CHAPTER III

METHOD OF PHENOMENOLOGY

We cannot fully agree with the popular misconception that phenomenology has no distinct method inseparable from its theory. Though Patthas expressed such a view, he was perhaps referring to its in-built system of theory and method such that to isolate one from the other would be logically absurd. The method of phenomenology is interpretative research that started with Weberian tradition of Verstehen sociology. Weber believed that empathetic or appreciative accuracy is attained when, through sympathetic participation, we can adequately grasp the emotional context in which the action took place. To interpret minority identity, it is not however desirable if not even impossible to recreate the emotional contexts of actions may it be a communal riot or Negro lynching. Because for the individual identity, the relevant context may be different. Hence we seek a compromise in the Wittgensteinian belief that words are also actions. So the interpretative task essentially starts with an appreciation of verbalizations of meanings pertaining to the experiential syndrome of minorityism, for the individual. Verbalization involves a commitment to action, to a view of the other, to an established relationship. And,
at the same time Verbalization also involves symbolisation of motives so that each party is expected to be aware of how the other is defining the situation, without surrendering its own right of perceptions and definitions.

Schutz believed:

The primary task of this science is to describe the process of meaning establishment and meaning interpretation as these are carried out by individuals living in the social world. Therefore, what we need is a method to imaginatively construct "the other" (the respondent) or feel one's way into the experience of another, or to create objective meaning contexts either out of subjective-meaning contexts generally or out of some particular subjective-meaning contexts, 3

(The particular meaning context of this study is the ethnic being and identity of the individual.)

Schutz's formulation of personal ideal type and the course-of-action type as part of his homuncular model is inadequate to our approach for study of minority identity based on a dialectical model, 4 But the task of phenomenology, radically conceived is to unveil the pre-theoretical level in which the individual articulates the distinctions between objective world and subjective being through his perceptual experiences constituting the prime reality. To some extent the method followed in this study partially bracketed the pre-categorical reality but by accepting the native categories of speech a la Schutz wholesale as the core of scientific data, irrespective of its ultimate validity or invalidity.
a pious penetration into the subjective depths of meanings or "natural attitude" is hoped for.Only those meanings relevant or claimed to be relevant by the individual for his identity "minority" or otherwise are taken into consideration. Therefore in this study, though the theoretical format is set according to the tenets of Phenomenological Marxism, there is no conceptual baggage to go with it. It is a hollow-frame where the concepts are to be filled by the respondents themselves. The possibility of the respondent's concepts not fitting the frame are not ruled out given the freedom of subject's choice in the interpretative schemata. After all what is real or not real is his definition and construction. Hence the notion of de-minority identity is as meaningful to the investigation on hand as that of minority identity.

The act of interpretative understanding underlines the method of our phenomenological field work. It is an elusive yet powerful link between methodological reflections of the researcher and his respondents to the existing notions and stereotypes in the field. Broadly speaking, it may be defined simply as a way of understanding a social situation from the perspective of the individual experiencing it and defining it through speech. It is the act of making things whose meanings seem clearly meaningless, and then discovering what they mean, by doing this, we reveal meanings that are not actually apparent to the uncritical mind but which nonetheless are present at some other level of consciousness...the description of the
'reality' of events in terms of the frames of mind of participants. The meanings that we can potentially discover only in an interacting situation is the way in which identities get projected. 6

The problem of motives in Brittain's view is really the problem of identity. 7 Both are taken for granted. Hence these are not masking realities but are related to critical life experiences which may not be apparent in an interacting situation. Yet,

It rests on the somewhat lopsided logic of social sciences that biographies reveal a process of developmental cumulation of salient identities. Hence a kind of temporal consistency of identity is assumed at least during the interacting situation of the interview. But respondents can always imaginatively reconstruct the past through escapism from present or fantasies of future. To some degree, this too can effectively reveal the life-worlds of the respondents, provided the researcher is aware of the illusory potentialities of identity. 8

The state of flux that is human actuality narrows down the scope of understanding according to Pelz. Thus he notes:

In so far as we wish to understand it and ourselves in accordance with untestable and possibly panicky preconceptions, it demands a radically different approach from any we have as yet attempted. 9

But whatever it may be the verbalizations of the respondents do throw valuable light on their perception of reality that is meaningful to their everyday world of living.
And seldom it is likely to depart from truth because very few individuals will not be not interested in what is of primary concern to their social being. Hence the first person "I" is given the pivotal place in theory and method of phenomenology.

Conceptual Framework And Formulation of the Problem

Since our conceptual framework is primarily determined by the dialectical method of Berger and Luckmann, the Consensus dominated homocultural model suggested by Schutz is inadequate for our purpose. Moreover, the phenomenological analysis of everyday life refrains from causal hypothesis as well as a priorisms of the ontological status of reality, though for this study, some modifications have been improvised.

