# Understanding young people's transitions in university halls through space and time

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## Abstract

This article contributes to theoretical discussion about young people's transitions through space and time. Space and time are complex overarching concepts that have creative potential in deepening understanding of transition. The focus of this research is young people's experiences of communal living in university halls. It is argued that particular space-time concepts draw attention to different facets of experience and in combination deepen understanding of young people's individual and collective transitions. The focus of the article is the uses of the space-time concepts 'routine', 'representation', 'rhythm' and 'ritual' to research young people's experiences. The article draws on research findings from two studies in the North of England.



## Key words

routine, representation, rhythm, ritual, leisure, domestic

# Understanding young people's transitions in university halls through space and time

## Introduction

This article contributes to theoretical discussion about young people's transitions through space and time. Space and time are complex overarching concepts that have creative potential in deepening understanding of transition (Adam, 1990, 1995, 1998, Lefebvre, 1991, Massey, 2005). The focus of this research is young people's experiences of communal living in university halls. It is argued that particular space-time concepts draw attention to different facets of experience and in combination deepen understanding of young people's individual and collective transitions. Transitions to adulthood are complex, multifaceted and heterogeneous. They involve a 'relationship between a range of transitional strands' rather than a linear movement (Thompson, Bell, Holland, Henderson, McGrellis and Sharpe, 2002:336). How these strands interweave depends on the interplay of individual agency, personal resources, contemporary cultural practices and social systems. Giving visibility to space-time gives visibility to connections between spheres of experience in young people's lives which are often theorised in disconnected ways. Morrow (2003) argues young people's transitions involve biological change, cultural and community change, changes in formal and legal entitlement and changes in how young people feel about themselves. The focus of the article is the uses of the space-time concepts 'routine', 'representation', 'rhythm' and 'ritual' to research young people's transitions

and the way these concepts may enrich understanding of young people's lives. The article draws on research findings from two studies in the North of England.

## Research into halls of residence

Halls of residence are traditionally the accommodation for young people entering higher education in the UK and form part of the University estate. Accommodation typically consists of individual study bedrooms in large buildings which contain shared communal facilities for dining, preparing meals, socialising and so forth. Because of the gradual withdrawal of state financial support to students in the UK over the last twenty years, more young people now remain in their homes of childhood whilst pursuing degrees, although halls of residence are still a popular option. Many universities have relinquished student accommodation to private companies. Despite these changes, there is an assumption informing policy and practice that halls of residence provide an appropriate and generally safe form of accommodation for young people, particularly in the first year of their academic studies, providing support in the transition to independent living.

Research into student living arrangements has involved four overlapping concerns. Firstly, the relationship between academic success, living arrangements and integration into higher education (Beekhoven, De Jong and Van Hout, 2004). Secondly, the impact of social inequality in relation to residence, for example, the relative ease of middle class students in settling in

compared to those from working class backgrounds (ibid) and the influence of gender, ‘race’, culture and sexual orientation (Evans and Broido, 1999, Kaya and Weber, 2003, Enochs and Roland, 2006). Thirdly, the design and quality of the space, territoriality, the personalisation of space and the relationship to academic success, incorporation and friendship building (Kaya and Weber, 2003, Rodger and Johnson, 2005). Researchers have called for deeper understanding of space in relation to privacy, leisure, beliefs, sense of community and academic studies (Curley, 2003). The fourth area considers transitions to adulthood, higher education and residence including identity development, the nature of dependencies and self concepts of adulthood (Galland and Oberti, 2000, Jordyn and Byrd, 2003).

The potential of the concepts of space and time to deepen understanding of the impact of living arrangements on transitions is developed in this article. Different analytic concepts derived from space and time, are drawn on to reveal different facets of transition. It is argued that these reveal the complex influence of social and spatial position and draw attention to young people’s involvement in weaving space and time for themselves from ‘other’ space-time (Davies, 1990). The management of transition by young people involves them in the production of space and time (Lefebvre, 1991). This is both a personal and collaborative project.

## Research methods

The research projects informing this article are closely related. The first was part of a wider analysis of gender, space, time and higher education which took place between 1998 and 2002; part of the focus involved small campus-based halls (Moss, 2006). The key question was, 'How do women create space and time to study?' The sample was all women from one year of two degrees; forty-six in all; twelve lived in halls. The research tools were questionnaires and reflective logs (given to the whole sample) and semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample, selected to represent diverse social positions related to age, residence, ethnicity, social class. The questionnaire provided snapshot profile data related to different spheres of experience (paid work, heritage, housing, relationship, leisure, community). The reflective log provided data related to the space-time negotiations involved in producing an assignment. The interviews provided in depth qualitative data related to the creation of space and time for higher education in the spheres above. The first stage analysis considered different spheres of experience (as above). The second stage explored the data in relation to a triad of space-time concepts developed from the work of Lefebvre (1991) and Adam (1990, 1995, and 1998) which are outlined below. One key issue that emerged was the significance and complexity of processes of collaboration between students.

