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“Our Brother’s Keeper”

**Moralities of Transformation at YMCA Centres in the
UK and The Gambia**

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Doctor of Philosophy (DPhil) in Social Anthropology
University of Sussex

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**I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and
will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another
University for the award of any other degree.**

Signature:

‘We do the work we are doing because of the faith we have; so that people seeing us will understand that because of our faith we want to be our brother’s keeper.’

- James Gomez, Chair of the Gambia YMCA Board

Abstract

Founded in London in 1844, the The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) has spread across the world, becoming integrated into state programmes of social reform and driving a development discourse that links socially productive youth into economic moralities of transformation. I trace the circulation of these ideas through a multi-sited, cross-cultural ethnographic study of Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) centres in the UK and The Gambia, focussing on YMCA programmes that operate transnationally, implementing global youth-oriented policy in local centres linked by bilateral partnerships. I follow these transnational linkages from Sussex Central YMCA (based in Brighton and Hove, England) where I have strong links as worker and volunteer, to a similarly sized centre in Banjul, Gambia, creating a cross-cultural analytical framework through which to explore the experiences of young men participating in their programmes. Using these contrasting contexts, I focus on the lives, narratives and practices of young men and YMCA staff in each location, analysing how YMCA programmes foster a version of transnational masculinity that combines economic rationality with the spiritual principles derived from Protestant Christianity. I explore this in reference to an often implicit, idealised form of YMCA masculinity based around strength of 'mind, body and spirit', known as the 'Whole Man'. I suggest the 'Whole Man' operates as an idealised motif of manhood within YMCA centres, fostering notions of self-sacrifice, empathy and embodied dynamism that is reproduced at the YMCA through 'secular rituals'. I trace how these masculine subjectivities interact with localised conceptions of manhood and youth in each location, focussing on the interplay of differing versions, conceptualisations and practices of masculine behaviour in each location. This thesis is generated by the friction between self-help models and actual lived realities, frictions which I hope to show represent the limitations of totalising models of coherent subjectivity based on moral principles.

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Table of Abbreviations

AAYMCA – Africa Alliance of YMCAs

ASBO – Anti- Social Behaviour Order

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

FBO- Faith Based Non-Governmental Organisation

G2G – Give 2 Gambia

GCSE – The General Certificate of Secondary Education

GYMCA – Gambia YMCA

HIV/AIDS – Human Immunodeficiency Virus and/or Acquired immune deficiency syndrome

ICT – Information Communications Technology

ILO – International Labour Organisation

IMF – International Monetary Fund

KI – Key Informant

MDI – Management Development Institute

NGO- Non-Governmental Organisation

NGS – National General Secretary

PE- Physical Education

SCYMCA – Sussex Central YMCA

SL – Sports Leadership Course

SUV – Sports Utility Vehicle

UK - United Kingdom

Y- Care – Y-Care International

YMCA - Young Men's Christian Association

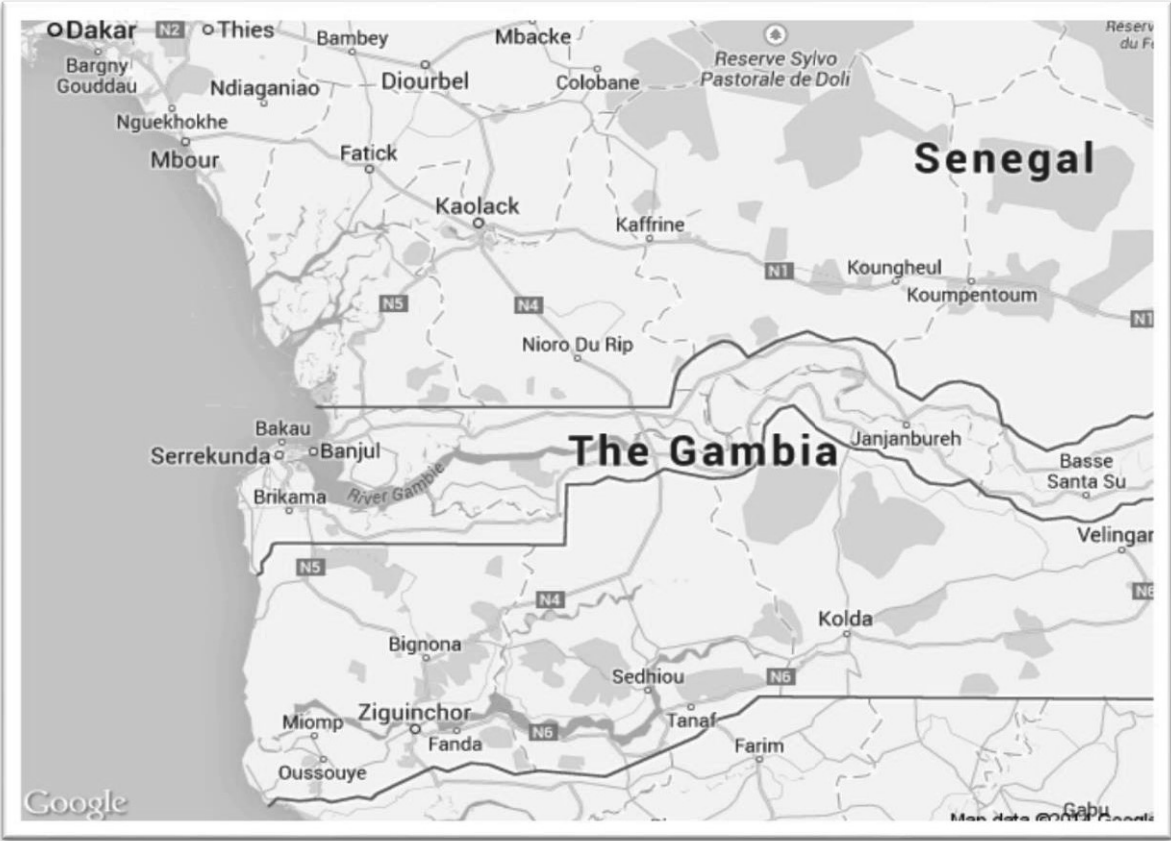


Figure 1. Map of The Gambia



Figure 2. Map of East Sussex, UK



Figure 3. Sussex Central YMCA, Marmion Road Building (right of picture), Hove.



Figure 4. The Gambia YMCA, Hostel Building and Sports Area (under construction).

Chapter 1: Introduction

Its 4pm at Hove YMCA and the centre is full of life. Located at the heart of the Brighton and Hove community, the middle of the afternoon is the busiest time of day as the array of afterschool clubs get into full swing. I am watching the action through a narrow doorway by the main entrance, signing people in as they arrive and making sure people know where they are going. Directly in front of me is a large reception area filled with people. Parents mill around waiting for their children. Children of different ages dash to and fro, visiting the toilet or grabbing a quick refreshment. There are three afterschool clubs happening simultaneously today. In the left hand 'function' room arts and crafts equipment is sprawled out across paste tables and the floor. Off to the right though a pair of sky blue double doors is the large and ageing sports hall, whose dented parquet floor and fading murals recall another era. Peeking through the windows you can make out laughing children catapulted through the air as they bounce around on a large trampoline, their friends watching excitedly at the side. Intermittently through another door, lively, sweaty children in leotards and plimsolls appear from upstairs, having a break from their dance class and grabbing a drink from the nearby kitchen, manned by a couple of enthusiastic volunteers. Amongst all this, are the YMCA staff and volunteers, ranging in age from 18 to mid-30s, attempting, sometimes in vain, to marshal the fun-fuelled children. Always on alert, occasionally, one of them will stop to chat with a parent or another worker, or emerge from a door with children hanging off them or squirting them with something, always invariably with a smile on their face. Today is a normal day in the life of Hove YMCA, every day the routine changes, but the general atmosphere of organised chaos and fun remains the same.

Abruptly the atmosphere does change subtly, three visitors have appeared at my reception windowsill waiting to sign in. All eyes in the centre have turned towards them, some more obviously than others, and the laughter has suddenly tailed off turning into a subdued chatter. Each visitor is dressed slightly differently, but each projects the same sense of gravitas stemming from the only item common to all three: their gleaming, white dog-collars. I and the other YMCA workers seem to be the only people in the centre carrying on as normal, I have met the three men before. They are local church leaders, come to meet David Standing, our Chief Executive and reputable activist in the local Christian community. They arrive every few months to consult with him on issues affecting the local community, looking at ways they can help out and help each other. After greeting the men and signing them in, I lead them through the locked staff door down a narrow corridor towards David's office, the parents, children and YMCA staff watching them with a mixture of curiosity and uncertainty fitting for figures they are more used to seeing in hushed, hallowed settings. After a few minutes, I lead the three priests into David's room and close the door behind me, returning back to my reception where the clamour has been renewed as if nothing had happened.

This moment of abrupt disjuncture was just one of many I experienced during my time with Hove, now Sussex Central, YMCA. From the moment I received my induction pack prior to taking up my part-time job which contained a section entitled ‘The Christian basis of the YMCA’ with the stated aim ‘to enable you to understand the Christian ethos of the YMCA and to make you aware of the background of Hove YMCA’ I was deeply intrigued by the inherent contradictions at work in the organisation. How could this Christian organisation do the work it does, on drugs, sexual health, and disruptive behaviour in the secular, atheistic setting of contemporary Britain? The incident above seemed to reflect many of these contradictions. Most of the children were unsure how to act around the three religious leaders, as were a number of the young volunteers and parents. Upon my first meeting, I too was wary. Raised an atheist, I had a healthy distrust of what I perceived as religious hypocrisy and dogmatism, a prejudicial view incubated in the climate of sexual abuse revelations and broader societal disenchantment with religious leaders and institutions. As I grew to know the YMCA, the people who worked there and the people they worked with, this view changed. I watched as the YMCA refused to join the handful of Christian protesters at Brighton’s famous gay pride parade, I saw the powerful and clear-eyed magic they worked with the most dangerous of society’s youth and I saw how faith was kept carefully out of their work, deliberately hived off from their everyday business. Combined, these factors helped ‘convert’ me to the YMCA way of thinking, and, as I became a youth worker and researcher, made me want to understand the organisation on a broader level.

This feeling was compounded in 2007 when at the last minute I was asked to join the Give2Gambia trip, where a group of staff and volunteers take a selection of worthy young people to The Gambia to perform a variety of charity projects. This research project was born on that trip, as I met inspirational members of the Gambia YMCA, listened to their stories and witnessed their work, I realised how similar their organisational culture was to the Hove YMCA and wondered how that could be possible. However, there was one significant difference. At each meeting we went to, we were asked to pray before getting started and throughout The Gambia YMCA, there was an unashamed promotion of Christian principles, their stated aim being: ‘The Gambia YMCA is a Christian Charitable Association. At its centre are Christians who, regarding Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, desire to share their faith with others.’ At the same time, I also noticed how they were passionate about their international links, their centre covered with messages from other visitors from places as diverse as Finland, Carolina, USA and Sierra Leone. I wanted to learn more about how the YMCA structure made this possible, how it had survived through the years, how it had managed its religious principles in different settings and why now, even in places consumed by poverty, it was thriving.

These questions motivated this current research and linked in with a number of strands in contemporary thinking about development work: firstly, getting away from the monolithic machinery of large transnational Aid architecture, how does development operate through trans-local systems of partnership and networks? Secondly, historically how did faith-based development organisations (FBOs) contribute to the contemporary landscape of international development and how are they re-shaping it in the current post-secular moment? Thirdly, why are organisations like the YMCA that target youth¹ and young men growing so rapidly and what can this tell us about wider trends in development and the processes of both Aid and global economy? Taken together these three sets of questions formed for me a compelling framing through which to view the YMCA and the operations of its local franchises.

It also posed another difficult question. How to study a huge organisation through two of its local centres? What could the particularity of each centre and their on-going relationship tell me about the YMCA as a whole and the development industry beyond that? I answer this by going back to my first encounter with the YMCA in 2007. Over the last twelve years, groups of Sussex Central YMCA students and staff, taken from hostels, sports programmes and youth clubs have been visiting The Gambia for ‘life-changing’ experiences and activities. Now run by Sports and Development Manager, Yolandi, the trip first came about through an act of serendipity, when a senior YMCA worker on holiday in The Gambia, mentioned his job to a taxi driver, who astounded, offered to take him to the Gambian version of the YMCA initiating a powerful and longstanding global ‘development’ partnership. This story is repeated often by both sides of the partnership, and was relayed to me by both Yolandi and Gambia YMCA managers as I moved through my trip, and I, in turn, have often repeated it to others. Along with a host of other stories it has become part of the rich tapestry that creates the YMCA as simultaneously global *and* local, irreducible to either domain. Rather than viewing development as systematic, homogenous and unwieldy, studying the informal relationship between two local franchises offers a way of seeing development as ad-hoc, interpersonal, and highly adaptable.

Moreover, this approaches also destabilises the rigid North-South binaries that underwrite much development programming and policy, allowing us to see development as emergent, stemming from specific ideas and spaces, constructed by a multiplicity of agents and actors implicated in complex real and ‘imagined geographies’ of politics, history and economics (Eyben and Savage 2013: 458; cf. Heron 2007; Wilson 2012). Rather, we can

¹ Youth is defined differently in different context. For example the UN defines youth as anyone aged 14-35 whereas The Gambia government places the limit at 30. On the other hand the UK, uses the 13-25 age range. In this thesis, I take a broader view seeing youth a situational category but generally defined as anyone from age 13-35 (Durham 2004).

analyse development as a set of contingent and multi-dimensional global processes rooted in the local, in communities and personal relationships, in historic particularities and specific cultural contexts, all of which militate against transnational and universal applications of development policies and practices (Yarrow 2011; cf. Mosse 2013). Finally, studying the trans-local gives a way of understanding how these processes are founded on seemingly unshakable univocal moralities, what Thomas Yarrow (2011) has called ‘salvation fantasies’, as situated historically and temporally as they are deployed uncritically and affectively in the development context of poverty, emergency and humanitarian disaster (cf. Fassin 2012; Heron 2007). Many of these ideas arose in conjunction with similar ideas in donor countries like the UK as forms of liberal superiority and population management², and this vital conjuncture of ideas and practices can only be analysed through a focus on local actors invoking wider regimes of knowledge, power, action, and inevitably, morality (see Escobar 2011; Crewe and Axelby 2012; Rist 2002)

A study of the YMCA offers a unique route to respond to these questions. Founded in London in 1844, it has spread across the world, becoming the largest youth NGO operating today, working with over 58 million people in 120 countries and intervening at every level of governance and civil society. To grasp the importance of the emergence of YMCA models and ideas on the contemporary movement, this thesis discusses a concept of Christian manhood known as ‘The Whole Man,’ suggesting that it operates as form of ‘charismatic’ hegemonic masculinity through which development work is implemented. ‘The Whole Man’ was a blueprint of manhood designed by YMCA innovators at the end of the nineteenth century that wedded spiritual wellbeing to the health of mind and body, creating an organisational trinity that is preserved today in models of ‘holistic’ development³ and crystallised succinctly in the phrase ‘Our Brothers Keeper’⁴.

As I will show, over time this model becomes increasingly implicit, represented in the organisational structures, priorities and ethos and embodied by staff and managers whilst also becoming the basis for overseas missionary work and organisational fraternity based around Christian principles. Cited by Gambian Chair of the Board James Gomez as motivation for his and the YMCA’s work the phrase ‘Our Brothers Keeper’⁵ has come to signify the meaning of Christianity itself; the need to protect our brothers, our fellow men,

² Arturo Escobar (2011) has tracked how the fears of over-population in the West led to a ‘racialised’ development orthodoxy (35-36; see also Mamdani 1973; Mitchell 2002)

³ For example, this is from a YMCA England response to a governmental committee on Health and Wellbeing ‘The YMCA is committed to creating healthy, sustainable communities where all individuals can lead active lives and fulfil their potential in body, mind and spirit.’

⁴ Taken from the Genesis story of Cain and Abel, where Cain murders Abel and is asked by God: ‘Where is Abel thy brother?’ Cain replied, “I know not: am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4: 10-4: 12).

from harm. In the context of international development, being ‘our brother’s keeper’ stands for helping our fellow man out of difficulty, a religious mode of development ideals with clear gendered connotations that need unpacking. These interpersonal and gendered relations are also predicated on the three-fold model for religious development embedded in the phrase: it is personal, the stranger becomes kin; it is unequal, the development worker supervises the object of development; and it is emotional, designed to preserve brotherly love against sin.

Through this thesis, I unpick these three layers of ‘brotherly’ love’ showing how the YMCA is implicated in processes of inequality and domination present in the capitalist societies in which it flourished, furnishing docile workers for the expanding industrial and commercial sectors of the time and naturalising both forms of inequality and gendered behaviour. I will suggest that class, ethnicity and masculinity are intractably linked at the YMCA, bound together in the creation of an aspirational white middle class masculinity based around private self-improvement, public sociality and male-to-male ‘brotherly love’ that was, and is, vital to maintaining and harnessing working class labour power both home and abroad.

By taking this critical view, I show how the YMCA uneasily marries their Christian values to both a secular humanitarian framework and a neoliberal rationale of governmentality. As I argue, Weber’s idea of ‘charisma’ as a connection to God is present in the YMCA leadership but also translated into embodied and secular forms of charismatic leadership. Contra Weber, I suggest this both ‘routinises’ the magical form of ‘charisma’ and reinscribes the power of the YMCA work, and accordingly, their faith (see Weber 1963, 1968, 1978). In both of these models ‘charismatic’ leadership has become central to ideals of successful personhood and citizenship, and I show how both ‘charisma’ and leadership become linked to specific attributes and styles of masculinity in each domain acting as a domineering, disciplining force. At the heart of this process are different layers of moral value and I show how analysing sport as a development tool can demonstrate how the individual moral body connects with the circuits of global morality through which development operates. In this framework, sport can be seen as a mechanism for entrenching specific values and a characteristics through and in the body and, in doing so, promoting forms of transformative ‘charismatic’ self-mastery that serve the purposes of development. Sport enshrines the principles of teamwork, communication and captaincy (leadership) and I explore how these values map straightforwardly onto neoliberal forms of entrepreneurialism and self-development fashioning and more problematically onto Christian values of self-sacrifice, openness and self-control.

A key part of this analysis is in the relationships built between staff members, some of

whom are Christian, and the Sports Leadership candidates, most of whom are not. This includes my relationships with several of the young men I worked with, exploring how my own set of moral values engaged with the different values I encountered in the lives of young men. This auto-ethnographic approach offered a further route to understanding how sport is used to foster certain kinds of relationships and forms of practice. As I show, development workers are surrounded by an 'economy of sentiment' that motivates both individual commitment and the broader mechanisms of development giving and action (see Fassin 2003). At the same time, development is increasingly market focussed, with emphasis on micro-finance, entrepreneurialism and income-generation (Mosse 2013). In this discourse, being emotional is equated with having 'passion' for the job and the performance of interpersonal skills by fostering networks and good business relations.

In what follows I explore how YMCA staff and students enact this simple form of informal development in their daily work and how this interacts with their complicated lives. In particular I examine how certain modes of masculine subjectivity are encouraged to complete the YMCA Christian mission of re-shaping young men's mind, body and spirit, and how these emergent masculine subjectivities interface within the YMCA through affect, role modelling and forms of shared 'habitus.' I explore how the YMCA organisational coherence is maintained through this chain of intersubjective connections through the emotional, interpersonal bonds forged on YMCA programmes and how this process is always incomplete. Overall, I emphasise how the YMCA form of development is perpetually steeped in liminality: between sacred and secular; between personal and impersonal; between formal and informal; between global and local; and between the body and soul, emphasising the need to rethink how development itself is defined in the neoliberal era.

Research Strategies and Rationale

'Our vision is of an inclusive Christian movement transforming communities so that all young people can belong, contribute and thrive.'

- YMCA England Mission Statement

To begin exploring how 'charisma' might work at the YMCA it is worth relating the specific and idiosyncratic history of the Gambia YMCA, a story that emerged one hot Thursday afternoon when I visited Chair of the Board⁶ of trustees, James Gomez (Gomez) in the affluent neighbourhood of Fajara (Greater Banjul), a short walk from my own compound. A cool relief from the midday heat, his house was decorated with the trappings

⁶ All YMCAs are governed by a board of Trustees who are mostly from a Christian background.

of wealth and influence common in prosperous Gambian households: elaborately carved mahogany furniture, sleek glass shelves and coffee table and a large flat-screen television. Sat in an ornate armchair he began to tell me the story of how the Gambian YMCA came to exist, describing with amusement how the Gambia YMCA was actually founded by a Muslim, an unusual, possibly unique, starting point for any Christian organisation, let alone a YMCA. A teacher by trade, after witnessing the good work of Senegal YMCA in Dakar, this founder had returned home to The Gambia filled with zeal, shortly afterwards founding a vocational training school using the YMCA label. A number of local Christians joined him to help with the work, but eventually the principles of the movement became compromised, as Gomez describes:

He was making it a family institution...You see the YMCA is a membership movement. So you have to organise with the people of the community. But you don't organise it in your house. That was his idea, he didn't realise [the] YMCA was bigger...But you must have Christian leadership, which is in the movement...For the couple of years he had the YMCA. He was making it a family business. When there are meetings he takes a cousin and things like that.

This incident highlights two major details of the YMCA systems. Firstly, for Gomez, having an organisation akin to a family is not the same as acting as if an organisation is a 'family business'. Although many YMCA workers are passionate about their work and have deep ties to the organisation, allowing traditional and communal forms of patronage and kinship to seep into the YMCA work was unacceptable: even family has its limits.

Secondly, the YMCA system depends on its Christian core, without which it is just another training centre, as he outlines here, directly linking the origin of the YMCA movement with the Gambian example:

Well originally we worked together for maybe two years. But when we started in '79 we said we want to have a YMCA based on YMCA principles... They started by studying the bible. So the principle of the YMCA is worldwide: whatever your church, you can be a member. You can take leadership only if you subscribe to the ideals of what the YMCA stands for. Now Gambia as you know is predominantly a Muslim country and we are basically a very small minority. And so for him it was difficult to allow the minority to take leadership in an organisation that he was part of.

As Gomez tells the story, having the teacher let go of his project was a difficult but necessary process, a resurrection of the Christian values that YMCA founder George Williams used to instigate the entire movement. For Gomez, the YMCA structures maintain the effectiveness due to the Christian bonds they encourage and the culture of leadership this instils. Therefore, restoring the Christian leadership of the YMCA was, in effect, restoring its 'soul',

reintroducing the very elements that have allowed it to adapt and thrive for so long, and in doing so redefining the meaning of the YMCA family for the coming generations.

The themes explored by Gomez serve as motifs that run through the ethnographic context of this thesis and set up a series of key analytical distinctions: between ‘family business’ and the business of family; between ‘a house’ and a ‘home’; between leaders who ‘subscribe’ and leaders who do not; between Christianity and other forms of religiosity; and between neutral, value-free charisma and ‘charisma’ steeped in Christian tradition and practice.

The origins of the Gambia YMCA indicate how powerful these defining traits of YMCA identity are to maintaining and sustaining the organisation, recreating commonality and community across disparate cultures. Gomez’s discussion also points to how an understanding of YMCA operations has to take into account global and local understandings of development simultaneously. In his account the global is easily blended with the local, a history of missionary work and Christian interconnection inseparable from the birth of the local institution in potentially difficult conditions. Most importantly, his description shows how the boundaries and binaries he sets out clearly help the Gambia YMCA to emerge and develop amidst the wider context of the YMCA movement and broader socio-cultural processes offering a way of understanding the YMCA movement as a whole and the reasons behind such rigid definitions of identity and community. As he shows, as an organisation collectively and through individual franchises, the YMCA is a survivor, built upon mechanisms designed to ensure its longevity and continued success and understanding the historical emergence of these structures is key to understanding how the YMCA thrives today.

Starting in nineteenth century London (1844) as a series of prayer groups for young men, the YMCA quickly spread around the world, now operating in over 128 countries. Initially, an Evangelical enterprise the YMCA rapidly adapted to both the changing, globalising world and processes of secularisation which threatened its Christian core values. As such it developed a flexible and adaptable model of development intervention that embeds local centres in communities, connecting them into loose networks of local, national, regional and transnational affiliations.

Though highly successful, this organisational structure has also had a detrimental effect on the perception of the YMCA leading to a recent marketing campaign in which the YMCA claimed it was ‘more than just a song!’⁷ asking the public to see the extent of its entrenchment in local communities and worldwide international development (see also

⁷ This refers to the YMCA image in popular culture stemming from the 1978 Village People song ‘YMCA’

Mjagkij 1994). Partly this is due to its convoluted and uneven history, but, on the other hand, the YMCA remains difficult to classify: Is it an NGO or an FBO?; Is it a local community centre or a gymnasium?; A hostel or a homelessness charity? And so on. In fact, YMCAs are all of these things and more, often having several premises for any single area or city franchise, and performing a number of different services simultaneously. As with many charitable organisations, their services, premises and personnel also alter significantly over time, going through different iterations in line with unpredictable policy and funding trends. Locating the contemporary YMCA then, means understanding how it has come to be so nebulous, immediately in the local community but part of a wider global community of both YMCAs and Christians, forever escaping simple definitions of development, Aid and organisational structure.

This structure has had two significant results that have implications for this research. Firstly, one key practical reason for the YMCA's consistent underestimation is that each centre is given complete autonomy and self-governance. Originally growing out of the London branch, each YMCA was conceived as a stand-alone centre, built around the missionising member who founded it. The international movement was then formed from the individual centres forming national associations which in turn, allied to form international cooperatives that spanned different continents operating within the highest echelons of development⁸. Both regional, national and individual YMCAs are also affiliated to the World Alliance of YMCAs which operates as council for all regions, but primarily an executive council formed by and funded by the national associations (YMCA England 2010). Indeed, the World Alliance of YMCAs claims to be the oldest voluntary organisation in the world⁹ (YMCA England 2010; Shedd 1955; Muukkonen 2002: 34).

Secondly, each centre has its own character and idiosyncrasies within the YMCA blueprint of at first Evangelical, and subsequently, ecumenical mission. This means partnerships between YMCAs are often borne through both official international platforms for networking and more personal inter-organisational relationships. New YMCAs are often founded by former YMCA students or staff members who have been schooled in YMCA virtues, practices and traditions. When these staff members leave many of them retain links

⁸ For example in Africa, there are 20 national YMCAs with the Africa Alliance for YMCAs (AAYMCA) acting 'as the umbrella body for all national movements' offering technical support, regional summits and disseminating YMCA programming (AAYMCA 2014). Similarly, YMCA England represents 121 YMCAs across England and claims to 'give YMCAs a national voice, by speaking with government, key policy makers and national media' and to 'support YMCAs by promoting high standards of working, sharing best practice, fundraising on their behalf, partnering with them to pilot new projects, and providing training opportunities for their staff and volunteers' (YMCA England 2010).

⁹ In return for their commitment to democratic governance, the World Alliance supports the National YMCAs to both build capacity and instigate new projects, and to provide leadership and guidance to all YMCA adherents (Worlds Alliance 2010a; Muukkonen 2002).

with their home YMCA, some using their skills to pursue careers in government or civil society, creating a web of historic YMCA connections and useful contacts; a YMCA diaspora. On a global scale, the ‘culture of association’ creates a sense of affinity between disparate YMCA members, allowing YMCAs to cultivate international links through personal relationships. For example the Gambia YMCA has a number of such relationships with YMCAs in Finland, the UK and the USA. These relationships are not regulated in any way and can take the form of irregular donations or specific projects but usually last for a period of years and work through long-serving, charismatic individuals such as National General Secretaries¹⁰ (Muukkonen 2002; Binfield 1973; Gustav-Wrathall 1998).

Today the YMCA movement represents an intricate lattice of these highly personal and individualised connections mixed with official funding partners, state funding contracts and private commercial deals. At the same time, it is expanding rapidly and becoming more professional, more systematic and more ambitious, filling the gaps left by receding states in the Global North and troubled states in the Global South. Drawn from a variety of Christian backgrounds, the early founders of the YMCA took a number of strategic decisions which reflected their desire to build an ecumenical tradition reaching beyond the boundaries of denomination and faith, engaging with the secular world beyond (Muukkonen 2002). In terms of the contemporary organisation, every YMCA deploys this original message in different ways,¹¹ depending on a multiplicity of local concerns and funding necessities. Throughout this thesis, I suggest that the continuing success of the YMCA movement, at home and abroad, is by design rather than chance, as they created a set of embodied dispositions that proved exportable and transferable across different domains. The reason for studying two YMCAs locked in a bilateral partnership is that it offers a singular route for examining these multiple processes in action as they are enacted in the lives of development workers.

Indeed, studying the YMCA requires a robust transnational framework that accounts for both the multidimensionality of its organisational structure and the way it creates and sustains long-distance connections. This groups this study within a recent trend of ‘post-development’ critique which has pushed our understanding of development as a ‘category of practice’ beyond binary notions of donor-recipient, locating development processes in complex intersections of political economy and post-colonial historicity (Mosse 2013: 230-232; see also Escobar 2011; Crewe and Axelby 2012; Venkatasen and Yarrow 2012; Yarrow

¹⁰ National General Secretaries are the equivalent of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in other organisations. I explore this feature of the YMCA in Chapter 3

¹¹ For instance, the powerful American YMCA recently rebranded to become simply the ‘Y,’ a branding move that reflects both the corporatisation of American civil society and the heated secularisation debates present in the American public sphere (Lupkin 2010b).

2011). In this context, ethnographic analysis of the ‘universal’ discourses at the root of development can show how they help create ‘dissension, fragmentation, and regional inequality’ that countermands their intentions of global integration (Tsing 2005: 2). As Anna Tsing (2005) reminds us,

The specificity of global connections is an ever-present reminder that universal claims do not actually make everything everywhere the same. Global connections give grip to universal aspirations. As soon as we let go of the universal as a self-fulfilling abstract truth, we must become embroiled in specific situations. And thus it is necessary to begin again, and again, in the middle of things (Ibid: 1-2).

In his book on Ghanaian NGO workers, Thomas Yarrow (2011) uses his detailed ethnography to take up Tsing’s call, exploring ‘what people are *already* doing’ (p.3) within the field of development in order to ‘show how development policies and discourses emerge through diverse forms of relationship, ideology and practice’ (p.6). To begin understanding ‘the institutional knowledge practices through which development projects are enacted’ (Ibid: xv), his work presents the detailed life histories of Ghanaian NGO workers, tracking how the multiple permutations of development activity within their narratives shadow parallel shifts in the development terrain, reflecting a more strategic form of agency at work. In his work, Ghanaian development workers are both accumulating prestige for their own gain as well as doing ‘good’ work for their communities and societies: ‘If informal personal relations may at times compromise on-governmental public action, they are also central to the construction of networks and coalitions through which various organizations and bodies seek to further distinct social and ideological visions of a better future’ (Ibid: 44). As he persuasively argues, the processes and discourses of development cannot be extracted from the emergent cosmologies of local actors and histories. Rather development discourses and instructions need to be understood at the intersection of these emergent processes, as actors, NGOs and global forces help create and redefine them in surprising and innovative ways.

Yarrow’s argument offers crucial insight into the emic, historical construction of development, but my project pushes his argument further by analysing the co-production of development between two local centres. Though Yarrow points the way forward, his study is necessarily limited by its focus on a single organisational culture, whereas this study seeks to follow the networks of development back to their source, completing the analytical program which Yarrow initiates. As others have argued, even a critical, post-colonial focus on the global South still risks reinforcing asymmetrical hierarchies of knowledge and expertise that recreate racialised geographies of marginalisation and abjection (Wilson 2012; cf. Heron 2007; Eriksson-Baaz 2005). At the YMCA, actors operate amidst a complex nexus of religion, politics and post-colonial dependencies. Only through understanding how

managers, workers and clients enact their identities within this complex multiplicity of frameworks can development be understood as always unfinished, being produced and reproduced at the sometimes fraught intersections of global systems of control and domination.

Multi-Sited to Global Ethnography

As such the YMCA presented a methodological problem of how to construct a study that was both manageable in terms of performing ethnography whilst allowing an analytical focus on the particular set of issues raised by the organisation as a whole. Adopting this approach treats ethnography as a truly global project, rooted in an understanding of bilateral transnational and trans-local linkages (see Marcus 1995, 2009; Burawoy et al. 2000; Falzon 2012; Coleman and Von Hellermann 2011). As Burawoy (2001) has argued ‘doing’ ethnography of global processes requires an understanding of globalisation founded on a ‘decentering of the nation-state’ and an increased emphasis on the ‘direct connection of ‘national’ civil societies to one another’ and ‘the unmediated connection of civil societies to supranational agencies’ (p. 149). As he further specifies, it is in the local itself that the global is manufactured: ‘It emanates from very specific agencies, institutions and organizations whose processes can be observed first-hand’ gesturing to the significance of the global ethnographer: ‘In demystifying the supranational agency, they also begin to recognize its limitations’ (Ibid: 149). However he cautions us to re-imagine this web of civil society as ‘Janus-faced’ (Ibid: 148) where ‘the global can be ethnographic in two ways – from the standpoint of experience (reception and consumption) or from the standpoint of its production’ (Ibid: 148). This necessitates a deeper understanding of ‘the inner workings’ of local agencies as part of the ‘global nexus’ of supra-national relationships: ‘The effects of globalization, however understood, are not homogeneous and ubiquitous but specific and concrete. Only in the locality — the ethnographer’s hearth - can one study these concrete effects of globalization’ (Burawoy 2001: 149).

In this sense, I use my experiences at Sussex Central YMCA and Gambia YMCA as a window into the wider processes of the larger organisation, not necessarily as an archetype of an organisational structure. The ‘inner’ everyday ‘workings’ of each YMCA is necessarily unique, and I use the idiosyncrasy of both franchises to represent how YMCAs build a certain level of idiosyncrasy into their organisational ethos and practice. The decision to study YMCAs in Brighton and Banjul were motivated by this logic, based on both personal and organisational relationships. As a worker in Brighton I have intimate knowledge of the

changes taking place there, excellent relationships with students, staff and clients and I can discuss my own experiences of working in the YMCA culture. My relationship with Gambia YMCA is also entirely predicated on my role at Sussex Central YMCA. As a senior staff member I have developed a relationship with Gambia YMCA over a number of years, leading to a level of trust and mutual respect that allowed me to spend time there and get to know how they worked on a day-to-day basis. This insider ethnography is built on the platform of these established relationships, offering unique insight beyond the bounds of simple participant observation.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that these decisions were taken to create an artificially bounded field-site for the purposes of this analysis (Candea 2007). The YMCA originated in London, and there are now multiple London YMCAs which have multiple partnerships spanning the globe. However, the ongoing partnership between Brighton and Banjul offered a unique opportunity to study a bilateral partnership in process and to move away from discussions of development as transnational discourse or part of a transnational apparatus of Aid and charity (Yarrow 2011). It also offered a route to viewing development as it is emically understood and created through local development actors and reinforced in multiple collaborations, crossovers and interactions that take place on both a local and global level (Yarrow 2011: 6). As Candea (2007) has argued, ethnography may derive its power from a sense of 'self-limitation' by adopting 'arbitrary locations', where specific and artificially bounded locations are used to cut 'through meaning' acting as a nexus that gives 'us something to strive against, a locus whose incompleteness and contingency provide a counterpoint from which to challenge the imagined totality of 'cultural formations' (p. 180). In this thesis, my choice of field-sites reflects a sense of 'self-limitation' as I work outwards from two interconnected, but spatially bounded centres to explore wider, but interrelated, issues of development, dependency and socio-economic change.

Consequently, rather than conceptualising global movement in terms of flows or continuities, anthropologists have shown how it is through the disjunctures, disconnects and discontinuities that global contingency gains new meaning (Roitman 2005; Tsing 2005; Ferguson 2006). As Marcus (1998) suggests it is in the act of comparison that we move towards a re-theorizing of the power relations implicit in the anthropological fieldwork process: 'Comparison reenters the very act of ethnographic specification by a research design of juxtapositions in which the global is collapsed into and made an integral part of parallel, related local situations rather than something monolithic or external to them' (p 86). The different research contexts offer a range of potential comparisons: between societies that are dominantly secular (Brighton and Hove) and Islamic (Banjul); that are ranked on the Human Development Index as 'high' (Brighton and Hove) and 'low' (Banjul); and have had different

political histories, from the metropolitan (Brighton and Hove) to the post-colonial (Banjul). The research will explore the extent to which these local contexts influence the ways global YMCA programmes are received and reproduced. This type of analyses offer us a way of seeing modernity as an interconnected whole, made up of networks of narrative strands that are everywhere contingent to political, cultural, social and historical realities (Marcus 1998, 2007).

Connected to this is how local actors in each location construct their identities at the YMCA in relation to global forces. The separate youth centres based in different, contrasting countries form an interesting platform for comparison precisely due to their multiple interconnections and shared cultures exacerbated by specifically engineered processes of globalisation (Fardon et al. 1999). In this way it engages with social science that uses 'the prism of space' (Urry, 1995: 14) to explore 'the intense 'structures of feeling' young people maintain with their environments and the simultaneous practices of re-localization that occur in the local-global nexus' (Nayak 2003: 177). This destabilises the neat delineation of bounded local spaces from vast global spaces, seeing how locales are porous and open-ended 'meeting places' within which a whole host of social interactions cross-cut and reconfigure our 'sense of place' (Massey, 1996 [1991] cited in Nayak 2003: 177). As Anoop Nayak (2003) has shown, for young people in particular 'rather than being fixed or stable points' or 'tightly 'bounded' hermetic zones' local places 'comprise a series of interchanging discourses' whose 'geographical boundaries...are, at best, 'imaginary' (Ibid: 177). Following Appadurai's depiction of 'scapes' she analyses how young people in different UK cities are embedded in 'youthscapes' which connect them into circuits of global desire, consumption and community but 'are invariably appraised at the prosaic level of the 'local', where the inflections of race, class, gender, and so forth, remain evident' (Ibid: 176). As such an ethnographic approach centred on embodied processes can 'reveal how young lives are fashioned by way of a 'power geometry' (Massey, 1996 [1991]), in which groups and individuals are placed in distinct and unequal relations' (Ibid: 176).

Nayak's work reminds us how an ethnographic focus on the body in development can also show how embodied processes become embedded in complex webs of interconnected political, historical and spatial geographies of coercion and control that needs cross-cultural analysis (Cornwall 2008). In his ethnography of Charismatic Christians Simon Coleman has shown how his Swedish Evangelicals 'construct a place of their own, a specific arena of action and meaning, within the shifting, liminal, chaotic space of the global' which need to be understood as part of a Protestant tradition of missionising which represents 'ways of engaging in global activity that overlap with but are not the same as methods adopted by, say, secular businessmen or members of Greenpeace' (p. 5). His approach goes beyond

Appadurai's focus on flows by analysing how globalisation is always created emically in relation to multiple global discourses: 'Processes of globalisation do not simply happen to believers; they also create them in their own image' (Ibid: 6). As he writes,

The global culture of these Christians does not simply involve communicating across territorial boundaries. It also involves the creation of a multi-dimensional yet culturally specific sense of reaching out into an unbounded realm of action and identity. Seen in these terms, globalisation is not merely a broad sociological process; it is also a quality of action, a means of investing an event, object or person with a certain kind of trans-local value (Ibid: 6).

As Coleman suggests it would be more useful to understand how 'transnational activity creates a liminal space that cuts across conventional political and cultural divisions. Yet such a space is neither homogeneous nor neutral in its constitution. As a realm of possibilities, it juxtaposes fragmented, dynamic and often competing versions of global consciousness and practice' (Coleman 2000: 5).

In this context using a cross-cultural approach can reveal hidden structural inequalities between different geographical regions and through the reproduction of transnational vocabularies of progress, change and development (Ferguson and Gupta 1997; Ferguson 2006). This research will purposely analyse how tropes of meaning defined in the transnational context of politicised development articulate in different local settings based on four key categories: how youth is defined and discussed as a category of being and how gendered versionings of youth are discussed as models of transformation; how identity is framed and discussed in economic terms; how religious models of behaviour are discussed and what significance is attached to them; how informants locate themselves both cosmologically and in terms of their associations, networks and relations, both locally and globally. Just as global development codifies their subjects as 'dependent', in Sussex the YMCA works with groups of disadvantaged young people who are struggling for articulation and are politically and socially marginalised by public perception even as a variety of resources are mobilised to integrate them into wider society (Ferguson 2006). As anthropologists have noted, this approach can help refocus the attention of development scrutiny upon the models and socio-cultural norms embedded in development programming transmitted uncritically from North to South (e.g. Mosse and Lewis 2005; Stirrat 2001; Van Ufford and Giri 2003).

Doing Cross-Cultural Research



With these concerns in mind, my fieldwork was designed to capture the workings of the YMCA in both local and global articulation. As such I began my fieldwork in January

2011 in Hove, UK taking three months to follow three courses and conduct interviews before returning for a further three months (April 2012- June 2012) after transferring to The Gambia for twelve months (April 2011- April 2012). My role at Sussex Central YMCA was straightforward in some regards due to my established relationships with many of the workers and young people. However some of the problems I had anticipated over 'blurred boundaries' did arise as I negotiated the different subject positions of researcher and worker (Wolff 2004: 202; Gellner and Hirsch 2007; Hastrup 1996). I was regarded as a senior worker so many of the younger workers would carry out my suggestions without question, meaning that I had to keep reminding them of my dual role and their right to withhold and withdraw. Equally, students would build relationships with me during interviews outside of the usual boundaries of worker-client sometimes referring to troubling personal issues or behaviour I considered immoral. Where possible I have tried to be sensitive around these issues, ensuring that the data is not harmful to the young person in the first instance. On some occasions I did have to act as a worker to a client, redirecting interviews or questioning viewpoints, language or behaviour I considered inappropriate. Where this occurs I have tried to be explicit about the implications of the actions and the material, and where appropriate included it auto-ethnographically as part of my argument.

The first six months of my Gambian fieldwork were spent learning Wolof and establishing myself with The Gambia YMCA. At Gambia YMCA I had several roles. Initially I helped ad-hoc with irregular programmes such as fundraising, conferences and awards ceremonies, while I set up the Sports Leadership course. After a few months I was also asked to help out with some ICT training on a more regular basis which took several mornings per week. The Sports Leadership course ran both as a weekly course on Fridays and Saturdays and as intensive courses for institutional groups. For example, I worked with the Gambia College teacher training school over a half-term break. This school (part of the growing Gambia University) is based in Brikama, a thirty minute minibus ride from The YMCA. In these instances, I adapted my methodology to do one short interview during the course period with one extended interview much later, to trace the impact of the course and the effects of YMCA ideas. Admittedly, it is harder to argue an 'institutional' change in these examples but the data pointed to long-lasting effects and many of the teachers struck up relationships with the YMCA through the programme. Similarly, in the UK one of the major courses I discuss took place in a location outside of the YMCA at a leisure centre in Eastbourne. Although it is harder to argue for institutionalisation through the YMCA centre and space, the space is ritualized through the specific processes taught on the course which are identical to those taught at Hove and many of the young people have either prior or develop later relationships with the Hove centre. Where possible I make these differences

explicit so as to suggest that the YMCA works more through embodied relationships than actual physical spaces, though the most potent forms of affective bonding could be seen at their primary centres.

SCYMCA Session Plan (Left):

Aim of session	To improve Passing		
Equipment	Football, cones, bibs, whistle		
H&S/Special needs			
Session number	2	Session location	
Session date		Session time	
No. of participant		Age / ability participants	Mixed
Activity:			
Warm Up Time:	3min dog 1min Star Jump 1min Stretches		
Main Content Time:	In 3's Pass the ball to each other  bring in a 4th person in the middle to stop  Play a game 10-15 mins		
Time:			

GYMCA Session Plan (Right):

Hove YMCA Session Plans	
Session Name: Drilling	Specific age group: 17-23
Number of Participants needed: 22	Time needed for session: 1 hour
Equipment and facility needs: Ball, whistle, bibs, pitch, cones	
Content of Session (Rules, how the game works etc): Drilling Warm up - 10mins Demonstrate drilling Mixing it that's to take you are go Or do the opposite - 10mins Or take you are going on the line & go opposite 15mins ④ Game 10mins ⑤ Warm down 5mins	
Progression/Aims of future session: Mix it up or you will become predictable, that's to do both at at once Next session	
© Hove YMCA 2007	

Figure 5. Coaching session plans from SCYMCA (Left) and GYMCA (Right).

Connecting YMCAs: The Sports Leadership Programme

To further dictate and 'self-limit' the terms of comparison I chose to focus on a single course run at the YMCA. The Sports Leadership programme targets young people who are good at sport but not coping well with other educational demands. In practice, the programme focuses on teamwork and communication skills, building in embedded literacy and numeracy skills that steer young participants towards national qualifications (GCSEs) and educational or career progression (Eley and Kirk 2002). It seeks to reintegrate these two aspects of their educational life, often tackling behavioural, emotional and psychological barriers in the process in a contemporary echo of the 'Whole Man' model (Eley and Kirk 2002). In recent years, part of the reward system on the course has been an expedition to the Gambia YMCA, with the most willing students being selected during the course and assisted in raising money to finance their own trip. During the expedition the aim is to transfer their skills to local schools, in effect teaching their learning to Gambian children and demonstrating their personal and professional growth in the process. This research documents the expansion of this programme as Sussex Central YMCA uses the Gambian

YMCA to develop this programme into a more sustainable and long-term project, using young volunteers and staff from Sussex Central YMCA to implement the Sports Leadership programme in Gambia. As an experienced Sports Leadership Trainer and youth worker, my role as volunteer tutor was at the heart of this process as the project built momentum and integrated into the Gambian YMCA daily routine and the local community. This thesis thus builds on my own experience of the cross-cultural nexus of YMCAs, exploring, through my growing understanding of Gambia YMCA, and its position in society, its relationship with Sussex Central YMCA, using each location to reflect the other.

As a Sports Leadership trained Tutor I have completed several of their qualifications and a Tutor Training course, allowing me to train Sports Leadership Tutors and administer courses. In the UK and The Gambia I observed Sports Leadership Level 1 courses, a course for over 13s that involves 4 main foci, spread over 33 hours of teaching: planning and running a coaching session; health and fitness; communication; and leadership. These teaching points offer a fruitful basis for analysing how the YMCA combines embodied practice with a discourse of leadership and self-development that is characteristic of many similar YMCA programmes and policies. Though this only represents a small fragment of the YMCA world, I use it as an exemplar of YMCA development work as it incorporates a number of elements common to YMCA programming.

In the UK the course was attended three days out of a five day school week, though the Sports Leadership hours were folded into a wider range of activities. In The Gambia, the course was taught over 6 weeks, over two mornings, usually Fridays and Saturdays which proved most compatible with young men's schedules (for Muslim students, Fridays is a prayer day, where the majority of Gambian Muslims spend the afternoon at the Mosque and have the morning). Normally half a day is sufficient to get through a section of material, generally involving a theoretical element and a practical session building towards actual coaching in a school. For example, the communication module's first section involves a series of teambuilding 'icebreaker' activities such as building a tower from newspapers or constructing a vessel to drop an egg out of a building. This is followed by a discussion section on forms of communication, before students are asked to complete worksheets on this subject. Some other activities might follow this, before the students run a coaching session themselves, usually at this stage with their peers which often finish in guided physical activity such as a five-a-side football match. A typical day will finish with a short reflection exercise, where students complete feedback forms or discuss the day's events and are reminded what they are doing the following day or week.

In each location, day-to-day operations were vastly different so where differences do arise, I try to be explicit and work them into my analytical framework. The key differential

between the field-sites was the recruitment of the cohorts involved in the courses. In the UK the Sports Leadership course is equivalent with GCSE qualifications, taken at age 16. However, it is also deployed as a course for any age, with the same content and learning requirements. This dictated how I would obtain my informants, as the course would have to be deployed differently in each location. In the UK, I followed already running courses, which integrated the Sports Leadership courses into wider qualifications which extended over a longer period of time. On these courses, young people could also gain their qualification through coaching at a local primary school, working through long-held partnerships where teaching time is exchanged for student access.

In The Gambia, I and my teaching partner Joe, had to do much of the recruitment, marketing and networking, often building upon existing YMCA partnerships. We also allied with organisations like local colleges, or parts of Gambia University further afield, but mainly we relied on word of mouth, recruiting YMCA staff, members, friends and colleagues, many of whom were already involved in coaching, teaching or sport. This also meant we could use peer-to-peer assessment on the course, which is commonly used for Sports Leadership courses in the UK. Even though the YMCA had good links with schools many schools were used to wealthy, Western development organisations, often demanding financial compensation for taking up coaching time. Although this created slightly different dynamics in terms of coaching experiences, in terms of teaching content, the Gambian course was solely focused on Sports Leadership Level 1 course, forming a solid platform for comparison.

The difference in the cohort also suggests an important difference in the deployment and implementation of YMCA programmes. In the UK, the Sports Leadership course is part of a statutory framework where young people are mandated to attend. The students have often been expelled from mainstreams school and are attending many different courses, alongside seeing social workers or other support workers. The YMCA is simply one component in this remedial package, often not forming their sole focus or capturing their attention at all. At the same time, where it does grab their focus, it may often become the highlight of their week, offering a ‘fun’ and physical outlet amidst a whole constellation of other forms of discipline and regulation. In The Gambia all attendees were voluntary, even young YMCA staff members could ‘opt’ out, and their attendance had to fit in with their work schedule. Furthermore, many of the Gambian Sports Leadership were older than their UK counterparts, already involved in forms of self-selected self-development, in which the Sports Leadership slotted in as both having the potential for further qualification and a way of making their interest in sport into their livelihood.

Throughout the thesis I use these differences to reflect on the different possibilities available for youth in the Global North and Global South. In the North, education is all-

pervasive and mandatory, but there are also many opportunities available for young people to express their particular talents in particular ways. Education is seen as a 'given' and part of crafting an identity and attaining aspirational goals. However, it can also be seen as oppressive and stifling, particularly for students with difficulties in formal learning environments or from socio-economic backgrounds where learning is not *morally* prioritised (Evans 2006; McDowell 2011). The YMCA deals with young people who have specifically 'failed' in the education system, although most YMCA staff see this in reverse, as the education system failing the young people. Consequently, students on the Sports Leadership course are seen as transitioning from moments of failure to moments of success, a narrative conversion of both self-worth and social moral value.

This is contrasted with The Gambia, where a culture of perpetual political and economic ineffectuality creates a deepening and complex dynamics of hope and disappointment that is directly linked into processes of 'becoming' adult (Esson 2013; cf. Vidacs 2010). Especially, as young men struggle to achieve their aspirations, YMCA courses intervene in an 'elastic' (Flanagan 2008: 136) period of youth, where young men keep trying to find opportunities even through many of their previous attempts have failed (Esson 2013; Durham 2004; Jeffrey 2010; Vigh 2006). In this context, the YMCA is just one pathway for transformation, escape and self-betterment amongst many, and may be contributing to hollow feelings of failure rather than clear pathways out of poverty. Through these differing cohorts and their differing experiences of the Sports Leadership course I explore their experimentations with self-actualisation, showing how youth itself is altered and shaped by courses, places and agencies like the YMCA.

Researching Youth: Participant Observation with Young People

Doing fieldwork in an institutional setting also requires a specific set of tools and data-gathering techniques (Frosh and Phoenix 2002; see also Coates 2008; Evans 2006; Kehily 2002). Informants may have a pre-conceived idea of both research and data-collection coloured by experiences with school, police, parents and government agencies and 'some educational researchers have acknowledged that consent within the classroom may 'shade into coercion' (David et al., 2001: 351), with participation in research becoming simply more schoolwork' (Israel and Hay 2008: 72). In this context being an 'anthropologist at work' or 'participating' in different contexts offered a particular set of challenges and formed part of continued negotiations with multiple gatekeepers, key informants and associated workers (Wolff 2004: 202; cf. Gellner and Hirsch 2007; Hastrup 1996). Although in the UK I was in

my 'native' culture, I worked with young people from very different backgrounds immersed in the daily life in their local area (Balakali 1997; Hastrup 1993; Narayan 1993). Originally from a privileged background in Surrey and young people often comment on my accent and my appearance, forming potential disjunctures and 'strangeness' (Agar 1980; Narayan 1993; Balakali 1997). In The Gambia, the introductory process was extended and involved more casual conversation as the young people learn to trust me and 'position' me in relation to their own lifeworlds. Although the cultural and linguistic barriers were more difficult to traverse, part of a globalized world is that popular culture enters shared spaces much more fluidly (Balakali 1997). For example English football is popular in the Gambia and is one obvious example of globalizing vocabularies that helped me establish shared ground, particularly with key informants, gatekeepers and colleagues (Balakali 1997).

In this mode of research a critical element of obtaining the subjective stories of young people is to watch them unfold in the process of transformation, and to situate that notion of transformation in its 'relational moment' (Jiménez, and Willerslev 2007; cf. Durham 2000; Diouf 2003; Janson 2002; Sands 2002). Consequently, in Sussex, I observed tropes of transformation in their enactment, through the students' interactions with others, behavioural patterns and interactions with different workers, mapping their social worlds (Dyck and Archetti 2003; Sands 2002; Sands and Sands 2010). Built into the Sports Leadership programme are a varied range of objectives, whether socialisation or more concrete, measurable outcomes such as awareness of mental health or employment. Frequently with young people, interpretations are made spontaneously before, after or even during activities and 'being there' allowed me to capture these varied responses, exploring how their social being alters through their relation with the YMCA. Through participant observation I was able to more effectively trace the extent to which YMCA outcomes were implemented and how they manifested themselves through behaviour as well as listening to how the young people interpret these outcomes for themselves (Frosh and Phoenix 2002: 16).

Narrating Youth: Interviews in Context

This sense of experimentation and controlled chaos is ideally suited to a reflective, long-term narrative approach and in this project I use narrative to explore how young people interpret their experiences, reworking a sense of self through multiple narratives of agency and transformation. I especially analyse how YMCA narratives of transformation are constructed amidst a multiplicity of potential stories, outcomes and 'futures', and how actual

lived realities conflict with the uncomplicated, institutionalised ‘success stories’ required by funders, donors and governments (see Dyson and Jeffery 2013). Not only does this approach destabilise the closed circuits of transformative narrative used by development organisations, it can undermine the ideological logic underwriting them, revealing hidden motives, agendas and forms of oppression. In their important volume ‘Telling Young Lives’ Dyson and Jeffrey (2008) use ‘individual vignettes’ of young people across several different countries in the global North and South to ‘illustrate how processes cohere to produce human outcomes, convey the textured experience of youth, and instil in readers empathy, respect, and understanding’ (Dyson and Jeffery 2008: 2). As they also note, returning to and reflecting on interviews with informants can also have powerful implications for shared knowledge and learning as the researcher and subject enter into a more concerted dialogue over the contents of the research, developing deeper insights into the development of subjectivities and writing the researcher into that development (Frosh and Phoenix 2002: 17; Kvale, and Brinkmann 2009).

It is also important to note, that sport is powerful as a transformative catalyst precisely because it enables and encourages processes of reflection and accountability. Unlike many other potential development activities, sport is specifically defined and discussed as an embodied event with associated behaviours, habits, codes and disciplines that are repeated, developed and reflected on in a way that sharpens moral self-definition more rapidly (Dyck and Archetti 2003: 9; cf. Wellard 2002, 2009; Kirk 2002; Sands 2002). As Csordas (1990) has discussed in relation to Charismatic ritual, reflection, narration and discussion are vital to the transformative process as subjects learn to see themselves as objects. Shillings and Mellor (2014) note that this type of embodiment requires an element of ‘temporal’ thinking as ‘past routines become subject to present deliberations that can project into the future possible versions of oneself reformed on the basis of distinctive actions and commitments’ (p. 280). In a similar fashion, Sports Leadership students learn to speak about their experiences and learn from their mistakes, creating powerful narratives of transformation. In this way, sporting activities can write the narratives around which young people construct their identities creating a powerful vocabulary of self-transformation that the ethnographer can ‘collect’ (Sands 2009; Messner 1995; Ronsbo 2003).

Key informants, Interviewing and Ethics

When researching youth, then, it becomes critical to understand the ways youth themselves are interpreting what other youths say, to gain a deeper understandings of idioms

and grammars specific to sub-groups of youths in particular times and places (Fass 2008; Dyson and Jeffery 2008; Chant and Jones 2005; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006). This became clear through my recruitment, relationships and increasing dependence on Key Informants. In both research sites the relationship with my key informants proved central to the collection of information, offering a conduit into the cultures I was attempting to study. In fact, frequently the KIs would provide an insight relating to the recently collected data that had not occurred to me, making them essential to the results of the research. In the UK, I recruited two young people to work on the research. Justin, a 19 year old sports and youth worker, immediately sprang to mind as I had got to know him well over the previous few years and we had developed an easy rapport. Through our sometimes close working relationship, occasionally in trying circumstances with exhausting young people, I also trusted him completely and felt that he could handle the delicacies of confidentiality and sensitive data. Throughout the thesis I explore the complexity of these relationships and my role in the YMCA relationship building process, using my own friendships and working relationships as a route into understanding wider organisational processes of incorporation.

In The Gambia, these issues were cut through with the specific historical conditions and unequal power dynamics of post-colonial Africa, tourism and aid dependency. They also played out in my relationship with my Gambian Key Informant. A well-known rapper, Mr. E. would drop by the YMCA to use their digital studio, but as a student of marketing and business was always looking for other opportunities in which to advance his skills. As a charismatic translator and guide, Mr. E. augmented the interviews in a number of ways: his youth made him able to expand on youth related topics, I had missed or misunderstood; he was able to help me understand the complex intersections of tribal, familial, religious and historical relations in The Gambia, and allowed me to develop interview data after the interview. Due to his significance, Mr E. deserves more of a presence in this thesis but the reasons that made him a good informant (distance, detachment) also meant he was not integrated wholly into the YMCA organisation. I regret his absence, and owe him further attention along with a debt of gratitude for his insight into the complex relationships youth negotiate on an everyday basis. As I explore in some of the following chapters, by situating myself in relation to the young people I worked with I would sometimes find myself in conflict with other groups of people: managers, family members, the government, wider communities and society, conflicts which I have written into what follows.

Due to the different timescales and pressures I experienced during fieldwork, I approached the interviewing process differently in each context. In the UK, my interviews with current students were often conducted during course-time, and as such, were sometimes greeted as a further burden of 'schoolwork' for the students, limiting their effectiveness. At

the same time, where I had built up a strong relationship with the young person, this trust fed into the interviewing process, creating some productive ‘moments’ of interactivity (Punch 2006). Through my observations on the course, I was also able to use ‘pop-up’ interviews, chats and spontaneous questionings to understand specific issues, actions and comments, generating more in-depth insight (Boggs and Eyberg 1990). As the Sports Leadership was a discussion based course, I was also able to feed my research questions into issues up for debate, creating impromptu focus groups, and getting further insight into the divisions of opinion within the group (Punch 2006). With graduated Sports Leadership, who were either staff, or volunteers, I had my most fruitful interviews which pointed to YMCA processes of reflection and narration. As they became incorporated, they also learnt how to assess their own behaviour, judging themselves next to people like Justin, who they saw as both peers and role models. When I returned to the YMCA after my Gambian fieldwork, it was also much easier to find these YMCA attached young men, rather than the Sports Leadership graduates, many of whom had moved on to further study or work, or who had simply dropped out of contact with the YMCA.

In The Gambia, interviews were conducted with all Sports Leadership, primarily at the end of a course due to the time –restraints many young Gambians were under as they studied, worked, coached, prayed or committed time to their family responsibilities. Consequently, it became clear that the easiest strategy for ascertaining the impact of the course on their lives would be to carry out extensive follow-up interviews by visiting people after the course, often at home. This also gave me a chance to familiarise myself with the complex Gambian geography, where neighbouring villages and towns could be vastly different in terms of ethnicity, wealth, type of buildings and sense of community. Fundamentally, this mode of research offered me a route to understanding the complex family structures that underpinned many young Gambian lives, played out in terms of household roles and positioning within houses and compounds as well as the ornate material cultures through which they forged their identity (Miller 2010).

