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OSCAR WESTLUND

University of Gothenburg and IT University of Copenhagen

LENNART WEIBULL

University of Gothenburg

Generation, life course and news media use in Sweden 1986–2011

ABSTRACT

It has been posited that different generations are largely influenced by the characteristics of the media landscape they inherit and grow into in their formative years. However, we also know from empirical studies that individual media use changes over the life course. At present no empirical study has analysed and compared the use of several news media among different generations in relation to both life cycle factors and media development over significant periods of time. Hence, this article explores the topic through its cross-generational comparison of transforming news media usage. As a point of departure, the generation analyses use the widely recognized classification of the dutifuls (1926–1945), the baby boomers (1946–1964), generation X (1965–1976) and the dotnets (1977–1995). Five analytically distinct media system eras, covering 1986 to 2011, are utilized for embedding the empiric analyses into distinct media system contexts. The findings evidence the generational hypothesis on formative socialization, especially with regards to the dutifuls and the baby boomers. Nevertheless, age and life cycle are also identified as critically important factors. The findings show that the elderly persist with legacy news media, while younger generations predominantly orient towards news platforms that have emerged in the digital mediascape, even though this traditional classification seems

KEYWORDS

generations
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to be too broad for analysis of media development. Consequently, researchers should ideally acknowledge this double effect of age in future research on media usage, as well as work further on developing relevant classifications of generation relevant research for our understanding of transforming media use.

INTRODUCTION

The sociology of generations suggests that people born at a specific time and place develop a collective consciousness that binds them together. Emphasizing a social and cognitive dimension to generations, much developed in their formative period, generations growing up in specific cultural and geographical contexts are assumed to develop binding characteristics that can be used for analyses of social stratification (Mannheim 1952). Later generation research has emphasized that generations develop mutual bonds from experiencing major societal events and processes (e.g. Wyatt 1993; Corsten 1999). Acknowledging that a generation presumably shares the experience of having grown up during a historical time in which specific events have taken place, this article posits that they share many such experiences based on accessing news from the media (cf. Højjer 1998). Whether they develop mutual frames of references through news media will clearly depend on the generations' various ways of accessing the news through different news media. Moreover, from a generational perspective the formative period is also assumed important to the routines that generations develop when using (news) media. Nevertheless, the media routines of individuals change throughout the course of life and depend on changing conditions related to the life cycle, such as a person having children or going into retirement. People also develop other interests as well as being exposed to new opportunities by the transforming media system. These two factors imply that people will change their behaviours over time. Following from this, our point of departure ultimately conveys generations as developing distinguished news accessing behaviours in their formative years, being embedded in the media system present at the time. It also acknowledges changes over the life cycle and transforming mediascapes as two aggravating circumstances suggesting one must be sensible to potential liquidity in the study of news accessing behaviours.

News obviously marks a different sort of media content than other types of media, such as gaming or music, for example. Most Swedish studies show that news usage is less frequent among young people compared to senior citizens (cf. Weibull 1983; Mediebarometern 2011 2012; Shehata and Wadbring 2012), while the opposite applies to gaming (Westlund and Bjur 2013). News accessing is here hypothesized to provide a middle ground in which both generational and life cycle effects are assumed to occur. It is also worth noting that divergent ways of accessing the news through media (platforms) often results in them being exposed to substantially different news stories.

Media permeate social life in quite another way nowadays as they did at the time of Karl Mannheim's original writing in the 1920s, when the written press dominated and radio was seen as a new medium. Media expansion in the second half of the twentieth century was parallel with urbanization and increased globalization. Moreover, social changes have broadened the scope of events that people care for and that news media report on. Different media systems have been present during the formative years of different generations, who have consequently accumulated dissimilar mediated experiences and memories

(Gumpert and Cathcart 1985; Höjjer 1998; Volkmer 2006a). The transformation of the media landscape has involved changes to media structures, the contents put on offer by the media, as well as how different generations use the media. The media that were dominant at the time of individuals growing up has been conveyed as essential to how generations experience their world.

This article acknowledges benefits with the generational concept, while also identifying several shortcomings when it comes to media research at present. Such research has typically focused on the contemporary young growing up in a digital habitat. Such research has often generated simplified constructs of the young as a homogenous generation oriented towards digital media, popularly described with miscellaneous terminology (e.g. McCrindle 2009). This strand of research is marked by a superfluous use of classifications which literally refer to more or less the same (age) group of individuals. While utilizing 'generation' terminology, in practice many of these studies actually study 'young' individuals as a group of a certain age. Here generation often seems to be more of a heuristic concept and it could be debated whether these studies really should be defined as studies of generations. Typically there is no longitudinal approach, no cross-generational comparison, no historical reflections on the relations between media and society, and sociology of generations is typically absent in their theoretical frameworks. Conversely there has been substantial criticism directed to these simplified constructs of the 'young' as homogenous (e.g. Buckingham 2008; Herring 2008). Recent empirical findings in fact evidence that the media lives of 'young' is marked by much heterogeneity (Westlund and Bjur forthcoming). Most importantly, with 'the young generation' attracting far more scholarly attention, other generations have been passed over. Following this, tracing and comparing the media use of different generations over time must be given precedence. Summing up the discussion, this article suggests that the generational concept is worthwhile to explore, especially since there are few studies that have truly applied this theoretical concept for robust empiric studies.

There are numerous ways of classifying generations into time brackets and each has shortcomings. This article will build on a classification widely used within social science in general, political science in particular, and in popularized forums in society. The rationale of these classifications can be found in the idea of generational identity and characteristics of generations, which are defined as ranges between decisive birth years. The terminology utilized is drawn from the influential work of C. Zukin et al. (2006), but has appeared in similar fashions in the work of other scholars (e.g. Strauss and Howe 1991). The classification contains four generations: *the dutifuls* (born before 1945), *the baby boomers* (1946–1964), *generation X* (1965–1976), and *the dotnets* (born after 1977). Dissimilarities in terminology involve that Zukin's dutifuls are referred to as the silent generation by W. Strauss and N. Howe (1991). While both parties use the baby boomer definition, which was originally coined by Landon Jones (1980), their definitions of decisive birth years vary some. Likewise they use different classifications for those born from the 1960s and onwards. Also, Zukin et al.'s classification may be debated as it makes a classification derived from American society, in which the two younger generations are smaller than the other two in terms of span and size, yet there is a seemingly natural transition from one generational age span to the next. Nevertheless, we found it fruitful to take our departure in an existing and widely used classification because it is an accepted construct to analyse behavioural and altitudinal change during the post-war period.

It is important to note that generations also change over the life course. G. H. Elder (1975) argues one should account for people having a chronological time span in their ageing, with several key events taking place (such as marriage, having children and retirement), while being embedded into society during a specific historical location. In this article we posit that generations and life courses are intertwined. We acknowledge that members of different generations pass through individual life courses, and emphasize that they do so at different historical locations in relation to both society and its media system. In relation to this, previous research on generational media use (treated as birth cohorts) in the United States and Germany, has evidenced that the importance of growing up with television to one's later usage may depend on how the media system as such develops (Peiser 2000). At present the generation born around the 1930s and 1940s have entered the life course of retirement, while the generation born around the 1980s and 1990s presumably are students or have entered into work life. Not only have these generations experienced substantially different media systems during their formative phase of life, they also experience different social lives, interests and phases. Conversely, and in a similar fashion as E. Loos (2012), this article marks significance to the formative phase of media use (emphasized by media generation and socialization theory), subsequent phases in life (emphasized by life course theory) and the changing media system. Hence, we theoretically account for the dimensions which Peiser (2000) and others include in their so-called age-period-cohort modelling of different cohorts using multiple regression analysis. Our analysis accounts for generational effects (in terms of inter-generational differences), age, education, gender and family composition as indicators of life phase, and differences depending on time periods (five phases in the media system). To date, media scholars have unfortunately largely overseen the intrinsic complexities relating to what we see as a double articulation of age.