The method of phenomenological reductionism that Husserl and Schutz advocated is suitably modified for the purpose of the dialectical model informing the methodological format of this study. Hence the pre-categorical ontology is neither totally "bracketed" nor accepted as reality per se. Nevertheless, it constitutes one of the triadic determinants in the three moments influencing identity formation, for which a fusion of Marxism with Phenomenology has been suitably devised. (Refer Chapter I, Part I)

The Phenomenological Marxist Framework based on the dialectical triad had no concepts to begin with at the time
of entry into the field. However with gradual exposure to the field and also to further studies on theory, the Minority Syndrome evolved itself as a totality model, made up of a three-tier structure to accommodate the three movements of identity as enunciated by Berger. These were given terminological references mainly for the purpose of academic communication. They are not to be misconstrued with concepts in the conventional sense. The salient features of the minority syndrome seen as a dialectical process are ideographically summed up by the term Minorityism. It is made of the following elements distributed in the dialectical triad, (a) the broad institutionalised socio-political order symbolised by the nation-state, its political doctrines and apparatus of implementing national identity. So the State machinery in precept and practice is a determinant force of the social stock of knowledge for study of minority identity. They are reflected either implicitly through state policies and legal enactments regarding majority-minority confrontations or explicitly in the official blueprint such as the Constitution of India; (b) the second-level of the triad is the inter-subjective or the ethnic universe of majority-minority relations in which the self externalizes its identity in a specific space-time context such as the focus on Muslim and Christians in the communal matrix of the present study, (c) the third and most important level of the triad is the individual (minority) member and his image of the self, the
self-society perceptions including his definition of who or what is a majority and minority in the light of the available stock of knowledge mentioned in (a) and (b) above to which he is presumably exposed to or aware of. We may conceptualise the individual awareness of his Minority Self in association of the collective milieu as Minoritization (or public identity). Minoritiness on the contrary is his private-image or internalised self not in the milieu of his collectivity. Both Minoritiness and Minoritization reflect the grass-root segmentation and localization of knowledge typified at the national level under (a) and (b) as pertaining to the Minority Syndrome. According to the tenets of dialectical phenomenology of the Bergerian School, identity is a by-product of all the three levels of society, viz. the typifications at objective level, the level of the individual and the inter-subjective world of consociate community. This in phenomenological parlance is known as typication, constructions and definitions. Our focus on minority identity of Muslims and Christians of Lucknow will be to examine the nature and relationship between these three traditional forces in determination of individual identity, within the conceptual framework of phenomenological Marxism.

It is as follows:

1. **Construction of reality**

   Minoritiness or self-concepts and notion - private world of intra-subjective identity (reality - construct) of the individual perse. - The Private Self
2. Definitions of Situation
 Minoritisation or public world of inter-subjective identity perceptions of the individual's image of his ethnic community. - The Public Self

3. Typification of Identity
 Relationship between minoritiness and minoritization in development and identity patterns indicating the social structure of meanings, at the objective level of ontological reality. The Image of the collective.

We have chosen "minority" individuals within the "religious community" as the primary province of meaning for individuals' internalization and identity foundation. Accordingly, the ethnic world-view becomes the principal epistemic community for the self though it may be sub-culture in the state context. One of the most vital functions of the sub-culture in the words of Gordon are,

first, it serves psychologically as a source of group self-identification the focus of the sense of intimate peoplehood and second, it provides a patterned network of groups and institutions which allows an individual to confine his primary group relationships to his own sub-culture throughout all the stages of his life-style. 10

However, this should not suggest a static notion of identity. Because though "identity is comprised of internalized features, identity must also be re-established and re-defined throughout life." 11

Theory And Method: Phenomenology in Action

The major considerations for formulating the research design of this study were the environmental constraints of the field besides the explosive nature of
work suggested by communal studies in India. Above all, the uncompromising role of the individual in any interpretative task was also an equally important consideration in the choice of the research design. The familiar teething problem confronted by field workers is well known in sociological endeavours. Still, the outstanding dilemma faced by the practitioners of phenomenology is to resolve the crisis engendered in the dual roles - of a researcher and as an individual - while operating in the field.

The Field Worker and the Field in the Lucknow Study

The social unity between the phenomenological worker and his universe is not a mere bio-physical reality nor one of a technical relationship. The phenomenological field is an uneasy relation between two subjectivities. However, consistent with his views on bracketing all pre-categorical notions, Schutz propounds his thesis of the "solitary theorising self" engaged in the interpretation of "reality" from outside all social relationships.

"Finally, scientists must free themselves from the fundamental anxiety governing the hopes, fears and aspirations of people in the natural attitude with no space-time relationship with the subject." (emphasis added) The value-free myth underlying Schutz' ambiguous stance on 'subjectivity' is obviously not suitable for capturing 'meanings' in people's own reference frames. The difficulty is aggravated all the
more in case of 'other culture' studies wherein the researcher has to have an empathetic penetration into the 'mind of the field for any meaningful work. Theorising is in itself as much social as an individual act so much so no generalization is either possible nor mandatory in social science enterprises. Giddens rightly adds:

> to get to know an 'alien' form of life is to know how to find one's way about in it, to be able to participate in it on an ensemble of practices, but one can never become a member of it. This is Immersion. But for the sociological observer, this is a mode of generating description which have to be mediated that is transformed into categories of social scientific discourse. 15

