

This emphasis in historical writing has had the effect of making persons out of a previously nebulous mass of people. It has brought the average man to the fore rather than the unusual or outstanding person. However, its principal objective has been to gain a glimpse of a functioning society and to discover its dynamic as a whole through the dealings of individuals with one another and their attitudes towards the institutions that surrounded their lives, not as reflected through legalistic or governmental contact but at the basic everyday level (1).

Notably, Nancy Farriss also uses an interactionist framework to situate her landmark study of Yucatán. She argues that “The [Spanish colonial] regime itself is seen as a product of interaction, shaped as much by the local environment—including its human element—as by Spanish goals and institutions” (*Maya* 9). Farriss implicitly affirms the interactionist approach in her assessment of local, contextualized influences of interaction, rather than impersonal ‘forces’ or social structures that somehow shape and determine behavior.

In his final analysis of interactions between Mayas and Spaniards in Yucatán during the colonial period, Robert Patch argues for a particular, contextualized approach to the study of economic production in Yucatán and other colonial regions. He suggests that broad categorization is only useful in describing modern industrial capitalism, but not in the varied, complex economic systems of colony (*Maya* 246-9). Like Hunt and Farriss, Patch utilizes an interactionist approach, insofar as it represents a localized interpretation of interaction and systems to describe various manifestations of interaction between Mayas and Spaniards in Yucatán under the colonial regime.

According to Dennis Tedlock, Maya scholar Inga Clendinnen understands texts to be “...historically situated cultural constructs in their own right” (145-6). Walter Mignolo argued for a contextualized construction of the past, with an emphasis on social interactions (Cornejo Polar 83-4). Both of these align well with an

interactionist approach, an approach whose theorists value the contextualized interpretation of meaning, symbols, action, and structures, rather than a generalized, universal approach to culture and history.

Finally, Quetzil Castañeda argues for a more nuanced view of power and domination in colonial Yucatán, rather than the simplistic, polarized understanding of Mayas v. Spaniards (42). An interactionist approach to power and domination in the Mayan context does just that, offering a specific, documented analysis of *shifting* power through interaction and transaction between individuals and groups. Castañeda also challenges the structural and historical approaches to studies of the Maya, arguing that the pre-1970s emphasis on structures and systems failed to incorporate dynamic change and interactional elements that effected change in systems. He suggests that the change in research in the 1970s included an emphasis on "...ethnographic concern for the particular negotiations, dynamics, and events by which structures and systems 'change'—that is, become undone and reformed anew in different shapes and configurations of power, agents, institutions, laws, communities, economic relations, and classes" (44). The terminology he uses here and later relates directly to symbolic interactionism and the 'ground-up', situated approach of interactionism:

Thus, as exemplified in Jones, the call for history in ethnography and in certain historical studies of the Maya, primarily colonial studies, is a call for a history that is temporal and includes change in time. The focus of research had been on charting structures and systems that endured in time within the same place. While shifts in structures and systems were noted, these changes were atemporal in that these writings of history offered a periodization of different synchronous portraits of a structure or structural whole without detailing the processes and dynamics of the transformation that lead from one to the other. The historical move that was inaugurated in the 1970s therefore entailed what can be called an ethnographic concern for the particular negotiations, dynamics, and events by which structures and systems 'change'—that is, become undone and reformed anew in different shapes and configurations of power, agents, institutions, laws, communities, economic relations, and classes (43-4).

Castañeda thus analyzes the work of Grant Jones and others, implicitly relying upon an interactionist framework. Although the present study is the first effort to explicitly analyze power in the colonial and contemporary Maya contexts using an interactionist approach, interactionist methods and interpretation are not without precedent in the context of historical, social, and cultural studies of the Mayas of Yucatán.

Geography of the Present Section

I have limited the scope of the present study of the colonial Yucatec Mayas to the geographical area defined by Eric Thompson and supported by Grant Jones (“Introduction” xi-xxiv). Thompson identified regional differentiation among various Maya groups in Yucatán, continuing toward the Guatemalan Highlands, arguing for the constitution of a cultural and historical sub-group, the Chan Mayas (3). He referred to the region South of the Yucatán Peninsula as “Chan”, an area most likely related more to the Mopan Mayas than the Mayas of Yucatán. Jones and Thompson identified linguistic and religious commonalities between the various overlapping cultural groups of the Mopan, Itza, Chichanha, Cehach, Chinamita, the Mayas of the Petén and western Belize, and the Lacandon of Petén and Chiapas (xvi). Although the Lacandon, Itza, and others speak a variant of Yucatec Maya, Thompson argues from observation and historical record for their association more with the Chan group he identified. Accordingly, the northern Chan boundary ends just North of Tzibanche, Sacalum, and Oxpemul (East to West), and proceeds along a line South of Tzuctok and Tenosique, moving Southwest from Oxpemul (Thompson 3-7). My analysis of power in the Maya context during colony emphasizes the experiences and interactions of Spaniards (and their biological and cultural descendents) and the Mayas of Yucatán, using the delineation established by Eric Thompson.

Chronology of the Present Section

The chronology of the present chapter, culminating with the end of the colonial period in New Spain and the beginning of the Republican period in Mexico, also merits comment and justification. Far from a date that is no more than a political signpost or historical marker, the post-1810 period is a logical break in the examination of the Mayas of Yucatán and their experiences of power, both in terms of the nature of social interaction and available source materials. Echoing interactionist appeals to particular, contextualized analysis, Walter Mignolo argues that colonial and post-colonial experiences are distinct, unique, and should not be generalized (*Darker ix*). In Yucatán, many of the patterns of interaction forged under colony persisted into the post-independence period. Nevertheless, just as early the early colonial institution of *encomienda* differed notably from later forms of labor exploitation in Yucatecan *estancias* or haciendas, other meaningful changes in interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas occurred through—and as a result of—the independence movement.

After a well-documented late colonial period in New Spain, replete with legal requirements (and administrative expectations) of detailed documentation and record-keeping, the post-1810 environment fundamentally altered institutions and practices related to records and record-keeping throughout New Spain. Rapid, significant change altered the creation and maintenance of records in Yucatán, providing a practical, political, and historical break between colonial and post-colonial research in Yucatán (Lockhart and Schwartz 405). Accordingly, my chapters on colonial experiences of power between Mayas and non-Mayas end at or near the beginning of the Republican Period in Mexico. Subsequent chapters continue with the post-1810 period, emphasizing the Caste War of Yucatán and the ongoing struggle for Maya autonomy and independence in the Peninsula to the present, contemporary period.

Power, Identity, and Mayas in Colonial Yucatán

Colonial Literature

Frequently, colonial authors and post-colonial authors writing until the early- to mid-20th Century or later depicted Spanish conquerors and colonizers in a sympathetic and supportive light, while either explicitly or implicitly disparaging indigenous culture, history, and experience, if they were acknowledged at all. I mention these authors not to discuss the merits of their claims, but to demonstrate how their writing provides continuity with earlier literature from the colonial period, in both content and form. Their perspectives and the implicit assumptions of their work demonstrate the persistence of specific meanings that shaped interactions throughout the colonial period and persisted well beyond it.

In the translator's preface to Robert Ricard's important text on religious orders in the early colony of New Spain, the author contemplates the "heroic period of the Mexican Church", treating the growth of Catholic orders in Mesoamerica with great sympathy and deference (viii). Ricard's work, though it does not focus primarily on Maya regions or communities, covers the early period of religious development between 1523 and 1572. That period included, among other abuses of ecclesiastical power, the notorious abuses and tortures of Fray Diego de Landa that began in 1562 with his discovery of persistent, continuing 'idolatry,' the traditional religious practices the Franciscans believed to have been previously extricated from the Mayas of Yucatán.

Ricard's admiration of Spanish religious orders and clergy is evident throughout his work. In the Preface to the Spanish Edition of 1947, Ricard notes that "I think that in my essay I did the Spanish missionaries all the justice they deserve – and they deserve a full and generous portion, for their work on the whole was admirable..." (305). Ricard excuses the abuses and excesses of Hernán Cortés on the basis of his religious faith and conviction: "He was greedy, debauched, a politician

without scruples, but he had his quixotic moments, for, despite his weaknesses, of which he later humbly repented, he had deep Christian convictions” (15).

Relating his derogatory stance toward the various indigenous groups conquered by the Spanish, Ricard suggests that “primitive peoples” commonly exhibit a “...invincible and almost pathological love of lying” (118). Regarding the Mexica, Ricard writes

...about the Aztec civilization itself, which has been frequently described with overly brilliant colors, one must not nurse illusions. In the judgment of an objective specialist like Beuchat, although it represents one of the superior forms of American civilization, one should not exaggerate its value and interest (33).

Later in the text, he notes that

[Fray Francisco Marín] had found them a barbarous people; he taught them to dress, feed themselves properly, and live in communities, and he initiated them into civilized life....Fray Marín de Jesús had only had time for the preliminary task: destroying idols, putting a stop to pagan ceremonies, and building churches (137).

Despite this decidedly one-sided evaluation, Ricard notes that church organization in Mexico essentially transplanted Spanish systems and traditions, disregarding and displacing organic, indigenous forms, practices, and cultures entirely, or at least attempting to do so. Ricard concludes that, with regard to religious institutions in New Spain, “what was founded, before and above all, was a Spanish Church, organized along Spanish lines, governed by Spaniards, in which the native Christians played the minor part of second-class Christians” (308).

Some studies are notable for their omissions of critical information, data that are often related to the experience of indigenous communities and individuals. In their classic ethnographic study, *Chan Kom: A Maya Village*, Robert Redfield and Alfonso Villa Rojas write about Spanish presence in Yucatán after the founding of Valladolid, stating simply, “From that time Spanish and Catholic rule was firm in

Yucatan" (20). This statement, apparently obvious to the authors, conceals the complex and shifting relations of power that developed over three centuries of colonial Spanish rule.

Robert Chamberlain's descriptions of Francisco de Montejo typify the unidentified, yet implied, subjugation of the Mayas throughout the establishment of colony in Yucatán, of the Mexica in Central Mexico, and other indigenous groups throughout Mesoamerica. In his 1966 text, Chamberlain writes that

Cortés had assigned Montejo *encomiendas*⁵ in New Spain, one of which, Atzacapotzalco, just northwest of the City of Mexico, was rich and populous. Montejo then built a sumptuous house in the City and for a brief space devoted himself to the development of haciendas and mines (18).

The construction of buildings and the development of mines were completed using indigenous labor, to say nothing of the system of *encomienda* from which Montejo benefitted. Montejo's palatial residence in Mérida, for instance, was constructed by hundreds of Maya laborers (Chamberlain 336). The contributions (forced, coerced, demanded, or otherwise) of Mayas and other indigenous communities are notably absent in Chamberlain's initial descriptions of construction and colonial development.

Chamberlain also repeats a common assumption in colonial-era literature (and later literature about the colonial period) that Spanish colonists were troubled by the 'warlike' nature of the indigenous groups. He writes that "The Indians everywhere menaced the colonists", as if the reverse were not also true (73). Chamberlain repeats the biased assumptions and perspectives of the colonial Spanish when he uses terminology like "warlike natives" and "the most bellicose and stubborn natives," tacitly agreeing with the colonial-era Spanish that the indigenous groups ought to

⁵ The systems of *encomienda* and *repartimiento*, among others, will be detailed further in the present chapter.

have simply accepted Spanish rule without any resistance or struggle whatsoever (82).

In his macro analysis of colony and colonization, Bouda Etemad notes that colonial empires spread to more than 70% of the six inhabited continents from the beginning of European expansion to the end of colonial expansion in the 20th Century (1). Etemad uses a flawed argument to explain the success of the Spanish in the Americas, arguing that Spanish were more cultured or 'metropolitan', in the sense of their routine exposure to different cultures and ethnic groups. He argues that the Inca, Aztec, and Maya collapse under conquest and colony had much to do with isolation and complete shock at the presence of 'strange and terrible' Europeans.

Etemad's interpretation does not represent the experience of the Mayas, particularly, or Mesoamericans, generally, given the sophistication of indigenous society at the time of European arrival. It was, in fact, the Spanish who displayed intractable rigidity and intolerance when faced with novel situations and people, from Cortés and Alvarado and Pizarro to Montejo, Landa, and countless others, secular *and* religious. Etemad is more accurate on one count: the isolation of the Mayas and other indigenous groups did contribute to their complete lack of immunity to various diseases. Their experience with far-reaching trade and diverse linguistic and cultural groups precludes the conclusion that they were naively shocked into defeat and submission by the Spanish. Etemad's flawed analysis exemplifies the danger of over generalizing, of looking for universal narratives that unite the experiences of all colonists and colonizers. This speaks to the need for a contextualized, situated analysis rather than sweeping statements that can be interpreted as favoring arguments of ethnic or racial superiority.

Writing about British missionaries during the colonial period, William Carey contrasts the "popery" forced on the Americas with his own Protestant 'call to arms', and the need for Christian (i.e. Protestant) 'soldiers' to labor in 'uncivilized' parts of the world. In Carey's simplistic and Euro-centric view, indigenous culture had little or no intrinsic value, and should be 'civilized' by Christian missionaries. In one

typical passage, Carey writes, "In many of these countries they have no written language, consequently no Bible, and are only led by the most childish customs and traditions....They are in general poor, barbarous, naked pagans, as destitute of civilization, as they are of true religion" (63). Although there may be similarities between the ferocity of the British missionary enterprise and the intensity of the Spanish religious orders, there are substantial, critical differences between English and Spanish missionaries, and even between regions within the individual colonies. Indigenous experiences in Yucatán were notably different than those of Central Mexico, for example, in the social, religious, and economic impact of conquest on indigenous groups in the first two centuries of Spanish rule. In the present study, I have exercised caution in generalizing observations from one colonial group or region to another, limiting my analysis to work on Yucatán.

The flaws and biases of early colonial research in Yucatán are many, and have been discussed at length in contemporary literature. These works are important in the present interactionist evaluation because of the ways in which they demonstrate continuity of form and meaning from the colonial period into the mid-twentieth century. I now turn to a discussion of contemporary research, including discussion on the relevance of interactionist interpretation in the context of Yucatecan Maya Studies. Contemporary, mid-twentieth century literature to the present represents a shift in both content and form, challenging earlier interpretations and the construction of meaning that originated in the colonial period.

Contemporary Literature

Contemporary authors from mid-twentieth century to the present tend to represent either sterile ethnographic accounts of colonial experience, or accounts more sympathetic to the Mayas and other conquered indigenous groups. Quetzil Castañeda provides a detailed description of changes, nuances, and debates within Yucatecan Maya Studies through the 1970s and 80s to the present (41-56). His source

list of theoretical and ethnographic work in Yucatán identifies some of the key shifts and theoretical bases of colonial and post-colonial research in the peninsula.

The introduction to Grant Jones' anthology on historical and anthropological approaches to Yucatecan Studies provides a useful tool for charting the early work of Robert Redfield and Alfonso Villa Rojas, Ralph Roys, and others, as well as subsequent challenges to their earlier efforts (xii-iii). According to Jones, the "Redfieldian paradigm", Redfield's model of Yucatecan history, must be challenged and dismantled. Redfield developed a "folk-urban continuum of tradition-modernity" in which the Maya are perceived as traditional and 'modernizing', but never fully present in the modern or contemporary social paradigm (Castañeda 54). Jones decries Redfield's approach as "static", advocating instead a dynamic, processual (or process-oriented) approach to social interaction and change ("Introduction" xi). To challenge Redfield's method, Jones identifies "...the complex dynamics of interaction..." present in Yucatán between Mayan groups and colonists (xiii-iv).

James Lockhart and Stuart Schwartz repeat the urban-rural discourse in the context of New Spain, arguing that the Spanish constructed society on the basis of the Spanish colonial city at the center, with rural indigenous communities at the periphery, serving the needs of the colonial order (91-2). They note that "All in all, the conquest period allows us to make a quite clear distinction between a Spanish world concentrated in widely scattered cities for Spaniards and their employees, and the Indian world of semiautonomous corporations inhabiting the countryside" (117). This view is also championed by French political scientist Jacques Lambert and Marxist author José Carlos Mariátegui, who similarly divide Latin America into either dynamic, progressive urban centers or traditional, semi-feudal rural settings (Mörner, "Spanish" 209).

Similarly, Marta Espejo-Ponce Hunt describes colonial period society as a dichotomy between Maya-oriented rural communities wherein the Franciscans exercised their jurisdiction and the colonial city, from where Spanish-descendent

colonists and *mestizos* extracted resources from the rural villages (373-5). She notes that “Overall, the estates continued to be an outgrowth of the Spanish nucleus, leaving Indian entities intact” (463).

In his critique of Redfield, Jones aimed to expand the focus of Yucatecan research from a principle focus on urban, colonial ‘Spanish’ cities toward an explicit emphasis on the neglected experiences of Mayas in Yucatán, living in *both* urban and rural settings, and their interactions with colonists and other groups present during the colonial period. Discourse analyst William Hanks argues that as a result of the acculturation of the indigenous elite, the notion of a “purely indigenous system” post-conquest stands out as inane and entirely fictional, given the hybridization of culture, language, and community that occurred after Spanish Conquest (721). According to Hanks,

The Spanish conquest of Yucatan created a new discourse in which Maya and Spanish systems of representation were encompassed, interacted, and then produced hybrid cultural forms. The Maya nobility played an important role early on in this process, through their participation in both Spanish and indigenous sectors of colonial society (721).

As Jones pointed out, the urban-rural dichotomy may have oversimplified colonial relations. At the same time, the existence of two distinct colonial settings cannot be denied. A more nuanced description of the relations between urban administrative centers, surrounding communities, and the extensive network of Maya villages and settlements begins to capture the complexity of interaction between individuals and groups in colonial Yucatán.

A number of authors have contributed to the more nuanced understanding of colonial relations and interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas in Yucatán that I suggest is the logical response to Jones’ critique of Redfield. Drawing on the ethnographic and historical work of Ralph Roys, William Gates, Eric Thompson, France Scholes, and others, Matthew Restall’s early work contributed an

understanding of the form and structure of colonial Maya society and the centrality of the *cah*⁶ among the Mayas (“History” 122). Charles Gibson’s text on Central Mexico and James Riley’s revision of *gañania*⁷ offer a basic model of labor relations and colony in New Spain (259-85). Cuello argues that depopulation and competition led to innovation in labor recruitment and employment, from slavery to *encomienda* to *repartimiento* to indebted servitude or debt peonage (683).

It is Arnold J. Bauer, though, who writes unequivocally about forced labor and the “landed estate” in colonial and post-colonial Spanish America. Following his interpretation of labor in Spanish colony, “...a cycle comes to a close as the Spanish American landed estate is given its death blow and then split open so that we may examine its historical entrails. With the beast laid out, the examining doctors have become more charitable about its long past life...” (34). Each of these authors has contributed either historical data or explicit interpretation to the record of Yucatán. An interactionist analysis of colonial interactions will synthesize the two, providing *both* a re-reading of colonial and contemporary research *and* a contextualized analysis of interaction and power.

Two other debates in the context of colonial Yucatán deserve mention in the context of my interactionist analysis: 1) debate over the accuracy of colonial records and testimony related to Landa and his inquisition in Yucatán, and 2) critique of the false dichotomy of complete religious domination v. syncretism and adaptation to the superficial imposition of Christianity in Yucatán among the Mayas.

Fray Diego de Landa’s inquisition in Yucatán that began in 1562 is a critical event analyzed subsequently in the next chapter as an example of interactions of power, particularly in the Franciscans’ exercise of meta-power through the

⁶ A discussion of the Maya *cah* or *cahob* (plural form), geographically-defined communities, follows in the present chapter, along with a description of political organization in Yucatán at contact and conquest. The structure of Maya communities and families is relevant to a discussion of symbols and meaning that inform action, a critical feature in my interactionist analysis.

⁷ Debt peonage and other forms of labor exploitation will be discussed in greater detail in the following section on interactions and experiences of power.

structuring of social and religious contexts for the Mayas. The veracity of written testimony obtained through torture and physical abuse by Franciscans is not my primary concern. I am more interested in examining the interactions that led to the torture and the creation of testimony under duress than the historical validity of the testimony itself. Nevertheless, some contemporary researchers have based their own interpretations and analysis on an implicit acceptance of testimony produced by Landa using physical torture against the Mayas, a fact that Inga Clendinnen, Dennis Tedlock, and others have noted and rightfully challenged.

Clendinnen notes that the conclusions of Scholes and Roys, mainly that the confessions obtained in Yucatán after 1562 of sacrifice, crucifixion, and other practices were factual, have been widely accepted in the research literature ("Reading" 328). She presents a revision of the record through a re-reading of indigenous Maya testimony from the record of Yucatán, casting serious doubt as to the reliability of the testimony obtained under duress, and also that obtained afterwards, once the precedent of torture had been set by Landa. Tedlock, like Clendinnen, challenges the evaluation of Scholes and Roys, who sided with Landa in the evaluation of testimony obtained through torture. Tedlock, again like Clendinnen, notes that the primary source these earlier authors use to support their comparison of indigenous testimony to 'known' Maya belief and religious practice is the writing of Landa himself, his *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*. Tedlock challenges the blanket acceptance by Madsen, Thompson, Bricker, and Farriss of the dependability of indigenous testimony resulting from Landa's tortuous inquisition (145). Regardless of the 'truth' of the testimony that emerged during Landa's inquisition, Tedlock argues, and I agree, that the act of "bracketing out" the inquisitors and their methods in order to acquire data on the Mayas does not allow for a complete, contextualized understanding of the events themselves (148). The interchange between the respective parties, the psychological dimensions of torture, and the ideological or religious impetus that led to the Inquisition of Yucatán must be approached holistically, not in a disconnected and disjointed manner.

Lastly, the debate over religious domination v. the superficial imposition of Christianity in Yucatán relates to an interactionist analysis vis-à-vis the detailed interactions that made either extreme impossible. In her comparison of “sacred and secular power”, Nancy Farriss criticizes what she interprets as ‘all-or-nothing’ models of post-conquest religious practice. Farriss argues that much work has focused exclusively on either the ideological and mental perspectives at play during the colonial period or the political implications of conquest. She also notes that “what has often been missing is the relationship between thinking and action” (“Sacred” 146). My interactionist approach to power in the experience of the Mayas of Yucatán provides an explicit demonstration of this link, and my analysis of power in colonial Yucatán links meaning and symbolic representations to individual and joint action, as well as the creation, maintenance, and destruction of social structures.

Farriss focuses her essay on *ritual*, the enactment of religious beliefs, a practice that links thought and symbolic meaning to action and interaction. In her focus on sacrifice and sacrificial ritual, Farriss calls “sacred power” the “capacity to channel divine energy into the world” (146). I find this definition unclear and impossible to define. I do think, though, that Farriss identifies a critical juncture of meaning and action using the example of sacrificial ritual. Unlike Farriss, I do not define power as *capacity*, but as the *interactive use* of religious symbols, imagery, or terminology to negotiate, manipulate or control resources, or establish the overarching social or legal frameworks in which other individuals or groups operate. Religious power may thus be seen among the Mayas of Yucatán prior to their European encounters, but also after conquest, throughout the colonial period, *within* Maya groups and *between* Maya and non-Maya groups. Given my pragmatic, interactionist approach, I argue that there is no mystical, supernatural force shaping the religious experiences of Mayas and non-Mayas from the mid-sixteenth century to the present. Rather, religious ideas, theological and cosmological beliefs, and religious ritual all served to structure and reinforce relationships between individuals and groups. That is, religious practices among the Mayas before conquest (and religious practices

between Mayas and non-Mayas after conquest) exhibit power in the various ways I previously identified. This is not to say that events characterized or understood by Mayas and non-Mayas as supernatural did not influence behavior and interaction, but that such characterizations were socially constructed, useful primarily in understanding the social construction of meaning and action.

Symbols and Meaning in Colonial Yucatán

From an estimated two million indigenous inhabitants in Yucatán at conquest, Maya population dwindled to approximately 250,000 by 1550, and down to a low of possibly only 100,000 in 1688 (Restall, "Ties" 359). After initial confrontations between Montejo and the residents of Yucatán near Chichén Itzá, the Spanish withdrew from the peninsula in 1535 before returning to defeat the Xiu at Mani and the Cocoms at Sotuta. The Spanish then founded Valladolid in 1545 (Redfield and Villa Rojas 19-20). Even in the relatively short period between 1550 and 1580, Mayas in Yucatán declined nearly 50% (Quezada, "Tributos" 75). Although Maya population reached nearly 400,000 by the end of the colonial period, the dramatic decline of Maya communities as a result of Spanish conquest was astonishing (Restall, "Ties" 359).

Stories of wanton cruelty permeate the early period of conquest, continuing in Yucatán under the contradictory rule of Fray Diego de Landa, who returned as Bishop of Yucatán after his inquisition and torture of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Mayas. In the conquest of Uaymil-Chetumal, for example, Spanish captains Melchor and Pacheco acted with greater cruelty than other Spaniards in Yucatán, namely the Montejos or Alonso de Ávila.⁸ Frustrated by the lack of supplies and Maya resistance to the Spaniards' demands, Melchor and Pacheco massacred villagers, tortured them by cutting off body parts, and hunted them with Spanish dogs (Chamberlain 234).

⁸ Alonso de Ávila is also sometimes referred to by the contraction of his name, Alonso Dávila.

At the beginning of the colonial enterprise, the Spanish negotiated from a position of weakness in order to obtain food, supplies, allies, and other useful resources in their campaigns to conquer and colonize the people of Yucatán. They manipulated *caciques*, regional Maya leaders, convincing them of good intentions, when in fact they were merely trying to minimize their losses and increase their chances of survival and the successful 'pacification' and conquest of the peninsula. Once Spanish survival was ensured, colonists sought to repopulate vacated indigenous Maya villages in order to establish the bases of *encomienda* and tribute, and thus, the foundations of colonial cities (Chamberlain 217). Regions the Spanish colonists considered 'unpopulated' then became refuges for Mayas fleeing the restrictive, demanding colonial system (Farriss, *Maya* 18).

