helplessly, “Blueberry, that’s my nickname!” Our uneasiness was not stirred as we proceeded the rest of that afternoon to make a series of grammatical corrections only to find that every one had mysteriously been anticipated, including the final entry, “God”!

As we slowly began to impose some order on the botanical material, I became obsessed with doubts about the value of my collection. I was well aware that a project which had brought together 3000 specimens, 22 informants not always sober, and countless thousands of names would demonstrate inconsistencies. So, for reassurance, I turned to the results of our mushroom picking—a mere 200 specimens, four informants, and 100 names. I paired the Tzotzil generic names with their Latin generic determinations to produce the simplified chart (Figure 1).

One wishes, of course, to have not merely generic but specific Latin identifications, but the mycologist protested that this was impossible as I had not provided him with a thorough comparative description of the specimens’ flavors. I had, in fact, asked my wife, who loves raw mushrooms, to taste the specimens and record their flavors. I learned the limits of her loyalty.

Figure 2 shows how even the mushroom specimens considered edible by the Zinacantecos are linked by their Linnaean identifications in a complex way. For instance, eahal čikin is a mushroom of the genus Lactarius. Mana yok belongs to Lactarius, but also to Cantharelles, Clitocybe, and Cyllybia. It also belongs to Cortinarius, Mycena, and Tricholoma, but not to Lactarius, Cantharelles or Clitocybe! At least, after having implicitly trusted my informants and feasted on many a leftover mushroom I was relieved to learn that not a single deadly specimen had found its way into this category.

Mushrooms are of minor importance in the diet, but no plant is more central to Zinacantec culture than corn. Everyone grows corn, everyone talks about corn, everyone depends upon corn for his survival. My collaborators from Zinacantán Center collected twenty ears of corn (ʔisi)n which they claimed were different from each other and which they called by different names. When I was still in Chiapas I strung the ears up across the room and brought in five men, each from a different hamlet. I asked them to name the corn. They could handle the ears, chip off kernels, and so forth. If each informant had assigned a different name to each ear there would be 100 names. Here are the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race of maize</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dzit-Bacal</td>
<td>lac ʔisım</td>
<td>k'oš nakapul ʔ</td>
<td>bik'it nakapul ʔ</td>
<td>lac ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil nakapul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dzit-Bacal</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>muk'ata nakapul ʔ</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil nakapul ʔisım</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dzit-Bacal Mixed with Negro</td>
<td>pinto ʔisım</td>
<td>pinto ʔisım</td>
<td>pinto ʔisım</td>
<td>pinto ʔisım</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbricado</td>
<td>masanil ʔisım</td>
<td>muk'ta sakramental ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>ye ʔiš ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imbricado Mixed</td>
<td>eahal ʔisım</td>
<td>eahal ʔisım</td>
<td>eahal ʔisım</td>
<td>eahal ʔisım</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nal-Tel Blanco Tierra Alta</td>
<td>k'oš sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>sikilal ʔosil ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nal-Tel Mixed with Negro</td>
<td>pinto ʔisım</td>
<td>muk'ta pinto ʔisım</td>
<td>pinto ʔisım</td>
<td>pinto ʔisım</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nal-Tel Mixed with Negro</td>
<td>k'oš masanil ʔisım</td>
<td>bik'it sakramental ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>k'ob'et ʔiš ʔisım</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nal-Tel Mixed with Oloton</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>sikilal ʔosil ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olotillo</td>
<td>k'oš ʔisım</td>
<td>sikilal ʔosil ʔisım</td>
<td>tikal ʔiš ʔisım</td>
<td>tikal ʔisım</td>
<td>tikal ʔiš ʔisım</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olotillo</td>
<td>k'oš nakapul ʔ</td>
<td>bik'it nakapul ʔ</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔiš ʔisım</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olotillo Mixed with Nal-Tel</td>
<td>lapul ʔ</td>
<td>lapul ʔ</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td>sakil ʔisım</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olotillo Mixed with Salpor</td>
<td>sakil ʔiš</td>
<td>tikal ʔiš</td>
<td>tikal ʔiš</td>
<td>tikal ʔiš</td>
<td>tikal ʔiš</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quicheño Mixed</td>
<td>muk'ta k'anal</td>
<td>sak-väyan sikilal ʔosil ʔisım</td>
<td>sak-väyan k'anal ʔisım</td>
<td>k'anal ʔisım</td>
<td>eahal ʔisım</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quicheño Rojo Mixed</td>
<td>eahal ʔisım</td>
<td>eahal ʔisım</td>
<td>eahal ʔisım</td>
<td>eahal ʔisım</td>
<td>eahal ʔisım</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quicheño Amarillo Mixed</td>
<td>k'anal ʔisım</td>
<td>k'anal ʔiš</td>
<td>k'anal ʔiš</td>
<td>k'anal ʔiš</td>
<td>k'anal ʔiš</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quicheño Modified by Tecuite</td>
<td>k'anal ʔisım</td>
<td>muk'ta k'anal ʔisım</td>
<td>muk'ta k'anal ʔisım</td>
<td>muk'ta k'anal ʔisım</td>
<td>muk'ta k'anal ʔisım</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Marceño Mixed</td>
<td>muk'ta k'on</td>
<td>k'anal masanil ʔisım</td>
<td>k'anal masanil ʔisım</td>
<td>k'anal masanil ʔisım</td>
<td>k'anal masanil ʔisım</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Marceño Mixed</td>
<td>k'anal ʔiš</td>
<td>tikal ʔiš</td>
<td>tikal ʔiš</td>
<td>tikal ʔiš</td>
<td>tikal ʔiš</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tzotzil Generic Names**