Furthermore, throughout the research process it was also necessary to take into account the ethical difficulties my research may create due to the power disjuncture between my position as Western researcher and those of my research subjects (Caplan 2003). The sensitive political situation in The Gambia meant both delicate handling of controversial issues (Eltringham 2003; Scheyvens et al 2003) as well preserving the integrity of Gambia YMCA operations and staff (Mosse 2006: 937). It also meant being open and transparent with young informants, ensuring that they were constantly reminded of my research and its purpose, creating a transparent dialogue of consent, mutual trust and a reflexive and flexible approach to risk assessment (France 2004: 179-181; Morrow 2008; Mcnamee 2001; Prout

and Christiansen 2002). I also worked closely with my key gatekeepers to negotiate, review and reflect on issues of consent and practice gaining support and guidance throughout the research period (Morrow 2008: 8-10; France 2004: 182; Oakley 2000; Baez 2002; Miller and Bell 2002). I also checked my consent packages with them to ensure they were understandable to both young people and young staff members in both research locations and ensuring that young people were voluntarily recruited and knew they could opt out or avoid uncomfortable topics (France 2004: 182; Morrow 2008: 9). Most participants were happy for me to use their real names, and real lives, though in a number of sensitive instances I have anonymised names and altered details, and in many cases I have asked my informants for feedback as part of an on-going research dialogue (Morrow 2008).

Thesis Structure

The logic of this thesis stems from my desire to locate the transformational trajectories of individual YMCA students, staff and managers in the wider YMCA organisational trajectory, understanding how each story informs the other. In the next chapter, I ground this study in recent work that shows how development must be seen as a series of interlinked practices, discourses and networks that can only be understood by viewing them in encounter and contact, where their implication in broader process of socio-economic and political change can be judged (Mosse 2013; Tsing 2005; Yarrow 2011). I then show how morality is inscribed in the body and becomes part of an ethical framework for shaping daily conduct, incorporating ideas of affect, relationality and masculinity. Here I use Foucault's theory of 'governmentality' to show how morality can be inscribed in the body and articulates through forms of ethical behaviour and attitudes. I then use Weber's idea of 'charisma' to show how embodied practices can be encapsulated for transmission between sacred and secular realms as well as showing how embodied practices can be maintained through affect and emotional relations creating what I term an 'economy of charisma.' Finally, I show how these embodied processes are gendered and how sport as a development tool implicated in complex processes of gender and inequality that need further analysis.

Chapter 3 locates the YMCA in its historical context, as it emerged with forms of self-transformation and 'muscular Christianity' in the mid-19th Century. I document how the 'Whole Man' model was consciously incorporated into the YMCA mission at home and abroad, before grounding this emergence in the contemporary neoliberal and post-colonial moment. Chapter Four delves more deeply into each ethnographic context, situating the

YMCA in each field-site more concretely and showing how the YMCA in each location is enmeshed in very specific issues of gender, ethnicity, religion and history.

The thesis is then divided into three sections, which focus on the three interlinked motifs structuring my analysis: ‘the ethics of leadership,’ ‘moral masculinities’ and ‘global moralities.’ Part one focusses on how the YMCA creates an organisational culture of leadership that filters through each level of YMCA hierarchy from managers to clients. In Chapter Five, I discuss of ‘friendship’ and ‘kinship’ as separate but inter-related concepts to show how the YMCA imagines its staff members and project partners as ‘kin.’ I explore how this process is achieved through the performance of ‘friendship’ as a specific form of relatedness that ritualises incorporation into the YMCA system (cf. Bellagamba 2006a). In Chapter Six, I reflect on a range of young volunteers and their ‘stories of becoming’ to understand how their behaviour and attitudes have changed at the YMCA as they have learned a sense of belonging. I deliberately focus on the ways their sense of self differs from idealised YMCA senses of personhood, using moments of disjuncture and conflict to understand how the YMCA creates a sense of collective identity and how the process of transformation is often incomplete, problematic and subject to conflict.

In Part Two, I extend this analysis honing in on masculinity as it is constructed as a moral ideal at the YMCA and as it interacts with different forms of masculinity in each research location. In Chapter Seven, through an auto-ethnographic account I show how these processes are challenged, interrupted and unsettled by the versions of masculinity available to the students, further drawing out the limits of processes of subjectification. In Chapter Eight, I focus on the embodied processes inherent in the Sports Leadership course itself, exploring how the young people describe and define both their sense of transformation and their sense of who they are in the present moment. I show how masculine identities are nurtured through ritual and reflection but are also inherently unstable and incomplete. This instability can be viewed most clearly at the juncture between ‘enrollment’ and abjection, when the YMCA system threatens to fail, misfire or stall.

Part Three draws these threads together to discuss how morality in each locations intersects to form versions of ‘global morality.’ In Chapter Nine, I present two lives of young people in the wider context of global poverty and ‘morality.’ Through their parallel experiences and aspirations, I show how inequality and insecurity are experienced in both locations, asking what the experiences of young men in the Global South can tell us about the experiences of young men in the Global North. In the final Chapter, I situate the ‘self-transformation’ in the global context, suggesting YMCA rituals of affect harness mobility and the experience of poverty to complete their transformative impact, rehearsing forms of ‘global morality’. Analysing the ‘Give 2 Gambia’ project run by Sussex Central YMCA, I use

their trips as a way of understanding touristic emotional and embodied experience in their encounter with the imagined Other in The Gambia. In the second half of the chapter, I reverse this gaze by exploring the imagined and partial mobilities of Gambian young men, whose encounter with the Other is structured by their positioning in the unbalanced global order, creating intersecting axes of hope, despair, ambivalence and confusion. I use this final critical chapter in conjunction with Chapter 11 to draw together the threads of my analysis, showing how morality can be implicated in complex circuits of desire and immorality which undermine the YMCA and their foundational Christian message.

Chapter 2: Manufacturing Charisma: Morality, Modernity and Masculinity at the YMCA

‘Am I not man and brother?’
- Motto of the antislavery movement¹².



Figure 6: Portrait of YMCA Founder George Williams (Doggett 1896)

¹² Cited in Calhoun 2010, p.36

Contained within the slogan above is a simple assumption that motivates much development work: that a shared humanity should stimulate giving from one human being to another. Coined during what Fassin (2011) has described as the first ‘humanitarian moment’ of abolitionism where slaves were abruptly recognised as ‘human’, today, this straightforward statement of moral fact underwrites colossal mobilisations of people and resources in the contemporary development industry. However, despite its motivational power, beneath the moral imperative lay the historic, economic and political circumstances of the relationship between the slave owners and brokers and their captives, a complex system of relationships steeped in desperately unequal power relations.

Following a similar set of relationships, in this thesis I seek to trace the way the moral imperative is utilised to create systems of dependency, entrenching deep-seated inequalities potentially marshalled by a pervasive discourse of neoliberal opportunity. My goal is not to unmask these inequalities but to illustrate how they are historically emergent through influential organisations such as the YMCA, who occupy a moral centre in the development world which is diffusing versions of personhood into multiple domains of social and economic life. I suggest that these ‘moral centres’ act as normalising agents, helping to adapt a supply of bodies to the demands of the market and, in doing so, creating forms of hybrid identity that require further analysis.

To achieve this I suggest that, at the YMCA, morality acts as a structuring catalyst in the process of transformation, offering a scaffold of ethical behaviour around which young people can build their identity. In this way it encompasses both the discursive constructions of moral, ideal behaviour and the behaviour itself: a double-lock mechanism of moral transformation. As I show, this mechanism is subject to contestation and change itself, part of an ongoing negotiation over morality and ethical citizenship which creates fracture and plurality. As young people draw on several moral sources to craft a sense of their own ethical self, I explore how the YMCA shores up its own version of moral subjectivity using a range of specifically designed tools and techniques. I trace how these strategies have emerged historically and how they are working in different YMCAs today, focussing on how the moral underpinning behind them converges in a model of Christian moral personhood.

To make these values more transmissible, I detail how the YMCA uses sport as a ‘regime of knowledge’ (Hyde 2011), a package of embodied practices that apply moral precedence to the successful implementation of individual behaviours and actions. These practices link into a neoliberal prioritisation of the self-contained, self-engineering person as well as neoliberal structures of self-regulating civil society and state policy. In this way it engages with three interlinked theoretical frameworks concerned with the nature and imposition of power. Weber’s notion of ‘charisma’ forms a central pillar, operating as a model

of how Christian leadership and ‘brotherly love’ becomes ‘routinised’ or folded into secular forms of management, administration and entrepreneurialism. However, I also show how secular charisma can operate as a form of governmentality, feeding into Foucault’s notions of how disciplinary practice is designed to cultivate docile subjects. Whilst drawing on Foucault’s later work to argue that this is an incomplete, even messy, process, I show how processes of subjectification work through a discourse of leadership that articulates in practice, language and implicit models of morality.

To complement these theories I show how morality is cultivated through the body and specific embodied and gendered processes. I show how Bourdieu’s notion of the embodied predispositions of ‘habitus’ can be seen as part of a broader ‘charismatic’ set of powerfully imbued, embodied behaviour deemed appropriate to positions of leadership, making moral frameworks imagined and embedded in the body. I show how this is differently gendered in each context, illustrating with ethnographic examples how gender is constructed in relation to ideas of ‘charisma’, leadership and the body. Taken together, these three theoretical perspectives, which I now discuss in more detail, form a powerful but inherently unstable vision of leadership as a mode of power and control paradoxically rooted in principles of humility, emotionality and service drawn from the Christian tradition, and ultimately the model of Jesus Christ set out in the Bible.

Global Moralities: Networks of Development

Morality has recently undergone a revitalisation particularly as an analytical category in conjunction with studies of development and a refocussing on the ways morality is produced and sustained in the support of specific political agendas (Barnett 2013; Englund 2008; Fassin 2012; Krause 2013; Redfield 2005; Redfield and Bornstein 2011). This requires a focus on such morality as a global mode of ‘disciplinary power’ (Foucault 1980: 105, cited in Lyons and Wearing: 9) constructed through networks of self-evident ‘moral facts’ (Fassin 2012) deemed as integral to development, progress and modernity. As Escobar (2011) has discussed, prevalent norms within development are constructed through intricate webs of meaning and obfuscation that serve to buttress the status quo and gloss over difficulties and uncomfortable truths, as he puts it: ‘Reality in sum, had been colonized by the development discourse, and those who were dissatisfied with this state of affairs had to struggle for bits and pieces of freedom within it in the hope that in the process a different reality could be constructed’ (p. 5). From this perspective the development orthodoxy can be viewed as deliberately opaque, rooted in a ‘sociotechnical’ register of ‘progress’ which obscures the

potential for harm, ambiguity and ambivalence and renders the dream of actual ‘progress’ more remote (Latour 2012: 5; Mosse 2011).

Using this argument, an analysis of the operationalising of ‘morality’ in development offers a powerful analytical disconnect between the superficial and increasingly dominant discourse of what Fassin (2012) calls ‘moral sentiment’ and the dangerous consequences of a purely moral, and not practical or practicable development policy (Fassin 2012). As Fassin argues, the unquestioned power of morality needs to be interrogated the more it is used to mobilise resources and actors:

On the one hand, moral sentiments are focused mainly on the poorest, most unfortunate, most vulnerable individuals: the politics of compassion is a politics of inequality. On the other hand, the condition of possibility of moral sentiments is generally the recognition of others as fellows: the politics of compassion is a politics of solidarity. This tension between inequality and solidarity, between a relation of domination and a relation of assistance, is constitutive of all humanitarian government (p. 2).

This ‘remarkable paradox’ (Ibid: 2) indicates how morality not only governs interactions between rich and poor it helps constitute the conditions of asymmetrical power relations: ‘When compassion is exercised in the public space, it is therefore always directed from above to below, from the more powerful to the weaker, the more fragile, the more vulnerable—those who can generally be constituted as victims of an overwhelming fate’ (Ibid: 2). Discussing what he calls the ‘politics of precarious lives’ he shows how the justification for development intervention is predicated on the poor helpless victim, whose inevitable powerlessness requires aid and therefore government: ‘The lives of the unemployed and the asylum seekers, the lives of sick immigrants and people with Aids, the lives of disaster victims and victims of conflict— threatened and forgotten lives that humanitarian government brings into existence by protecting and revealing them’ (p. 3).

Fassin’s concern with the morality in development is not new (see for example Escobar 2012; Mamdani 1973), but his focus on the increasing links between moral action and an unequal economic context highlights the growing power of morality to inoculate donor countries from the realities of life on the ground. Similarly, As Foucault (1979) argues in his detailed discussion of moral oppression, hidden structures of power and inequality can only be destabilised through a situated, globalised analysis: ‘The problem is to both distinguish the events, differentiate the networks and levels to which they belong, and to reconstitute the threads which connect them and make them give rise to one another’ (Foucault, 1979: 33; cited in Lyons and Wearing: 9). In this thesis, I use this type of analysis to show how internal YMCA moral economies both connect into and fuel circuits of morality

on a global scale cultivating forms of what Strathern (2005) has called ‘global morality’¹³, which I characterise as the universal versions of morality used to justify development interventions. To analyse how ‘global morality’ has been univocally and unilaterally underwriting development work, I take a critical, post-colonial approach that sees development as part of a networked vision of emergent modernity, as moral primacy is generated by, and through, a concerted and forceful (but not necessarily homogenous or systematised) moral consensus (Latour 2012).

As I explore, it is particularly in the realm of bilateral, informal non-state actors such as the YMCA that these rationalities are incubated, tested and refined before being rolled out into wider global arenas, ‘fixing’ the moral agenda and making it appear organically generated (see for example Newell 2006). As Fassin argues, attention to the transmission of ‘global moralities’ (through organisations like the YMCA) can also show why development is becoming more ‘morally’ charged even as state policy and programmes become ever more repressive and market oriented, indicating a fundamental shift in the development landscape that belies its ever-expanding remits and budgets (cf. Mosse 2013).

Consequently to understand the construction of moral legitimacy and its accompanying forms of embodiment, we need to appreciate how development creates its own authority via networks of expertise that make the ‘truth’ of development knowledge seem self-evident (Latour 2012; Mosse 2011). Rather than regarding Euro-centric morality as trickling down through transnational NGOs, analysts of development have suggested that NGOs (and FBOs) may have played, and play, an integral role in creating and nurturing structures of inequality and neo-colonial control *through* complex moral constructions (Crewe and Axelby 2012; Escobar 2011; Mosse 2011). David Mosse (2011), has discussed how an historical, situated analysis which connects local moral systems with global moral networks can develop our understanding of how these ideas emerge and circulate: ‘In an interconnected world, development agendas do not only travel; they interact with historical-cultural formations of identity, rights, and development, which are then in turn ‘globalized’ through advocacy chains’ (p.240). Mosse concludes that more needs to be made of the powerful depoliticising potential of ‘travelling rationalities’ (cf. Craig and porter 2006), where networks of experts and bureaucratic imperatives institutionalise ‘universal’ logics of ‘economics and law’ that produce a ‘denial of history,’ obscuring the role of agents and actants and ‘trial and error’ in the production of development orthodoxy (Mosse 2013: 234; see also Latour 2012; Mitchell 2002).

¹³ Strathern discusses an Australian Human Rights NGO, examining how morality is invoked uncritically in this context. refs

Taking an even more critical view, Alex De Waal (1997) suggests that only by looking at how the moral imperatives generated by sentiment help forge moral superiority in the Global North, can we begin to understand how ‘doing good’ itself perpetuate difference and discrimination: ‘Or, to answer a question incisively posed by Bill Yates, ‘Is Oxfam primarily a service to the Victorian charity ethic in Britain, or is its service to the marginalized populations of the world?’ (Black 1992: 195). De Waal’s question motivates much of this thesis, it is a question posed by many commentators concerned by the inability of intervention models imperfectly forged at home to function in a development context (for example see De Waal 1997; Escobar 2000; Mosse 2003, 2006). As Calhoun (2010) has discussed, originally seen as a tool of enlightenment and progress, development was always connected to the secular civilising mission of socio-economic growth and advancement. This serves to essentialise the superiority of the West, recreating the old colonial hierarchies in powerful new models of dependency and oppression:

Too often the story seems to be: Moral white people come from the rich world to care for those in backward, remote places....At one level, this is a massive moral achievement, a capacity to care for strangers in a radically new way. At another level it is a construction of events in various places...that comes not from those places, but from the cosmopolitan centres of the Global North (Ibid: 44-45).

Taking this argument further Fassin (2011) explores how compassion based on moral sentiment is part of a deeper self-fashioning of the modern subject bound up with the creation of a ‘humane’ self-image of modernity itself:

Humanitarian reason...allows us to continue believing— contrary to the daily evidence of the realities that we encounter— in this concept of humanity which presupposes that all human beings are of equal value because they belong to one moral community. Thus humanitarian government has a salutary power for us because by saving lives, it saves something of our idea of ourselves, and because by relieving suffering, it also relieves the burden of this unequal world order (p.252).

Wedded to this idea is his call for a broader genealogy of the ‘Western sociodicy’ from which humanitarianism and modernity emerge. As he notes, the humane values of humanitarianism are derived from Christian traditions that make the ‘idea of human life as the highest good...an inviolable principle’ (Ibid: 249). In what he calls the ‘secularization of the religious,’ this principle also becomes the foundational tenet of modern democratic structures, justice and human rights:

This analysis suggests that the contemporary presence of religion is most effectively manifested where it is least identifiable, where it becomes so self-evident that we do not even recognize it for what it is any more. In this view, the ultimate victory of religion lies not in

the renewal of religious expression throughout the world, but in its lasting presence at the heart of our democratic secular values.

However, this focus on life makes a virtue of suffering, creating a ‘moral economy’ where suffering is equated with redemption. As Asad (2003) has noted this ‘secular redemptive politics’ (p. 61) is dangerous precisely because it refocuses attention on the individual’s potential for transformative action as the ‘redeemer...must first redeem himself’ (Ibid: 61). For Fassin, ‘the entry of suffering into politics’ is equally critical, generating an endless cycle of redemption and redress: ‘We might say that salvation emanates not through the passion one endures, but through the compassion one feels. And this moral sentiment in turn becomes a source of action, because we seek to correct the situation that gives rise to the misfortune of others’ (Ibid: 250). Fassin’s arguments call attention to the inherent inequalities built into the model of charity upon which international development is founded and asks us to look more closely at the moral engine driving the global development machinery.

‘Economies of Grace’: Neoliberalism and FBOs in Context

As Fassin (2012) also notes the re-emergence of religious groups in the public sphere is, at least in part, responsible for the formation of a new and increasingly intractable moral consensus. However, despite Fassin’s attention to the ‘Christian legacy’ of humanitarianism, it is only recently that the sharp division between the sacred and the secular has been reimagined, troubled by the emergence of powerful religious groups and organisations across the world (Csordas 2007; Davie 2012; Hefferan and Fogarty 2010; Jones and Lauterbach 2005; Jones and Petersen 2013; Mosse 2013). For many social scientists studying the exponential increase in FBOs has played a vital role in this process, helping to reveal how myths of the secular public sphere emerge from a Western conception of modernity that cleanses religion from processes of governance and economics by way of ‘purification’ (Latour 2012; cf. Benthall and Bellion-Jourdain 2003; Bornstein 2005; Buijs 2004; Redfield and Bornstein 2011; van Ufford and Giri 2003). In this teleological narrative, the ‘non-secular’, irrational ‘them’ is superseded by the rational, secular ‘us,’ with the Euro-American model of modernity and the modern subject operating at the apex of an evolutionary system of progression and civilisation (Giddens 1991). To break apart this linear depiction, other scholars have put a greater emphasis on how modernity is created in the encounter between capitalist and non-capitalist societies (Rofel 2007). This vision suggests that modernities are multiple, with global processes understood in specifically local terms (Eisenstadt 2001; Van der Veer 2001). Nonetheless, anthropologists have argued that this recreates the hierarchical divisions of previous models, suggesting that modernity in fact be viewed as a singular and

‘shared trajectory’ (Bryant 2007) where the ‘West’ is as much influenced by global processes as the ‘rest’ (Kahn 2001; Piot 1999; Yarrow 2011).

This framework is vital for problematizing the role of FBOs and their situating in regard to an ‘ostensibly’ secular public sphere. As anthropologists have shown in many parts of the world the public sphere has never been secular, religion playing important political and economic role in the shaping of many ‘modern’ states and consequently modern subjects (Thomassen 2012). Lara Deeb (2011) has shown, for example, how Shi’l Muslims in Beirut construct identities which are simultaneously modern, cosmopolitan and pious, rooted in deeply felt discussions over the role of women in relation to the public sphere and global imaginations of Islam more generally. She coins the term ‘enchanted modern’ to show how of religious, political and social interests are ‘tightly braided’ together in forms of ‘public’ piety and personal senses of commitment and duty (p. 35). Her analysis brings out two important factors for this research. Firstly, the need to move away from Western binaries that hive religion off from public engagement and action. As she shows, this is a Western conception that needs understanding in particular contexts and is always contingent to historical social formations. Secondly, she shows how ideas of ‘public piety’ have become more trenchant with concerns and fear over a loss of Islamic identity and power. As she suggests, it is precisely at times of crisis and uncertainty that religious identities tend to re-assert themselves, countering doubt and degradation with force and fearlessness (p. 35; see also Janson 2014; Marsden and Retsikas 2012; Renders 2002; Rudnyckyj 2010; Osella and Soares 2010).

Using these ideas, I show how the YMCA as a movement has grown in the last thirty years, nourished by a combination of a wider tolerance and acceptance of religion as a public and political force and a neoliberalisation of civil society. Like the YMCA, many FBOs were forged in a protracted encounter with the evolving public sphere, developing differently in different local contexts (Baker 2012; Hefferan and Fogarty 2010; Rudnyckyj 2010). As such even the term FBO itself is ‘slippery,’ covering a whole range of organisations with wildly different configurations and applications of religious principles, irreducible to simplistic binaries of ‘faith’ and the ‘secular’ (Hefferan and Fogarty 2010; see also Barnett and Stein 2012; Saleminck 2004). As Hefferan and Fogarty (2010) discuss an FBO can be an organisations that ‘derives inspiration from and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within a faith’ (Clarke and Jennings 2008: 6 cited in Hefferan and Fogarty 2010: 1). As they argue FBOs operate along a spectrum of evangelisation ‘where faith might be explicitly stated or merely implied, including those that evangelize as their primary mission versus those that explicitly reject evangelism’ (Hefferan and Fogarty 2010: 1; Johnsen 2012).

As such anthropologists have approached analyses of Faith-based development as a recuperative task, attempting to show how they help integrate religious ideas into non-religious spaces (see Atia 2012; Dilger, et al. 2010) or tackle socio-economic, political (Renders 2002) or medical issues from a local religious standpoint (see Burchardt 2013; Dilger 2012). As many of these studies address, religious organisations come from a variety of denominational and discursive traditions with very specific ideas of ‘giving’ and community participation. For example, Benthall and Bellion-Jourdain (2003) analyse Islamic Relief, a large transnational Islamic aid agency, to show how it challenges the altruistic modes of Western charity, locating its humanitarian aspect in the struggle against a hegemonic Western imperialism, specifically targeting Muslim countries and populations. They note how the deeply held Islamic customs of *zakat* (charitable donations and works) and *waqf* (sites dedicating profit to charity) offer a fundamental challenge to Western style economic models that separate the market from daily life (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdain: 44). For them, more generally Islam roots the market in society, with charity and welfare being generated by the circulation of funds through successful commerce and the natural financial empowerment of the poor enriching society itself. (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdain: 44). Discussing how Islamic Relief has toned down its militant Islamic message for the international humanitarian landscape (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdain: 82), they also note that this does not necessarily mean a complete restyling slavishly following Western models of universal human rights, but rather a more nuanced redistribution of aid funds adhering to the principles of *zakat* Muslim charity to the disadvantaged (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdain: 83). In fact, Islamic Relief continues to dispute the universalistic claims of secular humanitarianism even whilst participating in the global humanitarian movement, modelling a form of Islamic aid and promoting Islam and Muslim rights but operating along universal guidelines acceptable in a secular context (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdain: 84).

The task faced by anthropologists working on Christian NGOs has been equally complex, reconciling a Weberian idea of the ‘rationalisation’ and secularisation of the public sphere with the neo-Weberian idea that the ‘Protestant Ethic’ (Weber 2003) is alive and well and helping to shape ideas of economic and social development across Africa (Bornstein 2005; Englund 2007; Freeman et al. 2012; Hefferan 2007; Martin 2006). For many of these studies, Christian notions of charity have been troubled by the emergence of neoliberal policies and practice, as well as societal upheaval and distress where the priorities of both societies and communities have shifted onto the market (Comaroff 2012; Freeman 2012; Van Dijk 2012). In this context, the emergence of FBOs needs to be placed next to and in conjunction with the explosion of religious organisations more generally, seeking to stitch together the fragments of community and social cohesion in the face of deracination and

disintegration (Comaroff 2012) and a growing move into the public and political sphere (Marshall 2009; Meyer 2004; Van Dijk 1999).

In the Global South, several factors have contributed to an exponential explosion of religious activity, resulting in recognition of religious identities as truly political (Marshall 2009). As Ruth Marshall (2009) has argued, religion is often painted as a response to poverty but in the case of Nigeria, Pentecostalism was seen as an attempt to regain control of a state perceived as both exploitative, in league with extractive industries and neo-colonial agents, and complacent, unable to marshal the array of social, political and economic actors and opportunities at play in a rapidly expanding global marketplace (Marshall 2009; cf. Ferguson 2006).

Furthermore, Dena Freeman (2012) has explored the simultaneous emergence of NGOs and Pentecostal movements across Africa is due to multiple interrelated factors that ‘connect’ Pentecostal forms of participation and notions of individual transformation with the development framework. However, these synergies are not unproblematic. Pentecostal organisations are often better at doing what NGOs do with more established forms of community engagement and more sustainable funding sources linked to local and global churches and religious movements (see also Jones and Lauterbach 2005). Moreover, Pentecostals more coherently incorporate existing religious practices and beliefs, offering a contrast to NGO’s ‘rational ontology’ through a ‘holistic ontology’ which ‘profoundly recognises the social and cultural reality in which people live’ whilst keeping a focus on ‘wealth-creation’ and individual self-fashioning (Freeman et al. 2012: 25-26).

Consequently, the part played by FBOs in naturalising the religious register must also be understood in specific contexts, where ideas of transformation, prosperity and social renewal are shaped by local religious expressions and traditions (Freeman 2012; Tyndale 2003). As Wendy Tyndale (2003) argues,

A challenge to development experts, from NGOs or government agencies, is to recognize that whilst abstraction, analysis and summary are all one valid way of understanding reality, experience and intuitive knowledge are equally important. A genuine combination of scientific and technological know-how with spiritual insights about the meaning of human life, as well as grassroots experience of what actually works in practice, is what is needed to illuminate the way ahead.

Chris Baker continues this argument by showing how these signs of religious revival are symptomatic of a wider ‘rapprochement’ between the secular and religious worlds driven by an broader socio-economic focus on the individual: ‘Social actors are beginning to break down the rigid boundaries between public secularism and private faith’ (Ibid: 573). He defines the FBO model of engagement as an ‘economy of grace’ where FBO workers ‘having

one's life touched (or even gripped) by a sense of love and security which then often compels one (either out of a sense of love or duty – or both) to reach out to others' so that they 'may also have the chance to experience and participate in that same sense of love, peace and security' (Ibid: 569).

As he describes this can arise in one of three interlinked modalities: first the modality of 'being there' 'consisting of 'mundane spaces of engagement and support that religious groups offer to their local community' such as coffee shops; second, 'mainstream modality' refers to the newer forms of FBO engagement where engagement with government contracts entails learning a 'language of accountability' and operating at the level of other corporate entities; third, an 'alternative' modality is counter-hegemonic and hybrid, driven by local stakeholders and as such is 'is flexible, responsive and highly entrepreneurial as well as technically skilled' (Ibid: 569-570). However, as he writes here, FBOs often cross these boundaries engaging in a wide range of activities and political positions:

None of these typologies does justice to the complexity of the situation on the ground. All types of religious-based engagement have the potential to be deeply and symbolically counter-cultural; to be socially progressive or socially regressive. What can be argued as indisputable is the notion that, implicitly or explicitly, religious-based engagement usually reflects an economy of grace, because its roots lie in notions of transformation. At their most ordinary, these notions of transformation relate to the level of the individual. At their most ambitious, they suggest the need and desire for deep structural change. In other words, there is an expectation that both personal and corporate structures will be changed by the interface of 'divine' grace with human experience and institutions (Ibid: 571).

I use Baker's definitions at length as they encapsulate the different facets of YMCA work which cover all three of these typologies and fit into his 'economies of grace' model that touches on many of the changes at work in the sector as a whole as an integral part of the unfolding neoliberal landscape of care, self-care and self-transformation. (see Bornstein 2005; Benthall and Bellion-Jourdain 2003; Dilger 2009; Atia 2012; Simensen 2006; Green et al 2012; Fountain 2013; Barnett and Stein 2012).

Understanding how development ideas are transmitted can also highlight how the NGO landscape has shifted creating a problematic dissonance between embedded or grassroots community action and rapidly shifting funding landscapes (Yarrow 2011). Much development work has been devolved or 'indigenised', allowing grassroots and community organisations to perform local services and creating hybridised forms of development practice (Wilson 2012; cf. Bornstein and Redfield 2011; De Waal 1997; Yarrow 2012). However, these movements have faced increasing contradictions in their work between a state who empowers charitable organisations to take on their services and a neoliberal discourses of financialisation, which threatens their original development goals and contorts their religious foundation (Elchyar 2006 cf. Comaroff 2012; Freeman et al 2012)

This potential paradox in FBO work requires a dual-level analysis of neoliberalism as both an ideology and discourse and as a set of practices (Hilgers 2012). At the one level neoliberalism can be seen as a concerted ideological effort to reengineer the state, ‘a political programme able to facilitate the emergence of spontaneous market order’ (Hayek in Petsoulas 2001: 2). This means a strong but reduced state which outsources many essential services and has an increasing focus on security and discipline (Wacquant 2010). On the other hand practical neoliberalism includes ‘(a) reforms or actions taken in the name of neoliberalism or based on its assumptions ...and (b) the embodiment of a principle of competition and maximisation in the categories of perception and practice of social agents and institutions’ (Dilger 2012: 81) as Hilgers (2012) puts it ‘the effects of neoliberal policies are anchored in bodies, representations and practices’ (p. 91). This duality is neatly summed up by former British Prime Minister’s Margaret Thatcher¹⁴’s (1981) note that ‘Economics are the method: but the object is to change the soul’ (cited in Hilgers 2012: 81).

This approach indicates the need for understanding the relationship between neoliberalism and religion in particular local contexts, where specific histories of both economic and religious practice are deeply intertwined. In the Global North this has meant a re-entrenching of religious groups as a political force and social conscience, acting as a source of moral leadership and guidance as secular politics has been depicted as losing its moral mandate (Marshall 2009). This has been coupled to a securitisation of the state that has led to a deeper and more involved engagement with religious leaders in an effort to undo the damage of several years of neglect and perceived assault (Wilson 2012). As social scientists have pointed out FBOs have been well-positioned to take advantage of neoliberal reforms, primed with armies of volunteers and ‘domesticated’ (Williams, et al. 2012) modes of religious behaviour which slot into the secular public sphere (Hefferan and Fogarty 2010: 6; cf. Bornstein 2001). Operating in this context, FBOs (and NGOs) begin to resemble private contractors, with their power to influence situations beyond a very narrow remit of ‘reponsibilisation’ becoming progressively limited (see also Mosse 2013; Ferguson and Gupta 2002). As resources are funnelled through FBOs they are placed squarely ‘at the center of the neoliberal restructuring of states’ (Hefferan and Fogarty 2010: 9; cf. Williams, et al. 2012) with goals of social progress replaced or merged with the dream of incremental integration into a liberalised, global market (see Yarrow 2011).

At UK YMCAs, for instance, young people accessing services are commonly referred to as ‘clients’ reflecting an ongoing ‘discourse whereby welfare becomes a commodity to be bought or sold’ (McLaughlin 2009: 1104). Similarly in Africa the development machinery has

¹⁴ Margaret Thatcher is seen a one of the prime advocates of neoliberalism

placed an increasing emphasis on neoliberal forms and meanings such as microfinance, entrepreneurialism and trade that assume that integration into globalised markets is equal to socio-economic development (Dilger 2012; Mosse 2011). Hefferan and Fogarty (2010) note that for FBOs in particular, this creates a disjuncture between what they stand for and what they actually do: ‘As neoliberalism pushes states to retract from social services delivery, are FBOs that draw on liberal discourses of tolerance and ecumenism better positioned to ‘responsibilize’ subjects than are more polarizing FBOs?’ asking what in this context are ‘FBOs that eschew missions of evangelism able to do that those with evangelizing missions cannot, and vice versa?’ (Ibid: 9). These ambiguities and strains point to the need for a more systematic analysis of development work in motion, as the complex and multifaceted motivations of development actors and organisations are played out against specific religious landscapes, folding aspects of faith into complex, hybridised forms of subjectivity (see also Freeman et al. 2012; Jones and Lauterbach 2005; Jones and Petersen 2013; Mosse 2013).

New Moral Worlds: Moralities, Ethics and Governmentality

This analysis then requires an understanding of how moral frameworks and narratives of transformation work in tandem at the YMCA to produce a particular type of person palatable to expanding neoliberal regimes of funding and governance. In his comprehensive review of anthropological approaches to morality, Jarrett Zigon (2008) discusses how morality has been either ignored or folded into discussions of everyday social habits. For him, though social habits can be moral, we need to be more precise when we discuss specific moralities at work in different locations. For the purposes of this analysis, he usefully defines three ‘interrelated spheres of morality’: first the ‘institutional’; second that of ‘public discourse’; and third ‘embodied dispositions’ (p. 162). Institutional moralities stem from organisations such as the Church which ‘claim that it is the bearer and securer of the truth or rightness of a particular kind of morality. And...in order to propagate and enforce their version of morality, it is generally a formal prerequisite of interacting with the institution that one, at least publicly, adheres to this morality’ (Ibid: 162). Secondly, and closely related to institutional morality, the public discourse of morality is ‘all those public articulations of moral beliefs, conceptions, and hopes that are not directly articulated by an institution’ such as ‘the media, protest, philosophical discourse, everyday articulated beliefs and opinions, the arts, literature and stories, and parental teachings’ (Ibid: 163). Thirdly, building on Mauss’s idea of ‘habitus’ ‘Morality as embodied dispositions is one’s everyday way of being in the world’ which diverges from morality as a ‘rule-following or conscious reflection on a problem

or dilemma’ as it ‘is not thought out beforehand, nor is it noticed when it is performed. It is simply done’ (Ibid: 164).

Zigon’s categories of morality are useful for understanding how the YMCA builds moral subjects by layering moralities on top of one another. Whilst young leaders are told to ‘be good’ or ‘do good’ they are also situated in wider schemes of social meaning: doing development work or helping people younger than themselves which are part of larger forms of globalised moral consciousness and community in which they are encouraged to actively take part. However, Zigon’s analysis only touches on the product of the combination of moral scheme and action, the ethical self, born through reflection and self-analysis. For Zigon, embodied morality is purposefully ‘unreflective and unreflexive’ allowing human beings to go about their daily business in a socially appropriate manner (Ibid: 164). However, following Foucault he argues that moments of crisis spawn moments of ‘problematization’ or ‘moral breakdown’ that cause the subject to reflect on their own moral choices more objectively:

Ethics, then, is a kind of stepping-away from this third kind of morality as embodied dispositions. In stepping-away in this ethical moment, a person becomes reflective and reflexive about her moral way of being in the world and what she must do, say, or think in order to appropriately return to her nonconscious moral mode of being. What must be done is a process of working on the self, where the person must perform certain practices on herself or with other persons in order to consciously be and act morally in the social world. Ethics, then, is a conscious acting on oneself either in isolation or with others so as to make oneself into a more morally appropriate and acceptable social person not only in the eyes of others but also for oneself.

Despite his focus on ethics, he fails to note how modernity is increasingly marked by these types of ethical, self-forming behaviours, where morality can be both actively and half-heartedly chosen and performed. He does, however, make the important point that the potential for ethical self-transformation is written into the embodied form of morality which can ‘create a new moral dispositional self. Thus, this moment of ethics is a creative moment, for by performing ethics, persons create, even if ever so slightly, new moral selves and enact new moral worlds’ (Ibid: 162).

The power of the YMCA, in fact, lies in their ability to craft ‘new moral worlds’ for the young people they work with to inhabit, disciplining them to create ‘new moral selves’ in order to adhere to their form of institutional morality. For Foucault (2008), the discipline of the self was a vital tenet of the modern state, central to his idea of governmentality. This idea stems from Foucault’s later work which showed how, contrary to his earlier depictions of the disciplinary power (Foucault 1976), modes of governmental control increasingly focussed on the production of amenable bodies, a concept he called Biopower (Foucault 2008 [1978]).

This set of ideas was expanded and embellished into a broader concept of governmentality which Foucault (1977) himself defined as,

First, the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument. Second... the tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West...has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses (appareils) on the one hand, [and, on the other] to the development of a series of knowledges (savoirs) (p.108).

To understand how these discourses of control become naturalised in the formation of the state, he proposes a third strand of analysis which would look at the history of administration and governance, which he calls the 'governmentalisation' of the state. As he argues, the evolution of religion played an important part in this process forming one of three 'points of support': 'the pastoral, the new diplomatic-military technique, and finally, police' on 'which that fundamental phenomenon in the history of the West, the governmentalisation of the state, could be produced' (Ibid: 109).

To ascertain how ethical conduct is conducted in practice Foucault indicates three modes of differentiation: first 'the mode of subjection...the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice; and second 'in the forms of elaboration, of ethical work... that one performs on oneself, not only in order to bring one's conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behaviour; and third, in 'the telos of the ethical subject: an action is not only moral in itself, in its singularity; it is also moral in its circumstantial integration and by virtue of the place it occupies in a pattern of conduct' (Ibid: 27-28). Combined, these three modes, subjection, reflexivity and telos, create a binding image of power created through 'the conduct of conduct' that exposes 'how the modern sovereign state and the modern autonomous individual co-determine each other's emergence' (Lemke 2002: 191).

This dynamic is vital in institutional settings where forms of ethical conduct are maintained through performance and demonstration in accordance with set levels of criteria. For Foucault (1990), a state concern with 'conduct' and the care of the self was bound up with the individual quest for ethical self-transformation towards ideal moral standards. In this definition, ethics are 'those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre' (Foucault 1990: 10). The subject, in effect sees himself as a work of art to continually perfect and adjust in accordance with a set of practical, ethical principles which they can only partially fulfil. In this schematic,

morality is defined as both a ‘moral code’ or set of sometimes contradictory ‘values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as the family...educational institutions, churches, and so forth’ but also as ‘the real behaviour of individuals in relation to the rules and values that are recommended to them’ (Ibid: 25-26). This double-bind of morality is notional however, with behaviour being assessed through provisional and performed forms of ethical conduct: ‘Another thing still is the manner in which one ought to ‘conduct oneself’ - that is, the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the (moral) code’ (Ibid: 27).

New Moral Selves: Entrepreneurialism and Affect

As I have discussed, Foucault’s’ ideas of the modern subject rested on the application of morality through ethics. Built into this model of governmentality are forms of both organisational and individual reflexivity that recirculate and reiterate the importance of specific behaviours and practices. As Foucault argues, these self-management practices have become the cornerstone of the modern subject, critical to a psychological-therapeutic discourse of self-improvement (see also Rimke 2001; see Hazelden 2003; Giddens, 1992; Weeks, 1995) where ‘the examination and reformation of the self...may take the form of a reflexive project’ (Hazelden 2003: 1) in which ‘we are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves’ (Giddens, 1991: 68; cited in Halzeden 2003: 1; cf. Bauman 1982; Featherstone 1991; Lash and Urry 1987). As states urge their citizens to ‘become experts of themselves’ discourses of empowerment and entrepreneurialism replace previous orthodoxies of social protection and social welfare, as ‘social insurance, as a liberal principle of social solidarity, gives way to a privatisations of risk management, and social work gives way to the self-help manual’ (Rofel 2007: 16; see also Lemke 2002; Cruikshank 1999; Rose and Miller 1992; Hazelden 2003).

However, recent studies have shown that, rather than being self-evident, these discursive constructions require practice (and practices) in order to become reality, and in effect, truth or a ‘new’ orthodoxy (Phillip 2009). As Hilgers (2013) has discussed, these policies must be seen as projects that have been gestating and converging in the public sphere, becoming increasingly part of a ‘depoliticised’ language of technical rationality: ‘30 years of socialisation to neoliberal policies, having forced the individual to become an ‘enterprising self’ in order to adapt to a market ordered by competition, have had their

effect...neoliberalism is involved in the concrete structure of the lifeworld and human experience, and exerts a real influence over the ways in which agents think and problematise their lives' (p. 91). As he argues, as resources become scarcer and livelihoods more precarious, this discourse accelerates, becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy of individual empowerment and success: 'This entrepreneurial logic, espoused by agents with extremely limited means, unfolds in a context where figures of success appear to be those who have succeeded in 'managing their affairs', 'getting business' or 'having a plan' (p. 86). However, he notes how only a deeply deliberate and prolonged assault on the moral-political landscape can explain the acceptance of these values in wider society: 'In the context of a 'moral economy of corruption' (Olivier de Sardan 1999), or a 'moral economy of ruse and resourcefulness' (Se Débrouiller) (Banegas and Warnier 2001), recent transformations on the continent have led to an 'important remodelling of modes of political subjectification as well as a redistribution of moral points of reference' (Banegas and Warnier 2001: 8)' (p. 86).

As sociologist Ulrich Bröckling (2015) has explored, this debate, and its adoption within development circles, hinges on how the veneration of the individual has been framed through the twin discourses of empowerment and entrepreneurialism. In his description of the neoliberal state, individual priorities have been reconfigured around a drive to orient thinking and behaviour on the goal of market success resulting in a broader context where competition for power, money, fitness, and youth dominate social ideals in an 'entrepreneurial knowledge society' (p. 2). His depiction of the 'entrepreneurial self' focusses on how individuals are encouraged to become 'self-optimizing' flexible and autonomous subjects, constantly improving and adapting to the needs of the market:

Entrepreneurs are, first, alert discoverers of speculative profit opportunities; second, innovative, creative destroyers of existing means of production and distribution; third, risk takers; and fourth, coordinators of the production process optimizing resource allocation. These four basic functions converge where they transgress their own borders and struggle to outdo one another under the dictate of comparison (p. 7; cf. Freeman 2014).

As he notes, in development terms the widespread acceptance of entrepreneurial norms has created the 'paradox' of empowerment programmes that work 'by attributing powerlessness to their prospective recipients and then offering to eradicate said powerlessness' (p.8; cf Baistow 1994; Cleaver 1999). As he suggests, these 'paradoxes' point to the 'problems' inherent in this model where the processes of governmentality are incomplete 'there can be no such thing as a subject free of contradictions' (p. 2).

A further aspect of the entrepreneurial subject is the degree to which individuals become both self-maintaining through specific types of relations. As Bröckling notes, Foucault discussed how power was 'always a failing project, never a settled reality' (p.97)

requiring a web of relations and networks through which to operate (Foucault 1996: 238–9 [cited in McKinlay 2006: 97]). As Foucault also argued, effective disciplining strategies operate productively through the positive forging of relationships or ‘relational mechanisms’:

[W]hat makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh upon us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasures, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault 1980, 119 [cited in McKinlay 2006: 97]).

Like Foucault, Bröckling, also describes how processes of reflection and feedback form an integral infrastructure for maintaining neoliberal control and resisting and subduing ‘counter-hegemonic’ forces and currents, what Bröckling calls ‘the feedback loop’ (p.6. cf. Foucault 1990), indicating the increasing use of ‘relational mechanisms’ for achieving a more integrated sense of the compliant and complicit subject (Ibid: 6).

Anthropologists have also shown how the relational elements of the entrepreneurial self rely on forms of emotional connections and inter-subjective associations in order to operate effectively (Freeman 2014). Within anthropology, affective management culture has come under increasing scrutiny as a practice of a more complete governmentality in the neoliberal era (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Smart and Hsu 2007; Yanagisako 2002). This is linked to a decentering of the Western notion of individuated rational subjectivity where public life has been systematically purged of irrationality, corruption and nepotism (see Carrier 1999; Rudnykij and Richard 2009). In this set of arguments, the artificial boundaries between the realms of the formal, coded as rational, instrumental and public, and the informal, coded as emotional, personal and private, become less relevant under the affective regimes of neoliberalism (see also Molé 2012; Muehlebach 2012; Osella and Osella 2009; Rofel 2007; Shever 2010; Smart 1993; Yanagisako 2002). In fact, the informal modes of operation practices in many realms of business over the years have come to be the norm, flipping the rationale of rationality on its head (Gill and Pratt 2008)

As Richard and Rudnycky (2009) have argued the cultivation of the entrepreneurial self can be understood as part of an array of ‘affective technologies’ which help connect the intimate workings of the home and individual emotion with the broader work of state regulation (see also Freeman 2014). Connecting Foucault’s work on governmentality with his work on subjectification they suggest that: ‘The notion of economies of affect takes governmentality not as an abstract doctrine or policy formulation, but instead focuses on the types of conduct through which government is realized’ (p. 59). As they argue, using ‘affect’ as ‘a way of acting on other actions’ adds an in built reflexive dimension to analysis as it ‘can be both a noun and a transitive verb’ as it ‘simultaneously makes both its subject and its

object' giving it an 'ability to act upon (or affect) action' that distinguishes it from emotion (p. 60).

They suggest this makes it particularly useful for understanding how subjects are 'mutually constituted' in their relations with others: 'In contrast with emotion, affect suggests relations practised between individuals rather than experiences borne by sole individuals...it is this relationality and movement, simultaneously producing its progenitor as well as its recipient' (Ibid: 61). This becomes particularly useful for understanding the importance of affect in naturalising forms of economic identity and practice:

The transitive aspect of affect also captures how it might be useful in conceiving of economic relations as something more than transparent rational choices borne by self-interested individuals. Affect is a means of subjectification that simultaneously produces those who enact it and those upon whom it acts. In substituting affect for emotion, we argue that affect is critical to producing the subjects of contemporary political economic transformations. In other words, we are not so much interested in what structures feeling, but rather in what feeling structures (Ibid: 60).

As they suggest, this effect is cumulative as affective economies circulate they create certain moral and emotional priorities, understanding affect 'not so much as an object circulating among subjects, but rather as a medium in which subjects but rather as a in which subjects circulate. Particular affects enable certain types of circulation and foreclose others' (Ibid: 60).

Affect offers an important axis around which to view the YMCA's work as it creates self-fashioning but also self-analytical individuals who constantly refine their behaviour in accordance with a sometimes contradictory array of intangible ideals and living role models. Affect also offers a way of seeing how spirituality and religious practice can be successfully mobilised for neoliberal regimes based around risk, precarity and docility and rewritten in a language of 'brotherly love' and friendship (Rudnyckyj 2010, 2011; see also Osella and Soares 2010: 14). Rather than countermanding risk, faith can reinforce a risk-based approach. As Osella and Osella (2009) argue in their ethnography of Muslim entrepreneurs performing philanthropic acts: 'Entrepreneurship is called upon to stand at the core of contemporary reformulations of Muslim morality. Here it allows – actually encourages – ideas of a synergistic interplay between business and morality, where material progress and religious reform become intertwined indexes of modernity' (p.215; cf. Deeb 2006).

The Discipline of Charisma

W/c 14th January

Theme: Remaining Faithful to God and Reflecting the Character of Christ

It is important as a Christian organisation that we reflect Christ's character in all that we do:

- Pray that we will always show real love and acceptance to young people who we work with, who in many instances have been rejected by society.
- Pray for Tom Lovejoy who has recently started as Pastoral Worker, with a role of providing pastoral support and providing opportunities for staff and volunteers or service users who want to know more about the Christian faith.
- Pray that we will be a good employer to all of our staff and volunteers, seeking to reflect our Christian values in matters of employment.
- Pray that we will commit those that we are working with to the Lord more faithfully in prayer.

Figure 7: Hove YMCA Weekly Prayer Letter

Understanding how the YMCA produces affective subjects through discipline and training can also help to understand how individual bodies are locked into specific forms of moral economy and how these 'new moral selves' can be described as 'charismatic'. This is essential for understanding how both non-faith and Islamic students at the YMCA can be urged to perform forms of masculinity deriving from specific Christian traditions. As displayed in the prayer letter above, YMCAs retain a sacred core which emerges in specific ways and at specific junctures in their work and varies from place to place. In the UK most YMCA workers and clients are not Christian but, the managers and board of trustees almost always are Christian, dedicated to furthering their faith through their work. In other countries, this situation is more complex. In places such as The Gambia, many clients and staff are Muslim and many partners are either Muslim or non-religious.

Investigating these contexts can explore how the YMCA form of ecumenical engagement stretches the core identity of the YMCA beyond its Christian foundation to multiple domains of social and economic life, but also need to be understood as a specific working of faith that relies on 'non-conversion' or non-proselytising. By denying this aspect of their Christian faith, the YMCA has been able to insert itself into different contexts and configurations of public life, but it also raises several questions about the nature of their work and its relation to their Christian origin. As we can see in the prayer letter, prayer was one way the circulation of Christian faith was sustained at the YMCA rooted in affective connections between YMCA members and routed through specific instances of positive

support and affirmation. However, as these more overt expressions of ‘faith-through –works’ die out, the question remains of how the original Christian function of the YMCA is kept alive?

In this thesis I explore this issue by looking at how the forms of morality at work in the YMCA becomes a ‘moral economy’ that works ‘charismatically’, that is through individuals, emotions and embodied forms of behaviour that link the sacred to the everyday (Weber 1978; cf. Coleman 2000). I use the term charisma as it encapsulates the transferable moral packages of behaviour, habits and practice through which the YMCA propagates its movement (Coleman 2000). As I explore many YMCAs are founded by charismatic figures who are charismatic in the sense of having a magnetic personality which draws people and opportunities towards them, but they are also ‘charismatic’ in the sense of having a personal relationship with God¹⁵. This requires a nuanced understanding of charisma as both an attribute of an especial personality as well as an organisational imperative that binds individuals into the collective. In this way we can look on YMCA leaders as ‘charismatic’, which is having faith, without needing students to also have the same, matching connection to God. YMCA students are therefore charismatic at one remove, part of an organisation that works charismatically and encourages ‘charismatic’ leaders but they are the objects of ‘charisma’ rather than the subjects; the demonstration of the ‘charismatic’ method in action as they show that ‘faith’ works. However, as I show, students are also encouraged to be charismatic, their actions, behaviours and attitudes judged in relation to a Christian template of personhood which *is* ‘charismatically’ connected to God. The YMCA works then, not through conversion, but through demonstration; in Christian terms it is an organisation of witness that demonstrates the power of God through industrious social engagement and tangible moral transformation.

‘Charisma’ is a complex term to unpack precisely because the secular understanding of it (as a persuasive, magnetic leader) has become so prevalent and is often conflated with ideals of both leadership and masculinity (Lindholm 2013; Van Klinken 2013). However, my analysis moves away from this idea and rests on an understanding of charisma that is imbued with sacred significance, denoting a connection to God and his divine message but also as an organisational imperative that works through processes of moral prioritisation and communicative action. As a number of recent studies have discussed, the ambiguity in Weber’s form of charisma stems from the ambiguous language used by Weber in his original formulation:

¹⁵ Where I am discussing religious ‘charisma’ I will use italics, when not using italics I mean charisma as discussed above

The term 'charisma' will be applied to a certain quality of individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a 'leader.'

(Weber 1978: 241; cited in Joose 2014: 11)

These on-going, and contested, interpretations pivot on the distinction in Weber's writing between whether 'charisma' is essentially a characteristic of innate or God-given personal magnetism or a status, position or role of group leadership 'constructed' by the 'recognition' and acceptance of followers (Joose 2014; Smith 1998). The first perspective feeds into the 'great men (and women)' of history paradigm that suggests the ultimate power of 'charismatic' individuals, at both the positive and negative ends of the leadership spectrum, to shape the course of world events (Lindholm 1990). The second perspective holds that leadership is entirely dependent on supportive followers, organisational structures and the context in which the leader emerges. Smith (1998) sums up this debate succinctly: 'The gulf between these positions is wide. Either charismatic authority is an automatic function of certain personality types, or it is conditionally granted by the public in conformity with pre-existing wishes and beliefs. Either leaders are followed blindly, or they are chosen intentionally' (p. 33).

Like many scholars, Joose (2014) claims that Weber was attempting to 'democratise' (Demant 2012: 184) and 'disenchant' the idea of charisma, moving it away from the realm of the spirit into the 'routinised' and everyday arenas of the secular:

He conceived of the 'gift' of charisma not as heaven-sent, but rather as something that followers ascribe to leaders through the imputation of special powers. Thus, the actual personal qualities that trigger these imputations were clearly of secondary importance to Weber (1922 [1978]), who maintained that '[w]hat alone is important is how the individual is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority, by his 'followers' or 'disciples'' (p. 242).

As Joose concludes, his goal is not to invalidate other interpretations of Weber's idea of charisma, but to re-assert Weber's self-confessed 'non-magical', social constructivist approach, thereby folding an idea of innate, personal and divine charisma into an organisational, relational understanding of leadership (p. 277).

Whilst Joose's analysis is compelling, in this thesis I argue that charisma is in fact located between these approaches, part of a dialogue between leader and follower that places the leader in a provisional, precarious state of authority. This dynamic emerges most clearly in the case of failed or destructive leaders, where the power of personality to mobilise and enable groups of followers ends in either organisational disaster or individual humiliation

and expulsion (Thoroughgood et al 2012: 899; Padilla et al. 2007). As Thoroughgood et al. (2012) have discussed, ‘bad’ or ‘destructive’ leaders are often judged in hindsight, their leadership qualities determined by the results of their actions: ‘In terms of a simple sports analogy, destructive leadership ultimately has to do with whether the team, following the rules of the game, won or lost (team outcome) and not only whether they had skillful players or an angry coach (traits, behaviors), or whether they practiced hard or played cleanly and fairly (process) (p. 899) Developing this perspective, I argue that ‘by shifting the analysis toward group outcomes and the contributing influence of followers and contexts and away from a singular focus on leader behaviours and traits’ we can gain ‘a more comprehensive understanding’ of the leadership process as set of organisational predispositions and imperatives (Ibid: 902; cf. Barbuto 2000; Padilla et al. 2007).

To understand how this process operates I discuss a revised version of Weber’s charisma which challenges and revises his idea of The Protestant Ethic by showing how ideas of industry and sacrifice are infused with forms of charismatic authority. For Weber (1978), there were several types of modern authority which corresponded to specific and separate forms of ‘motivation for action’ (Lindholm 2013: 7). Charles Lindholm (2013) summarises these categories and their associated characteristics:

Weber divided what he calls ‘action orientations’ into three ideal types: (1) Rational-legal—the organized codification of values.⁴ (2) Traditional—an unthinking adherence to custom. (3) Charismatic—commitment to a specific person. These correspond to the three primal motivations for action: cognition, habit, and emotion (p.7-8; cf. Weber 1978: 215–216).

As Lindholm notes, there was a clear hierarchy in Weber’s thought between the three modes of association and action, with ‘the rational-legal’ bureaucratisation of public life gradually displacing the other, now outmoded, forms of thinking (Lindholm 2013; Weber 1978). For Weber, then, there existed a ‘deep abyss’ between ‘virtuoso’ forms of leadership in religious groups and the modern state with its array of administrative systems for regulating ‘workaday’ life (p.287). However, as I have suggested the resurgence of religion in the public sphere has challenged the homogenising tendencies of the Weberian blueprint of ‘rationalisation’ leading to a need for new discussions about the heterogeneous roles of religion within the modern state (cf Marshall 2009).

Using this idea, I move through different layers of the YMCA hierarchy to understand exactly what sorts of relationships being charismatic encourages, suggesting that the characteristics of charisma that make it sacred also make it relevant in the context of neoliberalism. From this perspective *being* charismatic is a predisposition or set of bodily behaviours which overlap with specific forms of entrepreneurial behaviour. As such in this

thesis, I focus on the types of behaviour that cross-over between different domains but are interpreted through different languages of entrepreneurialism in each context. For example, entrepreneurs are focussed on the risk-reward axis, where taking risks to gain rewards is mapped onto a grid of success versus failure. For the economic entrepreneur the parameters of this grid are determined by profit and loss. However for the spiritual entrepreneur, the reckoning of profit and loss is more nebulous, both based around various schemes of spiritual success and failure but also rooted in the real world of material gain, individual prestige and the crafting of a successful livelihood.

To understand how these different forms of entrepreneurial self-making overlap I analyse YMCA practices in terms of three key interrelated areas that can be directly related to Weber's form of charisma. First of all for Weber getting emotional was intimately intertwined with Charismata, the signs of God such as speaking in tongues, convulsing, trembling and intense effusions of excitement that defined the divine element of charisma. This was indicative of what he called Primary Charisma, embodied by crazed cult leaders or fanatics, or as he called them 'pirates and demagogues' (Weber 1978: 215–216). However, the emotional form of charisma was also inseparable from its relational nature, the emotions created and helped maintain the relations. From this view, charisma can be seen as an affective technology, constructed in the interactions between group members as: 'charisma is above all 'a relationship, a mutual mingling of the inner selves of leader and follower' (Lindholm 1990: 7; see also Seale-Collazo 2012: 178). In fact, a potential leader's 'charismatic claim breaks down if his mission is not recognized by those to whom he feels he has been sent' (Weber 1968: 20; see also Riesebrodt 1999: 6-7)

These two elements are also central to the more broad idea of charisma as a tautological, self-legitimising system of power and control as Coleman (2004a) puts it : 'Charisma is taken to be an expression of the very authority that it serves to create' (p. 436; cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1990: 206). In Weber's writing, these issues crystallise at moments of crisis or succession when the reiterative nature of charisma (you follow to lead, and lead to follow) breaks down. Weber discusses how following on from Jesus proved almost impossible due to his anointment by God, necessitating the 'routinisation of charisma' as Paul sought to diffuse power amongst the followers of Christ (Weber 1968: 254, 258; cf. Blasi 1991; Muthiah 2010). As theologian Rob Muthiah (2010) has discussed, it was Paul who sought to define charisma after Jesus's example. However, this 'bureaucratisation of magic' also negates and dissipates the power of the charismatic figurehead, the subsequent leaders operating as distant echoes of the original (Weber 1968; see also Muthiah 2010).

Ethnography has been particularly useful for probing these issues, challenging Weberian ideas of disenchantment and showing how actors in supposedly secular realms

recreate powerful modes of sacred identity and activity. For instance, Bornstein (2005) challenges the idea that religion and state become discrete realms of activity under the force of modernisation, illustrating how Protestant notions of God-Given potential are fundamental to both development and the neoliberal systems upon which it depends (p.8). In her ethnography of World Vision and Christian Care operations in Zimbabwe, she demonstrates how 'trust' based on faith forms a core 'workday ethic' in contrast to forms of corruption or 'greedy' capitalism which are seen as individualistic or even mercenary:

In response to my asking what made NGOs Christian, people said repeatedly that it was the relationship of Christianity to trust. To be a Christian business meant to be a trustworthy business. With a Christian business, there was less likelihood of embezzlement, theft, or other evil associated with personal gain. Christian money was good money (p.164).