The often dismal reality of conquest notwithstanding, the Mayas of Yucatán were not always, nor everywhere, merely victims of the colonial regime. Maya resistance to Spanish colonial rule took many forms, most often the subversion or manipulation of colonial systems. The Spanish colonial system itself in Yucatán, as Farriss points out, was in many ways ineffective, as a result either of incompetence, internal inconsistency, or individual interests that competed with those of the larger colonial order or the Crown itself (*Maya* 285). Before presenting evidence of power as interaction, I will first examine some of the varied, subjective meanings held by Mayas and Spaniards at contact and conquest, and into the colonial period, as well as symbols and other symbolic representations that informed and directed their actions, both individual and joint.

Subjective Meaning and Symbolic Representations

The meaning and symbols used by participant actors to understand situations, events, individuals and groups vary widely, particularly in the context of conquest and colonization and the interaction between two previously unassociated cultural groups. Assumptions, symbols, meaning, and interpretation *differently* inform action

(both individual and joint), and directly affect subsequent feedback loops of meaning, action, and the construction of systems over time.

Take, for example, a single historical event, interpreted very differently by the Spanish and Cakchiquel-Maya participants. During an annual re-creation of the Spanish Conquest among the Cakchiquel-Maya of Highland Guatemala, a representative of the deposed Maya king would be led away in chains at the Fiesta del Volcán. To the Spanish, this represented a humiliating disgrace, the stripping of title and the dishonor associated with imprisonment. A structure erected in the form of a volcano and scaled by the actors portraying Spaniards provided rich imagery of conquest. The colonists used the re-enactment to justify the past and legitimize the colonial system. Robert Hill submits that

...the Fiesta del Volcán was clearly a Spanish-inspired celebration which symbolically achieved a variety of ends. Spanish rule and the prominence of the criollos in Colonial society were both legitimized. Criollos and peninsulares alike were reassured as to the supremacy of Spanish arms. Self-serving stereotypes of the Indians were perpetuated. Finally, through their humiliating defeat every year, the Cakchiquels were supposedly reminded of their place in colonial society (5).

Interestingly, to the Cakchiquel-Maya, the re-enactment was not only reminiscent of the more positive sacrifice to maintain the cosmological order, it also represented Kukulcan, the plumed serpent, as well as pre- and post-conquest myths of his departure and return (Hill 6-8). The prominent use of a quetzal feather headdress further reminded the Maya participants of Kukulcan. For the Cakchiquel-Maya, leading away in chains represented the honor of sacrifice and the perpetuation of the "cosmic order" (Hill 7). The Cakchiquel-Maya associated a variety of symbols with the volcano, home of the Earth Lord, Chac, keeper of rains, and a place of animal-spirit companions. Though the use of pyramids as sacred spaces was prohibited shortly after conquest, the construction and use of the symbolic pyramid (the volcano) re-created the sacred space with the tacit, albeit unwitting, approval of the Spanish.

The case study of the Cakchiquel-Maya illustrates two important features of the interactionist framework I use in the present section. Firstly, different symbolic representations lead to different action, both individual and joint. Whereas the colonists intended the re-enactment of conquest to reinforce the colonial system and remind the Cakchiquel-Maya of their subordinate place within that system, in practice, the re-enactment served to reinforce and strengthen Maya traditions, oral histories, and religious observances. This accounts for the exuberance with which the Cakchiquel-Maya celebrated the Fiesta del Volcán, as well as the privileged position of the actor playing the part of the last Cakchiquel-Maya king. Maya meanings and interpretations were unanticipated by (and unknown to) the colonists who thought the re-enactment would assert and affirm their own cultural symbols.

Secondly, particular, regional experiences should not be generalized within the colonial framework. The specific symbols identified among the Cakchiquel-Maya differ from those of Yucatán. Some religious or cosmological ideas among the Mayas transcended regional divisions based on family, clan, or geographic polities, but local contexts ultimately shaped the expression of belief and perception that led to individual and joint action. Compare, for example, some of the perspectives of the Cakchiquel-Mayas with those of the Yucatec-Mayas: Cakchiquel-Maya social stratification, like that of the Yucatec-Mayas, was based on family and the use of resources for the good of society (Hill 31). The cosmological vision of the Cakchiquels was not closed, like the European Christian model, but was open to new permutations (86). Like the Mayas of Yucatán, the Cakchiquels acted on a notion of cyclical time. Similarities notwithstanding, unique, regional expressions of belief and cosmology are also evident among the Cakchiquels, as well. Cakchiquel-Mayas supported religious practitioners who made requests on behalf of individuals or communities. Individuals born at certain times of the year were believed to be endowed with “divinatory potential,” and various levels of diviners officiated at name giving ceremonies, interpreted omens and dreams, and interpreted the calendar (Hill 101-3). Finally, the Cakchiquels imagined the self embedded in the

whole. *Natub*, or consciousness, represented an external force related to the day of one's birth, and was connected to personality and a sense of destiny or fate. The *Tona*, or animal counterpart, was born at the same moment as the Cakchiquel-Maya individual, and imbued with the same life force.

While Spanish notions of honor and disgrace would have been shared widely among the conquerors and colonists of New Spain, regional differences in meaning, symbols, and interpretation from the Guatemalan Highlands to Yucatán preclude meaningful generalization of their respective experiences. For the researcher, this framework for analyzing human experience ought to provoke caution when generalizing results from any qualitative or narrative research. That is, we must be careful before suggesting that particular experiences may be generalized at all beyond the immediate scope of the work in question. Walter Mignolo writes about this very phenomenon when he suggests that "...the universalization of regional semiotic practices is relative to a locus of enunciation constructed in the process of analysis and not of a transcendent or objective perspective" (359). Generalizations may provide a simplified structure for understanding basic similarities, but they ultimately obscure nuances in symbolic meaning and action that are fundamentally particular. Proceeding from this assumption, it is important to identify the specific symbols, meanings, and cultural references of the colonial actors of Yucatán (Mayas and non-Mayas) before analyzing their interactions of power.

Maya Cosmology and Cultural Symbols

"...the Maya ecological model was an organic, circular one, in which all creation was seen as mutually dependent, feeding on itself in endless cycles of decay and renewal" (Farriss, *Maya* 6).

The Mayas of Yucatán maintained a separate cultural sphere from their Maya neighbors outside of the peninsula.⁹ Even within Yucatán itself, a cohesive cultural identity did not coalesce until at least the colonial period, but most likely in the contemporary period (Restall, “Maya” 64). The unity implied by referring to diverse cultural and linguistic groups as ‘Maya’ poses a number of problems for Hostettler and others, who see the label as a recent, post-colonial conception of ethnic identity (193). Castañeda, like Restall, echoes the idea that ‘Maya’ emerged historically during colony, and has been understood differently across time and space, including in the contemporary period. Essays from the *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* reviewed by Castañeda portray the Mayas of Yucatán not as a single, unified cultural group, but as complex individuals and communities in relation to other, Spanish or non-Maya groups. Their agency and action, rather than uniform or unidirectional, displayed “diverse forms of manipulation, adaptation, selective borrowing, negotiation, inversion, measured acceptance, calculated rejection, and revalorization of the languages and mechanisms of *government*” (52). In other words, diverse symbolic representations and perceived meaning led to alternative action and interaction between Mayas and non-Mayas from region to region and community to community.

Adding to the complexity of Maya responses to colonial rule, non-Maya influence on written colonial accounts makes it difficult to discern an unfiltered representation of Maya belief, thought, and symbolism during the colonial period. To compensate for the influence of non-Mayas on text related to colonial Mayas, Clendinnen and others have identified their own efforts to strip away non-Maya interpretations in order to understand intended meaning as seen from Maya participant actors (*Ambivalent* 132).

⁹ For a discussion on the problems with labels, nomenclature, politics, and identity, see Castañeda. In the article, he identifies important differences in both experiences and identity among various Maya groups.

Analyzing a number of Mesoamerican groups, Frances Karttunen has identified commonalities that are too broad and generalized for inclusion in the framework of the present study, but which merit repetition for the purposes of comparison and evaluation. Karttunen identifies four common “principles” or symbols shared by various Mesoamerican indigenous groups, particularly the Maya and Nahua groups (3). According to his interpretation, diverse Mesoamerican groups held in common notions of “*cardinality, duality, reciprocity, and propriety*” (3). *Cardinality* relates to directions and rotation, as indicated by various calendrical, time-keeping, and ceremonial objects and practices. The principle of *duality* emerges in literary forms as representation of indigenous thought, and also in social organization (6). *Reciprocity* forms the basis of many types of social exchanges and relationships, from godparent roles to notions of reciprocity in religious observances and prayers (9). *Propriety* or politeness in speech and action, perhaps the most difficult ‘principle’ to define or evidence, may be seen, like reciprocity, in the context of interpersonal relationships and daily exchange between individuals. Beyond the interactional notion of propriety, this ‘principle’ also corresponds to social stratification and what are seen as ‘appropriate’ roles within the social system (10).

Within Yucatán, a number of authors have noted specific religious, social, and political symbols, beliefs, and practices that are useful in interpreting the links between Maya symbolic representation and interaction with non-Maya groups. Though regional variations throughout Yucatán are inevitable, the following section identifies common structures, meanings, and symbols among the Mayas of Yucatán.

Maya communities in colonial Yucatán were made up primarily of the *cah*, a geographically-defined community, or *cahob*, multiple communities. The second important group, the *chibal*, or patrilineal group (plural *chibalbob*), made up the extended family unit within the *cahob* (Restall, “Ties” 355). Maya society was organized around the *milpa*, the planting field, and concomitant shifts throughout regional territories. Dispersed villages suited the landscape and planting cycles, and the Mayas forged an intimate connection between land and territory, family and kin

(Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 139-40). Established traditions of marriage and kinship preserved the Maya social order in Yucatán, and all social, economic, and religious activities related closely to the family and familial structures (Restall, "Ties" 355). Practical considerations of relative wealth, space, and labor likely contributed to Maya marriage patterns in Yucatán during the colonial period. Anecdotally, endogamous marriage appears more common during the colonial period than exogamous marriage (Restall, "Ties" 360, 364). Restall portrays the Yucatec Maya family "...as an economic corporation...", and identifies marriage patterns as "...formative and cohesive..." ("Ties" 357). The "economic corporation" of Maya households during the colonial period combined subsistence and capitalist systems into what Restall dubs the interactive model, based on Christine Kray's ethnographic work in Dzitnup ("Ties" 366).

As in other aspects of family and community life, land ownership among the Yucatec Mayas differed from a purely individualist notion. Ownership, while related to inheritance and familial ties, also entailed even distribution or *cetil*, and joint ownership or *multial* ("Ties" 369). Restall notes the fluid, complementary relationship between separate and joint ownership among Maya communities of Yucatán during the colonial period. He also identifies five ways in which colonial Yucatec Maya families maintained cohesion: 1) residentially, 2) through joint ownership legally documented, 3) through "coparticipation" and the sharing of household tasks, 4) ideologically, through the *chibal* or patronym-group, and 5) ideologically, through the *cah* or larger municipal community ("Ties" 372).

With regard to Maya political organization in colonial Yucatán, Quezada identifies three types of indigenous political organization at the time of Conquest, drawing on the work of Ralph Roys and other earlier ethnographers. The first type of political ruling structure consisted of the *halach winik*, a centralized, inherited rule maintained by a specific family and a single *batab* or ruler in charge of judging disputes and settling conflicts. In this system of centralized rule, a town council or *ah kuch kabo'ob* worked to regulate or oversee various public works, such as tribute and

other community responsibilities. Beneath the town council, public defenders or *ah kulelo'ob* defended the accused and subsequently carried out the decisions of the *batab*. The *holpop* acted as diplomat and negotiator, though less is known about this particular role ("Encomienda" 663-5).

The second type of political structure identified by Quezada consisted of a collective system of autonomous rulers without a form of centralized power, generally from a single inherited lineage. A third and final type of indigenous political structure existed in colonial Yucatán, alliances of *batabo'ob* (multiple leaders responsible for resolving conflicts and settling disputes) not based on lineage, but on common interests ("Encomienda" 666). At the time of conquest, stable social hierarchies had formed in Yucatán, despite the disintegration of regional authorities throughout the peninsula.

David Freidel, Linda Schele, and Joy Parker note continuity of tradition and religious beliefs between the Mayas of Yucatán and Mayas of highland Guatemala, and other regions, with regard to stories of creation, beliefs about the structure of worlds, stories of tricksters overcoming death and disease, notions of sacrifice and rebirth, and the origins of maize (43). In Yucatán, specifically, Freidel et al. and Inga Clendinnen identify an important and widely-held concept of the four-fold nature of the cosmos or divinity, or the four cardinal directions surrounding the center, a five-fold conception of existence (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 50), (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 144). Beginning in the pre-Columbian period, Freidel et al. demonstrate the four-fold design of K'uk'ulkan at Chichén Itzá. K'uk'ulkan imitates the four cardinal directions, with its four staircases and solar alignment, and the nearby Venus Platform also represents directionality and creation; the Northwest and Southwest corner axes of K'uk'ulkan align with sun's rising and setting points during the summer and winter solstices (156). Similarly, off the coast of Yucatán, North of Tulum, royal residences on Cozumel were organized around four points in a ceremonial center (161). This focus on the four cardinal directions persisted into the colonial period, particularly with the adaptation of the cross.

During the colonial period, Mayas in Yucatán frequently adapted the Christian cross as a symbol in combination with the *yax che' il kab* or World Tree of the Center (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 39). Utilizing what Clendinnen labels an elaborate and highly developed religious conception of the world, the Mayas of Yucatán articulated an intimate connection between the sacred and mundane, particularly with regard to food and sustenance (*Ambivalent*). Maya communities celebrated the cycles of life and agriculture with the conscientious use of symbol and ritual. They demonstrated the cyclical, predictive nature of time and deities, based on the calendrical system and its reading or interpretation. Calendar priests provided critical information for the community, based on readings of the calendars, even into the colonial period. Keepers of ritual order thus established communities in sacred time, in accordance with the world order of the Mayas (Farriss, "Sacred").

Sacrifice, like the cardinal directions and the adaptation of the Christian cross, played an important role in the religious understanding of colonial Yucatec Mayas. They connected the idea of sacrifice to agricultural representations, not necessarily to a sense of personal empowerment or sharing of power, but in recognition of life cycles, maize, and newness of life and growth (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent*). The word *P' a chi'*, a word for sacrifice in Yucatán, variously means "to open the mouth," "to sacrifice and dedicate something to god," and "to discover, to manifest, and to declare" (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 202). The linguistic representation of sacrifice makes explicit the link between corn, fluids, sustenance, and sacrifice.

Farriss points out the function of sacrifice in Mesoamerica prior to conquest. Sacrifice, for the Mayas of Yucatán, was used as leverage with the lords of creation, in the sense of a "down payment" on future returns or favors, "a straightforward, businesslike transaction with no element of gratitude for favours received" (Farriss, "Sacred" 147). This is perhaps one of the most striking examples of religious power as action or interaction within Maya society. Mayas and other Mesoamerican groups demonstrated power (or attempted to do so) as they presented sacrifice (human and vegetal), essentially demanding a favorable response.

Due to the fact that most pre-Columbian and colonial-era Maya texts in Yucatán were destroyed by zealous Franciscans under the direction of Landa, the Books of the Chilam Balam provide perhaps the best example of indigenous record-keeping, memory, organization, and writing from the colonial period. Once most of the old Maya scripts and texts had been destroyed, the Chilam Balam provided a way to re-create the past from Maya perspectives using European lettering. Present in the Chilam Balam is a definitive symbiosis between animal and vegetable life, as well as clear adaptations from colonial times (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 137). Clendinnen notes, however, that these are helpful in understanding Mayan perspectives through the knowledge of their interpretation of new religious and cultural concepts.

The Books of the Chilam Balam depict the grief with which the Mayas of Yucatán received the Spaniards and Christianity. The adaptation of Christian imagery and nomenclature in the following section is clear; so, too, is the representation of mournful loss experienced by the Mayas:

Solamente por el tiempo loco, por los locos sacerdotes fue que entró a nosotros la tristeza, que entró a nosotros el Cristianismo, porque los muy cristianos llegaron aquí con el verdadero Dios, pero ese fue el principio de la miseria nuestra, el principio del tributo, el principio de la limosna, la causa de que saliera la discordia oculta, el principio de las peleas con armas de fuego, el principio de los atropellos, el principio de los despojos de todo, el principio de la esclavitud por las deudas, el principio de las deudas pegadas a la espalda, el principio de la continua reyerta, el principio del padecimiento, fue el principio de la obra de los españoles y de los padres, el principio de los caciques, los maestros de escuela y los fiscales, pero llegará el día en que lleguen hasta Dios las lágrimas de nuestros ojos y baje la justicia de Dios un golpe sobre la Tierra (in Rojas 80).

Despite concerted, repeated attempts by Franciscans in early colonial Yucatán, many of the pre-Columbian Maya symbols, social systems, and religious practices persisted well into the colonial period, in some cases surviving even to the contemporary

period.¹⁰ The symbols, representations of belief, and meanings that informed Maya action are critical in understanding interactions of power between Mayas and non-Mayas in colonial Yucatán.

Spanish Cosmology and Cultural Symbols

Spaniards and Iberian peninsular colonists who first interacted with the Mayas of Yucatán came from a nation of city-states (Lockhart and Schwartz 3-4). Spain in the sixteenth century was more provincial than national. At the same time, colonists were more influenced by Castile than any other region of Spain, in the sense of the primacy of that region and its norms, mores, beliefs, and social practices (19). In Castile, as opposed to other regions of Spain, political, social, and religious reconquest came more frequently to the fore, at least in part because of the political and familial connections between Castile and Queen Isabel. With the culmination of reconquest of Spain from the last Moorish stronghold of Granada in 1492, though largely symbolic, the practices and ideologies of conquest and the subsequent claims on land, resources, communities, and religion were established in the Iberian Peninsula prior to the Spanish Conquest of the Americas (19-21).

Kenneth Andrien notes deeply-ingrained Spanish notions of nobility, *limpieza de sangre*, and propriety at the time of conquest (xiv). These often formalized rules of propriety and decorum detailed who had certain privileges, exemptions, the right to carry a sword, and other individual rights. Nobility, rank, and hierarchy were all of central importance. Professionals also achieved a degree of social rank, and could be nobles, as well, but merchants, servants, artisans, and rural commoners came next in the social and political pecking order (Lockhart and Schwartz 4-5). Many Spaniards in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries derived meaning and value from their own ranking among the nobility. The lack of physical labor and participation in

¹⁰ In the next section on interactions of power in the colonial context, I provide examples of the persistence and survival of Maya beliefs, practices, and social structures.

governmental service also set nobles apart from commoners in the Iberian Peninsula (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent*).

Robert Ricard mistakenly notes that "...because of her long contact with the Moslem world, Spain was perhaps the one European nation best prepared for a great missionary enterprise" (308). Somewhat similarly, Lockhart and Schwartz argue that

Overall, the Iberians shared fully the general ethnocentricity of human groups in world history, assuming that their own language, religion, and ways were superior to those of others and looking for dominance in their relations with other peoples. But unlike some European nations, they had a deep, long-lasting, and yet recent experience with radically different linguistic, religious, and racial groups on their home ground and came to the New World equipped with expectations and mechanisms for dealing with them (10-11).

In the first place, most European nations or city-states at the time had experienced extensive, enduring contact with neighboring regions and distant civilizations. Spaniards had experienced unique cultural interactions over time, but the interaction of diverse cultures and ethnicities was not unique in Eurasia to Spain. Secondly, whatever may be Ricard's interpretation of Spain as "best prepared" for evangelistic work in the Americas, and however Lockhart & Schwartz define the Spanish as "equipped" to deal with different linguistic, religious, and racial groups, religious and ethnic divisions in Spain led to a growing sense of urgency in the reconquest, and a perceived need for unity, unification, and singularity in Spanish politics, religion, and society (Lockhart and Schwartz 9). As I demonstrate below, these ideas, meanings, and perspectives led to forced conversions, numerous ecclesiastical abuses, and other forms of extremism in the restructuring of indigenous society and religious life in Yucatán, rather than the 'well equipped' or 'prepared' interactions that Ricard, Lockhart, and Schwartz describe.

Aníbal Quijano suggests that the contemporary understanding of race and ethnicity originates in the colonial period (534). Though it may begun as observation of phenotypic differences, Quijano argues that the observation of physical difference

deteriorated into a belief of biological difference, and the implied inferiority of the 'other', typically non-European or non-Western groups. Through the process of conquest and colonization, Spaniards used language describing themselves and their geographical origins (*Español, peninsular, criollo*, etc.) to denote systems of privilege and prestige, thus structuring the colonial system on the idea of race (534). Quijano depicts the "cognitive model" of the Spaniards in this way: "...the model of power based on coloniality also involved a cognitive model, a new perspective of knowledge within which non-Europe was the past, and because of that inferior, if not always primitive" (552). The process of successfully constructing and implementing such a system of normative behavior, founding racially-divided institutions, and the codifying of the idea of race all represent transactional power in the colonial setting.

Quijano posits a dualism within European thought at the time of expansion and colonization, a dualism based on the division between civilized and uncivilized, traditional and modern, Christian and 'pagan', and so on (552-3). Unlike the complementary dualisms of Mesoamerica, European concepts of duality in the colonial context descended into a violent contest over what was considered the 'best' of each pair, and the obliteration of the other. In Yucatán and throughout New Spain, this framework of domination and loathing consisted of a disproportionate elevation of Spanish perspective, beliefs, and culture, as well as the summary devaluation of those pertaining to others. Ultimately, this produced action that reflected such a distorted view.

Walter Mignolo has proposed a particular framework of symbols and meaning in the Spanish world view at the time of conquest. Mignolo's argument fits well within an interactionist approach, with an emphasis on particular, contextualized analysis and the role of symbols or meaning in producing or leading toward action. Mignolo argues that the philosophy of writing first articulated in Spain by Elio Antonio Nebrija led to the study of Spanish languages, instruction in language and culture, and programs of evangelization throughout the realm of Spanish empire. Though Nebrija first articulated a philosophy of writing in Spain,

Mignolo also cites Cicero and Quintilian as ancient forerunners of the Western practices of rhetoric, oratory, and written history (134-5). He reflects, too, on Isidore of Seville, a Hispano-Roman intellectual who, at the time of a “revival of Visigothic culture” connected history with the written word (137). Nebrija formally presented Castilian grammar to Queen Isabel in 1492, specifically citing its use as a tool for colonial development and advancement among “many barbarians who speak outlandish tongues” (38). For Nebrija, Latin formed the basis of the humanities and all forms of education, and civility was rooted in or connected to Christianity, religion, and the humanities.

Theories by Nebrija and Aldrete on the origins and development of Castilian justified its use as a tool of colonization. As Mignolo points out, Nebrija developed a theory that posited all conquering nations imposed their language on the vanquished, and this despite contrary evidence even within Spain, vis-à-vis the Visigoth Conquest and subsequent adoption of local language and customs. Mignolo emphasizes the influence of Nebrija and Aldrete, arguing that they “...established a solid foundation for the spread of Western literacy in the colonial world by combining grammar, orthography, and the origin of Castilian in an ideological complex” (43). Far from purely ideological musings, though, these theories impacted colonial state and religious action in New Spain. Francisco Antonio Lorenzana y Buitrón, archbishop of Mexico, for example, wrote about indigenous languages. He echoed the arguments of Aldrete, supporting the idea of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew as superior to other languages (59-63).

The works of Nebrija, Aldrete, and other colonial-era authors represent a shift in the philosophical understanding of writing and speaking. Whereas Aristotle and later thinkers viewed systems of writing as interpretation and clarification of voice and the spoken word, sixteenth to seventeenth century religious practitioners writing the grammar of the Mayas and other indigenous groups viewed the written form in Roman characters as the voice itself (46-7). Spoken language was thus relegated to a secondary position of value and importance. If spoken language did not correspond

to the written forms established by Castilian grammarians, it was seen as inferior and unnecessary.

Writing, to sixteenth century Spaniards, meant exclusively the writing of books, not the myriad forms of text found throughout Mesoamerica and among the Mayas of Yucatán. Here, Mignolo reverses the equation and reflects on the relative lack of written expression by the Europeans when compared with the variety of written Maya forms (76). For sixteenth century Spaniards, letters were seen as more advanced in evolutionary terms than pictures or other forms of writing (44-5). Books came to represent the embodiment of Divine Truth and knowledge, and as such, cultures of books were able to justify colonial expansion based on their reading of sacred and other texts. Letters and the writing of books were the only legitimate and recognized forms of documenting history, culture, or other information.

Indigenous accounts were criticized for their erratic and inconsistent nature, as measured by European or Spanish standards of thought and text (133). If the Bible was a representation of Divine truth and knowledge, books as objects had the potential to reflect the dichotomy between good and evil. Thus, Franciscans in Yucatán were quick to judge what they understood to be 'books' as evil works of the devil; they projected their ideas about writing, books, and morality on indigenous writing and forms of communication (79-83). Ultimately, religious interpretations of text would do the most harm to Maya records and writing, not only because of the burning and destruction of Maya text, but also due to a summary devaluation of Maya expression, tradition, and perspective.

