Chapter 4
Methodology

In the previous chapter, we have discussed that the research problem of the present study, is the formal leaders of trade unions in the textile industry of Ahmedabad. While explicating the research problem, we have also mentioned that the attempt in the present study, is to focus attention on the social background of these leaders, their leadership role, and their opinions on some aspects of industrial milieu. In this chapter, we shall discuss the methodological aspects of the study, viz. the manner in which we have selected our respondents, have gathered information from them, and processed and presented the data in this thesis.

Before we discuss about how we selected our respondents, we shall first take note of some of the operational definitions relevant for this study.

With reference to the present study, (1) trade unions are registered organisations of mill-workers of cotton textile industry of Ahmedabad during the year 1974-75. (2) Formal trade union leaders are the executive committee members of the above-mentioned trade unions. (3) The 'outsiders' among the formal trade union leaders are those who are not actively engaged in the cotton textile mills of Ahmedabad. The 'insiders' are those, who are actively engaged in the mills mentioned above.

Selection of respondents:

Having defined our respondents as executive committee members, both outsiders and insiders of all the registered trade
unions in the cotton textile industry in Ahmedabad, it became clear to us as to what to look for. The first step for us was, to get the names of all the registered trade unions in the cotton textile industry of Ahmedabad. We got the list from the office of the Registrar of Trade Unions, Gujarat State. From a comprehensive list containing all the registered trade unions of Gujarat state, we had to isolate the unions relevant for our purpose. We found that there were ten registered trade unions in Cotton textile industry in Ahmedabad. The names of the seven unions included in the study are given in chapter two. The three unions which were omitted, were the following:  

1. The Mill Mazdoor Sabha  
2. The Gujarat Mill Kamdar Sangh  
3. Gujarat Textile Labour union  

It was found that the first union was confined to silk workers only, the second one was a fake one, in that it had no members and about the third one the researcher was told that it was a general union.

The remaining seven unions were approached by the researcher to get the list of the executive committee members. The first few visits to the various unions did not turn out to be successful. At times, it was difficult to locate the unions and in one case, when the office was located, it was found that the union has shifted to some other place. At times, the secretaries were not available.
In case of TLA, there was no major difficulty. One of the secretaries who was available, readily got a cyclostyled list of all the members of the executive committee. The list contained information regarding the mill, department, shift and residential address of all the insiders. The outsiders' list was different and since all of them were available in TLA office, no other details were given.

The Indicate union was the one which had its shifted office. The general secretary was a busy man and he could hardly spare some-time. After several visits however, a printed list of members of the executive committee was made available to the researcher. The list did not contain the names of the outsiders. Their names were dictated by one of the secretaries.

The secretary of the Lalvavta union had no ready list. However, he dictated from his file, the names of some members of his union's executive committee. After dictating twenty five names, he said that they were sufficient to get an idea of his union's leadership. Later on, some respondents of the union, told the researcher that any of them had to hide their identity in the mills and probably because of that, the secretary was unwilling to give the full list.

The Maha Gujarat Union secretary refused to give any information regarding any member of his union. After a number of unsuccessful attempts, the researcher approached an ex-leader of the union, who gave a letter of introduction, and himself gave
names of some executive committee members of the union. A complete list could not however, be available at any stage.

The secretary of the Mandal union had no ready list but he dictated all the names and promised to call all the members of his union's executive committee to the union office for interview.

The Sarni union also provided a complete list and so did the Sangh union.

On the basis of information available, it was estimated that the number of respondents would be between 250 to 300. Since, it was a small number, it was decided to make a census study rather than take sample out of these respondents. This was thought helpful in that, thereby sampling errors were completely eliminated. Moreover, a census study had the advantage of giving a complete picture. At the same time, the size of the respondents was sufficient to facilitate cross-tabulation and to provide adequate cells frequencies for various cells in the tables.