The dilemma confronting the field-workers of phenomenology is surfaced at two levels:

(a) Firstly the problem of interpreting reality-perceptions in the same framework of meanings as that of the respondents. Madge rightly warns

> In the adequate life history we must constantly keep in mind the situation both as defined by others and by the subject...let us see clearly the pressure of the formal situation and the force of the inner private definition of the situation. 16

(b) The researcher, besides grappling with the problem of interpretation, has to tackle the impact of socially composed realities both situational and extra-situational over the "intentionality" of the respondent's meanings. In fact, to be a solitary theorising self as suggested by Schutz is neither feasible nor desirable. To
pretend to be objective is the worst kind of subjectivism one can risk. The epistemological subject-object issue is at dual levels, involving the cognition of the respondents vis-a-vis the researcher and vis-a-vis the topic itself; that is to what extent the field worker is able to successfully project himself or herself into other human's beliefs by any objective criteria of validity. It is indeed something of a mystique to be apart and still be a part. Because in this situation the field worker has to continuously re-live another man's 'reality' as his own; and at the same time suspend his/her faith in all pre-categorical knowledge including his/her own. One can conclude with Bittner that the phenomenological field workers "are never themselves but only specimens of themselves because the field exists outside the subject-object relationship within which alone they have founded meanings...This constitutes the risk of abortive phenomenology a failure in cultural realism". 17 Must the self-notion of the researcher toward the respondent be one of inter-subjectivity or of object-subject association. In either case, how is 'immersion' ever possible if the researcher perceives of his subjectivity apart from that of his/her respondent and on the other hand, is it ever possible for him/her to get overself? The empathetic task on hand ruled out all consideration of formal approach to the field. Since the conceptual frame is set in Phenomenological Marxism ethical neutrality is possible only to the extent that it
reflects genuine empathy in the cause of cultural realism. This is an inviolable starting point for any phenomenological enterprise.

Furthermore, men always act towards situations and not towards the topic of research on hand, nor towards cultures and research categories. Also the interview situation will certainly be influenced by changing meaning structures that occur inevitably during all social interactions in spite of scrupulous devicing of formal controls; the meaning structure of the researcher and respondent is likely to be anchored in idiosyncratic, situational and different cultural attachments and definitions.\(^8\) By rationalising them, the interview is sterile as a basic source of interpretative data. The subjectivity binding the researcher-respondent relationship rules out any kinds of objectivity. More so because the concept of a researcher under phenomenological Marxism is not one of a social engineer. The environment of research, particularly for forays into applied phenomenology is not an artificially forged stage-managed scenario but simple folk-talk if one may use the phrase: into ordinary, everyday things in life that is most compulsively binding on the individual. If it is the minority identity that is to be studied, the phenomenologist cannot certainly create a situation of communal violence or even of ethnic prejudice even inadvertently through his tools of enquiry to see the response of the concerned subjects to it.
On the contrary, it is deduced from the situation of interaction with the respondents through the subjectivity of the respondent to his everyday experiences and perception of which ethnic identity is likely to be a part. Therefore it necessitated the researcher's unassuming presence in the everyday life situation of the respondent. It means the method involves an inevitable implication of the researcher's life with that of the respondent and feeling evoked by their language, history and accounts of each other's experiences. This in essence was the characteristic appeal of the qualitative research design that characterised the study of Lucknow minority situation.

Phenomenological Marxism seeks to epistemologically overcome the dehumanising developments of classical schools in Marxism, Positivism and Schutzian phenomenology. By upholding the subjectivity of the researcher and respondents as equally influential inputs on research, the resurrection of man in social science is completed in the following way:
(a) Belief in the right of everyman to his own definitions (the mark of its intellectual praxis); (b) Belief in the 'reality' of everyman's definitions, Thomas' famous dictum that if men define situations as 'real' they are real, is most successfully implemented in the method of phenomenology; (c) Belief in equality of knowledge - be that of the scientist or of the subject; (d) in the conscious interaction of the 'reality' of the scientist and the subject - what is
required of the researcher is the recognition of 'natural attitude' from that of the respondent as much as his own... involved, yet detached from their perception by not seeking good or bad, truth or morality but just understanding, some sort of role-involvement in a very rudimentary form to dwelve into the respondents mind becomes an indispensable prerequisite.