The second research project (Richter and Walker, 2007) focused on students' experiences in off-campus halls. It exclusively involved students in halls (sixty students from one degree cohort). Research tools and modes of analysis were similar to those in the first project with the addition of focus groups, a fruitful method for exploring shared experiences, group perspectives and collective transitions. Six third year and three second year

students were involved in focus groups on the basis of self selection. In the focus groups students were consulted on critical issues related to living in halls and a range of shared experiences were reflected on in relation to the following themes:

- student perspectives and experiences of everyday life in halls of residence;
- how students negotiated the experience of collective living;
- strategies adopted (individual and collective) and how these related to the transition to adulthood;
- cultural practices which had evolved and were evolving.

There were limitations to both samples, the majority of respondents being white working class young women. The reasons for the absence of the voices of young men and middle class young people related to the academic courses respondents were drawn from (social care). Black and minority ethnic students on these courses usually chose to remain in their family homes rather than move into halls for reasons of perceived safety and closeness to home (Moss, 2006). Students from wealthier backgrounds and men students chose other career pathways, although in the second study there was one young man participant. As lecturers at a new university in the UK, it was difficult to snatch time for research and we decided to explore the experiences of students we taught because of our closeness to them. We took steps to ensure the research did not influence academic outcomes and that it was not perceived to do so.

**Conceptualising space and time in the research**

Massey (2005) has argued that the spatial is socially produced and the social, in turn, spatially produced. Lefebvre (cited in Urry, 1996:391) argues that '… space is not neutral or passive geometry…' but a site of struggle involving major systems of power related to class and other social divisions. Space is not merely context but is dialectically produced through interaction; hence, places carry power. Adam (1990, 1995, and 1998) develops similar understanding related to time. Time has several meanings and is socialised in relation to benchmarks that suit some social interests more than others (1998:61). *Time spent* is valued differently and hierarchically (time spent on the domestic may be valued less than time spent in education); hence temporal practices also involve power relations (Davies, 1990). Adam (1995) argues that it is not possible to make visible individual agency unless we understand the significance of time as a social dimension. Jaques (1982/1990:22) argues that, '…life is different from physics.' Our sense of time involves, '…memories in the present of the past, expectations and desires in the present of the future.'

It has been argued that attention to space-time in research deepens understanding of the relationship between structure, agency and social heritage in young people's lives (Urry, 1996). Social and spatial position inter-relate, and specificity about place in research gives more visibility to individual difference as well as external systems shaping experience. However, in developing space-time concepts as research tools there are two dilemmas. The first dilemma is that too rigid a categorisation of space-time may restrict

the visibility of important processes and transitions. Attempts to log events in relation to the clock and map young people's uses of space may overlook simultaneous practices and the social value young people attach to space and time (Urry, 1991, Rose, 1993, Saraswathi, 1994). The second dilemma is that when moving away from such rigid approaches, one may adopt concepts that are too broad. When the concept of space is no longer simply synonymous with physical place and the concept of time no longer automatically refers to the clock, then the concepts become more difficult to apply. There is potential overlap between the concepts 'spatial' and the 'social', between 'representational space' (see below) and the concept of 'culture', and between 'spatial practice' and the concept of 'social networks' (Moss, 2006). It becomes particularly important therefore to draw on space-time concepts that give added value to research by making particular spatial and temporal relations both visible and meaningful.

The power of space-time concepts lies in their facility as tools which can be tailored to particular research projects and questions. They have the potential to direct the gaze to a range of detail that enriches research. If space and time are made visible then a variety of other issues may maintain visibility, for example, the changing social context of young people's lives, differences in their social position and experience, the connections between different spheres of experience (for example, leisure and education); the connections between individual and group behaviour, processes of exclusion and separation and the relationship between the past, present and future in trajectories to adulthood (Hassard, 1990, Urry, 1996, Moss, 2006).

For young people in this research living communally in halls, space and time are configured in particular ways. The spaces for leisure, living, friendship and studying are interwoven. Clearly their experience is grounded in their heritage of home, expectations of space-time related to social class, gender and ethnicity, the material circumstances and forms of capital they can access (Barry, 2006, drawing on Bourdieu). In halls they actively transform and reshape the social templates presented to them in order to create space and time for themselves and accomplish transitions.

