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Valley of Heart's Delight: Orchards to Hard Drives in the San Jose Mercury News

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VALLEY OF HEART'S DELIGHT:
ORCHARDS TO HARD DRIVES IN THE *SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS*

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Megan L. Alpers

May 2010

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by

Megan L. Alpers

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May 2010

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ABSTRACT

VALLEY OF HEART'S DELIGHT: ORCHARDS TO HARD DRIVES IN THE *SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS*

by Megan L. Alpers

This research was conducted to explore how the *San Jose Mercury News* (formerly *San Jose Mercury Herald*) covered the Santa Clara Valley's transition from an agricultural community known as "The Valley of Heart's Delight" to Silicon Valley, focusing on the changes made in the reporting of farm and ranch news.

The time period surveyed in this thesis is from 1935 to 2000. The purpose was to establish any changes to reporting agricultural news over the years. A social history of agricultural journalism in the *San Jose Mercury News* over a 65-year period provided insight into how the farming industry was portrayed by this publication.

The study revealed three major frames within the time period: first, agriculture as a livelihood; second, agriculture as an industry; third, agriculture as a novelty. There was a significant change in reporting over the 65-year period, and as the area transitioned into Silicon Valley, agricultural reporting largely disappeared from the paper. The paper was shown to be an early adopter of new technology coverage and was quick to cover the area's transition from a farming community to a high-tech center.

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I truly appreciate all of the *San Jose Mercury News* reporters who contributed to this research, either through their articles or through their personal reflections on what it was like to write for the *Merc* during such an interesting time of transition.

I dedicate my thesis to my parents, Donna and Lindsey Alpers, because without them, this would not have been possible.

"It was bloom time of the year. ... The landscapes of the Santa Clara Valley were fairly drenched with sunshine, all the air was quivering with the songs of the meadowlarks, and the hills were so covered with flowers that they seemed to be painted."

—John Muir, 1912

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Research Question	4
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
Newspaper Readership: Demographics	5
Newspaper Readership: Geography.....	9
Overview of Santa Clara Valley's History	15
How the <i>San Jose Mercury News</i> Frames Stories	19
Diffusion of Innovations in Relation to Agricultural Journalism	20
Summary.....	24
CHAPTER 3 - METHOD.....	26
Selection of Newspaper	27
Interviews with Journalists	27
CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS.....	29
Agriculture as a Livelihood: 1935 through 1945.....	29
Agriculture as an Industry: 1946 through 1975	35
Agriculture as a Novelty: 1976 through 2000	44
<i>San Jose Mercury News</i> as Force for Innovation	50
CHAPTER 5 - SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION	52

Summary	52
Implications of the Study	54
Limitations of the Study	55
Direction for Future Research.....	57
REFERENCES	59

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

A large chapter in the history of the United States was written in what is now known as Silicon Valley. Before Hewlett-Packard was founded in 1939, the area was already known for its innovation and commitment to technological development—agricultural technology. Farmers flocked to the Santa Clara Valley for the fertile soil, ideal climate, and mechanical innovations created by locals to revolutionize the way the world farmed and how food was preserved. John Muir visited the area in the late 1800s and nicknamed the area The Valley of Heart's Delight for the miles and miles of beautiful fields and orchards in full bloom (Muir, 1912).

As such global events as the Great Depression, World War II, the Korean War, and the Internet revolution impacted agriculture as a larger industry, farmers and ranchers in the Santa Clara Valley saw their way of life change to keep up with the times. World War II veterans returned home with the hope of starting their own farms with promised G.I. loans. Unfortunately, while they were across the Atlantic or Pacific, the land prices back home had skyrocketed and the government refused to pay for inflated land values. As a result, many G.I.s found jobs in other areas of agriculture (i.e. canneries and drying sheds) or in other industries altogether. Ultimately, there was a transition from hands-on farming as a ubiquitous way of life for nearly everyone in the area into agriculture as an industry comprising producers and the more distant processors. San Jose rose from a small agricultural community to one of the largest canning and dried-fruit packing centers in the world. The area benefited from an era of incredible growth and prosperity within this new niche.

The final act of the transition began with the phenomenal growth of manufacturing, defense, and high-tech companies in the area. With profits from these ventures catching national attention, agriculture was moved to the background as thousands of acres of orchards and row crops were paved over to make way for subdivisions, highways, and research and development facilities. Once this phase began, The Valley of Heart's Delight became Silicon Valley.

The entire transition from an agriculture-based community to the heart of high-tech was documented through the eyes of the local newspaper, today known as the *San Jose Mercury News*. From its birth as the *San Jose Weekly Visitor*, the *Mercury News* has, through its reporting, followed the area's transition from a farming town, to a suburban oasis, to Silicon Valley—the heart of the high-tech industry. Newspapers like the *San Jose Mercury News* serve as the history keepers for the community, collecting, and recording information that might be lost to the general population over time. Today, information stored on the Internet never dies and is available to anyone, anywhere, at any time. That was not always the case. Before the creation of the Internet, one of the best historical records could be found in the pages of the local newspapers (Fagan, 2000). As newspaper readership declines and communities turn elsewhere for their news, this important source for information might be lost as well. There is hardly a better source for localized information than newspapers whose reporters live in the area and understand its issues and values firsthand. Within the articles is found the voice of the paper regarding current events in the area.

Sometime between the early 20th century and today, the Santa Clara Valley transitioned from an agricultural center to the high-tech hub of the world. The *San Jose Mercury News* reporters were front row, documenting the metamorphosis. This study will have a foundation of previously written scholarly articles, a historical study of the newspaper itself, and interviews with reporters who were present in the newsroom during the transition.

One of the terms that requires definition in this thesis is agriculture, which will come to mean the production and management of food, either produce or livestock, but also farm-related businesses, too. Farm-related businesses include distribution jobs such as feed stores and auctioneers. The farm is the land where this production occurs. Ultimately, what is grown on the farm will be used by others in the population, either sold directly to the consumers (such as at a market), or to processors (canneries, for example). The term “farm” does not refer to a backyard garden.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to trace the agricultural history of the Santa Clara Valley from 1935 to 2000 through the *San Jose Mercury News*. The goal is to explore how the paper documented the changes in the valley, with particular attention paid to the question of whether the paper encouraged such changes, discouraged them, or remained a neutral observer. How did the newspaper’s editorial content mirror the local agriculture’s transition over time? Was the newspaper generally positive about industrialization and growth in the area, or negative? To find answers to these questions, historical research was conducted using the newspaper’s articles. Additionally, firsthand interviews were

conducted with current and former *San Jose Mercury News* reporters to gain additional insight about what it was like to be in the newsroom during the transition.

Research Question

The question addressed in this study is:

1. Was the *San Jose Mercury News* active and a propelling factor transition of the Santa Clara Valley from an agricultural community to Silicon Valley, or did it simply report based on the demands of its readers?

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

Because research on agricultural journalism and how newspapers have covered periods of transition in agricultural communities is limited, this literature review focuses mainly on the changing landscape of print journalism as a whole, as well as the history of the area served by the *San Jose Mercury News*. It looks at newspaper readership with relation to demographics as well as geography, as well as framing and diffusion of innovation theories. This review helps provide the setting for the *San Jose Mercury News* as a publication during the period studied (1935 through 2000).

Newspaper Readership: Demographics

The demographics of a community are reflected in a newspaper's readership, and there have been numerous studies involving the subsets of demographic, or as Burgoon and Burgoon (1980) called them, correlates of readership: income, age, sex, education, race, length of residence in an area, mobility, marital status and more. It is worth noting that according to Schoenbach, Lauf, McLeod, and Sheufele (1999), the sociodemographic determinants of readership have remained the same since the 1970s, even as readership declined in the following years. At first, the decline in newspaper readership was not taken seriously, but in the past 25 to 30 years, editors and newspaper publishers have begun to sit up and take notice.

While many editors initially believed that such a decline was a short-term phenomenon, and that, since people naturally began using the newspapers more as they got older—and that thus, these younger nonreaders would eventually begin reading as they aged—several studies have suggested otherwise: the maturing effect that had always been taken for granted among newspaper readers seemed not to exist at all. (Lain, 1986, p. 69)

The decline in readership can be traced to who is (or rather who is not) reading a newspaper, and the information provided in the following studies allows newspapers to tailor their content to best suit their readers. A November 2007 *New York Times* article reported that researchers from Scarborough Reports (whose research findings are available for a fee) completed a two-year study of 88 major American newspapers and found that when including online readers, there had been no significant drop in readership numbers (Perez-Pena, 2007).

As McCombs and Mauro (1977) wrote, the length of a story and its placement within the newspaper will also affect whether it is read by the audience, so it is important for newspapers to be aware of not only what is written, but also where it is placed and the style in which it is written if they want to retain readers and serve the purpose of spreading information. Schoenbach et al (1999) seem pessimistic about the future of newspapers and even go so far as to call it endangered.

As community members age, their newspaper reading habits change as well, depending on what activities and priorities they have in their lives. As readers retire and leave the working world, they are less interested in business and career news than their younger counterparts (Somerville, 2001). The average age of readers interested in popular music articles is in the mid-40s, whereas the average age of readers interested in community news (i.e. local agriculture) and obituaries is older, in the mid-50s. The Somerville 2001 study also cited information from the Newspaper Association of America that found the largest segment of readers was between 35 and 44 years old. Then the readership numbers decline between 45 and 64 years old and then increase from

65 on. Interestingly, ages 25 through 34 have a higher readership than 55 through 64.

Jim Abbott, vice president of the Newspaper Association wrote in a 2007 article for the foundation's newsletter that the importance of reaching the younger demographic is high to ensure readers for the newspapers' future.