In the present study, the question of role-selection, led to a conflict of self-notions and self-concepts of the researcher with the 'identity types' and 'typifications' of reality ontologically available in the field. That is to say, in spite of all the desperate pleas and persuasions made by the researcher to be accepted as an 'individual research student' the Lucknowites being as they are faithfully enslaved by typifications primarily identify people by ascriptive labels. Thus, almost instantaneously the researcher was branded as a Hindu from South India, which occasionally boiled down to finer breakdown of caste and even sex; 'A Brahmin female researcher from South India' was the mystification spun out of the researcher's own construction of reality where religion does not play a meaningful symbol. The deep-rooted syndrome of caste typifications characteristic of Lucknow was never successfully counteracted by the researcher. Totally unrelated to this field was the development of new institutional beliefs and symbols pertaining to caste Brahmins indicating strong trends towards projecting the
image of the community from one of majority to a dominated minority. The widespread consciousness of many Brahmins, particularly from Tamil Nadu coupled with sporadic outbursts of organised activity suggested a strong movement towards self-perception of the community as caste minorities. The researcher's ethnic roots in that community went a long way in influencing the role-selection for the field study. Accordingly, the image of a bourgeoning minority (that is the Brahmins of Tamil Nadu) provided the epistemic reference, and the fact of the researcher being linguistic minority (that is non-Hindi speaking) in the ethnic milieu of the field added to the minority self-image of the researcher which were adorned as new roles for the field. The crisis between personal ideological preferences (of secular self-identity) and ontological categorisation (of the Hindu stereotype) was thus finally overcome by the selection of a 'caste minority role' by the researcher. In this way, the mechanism of role selection of the self of the researcher as a minority of a kind facilitated communication with the self of the respondent. The role is always contingent upon working out of a definition of the situation and this field study is a remarkable example of this. The subtle difference between role-taking and role-playing is brought out very well by Shibutani. The technique of role-taking that was practised in this field study involves "the perception of gestures, vicarious identification with
another person and projection upon him of one's own behavioral tendencies". Yet, it was soon found that role-taking is only a skin-deep therapy in field work. The traumatic experience of the researcher plagued by the problem of self-identity is most effectively summed up in the words of Olson as, "I, the outsider wants the insights of an insider unencumbered by existing 'outside' theoretical preconceptions - wanting in but being out".

In spite of making all preparations temperamentally and technically to encounter the field, rapport-binding was not always easily forthcoming. These were due partly to the political uncertainties prevailing in Lucknow during 1977 and its far reaching consequence in eroding public confidence essential to success of rapport management in any human encounter. Additionally, the presence of rival factions within the two 'minority' communities selected for the study posed unexpected problems for gaining field acquaintance. Besides, being suspected as RSS worker, each sub-groups or sect like the Shias and Sunnis was suspecting to be spied upon by their opponents under the guise of the researcher. These startling revelations were realised during the course of a pilot survey that the field worker undertook by visiting some Muslims and Christians under the assistance of local election office. For instance, short of being physically thrown out an Anglo-Indian lady banged the door on the face of the researcher suspecting her to be a family planning
worker! A Hindu Chikkan manufacturer was voluble in his abuses when the researcher sought interviews with his Muslim labourers through back-door methods. Similarly, visit to some Shia households in the old city evoked their suspicious of the researcher's possible pro-Sunni dispositions. It was very clear that the confidence of the people was at its lowest ebb and so the field work had to temporarily suspended or kept in a low key until rapport was successfully established.

An additional constraint of phenomenological research was the problem of gaining accessibility into data that lay within private worlds of biographical anecdotes and family experiences of fame and shame, hope or despair as the case may be. The rigidity of the formal methods of research could not have yielded the flexibility and informality demanded by the conceptual framework as well as by the research topic particularly under the then prevailing political conditions at Lucknow. Hence, in order to penetrate the domain of personal knowledge and private perceptions that can reveal the reality meaningful to the subject in his own native categories, an informal mode of data collection and a qualitatively oriented methodology became the inevitable characteristics of the research design. Qualitative research is an act of faith and not of formalisation.

The constructions of actors own "reality" was therefore not conceptualized in any preconceived notion or category by the researcher. The double hermeneutical
process of interpretation followed by this study took into account the existing categories operating in the field of communal relations. The "typification" provided the "identity types" against which the data containing subjective definitions were examined. These typifications at the objective level of reality were the familiar stereotype in society that formed the core of official and academic ideal-types as well. These were as follows:

The label of a communal minority is affixed on all non-Hindus since they are less in number to the Hindus by mere conventions than constitutional means. The Indian Constitution does not define a minority directly but has only provided safeguards for all communities alike irrespective of caste, creed, race, language or sex. So by inferential argument and in the light of the political traditions behind the birth of Indian nationalism, Muslims and Christians have been identified as national minorities, ethnically (in this case, by religion) dividing them from the larger group of Hindus. Therefore, the Muslimness or the Christianness of birth is perceived to be a sufficient condition of their 'minority' images in popular stereotype-types, and even academic ideal-types. The researcher also adopted these 'categories' for technical convenience, but to be subsequently interpreted in subjective terms by the people concerned. It is in this context that the technique of open-ended, semi-structured interview to obtain ethnobiography proved extremely helpful.
As suggested by Denzin, the perception of more than one person towards one and the same situation, in addition to the individual's own repertory of definitions affords a triangulation of analysis enabling the research to peep at the world through the respondent's frame. 25

Considering the sociological landscape of the city, dominated by intra-communal antagonisms and tension, it was necessary to modify the objective categories obtaining at the national official level to suit local conditions. Hence the Shia-Sunni and Indian Christian-Anglo-Indian axis of animosities had to be accommodated within the design of research that was initially conceived for a holistic notion of minority identity. Consequently data collection had also to be done separately for the each sub-group separately.