yat h'ik'al
yat ka?
yisim čih
yo?on tuluk
bililuš
čakat'ob
čečev
štahal čikin
čikin h'ik'al
čikin č'o
či'olol be
č'en šok
skačuča čohver
kusum
k'abiš toh
mana yok
č'iš mana yok
moni?
pila
pišolito
pošil t'ahel
p'oko yok
sak-štah
sak-balon
sat pukuh
sekub t'ul
sekub vakoš
šulub čih
štahčuč
stenal yisim řuč
š'tot'
yasal vinahel
yuy
yuy čauk

**Latin Generic Names**

Agaricus
Agrocybe
Amanita
Armillaria
Auricularia
Boletus
Calvatia
Cantharellus
Clavaria
Clavariadelphus
Clitocybe
Collybia
Conocybe
Coprinus
Cortinarius
Craterellus
Crepidotus
Cysthus
Daldinia
Fomes
Gyroporus
Helvella
Hydnum
Hygrocybe
Hygrophoruses
Inocybe
Laccaria
Lactarius
Leccinum
Lentinus
Leptota
Lycogala
Lycoperdon
Marasmius
Mycena
Naematoloma
Panaeolus
Panus
Pholiota
Phylloporus
Phyllocladus
Pleurotus
Pluteus
Polyporus
Psilocybe
Rhodophyllus
Russula
Schizophyllum
Scleroderma
Stereum
Stropharia
Suillus
Tremetes
Tremella
Tricholoma
Ustulina
Xerocomus
Xylaria

**Figure 1.**—Mushroom or toadstool?

**Figure 2.**—Edible fungi chart illustrating overlap of Tzotzil generic names.

⇔ = span of Latin genera shared by Tzotzil generic names.
For these 20 ears that Dr. Paul Mangelsdorf assigns to 16 races there are 47 different Tzotzil names. Forty-one descriptive terms of such things as shape, color, habitat, season, and size are used to produce a majority of the distinctive names. Despite this extraordinary diversity, which might lead one to believe that these men were thoroughly confused by the array of corn—and they confessed bewilderment at the time—not a single one mistook an ear of highland corn for an ear of lowland corn, while the mistakes in identifying temperate corn that grows in the foothills only confirmed its intermediate quality.

Escaping from my unlettered Tzotzil informants, I sought reassurance from a group of undergraduates and Smithsonian colleagues sharing a literate, bookish culture. I gave them a simple test. The instructions were to look at each of 15 flash cards and write down what they called the thing.

