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**MORE THAN INK-STAINED WRETCHES:  
The Resocialization of Print Journalists  
in Converged Newsrooms**

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**Abstract**

Newsroom experiments with convergence -- a sharing of news staffs, technologies, products and geography -- disrupt not just the norms and routines of newspaper news work but, more profoundly, the professional socialization of print journalists and their perception of themselves as a distinctive kind of news worker. This article draws on case studies of four converged newsrooms to examine conceptual and sociological shifts among newspaper journalists. Findings suggest print journalists are undergoing resocialization to an expanded view of professionalism; ingrained habits and learned skills related to newsroom structure and storytelling norms are more resistant to change.

**Key words:** convergence, newspaper, resocialization, socialization

## **MORE THAN INK-STAINED WRETCHES: The Resocialization of Print Journalists in Converged Newsrooms**

In Tampa, Florida, a *Tribune* business reporter stands in front of a television camera, calmly waiting to tape her weekly segment for the NBC affiliate. Down the road in Sarasota, the *Herald-Tribune*'s outdoors writer huddles with the local cable channel's sports anchor, cameraman and producer to hash out details of an hour-long program to be cablecast live from the weekend boat show. In Dallas, the first reporter in the *Morning News* newsroom updates the Web site, works on stories for the next day's paper and alerts the ABC affiliate of major breaking news. In Lawrence, Kansas, *Journal-World* reporters team up with cable news reporters on election night to conduct live television interviews with winners and losers in the city primary.

Processes and products vary widely among the dozens of U.S. media outlets exploring newsroom convergence,<sup>1</sup> which involves some combination of news staffs, technologies, products and geography from previously distinct print, television and online media. Newspaper journalists providing everything from news tips to story packages for online and television outlets affiliated with their parent company find themselves part of experiments in novel ways of "making news."

This article suggests that unlike previous technology-driven newsroom innovations, convergence is a catalyst for the resocialization of print journalists, who are being asked not only to change the way they do their work but also to re-examine notions about themselves as a particular type of journalist. To explore this idea, case studies in four converged newsrooms were conducted in January and February 2003. Findings, drawn from both qualitative and quantitative data, indicate that newspaper journalists must make significant accommodations in both their daily activities and their self-conceptualizations as their jobs expand to incorporate other media forms.

## ***About Convergence***

Media mergers and acquisitions, facilitated by deregulatory policies and relaxation of cross-ownership rules, are enabling the big to get bigger still, raising concerns about concentration of economic, cultural and political power among a shrinking number of media giants.<sup>2</sup> Newsroom convergence stems from both this corporate trend and from the ongoing “digitization” of all media forms.<sup>3</sup> But within the newsroom, convergence has a narrower connotation related to changes in how journalists handle the products and practices of their working lives, particularly the new emphasis on cooperation among print, television and online journalists to tell a story to as many audience members as possible through a variety of delivery systems.<sup>4</sup> Virtually all U.S. newspapers now offer affiliated Web sites; nearly 30 percent, at all circulation levels, have partnerships with television stations. Such convergence takes different forms in different news organizations, ranging from simple cross-promotion of partnered media outlets to joint story planning and production.<sup>5</sup>

Scholars recently have begun to explore the effect of convergence on both news culture and content. A case study of two converged newsrooms found differences of both language and culture; the latter was more entrenched and more problematic, with potential to lead to stereotyping and conflicts over story ownership.<sup>6</sup> Survey research has suggested that journalists closely assess the source of the impetus for convergence and are more likely to react positively if they see it as originating with an in-group, or people like them. But journalists resist change; they are less positive about convergence if they think it will have an immediate impact in their newsroom.<sup>7</sup>

Another study that surveyed news professionals in print, broadcast and online newsrooms about key concerns related to convergence found widespread agreement that regardless of media form, good writing is a top priority and a basic skill for all journalists.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, a survey of media professionals and journalism educators found that although both groups saw convergence as important to the future of the profession, they also agreed that such fundamentals as solid reporting

and writing were critical while convergence-related skills such as being able to write across media were of secondary importance.<sup>9</sup> But fears about an erosion of quality stemming from convergence seem to be unfounded; a content analysis of the pioneering *Tampa Tribune* indicated enhancements in story presentation and found no negative effects on story quality or quantity.<sup>10</sup>

Additional information about convergence has come from trade press reports, many suggesting sociological challenges. “Cultural resistance is the biggest hurdle,” the *Tribune*’s executive editor says. “For multimedia work to take deep root, journalists from once-competing newsrooms must learn to cooperate and collaborate -- a tall order in our highly individualistic professional mystique.”<sup>11</sup> The quality and quantity content that converged journalists are expected to produce also are key concerns. “While some multimedia journalists can handle a variety of tasks efficiently and professionally, most will deliver mediocre journalism,” writes one observer. “Quality comes from those journalists who practice a defined job.”<sup>12</sup> Staffing, training and compensation for additional efforts that convergence requires are additional issues.<sup>13</sup>

This exploratory study builds on this preliminary work though the purpose here is neither to track the progress of convergence nor to outline its virtues or vices. Rather, it is to examine the challenges that convergence poses to the ways in which traditional newspaper journalists are socialized to view their work and their profession.

