

July 25, 2025

Dear Professor John Levi Martin,

Attached is our manuscript, "Life Course Trajectories of Sociopolitical Attitude Change across Cohorts and Topics," for consideration at the *American Journal of Sociology*.

The paper tests an assumption, common in sociology and political science, that early adulthood is a distinctly formative period in the life course for socio-political attitudes. We construct a novel dataset by linking 70 different questions asked repeatedly across 12 panel studies spanning about 70 years to evaluate shifts in the life-course trajectory of short-term attitude change across cohorts and issues. Using models that decompose change into durable and transitory components and that estimate absolute change over time as a function of age, cohort, and the interaction of age and cohort, we find that the assumed life-course trajectory is a relatively recent phenomenon. On most issues, recent cohorts express more stable attitudes as they age, but earlier cohorts showed more variable life-course trajectories across issues, with people often becoming more variable in their expressed attitudes as they aged. Across multiple different robustness checks, we also find little evidence that rates of durable change shift across the life course, challenging previous work.

The manuscript builds on work previously featured in *AJS* – notably Alwin and Krosnick's "Aging, Cohorts, and the Stability of Sociopolitical Orientations over the Life Span" from 1991 – and contributes to contemporary debates about personal culture, political socialization, the life course, and cohort effects. In documenting patterns across issues and cohorts, our work also raises a number of questions about what causes attitude stability and change over time that we hope will inspire subsequent work.

Word Count (including references and notes): 12,432

Thank you for considering our manuscript. We look forward to the opportunity to contribute to *AJS* and are happy to address any questions or revision requests.

Thank you,



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