Not all Franciscans in Yucatán throughout the colonial period destroyed indigenous texts and records of indigenous memory. Landa himself provided documentation of Maya practices and society before his own disillusionment in 1562 led to a brutal inquisition by the Franciscans. As Ricard notes, "The Crown was not at all hostile to the study and teaching of native languages, but it believed that none of them was sufficiently rich and supple to allow it to be used for explaining the mysteries of the Christian faith" (51). Even when extreme measures were not taken to

eliminate Maya text and memory, then, the symbols of superiority and ethnocentricity, and the deprecation of the 'other' led to action and interactions of power, albeit in more subtle or insidious ways. For instance, early accounts by Franciscan monks indicated dismay at the supposed indigenous inability to compose a written history (Mignolo 127-8). Also, in a letter directed to Dominicans and Augustinians in 1550, the Spanish Crown conveyed "that the Indians be instructed in our Castilian speech and accept our social organization and good customs" (in Ricard 52). Even in interactions more favorable to the Mayas, Spanish symbolic representations of their own superior culture, language, and writing led to the deprecation and devaluation of Maya text.

By the sixteenth century, reductionism had affected the idea of discerning or reading, relegating them principally to the discernment or reading of letters of the alphabet (Mignolo 138). For sixteenth century Spaniards, the idea of written history precluded a wider definition of human experience in the past and varied methods of representing or recollecting that experience (142). Not all conceptualized indigenous text in this way. Mignolo identifies Vico and Boturini as the forerunners of a broader definition of 'history' that would include forms of record-keeping other than writing with the alphabet (143-63). Vico presented a broader comprehension of language or speech and writing. Boturini read Vico and visited Mexico, defending indigenous writing and history on its own merits. Patrizi, too, questioned the basis of history as only written using the alphabet. He proposed and advocated a wider definition to include painting, sculpture, and other graphic representations in the sixteenth century (167). Even these progressive thinkers used European experience as the measure of cultural value, however; Boturini admired and reflected on the Mexican conception of the ages of the universe, but proceeded to relate the history of the Amerindians in terms of Greek ages and a Western conceptualization of time (154).

Inclusive changes notwithstanding, by the early seventeenth century in Spain the link between language—both spoken and written—and civility had been firmly established by such influential authors as Aldrete and Nebrija. Education in 'letters'

and language was equated by the Spanish with civility and advanced civilization (34).

The experience of the Itza demonstrates the typical pattern of intergroup relations between the Spanish and indigenous groups, predicated on the meanings and symbolic representations of the European conqueror or colonist (Jones, "AhChan"). Some of the Itza opted to peacefully submit to the Crown, while others chose to resist colonial rule, either openly or covertly. Eventually, Spanish expansionism and colonial development precluded any other viable options. The notion of peaceful coexistence or modern ideas about cultural autonomy were simply not options for the sixteenth to nineteenth century European or European-descendent agents of colonization. The assumed superiority of European modes of thought and the development of Western Civilization led to various interpretations of Maya society and culture as uncivilized, pagan, unsophisticated, or backwards. Each of these descriptions represents a comparison with European society, reflecting the view of the time that Europe and Western Civilization were the universal standards of culture, religion, and the whole of civilization.

By the time of the Spanish Conquest of the Americas, great variety of religious orders, secular clergy, and others made up a fragmentary, competitive religious scene in the Iberian Peninsula (Lockhart and Schwartz 13-5). In New Spain, the respective goals of various religious orders, friars, and the Spanish Crown did not always align, but some of the outcomes of Westernization were surprisingly similar, in terms of the transformation of indigenous society, rapid population loss, and the eventual reduction of indigenous groups to a peasant society (Mignolo 55). In Yucatán, Franciscans controlled the religious transformation of the Mayas, without the same competition that existed in peninsular Spain. The primary function of evangelization in Yucatán and other parts of New Spain was to eliminate and replace indigenous religious beliefs and practices with those of the friars (Caso Barrera 153). Despite the fragmentary nature of religious institutions in Spain, clergy in Yucatán implemented consistent measures of religious training, practice, and correction.

A number of symbols and meanings informed the actions of Franciscans of Yucatán in the early colonial period. Ricard notes the obsession of some friars with 'idols' and 'pagan' practices that sometimes extended to *any* form of indigenous practice, belief, tradition, or cultural remnant (57). Early preaching on the peninsula focused (almost obsessively) on 'idolatry' and sodomy, and the religious narrative of early colonial Spaniards emphasized conversion, the establishment of Catholic practice, and the destruction of 'idols'. The Spanish recognized that Maya cultural and religious forms were *different*, and in some cases documented and learned about Maya culture, language, and religion. However, that difference was measured against Christian religious practices, held to be the universal truth in comparison with the misguided particulars of indigenous practices. For the missionaries in Yucatán, the study of culture, language, and religion was simply a means to an end, and the end in the case of the Mayas was conversion to Christianity and the adoption of European cultural and religious practices, not the preservation or integrity of Mayan forms. Indigenous religion represented a threat to the colonial structures and order of New Spain, and thus had to be controlled and eliminated (Caso Barrera 155).

Within the Order of Saint Francis, friars adhered to a strict, sacrificial denial of self and 'worldly' things. The Order's appeal lay in its simplicity, spiritual enlightenment, and a messianic approach toward the 'other', as well as an emphasis on faith and mystic experience, rather than what were considered to be more worldly or less spiritual practices. The Franciscans and their evangelistic zeal found support in Cortés, the Spanish Crown, and the Pope, and the friars' firm belief in strict religious form and structure translated into their equally rigid application in Yucatán.

Timmer argues that the millenarian view of the Spanish Franciscans greatly impacted Landa's approach with and towards the Mayas and the discovery of continued pre-Conquest indigenous religion (477). 'Millinarianism' led the Franciscans of Yucatán to see themselves as ushering in the final act of the end times, "...a moment which would create the conditions for the consummation of history"

(481). This notion, writes Timmer, was less a specific, articulated program of action than ideas and symbols that informed action. The Franciscans saw themselves as pivotal actors in an unfolding, providential drama in which the evangelization of the indigenous population of Yucatán would advance the Christian program of global conversion and, ultimately, the end of the world (483). At the same time, insecurities over the fate of Catholicism in North Africa (*vis-à-vis* Islam), Europe (*vis-à-vis* Protestantism), and other regions led to intensification of evangelization and an urgency that made the events of Yucatán uncovered in 1562 all the more alarming to the missionary friars (486).

In line with my interactionist assessment, Farriss argues that cognitive, symbolic models of conflict and exclusivist theology among the Franciscans led to the egregious abuses of Landa and the torture of the Mayas (“Sacred” 151). In other words, symbolic meaning led to actions, and in the case of the Mayas of Yucatán, the actions of early Franciscans often exhibited interactional power. Timmer, like Farriss, provides a concise description of Landa’s Inquisition and surrounding events (477-9). He summarizes his presentation with the idea that “...[Landa] forged a view of history which combined faith in divine providence and fear of human perdition in order to justify his savage inquisition as a necessary and even merciful response to the Mayan religious revolt” (488). Landa’s religious and cultural symbolic representations led to calculated, egregious abuses, despite the contradictory nature of such actions taken by Franciscan clergy.

Invoking T. O. Beidelman’s 1974 “Social Theory and the Study of Christian Missions in Africa”, Clendinnen concedes that the traditional social anthropological view of Christian missionaries from Europe distorts their experiences and contributions (whether for better or worse), representing them as impervious to cultural influences or change as a result of their environment. She proceeds to present a case study of Franciscans in Yucatán as evidence of a more complex set of relations and interactions that shaped and changed the Franciscans, as well as the Mayas. She presents the Franciscans’ shared framework of symbols and meaning

before charting the divergent path that the friars of Yucatán took when rooting out 'idolatry' and torturing the Mayas after Landa's discoveries of 1562. Initially, commitment to conversion and discipleship through personal example overruled the use of force among the Franciscans of New Spain, while "The new apostolic church of the Indies would also rest solely upon the coercive power of the word, and the infectiousness of example" (Clendinnen, "Disciplining" 29). Shortly after their arrival in Tenochtitlán (and later, throughout New Spain), Franciscans resorted to corporal punishment and violence when their less coercive methods failed to achieve the desired result (30).

Clendinnen attempts to describe the Franciscan "'vision-in-action'" in Yucatán, something akin to the interactionist reading of symbols and meaning in action, both individual and joint (32). Clendinnen identifies a number of the symbols and meanings that informed Franciscan action in Yucatán, including an oppositional or divergent ideology based on Francis of Assisi's own rejection of material possessions and relational connections and a reactionary behavioral paradigm that "...mirrored, but in reversed and opposed images, and indeed comprised a radical critique of, the Spanish secular world which the Observants came to believe they could not directly change" (38). The contrived isolation, humility, and contemplation of Franciscans in Spain, "elaborately contrived and artificially protected", became, out of necessity, a part of daily routine among the Order in New Spain, due to the harsh realities of colonial life for the religious. The unfamiliar context of New Spain allowed for greater autonomy among the friars, subverting the carefully controlled relations of power among the friars within the Franciscan Order in Spain (39-41).

The Franciscans viewed the Mayas as children, in a paternalistic and self-serving metaphor of innocence and dependence upon the friars' benevolence and wise instruction.

Where we would see a people shaken by defeat and exploitation, but still living within a cultural system of complex reciprocities and highly elaborated deference rules, the friars saw men and women 'naturally'

humble and submissive, and free of the vices of pride, avarice and envy (42).

This paternalism led to a deeply-held belief among the friars of Yucatán that the Mayas needed to be punished and controlled for their own good. The self-denial of the Franciscans set the example the Mayas were to follow. In their discovery of old indulgences among the Mayas, the Franciscans sought to root out what they understood to be pathological idolatry all the more fiercely.

Despite writing his work on the spiritual conquest in New Spain in the contemporary era, Ricard repeats some of the ideas and symbolic representations of the early Spanish conquerors and colonists themselves, particularly with regard to religion and religious practices. Early in his text he repeats the error, noted above, of taking Landa's descriptions of 'idolatry' at face value, without questioning the validity or accuracy of the accusations against the Mayas. Echoing Landa, Ricard writes, "Their religion, indeed, appeared to be only a lot of rites and beliefs, unconnected with morality, and the rites themselves (human sacrifice, drunkenness, and ritual cannibalism) were too often sanguinary and immoral" (31). Ricard's description sounds little changed from that of Landa, during his indictment of the Mayas of Sotuta in 1562, when he described the "great sacrifices and heresies within the churches" (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 193):

...they have made many other idolatries and ceremonies in accordance with their ancient customs and have burnt crosses,...mocking them, holding them in little account,...and they themselves have become priests, and have preached falsely, claiming that which the priests, friars and clerics were teaching them was not true or good, and that what they [the ah-kines] were telling them were things for their salvation and that by doing that which they were advising, sacrificing, worshipping and venerating the idols and devils, they will be saved (194).¹¹

¹¹ Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 194. Some translated documents from Landa's Inquisition have been reproduced in the appendices of Clendinnen's *Ambivalent Conquests*. This particular piece comes from "Diego de Landa's indictment of the Sotuta Indians, 11 August 1562," 193-194.

The belief of the Franciscans of Yucatán in the moral depravity of the Mayas led to specific, repeated actions of dominance, destruction, and upheaval, or interactive forms of power.

I now turn to specific interactions of power, in which the Spanish ecclesiastical interpretation of events and the clergy's perception of the Mayas as idolatrous and unrepentant led to their sustained abuse and persecution. The clergy were not the sole actors engaged in interactions of power with the Mayas of Yucatán, though. Acting on the basis of their symbolic representations, Spanish conquerors, colonists, and officials sought to control and manipulate discourse, resources, negotiations, and the very structure of social, religious, and political systems in Yucatán, to the detriment of the Mayas. The degree of their success, as well as interactions of power that actually favored Maya communities, is the subject of the section that follows.

Four: Negotiation and Discourse as Power

Interactions of Power in the Colonial Maya Context

Exploitative actions, such as forced labor, the extraction of tribute, or inquisitorial tortures by Franciscans, most clearly represent transactions of power. Other, less obvious interactions such as communicative exchanges, the use of resources, and the construction of overarching social, political, religious, economic, or other systems may also demonstrate power, as well. Changing interactions between the Mayas of Yucatán and the Spanish explorers, conquerors, settlers, and their descendants did not occur uni-directionally. That is, the Mayas were not always the victims of interactions of power. Throughout the colonial period in Yucatán, though, Maya communities struggled to maintain their autonomy and cultural identity, given persistent attempts to end Maya cultural and religious practices and to collect any and all surplus goods, even at times the very means of Maya subsistence. In all, non-Mayas demonstrated a more effective and unrelenting use of power through their interactions with the Mayas.

One example from the early period of conquest demonstrates the complex interactions of power between the Mayas and Spanish in Yucatán. As Clendinnen notes, the Spanish practice of looting and the Maya practice of burning food stores to prevent their appropriation by the Spanish, coupled with drought, led to famine and

widespread disruption of the social network of the Mayas (*Ambivalent* 30). Regional conflict ensued, further depleting scarce supplies. In this instance, the Spanish exercised a degree of control over food resources that would have otherwise sufficed for the Maya during times of drought. Whether intentionally or merely in the interest of self-preservation, the Spanish had consumed resources vital to Maya survival, thus exerting power over them in subtle and insidious ways, perhaps even in ways unknown to the Spanish at the time. Despite temporary successes of the Mayas in defending their communities against the rapacious conquerors, the Spanish nevertheless demonstrated power in several ways from the earliest period of contact.

In another instance from the early period of conquest, the divergent meaning and symbolic representations of the Spanish and Mayas of Yucatán led to the justification of physical abuses and military campaigns of terror by the Spanish against the Mayas. Near the first point of contact, Cortés took regional Maya elites and more than 600 men with him, and they did not return to Acalán, despite Spanish promises to the contrary. Subsequently, en route to the same region in 1530, Alonso de Ávila sent messengers ahead of him to instruct the residents of Acalán to stay in their homes in order to avoid violence against them. The people left their homes and fled into the bush, not believing what Ávila had said to them. When a delegation returned, having received Ávila's promise of kind treatment, they were captured and taken as hostages (Chamberlain 88). This type of interaction and harsh treatment established later patterns of interaction in which the Mayas resorted to either passive or active resistance to Spanish demands. Perhaps more importantly, this illustrates Spanish expectation of allegiance and submission, based on the cultural and historical symbols they brought with them from Spain. When Maya communities did not wholeheartedly embrace the Spanish and their demands, they were punished for what the Spanish took to be 'disobedience' or subversion of the new order in Yucatán.

Here Chamberlain writes, again implicitly validating Spanish claims and presuppositions, that "Relations with the Indians were now friendly, and the natives

served the Spaniards loyally” (89). After the so-called ‘pacification’ of Acalán, de Ávila established the early town of Salamanca, and assigned the nearby villages to soldiers as part of the *encomienda* practice.

In the present chapter, as in the previous examples, I present various interactions of power between Mayas and non-Mayas, in which individuals or communities of one group or the other utilized methods of negotiation and communication, the control and manipulation of resources, or the structuring of systems as means of exercising power over individuals of the other group. In many cases, though certainly not all, the Mayas of Yucatán experienced power as subordinates, victims of the colonial regime and its representative actors. At the same time, Maya subversion of colonial systems and practices minimized material and cultural losses and the disintegration of community life over time. In each of the following categories, Mayas undermined what non-Maya colonists established as instruments of domination and control. Nevertheless, non-Mayas demonstrated greater, and more effective, use of interactional forms of power throughout the colonial period.

Negotiation as power

Negotiation as a form of power has more to do with the processes of interaction than a particular type of political or economic negotiation. That is, negotiation, according to my definition of interactional power, has to do specifically with the ongoing, shifting interactions between individuals and groups as they attempt to barter or argue with or otherwise influence another actor or party. Negotiation, narrowly defined, consists of a specific verbal exchange, in which two or more parties attempt to persuade or convince one another of their respective positions on a matter of some importance, be it economic, political, social, religious, or otherwise. Typically, the outcome of a negotiation, thus defined, results in some benefit for one party or the other, and a simultaneous loss or reduction of benefit for

the other. Alternatively, negotiation may also result in scenarios of mutual benefit. In the case of colonial Yucatán, though, negotiation often resulted in the extraction of resources from Maya communities by non-Maya colonials acting in their own best interests. Inasmuch as negotiation may be considered any persuasive interaction resulting in altered outcomes for parties involved, the act of negotiation demonstrates interactive power in the same way that the control or manipulation of resources demonstrates power. Much like the control or manipulation of resources, the use of negotiation to control or alter outcomes represents a form of power.

Most of the forthcoming examples of interaction between Mayas and non-Mayas may be understood as forms of negotiation, and thus, power. As Mayas and non-Mayas sought to control resources, they utilized legal and religious arguments to justify and legitimize their interactions, individual and joint. Legal petitions, land disputes, control of labor and production, and the interactions between colonial officials and Maya *caciques*, in particular, all represent some form of negotiation, regardless of outcomes. In many cases, non-Maya colonials benefited disproportionately from Maya labor, land, and other resources, but the fact remains that negotiation as a process was present in nearly all exchanges between Mayas and non-Mayas of Yucatán during the colonial period.

As Clendinnen points out, the Spanish had less to lose in the early colonial period, considering the social and material landscape in which they found themselves. Destitute and without sufficient resources, early Spanish explorers and conquerors depended significantly on Maya resources for their survival. What they could not obtain through peaceful exchange or barter, they simply raided and stole, either under cover of night or armed conflict. At the earliest point of contact, Mayas negotiated from a more secure and resource-rich position, compared to the position of the Spaniards, depleted of even the most basic resources, such as food, shelter, and other necessities of survival. As a result, the Mayas of Yucatán initially used their strategic advantages to expel the Spanish and preserve their former way of life,

whereas the Spanish concerned themselves primarily with survival and conquest, in that order.

With each successive interaction throughout the early period of conquest, Spaniards negotiated from the basis of their peninsular legal, political, and religious frameworks, resorting to brute force and armed conflict when initial, less coercive methods failed to convince Maya communities to submit peacefully to foreign rule and religious domination. Negotiation by Spaniards at this early point was less about bartering and persuasion, and more about leveraging whatever resources were available in order to acquire additional resources and eventually establish political, economic, and religious control of Yucatán and other regions. Negotiation by Mayas during the early period of contact and conquest centered on the maintenance and defense of resources, and the justification of established traditions, lifestyles, and indigenous structures, including familial, political, and religious systems present at the time of conquest.

More than other components of interactional power, negotiation as power illustrates the complexity of interactions and the dramatic shifts in the exercise of power that occur over a period of time. In other words, understanding negotiation as power reflects the inherent complexity of individual and joint action, as well as fluctuations in the exercise of power over time. In the early period of contact between Mayas and non-Mayas, for example, Spaniards negotiated and acted from a position of weakness and a general lack of resources, while Mayas negotiated and acted on the basis of their collective resources. Early interactions favored the Mayas, though in time, non-Maya colonists increasingly exerted interactional power as their control of and access to resources increased.

Communication and discourse as power

Language and linguistic structures (or structuring) as power

In his work on colonialism and European expansion, Walter Mignolo reflects on the interplay between history and fiction (125). He argues the idea that *all* narrative is fiction, and is useful primarily in understanding the formation of identity, myth-making, and collective memory (133). Mignolo depicts 'history' as an invention of the West, a tool used to justify colonial domination over those who do not share the same history (126-7). He notes that

The fact that this regional record-keeping maintains a complicity with empire and imperial expansion gave it its universal value and allowed imperial agencies to inscribe the idea that people without writing were people without history and that people without history were inferior human beings (127).

Here, as elsewhere, Mignolo challenges universal notions, in favor of particular, contextualized approaches. As I noted earlier in the present chapter, Mignolo's notion of collective symbols and representations, which he here labels 'history', complements an interactionist approach to power. Specifically, 'history' may be understood in this context as collective meaning and symbols that represent past experiences shared by a particular group, community, or other social configuration. Such meaning and symbols lead to and inform discourse, a form of action or interaction. Ultimately, language and discourse emerge from collective symbols used to describe the past, leading to informed action (individual or joint) that may exhibit power. More importantly, discourse and languages *themselves* may exhibit power, as I argue below.

Mignolo echoes the contention of Discourse Analyst William Hanks, who asserts the impossibility of ascertaining 'objective' historical reality through written communication, due to author perspectives, motives, and biases (722-6). Writing, according to Hanks, does not represent 'truth', but "instead artifacts of

communicative actions performed in a complicated, changing context” (727).

Similarly, interactionists do not seek to procure objectivity or a sense of absolute certainty with regard to historical ‘truth’ or universal experience. On the contrary, the interactionist enterprise offers alternatives to such grand claims or objectives, contextualizing research in the lived, biased experience of participants.

Speaking specifically about the interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas of Yucatán, Hanks suggests that

The Spanish conquest of Yucatan created a new discourse, within which Maya and Spanish systems of representation were encompassed. In some cases, the two systems remain distinguishable from one another, while interacting within a single whole. This can be seen at various levels, from the occurrence of Spanish lexical borrowings in Maya sentences to the use of Maya language to write a carta, preach Catholicism, or pay allegiance to the Spanish king. In other cases, it is more difficult to assign forms of representation to one system or the other. Some elements may be common to both cultures, such as the cross as a ritual symbol. More often, it is impossible to sort out two systems, because they are fused within the larger whole....ambivalence in discourse is a corollary of the hybridization inherent in colonial contexts (739-40).

In what sounds much like an interactionist approach to writing and discourse, Hanks articulates the complexity inherent in social interactions, and he identifies the importance of discourse, language, and text within those interactions.

Tedlock identifies three ways in which discourse (and the structuring of discourse) favors a European or Western interpretation over and above indigenous interpretations. Though his critique is principally relevant to the contemporary context, it also impacts our view of colonial-era text. Discussing representations of conflict in sixteenth-century text, Tedlock argues that European discourse was traditionally favored by scholars, due to the difficulty of deciphering Maya hieroglyphs and other text, preference of familiar discourse when two competing interpretations are presented in the “familiar script,” and also preference of familiar, written, European accounts to the actual situations or experiences of the Mayas (139).

Importantly, Tedlock challenges assumptions and interpretations implicit in early research of the Maya, assumptions which fail to adequately probe the nature of dialogue as self-serving, misleading, or intentionally constructed as an exercise of power. The use of specific terminology, for instance, represents the construction of meaning and symbolic representation, which both inform action. Referring to the Spanish use of *ídolo*, Tedlock notes that this label "...belongs to a specifically Christian lexicon for the denigration of the religions of others" (143). In this case, symbolic representation led to specific language and dialogue, which in turn led to actions by clergy, such as the violent or coerced destruction of 'idols' and other Maya cultural forms.

Functionally in Yucatán, languages and their sounds were reduced, forced to fit into the pre-established forms that had been delineated for Castilian Spanish, derived principally from Latin. In fact, Mignolo suggests that the Latin grammar had a greater impact on the writing of "Amerindian" grammars than did Castilian. European definitions of writing and communication (reading and writing on pages and in books v. the world around) replaced those of the Mayas. 'Books', to sixteenth to seventeenth century Europeans, came to define knowledge and learning in the colonial setting (122). Writing letters became a form of philosophy and its dissemination, and letters also came to preserve and chronicle history.

In addition to attempts to control the structure and form of writing, Spanish authorities sought to limit indigenous writing and representation in the first century of colonial rule. In 1577, Philip II prohibited all writing related to indigenous custom (Ricard 58). Extensive language training among the Franciscans in Yucatán (and clergy of other orders in other regions) enabled the religious to pursue evangelization, education, and religious training using Maya languages and expressions; Ricard identifies more than 109 works from 1524-72 in New Spain having to do with evangelization, of which 80 were written by Franciscans (48-9). Of the remaining texts, 16 were written by Dominicans, 8 by Augustinians, and 5 were

anonymous. Franciscans in Yucatán learned Maya languages as a tool for communication and conversion.

Writing and literature, history and discourse, identity and perception collectively form part of the matrix of interaction through which actors may exhibit interactional power (Mignolo 169).¹² In the colonial context of Yucatán, non-Maya colonists attempted to use these variables to shape and alter Maya symbols, perceptions, and actions. As I note below, in a demonstration of interactional power, colonists and clergy attempted to control discourse, language, and text in colonial Yucatán, with varying degrees of success. Narrative and the ability to control or define discourse may be seen not only as forms of power in and of themselves, but also as pre-cursors to meta-power, the structuring of systems and situations. The use of discourse and the structures of language transform symbolic representations and cultural meaning first into language or representation, and then into action.

Discourse as an interactive form of power: non-Mayas

Matthew Restall has argued that the Mayas¹³ of Yucatán did not conceptualize a cohesive cultural or linguistic identity for themselves during the colonial period, nor were they seen as having a cohesive culture prior to the contemporary period (“Maya” 64). He argues that the idea of ‘Maya-ness’ originates in the colonial period, yet an overarching notion of ethnic unity during that period is not evident in the record of communication and interaction between Maya and non-Maya groups (65). Sergio Quezada notes that at the time of Spanish Conquest, Yucatán consisted of

¹² Here and elsewhere, I have chosen the word *may* to illustrate the idea that interactions, in and of themselves, do not necessarily, and at all times, demonstrate power. That is, actors *may* or *may not* demonstrate power through interaction, depending on a number of variables and particular circumstances. This model allows for flexibility in describing *who* demonstrates power and *how*, given that interactions shift and relationships change over time; an individual actor or actors who demonstrate power in one instance may be the passive recipients of a similar action in another situation.

¹³ In terms of nomenclature, Restall uses “Maya” as an adjective (similar to its use as an adjective in Yucatec, but in English, as distinct from “Mayan”) and “Mayas” as a noun to describe the cultural or linguistic group. I follow these conventions in the present study.

autonomous political and territorial regions, rather than a unified political, social, or cultural region (“Encomienda” 663). The ‘realization’ of ethnic identity may have enhanced the prospects of successfully resolving legal or other disputes in favor of indigenous Maya claimants (or their defense lawyers). Relevant as much to the contemporary period as to the colonial, Restall states his position on Maya ethnic and cultural identity in this way: “...modern Maya ethnogenesis had to invent Maya ethnic identity because there was no Maya ethnic self-consciousness in pre-modern times to which Mayas could awake” (“Maya” 65). Urban developments may have also fostered awareness of commonalities not evident in far-removed rural community settings, and the passing of time may have also fostered a growing awareness of ethnic identity (77).