### ***Professional Socialization***

A large body of work, primarily in organizational communication, has examined the process of work-related socialization. Several stages of socialization are traditionally recognized. They include vocational socialization, which is influenced by education, interpersonal and mass communication; anticipatory socialization, in which individuals develop impressions of specific future work environments through communication with others already in the organization; an encounter stage that includes initiation into the work group; and a stage in which new members

adjust to group norms and values. Recent work emphasizes the role new members play in shaping the larger organization, so that socialization is seen as a mutual process.<sup>14</sup>

Identification with a particular medium is part of formative educational and professional processes for many journalists. An experiment at Brigham Young University suggested that placing students in an integrated newsroom environment undermined identities formed in high school or earlier, and attitudes of most participants became increasingly polarized over the 16-week semester. “All my life I dreamed of being a news anchor in a television news station. I worked hard, got into a good program, and now I am on a team that does a half dozen things I’m not interested in,” one student said. Print majors, many of whom had worked on their high school papers, were even less committed to the idea of converged news operations: “I’ve never been so miserable,” said one.<sup>15</sup>

Once students reach the newsroom, a large body of organizational literature indicates that the work culture becomes a powerful socializing force. Newsroom socialization processes have been studied for more than half a century, dating to Breed’s discovery of the importance of peers in transmitting news production norms.<sup>16</sup> Journalists tend to share professional values and to desire implementation of those values in their own work environment,<sup>17</sup> and organizational cultures create patterns of meaning that define appropriate action.<sup>18</sup> The recruitment, socialization and control of journalists are structured to preserve “institutional mythology,” such as a commitment to objective reporting.<sup>19</sup> From a sociological perspective, articulation of such norms is important both as a form of ritual solidarity and a prescriptive expression of the way “we” do things – or should do them.<sup>20</sup>

Although ongoing economic, technological and other changes have diluted the notion of “who we are,”<sup>21</sup> and technological change in particular has affected newsroom organization and communication patterns,<sup>22</sup> research continues to highlight the complex sociological role of such shared norms and self-perceptions among journalists. In a case study of the interplay of journalists’ professional and organizational attachments, Russo found that news organizations serve as vehicles

for enactment of professional work: “The journalists required the newspaper to enact the practices, expectations and values of their profession. The newspaper served as a vehicle for their expression of their professional beliefs and their roles as journalists.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, the extent to which journalists take pride in their newspaper significantly affects job satisfaction; when journalists perceive encroachments on professional autonomy, an increased concern for profit over quality or other organizational constraints, their job satisfaction goes down.<sup>24</sup>

A recent study assessing the power of newsroom socialization in the context of convergence explored the potential for a “collision of values and beliefs about the role of journalism and what journalists do and should do in covering the news.”<sup>25</sup> Its re-examination of data from the 1990s supported the socializing role of newsroom culture, which helped explain uniformity and conformity among news workers and provided them with defenses to withstand pressure for change.

A much smaller body of work has examined the resocialization of current employees within an organization undergoing such changes as development and dissemination of new performance criteria. Hart, Miller and Johnson, who studied employees in a mortgage insurance company as it was reorganizing, suggest that the resocialization process plays an important role during periods of organizational change, operating much like the socialization process of new employees in terms of tactics and impact.<sup>26</sup> An earlier study of communication channels used to resocialize employees in organizations facing a planned change found that general informational meetings were common while line supervisors -- who might be best at connecting abstract policies and goals to daily work tasks -- typically were bypassed. The same study emphasized that planned change involves more than new procedures or ideas; it encompasses new roles, values, rewards and ways of doing work.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Sociology of News Work***

Journalists are socialized not just to feel part of a particular group but also to do things in a particular way, coming to see that way as natural and desirable. The study of the sociology of news

work has one of the longest traditions in mass communication research, dating at least as far back as Breed's work on newsroom socialization in the 1950s, cited above. A generation later, media sociologists emphasized that news itself was a social construction, a product of active negotiation with cultural resources and professional norms to create a shared understanding of how news work is to be done.<sup>28</sup> Among the key ideas about "making news" contained in this work are:

- \* The conception of news as bounded by dictates of time and space, creating a "news net" that emphasizes stories that can be most easily accommodated within newsroom routines and structures. Space constraints led to organization of print reporters by specialized beats and by topic areas such as sports or business. News "typifications" or classification schemes allow news workers to deal with a glut of occurrences in a limited amount of time,<sup>29</sup> and routines and typifications can guide approaches even to extraordinary stories.<sup>30</sup> A recent application of the concept of news typifications posits that editors base decisions about newsworthiness less on traditional definitions than on predictions of how readers from various audiences will react to a story.<sup>31</sup>

- \* Issues of professionalism, a broad sociological construct that incorporates notions of expertise, ethics, public service and autonomy.<sup>32</sup> Such aspects of professionalism are tied to the underlying beliefs and values that constitute newsroom culture, and tensions arise when professional norms are seen as compromised by business or entertainment values.<sup>33</sup> Another aspect of professionalism involves the knowledge, use and sharing of sources. Many journalists "preserve their professional autonomy by jealously protecting their private sources and specialties from others' encroachment."<sup>34</sup> Berkowitz and TerKeurst explored dynamics of source-reporter relationships,<sup>35</sup> viewing both journalists and sources as part of an interpretive community, a group united by a shared interpretation of reality<sup>36</sup> within the larger social context of a news environment.