The rest of this article is structured in relation to the four space-time concepts drawn on; ‘routine’, ‘representation’, ‘rhythm’ and ‘ritual’. In each section a particular concept is clarified, justified and drawn on to analyse the research data. The first three concepts are developed from the work of Lefebvre in relation to the social production of space (Lefebvre, 1991). Concepts of time are given more visibility than in his work (Adam, 1990, 1995, 1998). The fourth concept is drawn from social anthropology and sociology (Van Gennep, 1960, Cohen, 1985, Bell, 1992) to give attention to group practices in halls. Throughout the article the focus is on young people’s leisure and domestic transitions. Although the research considers other aspects, including young people’s paid work and academic study, there is not space to discuss this here.

**Young people’s routines in halls of residence**

The concept of ‘routines’, from Lefebvre (1991) is drawn on to reveal spatial and temporal ‘frameworks for action’ and to draw attention to young people’s physical movement through space-time. ‘Routines’ involve ‘spatial practices’ (ibid) that evolve in relation to wider socio-economic developments. Lefebvre discusses the historical separation of the spaces of paid work, home and leisure and the way this shapes everyday routines. Areas of daily life are associated with distinct arenas and involve routine journeys. The concept of routines draws attention to young people’s physical transitions through space and time but avoids approaches that attempt to map and log these. It is important that young people’s transitions are considered in relation to their physical and material setting rather than being abstracted from this. The concept of routines is therefore used to explore the new physical arrangements of space encountered in halls (and surrounds) and the *routes* navigated by students. This involves consideration of routine building as both individual and collaborative and as an inclusive and exclusive process related to social position.

Routines are disrupted for those living in institutions like halls. Goffman (1961) has considered, for example, how space in institutions is managed to suit the interests of staff rather than residents. Lefebvre (1991) argues that all social space is developed with particular interests in mind. University halls are far less regulated than other institutions but movement of young people living there is still prescribed. Young people in the research are presented with new organisation of physical space, where the places for sleeping, eating, the domestic, the personal, studying and leisure are less clearly marked out than in their previous lives. They are faced not only with the demands of growing

independence, the stretching of familial and friendship ties, but also with a degree of dislocation, having to accomplish many aspects of transition in one physical setting.

Relationship building is vital to the establishment of routines in Halls,

> In the first year it seemed like a great big new experience … You had your friends round you, no matter day or night there'd always be someone, you know you could go in to or go and sit with … We always did things together…all cook for each other and go out together, watch videos together. Everyone used to joke because we'd all be sat round with cups of tea and one biscuit tin. [Geni 1[i]]

The transition to halls involves uncertainty, some loss of bearings, but also a sense of being freed up, 'Before I came to college my life seemed to be much more structured. Now it seems that things happen with more spontaneity and things aren't so routine' [Geni 1]. Young people express anxiety about how to behave in the new environment. Most seek low visibility until they have learnt the new routines. Critical to this is timing arrival on the first day at halls so as not to be first or last. It is vital to watch and relate to peers.

Friendship may be interpreted as a '…collaborative tool for exploring the world' (Green, 1998:179). In this institutional setting, relationship building is vital to the routine building necessary to accomplish transitions. Routines are established related to leisure, friendship, domesticity, personal hygiene and academic work. Particular places become associated with particular practices

involving everyday journeys through the landscape of halls and surrounds. The physical design of halls suggests certain types of everyday movement through space; students work with and modify space-time in relation to their own needs. In each halls of residence, routines evolve unique to that setting.

*Leisure routines*

The practices of friendship and leisure are tightly woven. In both research studies leisure happens across bedrooms, kitchens, corridors and communal areas, 'Used to knock on my neighbours doors and socialise in each others flats; used to play games in the corridors or in each others bedrooms' [Fiona 2]. However, particular parts of residence and surrounding area become more intensely associated with leisure. The students' union bar in the first research study is on the same campus and becomes a site of leisure for resident students who use it much more frequently and for more purposes than non-resident, 'It always seemed to be the same people during the week…might sometimes be eight or nine people. If something on… quiz…you can get anything from thirty to fifty people…nearly all resident '[Rose 1].

In the first research study, because of the distance form the city and because the halls are campus based, more leisure happens on site. The second research project involves city based non-campus halls. Part of the city has developed a particular character because of its links to the large student population and this area is signalled to the new students on their first day of arrival through pub displays and welcome signs. Large numbers

routinely gather there. Existing students are hired to market this area to new students and the place becomes an intense and regular site of leisure for residential students.

