

- (114) /baz'i totil h7ak' -camel ta 7alele/ (O 18)
He is supposed to be one of the most dangerous witches.
- (115) /yu7nox yahvalil ta hmoh, 7oy smarcante/ (P 318)
She's a complete professional (whore); she has her steady customers.
- (116) /tol la 7ep 7ocem yahval/(P 161)
They say she has had many lovers.
- (117) /yahval yahval muc'u sna7 sk'opohel/ (E 193)
Only a few know how to talk.
- (118) /capal xa7ox yahval/ (P 311)
His murderer was already prepared.
- (119) /mu sna7 rason hset' li mole/ (P 261)
That old man is not at all reasonable.
- (120) /mu xa k'u sta ta balamil/ (H 81)
He no longer gets anything (i.e., manages to succeed in anything) on Earth.

(e) /kavron/	cuckold, bastard
/tyavlo/	devil, bastard
/xulem/	buzzard, lazy man

Exegesis: 'These are bad words that would be said of a lazy man, a man who is not respected.'

- (121) /k'u akwenta xatik' aba kavron mol/ (P 215)
Why are you butting in, you old bastard?
- (122) /sme7el tyavlo, mi capoh 7uke/ (P 384)
You old lady devil (or: you devil's mother), will you try to defend her, too? Cf. (18) above.

(f) /h7ilol/	curer, seer
/c'ulel/	soul

Exegesis: 'He has a clever soul; he knows how to cure.'

- (123) /h7ilol 7ox ti vo7ne/ (P 18)
He was going to become a curer.
- (124) /mu7nuk ta ryoxetik ta hk'an 7o kilolal/ (P 212)
I didn't gain my curing ability from petitions to talking saints.
- (125) /te nan xc'ulel hset' li hkobel zeb/ (P 448)
The fucking girl has something of a soul, (i.e., has some sense.)

(126) /vo7one, ihvaycin xa, li7ay me ta hc'ulel/ (P 419)
 As for me, I have already dreamed about it; my
soul was there.

There are certainly identities and types of people not included on this list. The limited class of nouns from the gossip corpus suggested to my informant various types of undesirable person --- peons, fools, thieves, lazy buzzardlike men --- and only two neutral or positively evaluated types: the rich landowner associated with the wise man, and the spiritually potent curer. The example sentences show that my informant's associations correspond closely to the senses of these words as they occurred in gossip. Note that even in the positively evaluated clusters ((d) and (f)), individual words occur in negative contexts. /Totil/ applies not only to wise and respected elders but to master witches, trouble-makers. And, in cluster (f), talk about a person's /c'ulel/ may point as much to soul weakness and lack of discipline as to strength. The verbal associations into which each word enters make it possible for a native speaker to create conceptual clusters and illustrate each with common types of people.

Certain body-part nouns in Tzotzil carry heavy metaphorical weight. They often describe emotions, motives, character traits, and other mental phenomena. The two roots with the heaviest burdens of this sort are /-hol/ ('head') and /-o7on/ ('heart'). In the following lists, I consider various concatenations of verbs and adjectives with these roots.

(a) Adjective + /hol/ ('head')

	<u>Compound meaning</u>
/bik'it/ ('small')	low-tolerance for liquor
/copol/ ('bad')	unpleasant, unfriendly, un-cooperative
/palta/ ('fault, failure')	imprudent, unwise, foolish
/ko7ol/ ('equal')	in agreement
/pareho/ ('similar')	in agreement, friendly with, like
/hp'eh -hol xci7uk/ ('one head with _____')	in agreement with, together with, friendly with, companion of, etc.
/hcop 7o -hol/ ('different head')	strange, queer, evil, odd
/-hololal yec/ ('_____ 's head is thus')	that's the way _____ is by nature.

- (127) /ko7ol sholik ti baz'i naka vinik ta sa7ike/ (O 14)
They have similar proclivities in that they are always going after men.

(b) Adjective + /-o7on/ ('heart')

/hun/ ('one, whole')	content, happy
/lek/ ('good')	happy
/copol/ ('bad')	unhappy; §anxious, worried, grief-stricken, ill-tempered, mean
/yan sba/ ('disgusting, odd')	worried, anxious, sick
/pukuh/ ('evil')	ill-tempered
/zoz/ ('strong')	brave, courageous, strong, §uncomplaining
/bik'it/ ('small')	weak, fearful; §sensitive, quick to anger

- (128) /baz'i mas xa pukuh yo7on li yahval balamil/ (P 128)
The Earth Lord is nowadays terribly ill-tempered.

- (129) /slekil nan yo7on/ (P 389)
Perhaps it was from the goodness of his heart.

- (130) /shunul xa7ox ko7on ta xkik'/ (H 33)
With all my heart I was going to marry her.

- (131) /mi 7o hset'uk abankilale, yu7un zoz avo7on bu xaxanav/ (H 44)
If you have a bit of your older brother, then you will be brave wherever you go. (Proverb about /moy/, native tobacco.)