Notions of competition also affect journalists' perceptions and output. Coulson and Lacy found that newspaper journalists believe competition promotes higher-quality local news, as well as

greater diversity of news and opinion.<sup>37</sup> The same researchers, with a third colleague, also looked at the impact of broadcast competition on city hall coverage. They found that competition was related to journalists producing more stories, including some they might have missed without competition, but having less time for in-depth reports. Print journalists also said television competition led to more reporting of unimportant stories and, to a lesser degree, more sensationalized city hall news.<sup>38</sup>

\* Construction of a news narrative, or the story itself. The ability to build such narratives is a professional skill for journalists, who rely on norms of neutrality, credibility and facticity.<sup>39</sup> Literary conventions of news incorporate assumptions about “what matters, what makes sense, what time and place we live in, and what range of considerations we should take seriously.”<sup>40</sup> The conventions vary by medium; for instance, while all journalists see accuracy as vital, errors in print news stories tends to be of a different sort than those in television news.<sup>41</sup> There also are stylistic differences. Professional-quality broadcast news uses short audio and video elements to produce a compact, dramatic story. Print professionalism means longer stories, with the still-prominent inverted pyramid leading to accounts that end with a whimper rather than a bang.<sup>42</sup>

These and other facets of the complex sociology of news work – including the effects of technology on the culture and practice of gathering, producing and disseminating news<sup>43</sup> -- continue to generate new insights into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Studies of the adoption of pagination systems in the 1990s examined their incorporation in editors’ daily routines and acceptance of the new production method as a job skill.<sup>44</sup> Research into electronic newsgathering, now ubiquitous in US newsrooms,<sup>45</sup> has explored the effect on journalists’ physical presence at a news scene.<sup>46</sup> Increased emphasis on local news in online versions of newspapers suggests that editors may be re-examining their long-standing constructs of what constitutes an optimal mix of varied information for their readers.<sup>47</sup>

This study examines the ongoing process of newsroom convergence through the prism of these sociological concepts, exploring pressures that convergence exerts on journalists socialized into traditional print news organizations. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

**RQ1:** In what ways does convergence challenge the existing socialization of newspaper news workers to their profession, their medium and their newsroom?

**RQ2:** In what ways does convergence mesh with the existing socialization of newspaper news workers to their profession, their medium and their newsroom?

**RQ3:** What sociological aspects of newspaper news work appear most likely to change in response to convergence?

### ***Methodology***

Four newspapers with both television and online partners were chosen based on information in the trade press and from the American Press Institute, an industry leader in tracking convergence. The researcher selected media outlets of varying market sizes, ownership structures and approaches to convergence, appropriate to a method whose fundamental question is what can be learned from a particular case.<sup>48</sup> Such field research is called for when the goal is to learn about, understand or describe a group of interacting people.<sup>49</sup> The variety also allowed the researcher to explore several different permutations of convergence, which is not a uniform process across the industry.<sup>50</sup> The following newspapers were visited. Circulation figures are from the Audit Bureau of Circulations.<sup>51</sup>

\* ***The Dallas Morning News***, flagship of the Belo Corp. The newspaper has a weekday circulation of more than half a million copies and a Sunday circulation of nearly 800,000. Partners: WFAA-TV (ABC), TXCN (cable), dallasnews.com, wfaa.com, txcn.com

\* ***The Tampa Tribune***, part of perhaps the most widely publicized convergence effort in the country. The *Tribune* is a 238,000 daily and 314,000 Sunday circulation newspaper owned by Media General of Richmond, VA. Partners: WFLA-TV (NBC), TBO.com

\* ***The Sarasota (FL) Herald-Tribune***, a New York Times paper with a winter circulation of 116,000 on weekdays and more than 144,000 on Sundays; the numbers dip in the summer. It jointly owns, with cable provider Comcast, a local 24-hour cable news channel. Partners: SNN Channel 6 (cable), heraldtribune.com

\* ***The Lawrence (KS) Journal-World***, part of the privately owned World Company, started by the current publisher's grandfather in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *Journal-World* has a daily and Sunday circulation of just under 20,000. Partners: 6News Lawrence (cable), [ljworld.com](http://ljworld.com), [lawrence.com](http://lawrence.com), [KUsports.com](http://KUsports.com)

The author spent a week in each city in January and February 2003, observing newsroom operations, attending news meetings and talking with journalists about convergence. Conducting research on the journalists' turf enhanced understanding and facilitated interpretation of the context in which newsroom changes are occurring.<sup>52</sup> The non-probability sample of participants combined elements of a convenience sample, appropriate in exploratory studies such as this, and a purposive sample, which seeks subjects with specific characteristics,<sup>53</sup> primarily experience with convergence here. A total of 120 print, broadcast, cable and online journalists were interviewed, including 64 newspaper managers, editors, reporters, columnists and photographers. These newspaper journalists are the focus of this article. Interview questions were open-ended, seeking to elicit discussion about convergence. Hand-written notes were transcribed and analyzed for key themes related to the research questions. All journalists were promised confidentiality.