The article confronts the generations formed in older media systems with the transformations of the latest decades, under the control of changes during the life cycle. The framework for our analysis is the development of the Swedish media system between 1986 and 2011. This transformative period has been analytically divided into five (relatively) distinguished eras. While all periodization can be debated, the five eras have been singled out based on main changes for news provisioning in the Swedish media system (e.g. Carlsson and Facht 2010). The first era, called the *legacy media era* (1986–1990), was characterized by a strong newspaper culture (especially local and subscribed newspapers) and a broadcasting system governed through public service institutions (SVT, SR and UR or their public fore-runners). The *commercialization era* (1991–1995) signifies a period in which broadcasting was deregulated and a number of commercial media firms established operations that included national and local news reporting, especially in television and radio (TV3 and TV4). The *digitization era* (1996–2001) acknowledges digitization, as well as the invention and diffusion of the Web and online news sites in the 1990s (such as *aftonbladet.se* in 1994), but also the rise of free dailies such as *Metro* in 1998. The *cross-media era* (2002–2006) meant that legacy media as well as commercial broadcasters fuelled a rapid growth of online publishing initiatives, in parallel to their existing news delivery. During the 2000s news media experimented with additional solutions for publishing and distribution, to become accessible anytime and anyplace, and conglomerates of local newspapers started to publish Web-TV. In 2007, a *ubiquitous media era* took off (2007–2011) as the first successful touch-screen mobile device was launched

in Sweden, which was reinforced through the rapid diffusion of laptops and tablets equipped with mobile broadband (Westlund 2013).

The distinction between eras as well as attributing them certain characteristics express, of course, a great simplification. The names of the periods focus on 'new' media, but it does not mean that 'old' media have disappeared; actually international comparisons usually describe today's Sweden as a country with a strong press and a strong public service radio and television (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Therefore, it is important to keep this in mind when analysing the interplay between the old and the new.

To sum up, our aim is to describe and explain transforming *news usage* among dutifuls, baby boomers, generation X and dotnets in five media eras from 1986 to 2011. In this article dutifuls were defined to include the decisive span of birth years from 1926 to 1945, while dotnets were defined as those born 1977 to 1995. Conversely all four generations comprise periods of approximately two decades. The article traces generational changes in usage over time, for both life cycle and media eras, over the course of an expanding and shifting mediascape. Increasing fragmentation has offered people more freedom to form individual usage patterns, resulting in both inter- and intra-generational similarities and differences in news usage. The importance of the transforming media system is acknowledged by comparing differences in news usage over time in the context of media change, which for analytical reasons was divided into five (relatively) distinguished media system eras. Intra-generational heterogeneity is tested through logistical regression analyses for each media era that control life course effects with regard to ten different news media. Generational news accessing patterns are analysed with important guidance deriving from the theoretical frameworks of displacing and complementary effects, and the data used for the analysis consist of 26 annual and postal-based surveys representative to the Swedish population.

SOCIOLOGY OF GENERATIONS

Were it not for the existence of social interaction between human beings – were there no definable social structure, no history based on a particular sort of continuity, the generation would not exist as a social location phenomenon; there would merely be birth, ageing, and death.

(Mannheim 1952: 291)

Sociology of generations suggests that the shaping of generations goes beyond biological dimensions. German sociologist K. Mannheim has played a significant role in the establishment of sociology of generations' research tradition (e.g. Pilcher 1994). Mannheim problematized generations in the 1920s, although his work was not published until much later (Mannheim 1952). The generation approach can be seen as an alternative, or a complement, to Marxism for the understanding of social stratification (Eyerman and Turner 1998). Some scholars have criticized Mannheim's concept of generation to be very similar to Marx's concept of class society, which has to do with both concepts being concerned with the position of individual actors in society. However, others have underlined that class is primarily distinguished in terms of group interests and access to resources, while generations, on the other hand, are constituted based on their relation to social, cultural and historical time (Corsten 2011).

Sociology of generations does not limit its emphasis to the commonality of having people being born the same year, but forms a demarcation from biological perspectives on generations (emphasizing age and kinship groups such as family). Families and tribes form connections to each other as biological generations and concrete groups. Socially shaped generations do not constitute concrete groups, that is, groups in which the members are directly known to each other. Mannheim argued that generations have common experiences of historical and social processes (as well as of class), which is the important matter in the context of this article and not the fact that generations share similar years of birth per se. He emphasized that '[...] they are in a position to experience the same events and data, etc., and especially that these experiences impinge upon a similarity 'stratified' consciousness' (Mannheim 1952: 297). He used the term 'entelechy' in his discussions of such stratified consciousness and world perception among generations. In relation to this, I. Volkmer (2006b: 258) discussed that the 'contemporary consciousness of first impressions of the world during childhood and youth years' forms a link between people and creates generational identity. Moreover, Mannheim acknowledged that there may be much heterogeneity among the members of a presumed generation, which calls for treating them as different generation units. Mannheim (1952: 298) wrote that 'early impressions tend to coalesce into a natural view of the world'. Personal knowledge, memories and experiences (are assumed to) guide how people approach and understand social life and social change.

Drawing on the discussion so far, sociology of generations has persistently suggested that many of the distinct features characterizing generations relate to the experiences, memories and beliefs they accumulate when growing up, shaping a common frame of reference. So far media research has typically not been related to the concept of generation, and the sociology of generations has not yet placed much emphasis on the role played by media for personal experiences and memories. However, media have, of course, been treated in individual studies. For example, F. Colombo and L. Fortunati (2011b) discuss that media presumably have gained importance for how contemporary young adults relate to both politics and public life.

MEDIA GENERATIONS AND THE LIFE COURSE

Drawing on Mannheim's legacy, media researchers depart in the assumption that the character of the media system that generations grow into plays an important role for the shaping of their (media) memories and media usage. This assumption actually seems present in the myriad of studies on young generations' (digital) media use, albeit these studies seldom include a discussion on and reference to the works of Mannheim and sociology of generations.

External events in society are assumed to shape generations (e.g. Colombo 2011). J. Kortti emphasizes the role media play in creating a sort of generational consciousness, but also acknowledges that media present various images and discourse on specific generations (Kortti 2011; cf. Höijer 1998; Nilsson 2009). In concert with this argument, M. Corsten (1999) argues that media forms a sort of discursive resource for different generations: their shared experiences and practices of media make generations conscious that they have something in common. It might be the celebration of peace in 1945, the debate of the Vietnam War of the 1970s, the fall of the Berlin Wall in the late 1980s, or September 11, 2001. There are reasons to believe that media

are more important in such social narratives today than some decades ago, reflecting changes in the media system. C. Corsten discuss that

the members of a generation share a 'we-sense' by being able to rediscover the individual experience of biographical time in the ways in which other members of his/her generation express their biographical time, and then transform this shared perspective into the time of 'my generation'.
(Corsten 2011: 43)

While this points to the prevalence of media generations, it is also important to consider the importance of life course. These two approaches are discussed in the following.