Table 2.—“Bug Test,” based on Teach Me About Insects Flash Cards (“one of a series that trains young minds to think!”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bug</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Luna moth</td>
<td>moth</td>
<td>moth</td>
<td>“type of moth”</td>
<td>fairy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Millipede</td>
<td>millipede</td>
<td>centipede</td>
<td>termite</td>
<td>termite?</td>
<td>wasp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ichneumon fly</td>
<td>wasp</td>
<td>mosquito?</td>
<td>katadil</td>
<td>walking twig</td>
<td>insect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Giant walking stick</td>
<td>stick bug</td>
<td>stick insect</td>
<td>beetle</td>
<td>beetle</td>
<td>beetle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Japanese beetle</td>
<td>Japanese beetle</td>
<td>beetle</td>
<td>bug</td>
<td>bug</td>
<td>cricket?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Green peach aphid</td>
<td>aphids</td>
<td>aphids</td>
<td>“type of insect”</td>
<td>grasshopper</td>
<td>praying mantis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Earwig</td>
<td>Cinchuela</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>bug</td>
<td>bug</td>
<td>grasshopper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Katydid</td>
<td>grasshopper</td>
<td>grasshopper</td>
<td>“type of insect”</td>
<td>“type of insect”</td>
<td>but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Firefly</td>
<td>firefly</td>
<td>firefly</td>
<td>roach</td>
<td>“type of insect”</td>
<td>silverfish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. American cockroach</td>
<td>cockroach</td>
<td>Blattaria americana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Common silver fish</td>
<td>“bug—”</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>bug</td>
<td>“type of insect”</td>
<td>mosquitoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Cotton boll weevil</td>
<td>“bug—”</td>
<td>aphid</td>
<td>termite</td>
<td>termite</td>
<td>wasp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Bald-faced hornet</td>
<td>bee</td>
<td>wasp</td>
<td>wasp</td>
<td>wasp</td>
<td>bee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Monarch butterfly</td>
<td>Monarch butterfly</td>
<td>Monarch butterfly</td>
<td>butterfly</td>
<td>Monarch butterfly</td>
<td>butterfly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Black widow spider</td>
<td>black widow spider</td>
<td>spider</td>
<td>black widow spider</td>
<td>black widow spider</td>
<td>black widow spider</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice the spelling mistakes (italicized)—no problem in Tzotzil. Look at the “fairy” (No. 1E). The most knowledgeable informant correctly identified half of the insects. Following their judgment, I would confidently name No. 8 “grasshopper.” But even Dr. Seuss would be hard put to invent a creature sharing the attributes of aphid, termite, and mosquito (No. 12). Everyone knows the song about the boll weevil, “I’m looking for a home.” Well, he’d find no home in this people’s dictionary!

Agreed that college students don’t know their entomology. How about cars?