Despite the lack of a cohesive cultural or linguistic identity among various Maya groups, linguistic structures and discourse during the colonial period represent interactions of power based on the Spanish grouping of all Maya (and other indigenous) groups as ‘*indios*’. The labeling of ‘Maya’ by the Spaniards in Yucatán described what the colonials perceived as identifying characteristics of the indigenous population, including “bellicosity and duplicity” among other pejorative conceptions (Restall, “Maya” 79). Restall notes a critical difference between social or cultural realities and the colonials’ *depictions* of those realities through language and discourse. In so doing, Restall misses an important aspect of interactions between colonial Mayas and non-Mayas; regardless of the difference between ‘conceptions’ and ‘realities’, I argue that discourse itself shapes action through the representation of meaning, thus altering the social and cultural landscape through future interactions that are largely based on symbolic representations of meaning. Cultural symbols lead to language and discourse that inform action and that may also be considered a form of action in and of themselves.

The use of ‘Maya’ to denote ethnic identity is discourse as power. In the colonial period, colonists referred to ‘*indios*’ disparagingly, and used the term in discourse to identify and isolate Maya groups in order to perpetuate the social and

political systems in which the colonists predominated. Beyond the label of *indio*, Colonists used other terminology to define, frame, and deprecate Maya religion and culture while legitimizing their own. Maya day-keepers were known as *brujos*, and while religious figurines in Maya temples were known as *ídolos*, those found in Spanish churches were referred to as *santos* (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 176).

In terms of this particular dialogue as power, the Spanish identified 'idolatry' and indigenous religion as the cause of dwindling Maya population in Yucatán, not the colonists' own treatment of Maya groups through abusive labor practices and religious persecution (Caso Barrera 156). This structuring of discourse led to continued action (tribute extraction, forced labor, religious duties, etc.) on the part of non-Maya colonials that contributed to the steady decline of Maya populations in Yucatán until their eventual recovery in the late seventeenth century (Restall, "Ties" 359), (Quezada, "Tributos" 75).

Francisco Montejo oversaw the earliest expeditions into Yucatán, expeditions meant to reinforce colonists, develop inroads into the peninsula, and barter with the Mayas. He became governor of Chiapas in 1540, after he was forced out of Honduras-Higueras by Pedro de Alvarado. After Alvarado's death in 1541, Montejo was recalled. He remained *adelantado*, governor, and *capitán general* of Yucatán, though, as a result of a concession granted in 1526. By 1549, Yucatán was the only province still under Montejo's control (Chamberlain 180-4). Montejo, writing in 1534, reflected on interactions with indigenous Mayas in Yucatán thus:

The inhabitants are the most abandoned and treacherous in all the lands discovered to this time, being a people who never yet killed a Christian except by foul means and who have never made war except by artifice. Not once have I questioned them on any matter that they have not answered 'Yes,' with the purpose of causing me to leave them and go somewhere else. In them I have failed to find truth touching anything (Montejo in Chamberlain 165).

This dialogue informed the collective imagery of the early colonists, and justified further incursion, evangelization, and other disruptive means of 'pacification'.

Furthermore, Maya resistance was not viewed by the Spanish as justifiable, and the colonists interpreted Maya opposition as a sign of their 'uncivilized', bellicose, and 'barbarous' nature. In his translation of a section of the *Probanza de Diego Sánchez* of 1569, Chamberlain relates the disdain of the Spanish toward the 'stubborn' and resisting Mayas: "The Indians of these provinces had [thus] risen up and were in revolt, with haughtiness and stubbornness in their souls. They did not accept the summons, nor good words, nor requerimientos, nor threats [which were sent to them] to bring them to peace" (Sánchez in Chamberlain 212-3). 'Peace', in this case, refers to passive acceptance of the Spanish designs for social, political, and religious practice in the peninsula.

Franciscan clergy, like Montejo, constructed discourse that framed and justified their interactions with the Mayas of Yucatán. In a letter from Fray Lorenzo de Bienvenida to the Council of the Indies, Bienvenida illustrates vividly the view of Franciscans in Yucatán that their mission was similar to a military incursion, emphasizing that they were 'fighting' for their cause and that of the Spanish Conquest. Regarding a decree for more friars that had not yet been fulfilled, Bienvenida writes that "También no se envió lo que se decretó acerca de los que han sido y se vuelven clérigos, aunque mejor diríamos en soldados" (Bienvenida in Gomez Canedo 64). In his use of a military lexicon to describe the religious and social work of the Franciscans, Bienvenida led the way for Landa and others who would justify their torture and religious inquisition of the Mayas on the basis of colonial religious representations and discourse.

Discourse as an interactive form of power: Mayas

Though less plentiful than instances by Spanish colonists, examples of the use of discourse and language by the Mayas as a form of power exist in the colonial record. As much as the use and construction of dialogue itself, Maya individuals and communities challenged or re-interpreted dominant colonial discourse, either openly

or in more subtle ways. And unlike Mignolo's assertions to the contrary, Farriss argues that despite the influence of non-Maya colonists, the linguistic impact of Castilian among the Mayas of Yucatán was minimal, and did little to alter the linguistic structures of Yucatec Maya (*Maya* 110-3). The case of Yucatán may be exceptional when compared to more aggressively 'pacified' and administratively controlled areas, such as Central Mexico. Though the experience of Yucatán may not precisely match Mignolo's model of colonization and the use of language and text, his own emphasis of the particular lends his interpretation flexibility in its application and interpretation. That is, even if Yucatec Maya linguistic structures may have been relatively unchanged throughout the colonial period, Mignolo's observations regarding colonial discourse and the creation of text (or the destruction of non-European texts) still apply to the Mayas of Yucatán.

Indigenous groups labeled and indentified as 'Maya' in some cases took on that label as an act of subversion or in order to manipulate the language and discourse used to construct their social identity. Castañeda suggests that

The aim of subordinated people who assume an identity imposed by power is precisely to negotiate the dynamics of domination and manipulate power. ...the category of 'Maya' was first and foremost a term constituted in the dynamics of power as the sociolinguistic articulation of domination-subordination (46).

The early use of 'Maya' as an adjective by Mayas in Yucatán positioned them within the colonial system as subordinate to the Spanish colonials (Restall, "Maya" 69). As an adaptation or translation of the Spanish 'indios', the term indicates the use of dialogue and discourse as power, in that it represented the symbols of hierarchy and relative social position. Whenever possible, though, this linguistic usage was used by Mayas to improve their odds of success in legal or other administrative contests. In formal legal petitions, for instance, Maya elites framed themselves as 'Maya' as part of a deferential discourse in their interactions with non-Maya colonials (75). Castillo Cocom challenges Restall's argument based on weak evidence, but praises his

identification of the historical use of the term “Maya” as a political device (Castillo Cocom 182). Similar to the interactionist idea of symbolic representations and meanings shaping action, Castillo Cocom suggests that “...the beliefs that shape identities are part of the relationships of power and control that pervades this world” (182). In this, Restall and Castillo Cocom identify the use of language and discourse as power, in the political use of language to structure society in some way.

In terms of adaptation to colonial linguistic forms as an example of either subversion or submission, Hanks identifies the adaptation to Castilian Spanish as evidence of colonial domination by the Spanish and submission by the Mayas of Yucatán. In his analysis on written communication between Maya elites and the Spanish Crown, Hanks writes that “[Maya elites] take on the language of Franciscan mysticism to deprecate themselves as blind idolaters and give evidence thereby of having already entered into the colonial dialectic of self-representation through an imposed language” (730). In this way, the structures of language represent a form of power and domination in the socio-political context. Describing themselves as “common” and “humbled”, Maya authors signal their relative position to the “exalted” Crown (732). At the same time, though, Hanks notes that the forms through which the Maya elites addressed the King positioned them positively in relation to secular clergy and their own ‘idolatrous’ past, in an attempt to secure favorable treatment by the Spanish Crown. In this, then, the Maya adaptation of Spanish linguistic conventions represents the subversion of relations of power, or at least an attempt to leverage communicative forms on behalf of indigenous communities and Maya elites.

Writings sent by various Maya elites to the Spanish royal court in February and March 1567 demonstrate efforts to shape discourse and define a cohesive Maya perspective of events that shaped the conquest and colonial period (Hanks 722). William Hanks challenges the assertions of Gates, Tozzer, and Gonzalez Cicero that the strong support of the Franciscan orders and friars suggests the direct and substantial involvement of Franciscan friars in the drafting of the letters (723). The

earlier authors depict Franciscan influence as a measure of control, in which Maya elites succumbed to external pressure to conform to Franciscan ideology. Using discourse analysis, Hanks argues that letters deemed inauthentic by earlier scholars ought to be reconsidered as authentic. Though he argues somewhat convincingly for greater recognition of the authenticity of particular documents, Hanks fails to adequately address the framework in which said documents emerged, and the dynamics of power that shaped them. Inasmuch as the interactions between Franciscan clergy and Maya elites influenced the content and tone of the letters, the degree to which Franciscan involvement shaped the actual letters ceases to be of primary concern. Even if the letters presented by Gates are indeed authentic communication from Maya nobles to the Crown, written with little direct Franciscan oversight, they are not therefore less a product of the social and interactional relations between the Spanish colonials and the colonial Mayas. Even if, as Hanks posits, Franciscans had little to do directly with the writing of the letters to the Crown, the colonial context itself and the interactions between Spanish and Maya shaped the letters as much as – or more than – any direct influence by meddling friars.

Discussions of Franciscan influence notwithstanding, Hanks' attempts to authenticate and legitimize the letters of early 1567 reaffirm the Maya use of written discourse as a form of self-representation, and, according to my interactionist evaluation, a form of interactional power. Authenticated written communication by Maya elites would confirm their use of written forms as a means of asserting and affirming indigenous perspectives through discourse, an interactional form of power within the prevailing colonial context.

Five: Resource Control as Power

The Control of, Access to, or Manipulation of Resources as Power

Controlling resources is one of the clearest forms of interactional power. By controlling access to resources or the resources themselves, one group exercises control over the access and resources available to another group or groups. In the case of Spanish colony, indigenous groups, including the Mayas, relinquished control of land and other resources unwillingly. Even though difficult conditions for settlement in Yucatán made it initially difficult for non-Maya settlers to obtain and access land and other resources, by the mid to late colonial period, administrative and economic control of resources rested principally with *criollo* colonists and non-Maya groups.

Robert Patch has analyzed urban-rural systems of exchange during the last century of colony in Yucatán. According to Patch, early colonial documents clearly demonstrate the imbalance of power in the relationship between non-Maya colonials and the Mayas, yet the nature of that exchange and the interactions between the groups continued in the same manner into the later colonial period, as well (Patch, "Mercado" 86). By 1773, for instance, Mérida received the majority of its agricultural products from Maya communities as far away as 120 kilometers. Despite the inflow of payments into indigenous communities as the result of their sale of corn to urban

centers like Mérida, tribute, *limosnas*, and indebtedness taxed these earnings heavily (91-3). Although a rigid reading of urban v. rural may distort the actual experiences of both, Patch notes that the nature of relations between Spanish colonials and indigenous, rural Mayas was exploitative, in that the goal of economic exchange was to obtain products at the lowest possible price, not to establish thriving markets or economic systems throughout Yucatán (95).

Farriss argues that the primary consequence of the Spanish Conquest was incorporation of indigenous communities into a “global commercial system” (*Maya* 30). Quijano notes the interrelated nature of the Spanish colonial focus on wealth or production and other areas of cultural domination and control (541). Proceeding from this underlying assumption, the idea of power as control or access to resources has particular significance in an economic sense. In Yucatán, though, control of commercial production was only one aspect of the colonists’ overall control and access to resources, cultural, religious, social, and economic. Non-Maya colonist control of resources included tribute requirements placed on the Mayas, control and oversight of community funds, clerical requirements of donations and other service, slavery, *encomienda*, *repartimiento*, debt peonage and *gañanía*, control of land and other material resources, control of legal and administrative systems, and ultimately, the appropriation or control of social and cultural resources.

Non-Maya control of monetary resources

Tribute requirements are the first of many Spanish colonial models of resource control in Yucatán. Though tribute had formed part of the pre-Columbian systems, the colonial administration instituted a system of tribute that was at various times arbitrary, abusive, and exploitative. Among the Cakchiquel-Mayas of Guatemala, for example, tribute requirements were roughly equal to .5 to 1 year’s wages at *repartimiento* rates or paid labor rates (Hill). For their tribute, communities in Northern Yucatán were required to collect such items as corn, cotton cloth, pottery,

wax, honey, turkeys, and Eurasian chickens (deFrance and Hanson). Tribute requirements varied from region to region, and depended on existing local production and available resources. Maya tribute throughout Yucatán included corn, wax, honey, blankets, chickens, beans, salt, and fish, and a variety of labor commitments. After 1549, Spanish colonials began to collect a combined total of more than 55,000 cotton pieces annually from Maya communities (Quezada, "Tributos" 74).

Tecoh or Taxan, Izamal, Yucatán, pertaining to the *cacicazgo* or indigenous governance of Ah-Kin Chel, offers a typical example of tribute demands in Yucatán during early colony (Camara and Suarez 48). Mayas left the site after 1552, due to the policy of *congregación* in Yucatán and the decline in quality of the *cenote* there. (*Congregación*, the practice of re-locating Maya villages into a centralized town, will be discussed in greater detail as a component of meta-power, or the ability to construct social systems and the very structure of social life for another individual or group. *Cenotes*, from the Maya *tz'onot*, are fresh-water pools accessible after the collapse of a section of the porous limestone shelf of Yucatán. *Cenotes* provide the primary source of potable water, due to the unique geography of the peninsula and the lack of above-ground rivers or bodies of water). The municipality was given in *encomienda* to Juan de Esquivel, relative of Montejo, before it returned to the Crown in 1548. The amount of tribute due annually from Tecoh to the Crown beginning in 1549 amounted to approximately six bushels of corn and half a bushel of beans, four hundred blankets of local design, three hundred hens (to be chosen by the community of Tecoh), between 220-320 kilograms (or between 240-680 liters) of wax, and between 24-32 liters of honey (Camara and Suarez 49).

Spanish colonists utilized indigenous hierarchies and social structures to facilitate the production and delivery of tribute and other products through *encomienda* and *repartimiento*. In early Spanish colony, quantities of tribute and delivery schedules were frequently decided on an individual basis after consultation with local *caciques*, Maya community leaders or elites. *Caciques* were responsible for

ensuring the collection and provision of required labor, goods, and other tribute. If a community could not meet its tribute obligations, the *cacique* was responsible for the shortfall, and personally liable (Hunt 481). The inability to comply with the full tribute requirements led to indebtedness and formal requests by *caciques* to reevaluate and reduce tribute requirements. Occasional repression through the imprisonment of *caciques* and legal action followed reduced compliance in and after 1571-1572 (Quezada, "Tributos" 75).

Expansion of trade and transportation networks in Yucatán by the late sixteenth century facilitated trade of indigenous products and increasing tribute requirements. By the end of the sixteenth century, though, colonists had exploited Maya labor in Northeastern Yucatán through tribute requirements beyond practical or reasonable limits. The Spanish demanded production of local cotton textiles for export markets, yet population decreases made tribute requirements impossible to fulfill. Colonial administrators developed rigorous labor schedules in order to maintain compliance with tribute requirements. Forced or coerced compliance led to a reduction in time and resources for household chores and responsibilities, further diverting resources from the Mayan community (Quezada, "Tributos" 73-6).

Exploitation of indigenous Mayan communities by way of tribute and labor practices increased through the end of the 16th Century and into the 17th, as increasing demands weighed more heavily on decreasing populations in Yucatán. In terms of the administration of tribute and relations between colonists and Mayas, Hunt calls the agents of the governors "predatory" in nature, exemplified by the required collection of all corn for centralized storage during 1650-1652. Prices quadrupled as a direct result of the collection and storage, and Mayas could not afford to purchase their own corn. When flour was brought by the governor, he also profited from its sale (Hunt, "Colonial" 484-5).

Tribute and the burden of providing goods, services, and other community resources to the colonial administrators formed the basis of interactions between Maya and non-Maya groups. Beginning with tribute, colonials extracted the

maximum possible resources from Maya communities in regions over which they maintained administrative control. The consequences of tribute carried over into other areas of interaction, as well. Partly in order to avoid tribute requirements based on marriage status, Maya couples sometimes cohabitated without officially marrying, a practice strongly condemned and punished by Franciscans (Quezada, "Tributos" 75). Raids on community tribute reserves were reportedly frequent, and some *caciques* had to make up the difference from their own property and wealth (Hunt, "Colonial" 482). In one instance, community fund collections for one community in 1683 were almost entirely used to pay for non-Maya counsel. From the total amount of \$4,325 collected that year, \$4,187 was used to pay for Maya legal counsel, interpreters, and administrative staff, leaving only 138 pesos for the communities represented (Hunt, "Colonial" 356).

Regarding the rampant abuses of the tribute system, Bourbon reforms may have enhanced enforcement of laws and legal provisions (Farriss, *Maya* 356). Bauer has suggested that, despite exploitation in labor relations, choice, accommodation, and shifting structures over time mitigated the exploitation of Mayas in Yucatán by non-Maya colonists (35). Some of the abuses by regional authorities and local war captains or public servants were, in fact, curbed as a result of the Bourbon reforms, but only in exchange for some of the autonomy and local authority of the Maya *caciques*. Farriss notes that

Along with inroads on their judicial authority, the Maya leaders were entirely deprived of their control over public revenues on which much of their political as well as their economic power had been based. The harmful consequences of the new Bourbon policies were therefore not merely or even mainly in the added material burden placed on the Maya, but in the helplessness and dependence they produced by attacking the organization and the resources the Maya possessed for self-directed action (Farriss, *Maya* 359, 366).

Crown representatives appropriated any and all community funds, setting aside the vast majority in order to create a surplus in the late colonial period. When the caste

system and segregated administrative bodies were abolished under the Bourbon Constitution in 1812, the last remnants of Maya leadership were undermined and eventually destroyed. Non-Maya administrators could—and did—then assume leadership in the local communities, widely displacing indigenous leadership in Yucatán (Farriss, *Maya* 376). Non-Maya officials, for example, sold community lands as a means of raising revenue.

Even in instances of reform and the protection of indigenous community resources, colonial administrators strategically benefitted from greater access to Maya community funds. The pattern of interactions that began with the demand for and collection of tribute quickly expanded into the areas of labor and time. That is, interactions of power began with the institution of tribute, but continued with additional forms of resource control, as well.

Non-Maya control of labor and time

The principle resource of Yucatán, unlike the mineral wealth or abundant natural resources sought out in other parts of Spanish-colonized regions, was Maya labor (Chamberlain), (Hunt 7). *Encomienda*, the practice by the Spanish Crown of granting land access, use, and development to conquerors and other settlers, is discussed below, in the present chapter. In most cases, land access and usage rights granted in *encomienda* extended at the most to one or two additional generations beyond the original *encomendero*. At that point, land would revert back to the Crown. According to Caso Barrera, during the investigation of ‘idolatry’ and subsequent torture of residents of Yucatán, Maní, Hocaba, y Sotuta, *encomenderos* and clerics “disapproved of the methods utilized by Landa” (153). Their concern, however, as Caso Barrera notes, related not necessarily to the treatment and abuse of the indigenous population, but to the impact of the decrease in indigenous labor, and the potential for revolt against the colonial regime. According to Magnus Mörner and Woodrow Borah, the colonists interacted with the Mayas of Yucatán as if the rural

indigenous communities themselves were merely a resource to be exploited in the production and supply of food and other goods (Mörner, "Spanish" 189-90). In light of this, declining Maya populations concerned the colonists primarily in terms of material loss of production and the provision of goods to the cities. In the absence of mineral wealth, the appropriation of labor formed the basis of *criollo* success and livelihood throughout Yucatán.

Regardless of the context or type of system utilized during colony, non-Mayas (*peninsulares, criollos, etc.*) successfully utilized Maya labor at a cost perceived to be advantageous to colonial Spanish interests. That is, even with arguably more humane systems of labor, the primary concerns and interests of the colonials directed the acquisition of laborers and the subsequent treatment of workers. The Mayas, though they provided the primary source of inexpensive labor during the colonial period, were not the only group exploited through various systems of labor control. *Naboríos* were workers brought by Montejo from Central Mexico to Yucatán (Hunt 101). Africans, free and enslaved, also contributed to the labor base in Yucatán. As the colonial period progressed, racial categorization began to break down in reality and in law, though in practice, clear distinctions were made between 'indios' and non-Mayas (Cuello 696). Patch describes the economic relationship between the Spanish colonists and the Mayas as "parasitic" (*Maya* 35). Only in preserving and protecting the indigenous Maya system of production and distribution did the Spanish colonists succeed in colonizing and settling Yucatán (*Maya* 92). Farriss also makes the comparison of Spanish colony in Yucatán to a parasitic organism, but one that did not completely destroy the 'host', the Maya communities and culture of the peninsula (*Maya* 56).

In nearly all interactions between colonists and Mayas, non-Mayas sought to control resources generated by Maya communities. Countless abuses occurred, primarily by way of extracting illicit tribute and other 'contributions' from the Mayas under *encomienda* and later manifestations of labor control (Patch, *Maya* 98). Furthermore, in order to protect their economic interests, after major disruptions

such as famine, plague, or other calamity, *encomenderos* would send out hired men to round up Mayas who had left their villages and others, as well, to re-populate villages and maintain levels of production and tribute (Hunt 304). Military posts provided one additional means of securing some of the surplus from Maya villages (Hunt 493-513). In most cases, once the Crown set in motion legal prohibitions of the most egregious abuses by colonists and friars, much of the damage of resettlement, *encomienda*, religious proselytizing or persecution, and depopulation had already occurred.

Even in legitimate trade between autonomous villages and non-Mayas often clearly benefitted the non-Maya colonists, as in the example of the purchase of raw cotton and the measurement of cloth. Raw cotton could be purchased for 4 *reales* per *carga* in the 1670s, but could be sold on the open market for 8-12 *reales* per *carga*, or a 100-300% profit. Investment in spinning and weaving (materials and labor) likewise produced immediate 50-100% returns for non-Maya colonists (Patch, *Maya* 87). By 1678, Governor Antonio de Layseca had increased the size of the measurement of cloth, effectively cutting the purchase cost while reducing Maya profits (88).

Quijano identifies a number of exploitative colonial labor practices, including, but perhaps not limited to, "slavery, serfdom, petty-commodity production, reciprocity, and wages" (Quijano 535). He argues that this imbalance of labor relations, which I argue demonstrates persistent interactions of power, continued to the end of Spanish colony. The system of *servicio personal*, for instance, designed to extract a weekly allotment of indigenous labor from every community, led to consistent, repeated abuses. Underpayment or lack of payment plagued the system, and workers often had to remain in their assigned duties for three or four times the specified week of labor service. Colonists found other ways to extract additional days, products (such as a bundle of firewood), and other benefits from this loosely regulated and heavily abused system (Farriss, *Maya* 48-9). Ultimately, Maya villages largely complied with Spanish demands, providing requisite labor and tribute, a

demonstration of the Mayas' own exploitation and the interactional power of the less-numerous Spanish (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 43).

Colonial administrators, military captains, and other non-Maya colonists were not the only groups to access and exploit Maya labor. Franciscan clergy, under the guise of 'voluntary' donations to the church, ruthlessly appropriated Maya labor in the early colonial period. Labor, service, and tribute to the church were all used as forms of imposed penance, further examples of the Franciscans' demonstration of power through their structuring of rules, both religious *and* social, for the Mayas. Public humiliation and castigation at mass also served to reinforce the hierarchical position of the Franciscans (Caso Barrera 174). *Limosnas* provided for the Franciscans later became known as *obvenciones*, tacit recognition that the donations were not voluntarily given to the clergy (Farriss, *Maya* 40). Franciscans received an allotment of *semaneros* to support their work, and Farriss reports that most friaries utilized over 100 Maya laborers; the bishop of Yucatán used the labor system to have 12 Maya workers weed his patio, as well (*Maya* 53). Hunt cites another example of the free use of Maya labor by Franciscans, in the roughly seven-year construction of *La Mejorada* church and a monastery. "No money was involved, according to both Cogolludo and Cárdenas Valencia, so that the 'miraculous' effort can only be ascribed to large numbers of Indians" (229).

Over time, Franciscans demanded increasing amounts of donations from *caciques*, adding to the burden of *encomienda* and tribute in early colony. Friars established time frames for the submission of donations by Mayan communities, and even children participated in the tribute paid to the priests, providing the friars with an egg every Thursday (Hunt 309), (Quezada, "Tributos" 76). Hill notes that among the Cakchiquels of Guatemala, ecclesiastical rations eventually grew to include several cooks, servants, errand boys, tortilla makers, gardeners, and grooms (115). Clergy reportedly received candle offerings before re-selling the candles to parishioners for a 500-600% profit, and Hill argues that "[the payments] represented a considerable drain of wealth away from Indian producers into non-Indian hands"

(116). By the late 1600s, contributions to Franciscans by Maya villages approximately equaled their tribute payments to *encomenderos* (Hunt 354). Chamberlain suggests that complicity between civil authorities and ecclesiastical ones enabled clergy to access tribute and labor among the Maya as they built monasteries and established a permanent presence in Yucatán (Chamberlain 321). Clergy, as much as, and at times more than, colonial administrators, demonstrated power in their interactions with the Maya, through their use and control of labor, tribute, and other community resources. Even the practice of educating the sons of elite Mayas turned into a labor-related interaction of power, as children of royals were pressed into domestic service (Farriss, *Maya* 100).