The media generation approach

Turning to what we have chosen to label the media generation approach, this emergent research tradition scrutinizes the role media plays for different generations and how they use media in their lives. Returning to the emphasis on a formative phase (Mannheim 1952), and in concert with this assumption, several researchers have stressed early contacts and socialization with media as important for how an individual's media usage develops later in life (Gumpert and Cathcart 1985; Aroldi and Colombo 2007). Age has primarily been seen as important in the sense that it may guide for understanding membership to a generation that have grown up in a similar culture and media system (Aroldi and Colombo 2007). Generations that have grown up in radically different media landscapes and as a consequence of accumulating specific and shared experiences (at least in the past) with media and its content, different generations have emerged (Gumpert and Cathcart 1985). For instance, research suggests that there is great difference between generations that grew up before or during the expansion of commercial television channels (Nilsson 2006), and before and after the wider spread of mobile phones (Bolin and Westlund 2009). Generations can be seen as inexorably connected to the specific media that were dominant when they grew up, as discussed by P. Aroldi and F. Colombo:

Subjects who during their formative period (childhood, adolescence, early adulthood) saw the birth of a medium that then became widespread tend to consider this medium – in the nascent form in which they experienced it – as an integral part of their cultural landscape and retain a certain inertia in its definition also in the subsequent phases.
(Aroldi and Colombo 2007: 39)

Along the same lines, Corsten (1999) suggested that parts of the media that generations saw as integral were those that saw their birth and initial success, when these generations progressed through their formative period. In a similar fashion, Aroldi (2011) argues that media plays different roles in different moments in the social shaping of generational common identity; while Aroldi and Colombo (2007) add that the rituals and cultural objects transmitted by media form a kind of generational semantics. Seen in this light, the media that were dominant when growing up *presumably* continue to play crucial roles by influencing how different generations perceive the world. However, it must be noted that there are yet few empirical research projects that have scrutinized this assumption. While one generally finds a few cross-generational studies on media generations with national (e.g. Crnic 2011) or cross-cultural

approaches (e.g. Tapscott 2008), there are even fewer commanding attention to the assumption of formative phase. Reporting on the findings from an Italian media generation project, Aroldi and Colombo conclude that various generations have developed significantly different habits and orientations in their media consumption. One such finding was that baby boomers devoted more time and significance to television compared to their children, who would rather turn to the Web (Aroldi and Colombo 2007). A series of Swedish cross-sectional studies present similar findings for television programme preferences between generations (Nilsson 2006, 2009). This corresponds with the conceptualization of media generations.

As discussed earlier, contemporary younger generations have largely been conceptualized in terms of their orientation towards digital media. This practice is somewhat legitimized by G. Bocca Artieri (2011: 117): 'media technologies, due to the high impact they have in everyday life-routine may be seen as milestones used to label specific time in personal and generational history'. However, there are a few attempts in conceptualizing other media generations. In their qualitative study, Volkmer (2006a) and her colleagues outlined three media generations to which media played dissimilar roles: the *print/radio generation* (born 1924–1929), the *black-and-white television generation* (born 1954–1959) and the *internet generation* (born 1979–1984). That study was a source of inspiration to a quantitative analysis of Swedes mobile phone usage by G. Bolin and O. Westlund (2009). In their study patterns were analysed and compared regarding the radio/print generation (born in the 1930s), the TV generation (born in the 1950s), and the mobile technology generation (born in the 1980s). The findings witnessed distinguished generational differences regarding use of sound, text and image for mobile communication.

The life course approach

While the media generation approach posits that formative developments of media habits are important, it does not explicitly suggest that a generation necessarily keep their media habits intact throughout different courses in life when experiencing a transforming media landscape. The diffusion of innovations research tradition, developed in the early 1960s, has generated a tremendous number of studies evidencing that media as well as information and communication technologies are adopted with varying speeds and degrees by different members of society (Rogers 2003). In life course research 'age' presents us with different roles for stratification analyses of media use related to family formation, professional career and retirement life that affect the time and money available for media use. However, age has been approached in different ways in these analyses, and this article focuses on the dynamic interplay between generational belonging and life course. This issue has been subject to some confusion and inconsistencies in previous literature.

Summarizing the findings from several articles, M. Kohli and J. W. Meyer (1986) conclude that sociological and historical accounts have emphasized institutionalized life course theory, which has emphasized how society shapes different life stages and resulted in researchers organizing life stages in terms of chronological age. People are seen as individually shaping their own life stages, while being influenced by societal life-world perspectives. A.-L. Närvänen and E. Näsman (2004), for instance, discuss literature on generations vis-à-vis life phase in the salient case of childhood research. They argue that one must be careful in using these concepts as they seem to carry multiple meanings. They

note that some researchers put life phase to the fore in their analyses, while this dimension is literally absent in the analysis of others. Ultimately, they stress that a life course perspective and the notion of the life phase are fruitful for the analysis of humans, such as children. We argue that the life course approach, with the affiliated concepts of life cycle and life phase, has decisive importance for the study of transforming media use over time. We see life cycles as comprised by individuals' different stages and phases of social life relating to family and peers as well as education and work, such as adolescence, family life and retirement.

J. W. Dimmick et al. (1979) provided an important review on media use and the role of life spans. While acknowledging that the data on media use and life span are problematic, the authors emphasized its value, and propose researchers take a so-called stage theory approach (which will simplify individuals' progress and spirals over life). They suggest accounting for three dimensions: (1) life span position, (2) cohort (shared life event) and (3) period (history); from which they present nine stages in life accounting for biophysical and psychosocial changes (Dimmick et al. 1979). Clearly, their three dimensions correspond to the age-period-cohort modelling approach (e.g. Peiser 2000) as well as the approach we take to analyse data in this article.

Empirical research taking such an approach to generational use is relatively scarce. Peiser's (2000) analysis of several cross-sectional studies over time focused on cohorts (rather than generations). Nevertheless, it showed that American cohorts born after the 1940s that grew up with television continued watching television, whereas such patterns could not be found in Germany. Data from Sweden has shown that television viewing increases with age, whereas listening to music on the radio is decreasing (Mediebarometern 2011 2012; Nilsson 2008; Bjur 2011). Unanimous studies from the last four decades show that young people follow traditional journalistic news less regularly and read newspapers less frequently than others (Shehata and Wadbring 2012), while senior citizens are among the most heavy users of such legacy news media. Moreover, there are presumably life course effects to be found inside each generation, which are also influenced by the rise of digital media (cf. Findahl 2012).

It is important to note that the life course is related to changes in society. There has been a prolonged youth period among Swedes, which relates to the pursuit of education and securing a position in the job market (Nilsson 2005). Dimmick et al. (1979) argue that analyses of age should distinguish the role of life course and the variations when people become parents and enter the job market. Also, changing lifestyles connected to increasing individualization and mobility will affect the life course of individuals (cf. A. Giddens 1991). This affects the role of the media during the life course, especially media use related to the household. Unfortunately, research on 'generational' news accessing has typically neglected to analyse and preclude on potential life cycle effects, partly as an effect of its narrow focus on the young.

STUDY RATIONALE

This article aims to describe and explain the patterns of news usage among dutifuls, baby boomers, generation X, and dotnets. The salient case of news accessing is used to trace changes in usage over time among generations. Our point of departure synthesizes the media structure with generation and life course research. We posit that the media technology an individual embraces for news accessing in his or her formative youth will remain important through their adult life, although it can also be influenced by the changing mediascape

and altered individual needs. The article presents five specific contributions compared to previous research: (1) it performs cross-generational analysis; (2) it takes a longer time perspective (1986–2011), which accounts for five periods of prevalent change in the media system; (3) it includes use of all major news media platforms rather than just one; (4) it scrutinizes the double articulation of age by analysing the role played by both generations and life courses; and (5) it acknowledges intra-generational heterogeneity, especially in the older and more broadly defined generations.