Abbott (2007) described ways newspapers can connect with these demographics: reach them young, reach them by including them, reach them in multiple ways, and reach them where they are. Abbott understood that each demographic comes to the media with unique goals, yet the "reach them where they are" advice can be related to all demographics and all locations. Readers are interested in news being convenient and available, as Wang (1977) wrote in her study regarding information utility as a predictor for newspaper readership, but they are also interested in information from places far away. Readers in the Davidson and Cotter (1997) study felt pride in their community and read their local newspaper to learn what was going on in their town, but other readers also use national and international news found in the same paper to make decisions about the wider world, especially in the areas of politics and elections (Burgoon, Burgoon, & Wilkinson, 1983).

Loges and Ball-Rokeach (1993) conducted studies that documented readers' dependency on the news for advice as for whom to vote in elections or to learn about one's place in society. Additionally, Meyer (2004) found that the confidence readers had in newspapers to provide fair information began declining in the 1970s and 1980s. Consequently, there was also a decline in newspaper circulation numbers during those years. Meyer discussed a 1985 study he conducted that concluded that 75 percent of the

public had some problem with the credibility of the media. The study also found that adults question the newspaper's credibility less than they question television newscasts. Similarly, Burgoon, Burgoon, and Buller (1986) referenced the American Society of Newspaper Editor's (ASNE) study in a report and wrote that factors such as a newspaper's concern for the community welfare, community involvement, and avoiding bias boosted readers' confidence in the newspaper's credibility.

Community issue stories covered in newspapers, such as stories about the local government, are more likely to be read by males than females, while general human interest stories appeal more to the female readers (Weaver & Mauro, 1978). The gender-related readership habits Weaver and Mauro studied shed light on readership from the perspective of what women find interesting and worth reading versus what men find appealing. In addition to local government, men are more likely than women to read sports stories and articles about war. According to the Weaver and Mauro study, women are more likely to read serial fiction than men, and have a slightly higher readership level of humor and entertainment stories.

Readership research relates to this study, as it creates understanding of why the *San Jose Mercury News* covered agriculture the way it did. Stories were framed based on what the newspaper thought was most important to the readership. For example, if agriculture was an important part of nearly everyone's livelihood in the valley, stories would be framed to show the importance of agriculture in the Santa Clara Valley and information about how orchardists could improve their current prune or apricot outputs, for example. Additionally, as will be explained below, some stories provided

information connecting farmers with valuable resources about new pesticides or where to connect with migrant workers when it was time for the harvest.

The way that the newspaper framed agriculture as a whole in its stories is an important part of this study. The framing of the industry changed over time as other industries grew and found a more prominent and popular place in the valley. Studies like Loges and Ball-Rokeach (1993) are important, because they prove that readers depend upon newspapers such as the *San Jose Mercury News* to make decisions about the wider world and their place within it. If the *San Jose Mercury News* framed a story to show the importance of agriculture in the area, readers involved in farming were likely to see themselves as important to the area. Conversely, if the newspaper framed agriculture as outdated and unnecessary to the area, farmers could struggle to understand their position as a contributor to the community.

Newspaper Readership: Geography

Tillinghast (1981) brought together four readership studies based across the United States in Wisconsin, Michigan, and North Carolina, which hosted two of the studies. Tillinghast noted that readership decreased as one moved north to south geographically, but also when one transitioned from a highly educated to a less-educated demographic, which was also found during the 1993 Loges and Ball-Rokeach study regarding dependency and readership. Interestingly, Tillinghast also wrote that newspaper circulation had rapidly increased from 1850, when there was a copy of a daily newspaper for every 30.7 people, to 1950 when there was one newspaper to every 2.8 people. Some reports say that the decline in newspaper circulation did not begin until the

1960s and 1970s, but a 2004 study traced a decline in overall readership to as early as 1940. At the time, the population was growing so quickly that even though a smaller percentage was reading, the overall number of papers sold was increasing and masked the problem until decades later (Journalism.org, 2004). Tillinghast reported that between 1962 and 1977, newspaper penetration decreased from 102 percent (there were multiple papers reaching some readers) to 76 percent. His study ultimately found that all regions of the United States had seen decreases, but the lowest levels of readership were found in the South. The East had the highest levels of readership, with the Midwest and West following.

The declining readership in all of these regions may become a problem, but especially in the South, which has many rural communities. As Beaudoin and Thorson (2004) explained in their study, newspaper readership can have positive effects on readers, both in rural and urban areas. What is more interesting is that newspapers had larger effects on social networks such as associations and neighborliness in rural areas, promoting a sense of community and togetherness that was not as present in local television news programs.

Readership studies based on geography provide context for what the *San Jose Mercury News* was facing during the period studied. Based on what Tillinghast (1981) found, the readership in California was likely higher than that of states in the South, but was not as high as the Northeast. Newspaper readership grew dramatically following the 1850s through the 1970s. This is important to note because it appears that overall readership of such newspapers as the *San Jose Mercury News* was growing during the

first half of this thesis' study but then was decreasing as it neared the end of this study's time frame in 2000. This should be noted: *San Jose Mercury News* editors may have been making decisions differently from one period to the next as they began to worry about readership numbers for the first time.

While studies like Tillinghast's follow declining readership and note newspapers losing the battle against the newer forms of media, others describe this as a transition period for newspapers, not the end. In an article for *Editor and Publisher*, a journal following the newspaper industry (ironically, on its online version), Saba (2005) wrote, "If you count Web traffic, newspapers are actually more popular than ever." Also following the notion that the Internet has merely repurposed newspaper content, John S. Carroll said in a speech at the 2006 ASNE annual meeting that at least 80 percent of Internet news originates from newspapers.

Ahlers (2006) noted that it is up to the traditional media outlets to decide what the current and future news environment means for their business.

The switching behaviors of the new consumer market will impact adversely on the traditional media, but the impact is more properly characterized as pressure on the industry rather than a threat to its existence. Moreover, online markets will provide traditional media companies with growth opportunities as they continue to leverage their brands and their customer bases into the new medium. (p. 45)

Another study followed the entrance and exit of daily newspapers from the market over a 17-year span (Cho, Martin, Lacy 2006). The study underlined several factors that stood in the way of hopeful newspaper start-ups: the cost of printing, competition, and technology. These challenges for young papers were benefits to the older, more established ones. It costs less to print each copy of the newspaper when one is printing

large quantities, as the large dailies do. Even against the economic and technological challenges, 63 dailies began during the Cho, Martin, and Lacy study, while 305 established dailies ceased printing. While that may seem like a large hole left in the news industry, 64 percent of those did not disappear altogether and continued as weeklies or more localized publications and many evening or afternoon newspapers' demise was related more to the difficulty of midday or late-afternoon distribution than anything else. The localized publications which were new versions of older newspapers are exactly what traditional journalists are looking for as Pauly and Eckert (2002) wrote.

From journalists' perspective, a paper truly devoted to local news hires a dozen enterprising reporters. Their recent work experience has been quite opposite, of course. For more than a decade, closings, corporate takeovers, and staffing cutbacks have been the rule. Thus reporters' call for more local news probably implies a critique of corporate newspapering. (p. 314)

Studies around the world have found that even though younger generations are turning to the Internet for their news, they still rely on traditional media outlets for local information (Chan & Leung, 2005; Faber, Reese, & Steves, 1985). Additionally, studies in rural areas of Texas found that even though residents turned to television for most of their information, they cited newspapers as the most credible form of information (Oskam & Hudson, 1999). That said, that does not necessarily mean that the respondents to the Oskam and Hudson study actually subscribe to the newspaper, or would even read it if they did. Stempel, Hargrove, and Bernt (2000) wrote that the Internet is not the sole reason for the decline in traditional forms of media, but the researchers were unable to answer why traditional media use had decreased during the four years covered in their

study. The report also concluded that there is—and should be—a relationship among the Internet, newspaper, and broadcast media.

A report by the Pew Research Center (2006) found that nearly one-third of all Americans received their news from online sources. Surprisingly, the numbers of young people that used the Internet for news had been on the decline since 2000. Adults around 40 years old were the most likely candidates to use online news sources. During a survey, the Pew researchers found that four in 10 respondents said they had read a newspaper the day before, with most of those solely using the print publication and a small fraction reading both online and print news (Pew Research Center, 2006).

Agreeing with the Pew findings, studies of online news content indicated that outlets such as *USA Today* and *The New York Times* adapted to the new landscape and offered news online to compete with other Internet journalists (del Aguila-Obra, Padilla-Melendez, & Serarols-Tarres, 2007). Other Web sites and news-content aggregators the study referenced as strong players in the Internet news industry were *Google News*, *Yahoo!*, *CNET.com*, and *BBC News*. This finding was expanded upon in a BlogPulse Analysis report of the top sources of news on the Internet. Of the top 10 sources, five were print outlets with online editions, three were broadcast outlets with online editions, and two were content aggregators such as *Yahoo! News* and *Google News* (“Top News Sources,” 2010).

Online news sources are popping up every day, and Cassidy’s (2007) study of print journalists found that they believe online journalists are moderately credible, yet the ranking of credibility has increased as more print journalists become familiar with online

resources and writers. Deuze (2003) called the online reporters “a new breed of journalist.” This new breed of journalist has many more readership questions to answer than traditional print reporters. For example, who exactly is the audience? According to Chyi and Sylvie (2001), roughly one-third of a local newspaper’s readership is long-distance if it has an online publication. Most stories that appear in online newspapers were found in the print edition first. Deuze described the conflicts that arise in newsrooms between traditional and new media journalists, and he wrote that the future of journalism hinges on how those conflicts are resolved or how the two adapt to create a symbiotic environment. From another point of view, Flavian and Gurrea (2006) recommend that Internet journalists differentiate themselves and take advantage of the digital-media benefits the traditional newspaper cannot provide, such as an instantaneous flow of information and a wider reach. During their study, Flavian and Gurrea collected information about media users’ objectives and found that people use the two forms of media (print vs. digital) very differently when looking for news versus looking for entertainment or a distraction. Subjects were more likely to use the Internet for updated information regarding stories they had already accessed, or if they were looking for a specific topic. Conversely, they were more likely to use traditional print forms of media if they were interested in entertainment or passing time.