Another ongoing struggle for access to Maya labor and resources existed between secular and religious clergy in Yucatán. The rights of receiving ecclesiastical support were vigorously contested (Patch, *Maya* 123). Elements of colonial letters analyzed by Hanks demonstrate power through interaction, in that secular clergy reportedly abused the services and labor of indigenous Mayas. In their letter to the Crown dated 19 March 1567, Maya elites complain that the secular clergy “reside within our towns. We feed the lot of them; along with the things of their households; and they pay naught; and we shan’t ask them to; for we are ashamed before them; and we are frightened of them also” (Hanks 738). Despite contests over labor and resources among the clergy, Franciscans in Yucatán did not amass landed estates in the peninsula, and advocated on behalf of the Mayas against abusive colonial practices related to land tenure and use (Patch, *Maya* 111).

Clergy and colonists alike exploited Maya tribute requirements and relied on indigenous laborers for every facet of construction, maintenance, and service in the colonial centers. Four general categories of exploitative labor practices emerged during the colonial period in Yucatán, beginning with slavery and continuing with *encomienda*, *repartimiento*, and debt peonage or *gañanía* through the *estancias* or *haciendas*, late colonial landed estates.

Despite its relatively early prohibition in Spanish colonies, slavery was seen as legitimate punishment for resistance or rebellion against the colonial regime. As labor was needed for economic development, the municipal council of Mérida asked the Crown to approve the enslavement of Mayas, including captive women and children, who had revolted against tribute requirements and other colonial institutions. Their petition was an exception to laws allowing for the continued enslavement only of indigenous individuals who were enslaved by rival communities at the time of conquest and subsequent military action. Montejo's concession or patent of 1526 allowed for enslavement of any who resisted Spanish rule, and Montejo's son later authorized the practice explicitly. When Mérida was founded, colonists requested additional authority for slave trade, in order to build the economic basis of the city and region. Montejo's son further authorized the trade of slaves *within* Yucatán, but slaves could not be traded outside of the region without special approval (Chamberlain 277-9).

The Spanish Crown abolished slavery in the colonies in 1542, but a form of slave labor persisted within the institution of *encomienda*. Labor and tribute requirements through *encomienda* were commonly exploited, leading to what looked, in practice, much like the illicit practice of slavery. The most glaring contradiction in the early colonial system has to be the difference between the legal prohibition of slavery and declarations of 'indian' freedom, and persistent tribute and labor requirements that reflect the *actual* social position of Mayas in relation to non-Maya colonists.

Hunt argues that the one unifying characteristic of colonial Yucatán was the institution of *encomienda* (245). Cuello argues that, as in Yucatán, *encomienda* in the Northeast of New Spain during the early colonial period served as a more moderate form of labor utilization, and a respite from more tyrannical practices (694). He suggests that the system in the Northeast provided minimal Spanish goods for indigenous laborers, who were also able through *encomienda* to take advantage of some colonial developments. (Despite this contention, the Northwestern region

experienced a slow transition from slavery to other forms of labor. Slavery had been abolished by 1550, yet enslavement continued in various forms, legal and illegal, through the eighteenth century in that region. *Encomienda*, too, continued in the Northeast into the latter part of the seventeenth century [693]). The changes in form and substance of the labor systems, in the Northeast and elsewhere, demonstrate the colonists' "...flexibility in their stubborn insistence on exploiting the Indians..." (Cuello 696). The pattern of conquest and *encomienda* mirrored Spain's Roman experience, with the institution of feudal-type systems of land and labor (Quezada, "Encomienda" 662), (Hill 110). Hunt also suggests that "In essence, the Indians subsidized the occupation of their lands and the creation of a total Spanish society in their midst in return for an intangible", the promise of 'protection' and religious instruction (24). A sense of entitlement among early Spanish conquerors and colonists led to the granting of *encomiendas*, as well as the early colonial systems of jurisdiction, administrative oversight, and interactions with the Mayas of Yucatán; by the seventeenth century, Yucatán had approximately 150 *encomenderos*, with 70 in Mérida alone (26).

In large part, the Spanish left Yucatec Maya political structures intact until the latter half of the sixteenth century, the radical changes of Conquest notwithstanding. *Encomienda* did, however, challenge indigenous political and social structures, because earlier alliances and organization was not considered in the division of land under the Spanish system. *Encomienda* divided up and isolated towns, irrespective of previous alignments. Quezada illustrates this with the case of Ah Canul, 24 towns ruled by *batabo'ob* of a single lineage. In this case, the 24 towns were divided up among 23 Spaniards in *encomienda* ("Encomienda" 667-8).

Robert Patch refers to the nature of the relationship between non-Maya *encomenderos* and the Mayas of Yucatán as "parasitic", one in which the Spanish survived due to the productive efforts of indigenous communities. He defines this strategic economic relationship as the fundamental basis of Spanish colony, in which resources were extracted from indigenous communities and lands for the benefit of

the Spanish colonials and Crown. Indigenous labor, land, and products were exploited for both internal and external markets first through slavery, then through *encomienda*, *repartimiento*, and lastly, through debt peonage and other forms of low-wage labor (Patch, "Mercado" 83-8). Nevertheless, Yeager argues that *encomienda* was a surprising, paradoxical choice of institution for the Spanish Crown, due to the associated reduction of resources provided directly to the Crown (843). To make sense of this apparent paradox, Yeager argues that the Crown chose to institute *encomienda* so as to strengthen and secure its reach in the newly conquered territories, extract tribute (albeit indirectly through *encomienda*) from indigenous populations, and avoid the practice of slavery (857). In both cases, within the colony itself and at a distance in Spain, Spanish officials and colonists used their access to Maya labor and land to strengthen their own material position in society and ensure economic viability over time. These can only be described as interactions of power through the manipulation and control of vital resources in Yucatán.

Encomienda in Yucatán lasted longer than in Central Mexico. The practice was legally abolished in 1785 (Cuello 697). *Encomienda* survived in Yucatán longer than in other parts of Spanish-colonized territories, largely because of a petition for exemption made by the *cabildo* or municipal government of Mérida in 1720. In 1721, the Crown exempted the *encomiendas* of Yucatán from required incorporation (Patch, *Maya* 100). In 1731, the King also ordered *repartimiento* reintroduced at the behest of officials of Yucatán, recognizing its importance in the colonial system of the peninsula, and also its utility in preserving indigenous communities (132). *Servicios personales*, required periods of domestic service, were also restored by the King under Governor Figueroa. Both *encomienda* and *repartimiento* ended in Yucatán in 1786, under Charles III and Minister of the Indies, José de Gálvez (133, 159), (Farriss, *Maya* 39).

There may not be a clear legal line from the *encomiendas* of Yucatán to *estancias* or *haciendas* (large, landed estates), but ownership and control of related resources do follow similar patterns and exhibit continuity over time. Paternalism and de facto

control of indigenous communities, absentee landlords, tribute-collection, non-Maya family owners or controllers, and utilization of indigenous labor and the *mayordomo* or manager characterized both institutions (Lockhart 431-2). From a structural perspective, the 'institutions' of *encomienda* and *estancia* are conceptions used to describe the relations between individuals and groups, in addition to physical objects and locations. This links the structuralist analysis with that of interactionism, in that interactions take precedence. After the prohibition of *encomienda*, Spanish colonists transformed institutions from their early, primary focus on indigenous tribute toward control of land and labor, first through *repartimiento*, and later through debt peonage and *gañanía* (Keith 440).

Lockhart refers to *encomienda* and *hacienda* as "complementary master institutions" ("Encomienda" 411). He notes, however, that the notion of *encomienda* developing into the *hacienda* has been discredited from a legal standpoint; *encomienda* differed from the *hacienda* primarily in its formulation of land ownership. As opposed to the landed estate, the *encomienda* did not provide land title to the *encomendero*. I argue, along the lines of Keith, and also using Lockhart's comparison of similarities between the two institutions, that although the legal formulation may have changed significantly from one institution to the other, the practical effect on the indigenous Maya of Yucatán remained intact from early to late colony. The relations of power under both *encomienda* and *estancia* disadvantaged Maya individuals and communities in favor of colonists and clergy. Under both institutions, non-Maya individuals and groups controlled land and other material resources, orienting systems of labor, religion, and society as much as possible toward colonial models.

Between early colonial *encomienda* labor practices and late colonial labor practices on large *estancias*, the institution of *repartimiento* shaped labor relations between Mayas and non-Mayas. Yucatec Maya villages under *encomiendas* were subjected to demands from Spanish military captains and *repartimiento*, as well (Hunt 477). In light of reduced Maya population and increasing *encomienda* grants, colonial

administrators established *repartimiento*, a system of mandatory bartering and trade designed to secure cheap Maya products and establish markets among the Mayas for colonial products (Hill 111), (Hunt 466). *Repartimiento* “incorporated the Indians into the world economy as involuntary producers of raw materials, primary products, and manufactured goods, which Spaniards acquired at bargain prices and then resold to make handsome profits” (Patch, *Maya* 30). The legalization of the system in 1731 resulted in even greater demands on the Mayas, beyond their tribute and other labor requirements.

Repartimiento in Yucatán referred primarily to the practice of bartering Spanish goods for Maya cloth and corn. This quickly became another method used by non-Maya colonists of legally extracting labor from Maya communities without adequate or fair compensation; under *repartimiento*, little reimbursement was required, and even less was provided. Patch estimates *repartimiento* to have been “...as important as tribute and religious taxes combined” (*Maya* 84-5). “Yucatan had in effect become a sweatshop” (90). In one instance, governor and cacique Captain Don Juan Antonio Suárez of Tixkokob was arrested and jailed for allegedly failing to produce the required annual tribute. The three accusing Suárez of this were all either *encomenderos* or involved in the direct administration and control of an *encomienda*. Due to requirements of *repartimiento* performed for one of the accusers, Suárez was unable to gather the required tribute. Population shifts and demands on the villages and communities around Valladolid left caciques like Suárez with demands that could not be fulfilled, and increasing numbers of colonial claimants (Hunt 479-81).

Patch identifies the vested parties in *repartimiento* in Yucatán in 1700, based on Franciscan sources. The governor maintained a 60% stake in the total system, the treasurer controlled approximately 11% of the share, war captains and other officials received 10%, respectively, *encomenderos* shared 8%, and private individuals divided up the remaining 1% (*Maya* 83-4). In terms of the materials produced under the system, 66% were textiles, 27% wax, and 7% thread (87). Non-Maya governor’s agents acted as their personal merchants, bartering with, and selling to, Maya

communities. They also assisted in the system of *repartimiento*, and sometimes split profits with the governors (Hunt 488).

In addition to the abusive and exploitative practices embedded in the system of *repartimiento*, a number of actions by non-Mayas further demonstrated power through interaction. Debt collectors used heavy weights to cheat the Mayas out of in-kind payments, and many of the costs of production were passed on to Maya producers, even when finished Maya goods were bought at prices significantly below market value (Patch, *Maya* 155). Mayas were forced to purchase additional raw materials when those provided were insufficient or of poor quality, and colonists sometimes resorted to violence to ensure full tribute payments and labor fulfillment during the implementation of *repartimiento* (161). These interactions demonstrate power and exploitation in the manipulation of labor resources. Despite legal abolishment in 1632, *repartimiento* in Yucatán was replaced by forced labor in the late 1700s, called *mandamiento*, and both were followed by debt labor and low-wage labor on colonial *haciendas* or *estancias*.

Alexander defines *haciendas* as small-scale estates oriented toward local or regional markets, the wealth and status of the land owner, or both (3). Colonial Yucatán did not consist of a simple, unified system of structures, but what Alexander terms the “rural agrarian mosaic”, a mix of colonist-owned and operated systems, Maya-owned lands, leased lands, and other configurations, as well. Furthermore, there exists a false dichotomy between colonial *haciendas* and Mayan community structures, whereas in practice, a variety of overlapping systems coexisted throughout Spanish colony (5-7). *Estancias* were, in many cases, similar ranches established on unused land, which, as Patch notes, became available after the rapid decline of Maya populations in the first two centuries after Conquest (*Maya* 17). Maya population in Yucatán declined as much as 70% in the 50 years leading to 1601 (22). Another approximately 60% of the remaining Maya population perished between 1643 and 1666 (44). By the early 1800s, the Mayas of Yucatán numbered nearly 300,000 (139). In some cases, the sale of Maya land was a practical matter, after

population loss and diminished land needs by various communities. This, along with increasing demand for meat from burgeoning urban centers, led to encroachment by ranchers in Yucatán. Mayas managed their own herds more than non-Maya colonists, in terms of limiting the growth of herds and protecting their *milpas*. Cattle encroachment impacted the growth and harvesting of indigenous crops, but the Mayas did respond with legal challenges and more direct methods, killing cattle, establishing barriers, and so on.

As Maya population recovered in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, access to—and ownership of—land became for them an issue of subsistence and survival. Ironically, in the latter colonial period, some Mayas chose to work on the *estancias* rather than suffer under the continuing tribute and labor requirements of their local communities. Security, guarantees of food rations, and money all drew Mayas to the ranches in the late 1700s (Patch, *Maya* 107-16, 138-40, 197-8). After the 1630s, in theory and law, indigenous populations were considered free agents, in terms of their labor and employment. In practice, however, abuses continued unabated (Riley 259-60). Debt peonage became a reliable way to secure labor for *haciendas* when other coercive methods were illegal and indigenous populations declined (Mörner, *Spanish* 200). By the 1680s, *gañanía* was created to legally tie workers to a specific *hacienda* or *estancia*, in a sense continuing earlier practices of requisite labor on the basis of residence and geographic location. The use of advanced credit on wages illustrates the use and manipulation of resources to exercise power through interaction, even after the official end of *encomienda* and *repartimiento*.

By the mid- to late-1700s, colonial land tenure shaped relationships between Mayas and non-Mayas in Yucatán. Maya control of agricultural production and Spanish dependence on the Mayas for sustenance and economic development waned, and relations shifted toward interactions based on land ownership and control, and the landed estate (Patch, *Maya* 138-54). In 1779, the *audiencia* permitted 'Indians' to move residences freely. The Bando de Gañanes of 1785 further prohibited

coercion in theory, indicating that the institution of *gañanía* did entail coerced labor (Riley 261, 278). Despite legal protections, though, after the end of *encomienda* and *repartimiento*, Maya workers were trapped into squalid working and living conditions by intentionally confusing practices and hired recruiters who would trick unsuspecting laborers into contracts that in some cases were nearly impossible to terminate (Israel 39). Nevertheless, as Farriss notes, "...the evidence from Yucatan supports the revised conclusions from other areas that credit was more of an inducement than a form of entrapment" (*Maya* 216).

Magnus Mörner, like James Lockhart, argues for a more comprehensive approach to the study of haciendas and other systems of labor in Spanish colony, though he limits his suggestions to discussions of markets, landowner activities, and comparative analysis over time (215). My evaluation of labor relations using an interactionist evaluation of power expands the study of labor and landed estates in this way, but in directions that Mörner did not explicitly anticipate in his recommendations. I suggest that the nature of the system defined the type of labor required, and how colonists structured their systems of labor and production tells us a great deal about their interactions of power. For example, Mörner defines *hacienda* (or *estancia*) differently from plantation, a system of production oriented toward larger markets and the growth of capital. He admittedly echoes the definition of Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz, defining hacienda as "...a rural property under a dominating owner, worked with dependent labor, employing little capital, and producing for a small-scale market" ("Spanish" 185). Though these should not be considered static or unchanging over time, this distinction is important in determining the nature of relationships between colonists and Maya communities in Yucatán, particularly with regard to interactions that exhibit power.

Non-Maya control of land and other material resources

Farriss asserts the primacy and importance of land and the control or use of resources related to land. She has argued that land encroachment in the late colonial period in Yucatán became much more important than boundary disputes. Also, throughout the colonial period, "...the Spanish found little difficulty in acquiring as much land as they wanted....The sales [by the Mayas to the Spanish] were often an act of desperation resorted to in times of crisis..." (Farriss *Maya* 275-6). As I have argued in my definition of power, Farriss notes that political title or position is secondary to the action of controlling resources, in this case, land (366). When their initial provisions ran out, early expeditions in Yucatán led by Montejo demanded food and provisions from the Mayas. Whatever was not provided voluntarily was taken by force, for the survival and sustenance of the Spanish explorers. Raiding parties would surprise Maya villages, steal their corn, and then raid other villages when the corn ran out (Chamberlain 39-40, 77-8, 172).

Later in the colonial period, once colonial cities had been firmly established, merchants from the urban centers would forcibly purchase or raid corn from Maya villages in times of famine or other food shortage (Farriss, *Maya* 62). Farriss argues that Spanish intervention among the Mayas during times of famine contributed to higher mortality. Raids and confiscation of corn harvests notwithstanding, the practice of resettling migrating Mayas (who, in times of famine, foraged for food outside of their villages) hastened their demise (63). Colonial administrators were known to buy crops from indigenous communities at ridiculously low prices before storing them and re-selling the products back to poor villagers at a profit (Israel 34). These and other early interactions presaged later escalations of violence and conflict based on resources, and the slow and steady encroachment on Maya lands and land-based resources by non-Maya colonists.

In the early colonial period, urban centers absorbed surrounding communities and their adjacent lands. San Juan was one of the first Maya communities absorbed

and replaced by colonial Mérida. San Sebastian, Santa Lucía, Santa Ana, Santiago and Santa Catalina, and others later became part of the fringes of the city, and were eventually subsumed by Mérida (Hunt 209-37). Land encroachment in the late colonial period occurred as Maya communities rebounded and *estancias* grew in number and size. Sales of *cofradía* or Maya community estates proceeded primarily to Spanish buyers, despite legal petitions and challenges to the legality of the sales in court (Farriss, *Maya* 371-2). Farriss estimates that many of the estates grew by 200-300%, in terms of the change in total land usage. Boundaries had been expanded at the whim of the property owner, and community lands were frequently appropriated, regardless of judicial prohibition. Spanish colonists, emboldened by their successes in settling towns, continued to forcefully demonstrate their control over resources, to the detriment of the remaining Mayas.

Power, in the case of land acquisition and resource control, is not an impersonal capacity or 'force,' but the very real actions of the Spanish conquerors and colonists that led to their own increased control of resources and their eventual ability to establish and enforce new norms and rules. Where many commentators have emphasized power as the Spaniards' *capacity* or *ability* to overtake the Mayas (either due to superior firepower, advanced military techniques, or similar factors), I argue for an interactionist interpretation that situates or locates power in exploitative *acts* themselves. Power as a capacity or ability did not enable the Spanish to displace and dominate the Mayas of Yucatán. In overtaking the Mayas, the Spanish exerted power at multiple points over time in transactional, interactional ways. The Spanish were not somehow endowed with greater power than the Mayas. As events unfolded and the different actors interacted, non-Maya colonists maximized their control of negotiations, resources, and the very social structures through which interactions took place. The Spanish discovered and developed power through their interactions, exercising power to the point of massive de-population and great human devastation throughout Yucatán.

Complex Interactions in Colonial Yucatán

At this point, my analysis of colonial interactions turns toward power exhibited through interaction by the Mayas of Yucatán, despite evidence of Spanish or non-Maya colonial control and domination from conquest to independence and afterward. While the previous discussion may seem to indicate complete, unilateral domination of the Mayas by Spanish colonists and their descendants, the reality of colonial interaction between individuals and groups was actually more complex.

Caso Barrera argues that the Spanish conquest signified a loss of political power to the nobles and indigenous elite of Yucatán and elsewhere, primarily due to the fact that they could no longer act in accordance with their traditions and customs (Caso Barrera 180). In fact, the arrival of the Spanish signaled changes most dramatically in the order of social life and relations between various groups (commoner, lord, slave, and others in indigenous hierarchical structures). Yet vestiges of traditional relations persisted well into colonial times and into the contemporary period (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 156). Clendinnen reflects on the durability of Maya social structures thus: "It is not immediately clear why that social division should have proved so durable, given its suddenly enhanced costs, its lack of significant institutional support, and the savage buffeting the Maya had suffered over the several decades of the conquest" (156). Hunt, too, suggests that acculturation and cultural change happened much more slowly than previously thought among the Mayas of Yucatán. Despite early, rapid absorption of some *caciques* into colonial life, Hunt argues that the central, most important components of Maya culture remained intact largely throughout the colonial period (109-10).

The distributed power in Yucatán through the *cacicazgos* made conquest of the peninsula more difficult than the relatively rapid fall of Tenochtitlán, at least partly the result of centralized power in Central Mexico at the time of Cortés' military incursion there (Chamberlain 170). Also unlike Tenochtitlán, the Mayas of Yucatán do not appear to have imbued the Spanish conquerors with any mythical or

supernatural powers, as may have been the case with Motecuhzoma and legends of Quetzalcóatl. According to some historical interpretations, the Mexica viewed Cortés as a representation of Quetzalcóatl, and revered him as a deity. This may or may not have influenced the course of conquest in Central Mexico, though I think the Mexica presentation of Cortés and the Spanish as deities was a post-conquest creation, an attempt to situate and understand the upheaval and utter destruction of conquest. Farriss notes that “We find no supernatural overtones in the Maya’s responses. They seem to have accepted the Spanish simply as some kind of human strangers and to have acted on purely pragmatic political grounds in dealing with them, according to how they calculated their best interests” (*Maya* 22). Some Maya elites managed to maintain wealth and position, but as in other Spanish-colonized regions, they did so primarily through adaptation to Spanish systems, practices, and lifestyles (228). Changes in the form of wealth and position notwithstanding, the Maya elite maintained their power in the context of the local community, despite the erosion of their status and wealth as a group, and the erosion of regional hierarchies (232). In fact, by the time of the Spanish conquest of Yucatán, many of the regional ruling structures had *already* declined to the point of non-existence.

Pragmatically, the continuance of indigenous political structures facilitated the development of Spanish colony, in that elites managed the collection of tribute and provided much-needed resources to the colonists. *Ah kines*, Maya religious leaders, mediated informally between the two cultures and religions, helping communities adapt to colonial rule while preserving indigenous practices, beliefs, and systems (Caso Barrera 161). Through religious ritual and reenactment of traditional religious practices, Maya elites maintained their own status and the former hierarchy, demonstrating meta-power on a smaller scale within the larger colonial system (176).

Maya control of land and other material resources

When one compares the vastly outnumbered non-Maya colonists with much more numerous Mayas of Yucatán, the question inevitably arises: What enabled outnumbered colonials to secure and maintain control of land, labor, tribute, and other resources in Yucatán? Or, alternatively, why did colonial Mayas not revolt against their colonial oppressors more frequently, given the opportunity? One possible response to these questions not only clarifies the question of resource control by non-Maya colonists, but also provides reasons for continuity in Maya traditions, social structures, and relative autonomy during the colonial regime, *despite* interactions of power that disadvantaged the Mayas on nearly every count. Nancy Farriss suggests a number of reasons the Mayas did not revolt more frequently during the colonial period: a) the lack of ‘command and control’ organizational structures and the absence of a unified political or organizational structure across the peninsula (Informal communications networks existed throughout Yucatán, but none capable of mobilizing or providing a cohesive chain of command); b) a cyclical notion of time and the idea that Spanish rule would pass in time; c) prudence and the realization of the “futility of any uncoordinated action” (Farriss, *Maya* 72); d) intimidation and a record of retribution toward leaders, *caciques*, and other elites; e) more attractive possibilities of working within and surviving the colonial system through legal avenues, with subtle forms of resistance that eschewed violence in most cases; and f) mobility and the means to avoid confrontation (or subjugation) through migration (69-78).

As Farriss notes, each of the above reasons may explain the decisions of Maya communities not to revolt or challenge the colonial system outright, through violence or the use of force. At the same time, I think Farriss’ list is useful in understanding continuity in Maya traditions, beliefs, social systems, and religious practices, despite earnest attempts by colonials and clergy to fundamentally alter them. In the first place, flexibility in land tenure and land practices supported the survival of Maya

culture and population in Yucatán. The forms of land ownership and management varied, and numerous systems, types of ownership, and structures have been identified prior to, and after, conquest (Patch, *Maya* 68). *Cofradías*, Maya-owned ranches, allowed the Mayas to participate in the colonial economy after the shift toward the preeminence of the landed estate. By 1780, 158 *cofradías* existed in Yucatán, though Bishop de Piña y Mazo contested this number, arguing that only 42 of these could be considered *cofradías*, in the sense of being worker-owned (183). One notable *cofradía*, Estancia Locá, of the Immaculate Conception of Euan, included stock and agriculture (184-7). *Cofradías* supported saints' celebrations, pooling resources, establishing endowments, and in some cases, offering loans to workers (Hill 94-5).

Cofradías were not the only means of avoiding direct conflict with colonists or clergy while maintaining cultural autonomy in colonial Yucatán. Under colony, Mayas maintained private land, either in the hands of individuals or families (Güémez Pineda 712). Interestingly, Güémez Pineda notes that "La idea difusa de que el territorio pertenece a toda la comunidad constituye al parecer, una de las principales transformaciones acontecidas de la sociedad indígena bajo el régimen colonial" (713-4). In terms of private property ownership, retention, or sale in Yucatán between 1750 and 1821, Güémez Pineda argues that the Mayas of Yucatán had quickly learned the significance of legal and political boundaries or jurisdiction related to land ownership and use, using them to their own advantage whenever possible or practical (698-9). Control of land in Yucatán formed the basis of jurisdictional and administrative practice in the region.