Table 3.—“Kandy-colored Tangerine-flake Streamline Baby Test,” based on color photographs selected from dealers’ brochures of current 1967 models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bug</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ford Fairlane Wagon</td>
<td>Chevy II Station</td>
<td>White Chevy Station</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>White station wagon,</td>
<td>Chevrolet Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ford XL 2-Door Hardtop</td>
<td>Ford sports car</td>
<td>Red Thunderbird</td>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>Rambler</td>
<td>Wagon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ford XL Convertible</td>
<td>Ford convertible</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>2-door hardtop</td>
<td>Pontiac convertible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Chevrolet Corvair</td>
<td>Corvair</td>
<td>Chevelle, plum sedan</td>
<td>Mustang?</td>
<td>purple Corvair,</td>
<td>Corvair 4-door sedan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Chevrolet Camaro</td>
<td>Camaro</td>
<td>Ford—blue Mustang</td>
<td>Chevy Super-sport</td>
<td>Ford, Mustang?</td>
<td>2-door hardtop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Chevrolet Malibu</td>
<td>Pontiac</td>
<td>Pontiac convertible,</td>
<td>Pontiac Convertible</td>
<td>Green Cadillac</td>
<td>4-door hardtop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Dodge Dart</td>
<td>Dodge</td>
<td>Brick red sedan</td>
<td>Thunderbird</td>
<td>Buick</td>
<td>2-door hardtop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ford Thunderbird</td>
<td>Thunderbird</td>
<td>Red Chevy sedan</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Thunderbird hardtop</td>
<td>2-door hardtop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Chevrolet Biscayne</td>
<td>Chevrolet station</td>
<td>Chevy blue station</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Blue station wagon,</td>
<td>Station wagon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 seat Wagon</td>
<td>wagon</td>
<td>wagon</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Plymouth</td>
<td>Plymouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Ford Thunderbird</td>
<td>4-Door Thunderbird</td>
<td>Blue Lincoln</td>
<td>Lincoln?</td>
<td>Thunderbird 4-door</td>
<td>Imperial?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The best informant correctly identified eight out of ten, the rest, despite Madison Avenue, only two or three. Look at those names and think of them as potential dictionary entries. Three out of five know that Ford is a Chevy (No. 1) and one knows that Chevy is a Cadillac (No. 6D). Look at the personal distinctions: "2-door hardtop" vs. "4-door hardtop" (informant E), "plum" vs. "brick red" (informant B). Look at the syntax: "White Chevy Station Wagon" (No. 1B); "White station wagon, Rambler" (No. 1D); "A station wagon" (No. 9C). Rubbish! Remember we are searching for truthful identifications, that is, not deceptive ones. Consider the results above in the light of truth, truth as "conformity with fact, agreement with reality, agreement with the thing represented, the actual state of the case" (C. T. Onions [ed.], 1955:2258).

Disappointed in the blatant ignorance of American youth represented above, my research assistant and I puzzled over what domain of knowledge was as rich in vocabulary and as important to American culture as corn to Zinacantec culture. We chose breakfast foods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Apple Jacks</th>
<th>Lucky Charms</th>
<th>Sugar Pops</th>
<th>Wheaties</th>
<th>Froot Loops</th>
<th>Corn Flakes</th>
<th>Tacan Food</th>
<th>Grape Nuts</th>
<th>Rice Chex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Brans Flakes</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Wheat Germ</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Lucky Stars</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Brans Flakes</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Chicken Feed</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Chicken Feed</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Sugared Oat Cereal with marshmallows, Cheerios</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Trix</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Rice Chex</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>Cereal</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Cereal Granules</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>Weirdo Flakes</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Cheerios</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Cereal Krunchies</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.</td>
<td>OK's Floaties</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Cereal Chex</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.</td>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>Shit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Orange O's Candy Alphabet Cereal</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Party Mix</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Corn Flakes</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Fertilizer scented breakfast food</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Apple Jacks</th>
<th>Lucky Charms</th>
<th>Sugar Pops</th>
<th>Wheaties</th>
<th>Froot Loops</th>
<th>Corn Flakes</th>
<th>Tacan Food</th>
<th>Grape Nuts</th>
<th>Rice Chex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K.</td>
<td>Frosty O's</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.</td>
<td>Frosty O's</td>
<td>Alphabits</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.</td>
<td>Frosty O's</td>
<td>Puffa Puffa Rice</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.</td>
<td>Cheerios Alphabets with marshmallows</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.</td>
<td>Frosty O's</td>
<td>Alphabets with marshmallows</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.</td>
<td>Frosty O's</td>
<td>Alphabets with marshmallows</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.</td>
<td>Frosty O's</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.</td>
<td>Frosty O's</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.</td>
<td>Frosty O's</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.</td>
<td>Frosty O's</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.</td>
<td>Trix</td>
<td>Alphabets</td>
<td>Sugar Puffs</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>Candy Wheat Rice</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.</td>
<td>Frosty O's</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>Frosty O's</td>
<td>Sugar Puffs</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 4.—"Flapdoodle (food for fools)" Test
(x = correct answer; - = no answer)
INTRODUCTION

Dishes of cereal were offered for inspection and tasting first to white college students and then to black high school students. In the first test the subjects gained a total score of 36 percent correct, each informant correctly identifying from five out of the eight cereals to no cereals (unless one credits the informant who identified them all as "shit" as an appropriate response). In the second test the number of correct answers rose to 53 percent, ranging also from five out of the eight cereals correctly identified to two cereals out of eight. Comparing the two results it appears that white college students are most familiar with Sugar Pops and Rice Chex while black high school students score best on Cornflakes and Froot Loops, each group scoring very low on the other's favorite breakfast food. One could deduce from the names ascribed that there is a negative corollary between knowledge and inventiveness. The more highly educated were more ignorant yet more inventive and facetious. Similarly there were many fewer students of the first category who left blanks on the answer sheet. One could deduce that the less educated are less compulsive, soberer, and more honest, or perhaps that blacks are less compulsive, soberer, and more honest than whites.