(c) Verb + /-hol/ (subject)

We assume sentences of the form:

Verb (Person (Possession)) + / -hol/

<u>Verb</u>	<u>Sentence meaning</u>
/lik/ ('arise')	decide to do something, be provoked, have an idea, have mischievous or wicked thought
/kap/ ('become angry')	lose temper
/xi7/ ('be afraid')	become afraid
/c'ay/ ('lose, be lost')	forget, be befuddled
/vovi/ ('go mad')	go mad
/yan -pas/ ('do bad or disgusting thing')	have crazy, wicked thoughts
/sok/ ('break, be broken')	be provoked, become wicked

(d) Verb + /-o7on/ (subject)

/7ec'/ ('pass')	be satisfied with, try as hard as one can, do until one is tired of something
/lah/ ('finish, be finished')	stop being angry, be reconciled, be placated
/c'ay/ ('lose, be lost')	be distracted, be unaware
/sok/ ('break, be broken')	be unhappy, be distraught, worried
/lok'/ ('exit, leave')	do one's best, be sated
/lik/ ('arise')	have pain in chest, be excited
/vaxi/ ('become calm')	lose anxiety, lose evil proclivities
/k'upih/ ('long for')	have longing
/k'an/ ('want')	desire, want

(132) /c'ay sholik, mu sna7 bu cbatik/ (P 281)
They were dazed; they didn't know where to go (after committing murder).

(133) /te ista c'aybel yo7on/ (P 175)
He was distracted there.

(134) /sk'an sokaibeik shol kremotik/ (H 20)
She wants to provoke (and seduce) boys.

(135) /mu xasokbe yo7on abankile ta 7i7onel/ (N 4)
Don't make your brother unhappy with your babbling.

(136) /yo7on la xlik tahmek/ (H 15)
They say that his heart would pound. (Man with heart condition).

- (137) /ilik 7o sholik, iyuc'ik mas trago/ (G 1)
As a result (of drinking) they decided to drink more aguardiente.
- (138) /yan zpas ti hhole, mu hna7 mi 7ipon/ (H 66)
My head is crazy; I don't know if I'm sick (man with secret desire to scare people at night).
- (139) /baz'i mu xvaxi li ko7ontike, mu xvaxi li hholtike/ (H 66)
Our hearts won't behave, our heads won't be obedient (man who admits to being witch).
- (140) /muk' 7onox lah yo7on yec komo te sbik'oh sk'ak'al li mole/ (P 292)
But he wasn't placated in that way, for the old man was enduring his anger (had swallowed his anger).

(e) Verb + /-hol/ (object)

/il/ ('see')	know person's bad tendencies
/lo7lo/ ('deceive, trick')	maliciously mislead or trick someone

- (141) /kilohbe shol tah 7une/ (E 178)
I've seen the way that one thinks.

- (142) /yalal ilo7lobat shol/ (H 33)
She was purposefully deceived.

(f) Verb + /-o7on/ (object)

/kux/ ('rest')	enjoy oneself
/at/ ('count')	worry, be anxious
/pat/ ('mold, form')	gratify, mollify; decide
/il/ ('see')	be acquainted with person's character
/nop/ ('think, think about')	want, decide to
/pic/ ('make into lump, set')	\$long for, be tantalized by

- (143) /7ep 7ohtikinbil, 7ilbil k'u x7elan yo7on/ (H 90)
He is known by many; people have seen what his heart is like.

- (144) /ha7to ba spatbe yo7on tah yahnile/ (O 17)
Only then did he go to mollify his wife.

- (145) /ha7 no7ox spatoh 7o yo7on li yilolale/ (P 159)
He must content himself with his curing powers (i.e., he is not a witch).

(146) /ha7 yec x7elan yatel ko7on cak li7e/ (P 70)
This is what is troubling me.

(147) /kere, ipic' la yo7on sbaik noxtok/ (P 248)
Boy, they evidently longed for each other once again.

(g) Verb + /ta/ ('at, on, to, in') + /-hol/
For example:

(148) /xa7uk nan lekuk ti k'u ca7al yulem ta shol/ (P 325)
He perhaps thought that what had occurred to him was a good thing to do.

/yul/ ('arrive')	remember, occur to one
/hoy/ ('be encircled, surrounded, encircle')	think up, have thoughts
/nop/ ('think, think about')	decide, think up

(149) /baz'i xhoy ta shol k'usi xal/ (P 341)
He just dreams up out of no where what he says.

(h) Verb + /ta/ + /-o7on/

/ak'/ ('give, offer, put')	harbor grudge, take to heart, be offended
/na7/ ('know, long for, miss')	be concerned about, \$take pity on, be sympathetic
/k'ux/ ('pain')	be unhappy, be desolate

(150) /mu sna7 ta yo7on yec, toh pukah, mu stak' k'oponel/ (P 264)
He has no pity; he is ill-tempered and can't be reasoned with.

(151) /yiluk yil mi7n avak' ta avo7on/ (P 325)
Forget about it, if you are offended about it.

(152) /k'ux ta ko7on vo7on yec/ (H 56)
That sort of thing would make me unhappy.

(i) Idioms with freely occurring /-hol/ or /-o7on/

(153) /baz'i yu7un shololal yu7un yec/ (P 154)
That's just the way he is.