Of the print journalism industry stories, the most important for this study was the Oskam and Hudson (1999) research into rural areas and the dependence upon print journalism. This shows that even while the valley was gaining radio and television stations, most residents still relied upon the *San Jose Mercury News* for their information.

Additionally, even though the Internet was becoming an increasingly popular resource for news toward the end of this study's time frame, it is important that Chan and Leung (2005) as well as Faber, Reese, and Steves (1985) found that younger readers still turned to traditional forms of media for local stories. These findings underscore the importance of the *San Jose Mercury News*' reporting on local agriculture and the influence such reporting had on readers—both young and old.

Overview of Santa Clara Valley's History

In *Passing Farms, Enduring Values: California's Santa Clara Valley*, Jacobson (1984) noted that from its earliest farmers, innovation was a key to the valley's success. For example, John Bean, who settled in Los Gatos in 1883, found that his orchards had become infested with the San Jose scale and that the spray pumps on the market were ineffective. Jacobson wrote that Bean went to work using a continuous-flow turbine to develop a high-pressure, air-chamber pump that produced a continuous spray. This small hand-held pump was patented in 1884, and the John Bean Spray Company was formed two years later. The company evolved into Food Machinery Corporation (FMC), focused on military equipment, and until the 1980s, was one of the largest corporations in the world (Jacobson, 1984).

Even while the farm industry was booming, behind the scenes a stage was being set for the birth of Silicon Valley. McCormick (1995) noted:

A significant moment occurred in 1909. Stanford University President David Starr Jordan put up the first important venture capital of \$500 for work on Lee deForrest's audion tube, which could amplify an electrical signal within its airless confines. Thereafter, the relationship of genius, capital and the Santa Clara Valley would be forever entwined.

The resulting impact of Jordan's venture capital on the valley's economy would not be seen until many years later, but until then "The Valley of Heart's Delight" was coming into full bloom. According to Jacobson (1984), by the 1950s, as many as 250 million pounds of prunes came from Santa Clara Valley orchards. Even a farmer with a five- to ten-acre orchard could make a living by selling his crop to a neighbor who had built a drying yard. Paul Mariani Jr., the son of a local dried fruit processor, conducted research at U.C. Davis in the 1940s to develop a new technique that kept fruit moist and soft in a see-through package. This method is still the standard for prunes today. Jacobson (p. 208) wrote, "It is not an exaggeration to say that the manner in which the consumer buys dried prunes today reflects Santa Clara County technology."

While preserving food in pressurized containers can be traced back to the early 1800s, food packing companies found a home in the San Francisco area in the 1850s. By the 1900s, the Santa Clara Valley was home to many local family-run canneries.

Jacobson wrote:

In some ways the early canneries paralleled the family farm system. They provided a vehicle for an individual to build a company into a family-owned enterprise that very often employed several family members from one or more generations. In many cases the canners either began as growers or later became growers, in order to improve their profit of margin. (p. 225)

According to Jacobson (1984), by 1960 the valley boasted 85 canneries, 23 dried fruit plants, 25 frozen food operations, 85 fresh fruit and vegetable packers, and was known as the world's largest center for these industries. Technology developed in local canneries revolutionized the industry across the country. The American Society of Mechanical Engineers recognized the Continuous Can Sterilizer as a landmark in

American technology. Developed between 1912 and 1920, by Albert Thompson, the machine sterilized, cooked, and cooled cans in one continuous process. Before the Continuous Can Sterilizer, cans were moved from one stage to the next by hand (Jacobson, 1984).

The transition away from farming as a livelihood is directly connected to the mechanization of agriculture. According to Jacobson:

The mechanization of farming has helped to doom the small family-farm system. Even the family canneries have dwindled in number as they have been forced to cope with expensive new equipment, large-scale competition, and enormous expenses for energy and water. Producing small quantities of high-quality produce, the family farm has proved no match for the industrialized or corporate farm with its huge acreage and computer-controlled planting, harvesting, and marketing. (p. 226)

At the same time, other industries were seeing incredible growth and the population was rising almost too rapidly for the area's infrastructure. Payne (1987) explained that even as new freeways and bridges were being built, they were just as quickly becoming clogged with traffic as industrial areas had concentrated in the North Bay area, along the Bayshore Freeway from northern San Jose to Palo Alto¹, while most homes were being built in the South Bay and East Bay. An anecdote Payne includes in his book is from 1966. It was said at the time that the most frequently seen vehicles on city streets, other than automobiles, were moving vans. By 1978 more than 30 percent of all jobs were manufacturing, while agriculture jobs comprised only one percent of the jobs in the area.

Another example of growth in the area is the now-famous story of David Packard and William Hewlett. The pair met at Stanford during tryouts for the football team and worked together with their professor, Frederick Terman, Jr., on graduate studies.

According to Malone (2002):

After graduation the two went in different directions. But Terman soon drew them back to Palo Alto and convinced them to start their own company. The Packard garage, where the company was founded, would become the most famous such structure in the world. But it was Hewlett who found that house for the newlywed Packards, and it was Hewlett's design—for Terman—of an audio oscillator that would be the source of Hewlett-Packard and Company's first real product.

The one-car garage on Addison Avenue housed the audio oscillators, which were used for the stereophonic sound of Walt Disney's *Fantasia*. In 1940 Hewlett and Packard hired four employees and moved out of the garage and onto Page Mill Road. By 1947 Hewlett-Packard was incorporated and in less than three years the company had 200 employees and an annual income of \$2 million (Payne, 1987).

The *San Jose Mercury News* was given the task of chronicling stories like Hewlett-Packard's. The newspaper was directly linked to the infancy and growth of the Santa Clara Valley. Currently owned by MediaNews Corp., the paper began in 1851 as the *San Jose Weekly Visitor* and then the *San Jose Mercury Herald*. In 1883 the *San Jose News* began publishing as well. The *Mercury Herald's* owners purchased the *San Jose News* in 1942, and the *Mercury Herald* served as the morning paper for the area, while the *News* served as the evening paper ("San Jose Mercury News," 2010). Joseph Ridder became publisher of the paper in 1952, and in 1974 Knight-Ridder was formed as the result of a merger between Knight Newspapers and Ridder Publications. In 1983 the two

papers combined to form the *San Jose Mercury News* and continued to publish morning and evening editions until 1995. In 2006 Knight-Ridder was sold to McClatchy Company for about \$4.5 billion and stock. McClatchy then sold the *San Jose Mercury News* and the nearby *Contra Costa Times* to MediaNews (“Knight-Ridder: chronology,” 2010).

The newspaper has received accolades for being the first to publish on the Internet via America Online (“San Jose Mercury News,” 2010). The *San Jose Mercury News* has also been awarded two Pulitzer Prizes. The first Pulitzer was received in 1986 for reporting on the political corruption in the Ferdinand Marcos administration in the Philippines, and the second Pulitzer came in 1989 for comprehensive coverage of the Loma Prieta earthquake (“San Jose Mercury News,” 2010).

How the *San Jose Mercury News* Frames Stories

While readership studies can be used to study the complete newspaper’s influence on a community, framing theory is used to assess how individual articles themselves can be crafted to influence readers. In essence, framing theory refers to the choice of what information is presented or emphasized to an audience when reporting on a topic. Many researchers cite Goffman’s (1974) study as the first to determine that frames are needed to bring sense and organization to information, in this case, news stories. Goffman’s work as a sociologist taught him that readers needed to connect new concepts to what they already knew. This allows readers to pick up a story and understand the context in which it is written and how it fits in the wider world.

Framing does require interpretation on the part of the storyteller or journalist. McQuail (1983) wrote that it is impossible for stories to exist without some form of bias, even if reporters have the best intentions of objectivity. “When information is supplied to news media by sources (as much often is), then it arrives with a built-in frame that suits the purpose of the source and is unlikely to be purely objective,” wrote McQuail (p. 370).

Sometimes, framing studies involve political research, as was the case with Chong and Druckman (2007). The researchers studied public opinion of a hate group’s rally. In one round of research, the rally was framed as a “form of free speech,” and accepted by the majority of the population. That acceptance dropped drastically when the rally was framed as “a public safety issue.” The words used to describe the event had a large effect on how the audience perceived it. Entman (1991) conducted a similar study regarding the framing of two stories where planes were shot down. One story framed the incident as a deliberate attack, and the other as a horrible mistake that ended in tragedy.

These studies indicate why and how stories have angles and how reporters and editors play an important role in how a story is told. As McQuail (1983) wrote, it is impossible for journalists not to be affected by bias. This is important to understand, as it plays into how agriculture was covered in the *San Jose Mercury News*. While looking for bias was not a goal of this study, it can be helpful to take bias into account when determining how quickly the transition away from agriculture happened and what role the *San Jose Mercury News* had in that transition.

Diffusion of Innovations in Relation to Agricultural Journalism

As Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory (1962) defines it, "Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. It is a special type of communication in that the messages are concerned with new ideas." The four main elements in the diffusion of innovations are: innovation, communication channels, time or rate of adoption, and the social system. According to Rogers, innovation refers to an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. For an innovation to be quickly adopted, it must first be seen as having greater relative advantage, compatibility, trialability, observability, and less complexity than other innovations. The next element in the diffusion of innovations—communication channels—are used to share information about the new idea. Additionally, the social system is interrelated units involved in problem-solving to accomplish a common goal.