Movement through space and time to accomplish leisure, both on and off site involve inclusion and exclusion. Normative assumptions related to class, gender, ethnicity etc. influence who gathers together and where they gather. Clare 1, experiences harassment and her right to occupy a particular leisure site (the bar on campus) is regularly challenged,

> There's a big thing especially around gay students…you kept separate. The rugby lads were fine. It was the football group. There's this bizarre thing around…It was guaranteed if ever there was a group of male or female people who they knew to be gay there'd always be a comment or an argument…

Hence, the building of leisure routines involves particular parts of halls and the city becoming intensely associated with leisure practices. Leisure routines involve groups forming; including and excluding others and each routine is unique to the setting.

*Domestic routines*

Routines related to domesticity and the personal have also been disrupted in the transition to halls. Students have been used to more private space for

certain aspects of everyday life (related to social class and family size). In halls the very personal becomes more visible to their peers. Young people have generally had less domestic responsibility in their previous homes (related to gender and class). In halls they are thrown back on their own resources. In the first study there are very poor standards of accommodation; old crumbling buildings and inadequate facilities. Respondents refer to the accumulation of waste and the intensity of daily living,

> Have to walk past rubbish to bath…Have to borrow Hoover. Have to do it at a certain time. Washing … three machines for forty … up and down till one's free…things breaking…in maintenance book…Only one shower works – only two for forty people [Rose 1].

Routines of washing, cleaning and cooking are tailored and timed to available equipment, resources and numbers involved and are stressful and hard to sustain.

> I cooked for myself in the communal kitchen but got frustrated when other people hadn't washed up. I used to eat in my room to avoid the mess in the kitchen and kept all my own crockery so I only did my washing up because at the start I was doing everyone's [Donna 2].

Domestic routines compete with other routines associated with leisure, late night life and alcohol. Patterns of gender division shape these and

disproportionate time is spent by young women in maintaining the domestic fabric of the institution.

In relation to both leisure and domestic routines, practices are dispersed across the institution and surrounds but are more intensely associated with specific areas. This intense association of place with particular sphere of experience evolves in relation to architectural expectations, the student market, social group formation and young people's agency. The routines that develop involve patterns of inclusion and exclusion and are hard to sustain for some students. Clare 1 experiences temporary impairment; finds the buildings hard to navigate and receives little assistance, 'In the second year I had problems with my knees. Was on crutches for four months on and off. Living at the top of hill … even now I'm just absolutely disgusted with the lack of support…'

The concept of routines gives visibility to the particular settings and frameworks that halls and surrounds provide for young people's transitions. Routines for daily action are developed in relation to these existing frameworks. Pathways through the everyday relate to the normative practices of wider social life, for example, the clock-led times of paid work and education. Everyday routines that develop have their own unique dynamic related to resources in halls, design and peer relations.

**Representations of space-time in halls**

The concept of ‘spatial representations’, from Lefebvre (1991) draws attention to the dominant meanings associated with particular places. These places, he argues provide guidelines for action. Whereas the concept ‘routines’ gives attention to frameworks for action, the concept of ‘spatial representations’ focuses more deeply on the hierarchy of social values attached to social life and how these are transmitted in the way space is configured. Lefebvre argues that places are the products of past human activity, containing strong ‘guidelines for practice’ often associated with dominating interests. An example would be the classroom where desks are in lines facing the teacher. Such a setting deters collaboration between students and privileges the teacher as expert. Where the concept routine draws attention to routes through space and time, the concept of spatial representations draws attention to the meanings generated by places, the signals as to how spaces should be used and occupied and to the ways that young people transform and reinvent space in ways more suited to their transitions. Massey (2005:28) argues that the concept of representation tends to be associated with fixity, stability and closure, but in relation to space, ‘Here what we might have called representation is no longer a process of fixing, but an element in a continuous production; a part of it all, and itself constantly becoming’.

In this research the concept is used to explore young people’s interpretation of space in halls and surrounding areas to accommodate transitions. Although there are certain expectations as to the uses of space signalled in the design and lay out of spaces in halls of residence, students are actively involved in reinterpreting space-time in order to accomplish transition. There are tensions between the normative assumptions about the

uses of space and time and young people's meaning making in relation to this. Space is re-interpreted in relation to past experiences, present needs, relationships and future desires. Two examples of this process are discussed below.