Conversely, religious models of personal transformation become inseparable from neoliberal projects of personal development, as polarities of good and evil are ineradicably mapped onto material stories of economic transformation (Ibid: 141). However, this process proved morally complex as the discourse of the NGOs becomes a way of valorising the individual, a mode of being at odds both with idealised notions of community and existing local communities notions of morality (Ibid: 139). As Bornstein (2008) argues, in the work of development professionals, Weber's Protestant ethic often elides into a business ethic:

The faith of Christian development was evangelical. It involved trust in a Christian business ethic, a Weberian Protestant ethic...individual progress, with its Protestant ethic inspiring and demanding work and individualism, did not simply unleash evil, like bats out of Weber's iron cage. It also did not inspire evil, as if it were some moral reaction to the conditions of development itself. Rather, development discourse carried within it the moralizing forces of both good and evil, and the language to describe it in these (p.165-166; cf. Weber 2003).

Weber's work, in particular is useful for thinking through how modes of leadership based on charismatic personality and stemming from mystical gifts of the spirit become transplanted into rational systems of bureaucracy and management. As I will show, the values of YMCA programmes were derived from an ecumenical system that sought to propagate faith without conversion, a true expression of original Christian values that needs further analysis.

The Feelgood Factor: The Value of Sport as a Transformative Tool

In this thesis, I will also connect the moral frameworks promoted through charisma with the moral frameworks promoted in sport, showing how each helps to reinforce the other. As I will show, sport is a deeply charismatic system that promotes forms of gendered

behaviour and personhood that imbue individuals with both abstract moral values and very specific codes of ethical behaviour. In the neoliberal climate, sport is also valued both for its transformative power and its moral narration, it helps craft modern myths of overcoming, collective and individual triumph and national togetherness, what are commonly called ‘feelgood’ stories. However, as I explore sport also plays into what Paul Farmer (2006) has called in the context of HIV/AIDS ‘moral geographies of blame’ where the coordinates of moral discourse are remapped along the vectors of health, poverty and inequality. From this perspective being ‘good’ becomes associated with being athletic, healthy and active and being ‘bad’ is equated with being unfit, overweight and lazy (Coalter 2010). As I show these values powerfully reinscribe the neoliberal discourse of self-reponsibilisation discussed above as an aesthetic priority, linking forms of ideal bodies with modes of ideal citizenship and participation necessitating further critical analysis of their global interconnections (Coalter 2010; Nicholls et al 2010).

Understanding the rise of sport as a development tool can also help us understand the increasing success of charities like the YMCA and their specific worth in the neoliberal marketplace. In the context of development more broadly, the rise of the ‘sports-for-development’ industry has seen sports adopted as part of the development mainstream, placing it at the forefront of social engagement and participatory practice both in the Global North and Global South (Coalter 2010; Nicholls et al 2010). As wealthy countries struggle with a combination of decreasing physical and mental health, especially as austerity measures phase out important community services, sport is seen as a general panacea for social ills and an increasingly significant method of making citizens and communities cohere (Burnett 2009). This inherent power is recognised in the Global South, where sport operates along complex vectors of inclusion and exclusion. As sport is disseminated as a tool for transformation, global media coverage is also helping to fuel unrealistic expectations of migration and mobility which intersect with already existing circuits of migratory desire and aspiration (Carter 2011; Esson 2013).

As social scientists have explored, in both contexts this focus on the imaginary power of sport also places the onus on the individual to become an ‘entrepreneur of the self’ (Esson 2013) making it increasingly conversant with neoliberal emphasises on the self-transforming subject. Like entrepreneurs, individuals participating in sport are required to conduct self-work in order to achieve clearly and sharply defined forms of self-mastery and control which are always in service to both short-term and long-term objectives (Shillings and Mellor 2014b; cf. Esson 2013). Sport has also has a very specific ‘ritual’ quality which requires its participants to complete tasks and transgress specific boundaries and thresholds in the creation of forms of ‘habitus’ (Shillings and Mellor 2014b). However, sport is valuable as it

allows targeted form of intervention and management which link with neoliberal regimes of surveillance and administration, regulating the parameters of permissible forms of behaviour and making the record of success and failure more readily quantifiable

For example, on the Sports Leadership course at the YMCA the combination of sport and leadership creates a powerful ‘rite of passage’ for young people to undergo in order to transform. To mark their achievements, candidates have to pass through a variety of thresholds and master a set of skills ranging from communicating clearly to supervising young children. In this sense they are ‘liminal figures’ (Turner 1985; Van Gennep 1977) in the process of becoming something other than what they were. Yet, as ‘liminal servants’ YMCA staff members and managers facilitate these changes through combinations of rehearsal, repetition and training and methods of reflection and narration articulated in the leadership-oriented register of the sports field (McLaren 1993). In this way they emulate the role of religious leaders and pastors who structure forms of embodied practice through language, giving meaning to the forms of transformation necessary for living a morally successful life (Csordas 1994; Shillings and Mellor 2014b).

Sport also offers a very effective method for promoting forms of ‘team-working’, integrating individuals *both* into wider corporate group structures and broader skeins of social meaning that can be structured and reinterpreted according to practical social priorities (Shillings and Mellor 1997). Basketball, was in fact, invented by early YMCA workers with sociality in mind, to create social bonds between alienated and disadvantaged young men staying at the YMCA (McCuaig 2010). For Pierre Bourdieu, the ‘habitus’ of the body was vital to understanding how social groups were able to programme individuals with a set of dispositions which helped define their position in society and limited its capacity as a social actor (Bourdieu 1977). Described as ‘the permanent internalisation of the social order in the human body’ (Eriksen and Nielsen 2001: 130), habitus is a set of bodily dispositions or ‘ways of standing, sitting, looking, speaking, or walking’ which are enacted within complex ‘schemes of perception and thought...such as...the oppositions between the male and the female, east and west, future and past, top and bottom, right and left, etc.’ (Bourdieu 1977: 15). As Bourdieu has documented, sport can play an important role in establishing forms of embodied behaviour linked to moral and social norms: ‘A postural norm such as uprightness (‘stand up straight’) has...the function of symbolising a whole set of moral ‘virtues’- rectitude, straightforwardness, dignity (face to face confrontation as a demand for respect) – and also physical ones- vigour, strength, health’ (ibid.367). As he argues the popularity of sport today is in part due to its deployment as a strategy of socialisation in the British private school system, a technique of social regulation and stratification that has become normalised (Ibid: 369).

Despite the potential for this type of social engineering, sport only works as a tool for transformation due its inherent ability to give individuals a sense of agency, autonomy and more specifically embodied pleasure. At the YMCA, for instance, sport is used to both push young people through thresholds and boundaries but also to draw them in through doing a pleasurable, enjoyable activity. In this way, the YMCA seems to have anticipated a number of debates in social science itself, bypassing the ‘mind/body’ dualism said to underpin Cartesian rationality and Western secularism (Lambek 1998; Turner 2008; Mellor et al. 1997; Csordas 1990; Jackson 1989; Lock 1993 see also Merleau-Ponty 2005). Extending Bourdieu’s framework, Loic Wacquant (2004) has shown in his study of a boxing gym, sport also works ‘autonomically’ (Blackman 2008) rather than cognitively, embedding moral social lessons in everyday physical activity: ‘To become a boxer is to appropriate through progressive impregnation a set of corporeal mechanisms and mental schemata so intimately imbricated that they erase the distinction between the physical and the spiritual, between what pertains to athletic abilities and what belongs to moral capacities and will’ (p. 17). This blurs the line between a sense of individual agency and collective orientation: ‘The boxer is a live gearing of the body and mind that erases the boundary between action and representation and in so doing transcends in actu the antinomy between the individual and the collection’ (Ibid.: 17. See also Crossley 2006). In this sense sport is corporate both in its corporeality and its fostering of collective identity, the body being initiated into the whole through the process designed to shape it to fit, the YMCA version of subjectivity taught and learned through the very process of subjectification itself.

To understand the particular form of ‘hybrid habitus’ (Shillings and Mellor 2014b) at work in the YMCA, I borrow Coleman’s (2000) conceptualisation of a ‘Charismatic economy’ to explore how moral bodily schemas are transmitted from one domain to another. Discussing Swedish Charismatic Christians, Coleman has noted how they adopted a particular set of bodily dispositions and codes of conduct which, after Bourdieu, he calls the ‘Charismatic habitus’. For some Charismatic preachers, this form of bodily comportment became part of a ‘moral economy’ where performing neoliberal characteristics such as risk, audacity and antagonism allowed them to gain added prestige and reputation. In the network of churches Coleman studied, this both allowed Charismatic practice to travel and reinforced wider discourses of self-transformation:

The revalidation of the charismatic self is rendered dynamic not only by the element of risk, but also by that of increase... God is often referred to as ‘big’ in Faith discourse, and the interest on the investment evident in the return expresses divine magnitude, transferring it back to a believer whose receiving inner spirit is unbounded. Thus a human gift becomes translated into a divinely charged contribution to the self (Coleman 2004:432-3).

In this view *habitus* can both transgress the boundaries of different domains such as religious life and commerce, but is also essential for understanding how the spiritual can be built into the sporty: ‘*Habitus* as the reflexive crafting of a mode of being that locates human action, feeling and thought at the embodied intersection of worldly and other-worldly realities’ (Ibid: 277). This is vital for understanding how identity becomes ‘trans-local’ forged in the liminal nexus of transnational processes that ‘cuts across conventional political and cultural divisions....As a realm of possibilities, it juxtaposes fragmented, dynamic and often competing versions of global consciousness and practice’ (Ibid: p.5). As Coleman states, only through detailed analysis of interlocking forms of discourse and practice can the unexplored ‘mechanisms of ‘socialisation’ or training’ come to light, foregrounding ‘the possible interrelations or conflicts between the different *habitus*es that an individual may encounter through membership of different social groupings’ (Ibid: 63).

Unlike Coleman’s ‘Charismatic economy’ the YMCA system is predicated on a ‘charismatic’ model that places the sacred at the centre of secular service, what we might call rather an ‘economy of charisma.’ In this way the sacred form of ‘charisma’ becomes encapsulated in a package of charismatic behaviours which can be performed by anyone who is willing to subscribe to the YMCA method and values. In this context, charismatic leadership as a form of targeted reflection that guides young leaders towards forms of self-mastery and self-control rooted in specifically *chosen* forms of self-discipline. Sport is key in this context as a way of mediating embodied behaviour between discipline and pleasure. As Jennings et al (2010) have suggested in their study of Kung Fu practitioners in England, the combination of pleasure and embodied self-mastery often creates feelings of a shared sacred culture, describing the activities and belief system cultivated by practitioners as a ‘secular religion...organised around a sacralised *habitus* in the form of a family’ (553; see also Wacquant 2004:235; Delamont and Stephens 2008). Similarly, in the context of Aikido, Kohn (2007) discusses how regimes of self-discipline can engender deep-seated feelings of joy, creativity and liberation that carry over into everyday life and create powerful intersubjective allegiances. In her account, practitioners of Aikido at various levels of skill or participation share a deeply held sense of embodied self-mastery: ‘They love the way aikido training makes them feel and move—how it allows them to lose themselves in the moment and not think about anything’ (105). Nevertheless, as Coleman and Kohn (2007) point out, discipline does not always give way to self-discipline, as processes of bodily, mental and spiritual inculcation can be resisted, co-opted and negotiated (p.14; cf. Vincent 2002; Kohn 2008; Collins 2008; Dyck 2008). Taking this argument further, in the next section, I explore how these forms of ‘*habitus*’ are both gendered and implicated in the cultivation of wider forms of unequal gender orders.

'The Whole Man' and the 'Masculinisation' of Development



Figure 8. Joe, Gambia YMCA worker (left) and SCYMCA 'Mind, Body, Spirit' mural (right).

By promoting peer initiatives, intergenerational dialogue and working with the media, AAYMCA is supporting the youth to re-order and shift from masculinity that relies on dominance and abuse to one of mutual respect and understanding¹⁶

-YMCA Transformative Masculinity Programme

Another reason for understanding the YMCA as 'charismatic' is that it can create self-legitimizing forms of patriarchy that help define, establish and structure institutional gender relations and gender identities, which we might term 'hegemonic' (Connell 2005). At the YMCA almost all the key leaders and managers at CEO/NGS level are male, even though many board members, lower level managers, workers, volunteers and clients are female. This replicates the gender bias present in many Christian organisations, where male leadership is seen as stemming from Biblical lore (Bielo 2014). As Hefferan and Fogarty (2008) have reminded us, little is known of the gendered dimensions of leadership in FBOs, raising

¹⁶ YMCA 2013

particular questions as to their current success. As they note, FBOs often operate around 'Big-Man' systems of patronage and personality cults that keep men in forms of 'charismatic' control (Hefferan and Fogarty 2008). Through this thesis, I suggest this form of 'charismatic' authority aligns with a continuing neoliberal transformation of gender relations which rearranges households, families and individuals to suit the market (Chant 2008: 181 Connell 2009; see also Knights and Tullberg 2012). Here, leadership is not necessarily about men, but about a set of values and practices derived from patriarchy and normalised as forms of ideal personhood as 'the social order functions as an immense symbolic machine tending to ratify the masculine domination on which it is founded' (Bourdieu 2001: 9). This naturally allows men demonstrating hegemonic forms of masculinity to thrive, and forces both women and men to perform masculine behaviour traits along narrowly defined parameters.

Understanding 'charisma' as a hegemonic system of masculinity can also help us understand more clearly how the YMCA operates 'charismatically' by exposing the mechanisms of 'recognition' and affect that work to keep the dominant gender system in place. As Adriaan Van Klinken (2011) has shown in the Zimbabwean context, this can become especially relevant as male leaders dominate religious spaces, cultivating their own idiosyncratic forms of 'hegemonic' masculinity, which even if temporary, may leave a telling impression on the congregation (Van Klinken 2011; cf. Connell 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). However, Van Klinken reminds us that seeing masculinities as singular or hegemonic may strip men of their agency, reasserting a false dichotomy between men and women, and men and other men (p.107-109). In fact, even hegemonic masculinities are always constructed in dialogue with different audiences, their performance dependent on both real and imagined narratives of gender and gender relations (Bielo 2014). Consequently, 'charismatic' masculinities can be viewed as inherently plural, performative, unstable and liable to change and mutate depending on shifting contexts, audiences and arenas (Van Klinken 2012; see also Cornwall 2000; Guttman 1997).

Following this, I analyse sport as a closed circuit or 'black-box' form of development intervention that is deployed uncritically in diverse contexts, ignoring the multiplicity and pluralised performance of masculinities and gender relations (Starc and Šumi 2004; cited in Kotnik 2009: 55; see also Dunne et al. 2008: 13). In the development context, analysts have been attending to the increasing focus on young boys and men as 'gendered beings' seeking to understand their gendered identities in relational context (Cornwall et al. 2011). As Chant and Gutman (2002) point out in the past definitions of gender in development policy and programming have often been conflated with women and girls, ignoring the relational quality of gender and reifying gender binaries. Calling for a more inclusive mainstreaming of gender relations in development, they note how programmes focusing on men entrench this bias,

with projects ‘restricted to a limited number of sectors such as sexual and reproductive health, and violence and conflict’ (p. 2).

More recently Cornwall et al (2011) have sought to radically politicize the gender agenda. They show how development approaches to men and boys replicates earlier failures to address the institutionalized structures of power in the lives of women, ignoring the ‘structuring of gender orders and their concomitant inequalities and injustices’ (p. 3). As they discuss, approaches to dealing with men have been partial and haphazard, often recreating the ‘gender-blindness’ that directly conflated women and gender in early gender-based development work:

Engaging men in the project of gender equality has come to be about addressing the need to transform masculinity by changing cultural or social norms that guide men’s behaviour, rather than addressing the structural basis of gender inequalities. It is not surprising, then, that many feminists both recognize the need to engage with men and express concern over its potential implications, whether in terms of funding or control. Ensuring that this engagement gets to grips with gender and its structuring of inequalities is critical if the promise of masculinities work with men for greater gender justice is to be realized (Ibid: 5).

They propose a three-pronged approach to address this imbalance: firstly, destabilising the heteronormative orthodoxy in development studies; second, attending to ‘subordinate variants’ of masculinity’ which include ‘the intersections of race, class and gender in men’s lives’; and third, to think beyond the ‘limiting frames of current approaches to engaging men with gender issues’ creating broader alliances between activists, academics and policymakers (Ibid: 6-7).

A focus on men, then, risks re-inscribing gender binaries and reinforcing patriarchal systems of male domination but as Chant (2008) has argued, this reassessment also needs to be understood in the context of a broader ‘re-masculinisation’ of work and livelihoods under neoliberalism. As she discusses, this tendency can be understood as a response to a ‘feminisation’ of the global workforce in two senses: first, with the prioritisation of ‘softer’ masculine roles, for example in the office and service sector, that require skills (care, nurture, diligence, talk) gendered as feminine (cf. McDowell 2012: 589; see also Chant and McIlwaine 2009; Connell and Connell 2005; Connell 1998; Connell and Messerschmitt 2005; Edstrom et al. 2014); second, in the related in-flux of women workers due to their perceived ‘docility,’ flexibility and industry along with a ‘feminisation’ of managerial practice (McDowell 1997; see also Martin 1994; McIlwaine 1995).

Using these trends as an analytical focus, I show how the ‘Whole Man’ represents a form of performative, hegemonic and ‘middle class’ masculinity divorced from the male body but linked to ideas of patriarchal dominance and authority, subtly disseminating processes of subjection into the public domain. As historian Thomas Winter (2004) has described,

through the course of the twentieth century, YMCA models of successful personhood became increasingly androgynous, connected more to disembodied forms of acquisitiveness and entrepreneurial nous, reflecting how the ‘Whole Man’ has not only been secularised it has also become gender neutral – ‘The Whole Person’ we might say (p. 146). With this in mind, I use the concept of masculinity as a processual category to define modes of performance defined and discussed as masculine rather than a generalizable, stable category of male behaviour. I also differentiate between maleness, the biological fact of being a man, and manhood, the social category of being a man, and interrogate how these two conceptual categories combine to underwrite complex forms of performative masculinity (Connell and Messerschmitt 2003). An important part of this thesis is transformation, and I also present evidence of how masculinity is spatially and temporally contingent, altering over time and in relation to multiple spheres of action and performance (Connell 2005). Throughout this thesis I examine how YMCA staff, including me, form a gendered frame of reference for both young men and young women coming through the YMCA based on equality, individual identity, behaviour, character and self-discipline, more powerfully reinforcing the YMCA moral message and code of behavior but also paradoxically re-inscribing forms of patriarchal dominance and control.

I specifically place this analysis in the cross-cultural context by illustrating how the ‘Whole Man’ style of masculinity encounters different forms of testing or troubling masculinity in each research location. As I show, in both locations masculinity works through specific role models, in different types of ‘Big Man’ systems where multiple forms of masculinity are coordinated in relation to a dominant image of manliness. As the ‘Whole Man’ form of ‘charisma’ is introduced and promoted, I analyse how alternative ‘hegemonic’ images of manliness or ‘bigmanity’ offer another vision of status and prestige for young men to pursue, counteracting the effects of YMCA tutelage. As Utas (2012) has described, ‘bigmanity’ is a self-producing system requiring total belief in its own legitimacy, and I explore what happens to young men caught between multiple systems of masculinity as they ‘navigate’ (Vigh 2006) or ‘try out’ different male roles.

An emphasis on the situational performativity of masculinity also gives increasing relevance to forms of entrepreneurial ‘bigmanity’, marking entrepreneurial ‘power’ as both socially desirable and morally acceptable (Utas 2012: 8). Especially outside of state regulation, entrepreneurs construct their own moral orders as ‘the fewer functioning checks and balances there are, the more room there is for the Big Man to manoeuvre’ (Ibid: 8). At the same time ‘Big Man’ status is also unfixed, operating as an index of social position and allowing young men to coordinate their changing status in relation to it. However, despite the potential to accumulate both social prestige and economic power, as I will show, these

precarious masculinities become even more unstable in situations of precarious working and living conditions, but I will also show how in some cases these types of masculinity can be much more attractive than the ‘Whole Man’ version.

In the next section, I explore exactly how the ‘Whole Man’ version of masculinity emerged out of the precarious urban milieu of 19th Century Britain and America. I show how, as it worked with employers and industrialists, the YMCA constructed a version of ideal manhood that aligned with the requirements of both the expanding urban workforce and the overseas interests of America and Britain, bringing the ‘Whole Man’ into contact and conflict with the rapid social transformations that would come to define it and re-defining young men in the process.

Chapter 3: ‘A strenuous religion for a strenuous life’: Muscular

Christianity and the ‘Whole Man’ at the YMCA

‘The Young Men's Christian Association on the one hand has been led to contemplate the nature of young men as a whole, and to aim at their symmetrical development, and on the other hand to contemplate the religion of Jesus Christ as adapted to redeem the whole man—body, soul, and spirit.’

- YMCA Secretary Luther Gulick, 1889¹⁷

¹⁷ (Cited in Doggett 1896, p.47).

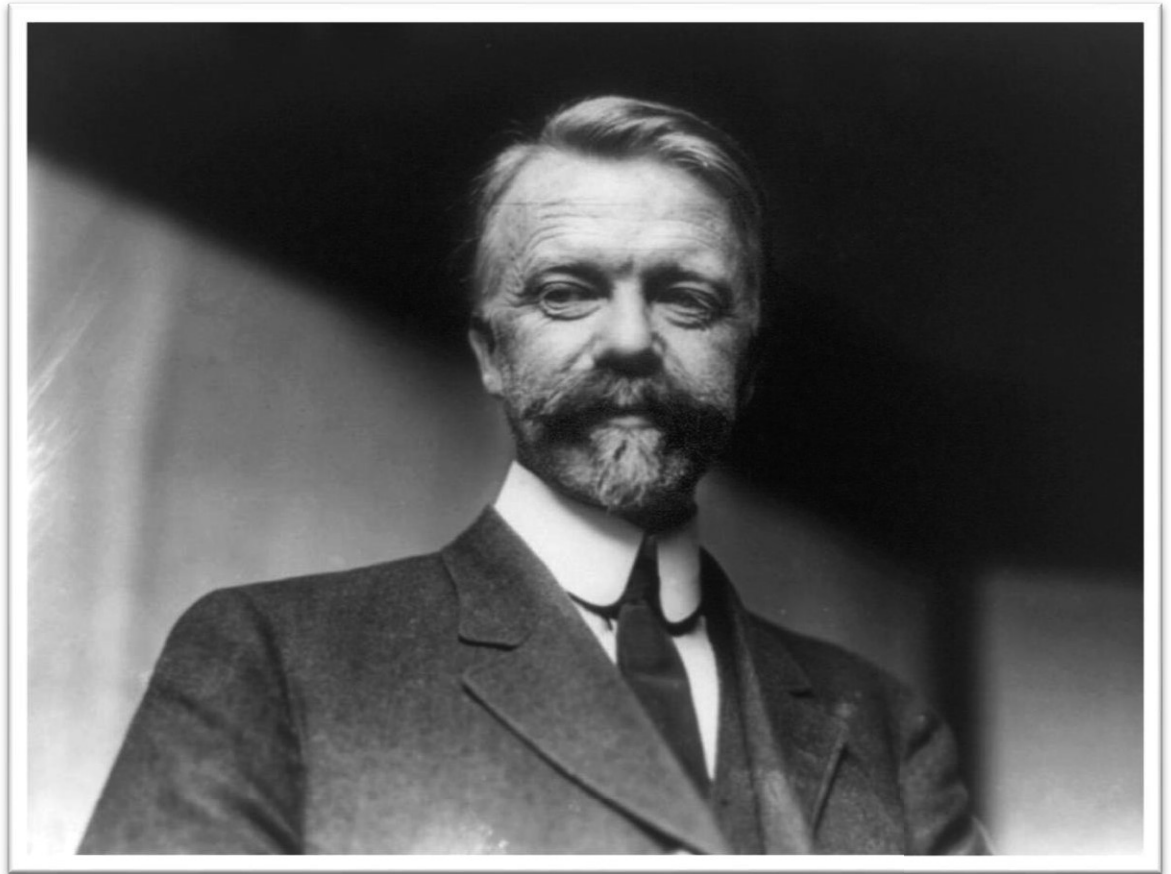


Figure 9: Portrait of early YMCA leader Luther Gulick (Doggett 1896)

This section details the emergence of the ‘Whole Man’ model of manhood that served as the core tenet of YMCA work at the dawn of the twentieth century, underwriting an evolutionary rationale that drove their work at home and abroad before being absorbed into secular forms of ideal manhood. I show how the YMCA cultivated a specific style of masculinity to promote their Christian values, embodied and enacted by ‘heroic’ figures known as secretaries who often founded and sustained YMCAs through sheer force of personality. But I also show how these personalities were rooted in organisational structures designed to nurture leaders and facilitate particular types of men before exploring how these processes fed into broader class-based conflicts and changes in part driven by the YMCA.

Founded in London in 1844, the YMCA was formed out of a spiritual response to the rapid urbanisation of the mid-19th Century and can be seen as part of a wider philanthropic trend that swept across Great Britain. Fuelled by industrialisation, the growing affluence of Britain’s upper classes and the cheek-by-jowl inequality experienced in industrial towns and cities led to a wave of ‘moral discussion’ that resulted in the establishment of several charitable and voluntary groups (Roberts 2004; Spurr 2014). The YMCA emerged out of this climate of social activism and engagement, beginning as a series of meeting between young drapers clerks in the backroom of their factory where together they formed

a simple ‘organization of Evangelical fraternalism’ (Spurr 2014: 554). Spurred by the threat of immorality around them, the success of the early YMCA was based on attraction, acting as a spiritual haven for young men migrating to and living in the disorderly city. In this sense, it was a movement born out of cosmopolitan modernity, designed to cope with the alienation wrought by mobility, industrialisation and the failure of existing socio-cultural apparatus, especially traditional church structures (Muukkonen 2002).

Emerging concurrently in two of 19th century Europe’s busiest trade centres, England and Germany, the YMCA was also swept up in a more general Evangelical Awakening¹⁸ that witnessed the growth of religious zeal across Europe and augured the revitalisation of a Christian tradition centred around social activism as a vehicle for conversion (Muukkonen 2002; Putney 2003; Winter 2004). For young men looking for advancement, these factors combined, offering a spiritual network of aspirational men like themselves and a mode of discipline that countered the novel temptations surrounding them, redirecting their unfettered energies into their prayers and their work (Muukkonen 2002: Binfield 1973).

As YMCA historians have documented it was in America, amongst the urban Evangelical communities that the YMCA found its true home, mirroring back and amplifying the original intentions of its London founders (see Putney 2003; Winter 2002). A central part of the religious activism was the use of recreation and physical activity as a mode of spiritual engagement in what became known as the ‘Muscular Christianity’ movement (Putney 2003). Initially an undercurrent within wider Evangelical circles that descried the results of physical ‘degeneracy’ and ‘decrepitude’ on the spirit (Putney 2003: 25), ‘Muscular Christianity’ was inspired by English writers such as Charles Kingsley and Tom Hughes who sought to reinvigorate English masculinity with images of ‘athleticism, patriotism and religion’ (Putney 2001: 14-16, 2003; see also Baker 1994; Macaloon 2006a, 2006b).

Stimulated by these ideas, ‘Muscular Christianity’ began to gain traction in nineteenth century North American cities, as part of an Evangelical revival railing against a perceived ‘feminisation’ of Protestant values and practices (see Putney 2003). These changes were driven in the mid-nineteenth century post-Civil-War America by a cadre of elite, white men, including Theodore Roosevelt¹⁹, who were looking to reconstruct American manhood and reclaim spiritual space given over to women during the war:

¹⁸ Known as the Third Evangelical Awakening, this period saw a renewed focus on social activism as preached by the Social Gospel movement who rejected earlier millennial calls for Christ’s Second Coming (Putney 2001).

¹⁹ Roosevelt coined the phrase ‘strenuous life’ in a book of that title in 1901 (Putney 2001: 26).

These men... viewed factors such as urbanization, sedentary office jobs, and non-Protestant immigration as threats not only to their health and manhood but also to their privileged social standing. To maintain that standing, they urged 'old stock' Americans to revitalize themselves by embracing a 'strenuous life' replete with athleticism and aggressive male behaviour. They also called loudly upon their churches to abandon the supposedly enervating tenets of 'feminized' Protestantism... They also contended that women's influence in church had led to an overabundance of sentimental hymns, effeminate clergymen and sickly-sweet images of Jesus. These things were repellent to 'real men' and boys, averred critics, who argued that males would avoid church until 'feminized' Protestantism gave way to muscular Christianity, a strenuous religion for the strenuous life (Putney 2003).

Strengthened via the collaboration between Evangelical churches and organisations such as the Boy Scouts of America, the movement's broad aims were to revitalise Christian manhood by instilling particular principles associated with traditional Protestantism such as industry, rigour, temperance and tenacity (see Putney 2001, 2003; Macleod 1983). Simon Coleman (2007) writes, how this movement combined Victorian concerns over immorality and debauchery with a growing unease about the direction of Christianity itself creating a threefold source of motivation consisting of 'reform within the Protestant Church (the masculinisation of its image), the need to keep hold of the believer amid the temptations of urban life, and even the missionising at times almost millenarian possibility of attracting the unsaved masses of the cities' (Ibid: 42; see also Erdozain 2010; Hopkins 1951; Ladd 1999; Mieras 2005; Putney 1991, 1993; Shedd 1955).

At the turn of the century, YMCAs played a crucial role in the development and entrenchment of 'Muscular Christianity' into everyday American life, crafting a sound theological basis for the incorporation of physical self-work into spiritual programmes of self-improvement. Central to this period was the refinement of the YMCA's so-called 'fourfold' programme, where young men were targeted on an intellectual, mental, physical and spiritual level. This would become the 'Whole Man' image that encapsulated the ideals of 'Muscular Christianity' and became central to the YMCA ideology.

Writing and researching at the turn of the century, prominent YMCA figure Laurence Doggett wrote the definitive history of the YMCA in 1896 as part of his studies before becoming Ohio YMCA secretary. In his account, fitness instructors Luther Gulick (fig11) and Robert Reynolds (Fig 12 and 13) pioneered flexible fitness programmes adaptable to the working man's lifestyle, helping to locate the growing emphasis on physicality, athleticism and the body within a spiritual framework. Originally describing these instructors as 'soul winners,' Gulick used passages from the bible²⁰ to construct theological arguments for a focus on the body: 'An association should work for the whole aim, that is, perfect Christian manhood' (Gulick 1891a: 34, cited in Gustav-Wrathall 1998: 28). This, he argued was

²⁰ For example 2 Corinthians 3: 2 and 1 Corinthians 6: 20 (cited in Gustav-Wrathall 1998: 28).

modelled on the behaviour of Jesus Christ, who ‘spent his time working for man as a whole. He worked for man physically, as well as spiritually’ (Gulick 1891b, cited in Gustav-Wrathall 1998: 28).

Coming from a medical background, Gulick was a firm believer in the benefits of physical exercise, good nutrition and productive uses of recreational time for self-betterment and spiritual self-discipline as he describes here:

From a scientific standpoint, the Associations have a very valuable foundation for their work in the fact that they are working for young men, not simply for their bodies, minds and souls, but for the salvation, development and training of the whole man complete, as God made him (Gulick 1889, cited in Doggett 1896: 51).

As well as medical science and theology, Gulick and his fellows were also influenced by innovations in social psychology, social science and Darwinism which held that each individual had to evolve through specific stages of development to reach full maturity (Winter 2004), as Gulick put it,

It was central, then, to shape behaviour towards civilized self-possession as each individual moves away from the more atavistic behavioural stages of human evolution...this could be achieved best through proper training and development of spirit, mind, and body and to overcome the mind-body dualism in social thought and to understand human beings as holistic entities instead (Winter 2004).

For these YMCA leaders, then, it was clear that the ‘Whole Man’ was also the ‘best man,’ an overriding ideal to be both acknowledged and aspired to in an evolutionary teleology of Christian manhood.

Today, the linking of physical self-improvement to an inner spiritual life is a core belief of the YMCA, but the fourfold programme emerged out of bitter struggles within the organisation over the growing power of the physical in YMCA everyday life. At the YMCA itself there was great alarm about the time spent on physical activity diverting young men from the primary purpose of spiritual awakening and conversion (Erdozain 2010: 217). Indeed, as epitomised by the ‘temperance movement’ which fought immorality and drunkenness, many Victorian Evangelicals openly derided physical activity, wary of its appeal to the ‘earthly senses’ which were seen as ‘divorced from spiritual perception’ (McCoach 1872, cited in Erdozain 2010: 217). Situating the YMCA at the vanguard of debates of the debasement of ‘spiritual work’ in lieu of physical pursuits, Gustav-Wrathall (1998) suggests this scepticism or ‘old ascetism’, which included founder George Williams, combined with powerful forms of Christian ‘pietism’ to create an ‘ethos’ that connected physicality with, at best, frivolity and, at worst, immorality: ‘Even some eventual supporters of the YMCA’s physical program warned that ‘a start...made to become *a perfect man* could result in *a perfect*

animal' (Ibid: 18, author's italics). These fierce battles within the YMCA and the Christian community were indicative of the difficulties in fusing the moral and the physical, and, in turn, the religious and the pragmatic priorities of everyday life (see also Gustav-Wrathall 2002: 15-23). YMCAs often needed a process of trial and error to strike this balance successfully, but in many cases this resulted in the dilution of both sport and spirituality in the lives of many Christians as the *jouissance* of doing the former was negated by the strictures of improving the latter (Erdozain 2010: 215-218).

Moreover, Dominic Erdozain (2010) has suggested this re-focusing of YMCA priorities had severe implications for the role of religion in American communities. Focussing on Victorian anxieties over the nature and content of 'pleasure' activities, he maintains that rather than helping the Christian message to spread, the YMCA ironically contributed to its incorporation into the secular orthodoxy: 'Secularisation occurred when the salvation economy *became* social morality in the later nineteenth century- a process fuelled by the family obsession with pleasure' (ibid.: 6). For evidence of this trend, he outlines the slow unravelling of YMCA prayer activities over the second half of the nineteenth century as religious work gives way to increasing levels of recreation and welfare concerns, partly in response to changing social trends and partly with a new emphasis on the physical as 'fundamental to mentality and morals' (ibid.: 222). Extending this argument he shows how debates within the YMCA reflected wider tensions over the direction of the Christian religion itself, debates that dwelt on 'codes' of everyday behaviour and 'ethics':

It was the secularisation of the Christian culture itself, rather than the society at large that was the crucial development...This mutation of religion into ethics took place right under the eyes of some of the most conservative Christian leaders; indeed it was welcomed as evidence of realism, practicality and engagement...Christian manliness, in particular, was the most deceptive of wooden horses (Ibid: 7).

Erdozain's work offers an important framework for understanding the YMCA as an agent in the secularisation process, but also for reimagining the secularisation process as a type of naturalisation, where Christian ethics become acceptable within wider society outside the Christian community. He concludes by noting that, as they moved from 'evangelical conversionism' to 'a scheme of social redemption,' YMCAs 'did not automatically sever the 'narrow channel' of supernatural faith but, time after time, a pragmatic use of leisure grew into a definitive dependence so that a principle justified theologically became the enemy of theology' in short 'salvation was physicalised' (Ibid.: p.273; see also Putney 2003; Spurr 2014).

Making Love Manly: Modelling Manhood at the YMCA

‘As for the young man: first of all he worships God...next he almost worships that secretary’

(From YMCA Journal ‘Association Men’ cited in Gustav-Wrathall 1998, p.59-60)

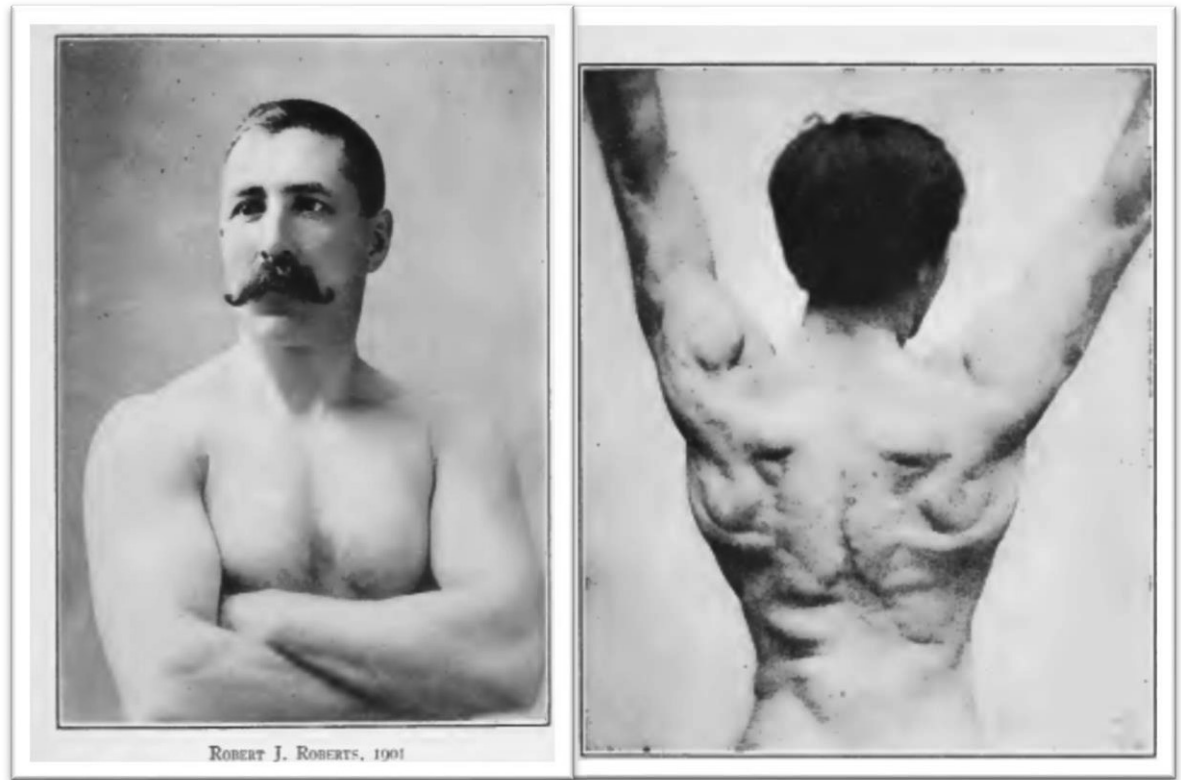


Figure 10: Robert J. Roberts, Founder of YMCA physical training programmes and (right) his back muscles- taken from YMCA training manual (Doggett 1896).

Tracing the YMCA version of manhood, then can also trace processes of secularisation at work in early twentieth century Britain and America that are insuperable from evolutionary logics of progress, modernisation and development. Men like Gulick, Reynolds, Williams (Fig. 10) and Doggett were seen as charismatic figureheads who drove their organisations forward, but slowly and surely as the YMCA grew, processes of leadership became institutionalised and expanded, enshrined in broader commercial and corporate forms of fraternity and partnership. As other historians have shown, this corporate ethos also began to exert an increasing influence over the relationship between the working and middle classes, irrevocable altering notions of respectable manhood in Britain and America (Winter 2002; Spurr 2014). Not only were YMCA secretaries viewed as ideal men, they were also seen as ideal workers, creating men who viewed social relations as an integral part of successful moral life.

In his book documenting the recalibration of YMCA priorities at the turn of the century, historian Thomas Winter (2002) has also argued that the YMCA played a key role in reconfiguring an American manhood coming under pressure from rapid social change. Not only did the secretaries represent a new version of manhood centred around managerial nous, care for the community and spiritual diligence, as they targeted the ranks of working men flooding to the city they began to define categories of manhood in relation to class and, sometimes fractious, class relations. Initially starting slowly with early associations in Boston and Montreal (both founded in 1851), the YMCA gained significant ground in the years following the Civil War (1861-65), playing an instrumental part in fostering a cadre of young, professional men suitable for the increasingly bureaucratic demands of the city. This new 'class' had its fullest manifestation, in the entrepreneurial, self-made professionals known as 'secretaries' who gradually replaced the volunteers at the heart of everyday YMCA operations. These men saw YMCAs as a vehicle of self-expression that combined 'their moral mission...with a manly purpose' and helped reinvent managerial masculinity for the twentieth century (Ibid: 6). As he details, this was achieved through the construction of a 'language of manhood' which mobilised YMCA members towards a common purpose, becoming the platform for broader organisational cohesion: 'This language of manhood performed cultural work by constructing meaning, organizing cultural practices, conceiving social relations, and establishing collective identity' (Ibid: 6). As the American YMCA honed its work in the expanding urban centres of America, this 'shared ideal of manliness' (Ibid: 7) played a crucial role in establishing relationships across class divisions, geographical distance and between men from different social and occupational backgrounds as Winter aptly puts it 'as YMCA officials set out to make men, they ended up making class as well' (p.1).

Architectural historian Paula Lupkin (2010) has linked this process into YMCA architecture, depicting how YMCA buildings were also structured to produce certain types of gendered behaviour. Describing early YMCA centres as 'factories of manhood' she links their utilitarian design to the formation of a 'corporate urban future' that required specific forms of morally correct masculinity (p. xvii). She dubs this period of rapid social transformation 'the age of incorporation' as institutions such as the YMCA helped transfer agricultural forms of subjectivity to the particular demands of the expanding city: 'From the scale of the nation, to the city, and down to the individual building and the human body, incorporation emphasised regimentation, planning, management, and separation; unity was achieved through subordination of the individual to the whole' (Ibid: xxi). In their 1963 study of the YMCA, Zald and Denton, following Clark, term this organisational model 'Enrollment Economics', as original YMCA models required memberships fees and subscriptions instilling a deeper sense of organisational loyalty and identification (p. 222).

However, they also note that this model was highly adaptive and flexible, allowing YMCAs to cater for their members' needs and incorporate new programming trends whilst maintaining a steady flow of new bodies (Ibid: 222).

Using this concept, I suggest the historical emergence of the YMCA offers a useful frame through which to see the YMCA moral economy in the neoliberal moment of increasing marketisation, where human becomes a resource and individual potential is more intimately monetised (Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Ho 2009). As the YMCA created a production line of leaders and captains educated in the YMCA ways, they became 'spiritual entrepreneurs' (Muukkonen 2001: 104) setting up their own institutes or exercising their skills across multiple domains. This was no coincidence, as YMCAs developed a targeted repertoire of useful leadership skills that served to circulate religious ideas throughout society: 'The YMCAs were a kind of stock market of spiritual services – they gathered those who were willing to serve and those who needed help²¹' (Muukkonen 2001: 104).

Central to this ideal of manhood was stress on charisma as both an emotional state of being and set of behaviours able to attract, inspire and care for young men at risk of going 'bad'. In his portrait of male-male relations at the YMCA, Gustav-Wrathall has described how this individual 'magnetism' would help create coherence within the organisation, attracting new followers but also helping in the process of 'conversion' to Christian values, an important part of the YMCA's primary purpose (Gustav-Wrathall 1998: 59-61). Citing Doggett he shows how YMCA leaders created a spiritual basis for 'intense, male-to-male love' to be reimagined as 'Christian brotherly love' (Ibid: 167):

Christianity is the greatest of social forces because it is the religion of equal love between man and man. ...The ideal society which fulfills its functions on the principle of love between man and man may seem unattainable, but it is this power of love which has abolished slavery, mitigated war, and which for centuries has been diminishing class and hereditary privileges. It is the practical side of the religion of Christ, and it is working today with unabated power. The religion of love is a fundamental social force, because it moulds men's character and governs their conduct (Doggett 1896: 12).

This was most clearly embodied in the figure of the 'heroic secretary' as envisioned by YMCA leader Jacob T. Bowne who wrote that the secretary should have 'intense love' for young men and 'also be a young man of irreproachable Christian character' (Bowne 1892 cited in Gustav-Wrathall 1998: 60). Doggett articulates how the institutionalisation of these values works to accentuate both Christian values and a sense of manliness: 'Love makes men

²¹ For example, numerous YMCA employees went on to play key roles in establishing global humanitarianism. One particularly notable story is of Henry Dunant, who used his experience founding the Geneva YMCA and figuring international consensus through the YMCA to found the International Red Cross movement.

honest towards their fellows; love is the source of self-sacrifice; the mainspring of true virtue; the inspiration of valor; the highest incentive to achievement, and ... the cap-stone of virtue, self-mastery or self-control' (Doggett 1896: 11). According to Gustav-Wrathall, this spiritual purity would extend to the secretary's physical appearance and athleticism which would help draw young men to the organisation: 'Bowne's 'heroic secretary' would be admirable in every way, physically and spiritually. Bowne believed in 'natural' leaders and a form of leadership that would attract young men to the secretaries. (Gustav-Wrathall 1998: 60). As the nature of secretaryship changed this also helped maintain corporate continuity, as the younger cadre of leaders looked to old-timers for guidance. Many of the original secretaries were lifers, either working past retirement on dying in office, with the incoming secretaries more career oriented, performing shorter stints of service. Consequently, Gustav-Wrathall explains that 'by nurturing relationships between older and young men. Association leaders succeeded in keeping the organisation relevant' (Ibid: 81-82).

Probing more deeply at the root of these ideas, John Gustav-Wrathall (1998) radically suggests that the shift to physicality introduced a pre-occupation with the bodies of young men which would ultimately begin to undermine not only the YMCA's spiritual priorities, but the very basis of the organisation itself. Careful to make the distinction between homosexual activity and homosocial bonding in the lives of YMCA members²², Gustav-Wrathall nevertheless endeavours to show how homo-erotic iconography became essential to the everyday operations of YMCA centres creating new ideals of Christian masculinity and manhood (Ibid: 60). As he explores, the cultivation of intense male-male friendships emerged out of a Victorian culture of close male companionship and partnership that was seen as healthy for character development and social relations, with YMCA biographies, including that of George Williams, rife with accounts of intimate expressions of love, joy and passionate attachment between young men (Ibid: 51-52). These narratives helped validate particular characteristics and prerequisites for YMCA secretaries and categories of manhood. For example, here Luther Gulick's description of George Williams in terms of both admiration and affection helped enshrine Williams' already considerable personal legend: 'we worked and prayed, especially for the men assigned to us. Williams was a 'son of thunder.' We gave him the hardest of the lot; he was a tremendous personal worker. I never knew his equal' (Luther Gulick 1889, cited in Doggett 1896: 55). As Gustav-Wrathall traces, these

²² Gustav-Wrathall shows how YMCA leaders displayed a preoccupation with intensive male relationships, clothed in euphemisms of 'wrongdoing' and 'questionable habits,' that broke out with a succession of a high-profile scandals including the so-called 'Portland vice scandal' of 1910, where young men rooming at the YMCA were prosecuted for homosexual activity.

expressions of affection serve to make affection manlier, bringing the private expression of emotion into the public realm and making love both a moral and civic virtue.

Learning to Serve: Masculinity and Class at the YMCA

YMCA leaders, then, were vital in folding the spiritual into the secular, promoting a form of transferable personhood that not only became inseparable from an idealised Euro-American model of entrepreneurial caring manhood, it helped foster the tenets of Western imperialism, expansionism and humanitarianism. Historian Geoff Spurr (2014) has argued that, particularly in the class and status obsessed context of Victorian Britain, early manifestations of the YMCA helped define a hegemonic form of masculinity which folded spirituality and religious identity into professional working lives creating a new vision of 'middle class' ideals. This version of masculinity interacted aggressively with forms of lower and lower-middle class masculinity, each helping to define and refine the other. He details how an Evangelical emphasis on the 'individual in his own conversion experience and salvation' remained central to YMCA beliefs, but developed into a recognition of the power of the YMCA form of engagement itself, suggesting 'that both worldly engagement and fraternal associationalism were necessary for salvation and the fostering of proper manliness' (p.548).

Spurr points to a lecture given by Reverend Hugh Stowell Brown²³ in 1857 on the subject of 'Manliness' which unequivocally set out 'a new lower-middle-class masculine script for young men to follow' (Ibid: 565). He made the argument that 'virtue and manliness were 'equivalent terms' and that godliness, being all virtues such as truthfulness, temperance, benevolence, and fortitude 'harmoniously combined,' was an essential condition of manliness' (Ibid: 565). Young Christians were urged to confront vice and 'ungodliness' where they found it, emulating the example set by Jesus Christ (Ibid: 565). One focus for this 'test' of manliness was at work and in business,

Your Christian men of business have a noble work before you.... The shop, the warehouse, the office, the market, are the very places in which you can most effectually demonstrate the manliness of the Christian character. By your sterling integrity, by your moderation in prosperity, by your patience under adversity, by your victory over self, you will preach the most eloquent, the most convincing, the most masterly of all sermons, and compel the scoffer to admit that your Christianity tends to make you, in the highest sense of expression, manly (Ibid: 565).

²³ Part of the influential 'Exeter Lectures' that outlined key elements for the YMCA

At a time when business itself was transforming, Spurr suggests that this call to young men equated a democratisation of middle class masculinity, allowing lower middle class men to convert their credibility in business into spiritual value. This linked into a Victorian ethos of self-improvement,

Bourgeois ideals of manliness transformed it into something far more democratic and potentially accessible for those lower-middleclass men able to pursue rigorous programmes of self-improvement. Manliness was now associated far more with a man's interior character, his moral excellence, which was reflected in his industriousness, self-discipline, independence, and devotion to civic duty. The idea that manliness stemmed directly from a man's internal nature corresponded well to the Evangelical emphasis on personal salvation (Ibid: 545).

Spurr describes how the newly formed corps of young clerks often found it difficult to find places to 'exercise their manhood' and the YMCA offered 'a homosocial association' where 'their manliness and overall masculinity could be developed and demonstrated' (Ibid: 545).

The construction of this form of masculinity also had a significant side-effect: as lower-middle-class men searched for new ways to assert their manhood they also searched for healthy ways to occupy their leisure time, creating an opening for physical recreation to be more widely adopted within the YMCA. Due to their servile occupations, bachelorhood and precarious financial positions, these young clerks and shop assistants often found themselves caught between a middle class patriarchy based around financial muscle and working class domains where masculinity was defined by physical prowess (Ibid: 545). However, as Spurr notes, it was only after the American YMCAs started building gymnasias that the British YMCAs followed suit, marking both a significant sea-change in the way YMCA policy was disseminated and a widespread acceptance that physical work was vital to the business of making men (Ibid: 545).

As Winter (2002) explains, this process had a far-reaching impact upon the imagining of what it meant to be a man in America at the end of the nineteenth century. Winter analyses how new programmes targeting 'railroad industrial workers' helped to stabilise worker-employer relations, using the institutionalised language of manhood to mediate across class divides. This process was not without problems as workers resisted YMCA interference, stealing sanitary supplies from their centres, spitting on their floors and occasionally boycotting centres for their collusion with employers (Ibid: 81-82). In fact, Winter argues these disputes, shifting allegiances and negotiations forced the YMCA to refine methods for controlling workers and further elaborate their language of idealised manhood (Ibid: 130). Overall Winter suggests that YMCA's were crucial to the development of 'Welfare Capitalism', merging concern for the soul with the goals of American industry:

Bringing an ideal of Christian manhood to the workers, the YMCA presumed could engender a workforce that would set examples of sacrifice and service and exude goodwill and selflessness. Once the workers adopted a higher ideal of manhood, rooted in values of Christian brotherhood and service, YMCA officials were convinced that workingmen would abstain from political radicalism and labour unrest (Ibid: 7).

From the outset, then, as their interests aligned, YMCAs became close allies of industry and business, with well-known entrepreneurial capitalists such as J.D. Rockefeller acting as early sponsors. As Winter argues, this story presents a ‘central ambiguity’ of the YMCA’s project: ‘the association’s attempt to transcend class lines and unite men on the basis of manhood ultimately led them to articulate new definitions of manhood structured by class difference’ (Ibid: 7). As Winter (2004) suggests, after the close association with business from the late 19th Century into the 1920s, this relationship began to dissolve as business took on responsibility for their own workers but this period played a formative role in the history of the YMCA and the development of key programmes and concepts. By making love manly, the YMCA had fundamentally transformed the dominant ideals of manhood in both Britain and the US, enshrining their own form of manliness complete with its Christian origins.

Extending God’s Kingdom: Mobility, Missionaries and Global Morality at the YMCA

A second strand of the contemporary YMCA that reaches back to the turn of the century and the growth of neoliberal forms of capitalism is the emphasis on internationalisation and global partnership, securely buttressed both by a common moral agenda and a system of brotherly love and association. Whilst the YMCA was helping to reinvent class at home, the evolutionary logic of the ‘Whole Man’ model was becoming the basis for missionary work in a variety of diverse contexts. Turning ‘Enrollment Economics’ inside out, as it were, YMCAs encouraged their young leaders to move on and found new YMCAs, completing their leadership training through the practice of leading and the development of autonomy. Continuing the family metaphor, these secretaries overseas would become known as ‘fraternal secretaries,’ objects of longstanding and long distance affection (Muukkonen 2002: 167). As Gustav-Wrathall has noted, expressions of affection tended to intensify in the letters of one secretary to another, particularly at times of parting or change (Gustav-Wrathall 2002: 56-58). Many secretaries would express their ‘joy’ or recall poignant moment of prayer, excitement or fellowship (Ibid: 57). Frequently, this affection took on an embodied nature, in Gustav-Wrathall’s words ‘a delight in one another’s physical proximity, an awareness of each other’s bodies, a sort of excitement that overtook them in

the prospect of spending time together' (Ibid: 57). Describing the correspondence of two secretaries becoming excited by an imminent meeting, Gustav-Wrathall observes, 'Ober and Wishard saw their relationship in continuity with a tradition of male love, united through a mutual commitment to missions' (Ibid: 58). Missionary work was thus viewed as something to strengthen both individual character and the mutual respect in the organisation, creating a powerful double bind and solidifying the expanding YMCA infrastructure.

In this sense the 'Whole Man' operated as a form of witness in the missionary landscape, creating an imagined geography of ideal Christian manhood based on simple 'Christian ethics...with emphasis on the Bible, personal piety, a humble lifestyle and philanthropic activity' (Ibid: 106). Coupled to this was the wholesale export of the 'Whole Man' concept as the principles of holistically cultivating 'mind, body and spirit' became the keystone of the YMCA's 'home-made hegemony' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992) as they disseminated practices, values and personnel to India (David 1992), Africa and Asia (Brownell 2008; King 1971; Mjagkij 1994; Tyrell). In Africa, the first YMCA was established in Liberia in 1881 by an American episcopal Bishop who, in a demonstration of the transnational routes being established by the YMCA, later returned to America to become the renowned first black Bishop of the American Episcopalian church (Coleman 2007: 43; Mjagkij 1994).

Indeed, this transnational back and forth was common with early YMCA secretaries, with many YMCA leaders acting as missionaries at home and abroad, seeing the two projects as inseparable. They would also prove key instigators in encouraging large mobilisations of young people to work or volunteer overseas, founding key youth placement projects such as the Student Volunteers Movement for Foreign Missions (SVMFM) that helped place young Christian leaders overseas through YMCA franchises²⁴ and building a platform for other overseas youth movements such as the Peace Corps. As Flipse et al (2010) report the YMCA was key in establishing overseas travel as a central component in career pathways of ambitious young people: 'In its first forty years the SVMFM alone would motivate twenty thousand youth, mostly college age and college trained, to enter missionary service' (p.92). By 1916, the YMCA had 157 secretaries operating in 55 countries (Tyrell 2010: 88) causing a distinguished Vanderbilt Professor to remark that in 1914 only six powers dominated the globe: 'The British Empire, the Russian Empire, the Japanese Empire, the Chinese Republic, the American Republic and the Young Men's Christian Association.'²⁵

²⁴ Two key figures were Dwight L. Moody and John Mott, well-known, charismatic nineteenth century evangelists who worked for the YMCA whilst proactively preaching the gospel (Flipse et al 2010: 91-92; cf. Putney 2003: 2-3). Because of his efforts on the transnational stage, Mott not only took on a heroic status inside the YMCA (Rosenberg 1982: 31), he was also awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1946.

²⁵ Oscar E. Brown quoted without citation in Rosenberg, E. (2011). *Spreading the American dream: American economic and cultural expansion, 1890-1945*. New York: Macmillan. p.28

Looking at this progress more closely, theologian and Finland YMCA worker Martti Muukkonen (2002) has explored the historical development and deployment of the YMCA 'mission view,' mapping its change 'from aggressive evangelism to social responsibility for human beings' (p. iii). Using the systematisation of YMCA mission work in the 1850s as a focus, he shows how a common YMCA identity was slowly distilled out of the diverse religious attitudes and traditions in the array of countries hosting early YMCAs such as France, Switzerland, Belgium, England and the United States²⁶. As organisational momentum grew, international meetings started to be established along interpersonal lines of communication, spreading the organisation in a haphazard manner: "These new associations heard about each other and started to build contacts. Leaders of older associations visited the new ones and encouraged them to organise themselves. Some associations became branches of the London YMCA" (Ibid: 84). Muukkonen relates how YMCA leaders quickly began to recognise the need for a greater level of organisational structure and control, but debates centred around how exactly to achieve this, as one YMCA member put it "This World Alliance is a kind of process of dependence which at the same time makes independent and a kind of independence which at the same time is aware of its proper dependence" (Jentsch 1971: 9, cited in Muukkonen 2002: 89).

As he shows, the heart of this idea was crystallised at the 1855 World Evangelical Conference in Paris where, after long negotiation and discussion, an agreement was reached that became known as the Paris Basis, restated here in full:

The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be his disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom amongst young men. Any differences of opinion on other subjects, however important in themselves, shall not interfere with the harmonious relations of the constituent members and associates of the World Alliance (cited in Muukkonen 2002).

This statement would form the blueprint for YMCAs international collaboration, outlining the basis of YMCA identity, ideology and belief as well as a disassociation from involvement in politics and controversy. With a remit to 'plant 'self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating' indigenous YMCAs' (Ibid: 167), he reaches the conclusion that the early YMCA leaders had a utopian vision of an increasingly Christian society where the ethics they promoted had become normalised:

The hoped-for future was...a world where young men could hear the gospel and turn to God. When God's Kingdom was seen as a collectivity of believers, the task of the movement

²⁶ For example, German YMCAs were seen more of a direct extension of local ministry, whereas British YMCAs were more loosely embedded in a wider realm of Christian philanthropy (Muukkonen 2002: 62-64).

was to extend the number of these believers. The immanent aspect of this hoped-for future was a society, which respects Christian values and morality (Ibid: 105).

Muukkonen's powerful evocation of the formation of the YMCA missionary work shows how the YMCA ambitions extended beyond the terrain of the religious into multiple domains of public and private life, envisaging a wholesale adoption of Christian values and the 'Whole Man'.

Examining the Paris Basis, Muukkonen considers how recognising their organisation as a 'tool of Christ' (Ibid: 85) allowed YMCA members to work across both geographical and theological borders solidifying the innate sense of Christian brotherhood: 'The mission gave a basic collective identity to the YMCA. In this, identity and mission mingled: to be Christian was to be sent to preach the good news' (Ibid: 106). This stage also gave the YMCA scope to refine its message and mission, with a focus on 'uniting, educating and sending' young men: 'It was not a restricted club but essentially a missionary movement. The vocation of the movement was to associate the efforts of individuals for one purpose: extension of God's Kingdom.... Unity of Christians was a witness for those who do not believe' (Ibid: 105-106).