Journalists also were asked to complete a 54-item convergence questionnaire. Triangulation of methods, such as this combination of interviews and surveys, improves measurement<sup>54</sup> and helps guard against the danger that findings will reflect the method of inquiry in misleading ways.<sup>55</sup> Each journalist was given a questionnaire immediately following his or her interview, with the exception of senior executives, whose positions of authority placed them outside the focus on newsroom staffers, and one bureau reporter interviewed by phone. This approach let busy respondents complete the questionnaire at their leisure. The questionnaire, which used a 7-point Likert scale, asked respondents to indicate agreement or disagreement with statements about the perceived impact of convergence on careers, work routines, public service and the journalism profession. Room for demographic information and open-ended comments also was provided.

Sixty-seven of the 110 journalists given questionnaires promptly completed and returned them. Non-respondents received an e-mail version of the questionnaire in mid-March 2003 and again in late March, yielding another 23 responses. The final response rate was 81.8% of all the journalists who received questionnaires: 84.5% of newspaper journalists, 75% of television journalists and 85.7% of online journalists. This article is based on responses of the 49 newspaper journalists who completed questionnaires, plus interviews with both questionnaire respondents and non-respondents from the four papers. Mean scores for relevant questionnaire items are provided.

### ***Findings***

This section considers findings in relation to three aspects of socialization: to professional norms, to newspaper culture and to medium-specific routines of “making news.” It highlights ways in which convergence affects both conceptualization and accepted practices of newspaper work. The section concludes with tentative evidence that at least some print journalists are beginning a process of resocialization instigated by convergence. Table 1 supplements the interview data with mean responses to questionnaire statements referenced in the text; the statements are presented in descending order, with those that newspaper journalists agreed with most strongly at the top.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

***Socialization: Professional Norms:*** If there is an overarching norm to any profession, journalism included, it is that of public service.<sup>56</sup> Journalists believe they work in the public interest and that their primary purpose is to provide citizens with necessary information.<sup>57</sup> Print, broadcast and online journalists in this study all said that, at least potentially, convergence could enhance that public service role by providing what one print journalist called a “360 perspective” on a story: better, deeper and more detailed information than any single media outlet could offer. But how that norm is fulfilled varies by medium, and print journalists tend to see their way as the best, looking down on television journalists, in particular, in an attitude one news manager described as “they’ve

got the blow dryers, we've got the investigative reporters." Television news is "often shallow, quick," an editor said. "I hate when TV reporters call themselves journalists."

Print journalists were ambivalent about the perceived effect of convergence on professional norms of credibility, accuracy and quality. They agreed strongly that "the quality of the story is more important than the technology used to tell it" but were unsure whether convergence affected that quality. They expressed concern that pressure for immediacy might overwhelm the need to get "a good story with accuracy and perspective," as one veteran wrote. But as a group, they were neutral on the questionnaire statement "the Web's demand for timely information jeopardizes our ability to get the facts right before a story runs." And they appreciated the benefit of immediacy when a big story broke. In general, newspaper journalists liked being able to tell a story in different ways. As one reporter with considerable on-air experience put it: "TV is the appetizer. The newspaper is the main course. [The Web site] is the dessert."

But the medium does affect the types of stories provided to the public. As suggested above, journalists mentally sort stories into categories, such as hard news (newsworthy occurrences available to analysis or interpretation), spot news (timely stories, of which fires are the prototypical example), or soft news (feature or human-interest stories).<sup>58</sup> Spot news gets greater emphasis in television, which typically values timeliness over other news criteria,<sup>59</sup> than in print; barring details that journalists deem newsworthy for some other reason, such events typically make the paper as briefs or police blotter items, if they make it at all. Print journalists see themselves as more likely to focus on hard or soft news. Several said television journalists do not care about the issue-oriented stories the newspaper does well, and some feared convergence would drag down their own product, potentially forcing "the more splashy TV-oriented stories" into the paper. Journalists generally disagreed with the statement "the same story can be told equally well in any medium."

***Socialization: Newsroom Culture:*** Culture is “the set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices” that characterizes a social or occupational group.<sup>60</sup> For newspaper journalists, it encompasses the professional values of expertise, ethics, public service and autonomy cited above, plus work routines that foster those values. Some continue to see television journalists as part of a different culture. “I went to j-school to be a journalist, not to be a multimedia person, not to be a TV person, not to multitask,” said a print reporter who expressed some of the strongest views on this topic. “I have never liked TV journalism. I’ve always thought it’s abhorrent, a subspecies.”