Marti (1980) found that the first examples of agricultural journalism in the United States, appearing in the 1800s, involved a combination of periodicals and scholarly scientific journals publishing the findings of universities. The audience of the periodicals included innovators quick to create their own new technologies and solutions for problems they encountered. The audience also included early adopters, quick to take what they read and implement the strategies on their own farms. Marti noted that the innovations were diffused quickly through these agricultural publications because editors were able to pass on what experts at universities had already toiled to determine about new technologies.

There have been few studies about agricultural journalism in the United States relating to this study's time frame, 1935 through 2000, but a content analysis study was conducted regarding agricultural journalism in Switzerland from 1996 through 2006, and it found that coverage remained relatively low but had an increasingly positive tone (Alfoldi & Tutkun-Tikir, 2007).

In the United States, agricultural journalism has been credited with the diffusion of the latest technology that has improved living and working conditions for farmers and increased productivity exponentially. In a study of how agricultural journalism helped build the rural south, Scruggs and Moseley (1979) determined that the best of what agricultural journalism had to offer was able to change the livelihoods of its readers.

They wrote:

It's safe to say that every major improvement in southern agriculture has been assisted by agricultural publications. While each publication often had a particular special crusade and can be given major credit in some special area, farm publications vibrated out time and time again and again and again the basic messages: produce more bushels or pounds per acre, improve efficiency! (p. 26)

In 2000 a study by Whitaker and Dyer identified bias in agricultural journalism. The researchers looked at the three agricultural publications with the highest readership (*Progressive Farmer*, *Farm Journal*, and *Successful Farmer*) as well as the three periodicals with the highest readership (*Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*) to determine how the selection of sources and the presentation of information in the publications indicated a level of bias in reporting of food safety news. The researchers found that there was little difference in the placement and size of the articles

between the farm and mainstream publications, but that the news magazines were more likely to show bias through the use of images (Whitaker & Dyer, 2000).

Instead of measuring bias in individual coverage, *The Invisible Farm: The worldwide decline of farm news and agricultural journalism training*, by Thomas F. Pawlick (2001) found bias against the agriculture industry as a whole in mainstream publications that was a result of readership demographics. Pawlick wrote:

The tendency to neglect rural news is not only a function of the increasingly inadequate resources devoted by the major media to agriculture, of an editorial bias stemming from the dictates of a heavily-urban circulation base, or of the poverty of means in developing countries. It is also due to a lack of available training in journalists interested in covering the farm beat, as well as to the absence in general journalism education of efforts to alert students to the importance of agriculture to all readers—including those who live in the city. (p. 6)

Similar sentiments about holes in the education of current journalists covering agricultural news can be found in *Agricultural Communications: Changes and challenges* by Kristina Boone, Terry Meisenbach, and Mark Tucker (2000). In the book the authors note:

Today, students majoring in agricultural journalism need a strong background in science and should take the necessary courses if their present curriculum does not fulfill this need. The science of agriculture has become more and more public and critical to public understanding of issues surrounding food safety, water quality and pesticide contamination. Fewer people are connected to production agriculture, and the general public is concerned about risks associated with agriculture. (p. 68)

Also related to the 2000 Whitaker and Dyer study about the shift in coverage to reflect external changes, Banning and Evans (2001) found changes in agricultural news reporting during their 10-year study of the agriculture publication/reader/advertiser relationship. In their research, conducted from 1991 through 2001, Banning and Evans

received feedback from agricultural journalists at farming publications via mailed survey. The results showed that the journalists felt the pressure of rising advertiser influence in the newsroom. As a result, the journalists worried about what the influence could do to the reporting of news by their publication (Banning & Evans, 2001). While there were no indications of this in the interviews with a few *San Jose Mercury News* journalists, it is possible that changes in farming coverage in the paper was influenced by similar scenarios.

Summary

One of the most significant pieces of research included in this literature review was Cho, Martin, and Lacy's (2006) study of newspaper entrances into and exits from the market. The study changed the idea of the newspaper from an endangered species to more of an evolving animal, finding ways to relate to its changing audience. In this way, the *San Jose Mercury News* would change its coverage over time to meet the needs of local residents. Clearly the demographics of the area changed between 1935 and 2000, and the newspaper shifted to keep up with those changes.

Another particularly significant study included in the literature review was the Oskam and Hudson (1999) research that explained that even though residents use other forms of media, the print versions continue to hold a high level of credibility in the public's eyes. This finding of the public's trust in the newspaper industry is important, because the print outlets were seen as a reliable source of information. If the *San Jose Mercury News* wrote that something was a good idea, the readers would be more likely to believe it than other forms of media.

The framing theory resources are also an integral part of this study because they can be used to understand how or why *San Jose Mercury News* reporters covered agriculture and technological advancements in the area the way they did. If a reporter or editor were supportive of the transition, he or she might write stories about industrialization as a good thing and a constructive movement for the residents. If a reporter saw farming as a way of life, he or she might frame a story so that it focused on the area's transition away from agriculture as having a negative impact on local farmers. The reporter might also be more likely to cover local agricultural news in favor of other news.

Based on Rogers' (1962) theory of the diffusion of innovations, it is believed that the *San Jose Mercury News* will prove to be an early adopter of new technology news, and propel the valley's transition from an agricultural community to a high-tech center. This study will trace how active the *San Jose Mercury News* was in helping diffuse the innovations and transitions that appeared in the Santa Clara Valley between 1935 and 2000. The historical orientation of this study will be that of social history, as it traces the changes witnessed and participated in by residents in the entire valley over that time period.

CHAPTER 3 - METHOD

This study chronicled the *San Jose Mercury News*' coverage of the Santa Clara Valley's evolution from a farming community to the epicenter of technology in the United States between 1935 and 2000, with a focus placed on the coverage of the area's agricultural news. Specifically, the study focused on how the *San Jose Mercury News* portrayed agriculture and changes to farming and ranching in the region. The study examined articles written between 1935 and 2000 about farming as well as changes to the area's demographics and businesses. Did the paper propel the transition to a technology center, or was it solely following what was already happening?

As discussed in the previous section, Rogers (1962) wrote about the Diffusion of Innovation theory, the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. According to this theory, where was the *San Jose Mercury News*? Was the editorial content reflective of an innovator, an early adopter, early majority, late majority or laggard?

This historical study is a qualitative analysis relying on a selection of newspaper articles as primary sources. Framing theory was used to examine the articles to determine whether the newspaper was propelling the transition, or following behind by reporting what had already happened.

Four firsthand interviews added insight into discussions held in the *San Jose Mercury News* newsroom during this period. The interviews served to either support or deny the theory that the *San Jose Mercury News* was a propelling force in the Santa Clara Valley's transition from an agricultural community to Silicon Valley.

Selection of Newspaper

The *San Jose Mercury News* (formerly known as the *San Jose Mercury Herald*) was selected for this study, because it was the main publication following the activities taking place in the Santa Clara Valley. The publication was founded in the late 1800s and had long been established as the source for news in the area.

The *San Jose Mercury News* is published daily, so Monday through Sunday editions were included in this study. Excluded were editions of the paper printed in languages other than English.

The newspaper's coverage of agriculture during the 1935 through 2000 period was examined. To locate the articles, the researcher used the microfilm resources of San Jose State University's library.

Even though the first transitions away from farming as a way of life for residents in the area did not begin until the 1940s, the period of 1935 through 1940 was included in this research to create a baseline for identifying changes as they began to happen. It also served useful when comparing what life was like for residents before and after the transition away from agriculture. Additionally, while the area became known as Silicon Valley in the 1970s, the period through 2000 was included to show the conclusion of important labor issues and local agriculture stories that concluded a chapter in the area's agriculture history.

Interviews with Journalists

Eight current or former *San Jose Mercury News* journalists who had been in the newsroom during the area's transition were interviewed. The study ultimately included

four participants: Leigh Weimers, former columnist; Jerry Ceppos, former executive editor; Mike Cassidy, current business columnist; and Pete Carey, current business and technology reporter. The participants wrote for the paper from the 1970s through present. Once the participants agreed to participate, a questionnaire was provided with the following questions:

1. When did you write for the *San Jose Mercury News*? If you still write for the paper, when did you start?
2. What was/is your beat?
3. Have you covered any stories about farming or ranching in Santa Clara Valley?
4. Did you ever participate in or hear any conversations in the newsroom about the transition taking place in the Santa Clara Valley, turning it into a technology hub known as Silicon Valley? What was discussed? What was the general feeling about the transition?
5. When did you first see a transition in the area toward the tech industry?
6. What did you think of the changes you saw?
7. How did coverage in the Mercury News change over time as the community changed?
8. What are your thoughts on today's Santa Clara Valley?

The interview content was then included in this study whenever relevant to the unfolding history.

CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS

As discussed in the literature review, frames serve the purpose of focusing the reader's attention on what the writer believes is the most important part of the story. There were three frames found in this study over the period between 1935 and 2000. The first frame appeared between 1935 and 1945, where agriculture was framed as a livelihood and an integral part of every Santa Clara County resident's life. The second frame appeared between 1946 and 1975 and portrayed agriculture as an industry further removed from most residents. The final frame, found between 1976 and 2000, showed agriculture as a novelty and a link to the Santa Clara Valley's past. The following is a detailing of the findings during each time frame.

Agriculture as a Livelihood: 1935 through 1945

In 1935 the Santa Clara Valley saw a boom in agriculture revenue. It didn't hurt that much of the country was still reeling from the Dust Bowl. There was a surge in the farm labor force as families escaped the Midwest for The Valley of Heart's Delight, as John Muir had called it during a visit 60 years earlier (Muir, 1912). News of the area's farming successes was directly relayed via the *San Jose Mercury Herald* (as the local paper was known until 1942). The year 1934 alone saw an \$11 million increase in the value of California's crops over the previous year, bringing the total from roughly \$55 million to \$66 million. In particular, there was a boost in acres planted for tomatoes, spinach, and lettuce (Hicks, 1935), turning the Santa Clara and Salinas Valleys into a colorful salad bowl filled to the brim with fruits and vegetables. Additional examples from this period that underscored the area's farming success include "300 women needed

for cannery work” (1936), “Morgan Hill cooperative drier ends busy season” (1940), and “New Clapp plant starts operations within a day or so” (1945).