'A moral empire': Ambiguous Associations at the YMCA

Despite the on-going expansion of their 'moral empire', YMCAs experienced tensions and ambiguities in their work, chiefly in parallel with actual military, political and cultural 'imperialism' that threatened their original Evangelical mission (see Flipse et al 2010; Rosenberg 1982; Tyrell 2010). Exploring the 'growing international interdependency' of the American nation, Ian Tyrell (2010) has explored how early missionary movements were borne out of American expansionism and a 'moral coalition' of reform groups who 'often thought of their work as analogous to empire—but a kind of Christian moral empire that rose above 'nation,' and one nobler in aspiration than the grubby motives of gold and glory' (p.4). In his portrait of what he calls the 'transnational organizing of American Protestant Christians seeking to change the world' (Ibid: 6) he shows how networks of moral reformists driven by new communications technologies served to create a moral platform, or global 'vision' (Ibid: 4) for American imperialism, establishing 'strong assumptions and even institutions and practices that survived to become part of the foundations of American global power in the twentieth century' (Ibid: 6). His study shows how 'the ferment of missionary enthusiasm' channelled through networks of both cooperation and commercial power

produced a dominant ‘matrix of moral reform that pushed an American way of organizing Protestant religion abroad’ and lent authority to the American national project itself (Ibid: 8)

Despite these intertwined moral agendas, Tyrell’s study, also highlights how the relationship between American imperial interests and missionaries were far from harmonious, often diverging on points of morality, indigenous rights and colonial tactics of oppression and control (Ibid: 8). Consequently, the failures of traditional missionary work necessitated the development of novel approaches based on the successful urban work of American YMCAs. This altered the gender dynamics of mission work: ‘The tensions inherent in an attempted masculinization of a crusade where women as missionaries were increasingly vital bearers of faith acted as a spur to continual innovation in the structures of organized moral reform’ (Ibid: 8).

These disjunctures between old and new played out in tensions between the American and British arms of the YMCA, as the American secretaries used the financial weight of their allies to back up their brand of more man-centred Evangelisation (ibid: 88). Particularly in India, the American YMCAs were suspicious of the static hierarchies in the British units which seemed to serve outdated colonial interests rather than the newly refashioned purposes of the movement as they conceived it (ibid: 88). Natives were often excluded from the British YMCA buildings, whereas American YMCAs viewed young indigenous men as their core target group, key to disrupting the burgeoning forces of nationalism and religious fervour that were engulfing the nation, even sending out missions themselves (ibid: 89). As Tyrell observes, in Japan, both approaches singularly failed, only the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 allowed the YMCA to gain a foothold through emergency relief efforts (see also Gems 2008). This marked a shift in emphasis from overt missionary work to more generic social service which would define both their overseas work and their continuing success at home (ibid: 96).

By the same token, post-colonial historians have also shown how colonial models of manliness served to undermine and appropriate local forms of manhood and masculine behaviour, creating a racialised ‘cult of masculinity’ (Mjagkij 1997: 152) based on a constructed concept of ‘whiteness’ (see Carrington 2010; Morell 2001; Ouzgane and Morrell 2005). As Sociologist Ben Carrington’s (2004) work on the black diaspora has shown, sport was central to this process, allowing white imperialists to flex their moral muscle and invalidate an inferior black masculinity (see also Carrington 2010). Carrington describes how sport helped create a ‘white colonial frame’ that buttressed notions of white superiority by using the exaggerated image of ‘the Black athlete’:

Historically, the black athlete developed out of and from a white masculinist colonial fear of loss and impotence, revealing the commingling of sex, class, race and power. The black athlete was created at a moment of impending imperial crisis; the concern that the assumed superiority of colonial whiteness over all others could not, after all, be sustained (p.6).

As black athletes challenged the physical hegemony of white men in the sporting arena, they were increasingly viewed through the colonial frame, their physical 'brawn' providing a biological basis for an evolutionary logic with White man's 'brains' at its apex (Ibid: 6-11; cf. Winslow 2013: 32-34).

In a study of the YMCA expansion into the Phillipines, Gerald Gems (2008) has shown how YMCA leaders, including Luther Gulick, helped facilitate the 'social and historical construction' of 'whiteness' (p.190) by contributing to 'anthropology days' at the St Louis World's Fair of 1904, that pitted natives against YMCA athletes in a series of events designed to demonstrate physical prowess and 'accentuated the physical debility of non-whites' (Ibid: 210). Awarded the Phillipines in the wake of the Spanish-American War of 1898, the American authorities used the 1904 event as a propaganda event to justify its continuing occupation over the Filipino people to demonstrate 'a public exhibition of white American might' and a 'benevolent American imperialism' (Ibid: 194-195). As Gems describes, this event helped solidify evolutionary ideas being cultivated by social scientists²⁷ and imperialists both:

Whiteness meant more than skin color. It included the adherence to a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (wasp) middle-class value system, with its particular tenets of morality, discipline, and work ethic. The attainment of whiteness accorded an ethnic group particular rights and privileges as well as social respect. Non-whites who failed to obtain the necessary standards faced ostracism and ridicule. Marked by their 'difference,' such groups became 'Others,' situated at lower positions on the hierarchical racial ladder (Ibid: 190).

Nonetheless, he suggests we historicize the ambiguity of sport as both a site of oppression though a construction of racial superiority and separation, but also as a site of bodily resistance. Similarly, Macaloon (2006a) has detailed how 'Muscular Christianity' became incorporated into several indigenous traditions, challenging its Euro-American roots. He strongly urges us to use 'the transformations of muscular Christianity around the world to break free of the simplistic binary of colonial hegemony and resistance and see into new logics of hybridity and indigenous appropriation' (p. xi).

In the next section, I begin this process by situating each YMCA in question in a particular historical, political and economic context. By examining the complex

²⁷ Indeed, Anthropologists such as Morgan were central to placing 'white' men at the top of the evolutionary pyramid (Gems 2008)

constellations of ethnicity, class and masculinity I explicitly draw out how a system of ‘global morality’ is constructed through entrenched networks of actors and organisations. At the YMCA, I show how this is achieved through interlocking forms of socially and historically contingent masculinity that need to be understood as the YMCA brings its version of masculinity to bear on the young people it works with.

Chapter 4: Ethnographic Contexts: Local and Global Encounters

As I have established the ‘Whole Man’ has a particular historical trajectory through which specific encounters at the local and global level are instigated. Analysing two separate YMCA centres can help to explore how this process is always specific to particular times and places, locked into prevalent forms of knowledge and practice. This type of analysis can also show how the charismatic form of leadership generated by the YMCA is both immediately global and local, personal and impersonal, situating charismatic individuals in broader structures of meaning, power and social change and offering a route to understanding the continued endurance of the YMCA.

In this section, I situate these factors in each specific local context, analysing how the charismatic characters working at the YMCA are formed amidst complex processes of gender, ethnicity and religiosity. I explore how the YMCA organisational apparatus work in different contexts as individual YMCAs adapt to rapidly changing environments inflected by specific historical, political, economic and socio-cultural configurations. However, I also show how YMCAs alter their outer organisational shells whilst retaining an inner Christian core, developing sophisticated, hybrid modes of engagement and identity that need to be understood in a particular context of changing relationships between faith, neoliberalism and gender. Only through this type of comparative understanding can we understand how the YMCA is both replicating the tensions felt by the early YMCA founders between the internal cohesion of the movement and the outward facing engagement with society and community and developing new modes of doing development the YMCA way.



Figure 5. Portraits of Brighton: disused shop units in central Brighton (left) and the more suburban area of Hove where the YMCA is based (right).

Local Encounters: Brighton and Hove, UK

Located on the south Coast of Great Britain, the small city of Brighton and Hove (pop. circa 250,000) is an important, transport, tourist, commuter and administrative hub in the county of East Sussex. Historically a small fishing town, Brighton transformed in the 19th century becoming a popular ‘health’ resort before gaining the patronage of the Prince Regent, and, via improved railway links, becoming a place for the wealthy of Southern England to congregate (Lyons 2011, 2013). This trend continued into the latter half of the 20th century, boosted by the establishment of Sussex University in 1961 which fuelled an intellectual and economic boom (Lyons 2011, 2013). Today, Brighton has become an enormously popular tourist destination gaining a reputation for hedonistic revelry, where, on Friday and Saturday nights, stag and hen parties vie with students, the local populace and a vibrant gay scene in the many nightclubs, casinos, bars and strip joints that dominate the city centre. At the same time, the city has become known as ‘London-by-the sea’ and ‘silicon beach’, a hub for technological innovation, creative industries and entrepreneurial enterprise, attracting international investment and acclaim (Norris 2013).

Despite, this apparently vibrant image, Brighton has always been a divided city. Formed in 2000 through a merger of Brighton and Hove, the resistant Hove residents use the term ‘Hove Actually’ to differentiate themselves from their less affluent Brighton neighbours across the fiercely protected border. This sense of division carries through into the County of East Sussex which, although one of the most affluent areas in England suffers from several forms of deprivation including housing shortages, increases in child poverty, unemployment and severe skills shortage, all of which have worsened since the 2008 financial crisis began (ESCC 2010).

Indeed throughout its history of recreation and pleasure, lies a thread of inequality and social problems. Brighton always had a poorer community, unable to access the excess of the wealthy citizens, visitors and patrons, (D’Enno 2007). Brighton has also had a long history of criminality, illicit drug-taking and youth violence. In the 1960s Brighton seafront formed the battleground for the ‘mods’ versus ‘rockers’ youth riots that became a keystone of youth-based social science (e.g. Cohen 1972). Brighton’s alternative history is also ‘alternative’ politically, gaining a reputation for radical, cultural politics, particularly in opposition to the first wave of neoliberal reforms instigated under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. Understanding Brighton, then, means understanding the historic segregation of its space, and the contestations that have subsequently taken place over it. Some contestations are still on-going in the current time of neoliberal restructuring, as spaces are increasingly policed, depoliticised and sanitised, rendering invisible the potential new forms of inequality that might arise (cf. Peck et al 2013).

This sense of liminality within a diverse urban context is also more marked in Brighton than in other UK cities due to the tourist and migratory element, where Brighton is seen as a fun-time city by the sea, and casinos, clubs and strip clubs are part of the economy that keeps it going but in which local young people can only partially participate. Yet young people in Brighton often also live in and off the city, gaining employment, opportunities or accessing services, such as those at the YMCA. It is precisely in the spaces between these tensions of exclusion and inclusion that the YMCA operates, and to which I now turn.

‘A Christian Culture’: Locating FBOs in the UK Policy Context

A history of Sussex Central YMCA, then, has to be located across these interlocking vectors of doubly imagined young men and an increasing neoliberalisation and systematisation of the public sphere. Founded in 1919 in an affluent area of the city known as Hove (as ‘Hove YMCA’), Sussex Central YMCA struggled through much of the 20th Century as a local community centre before developing in the last twenty years to become a leading organisation in homelessness and youth development across the county. The recent

name change to Sussex Central signifies a change in fortunes as more youth services have been outsourced from central and local government allowing the YMCA to expand its remit and staff levels, branching out from its original base in Hove to operate across East and West Sussex. Their upwards trajectory is reflected in a recent merger with Guildford YMCA (Surrey) to form a regional ‘super-YMCA’ called ‘the Downslink Group’²⁸ allowing them to bid for much larger funding contracts on a national scale.

In spite of this progression, a recent campaign to ‘Save Hove YMCA’ illustrates the crossroads confronting the organisation. The controversy centres around the demolishing of the YMCA’s Marmion Road site in Hove, which now dilapidated, is being sold to property developers. On one hand the impassioned community response against the move has made explicit the affection felt for the YMCA. On the other, the YMCA’s response has been an equally passionate explanation of their difficulties in making their decision coupled with a more sober description of the difficult economic conditions faced by the YMCA amidst the changing nature of charity work in England. These opposite polarities are reflected in the identification of the YMCA under its familiar but obsolete name of ‘Hove YMCA’ rather than Sussex Central or Downslink. As well as a lingering link to its role in the community, this situation reflects a dissonance in the perception of the YMCA that, as it chases larger funding contracts and recognition, it might be losing touch with the community roots, the ‘love’ at the heart of its original Christian function.

This on-going controversy reflects the YMCA’s imbrication in wider forms of socio-economic transformation that have ineluctably altered their relations with the communities they serve, their young clientele and even their loyal workforce. As social scientists have documented, in the UK FBOs have become increasingly important as social welfare has been ‘outsourced,’ becoming pivotal to a post-secular restructuring of state provision of social services that has acknowledged the longstanding expertise of religiously motivated groups (Baker 2012; Johnsen 2012). The persistence of faith groups in the public sphere is also symptomatic of the UK’s dogged ‘Christian culture’ which sees faith groups occupy a disproportionate level of authority and prestige in an ostensibly ‘secular’ public sphere²⁹ (Davie 2006). As Davie (2006) discusses Britain has a particularly sympathetic relationship with Christianity due in part to its integration as part of the British cultural bedrock, a lingering but powerful attachment to churches and cathedrals and a growing legitimisation of ‘public religion’ through the growth of religion worldwide (p.280- 285). To capture the

²⁸ This name references the South Downs National Park which spans the South Coast of England from Hampshire to East Sussex.

²⁹ As Davie (2012) notes, despite the statistics showing a gradual decline in both church attendance and spiritual practice in England, the Church of England has largely withdrawn from the provision of welfare but retains a ‘critical voice’ and an important social and ceremonial role in critiquing government policy (p. 595).

current role of Christianity in Britain today as ‘believing without belonging’ (Davie 2006: 277), Davie has coined the term ‘vicarious religion’ to express a ‘notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing’ (Davie 2006: 277).

She discusses how Britain forms something of an unusual case in terms of historic Christianity with powerful religious figures still an integral part of the public sphere and a population when 70 % of people claim to be Christian, even when the majority of evidence indicates the opposite (p. 281-284). As she discusses, this creates a ‘paradoxical’ and ambiguous status for religion in Britain where it is split between its institutions (i.e. a state church model of religious organization), and ‘its philosophical (secular-humanist public sphere) ideals resulting in ‘two rather different outcomes: on the one hand, the decline in the historic churches of Britain is entirely in line with its European neighbours; on the other, relatively high levels of religious toleration resonate more with the American case’ (Ibid: 290). In part, she argues this is fuelled by an increasing ‘American-style’ orientation around choice and self-development which emphasise experience and an imminent God (God within) over a transcendent, abstract form of worship ‘best summarized as a shift from a culture of obligation or duty to a culture of consumption’ (Ibid: 281). This sense of a ‘spiritual marketplace’ (Heelas and Woodhead 2005) is given encouragement within a climate where greater convergence between world faiths and forms of religion create a growing public acceptance and tolerance of religious belief what Jurgen Habermas (2006) has called ‘a self-reflective transcending of the secularist self-understanding of Modernity’ (p. 15; cited in Davie 2006: 290)

Indeed she notes that Britain and Europe could be seen as exceptional cases in their non-religious public spheres as ‘in global terms they are not a global prototype’ and ‘Europeans are beginning to realize that Europe is secular not because it is modern, but because it is European’ (Ibid: 5). She concludes that new conceptual tools are needed to grasp the complexities of this rapidly changing secular-sacred relationship and the multiple forms of mobility allowing religious ideas and practice to infiltrate even deeper into previously inviolable secular heartlands: ‘No longer is it possible simply to place individuals into boxes of those who ‘practise’ and those who do not, given that the great majority of European people lie somewhere between the two’ (Ibid: 284).

Studying the YMCA ethnographically offers a way of seeing how these complexities play out in ‘reality’ as YMCAs and YMCA workers adapt to fit their varying circumstances to contemporary British life. Following one YMCA over time can also show how the YMCA has shifted its priorities to face the challenges of the changing policy and funding context. This has been reflected in two key alterations in the YMCA’s approach: corporatisation and

professionalisation, one necessarily leading to the other. Firstly, over the last decade the rebranding of the YMCA has had a marked effect on the organisation's corporate identity and relationship with the community. When I first joined the YMCA in 2006, one of my early tasks was to help administer the new website. This meant, in effect, helping to create a new corporate identity. The negotiations over this identity reflected how the surrounding context was shifting. Funding was increasingly being allocated to large national or regional service providers who could boast a clear identity and demonstrable expertise.

At that time, Hove YMCA was diffuse, made up of several different autonomous centres spread around Brighton and Hove including: several hostels offering beds to young homeless people; several youth oriented advice centres for sexual health, careers and housing; counselling in schools; sports clubs and sport in local schools; youth clubs; youth engagement; and finally several charity shops. Many of these services were disconnected and loosely managed, some of them, operating as independent units under their own 'youth friendly' names such as 'Safe and Sorted' or the Youth Advice Centre.' As the management teams sought to bring these disparate elements under one corporate banner, it emerged that a number of these centres wanted to retain their identity in the local community, pointing out that their success was predicated on the appearance of neutrality and autonomy. In addition, it was pointed out that the YMCA label could put young people off using their services, a clear statement that the C of the YMCA had been eclipsed by the Y³⁰.

Secondly, moves to change the YMCA's image were also connected to changes in staffing and general outlook, dictated and driven by a changing work context. As Berger et al (2002) have discussed, processes of professionalisation often result in processes of secularisation, as the goals of faith are subsumed to the goals of government. As documented in the opening chapter, Sussex Central YMCA is connected into multiple faith-based networks with many key managers regularly attending church. However, though the Board of Trustees remains resolutely Christian, all prominent businessmen or community leaders, the Christian element has gradually been scaled back in its everyday work in a number of ways: Christian statements were minimised in or removed from contracts and other induction and Human Resources materials; the monthly prayer letter was replaced by a staff bulletin; the role of peripatetic pastoral worker, occupied by a local priest was quietly abandoned; and significantly the management team went from a majority of churchgoers to a minority.

These changes reflect an unspoken, but coordinated process of secularisation that aligns with both UK law and the greater transparency and accountability required by UK

³⁰ In the US, the YMCA has dropped the MCA completely becoming simply 'The Y.'

government. It also reflects other processes under this remit that have sought to professionalise the youth sector in a more general sense (see Bradford 2004; cf. Johnston-Goodstar and VeLure 2013). Staff have been retrained or sponsored to gain nationally recognised qualifications and become part of professional bodies. Mostly staff have had to accept these changes but problems have arisen when settled staff have resisted the changes. Linked to this, is the rapidly fluctuating funding context. As more emphasis has been placed on income generation, smaller scale projects and centres have gradually been eliminated, with staff redeployed within the organisation or let go. I am a case in point, having occupied several roles within the organisation from ICT advisor to Skills for Life officer, even to be made redundant in one role only to be employed in a different role a few months later. This ironically shows the emotional, familial side of YMCA business, showing both how YMCA staff are being buffeted by the changing circumstances of the organisation, but also how the YMCA holds the affection of staff, even as their fates remain uncertain.

Leaning into Uncertainty: Masculinity, Class and FBOs in the UK

The dynamic of uncertainty and familiarity also structures the YMCA's relationships with its young clientele, feeding off wider discourses that define youth as either productive or destructive elements of the social fabric (cf. Amit and Dyck 2012: 15; De Boeck and Honwana 2005; Abbink and Van Kessel 2005). Many of the YMCA clients are drawn from working class or lower-middle class backgrounds or communities where particular social issues (anti-social behaviour; truancy from school; violence; criminality) are painted as problematic, cast as part of a general social 'backwardness' that requires remedial action (Haylett 2001). As Amit and Dyck (2012) point out, in this context the bodies of young men are targeted as sites of reform and rehabilitation creating a double-sided imaginary of youth, that aligns the 'idleness of youths' with 'the deepening inequalities associated with post-industrial shifts in the structure of the labour market and economy' (p. 3; cf. Haylett 2001). As they observe, these associations are often bound up with proscribed narratives of class and social mobility, where education is perceived as a 'panacea' for economic marginalisation and the problems associated with working class neighbourhoods, leading to a prioritisation of values associated with 'middle class' identities (Ibid: 3; cf. Duckworth 2013).

To understand the role the YMCA plays in this process, it is then necessary to analyse class not as a pre-determined socio-economic status, but a product of various relations, self-definitions and performances of class-based identities where 'social collectivises' become 'rooted in particular types of exploitative relationships' (Savage et al 1995: xii; see also Savage et al 2013). As Savage et al (1995) have argued, this is a particularly important when analysing

the British middle classes who have generally be seen as passive cogs in the wider social machinery, a 'lieutenant class' without its own agency or social impact (p. 3). Rather, we need to understand how the middle classes have carved out a position of privilege for themselves in relation to other classes (Savage 1995: 4). Lash and Urry (1987), for example have discussed how the British middle class is also a 'service class,' built out of the need for the professionalisation and specialisation of the growing capitalist economy. As they suggest, the service class occupies 'those places (which) are located within a set of interlocking social institutions that service capital' by performing three key functions: 'to conceptualise the labour process; to control the entry and exercise of labour power within the workplace; and to orchestrate the non-household forms under which labour-power is produced and regulated.' (Lash and Urry 1987: 162). However as Savage et al (1995) point out, this managerial class was also subordinate to the capitalist and landowner classes, especially in early twentieth century Britain, necessitating a deeper acknowledgement of how class and its related status are performed in local contexts along the lines of nuanced relations of exploitation and control (p. 17-19).

In contemporary Britain, tracing this shift in the political-economic discourse is necessary for understanding how a normalised language of skills-based entrepreneurialism that values specific types of learning and socialisation has resulted in a re-entrenchment of working class identities as aggressively counter-cultural (Haylett 2003: 265). As Duckworth (2013) has discussed in relation to adult learning centres, these modes of learning have specific 'class' vectors that originate in a middle class discourse that valorises the 'knowledge economy' and 'pathologises' forms of working class behaviour that inhibit those accessing it (p. 20). This has partly contributed to a rise in disenfranchised hyper-masculinities, articulated through violence, alcohol abuse and misogyny as young men seek arenas beyond work to assert their masculine superiority (Power 2005). For example, in her ethnography of two U.K. schools, Linda McDowell (2003) has documented how young men feel 'lost' or 'redundant' as they cast about for masculine role models to follow in the post-industrial landscape. A perpetual erosion of UK manufacturing and industry in favour of service-based employment, has left young men 'learning to serve' rather than 'learning to labour' (McDowell 2011; cf. Willis 1977). She discusses, how young working class men form their masculinity from the margins, using the resources available to them, their own bodies 'as the disembodied rationality of idealised hegemonic masculinity is contrasted to the strength, agility or sporting prowess that are advantages of subordinate masculinities' (p. 13).

A similar pattern emerges in Gillian Evans (2006) depiction of young boys on a South London council estate locked in a 'big-man' system of prestige, violence and danger. As young men come through this system they learn ways of being masculine that are

incompatible with both school and the poorly paid jobs on offer in the local area: 'The problem, however, is that having a reputation and becoming lord of his own manor, a Bermondsey boy is ill-prepared for the humility required for starting work at the bottom of the employment ladder' (Ibid: 159). This is particularly crucial for understanding how young men bring their behaviours from the street into other spaces such as the school: 'Currently, sport and music are the only alternative, but still legitimate, means that bods have at their disposal to make something of themselves without simultaneously damaging their reputations on the street' (Ibid: 158). She suggests that a complex understanding of how young men help reproduce destructive social norms can also show how they negotiate and overcome them. To illustrate this point, she concludes with the story of an ex-armed robber working to jobs to put his son through school, showing some of her informants were breaking away from the self-destructive culture they were enmeshed in: 'They have, at a young age, experienced it all – crime, booze, drugs and violence – and... he knows that he has got a fight on his hands to save his son from what becoming a Bermondsey bod implies, which is a contender – a big-man in a short-life culture' (Ibid: 175).

In her work on young masculinities, Anoop Nayak (2003) has argued these possibilities are necessarily shaped by global processes as well as local ones, requiring a more systematic focus on how young people use their bodies to reconstruct their identities and sense of agency in line with changing historical, structural and social conditions (p. 169). She makes the point that studying 'whiteness' as it is constructed both locally and globally can also help situate young men's self-making within the complex nexus of changing socio-economic conditions: 'Making whiteness visible can unhinge it from its location as transparent, dominant and ordinary, by placing a renewed emphasis upon it as an activity or practice' (Ibid: 72). Her work is vital for appreciating how young people in the UK construct their identities at the YMCA in tune with both local geographies of manhood and aspiration and forms of manhood, aspiration and success played out on the global stage. She also points towards a way of understanding identity in their processual form, in between realisation and reality that takes into account the multiple imagined possibilities of manhood as well as the actual ways of performing masculinity in the present. Whilst young men may be increasingly influenced by the conditions of neoliberal labour and life, they may also be reinventing themselves for the market, creating new forms of masculinity that need to be analysed as they emerge. In the next section, I analyse this intersection of ideas, history and structural transformation at the Gambia YMCA, showing how it too is part of a broader political economy in which youth and young men are becoming increasingly more central.

Global Encounters: Banjul, The Gambia



Figure 6. Serrekunda Market and the Mosque behind it, The Gambia.

As a small country (1.7 million people), tucked inside Senegal, The Gambia's formation and history is structured by its relations to trade, religion and global interconnections, with its current economic reality structured around a reliance on a precarious combination of Aid and tourism for economic survival (Wright 2004). The Gambia YMCA is also heavily dependent on these connections. Founded in 1979 as an educational and training institute, the YMCA gained support from English missionaries and other YMCAs, growing in stature in the fast-moving Gambian economy. Today the YMCA stretches across the country and plays a leading role in the regional YMCA movement as well as recently being appointed as one of a select group of organisations to advise the government directly on development issues, cementing their position of power within Gambian politics.

In recent times, Gambia's economic history of colonial trade has transitioned neatly into relying heavily on a combination of development assistance, tourism and often detrimental IMF/World Bank restructuring programmes (Wright 2004; Loch-Brown 2007; Saine 2002, 2004). Once part of the great Malian Empire, The Gambia was first colonised by the Portuguese in the early 1500s before being contested by British, French and Dutch settlers (Wright 2004; Gailey 1964). With the British victorious in the 1650s, the Gambia became a transit hub for the slave trade before abolition in 1807 when it became a site for the resettlement of former slaves (Webb 1994; Weil 1984). Although, The Gambia finally became a British protectorate in 1820 and a full colony in 1886, the country was not significantly developed due to its lack of natural resources - apart from the groundnut industry which sustained the British settlers and fuelled the missionary movement (Fredricks 2003). The Gambian economy is currently reliant on a package tourist trade that, despite growing strands of ecotourism and up-market shops, restaurants and hotels catering for a wealthier brand of holidaymaker, has been flagging in the global economic crisis (Gaibazzi 2012).

Gambian economic history is indicative of how processes of both economic and cultural globalization remain intertwined and consistently asymmetrical. In his study of the Gambian tourist industry, Thomas Loch-Brown (2007) has discussed how, despite accounting for almost 20% of Gambia's GDP, for many Gambians tourism has proved to cut both ways, creating a 'spatial polarisation' that replicates colonial inequalities (p. 2-3; see also Wright 2004: 249). He notes how early tourists were attracted by the presence of colonial elites, foreign-owned tourist enterprises 'built by and for whites' and created 'tourist enclaves that separate the tourists from local entrepreneurs and economies' (Loch-Brown 2007: 3). As Loch-Brown suggests, financial benefits have largely been reaped by Western multinational tour operators and consolidated in the hands of small urban elites (Loch-Brown 2007: 2; see also Wright 2004: 247-249). The Gambian Government's version of economic development has also seen broken promises and the funnelling of tourist income back into the tourist areas, diverting resources away from local infrastructures. This has left local communities to cope with the less savoury aspects of increased tourism such as drugs, alcohol abuse and prostitution, further entrenching the sense of separation between the tourists and the locals (Loch-Brown 2007: 2; see also Wright 2004: 247-249; Wright 2011).

As Loch-Brown notes, NGOs and local civil society increasingly fill this gap, moderating the effects of both state and market and mediating between local interests and international development agencies (Loch-Brown 2007: 31; Kea 2004: 19). This has coincided with an international shift onto 'grassroots' forms of development where local parties gain training in order to create sustainable programmes and projects that respond

more efficiently to local interests, needs and identities (Loch-Brown 2007: 31; Elyachar 2005: 10-11; Kea 2004; Mosse and Lewis 2006). For Loch-Brown, only these types of organization can prise open the government procedures that prohibit local people from participating in the economic telos that promises their salvation and, in the next section, I explore the YMCA's development role in this fractious context. (Loch-Brown 2007: 31; see also Elyachar 2005: 10-11).

The Gambia YMCA: An Interfaith History

The history of The Gambia YMCA, then, needs to be understood as part of the YMCA's original ecumenical design, but also in the specific historical contingencies of modern Gambia where ideas of masculinity are structured through complex local and global hierarchies of ethnicity, religion and class. Christianity remains a religion of 'foreigners' in The Gambia (Fredricks 2003: 392), where 90% of the population are Muslims, mostly belonging to Sufi orders, and the various Christian denominations make up only around 5% of all Gambians (Ibid: 3). This makes the YMCA's success even more remarkable, as they have navigated the politics of religion, forming alliances with proselyting religious organisations, secular NGOs and shifting personnel in the Gambian government. This is part due to its ecumenical system of enrollment, where though many of its leaders are Christian and active within the wider Gambian Christian community, many of its clients, workers and volunteers are necessarily from a variety of backgrounds. However, its founding by a Muslim discussed earlier reflects the precarity of its Christian identity and some of the ways the Christian core is maintained amidst a Muslim majority.

The unusual origins of the YMCA reflect both the fluidity of religious identity in The Gambia, but also the illusion of interfaith co-existence maintained by Gambian authorities. The Gambia's colonial heritage supports this multi-faith landscape, with religious festivals of each tradition recognised by the state. However, with resources scarce, for families this celebration multiplied can create tensions and problems. One informant told me, how his father, a prominent member of the local community, had switched from Islam to Christianity and back again, necessitating changes in dress, diet, ritual and community networks on each occasion. My informant described how these 'everyday conversions' (Suchman 1992) were disruptive for himself, the family and community, but that the changes had also been accommodated and integrated into daily life. Coupled to this are the role of interfaith dialogue and tolerance as important parts of Gambian national identity, incorporated into the official state doctrine and reproduced in folk interpretations of Gambian character as

one informant told me, 'Here in The Gambia, Muslims and Christians, we are equal. You have like Nigeria, Muslims and Christians always fight. But Gambia here, no, we don't like that, we are united'³¹ (cf. Fredricks 2003: 158; see also Janson 2014).

For Christian Theologian Martha Fredricks (2003) a history of missionary work in The Gambia is linked directly to its struggle with Islam and how specific ethnic histories intersect with particular associations with colonialism and religion. Like many African countries, The Gambia has a diverse ethnic make-up which feeds into contemporary configurations of politics and neo-patrimonialism³². For example the Fula group have a nomadic history stemming from their pastoral roots combined with an Islamic history of Jihad and were specifically, and in most cases unsuccessfully, targeted by early missionaries due to the so-called 'hamitic' philosophy³³ that suggests that whiter skinned people are genetically related to Europeans and consequently less savage (p. 21). Conversely the Jola people were viewed as 'fierce and wild' and associated with Cannibalism and witchcraft making them much less attractive as objects of conversion (p.12). Primarily inhabiting the Casamance border region in South Gambia, the Jola were largely converted to Islam in the 19th Century but remain divided along gender lines with women and children practicing traditional religion in their homes and the men being Muslim in public. Fredricks also notes how the spread of Islam and Catholicism is split along ethnic lines, with the Jola-Foni group being largely devoted to Islam and smaller sub-groups such as the Karoninka and Manjago being converted to Christianity (p. 32). The Serer also resisted conversion from both Islam and Christianity up until the early 20th century, before mostly joining Islam apart from a small community of around 500 Christians who, with the help of a group of nuns, still hold regular meetings today.

The largest ethnic group, the Mandinka, founded the great Malian Empire, with Timbuktu becoming a renowned centre of Islamic learning in the 12th century and dominating the area of Senegambia as early as the 14th century. However even until the 18th century the Mandinka were split between adherents of traditional religion, the Soninke and Muslim, the Marabouts, resulting in a conflict in the 19th century. Emerging victorious the Muslim Mandinkas sought to convert the remainder of the Mandinka to Islam, resulting in their total Islamisation by the 20th century. Missionaries found it extremely difficult to recruit

³¹ Despite this apparent tolerance, it has often been argued that with Yahya Jammeh coming to power the religious tolerance was substituted for religious rigidity (Janson 2014).

³² The main ethnic groups are the Mandinka (about 41% of the population); the Wolof (15%); the Fula (19%); the Jola (10%); the Serahuli (Soninke) (8%); the Serer (2.5%); the Manjago (1.7%); and the Aku (0.8%), though it is worth noting the Aku are not strictly speaking an ethnic group but an 'artificially' created identity group stemming from returned slaves from Sierra Leone (Fredricks 2002). Each group has a particular history with colonialism and religion. For good summaries see Sonko-Goodwin 1997 and Hughes and Perfect 2007

³³ Deriving from the Enlightenment theory of monogenism

the Mandinkas, often turning to other ethnic groups instead. The result is that, today, there are very few Christian Mandinkas and only recently have a few high profile conversions begun a new process of proselytising in the Mandinka community (see Fredricks 2000 p10-20).

In contrast, the Wolof, the second-largest ethnic group, have been subject to a long process of Islamisation whose origins have been traced to the 11th century (Ibid: 43). This process accelerated in the 19th century under the influence of the Muslim brotherhoods (Tijaya and Mourid) and the brief establishment of an Islamic state in 1861 (Ibid: 44). This time also saw greater persecution of traditional religious beliefs, and only remnants of belief in Witchcraft can be seen today (Ibid: 44). There is also a small but coherent Wolof Christian community in both Senegal and Gambia, usually centred around former Portuguese colonies and in 1829 a Wolof dictionary was even developed to speed this process (Ibid: 47). Today Wolof is used as a liturgical *lingua franca* in Roman Catholic churches directly as a result of these earlier efforts at translation (Ibid: 47) creating a slight issue with young religious leaders aiming to popularise Christianity even further (Ibid: 389).

As Fredricks discusses, despite making small gains with specific ethnic groups, early missionaries attempting to counter the growing threat across Africa that Christianity faced from Islam failed to make any significant headway in the region. Several groups attempted to missionise (Quakers, Roman Catholic, Anglicans and Methodists) but only the Methodists initially prospered, establishing a church and attracting many former slaves (both Krio and Wolof) and European traders (p.393). As Fredricks notes, Methodism was also the only religion to continue trying to convert Muslims in the second half of the twentieth century and has been the most successful denomination in raising indigenous ministers. In contrast, the Anglican diocese of The Gambia was founded in 1935 and initially catered to the small expatriate community, though it has become increasingly important to the Gambian community today, with bishops regularly presiding over religious festivals (p.392).

Nevertheless, as Fredricks notes the history of missionary work in The Gambia is one of 'toil' and despite a surge caused by migration in the 1980s and the churches ongoing outreach work, the Christian population has remained relatively static. One of the ways Methodists, Anglicans and Roman Catholics established a foothold in The Gambia and have maintained their small Christian community today is in building schools (Ibid: 251). Normally based on the English public school model, The Christian schools are an important focal point for YMCA work which they carry forward into project partnership and collaborative events. Many of the school leaders are also leaders within their churches, regularly meeting with YMCA officials to discuss local issues and concerns or share resources. These collaborations also help foster a culture of dynamic leadership as a number

of YMCA volunteers, students and workers are recruited via these connections, identified through their schools or churches as leadership material, forming a vital link in the chain of Christian networks.

The YMCA plays an important part, then, in maintaining the interface between the minority Christian community and the Muslim majority, as well as mediating between different forms of each religion amongst different ethnic groups. One of its programmes in 2003 promoted inter-faith relations, perhaps indicating a need for ongoing and considered dialogue as the nature of religiosity mutates in the twenty-first century. As Fredricks observes, the 'accommodative type of Islam' from which Gambian Islam emerged has allowed both traditional religion and the various strands of Christianity to peacefully co-exist amongst an overwhelming Muslim majority. As Islam spread through The Gambia a growing sense of 'Islamic self-consciousness' saw Muslim groups demand 'the establishment of formal Western-oriented Muslim schools at all levels, the institutionalisation of the traditional Muslim education and the inclusion of Islamic Knowledge as a compulsory subject in the school curriculum' (Ibid: 157). The expansion of these programmes has been facilitated by the support of wealthy Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as well as the array of Islamic NGOs³⁴ who specialise in agricultural and medical aid (p.157).

The role of the YMCA then needs to be understood within the complex historical development of Islam in The Gambia and young men's relationship to its public and global iterations. Public attitudes towards President Jammeh have been shaped by his ostentatious displays of piety: dressing in Islamic fashion, bringing in respected Islamic advisors, marrying the daughter of a respected Moroccan scholar and incorporating a weekly prayer into daily Gambian life (Janson 2005; Darboe 2004: 76). Janson (2005) partially attributes this reformulation of identity to Jammeh's insecure power base and his insecure ethnicity (p. 3). As a Jola, an ethnic group not closely associated with Islam, he was rendered suspect in the eyes of Mandinka Muslim elders loyal to Jawara (Janson 2005: 3). To gain legitimacy and popular support the affirmation of his Islamic identity has helped foster a more stable platform for his presidency whilst pushing Islam onto centre stage in Gambian politics. Jammeh's hardline attitude towards Islamic extremism has made him look stronger in the eyes of nearby states, aligning with his belligerent attitude to the imposition of Western values through NGO work (Janson 2014).

Allied to Jammeh's re-articulation of Islam, is the changing role of NGOs in the Gambian public sphere. Jammeh's often high-profile and capricious denouncement of

³⁴ E.g. Islamic Development Bank, World Islamic Call Council, Islamic Dahwah and Islamic Cultural Development Association.

International NGOs as agents of ‘Western Imperialism’ and ‘neo-colonialism’³⁵ (Opicho 2013)³⁶ have largely been reserved for international development organisations that are perceived as working from the Global North outwards³⁷ with many NGOs still operating, performing welfare services and providing emergency relief. The YMCA plays an important part in the NGO landscape in The Gambia, driving reform around youth opportunities and employment. It helped found the government employment agency ‘GamJobs’ as well as hosting and overseeing the National Youth Council which draws talented youth leaders from different religious communities to implement government policy. The YMCA had been well known in The Gambia for its sports programmes but in recent years they had suffered for a lack of funding, though their famous basketball team ‘The Hawks’ had continued to maintain its dominance. Part of the reason for the dwindling of sports funding has been an increasing focus on ICT development. The YMCA is integral to ICT development in The Gambia, heading up ITAG and hosting events with global and regional organisations to promote ICT skills and infrastructure. The YMCA is also active in local partnership, working with organisations from the religious community as well as straightforward secular international organisations such as ActionAid. Allied to this regional leadership, the YMCA also continues to attract large sums of international funding, even in spite of the broader objections coming from the government, most recently for a multi-million pound project helping young entrepreneurs funded through the British Lottery Fund³⁸ via the YMCA’s development arm Y-Care³⁹.

Historically, this ad-hoc approach to development helps define the YMCA, but distinguishes it from other forms of FBO operating in The Gambia (and worldwide). For many of these FBOs, local branches are often connected into transnational overseeing bodies, who channel funds, personal and expertise through their global bodies. For example, World Evangelism for Christ International (WEC) has been in The Gambia since 1959 with explicit missionary goals, founding The Evangelical Church of the Gambia in 1989 but also engaged in a range of development activities as diverse as teaching literacy, HIV/ Aids awareness and training car mechanics (Fredricks 2003). Operating over a similar period, Catholic organisations such as Caritas and the Catholic Relief Service (CRS) maintain strong links with their respective denominational communities, with the Gambian branch of Caritas known as Catholic Development Office (CaDO) describing itself as ‘the development wing

³⁵ A representative of the EU was recently expelled after the EU withdrew several million Euros worth of funding over The Gambia’s poor human rights record.

³⁶ Jammeh has threatened to ‘slit the throats’ of homosexuals (BBC News 2015).

³⁷ Such as the UN, EU, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

³⁸ This was the first overseas project funded by BLF who normally support charities in the UK.

³⁹ Y-Care International is a separate arm of the combined United Kingdom YMCAs set up to provide development support and assistance for YMCAs around the world.

of the Catholic Church in 'The Gambia' (Caritas 2015; see also CRS 2015). Other organisations operate on a smaller scale, with funding and support coming via the global religious movement rather than in conjunction with the development structures. For example, the Anglican Mission Development Ministries (AMDM) was founded in 1991 to systematise the existing 'socio-economic programs' run by the Anglican diocese and there are also several well-established Baptist missions linked to popular local churches.

As non-proselytizing movement, the YMCA is part of these communities but does not receive funding from churches or church-affiliated groups. This makes its funding streams more precarious, but also means it moves fluidly between local, regional and national partnership, and retains a sense of distance from its missionary roots. On the other hand, the YMCA is a difficult organisation to define precisely because in a number of ways it is a unique organisation, neither transnational FBO nor community-based grassroots activist organisation, but incorporating elements of both into its organisational structure. As such, it needs to be understood as both, a hybrid entity born out of the conjunctures of specific historical contingencies which can only be understood through ethnographic engagement (Yarrow 2011).

Africa Rising: The 'Moral Economy' of Youth

'Empowering youth for the African renaissance'

- New motto of the Gambia YMCA

I analyse the self-making processes of the young leaders at the YMCA in this context, in multiple dialogues with their managers, their elders, their families, commercial leaders and the state mediated through the YMCA. At the Gambia YMCA young men are asked to reinvent themselves in accordance with a series of economic and moral imperatives that align with the economic values being promoted by the state and an emergent and entrepreneurial 'global middle class' (Cohen 2004). Though the YMCA clientele are drawn from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and like many Gambians from poor backgrounds, its managers are all part of the affluent emerging middle class, from wealthy educated families. As Yarrow (2011) has explored, NGO work in Africa can often be seen as a way of exercising prestige in a resource poor environment as well as demonstrating modes of faith, social compassion and activism and even radical politics. In this context, the YMCA can be understood as part of a wider civil society and development apparatus that targets youth as an indicator of poverty and underdevelopment, and links the 'empowerment' of poor young people with

skills for the global economy with the empowerment and enrichment of the nation (see Werbner 2004).

This dynamic particularly emerges in the new motto of the YMCA ‘Empowering youth for the African Renaissance,’ a statement of intent and purpose that links into a rebranding drive termed ‘Africa Rising’⁴⁰ where the positive business opportunities available in Africa are foregrounded in place of the usual narrative of poverty and despair (Mahajan 2011). The new YMCA vision places young people squarely at the forefront of this initiative, tasked with changing young Africans from ‘subjects to citizens’ and ‘creating independent citizens capable of actualizing their potential, actively taking charge of their destiny’ (Schellhammer and Schellhammer 2011: 14).

This moral agenda also needs to be analysed in the context of an emergent set of values associated with the emergent, and loosely defined, African middle classes. As Behrends and Lentz (2012) have explored a convergence of disparate groups and interests, the African middle class is expanding rapidly, fuelled by growth industries, global links and a focus on education that aligns with middle class ideas in the Global North (see also Cohen 2004; Werbner 2004). This affluent transnational conglomeration also have the wherewithal to drive the moral and political agenda, often placing themselves and their families in positions of influence and in some contexts creating an increasingly homogenous public sphere (Cohen 2004).

The economic and political power of the African diaspora has also contributed to this growth in influence, as both economic and cultural ties have created a globalisation of ‘moral economies’ that has empowered many Africans both at home and abroad to seek more localized and interpersonal forms of development action and political intervention (see for example Davies 2012; McGregor 2014). In this context, local NGOs have become important hubs of global feeling and association, connecting diverse interests and helping to circulate forms of moral orthodoxy which leech into development priorities more generally (Jones 2012).

Despite the growing power of NGOs in Africa, their power needs to be seen in the context of increasing inequality and a general distrust of elites and leaders. As Cohen (2004) has documented in the Moroccan context, in many developing African states the middle classes were traditionally associated with the pursuit of education, employment, and material security linked to the furthering of state-led objectives for development (see also Werbner 2004). However, this association has shifted with the neoliberalisation of African economies

⁴⁰ For example Mahajan (2011) writes that Africa is ‘still undervalued as a consumer market’ (p. xi).

that has retrained the focus of those situated in the middle income bracket away from national and local interests to the amorphous, unregulated global market (Cohen 2004).

In the Gambian media, the economic burden placed on youth is clearly yoked to ideals of manhood and narratives of moral adulthood. These debates take place alongside debates over the role of Islamic piety in the public sphere which often converge to exert extra and sometimes conflicting pressures on young men (see Janson 2014). Consequently, different versions of manhood are constantly being discussed and reconfigured as young men are discouraged from taking the ‘backway’ out of Gambia⁴¹ or ‘drinking Attayya’⁴², to ‘return to the land’ and to help their nation (Gaibazzi 2012). These discourse often play out in terms of specific categories of manhood that adhere to a stereotypical polarized vision of youth as ‘makers’ or ‘breakers’ of the nation (see Honwana and De Boeck 2006). Young men are actively encouraged to ‘get serious’, or to work hard and conform to standards of education, work and religious discipline in order to succeed and ‘build the nation’⁴³. Yet, they are simultaneously berated as lazy, lackadaisical or ‘being stubborn’ for lacking the aspirational dynamism required by their nation and families. This discourse often has an undercurrent of criminality and danger associated with it, and is also connected to the tourist trade where young men notoriously cultivate relationships with European women for economic gain (Loch-Brown 2007).

These first two categories also interact and conflict with globally defined ideas of manhood that shift in line with global politics and media representations. Rather than aspiring to become Gambian leaders, many young men aspire towards becoming global football and hip-hop superstars. Amongst Gambian youths, these types of heavily mediatized figures are said to have ‘swagger’ which has helped them accumulate money, status and the ability to help the poor countries from which they emerged⁴⁴. Swagger is a nebulous term defined as ‘A demeanor of confidence, coolness, and togetherness. Someone with Swagger gives off an aura of comfortability with his/her self. ... commonly referred to as Swag or Swagga’ (Urban Dictionary 2015). Young Gambians self-identify with ‘swagger’ as part of a complex imaginary of global and local ideals, where success is framed in relation to economic power and conspicuous consumption but often linked to the ability to provide for their families (see Gabriel 2011).

For young men at the YMCA the navigation of these multiple forms of manhood is rarely straightforward, and I use this study to show how an analysis of the YMCA can

⁴¹ Gambians were shown to be the third largest group in migrants taking the route through Libya to Italy.

⁴² Attayya is the sweet mint tea many Gambians drink socially, but which has become associated with unemployed or criminal youth.

⁴³ <http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/a-successful-2014-for-standard-chartered-bank-says-ceo-mukwereza>

⁴⁴ Akon is funding an ‘electricity project’ and Drogba has built hospitals and schools in his home country.

contribute to contemporary debates around ‘waithood’ and the growing difficulties for young African men to attain ideals of manhood (see Honwana 2013; Mains 2007; Sommers 2012). In The Gambian context, Chant and Jones (2005) have shown how traditional routes of attaining a livelihood necessary to adulthood have been disrupted, asking

If education per se is not necessarily the best route to overcoming privation, if social networks are more important to work and ‘life’ trajectories of young people, and if we understand poverty as intergenerational and/or as a ‘family affair’, we need to better understand why apparently dynamic livelihood creating opportunities such as education, training, and even work in growing sectors such as IT, do not remove more from poverty. Is it because there is simply not enough work to go around, or, as many participants argued, because educational provision is not harmonised with the job market? (p. 196; see also Chant and Jones 2009)

Similarly, Honwana (2013) has shown how youth are disproportionately impacted by the inequalities at the heart of endemic poverty. As work in rural areas evaporates, young men and women flood to urban areas in search of work, increasing competition and decreasing the likelihood of actually finding stable employment, pushing them into informal work or the informal sector. For young Gambians coming to the coast, this is particularly relevant as Ebola-hit tourist resorts shut down⁴⁵, even the opportunities for casual labour diminish. As one informant recently told me, Gambia is looking like a ‘ghost town.’

Nonetheless, Honwana also argues that for some young men, the process of exclusion has had an unforeseen effect, giving them room to reinvent forms of manhood antithetical to their peers and families (cf. Esson 2013; Masquelier 2013; cf. Jeffrey 2010). As traditional patriarchal structures have been destabilised, young men have sought alternative arenas to express their manliness, creating new, uncharted routes of self-actualisation. For example, Paolo Gaibazzi (2013b) has shown how young Gambian men have turned the immobility of their situation on its head, allowing them to reinvent themselves and their masculinity (see also Gaibazzi 2010, 2012, 2013a). In his study of Soninke (Serehuli) farmers he shows how farming has been re-conceptualised as a form of ‘hustling, the embodied dispositions of hard work on the farm rendered continuous with forms of enterprise on the street. For his informants farming is a disciplining technology in two senses. Firstly, farming operates as way of training the body and developing strength for ‘hustling’, travelling out from the local area to find money. Secondly, it also implicates the body in a complex ‘moral economy’ of ‘intergenerational reciprocity’ where kinship relations are constituted through powerful feelings of empathy and filial duty. This shift allows young men to frame their immobility in positive terms of future movement: ‘The ambition to emigrate gives an aim

⁴⁵ The Ebola virus primarily impacted Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea but holidaymakers associated West Africa as a region with the emergency (Farge 2015).

and directionality to dispositions that are instilled in the young men through other means' (p. 260).

Analysing youth in this way helps us understand forms of YMCA masculinity as part of a plurality of masculinities as models of ideal manliness are constructed and modulated through social relations (see Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994; Cornwall 2000) and social imaginaries (Weiss 2009; Warren 2003). For example, Stephen Miescher (2005) has shown how masculinities need to be understood in diverse fields of public and private performance, veering in and out of subordinate and dominant versions of manhood and intersecting with multiple realms of social being (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994; Hodgson 2002; Pype 2007; also Butler 1990, 1993; Cornwall 2005; Mckittrick 2003). In his study of a Ghanaian Presbyterian college school he uses life histories of male teachers to show how the Christian masculine identities promoted within the school intersected with complex forms of ethnicity, class and age, shifting over time and in different contexts. As he writes: 'Although these men's sense of self was deeply affected by their prolonged education, neither a Presbyterian form of masculinity nor *Akan* ideals around senior masculinity and...big man status became fully dominant and hegemonic' (p.102). In the next section I show how YMCA ideals of leadership are constructed around ideals of manhood and vice versa. In other words, being a good man is analogous to being a good leader. I also show that YMCA versions of ideal manhood are informed by various forms of masculine behaviour: being emotional, being friendly and being faithful to the organisation and its ethos all of which align with the historic 'Whole Man' model.

Part I: The Ethics of Leadership

Chapter 5: Charismatic Associations: Friendship, Family and Faith at the YMCA

‘The YMCA... It’s a family home, where you fall back to.’

- Joseph Peacock, Gambia YMCA Programme Manager



Figure 11. Sussex YMCA mural painted in GYMCA gym on recent trip.

Several months after my initial fieldwork period, I returned to Gambia YMCA with a group of youths and teachers to do a series of projects and activities. This trip was designed to be part of both their self-development and the development of the on-going relationship between Sussex Central YMCA and The Gambia. To mark the occasion I was asked to speak at a Sports Leadership graduation. Before I spoke, Joseph Peacock, the Programme Manager,

and Deputy National General Secretary (NGS) made a short speech. He described to the assembled guests how I became part of the ‘family’ while I was at the YMCA and how he was glad to see me return with my friends from Sussex Central YMCA. He went on to extol the value of friendship, expressing his hope that this visit could be just one more illustration of the fantastic friendship between both YMCAs and between the Gambia YMCA and me. After thanking him, I returned his sentiments, telling how we had arrived to help The Gambia YMCA once again. I expressed my sincere hope that our friendship could continue on indefinitely into the future.

Once I had presented certificates to the gathered students, the group moved to the gym to begin their allotted task: to renovate Joe’s dilapidated gym that had been the home of the Sports Leadership project for some twelve months of my fieldwork. After whitewashing the walls, one of the young men painted a huge graffiti mural spelling out YMCA on one of the walls. Others sprayed messages of sporting motivation (‘no pain, no gain’, ‘sport4life’). Another group dipped their hands in blue paint and created a bright blue ‘web of hands’ across another wall. Before we left, the graffiti artist was asked to sign his creation. Above his newly painted mural he wrote ‘Sussex’ and his local ‘tag’, effectively signing his artwork from all of us and from his own neighbourhood, memorialising our small contribution to the Gambia YMCA’s long history of global friendship.

In this section I consider how Peacock’s valorisation of friendship both wrote me in to the history of the YMCA and gestured towards wider forms of ‘charismatic’ business practice at work within the YMCA infrastructure. As our visit symbolised, at Gambia YMCA the on-going search for globalised support is inscribed onto the YMCA walls where faded messages and memories of funding, programmes, projects and ultimately people who have contributed to the present day form of the YMCA pepper the cracked paintwork. Yet these superficial hieroglyphs of global encounter also tell a deeper story of organisational growth, success and even struggle where the very brickwork of the YMCA buildings have been built from the ever increasing reserves of global goodwill generated through YMCA partnerships. In both contexts building friendships is seen as a necessary survival strategy, an act of faith in a capricious marketplace. In this chapter I explore how these ‘acts of faith’ are part of a faith-based orientation towards dependency as well as part of an entrepreneurial predisposition towards networked, nepotistic and deep-rooted commercial relationships, probing how closely the neoliberal form of entrepreneurialism converges with the YMCA version.

In each location, I show how these enactments of entrepreneurialism are clothed in similar but context-specific languages of ‘personalisation’, where the formal world of commerce is re-defined through the vocabularies of relationship and personal connections.

Although both of these registers of ‘friendship’ and ‘kinship’ are traditionally associated with the private sphere, they have become increasingly recognised as part of public life, civil society and the workplace (Desai and Killick 2013; Bell and Coleman 1999; Evans 2013). Peacock’s instrumental view of friendship raises important questions about the types of relatedness present in YMCA business and management practice that link into understanding how an ‘economy of affect’ might function at the YMCA.

Using a series of interconnected portraits of YMCA leaders, I show how these languages of friendship work charismatically, through magnetic personalities who also seek out other magnetic colleagues, connections and employees establishing a culture of ‘charismatic’ leadership that becomes a template for a secular, charisma divorced from the connection to God but invested with the same characteristics and credentials. As each leader is judged on their ability to generate networks, on specific material results, I explore how their own ideas of ‘doing business’ balance out with their personal ethics of ‘doing good’ whether framed by faith or not. In a number of cases faith fades into the background as the YMCA managers simply seek to survive and nurture their organisations or personnel, managing the demands of earning an income amidst the uncertain climate of civil society. I consider the ways charismatic leaders are judged in this precarious context, assessed on their ability to ‘act’ out their charismatic entrepreneurialism on a daily basis, believing in themselves and their methods as much as their work or their God. Taken together I explore how these stories demonstrate how the YMCA cultivates a clear ‘ethics’ for their leaders to follow, rooted in faith and morality but, ultimately, designed to filter out into the wider reaches of the world beyond, providing a ‘best practice’ model for both charismatic leadership and charismatic manhood.

Part 1: ‘If I like your face’: The Value of Friendship at Gambia YMCA

‘We do all the going. We do all the talking. We do all the networking. We do all the friendship. We do all the partnership building.’

- Joseph Peacock, GYMCA Programme Manager

Moving through my fieldwork, I could hardly help but notice the signs of transformation wrought through multiple processes of partnership and friendship in each location that seemed central to notions of a YMCA identity based on mobility and interconnection. In fact, at both Gambia and SCYMCA, transformation was occurring before my very eyes. During my time at each organisation, both YMCAs were embarking on costly programmes of renovation and construction enabling them to cope with the demands

of their business in the coming years. Contrasted with this welcome physical transformation was a more nebulous anxiety over the future leadership of each YMCA, necessary material metamorphosis cast against the enforced casting aside of incumbent father figures.

In The Gambia, where resources are scarce and prices rising by the day, Sam Thorpe, the National General Secretary (NGS) for twenty years, has just resigned peremptorily, an event foregrounded by the sudden appearance of workmen renovating the neglected YMCA complex. The enormous mango tree that had begun to grow into the roof of their employment centre has finally being trimmed, to the relief of many of the staff. At the hostel building, a team of precariously balanced painters are changing the dull yellow of its walls to a brilliant white. When I ask how they have funded these sudden changes after so many years of difficulty, they tell me about Y-Plus, an initiative where local businessmen provide funds in return for a share of any income generated from YMCA programmes, an innovative approach to both development work and partnership.

For many Gambia YMCA leaders, Y-Plus is an extension of the array of contacts and relationships cultivated over many years. Most of the Gambia YMCA managers are well-known figures in the local community as well as being vital cogs in the middle class machinery that runs Gambian civil society. As such they heavily rely on their connections with other powerful individuals, particularly in times of crisis and scarcity. However it must also be noted that these 'friendships' or relationships of reciprocity are not formed at times of crisis, but nurtured over years, through families, friendships and personal connections, doing favours back and forth, and offering aid at other people's times of crisis. Within the modest landscape of Gambian civil society, most managers and leaders operate in this fashion, rubbing shoulders with the counterparts at social occasions, government functions and at regular meeting places such as the church or mosque.

Leaving his post after 20 years, outgoing Gambia YMCA National General Secretary Sam Thorpe is uniquely positioned to describe how the Gambia YMCA was built through friendship, trust and faith. When I visited him in his plush compound a few minutes' walk from the YMCA, it hit home what a change it would be for both the YMCA and Sam to lose this deep-seated connection after so many years. Whenever I had mentioned the YMCA in other parts of The Gambia, Sam Thorpe's name had been the first to be mentioned and for many former YMCA associates he was synonymous with the organisation, a living embodiment of an organisational imperative. As I discovered, when talking to Sam this 'culture of association' was no coincidence, but part of a long tradition of cultivating and nurturing different forms of friendship and connection. As Sam describes, the YMCA global platforms are unusual in a development context as they specifically encourage interpersonal connection at all levels: It is the individual: 'If I like your face, I come to you. That is what

I've learned. If I like your face I come to you. You know you have your sign there. Relationships start on the personal level.' In turn, YMCAs are encouraged to send their National General Secretaries to the series of YMCA meetings such as the World Council which meets every four years and to the Africa Alliance which has a bi-annual meeting, usually to its headquarters in Nairobi. As Sam describes here these events provide opportunities for YMCAs to initiate and cultivate personal relationships that might be extendable into inter-YMCA partnerships:

With Kenya YMCA we were having a relationship because I was a very close with the then NGS. You know the story of the YMCA's having partners. It's because of the leadership meeting somewhere, getting together and that is how the relationship would start... That is an avenue where you can introduce yourself to other YMCAs.

As Sam goes on to discuss, these affective associations are shaped through individual experience of shared learning which can be told and re-told as part of YMCA history. For example, his Sierra Leonean counterpart came to Gambia YMCA as a refugee before rising to the position of NGS: 'He stayed here and we offered him computer training... and he volunteered here...and he's doing very well. That's a very strong connection.'

For Sam these long-term connections seemed crucial to the YMCA way of doing business where the story of his colleague's ascent mirrors his own creating a communal sense of transformation. This not only forges an affective link based on mutuality and shared history, it recreated the valorisation of affect as an organising principle (cf. Bellagamba 2006a). This idea of friendship mutates when he discusses global forms of partnership at the YMCA that have higher stakes resting on their performance and maintenance. As he discusses here, the Gambia YMCA was literally built through these types of transnational intra-YMCA partnerships, friendships and alliances, the architecture of association injected into every brick:

They have a lot of friends (the YMCA). Those structures, like the hostel structure, the 1st floor and the ground floor were built by Swedish YMCA, the first building, the aerobics room, is funded by them too. The story goes the proposal was given to the Americans they said they don't fund structures, but when they started, they come for visit, they saw the building going up, they told James Gomez they want to put some money into it...Then they would come every year with different groups and you know the interesting thing is, they made this pronouncement, every time they come they see new things at the Gambia YMCA and that motivated them.

For Sam, the YMCA is not only produced through friendship, it is reproduced through the material evidence of that friendship, documented through a complex history of obligation reciprocity and materiality (cf. Eyben 2006: 34). However, also detectable in his description is the inherent incredulity of his American visitors, who needed proof of development to

help with further investment. For the American YMCA, the building of the Gambia YMCA complex was witness to the effectiveness of building infrastructure and therefore development itself; it literally had to be seen to be believed in creating complex dynamics of obligation and reciprocity that strengthened the partnership but at the same time reinforced feelings of dependency and powerlessness.

For Sam this inequality and dependency is part of the system, and part of his entrepreneurial identity which enables him to make multiple simultaneous connections in order to stave off the threat of sudden shifts of funding or personnel. As he continues here, this highlights some of the drawbacks of making the personal part of this business ethos:

We have lots of partnerships with American YMCAs. But when they have a new leadership the partnership dies like that, because they are not interested in international work... Their main focus for the time-being is working internally.