(154) /k'u 7onox shol li yihil c'ah krem/ (P 369)
What's the matter with that awful lazy boy?

(155) /yo7onuk skob li sni7 me7ele ta 7alele/ (O 17)
He is supposed to have wanted to fuck his mother-in-law.

- (156) /yil xa no7ox yil, mu xtal avak'bon sk'ak'al
 ko7on/ (H 55)
 Let's forget it; don't come here and make me angry.

Idioms occurring with these two roots in the gossip corpus seem to show a fairly clear dichotomy between thinking, personality, and intellectual capacities which are associated with /-hol/ ('head'), and emotions, attention, and desire which are expressed in terms of /-o7on/ ('heart'). Much of the power of Tzotzil to deal with internal mental processes and states stems from idiomatic use of these two roots; on the basis of usage in gossip we may posit some implicit contrast between things of the heart and things of the head (not unlike a similar contrast in English). The wider domain covered by these idioms is itself explicitly represented in ritual speech:

- (157) /ti shole ti yo7one/ (Laughlin (n.d.))
 His head, his heart.

and in such formal couplets as they occur elsewhere, as, for example, in sentence (139) above.

Listening to gossip makes one aware of such semantic facts of a language --- facts which seem to imply native theories about the world statable in no simpler way than by giving examples.

Nouns dealing with disputes and settlement of arguments are prominent in gossip and similarly revealing. Jane Collier (1970:74-94) talks about 'Zinacanteco legal concepts' through the medium of certain Tzotzil expressions having to do with

bringing up, searching for a settlement to, and reaching an end of disputes. Of the clusters of nouns produced by the native sorting task, several evoke conflict situations.

- (a) /perton/ pardon, forgiveness
 /pasensya/ patience, \$As exclamation:
 So what? What can you do?
 Exegesis: /C7ak'van ta pertonal, 7oy spasensya/ ('He pardons people; he has patience.')

(158) /muk' sperton, mu xa7i k'op/ (P 386)
 He has no mercy; he won't listen (to reason).

- (b) /moton/ gift
 /limete/ bottle (fifth bottle for liquor)
 Exegesis: /7oy smoton, i7ak'bat slimete/ ('He has a gift; he is given a bottle.')
- (Refers to the fact that a man who settles a dispute is always given a bottle of liquor by the disputants.)

(159) /ta limete lah 7o k'op/ (E 356)
 The dispute was settled with a bottle (i.e., with one party asking pardon with a bottle which was accepted by the other.)

(160) /islok'esbe li slimeteal ha7 xa islahe7 7o smul/ (O 15)
 He pulled out his bottle (and gave it to the other) and thereby apologized.

- (c) /7akwerto/ in agreement, agreement
 /7amiko/ friend
 Exegesis: /Ko7ol sk'opik, ta 7akwerto, komo 7amiko ya7el/. ('They have the same stories; they are in agreement, because they are friends.')

(161) /spas tal sba ta 7akwerto/ (P 117)
 As they came they made an agreement.

(162) /lek yamiko sbaik ta xlo7ilahik/ (P 127)
 They seem to be good friends from the way they joke together.

Cf. sentence (31) in Chapter 3.

- (d) /tahimol/ games, foolishness, frivolous
 business
 /melol/ \$proper or traditional way
 Exegesis: /mu sna7be smelol, tahimol ck'opoh/ ('He doesn't know the correct way to handle the matter; he talks as if it were a game.)

(163) /ti yecuke tuk' no7ox tal avalbe smelol/ (O 10)
You should have come straight here to explain
what happened.

(164) /muk' bu tahimol li k'op lavie/ (G 3)
This affair now is no game.

(e) /7il pletu/	quarrelling
/kavilto/	<u>cabildo</u> , town hall
/koh/	fault of ---
/mulil/	guilt, sin, fault, misdeed
/multa/	fine, bribe
/kronta/	enemy
/k'op/	dispute, argument, affair
/7ixtol/	toy, plaything
/k'ob/	hand
/pus/	sweat bath, (joking euphemism for jail)

Exegesis: My informant offered the following hypothetical story:

/7il pletu xci7uk yahnil/
He quarrels with his wife.

/tol xk'ot ta kavilto/
He's always going to the town hall.

/skoh mul, cak' multa/
As a result of his misdeeds he pays a fine.

/skronta sbaik (xci7uk yahnil)/
He is an enemy (of his wife.).

/tol ssa7 k'op/
He's always making trouble.

/tol x7ixtol-k'opoh/
He is always talking irresponsibly.

/zzak k'obol 7un, c7oc ta pus/
They seize his hands, and he enters the jail.

(165) /baz'i me7-pletu/ (P 373)
She's a terrible troublesome old lady.

(166) /7o skaviltoal 7o xcukelal/
For such behavior there is a town hall, a jail.

(167) /skoh cuvah/ (W 14)
It's due to his madness.

(168) /skoh szak-7anzile/ (P 300)
It is the fault of his propensity for raping women.