With farm revenues up, there was a move to protect the income and continue the growth. In the San Jose area, farmers began to organize and create advertisements to encourage the consumption of locally grown produce (“Prune ad panels,” 1935). The *San Jose Mercury Herald* supported the efforts of local farmers, and published editorials warning of the threat from imported produce. Spain and other Mediterranean countries wanted to open trade of manufactured goods from the United States and agricultural products produced in those countries. The problem, as one editorial writer saw it, was that the imports from Spain would be the exact same products that California was already producing in the form of oranges, prunes, and olives.

If the bargains with the Mediterranean countries affected staple crops [i.e. corn or wheat], the whole agricultural industry would be up in arms. But they do not. California is the only state whose agricultural products would be hurt by Mediterranean imports. The burden of protecting them would fall entirely on the California delegation in Congress. Secretary Wallace has said that some industries must be selected for sacrifice in order to restore foreign trade. Evidently Professor Adams [of the University of California] thinks that they may be California farm industries. (“Sees danger to our agriculture,” 1935)

At this time, Horace Greeley Keesling, the paper’s farm editor, published the two- to three-page Farm Orchard Garden section of the Sunday paper. Keesling was born in 1855 in Mechanicsburg, Indiana, and, after moving to the Santa Clara Valley in 1873, became well-known as an expert nurseryman, orchardist, horticulturist, and breeder of exotic chickens imported from China. Between 1900 and 1907 (before his time with the *San Jose Mercury Herald*) Keesling and his family planted approximately 500 black walnut trees to provide shade for people traveling the 30 miles on Monterey Road

between San Jose and Gilroy. Many of the trees, now known as Heritage Trees, still line the road today, more than 70 years after Keesling's death in 1940 ("Heritage Tree," 2007).

Keesling's Farm Orchard Garden section included news about agriculture across the country and information about how to boost your own farm's efforts, through composting and support of honey bees' pollination efforts. Keesling's section was also the first to include an editorial piece about farm worker unionization. At the time of the article's publication, the lettuce industry was in the midst of a five-week standoff between the growers and shippers and the labor force. In this case, Farm Orchard Garden contributor Ralph Taylor was a bit off-base in his predictions: "Not only is the movement foredoomed to failure—if past history repeats anything—but it is almost a certainty to play into the hands of Communists and radical agitators who are the enemies of both labor and agriculture" (Taylor, 1936). Similar sentiments could also be found in "The Salinas controversy" (1936) and "Labor assails lettuce peace bid rejection" (1936), which discuss the first use of force and violence during farm labor strikes. As the labor movement progressed, the *San Jose Mercury Herald* continued to report on the issue in greater detail. Examples of deeper reporting on a strike within the industry include "Cannery strike threatens all California" (1945), "Union asks quick fruit strike end" (1945), and "Fruit workers victory trailed by AFL demand" (1945). In each case, these articles appeared on the front page of the paper. In the coming years, coverage of farm labor disputes would grow even further. For now, it is important to note that the

publication was at the forefront of discussions and leaned in favor of growers instead of the laborers.

With most readers involved in agriculture, the *San Jose Mercury Herald* included produce market prices at the top of the business page and reported on new technological developments that would help ease the lives of farmers. Frank Dutra, a Campbell native, was interviewed about his new disc cultivator that allowed tractor drivers to turn more easily and save time in the field (“Idea for better plow,” 1940). Additionally, to assist farmers, universities in the area used laboratories to find solutions for pest problems. For example, a station was set up on Winchester Road for University of California researchers to collect mealy plum aphids for laboratory work, and the results were pesticides that, while not “safe” by today’s standards, were not as harmful as the widely used coal tar distillate, which was found to burn the skin of men and horses in the field (“Science laboratory waging war against insect pests,” 1940). These stories are among the first examples of the diffusion of innovation through the newspaper. As soon as new developments to farming technology were made, they appeared in the *San Jose Mercury Herald*. Additional examples of this type of coverage during this period include “California methods for rodent control going to Manchuria” (1936), “The Bush Tartarian is good pollenizer” (1936), and “Stratum plan for compost pit” (Halliday, 1936).

The first evidence of the transition between the Valley of Heart’s Delight and Silicon Valley began to appear in the late 1930s and very early 1940s, as William Hewlett and David Packard were toiling in the Palo Alto garage. An editorial page column explained the area’s economic situation, stating:

Gains are noted in building permits, post office receipts, electric and gas meters and telephones. Express shipments and water service connections are also up. Independent retail stores marked up the largest increase, 7.6 percent, during the first half of the year—of stores of any city of San Jose’s size in California. The increased trade here is far above the state average. The best thing about this San Jose growth is that it is the steady, enduring kind. (“Steady growth continues,” 1940)

At the time the population of Santa Clara County was roughly 175,000, and agricultural news was a priority for the *San Jose Mercury Herald*. Articles and photographs featured hundreds of workers lined up to work on new cannery production lines, including many San Jose State College coeds on break from school (“Near close of ‘fruitful’ season,” 1936). A special section’s front page on August 2, 1940, included three large photographs of a peach and pear cannery, noting that there were 16,000 persons employed in canneries like it around San Jose (“They can,” 1940). Profits grew for local growers as the canneries created a higher demand for their produce, which was evident in articles such as “Prune payment of \$600,000 sent growers” (1940), “2 billion dollar annual farm income seen for California” (1945), and “California leads in farm income” (1945).

The canned goods produced in San Jose were sold across the United States, and also found their way to the allied forces fighting in World War II. To bolster production back home while thousands of men were fighting and women were filling new cannery jobs, local growers requested that German prisoners of war serve as farm labor. One story, from early 1945, told of two pear farming organizations placing an order for 560 war prisoners. They were shocked to learn that it would cost about \$30,000 to provide the requisite housing camp for the laborers. Possible sites for the camp were then

evaluated, including the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds and a Civil Air Patrol field on King Road (“Prisoner price almost stuns ranchers here,” 1945).

During the war, San Jose residents were encouraged to grow their own produce so more large-scale farm-produced food could help feed the armed forces. A column by Rolly Langley called Let’s Grow It! appeared in the *San Jose Mercury Herald* to encourage and educate readers looking to get the most from their home vegetable gardens and fruit trees. Cultivation was very much a part of every resident’s life, and the *San Jose Mercury Herald* was very supportive of the efforts (Langley, 1945). This can be linked back to the framing theory previously discussed. Stories during this time framed agriculture as way of life in the area, and a way to support the troops overseas. At least one agriculture story appeared on most front pages of the newspaper.

As the area’s growth picked up pace, challenges with limited resources—namely water—appeared. As farm acreage increased, so did the demand for drinking water in areas near downtown San Jose. Farmers who had never had to worry about the impact of water diversion were now being reprimanded by the Santa Clara Valley Water Conservation District (“Ranchers sued for diverting storage water,” 1940). Examples of articles that noted the first tearing down of orchards to make way for housing and roads include “State starts \$500,000 road program here” (1935), “SERA workers in varied jobs to beautify San Jose’s landscape” (McMurry, 1935), and “Viewing new entries to San Jose” (1936). The area’s rapid growth was then charted in “Home building sets all-time high mark here” (1940) and “S.J. held destined to be U.S. most progressive area” (1945).

Another challenge emerged a few years later as soldiers returned home from World War II. When the soldiers had enlisted, they had been promised farm loans, and many of them saw an opportunity to return home and begin their own farm. Unfortunately, by the time the war concluded, land values in the Santa Clara Valley had skyrocketed and veterans eligible for the loans under the G.I. Bill of Rights found the promise meaningless. A County Farm Security Administration committee met in San Jose and determined that it was almost impossible to buy—or even rent—farms at a reasonable value (“High farm prices holding up loans,” 1945). As a result of that meeting, servicemen who would have entered the farming industry were left to find work elsewhere. In 1945, the paper ran a 12-part series about what the business landscape in San Jose looked like for returning veterans. The article noted:

The attitude for which San Jose businessmen are looking in post-war employees is, above all else, a desire to work. Employers are crying for ‘good workers who have both aptitude and fortitude. . . . The only hint of fear shown was of an overabundance of unskilled labor and of defense workers who have picked up a supply of half-knowledge but are incompetent for peace jobs’ (“Jobs are assured vets with skills,” 1945).

Articles like this served as the first hints of the next transition, as hundreds of farm-reared residents turned away from the field and into manufacturing jobs. Farming had ceased being a way of life for many residents in the area and had been an industry for one to get into or out of, depending on financial situations. Stories in this period were framed to show a wealth of opportunities outside of agriculture.

Agriculture as an Industry: 1946 through 1975

Between 1946 and 1975, the *San Jose Mercury News* framed agriculture as less of a way of life for everyone in the valley and more of an industry, mirroring the distance

that was increasing between the average San Jose newspaper reader and the farm. While the transition had begun decades earlier, World War II served as a defining moment, with a very visible difference in the American agriculture landscape before and after the war.

The newspaper presented a “them versus us” approach to farming, where farmers were seen as a group separated from the rest of the residents in the area. There were reports of increased conflict between agriculture and new housing developments. One example includes a local Berryessa resident who spoke to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors to complain that the odors from a nearby meat packing and tallow company were wafting into his neighborhood with unpleasant results. The resident, V. Zunine, was quoted in the newspaper saying, “We want real action taken immediately and this cleaned up, otherwise we will do our best to do some cleaning up in the next election” (“Still smells, Berryessa Road dweller tells supervisors,” 1950). Other examples of conflict over resources between farms and housing include “Farm water source study due Oct. 1” (1950), “New proposals for getting more water” (Wiley, 1950), “State solons hear of water plight” (1955), and “Old Matasci Ranch acquired by builders” (1965).

