CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION

The objective of this case study was to explore the nature of differential impact of the first year of development-TV on different economic strata in one village in Kheda district in Gujarat state in India.

This chapter first summarizes the theoretical framework of the study from the early sections. It then discusses the changes in selected indicators of modernisation that were noted after the TV Year (1975-76), and relates them to TV content, receiver-village structure, and the Environment of the Emergency. Insights are discussed in conclusion, to generate propositions for further study.

Chapter I highlights the empirically established fact that recent economic growth has been leading to widening economic disparities between economic strata. Many studies of the so-called Green Revolution show that the economic position of the small farmer worsened as a result of "miracle seeds" which were technologically land-size neutral, but which in practice have an upper-class bias. Thus, the new development input benefited the already well-off more than it benefited the really needy. Will media as new development inputs also benefit primarily the well-off? Can media distribute ideas, information and ambitions equitably in an unfair inequitable economic context?

Chapter II looks at the role of media in creating a climate for modernisation, but then raises the possibility of an upper-class bias in this general attitudinal re-orientation function, too. Are the aspirations of the
lower economic strata groups limited by the reality of their poverty, and the essential rationality of not dreaming dreams that they know can never come true in their rock-bottom economic positions? According to the operant conditioning point of view, the world-wide expansion of media did not lead to a revolution of rising aspiration because villagers' environments and village infrastructures negatively reinforced increases in aspirations, since it could not fulfill them. Did the environment of the Congress "Garibi Hatao" (Eradicate Poverty) slogans, and, the Emergency which was announced a little over a month before TV was introduced combine, to produce a credible appurtenance of structural change in progress and hope of mobility for the lower economic strata? Did frequently televised claims and cases of land re-distribution, arrests of money-lenders, release of bonded labour, and enforcement of minimum wage laws have encouraged the poor peasant to have higher aspirations than he normally would have allowed himself?

Chapter III presents the multi-prong methods used in the case study: the survey, content analysis, and observation. Chapter IV reports on the content of the first year of TV programmes received in the study village. Chapter V describes the village structure and control mechanisms, based on the field observations of the resident observer. Chapter VI specifies the quantitative changes in the indicators of modernisation used in this study.

The before-after survey showed that the upward-oriented small farmers gained significantly on more indicators of modernisation (six) than the large farmers (five) and the landless labour (four).

On which indicators did each stratum show significant change? The upward-oriented small farmer stratum showed significant gains on four attitudinal orientation indicators, viz., urban pull, aspirations for the future,
empathy and reduction in fatalism, and, also on two indicators more dependent on structural change, viz., organisational membership, and, political efficacy.

The lowest stratum, landless labour, showed significant gains only on the same four attitudinal orientation indicators as the small farmers, viz., urban pull, aspirations for the future, empathy, and reduction in fatalism. After a year of TV, and in spite of the twenty-point programme for the poor, the landless labour stratum did not show any gain in their ability to influence the decisions of local self-government councils, nor did they show any change in the nature of their participation in village organisations. As mentioned earlier, the introduction of TV was not accompanied by a re-distribution in the opportunities for action and improvement. The landless stratum did respond in favour of modernisation at the level of socio-psychological predispositions, but were less effective in influencing the real life economic and political control organisations of the village, and the composition of their leadership in a year. It appears that communication can change perceptions and predispositions, but alone, it cannot change situations and the opportunity structure.

Alongside the small farmer and landless labour strata, the large farmer stratum also showed significant gains on the same four predispositional indicators of modernisation, viz., urban pull, aspirations for the future, empathy and fatalism. The more striking changes, however, are the significant decline in perception of political efficacy levels, and their simultaneous significantly increased level of organisational membership. The large landlords were worried by the pro-poor stand that the Congress party in power took in the 1971 election, and, the declaration of Internal Emergency. The Prime Minister, TV announced, was taking stern steps that included
the long-overdue appropriation of surplus land from large landowners like them, and liberation of family labour that they had assumed was their property. The large landlord stratum was threatened: they felt their effectiveness in influencing decisions at the village, taluka and district level was being weakened, and they therefore made attempts to consolidate the dominance of their economic class in village level organisations.

The fact that all three strata showed significant gains on urban pull, aspirations for the future, empathy and fatalism could be interpreted to mean support for the Optimistic Approach to media's role in development: all strata benefit equally. An alternative explanation favoured by this researcher is that the media combined with the Emergency and the Twenty-Point Programme to present a credible promise of redistribution of economic power, and, positive reinforcement for these new attitudes, which is why the landless labour stratum dared to allow itself to hope alongside the small farmer and large farmer.

Why did small farmers gain more than the landless labour? The small farmer owns some minimum resource base and is more likely to have had some success experiences that permit full range to his aspirations as against the landless labourer who owned nothing, and has obtained little. It was found that the small farmers claimed that the motivation for TV watching was to learn from it; more landless labour than small farmers claimed that people watched TV because they had nothing else to do. Thus, a larger proportion of small farmers may have been "set" to learn, with the advantage of a minimum resource base which enabled them to act more readily on TV's suggestions.
This study represents a departure from the normal convention of treating the village as the unit of analysis, and aggregating scores on this basis. Figure 3 amply shows the advantage of stratifying a village population on a variable, viz., economic assets here, that is theoretically expected to make a difference in understanding the behavioural outcome under study, viz., modernisation. To illustrate: there is no statistically significant change in political efficacy for the total village sample. However, the sub-samples for small and large farmers show significant and dramatically opposite changes. The large farmer stratum is clearly showing the threat it feels as a result of the structural changes being talked about under the Prime Minister's Twenty Point Economic Programme. Figure 3 also shows that land ownership stratification has little relationship to understanding changes in secularism and educational aspiration for the son that are clearly significant at the total village level and are probably explained better by other factors such as one's own education level.

The following insights called from this study are listed in conclusion for testing in controlled field experimental studies:

1. In accordance with the operant conditioning view, TV effect on behavior is also a function of the surrounding social and economic structure.

   a. Exposure to TV for development will result in gains on variables related to socio-psychological predispositions towards modernisation, TV operates in the context of imminent/simultaneous changes in the overall economic structure. The promise of positive reinforcement for such attitudes for the lower strata is essential, and was provided in this village
by the Emergency and the pro-poor Twenty-Point Programme.

b. Action-recommendations on TV will be adopted only by those strata that already have the capacity, the freedom and the facility to take such action in the area that is featured, e.g., TV alone could not lead the landless in this village to greater organisational participation and political efficacy.

2. Use of TV for development within a larger context of economic structural change that threatens high economic strata will result in upper class defensive action to consolidate its position against any re-distribution of its economic control and decision-making power, e.g., the large farmer stratum found its political efficacy threatened by the Emergency and simultaneously took steps to strengthen its control on local organisations in this village.

3. Contrary to the popular misconception, use of TV for development will not automatically activate interpersonal interaction with formal change agents, subsequently. This linkage has to be planned in advance.