Both internal and external factors already discussed unanimously determined the technique of data collection in favour of the Informant Method. 26 However, the conventional styles of informant-oriented research that rely on a handful of 'individuals screened for the purpose' would not have delivered the goods in this study that centred around the private world of experiential self and perception. So the regular function of an informant as a representative respondent, had to be tailored to one of a 'contact man' to provide the individual members for purpose of the concerned study, besides giving some useful insights into the relevant symbols necessary for technical familiarisation with the field. It
was also expected of the informants, at least the educated ones among them to provide a general orientation course to the alien researcher besides furnishing the necessary documents and other records pertaining to the various communal organisations in the city for added information on the subject.

The choice of the informant method in a way also marked the genesis of the field work formally. The implementation started with assistance from the State Minorities Commission to facilitate the finalisation of the informant's list. The process of research entry thus began, finally relied on both formally chosen technique of informant method and other non-formal sources of contact and communication as shown in the following sketch of rapport establishment and field approach.

Diagram II

The Process of Rapport Building

Community festivals
celebrations,
meetings and
conferences

Private individuals
friends, informants
and respondents

Secondary source of information (State Archives, Libraries, official documents of the Minority Organizations and Government publications as well; police records etc.)

The Researcher in the Lucknow Field

Officials and other Govt. Authorities including minorities Commission and Ministerial Departments, Local Academic Community

2

Community power structure, Religious and political leaders and Executives of Communal Organisations.
The choice of the informants was determined by following considerations:

(1) As far as possible, those informants who are fairly well-known in the community either for some specific communal/social welfare work or for scholarly contributions or those who have been freedom fighters and old residents of the city with first hand information on the evolution of local communal relations.

(2) Informant selection was such that it was representative of Lucknow social structure of Muslims and Christians at the level of community sect and biraderis; also representing traditional modern professions and occupations as well. This was necessary to obtain the maximum amount of co-operation from the respondents by successfully counteracting the likelihood of any situational or personal embarrassment arising out of a 'crisis' of confidence. The introduction and references given by the informants for contacting the respondents acted as effective buffers to the tension-bound interview situations. There were ten informants in all, three
Sunnis, two Shias, two Indian Christians and three Anglo-Indians.

The role of informant may be summed up as "agents, participants or witnesses professedly or ostensibly giving their own answers on the ground of their inside or close up knowledge to the question of causation. As already stated such a performance was expected of the informant only to some extent since his 'information' was only partial data, for, the requirement on hand, being the subjective knowledge of the respondents in their own concepts. While some of the informants were found to be enthusiastic respondents themselves, they were only sought for guidelines to get acquainted with the non-informant respondents a kind of "what's where" service rendered by a local tourist bureau. But their most important task was to persuade respondents to go through an informal interview lasting for not less than an hour or two. To facilitate their work of selecting respondents each informant was provided with a scheme of urban occupations in the city of Lucknow and was asked to furnish not less than 5 from each of the 12 boxes into which these occupations were grouped as reflected by Table 8. Also, since the city's communal landscape was internally divided, the respondents were chosen/such a manner that they could represent the four major sub-sects; that is, Sunnis and Shias for Muslim, Indian Christians and Anglo-Indians for Christians (hereinafter referred as M, Ch, S, Sh, I and A respectively in tables etc.)
Table 8

Occupational Basis of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Occupation</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Semi-traditional</th>
<th>Modern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>1 - 25</td>
<td>2 - 20</td>
<td>3 - 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private (Community)</td>
<td>4 - 14</td>
<td>5 - 7</td>
<td>6 - 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private (Non-community)</td>
<td>7 - 1</td>
<td>8 - 2</td>
<td>9 - 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/Government</td>
<td>10 - 3</td>
<td>11 - 3</td>
<td>12 - 70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vertical columns in the above table indicate the category of occupation— if caste/biradari based it falls under "traditional" whereas "semi-traditional" jobs are those non-caste or non-biradari in nature but involving a very low level of technical know-how, and those that have been ethnic prototype occupations of these communities in Lucknow since time immemorial. The last column "Modern" relate to technical and academic occupations and professions including commerce and trade operated through means of modern techniques and exchange market. This is also true of the other two categories as well but the nature of the economic activity in "Modern" is technologically superior.

The horizontal rows in Table 8 reflect the source of employment and has been divided into four categories: (a) self-employed with or without other mechanical or manual aids,
(b) private employment within the organisation run by the community such that its work situation is not de-linked from ethnic ethos; (c) private employment outside the community, and (d) public sector or government jobs both the State and the Central Government as well as in Public Sector organisations.

In Table 8 above, the figures indicated in each box against the serial box no. for example, 1-25, 2-20 etc. are the number of respondents belonging to the occupational category indicated by the concerned box. There are 228 in all with 2 in the unemployed category, not included in Table 8. Thus, there are 25 Muslims and Christian self-employed in the Traditional Occupation Sector (Box No. 1) as against 35 in the self-employed category of modern sector of occupations i.e. Box 3 and so on and so forth.