Exacerbating the problem was a view that the federal government’s farm program was unnecessarily stuffing taxpayer dollars into the pockets of farmers, who were already succeeding financially. On April 7, 1950, the paper ran a political cartoon, originally from the *Chicago Sun-Times*, showing a large rabbit labeled “Farm Program” looking over a basket overflowing with surplus eggs, surplus onions, and surplus potatoes. Right

next to the cartoon ran an editorial by *San Jose Mercury News* columnist Dorothy Thompson.

The U.S. agricultural program is a complete mess. The government, having subsidized farmers to produce more of everything than they would otherwise have done... finds itself stockpiled with enough surplus food to nourish another nation. The subsidy is contributed by the taxpayer-consumers. Yet the people, having paid the farmers, cannot even get back some of their money by lower food prices. The program has produced preposterous inequities. (Thompson, 1950)

Based on *Associated Press* articles like “Farm surplus conditions draw Truman’s criticism” (1950) and content from other papers that found placement in the *San Jose Mercury News*, Thompson’s thoughts seem to be in line with what much of the nation was thinking, so it is likely that the opinions expressed in the *San Jose Mercury News* were also being reinforced by other papers as well as television and radio news outlets. This is one indication that the transition away from farming is already under way in the Santa Clara Valley.

With the addition of local companies like Food Machinery & Chemical Corp. (FMC) and Wooldridge Manufacturing Co., employees who had previously worked outside harvesting the apricot orchards found new jobs that were not dictated by the harvest seasons. San Jose built upon its industrial foundation in food canning to include large-scale machinery and defense corporations as well. As the Korean War drew near, even more manual labor jobs transitioned to factory work. FMC was rumored to be making “Water Buffalo” amphibious tractors for the government and would not disclose the extent of its relationship with the military. Additionally, Owens-Corning Fiberglass Corp. of Santa Clara sent roughly 75 percent of its output directly to the government (“S.J. plants ready for war work,” 1950). Stories at this time were framed to show these

companies as a new opportunity for the area. They provided solid jobs for veterans and newcomers who had moved to the area looking for work.

Even as other industries were taking root in the Santa Clara Valley, it was clear that canning was still very much a leader of the local business sector. In the late summer of 1950, more than 3,000 jobs for fruit cocktail cannery workers became available at the Barron-Gray warehouse on Fifth and Martha Street. Reporter Hal Martin wrote that the new 125,000-square-foot cannery was the largest of its kind in the state. Many of the Bartlett pears, seedless Thompson grapes, and Yellow Cling peaches included in the fruit cocktail had been grown in the Santa Clara Valley (Martin, 1950).

This time period was one of relative prosperity for farmers in the valley. There were record harvests, and advancements in canning and preservation technology meant that more fruit could be processed and sent to new markets across the country. The fruits, vegetables, and livestock produced here were a source of pride and the *San Jose Mercury News* annually featured the year's best bounty making its way to (and often taking top prize at) the California State Fair ("Ready for state fair," 1950). Other examples of coverage discussing the valley's supremacy in agriculture include "Biggest livestock show indicated as valley ranchers prepare for Santa Clara County Fair" (1950), "California top beef state" (1955) and "San Benito Fair keeps cowboy flavor" (1960).

By that time Carroll K. Hurd was the farm editor for the newspaper, and much like in Keesling's era, the Sunday edition included Ranch Home Garden, where readers could view pictures of local prize-winning livestock, read about prune prices and the latest in fruit dehydrator technology. Examples of articles found within the Ranch Home

Garden section include “Four methods for fig preserving” (1950), “Elkhorn Dairy lesson” (Hurd,1955), “Co-op blames weather for berry crop drop” (1955), “California crops in new record” (1957), and “Berry industry looks to research for answer to production slump” (Hurd, 1957).

It is important to note that in all of its coverage of the Santa Clara Valley agriculture community, the *San Jose Mercury News* reporters would often interview members of longstanding farming and ranching families for their insight into the issues, as they were most often the experts on the particular topic. At the same time, farmers had begun to organize themselves in a more structured manner. There was the California Dried Fruit Association, the Dairy Breeders Association, and the Santa Clara County Cattlemen’s Association, among others. These organizations provided spokespeople for media opportunities and represented family farmers on a regional and national level. Additionally, the Ranch Home Garden section of the paper included a column by Joseph W. Santana, the farm labor representative for the Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Santana provided updates on the supply and demand of farm labor, noting how many people would be needed for each commodity’s harvest. He once wrote:

With apricots over, Valley growers were turning their attention to the harvest of a fair to good prune crop. Over 15,000 workers will be needed to harvest the crop which comprises about 50,000 acres. At this time, the labor supply is deemed to be adequate. Many families employed during the apricot season are staying to find work in prunes. ... The local Farm Labor Office reports the arrival of many families seeking work in various crops in the valley. It is suggested that local growers anticipating need for workers in the near future should contact the local office. (Santana, 1950)

Santana’s column was a helpful way of connecting growers to their labor force, and tangible evidence of how the *San Jose Mercury News* supported the agriculture industry

at this time. Ultimately, more help was needed. Over time, as growers struggled to gather laborers for the harvest, they resorted to more innovative tactics, including a televised commercial appeal, which appeared on *KGO-TV* (“Strawberry pickers sought via video,” 1952).

Toward the end of the 1950s, urban renewal and being conscientious about San Jose’s growth were hot topics of discussion. A City Redevelopment Agency was created, and the executive director, Olney G. Smith, warned the San Jose Rotary Club about the dangers of city planners basking in recent successes: hundreds of new homes, an influx of industry, and \$24 million in bonds approved by voters for civic improvements. Smith recommended that the city buy buildings and land in blighted areas and redevelop them, making a profit while also making the area more appealing to current and future residents (“San Jose is sitting pretty, but the boat can be rocked,” 1957).

The 1960s were a time of change for the area as well as the paper. By 1960 the farm section had evolved into Farm News, one or two pages on Sundays. Farm editor Carroll Hurd left the newsroom in 1963 to devote himself completely to a chicken farm he had started. Hurd died in 2008 at the age of 93 (Airoldi, 2008).

At the paper, news focused on the addition of new corporations and the fledgling high-tech industry. In 1960 the paper announced the construction of the two-mile linear accelerator at Stanford University. An article quoted a Stanford research associate saying that once the \$125 million accelerator was completed, there would be no comparable concentration on earth of nuclear research facilities (“Bay Area would lead in nuclear research,” 1960). Just a few years later, the nearby Stanford Industrial Park was updated

to house 40 firms with 11,500 employees. Half of the companies were involved in electronics. The park was specifically located near the Stanford campus, so the companies could harness the synergy of education and industry. According to the article, “Many firms have Stanford faculty members as consultants and lunch hour ‘think sessions’ between industry and university advisers are frequent” (Lindsey, 1963). Similar articles discussing developing companies and their technologies include “Tiny gadget helps woman’s heart beat after coronary” (1963), “Superheat reactor powers generator” (1965), and “San Jose engineers expand” (1965).

When describing the exciting time in a foreword to Carolyn Caddes’ *Portraits of Success: Impressions of Silicon Valley Pioneers*, current *San Jose Mercury News* business and technology reporter Pete Carey wrote:

As integrated circuits’ commercial opportunities became obvious, new companies that made them or that made something needed to make them were being formed every few weeks. All those companies were using Silicon for their chips, and in 1972, Don Hoefler, a writer for the trade paper *Electronic News*, began using the term Silicon Valley to describe the area. At first it was a rather self-conscious term, requiring a lot of hubris to repeat with any conviction. But the phenomenal growth in size and importance of the area has made the term recognizable nearly everywhere. Outside northern California, a relative handful of people have heard of Palo Alto, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Cupertino, and San Jose, but the world knows where to find Silicon Valley. (Carey, 1986)

Leigh Weimers, former columnist with the *San Jose Mercury News* added:

The opening of Stanford Industrial Park began to bring new technology into focus. We were doing stories on the scientific advancements of Varian Associates, for example. Can’t remember too much coverage of Hewlett-Packard until after it had become fairly huge. And, of course, when the late Don Hoefler coined the term “Silicon Valley” as a modern synonym for the Santa Clara Valley, the die was well-cast (Leigh Weimers, personal e-mail communication, November 9, 2009).

With all of the talk of research and technological development, agricultural news moved to the background during the latter half of the 1960s. The focus on technology over agriculture does not mean that the industry was dying. On the contrary, according to Frank Freeman's April 4, 1965, article, agriculture still reigned supreme as Santa Clara County's biggest industry. Freeman explained that 86 different crops were grown in the area, representing a value of more than \$70 million, which would turn into \$200 million if finished products were taken into account. He wrote, "Subdivisions notwithstanding, this county is among the 25 most important counties in agricultural production in the United States" (Freeman, 1965). While it appears that fewer people were involved in hands-on farming, it was clearly still a viable industry in the area.

As the 1970s began, farm labor issues brought agriculture back into the spotlight in the *San Jose Mercury News*. Farm labor leader Cesar Chavez was prominent in local coverage, as well as stories pulled from the *Associated Press* wire into the paper. On April 4, 1970, Chavez announced that his four-year effort to organize farm laborers had found its first success. The article outlined that Chavez had signed two table grape growers and reached an agreement with a third to allow for the unionization of their workers. Chavez added that a strike would continue against any growers who opposed unionization. This was one step on a long road, because the majority of growers in California did not support unionization as the best way to change the industry. The article quoted California Farm Bureau President Allan Grant: "We understand that the contracts are essentially one family of Coachella Valley growers and we do not recognize the signing as any great breakthrough. Most growers are not willing to be coerced into

signing...but will continue to work for fair farm legislation” (“Chavez claims 3 contracts,” 1970). Three days later the paper ran an editorial piece explaining the impact of Chavez’s announcement. Lou Cannon, of the *San Jose Mercury News* Washington Bureau wrote in an opinion piece, “Underlying the announcement of the accord between Cesar Chavez’s United Farm Workers Organizing Committee and one Coachella Valley grower is a carefully contrived economic gamble that could either pave the way for further farm union agreements, or backfire entirely on Chavez” (Cannon, p. 26). Cannon’s editorial questioned the validity of the current farmworker unionization movement. His editorial included an interesting point, underscoring the fact that Chavez not only needed his boycott efforts to be successful, but he needed to ensure the success of the farmer who signed the first unionization contracts as well. Cannon noted that the best method to encourage other growers to sign contracts was to show how their farms would benefit financially by supporting unionization.