In this context, Sam tells me how faith plays a vital role in counterbalancing financial risks. As he discusses here, surrounded by doubters he had to have faith in both himself and God in order to trust that the spiritual aspect of his life would translate into the commercial realms in which the YMCA operates:

The board was after me: how can you complete this? When you know you don't have money to complete you should not start. But I said 'I will have money, I don't know where it will be coming, but I'll have money to complete before the end of this year.' And when the money came, they said 'are [is] somebody psychic?' I said 'no I'm not a psychic I just have the belief and trust that the Lord will provide for me.'

Discussing this subject with him, Sam immediately recalled several moments of organisational doubt and distress where funding shortfalls would have created enormous difficulties for the Gambia YMCA. As he discusses here a global funding opportunity came up to gain a multi-million pound microfinance project through the global YMCA:

It was a test case for us... So I said 'well we'll just pray over it.' That is what we do here: when we develop a proposal we pray over it and we just ask other religious people to pray for us so at least God will put the blessing that we need so it will be approved.

In a similar way to the Sussex YMCA prayer letter, here prayer was targeted and specific, focussing on a specific decision and opportunities. As he discusses here, faith and risk are inseparable in his world, part of a business ethic that conflates the two: 'We needed... £5,000 to complete everything, and you know, God has helped me a lot in that work Ross. There was this lady who visited with group from UK... She called and said... I assure you we will be able to donate £5,000.' For Sam, the power of this particular miracle is in its specificity;

he asked for £5,000 pounds and received that amount. God provided what was needed and nothing more. Faith, then, becomes a way of personalizing the impersonal, a way of doing business and a mode of spiritual engagement with the arbitrary financial and material realms that govern development funding.

'Leading to sacrifice'

For Sam, God worked through people externally to help the YMCA, bringing in material rewards through deep friendships and associations. Internally, this emphasis on networking and affection creates a solid culture of association within YMCAs that promotes specific behaviours and personnel. For example, for YMCA programme director, Joseph Peacock (Peacock), trust is also a crucial element of the transformative power of leadership at the YMCA, where dynamic, charismatic personalities, like himself, develop with one eye on the future and a shepherding hand towards the past. As his valorization of friendship above indicates performing friendship is a vital part of garnering new business and sustaining continued investment, creating deeply vested instrumental friendships. In the context of early 20th Century Gambia Alice Bellagamba (2006a) has shown, 'ritualised friendship' is an established mode of maintaining strategic connections beyond 'descent, marriage, enslavement and other forms of negotiated or compulsory relatedness' (p.246; cf. Bellagamba 2000). As Bellagamba writes trust is deepened and moralised through repeat performance: 'Trust added a moral value to relatedness and imbued it with a sense of stability and confidence. Being so precious, it needed time to consolidate itself and had to be nurtured through daily affective, material and intellectual exchanges' (Ibid: 259). These forms of friendship needed to be maintained, rehearsed and performed through narrations of successful friendships which become 'a kind of moral script on how friends should reciprocally behave. Thus, it becomes a social commentary on the interdependence between subjects that friendship brings into being' (p.247: cf. Bell and Coleman 1999).

Brought up in the YMCA, steeped in its ethos and practices from a young age, their version of leadership has seen him develop a close affinity with the organisation that goes beyond the usual employee-workplace dynamic:

It's all a matter of trust... key abilities and skills are built, but for me to trust you there are some qualities you have to exhibit... And the first thing is trust....Some of my friends will tell me: 'Why can't you move on with other big NGOs? You have the contacts, you have travelled, you have experience...' I said 'No.' I said 'I cannot be jumping all over the place and I cannot say anything tangible that I've done, it's good for me to stay somewhere for some time, at least fifteen years and do something and then move on.

Peacock's story is both pragmatic and romantic, linking the power of leadership for self-improvement and his career, with a wider sense of belonging and personal commitment. He also places two sets of interpersonal relations in sharp relief, locating his motivation outside of the normal financial concerns of his friends, showing how closely connected his work is to his overall life project.

Not surprisingly then, for Peacock being a good leader is a sacred duty which is deeply personal and necessitates creating a bond of trust between the leader and his followers, as he describes here:

I believe I have been leading, I don't know whether I'm a good leader, I've been trying my best to lead, to sacrifice, I have been leading to sacrifice, meaning I have been putting myself at the back and people in front. I'm that type of a leader: I do the thinking, I set the ground and I allow people to be part of the shared vision... Somebody needs to start, and that's always the responsibility of the leader. They have to take the first step and others follow, that's always how I do my thing... What I create I take backstage, if I design this cap I will always be the first person to wear it, I will hide it somewhere to see Ross wear it and assess the cap on his head!

For Peacock a leader is determined by his followers, a Biblical model of sacrificial leadership that binds each to the other. Similarly, Peacock's weaving of different versions of leadership, from the spiritual to the secular, reflects the way he both narrates his own life and infuses meaning into his own work through association and collective mission, using the YMCA model of leadership as way of understanding the world:

I know the power of that logo up there, because I've done development in the remotest villages in South Africa, in Hong Kong, in Mexico, and I've done field trips. I've attended the biggest world YMCA meetings in the world, three times the World Alliance Meeting and I've seen the diversity and the dimension[s] of the YMCA. Even if tomorrow I get a better job and move on I will stay... I will still love it – being [at] the YMCA, just to continue serving; because I know the people they are reaching.

For Peacock, this is 'the power' of the YMCA logo, its scalability and transposability linked to its inherent capacity to have both staff members and their wider audience believe in its transformative energy. This, in turn, provides the reason for staff members to feel passionately about the organisation, its work and fellow colleagues and students.

Peacock's story also reflects the value of the YMCA model of leadership as it intersects with both the practical realm of economic development and politics and the spiritual realms of the Church. As he puts it here, he is hoping to transfer the skills learnt at the YMCA to other realms in the public sphere: 'Maybe, God willing one day, you'll just see I've become Prime Minister of Gambia.' His invocation of the Gambian spiritual aphorism (Insha'Allah) is no coincidence, as, for Peacock, leadership is necessarily interpreted through

his faith, his association of his spiritual life with his development work is perhaps also responsible for the deep affiliation he has to the YMCA as a movement. As he discusses here, his early experiences in Church prepared him for leadership roles, he even suspects that if he had not found the YMCA he might have become a priest: 'I became Chief Server, which was chaplain, the highest position in the Anglican Church, I grew up in the church and that, all those experiences brought into the job that I'm doing today.'

In the following section, I explore these deep commitments as they are tested by the changes wrought at each YMCA, showing how bonds forged through trust, faith and friendship come to signify new modes of kinship and association in the global sphere.

For Peacock, trust is bound up with his performance of the YMCA ideals but also deeply connected to his own performance of YMCA expectations. As he explains here, the YMCA brand is based on creating this sense of trust through its culture of leadership, effectively getting people to trust the culture itself rather than charismatic individuals:

We just need to motivate the right people to stay or they move on, so that we can keep the flag flying. But as I always say: the YMCA is here to stay! Peacock or not Peacock, Sam or no Sam, the YMCA is here to stay, the YMCA is bigger than us, because we come and go but the YMCA is here to stay, I always say.

In Peacock's words, it is actually the YMCA model that is being sold to their funders and partners, a specifically marked YMCA version of leadership that fits in with wider social development goals and objectives. As he explains here this 'culture' is proving crucial to the ongoing success of the YMCA,

A lot of emails I get all of them want to work with the YMCA, a lot of people, trust me. That's our profile, people know us, we have our niche, we have our edge over other NGOs, other organisations, and we are being quoted everywhere in the country. Copy the model of the YMCA, taught to be like the YMCA.

This sense of organisational trust is foregrounded by the profound sense of *mistrust* at work in Africa more generally linked to colonial abuses of power, corrupt self-enriching leaders and a failure of political transformation (Mamdani 1996). In this climate of suspicion, learning to lead, is simultaneously about showing you can lead and repeatedly demonstrating you are trustworthy (cf. Bellagamba 2000, 2006a). Known for his canny management and ambition, Peacock explains this situation in terms of the YMCA:

In Africa the moment you show your face into the political platform, the first two questions are, 'Who is he and what has he done? For them to trust you, to entrust the responsibility of leadership into your hands, they must see how you have lead before. How successful you have been to design and help the community.

For Peacock, then, leadership is not simply about building a good YMCA brand it is also about building up his own personal sense of prestige and status, together with a successful organisation. Only through this accumulation of ‘proof’ can the air of scepticism be cleared, paving the way for his own personal transition to another level of management and success.

‘The go-getter’

‘Thank you very much for coming to The Gambia and bringing this wonderful programme ...May the Lord guide you and help you with all your endeavours. Thank you very much!’

- Joe Senghore, Fitness and Wellness Manager at Gambia YMCA

For both Peacock and Sam, the YMCA organisational image fitted with their own self-image and projects of entrepreneurial self-making. However, for other Gambia YMCA workers, there existed a deeper moral and ethical ambiguity in their relationship to the YMCA leadership ethic. From a distinguished family, related to a former Senegalese president, Fitness and Wellness Manager Joe Senghore is something of a ‘black sheep’ having followed his favoured career of sport and fitness around the world. Wearing his oversized American style T-Shirt saying ‘You Belong to the Y’ on one side and ‘Body, Mind, Spirit’ on the other he embodies the dynamic mode of transformation promoted by the YMCA. As self-styled ‘go-getter’ his work is defined by his love for the community and his love for God, but inflected through his own personal goals, as he puts, ‘to go and...make it happen. You know, even if you have difficulties or challenges.’ Returning from a period of study in America where he had become an effective Marathon runner, he had turned his passion into his livelihood, running the ‘Fitness and Wellness’ Centre at the Gambia YMCA and sustaining their struggling sports division. He was also my closest ally in The Gambia, a man of rare honesty, loyalty and reliability who I came to trust over the course of my fieldwork as he embodied the spirit of his words above. For almost a year he helped me develop, run and administer the Sports Leadership programme, a programme which he is still running today.

My relationship with Joe was also indicative of his growing urgency to resurrect the sports department before it was too late for himself and the YMCA. He saw me as an important source of opportunity and a way of gaining expertise and knowledge which could lead to his own re-establishment at the heart of the YMCA along with a renovated and rejuvenated Sports division. As he struggled with his vision, the rest of the YMCA was moving away from sports into more lucrative, sustainable modes of development like ICT and microfinance, leaving him with little income and little optimism. A devout and active

Christian, Joe also introduced me to the diverse Christian community in The Gambia, taking me on pilgrimage, hosting me for Christmas and bringing me into his church community. In return, I helped Joe on his various other sports projects: filming his run against Malaria, where hundreds of school children ran, walked and ambled along the main Bertil Harding Highway; making a fool of myself on national TV for his 'Largest Aerobics Workout in The Gambia' to raise awareness about diabetes; and handing out bags of water on the inaugural YMCA half-marathon. For all of these events, I also helped Joe, promote, coordinate and raise 'funds' as he would say, sending letters to government figures, corporate managers and local businesses, handing out flyers on the street and speaking regularly on Gambian radio, getting well-known for my 'mission' in The Gambia. Through Joe, I became part of the Gambia YMCA, integrated into their programmes and their public profile.

For Joe, building a public profile and nurturing personal partnership all formed part of his own ethical code. Stemming from his Christian background, he believed fervently that his work was 'doing good' and that the YMCA was part of a Christian heritage and legacy of community engagement. His passion for all things YMCA also deepened his faith in the movement at times of doubt. Despite his long association with the YMCA he sees problems in the current obsession with 'income generating' programmes that has left the sports and fitness departments chronically underfunded. For him, a business model is only applicable at the YMCA if it retains its original human element at its core, the sports programme is,

Important, very important. But at times they [YMCA management] don't see it as important because it does not generate a lot of income. Or you find that they don't respect... people that [are] working in that area. They look at them as very low, because it[s] kind of a compare[d] to social workers.

Joe's edge of disappointment here reflects his passionate approach to his work which has been undermined by a market shift toward ICT and Microfinance. My visit had rekindled a sense of optimism that the funding context would swing back in his favour and sport would become central to the YMCA again. As he expresses here, his belief in the YMCA ethic of leadership overrides his personal misgivings: 'I believe you know, they have the right people, the right people, and I say it again, the right people... It's all about being faithful, truthful, transparent and openness.' Ethics for Joe is about being accountable to your colleagues, community and students. However, the language of 'transparency' is also the language of neoliberal leadership, of an audit culture which lends itself to administrative regimes of surveillance and monitoring. Joe's ethics of leadership, is then also a self-auditing ethics of behaviour that places moral precedence (being right) on modes of leadership conducive to neoliberal entrepreneurialism.

Nevertheless, for Joe the ‘slippage’ between his moral code and his everyday ethics occurs when YMCA work is given over to more explicit requirements of the market such as ‘income generation’ and ‘profit-making.’ As he explains here, balancing his emotional bond to his work and the YMCA vie with the need to survive economically: ‘It’s a passion, that’s why I’m still here. I don’t generate a lot of money from it but it’s my passion and also I like to help the people who are very interested in that area.’ As Osella and Osella (2009) discuss ‘a discourse linking religious virtuosity to economic performance cannot but entail and generate unevenness, slippages, and tensions’ (p.215) as moral codes vie with the competitive sometimes ruthless demands of the market. In Sam and Peacock’s self-presentation, God and their Christian faith underwrote their self-confidence and had propelled them towards correct decisions and opportunities, allowing to spread their own personal reputation. However for Joe the contradiction and the cross-roads of the YMCA, his belief in the YMCA is from the ground-level up, from his interactions with people and the community, so in his view the YMCA has traditionally entered the arenas where there was no money to be made and part of being part of a family is having faith, in the organisation, your colleagues and the YMCA mission. As these affective associations get stretched in the current economic climate, Joe is hanging in there, doing what he loves and doing the daily work of the YMCA even as the financial incentives to do so evaporate.

Part 2: ‘God’s in control’: Faith, Risk and Affect at Sussex Central YMCA

Right through since 1844 the YMCAs never been that great in terms of its politics or organisation but it’s survived. There’s something in its DNA that enabled it to evolve as the world changes and still to come through intact in terms of keeping that core whatever. Part of that is its Christian faith but that’s not all of it.

- David Standing, SCYMCA Chief Executive.

The tensions which played out at Gambia YMCA also existed, albeit in slightly different forms at Sussex Central YMCA, played out against a deepening feeling of economic uncertainty. In the context of the ‘Big Society’ agenda of the UK government, organisations like the YMCA have had to alter their services to become more profitable whilst trying to maintain their connections with their grassroots army of volunteers, young people and stalwart workers. As Sussex Central YMCA comes to its 100 year anniversary it may change unrecognizably in the coming months and years as it faces the retirement of its CEO, and heart, David Standing and it considers several options to off-set the current financial crises. Having already taken over Lewes and Horsham YMCAs, the organisation is working with

YMCAs across the region, and is currently merging with Guildford YMCA in order to access larger government contracts.

One necessary outcome of this growth may be the demolishing of the YMCA's original building. Built in 1919, it has been slowly dilapidating for years, and situated on a prime plot in Hove, its future is being decided as I write. As at Gambia YMCA, the history of Sussex Central YMCA is bound up with its material existence, the roots of transformation and its negotiation of the past determining the direction of its future. At the centre of this maelstrom of change sits the calm centre, David Standing, who now coming to retirement age is seeking to leave a sustainable legacy for future generations of young homeless Brightonians as well as the YMCA staff. Known for his calm demeanour and civilised approach to business, for many staff members and partners of Sussex Central YMCA, David is not only head of the Sussex branch, he *is* the embodiments of its history, values and future trajectory. Over the last 25 years, David has steadily been building up Sussex Central YMCA from the handful of staff members it had then, to the 300 that it has today, in the process garnering a reputation as a driven and passionate advocate of the homeless young men and women of Brighton and Hove. In person David cuts an unassuming figure, white-haired, softly spoken, and soft-shouldered, his warmth and humility belie the power base he has constructed for himself at the centre of local politics in Brighton and the fact that he carries the fate of the Sussex YMCA in his hands. As I have got to know him over the years, for a time acting as his emergency P.A., I have come to recognise David as a man of contradictions: a powerful and persuasive 'leader of men' (and women) on the one hand, and a kind, avuncular guiding light on the other. This sense of contradiction is in keeping with his unusual management style which combines an old-fashioned loyalty to his staff with a careful and deliberate honesty that sits at odds with the delicate and structured diplomacy of modern corporate management.

When I went to see David, I was reminded of this balance: between the old and the new, the modern and the timeless. His unfussy, modest office with very few personal features reflects the man himself. A self-confessed 'luddite' David eschews modern technology, often dictating emails to his P.A. rather than slowly typing them himself, adding to his old-world charm. Yet, he has helped refashion the Sussex YMCA into a modern, forward-thinking organisation, a pioneer in homeless support and for young people oriented services more generally, now positioned to extend its reach across the entire South-East region and become one of the most influential Third Sector service providers in the UK. Ironically, David became involved with the YMCA in 1991 after he had taken early retirement due to illness, and his background in social work mixing with his Christian connections drew him to the role. Then, as now, the YMCA was going through a difficult crisis. Many funding streams

had been cut and their future was in serious jeopardy. Using his experience, he drafted in a researcher from Sussex University to identify the urgent needs of the local community and he discovered that the city of Brighton and Hove was desperately short of housing for young people and that there was nowhere for them to go for advice or counselling. Both of these services became the bedrock of the YMCA today and the organisations growth has been exponential.

As he tells me this story, a further contradiction emerges: between the corporate dynamism of the modern YMCA and his more traditional approach which is slowly becoming less useful to the current organisation. David suggests that this change is both necessary and part of a relentless drive to establish the YMCA permanently: 'You can't stand still, you've even got to retract or grow, and growing seems to be much more these days through collaboration and merger.' Part of David's legacy is the imminent merger with Guildford YMCA - a smaller but nationally recognised YMCA that can offer specific benefits to Sussex Central YMCA in terms of 'more assets, strong board members, a good name in its local area, combining two strong YMCAs, combining strength with strength will create a strong YMCA to face the future'. In this climate, for David, partnership is the answer to YMCA's profile problems, and is the route to securing the Sussex Central YMCA's future: 'we punch below our weight...people don't know what we do, and we don't have the same kind of brand strength that the YMCA does in America'. He suggests that the YMCA has had to work hard to not simply manage changes over time, but manage the ways it engages with the world. The YMCA's brand identity is an important part of this process, especially as SCYMCA competes with bigger organisation: 'the Christian bit does sometimes get in the way...I think the YMCA and Y-CARE don't have the same strength of image as someone like Médecins Sans Frontières'.

For David, a shared Christian culture, and the role of his own belief in God within that, are designed to cope with organisational stresses generated by rapid change: 'It is how you retain that responsiveness to your local community, your ethos and your values but become more corporate and business like... The biggest challenge is to be able to manage the change'. As he suggests in the changing funding landscape, he has found himself increasingly redundant, his personal, almost fatherly but quietly effective style of management becoming slowly replaced by a more dynamic, ambitious style of 'modern' management. In this new world, he tells me how he relies on his faith as a personal check against the commercial world he has found himself in, helping him weigh his decisions and actions against the needs of the people around him. Managing the change then becomes part of self-management, his personal ethos acting as a guide rope for the entire organisation. As

he describes here, faith forms an important foundation in his decision-making, his faith vision vying with other forms of entrepreneurialism based on luck and risk:

I find that where my faith gives me strength, is that I can trust that ultimately God is in control of all this... I do pray about things I've got to consider and for me personally it is very much a faith journey...Others could say its luck...it's never easy, that's the other thing about faith, you know all the time that God's in control.

In David's view the commercial risk-reward axis is secondary to the 'ultimate' power of God's will, but it is also an integral part of it each parallel view of commerce serving to buttress the other. However, he also makes the point that this can create dissonance and ambiguity: do you trust the numbers or go with what God is telling you?

One example of this process of oscillation between the personal, spiritual world and the wider, impersonal organisational sphere is the appointment of his son-in-law Chas. David acknowledges, that the business mentality displayed by Chas, differs from his own 'intuitive' approach, where a dependence on his spirituality and his personal relationships means making tough decisions is even harder than usual. Consequently, in David's view, the risk of appointing a family member was outweighed by his faith both in Chas and in God's will, and has been borne out in material gains. As he discusses here both his faith and Chas's appointment are linked into a recent commercial triumph, the award of a large government contract to provide housing services across the region:

The recruitment of Chas was a bit of a risky thing to do. He's a strong Christian too, it's not always been easy, but I think appointing him... and how we won the [funding] contract, against all the odds, we were the minnows, I felt that was because God was on our side.

Like Sam, David's faith has very concrete associations, in the people around him and in the moral value of his work at the YMCA and in the very commercial decisions he has to take on a daily basis. Whilst these decisions may be for the good of the YMCA as a going concern, they also align with his personal beliefs and values creating a valuable synergy that infuses his work with moral purpose. In the next section, I explore these issues in the views of younger managers further down the YMCA hierarchy, asking how stable this balance between different forms of risk-reward as the Christian core message extends through the organisation.

'Make a Difference'

'It's quite a humbling experience when you see staff at all levels who are really impressive...I think there are definitely people who shine through as potential leaders.'

- David Standing, CEO Sussex Central YMCA

For managers like David and Sam, working for the YMCA meant accepting the double-edged nature of faith, where failure may be built into God's plan and is bound up with 'risk' and 'luck', two tenets of the entrepreneur, faith counterbalancing the organisational imperative, playing a part in key decision-making and synchronising spiritual life with work life. However, what about those managers without faith? At Sussex Central YMCA, though notions of leadership ethics are often divested of the religious ideas espoused by their Gambian colleagues, remarkably, models of transformation and charismatic potential closely resemble these religiously inspired frameworks. How do they reckon success and failure, profit and loss?

As the Youth and Sports Director, Stuart holds a key role in the organisation linking David and the board to the youth education centres run by the YMCA across Brighton and Hove. Stuart explains David's point about the quality of YMCA staff further, linking the expanding needs of the organisation with the expanding entrepreneurial skill-set of his staff:

I think we do deliver because we have committed staff who want to make a difference to young people and I think a lot of the staff at all levels are quite entrepreneurial...And that has allowed us to develop and grow. Maybe as other types of organisations ...aren't entrepreneurial and aren't opportunistic and aren't always looking for that...They don't have to. Whereas we do in order to survive.

In Stuart's view gearing staff to look for opportunities plays a crucial role in actually discovering and developing those opportunities, synchronising organisational progression and individual growth. Like David, when discussing whether his belief in transformation can help young staff members to realise their potential he also acknowledges the down side of this constant agitation towards change:

Nearly everybody, their roles have changed and developed and usually grown... I think it means nobody gets bored – they get stretched and I think the question comes is whether they're rarely purely in their comfort zone...I think occasionally staff can feel put upon to do something that isn't theirs and that's when the resentment starts.

For Stuart, some people simply are not suited to this dynamic culture and being entrepreneurial also sometimes means making a sacrifice, putting the organisational needs ahead of your own and giving everything to provide a high level of service. For him, this is part of the YMCA's enduring appeal, an ability to 'deliver' against all odds and to a consistent level of commitment and expertise generated by the entrepreneurial spirit of endeavour embodied by his staff.

Another element of Stuart's ethics of leadership is the value of identifying young leaders via their potential, in terms of both organisational benefit and the benefit for themselves. Part of this identification process lies in recognising whether the staff member has a capacity for change, adaptation and, crucially, emulation. In his discussion of Yolandi here, he notes how a culture of leadership driven by behaviour modelling can actually prove 'nurturing', an ethical framework that enables young staff members:

She's not dissimilar to me and so she's quite entrepreneurial and looking for business so...
She's someone that's wanting to develop and grow and say 'yeah we can do that.' And I think that nurture is then created in the staff team.

Yolandi is the Sports Development Manager, and will actually go on to succeed Stuart in his role. She is another character who embraces the YMCA spirit of entrepreneurialism, trying her personal story into the expansion of the YMCA. Her success is marked by the YMCA leadership, her ability to garner new business through strategic partnership illustrative of the ways she has anticipated and profited from a process of professionalisation across the 'youth work' sector. Yolandi's portrait of success here shows that, although this belief in entrepreneurial transformation is often firmly rooted in secular realms, in the cold reality of numbers and statistics, it is often wedded to the human stories of transformation that infuse the spirit of the YMCA:

It was probably a turnover of 100,000 and now the turnover that I manage is over 1 million so it's expanded quite a lot. And the whole sports and youth has gone from two staff to 24 staff since I've been there. And our overseas projects- taking a failing project and making it a massive success- that's my biggest achievement.

Her emphasis here illustrates the way YMCA growth becomes personally cherished, deeply embedded in the individual life-stories of YMCA staff. The overseas success she discusses is the continuing Gambia partnership that generates no income for SCYMCA but it does incur a healthy dose of media coverage, unlimited local goodwill and real enjoyment and personal development in the young people. Justin, mentioned above, is one of her projects or protégés. He more than any of her staff signifies her passion for her business: 'He is polite, a good worker, a good boy. He's done really well, really well.' In Yolandi's world, the personal is inseparable from the professional, her story of personal transformation is signified by the transformation she inspires and the trust she places in others. This is further underlined by her relationship with me, another colleague she has invested time and resources in, drawing me into the YMCA family. She has encouraged and supported me, and most importantly

allowed me to utilise my work for this research, as she explains here, this was a mutually beneficial exchange:

I'd like a better team, maybe with you and Adam, someone technical. I can see me managing the whole department. But it being more educational: me being the education and training manager for the whole of Sussex central YMCA –that'd be good for you- I hope so...It can't just be me running a whole department.

Yet, despite her obvious business acumen, she also defines herself by her relationships with people around her, placing trust in her colleagues at the centre of her future. Like David, she recognises the value in the people around her, but unlike David, her faith in her colleagues is entirely secular, based on a set of principles and values garnered from her own transformational journey, making transformation both moral and personal all at once.

Opening Up

As we have seen, becoming part of the YMCA family means making a sacrifice, sometimes foregoing your individual goals in service of the greater good, embracing the organisational objectives, the needs of your beneficiaries and most importantly the potentialities of transformation. As the YMCAs mutate in the new global context, staff members' allegiances are tested and threatened, bringing into focus the bonds of emotion, trust, and kinship that have held them at the YMCA over so many years. When Peacock describes the YMCA as a 'family home' he is illustrating the way the YMCA culture tends to circumscribe staff and their goals, enfolding them in the stories of transformation they have come to represent. For some this came naturally, particularly in The Gambia, where membership of the movement engendered deep-seated loyalties, and the YMCA as an organisation became intertwined with their own personal transformation. One of Yolandi's key staff is Adam, a staff member who having begun working part-time has quickly moved up into full time work and is currently about to adopt a management position. His story reflects a more general narrative where staff members are absorbed by the YMCA, imbibing a culture of transformation as they become a part of that culture itself. His rapid rise is partly due to his positive attitude and his passion for his work, but he also has a valuable ability to form affinities with troubled young people, making him ideal for his role. As he describes here, the YMCA culture begins with the staff themselves, who create a potent core identity that emanates out to the young people. For Adam, the creation of this culture is also instrumental, getting the results that development often demands:

From working here for about the last 8 months officially I've been quite impressed ... I've just really enjoyed working in the atmosphere and environment. It feels friendly, funny and really safe and I just feel that young people really excel in the environment.

For Adam, the emotional linkages between the staff and the clients he works with provide a framework for the YMCA's success and, most importantly imbue his own work and place in the organisation with significance. When I ask him why he joined the YMCA, his answer illustrates the way YMCA fosters an environment that inspires trust:

It's helped to work for the YMCA...Before I just popped my head in when I was working at another school but to be able to work with the young people and see the young people, the youth workers. I can see their skills and have learnt from them and hopefully they have seen my skills and learnt from me too. Generally it's a really good atmosphere and I really enjoy coming to work.

From being attracted to the YMCA to working for them, has also seen Adam adopt the values of the YMCA, modelling transformation and embodying the effects of leadership, becoming a leader and becoming part of the YMCA. Trust in his colleagues has begotten trust in himself, generating powerful feelings of mutuality that have bonded him to the organisation, creating a faith in the YMCA that is entirely secular yet deeply held.

As Adam and I became colleagues and friends, I also began to develop trust in his work and, to borrow Joe's word, his 'openness'. An experienced man, Adam was able to communicate his own experience of difficulty, hardship and challenge, using concrete examples from his life to illuminate his teaching. On one course I joined as part of the research, Adam was having difficulties with a particularly unruly group of students. Yolandi agreed to let me join the course on condition I support Adam with one-to-one work, effectively building relationships with the most difficult students. As I joined the course the group began to settle down and Adam began to regain control of the classroom. Once established, many of the relationships between students and staff members and within the group flourished. Still today, Adam reflects fondly on that particular group, the combination of our friendship and the successful transformation of the young people making the latter half of the course highly enjoyable. Nevertheless, as he describes here, the difficulties he has experienced have been written into the narrative of success:

There was a moment coming up to half term before Christmas where I thought it maybe wasn't going to work. And if I'm honest I was quite upset about it at that time. And then [after] sticking with it we turned a corner. And it's become more rewarding for both young people and myself. Because obviously I wanted it to work and it's become important to me —my baby in a way!

Just as the financial struggles of elite managers become part of the narrative trajectory of the YMCA as a whole, Adam's individual narrative of overcoming has become constitutive of his self-regard, part of the reflexive construction of his current YMCA persona. Describing the course as 'his baby' also reflects how his journey is placed in emotional terms of attachment, belonging and nurture. Through his emotional development he has bonded to both the YMCA as an organisation and the young people under his care. As he discusses here, his own learning has been shaped by the emotional trajectories of the students:

The boxing has been fantastic since we've put it in place. It was a bit of a gamble ...but they've seemed to really excel. It's important for mental health issues too. And a lot of the young people have anger issues too. And it's really important to channel that in the right way.

Using boxing to solve multiple issues is part of a 'Whole Man' ethos caring for 'mind, body and spirit'. As he admits it was also 'a bit of a gamble' with the potential to unleash aggressive behaviour and undermine the spirit of cooperation he was trying to create. Like many of his managers he had taken a calculated risk, but whereas they viewed it as part of an economic system, Adam viewed it as part of a broader blueprint of care, trust-building and affect. Here he talks about this in relation to a specific student, as his gamble paid off in perhaps unexpected ways:

An example would be Aiden who's been one of the most open students on the course and has confessed. That's the wrong word completely. But shared and said about suffering from depression from time to time. And how practical and sporty stuff really helps with that. And to get out of the house and actually attend the course and spend time with other people. And I think if the others did open up a bit then that would be the case with them too.

Adam's slip of the tongue here is instructive. In religious culture, confession is a ritualised mode of emotional outpouring with a specific goal. Confession also depends on ritualised relationships between Priest and confessor, circumscribed by sacred spaces of the screen, the box and the church. For Adam, a secular ritual of confession had been enacted on the course between him and Aiden. Sport had created a space for this sharing of information and emotion to occur, augmented by the classroom space and the intimacy generated on the course. In this instance, gambling on affect had paid off for Adam, reinforcing his own sense of successful personhood and bolstering the intersubjective framework championed across the YMCA.

Conclusion: Faith in Friendship at the YMCA



Figure 12. Author (left) with GYMCA manager Joe (centre) and SCYMCA manager Adam (right)

This chapter has explored how trust, faith and friendship are folded into YMCA ideas of entrepreneurialism and self-fashioning. However, as I have shown these forms of entrepreneurial thinking are defined in different ways in each location. In The Gambia, faith is critical to notions of risk-taking, material growth and partnership-building and is unashamedly figured into the YMCA managers' work. In the UK, the relationship to faith is more circumspect, situated in a secondary role behind decisions based on both the development of personnel and the development of the YMCA business. For David, these business decisions synchronised neatly with his personal vision of a spiritually rendered landscape as well as with his personal mission. However, as I have explored the entrepreneurial spirit at the YMCA is deeply ambiguous, treading the fine line between faith and secular business, and sometimes creating issues between personal ideologies and organisational imperatives. This was most clearly displayed in committed workers lower

down the organisation whose loyalties and passion had been stretched by organisational growth, threatening to distort and disrupt their connection with their client base and the community.

Running through these discussions, tensions and ambiguities is a clear theme of affective connection, even what we might call love. Managers had love for their work, their organisations and their staff simultaneously, and in many cases these mundane forms of love were connected to spiritual forms of love and compassion. In other places these feelings were encoded in a language of business and commerce, especially around ideas of networking, partnership and entrepreneurialism. Again in The Gambia this is articulated in culturally specific terms around ‘trust’, where if you like someone’s face you will be more inclined to look favourably on a potential business partnership with them. These modes of ‘trusting’ and ‘liking’ are implicated in complex socio-cultural ideas of what relationships actually entail including a whole host of reciprocities, obligations and commitments which require constant demonstration and enactment. At the same time, these friendships can be deeply rewarding, testament to a risk-taking mentality that cultivates both material and spiritual gains at an organisational and personal level.

The Gambian context can also help understand the UK context where business decisions have to be placed in a rationalising framework that judges potential risks against potential rewards purely in terms of organisational sustenance and growth. This approach makes a simple calculation: how many people can we help with our work, and how many good staff members do we need to complete this transaction. As David discusses, this approach is becoming increasingly difficult as the YMCA bloats in size, stretching beyond his original vision and challenging his own capabilities and skills. Like workers further down the scale such as Adam, David is finding his loyalties split between his wonder at the organisation’s expanding reach and wondering how this will affect the organisations relationship to the community it purports to serve. However, in both locations the particular demands of a combative funding landscape is accelerating this process, pushing both David and Sam out of the picture and creating anxiety in people like Adam and Joe.

David’s choice of his own son-in-law as successor reflects this anxiety and how it is often mitigated, by selecting someone known and familiar, avoiding the risk of bringing in a stranger. As Weber suggested this is a hallmark of ‘charisma’ at work, where a connection to God is maintained by passing it intimately from person to person (Weber 1978). At the same time built into these sometimes fraught discussions of succession and organisational continuity are a specific and gendered grammar of leadership that circumscribes not simply the type of person most suitable for the role but the style of management most valuable to the organisation (cf. Van Klinken 2012). In this context it is the middle managers like

Yolandi, Stuart, Peacock and Ponce who are thriving, developing small fiefdoms within the organisation that are the motors for growth and expansion. Promoters of middle class values of individualistic entrepreneurialism, they are also the middle men and women holding the organisations together and bringing in both new business and new talented young workers. In this sense, they are truly entrepreneurial as driving for business is their prime objective, whether out of personal pride or commitment to the YMCA.

Even in the Gambian context, where the middle managers have faith, they are still striving towards a type of ruthless efficiency, cultivating a culture of leadership that cherry picks the best clients and workers and moulds them into potential successors. As the growth at both YMCAs testifies, this relentless push towards partnership is itself dependent on the axis of risk and reward, and in the next chapter I discuss the potential ways in which risk-based ideas of identity carry their own 'risk' and 'rewards' in the form of travelling up, or down, the YMCA hierarchy solidifying the gendering process. In Foucault's terms this cultivates an institutional morality buttressed by ethical judgement and assessment. As I show, in the YMCA world the entrepreneurial middle manager is king, and success or failure is met with equal measures of acceptance or dismissal further entrenching a deeply felt sense of organisational commitment, devotion and even love based on the specific code of YMCA ethics.

Chapter 6: The Rules of Charisma: Love, Leadership and Masculinity at the YMCA

It is April 2011, and I am nearing the end of my fieldwork. I have returned to the YMCA in Hove after a year in Gambia to do some follow-up interviews. When you enter the YMCA centre, as well as seeing a pool table, you are greeted by a colourful cocktail of murals, message-boards and images summing up the YMCA and its work, offering you things to do and courses to take. Immediately in front of you is a large pin-board entitled 'gay role models in sport,' next to which is a tableau of images from previous Gambia trips. Leaving this room, you can go into a function room which hosts events such as the 'Older People's Lunch Club' and children's parties, and also houses the popular DJ suite where young people come every Thursday night to listen to their peers 'spitting bars'⁴⁶. A second doorway leads into the sports hall, complete with soccer goals, basketball hoops, gym equipment and crash mats. The final door leads up some stairs, through a dance studio where pigeons have been

⁴⁶ Slang for rapping

known to roost, into the main YMCA training room, where the teaching component of the Sports Leadership courses generally take place.

These YMCA spaces are normally full of people, laughter, music and sweat. Right now, the sports hall is full of toddlers bouncing around on oversized soft obstacles. In the main foyer, the hub of the centre, two young men are playing pool. On a nearby sofa, three young women sit and chat, playing with their phones. Milling around, are a few mums and some YMCA workers, I instantly recognize them as two workers I know well, Tasha, a young female worker, and Justin, one of the young men who acted as a key informant on my research. I walk straight over and say hello, Tasha is making tea for one of the mums and offers me a cup, which I accept. I ask what they have been up to recently. As Tasha darts off to supervise the Toddler's gym, Justin tells me things have been going well, he will be starting to supervise courses as a lead worker soon, which he is both excited and nervous about. The young people in front of us are the latest Sports Leadership group who are on their break. As we're talking he occasionally gives one of the lads playing pool advice, eventually giving in to their requests for a game, the young people keen to test their mettle against him. As he is playing the girls enter into a heated debate and Justin steps in to tell them to watch their language and keep the noise down, the girls look sheepish and slope outside for a cigarette.

Just before he has to get back to work, I ask him what happened to Leo, my other key informant, who left the YMCA under a cloud whilst I was in Gambia. 'I don't know really' he told me 'he was just being a bit of an idiot'. Whatever had happened to Leo, it's clear that his professional conduct at work had not been to the required standards and he had lost his job as a result, becoming a sad footnote in the YMCA story, and the process of this research. As I watched Justin marshal the straggling young people, and patiently wait for them to file back upstairs for their instruction, he shot me a rueful smile, a sign that even though, the work is hard, often unrewarding and the clients demanding and difficult, for the young leaders still part of the YMCA family, life could be a lot worse.

Justin and Tasha are just two of the many young leaders who inhabit the spaces of YMCAs all over the world, performing innumerable duties from making tea to disciplining errant young people. In the previous chapter I discussed how YMCA spaces became loci for the production of *moral*, self-auditing subjectivities defined by their transformative and leadership capabilities. In this chapter I investigate this role as I continue exploring the YMCA ethics of leadership by looking at the lives of workers not yet fully accustomed to the YMCA system of charismatic leadership. As the twin narratives of Justin and Leo suggest, leadership trajectories at the YMCA are divergent and unpredictable, and I explore how the

YMCA's culture of trust and mutuality offsets the often chaotic, multi-dimensional circumstances of young lives.

Comparing the two locations also offers a route to tracking the circulation of leadership as a discourse of self-reponsibilisation linked to a set of ethical predispositions, embodied practices and behaviours. In the UK, I select two young workers and former Sports Leadership students who have learnt to narrate their version of change along very narrow parameters. In the Gambian context, I trace how these narratives of change are much more deeply implicated in the inequality, frustrations and destabilisation brought about by global neoliberal policy as educated young men scramble for limited opportunities. Through both sets of narratives, I follow these moral discussions, showing how the young leaders themselves become moral arbiters, of both other young people and themselves, learning YMCA modes of self-regulation through the regulation both of their bodies but also of their complex narratives of conversion, transformation and emotional development, and in the process becoming charismatic leaders themselves.

Part 1: Yolandi's Law: Policing Masculinity at Sussex Central YMCA

In the UK, community spaces seeking to attract young people have sought to appeal to a sense of youthfulness through 'young people friendly' places, softening and reinventing their centres with bright colours, beanbags, exciting equipment and easily understood messages (Nordstrom 2009). At the YMCA this fits in with a need to appeal to the consumption habits of young people with growing spending power and options, offering a 'home' amidst the alienating city (Pearson 2003; Winton 2005). Despite this outward amenability, each entry, encounter and induction into the YMCA is governed by a set of rules, compromises and negotiations that knit individual agency into collective objectives. The most obvious incarnation of this process is the initial activity on each teaching course, as each young person is asked to sign a 'contract'; a set of 'ground rules' each group devises themselves to which they must adhere. Rules are also enforced through bold, colourful slogans of what you must be, do and say, alongside which are smaller, but just as colourful, handmade, laminated posters of things you must not do, in a slightly messy overlap of discipline and encouragement.

Much of this is due to the presence of motivator, watchdog, mother figure and boss Yolandi, who has been centre manager and the manager of Sussex YMCA sports department for over eight years, and who has developed sets of rules, and methods of keeping them, that are only ever partially successful but nonetheless rigorously and vigorously enforced. As a

former policewoman, Yolandi's word carries slightly more heft than the usual youth worker, and young workers dread incurring her legendary wrath. Equally, young clients at the YMCA are aware of Yolandi's sternness. Many of us even threaten disruptive young people with a visit to Yolandi's office, letting them know that her word is not only the last word, but it is the law of the YMCA.

Yet, young people and young staff members do continually contravene Yolandi's laws, meaning that they have to be reinforced and restated, new procedures invented to fit new circumstances, and behavior has to be patrolled and policed on an everyday level. On Sports Leadership courses, for example, tutors use a football based, yellow card/ red card warning system where multiple minute offences, such as swearing can earn the warning of a yellow card, and the possibility of a red. Yellow cards and even red cards can be earned instantaneously too, through specific deeds and words. Using the swear word 'cunt' for instance is warrant for instant yellow card, whereas violence towards other students or the tutor can be an instant red. In practice this system is more flexible, highly dependent on context and individual cases, and ultimately laid before Yolandi's judgment.

Staff are also subjected to a disciplinary system, in line with U.K. employment law, where warnings become progressively verbal, written and final. Due to the nature of the YMCA incorporation process, where staff members have often been clients, and often come from troubling, complicated backgrounds themselves, from time to time, Yolandi has to give even her favourite staff an official warning as their behavior deteriorates or their levels of professionalism slip. Occasionally, she has to let a staff member go, normally for serious breaches of conduct such as theft or repeated inappropriate behavior. For her this is always a last resort, as she gives young people (both clients and staff) time, chances and attention to remedy their attitudes. As I've witnessed over the years, when she does have no choice but to fire a member of staff, she feels it keenly and as a personal failure, but she also believes in her own everyday code of ethics devised for the collective good of the YMCA. This has become even more important to her as the YMCA has evolved, and she has moved through the ranks into senior management. Now she is gradually putting her ambitious project of turning the youth centre into a dedicated educational centre, becoming the nominal headmaster of the nascent Sussex YMCA College perhaps finally fulfilling her destiny and bringing her law, and love, to bear in an official capacity.

'A good boy': Justin's Story

Yolandi is a powerful example of the gender coordinates at work through the YMCA. She operates as an authoritative matriarchal figure within the YMCA centre, controlling and dominating the space through discipline and surveillance. At the same time she is kind, caring

and generous, supporting young people and building meaningful, sustained relationships with young people and staff. Part of these relationships rest on the fact that her femininity is non-normative, containing elements of masculinities which the young men can relate to. As a former policewoman from a working class family she knows how to be tough, representing a version of street-based masculinity which they respect (see Evans 2006). She is also a former football player so relates to the 'language of the field', banter, informality and directness required between teammates that overtly negates traditional feminine roles through performance, on the field and off it. As Messerschmidt (2009) has shown women in male dominated spaces often use masculine language to fit in but also to assert their own personal styles of femininity in innovative ways (p. 86). Similarly, Yolandi employs a variety of gendered behaviours to assert her version of correct behaviour law, including feminine characteristics that challenge misogynistic and violent masculine behaviours and attitudes and allow her to perform her dominance through feminine power (Ibid: 87). Despite these demands, young people become attached to Yolandi directly and personally referring to her as they would to a parental figure by expressing their wish to 'not let her down' creating a powerful dual attachment of discipline and care that epitomizes the YMCA ideology rooted in emotion.

For Yolandi, Justin is the prime example of how the YMCA can take hold of a young person's life and turn it around through this specific emotional attachment. Yolandi and Justin have formed a close bond that goes beyond normal workplace relationships, his success reflecting and validating her judgment and representing her proudest achievement. When he arrived after a history of violent altercations at school to do the Sports Leadership Course, she recognized that he had the potential to not only do well on the course but become a good coach, although even she could not have foreseen that several years later he would still be working at the YMCA. As she describes here, his violent, disruptive form of masculinity has been recalibrated, his transformation clearly measured through his actions:

He has been amazing. When he first started on Sports Leadership, he was really awful, really bad, the worst behaved boy in east Sussex. Now he is really, nice! He is polite, a good worker, a good boy. He's done really, really well.

'Niceness' and 'politeness' are both seen as desirable characteristics by Yolandi, part of an overall ability to relate to people, to communicate and to be 'good.' However, it was his ability to lead the group and his excellence in coaching that marked him out from his peers, allowing him to volunteer as a sports worker before becoming a fully fledged member of staff, tutoring those very same troubled young men who used to be his classmates. Crucially only by going through the system can Justin become part of that system, his experience of

following the YMCA steps acting as a narrative of progression, transformation and leadership which is perpetually being replayed and enacted in Justin's everyday life.

Yolandi's choice of language is also important in understanding how YMCA narratives become both enacted and re-articulated by young leaders fostering informal and formal modes of honour and accountability. As they work their way through the YMCA system they develop ways of talking that emulate the narratives of transformation and validate their own stories, actions and activities. For instance, Justin's narrative of Leo's departure reflected how YMCA cultures are not only built around models of leadership based on a valorisation of particular values; they are created through the narration of particular stories in particular ways (Collins 2008; Coleman 2000). In this context reflexivity and reflective language becomes a way of managing the production of specific subjectivities. Returning to Rudnyckj and Richard's (2009) definition of affect as 'conduct about conduct' is useful here as YMCA staff members learn to speak affectively about the consequences of their behaviour (p.61). Justin actually summed this up neatly in his description of how assisting me with the research for this project enabled him to become more reflective: 'I got to know myself a lot more by talking about myself...I have grown up a lot more.' For Justin 'growing up', that is gaining adulthood, was implicated in his ability to reflect on his own behavioral history. By discussing his own actions he had come to know himself but this process of knowing was framed by the explicit moral framework of the YMCA and the implicit masculine archetype of YMCA values. Both of these models structure his understanding of transformation itself and are being perpetually reinforced through processes of reflection, triangulation and discipline.

This is reflected in Justin's discussion of Leo's departure from the YMCA. Justin placed Leo's inability to fully embrace the YMCA values in the context of him being an 'idiot', code for non-conformity to YMCA roles and regulations and ultimately contravention of YMCA morals, a narrative of discipline that also enacted discipline (Collins 2008: 141). In this respect, behaviour, both positive and negative, is seen as something done in relation to others. Actions are seen to have impacts on other people and therefore transforming behaviour means transforming those relations. At the same time, relationships are also enabling or inhibiting; part of the transformative journey or not. In Justin's story, negative relationships are continually placed next to positive ones creating a moral schematic of relational transformation. As he describes in his experience of secondary school here his experience of change began on the interpersonal level:

People just started believing in me and backing me up... My head teacher used to bend over backwards to help me out there and when you're going through a rough patch he was someone who was there for you. I could...speak to him about anything.

At the YMCA, tutors are often set in opposition to normal teachers due to the informal ways they relate to students. The attitude of Justin's teacher shows that this is not necessarily such a clear division, but also that emotions play a key role in this process of transformative learning. Crucially, as Justin relates here, he sees the breakdown in his social relations as spatially situated, a result of his own relationship with his school:

Bad behaviour is something that happened to me....I was naughty...I never wanted to work, would walk out of lessons, not want to go to school...I literally thought it was shit – that was my attitude... Just teachers – I didn't like them... they weren't my teachers – just people that used to tell me off.

From Justin's point of view, his experience of bad behaviour is directly associated with the bounded area of the school and the set of relations contained within it. When he says that he thought it was 'shit', he is talking about both the establishment and the people who govern and circumscribe it, a synchronicity of people and place.

At the centre of this YMCA redefinition of spatial engagement is the strengthening of the emotional attachment contained within their centres through a reconfiguration of emotional attachments to places themselves. For Justin this happens partially through his faith, as he puts it 'I am Christian. Being Christian doesn't affect me at work or the way I work. It's not important to work in a Christian place but it is nice.' In the UK, Justin's understated faith works well with the YMCA philosophy, reflecting the strategic secular presentation of YMCA activities to the wider public. Importantly though, his sense of 'niceness' also ties into affective workings of YMCA spaces, and the emotional sense of space he has developed. Here, Justin describes how this sense of belief in him from others translated into a potential future, but also reconfigured his relationship to work and relationships through pleasure:

I just had my eyes opened by finding something that I enjoyed: coaching and then The Gambia [trip]... It made me feel good teaching people what they like doing... It made me feel a lot better about myself, a lot happier... [It] kind of threw me into the big world but I don't know how to explain that? My confidence grew massively. I felt responsible for a lot more things...Straightaway I thought, 'This is what I want to do...' You get paid for doing something you have fun in, you have a laugh.

For Justin, having a purpose was connected to a relocation of his feelings of attachment and a personal feeling of undergoing transformation, his life becoming governed by both a place to change and a way of finding everyday enjoyment. In doing so, the YMCA helped Justin triangulate his identity with new coordinates, allowing him to match a very personal, intimate feeling of self-confidence with an externally configured sense of having a career, a future and a worthwhile life, an intimate expression of the YMCA model of emotional masculinity.

As Foucault tells us subjectivity is always unfinished, and Justin's story is always in the making, his narrative part of a continual and contingent sense of role modeling that always remains at work amongst the young people coming through the YMCA. The best example of this process is in his relation to his sister Lauren, whose gender coordinates are triangulated through her sporting ability and her brother's version of YMCA masculinity. Her behavioral issues were more centered around disinterest rather than disruption, but like Justin, she found herself on the Sports Leadership course before excelling, volunteering and becoming an apprentice. For Lauren, Justin's transformation is clear and simple, a move from a violent, dangerous and unhappy form of behaviour where 'he used to be naughty, disruptive...he used to hit things when he was angry. He went through stages of hitting walls' to a more positive, 'mature' version of masculinity, characterized by his ability to take responsibility 'working with something he enjoyed.' By her account, he changed through 'teaching sport and then matured a lot through teaching kids' but it was his emotional experiences in The Gambia that accelerated a process of transformation already begun at the YMCA: 'He came back really behaved and wanting to do stuff.'

Like the YMCA managers, and wider society, Justin's change is defined by Lauren through his ability to work, relate and participate, a process cemented by a dramatic shunt in perception brought about by the Gambia trip. As Justin's story also shows, the process of story making and telling also becomes a vital part of the YMCA moral machinery, folded into her understanding of Justin's experience, is her own burgeoning experience of enacting change as well as the shadow reminder of past, negative behaviour, as she describes here he showed her how to: 'Think more positive ...and not always wanting to do the bad stuff or get into trouble...He's a role model for me because he's got good behavior. And obviously teaching kids... It's just something to look up to.' For Lauren, her YMCA has always been a mirror of Justin's, and her new subjectivity has been shaped by his success, all circumscribed by his potential failure. His quest towards being a 'Whole Man' has helped her towards becoming a 'whole woman', a relational sense of femininity being shaped by his emergent sense of honourable masculinity, offering an alternative way of seeing her world and her life through the lens of the YMCA.

'Second chances': Leo's Story

As Justin's story is discussed and replayed at the YMCA, it is also refined and reflected on by YMCA managers, becoming a form of both rehearsed narration and performance that demonstrates idealised YMCA subjectivity and masculinity, a parable of morality. However, it is also always provisional, his good behaviour always in danger of slipping away with a series of mistakes or misdemeanours. As Yolandi outlines her plans for

Justin here she is aware that even success stories need constant vigilance, assessment and review: 'I'd like to see him as a teacher but I don't think he's academic enough... I think he'd be brilliant leading Sports Leadership courses.... He's running his first course this summer by himself, so I hope he'll do well on that... we'll see how he gets on.' Yolandi's final cautionary tone also reflects the inherent fear of a reversion to bad habits and behaviours needing constant vigilance, re-assertion and re-inscription, a secular fear of backsliding and corruption (Sandstrom 2001: 136). As Sandstrom (2001) has observed, in religious communities, identities are rarely 'hard and fast' but contain elements of different religious traditions, customs and belief systems which necessitate constant recreation and synthesis as people move fluidly between, or 'straddle', seemingly opposed polarities (Ibid: 136; cf. Ferme 1994; Shaw and Stewart 1994). As such, religious narratives are often strengthened through opposition, leaders making substantial narrative efforts to consider, create and maintain authenticity (Shaw and Stewart 1994: 1).

Similarly, for Bornstein's (2005) World Vision employees, modes of conversion intersected in the moral interpretive frames of development and Christianity. As she states, these narrative modalities function through containment, in the dual sense of encompassing and controlling, immoral behaviours and attitudes: 'Embedded within the development discourse of benevolent progress existed its inverse: the evil of Satan and witchcraft' (p.141). Even Justin's story of 'true' transformation contains within it the shadow side of his potential failure, strengthened by this contextual knowledge and the recycled stories of other YMCA failures as part of the YMCA moral economy. For Youth Director Stuart, gambling on a troubled young person is often worth a risk, part of the market logic of Enrollment Economics:

With the success rate as such it's just worth it. And we get such a high standard of committed staff who...see that they wouldn't have had these opportunities. So they tend to work harder...and have a greater understanding of the client group.

Stuart's description points towards a rational calculation of value that fits in with in a neoliberal mythology of leadership where fending for yourself and self-regulation become part of the narrative of morally appropriate behaviour (Roitman 2005; Rofel 2007; Molé 2012). As Yolandi describes here:

Getting reliable staff is hard. We get staff who get a second chance, that's what we're about second chances. That's what the YMCA is about. But sometimes they get a second chance and they mess it up. They start acting badly or...becoming unreliable, it's a shame.

For Yolandi, the emotional attachment she feels for the young people has to be weighed against the wider moral and organisational imperative, where 'reliability' and being a good worker make both emotional and economic sense.

In this light, Leo's exit from the YMCA can be read as a diminishing of his value to the YMCA but also as a narrative failure as he failed to adhere to YMCA moral scripts of 'Whole Man' development and transformation. Nonetheless, before he left, Leo and I had a good relationship and his story of transformation at the YMCA closely mirrored other young leaders like Justin. He had also experienced a troubled youth, finding himself on a Sports Leadership programme in his home town of Hull in the North of England after his lack of engagement in education: 'School was a bit of drag for me; I didn't really get much done and was expelled a few times.' Moving down to Brighton and coming to the YMCA enabled him to begin a new life with improved prospects: 'I was hanging around with the wrong crowd. I needed a better lifestyle – I wanted to make something better of myself and not just be a flop.'

The sports work he did with the young people at the YMCA also allowed him to change his lifestyle physically and is something he promoted through his work, as he says here: 'I think sport is really important to keep fit and sport also keeps people out of trouble. You know instead of drinking on a Friday they can go to the local youth club and play football.' Getting to know Leo, it was evident that he cared deeply about the young people he worked with and was good at his job, whether working with young people with Learning Difficulties or the challenging students on the Sports Leadership course. As he says here, the Sports Leadership course itself opened up new avenues for him, both in terms of his career and a significant life-style change such as,

Just learning different methods of coaching and finding out about different stuff that I didn't know about like sports before really. At the time I was young and 16 so then it didn't really have an effect on my life... But looking back now I would say so because it's quite important to have worked in a role like this.

For Leo, although he often acted as the YMCA required, even during the interview he refused to adhere to the YMCA narrative structure, spontaneously disrupting their language with his own taken from the street:

It's left me speechless really since day one. It's been brilliant really... Like the people that you work with and the things that you get out of working at the YMCA like going to The Gambia. All these different types of courses that they've put me on they've boosted my confidence massively... I've changed more as a person. I don't know how to word it. I'm less of a cock.

Like Justin's narrative, Leo's story was messy and non-linear carrying within it the echo of his former life, the lives of his peers and his possible future life. However, for Leo, the abrupt end to his journey reflected a reluctance to fully embrace the new persona, behaviours and vocabularies YMCA transformations require. In the next section I transpose the versioning

of gender identities to the Gambian setting, analyzing how the commentary on young leaders' behaviour is inflected through the lens of local politics of belonging and masculinity in the context of dependency and development, creating a powerful matrix of normative subjectivity where the value of morality is entirely different.

Part II: Poncelet's Philosophy: Spiritual Discipline at Gambia YMCA

On the wall of the YMCA ICT training suite is a tattered sign covered in clear tape. It reads 'Poncelet's philosophy: 'Do unto others as you would do unto yourself' - Matthew 7: 12.' Poncelet (Ponce), Director of ICT at Gambia YMCA is a charismatic and commanding figure. A strict disciplinarian, his Christian based spiritual philosophy seems at odds with the iron-hand he wields over his young staff members but reflects his sense of responsibility for upholding the standards of the YMCA. This ambiguity emerged during a tense meeting of the YMCA ICT department. Around me sat the various staff I had been working with over the last few months: young volunteers, Kebba, Bubba, and Ousay working in various departments, along with Anet who ran the ICT teaching suite. Together we made a strange group. Kebba was the ICT technician on site, forever running from one job to the next at the beck and call of Ponce and Anet. Bubba had just joined us and had been helping me train young students in ICT and the English exams which Anet and Ousay ran in the next room.

The room is apprehensive, the day before a terse email has gone round from Ponce, calling us to the meeting. When Ponce arrives he was upset as he explained that he has called the meeting because the ICT division needs to work harder and generate more income. He explained how hard he works, doing three or four jobs at once before saying that if the young volunteers do not start pulling their weight they will suffer the consequences, or as he puts it 'If you have a cancer, you cut it off.' Again he repeated to them the urgency of generating more business: 'You need to innovate, use your initiative' he tells them. A big part of this, he continued, was to use my own connections in the expatriate community to access funding, telling them that I would not be around forever. His point made, we were all dismissed, returning to our daily duties with added fervour.

Ponce's sudden exertion of discipline here reflected two interrelated aspects of his authority at the YMCA. The first was a discourse of ruthlessness through which he re-asserted how lucky the young leaders were to even have an opportunity to work with him. The second was a valorisation of dynamic networking as a mode of survival, echoing the risk-taking entrepreneurialism discussed in the previous chapter. As I became incorporated into Gambia YMCA, I was struck by how similar Ponce's values and management style was

to that of Yolandi. A charismatic character, he demanded absolute commitment and inspired a deep devotion from his staff members. Both managers also viewed the creation of productive staff members as a matter of organisational survival. As Ponce's statement 'if you have cancer you cut it off' indicates', in his view the YMCA is like a political 'body' where unproductive staff members are like a 'disease.' Using this metaphor, the flow of blood could be paralleled to the flow of affect as Ponce exhorts his staff members to aggressively develop networks. Even I was viewed as a liminal figure, both useful as a human resource in terms of my own skills but currently underused as a source of funding and relationships. As Ponce assessed me, he also assessed his young lieutenants, calculating their value to the YMCA in terms of their ability to relate.

A Nigerian converted to the Gambian way of life, Ponce understands how his relentless drive to succeed gains him access to the world of people like me who can offer resources and opportunities to keep the YMCA going. Part of this involves relying on relationships established over years of working together and seizing opportunities when they arrive, as he explains, 'programme development cannot work without networks.' A strong Catholic, he has learned that being part of the YMCA does not necessarily mean promoting Christian aims, but Christian openness fits neatly with the work he does: 'I believe in humanity, I believe in the concept, if you love your neighbours you love yourself, so all religion respects that...' a philosophy of spiritual affect that seemed at odds with his earlier role as the patriarchal disciplinarian.