New indigenous structures, the *cabildos de indios*, re-organized indigenous powers somewhat arbitrarily, not on the basis of existing systems or structures prior to Conquest. Nevertheless, Güémez Pineda argues that this re-organization did not fundamentally change Maya land use and production in Yucatán (709-10). Royal orders of 1571-1572 by Felipe II regulated the sale and transfer of land, requiring judicial approval, public announcement, and public auction or other formalities, depending on the value of the property. Later requirements added verification of

ownership and a form of purchase registration (715). Hunt argues that because of legal procedures designed to protect Maya lands, they received fair compensation for the sale of land in most cases. In one instance, the Mayas of Temax sold some land for \$21, while a comparable nearby plot of land sold by an *encomendero* for \$12 (414-5). *El Juzgado General de Indios* was a special system created in the sixteenth century to prevent abuses toward, but also by, indigenous Mayas in Yucatán. The *Juzgado* was made up of legal representatives, interpreters, and a bailiff, and oversaw any number of issues related to indigenous affairs in Yucatán. Salaries came from fines or other funds from the indigenous communities themselves (Güémez Pineda 716-7). Interestingly, the Maya name for this form of tribute or tax, *holpatán*, means “additional tax.” The entity was abolished in 1820, after the Independence Movement in Mexico.

In many cases, Mayas not only maintained legal ownership and control of land, but the production of food and other crops, as well. In some instances among the Cakchiquels, as with the Pirir family (early to mid-seventeenth century), Cakchiquels maintained control of land and even expanded land holdings, as long as their ownership did not challenge or conflict with Spanish claims. A Cakchiquel man, Miguel Perez Pirir, ran something of a family agricultural corporation during this time (Hill 33-8). At least initially, soil conditions and the significant differences between the general agricultural conditions of Yucatán and those of Spain, together with efficient Maya production, left much control of land and production in the hands of the Mayas (Güémez Pineda 701). The difficulty of food storage as a result of the climate of Yucatán enabled the Mayas to retain greater control of the production, transportation, and even the sale of maize (Patch, *Maya* 74-81). Partly because of climate conditions and difficulties with agriculture, ranching would become one of the few productive efforts in colonial Yucatán to prove profitable for the Spanish colonists in the mid to late colonial period. According to Güémez Pineda, nearly 900 landed estates existed in Yucatán by 1794-1795 (702-4). Because of the inability of the Spanish to successfully introduce into Yucatán the production and harvest of wheat,

the Mayas maintained production of maize throughout the colonial period. Excess crops not consumed or provided as tribute or through the various labor systems could be sold at open markets (Hunt 107).

Nevertheless, by 1794, rapid population growth (an additional 200,000 people since 1700) led to greater pressure on food producers, as well as higher incidence of hunger and famine in Yucatán (Güémez Pineda 708). This upward population growth led to official requirements on Maya producers that exceeded their possible output, and exemplifies the imbalance of power between Mayas and non-Mayas in periods of scarcity and need, even with Maya control of community land and the production of food. In other words, despite Maya control of land and production resources in this case, non-Maya colonial administrators still controlled levels of production, output, and the prices at which products could be sold.

Even with legal safeguards (and certainly before their implementation), abuses were widespread. Despite royal protections for Cakchiquel-Maya lands in Guatemala (the creation of *ejidos* of about 7 square kilometers in town, the preservation of ancestral lands, Laws of the Indies, etc.), in practice, few titles were actually provided, and practices clearly favored Spanish *criollos* & *peninsulares* (Hill 50). Lands better for grazing, farming, etc. were consistently reserved for, purchased, or taken by the Spanish. Natural boundaries mentioned in the documents of sale were removed or non-existent in later surveying, leading later defenders to note that much land had been acquired through fraudulent expansion or the absence of permanent markers (Güémez Pineda 745). Much of the land pertaining to the Mayas under colony was held by a relatively small group of indigenous land owners, and Maya-owned land was transferred through both official and unofficial means during the colonial period (714, 716). Legal safeguards were meant to ensure the consent of all parties involved, and the legitimacy of the entire process (718-22). At the same time, the legal procedures established to verify ownership, among other things, were erected to stem the “‘alarming’ rhythm of sales of indigenous lands” (739). This concern was not entirely centered on indigenous rights, however. Administrators

worried that large land sales would divest indigenous communities of their source of tribute and other material contributions to colonial life, such as the cultivation of maize and subsistence farming, which kept them from dependence upon the colonial system as landless renters and laborers. Even in a context of Maya control of land or the production of crops, colonial oversight, demands, and other forms of interactions challenged or otherwise limited Maya autonomy to varying degrees.

Maya adaptation to, use, or subversion of Spanish systems and institutions

Resistance by the Mayas of Yucatán to colonial rule took a variety of forms. In some cases, frustration with tribute requirements, labor demands, the extraction of community funds, and other abusive or exploitative interactions led to armed revolt, as in the Caste War of Yucatán in the post-independence period. More often than not, resistance took more subtle forms, and Mayas more frequently resorted to covert forms of subversion and resistance in their interactions with non-Maya colonists. Given legal opportunity in the late colonial period to rid themselves of clerical demands, tribute requirements, and labor duties, the Mayas of Yucatán wholeheartedly embraced the new freedoms. Low church attendance, participation in catechism, donations to the friars, and donated labor all signaled the Mayas' widespread relief and acceptance of late colonial reforms (Farriss, *Maya* 375-7).

In cases where religious practice did not decline, Maya communities appropriated and adapted Catholic belief and practice to fit their own cosmology and tradition. Caso Barrera suggests a two-fold purpose for the continuance of religious practices in Yucatán, long after Spanish conquest and the establishment of colony: "En primer lugar, tratar de mantener el equilibrio del cosmos, apaciguando a los dioses y pidiéndoles sus favores. En segundo lugar, se observa a través de los discursos de los principales y ah kines la utilización de la religión como una ideología para oponerse a los españoles" (Caso Barrera 166-7). Ultimately, the inability of Franciscans and other clergy to fully eradicate Mayan religious practice

and belief demonstrates for Caso Barrera their relative incompetence with regard to their supposed task. The appropriation and subversion of Spanish religion served to reconfigure the nature of relations between Mayas and colonists in a manner more favorable to the Mayas. Syncretism in Yucatán thus reflected Maya adaptation to new and different forms, but also continuity with traditional religious practices.

Maya elites continued to practice power through ritual after the conquest, though with requisite discretion under the watchful eye of the friar. These indigenous leaders maintained dual roles during the colonial period, often arbitrating or negotiating between the Spanish colonial authorities and indigenous communities (Hanks 721). As both religious and social elite, they developed new and creative ways to maintain traditional practices alongside new ones. Clendinnen identifies their practice of 'translating' symbols and meanings into words and concepts the friars could understand. This impossible burden led to continued misunderstanding and misinterpretation by friars (*Ambivalent* 188). Meaning was contested and appropriated by non-Mayas, leading eventually to interactions of power between the Franciscans under Landa and the Mayas.

Though extreme allegations of ritual crucifixions in churches have been disputed, there remains little doubt as to the continued ritual purification and offerings of food on sacred grounds, at churches, and on altars, all carefully hidden from Franciscan clergy. Clendinnen, for one, argues that some form of sacrifice continued into the colonial period, though confessions of the most extreme nature are likely exaggerated. The so-called 'cenote cult' is likely also a fiction, built on confessions obtained under duress during the inquisition of Landa that began in 1562. Despite the excesses of clerical fervor, however, creative adaptations and the use of Spanish Christian symbols mark the early Maya response to Spanish conquest, perhaps, writes Clendinnen, as a result of Maya views of the transitional nature of Spanish forms (*Ambivalent* 163-4). At the same time, appropriation of Christian symbols into Maya cosmology reinforced the religious importance and status of elites (Farriss, *Maya* 145). This appropriation and syncretism subverted colonial religious

systems, and these practices must be considered interactions of power, in the sense that through them, the Mayas of Yucatán controlled cultural, social, and religious resources despite ecclesiastical efforts.

In response to colonial rule, tribute requirements, forced social change, and other restrictions of the imposed system, many Mayas chose to migrate or re-settle, forming a consistent pattern of migration and movement throughout the colonial period in Yucatán (Farriss, *Maya* 199). Alternatively, after early colonial resettlement practices, growth in the Maya population in Yucatán resulted in the lax enforcement of law and royal edict as regarded resettlement and enforcement of settlement and trade policies (Patch, *Maya* 225). In some cases, interactions between Mayas and non-Maya colonists were mutually beneficial or advantageous. Patch demonstrates how colonial Mayas treated colonial land owners with deference, particularly under *encomienda*. The reasons for this, though varied, often had much to do with the ability of the colonials to act on their behalf in legal or jurisdictional matters, or in times of duress (104-5). Strategic alliances also afforded the various indigenous groups a degree of protection from outright extermination or violent, armed conflict. Furthermore, the relationship between literate Mayas and non-Maya colonists served various purposes, not the least of which was the defense of Mayas from colonists' accusations and prosecution. In these cases, Maya actions of resistance or subversion took the form of creative adaptation, in that Mayas took advantage of their relationships with colonials for the general benefit of Maya communities.

Maya resistance in Yucatán, according to Caso Barrera, centered on the notion of cyclical time and the inevitable end of Spanish rule (176). Mayas in Yucatán exercised power through resistance in attempts at changing the narrative of meaning and interaction and re-asserting non-Spanish norms, systems, and society. Early on, at the time of conquest and initial colonization, Maya resistance was more likely to take aggressive or violent turns, as seen in the events of November 1546 in Valladolid. At that time, Spanish administrators moved into rural areas to oversee tribute collection. On November 8, Mayas attacked the Spanish, performed

traditional rituals to spite the colonists, and destroyed articles related to the Spanish. This sparked an extensive rebellion throughout Yucatán that was ended in 1547 with the restoration of colonial order (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 40-1). Farriss notes the complexity of the colonial system, in which Mayas educated by the friars struggled to find a place in either society (Spanish colonial or Maya). In some cases, this state of cultural limbo may have led a number of individuals to challenge the colonial paradigm. The *batab* Fernando Uz, for example, was arrested for his alleged part in an armed conflict, and Jacinto Canek, leader of the 1761 rebellion that carries his name, learned Castilian and Spanish colonial culture prior to his rebellion against that very system (*Maya* 98-100).

As colonial relations became more established and colonial systems became further entrenched, Maya resistance generally took more subtle, cautious forms. Restall, for instance, challenges Farriss' assertion that Spanish clergy successfully instituted residential divisions, to the detriment of the Maya familial systems. He suggests that the clergy did not achieve the degree of success that has been claimed, citing colonial records and documents indicating a high proportion of communal house-plots in colonial Yucatán, as opposed to individual, nuclear households. Even the appearance of separate, nuclear households often hid the practical reality of what Restall terms "multiple-residence extended-family household complexes" ("Ties" 368). The continuity of social and familial forms demonstrates power through interaction, in that Mayas consistently and conscientiously maintained traditional practices in the face of intentional attempts to fundamentally alter their structure and form.

The experiences of Gaspar Antonio Chi illustrate the complexity of interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas, and also the ways in which the two distinct cultures overlapped during the colonial period. Examples of non-Maya actions of power are clearly present in the experiences of Chi, but so, too, is evidence of interactional power used by the Mayas of Yucatán.

Gaspar Antonio Chi lived before and after the Spanish conquest of Yucatán. A leader of the Tizimin *cah* and the Xiu *chibal*, Chi received a Franciscan education and became a notary and translator for legal and other administrative cases. Chi became more closely associated with Spanish authorities despite the fact that they had exploited political differences among Maya ruling families in order to incite uprisings that were then condemned and punished militarily (Restall, "Gaspar"). Chi's writings have become important records of colonial Yucatán; his own histories of pre-conquest Yucatán, written for *encomenderos*, provide insight into Chi's perspective on the conquest. In the histories, he discusses decreasing population and change as a result of colonial systems and design.

Political process in colonial Yucatán was defined by increasing Spanish intolerance and control of Maya affairs. Friars schooled young Maya noblemen like Gaspar Antonio Chi as a strategy for fundamentally altering the social, religious, and cultural structures of the Mayas. Nevertheless, Mayas in Yucatán exhibited clear efforts to moderate change and control the frameworks imposed by the Spanish. Maya nobility acculturated to the new legal systems, and complicity with the new colonial system was viewed primarily by some as a means of survival. Interestingly, Chi worked for a number of Spanish officials that related very differently to Maya communities in Yucatán, including Diego de Landa. Chi worked for Landa after his return to Yucatán as Bishop in 1573, but he also translated ecclesiastical punishments to the condemned at the time of Landa's earlier inquisition under then-Bishop Toral. Chi initially worked for Bishop Toral, and is thought to have helped prepare or contribute to de Landa's "Account of the Things of Yucatán," particularly regarding Maya culture and society.

Restall writes that literate Mayas in the colonial period acted as intermediaries between their own Maya cultures and those of non-Maya groups. Chi acted on many occasions as an intermediary, often representing the Spanish as translator or notary. Chi played one such intermediary role during the ecclesiastical investigations of 'idolatry' in the early 1560s. Religious images in a cave near Mani led Landa to

initiate a series of interrogations, torture, and the public humiliation of local residents. Restall notes the excessive fervor with which the clergy waged their campaign to eliminate indigenous religious forms and practices: "Even for the sixteenth century this extraordinary campaign of extirpation was an excessively violent expression of colonist frustration" ("Gaspar" 14). The scene was repeated in Mani and other locations, with much larger efforts directed at rooting out the idolatry and non-Christian imagery. Restall estimates that about five per cent of the 4,500 victims were killed as a direct result of their torture. Among the survivors, in a public display in 1562, those convicted were forced to pay heavy fines, serve a Spaniard for up to ten years, receive 200 lashes, or any number of other penalties, arbitrarily assigned by the clergy. Priests burned books of Maya writing, and the activities continued to Sotuta, Hocaba, and Homun. Bishop Francisco Toral held the author of these actions, fray Diego de Landa, responsible, but not until significant death and damage had already occurred. Throughout the events spearheaded by Landa, Chi translated, relating the sentences of the condemned in Maya.

As in the case of Gaspar Antonio Chi, the relationship between literate Mayas and non-Mayas served various purposes, not the least of which was the defense of Maya individuals and communities from Spanish accusations or prosecution. According to a contemporary of Chi, Pedro Sánchez de Aguilar, Chi "defended the Indians in their lawsuits and presented or composed their petitions for them" (In Restall, "Gaspar" 18). Though he may appear initially to be merely complicit with the actions of the Spanish in early colony, Chi nevertheless acted as defender of accused Mayas, and as intermediary in an imposed legal system. The abuses of Franciscans under Diego de Landa most clearly represent interactions of power. More subtly, though, Chi mediated between the zealous friars and Maya individuals, using his religious education and cultural knowledge to moderate and transform imposed cultural, religious, and legal systems. This, too, demonstrates power through interaction, though to a lesser degree within the overall system in which Chi and other Mayas found themselves after Spanish conquest.

In the above instances, though the abusive practices of the Spanish toward the Mayas of Yucatán are easy to identify as actions or interactions of power, they do not fully represent experiences of power in colonial Yucatán from my interactionist perspective. The Spanish act of creating the colonial system and enforcing its rules demonstrates one further interaction of power, particularly as the Mayas had little or no voice in the establishment of the system that led to abuses like those of Landa. The use or manipulation of legal, religious, or other resources to enforce the system also demonstrates power, but the very structuring of the colonial system most clearly represents interactions of power between Mayas and non-Mayas in the colonial context. It is to this definition of power, or meta-power, that I now turn.

Six: Defining Situations as Power

Legal and Social Rule-Setting or the Definition of Situations as Power

Raymond Craib analyzes the production of maps as a method of obtaining cultural and political meaning. Writing much like an interactionist, Craib argues that “In effect, European practices of mapping and naming provided a textual tangibility for a landscape in which their own history could begin to unfold and colonization could occur, a landscape where historical ambiguity would be reconciled through spatial order” (Craib 11). In other words, historical and cultural symbols led to concrete actions of conquest, re-construction, and colonization. Interactions of power are present in the construction of maps and the definition of space, as Mignolo has noted; the construction of maps, as with other texts, provides an opportunity to exercise power in and through geographical space, and in relation to the residents thereof. The symbols, ideas, and meaning that contribute to the construction of such texts informs future action, such as colonial expansion, the subjugation of indigenous inhabitants, or the exploitation of resources in a region under exploration and settlement by a colonial enterprise.

In terms of images, symbols, and meanings that informed action, the idea, represented cartographically, of ‘new’ land to be colonized, settled, developed, and exploited led to the practice of indiscriminate exploitation of Maya communities in

Yucatán, throughout New Spain, and beyond. Craib writes that “Cartographic representation was thoroughly imbued with ideas about the economy, property, space, and culture” (19). These meanings led to specific interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas in Yucatán, interactions of power that have already been noted in the present chapter, or that will be noted below.

Mayas, like non-Maya conquerors and colonists, impacted colonial interactions vis-à-vis their own symbolic representations and cultural frameworks. As opposed to the spatially-oriented maps of the Spanish that focused on topography and landscape, though, Maya maps of New Spain examined by Mundy exhibited social characteristics, primarily indentifying social and relational connections in space and time (Craib 24-5). As I indicated in the previous chapter, these physical and symbolic conceptions of social, religious, and physical reality informed action, leading to the creation, maintenance, or destruction of various systems in Yucatán.

Maya frameworks, norms, and ‘maps’ necessarily shaped early interactions between Spanish explorers and the Mayas of Yucatán. Stories by Landa, Díaz, and others describe interactions between Mayas and Spaniards as early as 1517 and initial expeditions from Cuba under then-Governor Diego Velázquez the same year. In early exchanges between Mayas and Spaniards, Díaz del Castillo notes that the Spanish explorers were obliged to operate within the frameworks and norms presented to them by the Mayas of Yucatán. In several early encounters, Mayas ferried a number of Spaniards to land by canoe and led them in a procession toward the center of activity, later attacking them by surprise. The attack may have actually been alluded to through dress and ritual, of which the Spanish had no knowledge at the time. During the disastrous expedition of Córdoba from Cuba to Campeche, multiple attacks and lack of drinking water led to significant loss of life and supplies and retreat back to Cuba. The early period of interaction is marked by adaptation and adjustments that eventually permitted the Spanish explorers to regroup, re-supply, and plan further explorations through Maya territories further inland, eventually as far as Tenochtitlán.

Despite the eventual defeat of Maya ruling families and indigenous political structures, Maya social, religious, and political organization persisted after conquest and Spanish settlement, in part because the colonists found these advantageous in establishing tribute and strengthening colonial rule (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 38-9). The early development of Spanish towns and administrative authorities depended, too, upon the location and provisions of Maya communities. In these instances, Mayas exercised greater power in their interactions with Spaniards, as the Mayas defined, controlled, and managed social interactions. Initial, non-peaceful exchanges often favored the Mayas, due to their knowledge of the terrain of Yucatán and its dense vegetation, of the freshwater *cenotes* or sink-holes in the limestone crust, and of food stores maintained by local communities. Mayas defined situations and the context of armed encounters, leading to crucial Spanish losses at the earliest point of contact between Mayas and Spaniards. Ambushes with arrows and traps in dense foliage, for example, left little time for effective defense of Spanish men or horses. These initial conflicts, coupled with demanding physical conditions and a lack of gold or other 'treasures' led to Spanish contempt toward the inhabitants of the peninsula, and their temporary withdrawal between 1535 and 1540.

The Spaniards would return, though, to take what remained, in their minds, of the spoils of conquest: labor, material resources, and land (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 29). If Maya systems, frameworks, and 'maps' directed early interactions, it was the frameworks and 'maps' of the Spanish conquerors and colonists that shaped the military and spiritual conquest and the post-conquest colonial period in Yucatán. Despite the initial importance of Maya contexts (towns, production practices, etc.), Hunt suggests that "Eventually a point was reached when the Spaniards were no longer guided by the Indian factors" (Hunt 580). Mérida and Valladolid then continued to transform Maya villages and larger communities, shaping the day-to-day interactions and routines to colonial needs and whims. The growth of colonial centers thus exemplifies the shift in interactions of power as colonial frameworks and contexts overwhelmed or subsumed those of the Mayas.

Consider Hunt's argument as to the passive (or merely receptive) nature of Maya communities:

Even so, though the Spaniards superimposed their state on the Indian layout, the limitations of development were always dependent on the Spanish impetus and direction, that is, the Indians, at least for Yucatan, have to be considered relatively static—a constant, a group being acted upon, rather than acting. The Spaniards advanced relative to the Indian village no matter what was happening there, in good times or bad (583).

Hunt portrays colonial Mayas as passive recipients of colonial design. Though I do not deny the pervasive influence of non-Maya colonials from conquest through the period of independence and beyond, I think Hunt's depiction of the Mayas as passive, static group conceals the complex nature of interaction between Mayas and non-Mayas throughout the colonial period vis-à-vis relations of power. As I have already argued, Mayas demonstrated power in an imposed system through various forms of resistance and non-compliance, and at times through armed conflict.

Though her argument may be critically incomplete, Hunt accurately describes an important shift toward the *preeminence* of non-Maya structures or systems throughout the colonial period, to the detriment of the Mayas of Yucatán. That is, though early interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas may have been more influenced by the systems and frameworks of the Mayas, after conquest and into the colonial period, non-Maya systems directed action and interaction more than those of the Mayas, at least with regard to the relations between the two primary groups in Yucatán. As Inga Clendinnen notes, "...settlers and missionary friars fought a dangerous battle for the power to determine the kind of Yucatan they would make" (*Ambivalent* xi). Missionaries, in particular, sought to transform the very structure of Maya society, perhaps more so than other settlers who were busy attending to their own concerns in the burgeoning towns throughout the peninsula. This struggle for power, in interactionist terms, was a struggle over resource control, as well as the ability to establish the social order, with its rules, structures, and norms. What Restall

identifies as “Competing visions of the nature of native culture and the entire grand scheme of colonization,” Clendinnen calls “world-making”, the very heart of meta-power, or the ability to define and construct the social order (Restall, “Gaspar” 15), (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 128). The colonial struggle for ‘power’ among settlers and friars became a struggle to determine the very nature of the social order, including access to, use of, and control over resources.

By the end of the colonial period, and certainly before, non-Mayas had successfully altered social, religious, economic, political, and interpersonal interactions to reflect non-Maya traditions, practices, and norms. Continuity of Maya beliefs and traditions notwithstanding, non-Maya colonists and clergy successfully implemented systems of all kinds in Yucatán that directly challenged or displaced those of the Mayas, either altering existing systems or replacing them altogether. The extent to which clergy and colonists successfully implemented their regime of cultural change is the final subject of the present chapter, an examination of meta-power in colonial Yucatán, or the imposition of social systems and associated constructs.

Non-Maya development of legal systems and institutions

The Spanish conquerors and colonists first exhibited meta-power in Yucatán through their imposition of legal systems and institutions that superseded those of the Mayas, beginning with first contact throughout the peninsula. The following text comes from the Spanish *requerimiento*, a reading of rights or proclamation that was publicly announced to newly-encountered groups in areas where Spanish conquerors sought to establish colony. The *requerimiento* was a legal, political, and religious practice that took place systematically before indigenous communities were subjugated and colonized either peacefully or through military action. The English translation of las Casas’ early sixteenth century version of the *requerimiento* illustrates the foregone conclusion that the newly explored lands were the possession of the

Spanish Crown. More than any other document or text, the *requerimiento* illustrates meta-power through the imposition of a legal framework that structured interactions from the point of contact into the colonial period.

The first two sections of the *requerimiento* describe the religious perspective of the Spanish conquerors. A crude summary of Catholic creed, the text provides a sweeping introduction to Christian belief from creation through the establishment of the Christian church and the eternal nature of Christian institutions (Las Casas in Chamberlain 24-5):

On behalf of the king Don Ferdinand and the Queen Doña Juana, Queen of Castile and León..., subjugators of barbarous peoples, we, their servants, notify and make known to you as best we are able, that God, Our Lord, living and eternal, created the heavens and the earth, and a man and a woman, of whom you and we and all other people of the world were, and are, the descendants, as will be all who come after us. Because of the great numbers of people who have come from the union of these two in the five thousand years which have run their course since the world was created, it became necessary that some should go in one direction and that others should go in another. Thus they became divided into many kingdoms and many provinces, since they could not all remain or sustain themselves in one place.

Of all these people God, Our Lord, chose one, who was called Saint Peter, to be the lord and the one who was to be superior to all the other people of the world, whom all should obey. He was to be the head of the entire human race, wherever men might exist and be, no matter under what law they might live, or to what sect they might belong, or what belief they might hold. God gave him the world for his kingdom and jurisdiction, and although He directed him to establish his seat in Rome, as the city best situated from which to rule the world, God also permitted him to be and establish himself in any other part of the world to judge and govern all peoples, whether Christians, Moors, Jews, gentiles, or those of any other sects or beliefs that there might be. He was called the Pope, because that name means the Admirable One and the Great Father and Ruler of all men. Those who then lived accepted and obeyed this Saint Peter as Lord, King, and Superior Ruler of the Universe, as those who have come since have accepted and obeyed those who have been elected Pope after him. This has continued to the present, and will continue until the world ceases to exist.

The *requerimiento* then transitions to an explanation of Spanish authority as derived from Saint Peter, and their legal, documented claim to all land and “everything that there is in them.” :

One of the past Popes who succeeded Saint Peter to the dignity and throne which has been described, as Lord of the Earth gave these islands and mainlands of the Ocean Sea to the said King and Queen [of Castile] and to their successors in those kingdoms, our Lords, with everything that there is in them, as is set forth in certain documents which were drawn up regarding this donation in the manner described, which you may see if you so desire.