Even if other growers in California were not signing contracts yet, subtle changes were improving the conditions for migrant farmworkers. The day of Chavez’s announcement of the first unions forming in Southern California, in Gilroy a new 100-unit housing project for farm laborers was beginning construction. The Gilroy Harvest Housing Association and the federal government paid \$353,000 for the 10-acre complex, and it was the first program of its kind in the country. The site included 100 two-bedroom housing units, laundry facilities, and a complete day care center (“Ground broken for 100-unit Gilroy farm housing project,” 1970).

Just a few years later, Chavez's United Farm Workers Union had grown into a powerful force in California agriculture, and was involved in decisions at even the highest level in the industry. In 1974 the U.S. Department of Agriculture was working on a mechanized lettuce harvester that could harvest twice as many heads of lettuce as the traditional manual method. Both the Teamsters Agricultural union and the United Farm Workers Union called for further research into how the machine would impact laborers. A spokesman for the Teamsters said that the machine would cause problems for older workers who would have to learn new skills and could be pushed into early retirement if they were not able to keep up with the technological advancement. He added that with the relatively recent mechanization of agriculture, employees had not had much time to build up retirement benefits (Bowe, 1974).

These were some of the last articles the *San Jose Mercury News* wrote framing agriculture as big business and an influential industry in the area. By now, stories about new technologies appeared more frequently within the paper.

Agriculture as a Novelty: 1976 through 2000

With the United Farm Worker Union firmly establishing itself in the late 1970s, the *San Jose Mercury News* frequently reported on its activities during the 1980s, including a garlic strike where Gilroy farmers were picketed because of alleged child labor law infractions (Glines, 1980). Beyond labor issues, farm news had moved to the back of the minds of many valley reporters. Stories that did run in the paper showcased agriculture as a novelty, including many photos and articles about unique county fair

exhibits and historical ranches. By the 1970s, there was no longer a farm editor or a farm news section on Sundays.

Stories during this time concentrated on the housing growth and the surge in the business landscape. Columnist Leigh Weimers said the newsroom was more interested in urban sprawl than anything else, noting, “As is all too typical of newsrooms, not a lot of notice was taken of the shift to technology until after it was fairly well under way. To be sure, there was much discussion and coverage of the transformation of orchards to housing, but that mostly was in an urban sprawl context” (Leigh Weimers, personal e-mail communication, November 9, 2009). Similar to Weimers’ point, the *San Jose Mercury News* reported in 1980 that the city of Gilroy had found itself with a need to build 12,000 new homes as soon as possible to accommodate a new business park in nearby Morgan Hill. The city’s planning committee scrambled to determine how to make that a reality in light of the city’s existing growth management ordinances. As a result, areas like Coyote and San Martin took the brunt of the growth, because they did not have the same strict ordinances (“M.H. development stirs Gilroy’s fear of housing squeeze,” 1980). The lack of affordable housing was exemplified in a story that ran the same day about a family that had been homeless for a week because there had been a limit to federally funded subsidies and the Santa Clara County’s housing prices had skyrocketed beyond what the government could subsidize for the 1,500 to 2,000 needy people in Santa Clara County at the time. The article, by Elias Castillo, featured Mauricio Ochoa, a 3-year-old boy who had spent his recent birthday in the car serving as his family’s home (Castillo, 1980).

With the demand for new homes at an all-time high, land became so valuable that it made more sense to build subdivisions than farms. Also, as the technology industry advanced, there was a growing need for larger research and development facilities. In 1980, IBM was planning to build a 500,000-square-foot facility on what were formerly the Stile and Rule ranches in the Santa Teresa foothills. While IBM was going to maintain more than 500 acres as open space and use about 30 acres for the actual facility, there was no discussion of using the land for farming and ranching, as it had been before. Instead, a hiking and horseback riding trail was created (Acuna, 1980). When stories like that of the IBM facility appeared in the paper, content was framed to explain what the development would mean for jobs in the area and the housing crisis, but did not include discussion of what it meant for the agriculture industry.

When agriculture stories appeared in the paper, they often included news from the Santa Clara County and nearby San Benito County fairs, with accompanying photos showing off prize-winning produce and livestock from the remaining farmers and ranchers in the area. Newer types of technology took the spotlight and intrigued valley residents and the reporters themselves. Mike Cassidy joined the *San Jose Mercury News* staff in 1986, but it was not until later that he was struck by the impact the high-tech industry was having on the area. He noted:

I think a tipping point for me was in the mid-1990s, about the time of the Netscape IPO, when it struck me what fascinating innovation was under way here and what fabulous wealth it was producing. I happened to be living a couple of blocks from Netscape at the time and I looked on in wonder as the company grew at an incredible rate, literally marching down Middlefield Road occupying new office building after new office building. (Mike Cassidy, personal e-mail communication, February 5, 2010)

By that time, the word about the area's business and technological success had spread worldwide. Jerry Ceppos, who joined the paper as an associate editor in 1981 said:

When I became the executive editor in 2000, I knew that we were the center of the universe in terms of technology and venture capital and should get busy on that story before someone stole it from us. I was particularly irritated that *Time* magazine had run a cover story about that time on Marc Andreessen, with all sorts of personal insights (as I recall, *Time* reported that Marc's real pleasure was going to Tower Records—there's a name from the past—and buying a ton of CDs. We had not given Marc that sort of human face, though had reported on him). (Jerome Ceppos, personal e-mail communication, January 26, 2010)

Cassidy, who today writes a column in the *San Jose Mercury News*' business section about the culture of the area, recalls a meeting Ceppos held with the newsroom to encourage reporters to take advantage of the thrilling story of Silicon Valley unfurling right in the paper's backyard.

Many of us were excited by the realization that we had the good fortune to be living in the midst of the biggest business story of the decade, or longer. The fact that a transition from agriculture to industry, which had been going on for some time, was accelerating added a dramatic element to the story for our local readers. (Mike Cassidy, personal e-mail communication, February 5, 2010)

Around that time, the San Jose area was visited by representatives from other countries looking to replicate some of Silicon Valley's success. Business leaders offered their countries for possible joint ventures, with American money and technology and foreign labor (Grad, 1991).

The agriculture industry was momentarily brought back into the newspaper's spotlight in 1993, with the announcement of Cesar Chavez's death. There was some discussion of how farming had changed since Chavez's first work toward unionization began decades earlier, and how his unexpected death left no clear leader for the United

Farm Workers Union. The *San Jose Mercury News* ran a multipage story the day after Chavez's death, followed by a column by Jim Trotter, an editorial cartoon of the United Farm Workers logo with Chavez's birth and death dates, and an editorial piece. Chavez's impact was a profound one on the labor environment as well as the Santa Clara Valley.

The editorial piece stated:

The man from Sal Si Puedes is gone. Outside of Delano, birthplace of the United Farm Workers of America, no town knew Cesar Chavez better than San Jose, where he once lived in a barrio called Get Out If You Can. ... Though the UFW's membership and effectiveness waned in the 1980s and the union itself is now near death, Chavez did everything a leader could to keep his movement alive. And live it does through the slowly growing number of grass-roots groups and other unions carrying the UFW's mission, not only on the farm, but also in the shiny offices of Silicon Valley. ("Cesar Chavez's legacy", 1993)

It is important to note how the framing of this editorial differed from the first editorial written by Ralph Taylor in 1936, which saw farmworker unionization as impossible, a threat, and a link to Communism.

Other stories from this study's final time frame discuss agriculture as a relic from days gone by as well as an important link to the foundation of the Santa Clara Valley. Examples of these articles include "Bloom off California wine boom" (Harnett, 1974), "Gilroy celebrates its fame claim with garlic festival this weekend" (1980), and "Put a grape on your face" (1993).

Another significant moment in the area's agricultural history was the tearing down of the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds in 2000 and 2001. In 1999 the fair was held for the last time in its traditional late-summer time frame, with locally raised goats, sheep, swine, horses, cattle and even rabbits and chickens housed for judging in barns built in 1941. That year the attendance was roughly 326,000 and the fair made a profit of

\$50,000—for the first time in years. Shortly after the 2000 fair was held in May, demolition began on the barns to make way for an 8,000-seat amphitheater, a 125,000-square-foot Expo Center, and a sports complex. An article discussed the changes fair participants had seen over the years:

Nowhere is that more apparent as in the agriculture horticulture division. As entries trickled in Thursday, longtime volunteers recalled the days when commercial growers would deliver truckloads of produce for judging. The entries were displayed in the huge Expo Hall. Now they fit on a dozen or so tables in a small open-air pavilion. (Rombeck, 1999)

In 2000, produce and horticulture entries at the Santa Clara County Fair were drastically reduced, as the change in the event's timing meant it was out-of-sync with the harvest season. On the other hand, photography, writing, and painting entries from local schoolchildren rose to 200 from the previous year's 25 (Rombeck, 2000). As a note, construction on the amphitheater did not begin as planned, and the land where the fairgrounds are located is being evaluated as a possible housing site for low-income families, or to be sold to provide income for the county. But even as one chapter in the area's history ends, others are beginning.