Data Collection instrument:

Once the approximate size of the respondents was available, and the main objectives of the research problem were explicitly stated, the next problem was to decide about the instrument of data collection. In view of the time and money constraints of the researcher, questionnaire was an appropriate instrument to adopt. But in view of the social composition of the respondents and
the nature of their work, it was felt that questionnaire might create more problems than it might solve. To begin with, the respondents were composed of different linguistic groups and therefore, questionnaire in different languages would be required. Secondly, many of the respondents, who were mill workers, were likely to have low level of education and they would find it difficult to fill up the questionnaire themselves. Thirdly, as trade union leaders, our respondents were likely to be busy persons and they would not find time to attend to such work of filling up questionnaire. In this case the advice given by Eby (1950) to students of trade unions is very appropriate. Considering the active life of trade union leaders, he advises them to use interview technique.

The alternative was to use interview technique. For leaders, who were busy, interview was the best way to get information. Moreover, in spite of their low level of education and diversity of mother tongue, it was easy to get information from the respondents through this technique. The method also has certain flexibility, whereby inquiry into aspects which are not thought of earlier, can be made. Added to all this, the technique also affords opportunities to have close observation of the respondents' family life, work situation in the mill or union activities, depending upon the locale of the interview. Thus, besides obviating the difficulties posed by questionnaire technique, the interview technique has the possibility of probing deeper and wider into the area of inquiry.
As was noted in chapter three, there are very few studies about trade union leadership in India. About the role of trade union leader—which includes process of recruitment and socialization, as also the tasks they perform—we practically know next to nothing. In a largely unexplored area, an interview guide provides the flexibility which is required in such a situation.

The three major areas of inquiry are: (1) the social background of leaders (2) their leadership role and (3) their opinions. The interview guide was prepared which incorporated all these three areas. Since a majority of the respondents were Gujarati, the interview guide was prepared in Gujarati (An English version of the interview guide is given in the appendix).

In the area regarding social background, items such as age, sex, education, mother tongue, native place, religion, caste, occupational background etc. were included. For insider respondents, additional items like mill, and department in which they work, years of service in the mill, etc. were included.

The second area about leadership role included information about how the respondents join unions, how they make their way to positions of power, what factors—political, familial, economic—influence their choice, etc. This was different from the first theme in the sense that it involved a process which was bound to be different for different respondents.

Also included were the items about leadership tasks—the various organizations, bodies, committees of which they become
members, the type of tasks they have to do for members, the amount of time they spend in union activities and their perception of gains and losses of this role.

In the last area about their opinions, there were twelve statements which were meant to elicit respondents' opinion about some aspects of industrial scene.

Once the interview guide was prepared, five interviews of insiders and outsiders of two unions were conducted to test its adequacy. With some minor changes, the interview guide was printed.

Data Collection Process:

The data collection was started in the middle of the month of November, 1974, and it continued up to the end of July 1975. This works out to be one interview per day, which was admittedly a very slow process. But since the researcher himself conducted all interviews, while, at the same time, discharging his academic duties, such a slow process was not allowed to bring in any inconsistency in the data-collection approach and process.

A beginning was made with TLA. It was found that the members of the executive committee were coming very often to TLA office, either to attend some committee meetings or to accompany any of the members from their mill. A list was also made available to the researcher. But the problem was how to find out 'who is who'. In this connection a library assistant of TLA was very helpful. He introduced many of the respondents and made the
task easy. One of the secretaries of TLA had given a letter of introduction to the researcher and it used to serve as a starting point for the interview. There was hardly any reluctance showed by any of the respondents, though there were some who used to say that they did not have anything new to say.

Most of the interviews of TLA respondents were conducted in any of the vacant rooms or canteen of the TLA. Few were interviewed in their mill-compounds, and fewer still, at their residence. All the outsiders of TLA were interviewed in the TLA office only.

Next was the Sarni union. Unlike TLA, which had essentially Gujarati speaking respondents, the Sarni respondents were all Muslims—with the exception of only two. The responds were more at ease in Urdu than in Gujarati. However, most of them were able to converse in Gujarati, and therefore the problem of communication was not very acute. Here also, the interviews were held in the union office in the beginning. But after sometime, it was found that unlike TLA, respondents in this union were not coming to union office frequently. Therefore, the researcher had to go to their residence for interviews. Few of them were also interviewed in the mill canteen or mill compound.