This perception that “we” are different from “them” supports the observation that many print journalists are sitting convergence out as long as they can, though degrees of participation vary both within and among newsrooms. Especially in larger organizations, cross-media staff communication remains limited, resting primarily on shared news budgets and budget meetings, plus the occasional e-mail or phone call about a major story. “Among the news reporters, it’s really still a pretty unusual thing,” a reporter in a larger market said. The questionnaire confirmed that convergence has not significantly changed newsroom practices, a key cultural component in the resocialization of news workers. Print journalists disagreed with the statement “the effort necessary to make convergence work is shared equitably throughout our news operation.” As one editor wrote: “There are many, many print reporters in the room who have never worked at all with our TV operation.”

Cultural socialization is partly a matter of training in particular work practices, and the outlets studied here are taking relatively little formal action to build new skills sets among news workers. Print journalists in all four newsrooms cited a lack of training for television or online work as problematic, and questionnaire results supported the view that employers had not provided appropriate training for transition to work in a converged newsroom.

Yet despite cultural skepticism and remaining skills gaps, a clear benefit to convergence that emerged from this study was a realization by many newspaper journalists that their television

counterparts had substance after all. Print journalists agreed more strongly with the statement “I enjoy working with people who have professional strengths different from my own” than with any other on the questionnaire; in fact, not a single respondent disagreed. Newspaper journalists also agreed, though less strongly, that they had gained respect for colleagues in other parts of the news organization. One reporter who had “always sort of dismissed them as hair spray, bow ties, vapid airheads” realized when she began doing television herself how much work a news package demands. Another print reporter said convergence “forced me to accept how difficult that job is,” adding, “I still love to make fun of TV people, but it doesn’t mean I think I can do what they do.”

***Socialization: Routines of “Making News”:*** Print reporters voiced concern about fitting new duties into their newsgathering and production routines. Used to once-a-day deadlines, they struggled with online and television products that required more frequent feeding. The Web was less problematic despite its constant need for fresh news. Rather than uploading stories themselves, these print journalists typically provided information to the online staffers who maintained the site. The request that they write a few paragraphs about a breaking news event -- enough to constitute an online story – struck them as reasonable. It sometimes was an annoyance but rarely a major drain on time or energy for people comfortable with slapping together sentences in the inverted-pyramid style that they saw as the best structure for online news. Several admitted that filing Web updates made writing a longer print piece easier by helping them focus the lead and establish a framework.

Television creates more significant problems. Its demand for visuals wreaks havoc with print journalists’ accustomed routines. Television requires that the journalist physically travel to the location of the source or the event rather than staying in the office and working the phones or Internet. Not only does getting the video take time in and of itself, it also affects interviewing, researching and writing time for print stories. One reporter said he sometimes feels stretched to the point of a nervous breakdown by the resulting pressure.

Television production also is time-intensive. It takes precious time to write a script (which does require a different writing style from print), to tape a voice-over or go live with a stand-up, and -- most frustrating of all -- to hurry up and wait. “They forget that we have jobs” of our own, grumbled an annoyed print reporter. Moreover, time devoted to other media comes not instead of but in addition to time spent producing their usual quota of newspaper articles. With the exception of one reporter whose job officially was split between two media, everyone in this study was responsible for comparable amounts of print content as before convergence. Nor had salaries increased in compensation. “I’m like a duck,” said one. “I’m already paddling as fast as I can.”

Several print journalists also cited organizational variations as significant obstacles to seamless convergence. In the metro areas visited here, broadcast staffs were large, experienced and stable enough for reporters to have areas of specialization, such as city government or education. But few local television newsrooms are organized around beats.<sup>61</sup> In Sarasota and Lawrence, where the convergence partner is a cable channel, many television reporters were relatively inexperienced generalists. Such organizational differences impeded the development of relationships between staffs and the ability to “work more closely together from the inception of a story,” as a newspaper reporter wrote. Varying levels of understanding of local issues also frustrated print reporters who said they continually had to “spoon-feed” their cable counterparts to fill in knowledge gaps, sometimes in the middle of a news event. Others were troubled by repeated mistakes that, because of cross-promotion of convergence partners, they felt reflected poorly on the paper.

Another deterrent to open communication was that, as many print journalists pointed out, they had been socialized to see television journalists as competitors for sources and stories. Suddenly being asked to see them as colleagues was a challenge. Even in newsrooms where the main manifestation of convergence was merely sharing information, doing so did not come easily. Journalists remain especially possessive of enterprise stories resulting from individual initiative and

legwork, or “active discovery” of information.<sup>62</sup> However, a number of newspaper journalists said they had gotten over this attitude, citing either the professional norm of public service or the more selfish opinion that “it’s still my story.” Questionnaire results indicated agreement that convergence had given them a “leg up on the competition.” But resistance lingers; print journalists disagree only mildly with the statement “the fact that we now are continually ‘scooping ourselves’ bothers me.”