- (169) /isyakubtas xa sba mas yo7 mu k'usi smul 7o/ (P 291)
He got himself drunker so that he would appear blameless. (Zinacantecos believe that drunkenness is an extenuating circumstance in committing crimes. Cf. J. Collier (1970:76 ff.))
- (170) /szinanbe sbaik multa/ (W 13)
They strapped each other with fines.
- (171) /cba shelik ta tak'in li skrontaik/ (P 418)
They went to exchange their enemies for money (by selling their souls to the Earth Lord.)
- (172) /solel iyixtalan tak'in sa7-k'op spas tahmek/ (P 170)
He just frittered away his money by making trouble all the time.
- (173) /ko7olko7ol sk'upinik pus/ (W 13)
They equally enjoyed the sweat-bath (i.e., the jail.)

Jane Collier (1970:74 ff.) concentrates on the 'legal concepts' which underlie various expressions based on /mul/ ('sin, crime') and /k'op/ ('dispute'). On the importance of these concepts she suggests that

"the finer points of legal reasoning can only be understood in terms of the culturally specific concepts employed by the participants. Zinacantecos have specific ideas about why people do wrong, about the consequences of a wrong, and about the nature of an appropriate settlement. Their procedures for handling conflicts are intimately related to, and cannot be understood apart from, their ideas of the form that a settlement should take." (p. 74)

And she states that

"Zinacanteco legal concepts are implicit in the Tzotzil words used to discuss cases. These words have no direct English translations because they are based on a different set of assumptions and their meanings can only be grasped through an examination of the contexts in which they are used." (pp. 74-75)

Gossip offers glimpses of such verbal contexts.

Informal speech often alludes to aspects of a formal legal theory; for example, sentence (169) alludes to a

relationship between drunkenness and one's liability to /mul/ ('guilt'). In a less obvious way, the vocabulary of gossip leads to an implicit understanding of the origins of disputes and the mechanisms of their settlement. One need not resort to formal interviews to understand from clusters (a) and (b) that settling a dispute is sometimes a matter of begging pardon, or offering a bottle. Furthermore, the metaphor of 'words' (/k'op/) pervades Zinacanteco talk about conflict, as if fighting were a matter of not listening (see sentence (158)), as if a rash, irresponsible talker gets himself into more trouble (see the examples based on /tahimol/ ('game') and /7ixtol/ ('toy')), and as if the end of a dispute is the end of talk (sentence (159)) or a matter of bringing stories into agreement (see cluster (c)).

The townhall is the most fertile source for gossip, and gossip sessions are accordingly rife with accounts of disputes and the accompanying verbal duels. Thus it is not surprising that nouns culled from gossip should suggest to an informant situations or personalities related to conflict, the cabildo, drinking in settlement of disputes. In cluster (e) my informant was able to recreate a whole imaginary court case from the semantic prods contained in a list of nouns. Words are suggestive objects in a speaker's universe.

I could continue with other root classes: Intransitive verb roots include a large class of words having to do with emotional states; Positional roots govern idioms of emotion,

and of human quality based on metaphors of shape and size; Transitive verb roots occurring in gossip are easily sorted into classes of evil and negatively evaluated acts. I leave to another place further exposition of the semantic facts involved. Here I have tried to show, first, how one can present interesting and culturally salient semantic facts of a language through examples from actual speech --- lacking, as we do, a theory of semantics which might provide a more formal (and less voluminous) descriptive mechanism. Second, I hope to have thrown some light on Zinacanteco culture as one perceives it through a gradually acquired understanding of the language. I believe that as one begins to be able to talk and to understand what people say about their doings one's appreciation of those doings changes in quality; the challenge to the fieldworker is to convey some of the insight one gains from learning a native language without having to teach the whole language. The appeal of gossip lies in its full use of the resources of the language to talk about a wide range of cultural phenomena.

Rules

Ethnography, at least in recent years, has involved a search for cultural rules. The fieldworker, trying to understand what is going on around him, observes certain regularities (which leap to even the uninitiated eye): people do things in similar fashion, have similar routines, treat each other in patterned ways, and are generally predictable. As he begins to understand more of what he sees and hears, the fieldworker becomes aware that people have definite opinions about other peoples' behavior and the state of the world in general: they condemn or condone, justify or disapprove, cite custom, and point out innovation. Fashion has decreed a terminological shift: we talk now of rules underlying patterned behavior, or of rules embodied by native opinion and value --- in short, of the rules of a culture.

That we can find rules to apply to both kinds of phenomena --- regularities and norms --- tells us something about the ambiguity of the word 'rule'.¹⁰ As ethnographers we are familiar with still other sorts of rule: rules of marriage, legal rules (laws?), rules of etiquette, rules of inheritance, rules of demeanor, rules of dress, rules of games, rules of success for the farmer, and so on. Several types emerge:

10

I have benefitted from criticisms of earlier versions of this chapter by Prof. David Maybury-Lewis. I do not expect that he would agree with all I have to say here.

Rules which embody stated norms (which issue from our informants' mouths.) 'Children should respect their parents.' 'The youngest son lives with his father, and inherits his father's house.'

Rules which amount to definitions. 'To sow corn is to do this (with a demonstration of how one sows corn)...'
'Ritual dress consists of a black cloak, head wrapped in a scarf, ...'