Once Spanish authority has been established, the text quickly turns to the demands of Spanish authorities that the newly-encountered groups submit immediately, peacefully, and completely to the authority of the church and Spanish Crown:

In consequence, Their Highnesses are Kings and Lords of these islands and mainlands by virtue of the said donation. Certain other isles and almost all [natives of these lands] to whom this summons has been read have accepted Their Highnesses as such Kings and Lords, and have served, and serve, them as their subjects as they should, and must, do, with good will and without offering any resistance. Without hesitancy, and immediately upon having been informed of the foregoing, they gave their obedience and received the male clerics whom Their Highnesses sent to preach to them and instruct them in Our Holy Faith. All these people of their own free and willing accord, without coercion and without any reserve whatsoever, became Christians and remain Christians now. Their Highnesses thereupon received them with joy and benignity, and forthwith ordered that they be dealt with as their subjects and vassals. You are constrained and obliged to do the same as they.

Consequently, as we best may, we beseech and demand that you understand fully this that we have said to you and ponder it, so that you may understand and deliberate upon it for a just and fair period and that you accept the Church and Superior Organization of the whole world and recognize the Supreme Pontiff, called the Pope, and that in his name, you acknowledge the King and the Queen Doña Juana, Our Lords and Sovereigns, his representatives, as the lords and superior authorities of these islands and mainlands by virtue of the said

donation, and that you consent to and permit that these religious fathers declare and preach to you concerning the foregoing.

Finally, a stern warning completes the reading of the *requerimiento*, providing the listeners with one of two possible responses. Among the Mayas, after the conversion of a group, the governor could either accept the group as subjects or forcefully subdue them:

If you do this, you will do rightly and that which you are obliged to do with respect to Their Highnesses, and we, in their names, shall then receive you with all love and charity and shall leave you your wives and children and property, free and unmolested, so that you may do with them as you freely wish and as you hold good. And we shall not compel you to become Christians unless you yourselves, being informed of the Truth, wish to be converted to Our Holy Catholic Faith, as has passed with nearly all the peoples of the other isles. More than this, Their Highnesses will give you many privileges and exemptions, and will bestow many benefits upon you.

If you do not do this, however, or resort maliciously to delay, we warn you that, with the aid of God, we will enter your land against you with force and will make war in every place and by every means we can and are able, and we will then subject you to the yoke and authority of the Church and of Their Highnesses. We will take you and your wives and children and make them slaves, and as such we will sell you and them, and will dispose of you and them as their Highnesses order. And we will take your property and will do to you all the harm and evil we can, as is done to vassals who will not obey their lord or who do not wish to accept him, or who resist and defy him. We avow that the deaths and harm which you will receive thereby will be your own blame, and not that of Their Highnesses, nor ours, nor of the gentlemen who come with us.

We request the scribe who is present to give us a signed testimonial of what we have said and what we have required of you, and we request those who are present to be our witnesses....

Simply put, the arrogance, ethnocentricity, and self-absorption of Spanish symbolic representation in the *requerimiento* are breathtaking. The *requerimiento*

illustrates well the Spanish world view and some of the symbols present in Spanish thinking at the time of the conquest of Yucatán. Accordingly, the Spanish conquerors and colonists were merely communicating their legitimate, legal claim to all land (and everything in or on the land) that they encountered. “Legal pacification” was the terminology preferable to ‘conquest’, given the negative intimations of the word ‘conquest’. Resistance to their imposed rule and subsequent ‘legal pacification’ would be met with force and armed conflict, legitimate in the Spanish conception of the world because non-compliant vassals of the king and queen would be rejecting the sovereign rule of the Spanish Crown (Chamberlain 27). Again, the *requerimiento* demonstrates the first instance of meta-power exercised by Spaniards through interaction with Mayas of Yucatán.

In the case of Spanish expansion and colonial imperialism, legal theorists provided a framework through which conquest, conversion, and colony could be understood and justified. As I have argued, John Schmidhauser suggests that “Legal imperialism in this era meant elimination of the indigenous legal system, destruction or degradation of conquered legal elites, and imposition of the legal system of the conqueror manned by the legal elite of the conqueror” (341). Elsewhere he generalizes this idea, arguing that “...powerful nations develop broad theoretical justifications for legal imperialism and for complete or partial elimination of indigenous legal systems” (338). Such instances of destruction, degradation, and the imposition of systems exhibit interactive meta-power.

Functionalist Jay Moreno has correctly noted that laws and legal systems do not always correlate to behavior and practice, particularly in the colonial context (308). Moreno speaks specifically to the nature of the Spanish legal system and the difficulty of implementing centralized Spanish rule across the Atlantic. The impracticality of Spanish legal forms instituted in ‘New Spain’ and controlled from across the Atlantic led to an understandable rupture between the theoretical design of the legal system and its practical implementation. Specifically, the ease of direct appeals to the monarch (utilized by Cortés after his successful break from Governor

Velázquez and by Maya elites, among others) undermined the hierarchical political and legal structure of Spanish colony. Systemic disregard for Spanish law in the colonies led to arbitrary implementation of regional practices almost completely independent of the established Spanish legal system. Practically, this allowed for greater regional control over decision-making and legal process, permitting greater exercise of meta-power by the colonial Spanish, even as the relative exercise of power by the Crown diminished as a result.

The breakdown of the legal system that Moreno identifies in no small way contributed to repeated abuses of indigenous individuals and communities, and prevented recourse under the law as a result of the flawed system. While Moreno's argument certainly applies to colonial Yucatán, the mere *use* of legal resources as a form of power does not fully conceptualize the meta-power component of Spanish legal systems, the very construction or de-construction of systems themselves, and the impunity to ignore or evade laws while holding others to the letter of the law. Early Spanish conquerors and colonists exhibited meta-power in their construction of formative legal systems that endured throughout the colonial period and beyond, regulating interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas for centuries after conquest.

Non-Maya development of economic systems and institutions

Just as the construction and imposition of legal systems represents meta-power exercised by Spanish conquerors and colonists, their development and imposition of economic systems and institutions likewise illustrates meta-power in colonial Yucatán. I have already discussed *encomienda* and *repartimiento* as methods used by the Spanish to control labor and other material resources. *Encomienda* had been fully established by Montejo in Yucatán by 1545 (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 38). Montejo's establishment of the *encomienda* system clearly represents the type of meta-power outlined by Peter Hall. The 'granting' of land, including the unfortunate inhabitants of that land, carried over from the period of *Reconquista* in Spain, served

as the model for the settlement and pacification of Yucatán. *Encomenderos* received land and servants, and were entrusted with their material and spiritual care. In each instance, *encomienda* demonstrates meta-power through rule-setting and the definition of situations. Non-Mayas demonstrated power through *encomienda* and *repartimiento*, not only through the explicit control of resources, but also in the very establishment of the systems themselves.

After *encomienda* and *repartimiento*, Mayas of Yucatán saw their labor and resources further exploited through *estancias* and the institution of the landed estate. Israel contends that "...however deplorable in many respects were conditions on the haciendas and in the mines and mills, they may well have been better than conditions under the Indian hierarchy..." (39). To support this claim, he cites general growth in population in non-Maya colonial towns relative to the higher rate of depopulation in Maya villages. Israel's apparent defense of mid- to late-colonial labor exploitation notwithstanding, the Spanish colonists had structured society in this way. The very idea that living in the squalor and exploitative conditions of *haciendas* and mines was preferable to rapid depopulation in traditional villages demonstrates, at some level, the degree to which colonists successfully altered Maya communities and their prospects as individuals and communities under colonial rule.

Historian Magnus Mörner has debated the source and nature of Spanish colonial stratification as derived from medieval Castilian models. In a response to critics of his earlier work, John K. Chance and William B. Taylor, Mörner attempts a more dynamic interpretation of colonial stratification on the basis of economic change, the power and status of elites, and an analysis of generalized v. regionally-contextualized approaches. Ultimately, he concludes that social stratification in colonial 'New Spain' may best be described as a combination of medieval Spanish hierarchy, burgeoning commercial systems, limits to social mobility, and a particularly advantageous relationship between religious institutions and the state ("Economic" 367). Regional variations in social stratification owe to economic

differences, and Mörner notes briefly the “exploitation of the masses by the state and by the elites” (369). He notes that a regional interpretation and assessment of colonial social stratification provides the most accurate and useful model for understanding Spanish colonial society. Mörner presents a logical evaluation of social hierarchy in Spanish colony. Ultimately, he argues that social stratification in Spanish colony has led to ongoing inequality and struggle (338).

Though I take issue with his vague use of ‘power’ as a latent capacity or something that can be ‘wielded’ or ‘displayed’, as opposed to my definition of power as interaction, Mörner does offer a useful analysis of colonial Spanish social stratification. I think the most important component of Mörner’s work lay in the underlying representation of meta-power evident throughout his discussion of stratification. The institution of medieval Castilian structures, subsequent economic development on behalf of the Spanish State, and the “exploitation of the masses” all represent the effective construction of social, political, and economic systems over and above pre-existing, Maya systems.

Non-Maya development of civic or social systems and institutions

Non-Mayas asserted (or in less-successful instances, appear to have *intended* to assert) meta-power through interaction from their earliest point of contact with the Mayas of Yucatán. In 1526, Francisco de Montejo received permission from the Crown to pacify the peninsula. He then planned and supplied an early expedition aimed at the control and development of the region according to Spanish rules and customs. Clendinnen notes that in building the expedition in 1527, Montejo did not have a translator, “an extraordinary omission, [suggesting] that Spanish confidence in their destiny to master Indians was so complete as to obviate the requirement to hold human converse with them along the way” (*Ambivalent* 20). In other words, non-Mayas exploring the peninsula believed it was their God-ordained and state-sanctioned right to dominate and control the region, followed by their imposition of

Spanish systems, institutions, mores, and cultural practices, as well. If the first aspect of conquest represents power through the control of material resources or use of physical force, the second aspect of conquest and settlement represents meta-power, the structuring and development of systems that regulate, modify, or shape actions and interactions within the system itself.

After friendly exchanges at Cozumel with Naum Pat, as had been previously established through earlier contact, the early expedition to Yucatán made landfall at Xelha. The settlement experienced rapid decline as the Spaniards demanded food from local Mayas, who, in turn, largely withdrew into the forest to avoid the burden of providing food and other supplies to the Spanish explorers. Eventual recovery of the settlement led to inland expeditions by the Spaniards. Battles against the Spanish explorers were sometimes led by Gonzalo Guerrero, a Spaniard who, after a shipwreck around 1511, had adjusted to life with the Mayas, married, and fought against Spanish incursion on the peninsula. Throughout this early period of interaction, Spaniards interpreted Maya actions as arbitrary, ‘uncivilized’, and confusing. Thus, they sought to replace these practices with those of Spanish and European origins, exerting meta-power over the Mayas through social, religious, and legal rule-setting or the imposition of normative practices.

The Mayas often ignored previous agreements and treaties made by the Spaniards, and reception of the Spaniards varied from region to region or *cahob* to *cabob*. Clendinnen suggests, and I agree, that the Spanish explorer-conquerors paid selective attention to only those things “immediately relevant to themselves” (*Ambivalent* 24). The exchange between Spanish Montejo’s son and the Cupul lord of Chichén Itzá demonstrates this well; after a demand for submission, the Itza leader pointed out that the Itza already had a structure of nobility and regional authority, of which the Spanish explorers were apparently completely unaware (26). Mayas resisted Spanish settlement in the 1540s, specifically in Mérida at Tino and in Valladolid at Chauaca. The Spaniards eventually succeeded in asserting their ability to settle and build, despite ongoing resistance and fighting.

The third important area of non-Maya utilization or imposition of meta-power relates to civic or social realms in colonial Yucatán. As with legal and economic systems, non-Mayas largely determined the nature and structure of colonial institutions and practices that, in turn, altered interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas, and within both groups, as well. Patch argues that the Mayas of Yucatán, as a consequence of Spanish conquest, were reduced to a single peasant class, despite the legal and social stratification of *caciques* that occurred during the colonial period (*Maya* 67). Both in religious and secular circles, Maya elites experienced declining access to resources and positions of importance within the colonial system. What Farriss calls the “postconquest disintegration of interprovincial and intercommunity ties within Yucatan” overshadowed the retention of some land and vestiges of political, social, or religious authority by Maya elites (Farriss, *Maya* 308). The Spanish practice of recognition and alliance with indigenous elites changed after 1562 in Yucatán with the Franciscan investigation and tortures under Landa. After that time, don Diego Quijada took steps to diminish the power of the indigenous elite (Quezada, “Encomienda” 673). Political organization in Yucatán after the mid-1500s altered the relations between Maya elites and their communities, as elites were now allied with the Spanish infrastructure and political structures, regardless of previous alliances or commitments (676-7).

Dramatic change in the relative social position of Maya elites notwithstanding, the ways in which non-Mayas dictated Maya action and behavior illustrates even more clearly the imposition and use of meta-power. Early in the post-conquest period, Spanish officials utilized the indigenous elite to organize and acquire labor and other resources when needed or desired. Quezada notes that in 1547, Franciscan friars convened the *halach winik* of the *kuchkabal* (jurisdiction) of Maní and asked them for laborers to construct a church and house for the Franciscans. More than 2,000 Mayas participated in the division of labor to construct the project. Under don Diego Quijada, more than 1,500 Mayas worked for 15 days to clear the jungle between

Mérida and Hocaba, and approximately 2,100 Mayas worked on roadways between Mérida and the towns of Homun and Huhí (Quezada, "Encomienda" 663, 678).

By the latter part of the sixteenth century, indigenous governors and other officials saw their titles stripped at the whim of non-Maya colonial officials (though officially due to justified cause), in part as a result of Quijada's efforts to diminish their power. The legitimacy of indigenous rulers was thus further eroded, given that their position in the community could be altered due to their own actions or the whims of colonial administrators (681). The successful ability of non-Mayas to command indigenous labor and resources through established systems of tribute illustrates concretely the implementation of meta-power by non-Mayas. The successful ability of non-Mayas to determine the nature and extent of the relative importance of Maya elites further demonstrates meta-power, from conquest through the colonial period.

Lasting, significant change in Maya social systems as a result of intentional actions by non-Mayas also demonstrates meta-power. Restall addresses whether or not – and to what degree – Yucatec Maya familial structures changed as a result of Spanish colonial presence. He notes that naming patterns changed after conquest, and the traditional pattern of naming (using both the patronym or matronym based on gender) largely ceased in favor of the Christian patriarchal system of a given Christian name and the continued use of the patronym system ("Ties" 363). Furthermore, the use of indigenous names was largely prohibited after 1552, in favor of Christian names (Caso Barrera 166). Like Restall, Farriss suggests that colonists unwittingly undermined Maya institutions of extended family and community, though I argue that clergy and colonists did so knowingly, at least to some degree (*Maya* 169). Friars insisted on residential settlement based on the nuclear family, rather than the traditional extended family. Traditionally, Mayas provided patrilineal inheritance, but Spanish law expanded that to any legitimate heir, altering inheritance patterns among the Mayas. Orphans were not uncommonly sent by the friars to the cities for 'care', in many cases resulting in servitude for the child (171).

'Orphans' were any children without father and mother, but in Maya communities, such children would have been cared for by extended family. Finally, average marriage age dropped significantly after conquest, in part a result of pressure by priests and other actors in the colonial system. Among the Mayas of Yucatán, the average marriage age dropped from around 20 years to 14 (for boys) and 12 (for girls) after conquest (173). Priests, presumably to prevent sexual 'immorality' and to increase tribute and alms payments, facilitated this change, in some cases punishing young Mayas who did not marry early enough.

In addition to changes in familial structures, naming patterns, and marriage practices, non-Mayas introduced a number of other changes to the daily experience of Mayas in Yucatán, further evidence of meta-power exercised by non-Mayas through their interactions with Maya individuals and communities. Changes in sexual mores and widespread instances of sexual abuse by clergy represent the imposition of new systems or institutions, and the impact that such systems had on the conquered groups. In a sample of "clerical solicitation" in Yucatán from 1578-1808, Chuchiak identifies 27 clergy who were accused, only one of whom was judged to be falsely accused. Three of the accused died during the trial, four were only removed temporarily, and nineteen were permanently removed as an outcome of the allegations and subsequent proceedings ("Sins" 107-10). Despite official prohibitions, early Spanish conquerors raided Maya villages for young women, and in some cases prostituted the girls among the soldiers. Sexual slavery and prostitution by and for the Spanish was not uncommon under Montejo, in what Chuchiak terms "an organized prostitution ring" (81-2). The early sexual conquest of the Mayas led to changed sexual mores, including earlier sexual contact on average after Conquest than before (83). Conflicting symbols of chastity or purity and sexual desire among colonists and clergy led to even greater confusion and conflict in Maya communities; changes in sexual behavior brought about primarily by the excesses of Spanish conquest were later punished severely by clergy adhering to symbols of sexual purity and chastity (85-7).

The imposition or use of meta-power did not solely occur during the initial period of conquest, either. Changes in indigenous governance between 1530 and 1560 brought accompanying benefit to the ruling non-Maya classes. Colonial administrators made changes in local community leadership and civic structures, in order to enhance their administration and strengthen colonial control. Administrators designed the re-organized system based on the Spanish *cabildo*, a municipal council, rather than the structure of Maya leadership already in place throughout Yucatán (Israel 11). The *cah* or *cahob*, along with the *chibal* or *chibalbob*, made up the principal forms of Maya governance and social order prior to conquest, as identified by Restall and others (“Ties”), (Redfield and Villa Rojas). Complex relations between various *chibalbob* and Spanish colonists were marked by conflict, dissent, and struggles over control of (and access to) resources throughout the peninsula (Restall, “Gaspar”). In the post-conquest colonial period, non-Maya colonists and clergy determined contexts, rules, norms, and the structure of social situations, while Mayas complied in order to survive under the new definitions of social and cultural reality.

Illustrating this idea of non-Maya exercise of meta-power, deFrance and Hanson demonstrate how Spanish colonists restricted the movement of the Mayas of Ek Balam, structured their labor, and altered subsistence patterns in the region. At Ek Balam, Spanish colonists and clergy developed an *encomienda* in 1545 and a *visita* sometime around 1553, altering subsistence and production patterns in order to facilitate their own needed goods and tribute requirements (299). Together with the institution of *encomienda*, the introduction of European or Eurasian pigs and chickens for production and consumption altered the diet and food resources of indigenous Mayas of Ek Balam by restricting access to native animals in the region (301). Restricting movement and migration facilitated forced labor and tribute requirements, and made religious conversion and training possible and more effective. In addition to evidence suggesting colonials restricted trade relations between the Mayas of Ek Balam and coastal communities, deFrance and Hanson cite

written policies mandating sedentism among the Mayas of Yucatán in order to facilitate religious instruction (302, 312). Moving from one town to another required the explicit permission of the Spanish colonial town council. Traditional Maya movement and practices were further limited through a later order that their bows and arrows be burned to prevent their migration and travel away from the town centers (302).

One final example of meta-power merits mention here, as it relates to both the construction of social systems and the development of religious and educational systems and institutions, the final area of meta-power that I evaluate in the present chapter. The practice of *congregación*, forced resettlement into administrative units, demonstrates meta-power in the social context more than any other action by Spanish colonials in the early period of conquest and colonization in Yucatán. The experience of the Cakchiquels of Guatemala is quite similar to that of the Mayas of Yucatán, particularly with regard to resettlement and the non-Maya structuring of society and social systems among the Mayas (Hill). With a dwindling population in the Cakchiquel area of Guatemala, *parcialidades* were artificially united in towns by the clergy, without regard for past relations and histories. The *parcialidades* served administrative functions, and were yet another instance of defining situations by one for another, to the detriment of the Cakchiquel-Mayas. In the Cakchiquel town of Sacapulas, Franciscans, then Dominicans, united two *amaq'* groups (units of the *chinamitales*) with three *chinamitales* (territorial unites with aristocratic head and functions) each. Conflict ensued between two *amaq'* when placed together under *congregación*. Ultimately, Dominicans acted as intermediaries for conflict resolution and the development of a 6-point contract between the two Maya groups. This illustrates the resulting conflicts from the Spanish reorganization of Cakchiquel settlements. However, as the Dominicans and Spanish *audiencia* had to intervene to resolve the subsequent conflict, this reinforced the conviction on the part of the colonists that the Cakchiquels needed assistance, direction, and oversight. These

ideas justified past Spanish actions and rationalized the continued execution of resettlement and *congregación*.

Prior to conquest, a majority of Mayas in Yucatán lived along trade routes near the coast. However, most of these populations were decimated by disease and other results of the conquest, leading to a higher concentration of Mayas in the interior (Patch, *Maya* 23). During resettlement in Yucatán, 400 villages were reduced to 170 towns, and later to 23 (Farriss, *Maya* 207). *Parcialidades* were distinct municipal units that resulted from forced re-settlement of diverse—and sometimes conflicting—villages into a single town. Patch comments on the case of Calkiní, where six *parcialidades* resulted from the forced resettlement of nine villages (Patch, *Maya* 50). In some cases, during resettlement, friars in Yucatán even destroyed gardens, orchards, and homes to prevent Maya re-settlement (Farriss, *Maya* 162).

Franciscans found it difficult to evangelize in remote, rural, rugged terrain, and requested that the Crown permit them to centralize ‘Indian’ settlements for ease of conversion and religious instruction (Ricard 136). Franciscans and Dominicans both made specific requests of Charles V. Even at the time, some colonists criticized the clergy’s use of Maya labor to construct lavish monasteries and amass resources to serve the order. Between 1523 and 1538, Charles V provided written support of Franciscan *congregación* in Yucatán, a practice that included attempts to re-organize and control every aspect of indigenous life. Ricard notes that the control of Maya society through *congregación* was more than simply a theoretical premise. He suggests that

These villages were entirely in the hands of the religious, even their temporal affairs. They administered justice, decided questions of succession, distributed the goods of the dead among the various heirs, and took care of widows and orphans. The missionaries thus became true political authorities (139).

Ultimately, re-settled Maya towns and villages were kept in relative isolation from Spanish colonial towns and other Mayas settlements, remaining principally under the direction of the Franciscans (153-4).

The construction and development of convents, villages, and towns by the religious orders provides one of the clearest examples of meta-power during colony. Typically, re-settlement of numerous villages into a single, Spanish town included the raising of a cross, laying out a grid of streets and blocks, the construction of a chapel and monastery, the assignment of lots and positions, the organization of utilities and other necessary supplies, and lastly, the construction of houses and other municipal buildings (140). The practice of uprooting and transplanting entire regions and then re-establishing or resettling them in distinctly Spanish towns strikes me as both extreme and ruthless in scope and measure of social, religious, and economic control.

Non-Maya development of religious and educational systems and institutions

As in each of the previous instances, actions by non-Mayas related to the development and imposition of religious and educational systems and institutions exhibit the clear exercise of meta-power, to the detriment of the Mayas of Yucatán. In this area, more than any other, Franciscan clergy exercised power over the Mayas through their institution of Spanish religious systems and practices. As in all other cases of interaction, interactions between the Mayas of Yucatán and Franciscan clergy were based on assumptions, beliefs, representations, symbols, and the meanings held by both groups. Over time, though, Franciscan actions demonstrated power to a greater degree than those of the Mayas. Franciscans structured the very systems of religious and social interaction between Mayas and non-Mayas, even shaping interactions within Maya communities themselves.

Eight permanent Franciscans arrived in 1545 from Mexico and Guatemala, six or seven more came to Yucatán in 1549, as many as fifteen more arrived in 1553, and

ten additional Franciscans came to Yucatán in 1561. By 1562, the infamous year of Landa's discoveries and the beginning of his inquisition, eight monasteries operated in the peninsula (Clendinnen, "Disciplining" 32-3). By the 1650s, there were 110 Franciscans in Yucatán (Israel 48). In Yucatán, religious institutions came to be organized into religious parishes, *doctrinas*, and secular parishes, *curatos*. *Cabeceras*, or head towns, served as the primary bases of operations and residences of the curate, the *doctrinero*. *Visitas* were the towns that the friars visited (or, literally, visits to the towns), under the purview of the *doctrinas* and *curatos*, but which did not have a permanent clerical presence in them.

Oswaldo Pardo has examined legal changes between the mid-sixteenth century and the start of the seventeenth, emphasizing specifically the tension between secular and religious authorities throughout 'New Spain'. For Pardo, demeaning punishments (such as cutting off the hair as punishment) and their prohibition exemplify shifting legal power structures during the early colonial period (82). (After 1568, however, reports from Central Mexico indicated that whippings and shavings had become to the Nahuatl a badge of honor or courage, and did not have the earlier, intended effects of humiliation and penance [83]. In this way, indigenous communities began to transform symbols of oppression and humiliation into symbols of their own making, altering the relations of power imposed by the Spanish). More to the point, I suggest that the ongoing struggles between secular and religious ecclesiastical authorities in Yucatán (and also the struggles between church and state authorities) represent contests over power, contests over which non-Maya group would successfully exercise meta-power in their interactions with Maya communities and elites. Legal challenges to church authority were not uncommon, even as ecclesiastical authorities undermined state influence and control of resources in Yucatán through their own access to Maya labor, tribute, and other resources. A 1560 decree, for example, banned religious orders from acting as legal or judicial authorities, yet practices by the religious more often than not diverged from the written law (86).

Friars and secular clergy attempted to regulate social customs that had little or nothing to do with religious belief or practice, out of fear that attachment to a particular custom or tradition could lead to 'idolatry', a return to traditional religious practices, or revolt (104). For many of the religious orders, legal jurisdiction and social reform were natural extensions of their evangelization of indigenous communities (79). Even in situations where legal jurisdiction fell to the government, friars sought to mediate in place of lawyers and the formal judicial systems in Yucatán and throughout New Spain. This approach took the form of paternalism, with friars 'reprimanding' their charges in an attempt to reform their behavior (80). In Yucatán, this direct challenge to civil authority led to greater control of both religious and civic interactions by the Franciscans, as well as diminished influence by the regional government in the early colonial period.

