**Life-course Trajectories of Sociopolitical Attitude Change across Cohorts and Topics**[[1]](#footnote-1)

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**Abstract:** Many theories of socialization, cultural transmission, and cohort-based change assume that early adulthood constitutes a distinct period of attitudinal malleability. Yet this assumed “impressionable years” model rests on evidence from a small number of survey questions and rarely has been systematically tested across cohorts or attitude domains. This article links 70 socio-political attitude items measured multiple times across 12 U.S. panel surveys spanning about 70 years to evaluate how patterns of both durable and transitory attitude change vary across age, cohort, and question. Mixed-effects models find that the expected life-course trajectory of high volatility in early adulthood followed by increasing stability in middle age is a recent historical formation, not a fixed developmental feature. Earlier cohorts often displayed greater variability later in life, and life-course trajectories differ across topics. These patterns challenge the frequent assumption of attitude malleability in early adulthood and point to social structuring as a source of attitude malleability over time.

**Keywords:** Life-course; attitude change; early adulthood; cohort effects; personal culture.

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