Rules underlying actual (observed) behavior, at various levels of abstraction. 'In 64% of the cases, on the average, men will live with their fathers after marriage.' 'The costliest religious office lends the most prestige.' 'A person will inherit part of an estate only if he contributes to burial costs.'¹¹

Rules of interpretation, lending sense to action, of the form: "He wouldn't do that unless..." or "If he ..., it must mean that..." 'Two men shake hands to show (express) their equality of status.' 'People with brick houses are ostentatiously wealthy.'

Rules of strategy. 'A quick way to make money is to plant lots of beans in October.' 'To get a high-prestige cargo one should ask for a low prestige cargo and then change later when an opening comes.'

Rules of each type will often overlap with rules of other types. Why are such different sorts of proposition all rules?

I claim that the study of gossip affords a new perspective on the nature and use of rules in ordinary discourse.

Consider first a straightforward sort of rule: legal rules which govern settlement of legal disputes. Jane Collier (1970:95-101) suggests that a useful way to view Zinacanteco dispute settlement is 'from the bottom up': looking at "disputes to pinpoint interaction situations

11

I offer these as hypothetical rules only --- that is, I don't guarantee that the facts they suggest are true.

which may lead to conflict." (p. 95) Individuals find themselves in conflict for a wide variety of reasons and in quite different situations. By the time they seek legal solution to the conflict disputants have phrased the dispute and the attendant facts in ways that call legal rules into play. The rules themselves are used selectively; and they provide a conceptual framework in terms of which disputants can phrase their arguments. Related to these arguments is the notion that rules and the phenomena with which they deal exist only through use.

"Beals and Siegel (1966) have pointed out that a particular act is only expressive of conflict when someone interprets it as such. A wrong only becomes a wrong when someone says it is." (J. Collier (1970:98))

Legal rules largely constrain action after the fact: when someone chooses to find fault with another's behavior, he phrases his complaints in such a way that the other may be considered to have violated a rule.

Collier further urges that we can best understand the processes by which legal rules (and entire legal systems) change

"by looking at conflicts as based on shared perceptions, rules as shared statements to describe behavior, and jural communities as areas with shared procedural norms for handling conflicts... New types of conflict occur, rules change, and jural communities divide when litigants who formerly shared perceptions come to see things differently." (1970:99)

The rules, as propositions statable in words, are less liable to change than are the meanings which people attach to the words in question. Individuals are free to manipulate

a system of legal rules within the boundaries set by language: if a skillful lawyer can convince the magistrate (or his neighbors) that a rule applies, he is free to draw the indicated conclusions.

In the remainder of this chapter I extend this point of view --- that "individuals in conflict use rules to justify the actions they take" (Jane Collier (1970:101)) --- to rules outside the domain of law. I remarked above that it is plausible to think of gossip as 'about rules.' More precisely, if we conceive of Zinacanteco culture as storable in terms of some complex set of propositions about behavior, then gossip is an activity through which actual behavior is verbally bent into a form amenable to the application of rules.¹² As people gossip they fit their culture (propositions about the world) to the world itself. How then may we understand the relationship between rules and action?

(a) Are some rules conscious and others unconscious? This is dangerous ground. Even when our action conforms to a rule, we are not necessarily conscious of the rule (aware of it as we act). We do not appeal to rules of grammar as we talk;

12

We apply rules and perform this sort of conceptual twisting whenever we talk: we use words to talk about the world by virtue of 'rules' (about the mapping between word and object, or, more accurately, about the world itself) which govern all speech.

(often, in fact, we cannot even formulate them). Rules for dividing fractions or computing square roots, on the other hand, seem to guide our pencils as we calculate, especially when we have only lately learned how. Consider some further cases. Rules of the road only surface in unusual circumstances (for example, when we appeal to them ruefully after the accident to determine who was at fault). Parliamentary rules may guide our action, but we need experts to keep track of them. Sometimes we can't perform at all without a rule:: rules of thumb (how to convert Fahrenheit to Centigrade) define the answer. And some rules (college conduct rules, most laws) are of more concern to authorities who enforce them than to those affected. The extent to which we are bound by rules, or conscious of rules, as we act depends on the sort of thing we are doing.

To be available to gossip a rule need not hover in the minds of actors who observe or break it; nor need it be explicitly formulable in most contexts. In gossip, ordinarily it is non-standard behavior that activates a rule; the oddness of a man's behavior stimulates gossip about what is odd in it.

Xun has only very old, ragged clothes. He has an old, torn leather bag, with its pocket torn off, that is almost completely black. He probably bought it back when he was courting his wife and hasn't bought another since. (E 426)

Lol used to buy liquor near /k'onlum/, and while there would stay in the house of an old woman who was perhaps 55 years old. He screwed her several times and then married her. She has given him no children (and probably has sapped his potency) because she is too old. When they walk around together you might think to look at her that she is his mother. (E 463)

Mikel, the youngest son of an elderly man, decided to move away from his paternal home and leave his older brother behind. He has accused his father of witchcraft, and one day, when they went on a long trip in the same truck, Mikel addressed not one word to his father. (W 140)

These facts are noteworthy enough to gossip about because of the departures from expected, normal behavior implied, respectively, by (i) not buying new clothes, (ii) marrying someone who is mismatched in age (--- something which Zinacantecos believe can cause a severe, ultimately fatal illness), and (iii) not respecting (and, hence, talking politely to) one's father. The rules in question here are probably automatic, unconscious, and usually unimportant. One pays minimal attention to dress until there is some striking omission or defect. Similarly, one ordinarily takes no note of married couples appropriately matched in age, or of the everyday cordiality between father and son. Gossip, when it detects something queer, tries to pinpoint the source of the queerness; but the rules of a culture do not mark normalcy but only departures from normalcy.