*Reinventing home*

Young people have certain expectations related to the use of space from their former experiences of home. The 'homeliness' of halls is constructed architecturally through the creation of a number of private and public spaces (the 'private' study bedroom, small communal areas for cooking and eating, larger communal areas for socialising). The messages about home generated in the spaces of halls are insufficient. Young people compare their present experience with past home based ones (these differ in relation to gender and social class). They reflect on the spaces of halls as well as the behaviour of themselves and other occupants,

> I don't know if it's because we live on a floor with the lads or what but it is disgusting; it really truly is horrible. …You couldn't walk barefoot anywhere for fear of treading on cigarette ends, or bits of food… It really is grotty. … I don't think it's got to do with them being in a lower year…I just think it's… disrespect… [Geni 1].

> Have to cook, clean and wash and iron for myself. My mum always did these, although of course I helped her. Since coming here I have become a little obsessed with things being in their place [Molly 1].

Young women emphasize that they, rather than the young men, are the ones who have concerns about hygiene and keeping halls clean. Whether they perceive this responsibility as natural or enforced, it shapes a gendered trajectory to adulthood involving some reproduction and some resistance to gendered expectations about whose responsibility it is to maintain domestic order.

As well as the need for cleanliness and order, their understanding that domestic space should be private is also challenged in halls. Halls insufficiently replicate 'home' as previously experienced (and/or idealised). Halls are too large and involve living with large numbers of relative strangers. Hence, students re-invent their previous understanding of 'home', using artefacts from childhood. In addition, in the process of settling in, parts of the landscape of halls become 'privatised' by students. In the first study, the students' union is designed as a public leisure site. It is a cold, inhospitable space lacking comfortable seating. For young people living in halls however the students' union bar is described as quasi-home space.

> Because we live there, it's just like popping to the shop or something - not all action really - Molly's gone in her pyjamas and jumper…The room in halls is the bedroom, and that (the union bar) is like your living room. There's the telly. [Geni 1]

It is conceptualized as relatively private informal space away from public gaze. Its quasi-home status is recognisable because important behavioural signifiers that this is public leisure space are missing. There is no need to 'dress-up'- this is saved for trips into town. The student union bar is accommodated by residential students as part of home. Hence public leisure and private domestic space become blurred in this residential setting.

*Reinventing leisure*

Transitions involve testing normative expectations. Leisure is a site of change and contains the possibility … to develop 'alternative self definitions and identities' (Wearing, 1998:46, see also Green, 1998). Leisure engagement has been conceptualised as a political act, being 'a means of taking control and finding meaning' (Burden, 1998:10). Here is an opportunity for young people to experiment with the meaning of the social space-time arrangements they encounter. It offers release from pressures to conform to traditional expectations but also provides an opportunity to practice conformity, whether to the demands of home, paid work or higher education.

The move from home to halls offers many opportunities to test adolescent rules, 'Last year (first year in halls)… a novelty … smoking in own room …' [Rose 1]. Particularly in the first few weeks, leisure time involves drinking, partying, sleeping; all unregulated. The lack of boundaries means their worlds become topsy-turvy; up all night, sleeping all day. They reflect on this as an

indication of their lack of responsibility, obligation or direction. Kathryn 2 talks about the role of 'crap' TV as being significant, 'You knew it was time to do something when the repeat of Neighbours [an Australian soap] started'. Some talk about potentially 'risky behaviour' and living on diets of takeaways and excessive drinking. Leisure space-time is viewed ambivalently and competes with domestic concerns related to health, hygiene and well being. Whereas formal leisure routines are associated with particular sites, on and off campus, all the spaces of halls become potential sites of leisure as normative representations related to space-time are tested playfully by groups of students.

In Lefebvre's (1991) terms, the social guidelines generated by the organisation of space in halls, are insufficient to meet the everyday needs of young people and the formation of adult identities. Young people's understanding of leisure and domesticity involve the distinct and separated arenas they have experienced previously. In halls leisure and the domestic overlap, public and private are blurred. Young people in halls therefore are involved in inventing their own versions of domesticity and leisure in this new difficult landscape.

**The rhythm of personal life in halls**

The space-time concept 'rhythm' is discussed by both Lefebvre (1991) and Adam (1990). It draws attention to the ways in which individuals weave complex temporal demands and carve out space and time for themselves

from the frameworks (‘routines’) and guidelines (‘representations’) laid out for them. In halls, space and time are shared with, controlled, regulated, interrupted and dominated by others (Davies, 1990). Attention to the personal rhythms that young people develop to accomplish transition is a way of developing deeper understanding of ‘lived space-time’ (Lefebvre, 1991). Attention to the personal rhythms of daily life also gives attention to the complex temporal influences informing individual action in halls (Adam, 1998).

