

SLLS John Bynner Distinguished Scholar Award Address

Living Under Time: Rethinking Life Courses as Lived Temporal Relations

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Life course research is fundamentally about time—yet rarely about how people live under it. The field has focused on when transitions occur, how sequences unfold, and how trajectories can be mapped. But it has left underexamined how individuals are positioned in relation to time itself, influencing what can be done, when, and on what terms. This paper advances a new framework for understanding contemporary lives, focusing on temporal conditions that must be actively navigated. To capture these conditions, it develops six concepts that together reorient how temporal relations are understood: Time In and Time Out, Time Between, Time Until and Time Left, and Time Since and Out of Time. These concepts do not refine duration or extend linear models; they identify qualitatively distinct temporal relations that are socially produced, evaluated, and consequential. This paper does not claim that lives have only recently become complex; rather, it shows that the social organization of time has shifted, making these conditions more widely present and affecting how temporal relations are structured and interpreted.