Gossip deals as well with more obviously rule-bound behavior. Zinacantecos could easily state rules for proper courtship or domestic division of labor; these same rules are promulgated in gossip about improper behavior, as well as in court cases. These are areas --- ritual performance is another --- in which there is a question of propriety over and above normalcy, convention.

Behaving normally is like playing tic-tac-toe. Certain

moves are legitimate (in accordance with the rules); moreover, certain moves force certain other moves (allow one to expect conventional responses). Departures from normalcy may take the form of moves outside the rules (which cease to be moves at all --- they do not belong in the game), or of unconventional (senseless, unbelievable, stupid, self-defeating, unfathomable) moves. When, in ordinary life, our expectations fail we are stopped short; we gossip about what has gone wrong.

(b) There is a certain nonsense to the notion that there can be a gulf between rules and behavior. (See Keesing (1971)). The ethnoscientist's search for rules of behavior cannot end with a set of principles which tell us little or nothing about what behavior to anticipate. That is, it is not enough to state, as Jane Collier does about Zinacanteco inheritance rules that

"Zinacanteco inheritance is not governed by a precise set of principles nor could it be, because the principles used to justify claims to property, if stated in sequence, are clearly conflicting...These principles do not govern Zinacanteco inheritance, but only serve as justification for a claim to property. The actual distribution of inheritance is determined by a compromise between competing claims." (1970:146)

Since native actors only rarely surprise each other by their actions, there must be mechanisms by which one man can anticipate the behavior of another. Similarly, since legal settlements are rarely incomprehensible, native actors must understand the procedures through which settlement is made. Hence, it may be that the rules of inheritance conflict, and

that rules serve primarily as justifications for claims. (Or that, for ordinary action, there are conflicting alternatives --- shall I wear shoes or sandals? Do I call him 'Joe' or 'Professor X'? Shall I have my ham and swiss on white or rye? Shall I shake his hand or punch him? --- between which one chooses on the basis of the standard (i.e., rule-bound) implications and consequences of each alternative.) Yet there is presumably more to the resolution of conflicts than compromise. Rules are clearly not on an equal footing with each other and thus some compromises are easier to come by than others. Keesing's (1970) work on Kwaio sharing of bride wealth shows that it is possible to untangle the competing claims of relatives and to anticipate eventual outcomes by paying precise attention to anomalous cases. The rights and obligations which ordinarily coincide in single individuals are split among several in the case of adoption or changing residence. The outcomes of cases in which several people have claims to goods ordinarily reserved for one person show in greater detail the rules which govern bride wealth distribution. Individuals in conflict have the freedom to appeal as they like to rules; but it may often be the case that conflicts between rules once invoked are themselves resolved by rules --- rather than by something as nebulous as compromise.

There is, unfortunately, the disturbing possibility that the natives' ability to anticipate the outcomes of disputes and the actions of individuals amounts to little more than the

ability to give post facto rationalizations for eventual outcomes. The ethnoscientist may be able to produce a model of residence that gives a perfect match with the residence patterns observed during a field stay. But there is nothing more remarkable in this than in the villagers' ability to justify or at least to come to understand another villager's decision about where to live --- after he has built his house and moved in. The ethnographer and the gossip perform similar operations: they observe behavior and use rules to understand its implications or the motives behind it. In fact, the ethnoscientist can make up rules to justify the behavior he sees. We need not be satisfied with a 'compromise' between rules or a 'gulf' between rules and behavior; the gossip and the ethnographer have a stake in reconciling rules with behavior. The power of rules as determinants of action stems from the fact that each time we construe a particular sequence of behavior in accordance with rules, we strengthen the presumption that future behavior will also accord with the rules. Natives base their ability to anticipate on such presumptions.

Note that the gossip has an advantage over the ethnographer in that he can reject certain behavior outright as deviant, anti-social, wicked, reprehensible, nonsensical, incomprehensible, ill-conceived, or generally out of line with (some) rules. The ethnographer has a harder time establishing some criterion for calling a particular residence choice 'deviant', even when the natives are willing to agree among themselves that it is wrong, bad, unmanly, queer,

fishy, etc. The ethnographer, building his model, is obliged to say: "The man must have had his reasons." The natives, gossiping, may counter: "They were bad ones." Gossip trades on rules and 'should'-statements, urging certain behavior by praising it, and throwing out other behavior by condemning it. The ethnographer faces the brute facts of statistical reality.