The concept ‘rhythm’ draws deeper attention to the way young people create personal space-time than the previous concepts. Each young person develops a personal rhythm to accommodate the multiple times of education, paid work, the personal, the domestic, leisure and friendship in the setting of halls (Adam, 1990). This involves carving out space-time for self from other’s space-time (Davies, 1990). Leisure, domesticity, public and private become blurred; particularly condensed and intensified in the individual study-bedroom, ‘Thing that annoys me is doing everything in the one room…studying, sleeping, eating. There’s nowhere you can go to get away’ [Rose 1]. This room provides private space but has also to be multi-functional and accommodate a complex range of demands. This generates ambivalence. Sometimes Rose feels a lack of privacy and under surveillance. Sometimes she feels anonymous and isolated, ‘Like an open prison. Got your little cell. Can ‘to and fro’ and go down town if you want’ [Rose 1]. Clearly prior experience influences this; the space in halls may also be luxurious for those who have shared bedrooms with siblings at home.

Creating space and time for self in these crowded and noisy conditions is complex. Other students keep Geni 1 awake late at night. After failed

complaints, she develops a rhythm which involves weaving space-time for self from other's space-time,

> It sounds like I'm contradicting myself now, but the good thing about them being up till all hours meant that they didn't get up in the morning. So it'd be absolutely silent you know… till like two, three in the afternoon, and then the noise would start … so I'd just do my work in my room (in the morning)…and then go to the computer room.

The times of others interrupt her study time (for example, emotional time for boyfriends; noise in halls) but can also support her studies when she collaborates or gets emotional support. Emotional space and time is vital in accommodating these complex temporal and spatial influences. The noise and intensity of institutional life leads one young woman to cocoon space-time for herself,

> Walk more to get away from Halls and the whole tight-knit structure of people there … At night, once I'd done my work…all my books, files around…Couldn't get it out of my head. Felt like you couldn't escape work … When you come to go to bed you don't feel like it anymore because you've been sat there all day, burning nice oils and having something nice for tea [Rose1].

Young people are experiencing major changes in their living environment, in their legal entitlement, financial responsibilities and in levels of adult

protection (Morrow, 2003). Geni 1 sums this 'growing up' as integrally connected with the process of higher education and living in halls, 'Think I've become more independent. I was independent before I came here but now, thought of being on my own or doing things on my own doesn't feel lonely.' Feelings of adulthood are situational, specific, related to personal experience and social position. Geni feels independence earlier than some others because of the loss of her parents whilst a child and the working class values and practices she has grown up with. She receives no financial familial support, relies on loans and paid work.

Accommodating transition in halls involves careful weaving of complex temporal and spatial influences at a personal level in order to carve out space and time for self. This is an emotionally intense personal project and its success depends on developing an effective personal rhythm for daily life in halls. This involves timing and synthesising activities to meet multiple temporal demands. Control over space and time relates to resources and capital available, social position and the actions of others. Other people and institutions might dominate space-time. In this context, carving space and time for self involves the exertion of power.

**Shared experiences and quasi-rituals**

The concept of 'ritual' draws on theory from social anthropology (Van Gennep, 1960, Turner, 1969, Driver, 1991, Bell, 1992) and is used by Cohen (1985) to explore the sociology of community. Cohen recognises the role of group

rituals in corroborating social identities and social location. In the research discussed in this article, we use the concept ‘quasi-ritual’. We are not discussing rituals in the formal sense (those long established traditional celebrations that mark transition in communities such as coming of age ceremonies (Morrow, 2003)). We are drawing on the concept to give attention to the shared experiences in halls that appear to provide similar but temporary social anchors for young people. These practices are developed by the young people themselves and appear to create space and time for transition at the level of the group. Young people living in halls celebrate and practice transitions in a variety of complex ways. They draw on contemporary cultural practices to do this. We have previously drawn on space-time concepts to discuss the building of routines in halls, the re-interpretation of the spaces of halls by young people, the personal carving out of space-time for themselves. Now we move on to explore how transition is managed and accomplished at the level of the group through quasi-ritualised practices. This reveals the power of group activity in accomplishing transition and the complex relationship between the individual, the group and ‘the world as mediated by … group membership’ (Cohen, 1985 p. 54).

The events discussed in this section were recounted in the focus groups in the second research project. Young people discussed group activities they had engaged in and the relationship of these to their transitions to adulthood. The events they selected were recounted with emotion, humour and irony. The focus group provided an opportunity for collective reminiscence and was itself formative in terms of these young people’s transitions. The accounts given involve personal and group memories and demonstrate the way that

young people draw on current cultural resources to manage transition (Halbwachs, 1925/1992, Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983, Mizstal, 2003). The events recounted appear also to delineate the form of future trajectories to adulthood,

> One may say that an individual remembers by placing himself (sic) in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories (Halbwachs, 1925/1992:38).