The question whether people in general, and generations in particular, keep with 'old' media and are sceptical to 'new' media touches base with more general issues on how old and new media interrelate. In the context of newspapers, the rise of 'new' digital media has cast light on concerns over whether such an approach will cause the imminent death of print media (Westlund 2012; Westlund and Färdigh 2011). Similarly, there has been debate and research on the effects of radio and television on the ways people access the news, focusing on whether these 'new' media will displace the printed newspaper or complement it. Therefore, transforming news accessing patterns among generations can be informed by two strands of research. The hypothesis of displacing effects form a medium-centric approach, emphasizing the functionalities of the media in a zero-sum game in which emergent and superior media are assumed to exert a displacing effect on the old media (e.g. McCombs 1972; Dimmick 2003). The complementary effects hypothesis, on the other hand, suggests accounting for people's needs and habits, acknowledging that they may have different complementary uses of media. This strand of research is positioned as critical towards assumptions of functional equivalence (e.g. Dutta-Bergman 2004; Flavian and Gurra 2009). Contemporary research into displacing and complementary effects have mostly focused on the interrelated roles of printed newspapers and digital news sites, showing that both sorts of effects are present simultaneously but with different importance in various age groups (Bergström and Wadbring 2010; De Waal and Schoenbach 2010) and among different generations (Westlund and Färdigh 2012). While age is undoubtedly a critical factor, there is limited research on how it comes to play in the context of generations and the life cycle.

Each of these two hypotheses touch base with the double articulation of age discussed and analysed in this article. The formative phase, emphasized by sociology of generations, essentially posits persistence in habits. This can in turn be translated into assumptions of generations demonstrating incremental change in their news media accessing habits over time, from which it follows that there should be limited displacing effects. Moreover, this generational persistence may hold such strong power that they are also reluctant to embrace additional media for news consumption, resulting in limited complementary effects. The life cycle approach, on the contrary, assumes change over time. Needs and habits are seen to have a transitory existence, acknowledging that people travel through a different life course and thus command attention to different news media with varying focus and intensity. Following from this, the life cycle approach is considered more in harmony with having expectations of displacing and complementary effects. However, it must be noted that such life cycle effects on news media usage develop through an interaction with the continuously transforming mediascape.

This article broadens the analysis of news media to include ten different news media, but does not attempt to trace all the displacing and complementary effects among these. Instead we see displacement as taking place when a medium previously dominant to a specific generation becomes contested and

loses ground. The other side of the coin, when generations maintain their formative news media habits but also develop habits with new media, is seen as media having complimentary roles. Therefore, our main hypothesis is that generational differences will increase over time. We expect that the dutifuls and baby boomers will distinguish themselves from the generation X and dotnet generation by increasingly keeping to legacy media when new news media technology spreads. The effect of the generation is also expected under the control for age and transitions in life cycles (cf. Nilsson 2005). With the expansion of new media the effects of age may also increase within generations; therefore, life course may even be considered more important than generation when explaining news media use. However, other studies show that the introduction of the internet strongly affected general usage patterns (Findahl 2012).

While our operationalization of generational belonging builds on the research by Zukin et al. (2006), the operationalization of the second meaning of age relies on a selection of other key independent variables. Reviews on life course research has suggested to convey life course both over long stretches of time, and at key transitions such as marriage and having a first child. This research also puts emphasis on changes in life course taking place on both an individual and societal level, but it is worth noting that many life course researchers reject the assumption that the formative direction of life is seemingly unaffected by changes in society and one's life (Mayer 2009).

In this article, age is seen to present us with an indicator of the importance of life course. It nurtures the analysis with the effect of how old these generations were during a specific media era (outlined in Table 1). A few additional variables indicating social establishment, which interact with age, present us with a richer understanding of potential life course effects. *Type of household* (single or with children) is included as an indicator that distinguishes orientation towards household media or more individualized news media. Furthermore, *gender* and *educational level* correlate strongly with life course and people's establishment on the job market and having their first child. Data retrieved from Statistics Sweden show that in the initial year of our study period (1986), the average age for giving birth to their first child was 26.07 among women and 28.65 among men. By 2011 the average age had increased by about three years, to 28.93 and 31.45, respectively. Data from the SOM-survey with the Swedish public from 1986 evidences that 14 per cent then had acquired a university degree, a figure that had risen to 37 per cent in 2011. In conclusion there has been a postponement of adulthood, with mixed findings for men and women. This postponement of a critically important phase in life is intertwined with other factors, such as time spent in the household, mobility in everyday life, income level, and the use of different news media.

	Legacy media era (1986-1990)		Commercialization era (1991-1995)		Digitization era (1996-2001)		Cross-media era (2002-2006)		Ubiquitous media era (2007-2011)	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
Dutifuls (1926-1945)	52	2604	57	2728	63	5356	68	5890	72	4634
Baby boomers (1946-1964)	33	2702	38	2954	44	5950	50	6973	55	6112
Generation X (1965-1976)	20	1372	23	1728	29	3347	34	3924	39	3368
Dotnets (1977-1995)			16	269	19	1898	22	3670	24	3694

Note: The annual SOM-surveys 1986–1991 covered only the age group 15–75 and 1992–1999, 15–80. From 2000 the surveys cover 16–85, which affects the relative size of the generations.

Table 1: Mean age and number of respondents among the four generations for each media era.

Context, method and material

The Swedish newspaper market is relatively strong by international measures, and common to the other Nordic countries as well as Switzerland and Japan (World Association of Newspapers 2011; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Hadenius et al. 2011). However, there have been substantially transforming news usage patterns from the mid-1980s until present day, highlighting a general decline in both quality subscribed newspapers and evening tabloids (Bergström and Wadbring 2010; Strömbäck et al. 2012; Westlund and Färdigh 2012; Weibull 2012a). Just as the other Scandinavian media systems, Sweden has both a private and public service sector for news media (Hujanen et al. 2013). Sweden has become known as having an advanced position in digital development. The World Economic Forum, for instance, compared 142 countries with regard to digital development in their Networked Readiness Index 2012 (Dutta and Bilbao-Osorio 2012). The analysis informs on contemporary change in a developed country where legacy news media are confronted with emergent growth of digital media.

This article uses data nationally representative to Sweden for the period 1986 to 2011, originating from the annually conducted omnibus survey project organized by the SOM-Institute at the University of Gothenburg, as a partnership of the departments of Political Science and Journalism, Media and Communication. From 1986, a survey has been carried out annually. It is based on a random sample of the Swedish population consisting of between 3000 and 9000 people, who have received a questionnaire focusing questions on Society, Opinion and Media. The data sample for 1986–1991 was constituted by Swedish citizens aged 15–75 years. From 1992 to 1999, Swedes aged 15–80 were included, from 2000 to 2008 it was 15–85, and for 2009–2011 those included were aged 16–85. The response rate is (on average) around 65%, ranging from a low of 58% (2008) to a high of 70% (1987), and the surveys are methodologically well documented (Vernersdotter 2012). The distribution of responses equals the proportion of the Swedish population when it comes to age, gender, social class, education and so on. By international standards the response rate has exceptional quality. While user-reports can be criticized for being associated to under- or over-representations of actual behaviour, this problem is most prevalent for cross-sectional surveys that lack any benchmark, and less so for repeated survey projects like the one utilized here (cf. Vernersdotter 2012). Analyses based on the survey data have been published annually since 1987 as edited books (the latest being Weibull et al. 2012) as well as articles in various international journals.