The plethora of names is reminiscent of the Zinacantecos' labeling of corn. The eight kinds of actual cereal are dubbed with 53 names! As with the Zinacantecos, it is difficult to determine which names are authentic and which are merely descriptive. Regardless of race or level of education the number of informants who were duped into believing that Toucan Food was a kind of cereal is disturbing, though I must confess that I later learned that what the pet shop had represented to me as special bird food was in fact dog food! The errors of substance are astonishing—Rice Chex are identified eight times as wheat, five times as rice, and twice as corn. Not only is there a failure to identify the substance properly, but even the form is misconstrued. How could Grape Nuts possibly be described as "flakes" (R7)? The levels of discrimination, too, are thoroughly mixed; cereal, flakes, food, dirt, grain, germ, granules, protein, wheat. If majority is master than we can conclude safely that Cornflakes, Froot Loops, Sugar Pops and Frosty O's are correctly identified. But unlike the Tzotzil names for corn there is one and only one genuine name for the product contained in the box labeled "Apple Jacks" and that name is not "Frosty O's," "Frosti O's," or "Frosted O's" despite the claims of ten of the fourteen black informants. Majority rule does not assure the truth.

As a last resort, I gave a greatly simplified test to ten college professors (anthropologists and linguists)—ten vegetables were handed to them for identification. They scored 58 percent correct, the best informed individual identified nine out of ten, the dullard scored two and a half (with half points for partial identification).

Demoralized by the apparent inability of most Americans to master the most mundane domains of common knowledge, I retreated and restaged one of my techniques that had proved most successful in the field for narrowing the range of meanings. I tossed a doll on the table and asked those present to describe it in one word. They replied, "lying," "crying," "flogged," "sprawled," "raggedy," "prone," "sleeping," "supine," and "dead." I wondered at the success of my efforts in Chiapas. I worried over experiences that were as common to English speakers as to Tzotzil speakers, but which stubbornly evaded labels. I tested the ingenuity of my colleagues by having a boy come in, put his finger in his cheek and pop it. Q: "What was that?" A: "Somebody just stepped in and made a popping noise." Q: "What do you call it?" A: "There's no word for it."

Quite opposite is the problem presented by those in the know. Take for instance hunters' names for ducks. The ruddy duck has nearly one hundred colloquial names including such diverse titles as blatherskite, booby, bumblebee-buzzzer, chunk duck, dopper, dummy duck, fool duck, god-damn, greasy, Johnny Bull, paddywack, sleepy brother, soldier duck, spoon-billed butterball, tough-head, and wiretail (Kortright, 1953:364).

Samuel Johnson has said: "The rigour of interpretative lexicography requires that the explanation, and the word explained should always be reciprocal" (Johnson, 1797:9). I gave a final matching test to five of my literate informants with glosses from Webster's Third New International Dictionary.
Only one word was correctly matched by all informants—
“blue.” One informant correctly paired six out of eight. The
remaining scores were too shameful to reveal. I was tempted
to conclude reluctantly with Dr. Johnson that “most men
think indistinctly, and therefore cannot speak with exact-
ness” (Johnson, 1797:12), but it seems more likely that the
fault lies not in my informants’ lack of native ability, but
rather in their lack of instruction and their unfamiliarity
with literary aspects of the English language.

In the absence of a dictionary, in the absence of recognized
authorities, who is your authority? Is it the majority? Is it the
people? The above array of popular wisdom is disconcerting.