Informant Bias

The scope for informant bias, in the selection of respondents and in the presentation of 'information' is unlimited in this method. The bias, however, unintentional it may be, arises due to various reasons most important among these is the informants' standing in the society; the fear of possibly risking it on account of the interviews usually prompts them to always recommend, 'convenient respondents'. In the course of the field study at Lucknow, the researcher found to her greatest amazement, that more than the respondent, it was the informants who needed constant
reassurance as to the veracity of the research work. So rapport management had to be done at two levels, firstly with the informants and then with the respondents.

While respondents' suspicion, apprehension or curiosity were familiar obstacles to progress of interview the informant bias was a major hurdle to the task. An attempt was made to overcome these problems by adopting the following measures:

(a) The interview procedure was qualitatively formulated such that it was possible to unobtrusively catch the respondents on most trivial matters of everyday life like the local custom of "paan" eating, "hooka" smoking or the price of edible oil, when most probably they were tutored by the informants with 'tailored' responses on formidable minority issues such as uniform civil code or Hindi imposition. By being able to defuse the seriousness of the interview situation this way, rapport was sufficiently forthcoming in a manner as to permit the greatest manipulation and manoeuvrability possible and with the least awareness of the respondents. The importance given to everyday situations of basic needs provoked even the most dormant egos to respond and gradually unravel their dimensions of identity.

(b) Another technique to check the overflow of informant bias is to contact the respondents much later than the
appointed time. Stalling for time was an effective move to take the respondents mind off the situation that may have been stage-managed by the informant;

(c) As far as possible informants were asked to only provide the respondents' whereabouts and give a letter of introduction without physically contacting them. Thus, the researcher undertook the arduous task of 'initial encounter' with informants' introduction (mostly verbal) herself so that respondents were not 'prejudiced' into the study already;

(d) Another device adopted was the triangulation of methods by co-opting other measures of data collection such as contact with leaders, authorities, organisational heads and also with the help of secondary source information including diaries maintained by the respondents besides other personal and public documents.

It was not possible, at times, even for the informants to win the confidence of individuals from their respective communities, non-response was due to various reasons - lack of time and interest; of trust in the work, particularly for government servants and wage-earners the confidence-factor seemed to be a vital variable. At times, non-response was also intentional and whenever the research technique did not succeed in breaking the ice, it was accepted, though complacently, that silence speaks more volumes
than words.

The informant-respondent contact network was kept in tact for nearly three years — too long a period to doubt the sustenance of loyalty and interest of the informants. It was unavoidable however because the work proceeded intermittently due to various reasons, particularly when disturbed local conditions prevailed as for example (a) during the Shia-Sunnis riots of 1979, (b) the Aligarh and Moradabad, Hindu-Muslim riots in 1978 and 1980 respectively, (c) or for that matter the Christian protest against the threatened imposition of the Tyagi Bill in 1979. During these 'crisis' situations, it was found wiser to be off the field, though the contact with informants continued.

Field Protocols

(a) Techniques and Tools of Data Collection

At the threshold of research, the most vital question confronting the field worker is the elusive nature of the 'data' in the offering. What to be accepted as 'relevant material' of the study is particularly very ambiguous in the phenomenological investigation which deal with commonsense happenings meaningful in the day-to-day existence of the concerned 'individual' respondent. The problem on hand was to represent an ultimate reality in place of negated realities of everyday lives which may contain anti or marginal views.
to the sub-systems of reality, that is the meeting point between sociology and psychology that was left-unexplored hitherto and to be successfully explicated by phenomenology. Such an 'ultimate reality' (ultimate because for the concerned individual such a 'construction' and 'definition', is meaningfully relevant either theoretically or even experientially) cannot be fed as a stimulus through pre-coded questionnaire because the provinces of meanings' between the respondents views and the researchers ideas presented through formal methods may not be anchored in one and the same reality. The researcher may be dabbling with "rational" academic symbols and theoretical notions of minority identity whereas the respondent may be in a different 'world of meanings' magic or ritual or politics that serve his practical interests in the context of his inter-subjective existence. Therefore, the phenomenological data is generated through what Psathas calls as the method of co-operative encounter and exploration in the native categories' itself which understandably enough cannot be fulfilled by the rigidity of formal methods including structured informal interviews. In this connection, the 'informant' acted as an influential 'variable' on the technique because to some extent, the respondents were aware of the research topic and hence the conscious, semi-conscious or sub-consciousness association with what is minority 'being'. On her part, the researcher was also biased more towards the respondents' perceptions of the
ethnic worlds of meanings than all the others put together. Therefore, as a formal check on overplay of emotional or sentimental outbursts, the researcher had a kind of interview guide 'meaningful' to the empirical conditions prevailing at Lucknow (that is to say both 'inter' and 'intra' categories were incorporated). The guide was not meant to be administered to the respondent, but served as an aid so that the items included in the guide were sensitized in the course of conversations casually, to elicit the inter-subjective perceptions or public identity of the respondents vis-a-vis his self-identity. For example, any unobtrusive reference to the minority character of Aligarh Muslim University can evoke a wealth of responses from an individual who may 'define' it in any number of ways he feels like - as much a non-issue as an issue itself; further dimensions of his responses can amount to seeing the 'problem' as political, economic, cultural or in psychological terms as indicated by his choice of linguistic expressions and vocabulary. Similarly, the topic of 'foreign aid' to churches may or may not be 'relevant' to the concerned respondent who may just brush it aside in favour of discussing admission of his children to Christian schools. Here again the problem may be viewed by intra-minority or majority-minority categories as the case may be. It is from such verbalizations of that is meaningful to the individual that the second-phase of interpretative task begins for the researcher, that is, to understand varying
definitions as they relate to the same behaviour. That is, how do the individuals in the study perceive and define a taken-for-granted reality called minority situation? What are the categories of definitions used? And what is the criteria of unity and diversity of reality constructions?