The descriptive findings report average percentages of usage for different news media among the four generations, for each of the five media periods. The explanatory analysis has been approached by performing a total of 37 binary/binomial logistic regression analyses for the five different media eras. This method is particularly well suited for analyses of curve-linear relationships (non-linear) between independent variables and categorical dependent variables (i.e. dichotomous criterion). Table 3a–3e presents us with relatively straightforward results for interpretation thanks to the binary nature (either they are regular users of news media or they are not). We use a goodness-of-fit measure (McFadden's pseudo R²) for the outlined logistical regression analyses, which is a conservative estimation measure that does not exaggerate the explanatory power of the model.

The four generational constructs are used as independent variables with generation X as reference category for the legacy media era and dotnets as reference category for the other media eras. Other independent variables

included in the analysis and used as indicators of people's changing courses of life include: age, gender, educational level and household composition. Age has been used as a continuous variable (varying from 15/16 to 75/85 years, rather than transformed into a dummy variable with a reference category), enhancing the possibilities for analysis of linear relationships. Moreover, gender is a dummy variable (1=woman, 0=man), educational level is coded dichotomously (1=high/middle high, 0=middle low/low); whereas personal life situation is analysed with two dummy variables, single households and households with children, with other households used as a reference category.

GENERATIONAL NEWS ACCESSING TRANSFORMED 1986–2011

The analysis is presented in two sections. The first section presents a descriptive analysis focused on transforming news usage among the four generations. It provides a general overview and embeds cross-generational differences and similarities into the five periods of the changing media system. The second section presents us with logistical regression analyses focused on explaining the value of generations under control for life course with regard to all five media eras.

Describing changes in generational news accessing

The news accessing behaviours for each of the four generations throughout the course of the five media eras are scrutinized closely in Table 2. Each media era presents us with an analysis of how the news platforms available at the time were being used. The plethora of news platforms increased over time and reached ten different kinds for the analysis of the ubiquitous media era. Naturally, dotnets were not analysed for the first media era since they were not of age to be studied in the surveys. The discussion that follows will first comment on how each generation have altered their news usage over time, and then discuss prevalent cross-generational findings.

The dutifuls are characterized by stability. Throughout the 26 years there are only minor differences with regards to their reading of quality newspapers, watching public service television and listening to public service radio. Further, they are less active in the use of different new media, especially online news media and mobile news. Nevertheless, the findings indicate a declining interest in printed evening tabloids, whereas their use of commercial television increases over time. Also, the baby boomers exhibit comparatively stable patterns of news media consumption. This is true for printed quality newspapers, public service radio and, to some extent, for both public service and commercial television. Similarly to the dutifuls, the baby boomers are gradually displacing printed evening tabloids and have increased their access of news from news sites, especially in the last ubiquitous media era. Furthermore, the baby boomers picked up free dailies from their start, but are still less active with regards to accessing news on mobile devices. Generation X presents us with more liquid news accessing patterns compared to the dutifuls and baby boomers, with the exception of reading quality newspapers and watching commercial television. Their interest in watching public service television increases throughout the course of the five media eras, whereas they turn into less frequent listeners to public service radio. There is a prevalent displacement in their frequent reading of printed evening tabloids, down from 45 to 8 per cent during these media eras. On the contrary, the proportion of generation X frequently accessing evening tabloid news sites increased from

	1986-1990	1991-1995	1996-2001	2002-2006	2007-2011
Dutifuls (1926-1945)					
Quality Newspapers (print)	86%	83%	84%	86%	81%
Evening Tabloids (print)	36%	29%	23%	24%	14%
Public Service TV	77%	78%	82%	86%	86%
Public Service Radio	65%	67%	69%	66%	63%
Commercial TV		16%	37%	44%	46%
Commercial Radio			11%	10%	9%
Free Dailies			8%	10%	14%
Evening Tabloids (online)			1%	4%	10%
Quality Newspapers (online)				4%	10%
Mobile News				1%	4%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	4024	3848	6586	6599	4738
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)					
Quality Newspapers (print)	78%	76%	77%	77%	71%
Evening Tabloids (print)	39%	33%	28%	25%	13%
Public Service TV	46%	42%	52%	61%	63%
Public Service Radio	55%	55%	51%	50%	51%
Commercial TV		21%	36%	38%	40%
Commercial Radio			13%	12%	11%
Free Dailies			12%	16%	21%
Evening Tabloids (online)			5%	14%	27%
Quality Newspapers (online)				9%	22%
Mobile News				3%	10%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	2702	2954	5950	6973	6112
Generation X (1965-1976)					
Quality Newspapers (print)	66%	61%	63%	63%	57%
Evening Tabloids (print)	45%	36%	27%	22%	8%
Public Service TV	26%	25%	30%	38%	36%
Public Service Radio	44%	45%	32%	29%	29%
Commercial TV		24%	35%	35%	29%
Commercial Radio			16%	14%	14%
Free Dailies			16%	19%	23%
Evening Tabloids (online)			7%	20%	41%
Quality Newspapers (online)				13%	30%
Mobile News				7%	20%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	1372	1729	3347	3924	3368
Dotnets (1977-1995)					
Quality Newspapers (print)	-	54%	59%	49%	35%
Evening Tabloids (print)		33%	31%	24%	7%
Public Service TV		18%	18%	19%	16%
Public Service Radio		23%	15%	12%	11%
Commercial TV		31%	30%	25%	20%
Commercial Radio			12%	8%	8%
Free Dailies			20%	24%	28%
Evening Tabloids (online)			7%	21%	41%
Quality Newspapers (online)				13%	33%
Mobile News				7%	22%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	-	269	1898	3670	3694

Note: Frequent accessing of news varies for these news media depending on what can be seen as frequent. Quality newspapers (print), Public Service TV, Public Service Radio, Commercial TV and Commercial Radio bear reference to at least five times per week. Evening Tabloids (print), Free Dailies, Evening Tabloids (online) and Quality Newspapers (online) refer to at least three times per week. Mobile News refers to at least once a week.

Table 2: Generational news accessing 1986–2011 (per cent).

7 to 41 per cent in a shorter time period. It is noted that their acceptance to all online media is higher than it is in the two older generations.

Dotnets has a distinctively lower figure for accessing news from traditional print and public service news media than the other generations. This is especially prevalent for quality newspapers in print, where a clear downward tendency can be observed, and is also seen for public service and commercial television. It is worth noting that during the period of ubiquitous media, dotnets displaced printed news media (except for free dailies), and this goes for online news and mobile news as well.

Table 2 also presents us with important findings for the individual news media among the four generations over time. There is a decline in the reading of print newspapers among all generations, especially the evening tabloids. Several news media present us with important differences between the four generations and the five media eras. There is a widening gap between dutifuls and dotnets in reading printed quality newspapers, from 29 (83 respective, 54 per cent) to 46 (81 respective, 35 per cent) percentage units between 1991–1995 and 2008–2011. Concerning evening tabloids, generation X were the most frequent readers during the legacy media era, but in the ubiquitous media era they were the least (alongside dotnets).

Moreover, the dutifuls are the most frequent users of both public service radio and television in all eras, while generations X and Z are the least frequent public service users. The gap between dotnets and the dutifuls was more than 50 percentage units for radio and 70 percentage units for television in the ubiquitous media era. Furthermore, there were evidently more dutifuls and baby boomers watching commercial television in the last two media eras, while there were declines in the last media era among both generation X and the dotnets. The accessing of news from free dailies and online media exhibit a similar pattern. The figures are substantially higher for generation X and the dotnets when compared to the dutifuls and baby boomers in all media eras. Nevertheless, online news accessing has clearly gained traction among baby boomers over time and, in particular, during the ubiquitous media era.