The Manda union was the third on the list. The secretary of the union was very cooperative. He had arranged to call respondents in the batches of two or three and he also used to inform the researcher about the date and time. A separate room was also made available to the researcher to interview the respondents. In spite of
the interest taken by the secretary, two respondents of the union who were bed-ridden for a long time, could not be contacted.

The next was Maha Gujarat Union. As noted earlier, the secretary of the union had refused to give any information about the union as well as about the respondents. But because of the letter of introduction given by the former leader of the union, interviewing became easy. Most of the respondents were interviewed at their residence and in some cases, at the party office. Unlike the respondents of other unions, respondents of Maha Gujarat union were skeptical and suspicious about the intention of the researcher, but once they found that he had the letter of introduction, they used to be frank and friendly.

The respondents of Lalwansta union did not show much reluctance, though some of them did. Here also, a reference to some of the important leaders of the union and of the party, used to carry conviction with the respondents. Mostly the interviews were conducted at the residence of the respondents.

The Indicate union was contacted late because, the secretary and other officials were busy with political activities when the researcher had first met them. Many of the respondents were contacted in the union office and some were either interviewed at home or in the mill.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Total number of formal leaders</th>
<th>Total number of interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TLA</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicate</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalvavta</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maha Gujarat</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandal</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarni</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangh</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>282</strong></td>
<td><strong>251</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Sangh union had only five members on the executive committee, four of which were contacted and the fifth one could not be located because of inadequate information.

In spite of attempts to frequently contact those who were left out from different unions, some of them could not be contacted. The outsiders who were left out were either political partymen, who were busy with more of political activities than trade union ones; or they were away on some tour. Those of the insiders who could not be contacted were either sick or those who had gone to their native place on a long vacation.

Table No. 4.1 indicates the total number of formal leaders in each union and the number of those who could be interviewed.

The table indicates that the response works out to 89.0% which is a fairly high percentage. It should however be mentioned that in case of Lalvavta and Maha Gujarat unions, a complete list was not available and therefore, from among those who were left out, it is not possible to find out how many outsiders. In case of TLA, the seven who were left out, were all outsiders. In case of Indicate, 2 were outsiders, and one insider and in Mandal and in Sangh, the three left out were all insiders.
The interview method was a costly one in terms of time. An average interview used to last about three quarters of an hour. In some cases, it was more than an hour. Because of this long duration, the respondent used to get involved into it. The usual procedure was to let him give his own history of migration (if there was any,) and then his job history, and from that, to go over to his union and his activities in it. Some of the factual information were noted down, as and when they came, and if they were not revealed during respondent's own narration, the researcher used to ask about them. In a long interview like this, it was easy to check and cross-check many items of information, and at least on the side of the factual information, the researcher feels, without undue modesty, that they were, by and large reliable. In case of respondents' opinion about various statements, the judgement was made largely on the basis of the comments that they used to make.

The time-consuming interview technique was also indicative of the time-sense of our respondents. It was hardly necessary except in case of some outsiders to fix up appointment and seek interviews of the respondents. Most of them were ready to oblige, as soon as they were told about the research work. To most of the insiders, it was a way of being recognised and they were ready to give enough time. An old Muslim respondent of TLA had sat up to 8.00 PM. in the union office, giving
interview. An outsider who was obviously very busy with work and was surrounded by members, was approached by the researcher, to fix up time convenient to him. To his surprise the researcher found that he (i.e. the leader) put aside his work, asked his men to wait and said "you may ask, whatever you want to!" Apparently, he was accustomed to journalistic interview which used to get over within ten to fifteen minutes. In the case of the present interview, he could not complete it, because after sometime he had to go out on some important trade union work. The remaining interview was completed the next day. Some educated outsiders had also fixed up appointment; but in two to three cases, they were not able to stick to the appointments. Not only that, when they used to meet again they had not the slightest regret for not keeping it.