For Ponce this equating of passion to commitment fitted in with his overall philosophy where the 'tough love' with which he treated his employees was part of a duty of care that needed to be enacted and performed as part of a broader 'love' for the work of the YMCA. As he describes here, in The Gambia the YMCA chain of leadership is about demonstrating an emotional commitment on a daily basis through self-sacrifice:

I love what I'm doing. The day I don't love what I'm doing, I'll pack my bags and go somewhere else. I mean sometimes I'm down broke and if I'm somewhere else [I'd have more money]. But you have to be passionate and that's one thing when I interview people, I always make sure they have that passion. If it's all about the salary at the end of the month forget it. If I tell Bubba or Kebba to stay here...I know they will stay. They stayed here for one year without getting a salary.

The chain of affect through which Ponce constitutes his own subjectivity links work, interpersonal relations and the YMCA mission. As he says, this is in contrast to other forms of work which are financially oriented. This marks a sharp distinction between business as a mode of acquiring finance and business as a mode of development. However, this deep attachment to work requires continual performance through commitment and sacrifice and

is always in danger of being compromised and requires a specific focus on the future for the good of himself and the good of the YMCA. In this way, his affective attachment not only infuses his work it changes how he thinks of himself, a living embodiment of affect.

‘Swaggersta’: Kebba’s Story

As Ponce provided a set of rules and regulations for young leaders to follow, they were required to perform their ‘passion’ for him in specific ways. For some of these young workers, this performance intersected with multiple other forms of performativity present in their lives, creating conflicts and contradictions and specific, personalized forms of discipline and modification. A good example of this process is ICT assistant Kebba who was constantly being chided for being lazy, late and unreliable but was also vital to the smooth functioning of the YMCA. I first met Kebba in 2010 on a preliminary visit to the YMCA. A skinny youth, he was then working as a volunteer for Ponce, repairing old IT equipment. As he had spent his early childhood in the UK before his family had returned to The Gambia following his father’s employment as Chief Executive of a large transnational organisation based in Gambia, he spoke excellent English and I chatted to him about his favourite English TV shows. When I finally arrived to start my fieldwork in 2011, he had become a part-time employee at the YMCA, performing a variety of functions, but mainly staying on call in his cupboard-like office to maintain the creaking YMCA ICT equipment.

Though officially part-time, Kebba rarely seemed to leave the YMCA. In his spare time, he would join the groups of young men and women congregating in the YMCA digital music suite, where he was intent on pursuing a parallel career in music. His nickname is ‘Swaggersta’ (pronounced swaggerstar), and in my discussions with him he alerted me to the difficulties in marrying his self-styled music based persona with his professional work-based disposition. Often these two priorities would conflict. At times Kebba was willful and obstinate, preferring to do his own thing rather than do what his managers dictated. As Ponce’s muscular demonstration of authority showed, occasionally he would be disciplined and set on the right track, the swaggering tucked away behind a sly withdrawal into a technical to-do list.

For Kebba, then, becoming ‘serious’ had meant redefining his sense of manhood at the YMCA in line with Ponce’s philosophy, leaving his ‘swaggering’ ways behind him and conforming more stringently to the YMCA way of being as he tell me ‘It’s just like preparing for life and everything, it’s good to be serious and somes... you have to stop and be focused.’ Although illustrating Kebba’s powerful attachment to the patriarchal system he resisted, his ‘swagger’ was partly borne from a privileging of masculine superiority and prestige rooted in

notions of patriarchal authority and 'Big Man' masculinity'. For Kebba, this is also fed through a preoccupation with the perceived rewards of 'modernity' represented by figures like me (see Ferguson 2006), an emic interpretation of the development myths of progress rewritten in the language of neoliberalism. From this perspective, education, technical expertise and making money become the objectives of life, part of the ongoing quest to inhabit the entrepreneurial spirit. However, as he explains here, these goals are mediated by his relationship with his father and his emotional connection to his work:

I have almost three different options and everything: Multimedia, computing, engineer, architectural engineer, mechanical engineer.... So during my last trip my dad say 'Ok, you'll have to just go and meet some of my friends that have succeeded in all three types of jobs'... So my dad always say ... 'it's not all about the money, it's all about doing what you love.'

Kebba here expresses an apparent contradiction between 'doing what you love' and earning money and prestige. Yet as Rudnycky's work and Poncelet's exhortations have shown, emotion, passion and even love are a vital part of doing business. 'Doing what you love' is in fact a tenet of a contemporary capitalism that reconfigures individual identity through strong evocations of sentiment. In this case, 'love' is both the operational element of finding a career pathway but also the strengthening of a bond between father and son. By doing what he loves he is also demonstrating love for his father, a powerful reinforcement of a passionately motivated masculinity.

Love, is then part of the entrepreneurial ethos, making the processes and language of family relations ever more conversant with the practices necessary for the workplace. Another element of Kebba's relationship with his father is the echo of Ponce's request to 'use your networks.' In The Gambia this presents a paradox for young Gambians like Kebba looking to break out on their own but reliant on the structures of affection fostered by their parents and elders. Trapped in this Big Man system, Kebba is also looking to become 'Big' but has many different directions in which to realize his ambitions. Acknowledging his father's accomplishments he describes here how he admires this skills but also wishes to acquire the same skill level himself: 'When I can fix many stuffs without consulting him so that's a very huge progress.' Kebba's relationship with his father is then defined by the work he does and skills he learns, but is inflected through Gambia's 'Big Man' system. As a young Gambian man with a limited income, he is supposed to be reliant on his family and his father's networks of patrimony and patronage. However, as a technically gifted, entrepreneurial worker he is eager and impatient to stake out his own domain of 'Bigmanity.' In this imagined space, Ponce represents as much of a role model as his father, his technical skills as vital to Kebba's sense of manhood as his relationship with his father and his father's

values. Both represent future routes to take, but both are suffused with confusion, contradiction and unrealized possibility, making the path to becoming a 'Big Man' increasingly unclear.

This ambiguity is also reflected in The Gambia YMCA's status as a space of global encounter, where international volunteers mixed with Gambian managers and local narratives of self-development interacted with global forms of mobile becoming. For, one of Kebba's managers, his 'swagger' proved problematic to her notion of femininity and personhood articulated through notions of work ethic, attitude and communication: 'He is very stubborn, he just doesn't like being told what to do...on the first day he voiced out his opinion to Ponce that I was a very bossy lady...maybe he feels intimidated.' Kebba's attitude to female authority figures seemed to emulate forms of dominant masculinity laden with cultural presumptions about femininity. As one manager states here when she asked Kebba why he had not been responding to emails, 'Kebba, says he doesn't read emails, his father cannot tell him.' For Kebba, part of his 'swagger' meant negating his manager's 'direct', dominant femininity, undermining her authority by placing it in the context of both established patriarchal authority and his resistance to it, the power of the father inhibiting Kebba's sense of duty to the YMCA hierarchy. By invoking the 'sacred' rule of Gambian paternal authority he was undermining both female authority but ironically he was also undermining his own claims to masculine legitimacy.

These contradictions in the construction and negotiation of masculinity: authority against autonomy, having a voice against having respect are also calibrated through Islam, which also assists Kebba in gaining a sense of moral masculinity that helps him understand the YMCA movement and the way private piety is often publicly oriented. For Kebba, growing up in multiple interstitial spaces (between the West and The Gambia, between Islam and secularism) as well as exposure to all forms of religion has created a self-created sense of religious broadmindedness that approximates YMCA notions of ecumenical tolerance. As he discusses here this creates a 'situated' form of religiosity in which the YMCA is implicated as just another node in the religious landscape: 'When you say that you work in the YMCA they will be like that Christian place and everything but when you come to the YMCA you will see a whole lot of mixed religion and everything.'

For Kebba, this religious lens forms a powerful, though not all-consuming, hold on his vision, and feeds into a morally binding sense of right and wrong. Just as 'being serious' has an impact on his reputation, the public cultural discussion of religion means that his own sense of religiosity is shaped under the scrutiny of the public eye. However, as he discusses here, this religious feeling also works through a process of negotiation between internally felt

emotional attachment and external parental pressure, where the degree of 'seriousness' is determined by their social consequences:

Sometimes when I don't pray my mum will be like '...you need to go and pray'...actually I need to pray too. I don't have to offend God but I'm a real Muslim too...I used to pray like a whole month ...then suddenly all these devils and everything get into me so everything changes you know.

His invocation of the term 'devils' reflects a powerful mode of religiously oriented thinking that ascribes negative behaviour to the infestation of 'devils', 'demons' and 'evil spirits' (De Boeck and Plissart 2005). Though he is becoming 'serious,' his process of becoming is in its early stages and it remains incomplete. Even as he flirts with bad behaviour and poor work performance, his own individual sense of religion ties him more immediately into a rooted sense of self, not entirely through Islam but through his kinship connections.

'The quiet one': Bubba's Story

As Kebba strove towards 'Bigmanity,' his masculine preconceptions vied with the 'Whole Man' masculinity rooted in modernity, the world of ICT and globalized development which the YMCA required, creating frictions that needed to be worked out on a day to day basis. Kebba's ambivalent relationship to Islam also offered an alternative viewpoint through which to see the intersection of YMCA values and Gambian social mores, offering a nuanced view of the ways in which Islamic modes of being integrate into the global market. This point was even clearer in the case of Bubba, a young student turned volunteer. In contrast to Kebba's 'swagger' and strategic piety, Bubba was a devout Muslim whose 'shyness' and 'quietness' were viewed as problematic in the communicative culture of the YMCA. As Marsden (2007) discusses in his ethnography of all male singing groups in Pakistan, the values of Islamic manliness need to be situated in complex historical negotiations over gender, patriarchy and intergenerational authority. For the Pakistanis in Marsden's context, shyness is both a masculine attribute of 'youth' needing to be overcome and a sign of 'piety' for reform-minded Islamic leaders (p.483).

This multiple landscape of leadership masculinities also helps understand how Bubba's quietness was laden with extra resonance that was picked up by the members of YMCA staff attuned to religious modes of masculinity. Beginning life as an English student, he showed enough aptitude to be offered a combination of paid and unpaid work at the YMCA. Part of this work was supporting me training ICT students, meaning he often had to speak to students, give them advice and instructions, which meant becoming more

outgoing and more proactive, or as one manager put it ‘if you are working at a place you have to have initiative on your own, not always waiting for some person in upper position to tell you what to do, like you’re in school.’ Here his lack of initiative is directly associated with a lack of maturity, situating him as an unrefined youth. However, for other YMCA staff, Bubba’s shyness was seen in a positive light, as a contrast to the over-confidence of his counterpart Kebba, in her words: ‘Don’t let it fool you. It’s always the quiet ones that are sharp...or maybe he just respects being at work.’ A devout Muslim, his manager’s positive assessment of Bubba’s character comes in her identification with his Muslim values, his sense of respect irrevocably linked to his religious identity: ‘One thing that has made Bubba the man he is, is his religion, he’s very spiritual, because religion teaches a lot of tolerance, respect...he’s very humble.’

Whilst for ‘Ponce’ passion is part of devotion and commitment to the YMCA mission of development, for some Muslim staff members being quiet and humble reflected a deeper passion and respect for humanity. However, Bubba’s sense of Islam needs to be understood through his own understanding of economic development, inflected through the neoliberal moment and his imaginative encounter with modernity (Weiss 2009; Masquelier 2010). When discussing the influence Marabouts continue to exert over Gambian culture as both spiritual leaders and healers, he places himself in opposition with Gambian cultural norms: ‘Most people believe in the Marabouts but...what I learnt from the Khoran is I should not believe in the Marabouts...I won’t go to him to heal me even if I’m sick.’ Bubba’s faith-based rejection of specific religious practices he associates with superstition and tradition, ironically mirrors the historical and teleological reductionism of economic development, but it also mirrors the views of Islamic reformist movements such as the Tablighi Jama’at who have a strong presence amongst young people in The Gambia (see Janson 2008). As Bubba puts it:

There is a saying that says ‘even if you hear something from someone older than you, even if you don’t believe it, don’t let it be on your eyes?’...Muslims: we believe in science. I think...everything in this world is science. Everything in this universe is science; even this Koran we’re talking about is all science... So I don’t think science is against religion, I don’t think that way.

Bubba’s discussion here reflects a thorough awareness of deep cultural change as he negotiates the expectations of his family, his culture and his religion, redefining his life project through the mixed language of neo-liberal choice and generational resistance. Ultimately though, for Bubba, the ability to choose needs to be guided by an overarching moral framework, and lived through Allah’s Will, as he puts it here: ‘Well I was born into Islam but I really, if I had the chance... I would choose Islam.’ For Bubba, the freedom to break away

from his religion has only reinforced its hold over his life, and can be separated from other traditional, cultural practices which are losing their relevance for him with the onset of modernity.

Bubba's need to stand out from the crowd also reflects a stark socio-economic reality for young men like Bubba as they try and carve themselves out a future at the YMCA amidst intergenerational discord and rapid shifts in societal patterns of consumption, labour and political power (cf. Cole and Durham 2008; Ferguson 2006). For Bubba, a Serehuli, he is breaking with several traditions and expectations present in his father's generation. Serehulis are traditionally known for giving the pursuit of commerce preference over education; a trend which Bubba assures me is changing with the younger generation. As education becomes more associated with good wages and good prospects, and significantly for him, technological advancements, the culture of his grandfather is slipping away:

The generation of our grandparents was very difficult...My grandfather was a farmer and was a very hard working farmer. Ok, if he didn't go to the bush to farm he wouldn't have anything to eat. But for me, ok even if I sleep [the] whole year but not [have something] to eat? I will have that one...I would rather be in this generation.

As he explains here, in the competitive Gambian climate, valued networks become a way of standing out from the crowd. Many of the young Gambian men who worked at the YMCA enjoyed the deepening of their knowledge, creating a sense of expertise and superiority over their peers. Like them, Bubba saw ICT as his route into a 'modern life', as he strives to differentiate himself from his peers: 'You could be in a ghetto but don't stay in the ghetto... But the smart ones or the lucky ones are the ones that gonna' leave the girl behind...'

For Bubba, this accentuated a sense of distance he had already created between himself and his friends by trying to leave 'the ghetto' has propelled him into the YMCA fold, offering a sense of security attached to deeply affective social bonds. As he describes here when I ask him if the Christianity of the YMCA worries him 'it's like a family to me. It doesn't matter, as far as we are all as a family.' At the YMCA, Bubba was simply searching for certainty amidst the breakdown of older social bonds. As he says here, he cannot even imagine his future, ambition and achievement are firmly rooted in the precarious realities of daily Gambian existence: 'The future is a dream... I work hard to achieve what I want to achieve but what I want to be in the future is not in my place to think.' For Bubba, dreaming is a double-edged sword; it is both the future realization of discipline in the present and the illusory myth of achievement without the intervening hard work. Equally, the YMCA offers a route of increased certainty, locating the future in more concrete realms and presaging the

neoliberal dream of individual achievement, personal fulfillment and, eventually, actual escape.

Conclusion: Measuring Success at the YMCA

This chapter has shown how attitudes and behaviours at the YMCA are located in specific narratives which intersect with broader discussions around the proper role of young people in society. As their behaviour is discussed and assessed, young YMCA leaders are placed in relation to both their 'failed' peers, other successful colleagues and destructive or anti-social youths outside the YMCA walls. This grid of success and failure is dependent on the cultural meanings of 'success' ascribed through the YMCA system which vies with various alternative reckonings of what it means to be successful. As leaders mould their young charges, they do so amidst an array of competing and entrenched forms of social obligation against which their actions are judged. Taken together, this collection of motifs, narratives and characters creates a powerful framework for affective and automatic regulation of selves and subjectivities, or an 'economy of affect'.

In the UK, young leaders were implicated in a complex discussion over the appropriate role of youth in society. As Gareth Jones (2011) has pointed out, modern societies get anxious about youth just 'hanging about' and prefer youth to enter public space 'in relation to a purpose, usually determined by the state, media and religious institutions, but not young people themselves' (p. 146). From this view, educational settings need to be recognised as 'spaces of socialisation' teaching young people not only how to learn but also how to be social in particular ways, and in particular places (Ruddick 2003; Jeffrey et al 2004; Ansell 2004). Justin and Leo's paired stories reflect this polarising narrative where being 'social' specifically means *not being* anti-social. As I have shown Justin's position was noticeably precarious. Even as he was viewed with affection and fondness by Yolandi and other YMCA staff members, the memory of his past lingered on as both evidence of his progression and a reminder of his potential future, a vivid three-dimensional portrait of success and failure.

In The Gambia, these discussions were firmly rooted in a grammar of leadership and masculinity, where being a successful man was equated with being a successful leader. YMCA leaders such as Ponce were critical to this process, modelling successful, in terms of status and prestige, forms of masculinity reliant on specific behaviours which both Bubba and Kebba were being pressed towards. They are also caught at a critical life-stage where the Gambian category of manhood is being recalibrated in accordance with shifting economic circumstances and global imaginaries of both Islam and mobility. The trade-offs between

far-off success and nearby prestige are in constant flux, triangulated by organisations such as the YMCA who are situated in complex and often illusory liminal cultural spaces: between the religious and secular; between the local and the global; and between earning good money and being a good citizen.

As I have shown, within the YMCA, an organisational culture is designed to capture the imagination of young Gambians, offering a route to become a successful man. However, to obtain these rewards, young men are required to forego certain aspects of their youthful or Muslim identity, or in some cases aspects of both. Being young, being Muslim and being at the YMCA, then, are not necessarily commensurable. Nevertheless, interrogating the gaps between these models can highlight how the YMCA moulds young men in the image of an implicit but always present version of maleness that has a complex genealogy. Young men are required to be emotional or passionate, to be disciplined and industrious and to be dynamic and entrepreneurial, building networks for the sake of the organisation's continued survival and success. As I have discussed, these elements all correspond to the original Christian 'Whole Man', which has been normalized into a Euro-American, middle class ideal of commercial leadership. In the next section I deepen this analysis by examining more closely how the YMCA programmes are gendered, asking how the YMCA form of morality is translated into models of masculinity and how these models stack up with the historical vision of 'The Whole Man.'

Part II: Moral Masculinities

Chapter 7: From Big Man to Whole Man: Making Moral Masculinities at the YMCA

As I have established the 'Whole Man' model encompasses an array of attributes which sometimes sit in uneasy tension. Particularly as young leaders learn to be 'whole men' (or women) they are learning how to balance out their entrepreneurial drives and their ability to relate to others with their duty of care, a sometimes delicate operations. In this chapter I focus on these difficulties by situating the YMCA values in specific contexts, analysing the types of masculinity it interacts with in what Connell has called 'moments of engagement' (Connell 1995: 121), where hegemonic forms of masculinity are subverted, challenged or attacked. This feeds into Foucault's idea of 'resistance' by showing how subordinate

masculinities are not only challenged at the YMCA they are incorporated into the dominant model (Foucault 1979).

Depicting a series of ethnographic scenes, I show how masculinities are embedded in the body through rituals, narrative and specifically on the Sports Leadership course, reflection. In a parallel to religious conversion, young people on the Sports Leadership course are taught to place their past, be it violent in the UK or 'useless' in The Gambia, in the story of their self-realisation on the course, creating powerful narratives of transformation. As I move through the different scenes and interact with different characters I probe the ways these narratives are moral, gendered and spatial, creating a powerful script of moral masculinity that has temporal and spatial trajectories. Using these contrasting and complimentary experiences, I ask if young men develop new embodied modes of being at the YMCA or simply broaden masculine notions imported from their own cultures, class backgrounds and experiences and how their notions of masculinity are shaped by their encounters at the YMCA. I aim to show how masculinity is imperfectly generated through the affective encounter at the YMCA, through the relationships formed, tested and continued through the YMCA system of incorporation.

Part 1: Beasts, Tanks and Animals

We're in the YMCA training room again, sat round a large table. In front of me are five young people from the Sports Leadership course, Callum, Benny, Kyle, Joey and Owen. To the right of me sits Stacey, the Sports Leadership tutor who has given me this afternoon's session to conduct a focus group on masculinity. It's not going particularly well. So far I have not managed to get even a sentence out of the young people, just indifferent shrugs and looks telling me they would rather be elsewhere. Justin, Stacey's assistant, is stood beside me, gamely trying to encourage the young men, but as he tells me later, 'It's like pulling teeth' with young people sometimes. When I ask them about the course they give one-word responses such as 'Shit', 'Average' and 'Standard' before they veer off, discussing a Muslim classmate as 'the one who's kind of black.'

Moving the discussion on, I finally ask, with much awkwardness, 'What makes a good man?' Joey responds directly by saying, 'Having a ten inch penis.' Trying not to laugh, I'm saved by Benny who comes in with the thoughtful, 'A man who goes to work, steps up and looks after his family.' When I ask him what he means he tells me he doesn't know, suddenly becoming unsure of his answer. But Joey changes the tack saying: 'Like last night, with that film 'Never Back Down,' it's sick mate... He just gets out of his car and fucks everyone up.

Have you seen it?’ I reply that I haven’t before asking if being tough makes you a man, a question that is greeted with stony silence. After a few seconds I ask Owen what he thinks, slightly embarrassed I am worried I have put him under the spotlight but he finally says simply: ‘Looking after your family.’

After a short group silence, I decide to shift my angle of questioning. I ask if they know any men in real life who they respect. Kyle speaks up first, ‘I respect Teddy Randall; he’s a beast...he’s in prison now, for armed robbery.’ I ask if Bobby has a big local reputation. Joey tells me that ‘it depends who you know, and who they know.’ Then I ask him how he exactly got his reputation, and Joey explains that ‘his dad used to be a tank, back in the day.’ They then start chatting about different men in the neighbourhood who will ‘animal’ anyone, meaning physically assault, harm or defeat. Eventually Joey admits that his granddad is not a fan of Bobby the ‘tank,’ as he only fights with weapons, not with his hands.

As the chatter subsides, I ask them if they want to be a tank? Joey looks at me with a mixture of outrage and disbelief, gesturing excitedly with his hands: ‘Everyone wants to be a tank, wouldn’t they? Six foot, fucking chest out there, arms like that.’ After a few more questions with limited responses, I decide to begin wrapping things up by asking about the course. When I ask them what they think is the best thing about the course, Kyle leans back on his chair and says, exhaling for effect, ‘Yolandi.’ Immediately, Joey’s eyes light up ‘He’s in love with her,’ he chirrups. Kyle replies with the provocative ‘No... I’d bang her though.’

At this point, I feel that Kyle has gone too far, overstepping the mark by being rude about my friend. I glare at him for a few seconds before asking the room: ‘So you like Yolandi? What do you like? Bearing in mind, she’s a good friend of mine.’ ‘Is she,’ says Joey, surprised. Though I’m grateful Kyle has nothing else to say, I ask Callum what he thinks of Yolandi. He says, ‘She don’t let you get away with bare shit,’ referring to her iron discipline. With lunchtime approaching and boredom potentially dangerous, I decide to end the focus group, my insight into young masculinities taking me unexpected places and testing the limits of my own masculine performance.

Through my focus group I wanted to get an understanding of young masculinities and the young subjectivities being cultivated at the YMCA, but found the topic slippery and dangerous, treading on difficult territory for the young people, and pressing emotional buttons for myself and them. Many of the young men I worked with had troubled relationships with their male role models and, as Kyle showed, problematic attitudes to the women in their lives that reflected styles of masculinity and relationality antithetical to YMCA models. As I challenged Kyle, I was aware he was provoking me and the other tutors, and even though my manner was calm, my words might have sounded like a threat, or at least a warning. In public at least, I had momentarily used my authority to win a point, but many of

these issues were better addressed in private reflecting a split in the performative workings of masculinity. In public, in front of the other tutors and students, I could not let the comment about Yolandi pass, but could not challenge it too directly. I was performing my masculine role, stepping out of my facilitator's shoes and into my own. Equally, I was modelling a form of masculinity, showing certain traits and characteristics of manhood even as we were discussing other forms. My middle class sensibilities rooted in equality and respect failed to mesh with the forms of racism, misogyny and violence necessary for the young people's forms of masculinity and more conversant with local reputation and neighbourhood 'toughness'.

For Sports Leader Callum, generally regarded as a success on the Sports Leadership course, and one of the fortunate young people to go to The Gambia, masculinity was also a slippery and difficult subject, charged with contradiction and risk. Like Kyle, Joey and many young people from White Working Class neighbourhoods, his masculinity and masculine ideals were constructed through tales of adventure, criminality and violence, told and re-told as a form of cultural capital (see Evans 2006). Through these stories young people not only find excitement and authenticity, but ways of becoming men, helping them to construct fragile subjectivities in the telling (Evans 2006). As Callum discusses here, narrating an escape from some ticket collectors on a train, petty criminality, macho strength, streetwise cleverness and ultimate triumph are all woven into a version of model behaviour that give his masculinity meaning:

I wouldn't say this is really manning up, but I bunked the train ...and there was these tickets guys everywhere... six of them came in and said we need your name... Dave went to smack this ticket guy but he hit the wall and made a mark on the wall. And then we all just ran. Then there was this proper fat guy so I grabbed him and threw him out of the way, Danny opened the door we all ran and I was the last one out. And the door caught my finger, then we heard sirens, then we ran.

Callum is currently on bail for robbery, perhaps, reflecting his serial lapses in good behaviour, when I interviewed him, he also discussed other morally problematic incidents, for which he had been punished and subsequently feels he has moved on from. As he describes here, his violence decimated his time in school, culminated in this shocking incident:

Callum: Well I was usually in three fights a week. I had people chatting and stuff about my mum and dad. I got kicked out of [another college] because this guy called Matt said that my dad should've died. So I punched him in the eye and his eye popped on my hand.

Ross: How did you feel about that?

Callum: It was funny at the time.

Ross: Can he see?

Callum: He's now permanently colour blind in his left eye.

Ross: And do you feel bad about that?

Callum: Not really, because he was giving me shit for about two years.

For Callum, morality is gauged in degrees, and justice is meted out as part of his masculinity. At the same time, Callum was also performing a form of masculinity in the interview, invoking the youth work language of feelings, telling the story of masculine prowess as masculine damage, perhaps in order to shock or impress me. Even as I attempt to exert my own morality within the interview, Callum's street based code re-asserts itself, both our masculinities and moralities caught at an impasse.

In relations with women, masculinity also becomes particularly visible, forming a key terrain of negotiation with young people, as we challenge their attitudes, actions and language. As Callum relates, in his relationship with the women in his life, his young masculinity is determined by gestures and deeds, performed in different arenas and governed by very specific context-based codes:

My little sister is the same as me in learning and that. I had trouble learning and she is too and [she is] getting bullied by boys in the year above her. So I told her to tell them that if they don't stop, I'm going to walk down there. I don't care if they're in Year nine, I will smack them for bullying my sister.

Callum's description here indicates how the street-based form of violence he adheres to can be used for actions coded as both moral and immoral. Unlike the previous incident, in this context his violence is mobilised in support of protective relationship with his sister, a sign of an implicit family honour code. However, Callum operates in a rapidly shifting moral universe where physicality and morality are often necessarily combined in sudden moments of violence or crisis:

Callum: I haven't got the physical strength to hit a girl. I would put my fist up to her but I wouldn't hit her. The most I would do is push them over if they'd smashed me in the face or something. If I ever saw a man hitting a woman I would run over and hit them. I feel strongly about that.

Ross: But you hit your headmistress though?

Callum: Yes but that was three years ago - I've changed a bit... I don't hit girls; I've matured quite a bit.

Here, Callum's estimation of his own masculine power is not only created by his restraint, his ability to control his temper and violence, but also his narrative of transformation that locates his own violence as an historical event. Through his story, despite his recent problems, Callum is re-writing his own past, making his early difficulties formative influences in his newly developed, and evolving moral code. In the next section I explore this re-invention of the self further by describing another instance where my own moral code was embodied and challenged in a 'moment of masculinity' on the Sports Leadership course.

Part 2: Rituals of Manhood: Muscular Masculinity on the Sports leaders Course

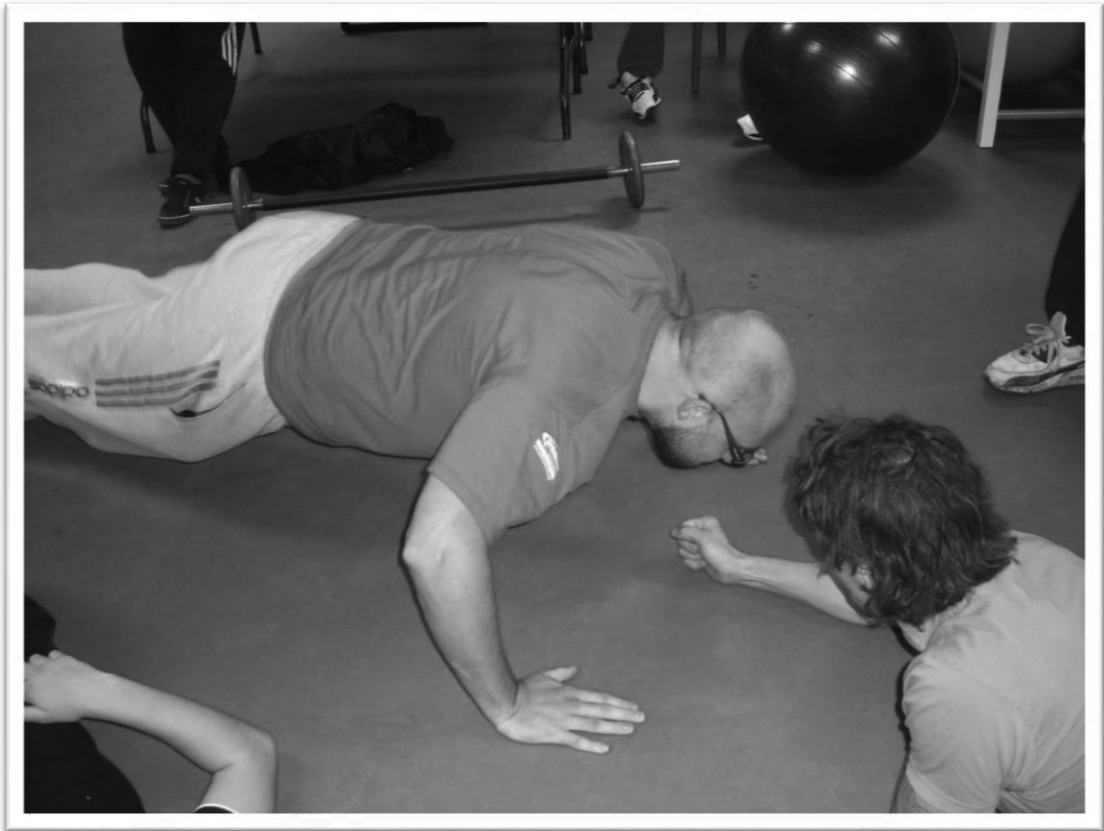


Figure 13. Author doing press-ups

For many staff members at the YMCA the opportunity to ‘do sport for work’ is why they attend the YMCA and helps them bond with their sometimes wayward students. Today I have been training with the young people. In the morning session, the students have been working on today’s worksheet: ‘good leader/ bad leader,’ where they identify the qualities of a good leader and apply them to their coaching work. Now, in the afternoon session they are being rewarded with physical activity. Some students have gone swimming with a colleague and some have been to the gym with me, where the students and I have been trying to outdo each other on the bench press. In good spirits, I have offered to do ‘padwork’ with two of the students who are interested in boxing and MMA (mixed martial arts). Aiden, tall with curly brown hair, and Liam, shorter with close cropped black hair, are lively young men who came to the course with trepidation and reluctance. Many of our students are required to come by either a support worker, who is trying to get them back into school. As we have

done more and more physical work, both Aiden and Liam have relaxed on the course and begun to trust us. As we have encouraged their MMA work, they have responded enthusiastically and we have used these sessions as an increasing reward.

As we begin our session, the boys get increasingly aggressive, trying outrageous roundhouse kicks and impressive jumping manoeuvres. Impressed by their athleticism, I encourage them, but also impress on them the need for control and restraint. After about twenty minutes I suggest we have a break and send them out of the training room, following them down the stairs to catch up with my teaching colleague. When I return, I am surprised to find Liam and Aiden on the floor of the training room, Aiden with Liam in a painful and dangerous looking headlock and Liam, red-faced, shouting obscenities. I tell them to stop fighting and to separate, a command they ignore. My teaching partner has followed me in, and together we do separate the boys, telling them to calm down; my colleague taking Liam outside to cool down. After ten minutes or so, Liam returns and the boys shake hands, telling us they were just practising MMA holds. We tell them to stick to less contact-based combat in the future, a message they seem to, at least on the surface, accept.

Boxing, MMA and weight lifting form a cornerstone of student development on the Sports Leadership course, allowing myself and other tutors to spend time away from the classroom, bonding with the students. At the YMCA, this process serves a dual purpose: allowing students to cultivate relationships away from unmanageable friendship and family networks; and providing an alternative space away from toxic relationships with school and work. Sport plays a vital role in this process, creating the grounds for the ritualisation of intersubjectivity, using combinations of performance, discipline, enjoyment and achievement to deepen and strengthen the connection between individual transformation and collective unity (Jennings et al 2010: 553; see also Wacquant 2004: 235; Kohn 2007). However, incidents like the one described forced me to reflect on whether I was modelling or undermining the notions of masculinity that circulate in this setting, and are embedded in the ethos of the programme. In breaking up the fight I was attempting to promote a caring 'Whole Man' masculinity, but through my promotion of physical competition, I was also paradoxically attempting to use the very system of embodied power we were trying to displace, potentially feeding into alternative systems of masculinity based on violence and physical dominance. In her detailed ethnography of London council estate Gillian Evans (2011) has identified how 'Big-man systems' on the street which translated into school spaces as a 'pecking order of disruption,' a 'frenetic...learned disposition' that militates against the required expectations of teachers and parents which required them to be 'good boys' at school (Ibid:296). As with the YMCA, boys were required to learn a different form of 'self-

value' creating ambiguity and confusion as they moved from one system of masculine power to another (Ibid:317).

The YMCA operates as a transformative interface between these two systems of male prestige, hoovering up young men multiply rejected, failed by mainstream education and parents but also left intimidated and confused by the often unmanageable demands of the 'street.' As such, though it has the power to recalibrate the set of values through which young men interpret male prestige and masculine behaviour, this process is rarely complete, part of a continued and contingent negotiation. This uncertainty and ambiguity was reflected in my discussions and relationships with young people on the course. For example, Liam's sometimes fractious relationship with Aiden reflected a significant transformation from his initial appearance on the course when he had been withdrawn, sullen and seemingly angry. Unlike other students, who were often overtly aggressive, his complex emotional state manifested as simple withdrawal from activities, as well as keeping his distance from the other students.

Liam came to the course with something of a reputation for violence, both in and out of school. Down one side of his face was a six-inch scar, giving him the impression of 'hardness', a physical marker of 'manly' experience. From this physical reference point, both staff and students treated Liam with deference, reflecting an awareness of the 'Big-man' system from which he had emerged. It was only when we began boxing and kick-boxing that he began to gradually integrate into the group. Liam began sharing cigarette breaks with some of the other students, like Liam, where their bond deepened under the guidance of an experienced kickboxing instructor who would occasionally join us. Through these tiny increments, his enjoyment of the course seemed to change. Though he was never the most enthusiastic member of the group, his patience with written work did improve as did his attention span in group discussion. And he did start listening to his YMCA tutors, including me.

This gradually growing bond of trust surfaced during my interviews with him where he frankly discussed his history of violence. Echoing Evans' model of the tensions between the street and school, he told me of how 'the idiots' in his peer group had caused him to stay away from school. When he did go he would get into fights or cause trouble, hoping to stay on top of the pecking order. As he states here although the course has had an impact his past actions haunt his present daily life: 'I changed it around a bit now but I've still got like a bit of a reputation. The police always want to seem to stop and search me and they are a bit annoying to me like that.' His relationship to the local police reflect his antagonistic relationship with most of those around him, including his family, social workers and his school, resulting in both his expulsion and a stressful period of homelessness, living on the

streets. Liam's time on the 'streets' had also reinforced his sense that 'street' based values steeped in machismo and violence should take precedence in the way he lived his life, a view that had been slowly changing at the YMCA, as he depicts here:

Well I was getting arrested nearly every other day – just getting in fights near enough every day. Nicking cars – I was like nicking cars – one or two a day. I was going out first thing in the morning – nick a car drive around in it for the day and then set light to it. Then I'd go out about half ten/eleven at night and nick another one and drive that around for the night. It was either cars or motorbikes; anything with an engine. That was at a bad point, I didn't really care – [I was] on the road to self-destruct. I didn't care about myself or no-one.

For Liam, struggling to find a new identity outside of stealing and brawling, the damage to his face was his nadir. But it was also a point of epiphany: he entirely dropped out of school and began a slow process of change, culminating with his appearance on our course.

In Liam's story, the breakdown in his relationships had been the cause of his criminality, the territorial allegiance Evans identifies as a factor in Big-man systems leading him into violence, but also creating the grounds for his redemption. Removed both from his geographical and filial interconnections, he had begun to rebuild his life with a new set of values, forever reminded of his violent past. It was in his body that his transformation began to take hold. He talked of the Sports Leaders course as: '...using my energy up', and went on, 'usually I would get into trouble – go out and have a fight or try nicking stuff, but when I get home from this I just want to relax and sit down and not do anything.' Eventually, he had one fight too many, getting badly injured and scarred. In his account, the pain of the wound was nothing. What scared him was having to endure an injection for the pain. Liam's sense of hardship endured and pain received were badges of masculine endurance and toughness, at odds with his fear in the face of a simple injection.

Liam's violent encounter was both part of a performance of 'toughness', but also a way of performing and narrating his current transformation into another way of being, one that offered him a different masculinity. As I tried to learn about Liam's story, I was also implicated in this process, offering respect to his physically dangerous past, but also new ways of showing manliness and being a 'good man'. For Liam, the opportunity to tell his story was also an opportunity to display a masculinity that carefully balanced his histories of violence and vulnerability, creating a provisional or working masculine identity in the present. Yet it was also an opportunity for me to open up a new way of being for Liam, offering succour to the marks of manhood, whilst questioning their validity and worth, pointing the way towards new ways of being vulnerable but also new, exciting ways of being manly. As I discuss in the next section, these 'moments of engagement' take place on a very different terrain in The Gambia, asking further questions of what morality and masculinity mean in context.

Part 3: Dressing for Respect

Located on a sprawling campus that is part of the new Gambia University, today I have come to Brikama College to teach a group of trainee teachers the Sports Leadership course as part of their on-going development and in the spirit of fostering links between the college and the YMCA. It is the middle of rainy season and the humidity is stifling in the small classroom. Above me two creaky fans wobble round giving me gentle relief from the heat. Some of the students are sat chatting or reading bits of newspaper, whilst others file into the room, drifting back before the next session kicks off. As we are all feeling a little lethargic, I decide to hold an impromptu focus group talking about youth issues. There are 15 students, and after twenty minutes only two or three have spoken. So far the discussion has centred on the lack of resources in The Gambia and a lack of ‘materials,’ a phrase often used as a euphemism for a lack of financial Aid from both the Gambian government and overseas.

Trying to ignore the implicit request, I decide to change tack when Matthew, who though a devout Christian is known for his flamboyant extroversion, makes the request overt. He suggests that I should give him some materials, ‘If you guys can give us some of those football kits it will motivate us to play’. Feeling slightly uncomfortable and trying to move on from this comment, I ask the group how you can get respect in The Gambia. Alasana, a serious young man with a firm countenance, speaking slowly and deliberately suggests that, ‘Obeying your teammates, support them. You will win their hearts.’ He looks annoyed when another young man, supported by those next to him, interjects with ‘Respect your parents and your elders.’ On one side of the room though, two young men Matthew and Salifu, are agreeing that ‘money’ is the best way to win respect or as Salifu puts it: ‘If you are wealthy you get respect.’

At that point, offering a note of calm and a slight tone of reproach, Ebrima speaks for the first time. Ebrima, is a shy, quiet student who struggles with the writing elements of the course but is considered the most pious member of the group, often with Khoran in hand, or studying during the breaks: ‘You will be respected when you have money, but when money gone they will not respect you,’ he tells the group. Moving on from this, many of the students extol the virtues of getting self-respect, by being honest and by dressing well. Marsell, an excitable, skinny young man sporting a Manchester United shirt, tells me: ‘Dress, can bring you respect.’ Then looking directly at me, but trying to make his point tactfully he says, ‘In our culture, if I went to town in the shorts, if they see me in that, they will lower my respect’. I suddenly realise the young men have noticed my attire for the day: as well as a

sweat-drenched short sleeve shirt I have on the only shorts I had available after a mix up with my laundry, my bright blue swimming shorts. Due to the increase in humidity during the rainy season, I have dumped my regular trousers and resorted to shorts, aware that they are seen as 'boys' clothes in Gambian society. Another student points out that, 'In some Arabic places, if you don't wear full dress, they will not respect you... They always think you should wear this Kaftan'. He goes on to suggest that his father would not even let him attend the course if he knew it was about sports, saying: 'You should be in the Islamic religion always. Even if my father knew we were sitting here, just talking sports, he will not like it. Definitely, I would not come' sparking a heated debate that rages on well after class.

For the young Gambian men on the Sports Leadership course, 'dress' is obviously an important subject for debate, part of the broader everyday discussions of behaviour, conduct and social respect. Yet as this instance shows, this commentary is also a negotiation, part of on-going debates and discussions that shape the lived realities of the students. As Basiru's defiance of his father's wishes attested, Gambian youths are often engaged in small acts of resistance and disobedience that were part of this conversation, rooted in the pragmatism of everyday life. Although many Gambian young men agreed that they should respect their elders and families, they also did not always agree with them, and surprised me with their willingness to disregard their families' feelings by doing both sport and the Sports Leadership course. Marsell's generally respectful comments on my attire were not only reflective of debates within Gambia, but the young people's positioning of me within these debates. By wearing shorts I had associated myself with 'boy' masculinity, a colonial category of youth (Lindsay and Meischer 2003: 4-5). However, as an outsider and foreigner, I was partially exempt from the social codes they had to adhere to, but equally my dress confirmed and reified the intrinsic power of that outsider status. As Marsell pointed out, I was in a different situation to them, separate and unique, immune from a lack of respect by my way of dressing but also excluded by it.

At the same time, I had unwittingly facilitated forms of everyday rebellion simply by holding the course that entered into moral debates around the role of sport, youth and money in everyday Gambian life. Through my ignorance I had aligned myself with the younger generation, as one young student said to me, 'you are on the side of youth' and my natural instincts were to support the young Sports Leadership students in their endeavours and pursuits as empowered 'individuals', understanding but apart from their familial relations. Anthropologists have documented how young men resist their families' wishes through versions of global Islam, creating complex multi-faceted articulations of Islamic agency. For example, Masquelier's (2007) work in Niger explores how technology allows young people to give voice to pre-existing agentive concerns enabling 'young Nigeriens to participate in

debates on what it means to be a Muslim, a citizen, or simply a youth with moral convictions' (p. 246-7). As the political figures in Niger failed to live up to the young people's levels of moral scrutiny, they promote religiosity as a viable alternative code of conduct as 'Islam has more than ever become a source of moral order and a mode of social engagement for Nigerien youths' (Masquelier 2007: 256; see also Janson 2014; Leblanc 2000).

Like the young Muslims in Masquelier's study, when I spoke with many of the students after the course, their lives were complex processes of navigating multiple realms, arenas and codes of conduct. Though many were devoted to their families and respectful of their elders, many also gently and indirectly challenged their authority through their everyday lived behaviour. The axis of Islam and sport formed a powerful prism through which to view this subtle negotiation as young men expressed their split masculinities in between spiritual piety and physical power. Sitting quietly during the debates, occasionally smiling at some of the passing comments was Muhammed, a young man from outside Brikama whose complex life was deeply implicated in the worlds of sport, Islam and Gambian future. As a trainee teacher he held the lives of young Gambians in his hands, but he also coached his younger brother's football team, using the Sports Leadership Course to confirm his incumbent authority. Yet, he was also following in his father's footsteps, learning to teach Arabic and lead in the local mosque as he tells me: 'My dad is a mosque leader, he send me to Arabic school... I can say that I'm the right hand [man]. In case he's not here, I'll be there for him.' But as he admits, even his father's wishes for him are conflicted, confused by Muhammad's youth status: 'At this moment, what he really want to me is to be teaching... I'm a bit young to be a mosque leader. Like here if you want to be an Imam, you must have a wife.'

Muhammad is also enthusiastic about his future life, claiming that he would like to have four wives and twenty children, a claim that makes us all laugh 'enough for your own school', I respond, tongue firmly in cheek. Despite his commitment to both teaching, Islam and both present and future family, Muhammad also lets out his secret wish: 'What I wanted to be is a player, no matter what, I want to be a football player.' His heroes are the Manchester United legends of football Ryan Giggs and David Beckham, saying how he respects their skills and hard work and that if he was not teaching 'every day I would be at the field, even maybe from the morning, come back home for lunch, and go back in the afternoon.' However, out of respect for his father he now just concentrates on his coaching as his father told him 'spending most of your time with books is more important than going to the field.'

For Muhammed, sport and Islam nestle uneasily alongside each other in his life, forming two sides of his complex masculinity. Ultimately the Sports Leadership course offered both a link to the sport he loves, and a move away from the physical side of it he loves most, being a 'player' simply not serious enough for his father, his family and the

demanding rigours of his anticipated future. Whilst I and the YMCA were ‘on the side of youth’ we were enmeshed in the complexities of Gambian society, entering sometimes directly sometimes inadvertently into a constant process of conversation and negotiation that was mediated through intergenerational conflict and Islam. Even as I dressed like a ‘boy’, I was categorising myself as a supporter of sport and youth, unintentionally questioning the validity of Islamic cultural power. With young people like Muhammad, caught in the teeth of this debate, I was offering an alternate version of manhood, rooted in the West but given life at the YMCA. In the next section I supplement this analysis by presenting an account of a moment when my own masculine authority was invoked, almost against my will, further questioning the role of the YMCA ‘Whole Man’ as a strategy of subject formation.

Part 4: The Shifting Sands of Manhood: Sport and Situational Masculinities in The Gambia

It’s 1pm and I’m in a dusty Gambian village. In front of me is a group of expectant young faces, listening intently to what I am saying. They are a local youth football team, and I am giving a half-time ‘pep’ talk at the request of my YMCA student, Siaca. Next to the pitch, some felled logs are providing the supporters with somewhere to sit and I am encouraged to sit down next to a group of about ten young men. Some of them ask me questions, and chat to me about English football. Once the action starts, most of them stop chatting and concentrate on the game, making comments or shouting encouragement. On the next log along, some older men sit and watch. As the players draw near to them they shout instructions in various languages, making the young players turn their heads to take notice. After a pretty uneventful goalless first half, people flood across the pitch, including several washerwomen, baskets on heads hurrying on with their daily chores. After my speech, the players walk back to the field and as they do, the older men from the log, bark agitated instructions at them, they stop and listen. One man in particular, has taken the lead and the players bow their heads as he berates them, Siaca remains passive and silent next to them, eventually thanking them, and walking his players back to the pitch. I ask one of the young men near me what the older man had been saying. ‘Oh he just said play better; he used to be a player.’ Whoever’s speech was more successful, the team do play better, but so do their opponents and the game finishes one goal apiece. Most people seem happy with the result, except the angry man on the side-lines, who, even as the other supporters drift off, is following Siaca to give him some advice, but it’s difficult to tell from where I am whether Siaca is listening or not.

Siaca's battle for authority on the football field, and his exploitation of his relationship with me, can be seen in the broader schematic of African youth 'stuck' in between youthhood and adulthood (Jeffrey 2010; Masquelier 2013). Whilst he is also part of a 'sandwich generation', caught between intractable elders and discouraged youth, he is also bridging other divides between economic muscle and community power, working horizontally whilst restricted vertically. I met Siaca early in my fieldwork. A young security guard at the YMCA had mentioned his name in conversation and encouraged me to enrol him on the Sports Leadership course. Eventually, I gave him a call and met him face to face, but it wasn't until a few months later that I managed to get him onto one of the courses. By the time I visited his village to watch the football match and subsequently to interview him, he had also become a security guard at the YMCA, looking after the under-populated hostel building. What initially struck me about Siaca was the way his entrepreneurial spirit weaved into his civic mindedness, his everyday grafting for his family naturally extending into care for his community. Living in a compound with 13 mouths to feed and only two workers, as he tells me, '...the living condition is also very difficult here, it's all about, what we say, manage it from hand to mouth, just push it...it's a big load onto us.'

Yet, whilst 'doing business', as he puts it, and working as a security guard, he was also involved in sports coaching, youth work and arts programmes as well as finding time to produce music. As an older youth, Siaca saw it as his responsibility to help those 'coming up' behind him. The experience of the Sports Leaders course means that, in his words, 'this is the knowledge I have from the coaching, so this is what I have to translate here.' At least part of this translation is giving younger youth better chances than are available to his generation: 'We work with the young ones, at any ages, because we try to render services for the community that will help create opportunities, and foster relationships among the youths in the community here.'

Siaca claims that he is directly inspired by the Gambian President in trying to achieve development at home, his attendance on the Sports Leaders Course part of a wider strategy rooted in tying his individual aspirations to both his community and his nation: 'I'm trying to improve the living condition of the society. There are lots of changes [I want to make], financial changes, education changes, that's what I work on.' In Masquelier's (2010) study of young Ivorian Muslims, she usefully identifies a form of 'situational ethics' defined as specific modes of tactical behaviour tailored in response to a range of pressing economic, social and cultural contexts (Ibid.:252; see also Jeffrey 2010; Leblanc 2000). Siaca's different ways of asserting authority and community endeavour seemed to reflect a situational or tactical masculinity that altered specifically from context to context and allowed him to accrue masculine prestige in a variety of domains. This allowed Siaca to cumulatively create a

reputation and profile in the community whilst also attempting to occasionally avoid disrupting the 'Big Man' System of masculinity.

This became clearer when I went to Siaca's compound to interview him and meet some of his family members before the football match. Immediately as we entered we were greeted by his stern-faced grandmother pounding maize in a large pestle and mortar. As Siaca explained my presence, she nodded and smiled, directing a question at Siaca. He explained she did not speak English, but that I was welcome. His grandmother ushered for me to go inside before slowly returning to her work. Inside, the house was cool and dark, with the lights turned off. Bigger than many Gambian houses, the tiled floors gave instant relief from the heat outside but sat in a large reception area the house seemed empty. Abruptly, the house sprang into life as the family was alerted to my presence: mother and daughters emerged from the kitchen, wiping their hands; small children of both sexes emerged from bedrooms; young men and women, friends of Siaca and the family, appeared at a nearby doorway, framed by the light as they crammed inside.

I was asked to sit on a chair in the middle of the room, as all the newcomers gathered round keeping a respectful distance, one young boy clinging to his sister's leg. After introductions and pleasantries, I asked if I could interview a couple of family members and a friend. First came his mother, who, in broken English, told me what a 'good boy' Siaca was. Second came a male friend, who told me how much Siaca did for his family and the community, also telling me Siaca was a 'good boy,' meaning he was a good friend and a decent person. Last came his sister. Surprisingly, I found out that she was also a football coach and player, encouraged greatly by her brother's example and his on-going encouragement. He is a 'good brother' she told me.

The story of Siaca's sister reflects a deeper, negotiated reality for young men in the Gambian context, struggling with intergenerational change and mutating gendered hierarchies. Prior to the football match, Siaca and I had passed a group of young women in headscarves and full football kits on their way to the field, the team his sister coached. She told me, many of them change after they have left their houses so as not to aggravate their family members who see this type of dress as un-Islamic. By encouraging his sister, Siaca was promoting the young women's own gendered negotiation of femininity, as they sought to situate themselves in between sport, Islam and the family.

These manoeuvres were also implicated in the complex intergenerational tensions encapsulated on the football field. Whilst young men were encouraged to take charge, the room given for their voices to emerge is occupied by the community elders. As Utas (2012) has noted young men in particular coordinate their 'Bigmanity' in relation to a fixed, charismatic centre, striving towards an ideal masculine type through activities that amass

standing within that system. Siaca's leadership qualities were simultaneously accruing prestige within his community but also disrupting the 'Big Man' constellation, destabilising the primacy of eldership and establishing a new primacy based on civic-mindedness, knowledge and merit in which Siaca was the central authority. His support of the girls' football team fits into this schematic. By encouraging his sister and her team, he was supporting them as individuals outside of the established gender norms, and age-specific hierarchies. In doing so, he was also re-affirming a new pattern for gendered relationships based on equality, merit and community which aligned both with the objectives of the YMCA and his emergent masculine power.

Conclusions: Making Men 'Whole'

As I have shown, in the cross-cultural context, comparative projects can show how geographies of exclusion and inequality are being remapped from global to local coordinates and being enforced and articulated through specifically gendered discourses of masculinised self-development. In the Global North, leadership is seen as a way of revitalizing a politically disengaged generation through civic participation and entrepreneurial dynamism (Flanagan 2008). However, this discourse of discipline inevitably targets specific classes and ethnicities (Evans 2006). As my discussion with Liam showed, taken out of its performative zone, his masculinity became more pliable, open to manipulation and modification through the YMCA relationships and values instilled on the course, where aggression needed to be controlled, productive and instrumental. Consequently, students on the Sports Leaders course are seen as transitioning from moments of failure to moments of success, a narrative conversion of moral value played out in terms of new masculine behaviours.

In the Global South, understanding the gendering of leadership becomes more urgent in the context of harsh economic conditions, fracturing male role models and a universalizing concept of Western agency that contradicts autochthonous notions of manhood (Durham 2008: 171). However, unlike many youth movements in Africa, particularly religious groups, that have created intergenerational friction (see for example Janson 2008; Leblanc 2000) the YMCA might be seen to reinforce overarching societal norms connected to traditional modes of leadership that include gerontocratic hierarchies and 'Big Man' masculine dominance (Lindsay and Miescher 2003:3; cited in Barker and Ricardo 2005:11). Interventions in this 'elastic' (Flanagan 2008:136) period of youth, can prove problematic as the moral coordinates for 'doing good' are continually in flux, creating

unstable categories of manhood that, as YMCA worker, I failed to understand and may have been reinforcing, undermining or confusing.

Nonetheless, youth are rarely simply passive recipients of gender coordinates, articulating their own complex versions of agency, masculinity and aspiration (Durham 2004). Through his discreet and thoughtful work, Siaca was challenging many entrenched Gambian gender norms across multiple domains. Through the Sports Leadership course, I was able to help him maximise the cultural capital he had already accrued, lending him greater authority to wield in the many arenas of negotiation that he dealt with on a daily basis, creating new forms of leadership, masculinity and subjectivity through which to exercise his agency. In Liam's case this sense of agency was more clearly governed by the physical elements of the Sports Leaders course, showing the way success is built from the body up. Whether Liam will be a good leader or not is much harder to tell, but he was learning to trust us and the YMCA and in doing so progressively breaking away from various problematic domains of his everyday life. Understanding this procedure, also means understanding that my own masculine subjectivity was integral to this mechanism of masculine re-configuration at work at the YMCA, incrementally making 'Whole Men', even as they were being silently, and sometimes painfully, unmade.

Chapter 8: 'The Big Change': Managing Transformation at the YMCA

In the last chapter, I analysed how masculine bonds at the YMCA are forged and tested through specific modes of relatedness and reflection. In this chapter, I show how these bonds are deepened and strengthened through ritualised forms of discourse and embodied practice that are dependent on reflection, interpretation and YMCA administration. Taking one course from each location, I focus on two YMCA Sports Leadership courses that could be considered archetypal, using them to explore broader issues around the role of sport as a transformative tool. I show how each course has a cumulative impact on the students as transgressions, deviation and mis-steps are re-incorporated into their personalised narratives of transformation. However, the course only works through fostering powerful and lasting intersubjective connections through feelings of pleasure, joy and self-mastery. I show how YMCA subjectivities are constructed in the interplay between these positive feelings and processes of discipline and policing further suggesting the power of sport as a mode of responsabilisation.

By comparing the two locations I trace how the YMCA version of masculinity which I was continually enacting, interacted with various forms of culturally proscribed forms of manhood and change. In the first section I describe three scenes at Sussex Central YMCA where moments of success and failure are morally valued by the Sports Leadership tutors. I use this sequence of moments to create a narrative thread of transformation, showing how the subjectivity being fostered by the YMCA is clearly defined through both social and spatial trajectories. I term these moments ‘thresholds of transformation’ as the positively coded future offered by the YMCA becomes tangible to the young men but is simultaneously provisional, negotiable and fragile, constantly in need of reinforcement as their old lives and behaviours threaten to vehemently reassert themselves.

I then analyse how the embodied aspects of the Sports Leadership are adapted to the Gambian context, intersecting with complex imaginaries of leadership, sport and manhood. Firstly, I show how the YMCA ‘Whole Man’ I was demonstrating encompassed apparently contradictory subjects positions of strength and expertise alongside weakness and vulnerability. Secondly, I explore how the performance of leadership on the course linked into wider socio-cultural systems of legacy and reciprocity. I show how the YMCA ‘Whole Man’ interacted awkwardly with the ‘Big Man’ system of masculine leadership and prestige. In the next section, I present two ethnographic moments that illustrate the partiality of the ‘Whole Man’ system but also how the course’s inbuilt structures of reflection and narration mitigate its conditionality.

Part I: Sussex Central YMCA

Episode 1: Learning to Lead

It’s a dank Wednesday afternoon at a school in West Hove, a wealthy but overcrowded district in East Sussex and Stacey and her Sports Leadership group have arrived at a local primary school round the corner from the YMCA. Today marks the culmination of the students’ studies as they put their hard-earned theory into practice and cross the threshold from student to teacher in what tutor Stacey calls ‘the big change’. The group consists of seven members, six of whom are present: Benny, a tough looking young man in a mismatched black and white tracksuit stands out, due to his beanie hat perched atop his head; Kyle, whose watchful eyes and knowing smirk, give him the look of the streets; Joey, the livenwire of the group, a motor-mouth, who as well as being very disruptive is very funny; Noah, whose zany hair, and slightly smarter clothes mark him out as a possible Hove citizen; Callum, a Gambia trip veteran who Yolandi has identified as a potential YMCA staff member and Owen, another Gambia trip veteran, who, diagnosed with minor learning difficulties that inhibit his speech, did exceptionally well in the daunting Gambia environment.

Before the coaching session, both Stacey and the students were understandably tense. Some of the students were bubbling with excitement, some quietly nervous, their behaviour testing Stacey's patience. When I spoke to her, she was also quite tense, fretting about the young people's foul language and their prospective performance at the school. As it turns out, the session went well but one student, Noah, has not quite made it today. As we were due to get in the minibus to go over to the school, suddenly an argument broke out between two of the boys, and a scuffle ensued. We separated them, but the damage was done. Sometimes with students, a fight can break out and can be forgotten instantly, here, Noah felt aggrieved and refused to board the bus. Stacey, I and then his fellow students, even his adversary, pleaded with him to return, knowing the significance of getting that first session out of the way, but all to no avail. With time already ticking by, we had to drive off, but as we did, we all saw him walking along the side of the road, angry glare on his face, as he made his way home. That was the last time I saw Noah. Embarrassed, he didn't return to the course for some time. More generally the day was deemed a success, as Stacey told me, despite the feeling of sadness at Noah's departure amongst both staff and students you have to celebrate the ones that do turn up, not worry about the ones who do not.