Equally, if not even more important was to explore the intra-subjective or self-images of the individual in the world of his own 'folk mappings'. It contains the most elementary form of hardcore subjectivity i.e. the image of the Self as seen by the Self. For the world of private identities nothing can be more fruitful data than biographical experiences, with which the individual may be functionally, genetically and historically linked to recall Schutz. 32

Therefore, there are two aspects of 'data' to justify any claims to the phenomenological status of the study, viz. the private and the public domains of identity, which have been conceptualised as "minoritiness" and "minoritization" in this thesis. Naturally, the enormity and richness of information required to comprehensively cover both these aspects and in the vocabulary of individual concepts themselves will be possible only through informal conversations with the informants and respondents. This accounted for the final choice of the technique in favour of informal interviews, sometimes as unobtrusive and ad hoc like TV interviews that the respondent was almost unaware of his having gone through the 'session' of an identity disclosure. There are no formal
methods of classification within an integrated conceptual framework though the thematic significance was not lost. On the other hand, the unstructured and informal sociological tools contributed to the richness and evocative quality of the data.

The main point of qualitative method is to ensure the reliability, authenticity and meaning-relevance of the information given. To do so, without sacrificing the researcher's role of an empathetic partner, the sensitive aspects of the topic was given secondary importance to respondents' primary interests in life. Care was also taken not to repeat any questions sequentially but present a virtual juggling of topics through the method of cafeteria questions with some repetitions so as to check data consistency. The researcher's interest was not on truth or falsehood but only in the individual profiles of perception of the self and others, so it was not difficult to categorise such perceptions in the course of double hermeneutics to complete the research task. That is, as per the conventions of phenomenological method, data collection was done in "existing types" of respondents but interpreted through type-constructs of the researcher.33

No two interview situations were alike since no two respondents were alike. The sequences of each interview situation was skilfully forged so as to fit into the 'uniqueness' of the concerned subject. In this way, the
reliability-validity factor was also taken care. The responses of the subjects were varied outbursts of disgust and anger, in difference or apathy of hope and aspirations. The context changed from one respondent to the other depending on the situational constraints. For instance, it was as absurd to ask a Muslim rickshaw puller on Sixth Five Year Plan productivity as it was to discuss the future of English with an illiterate Muslim; polygamy set the ball rolling for a Maulana and the 'Shariat' controversy warmed up rapport with him. So more of an intuitive insight than an intellectual approach was required to deal with the human factor in the interview situation. This is the essence of Verstehen sociology.

Case histories gathered from informal semi-structured interviews constituted the substantive bulk of data collected, the analysis was accordingly qualitative in nature.

Some unobtrusive techniques and other ad hoc methods had to be improvised from time to time. These multiple tools of investigation helped to impart an element of authenticity and in-built mechanism of verification essential to qualitative research. Also, no set rule was followed in recording of the data that was verbally constituted. If the mood of the interview situation permitted it, the recording was done on the spot in the form of short-notes, which were later elaborated (in English, if the original
was in Hindustani) into full-fledged case histories. If due to various reasons on-the-spot recording was not possible then mental notes were the only alternative possible, to be later transcribed into script. Alongside the interviews, a log book of current events of 'topical' interests to the concerned minorities was also kept besides maintaining a field work dairy.

**Sampling**

In a qualitatively set field study as in the present case, the technique of sampling and the size of the sample are not major methodological issues as in the case of formal studies. On the other hand, practical considerations of feasibility and availability of respondents have been given considerable significance. On account of the external and internal pressures on the concerned study, it was not very easy to procure respondent at will. What was important is the accessibility to the respondent - hence it was quality and not quantity that mattered in such studies involving in-depth case history analysis. In all, 92 Sunnis, 56 Shias, 52 Indian Christians and 30 Anglo-Indians were interviewed as respondents. Besides, 15 Muslim organisations, and three Christian associations were also approached for primary source data besides seeking valuable information as a sensitization process to the field study.
The De-linking Phase

With intermittent breaks, the field work was spread over nearly three years. Since no formal methods were followed at any stage of research, it was not easy to draw the deadline for winding up the interviews. The decision had to be essentially qualitative and subjective. Though the size of the sample is large enough for a qualitative study, the collection of data continued to proceed until there was a kind of saturation "smell" by the researcher. This stage was of course reached much earlier in case of Muslims as compared to the Christians on the whole by the completion of 189 case histories, it was almost evident that it was time to call a halt. But 41 more case histories were added to the already imposing list; this was partly to replicate some; and, more over to acquire as many representative cases as possible from the occupational nexus obtaining at the city of Lucknow.