Examination of shared experiences that are collectively recounted draws attention to particular processes related to transition, for example, the breaking of some familial dependency, the celebration of significant sexual encounters, the celebration of domestic autonomy and so forth (Morrow, 2003). The events students selected for discussion involved intense shared moments in space-time.

*Domestic rituals remembered*

The transition from home to halls contains within it a transition from adolescence to adulthood, imbued with external and internal expectations. Our respondents in the focus group recognise the social nature of this experience. They reflect on the physical move from home to halls accompanied by various family members and the paraphernalia required to

set up home, 'We passed other people making the same journey, you could tell , cars full of bedding, pots, pans, house plants, family member all jammed in, squashed against the inside windows of the car' [Kathryn 2]. There is speculation about 'which university', 'whether they were going to the same halls' but also recognition that this particular experience of transition is being replicated all over the country and beyond and is a shared experience. One student reflects on the symbolic aspects of this journey - transition. She talks about how the car, full of her possessions seems to represent her life, and how it seems so insubstantial. This is a time of dislocation and change, at times exciting, freeing, but also confusing and troubling. Many talk of feeling upset about leaving behind the familiarity of family, friends and community; although this is tempered by feelings of achievement at having to negotiate and mark out a new way of living, '… because I was wanting independence I was proud of myself for doing it. It was hard at first but, because everyone was so nice, it was easier' [Georgie 2].

The domestic ritual of the 'Sunday Lunch' which they re-create in halls provides our respondents with a social 'anchor' in the week. Attention to such shared experiences reveals the way these students attempt to collaboratively confirm their domestic autonomy. They reproduce the cultural practice of celebrating Sunday lunch (originally celebrating the return from church and associated with Christian practices, but also associated with poverty and working class lives). The meal is shared, space is shared, they learn how to manage [or not] domestic arrangements. This is an example of a ritualised event (Bell, 1992) that takes a very domestic form and draws on 'home' experiences as a reference point. Young people say this has a number of

meanings. It represents growing up by emulating adult activities, it is also about taking responsibility in areas usually controlled by adults, but at the same time it is steeped in nostalgia about their previous home lives (or home lives imagined in contemporary culture). This is re-lived at the level of the group and with a deep sense of fun.

*Leisure rituals remembered*

A young man describes groups of students going out in the evening in ritualised terms, 'There's a kind of buzz which starts about 7, the noise of showers, hairdryers, music and the smells of shampoo, soap, perfume' [Simon 2] . This preparation also involves the re-designation of space between rooms through the opening of doors onto internal corridors and communal areas. This space is no longer just for passing through but is now a space to linger with a glass of something before moving into the city for the evening.

Once out, many groups of students mark themselves out in groups, wearing particular fancy dress. They move through the pubs and cafes in the area dressed as cartoon characters, or in drag, or as school girls with suspenders, or as cowboys. They reflect on their own behaviour once out of halls, which they see as challenging boundaries and which often involves giving cheek to figures of authority. This ranges from a drunken offer of a chip to a police officer, to a group of young women swarming over a fire engine that is outside a club, starting and revving the engine [keys were left in the

ignition] and using the tannoy system to address passers-by. They also talk about collecting 'trophies' mostly road signs and street furniture, how competitive this becomes and the relative status of different 'trophies' – traffic cones being worth less than a traffic cone with a light on for example,

> Me and A went into a car park and managed to lift a metal post out of the ground – a massive steel thing – we managed to get it back. It was purely just to say we beat anything you got. It seemed at one stage; everything we owned was public property [Cassie 2].

'Rule breaking' seems to be an important, collective way of celebrating not being watched over and policed by adults. It involves group testing of normative assumptions as well as the authority of adults (Cohen, 1985). The pressure to engage with some of this activity is clearly peer led, and it may well be the case that young people prefer to conform to the expectations of peers rather than those of the adult world. In addition, self-regulation is part of the process. It is not just about being able to break rules; it is about choosing the rules to be broken (ibid).