Consider the moralizing and the conflicting values --- stated often in categorical, rule-like propositions --- that figure in the following gossip sequence, about a rich man made poor by excessive lending.

"/Kere/, he has a lot of money, indeed!" (W 138)

"I hear that he has just scattered it all over."

"But he isn't given it back; he himself has had to go into debt now."

"/Putu/, that's bad..."

"The old man has lost his wealth now; I don't know why. Perhaps he can't get his money back now because he spread it around."

"It's just as if he gave it away."

"He treated his money as if he could just pick it off a tree, as if he could manufacture it; that's why he distributed it among so many different men."

"But the poor old man is extremely good-hearted. When my son Cep made his house he told me, 'I'll give you the money.'

He just offered it by himself."

"But he always lent so much; he didn't just lend a few hundred at a time. Instead he would lend ten thousand to just one single man."

"Well, he should have made some sort of deal. He didn't watch out to lend only to those who would probably pay him back, to those who seemed to be good men. Instead if anyone at all went to ask him for money, 'Here, take it' he would say. He didn't wait to see from their faces if they were good men."

"Well, they say that at first he was always given back the money he lent. People would keep asking him for some amount --- people are very crafty --- and after a year they would return it. They would pay him promptly, maybe give him some interest. So, you see: the old man was elated since he got his money back. But then the next time --- well, he never saw his money again. Old Xun Inas died, for example, and the whole deal was ended."

"Son of a bitch, he lost five thousand on that!"

"So the poor old man had thought to lend out of the goodness of his heart. But now he isn't given even a penny. It's awful. He wanders around asking for it, but no one gives it back. None at all. He says his children are getting angry."

"'My sons are angry,' he says." "/Kavron/, the way you lend the money, it seems that you just like to drink beer," they say. But I don't care about drinking beer," he says."

"Well, his sons are the ones who do the work; the old

man no longer works."

"/Kere/, I think that's terrible."

"Well, the old man has patience; he has compassion for others."

"Ah, he is forgiving. He has a good-heart."

"He doesn't believe in stealing peoples' sheep (by charging interest) the way Lukax does."

"No, he doesn't drag out of people what he could by asking for interest on his loans..."

Several clear, though obliquely stated, normative propositions are implicit in this conversation. Here are some of them:

1. A rich man, if he is good-hearted, will lend money.
2. A good-hearted reasonable moneylender will not charge interest.
3. A man lending money should be sure that the recipient is likely to be able to pay him back.
4. A man should never lend a lot of money to just one person.
5. One should be careful of one's money, since it doesn't grow on trees, but is the product of work.

Gossiping about this one unfortunate old man allows the participants to agree on these principles, and to apply them to (derive them from?) a concrete situation. They can decide together what to think about the man himself, and --- more pragmatically --- they can assess the causes for his misfortune and guide their future actions accordingly.

(c) In most situations individuals have a wide range of alternatives. Individuals construe the circumstances and choose between alternatives on the basis of many different constraints (some of which may be what I have called above rules of strategy). Strategies are not random; nor are they morally neutral. Native actors are able to fathom the import of peoples' actions (the meanings of their actions) with the help of their knowledge of different rules of strategy.

About a month before the scheduled wedding, an engaged girl disappeared from her home, and was missing for one night. The girl's family tried to keep her disappearance hidden, but the groom's family discovered that she had run away. After a day's searching the girl was found at her grandmother's house. All concerned assembled at the Agencia to decide what had happened and what was to be done. The girl's family claimed that she had been beaten by her fiancé and one of her brothers and had run away, in fright, hiding with her grandmother. The groom's party suggested that perhaps one of the girl's kinsmen, who did not favor the match, had prompted her to run away and hide to avoid marriage. The groom himself hinted that he harbored suspicions that the girl might have run off with a lover. The options were to break off the courtship --- with the girl's family repaying the considerable courtship expenses the boy had incurred --- or to have the two get married immediately, with the church ceremony to follow at the scheduled time. The girl's mother eventually bowed to pressure from her kinsmen (who did not want to have to repay the bride price) and allowed the girl and the boy to start living together, with the strong stipulation that the wedding ceremony and fiesta still take place. (G 63)

The parties to this dispute were concerned to interpret the actions of the girl in running away. What did she mean to be doing? Had she a lover? Did she want to call off the marriage? Both sides tried to cast the events in such a light that rules could be brought into play to govern the

outcome. Thus rules enter into the proceedings at both ends: they help shape peoples' impressions and interpretations of what the problem is, what the behavior entails; and they then specify an outcome, given agreement on the situation.

Rules of interpretation allow one to understand the implications of action. If a girl fails to greet her suitor, refuses to feed him when he visits, or --- worst of all --- runs away unaccountably, he understands her to be refusing his suit, by virtue of the 'rule' that states that a girl should treat her suitor well. If a girl's parents suddenly refuse gifts proffered by their daughter's suitor, then the boy receives a clear message about the status of his supposed marriage contract. (N 4) Receiving the gifts of a suitor energizes the rules governing agreement to a marriage proposal; continuing to receive the gifts throughout the courtship binds the girl's family further.