In sum, the dutifuls and baby boomers stick to legacy news media the most, both in terms of higher frequency of use and in the consistency of using them. Their media habits seem least influenced by the changing mediascape, having adopted online and mobile news media significantly less than the others. Generations X and Z largely exhibit reversed patterns, and these findings are in line with our hypotheses. However, there are observations that point in other directions. One example regarding the relatively low figures among generation X accessing news from public service television in the commercial era, and how their use increased despite this, shows that a decline could be expected considering that several news media had emerged. The most reasonable explanation is that in this era, generation X is at a life phase when traditional news is of less interest; in the next eras there is an increase likely related to another family-oriented life situation. These observations of generational vis-à-vis life course effects are a matter to be scrutinized more closely in the following section.

Explaining changes in generational news accessing

The decisive question concerning the importance of a generation in relation to life cycle factors is scrutinized through numerous logistic regression analyses for the five different media eras. The findings, presented in Table 3a-e, indicate

that the formative phase of the dutifuls and baby boomers is important. These two generations largely persist in accessing news from legacy news media and when confronted with a changing mediascape. Generations X and Z, in similar fashion, develop a digital orientation in their news accessing patterns. However, changes in life course also influence media habits independently of a generation, where age differences within the generations are clearly visible. Now follows a discussion on the key findings from the regression analysis for each media era. The average age for each generation in each era (cf. Table 1) is continuously inserted to the discussion as a frame of reference for life cycle.

The legacy media era (1986–1990)

The first era was marked by an almost total dominance of the printed press and public service radio and television. In line with expectations, the findings show that the dutifuls (mean age in this period was 52) and baby boomers (33) are slightly above average for all news media except for public service television. Age holds a distinguishing and dual power with regards to the reading of quality newspapers and evening tabloids. The reading of evening tabloids is more age-dependent than quality newspapers. Also, public service television is highly age-dependent with young viewers largely being non-frequent viewers. Educational level has limited importance in this analysis, although there are slightly positive numbers for quality print newspapers and negative numbers for evening tabloids. The pattern of media usage in the legacy era is very much in concert with previous research (Shehata and Wadbring 2012); and is especially true for the dutifuls. Ultimately the legacy media era reflects an old and stable media system, and dominated (80 per cent) by the dutifuls and baby boomers generations that were born into (and within) this era, and had reached establishment in their life course.

Table 3a

Legacy media era (1986–1990)

	Quality Newspapers (print)	Evening Tabloids (print)	Public Service Radio	Public Service Television
Dutifuls (1926–1945)	0.10***	0.16***	0.11***	0.07*
Baby Boomers (1946–1964)	0.05***	0.08***	0.07***	0.04*
Age	0.17***	-0.41***	0.12**	0.68***
Woman	-0.01	-0.07***	-0.01	0.04***
Educational level	0.10***	-0.16***	0.01	-0.07***
Single households	-0.08***	-0.02	-0.00	-0.07***
Households with children	0.01	-0.03*	-0.06***	-0.00
Number of respondents	6 062	6 062	6 062	6 062
Mc Fadden Pseudo R ²	0.05	0.02	0.02	0.17
Log likelihood	-2 849	-3 938	-4 051	-3 43
Chi2	294.95	188.34	174.01	1 403.31

Table 3a: Explaining news accessing for five media eras (logistical regression).

The commercialization era (1991–1995)

In this second media era, in which commercial television and radio gained traction by introducing new national channels, the dutifuls (now 57) and the baby boomers (38) report significantly higher figures for all legacy news media than other generations, except for public service television. Their figures for

the new commercial, terrestrial television (established in 1992) are significantly lower in comparison. On the other hand, generation X, who were relatively young (23) in this era, generates strong figures for evening tabloids and public service radio (cf. Table 2). With regards to age, the introduction of commercial broadcasting presents us with augmented levels of age stratification when compared to the legacy media era, whereas figures for educational level remain largely unchanged. There are exceptional discrepancies for reading quality newspapers depending on the type of household. The explanation has to do with single households terminating newspaper subscriptions to a larger degree than family households. The commercialization era to a large extent is similar to the legacy media era. One important reason for this is that the dutifuls and the baby boomers are the dominating generations with about 75 per cent of the population.

Table 3b
Commercialization era (1991-1995)

	Newspapers (print)	Evening Tabloids (print)	Public Service Radio	Public Service Television	Commercial Television
Dutifuls (1926-1945)	0.11***	0.22***	0.25***	-0.07	
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	0.07***	0.19***	0.25***	-0.08*	-0.12***
Generation X (1965-1976)	0.02	0.10***	0.19***	-0.02	-0.05**
Age	0.23***	-0.38***	0.25***	0.80***	0.17**
Woman	-0.01	-0.06***	-0.03***	-0.01	0.04***
Educational level	0.13***	-0.17***	-0.04**	-0.00	-0.04***
Single households	-0.17***	-0.03**	-0.03	-0.04**	-0.02*
Households with children	-0.03**	-0.06***	-0.06***	-0.05***	0.02**
Number of respondents	8 387	8 387	8 387	8 387	8 387
Mc Fadden Pseudo R ²	0.06	0.03	0.04	0.19	0.02
Log likelihood	-4 334	-5 131	-5 497	-4 664	-4 069
Chi2	598.38	266.46	445.78	2 256.05	125.88

Table 3b: Explaining news accessing for five media eras (logistical regression).

The digitization era (1996-2001)

The digitization era signals a technological change in the media system, marked by rapid diffusion of the Web. Findings indicate that dutifuls (now with a mean age of 63), baby boomers (44) and generation X (29) do not significantly differ from the average when it comes to reading quality newspapers and evening tabloids in print; baby boomers being an exception for evening papers. Both the dutifuls and baby boomers persist to have relatively high figures for public service television and radio, whereas generation X reportedly scores high for commercial television. More generally, the age factor plays a more pronounced role as expected and based on previous research presented here. The digitization era broadens the mediascape, and here the age factor comes into play. For instance, age presents us with high and positive figures for quality newspapers and public service news media, but negative figures when it comes to commercial radio and free dailies. This indicates a possible inertia among the elderly towards adopting the new media, regardless of generational belonging. The relatively slow changes in media use seen from Table 2 are explained by the fact that dutifuls and baby boomers still make up almost 70 per cent of the population, where the latter generation is somewhat bigger.

Table 3c
Digitization era (1996-2001)

	Quality Newspapers (print)	Evening Tabloids (print)	Public Service Radio	Public Service Television	Commercial Television	Commercial Radio	Free Dailies	Evening Tabloids (online)
Dutifuls (1926-1945)	0.03	0.03	0.38***	0.10***	-0.01	0.03	-0.04	-0.03**
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	0.01	0.06***	0.32***	0.03	0.02	0.05***	-0.02	-0.00
Generation X (1965-1976)	-0.03**	0.03**	0.20***	0.03*	0.06***	0.07***	-0.02**	0.00
Age	0.37***	-0.21***	0.31***	0.76***	0.12***	-0.09***	-0.11***	-0.03
Woman	-0.00	-0.05***	-0.04***	-0.05***	0.04***	0.01	0.01**	-0.03***
Educational level	0.12***	-0.17***	-0.03***	0.04***	-0.11***	-0.06***	0.05***	0.02***
Single households	-0.12***	-0.04***	-0.06***	-0.08***	-0.01	0.01*	0.04***	0.00
Households with children	-0.00	-0.03***	-0.08***	-0.05***	0.04***	-0.00	-0.01**	-0.01*
Number of respondents	16 735	16 735	16 735	16 735	16 735	13 369	11 681	13 369
Mc Fadden Pseudo R ²	0.06	0.02	0.11	0.19	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.06
Log likelihood	-8 684	-9 416	-10 357	-9 353	-10 767	-5 022	-4 14	-2 218
Chi2	1 197.39	456.24	2 482.49	4 333.22	204.34	106.21	260.98	301.76

Table 3c: Explaining news accessing for five media eras (logistical regression).