Different media forms also demand different narrative styles, most obviously involving the strong visual component of television news. Few print people have been socialized to see images as driving a story. Nor are newspaper people accustomed to thinking of themselves in visual terms – until they go on television. “TV people are visually pleasing,” one male print journalist said. “I need to not be bashful about having makeup in my drawer.” In general, television reporters are more a part of the story than print reporters believe themselves to be, and some found this disconcerting. “You have to package yourself within the story. It’s a whole different kind of journalism,” said one.

The Web has its own narrative requirements. Newspaper journalists recognized the ability to tell a story in depth and detail online but admitted they were not doing as much to support those narrative capabilities as they might. Only a few described supplying additional materials for the Web site, such as the sports reporter who sent back digital Super Bowl “postcards” or the education reporter who generated a database of dropout rates.

Yet despite recognition that different media require different storytelling abilities, most print journalists believe their own skills remain vital. They agreed with the questionnaire statement “my journalistic skills are valuable in any news medium” and said good writing remained important. They felt “good journalists should be able to tell their stories well in multiple formats,” and most did not find doing so stressful. Interviews suggested a growing confidence among convergence participants. One converged reporter said that at first he was scared he would say something stupid, but now “my heart rate barely picks up. My biggest fear is that my lips are chapped.”

These preliminary findings suggest that although different media forms demand different storytelling approaches, journalists feel the skills can be mastered -- and some admit the new demands can be re-energizing. "Challenges are fun -- they keep you on your toes," one reporter said. Another said he felt he was in a "fertile time mentally. Doing TV has done that for me."

***Openness to Resocialization:*** In fact, although the previous discussion has emphasized the challenges of convergence-induced resocialization, many journalists indicated a willingness to accommodate changes in perspective and practice. "I've learned quite a bit and have had my opinions change and have had some of the print-side arrogance knocked out of me," a newspaper editor wrote. A number admitted that early fears about a dramatic increase in work or an equally dramatic cultural shift had not played out. Despite stylistic differences, professional storytelling norms such as a commitment to objectivity are similar across all media -- and one effect of convergence is to increase recognition of those similarities.

The strongest indication that newspaper journalists may adapt to accommodate convergence can be summed up this way: Concerns that emerged here were mainly with the way convergence is being implemented. With exceptions among a few individuals, they were not fundamental concerns with the idea of convergence itself. Print journalists are indeed worried about time management, competition and the other concrete aspects of news work. At the same time, they believe convergence is inevitable -- and is a good thing for their careers, company and readers.

Many journalists see convergence as enabling them to offer more information in multiple formats suited to changing audience lifestyles and needs. Questionnaires indicated mild agreement that converged operations allow the company to better serve the public; news partners mean "we have more eyes and ears out in the community," as a reporter said. News managers have acknowledged their staffers' near-universal socialization to core professional norms of public service by promoting better journalism as the goal of convergence. "If synergy is about economic

efficiency, then it isn't ever going to take hold in the newsroom. If it's about quality journalism and doing things better with more tools, then it will," a manager said. "I don't expect the newsroom to rally around synergy as an economic model because they won't -- and frankly, they shouldn't."

Journalists also saw convergence as a shrewd corporate move. Although some said the jury would remain out pending a financial assessment, most applauded their employer's decision to take the risk. "It's made perfect sense to me for years," an editor wrote. "It strengthens us and serves our customers in ways that outweigh any drawbacks. And it's inevitable if newspapers are to survive." Some even said more should be spent on convergence efforts. Questionnaires showed disagreement with the statement "convergence has cost this company more than convergence is worth."

Finally, journalists saw convergence as a plus for them personally, agreeing with the questionnaire statement "working in a converged newsroom environment is good for my career." As one newspaper journalist said in his interview, "People who can switch back and forth are going to have a better opportunity for a job." At the very least, they considered convergence experience a smart insurance policy. "I've got a lot more options now," said one print reporter with considerable on-air time. "I've demonstrated my versatility."

The evidence, then, is somewhat conflicting. It suggests that convergence poses numerous challenges to newspaper journalists' socialization to their own news organization's norms and culture. At the same time, it points toward openness to ongoing resocialization, manifested in a willingness to change how that work is done -- or perhaps, more fundamentally, how it is defined.

### ***Summary and Discussion***

The first research question asked how convergence challenges the existing socialization of print journalists, and there are numerous answers. At a broad professional level, some continue to see television journalism as inferior and even "lame," less driven by public-service values and more likely to focus on visually interesting spot news than on issue-oriented stories that people need. In

terms of newsroom culture, an “us” and “them” attitude remains common. Especially in larger organizations dominated by seasoned journalists long socialized to newspaper work, communication with counterparts in partnered newsrooms remains limited. As for daily cultural practice, many print journalists express little or no motivation to participate in convergence, sometimes citing inadequate training in different forms of storytelling as justification.