In gossip rules are laid grid-like over the continuum of behavior, to allow participants to interpret the events they are discussing. During the events recounted above (in G 63), various stories circulated in gossip. One account had it that the girl had run off with another lover to elope; another claimed that the suitor had beaten the girl severely, and that she had run off as a result. A third version maintained that one of the girl's uncles, an enemy of the groom and his friends, had persuaded the girl to hide in his house to avoid the wedding. Each story represents an interpretation

of the facts --- that the girl was missing from home one night --- in a form that suggests certain consequences.

Rules of interpretation are symbolic statements of relationships between categories of behavior. 'Accepting a gift of liquor' is tantamount to 'agreeing to a request.' 'Being absent from home' is equivalent to 'running away.' And so on. Rules of this sort allow people to formulate expectations on the basis of past behavior --- expectations which have more force (even if less reliability) than those based on statistical regularities alone.

Rules allow actors to communicate through action. In Zinacantan, putting on ritual dress implies certain contexts and is inappropriate in everyday life. Shaking hands in greeting rather than bowing implies a certain sort of equality derived, in the purest cases, from age, but often reflecting an equality of ritual status instead.

Though life is very little like a game of chess, the analogy holds to a certain point. Rules of chess define proper moves ('A knight moves like this...'); rules of strategy point to favorable lines of play ('When attacked in this way, a solid defense is as follows...; these moves, on the other hand, are weak...'). Cultural grammars have analogous rules. But a game of chess leads to a single end; moves in the game may have meaning with respect to that end, i.e., winning or losing. ('His gambit with the queen showed his desperation.' 'When he threw his king across the room

it meant he was resigning.')

But ordinarily, to move a knight according to the rules is not to say anything in particular (mean anything in particular). Whereas, to shake a Zinacanteco's hand in greeting is to do more than simply abide by the rules; it is to imply something definite about status.¹³

(d) Though rules may not be causal determinants of behavior (whatever that might mean), they certainly figure in explanations of behavior. Part of the answer to the question "Why do people act as they do?" or, more commonly, "Why did he do that then?" will be an appeal to cultural rules ("That's how it's done..." "He meant to ..., and so he ...") While a native actor may not be able to predict, from his knowledge of his own culture, what another will do, or what people will say about it in gossip, he will nonetheless be an appreciative audience: he will recognize the appropriateness of another's remarks.

Gossip can lead to contradictory conclusions, from the same premises and with equally legitimate reasoning. Consider the contrast between the following two accounts of adultery, both offered by the same man on different occasions. When he

13

I have in mind here more than a Goffmanesque communication of the facts of self and situation through interactive behavior. I claim that the rules and conventions governing behavior lend meaning to the choice between culturally appropriate alternative acts in specific situations; e.g., the choice between bowing and shaking hands, in greeting. Rules define the semantics of behavior.

told me version one, my informant was having a fight with Maryan and his brothers, and was inclined to ridicule.

Version 1

Maryan has recently been dragged to jail in /Hteklum/ over a long-standing fight with his ex-wife and her father. His ex-wife had, by a previous marriage, a daughter with whom Maryan began having sexual relations. The girl became pregnant, and Maryan's wife moved out in anger. Now the ex-wife and her father are demanding bride-payment for the girl, who is herself unsure whether to stay with Maryan. He has been jailed for not paying, and for his foolish lack of sexual restraint. Why does he need two women in his bed? (G 53)

Later my informant was asked to help get Maryan off.

Returning from Zinacantan Center after the court case he offered the following account (not remembering what he had told me the week before).

Version 2

Maryan got into trouble because of his step-daughter. His wife left them alone together often, and he eventually got her pregnant. When questioned, the girl claimed that she had never felt a thing. She said she didn't know how she could possibly have gotten pregnant. (We know how, ha ha ha.) Maryan's wife ran home in anger to her father, leaving her daughter to take care of Maryan. Maryan was willing to divorce his wife and offered to marry the girl, but his ex-father-in-law (the girl's grandfather) demanded 1000 pesos in bride-price. That amount seemed high, considering that as the girl's step-father, Maryan had contributed most of the money towards raising the girl in the first place. At the cabildo I argued that no harm had been done; that the girl wouldn't die from having her step-father's baby. (G 53a)

Clearly both versions of this story are possible; both, that is, can be framed in language appropriate to Zinacanteco gossip. Either account would be appreciated by an audience of Zinacan-

in favor of neither Maryan nor his ex-wife. A convincing moral argument can be made for either side.

(e) It should now be clear that gossip is a powerful instrument for manipulating cultural rules. Gossip is a primary meta-cultural tool, an activity through which people examine and discuss the rules they espouse. Through gossip people not only interpret the behavior of others, but also discover other people's interpretations; they can thus learn cultural rules at a distance. Through dialogue, gossip allows rules to change: it redefines the conditions of application for rules, thus keeping them up to date. Finally gossip exploits the interpretive potential of rules to advance particular (personal, factional) ends. One talks, in gossip, as if the rule of culture were absolute; whereas cultural rules legitimize disparate and often contradictory modes of action. By catching someone's ear in a gossip session, one can introduce a particular assessment of the facts and cloak it with the garb of absolute morality and unflinching truth.