The cross-media era (2002–2006)

During this media era a growing portion of legacy media expanded their omnipresence and created a new type of cross-media news work. At this point the dutifuls present us with amplified usage patterns, with the majority retired (mean age 68), and baby boomers (50). Belonging to one of these generations has a stronger effect on the use of legacy news media compared to those belonging to other generations, while the effects on the contrary are lower with regards to online news media. Further, these two generations also have a significantly higher interest in commercial media on traditional platforms, increasing in relation to the digitization era. Generation X, with an average age of 34, on the other hand, scores especially high for accessing online news. However, we can also observe interplay with the age factor, which has gained significance for all legacy media except evening tabloids, especially increasing for public service television. Men and the educated distinguish those

Table 3d
Cross-media era (2002-2006)

	Newspapers (print)	Evening Tabloids (print)	Public Service Radio	Public Service Television	Commercial Television	Commercial Radio	Free Dailies	Evening Tabloids (online)	Quality Newspapers (online)	Mobile News
Dutifuls (1926-1945)	0.19***	0.10***	0.33***	0.22***	0.10***	0.06***	-0.09***	-0.13***	-0.01	-0.02*
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	0.12***	0.11***	0.31***	0.13***	0.09***	0.07***	-0.05***	-0.04***	0.00	-0.01
Generation X (1965-1976)	0.04***	0.05***	0.20***	0.10***	0.10***	0.08***	-0.03***	-0.01	0.01	0.00
Age	0.27***	-0.21***	0.43***	0.70***	0.11***	-0.07***	-0.04	-0.02	-0.11*	-0.04
Woman	0.01	-0.04***	-0.06***	-0.03***	0.05***	0.01	-0.00	-0.05***	-0.05***	-0.03***
Educational level	0.12***	-0.15***	-0.01	0.08***	-0.13***	-0.06***	0.05***	0.06***	0.08***	0.01***
Single households	-0.17***	-0.03***	-0.01	-0.07***	0.00	0.01**	0.06***	-0.01	-0.01	0.00
Households with children	0.00	-0.05***	-0.06***	-0.07***	0.00	0.02***	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.01**
Number of respondents	20 391	20 391	20 391	20 391	20 391	20 391	20 391	18 742	3 3	5 082
Mc Fadden Pseudo R ²	0.10	0.02	0.13	0.20	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.07	0.07	0.12
Log likelihood	-10 813	-10 992	-12 163	-11 087	-13 141	-6 957	-8 847	-6 902	-948	-743
Chi2	2 272.66	445.80	3 723.70	5 694.39	594.83	192.36	480.63	1 007.65	131.96	205.94

Table 3d: Explaining news accessing for five media eras (logistical regression).

individuals inclined to access news with mobile devices. The increasing stratification of media habits according to generation and life course, especially towards legacy media, can also be observed in the increasing figure for variance explained. In this era the baby boomers represent about one-third of the population and dutifuls less than 30 per cent.

The ubiquitous media era (2007-2011)

During the ubiquitous media era mobile media gained significance, fuelled by rapid diffusion of smartphones, which resulted in the introduction of a new platform for media use. In line with the previous media eras, the dutifuls (mean age 72) and baby boomers (mean age 55), were still representing a majority of the population, showing the strongest preference for legacy news media, especially quality newspapers, while less so for radio. They essentially inhabit the mediascape they once grew into, while there is a more limited generation effect on the use of digital news platforms compared to those belonging to other generations.

Generation X (mean age 39) is characterized as having active and diversified news accessing habits, on par with the figures identified in the previous media era, but increase in a tendency for quality print papers. Also the age factor gained significance, scoring highest values among all independent variables for six out of ten news media platforms. The importance of educational level remains relatively intact, but presents us with an increase for online quality newspapers. On the contrary, gender has lost some importance with the exception of quality newspapers online. This increase is explained in the variance witnessed through the stratification in news media habits that remains. An empiric analysis (not reported in the tables) of dotnets's (mean age 25) news media orientation conforms to our expectations. It shows that this youngest generation score low with regards to all legacy news media, especially quality morning newspapers in print, but that belonging to this generation has a higher effect on the use of digital news platforms compared to other generations, except for online evening tabloids.

Table 3e
Ubiquitous media era (2007-2011)

	Quality Newspapers (print)	Evening Tabloids (print)	Public Service Radio	Public Service Television	Commercial Television	Commercial Radio	Free Dailies	Evening Tabloids (online)	Quality Newspapers (online)	Mobile News
Dutifuls (1926-1945)	0.21***	0.08***	0.20***	0.17***	0.09***	-0.03	-0.01	-0.15***	-0.14***	-0.11***
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	0.16***	0.08***	0.24***	0.11***	0.11***	0.01	0.03	-0.01	-0.04**	-0.07***
Generation X (1965-1976)	0.10***	0.04***	0.17***	0.07***	0.08***	0.05***	0.01	0.04**	-0.01	-0.03**
Age	0.44***	-0.04	0.55***	0.78***	0.23***	0.06**	-0.21***	-0.25***	-0.08*	-0.01
Woman	0.02***	-0.02***	-0.05***	-0.02**	0.05***	0.00	0.01	-0.08***	-0.10***	-0.07***
Educational level	0.12***	-0.10***	-0.01	0.06***	-0.12***	-0.06***	-0.00	0.09***	0.17***	0.07***
Single households	-0.20***	-0.02***	-0.03**	-0.05***	-0.02*	-0.01	0.06***	-0.02	0.02*	-0.00
Households with children	-0.01	-0.02***	-0.06***	-0.07***	-0.01	0.02***	-0.01	-0.00	-0.01	0.03***
Number of respondents	17	17	17	17	17	17	11 285	12 312	17	6 263
Mc Fadden Pseudo R ²	0.12	0.04	0.14	0.23	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.08	0.07	0.09
Log likelihood	-9 785	-5 739	-9 98	-9 064	-10 557	-5 624	-5 727	-6 759	-8 539	-2 166
Chi2	2 645.05	420.85	3 123.26	5 313.00	919.28	182.22	215.00	1 177.30	1 305.02	437.81

Table 3e: Explaining news accessing for five media eras (logistical regression).

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This article has presented descriptive and explanatory data on the salient case of news accessing among four generations over five media eras and covering 26 years. The point of departure has been the generation classification proposed by Zukin et al. (2006). It does not entirely cover all the relevant media generations, but represents an accepted and reasonable approach to the main post-war generations. We have been able to show how the dutifuls, baby boomers, generation X and, to some extent, dotnets have changed their ways of accessing news in a period when the media system changed dramatically and when legacy news media became gradually complemented by a strong, although gradual, growth of commercial and digital new media. Sociology of generations as well as media generation research has emphasized the assumed importance of the formative phase. This article posits that the news media embraced in one's youth will continue to play an important role in life, although conditioned by changing life phases and the transforming mediascape. The empiric analysis presents us with two particularly important findings.