Theoretically, interview situation must be such that the interviewee is free from the influences of the presence of others. Such an ideal situation was not possible in most of the cases. Those respondents who were interviewed in the union offices, were usually surrounded by some of their friends/colleagues/co-workers/members. It was also felt that the presence of others did not put much of a constraint on the information given out by the respondents. The ease with which most of the respondents were giving out details about the job,
This may be because of the group-oriented values of our society. It may also be, because most of these leaders were men working in public life and details of their lives were known to their members and therefore, there was no question of hiding anything.

In case of some respondents who were interviewed at their residence, the female members of the household were expressing doubts about the reasons why the information was gathered. Some doubted that the information was for the use of income tax department or rationing department or family planning department. However, the respondents were not apprehensive of any such misuse of information and there was no reluctance or hostility from any of them. Only two outsiders refused to be interviewed. One of them was from Indicate union and he said that he did not believe in the utility of such inquiry. Another outsider was from Maha Gujarat union and he too was cynical about any such research work about trade union leaders.

Coding and data processing:

Although the data of this study have been collected by means of an interview guide and therefore, a good deal of the data are in a descriptive/qualitative form, an attempt has been made to code the quantifiable and classifiable information, so as to facilitate analysis. On the basis of the various items
of information, a preliminary code book was prepared and later on, used for coding information from a few randomly selected interviews. In the light of this experience, the code-book was revised, and the researcher himself did all the coding work. Such a procedure, not only ensured consistency in coding, but also provided an opportunity to the researcher to make separate note of the various descriptive statements that could not be numerically coded.

However, the coding work performed by the researcher was one hundred percent checked by another qualified person and the questions raised by her, were resolved. Then the data were transferred on to the IBM cards. The Punched cards were machine-verified. We obtained frequency distribution of all variables and carried out consistency checks regarding related items of information. After having corrected the errors thus detected, we obtained frequency/percentage distribution of all variables, separately for each union and also for outsiders/insiders.

The usual approach in this thesis has been to discuss the various aspects of trade union leadership in terms of each union and outsiders/insiders, separately. The data have, therefore been presented in the form of frequency/percentage distributions, separately for each union and for outsiders/insiders. However, in view of the small number of observations in certain categories of the independent variable, we have not
computed percentages and have instead, indicated frequencies within brackets. Further, an effort has been made to retain as detailed an information as possible, while presenting classification of data on various items. Similarly, an effort has also been made to arrange the categories of various items in terms of their logical consistency, meaningfulness, and rank-order, to the extent possible.

It may finally be mentioned that no effort has been made in this study to develop any scale of opinions of the respondents. This, however, does not mean that the responses of the respondents to the various statements do not form any cluster. Nevertheless, it seemed best to avoid the use of the complicated statistical techniques to determine unidimensionality of the scale. Further, the researcher is humbly of the opinion that the responses of the respondents to the various items, could not be formed into a composite scale without attempting to determine their level of reliability and validity. The scope of the present study was limited and the time as well as resource constraints have not made it possible for the researcher to attempt such a sophisticated analysis. We may finally mention that the individual statements and the responses to them have some importance in indicating the opinions of the trade union leaders regarding the respective items.

Presentation of data:

Having discussed the manner in which we have gathered data and processed them, we shall briefly note how they are presented in the subsequent chapters.

Our next chapter deals with the social background of our
respondents. We have first discussed the proportion of outsiders and insiders as well as the office-bearers and non-office-bearers among them. Then we have presented some personal characteristics like age, sex, education etc. of our respondents. Later on, the social composition of leaders, in terms caste, religion, mother tongue and native place is discussed. For the insiders respondents, information regarding their mills, departments and duration of service in the mills etc. is also given.

In the next chapter, we have tried to describe the way in which these respondents have first joined trade unions and how they have subsequently come to be members of the executive committee. We also have noted their experience in political parties and in trade union movement.

The leadership role is described in the next chapter. Here, the participation of respondents in various union and non-union bodies is presented. Moreover, the tasks which our respondents have to perform and the subsequent strains and gratification that they derive is also mentioned.

In the final chapter the respondents' opinions on twelve different items are analysed.

In conclusion an attempt is made to develop some broad generalizations about the social background, role and opinions of our respondents, and to suggest some problems of research and hypotheses in the area of trade union leadership.