In any case, about twenty minutes later everyone is focussed on their task in hand: marshalling the streams of rambunctious seven and eight year old children pouring out of their classrooms into the playground. The Sports Leadership students are assigned groups and told what to do, some clutching their coaching session plans which they refer to as they try to get the children under control. As they coach, the tutors monitor the behaviour of their group members, giving them tips where appropriate and nudging them in the right direction, reminding them to speak up and be clear with their communication. In one corner, Owen and Callum are doing well, commanding their young charges and getting a simple passing drill going. Knowing each other from the Gambia trip has helped the pair develop something of a working relationship and Callum, partly due to Owen's Learning Difficulties, is directing both children and Owen in the activities. At the other end, Stacey has helped Joey and Kyle to organise their group as they were struggling to assert themselves over the excitable children, who liberated from the classroom were running amok. Having calmed the situation down, Stacey stands back and lets the boys get on with their coaching - now running much more smoothly. In the middle of all this, at the centre of the playground, are Benny and Kyle, who mainly seem to be having fun whilst doing their coaching. They are smiling, joking with the kids but also are running their session well, demonstrating the passing drill, before having a blast, literally, with some penalties. Finally, as the satisfied children file back into their classroom, under the watchful eyes of the teachers, they thank the young coaches, who say goodbye, sometimes to specific favourites. As we walk back to the minibus, there is a mixture of pride and relief: Joey and Kyle are definitely at the relieved end of the scale, whilst Owen and Callum are more quietly glowing with pride. Once more in the middle, Kyle and Benny are back to their difficult best, as Kyle walks past Stacey and I, his teen swagger returns and he says, 'Come on, I need a cigarette.' Stacey and I share a glance and sigh. Recognising his comment as a clear moment of rebelliousness after a promising day.

Episode 2: Rehearsing Reflection

Its late afternoon, and the Sports Leadership session has about twenty minutes to run before the students pack up and go home. Generally lethargic and laconic, the students loll about the training room looking as if they are about to nod off. Callum is doodling on a piece of paper whilst Benny plays with his phone under the table and Kyle sits with hands in pockets rocking back and forth on his chair. Stacey, the tutor, has just repeated her question without much response. She tries again: 'Come on guys, what did you think of today's session? In a moment, each student will have to fill out a session feedback form, a reflective account of today's session, detailing how they think it went and what they could work on in the future. Reflection forms an integral part of the Sports Leadership course, running in and out between the learning, coaching and other activities like the thread carefully stitching them together. At the YMCA, students are often notoriously reluctant to perform reflection activities, in part because they are pretty dull, but also because they are essentially a paper exercise, designed by administrators, facilitators and funders to extract the evidence of transformation.

Now, Stacey is writing suggestions of reflection on the board, examples of what the students could say about your session. After this, the students are told to complete their worksheets. Stacey moves round the room offering encouragement and suggestions individually, whilst ensuring that the students keep their phone away and stay off the computers. Most of the students are getting on with the work now, aware that if they finish quickly they can leave earlier. Benny, lets out a frustrated sigh, which attracts Stacey's attention and she spends some time with him helping him complete the sheet, asking him questions like 'what did you enjoy about the session?', 'what was your favourite part?' or 'what didn't go well?' After a few minutes, students begin finishing and packing up their things, some of them ask to check their emails on the PCs, which Stacey allows, some play with their phones. Benny, whose reading and writing is slightly behind everyone else's, takes a few more minutes to finish up. Handing his form in to Stacey he lets out another loud sigh, this time of relief, waves goodbye and heads out of the classroom. Stacey shakes her head, collects all the forms in and puts them in her teaching file, adding them to the mounting, and necessary, paper trail that follows the young men and women through the Sports Leadership Course.

'Sport is a bit of a religion'

These vignettes demonstrate the delicate and often problematic process of trying to transform the young men who join the course. As they journey through the course, the students are expected to pass through certain tests and markers, crossing specifically designed thresholds that mark, what Wacquant would term, their 'becoming' (2005: 236; cf. Turner 1975, 1985). At the same time, they are crossing and re-crossing the threshold of the YMCA

space, carrying the style of comportment they are taught at the YMCA into wider realms beyond. Entering the school is the ultimate test of their newfound confidence as they have to perform their skills in the 'real' world for the expectant children and watching teachers. It is also the moment when the intersubjective bonds between YMCA teacher and student become strengthened as the students suddenly find themselves on the same side as the teachers, the teachers in turn becoming part of a support network rather than instructor and disciplinarian.

As Kyle's final comment reflects, this mood of cooperation is often transitory, a performance locked to a particular place and time. Noah's refusal, like Leo's story of failure in Chapter Five, re-iterates the limits of transformation, the potential for relapse, and the difficulty of gauging those limits. Though 'transformation' occurred on the course, moments of unevenness and reversion were recycled into the overall narratives of progression, difficulty and, sometimes, forceful resistance. The students could sustain their behaviour for long periods or have 'bad days,' where the emotional turbulence of their lives dominated and disrupted their behaviour. Some students simply refused to join in some activities, or tried one session and never came back. Some just never attended at all, or had significant family or legal issues for sections of the course which prevented them from coming.

Most of the time, these issues are resolved through the nature of the course design itself which offers an embodied antidote to the strictures and regimentation of mainstream schooling. However, as the second episode demonstrates, these processes are also continually reflected on and fed back into improving practice, behaviour and attitudes creating a cycle of affirmation that frames the transformative process replicating the ritual-reflection dynamic of religious practice (cf. Csordas 1994). For Joey, his narrative is in the making as he learns specific ways of being and speaking that fit in with the 'Whole Man' ideal. Joey describes this as a two-way process, where the power of the course stems from the faith placed in the students, the YMCA is: 'A different environment to school: it's more relaxed; you can more be yourself, like you are outside school. At school you have to be, like, a student... You can let your hair down. It's alright, I really like it here.'

Joey's endorsement of the YMCA is also a rejection of the school system, where uniforms, discipline and routine are used to organise young bodies into specific uniform roles. Conversely, Joey views this intention to transition young people as a form of 'play', disconnected from reality, or in his terms:

I've grown up a lot. I used to mess about a lot, do really childish things, like play with lighters, do weird stuff. My mum said, 'you've gotta' grow up.' Coming here...where we've been going out to schools [for coaching]...you gotta' grow up. You're in the proper world. You gotta' proper go for it. It's not like school [his own school], where you can muck around,

[and then] you go back in the next couple of days and start again. You can't. It's there, it's done, if you do something, you break the law, that's it.

As the YMCA has created a sense of moral order in Joey's life, it has also connected him into a more authentic 'proper' world of work and adulthood which he enjoys being a part of. In this new arena, Joey has become subject to a more concrete framework of discipline and surveillance where he has become more accountable for his actions, mistakes and 'weird' behaviour. As he describes, this process is being continued in relation to the people around him, the moral code laid down for him at the YMCA in continual need to reframing and reiterating. Nevertheless, Joey's narrative reveals this process in the making, pointing to both the efficacy of YMCA transformation as it works through Joey's life and also its inherent provisionality and partiality as he resists, subverts and rejects it.

For other students the lessons learned in the playground carry over into their everyday lives creating more lasting forms of personal transformation located in the embodied feelings of pleasure associated with growing self-confidence and self-discovery. Nigel Rapport's (2007) analysis of a bodybuilding hospital porter has shown how embodied practice in one realm of being can come to define articulations of identity across multiple arenas of social interaction. As Rapport states, his subject 'both escaped from the hospital as work-place to the recreational space of the gym, and he escaped from the rigours of the gym to the relaxation of the hospital; he also escaped from working on his body to luxuriating in it' (p. 35).

For Benny, the experience of the Sports Leadership course has changed the way he thinks about his own life, helped him identify possible paths that were seemingly closed to him gradually changing his outlook on life at the YMCA, 'it's alright like, if I didn't come here, I would of [sic] just spent my teenage being in school... here I've been fishing on a boat, I've worked in a school... I've done rock climbing... I've done kayaking.' As he was encouraged at the YMCA Benny's passion for sport began to develop into something more, a viable career option, and the opportunity to do what he enjoys:

It's a good way to interact with people. Sport is a bit of a religion, like football and that. You can have debates about it. You can talk about it forever. It's a good life to live, to have a bit of sport in your life. It's good for you. It's good for your mind. It gets your mind off things. It's good for you health-wise, fitness, I like it. If I got paid to do sport, even if it was just minimum wage, I'd be happy.

Benny's summation of the reasons he loves sport replicate the sense of 'Whole Man' masculinity we were trying to instill through the Sports Leadership based around 'mind, body and Spirit. Firstly it has shaped his body and embodied practice making him 'healthy' and 'fit' which he codes as 'good'. Secondly, it, sport has distracted him from his problems giving

him an improved sense of well-being. Thirdly, sport becomes a way of producing relationality and becoming relational generating happiness and an inter-subjectively mediated feeling of self-respect. Though these factors are framed in a secular way they closely reiterate the YMCA priorities. Sport becomes much more than a past-time it is a 'good life to live' a way of life that generates feelings of well-being and satisfaction.

By the same token, it also becomes a religion, in the sense that it becomes an obsessive way of life where the embodied practice generates relationships through shared practice and discussion. Through these factors: embodied practice, shared experience and augmented well-being he has developed a sharper sense of his own needs and desires which are wedded to the goals of the YMCA. He continues this idea by showing how the Sports Leadership course has led him on a journey of reinvention, starting with re-narrating his past in terms of conversion and transformation:

To be fair yeah, the SL course has gave me something to look to, something to think about 'cos before I didn't have something to look forward to, just a...dull future. It gave me more options and made me look, more open-eyed and that. I've seen more of the world, seen that there's more in life, and it's nice when you're just teaching kids, playing things, it's just nice to do something, you're working to make them better.

Re-visioning his past through his present has also given him new ways of seeing his future. Benny's 'dull future' was going to be being a plumber, a job many families encourage as good, solid work but which leaves Benny cold: 'I wanna' be a P.E. (Physical Education) teacher or coach, or like they do here. I wanna' do something with sport, a job career in sport...that's my dream. What I wanna' do with plumbing? I don't want to spend my life under a toilet seat.' Benny's dream has been realised at the YMCA, where he has been volunteering as a sports worker since the course finished, pulling himself, with a little help, out from under the toilet seat, a good metaphor for the alternative future he had envisioned for himself originally.

'It made me feel more grown up'

Noah's refusal could also be read as a failure to adhere to the terms of intersubjectivity defined by the YMCA at the outset of every course. Analysing moments of disjuncture and failure offers a route to understanding how masculinity works through specific modes of intersubjectivity, reshaping relations through processes of relatedness. For example, a key element of Benny's transformation was also his budding relationships with some of the staff at the YMCA like Justin, Stacey and Yolandi who were prepared to offer him a chance to chase his 'dream' of becoming a sports worker. Many of these workers have

also been young people coming through the YMCA system themselves. For example both staff members Justin and Stacey joined the YMCA as volunteers after completing the Sports Leader course. This personal experience of transformation often helps them to form meaningful bonds with young people, as find points of commonality and identification. They are also close in age to the young people, and may come from similar areas or schools offering multiple coordinates of familiarity for the students to identify with.

These bonds often form vital links in the chain of transformation, relationally contracting the young people in to earning rewards and sticking to good behaviour. However, the system is far from foolproof. As Noah's refusal suggests, the very fragility of the emergent subjectivities makes them prone to volatility and unpredictability. Many YMCA tutors have themselves been threatened with violence during a course or had to fire students for serious breaches of discipline, a violent reminder of the limitations of this template. When I spoke to Kyle, Joey and Callum, all had improved their behaviour but were still involved in illegal, immoral or questionable activities.

Despite these setbacks, as Stacey says, YMCA tutors tend to focus on the changes they can make in the present. YMCA subjectivities are sustained through multiple points of continuity, a coordination of multiple narrative strands constructing the whole. YMCA tutors often select the strands they find desirable and weed out the strands they find less useful, filtered through the lens of the YMCA 'Whole Man'. This also allows us to see the 'Whole Man' as a constellating force, fostering an array of character traits that are always temporary and in need of shoring up. For example, returning to Callum's story shows how his destructive past has been reoriented at the YMCA but always threatens to destabilise his transformative journey. I first met Callum on The Gambia trip, where he impressed with his confidence and willingness to help out. However, he finished the trip under a cloud, by repeatedly breaking curfew and eventually along with another student being barred from the group's evening activities. For Yolandi, this was particularly difficult as she had high hopes for Callum, and had been delighted with his work and transformation so far on the Sports Leadership course, which he then failed to complete.

Four months later and I am back at the YMCA, and so is Callum, coming to the mid-point of another Sports Leadership course, and hopefully, finally getting to do some coaching and graduate. Here he discusses how the course has affected him:

The best thing about Sports Leadership is teaching the small kids. And that I actually did it and actually got on with it and enjoyed it...I guess it made me feel more grown up. It made a difference being the teacher instead of the student. If a teacher told me to do something I wouldn't do it.... I was leading them more, even taking over.

Although, according to him, he has matured, Callum is still getting himself into trouble, and is currently on bail for various petty crimes. His life is still chaotic too, and he is emotionally traumatised after his friend's recent suicide. When I interview him, we talk about The Gambia, his friends and his run-ins with the law, and, clearly emotional, Callum describes how his relationships with staff members help him perform on the course:

It's been alright – it's better than what I thought it would've been. When I started here from what happened in my school experience I thought I was only going to last five minutes. But...I've only missed two days...like with Joey he's an annoying little shit and I've managed to keep my temper from going over with him. You know once in the sports hall he threw the ball directly in my face and I was just about to hit him. And then I remembered that Yolandi said if I hit anyone I'd be kicked out straightaway. So I just grabbed him and held him still, just saying 'shut up!'

Callum's sometimes unspoken, and often, loudly spoken contract with Yolandi, seemed to have created an emotional foundation for his transformation, a secure footing on which to build, making him at least 'feel' more grown up. As he goes on to tell me, he 'was pretty much un-teachable' when he first arrived at the YMCA, an objective perspective on his own past behaviour. This reflects how his transformation has become measured by himself and the people around him in both incremental and iterative terms of progression, conversion and backsliding, forever in flux but maintained through the affective power of the bonds forged at the YMCA.

In the following section I transfer my analysis to The Gambia, showing how 'unteachability' is filtered through the 'Big Man' system of masculinity. I show how the masculine attributes valorised by the 'Big man' system such as dominance and authority were undermined by the 'Whole Man' teaching. Through the difficulties I had as a teacher on the course, I explore how making the students become 'teachable' was sometimes read as becoming more submissive and vulnerable, threatening a sense of masculine pride. I begin with an ethnographic description of the course, tracking the phases of development the Sports Leadership students undergo.

Part II: Gambia YMCA

Episode 1: Learning to See

It is eleven am on a Friday morning, and I'm conducting the introductory session of my second Sports Leadership course in The Gambia. There are seventeen students in attendance, varying in ages from sixteen to fifty-four, and from multiple ethnic backgrounds, widely ranged coaching experiences and financial means. The course has been populated through YMCA networks and contacts and largely consists of members of

Gambian national rugby and cricket teams. Many of the young players and coaches are supported by their families and are doing studies alongside volunteering and working. Although sitting in the youth bracket, these pursuits tend to reflect their respective ages. Billy, thirty for example is a stocky, open-faced part-time rugby coach for the national side, a team that most weeks fail to muster a full fifteen, but in the week he is a trained satellite dish engineer, servicing the expanding Gambian middle classes. On the other hand, Tamba, eighteen, is a lanky, suave young man, cocksure and seemingly unburdened by the weight of life, who's aim is to be the Gambian cricket captain but is also at college studying 'a little ICT', as he puts it. To fit in with these hectic schedules, we have arranged the course to run on Friday and Saturday mornings to maximise the student's ability to attend. Friday is the Gambia's holy day, and we finish by one pm allowing the Muslim students enough time to dash to the mosque for two pm worship. Saturdays are much like English Saturdays, a mixture of a work day and a leisure day, and many young people head to the beach on these days to do sports and socialise.

The Sports Leadership course begins with a series of team-bonding exercises or 'icebreakers.' So far, games that proved successful in England have fallen flat. A 'human knot' exercise, where students hold hand and have to disentangle themselves has resulted in chaos and confusion. Slightly disheartened, I have moved on to an activity that is central to the Sports Leadership process: a blindfold obstacle course. I have divided the group into pairs and equipped each pair with a blindfold. The objective is for one member of each pair to lead the other blindfolded member around a series of obstacles and hazards. In England this would normally take place in a sports hall, but today we are out on the Gambia YMCA basketball court and it is proving slightly treacherous. Around the unfinished court are piles of rubble, boulders and loose gravel making the game more hazardous than usual. Urging the students to be vigilant, Joe and I scurry between different pairs as they traverse the course. We check two things: one that they are not holding or touching their partners and two that they are using the correct form of communication which is to be clear and simple. These messages support the learning objective of the course which emphasises concise and direct communication to convey coaching instructions.

As each pair completes the course, they reverse roles, the other donning the blindfold. At the end, I gather the students round and ask them how they felt firstly when leading. Most are enthusiastic saying 'it was fine'. Billy says enthusiastically, 'It was good, we had to communicate'. I thank him and ask them how it felt to be led. On this role, there is less enthusiasm. Many of the students look at the floor unsure what to say. I finally asked if anybody 'liked it'. A number of students tell me, 'No, I didn't like it.' One student says: 'We cannot see, we will fall.' Another says 'It is too difficult.' I stress how important it is to learn to both give and receive instructions: 'When you are a coach you must always listen carefully,' I tell them with sternness. They look relieved when I tell them we will be having lunch and then doing some coaching. As they disperse, Joe and I confer on the activity and Joe tells me, 'I think you scared them.' Laughing, I realise ironically that my message of 'listening' has been delivered through wielding my own 'Big Man' authority rather than my 'Whole Man' nurture, a tension I will need to resolve.

Episode 2: Playing Fair

Its eleven am in the middle of the Gambian rainy season. The Sports Leadership are out on the basketball pitch performing drills. Today we have been learning about 'fair-play' and now we are putting it into action. Fair-play is a section of the Sports Leadership course where students learn about sportsmanship and the importance of rules and regulations in any sport. In the theory section, students are presented with a series of sport based scenarios and encouraged to act as an official. In the practical section they play the role of the official on the sports-field. They are also taught how to organise a variety of different competitions before being part of one and officiating in it. On the Sports Leadership course, 'good' sportsmanship means both adhering to the letter of the law and treating your opponent with honour and respect. When officiating, the students are taught to be impartial, even-handed and calm.

Today's chosen sport is football. As we have twelve students, the students are split into four teams of three. With the students input, we have chosen to begin a knock-out tournament, where two team plays off against another to get into the next round. Whilst not participating, students from the other teams are given the opportunity to take charge of the game as the referee. Each student has been given a whistle and a set of yellow and red cards⁴⁷. The first student to take the whistle is Kebba. After a few seconds of play the ball goes out for a throw-in. Kebba forgets to blow his whistle and a number of the players remind him of his duties. A few moments later one of the players gets pushed over in a clear foul. Instead of whistling, Kebba calls out 'fairplay, fairplay' and the players ignore him continuing with the game. I note this down and at half-time ask the players and spectators from the other teams to comment on Kebba's officiating. Initially most say he has done a good job before one or two note the lack of use of his whistle and the missed foul. Agreeing with them, I take my own whistle and model a mode of intervention using a combination of whistle, aggressive hand gestures and the movement of my body towards the site of the foul play.

As we resume play, I hand the whistle to Bas who emulates my methods, including my assertive tone of voice and my hand gestures. However, he starts whistling at minor infringements breaking up the game and bringing frustrated sighs and groans from the players. When the ball is kicked far out of play, one of the spectators chased after it and I quietly suggest that Bas use his whistle a bit less. He takes my advice and we have an incident free second half. The rest of the matches proceed without incident. As we try and give every student a chance to officiate, Joe and I feedback, demonstrate and adjust the actions, words and positioning of the coaches. In the final match, rugby coach Billy has taken charge. As it is the final, the stakes have risen and the competitive element has increased. Chasing after the same ball, two players suddenly collide, ending up in a heap of arms and legs. Billy rushes in shouting for the two players to get up, before giving both a yellow

⁴⁷ In association football a Yellow Card is issued for a repeated or serious breach of the rules. A Red Card is issued in case of a second Yellow Card or a more serious or violent infringement.

card and telling them loudly that he wants to see 'more fair play' from now on. After we return to class, we reflect on the day's work as a group. . Joe and I thank Billy, congratulating him on his commanding voice and assertive manner, turning to the other students and asking them to 'shout like Billy' if they want to succeed in the future. We discuss the main points of fairplay and our experience of them in the day. I tell them to go out and practice fairplay in their games with their friends and make sure above all else that they show 'good' sportsmanship before sending them on their way.



Figure 14. Fairplay discussion flip-chart from GYMCA.

'Anything you do, they will talk'

On the UK Sports Leadership course, the ritualisation of sport was used to convert young men from 'tough' street based version of masculinity to 'Whole Man' versions based around the YMCA principles. As I have shown in these episodes, the Gambian young men presented a different set of challenges. In the previous chapter, I have shown how 'Big Man' masculinity entrenches deference for both age and knowledge, a knowledge which is sometimes assumed in the case of Western 'expertise.' Through these instances the rituals of the Sports Leadership interacted uneasily with both 'Big Man' characteristics but also fed into changing forms of masculine identity and role modelling. Several of the directives and

games on the Sports Leadership course challenged the inherent authority of 'Big Men.' The blindfold game was particularly telling, as the students were unwilling to voice their discomfort with the game until pushed. In the UK context, students playing this game also proved reluctant but do ultimately vocalise their emotional responses to the game, often in an emotional register of fear, embarrassment and uncertainty. For the Gambian students, this vocabulary was more difficult to articulate.

This also raises questions over the objectives of the game which is to interrogate the relationship between *being* a 'leader' and a 'follower'. In this simplistic duality, a leader is dominant, assertive and directing whereas the follower is submissive, amenable and receptive. The YMCA model I was promoting is to be able to switch between both roles, embodying and encapsulating attributes from both subject positions. Yet translated into the gendered polarities of having power or being powerless, this switch proved more problematic for the young Gambian men emphasising how 'Bigmanity' is not simply an embodied disposition but a set of precepts and assumptions that govern and police behaviour. Through the Sports Leadership course I was forced to negotiate with this implicit system, repeatedly emphasising the primacy of the YMCA model. The ritualistic nature of the course helped me to structure this learning as both journey and 'rite of passage', teaching masculinity through being masculine in a certain way. As the students moved through the course, they were encouraged to enact 'Wholeness' to adapt to my system or adapt their behaviours and attitude to emulate mine. As illustrated through the blindfold game, an integral part of this process was learning how to both be teachable (listening) and emotionally literate or at least open to emotional programming. Through teaching them to coach, I was teaching them to learn in the YMCA way, through humility, self-sacrifice and servility.

This became evident when talking to the most reticent member of the group, Peter. Aged twenty-five he is a devout Christian and a central figure at the local Methodist church, playing guitar in the choir. However, on the coaching field he was timid and reserved, embarrassed to express himself or be noticed. A trained electrician, he had recently become a part-time cricket coach with the national team, though he admits he would 'love' to go full-time if he could. The Sports Leadership course helped him to begin overcoming his timidity and emulate Billy's example of assertive and vocal communication. It also helped him to develop a greater sense of confidence in his own abilities. As he describes here the combination of session planning and behavioural reflection helped him to hone his sense of expression:

Making our own sessions was the most enjoyable part of the course. I'm always a shy guy. The course helps me to learn what it would be like to be a good and proper coach: that you should not be shy. It helped me to know myself and express myself properly.

In Peter's description being 'good' and being 'proper' equate with losing his inhibitions and 'shyness' in the coaching arena. By witnessing the embodied practice on the Sports Leadership course he had begun to adapt his coaching style to be more like a 'Whole Man.'

Yet, this process was inflected through the cultural expectations of people around him, reflecting the varying types of masculine performance he was expected to provide. As he discusses here, prior to the Sports Leader's course he would feel intimidated by other coaches and fail to voice his opinions. He felt this acutely at a regular meeting the cricket coaches have with local P.E. teachers: 'My weakness was... I'm a shy guy so when...I'm talking to them... you know, how shy guys be.... It helped me on that side [the course]. I'm trying to improve on that.' Though he was aware of his 'shyness,' he found it difficult to improve without the specific guidance and instruction found on the Sports Leadership course. As he continues here, his learning of coaching had been coloured by the aggressive nature of many older, Gambian coaches:

At times yes, that's the main issue here, yes. That you have a coach who always shout, 'Hey this, this and that. Ah this guy's very tough, he's a tough guy. I don't like him.' And if you tend to be a cool guy, a slow guy, they also say 'Ah he's very slow, he's a slow guy'. Anything you do they will talk. Even [if it is] positive or even negative they will talk, 'This guy's very cool, he's very calm - a coach should not be that cool.' [If] you be [are] aggressive they will say, 'Ah he is very aggressive, a coach should not be this aggressive.'

As Edstrom (2007) has shown in the context of HIV/ Aids in South Africa, masculinities are refined through discursive constructions that limits the range of available roles and subjects positions. This is often achieved through morally coding certain behaviours as 'feminine' or 'weak.' Peter's professed 'weakness' of 'shyness' could easily be read as a sign of humility or respect (See also Van Klinken 2012). In Peter's spectrum of good coaching you can be shy, slow and cool or aggressive and tough, a reflection of various masculine subject positions. Peter also demonstrates how ideals and ideas of manhood are constructed through discussion and collective calibration. However, on the Sports Leadership course we needed the young people to be able to occupy multiple and shifting positions of 'weakness' and strength', passivity and action. At times we needed them to listen and take note, at other times we needed them to assert their authority and use their 'Big Man' practices, a provisonality that, at times, proved deeply problematic in an atmosphere of overheated contests for authority and status.

Peter's story is further complicated by the ways he is problematizing the very notion of 'strength' in his own life and coaching through the double complex relationship to women and religion. Though he was having trouble asserting himself on the course and in his

coaching, he was one of the few coaches on the course coaching girl's cricket. This invites scorn and innuendo from his peers:

Yes, at times you must hear negative comments about you. So all you have to do is just ignore. Because at times like I do coach some girls who are the same age with me, and some of my friend will be like, 'Ah are you sure you are only coaching these girls?' But I just ignore them. I know what I'm doing.

His last statement of self-confidence demonstrates the assertiveness we were looking to instil on the course. However, Peter chose to demonstrate his 'strength' through less obvious avenues such as coaching girls. His infectious enthusiasm for cricket has also inspired the girls to get involved and generate their own passion for the game: 'They still enjoy it, most of them have my number so at times, they will even call me [to ask]: 'Is there training today?' As he goes on to confess he has met lots of new friends through sport which has helped him develop his confidence but this has been reinforced through his faith:

Well the game itself, it changes your life, because it makes you to be honest. Because the game is all about honesty. When you are playing the game of cricket there is no cheating in it. When you play the game of cricket you go out in all white, you wear white. White which signifies purity, that's what I love most about it. As a Christian you have to be pure. It really helps.

As we were teaching him about learning about 'fairplay' through sport, Peter was playing cricket to reflect his religion. In shining white uniform, he was presenting and embodying a model of honesty and purity which more accurately reflected his Christian values and his quiet strength problematizing the assertive version of manliness we were instructing on the Sports Leadership course as well as challenging the rigid hyper-masculine norms of his own culture and social networks.

'Tomorrow my name will never die'

For a number of the young Gambian men at the YMCA, narratives of leadership and embodied becoming act in a parallel fashion, circulating through their lives as both encouragements and blandishments for them to improve their behaviour in the present. As my students struggled to assert themselves in the context of an elder based 'Big Man' system, they were implicated in multiple systems of masculine prestige and pride and often had to weave between them, creating powerful narratives of storied manliness littered with achievements and accolades. In the West African context, these narratives can also be placed in the context of giving and receiving 'blessings'. As Catherine Bledsoe (2002) has explored in the context of reproduction, 'blessings' form a powerful social infrastructure through

which Gambians build their reputations, dictating their actions in terms of future promises. For young women this means using their embodied value to maximise these relations, as she puts it: 'In the West African view, life ideally consists of working on behalf of benefactors (whether kin, in-laws, or patrons) in acts of sacrifice that convert physical effort into social and moral value' (p. 256). For young men, sports offer a route to harvest blessings from their family and friends. However, like the young women in Bledsoe's account, their window of opportunity, defined by their youthful body, is quickly slipping away meaning they have to work hard in the present to maximise their embodied value.

At thirty, Billy is an older youth, part of the extended youth phase that is seeking to gain access to the world of adulthood but encountering perpetual frustrations. As a satellite dish engineer he is servicing the burgeoning Gambian spending power whilst providing for his own family, part of the exciting growth spurred by Gambian modernity. However, like many young men, Billy only experiences fragments and reflections of this modernity, the satellite images of his rugby heroes beamed around the world offering little tangible change in his everyday reality. Sport offers Billy a way of joining this global conversation via his body (cf. Esson 2013), offering an escape route from the difficulties of his daily life, opening up new networks and opportunities and giving him a sense of purpose, as he describes: 'Sport is very important, it relax my mind, it relax my body, it gives me good health. It gives me more, more friends... As far as I'm involved with sports, I am not gonna' be useless. Every time, I have something to do.'

Sport not only operates as a form of relief it simultaneously disciplines Billy towards action, a predisposition of proactivity which boosted his value in the competitive market place. However, in the context of economic survival, Billy's love of sport was regarded by his family as a distraction from his fulltime work, the course operated as a boon to his ambitions of being a coach, bolstering his confidence in those familial negotiations. In his words:

In my family and my community what they are always expecting from you is money, and this thing [rugby coaching] is not bringing out money yet. It might be tomorrow or in the future... They [his parents] don't support me. I have my belief. I'm a strong headed boy really. Those who created football, where are they? Did they eat the money of football? No, they don't enjoy it. But the sports now is feeding so many people because of them. So their name is still in the books, in the walls, in the mind, in the heart.

Critically, Billy's value of sport is based in the body, in the use and deployment of his own body and using his body to create value outside of his labour value. Like a rugby player, Billy puts his body on the line in economic and community terms to gain ground in his own life, retaking a sense of agency and rewriting his own legacy.

As Billy puts it here, the narrative of sport is precisely what compels him to both compete in sport, and with and for his family: 'Let's say I'm teaching them rugby, let's say tomorrow my name will never die. I can die but my name will remain there. Maybe in that school or in the mind of that person... I'm the first person who teach[es] them how to handle a rugby ball.' The astonishing aspects of Billy's wish to preserve his name, is the sheer modesty of his ambition, when many young men buy into the grandiose and over-exposed myths and legends of modern sport, Billy's simple wish is powerful, not because of its potential effects, but because it potentially works through simple affect, a small link in a great chain of being.

For other members of the group their 'value' is squarely invested in their 'potential' to achieve, the prospect of future blessings tied to their possible 'Big Man' status. Like Peter, Gabriel, was a quiet softly spoken young man, but unlike Peter, Gabriel gave off a self-assured confidence and was using the Sports Leader's course to accelerate his 'Big Man' trajectory. At nineteen he is already touted as the next possible Captain of the Gambian cricket team, being Captain of the Gambian Under 19s and even earning himself a couple of caps for the Senior side. In a country with a very small pool of cricket players upon which to draw, Gabriel is an outstanding candidate for full national service and hopes to be part of the international set-up permanently in the coming months. Like his father Gabriel is also taking a banking degree at the Gambia University, directly emulating his father's path to financial success whilst hoping to make more of his sporting skills. As he states here, he directly connects the accomplishments of global football star Cristiano Ronaldo in with his father, who has been a Gambian football and cricket star in his own right:

My heroes...I start with my dad. Then I start with Cristiano Ronaldo. My dad, he taught me a lot ... from the family he is from and the way he is, [he] prove[d] and change his lifestyle and all that. I really appreciate it and like to follow his footsteps. He is a banker and he also played for the Gambian football team, they call him Keeper J.

As he continues here, though he 'starts' with his dad the sportsman, he is already marking the characteristics of success in the life of Ronaldo: 'he has an incredible lifestyle, he is dedicated, committed and he delivers. When I be[come] a sports man, I want to be like him. I want to be dedicated, committed and I want to deliver.'

For Gabriel, leadership was part of his everyday life, a mode of negotiating, inhabiting and securing a raft of networks and connections for his future, firmly establishing a sense of masculine credibility he could cash in later. Sport, then, can be seen in this dual optic, as a way of cementing embodied credentials in the present but also as a way of securing a valuable future. As Gabriel discusses, sport also offered a chance of distinguishing himself in his community and a way of realising his dream to travel abroad. He has already visited many

African countries with the cricket team and hopes to extend his travels to Europe. Cricket, then, is not simply a sport, it is freighted with the associations of a life-cycle, the tenuous possible future success, the family networks of pride and status and the standing in a community where everyone knows everyone and what you do defines your role:

You have to lead. You have to set the example. You have to be their friend. You have to talk to them, advise them. They always look up to you, like 'is Gabriel going to score 100 runs? If the captain can score 100 runs, why can't we score 100 runs?' So I always have to lead them.

Gabriel's story illustrates the way sport cannot be reduced to a mere past-time, it is integral to his identity, acting as a boon upon which the arc of his life rests. He sees his future in terms of wickets and runs, victories and defeats, glory and misfortune, the language of sporting heroes that has been imbibed and re-circulated, particularly around the youth of the developing world. In creating a model for the sporting body, sport creates a model for life, mimetically transferring its power, and its currency into the real world. The Sports Leadership course at the YMCA was not only feeding an already powerful cultural value-system but developing and embellishing it, reinforcing the value of leadership, 'Big Men' and charisma all through the sporting body.

Conclusion: Rehearsing Masculinities

In this chapter, I focussed on the complex and conflicting feelings generated by forms of discipline and self-discipline at the YMCA showing how affect and intersubjectivity are intertwined through ritual work. Relationships are critical in the reconstitution of the students as moral subjects, as the YMCA renews their very ability to relate to people in specific ways. However, these newly formed relationships have to micro-managed as young people learn new ways of relating and new forms of companionship that bond them more completely to the YMCA way of life.

In each location, this ritualisation contended with context-specific challenges drawn from the socio-cultural moment in which it was enacted. In the UK, violence that was useful on the street for survival and reputation was rendered 'useless' in the context of Sports Leadership. Other less immediately damaging behaviours such as swearing and disruptive 'backchat' were incrementally attacked using a 'carrot and stick' approach that combined positive affirmation with tutor discipline. This creates forms of approximated transformation in which facets of different masculinities vie for ascendancy. The dominance of any particular set of masculine dispositions often depended on the context the students were in and the

audience they were performing for. For YMCA tutors the objective of reflective sessions was to integrate these moments of breakthrough or 'threshold crossing' into a 'master-narrative' of positive transformation.

In The Gambia, my task as a tutor was to leave behind a set of self-governing bodily and attitudinal dispositions that overrode existent cultural ideas. By using the cumulative force of ritual, reflection and relation to global issues I reinforced both the instrumental, 'this-worldly' value of these ideas but also their simultaneous abstract moral value. However, as I deployed my own multiple and shifting masculine identity through the rituals of the Sports Leadership, I performed elements of masculine formations that aligned with different sets of masculine values for the young men. On one hand, I taught them to be assertive and authoritative and on the other submissive and nurturing. This first set of values fit into a 'Big Man' system of masculine identity, reinforcing modes of elite subjectivity and re-affirming forms of dominant masculinity. However, the second set of values was branded as 'weak' or deficient, making them more difficult to enforce.

I located these multiple masculine identities in the context of 'blessings,' reframing them as a form of circulated masculine prestige which cultivates feelings of legacy and heritage. Sport played a vital role in these processes, allowing young men to perform their masculinity and advertise their masculine potential for becoming a 'Big Man.' This sense of performativity has to be viewed as a form of embodied futurism that condenses the economic, socio-cultural and leadership potential into embodied moments and stories. As they used their bodies in the present they were creating a history of embodied power that could be projected onto their multiple and uncertain futures. Their example also offers a way to reevaluate the UK example. As we were teaching the students, we were urging them to perform in certain ways at certain times. This could be viewed as a rehearsal of masculinity that situates them in relation to the YMCA legacy and history. As they get 'blessings' from the school they perform at, from their peers and from the students, they are also having the objective of that performance validated and re-asserted.

In the next section I interrogate these processes more deeply, analysing the frames of hegemonic masculinity prevalent in young men's as they craft complex, multiply inflected identities out of tense negotiations with friends, family and societal norms and expectations, further testing both the limits of the 'Whole Man' and the circuits of global morality in which the YMCA is implicated.

Part III: Global Moralities

Chapter 9: 'Just Managing' to 'Just Getting By': Flexible Moralities and Inflexible Bodies at the YMCA

Abdu, The Gambia

I met Abdu buying DVDs on the main commercial artery of the Gambia, Kairaba Avenue, where banks, embassies and air-conditioned mobile phone shops compete for business with a host of hawkers selling everything from sunglasses to Christmas trees to unsuspecting tourists and affluent ex-pats like me. I got to know Abdu sitting in the shade of the Standard Chartered Bank flicking through his latest DVD offerings and chatting about football. Noting his interest in coaching, eventually I asked him to join the Sports Leadership course, and eventually, he, in turn, showed up for one of the courses, attired in an old Barcelona FC shirt and plastic flip-flops. Sometimes he could not make the course, telling me when I next saw him that he had been 'doing business,' the course always secondary to his daily living. Today we have just completed a course in the blisteringly hot afternoon sun and are both heading home, trudging through the gritty red sand that lines many of Gambia's roads. As we walk, as usual, we chat football, me lamenting the failure of the Chelsea striker Fernando Torres; Abdu lauding the Ivorian striker Didier Drogba. Then he turns to me and says, conspiratorially: 'You know it's the juju'⁴⁸ right?' Confused, I question him about this, and he tells me how Drogba has cursed Torres to fail, as he has cursed all other Chelsea strikers. When I still seemed skeptical, Abdu remained adamant asking: 'How else can you explain them playing so badly?' I did not really have an answer for him, but I did ask him if everyone thought as he did, especially as he was Muslim. He simply replied: 'It's not just that everyone thinks it, everyone knows it.' Suddenly, I noticed we had come to a crossroads, he waved me goodbye and set off towards the beach to play football, I set off towards my gated compound in the plush Fajara area, wondering what other avenues I had yet to explore in The Gambia.

Aiden, UK

A tall, gangly young man Aiden arrived on the Sports Leadership course with a reputation for violence and disruption. Quiet at first, he had a disarming charm and an old-fashioned sense of politeness which endeared him to my fellow tutors and I, as well as his classmates. He soon became a group leader, able to curtail the bad behaviour of others and persuade other group members to obey us. This was due partly his

⁴⁸ Gambians use the term juju to refer to magical items (such as amulets and potions) made by Islamic marabouts as well as practitioners of indigenous medicine that can curse or protect from curses, (see Madge 1998; Shaw 2003)

personality and partly to his physical superiority over the other boys, he would dominate weight training, was a natural swimmer and was decent at both football and martial arts, earning him both respect and fear. Today we have experienced more of the latter. Asking him to do a simple numeracy worksheet, an essential part of the course, Aiden has kicked off, kicking a chair, swearing angrily and storming out of the room. When we asked him where he was going, he shouted over his shoulder 'for a cigarette.' Later on, when the other students are on a break another coach and I persuade Aiden to have another go, and complete the worksheet, which he did, with our help. He seems pleased with this outcome, and later on he will tell us how his anger management counsellor taught him to go for a cigarette if he feels like he might lose his temper, a simple strategy that proved very successful in this instance. As we drop him home later in the day, he is in a good mood, regaling us with stories about his love of fishing, an unusual habit for a teenage boy in East Sussex. When we arrive at his road he hops out of the bus, and begins bounding down the road, taking his t-shirt off in the warm spring sunshine and waving us an energetic goodbye. With any luck, he'll be here when we arrive to pick him up next week.

In this chapter, I ask what viewing these two stories side by side can tell us about the separate but interconnected geographies of inclusion and exclusion at work in the lives of the Sports Leadership candidates as they struggle to define their emergent identities. As I have shown, the Sports Leadership course starts young men on a particular programme of transformation which is often messy, incomplete yet dependent on closely forged relationships. To test the boundaries of this analysis further, I examine two young men on the periphery of the YMCA focus, outliers who are neither incorporated into the YMCA system nor fully transformed by its programmes. However, as I show, they both represent, in different ways, how the YMCA offers just one narrative of transformative potential amongst many available, and how young men tune in and tune out of specific moral narratives depending on their immediate needs and obligations. These 'explorations' (or 'navigations') of potential avenues of opportunity are both temporal and spatial, governed by age-specific factors, locales and relationships and circumscribed by shifting socio-economic landscapes. They are also global and local, encompassing a vivid constellation of role models, aspirational possibilities and circuits of desire into which the young men can also 'tune.' As the young men explore, they do so in the climate of austerity and precarity, where opportunities are becoming increasingly restricted and the chances of realising their dreams are increasingly unlikely.

I ask to what extent their stories juxtaposed can expose the peripherality of the YMCA to young lives lived out in precarity and marginalization, amidst an unfolding terrain of imagined and experienced exclusion where young men seek their own succor, in the body and in their own way. In each vignette above the young men expressed forms of dislocated

emotion: suspicion and determination in the first; anger and pleasure in the second. I explore how these emotions stack up in each location, prefiguring specific forms of relatedness and masculinity as the young men attempt forms of self-fashioning carved out of an unsympathetic socio-economic climate. In each story emerges a language of precarity that is at once similar, yet particular to each situation: in The Gambia young men are ‘just managing’ and in the UK they are ‘just getting by’. In the Gambian context, ‘just managing’ is both a greeting amongst the young and a statement of fact: most people are ‘just managing to eke out an income’. In the UK, young men from working class communities are ‘just getting by’ without the threat of abject poverty behind them, they are able to search for forms of meaning beyond mere subsistence. But they are not ‘just getting on’ like previous aspirational generations (Smith 1989); they forever risk the humiliation and exclusion of failure and further entrenched and inescapable economic marginalization (see for example Willis 1977).

To understand how these grammars of poverty and inequality become incorporated into versions of masculinity, I view both of these registers of economic hardship through the Congolese notion of ‘se débrouiller’⁴⁹ (fend for one’s self) that encourage entrepreneurial self-reliance combined with hyper-instrumentalised kinship networks (De Boeck 1998; Langevang 2008; MacGaffrey 1998; Mantz 2003; Trefon 2002, 2004; Vigh 2008; Waage 2006). I suggest that in each context, the body has become the site of protest and contestation over the flexible demands of neoliberal policies, the cultivation of intentionally inflexible masculinities becoming a way of entrenching masculinised aspirations and modes of being (see Connell 1995). For Abdu, Drogba’s deception was not only *morally* acceptable it was a necessary component of Drogba’s success, creating a new moral norm or masculine aspiration. In Hayden’s story his role as alpha (hegemonic) male on the Sports Leadership course ran parallel to his newfound sense of acceptance on the fishing boats. How do these multiple forms of self-actualisation intersect, and what forms of moral priorities do they foster? Comparing the two field sites offers a route to understanding these processes, as part of global geographies of disaffection that overlap with complex local understandings of class, ethnicity, gender and generation. As I will argue, the language of ‘just managing’ reflects a deeper reality of masculine performativity as young men struggle to forge notions of manhood by accessing the divergent masculinised realms which surround them, such as the YMCA, the fishing boat and the street, creating narratives of being and becoming locked into wider changes in the unstable neoliberal economy (Fuh 2012).

⁴⁹ In the Congolese context notions of ‘Se Débrouiller’ (‘fending for one’s self’) evolved out of the apocryphal ‘article 15’ which enshrined the idea in Congolese law, before becoming a more everyday language of ‘chronic crisis’ and corruption (see Trefon 2004; Petit and Mutambwa 2005).

‘Doing business’: Abdu’s Story

‘I’m managing, managing really, playing soccer and doing business. Still now I’m trying, trying. Maybe one day I will make it, but it’s not easy, it’s not easy man.’

-Abdu, Sports Leadership Student

When I visited Abdu a few weeks later, his identification with Drogba’s overriding desire for success began to make more sense; his daily experience of negotiating, deferral and provisionality intimately written into his living space, offering a tangible manifestation of the diverse moral agendas that drove his everyday life choices. Unusually for an unattached young man, Abdu rented a room in a compound just behind Kairaba Avenue, usually spared for local Gambian businessmen and a scattering of international NGO workers and volunteers. The room was large; with space enough for a double bed, a sink, a gas burner and a couple of plastic garden chairs, effectively creating a self-contained and self-sufficient living space. Amongst my Gambian informants, Abdu’s apparent independence was notable, as most young men lived with older family members and rural migrants find accommodation with family or friends. Abdu’s family lived about twenty minutes along the coastal highway in a small town called Farato. When I asked him why he’s living here, he told me: ‘Because here is good for me. Here I can be doing business helping them (his parents). That’s why I’m here.’

In Abdu’s case, a crucial aspect of this negotiation is his developing and contingent sense of morality through which his masculinity is constantly shaped and re-shaped. For instance, in his identification with the footballer Drogba, Abdu was exploring a complex dynamic where the imagined realm of the West is folded into on-going negotiations with an older generation whose views and values failed to match the current economic conditions. A regular football player, Abdu’s love of sport generates a sense of pride and prestige but it also threatens his reputation by stiling his ability to ‘manage’ economically. In his description here, doing sport whilst not earning an income would represent a contradiction and a sense of masculine failure. However, doing business allows him to boost his reputation, each mutually reinforcing the other, as he explains here:

‘I’m doing business to help myself to [on] this sports side and my family. When I’m doing sport, I won’t get any money to buy shoes or balls for myself so that’s why I don’t forget about the business. I just keep on doing the business of the sports. So you will see anything I need I’ll just buy it for myself instead of begging somebody. I just buy it for myself.’

This situation is complicated by the role of his family and is viewed through the lens of intergenerational reciprocity. The subtext running through his story is that sport is seen as valid *only* as a leisure pursuit counterproductive to the harsh economic conditions within

which he operates. However, as he discusses, this situation is still in flux, changed by the changing economic climate that restructuring the relationship between his generation, livelihoods and sport.

This complexity of this situation is reflected by Abdu's admission that despite the fact that he played for his father's former football team, his father's new-found disapproval of football as a pastime has forced him to keep his footballing activities secret. A longstanding local team they actively recruited Abdu due to his father's history as a player, a traditional sporting inheritance for many Gambian football teams. His father's change of heart over sport has exacerbated existing tensions in the family, particularly between him and his father, giving Abdu added reason for leaving the family home:

He never know that I'm from the field...That's what even made me to live here, is to have freedom. I don't like to stay with my dad and I don't want to make him angry. When he say I never like to disobey, that's why I be far away from him, keep[ing] the peace.

Abdu's situation is characteristic of many young men across Africa, his newly found financial power subsumed to the traditional patriarch and his incumbent authority (cf. Utas 2008). In order to maintain and develop his new found freedom, he is forced to use avoidance and deception, the fulfilment of his aspirations linked to the careful handling of his family's needs, demands and power.

Similarly, Phillip De Boeck (1998) has shown in his ethnography of young Congolese diamond smugglers on the Angolan border, morality structured around the forms of masculinity generated by 'diamond hunting' activities plays out similar tensions:

The construction of male identity is ambivalent insofar as it evolves around two opposing aspects that of singularized, autonomous manhood, a model which seems to be idealized by many youngsters and a second aspect of social responsibility, highlighting the elder's capacity to weave the social network and give a tangible form to ties of reciprocity and solidarity. In the context of on-going diamond smuggling, stress is often put on both aspects simultaneously (p.802).

Rather than destabilising the moral order, hunting for diamonds reinforced both physical, individualised forms of masculinity, and masculinity rooted in relatedness and social power, each reinforcing the other. In this context, De Boeck shows how diamond hunting is also placed in the moral framework of social obligations where conspicuous consumption is critiqued as an immoral misuse of fortune (Ibid: 800).

Despite the appeal of global figures like Drogba and the rejection of his father, Abdu's moral identification was also structured in relation to other local forms of successful maleness. For Abdu this emerges in the figure of his distant grandfather, a retired farmer living in Guinea-Conakry. As a Fula, Abdu's family were originally nomadic cattle-herders,

many of whom have been drawn into shop-keeping or the service economy by Gambia's economic shift from agriculture to tourism and development. Abdu tells me how his grandfather retains his robust, physical strength, a masculinity forged through hard labour and long harvests: 'He is old and he is strong still now...I can say now he is in nineties but is still strong.' Even more vitally, Abdu's appearance seems to have bypassed the connection with his father, his looks imported from his grandfather along with his name: 'I look like him. And it's the same name, he is a strong one.' Ironically, named for his grandfather by the father he has rejected, Abdu identifies directly with him, a mirror through the past to reflect a possible future for himself, a future where he is 'the strong one.'

'I'm not a captain yet'

At the same time, Abdu's quest for strength also reflected a quest for agency in an economic environment characterised by frustration and waiting (Masquelier 2013). As Masquelier (2013) has argued, masculine socialisation has to be understood in this context, as young men lacking opportunities creatively construct new social relations through music, dance, sport or conversation (see also Jeffrey 2010). Sport offers a way of interacting with his peers whilst keeping his body in condition, driving away feelings of boredom, loneliness and frustration: 'If I sit without doing nothing I don't feel comfortable. I must go and take some training because...I like to play with peoples.' Though he viewed sport as an escape and a social activity, Abdu, also had to compete for his place in the team, his friends fluidly shifting positions from teammate to rival. As he explains here, the moral quandary this generates has been subsumed to the logic of competition as training secretly has become the norm among the most ambitious young Gambian men: 'Even if my teams are not training, like we say I'm still training also. At the night time I go to the beach and come back, nobody knows, that one it means stealing fitness.' When I ask him what stealing fitness means, Abdu explains that it is when you trick your competition for a place in the team into thinking you are less fit than you are, a common practice amongst young Gambians, creating complicated tensions between him and his peers and creating complex contingent moralities that feed into his everyday life.

In one sense then, the YMCA was aiding Abdu's flexible moral stance, by helping him develop skills he could use to his advantage. This comes out, unusually when I ask him to identify an example of a good leader, he simply replies 'me.' Interested in his confidence, and how his confidence has been reinforced by the Sports Leadership Course, I probe further

and Abdu paints a picture of how leadership within a football team is both sustained and reproduced:

I'm not a captain yet. There are many peoples in the [football] field ...It's not easy to be captain. And when you make captain also you need to be more intelligent...For sure, if they give me the captain[cy], for sure I'm intelligent. They give me the captain[s] band I can handle it. But they don't give it to me, and our captain is no more intelligent. But we just give him the respect... Whatever he say we keep on doing that.

Though he has respect for the captain, he sees the captain as his equal, but accords him the respect his role demands. As he tells me, part of being 'intelligent' is learning how to give respect to others, in effect how to build positive relationships and 'you must be respectful, you must be a good listener, as when your coach is talking to you, you must listen.' As he describes here, judging, commenting and understanding leaders actions is an integral part of self-development towards leadership: 'He is a good captain, because he's honest with everybody there. He don't fight. Some captains they do [show] bias. So he's fair to everybody.'

In other ways, Abdu was also tracing imagined trajectories in reality, experimenting with possible futures by putting his body on the line. A common route for young men to take to support their desperate families is migration, following well-travelled routes to find fortune in other countries. In the Gambia, this process is refracted through the lens of tourism and development, whose implication in the perpetuation of global inequality are both holdovers from a colonial past (Kothari 2005). As his family's day-to-day financial needs superseded his education, Abdu was also driven to attempt the difficult and highly prohibited immigration route to Europe by road via Libya: 'You know many Gambians were hustling to Libya. Whenever you reach to Libya, to reach Italy it's very easy, but I never pass Algeria...Lots of people go that way: some died, some sick, some alive. It's very hard man.' Painting a story of a difficult journey and some harsh treatment by the Algerian authorities, Abdu relates how it was his family who had supported him to go, who told him to come back and make do in The Gambia: 'They said to come back and do what I was doing here.' Though needing his support and willing to support his risk on the road to Italy, his family were only willing to risk him so far, eventually their care for him overriding their financial desperation.

In contemporary Gambia, the mobility discourse has been further twisted by the policies of Jammeh's government, who realising that the country was losing its young labour force, urged young Gambian men to return to the land, proclaiming it a move for national prosperity and patriotism (cf. Gaibazzi 2014). Similarly, well known global figures such as Drogba, who have made their fortune in the Global North are expected to return to help

their countrymen, and morally evaluated as to the degree of aid that they provide. This doubled moral discourse of ‘staying at home’ forms a powerful moral structure for failed migrants like Abdu who can place their failure or ‘non-leaving’ in a narrative of nationalist rhetoric but it can also justify more powerfully the desire to leave in the first place (cf. Gaibazzi 2013). As he tells me, if he was successful he would ‘come back and help the country exactly like the way he (Akon) does, it's very good’ but that the Gambia was ‘hard but actually we're managing, I think one day everything will change.’

A final dimension of Abdu's conceptualisation of ‘being strong’ was how his sense of physical strength interacted with, and was sometimes augmented by, a spiritual idea of strength derived from Islam. Based on forbearance, humility and piety this further aligns more closely with YMCA notions of humble ‘Whole Man’ masculinity and morality. Like many young Gambians, Abdu's faith is also structured around the notion of *Insha'Allah* (‘let it be God's will’) which helped Gambians manage everyday hardship and feelings of dispossession. When I spoke to many young Gambians, this phrase would accompany their real and imagined hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future, placing a spiritual gloss on their concrete concerns and replicating the sense of lost agency they experienced at the hands of the global economy. Yet, *Insha'Allah* also signified a certain determination to continue even as their limited life chances diminished and contorted, as one of my informants told me: ‘If you work hard, God will do something for you.’

In The Gambia then, even as young men were excluded politically, geographically and socially, they were not simply waiting, they were transforming their ‘managing’ into dynamic forms of agentive masculinity, echoing both Islamic versions of industry, YMCA versions of ‘Whole Man’ masculinity and neoliberal entrepreneurialism. In the next section I use this vision of youth and young masculinity to explore the UK context, exploiting the points of contrast and continuity to show how youth are beginning to share both a common language of exclusion, marginalisation and disenfranchisement and common modes of resistance and optimism.

‘A big man's job’: Aiden's Story

‘You can just do what you want –there's so much freedom.... you've got the whole sea to yourself. And when you are your own boss it's even better.’

- Aiden, Sports Leadership Student and Fisherman

In the UK context the performance of masculinity can be located in a *less* precarious setting, in terms of fighting for survival, but presents similar challenges in terms of moral choice and embodied agency. Aiden's love of fishing also seems to go against the grain of

social trends and the YMCA system, his expression of passionate industry a throwback to a previous era where working class masculinity was performed primarily through physical labour (cf. McDowell 2011; Howard 2012). Though compelled to attend school and rarely doing so, part of the reason for his continued attendance on the Sport Leaders is its practical, physical element allowing him to contribute towards his own sense of masculine power obtained on the fishing boats. As he describes here it is the physical test, proving his masculine mettle that is part of the pleasure, the physical hardship worth risking his health and education:

Well I think I'm quite strong. I mean I lift five stone boxes fourteen feet in the air. That's how much a full box of fish weighs... You have to put your whole body weight into it. That's why my back and knees are so knackered. It takes its toll. The amount of times I've bunked off school to go fishing – it's ridiculous.

For Aiden his discovery of fishing deepened the sharp polarisation of life on the boats with feeling coerced to attend school, the sheer physical pleasure of catching fish contrasting strongly with the dull, academic world of school and offering him a chance to demonstrate his physical prowess in the real world.

Aiden's description places one vision of youth against another: the working class physical work against the educational preparation for entry into the serving sector. As Linda McDowell (2003) has documented a perpetual erosion of UK manufacturing and industry in favour of service-based employment, has left young men 'learning to serve' rather than 'learning to labour' (McDowell 2011; cf. Willis 1977). She discusses, how feelings of 'redundancy' leave young working class men to form their masculinity from the margins, using the resources available to them, their own bodies 'as the disembodied rationality of idealised hegemonic masculinity is contrasted to the strength, agility or sporting prowess that are advantages of subordinate masculinities' (p. 13). As Aiden describes here going out on the boats is not only about physical enjoyment, for him fishing is about expanding your horizons, reaching beyond the apparent limitations of everyday life in Seaford:

I just fell in love with it... It's the best job in the world... My mate Dave, he's never had a job and now he's doing bricklaying with his dad... and that's what he's into... but he just sits at home, smokes weed, gets high and plays XBOX blah, blah, blah.

Not only does fishing offer both a literal and figurative escape from his on-going daily difficulties, it offers Aiden a chance to redefine them on his terms and in his masculinised language, that is imbued with deep emotional attachments and flourishing aspirations.

As we talked further it became clear that Aiden's masculinity is also constructed through multiple forms of demonstration, performance, and practice, the on-going fragility

of reputation needing to be reinforced and remade on a regular basis (cf. Evans 2006; McDowell 2011; see also Connell 2005; Butler 1993; Bourdieu 2001). Aiden's experience of this process stems from his problematic relationship with his father and the on-going need to develop new masculine identifications and relationships. As he describes here, his emergent, risk-taking masculinity was forged out of his difficult childhood but also through inheriting his father's legacy:

I've always been independent. I was walking myself to school in Year One [aged four/five]. So that says it all really. I'm working on a big man's job at my age for three years now. I started when I was eight with my Dad and then I've been doing it properly for the last three years and I've had my own boat and everything since last January.

As Van Ginkel (2009) has noted, in the case of Dutch fisheries, employing through kinship acted as a way of offsetting the increased levels of precarious working induced by neoliberalism. Though the fisherman had grown accustomed to seasonal work patterns and depleted stocks, this has increased as: 'Kin provided for the flexibility, versatility and resilience needed in an industry where uncertainty was rife' (p.184). However, in Aiden's case, his father's failure was seen as doubly masculinised, as both a betrayal of his fatherhood responsibilities and a betrayal of livelihood responsibilities seen through his poor record on the boats.

Aiden's perspective on the father-son dynamic is also coloured by his association with his father, reflecting an ongoing negotiation in which he has to carve space for his own identity. As he describes here his dad's unsociable disposition threatened the camaraderie of the boats and also threatened Aiden's credibility in the local community:

I mean everyone says I'm a better fisherman than my dad and that's my main achievement. I mean when my dad was fishing no-one liked him really and when I first went down there it was quite hard for me to get a job because of my dad's reputation. I mean I'm his son. And then after I got a job I worked for one year on one boat and then got a job on another boat. And now I've worked on half the boats there...it gives a good name to you. And I know if I got sacked from this boat, which I know I never will, I've got somewhere to go.

As he works of the cultural debt incurred by his father, Aiden paints a stark picture of both masculine failure and fragility that he is endeavouring to repair on the fishing boats. Here he explains how he has earned his reputation as a 'grafter,' a common term in manual work for someone who works hard without complaint, a masculine marker of individual toughness (cf. Gunter and Watt 2009):

There's our partner boat...we're good mates and he's [he captain] got a lot of respect for me too. I've been to sea with him when his crew's let him down. And I've done the work better than his crew. And he wishes he could employ me but he can't. His crew's been out on the

razzle the night before and moan they can't come in. And I've gone to sea with him and we've done it in four and a half hours. With them it'd usually take eight hours.

In the hyper-masculinised world of the boats, Aiden has repeatedly proven his willingness and industry, endearing him to those around him who hold the economic power. Being seen as a good worker is also seen as being good per se, the virtues of industrious masculinity becoming moral and allowing Aiden to rebuild the shattered reputation of his family. In doing so he is able to regain his honour, constructing a powerful sense of moral masculinity through hardened physicality that ran contrary to the caring YMCA 'Whole Man.'

'You ain't fucking changed'

The moral 'credit' Aiden earned out on the boats was also critically implicated in the various support networks and relationships he fostered both on the YMCA course and at sea. Navigating and negotiating his tricky relationships proved essential both to his prospects for success and his moments of failure, his moral logic locked into the unpredictable contingency of everyday interaction and the different masculine roles he performed. As Gillian Evans (2006) has documented, as young men in the UK battle with their peers, families and unstable circumstances, they inhabit and perform different versions of masculinity, often transposing their street toughness and territorial disputes into the school and the workplace (Ibid.: 158). As she puts it, this process is highly contingent and has to be learned and embodied: 'Becoming a working class person is a lot to do with learning to become a particular kind of person and by learning how to belong to a particular kind of place' (Ibid.: 158).