Frank Cancian was able to derive further clarification of
the structure of the Zinancanec religious hierarchy by utilizing
his informants’ errors, but he was sufficiently canny to
choose a domain where error could be readily determined
and measured (Frank Cancian, 1963a). Either a man was
“grand alcalde” in 1956 or he was not. My own attempts to
sort out the rubbish were not marked with such success.

A task allied to the problem of meaning was the proper
sorting out of roots and their classification by types. I had
replied on Terrence Kaufman’s advice from the very start in
establishing grammatical classes. His comparative knowl-
edge of Mayan languages would be especially useful. So we
spent a Christmas season poring over the vocabulary trying
to delineate homonymous roots, and trying to generate a
syntactic system that would take into account the various
assemblages of words under one root. Even after days of
persistent sifting through the mass of material, we had only
reached halfway through the alphabet. What at first had
seemed would be a realistic and simple linguistic ordering
soon became cluttered with innumerable anomalies. The flu
and the mindless variety of linguistic facts drove us to de-
spair. It was left to me to continue to the end, supported by
long distance calls to my mentor for help. I don’t believe it
is false to report that his own confidence was severely tried
as he witnessed even the most basic rules of Tzotzil sound-
change violated not 20 percent of the time, not 40 percent,
but 60 percent!

On this note of disorder ended my second stage of lexicog-
raphy. The caterpillars continued to wiggle on their pins in
the most alarming way. Even so I looked forward to the final
presentation of my collection, secure that despite its inconsis-
tencies it was a considerable achievement.

THIRD STAGE—PRESENTATION

The final stage was inaugurated by a game of jotto which
I was induced to play on a computer terminal to prove to me
that even I could face the new world bravely. It was the first
step into the heart of darkness. A team of keypunchers trans-
ferred the information from the 25,000 typed vocabulary
slips to a computer tape. I rented time on a computer termi-
nal and hired an operator to make corrections. When the
representative from the VIP Company stopped by to look at
her work, he exclaimed, “That’s all garbage!” In retrospect
his reaction was not surprising, for in addition to the bizarre
combination of letters was the insertion of percentage signs,
commercial ats, knot signs, pound signs, a host of code letters
that would eventually indicate such things as capitalization,
italics, and boldface.

The decision to computerize the dictionary was based on
the following grounds: (1) it would permit offset printing at
a much lower cost than type-setting; (2) it would eliminate
proofreading at the galley-proof stage and avoid the intro-
duction of new errors by typesetters; (3) it would permit the
creation of the English-Tzotzil section by automatic means;
and, finally (4), it would store the data in a form that would
be susceptible to manipulation by future scholars who could
pull out whole classes of data for investigation. On the face
of it, the grounds are logical and eminently sensible.

But it must be remembered that computers tolerate no
errors. The “input” must be perfect. My terminal operator
did her best. It was not good enough. Every space in the
80-character line had to be properly filled. If a correction
involved a change in spacing, then not only that line, but
every succeeding line of that entry had to be changed by a
complicated procedure that was itself subject to human error.
Endless proofreading always revealed new errors that had
been overlooked. Once this material was transferred to tape
at considerable expense, we were left with the botanical data
that was still awaiting final determinations. A quick glance
at the plant entries hardly suggests their complexity now
that they have been stripped of all the code characters—charac-
ters which demanded that the keypuncher shift constantly
from upper to lower case and back again. Tzotzil, English,
Latin, abbreviations of botanical authors, specimen num-
bers, informant numbers—so much gibberish. By mispunch-
ing the line number, the line would be inserted at the wrong
end of the dictionary. One 80-character line of input with its
number tells the story eloquently as shown in the box below.
Neither professional keypunchers, Harvard amateurs, nor I
were sufficient to the task. My most experienced keypuncher,
forced to seek confirmation of his insanity to escape the draft,
worked with phenomenal speed and accuracy while thor-
oughly stoned. But even he could take only so many months of
gibberish. Each successive keypuncher compounded the
ersors as she made corrections. One finally rebelled, calling
it “shitwork[,]” berated my programmer for involving her in
such “immoral, antihuman” activity. I learned then how
right she was. Zeno’s principle of infinite progression seemed
truer and truer as I proofread on planes, boats, beds, in buses,