Concrete practices and routines of newspaper news work may pose even greater challenges to print journalists’ resocialization to a converged newsroom environment. Time pressures are a major issue for journalists struggling to produce stories for television and the Web -- not instead of stories for the paper, but in addition to their regular print duties. Structures that have evolved to facilitate news production, such as beats and typification schemes, do not translate seamlessly across media formats. Competitive tendencies can get in the way of even low-impact requests for cooperation and information sharing among convergence partners.

The second research question asked how convergence meshed with the existing socialization of newspaper journalists. There is evidence here that convergence experiences are leading print journalists to realize, perhaps for the first time, that colleagues in other media have many of the same values, self-perceptions and skills. Despite persistent stereotypes, many have discovered that doing good television news is difficult and requires journalistic talents they never suspected on-air colleagues possessed. Print journalists also see the ability to provide information more quickly and in more forms as a real public service, recognizing that a space-constrained product that comes out once a day is no longer sufficient to keep an audience well-informed in a 24/7 news environment.

Moreover, they see convergence as beneficial both for their employers and for their own careers. This finding suggests that at least among print journalists studied here (all of whom work in already-converged organizations, of course), resocialization may in fact be under way. To reiterate, journalists’ concerns focused on the way convergence is being done more than on the idea itself.

Continuing research is needed to track how existing professional, organizational, and operational norms and practices are either integrated or further differentiated over time, but there are indications here that print journalists recognize similarities they may not have noticed before.

The third research question, asking what sociological aspects of newspaper news work appear most likely to change in response to convergence, leads to a search for probable paths of least resistance. One of the simplest entrees to convergence for a news organization is to encourage cross-media information sharing. The *Lawrence Journal-World*, the smallest paper in this study, reconfigured its newsroom so journalists from all media work side by side. The largest, the *Dallas Morning News*, has less flexibility to tear up its infrastructure. It has promoted “synergy” by emphasizing the need to communicate with previous competitors, hoping trust will grow, one pair of journalists at a time. The rather surprising finding that newspaper journalists enjoy working with counterparts in other media, and have gained respect for them by doing so, lends credence to this strategy. And general support of the online component and its potential to provide information between print editions suggests relatively few barriers to cooperation with Web staffs.

The aspects of socialization that previous research suggests would be the hardest to change if they truly conflicted – deep-seated beliefs about core professional norms and values – are those on which journalists here see the most common ground. Despite lingering concerns about television quality and the types of stories it does best, convergence is foregrounding actual commonalities rather than presumed differences among news workers. “We” and “they” still belong to separate cultural in-groups, but the circles delimiting each group have begun to overlap in both journalistic perception and practice. Should that trend continue, as the economic and technological climate suggests it will, the extent of overlap should expand. If so, resocialization to a more inclusively defined journalistic profession and culture seems not only feasible but also likely.

That said, medium-driven variations in professional practice – notably issues related to newsroom structures and storytelling norms – may well separate newspapers, television and online products and producers for the foreseeable future. It seems unlikely that newspaper journalists will be resocialized to the point of seeing no distinctions between themselves and their colleagues any time soon. As long as distinct media forms remain, production of quality content for those forms will impose hurdles to resocialization for a variety of reasons that this study makes clear. Universal fluency in all forms of storytelling takes more extensive training than any media organization – or journalism school – is even close to providing. Deadlines and the time constraints they impose will not go away. Television newsrooms may never be staffed at a print level in terms of either size or experience. Small staffs and deadline pressures in television and on the Web make such newspaper structures as beats unfeasible, particularly at smaller outlets. The nature of the medium dictates that television retain its emphasis on the visual and therefore on certain stories, told in certain ways.

Some of these sociological barriers could be mitigated by appropriate management actions. Newspaper journalists can receive the training they need to be competent, if not expert, producers of multimedia content. Accommodations in work schedules can enable journalists to do different things -- something many said they enjoy -- and not just more things, which add to the pressure of an already stressful job. Technology can be an enormous aide. Software to facilitate shared news budgets, programs to translate stories into different formats, and digital cameras to create visual content that can be displayed across platforms are among the investments that make it possible for journalists to juggle more balls than in a past that, as a reporter said, seems “like simple times now.”

Journalism schools, a primary agent of socialization before journalists enter the newsroom, clearly have a role in dispelling the “us” and “them” views of students in distinct sequences. However, some managers in this study expressed concern that too much convergence in the curriculum will produce graduates who are a mile wide but only an inch deep, generalists ill-suited

to an entry-level job at a small paper with no convergence prospects in sight. Newspaper employers are looking for journalists who understand what it takes to produce stories in multiple formats and are open-minded about doing so -- but are still proficient at reporting and writing for print.

Educators may need to revisit the rationale behind rigidly sequenced programs – ones in which students are “miserable” when asked to work outside their preconceived perceptions of themselves as future professionals<sup>63</sup> -- without discarding the ability to focus students on a career path that probably will continue to put primary, if not exclusive, emphasis on one medium in the near term.