The withdrawal stage is also equally important so as not to leave behind bitter feelings and uncertainties. The contact with the Informants continued much after the actual physical contact with the field had wound up. This was essential to tie up some loose ends which are inevitable in non-standardised research enterprises. At times, it involved very intense moments of emotional disturbances particularly in cases where the respondents were from the
lower strata holding high hopes in the benefits of the research study to redeem their wretched conditions. Worse still, the educated and the informed among the respondents misconstrued empathy with sympathy; and expected the researcher to be a missionary in the cause of minorities, by expressing their viewpoints, and emphasizing "minority" problems, and offering instant solutions for the same. With great difficulty, they could assimilate the fact that the concerned research enterprise was not meant to be a
Notes and References


2. Bedrich Baumann, *Imaginative Participation: The Career of an Organising Concept in a Multi-Disciplinary Context*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1975. In this book, the author has attempted to differentiate between the Weberian concept of interpretation and the phenomenological notion of it. According to him in Weber's interpretation, the subjective meanings and casual explanations are correlative; whereas, Bergerian understanding of the Verstehen Sociology is one of empathetic grasping of individual's reality constructions not explanatory but descriptive. Schutz relies more on W.L. Thomas' reality concept; whereas, Bergerian concept of Social Action is essentially a Meadian dialectic between self and society, in the view of the author.


4. Schutz emphasizes on three rules to be observed in the construction of the Homuncular model. They are (1) Logical consistency; (2) subjective perception of meanings; (3) interpretation within subjective framework. Like the Weberian Ideal Type, the homuncular model is also set in methodological individualism. But the method of verification are different. Schutz assigns equal responsibility to the researcher and the respondent to approve the validity of the model. Whereas, for Weber, Ideal-type is an objective model of analysis that has an universal status beyond space and time. Since it is an abstraction of reality where individual definitions are not taken into consideration, there is no question of a Verstehen Sociology ever made possible with use of Weberian Ideal types. The greatest failure of Schutz's model is its pretence of subjectivity because Schutz insists on the validity of his inductive model being inter-subjectively approved by the community of scientists on the one hand and by the intra-subjectivity of respondents on the other. What if they do not


18 Ibid.


20 For the first time perhaps in the history of independent India, the Brahmins of Tamil Nadu organised themselves into a militant group to protest against alleged social, economic and cultural discrimination against the community. The Brahmin Association became the focus of academic discussion on the grounds of its claim to be recognised as a constitutional minority as reported in national English dailies of September 1981. Officially (i.e. as per constitutional notion) the Brahmins as part of the Hindu Caste Structure come under the rubric of a majority ethnic and hence the paradox of their demands. This development coincided with the entry of the researcher hailing from the protesting Brahmins of South India into the Lucknow field.


23 P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *Social Constructions of Reality*, Penguin Books, 1966. The authors make a distinction between "identity-types" and identity. The former is those identities of people institutionalised by objective reality popularly known as stereotypes; whereas the latter is internalised subjective process of understanding and expressing
reality, which may not be consistent with the identity type at a given point in time.

24 The Indian Constitution does not define a minority. The question "Who is a minority?" have been constantly decided in legal pronouncements by the Supreme Court of India by interpretation of fundamental rights guaranteed to all by Acts 29(1) and 20(1). In the legal issues pertaining to size of the minority vis-a-vis the state or the nation as a whole, the Supreme Court of India (in the case involving the Kerala Education Bill, 1957 Case, i.e. A.I.R. 1958 S.C. 1956) observed that any population less than 50 per cent of the total population in a country or nation-state as a whole is a minority; further, it introduced the variable of the state basis to bring out the local and regional variations in the distribution of minority populations. For example, the Muslim population of Jammu and Kashmir is more than 50 per cent of the state population and hence it becomes a majority though it is a minority in the national context.


28 John Madge, op. cit., 1976 offers an excellent discussion on the merits and demerits of Informant Interviews.

29 The Tyagi Bill otherwise known as the Freedom of Religion Bill was proposed in the Parliament by a Hindu member of the then ruling Janata Party in
1979 as a step towards curtailing conversions of Hindus by Christians and Muslims. A procession was taken on Easter Day 1979, by all the Christians of Lucknow city irrespective of their denominations as a mark of protest against the Bill conceived as an assault on their fundamental right to convert.


33 A. Schutz, op. cit., 1964 distinguishes between the two types of constructs in research enterprise. They are: (a) First Order constructs or the respondents' own frame of reference. These are called existing-types by Schutz; and (b) Second Order constructs i.e. the researchers' constructs that are hermeneutically transformed from the existing-type constructs. These are called Type-Constructs.