The Franciscans of Yucatán exercised unusual and unrestrained political power for much of the colonial period, but especially in the formative years of early colonization (Clendinnen, "Reading" 328). In the early years of missionary work in the peninsula, Franciscans trained sons of Maya elites before returning them to their communities to teach others. Religious instruction occurred daily, with prayers, recitation, and doctrinal instruction, until the friars judged the children ready to return to their daily routines and to instruct their parents in the Christian faith. Clergy required all adults to attend mass on Sundays and feast days, among other obligations (Chamberlain 319-20). Later, Franciscan interaction with Mayas took more aggressive, and at times violent, turns. Religious orders often maintained jails and stocks or shackles in monasteries throughout New Spain, and Yucatán was no exception to this practice (Pardo 81). Franciscans, for their part, argued for even harsher punishments, particularly for Maya priests, primarily because of their ongoing discovery of 'idolatry' among the Mayas of Yucatán (Caso Barrera 158). During Landa's inquisition, tortures included hanging by the wrists, sometimes with weights on the feet, flogging, and burning wax thrown on the skin (Clendinnen, "Reading" 329).

Caso Barrera has identified communication between the Crown and the government of Yucatán in which the Crown voiced support for the position of Governor Carlos de Luna y Arrellano against the Bishop and Franciscans, particularly with regard to mistreatment of Maya communities of Yucatán, the use of stocks for punishment, and prisons maintained and operated by the religious (156). In practice, the Franciscans of Yucatán had assumed authority over judicial and legal matters far beyond the scope of their religious practice. Accordingly, Luna y Arrellano noted that fleeing communities and relocation resulted from the abuses of the religious in the peninsula, not, as the Franciscans maintained, as a result of their idolatrous practices (157). Throughout the ongoing conflict between the Governor and the religious authorities, Franciscans felt that Luna y Arrellano's challenge to their authority undermined their work with the Mayas, in that the Mayas became more likely to disregard the instructions and demands of the religious as a result of the conflict (160). The fact that an official order had to be given to permit indigenous families and individuals to relocate (against the will of the Franciscans) speaks to the ability of the religious to structure and control nearly every aspect of social interaction in Yucatán, beginning in the early colonial period.

From the start, Franciscans in Yucatán, like the Spanish explorers and conquerors before them, sought to leverage their access to Maya community resources in an extraordinary attempt to fundamentally alter the social and religious behaviors of the Mayas. More than an exertion of force or solely the manipulation of resources, the effort of the Franciscans demonstrates meta-power in the degree to which the clergy sought to change the entire social and religious landscape in Yucatán. Ricard notes that the 'spiritual conquest' involved the destruction of sacred spaces, writing, and books, as well as other religious and cultural objects, in order to solidify Christian practice and Spanish tradition among the Mayas. Clergy appropriated sacred spaces, temples, and mounts in a demonstration of spiritual and material conquest. This suggests contempt for prior practices, beliefs, and religious concepts, as well as the assertion of non-Maya religious superiority.

After the establishment of Spanish religious practices in the peninsula, Mayas experienced further attacks on their traditional religious and social rituals by clergy and colonists alike. Tomás López Medel, member of the Guatemala *Audiencia* and representative of the Crown, for example, restricted traditional religious and social ritual among the Mayas and other groups. He oversaw the implementation of rigid and clearly defined religious, sexual, and social rules, directing marriage and family organization, emphasizing resettlement and urbanization, and requiring so-called 'cultured' behaviors (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 57-8). These were all interactions based on symbols and religious notions, and, as Ricard notes, "the spiritual conquest completed and reinforced the military occupation" (163). Ricard also notes that "The development of the Mexican mission, which may be likened to a military conquest and occupation, is also like it in the case with which the religious destroyed all strongholds of native paganism and installed themselves in them afterward" (78).

Nancy Farriss argues that the 'spiritual conquest' led in Yucatán by Franciscans was in many ways more devastating and difficult for many Mayas, due to the social and cultural implications of the changes imposed. By the early 1560s, most of the approximately 500 Maya elites had received baptism ("Sacred" 148-9). Ricard notes, though, the use of 'pre-emptive' baptism, hasty conversions and baptisms carried out or required with or without any understanding or explanation of meaning (84). A letter from Bishop Zumárraga in 1531 claims more than 1 million baptisms by 1524 in all of New Spain, and Pedro de Gante claimed 14,000 baptisms daily in a 1529 letter (91). Structured, formalized religious and civic ritual like mass baptisms demonstrated the (assumed) superiority of Spanish practices while devaluing those of the Maya. Non-Maya religious leaders thus exercised meta-power as they structured rules of interaction and religious systems, and then proceeded to base interactions on those systems.

Throughout their development of religious practices and institutions in Yucatán, Franciscans systematically excluded Mayas from the priesthood and meaningful spiritual leadership in the church hierarchy (Farriss, "Sacred" 156).

Spiritual practice was, in fact, an exercise of power vis-à-vis the use and control of resources and the ability to define and structure reality, all actions that the friars jealously guarded. Farriss articulates the conflict that resulted from this exercise of power when she writes that "...access to the sacred domain...lay at the heart of the conflict between Maya elite and the Spanish clergy. That the struggle was as much over who would control that access as over how that access would be gained – that is, whether through Christian or Maya ritual – can be seen even more clearly in later idolatry cases, as Christian ritual became an increasingly stronger component in the syncretic mix" ("Sacred" 156). In cases of 'unauthorized' mass, for instance, Farriss notes the scant inclusion of any Maya religious representations, yet the friars were outraged and prohibited further occurrences. Farriss identifies the Franciscans' underlying emphasis on power or control of resources, rather than issues of 'paganism' or indigenous religious practice. If these early religious interactions are understood as interactions of power (i.e., contests over resources and the ability to define situations), then Maya resistance to religious domination does not merely represent resistance to Spanish religious forms, but also attempts to maintain legitimacy and hierarchical position within Maya communities.

Another clear instance of meta-power, Franciscan education in Yucatán was an exercise in cultural destruction and the slow erasure of Maya-defined patterns of record-keeping and regional history. Franciscan friars used education to instruct the Mayas in Spanish norms and behavior, and for religious indoctrination. Ricard, who writes favorably of the Franciscan enterprise in Yucatán, notes that "...teaching could not be separated from indoctrination. Consequently, the Christian doctrine and reading and writing went side by side" (207). Franciscan education in Yucatán was synonymous with religious indoctrination and forced cultural assimilation, and as such, provides a clear example of meta-power, or the definition of systems and structures within which subsequent interaction took place.

The Omnimoda Bull of May 9, 1522 and its confirmation in Exponi Nobis Bull of March 24, 1567 granted Franciscans and other religious orders the right to oversee

the religious and social education of Mayas and other indigenous groups. Specifically, the Bulls acknowledged the freedom of religious orders to evangelize and administer sacraments without the explicit permission of the bishops (Ricard 109-10). Franciscans directed their religious instruction largely toward children, providing daily lessons and religious instruction for low and high classes alike (98-9). The friars also enlisted young trainees as evangelists to their home communities, likely due in no small way to their often dogmatic, unwavering commitment and belief. These young Maya missionaries were used by the friars as instruments of conversion and religious development in Yucatán.

The *doctrina*, or Franciscan school, provided a means of evangelization and daily religious training. Traveling Franciscans would conduct *visitas* to perform religious functions periodically in smaller towns and settlements. In the end, Spanish ecclesiastical meanings and symbols translated directly into action and the training of Mayas in 'proper' ways of thinking, acting, and behaving. Furthermore, Franciscan clergy facilitated the economic and political subjugation of the Mayas, as well. deFrance and Hanson argue that Franciscans and colonists collaborated to extract resources and other benefits from Maya communities, despite their underlying conflicts and struggles for resource control. Eventually, Franciscans and colonists alike transformed Maya communities "...into Spanish municipalities (municipios) that consisted of individual nuclear households, which constituted both the core of a "primitive" capitalist economy and the nucleus for Christian conversion" (deFrance and Hanson 302). Religious conversion and economic exploitation, equal representations of interactive power, developed jointly in Yucatán.

Initially in Yucatán, Franciscan friars acted as intermediaries between Spanish colonists and the Mayas, helping to reduce their labor and tribute burden and acting in their defense (Clendinnen, "Disciplining" 33). As long as their program of conversion and protection advanced in a manner deemed 'satisfactory' by the Franciscans, there was no need to resort to physical violence or other coercive methods. As soon as it became evident that their program of conversion and

transformation had not achieved its desired effect, however, the Franciscans of Yucatán turned on the Mayas, resorting to physical violence, torture, psychological warfare, and murder. Beginning first with the *garrucha*, or hoist, and continuing with floggings and splashing hot wax, the Franciscans demonstrated a cruelty toward the Mayas of Yucatán that surpassed even the abusive interactions between the Mayas and Spanish colonists.

Franciscans sometimes mediated on behalf of the Mayas, as in the case of a suspected attack by the Xiu, in which Fray Villalpando saved 26 nobles from ritual deaths. Baptisms and 'conversions' followed, as well as lasting pacification, or at least the absence of violent revolt (54). At the same time, Clendinnen argues that the early defense of the Mayas by the Franciscan Order may have contributed to the Franciscans' later justification and pursuit of ruthless conversion and confession policies (112-3). Later, Franciscans forced Mayas to attend religious services and to perform catechism, keeping track of church attendance at Sunday and feast day catechism. Possible sanctions or punishments for non-compliance often included beatings or imprisonments, and bare lashings were commonly used by 1570 as punishment for skipping mass (Ricard 96-7). Children of elites were compelled to receive baptism and learn the Euro-Christian worldview and teachings, rejecting traditional ways in general, as well as particular beliefs and regional practices (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 47).

No other individual or series of events better illustrates meta-power than Fray Diego de Landa and his inquisition in Yucatán that culminated in his murderous campaign of 1562.¹⁴ Landa was named custodian of the Franciscan Order after

¹⁴ For a concise overview of Landa's early missionary work and subsequent institution of the Inquisition in Yucatán, as well as a discussion of the authenticity of Landa's *Relación*, see Restall, Matthew, and John F. Chuchiak IV, "A Reevaluation of the Authenticity of Fray Diego De Landa's *Relación De Las Cosas De Yucatán*," *Ethnohistory* 49.3 (2002): 651-69 [652-653]. In the end, Restall concludes that "The manuscript of the *Relación* that is the source for all editions and readings of it is an arbitrary collection by three or four compilers, probably made at different times but all after Landa's death, of excerpts from what may have been either a larger multivolume work of Landa's (possibly already "typeset" for publication) or a collection of writings by Landa that did not comprise

Francisco de Navarro. Once he obtained that position, Landa consolidated control, particularly with the public legal battle against conquistador Francisco Hernández. Clendinnen writes of “the exclusivist zeal which both fuelled Landa’s curiosity, and empowered him to abrogate it so decisively” (*Ambivalent* 70). From his early years as a missionary in Yucatán documenting and participating in Maya familial, social, and religious life, Landa dramatically altered his stance toward the Mayas in later years.

After early successes in forced conversions, baptism, and resettlement, the Franciscans discovered entrenched religious practices pre-dating Spanish arrival. In 1562, casual questioning turned into more brutal and tortuous inquiry in the friars’ attempt to root out and quash idolatry in the peninsula. Franciscans burned Maya texts, and the activities continued to Sotuta, Hocaba, and Homun, interrogating and torturing Maya commoners and elites alike. Ecclesiastical abuses mounted, and settlers feared loss of tribute as a result of mass detentions and the tortured state of released Maya, who were in many cases unable to work their fields. Of the colonists’ response to Landa’s inquisition, Clendinnen notes that “For lay Spaniards, who had not so painfully mixed their labour in the missionary enterprise, the persistence of Indians in idolatry was to be expected; it was the friars’ reaction to it which was reprehensible, excessive, and dangerous” (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 98). Landa led the charge, despite the fact that the friars’ indiscriminate use of violence actually violated the legal ‘safeguards’ in place at the time. Landa set proceedings under church autonomy, effectively threatening dissidents with excommunication, and continued the “mass arrest and savage unselective torture” in nearby provinces (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 76, 84).

Despite his earlier affirmation to the Crown of the right of the religious to use physical punishment against indigenous believers, Fray Francisco de Toral

anything we might grant the integrity of a book (the very definition of a recopilación)” (Reevaluation 663).

...came quickly to repudiate what his brothers had done in Yucatán. Judging the Indian 'confessions' to blasphemous idolatries and to human sacrifice to be the pitiable inventions of tormented and desperate men, he decided the Indians to have been guilty of no more than the continuation of some of their old idolatries, as to be expected in a people so new to the faith (Clendinnen, "Disciplining" 35).

Nevertheless, the actions by Landa and the Franciscans in Yucatán were sustained, defended, and perpetuated over a period of four months, not a fleeting aberration or temporary lapse of collective judgment. The author of these actions, fray Diego de Landa, was held responsible by Bishop Francisco Toral, but not until significant damage had already occurred. Bishop Toral, who served as Bishop of Yucatán from 1560-71, tempered the Inquisition and brought some degree of respite to the persecuted Mayas. Toral prohibited the use of torture by the Franciscan Order, and a power struggle between Toral and Landa quickly ensued. Initially, Toral focused on the dubious legal grounds of Landa's inquisition and the order's poor record-keeping. He found that incriminating testimony had been fabricated under duress, including colluded reports of human sacrifices, in order to avoid torture. Despite some measure of moderation and Toral's rebuke of Landa, Landa's absence to Spain led to his followers' supposed petitions for his return, as well as fabricated letters of praise from Maya leaders (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 101-2). The Council of the Indies was prepared to punish Landa, but he convinced them of the supposed human sacrifice and other idolatry confessed to under torture.

During Landa's absence, Bishop Toral systematically removed the Franciscans from positions of authority with regard to questions of 'idolatry', as a direct result of Landa's inquisition of the Mayas. Toral's alliances with the secular clergy and the Provincial Governor led to deteriorating relations between the secular authorities and the Franciscans, something that Landa would not forget in his position as Bishop of Yucatán (Chuckiak, "*in Servitio*" 614-8). A number of internal conflicts led to Toral's resignation and Landa's appointment as Bishop of Yucatán (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 105-8). In the interim period between Toral and Landa, Franciscans

acquired a number of important judicial positions and began to escalate the ongoing investigation of 'idolatry' (Chuchiak, "In Servitio" 620).

The Mayas exploited tensions between the Franciscans and the state, in attempts to mitigate their abuse at the hands of Landa and the Franciscan friars. Appeals to the Franciscans protected the Mayas from economic subordination and exploitation by the Spanish colonials, while complaints to civil authorities curtailed some of the Franciscan abuses and religious persecution. By the time of Toral's death in 1571, Mayas began to lodge formal complaints, using the legal system to protest injustices. The precedent of ecclesiastical domination had already been established, though, and much physical, psychological, and cultural damage had already occurred. After the height of Landa's inquisition and tortures, the Mayas resorted to minimizing further loss through the imposed colonial legal system. Landa returned as bishop of Yucatán in October 1573. He promptly returned to the task of isolating detractors and any opposed to the Franciscan mission in Yucatán, excommunicating the provincial governor, Francisco Velázquez de Gijón after his civil suit against two Franciscans. The friars had alleged abuse on the part of the Governor, and Landa responded in full support of the religious order (612). After Velázquez's rebuke from the Crown and removal from office in 1578, Landa continued to struggle against the new governor, Don Guillen de las Casas (635).

Chuchiak notes that Landa returned to Yucatán, not beaten and broken by his earlier experiences, but emboldened and more influential than before. Chuchiak suggests that Landa prosecuted more Mayas for idolatry after his return as Bishop than throughout his *auto-de-fe* in 1562 (620). Chuchiak disagrees with Clendinnen's assessment of Franciscan training at San Gabriel and the degree to which their training influenced their actions. Chuchiak argues that Landa's programs against the Maya and his stature among the Franciscans shaped their approach more profoundly than their earlier training or ideological presuppositions. Ironically, though, the obstinate manner in which Landa proceeded actually created a political atmosphere that allowed the Mayas to continue their traditional religious practices after Landa's

death. "In the end, politics and the jurisdictional disputes initially caused by Landa did little to end Maya idolatry. Instead, Landa's efforts actually helped preserve traditional Maya religious practices that have persisted to the present day" (645). Landa oversaw the creation and institutionalization of the *Provisorato de Indios*, a religious court charged with oversight of Maya idolatry in Yucatán. After his return as Bishop, Landa oversaw continued interrogations, imprisonments, and abuses of Maya commoners and elites, much as he had in 1562. Lashings, public humiliation, imprisonment by Franciscans, and other draconian measures were used throughout 1574 against the Mayas of Yucatán, under the watchful eye of Diego de Landa. The Franciscans routinely exceeded their ecclesiastical limits in the prosecution and punishing of the Mayas, through the excessive use of force and extreme measures of punishment. The Crown and *Audiencia* rebuked Landa for overstepping ecclesiastical procedures and legal boundaries in his investigations (624-6, 636).

The actions of Landa, including both the inquisition of 1562 and his return to Yucatán as Bishop, demonstrate meta-power through his construction and maintenance of the very systems of social interaction, based on his religious framework and symbols or meaning. Landa, in his *Relación*, interprets or locates meaning in the events of the inquiry of 1562 as a problem of authority (Clendinnen, *Ambivalent* 116-18). Based on that interpretation, his actions served to 'instruct' and force the Mayas into submission to 'true' authority, the authority of Landa and the Franciscan Order as representatives of the larger church. A number of symbolic representations and meanings informed Landa's actions toward the Mayas of Yucatán, all of which contributed to his exercise of meta-power and the structuring of religious, social, and cultural systems within which interactions between Mayas and non-Mayas took place. In the first place, Landa exhibited an unshakable and unrelenting conviction in his version of truth, whether or not that external conviction masked his own internal conflicts or doubts. In the second place, Landa displayed a conviction that his earlier, 'gentler' efforts at conversion (and learning Maya languages, customs, and traditions) had led to his deception by Maya leaders.

Finally, Landa became convinced that deception by the Mayas regarding their ongoing religious practices was deeply entrenched and far-reaching. Each of these informed Landa's actions and his use of meta-power to structure social and religious contexts for the Mayas throughout his tenure as friar, then as Bishop, and even after his death, through his lasting legacy in the Franciscan Order of Yucatán.

Conclusions: Interactional Power in Colonial Yucatán and Beyond

Spaniards believed themselves racially and culturally superior to subject peoples such as the Mayas, who could be turned into collaborators of colonial oppression if they could only be convinced of that fact; in the past, scholars tended to believe either in Spanish superiority or in the indigenous people's acceptance of their own inferiority. It is now clear that neither was true... (Restall, *Maya World* 1).

As Restall notes in his introduction to *Maya World*, early researchers of the colonial and post-colonial period in Yucatán did not adequately analyze the variety of experiences in the peninsula, focusing instead on uni-dimensional characterizations and a predominantly descriptive ethnographic approach, followed in later decades by research that largely echoed the Eurocentric narrative evident in colonial literature. Only recent scholarship in the last twenty to thirty years has called this into question, deconstructing the traditional, often implicit paradigm of Spanish superiority and Maya inferiority (5-10). Works by Grant Jones, Matthew Restall, Paul Eiss, and others have challenged the monolithic narrative of colonial Yucatán, through the re-introduction of Maya voices in colonial literature and intentional efforts to expand analysis of colonial and post-colonial interactions throughout the peninsula. Jones' text on Maya resistance to Spanish colonial rule, for

instance, reassesses the nature of interactions between Maya communities and Spanish colonists, pushing his analysis in *Maya Resistance* toward a more comprehensive framework for understanding colonial structures, oppression or domination, and subsequent resistance to subjugation. These challenges to a “uniform vision” have re-shaped research on colonial Yucatán, replacing earlier perspectives with a more nuanced and comprehensive notion of colonial interactions (Restall, *Maya Conquistador* xiii).

In this context of paradigmatic change in research on colonial Yucatán and the relationships between Mayas and non-Mayas, the pragmatic approach of symbolic interactionism provides a fitting framework for the deconstruction of old conceptions and the reconstitution of new historical and sociological narratives. The ‘bottom-up’ approach of interactionism allows for reinterpretation and analysis of interactions at the individual level, but does not limit analysis solely to person-to-person interactions. On the contrary, interactionism describes all types of interaction, from the construction and negotiation of meaning and symbols to individual and joint action, and ultimately, the construction of systems and institutions that simultaneously impact meaning, action, and so on. The strength of an interactionist framework in colonial Yucatán also has much to do with the organic, contextualized selection of methods and tools of research to match the very interactions themselves. That is, interactionism is not formulaic and rigid, but flexible enough to be applied in a variety of contexts in ever-changing ways. . Interactionist frameworks are not deterministic, thereby avoiding the pitfalls of *a priori* statements regarding the universality of human nature and the nature of human behavior and interaction. Interactionist theorists have intentionally preserved the nimble character of interactionist methods, adapting and conforming various interactionist frameworks to the context studied, not the other way around.

For these reasons, pragmatic interactionism provides a meaningful framework for approaching colonial Yucatán. Using an interactionist framework in colonial Yucatán, for instance, requires analysis of shifting definitions and understanding of

meaning, as meaning is constantly in flux, reconstituted and changing with each individual and joint action. This notion challenges static definitions of power and a singular definition of interaction that describes the oppression of one group by another with only notable exceptions to the otherwise clearly established pattern. The interactionist framework that I describe in chapter one reflects the inherent complexity of human interaction, and does not reduce historical interactions to stereotyped characterizations or simplistic formulas. On the contrary, interactionism, when used as the framework of analysis in colonial Yucatán, provides a rich and nuanced perspective that captures fluctuations of power, reflecting the fluid nature of interactions between Mayas, non-Mayas and all participants in colonial society.

In chapter one, I identified interactionist terminology, philosophical background, historical development, and theoretical underpinnings of pragmatism as a means of understanding individual or joint human interaction, as well as the construction, maintenance, or de-construction of social systems or structures that transcend individuals and joint action. Interactionist frameworks, I suggest, are subjective, contextualized, and adaptive. A holistic approaches such as these, both flexible and comprehensive, provide the researcher with a robust method of inquiry, one within which I develop a model of interactional power.

In sociology, generally, and symbolic interactionism, specifically, a working interactional definition of power is, at best, incomplete. In chapter two, I presented a working model of power that is both a process and a construction of interactions themselves. Just as the interactions between individuals and groups are constantly shifting, so, too, are relations of power, thus defined. In my definition of power, I intentionally avoid a description of power as a latent capacity or unrealized potential, as is often the case in the literature on power, as much in sociology as in other related disciplines. True to the interactionist model I outline in chapter one, my definition of power addresses each of the levels of action and interaction, from the construction of meaning and use of symbols through the development of systems and structures and every stage in between.

Power should not be understood as latent capacity, but as action and interaction themselves. Interactional or transactional power is relational, embedded in a particular cultural and historical context, wherein the observable outcomes and effects of interaction become the very measure and definition of power. Interactional power thus shifts from a theoretical possibility of power differentials to the lived experiences of inequality, which I define as the fluid exercise of power. Power emerges through interaction; it is not a determining factor that guides interaction between individuals and groups.

Power as a *process* situates it within social interactions, grounding it in lived experiences and removing it from an esoteric or purely theoretical realm. Power as the control or manipulation of resources links it to individual and joint action; according to this definition, it is the *act itself* that constitutes power, seen always within and through social matrices and actions that privilege one individual or group over and above another or in some way involve social prioritization and hierarchical structuring. Power as negotiation speaks to the fluctuations inherent in social interaction, but also to individual agency and the ability of an individual or group to alter power relations through direct action and reaction. This supports a more nuanced understanding of interactions in colonial Yucatán, because power and its myriad expressions are not fixed, immovable, or unchanging. The interactionist model of power thus emerges from interactions themselves, mirroring the intricacies and fluctuations of social relations and demonstrating the ever-changing nature of social systems. Finally, power as legal and social rule-setting or the definition of situations reflects a systems-level focus and actions that transcend the individual or person-to-person interactions.

Transactional and grounded in the social context, my interactionist framework of power provides a cohesive model of power that I then utilize in subsequent chapters on colonial Yucatán. I argue that non-Mayas in Yucatán have not historically acted toward (or interacted with) Mayas on the basis of their 'latent power' or from a 'position of power.' On the contrary, through interaction based on

specific symbolic representation, non-Mayas in Yucatán traditionally acted in ways that demonstrated or exhibited power; various political, military, and religious actions simultaneously benefitted non-Mayas while disenfranchising Maya individuals and communities throughout the peninsula. Negotiations throughout the colonial period in Yucatán demonstrated power, often to the detriment of Maya communities. In many cases, Maya groups sought to leverage legal resources against claimants to land, labor, or other resources, but non-Maya colonists often demonstrated power to a greater degree, benefitting disproportionately from these exchanges and legal disputes. Likewise, colonial discourse, modeled largely on European forms, generally favored non-Maya colonists. In this fluid interactional exchange, non-Mayas have not always, at all times, exercised power to a greater extent than Mayas. However, colonial and post-colonial social outcomes among indigenous Maya communities demonstrate the extent to which non-Mayas have more successfully exercised power, from their resource access and control to their defining of social, political, and religious systems for Mayas and non-Mayas alike.

In the context of colonial Yucatán, the framework I utilize here should prove useful for further research that either broadens or deepens my preliminary investigation of interactional power among Mayas and non-Mayas in Yucatán. Perhaps as importantly, the interactionist framework of power that I have used to examine the colonial period in the Yucatán peninsula lends itself to wider application in Latin American cultural and social studies, historical research, and contemporary sociological study. As Charon indicates, symbolic interactionism has informed and transformed sociology, with its quiet challenge to traditional sociological methods and conceptions of society. A comprehensive interactionist model of power likewise has potential to alter sociological and cultural conceptions of power and the ways in which power is understood in the social context. Broadly speaking, the model of power I develop in chapter two may have wider applications that include sociological and cultural studies of Latin America, but extend beyond this particular area of research, as well.

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