But long-term, the newsroom convergence trend seems likely to continue, for the reasons cited above. The optimal approach will vary widely, as will its timing in any particular market. Moreover, this study suggests that newsroom structures and approaches to informing the public will contribute to preserving distinctions among various news products and the journalists who create them. At the same time, it points toward enormous potential for increased cooperation among journalists and the likelihood that as creative professionals continue to expand their definition of who they are and what they do, they will find an expanding number of ways to provide new outlets for their work and fulfill the professional goal of quality public service.

More research into convergence is called for as the concept evolves over time and across markets. In addition to continuing to examine effects within newsrooms, researchers will want to explore the fundamentally important issue of the impact on content and audiences. A variety of research methods should be applied. The research described here derived from four case studies, and the findings are not generalizable to all newsrooms experimenting with convergence. Nor are the journalists who participated in this study necessarily representative of others in their own newsrooms since they were not randomly selected. Different methodologies can address these issues. That said, the virtue of a case study is in its ability to assist in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation.<sup>64</sup> The current study seeks to meet these goals.

**Table 1: Questionnaire responses**

This table shows the mean score (with the standard deviation in parentheses below each score) for journalists who completed and returned a questionnaire. "All journalists" includes those in newspaper, television and online newsrooms. The statements are part of a 54-item questionnaire given to all interviewees, using a 7-point Likert scale in which a "1" corresponds to "strongly disagree," a "4" is neutral and a "7" corresponds to "strongly agree."

| <b>Questionnaire Statement</b>                                                                              | <b>Newspaper Journalists<sup>a</sup><br/>(n = 49)</b> | <b>All Journalists<br/>(n = 90)</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| I enjoy working with people who have professional strengths different from my own.                          | 6.61<br>(.64)                                         | 6.48<br>(.75)                       |
| The quality of the story is more important than the technology used to tell it.                             | 6.36<br>(1.01)                                        | 6.22<br>(1.11)                      |
| My journalistic skills are valuable in any news medium.                                                     | 5.92<br>(1.58)                                        | 6.02<br>(1.37)                      |
| Working in a converged newsroom environment is good for my career.                                          | 5.51<br>(1.54)                                        | 5.86<br>(1.40)                      |
| I have gained respect for the people in other parts of the news operation as a result of convergence.       | 5.45<br>(1.70)                                        | 5.71<br>(1.46)                      |
| My company is better able to serve our audience because of our decision to converge news operations.        | 5.45<br>(1.54)                                        | 5.61<br>(1.45)                      |
| Overall, converged newsrooms are a good idea.                                                               | 5.39<br>(1.59)                                        | 5.66<br>(1.44)                      |
| Our decision to converge newsrooms has resulted in more work for me personally.                             | 5.10<br>(2.01)                                        | 5.23<br>(1.86)                      |
| Converging our newsrooms has given us a leg up on the competition here in our market.                       | 5.01<br>(1.78)                                        | 5.48<br>(1.60)                      |
| Good journalists should be able to tell their stories well in multiple formats.                             | 4.91<br>(1.59)                                        | 5.25<br>(1.61)                      |
| Convergence has had no significant impact on the quality of our individual news products.                   | 4.15<br>(1.67)                                        | 3.49<br>(1.76)                      |
| The Web's demand for timely information jeopardizes our ability to get the facts right before a story runs. | 3.99<br>(1.79)                                        | 3.52<br>(1.80)                      |
| Our decision to combine newsrooms has significantly changed my day-to-day job.                              | 3.71<br>(2.05)                                        | 4.20<br>(2.03)                      |
| The need to produce stories in multiple formats stresses me out.                                            | 3.67<br>(1.72)                                        | 3.44<br>(1.51)                      |
| The fact that we now are continually `scooping ourselves` bothers me.                                       | 3.66<br>(2.00)                                        | 3.07<br>(1.93)                      |
| Convergence encourages journalists to be jacks-of-all-trades but masters of none.                           | 3.56<br>(1.77)                                        | 3.45<br>(1.69)                      |
| Asking journalists to work across converged media results in mediocre journalism.                           | 3.27<br>(1.67)                                        | 2.93<br>(1.63)                      |
| Good writing seems less important to journalism now than it used to.                                        | 3.12<br>(2.18)                                        | 2.97<br>(2.09)                      |
| Convergence has cost this company more than convergence is worth.                                           | 3.11<br>(1.63)                                        | 2.62<br>(1.57)                      |
| My company provided appropriate training for me to make the transition to work in a converged newsroom.     | 2.97<br>(1.67)                                        | 3.11<br>(1.66)                      |
| The same story can be told equally well in any medium.                                                      | 2.77<br>(2.04)                                        | 2.77<br>(1.96)                      |
| The effort necessary to make convergence work is shared equitably throughout our news operation.            | 2.69<br>(1.57)                                        | 2.91<br>(1.60)                      |

a) One journalist who splits his time between print and television is included with the newspaper respondents, the medium in which he has the most longevity.

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