Jerome Ceppos, said, "I still think that the cultural story of the valley is one of the great American stories of all time" (Jerome Ceppos, personal e-mail communication, January 26, 2010). Referring to the valley's status as a "technology hub," columnist Mike Cassidy added, "I am optimistic about the valley's future. There are huge challenges in terms of education and what appears to be a widening wage gap between the very wealthy and the poor. Still, I think the innovative spirit of the valley will one

day return the area to general prosperity” (Mike Cassidy, personal e-mail communication, February 5, 2010).

San Jose Mercury News as Force for Innovation

To answer the research question (Was the *San Jose Mercury News* a driving force in the transition of the Santa Clara Valley from an agricultural community to Silicon Valley, or did it simply report based on the demands of its readers?), the findings of the study show that the *San Jose Mercury News* was a propelling force in the transition, and an early adopter when it came to covering new information and innovations. With regard to framing theory, the evidence strongly suggests that by telling readers what news, events, and advancements were important in the area, the newspaper was able to focus the investments and business decisions of its readers on what was new and up-and-coming. In this case what was up-and-coming was technology instead of agriculture. One of the most important articles included in this study was the 1965 piece by Frank Freeman about agriculture as the county’s biggest industry (Freeman, 1965). Based on the other coverage in the paper at the time, one would never have guessed that farming and ranching was thriving in the area. This is an example about how the paper was constantly looking ahead, and propelling the area into the next phase.

Supporting points for the findings were found by asking the journalists themselves what it was like to be in the newsroom during the valley’s transition. This was answered in part by Leigh Weimers, Jerry Ceppos, and Mike Cassidy through their personal e-mail communications with the researcher. They explained that it was exciting to be a part of the nation’s largest business story in the 1980s and 1990s.

When asked about his opinion of the changes, columnist Leigh Weimers noted:

Personally, I enjoyed the changes. I enjoyed writing/reading about the latest scientific advancements, from lasers and space exploration devices to the advent of the personal computer and video games. Although some people lamented the loss of the valley's orchards and their sea of springtime blossoms, I was much happier seeing them replaced by homes and tilt-up R&D buildings. I'd picked prunes as a young man (terrible job) and quickly saw that the only real way for people to make a decent wage in agriculture was to own the ranch, not work on it. The jobs offered by industry provided much better pay. Not a bad trade. (Leigh Weimers, personal e-mail communication, November 9, 2009)

CHAPTER 5 - SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Summary

This study was designed to probe how the *San Jose Mercury News* reported on the transition of the Santa Clara Valley's agricultural community and the rise of technology to create Silicon Valley. The period studied was from 1935 to 2000. The intention was to investigate whether the paper propelled change in the area, or simply reported what had already happened. The study also included a few firsthand comments from reporters who were in the newsroom during the time of the transition and could provide insight into discussions surrounding the valley's changes.

The findings of the research indicated that the newspaper's coverage of agriculture stories during the 1935 through 2000 time frame could be broken up into three segments. The first segment, taking place from 1935 through 1945, showcased agriculture as a way of life and a necessary part of every Santa Clara Valley resident's life. There was a mentality that the news about farming and ranching was important to all readers. The second segment took place from 1946 through 1975. During this time, agriculture became an industry with a distance between most readers and the farm. Hot topics included profits and labor issues, including the birth of farm worker unionization. The final segment, from 1976 through 2000 portrayed agriculture as a novelty, or a relic of the valley's past. There was no farm editor, and most articles were features included for their unique flavor on topics readers knew very little about.

Discussion

This study supported the original conjecture that the *San Jose Mercury News* was active in the transition of the Santa Clara Valley into Silicon Valley. However, as evidenced by interviews with reporters who were present in the newsroom during the transition, some felt the paper was not on the forefront of the news, but instead reported on what was under way.

This means that while research shows that the paper was reporting about the transition as it was happening, it is possible that it could have been even more aggressive and forward-looking in its coverage. Rogers' theory of the Diffusion of Innovations (1962) outlines the order in which new innovations are accepted by society. First come the innovators, next the early adopters, then the early majority, followed by the late majority and laggards. Based on where the newspaper falls within the categories, it would frame its stories to support its views. In this case, the *San Jose Mercury News* falls within the early adopter category because it reported on the latest business and technology news within Silicon Valley, but by one reporter's own admission, the paper was not an innovator and did not begin covering the high-tech story until the transition was beginning.

This study is important as a historical survey of what was happening in the valley between 1935 and 2000. In the future, other researchers will be able to use this study as part of a foundation for further study. It can also be compared and contrasted with other studies about agriculture in the United States and the reporting of farm news over the years.

A question that remains unanswered involves the readers of the newspaper. Now that it is clear how the paper changed over time, how did readers view the transition, and how often did articles in the paper become involved in farm decisions about purchasing, planting, and harvesting? This is examined further in the section below about directions for future research.

Implications of the Study

This research has a few implications for other types of news coverage. First, it is likely that other industries beyond agriculture saw a change in coverage as high-tech was brought into the Santa Clara Valley spotlight. For example, mining was an integral part of the Santa Clara Valley's history, and a necessary foundation for the technology created here (History San Jose, 2010). Mining coverage transitioned out before the time period studied in this thesis began, but it is likely that it saw a transition similar to agriculture's as it was replaced by new industries. It is likely that agriculture served in the same capacity as technology in eclipsing the mining coverage in the *San Jose Mercury News*.

A second implication of this study is that other areas of the country that have seen a growth in technology—for example, Seattle, Austin or Boston—might have seen their newspapers' coverage transition from one industry to another in a similar manner as the *San Jose Mercury News*. In these cases the industries leading the area before may have been first seen as a livelihood for most residents, than as simply one of a few industries in the area, and then a novelty and relic of the area's history. Austin would be of particular interest, as it was a prominent center for the beef cattle industry and has now become

known for its high-tech companies. The coverage in the *Austin American-Statesman* may have mirrored that of the *San Jose Mercury News*.

As a third implication, this study can serve as a predictor for newspapers in third-world countries that are moving from an agriculture-based society to one with a wider breadth of industries and technology. If the country is early in the transition, it can look to the *San Jose Mercury News* as an example of changes likely to happen to their own newspapers. This of course does not take into account the speed of the transition or the typical editorial content and style of the newspapers. Furthermore, for the transition to mimic the one found in the *San Jose Mercury News*, the paper would need to be an early adopter of new ideas, innovations and technology.

When determining what this study means to San Jose and the *San Jose Mercury News*, it is important to note that other studies have analyzed the voice of the *San Jose Mercury News*, none focused specifically on the area's agricultural roots and pinpointed changes in the portrayal of farming from a way of life to a business venture and then on to a novelty. Local historians and agricultural journalists will be able to use this information as a historical study of the Santa Clara Valley, and journalism scholars will be able to learn from the findings regarding the voice and actions of a newspaper in times of change. Additionally, the *San Jose Mercury News* can use this study as tangible evidence of its history and influence in the area.

Limitations of the Study

This study focused on news and editorials in a single newspaper, the *San Jose Mercury News*. Advertisements were excluded. It is known that advertisements can

reflect the business environment of the area. For example, there were three advertisements in the August 4, 1945, issue that requested men and women to work in a fruit packing plant for the winter, both night and day. This advertisement is an indication that the packing and canning industries were an active part of the local economy at that time. It also implies that there was a high demand for labor away from the orchards at that time. While it might have strengthened this study to include advertisements, ultimately, as the paper itself wasn't directly involved in the creation of the advertisements, these were excluded. This is an area of opportunity for future studies.

Additionally, it would have been helpful to have more current and former *San Jose Mercury News* contacts interviewed, as the more insight, the better. The greatest challenge is locating journalists who wrote for the paper during the early years of the transition (1935 through 1955) who are both alive and either still in the area or available via phone or e-mail for an interview. For practical purposes, the study was limited to input from five sources, with three being quoted within the thesis and one providing insight from an introduction he made to a book about the valley's technology pioneers.

This study was confined to one paper within the Bay Area, so it does not provide insight into the area beyond the Santa Clara Valley. The transition from agricultural community to high-tech center is fairly unique to the Santa Clara Valley, but this does not mean that there was not a transition away from agriculture as a widespread livelihood in other areas. To study other transitions, it would be necessary to review the news articles from other communities across the United States. Other media such as radio and television broadcasts as well as magazines could be taken into account in such a study.

Direction for Future Research

For future research, it would be interesting to gather insight from the farmers who lived and worked in the area during the transition, providing this thesis for their review and feedback. This can be used to establish how much influence the articles in the *San Jose Mercury News* had on the decisions of farmers in the area. Did the farmers get the impression that their way of life was being eclipsed by high-tech and they should get out of the industry as soon as possible? Did the *San Jose Mercury News* accurately portray what it was like to farm in the valley during the period studied?

Additionally, future studies can include in-depth research of the period of time before and after the period studied in this thesis. This would include the period from when the *San Jose Mercury Herald* first started publication in the late 1800s through 1935 and then 2000 to present. Are there additional themes in the reporting of agricultural news? Do they align with what was found in this study?

As previously discussed, this study has implications for other areas making the transition into a high-tech center (as in the case of Seattle, Austin, and Boston) or making the transition from an agriculture-based society into something else (as in the case of third-world countries). Future research could include conducting historical or ongoing studies of local newspapers in those areas to determine how the transitions were covered uniquely there. These studies would also have foundations in framing and diffusion of innovations theories.

Ultimately, the transition seen in the Santa Clara Valley is unique. Nowhere else in the world is there such a rich agricultural history tied to a rich story of technological

advancement. The synergy of innovation and great resources has made the area a great environment for success, whether it is in apricot harvests or semiconductors. The area's transition should be noted as one of the most important chapters in American history, and this study is designed to be a part of recording that chapter.

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