In relation to the return to halls after a night out, these young people employ a practice they call 'the walk of shame.' if someone stays out all night and returns the next day wearing the same clothes they have gone out in the implication is that they have slept with someone. The 'walk of shame' is drawn from a contemporary quiz on UK television. Anyone knocked out of the quiz is publicly humiliated, the cameras following them off the TV set. The 'walk of shame' in the context of halls involves other students hanging out of

windows and chanting ‘walk of shame’ at the returning student. This is a source of embarrassment and a marker of their sexual prowess. It conveys both moral disapproval and celebration. This quasi-ritualised event draws on contemporary popular culture to collectively mark a turning point towards adulthood. The group regulation and surveillance of sexual behaviour is traditionally an important source of ritual. As Foucault has argued (1980) social practices related to sexual behaviour are not concerned to limit behaviour but serve to define what is socially acceptable. The ‘walk of shame’ in halls delineates the boundaries of socially appropriate behaviour. These ritualised aspects of leisure experience both reproduce and test social divisions. Gendered social roles are tested through cross dressing in fancy dress. Social class respectability is tested through minor law breaking. Ideas about adult sexuality are tested through practices like the walk of shame. These quasi-rituals signal the shape of future transitions to adulthood (ibid).

In these accounts of shared leisure and domestic experience, halls provide some of the ingredients for the creation of a fleeting sense of ‘communitas’ (Cohen, 1985) based on temporary shared identity and shared space-time. Complex transitions related to social roles, behaviour, morality and concepts of appropriate adult behaviour are played out by these young people in groups. Clearly these events involve social inclusion and exclusion and confirm also the boundaries of the group. They have the potential to replicate socially divisive practices. They give immense pleasure to those involved and delineate trajectories to adulthood. Use of the concept ritual within space-time methodology deepens understanding of transition in communal settings.

## Conclusion

In this article we have discussed the way that conceptualisations of space-time may be drawn on to deepen understanding of young people's transitions, including the potential and dilemmas involved in applying such concepts in research. The approach discussed involves the application of specific space-time concepts to draw attention to particular facets of transition in the residential setting of halls. The concepts 'routine', 'representation', 'rhythm' and 'ritual' are complementary. Below we draw out the value and connectedness of the particular concepts we have used.

The concept 'routines' draws attention to young people's everyday patterns of movement through physical space-time in halls, showing how particular places become intensely associated with spheres of activity, the collaborative nature of routine building and the way this involves inclusion and exclusion. Lefebvre (1991) argues that routine movements through space-time reveal the space-time frameworks that regulate social life. In the case of this research into halls of residence, these frameworks are disrupted because of the new organisation of space and the expectation that more aspects of daily life be accomplished in one collective setting. Young people develop their own routines for everyday living, modifying the given frameworks and managing transitions in ways unique to the residential setting they occupy.

The concept 'representations' is also drawn from Lefebvre and relates to 'routines' (ibid). However, here the attention is on the dominant meanings associated with the uses of space and time. Places generate their own

meaning. Halls of residence, although constructed to represent some 'homeliness' through a mixture of private and public areas, do not correspond to young people's expectations. They actively engage in developing the space to meet their expectations. The concepts of 'routines' and 'representations' are related in the sense that understanding young people's routines deepens insight into the space-time frameworks for transition and how young people engage with these. Understanding the way young people reinterpret space in relation to their own expectations deepens insight into the space-time guidelines that shape their lives. Young people actively transform the physical space around them and the meanings attached to it.

The concept 'rhythm' provides a different insight. The focus is on personal action together with the complex space-time influences on this. Young people are conceptualised as 'centres of action' (Adam, 1990: 66) involved in weaving multiple spatial and temporal influences in order to create space and time for themselves and manage transition. The daily routines they engage in and their reinterpretation of the meaning of the space around them ('representations') are parts of that process. The concept 'rhythm' however gives deeper attention to the complexity of this personal project and the exertion of power necessary in the residential setting of halls. In Lefebvre's terms (1991), the concept draws attention to the way space-time is 'lived' individually.

Finally the concept 'ritual' moves the focus from the individual to the group and related group processes. Young people in halls develop collaborative practices related to shared experiences and shared cultural assumptions. They play, practice and celebrate transitions in a variety of quasi-ritualistic

ways. Transition is a group as well as an individual process, particularly in the intense collective setting of halls. Exploring personal rhythms draws attention to the way young people carve out space-time for themselves at an individual level. However, exploring quasi-ritualised group practices draws attention to collaborative processes of transition.

In combination these space-time concepts reveal the complex nature of young people's transitions in halls of residence, including the uniqueness and relevance of the physical setting, the significance of young people's meaning making, the complexity of transition at a personal level and the relevance of group collaboration in managing the process. Our aim has been to contribute to theoretical discussion about young people's transitions through space and time. In applying space-time concepts we have tried to avoid approaches that involve mapping movement through space or logging time. We have nevertheless tried to be specific in the application of particular concepts to understand different yet connected aspects of transition. This has proved difficult, particularly in terms of areas of overlap and fine-tuning. Nevertheless this has also proved fruitful.

[i] Respondents from the first project are identified by 1 and respondents from the second by 2.

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