The first finding gives general support for the generational hypothesis on formative socialization. The descriptive and explanatory data show, in line with our hypothesis, that the dutifuls and baby boomers – socialized in an era when traditional newspapers and public service media were the sole news sources – are strongly oriented towards legacy news media throughout the course of all the five media eras of media change. Their persistence in, and habits of, reading printed newspapers and accessing news from public service broadcasters is established in the first media eras we analysed. This gradually becomes more and more prevalent as they largely refrain from displacement in their small steps towards embracing emergent news media platforms. These gain traction over time seemingly in parallel with the evolving mediascape. Generation X, by comparison, balances between old and new media, becoming increasingly digitally oriented over time. Dotnets, on the other hand, have exclusively formed their news media patterns throughout the last three media eras: they exhibit a strong inclination towards digital news media.

The second finding casts light on the ways life course exerts influence on news media behaviour. The logistical regression analyses evidence of such effects, especially for the last three media eras, and seemingly with greater effect than generational belonging. The elderly, regardless of generation, education and gender, persist with legacy news media while the young turn out to be geared towards trying out new news media. There is obviously more than one meaning of age present. Age may signify life cycle effects with regards to the elderly predominantly using news media coupled with the traditional household, since they spend much time in their homes. The young, on the other hand, typically exhibit lives with augmented levels of mobility, and hence display preference for portable news media such as mobile devices or free dailies, using news sites at work or school. Thus, we have observed that the reading of printed quality papers is less frequent among the youth than among the elderly in all generations. Moreover, it must be noted that a comparison of news accessing behaviours among each generation when they were young (cf. Table 2) witnesses a strong decline in legacy news media. The media systems were largely different when these generations were in their early 20s, entering a life phase where they were establishing their own home and place in adulthood. For instance, quality newspapers played a substantially diminished role for dotnets in their 20s from 1997 onwards, compared

to generation X and the baby boomers in the early 90s and previous decades. More precisely, when aged 40–44 the reading of quality newspapers in print was far more common among dutifuls (88%) than among baby boomers (77%) and generation X (63%). This generational change means a loss of roughly ten percentage points in readers per generation.

To put it another way, when a generation has grown old they have already developed strong media habits, which change slowly, whereas when individuals are young there is greater responsiveness to emergent news media that has to do with them being in a formative phase in life. During this period they are more open to trying new media and domesticating these into their lives.

To understand the results it is important to be reminded of the character of the changes in media structure. The introduction and diffusion of commercial television and radio, and digital media has not (yet) meant that newspapers and public service media have disappeared. In fact, they were (and still are) the main Swedish news media in terms of reach (cf. *Mediebarometern* 2011 2012). What happened instead was that it was added as a new layer of media, offering a complementary alternative to legacy media. As we can observe, this meant that legacy news media have lost significance for each media era that has passed by. This indicates a gradual displacement on the total level. However, this does not necessarily mean that the generations per se have displaced older legacy news media with new digital media, but instead that older generations have embraced and added alternative news media, while younger generations have formed habits with digital media. One can also acknowledge that other studies have shown senior citizens having legacy media as their daily point of departure for media use, whereas younger people typically start with digital media (Hadenius et al. 2011; Weibull 2012b). Ultimately, this indicates that generations do not entirely persist with their formative media habits, but instead that there are significant changes occurring. We conclude that changes in generational news accessing (societal level) are contingent upon transitions in media periods (media system level) as well as how people travel through life cycles (individual level).

While the data used for analysis is comprehensive, limitations for analysing displacing and complementary effects over time involve the cross-sectional nature of the data and also the absence of data on how older generations accessed news when they were young. Despite using robust survey data covering 26 years, it only covers some of the cycles for any of the generations' life course. Hence, this constitutes a problem of methodology. The dutifuls are analysed during the established phase of their life course, whereas the dotnets are covered in the early non-established phase. It is important to remember these analytical restrictions when studies of the 'young generations' are presented, which should be conceived as studies of one phase of the life course on a generation.

The interactions between generation and life course, however, are not finally evidenced by our analysis presented here. It is worth noting that the generational constructs tested here, drawn from Zukin et al. (2006), have some important shortcomings. First, it is not based on a theoretical framework where media are significant. Second, it covers a relatively wide span of decisive birth years. It is been used here because it reflects general social changes. However, it also means there is much intra-generational heterogeneity, which helps explain why age repeatedly attracts higher scores than generational belonging in the logistical regression analyses. These effects, inexorably connected to life course, are most pronounced for baby boomers. Future research should explore the granularity of generational classifications,

aiming to conceptualize *media* generations in ways which restrain substantial age and life cycle effects by narrowing the age span in sensible ways. As a small attempt we performed an analysis by collapsing the baby boomers into two equally sized cohorts based on decisive birth years. The findings confirm expectations on significant differences in news usage among these two baby boomer cohorts. As presented, in the digitization era (1996–2001) 77% of baby boomers were frequent readers of the quality press (cf. Table 1), but usage was higher among the older cohort (80%) than the younger cohort (72%). Similar intra-generational findings are found when collapsing generation X into two cohorts (66 versus 61%). Exemplifying evidence on the interaction between generation and life course has been presented for the salient case of quality newspapers in print.

Looking closer at the results, it is clear that the changes in media habits between generations are not only an effect of changes in the media landscape. On the contrary, societal development can be seen as an important background factor (Weibull 1983; 2012a), among which individualization (Giddens 1991; Bjur 2009) and mobility (Elliott and Urry 2010) mark factors possessing exceptional significance. In our data we find that individualization, as indicated by the share of one-person-households, has increased from 15 to 20 per cent from 1986 to 2011. Other studies from Sweden show increasing mobility in terms of moving between places (Andersson 2007), and a more general increase in spatial mobility through individualized modes of traveling (Frändberg and Vilhelmsson 2011). Living in one-person-households and/or having a life marked by mobility has always been most commonplace among young people, but when it comes to generation X and the dotnets these patterns have however expanded to larger groups of young adults. Since both individualization and mobility are negatively correlated with traditional newspaper reading, it is tempting to conclude that changes in social habits between generations might be as important as media development, or at least that media changes, to a large extent, reflect social changes.

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CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Oscar Westlund holds a joint affiliation as associate professor at the University of Gothenburg (Sweden) and the IT University of Copenhagen (Denmark). He serves on the editorial boards of *Digital Journalism*, *Journal of Media Innovations*, and *Mobile Media & Communication*. He is an interdisciplinary researcher focusing on the transformations and relationships between old and new media, including topics such as media generations and generations of media. Westlund has published with more than a dozen international peer-reviewed journals, among which recent contributions focusing media use and age appear in *Observatorio* and *Young*.

Contact: University of Gothenburg, Department of Journalism, Media and Communication, Box 710, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden.
E-mail: oscar.westlund@jmg.gu.se

Lennart Weibull is Professor of Mass Media Research at the University of Gothenburg. He is author of numerous books, articles and research reports. His research interests include among others media structure, audience development, newspaper industry, journalism history and media ethics. He is

one of the founders of the SOM Institute. Among his recent international publications is the edited volume *Media, Markets & Public Spheres: European Media at the Crossroads* (Intellect).

Contact: University of Gothenburg, Department of Journalism, Media and Communication, Box 710, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden.
E-mail: lennart.weibull@jmg.gu.se

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Editor

Paul Grosswiler
University of Maine
paul_grosswiler@umit.maine.edu

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cathy.adams@ualberta.ca

Review editor

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bcogan@molloy.edu