In spite of his misgivings about his family, Aiden places many of his violent emotional outbursts in the context of a moral obligation he simultaneously feels towards them, reflecting implicit, but one-sided, codes of loyalty and respect. In his telling here, he is only partially to blame for his violence, his victim status again in tension with his ability to deal with the relationships around him: 'They'd drag things up from the past, [saying,] 'You ain't fucking changed.' Well one of them...bought up a bit of shit that had happened between her and my mum and I just went loopy. I tried punching her and everything.'

Given his past difficulties in establishing relationships, it was perhaps not too surprising that Aiden had also struggled to forge friendships on the Sports Leadership course, initially keeping his distance from his fellow students and taking his time to get to know them. In turn they had also been wary of his explosive temperament, before gradually coming

to respect and befriend him. As he describes here this process was part of his growing self-awareness, rooted in acceptance of his genetic and behavioural inheritance:

Yeah, it depends what mood I am in, it's the same at college. So I was threatening to punch [another student] in the face last week. But that was only because I was in a really bad mood and even he's noticed that. That depending on what mood I'm in, depends on how I act. It just takes over my mind and I can't get out of it. My mum's the same and my sisters the same, that's why she's not even with my family. My nans even the same...she's a feisty thing. I mean out of all of them I am probably the most chilled.

Despite his problems at school and his initial problems on the course, Aiden had eventually settled, sitting down, working, participating in activities and listening to instruction. In effect, he had become an ideal Sports Leader, someone failing in mainstream education who had been reoriented on the course. When I ask him what has changed, he tells me that the way the tutors teach is critical: 'You've got a lot more patience. There's less people so you've got more patience.'

As he says here, he formed a particular bond with the only young woman on the course, Jade, an equally tough, independently minded student with a deep commitment to the YMCA: 'She was the first one I met and then we obviously got along. You know we think the same. We just want to get out of college and do our own thing...I thought they were alright (the other students), they thought I was alright and we've got along since.' Through his friendship with her, ironically forged in a desire to leave school altogether, he had mediated friendships with other students, becoming a valued and valuable member of the group, and incrementally becoming a voice of leadership, authority and maturity. When I tell him this, he snorts a chuckle and says with comical grin, 'I've always been quite mature. I don't mean to boast or brag or anything but y'know.' As he bonded with Jade over their shared aspiration for independence, he was also out proving his on the fishing boats, performing a powerful physical version of manhood, whilst aspiring to fully inhabit an 'adult' masculinity that seemed perpetually out of reach.

When I spoke to Aiden about his 'maturity' and how he had calmed down at the YMCA he also acknowledged that he still had some way to go to achieve an idealised YMCA masculinity, describing how his moral code is also shaped by other more violent forms of physicality and power. At the time I spoke to him he had a painful looking black eye, a masculine marker of combat and possible victory. Asking about it, he tells me how a fight broke out between him and another young fisherman on the docks, a physical confrontation where his reputation was at stake: 'I had some fight with a kiddie down the harbour...he was 25 and a fisherman and he had a big ring on him and he hit me with it... I lamped into him about eight times and he didn't get up.' As Aiden admits, despite the positive effects of the course and his love of fishing, he is 'still a little bit errrrrrrrrrrrrr', referring to his fiery

temper and propensity for suddenly aggressive behaviour. In this instance he places his violence in the context of masculine face-saving and unprovoked assaults, both on him and his reputation:

So Jimmy came up to me and had his little kid and everything but was saying, 'You're a little grass, you're a little grass' and I was like, 'Grow up, you fucking dick head. You're 25 so act your age.' And that's when my boss was there and said, 'Don't stand for it.' And that's when he had it coming – fucking little druggie: [I said] 'See that cone – let's wrap it around your head....'

For Aiden, his violence at school had stemmed from an inability to relate to his peers and environment. Here his violence was condoned and conducted through his social relations and his feelings of acceptance and even 'love', his masculine relatedness forged in an act of brutality that was morally valued as good. In this context, violent events such as Aiden's fight can be narrated as positive steps on an upwards path to manhood, the traditional rite of passage. Ironically, even in the heat of battle, Aiden seemed to recognise this fact, calling on his opponent to 'grow up', just as he was growing up through the fight, earning his manhood and flexing his economic muscles all at once.

Conclusion: Managing Masculinity

The state of perpetual uncertainty wrought by the contemporary global economy is generally accepted to have created a 'flexibilisation' and informalisation of the labour force, divesting workers of crucial senses of wellbeing, pleasure and job satisfaction (see for example Bourdieu 1998; Comaroff and Comaroff 2012; Johnson 2011; Wacquant 2008). Whereas young men used to ally their physical power to their work, these forms of masculine self-realisation have become less common and less acceptable, resulting in added feelings of marginalization for some already hard-pressed groups of young workers (cf. McDowell 2011). However as Nicola Power has discussed in reference to the Canadian fishing industry, in some cases young men are beginning to reassert the 'inflexibility' of their bodies, using their physical power to resist the uncertainties wrought by broader economic trends (Power 2005: 44).

Whilst it can be argued that the *jouissance* young men experience from these forms of precarious labour are an integral part of contemporary neoliberalism (see Wacquant 2008) I also suggest they show how young men are implicated in a wider politics of the body and work that relies on a tension 'between precarity as a labour condition and precarity as an ontological experience' (Millar 2014: 6). As Millar (2014) has shown in relation to Rio De Janeiro local *catadores* raid the trash for valuable items but also situate themselves in wider

projects of life and self-making dependent upon forms of ‘relational autonomy’ that have their own particular local moral logic: ‘While an understanding of precarious labour as a strategy of survival draws attention to the everyday emergencies that unsettle life in Rio’s periphery, this account overlooks the aversion *catadores* express to conditions of waged employment as well as the fuller life projects and forms of sociality enabled by their work on the dump’ (p.16).

In the African context, this endemic uncertainty has had surprising consequences as young men use their bodies in unexpected ways to ‘figure things out’ and develop physical forms of self-mastery (Agadjanian 2002). By following the stories of two young men in each location, I explore how the YMCA sense of ‘Whole Man’ contributes to the ‘inflexible’ body, offering certainty amidst the uncertain economy, hope amidst the despair and a sense of order amidst the disorder of state fracture (Trefon 2004). For both Abdu and Aiden, the ‘inflexible’ body offered relief from the outside pressures of their ‘flexible’ disordered everyday lives. Whilst Aiden sold his body on the seas, Abdu tried to sell his on the football field. Like Esson’s ‘entrepreneurs of the self’ they used their bodily capital to reconfigure the available possibilities in their lives. Abdu’s echoing of the common refrain heard in The Gambia, especially by young men, that ‘I’m just managing,’ could have been easily echoed by Aiden, as he struggled to find a place for himself on the Sussex coast.

In the cases of Abdu and Aiden, like ‘Se Debrouillards’ they were fending for themselves *through* their masculinities, flexing their economic muscles along with their actual ones and entering a ‘Big Man’s’ world in the process. Not only was the ‘Whole Man’ model insufficient to completely satisfy their immediate social and cultural needs, it was peripheral to their on-going projects of self-making and masculine self-actualisation. Their immediate set of needs placed the YMCA version of self-management dictated by self-care and emotional self-awareness in competition with the more corporeal forms of self-management they were learning outside the YMCA. Here, the ‘inflexible’ morality of the YMCA failed to match the ‘flexible’ situated negotiations of life in both The Gambia and the UK.

Yet, each of these stories is defined by its local and global context as each young man navigates the ‘immediate and imagined’ opportunities arrayed before them (Vigh 2006: 54). For Abdu, his family connections cut both ways, draining his resources but providing him with a sense of honour, duty and respect as he became the main provider. His passion for sport and his sporting body play a key role in this process, removing him from his everyday problems and allowing him to reinvent himself on his own terms. Abdu’s ability to ‘steal’ to the field also reflects his conditional orientation to morality, his ethical practice deeply embedded in the considerations of both everyday existence and possible, distant futures, rooted in a secretive, but aspirational, masculine subjectivity. In the competitive Gambian

environment with high-stakes and high rewards, stealing, stealth and secrecy had all become part of everyday surviving, where each interpersonal relation required deft management and delicate negotiation.

Chronically let down by his family and finally on the fishing boats by his father, Aiden has striven to rebuild his name and in doing so has forged new relationships on the boats, including powerful new masculine identifications. Whilst the YMCA was trying to teach him emotional literacy, Aiden was trying to prove his worth with his fists and through his physical work, a seemingly incompatible meeting of two versions of masculinity. Though he took succour from the 'Whole Man' he never subscribed to it, using it as one more point of coordination through which to construct his own sense of masculine agency. As Aiden consciously distanced himself from a previous life, he was driven by the failing of his family to find a place for himself in the fishing community and creating new social bonds and networks even as he purposely dissolved others. Though we were able to encourage and bolster their individual senses of self-realisation, in both cases this enhanced their ability to complete their own journeys of transformation that ran contrary to our implicit and explicit aims of moral transformation. Their stories also indicate the limitations of a morality based mode of masculinity and transformation when transferred out of the YMCA, particularly as YMCA values prove incompatible with real world dilemmas, anxieties and bodies. In the next chapter, I take this analysis one step further, exploring how mobility is experienced and imagined and how global inequality further impacts and limits the parameters of the YMCAs moral commitments.

Chapter 10: Moving Youth: Mobility, Morality and Affective

Encounters

‘The smiling coast of Africa’ The Gambia is the perfect, safe introduction to Africa. If you’re a first time traveller to this area or to The Gambia itself you need to be prepared for visiting a developing country but also to fall in love with the place.’

- Gambia Experience Tourist Brochure 2014



Figure 15. Gambian postcard

Described as ‘The Smiling Coast of Africa,’ The Gambia is at the forefront of the rebranding of Africa in the Western imagination. A ‘smile’ is a powerful semiotic evocation of this transformation, an embodied and universal symbol of affection and recognition⁵⁰. As an image, ‘The Smiling Coast’ also seems absurd, an anthropomorphic transformation of a geographical feature. Yet, it draws our attention to the relationship between imagined global landscapes and the framing of Africa within them (see Ferguson 2006). As Ferguson (2006) has discussed, Africa is often represented as backwards or dangerous in relation to the

⁵⁰ Janson (2014) discusses how this is a play on Ghana’s moniker ‘The Gold Coast’

advanced and secure Global North (see also Asad, 1973; Mbembé 2001; Mudimbe 1988). This ‘teleology of modernity’ (Bhabha 2005: 15) serves to re-entrench asymmetrical globalisation and naturalise the dominance of neoliberal policies of exclusion and exploitation (Ferguson 2006: 11; cf. Mains 2012). Increasingly, this process is imaginative, bound up in the notional incorporation of African states into global markets (Ferguson 2006). Allied to this, is the knowledge that migration is becoming ever more difficult and dangerous, the very economic inequality that drives people to migrate also shutting down routes of access to distant areas of prosperity and security (De Boeck 2012: 70-72; Fassin 2012a; Gaibazzi 2014; Graw and Schielke 2012; Weiss 2002;). As Salazar (2010) has more recently suggested, in this case, it makes sense to use anthropology to focus on the sometimes contradictory ‘cultural meanings’ generated by mobilities (Salazar 2010: 55; Frello 2008) looking for the ways cultural imaginaries and actual movement overlap and interact (cf Fassin 2012a, 2012b).

As I have discussed, the YMCA fosters moral subjectivities that have the capacity to perform affective practices, fashioning masculine identities through multiple forms of relationality, narrative and reflection. In this chapter I examine how the ritualised performance of affect is concentrated and augmented through the experience and imagination of mobility. I show how the predisposition to mobility becomes a central tenet of ‘Whole Man’ masculinity as young men are taught to ‘open up’ by becoming more open to the world. However, this process is based on a concept of transposability and translatability that articulates differently in each context. In the UK context, this is achieved through actual mobility on a ‘volun-tourist’ trip to The Gambia, where young men are expected to perform embodied rituals of affect. For young Gambian men, opening up is achieved through a combination of actual and imagined encounters with Western culture, agents and ideas that naturalise discourses of achieving success via mobility. These encounters can be frustrating for immobile young men as the expectation of mobility outstrips the potential to actually move. In both cases, one realised mobility and one unrealised mobility, the ability to move geographically becomes synonymous with the ability to ‘be moved’ emotionally.

As Comaroff and Comaroff (1991) have documented, encounters in the post-colony are often marked by provisionality, struggle and ‘misunderstandings’ which reveal hidden relations of historical power and control and their obverse: subversion and resistance (p. 256; see also Asad, 1973; Van der Veer 2001). With this in mind, following Tsing (2005), I term the following series of interactions ‘awkward’ encounters ‘where words mean something different across a divide’ integral to her notion of generative ‘friction’ (p. 3). As she describes here: ‘Cultures are continually co-produced in the interactions I call ‘friction’: the awkward,

unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference even as people agree to speak' (Ibid: 4). Through a comparison of my encounters in each context, I suggest that my shifting subject position, from emotional subject to an object of emotion, reflects the structural configurations that create unequal access to mobility and created moments of disjuncture, awkwardness and miscommunication. I begin in the next section with a series of emotional encounters witnessed on the Sussex YMCA G2G trip, before turning to the Gambian experience and imagination of mobility and immobility at the YMCA and beyond.

Part I: Giving to Gambia



Figure 16. Sports Leader Justin sharpens pencils for Gambian students on the G2G Trip.

Episode 1: Gambia Trip, December 2008

Today is our final day of activities at the small rural school in The Gambia. We have been running a three day programme of sports and art activities and we are finally packing up to leave. Our group is gathered in the shade of a small round pavilion, hot, tired and emotionally spent. We are waiting for the headmaster to bring a group of orphans to us, for who a number of staff members have gifts. After last year's

trip, we were given a list of orphaned children in the village and many of the staff members and their families have chosen to sponsor a child and bring them clothes, pencils and books.

As we wait, many of the schoolchildren, creep up to our seats and point at our water bottles. At first we think it is for the water, but as it turns out they just want the bottle to carry water from their well to their homes. Visibly moved, many of the students and staff hand over their bottles, causing a minor riot amongst the children. Finally the headmaster arrives with a group of orphans, and each staff member is asked to come into the headmaster's office before the child where the exchange can take place. The children seemed simply bewildered by this generosity, by the sack full of riches they receive, but were equally taken aback by the emotional states of their benefactors. Many of the staff were distraught, even the tough, ex-policewoman Yolandi, unable to stop the tears rolling down her face. As other staff and students witnessed this emotional exchange, it began a ripple effect, where nearly everyone was deeply upset and most of the Gambians looked on in bemusement. As the last staff member, Stacey, came out she was almost beside herself. And as others consoled her, Yolandi took me aside and told me that she had not had the heart to tell Stacey that her chosen orphan had tragically died in the intervening months and, this very morning, they had quickly found a replacement to present to Stacey. Stacey had, in fact, been the victim of a benevolent, affective fraud in which Yolandi, and now I, were complicit.

Episode 2: Gambia Trip, December 2007

It's the second day of the Give2Gambia trip, we are on our way back to the school in the small rural village of Kafuta in central Gambia. I am sat at the front of a rickety old coach, property of the Gambia YMCA and emblazoned with the word Hawks down each side, representing their champion basketball team. Today we are also planning to do sport, though not quite to their standard. We are all, staff and students, in various states of tiredness after yesterday's activities.

As we had completed our activities, the staff had invited us to join in a football match with the children from the school, taking place on the sandy, uneven football pitch at the back of the school. Around ten of our group agreed to join one team, a mixture of ages and ability forming our makeshift squad which quickly swelled with some enthusiastic students and even teachers who wanted to be on our side. On the other side, the rest of the school lined up, including a lively gaggle of younger children who piled after the ball with scant regard for their own safety. As they charged around the pitch, we did our best to stay out of their way and occasionally snaffle the ball and make our way towards their goal, the scoreline being roundly ignored amidst the chaotic enjoyment. Suddenly, the ball dropped to Justin, a sports leader and clearly our most talented player. Holding off the challenges of some of the older boys the ball and dribbling past a few amazed children, fired a 30 yard curling shot into the top corner, before running off ecstatically and being mobbed by the school, disappearing under a tangle of legs.

In England, Justin has the nickname Rooney, named after the bullish England and Manchester United striker, Wayne Rooney, whose physique and skill Justin handily resembles. Obviously this comparison was not lost on the football obsessed Gambian children who began a chant of 'Rooney, Rooney, Rooney', its deep reverberations echoing the similar chants at the Manchester United ground, Old Trafford. Now as we enter, the school for a second time, a group of young children spot Justin through the coach window and begin chanting 'Rooney' again. Both embarrassed and moved, Justin looks down at his chest, seemingly on the verge of tears. At that moment we arrive and have to step out of the coach, as Justin steps out he is mobbed by children wanting to give him a high five, continuously chanting 'Rooney, Rooney'. Smiling bashfully, and blushing too, Justin sheepishly raises his hand, acknowledging his sudden fame before jogging off to start the day's activities.

Episode 3: Gambia Trip, December 2008

Yolandi and I look at each other, we are both in something of a panic. Our translator and guide, Modou, has just disappeared into the heavily fortified US embassy on Kairaba avenue. He has gone in to find out what has happened to one of our young people, Callum. Callum has been led away at the point of an AK47 after accidentally taking pictures of the US embassy. The embassy is positioned in between supermarkets and hardware stores on the commercial trunk road, Kairaba Avenue that runs between the Atlantic Coast tourist resorts and the bustling Serrekunda market, a junction point for all of Gambia. We are on our way to visit the rural school in the village of Kafuta, lade with equipment and resources, aware that around half the village will be lining the streets into the school, exuberantly awaiting our arrival.

Today we will be late for our customary welcome, as we wait anxiously for Callum to re-emerge. Eventually he is released with a stern warning and the offending photos deleted from his memory card. 'Were you scared?' I ask him as he gets back on the bus 'No,' he replies 'that was awesome'. A few days later Callum, will once again be confined. This time it will be to his room, having flouted our curfew once too many times. Unfortunately, he will miss the traditional group meal out at a local Chinese restaurant, but as Yolandi keeps reminding him 'it's his own fault.'

'I Googled it, I Googled it, and I Googled it'

Pleasure, joy, guilt, shame, fear, anxiety and empathy: all of these seemingly disparate emotions fold into the encounter with the Other on the G2G trip. At the same time, emotions alone are not sufficient for the YMCA transformative process, they need to be reinterpreted, reaffirmed and situated within transformative narratives and trajectories. Often these orchestrated moments of reflection happen in juxtaposition: Stacey's tears next to an orphan's bewildered gratitude; Justin's pleasure, next to his sudden hero-worship; Callum's

danger and excitement next to his misbehaviour and exuberance. All of these instances serve to connect the individual experiences of the young people and young staff members into the collective journey, mission and purpose of the YMCA, the individual stories woven into the wider tapestry of YMCA transformation. At the same time, these moments of affective encounter represent just that, moments of self-transformation through the transformation of others, the self re-shaped in relation to the objects of the affect as the self becomes more deeply objectified (Csordas 1994).

Accordingly, the experiences portrayed above represent very specific types of emotion, elicited through the affective contact fostered on the trip, symbolising how exchange is used by the YMCA as a surgical tool designed to elicit specific effects. The young people in England, raised in an era of material prosperity, even when in lower income brackets, come to recognise any degree of poverty they may have experienced pales in comparison to Gambian everyday living, as one student said on my first trip 'I thought I was poor 'cos I didn't have an Xbox'. As this observation reflects, through the encounter young people seemed to gain a greater sense of self-awareness and self-analysis, amplifying their sense of humility and deepening their capacity for reflection. Travelling home just before the hyper materialistic Christmas period, many young people would express their guilt or discomfort, one even going so far as to suggest he was going to send all his presents to Gambia.

For young people at the YMCA, images of global poverty are part of daily life, integrated into the digital media landscape and a regular part of digitally mediated collective consciousness. It is this growing sophistication that feeds the desire for more adventurous holiday destinations (Terkenli 2002; Kane 2010). Students attracted to the G2G trip are subject to this same desiring process, instigated by powerful but generic imaginative visions of African poverty combined with evocative stories and images from previous trips purposefully displayed throughout the YMCA. Stories like the ones above have been incorporated into YMCA legend, often, through promotion, serving to represent what the Gambia trip actually is, the example standing for the whole. At the same time, the stories are deeply personalised, the characters in them current, former and future members of the YMCA staff, the Gambia trip represented as a defining moment in their trajectory of transformation. In her insightful analysis of young travellers, Verad Amit (2012) counters discourses of transnationalism that suggest an underlying unity or continuity. On the contrary, she suggests mobility is often motivated by a desire for rupture, and especially for privileged travellers, characterised by terms like escape and adventure. As she argues, for travellers who can afford it, the disjuncture of mobility may actually reinforce their elite

identity status at home: 'Desires for escape/change/rupture on the one hand and continuity on the other are often complementary rather than mutually exclusive' (p.505).

Amit's analysis is useful for understanding how the YMCA incorporates the difficulties experienced by young people on the Gambia trip into overall narratives of becoming, using adventure, danger and discomfort as forms of masculine overcoming, or surrogate rites of passage. Josh, 19, is a well-spoken young man from a wealthier background than most Sports Leadership students. Suffering from a lack of confidence at school due to his Tourette's syndrome⁵¹, the Sports Leadership course helped redirect his life, helping him gain qualifications and renewed confidence:

It helped me so much. Before I went I was unconfident, a bit shy, and nervous and had a lot of anxiety. I took things a bit for granted in some ways because when I got back I appreciated things more...The Gambia Trip: it really got me on my feet and I got to help others while helping myself. What could be better than that?

For many of the students the trip to Gambia was a welcome break from the pressures of college and the search for future employment. For Josh, it offered the chance to see a new part of the world, a true adventure: 'I was nervous as anyone would be as it's a natural feeling, I was excited too as I love seeing new places and new things, but this was different, Africa! ... I knew we were going to the charity side of it, so I was scared I was going to see things I didn't want to, but thankfully I was wrong and it was beautiful.'

Whilst Josh was normally anxious, his feelings of fear and nervousness naturally vied with the feelings of anticipation and excitement that were an important part of the allure of the trip. As he describes here, these feelings were accentuated by the mysterious nature of The Gambia itself, his imagination feeding off mediated memories and movie images:

I Googled it, I Googled it, and I Googled it, but nothing came close to what it's actually like. I thought it would be desert, the odd tall tree...beggars on the street hassling you, telling you sad stories, crying, babies coughing, and people shouting. I expected the town to be like the slums in Brazil: people everywhere, crowded, everyone trying to sell whatever they can get their hands on.

When he did get to The Gambia, he realised that it was not nearly as bad as he had feared in terms of the stark images of poverty he was imagining, but still held some challenging similarities: 'I was quite confused by the people asking for money, as I wasn't used to it, so it did shock me and I thought to myself what have I got myself in for.'

Josh's confusion also emerged in his interactions with young children on the street who, from colonialism to the present day, refer to foreign tourists as 'Toubabs', a moniker

⁵¹ A debilitating illness one symptom of which is uncontrollable outbursts of inappropriate language.

allegedly derived from Two Bob (pounds), English slang for a common unit of currency at the time of British colonialism:

The young children were so happy yet had so little, they were funny. They have a habit of shouting 'Toubab' which means white man. With my 'Tourettes' I was quick to judge and thought it was rude, but I got reassured by the staff it's not meant in a racist or rude way.

Josh's initial disorientation began to abate as the trip moved forward and he became more comfortable on the trip, settling in with his trip mates and the YMCA staff. As he discusses here, his perceptions of Gambia have been transformed:

We did loads of things: we ate at different restaurants each night, had a lovely hotel, went on wildlife walks, and had great fun in the boiling heat playing football at the orphanage. We also painted a primary school and held an Aerobics class which was unbelievably amazing! Every day was different and every day was amazing, I could go on for ages. Now, it's a holiday location for me, I want to go back and loved it so much. I would do anything to go back...I would rather go and volunteer and have a holiday at the same time, as volunteering is so fun and I appreciate every minute I get to spend there.

In Josh's description, holidaymaking and volunteering have become powerfully inseparable, part of the same experience, the voluntary aspect redefining and enhancing the holiday one. Even as he was relaxing on holiday the YMCA defined sense of moral obligation was filtering his experience, giving his holiday more meaning and increasing his loyalty to the YMCA place and staff that enabled it. In the next section through stories of young men on the Gambia trip, I explore how this process is enabled through the intensity of embodied encounter and the emotional experiences of travel and tourism. I analyse how this accelerates the learning process becomes an integral part of the transformative framework, rapidly accentuating the difference between old and new selves and behaviours and driving the messages and morals of the YMCA home.

'It's turned me round'

Despite Josh's powerful individual description, it is clear that the YMCA heavily intercedes in the process of narrating the Gambia trip experiences, interpreting and retelling stories in continual and on-going processes of reflection, feedback and negotiation. At the YMCA more generally reflection is used to solidify and strengthen processes of transformation, teaching the young people how to self-narrate their stories of change, conversion and success in predefined and circumscribed ways. In her depiction of 'poverty tourists' to the Brazilian Favelas Freire-Medeiros (2013) notes how feelings of shock, disjuncture and strangeness that the experience initiates a 'self-transforming' experience:

The advantages, comforts and benefits that are part of the tourist's daily life – and so often belong to the resident's wish list – are then seen as shallow and superfluous. In some way ironically, the contact with those unable to consume several basic goods becomes vital in triggering off a process of self-evaluation of the tourist as a consumer and a human being (p. 4).

On the Gambia trip, this process intensifies to match the intensity of the intended experiences, beginning before the trip even starts and continuing after it has finished. In addition to the pre-trip briefing, during the trip, the emotional responses of young people are monitored closely, each evening at dinner, the group debriefs and the students are expected to complete short questionnaires about what they have seen and done on the day, their responses often becoming part of post trip reports and promotional material, a constant process of reflection that continues throughout the trip.

In this way, YMCA staff, including myself, operate as surrogate 'poverty tour' guides aiming for authenticity in two senses, the authenticity of the experience and the authenticity of the emotional response from the young people to that experience, one triggering the other. However, Tucker (2009) has described in her own experiences of researching poverty in Turkey, reflexivity takes a great deal of calculated effort to identify and isolate specific emotions necessary to the destabilisation of the tourist encounter. She notes how embodied experience, particularly feelings of shame, can help 'disrupt the flow of discourse in tourism' opening up 'postcolonial potentialities' creating more 'ethical' encounters between tourist and host (p. 445-447; cf Probyn 2000, 2005). Reflexivity is critical to this process:

In order for that potentiality to be followed through, it is necessary that all parties learn how to read the elements of emotional moral discharge from their own and each other's bodies. It is necessary, in other words, to develop an embodied competence in order to be able to reflexively play *to*, *with* and *against* colonial discourse in... world making tourism practice (p. 459).

For many of the young people on the Gambia trip, the physical proximity of poor, sick and disabled children has a drastic and dramatic effect, partly through the sheer inescapability of shame in the face of abject poverty. However, the students are taught to read, interpret and identify their own emotional responses in a process developed on the Sports Leadership course but accelerated through the intensity of the Gambian encounter.

For example one student deeply moved by his experience in The Gambia was Lawrence, 16, a charismatic personality, very open with his emotions, and honest about his thoughts, as he might say 'wearing his heart on his sleeve'. Sometimes, this can be difficult, as when he shares about his difficult past with his mum's mental health issues or as he discusses here the reasons he has stuck with the YMCA:

Here everyone's friendly. At home, it weren't friendly at all and I used to come here and it's different and it turned me around: its people I know and I can trust and can talk to. If I didn't come here, I wouldn't (have) done none of this. I would be in a police cell by now. It's turned me round.

As he goes on to tell me, going back to the Gambia is also a big motivation 'If I go to Gambia this year I'd rather be a member of staff than one of the kids.' For Lawrence, it was only on the Gambia trip that he began to harbour thoughts of working at the YMCA, the sheer joy of being able to help the Gambian students overwhelming him: 'I just hope to go back to [The] Gambia and help again, that's the thing I love doing, like seeing people ain't got nothing and what we've got, it's just an incredible thing to do.'

Lawrence's pleasure and enjoyment on the Gambia trip appeared to be the defining feeling for him, marked in the acute contrast between Gambian children and he and his peers:

They smile when they've got nothing. When we've got nothing we don't smile, even when we've got something we don't smile. We've got everything, they've got nothing. And imagine what they'd be if they had what we've got, they'd be so chuffed. But it's a brilliant place and people who go, enjoy themselves really.

For Lawrence it was the disruption of his habitual thinking which made the Gambia trip so powerful, the humanising of poverty bringing about a transformation in perception and becoming enhanced through reflection (Tucker 2009). As he was slowly building a new self at the YMCA he was being encouraged to do so through empathy and mutually generated understanding, using his experiences to understand the difficult experiences of other. His adoption of this frame, not only opened up the possibility of his joining the Gambia trip through his improving behaviour, it also framed the way he interpreted the trip, as an exercise in empathy. As it turns out, it is a way of being he is still learning, re-joining the YMCA after expulsion from his latest college: 'I was on my feet, then I had an incident. Basically it was all to do with another kid, but it was my fault for reacting the way I did. So they kicked me out for it.'

Lawrence's emotional development was clearly a work in progress but his descriptions indicate how the embodied experience of poverty can create new channels of emotional connection. For the YMCA this proves useful for breaking down entrenched barriers to intimacy and understanding and creating greater scope for YMCA processes of transformation to take hold. For instance for Sports Leader and volunteer Daryl, 14, The Gambia excursion was continuous with a powerful process of empathy building begun at the YMCA centre in Sussex. Daryl's relentless energy had made life difficult for him at school where, where acting like a 'bit of a little shit' did not go down well with teachers, parents or fellow students. Now, with a renewed allegiance to the YMCA his life has gained new

direction, marked by a growing sense of reflective self-awareness fostered in the YMCA atmosphere: 'I won't get in trouble because I don't want to get kicked out of the YMCA - if I did I reckon I'd start getting into trouble again.'

It was partly this restlessness that got Daryl interested in the Gambia trip, his eagerness to learn at the YMCA extending to a willingness to have new experiences and go to a new country. His first trip abroad, Daryl found the trip emotional, in his words it was: 'sad and fun – it was a mixture of everything... I think I've changed, going to The Gambia has changed me.' He also tells me how he is desperate to go back on this year's trip, partly to see friends he made previously and partly because the school students are so different to English schoolchildren:

Just to see the people again that I met that was so good. I actually speak to one of them on Facebook now and he always tells me about the weather there... They actually ask for less than kids do here. If you went into a school and there were a bunch of pencils they'd just really want them. And they do what they're told. If a teacher tells them to sit down, they sit down.

On the trip, Daryl was deeply affected by the trips to the school and the hospital, becoming quiet and reflective after each trip, in contrast to his usual bubbly personality. When we discuss this, he frames it in terms of his alternative life choice, still wanting to join the army when he hits 16. As he says, he feels he needs to 'man up', when I ask him what this means exactly, he says to get his 'anger out' as he used to be 'well-violent,' whereas he has learned to 'just chill' at the YMCA. Taking this further he cites the Gambia trip as the moment he realised he would have the constitution to become an army medic:

Yes, I like helping people. So being a medic so I can save people rather than kill them... [and] just being tough and strong willed so you can do things that you wouldn't normally do....It was like [in] The Gambia I couldn't face it [going to the hospital] but then we were sitting in the hospital next to them and I was fine with it. So I thought why wouldn't it be the same if someone was dying in war. They're dying the same way but more like painful kind of deaths.

For Daryl, it was in his embodied encounter with pain, suffering and sickness that had moved him sufficiently to believe he could cope with becoming a soldier, a very literal interpretation of the situation and an ironic inversion of the empathy we were trying to create. Being able to 'face' his fears had enabled him to purge his anxieties of bodily discomfort, proximity engendering poignancy. Yet, his experiences had also not changed his life goals, simply tied them more intricately into the YMCA system of bodily incorporation and the quest for an honourable life.

For the YMCA, the G2G trip represents the final assault on the negatively coded sense of self they have been retooling through the Sports Leadership programme, a muscular way of completing their process of self-transformation and crystallising the values and behaviours of their new subjectivity. Whilst obvious emotions such as pity, sympathy, guilt and shame arise, so do less obvious emotional reactions such as excitement, fear and joy, many in combination with each other. What all these emotions share in common is a collective association with the experience of poverty, and the projected expectations of tourists from wealthy nations visiting poorer ones. As the young people traverse the geographical boundary between rich and poor they are also traversing the boundary between their imagined rendering of the poor, and the reality. In doing so their sense of both self and their relation to the world is reconfigured, their very notion of home as a static, enclosed space destabilised (Tucker 2009; Johnston 2001). In the next section, I invert the 'tourist gaze' suggesting that the embodied experience of the young Sussex students has to be placed in the context of global inequality and deprivation. By exploring the feelings and experiences of both imagined and embodied mobility in the lives of young Gambians I suggest that the effectiveness of YMCA processes of transformation are limited by socio-economic circumstance.

Part 2: Returning the Gaze

The young men from Sussex Central YMCA imagined poverty, even as they were experiencing it, translating their travel narratives through the tightly defined filters of the YMCA. In this way the YMCA operated as a medium of mobility, not only enabling the travel of the young men but controlling and organising it as part of a provisional transformational narrative that required confirmation. This showed both the potential of the YMCA model but also its limitations as an incomplete and fragmentary form of transformation. In the following section, I explore these limitations in relation to how the Gambia YMCA operates as a similar medium in very different economic conditions, where actual travel is more intermittent and engagements with the Global North are shaped by chance encounters, specific historic conditions and mediating organisations. I examine three features of the global imaginary at work through the YMCA, sport, development and religion. I acknowledge that each of these subjects demands more attention.

My purpose is not to provide an exhaustive account of how each area plays out in The Gambia, but to gesture to wider issues through instances of surprising possibility instigated by my presence as an outsider, Westerner and white man. I follow Koning and Ooi's (2013) argument that moments of auto-ethnographic awkwardness can reveal deeper

knots in the social relations of fieldwork, reflecting hidden inequalities and intersubjective spaces that make both researcher and researched uncomfortable (p. 30). In my case, even though I was attempting to play a benevolent, albeit imported, development worker at the YMCA, the limitations of my power and the corrosive legacy of colonialism and aid were written into my adopted persona, creating moments of irresolvable tension. As I show, these moments fed into to on-going currents of tension in broader Gambia and the global economic system, pointing to economic and political realities in which both I and my informants were implicated.

It is from these tensions that desires to migrate, travel and escape emerged, providing the grounds for powerful imaginaries of mobility at work through the YMCA and, indeed, through my presence in The Gambia and I explore this transposition by looking at three separate ethnographic moments linked in their relation to mobility and imagined global relationships. Throughout each section, I suggest that the imaginary elements of identity and masculinity formation be considered alongside and in continuity with the everyday, lived realities that structure their daily experiences. By analysing how these global narratives spread and become naturalised, we can track the formation of 'global moralities' that reconfigure local identities and gender orders further entrenching globalised forms of socio-economic inequality.

'A tree of money'

I've just arrived at Gambia YMCA after a six hour flight and a smooth taxi ride. Gambia YMCA is positioned in the centre of Kanifing, a commercial and residential district of Greater Banjul, a thirty minute drive from the administrative capital itself Banjul. After a hot, dusty wait to check in, I've been chatting to a young volunteer who runs the hostel under the supervision of the hostel manager. He tells me that he has been volunteering for too long at the YMCA and needs to earn some money, shortly he is hoping to begin computer classes at the YMCA's ICT training centre, part of the same complex as the hostel, but he doesn't have a computer. He asks me, if I should have a laptop at home that I'm not using if I could please bring it to him to use. I laugh and sardonically reply that laptops grow on trees in England. He stares blankly back at me before laughing nervously. Now feeling slightly awkward as well as guilty, I offer to tutor him on computer basics, of course, insisting that he make use of the YMCA pcs available to students. Although slight, this incident reflected a number of encounters I experienced during my fieldwork in The Gambia, reflecting a trend of difficult exchanges governed by global inequalities, national failings and a growing culture of dependency.

Awkward encounters can perhaps reveal how global power plays out in interpersonal relationships, in complex and sometimes surprising ways, unlocking the hidden historical intersection of post-coloniality (Eriksson-Baaz 2005) post-development (Dogra and Cohen 2012) and tourism (Chant and Evans 2010). As I was working in The Gambia, I became used to requests from strangers and acquaintances, but I also became used to being seen as an opportunity for advancement, especially through the Sports Leadership course. For some of my informants, these projections stemmed in part from a culture of uncertainty, where multiple livelihood routes had to be pursued and possible patrons accumulated, refracted through the highly racialised lens of Whiteness. Kebba, a young rugby coach on the Sports Leadership explained it was his intimacy to a 'Toubab' that had broken down this process of repetitive 'othering'. Kebba's situation was highly unusual, in that he had been taken in by an elderly English woman called Margaret who allowed him to live in her house in return for certain chores, a very physical incarnation of the philanthropic development relationship. Here, his simulation of people asking me for money anticipated many of the awkward exchanges I experienced through my relationships with students at the YMCA:

Maybe in here, [those] who didn't stay with them, [would say] 'I see Toubab: you have tree of money and you grow it at your home.' But if we see you guys, we say, 'These guys are having a lot of money, ok. But [for] people who be with [them] and people who knows their life, it's very hard to say please give me this.' It's [a] very rare example...I have no way to eat. I will say [to] Ross, 'Please help me.' I know you face this difficulty.

As I cultivated relationships, many of which left the field with me, I was also inadvertently cultivating forms of hope and expectation forged in the dependent and unequal climate of Gambian past and present. Though many of the Sports Leadership would initially ask me for equipment or financial assistance, my gentle refusals led to other forms of requests, in most cases for further opportunities and occasionally for sponsorship to continue their education abroad. At the time of my fieldwork, I had hoped to help the YMCA develop its coaching infrastructure but had run out time and resources.

Yet, during my interviews, I frequently offered hope of further courses to many of the Sports Leadership, a hope that turned out to be false or misguided. Now, in 2014, almost two years after my fieldwork, many Sports Leadership still ask the same questions, the hope of continued coaching training still looming large in their own futures, reflecting how my very presence and purpose in The Gambia had always been implicated in global imbalances, my own mobility marking me out as a source of hope.

As Maria Eriksson-Baaz (2005) has shown in the context of development, personal relationships, attitudes and behaviours can replicate and rehearse relationships of post-colonial power and inequality between Aid donor and recipient (see also Fechter 2005).

Though Kebba's proximity to Western modes of living had deepened his understanding of Western culture and identity, it had also more deeply entrenched his own view of The Gambia as backward and in need of development (cf. Eriksson-Baaz 2005). This emerged as we discussed his participation on the YMCA course, his focus on leadership applicable across his many employment, education and leisure pursuits: 'My favourite part of it is leadership. Because it's very important anywhere you go. Not even only in the Gambia - anywhere in the world, leadership is very good.' Taking this further, I asked him about his two favourite leaders. His answers were revealing. The first being the former England rugby captain Martin Johnson: 'He plays well, he do everything for his country, I like him'. The second being the Gambian leader, President Jammeh:

Our President, he's a good leader, because, you know, he creates. You know, right now if you miss [leave] The Gambia [and] maybe in fifteen years [come] backs... You will think you've come to another Gambia. Not the same Gambia you leave [left] here... Many things [will] have changed. Definitely... Gambia is coming up. Maybe in five or ten years Gambia will be a small Europe.

Kebba's idealistic portrayal of development in his own country chimes with the President's own ambitious claims that the Gambia will be 'the Dubai of Africa' by 2020, but are inflected through his own dealings with Westerners and Europeans, and his own imagined rendering of progress. Similarly, his enthusiasm for rugby and his own role in its development are wedded to notions of material progress 'I'm trying to bring rugby up too, it's just that... here it's very difficult, we don't have a rugby field here, that's why this very difficult for us here. But at the school, for them to start [coaching] it's a big advantage for people who like rugby.'

Much as his notion of sports development was refracted through a belief in the power of leadership to transform Gambian rugby, from 'backward' to 'modern', his belief in his political leader was a mixture of wishful thinking and visible signs of actual progress. However, in both arenas, this material progress was fraught with political manoeuvring and sleight of hand. Yet, for young Gambians like Kebba this progress was very real, connecting them to the distant realms and webs of imagined modernity, symbolised and embodied in the lives of people they knew and met, like me and Margaret and, and people they had not, like Martin Johnson, complex and diverse configurations of fantasy and reality. In the next section, I focus firmly on reality at the YMCA. Using an example of an actual Gambian sporting hero I show how narratives of mobility can be politically mobilised for success whilst inadvertently perpetuating a broader economic narrative of failure, immobility and stagnation.

'Let us not be big'



Figure 17 Sports Leader receives certificate from Peter 'Bonu' Johnson and Joe

For Kebba, mobility intersected with notions of development and sport, broader structural inequalities glossed by a personal relationship. However, sport also operated as a powerful vector of imagined and actual mobility itself, where fantasy and reality most clearly overlapped in everyday life. Sport also acts as a volatile realm of contestation over national development and identity, where wider political discourses around 'brain drain' are played out in sporting arena, in a process known as 'muscle drain' (Andreff 2001, 2009; see also Esson 2013). In both discourses, youth is seen as an important national resource and as sport has become more lucrative, the bodies of youth are seen as increasingly valuable to national development and economic progress. However, these discourses are constructed in opposition to common narratives of spatial entrapment coming from youths themselves and are often framed as anti-western and anti-colonial by the Gambian authorities. For young people, gaining the Sports Leadership certificate was implicated in these complex politics of local authenticity, where 'foreign' qualifications are valued much more highly than local ones but the political rhetoric promotes Gambian expertise over foreign intervention. As a white man running a 'foreign' coaching course, I was directly implicated in these political discourses, promoting Gambian youth but also situated within a discourse where foreign expertise was undermining local experience.

This came to light most forcefully when we had a visit from the most successful Gambian football coach, Peter ‘Bonu’ Johnson, current head coach of the Gambia national football team to oversee our Sports Leadership graduation. A successful coach at local level, Bonu recently replaced the Belgian coach who had in turn replaced a Spanish coach. His appointment tended to reflect a divided and confused political discourse, many media commentators lamenting his lack of experience whilst many younger coaches seemed reinvigorated by having a home-grown success story to emulate. This sense is amplified as Bonu is a YMCA graduate, his coaching advice to the young graduate reflecting his Christian ties: ‘We Gambian coaches... Let us not be pompous, let us not be big, and always be willing to listen, let us be humble’. Attempting to encourage the young coaches before him, he describes how his coaching qualification is recognised worldwide and yet disregarded by his own football authorities: ‘And we still sit down, and say we don’t have a coach here... I always laugh.’ At this point, he refers to me directly, suggesting that constant deference to foreign coaching expertise is harming the progression of young coaches: ‘They [the Gambian football authorities] tend to believe more on the professionals - sorry Ross not because you are white - than your own.’

After a hearty round of applause, I talk to a few of the young coaches who have been enthused by his speech, one struggling young coach Modou, telling me how the appointment of Bonu has restored his hope of a ‘future’ in coaching. Nine months on and Bonu’s upwards rise has come to an abrupt end and his point about foreign coaches seems oddly prophetic. After a string of poor defeats, he has been relegated to the role of assistant manager, with his former assistant manager, Italian coach Luciano Mancini, being promoted to manager, a sting in the tail of his journey with the Scorpions, from local to international coach.

The moment when Bonu referred to me during his speech reflected the inherent ambivalence of my presence in The Gambia as representative of both sports development and wider development itself. It also signalled the current political shift in The Gambia from overt aid dependency to self-determination, a language of neoliberal self-transformation wrapped up in nationalist rhetoric. Whilst the young men on the Sports Leadership course saw me as a source of potential qualifications and knowledge, they were being told to value their own coaching knowledge and expertise, creating a ‘se débrouiller’ economy of coaching knowledge. Yet, even Bonu was caught up in these contestations, losing his job to an overseas coach and continually having to bring out his FIFA certificate to prove his credentials. For many young coaches this created deeply held ambiguities in their approach to mobility as their national pride was crosscut with a wish to feed their families and gain prestige and status.

One student particularly vocal about this issues was cricket player Ousman, 16, whose view of mobility is charged with moral indignation, rooted in the uncertainty and struggles he sees his peers facing on a daily basis. As one of the few Muslims on the cricket team, he was recruited for the youth team by the captain because of his aptitude for football, and as he says Christians and Muslims play, work and live together in The Gambia and on the cricket team with a 'clean heart.' Now having watched the senior team jet off to international tournaments he has finally been to one himself in Ghana. However, for him the prospects of mobility are deeply ambiguous, standing for both the problem and the solution to Gambia's worsening economic problems:

The problem is, some of them [youths] I blame them, some of them I don't blame them, [it's] 50-50. Ok, some of them they think about Europe too much. Even me too, I love to go to Europe or America, but, you see...I stay here. When you come...you will not see me. All of us we will go out [of the compound]...Because if you sit one place without doing nothing, it's not good for you and it will be not good for your future also. You see the difference: what we are today and yesterday is different. So we have to think about tomorrow, what you gonna' be? What you gonna' be then? And also there is another problem here: there is no easy job for the youths. That's number one, there's no easy jobs... It's not easy.'

Repeating the youth refrain 'it's not easy', the struggle to find money, success and security, Ousman sees cricket as his way out, and his way of differentiating himself from his peer group:

I always say, 'Life is not easy round here'. You have to travel, you're supposed to travel. But he [his brother] tell me, 'Boy, keep the faith.' You see the difference today: I play cricket and I travel. I experience a lot. Some of them here, they don't travel, they don't go nowhere... I always, always believe in God.

Framed through his passionate belief in God, for him mobility is a way of showing faith and living a spiritual life, antidote to an immoral lifestyle create by inactivity.

Relating back to ideas of legacy and 'blessings,' Ousman also believes deeply in living a morally correct or 'good life.' As he tells me, when he dies people will look back and judge him for his actions and words: 'We came here for mission, not competition. When your mission ends ...your friends will take your photo, they say 'ah Ousman, was a good boy...my best friend, my lovely.' Asking me what my 'mission' in The Gambia is, he used the example of my mobility to structure a theory of moral mobility:

Yeah, it will help me, because God's here wanting. He say, 'Help yourself' then he help you. If you just sit one place and say God will help you. No, no, no, no, no. Like you will learn the example: you [me] staying in England far, far away... You come to Gambia. Why you come out just to help yourself? And God helps you. Its life: if you sit one place, it's not

good. Either you steal, or you're drunk, drinking this alcohol, disturbing yourself. Disturbing yourself for nothing, wasting your time, so its better you get up, you go and find something.

Ousman's answer, showed how he situated me as a Westerner as a moral paragon of mobile dynamism, a go-getter who was using my mobility to help others and live a moral lifestyle, the ideal lifestyle he imagined for himself. In me, the YMCA and the Sports Leadership course, he saw God's hand, but also an image of his own future, a moral rendering of mobility that sat alongside his sedentary peers dreaming of 'Babylon'.

Yet, like his peers, he was also making moves and dreaming of travelling abroad, the very idea of travel locked into his quest for status at home. In the next section I take the spiritual element of Ousman's argument and process it through a starker moral filter engendered by Islam. I suggest that the YMCA is located in between the forces of Western post-colonialism and imperialism whilst paradoxically offering a route to empowerment and escape. I trace these contradictions through the difficulties face by one Sports Leader, whose negotiations with family, friends and his religious community are heavily influenced by his perception of Western influence and his experience of Islam, both global and locally. I try and find out how the YMCA and my presence in The Gambia feed into his 'Manichean dream' even as they are brought into direct contact on a Sports Leadership course, actually increasing the imagined distance between the two realms and deepening feelings of alienation and dejection brought about by economic insecurity and spiritual anxiety.

'Wicked Toubabs'

For Kebba and Ousman, sport and dependency had become a way of life, a way of connecting on a daily basis into the global circuits of hope and optimism that sustained his life. However, the experiences of many young Gambian men chimed with the experiences of young men across Africa where modernity is experienced as a form of 'abjection' (Ferguson 2006) or disappointment and ambivalence (Baumann 2013) that articulated through relationships with versions of local and global Islam (Masquelier 2007; Rudolph and Piscatori 1997; Soares and Otayek 2007). When Osama Bin Laden was killed by American Special Forces in 2010, many Gambians I spoke to refused to believe he was dead, citing an American conspiracy and an international bias against Islam. As I have shown in previous chapters, for young students on the Sports Leaders course their encounter with the West was shaped in such ambiguous and ambivalent terms as they developed a 'situational ethics' (Masquelier 2007) to negotiate both with global notions of community and local influences from family and friends. Often these debates and negotiations were carried out in the public

sphere, where youth became the object of social, moral and religious scrutiny pointing towards a need to constantly perform piety for a public audience (cf. Mahmood 2011). However, for some young Muslims, engaging with education, technology and global events became a way of resisting the perceived imposition of cultural values from both the West and the local community, carving out complex forms of situational and tactical agency (in the Nigerien context cf. Leblanc 2000).

Sainey's story offers a way of exploring these moral tensions as they are performed in different realms and arenas, played out along global imaginaries that inflect the everyday realities of young Gambians. At 25, Sainey has developed a strong sense of faith by selecting and discarding different forms of Islam over time, his faith formed at the complex intersection of mobility, masculinity and economic deprivation. Unlike many young Gambian men, Sainey had joined the Tablighi Jama'at movement, known locally as T-Jama'at, the Islamic missionary movement started in India and now diffused throughout the world (cf. Janson 2005). Sainey was first introduced to the local Tablighi group through his uncle and was attracted to the different model of sociality on offer within the Tablighi community: 'Whatever they do, they sit and talk about it, they call that *Mashura*, they will talk about it, and whatever they finalise they all follow.' As Marloes Janson (2005) notes, the Tablighi movement often targets younger men, especially young migrants deprived of their traditional social networks, aiming to become a 'surrogate family' symbolised in the practice of members addressing each other as 'brother' and 'sister' (p. 10). Sainey seemed to enjoy this aspect of Tablighi life, gaining a sense of community through shared spiritual practice: 'I value my religion; it's a way of life, an everyday thing....Visiting friends, talking to them about Islam, calling them to prayers. Reading your five daily prayers. I've seen a lot of discipline there.'

Moreover, Sainey's story is a powerful reminder of the ways global Islam is immediately locked into the local, inflected and lived through the negotiation of different realms and moral conundrums. As anthropologists have shown, in the wake of crumbling trust in national state infrastructure, religious modes of being are often attractive due to their association with foreign 'modernities' and envisioning of material success through spiritual piety (Roitman 2005: 35; Ferguson 2006; see Maxwell 2006; Soares 2005). In the Nigerien context, Masquelier (2009) points to how young people are inescapably altered by global events, and articulate their experience of local drama 'through the lens of 9/11 and the Manichean world that has emerged in its wake' (p. 258). For Sainey, schooled in transnational Islam shaped in contrast to Western materialism, the West occupied an ambivalent position in his imagining of the global order, an affront to Islam but also a place of opportunity and

escape from the difficulties he faced at home, forming a complex articulation of globalised morality (cf. Masquelier 2010: 254-5).

As Sainey describes here this tension is always gauged through the historical intersection of The Gambia and the West: 'I hate tribalism and I hate racism, because I feel we are all one. Sometimes they say, 'Ah these Toubabs are very wicked, they enslaved our forefathers.' But the present Toubabs they didn't do that.' As he tells me, to escape he needs a Western education: 'I don't want to study in the Gambia, I want to go and study in the US. That's my problem.' His 'problem', as he sees it, is positioned at the intersection of faith and economic power, mobility ultimately equated with spiritual, cultural and economic authority:

I really want to go university, then after a few years I have enough savings and you know. Marriage, you know it's not dating; it's a life time contract. In Africa, we believe if you marry someone in Islam, you are the head [of the household] and you have to take care of the woman. I cannot go and marry someone and expect my family to take care of my wife, that is disgracing. I need to have my own incomes and solve my problems, if it's my family I need to do it myself.

Sainey positions his own masculine becoming at the complex intersection between mobility, family and Islam, but is also reflected in a neoliberal economics of self-discipline, accumulation and autonomy. Equally, though Sainey wants the masculine prestige of a 'Big Man' characterised by financial power and independence, he also wants the perhaps contradictory recognition for piety and parsimony lent by Islamic practice and authority. However, His feelings of frustration towards both idealised states of manhood are further exacerbated by his own failure to live a spiritually pure life read through his fantasies of becoming a missionary overseas.

As he discusses here, stories of spiritual success rooted in self-sacrifice and the severing of social ties also motivate his world-making imagination: 'I talk to my friend in Brazil, some of these brothers; they sacrificed their families, their wealth and moved to Brazil. And now you have tens of mosques in Brazil.' As his friends multiply their spiritual currency abroad, Sainey dreams of escaping the shackles of his current life through either spiritual or financial accumulation at home, one way or another, becoming a 'Big Man' in his own community.

Conclusion: Coming Home to the YMCA

In this chapter, I have argued programmes such as the YMCA G2G unconsciously 'naturalise' and maintain global inequalities. In order to trace the ways this happens, I have attempted to map the complex imaginative network of narratives and discourses that

structure, and are structured by, forms of migration, mobility and travel. This further situates the cultivation of the YMCA 'Whole Man' masculinity in a global context of moral subjectification. As I have described, the YMCA cultivates networks of relationships through which moral behaviours are modelled and enacted. In this chapter I have shown how processes of relationality are implicated in complex socio-economic and political relationships that define and structure moments of relatedness. For the UK students 'volun-tourism' provided a powerful embodied experience of moving and being moved that generated new possibilities of affective association and attachment. Through performing affect and consuming poverty they learned how to be more emotional and how to channel these emotions into caring, nurture, kindness and mutuality. The shock generated by immediate suffering allowed the YMCA to accelerate the processes it had itself been nurturing on its UK programmes.

Through the looking glass, as it were, the young Gambian men at the YMCA are vigorously imagining their escape from the confines of poverty and daily grind, narrated and eyed through the influx of wealthy western tourists, the frenetic morass of global idols and transnational ideals of morality and conduct. Somewhere amidst this array of influences young Gambians are also repositioning themselves within the global order, adjusting their viewpoints in line with constantly changing aspirations and circumstances. Even as their relationship with their friends and families around them threaten to destabilise, they are finding new vocabularies and modalities through which they can express their frustrations, dilemmas and feelings, and in doing so find new ways forward that bring new meanings to their actions, meaning, defined, structured and designed by organisations like the YMCA.

More generally, I have shown how by analysing the emotionally embodied and depoliticising experiences of tourists and travellers, mobility can begin to be understood in its situated, economic reality, allowing the power differentials at the heart of mobile encounters to emerge (Crossley 2012; Lyons and Wearing 2012; Tucker 2009: 448; see also Bornstein 2005: 95). I have explored how my role as a Western agent of development becomes central to this process as I became an object of emotion as hopes and aspirations were projected onto my presence. By trying to promote sports programmes in The Gambia I may have inadvertently been perpetuating a myth of foreign expertise and mobility ironically making feelings of immobility brought about by economic realities much more deeply felt. Only through a deeper understanding of how YMCAs, and transnational NGOs like them, populate the imaginative landscape of mobility, increasingly dominated by polarised discourses of freedom and interdiction, can the intimate inter-connectedness of the world be understood.

Chapter 11: Conclusion: ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’

‘Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.’

- 1 Thessalonians 5: 12-15

Current approaches to development fail to capture the inherent complexity of ‘doing good’ in an increasingly globalised world (Mosse 2011) requiring new approaches that re-imagine the local-global nexus as an intimately interconnected circuit of ‘travelling’ tropes of meaning, action and behaviour (see Hyde 2011). Using a case study of two interconnected YMCAs I have shown how these ‘tropes’ are embodied and deeply embedded in both institutional practices and interpersonal relations, implicated the production of subjectivities that allow them to circulate more freely. As I have demonstrated, taking this critical, ethnographic approach to YMCA trans-local operations can highlight the contradictions, ironies and tensions at the heart of YMCA seemingly universal ‘global moralities’ as they are produced, maintained and challenged, opening up avenues to understand how the organisation is being warped and tested in the current socio-economic moment. Whilst ‘Brotherly Love’ operated as a blueprint for YMCA ‘global’ development practice, it also allowed the YMCA to participate in a global economy of unequal relations undermining, or as with the question above, inverting the original Christian foundation of the YMCA movement. As they pursued ‘good’ for others they also pursued ‘good’ for themselves recreating a classic paradox at the core of all philanthropy and placing a metaphorical ‘question mark’ over the validity and value of their work (see Fassin 2011).

I have also shown that this ‘networked’ approach to development is fraught with a range of tensions which are embodied in the lives of managers, workers and clients at the YMCA: between doing good and making ‘good’ citizens; between serving the community and serving the state; between creating a service culture and self-serving individuals; between an entrepreneurialism of the self and being a commercially minded entrepreneur; and even between the interests of the charity and the interests of the YMCA as an organisation. As I have discussed, particularly in the case of young men such as Abdu and Aiden, the YMCA’s attempts to inculcate a set of values based on holistic forms of subjectivity are always partial and provisional and meet different challenges in each setting, supporting Foucault’s assertion that ‘power is always a failing project’ (cf. Foucault 1996: 238–9 [cited in McKinlay 2006: 97]).

For the YMCAs in both contexts, this should perhaps be provoking more circumspection and ‘soul-searching’ but instead it is powering their growth as they hungrily incorporate opportunities, personnel and premises into their expanding infrastructure. For the managers at the top this situation is allowing them to perform their faith even further, allowing them to extend the reach of the YMCA and prove God’s plan. For middle managers, it is empowering them as they garner opportunities for extending their business whilst extending their own influence within the organisation, a synergy of internal and external possibility. For other, younger workers it is opening up opportunities to advance, as spaces are vacated in the command structure for new lieutenants, offering new pathways for entrepreneurial self-actualisation.

However, for some clients, managers and workers there is a sense of loss, ambivalence and dejection as the organisation changes. For these men and women, the passion of their work relies on hands-on interaction, a very pure and direct expression of ‘doing good.’ For these individuals the sacrifices they are making for the organisation are only worth it if the organisation remains true to its roots, whether defined as a faith movement in The Gambia or as a community movement in the UK. For this group of workers, being ‘of service’ to their clients and communities is very much not part of the ‘service’ culture promoted by neoliberalism, but rather part of a ‘service ethic’ that aligns with Christian values, without necessarily being Christian in design.

As I have demonstrated, such processes of subjectification need to be understood as a powerful disciplining force throughout the YMCA shedding new light on how institutional moralities connect into circuits of both local and global moral geographies of blame and veneration. Through the ethnography we have seen how the YMCA programmes have the power to discipline in two interlocking ways: firstly by harmonising physicality with productive sociality as in the cases of young men such as Liam, Callum and Benny whose love of sport was resulting in a tethering to the behavioural requirements of the YMCA (Chapters Six and Seven); secondly by associating personal economic and workplace success with celebratory self-development through leadership as with the cases of Kebba, Bubba and Justin who narrated their own sense of self in line with the institutional expectations of their superiors (Chapter Six). Taken together these two discursive constructs form a powerful rubric of responsabilisation that generates self-transforming, and thus, self-regulating, subjects.

This discursive construction of subjectivity is also compounded by the need to present ‘success’ as complete and ‘successful’ to funders, external partners and the world beyond the YMCA. This results in successes being always loudly broadcast whilst failures are either recycled as part of their success, attributed to individual failings or marked down as a

percentage loss, part of a gambling business model working on small margins for large gains. This was shown in Chapters Six and Eight where young men such as Noah, Leo, Kebba and Bubba were constantly being re-taught how to 'speak' about and reflect on their own lives, experiences and work performance. This constant circulation and recycling of narratives makes the stories of transformation increasingly and cumulatively moral, offering moral coordinates for newcomers and creating a powerful 'moral economy' for YMCA staff and students (cf. Rudnykji and Richard 2009).

As I have moved through the thesis and concurrently down through the hierarchical levels of the organisation, the fissures in this system have become more apparent. Particularly in The Gambian context with young men like Abdu (Chapter Nine) Ousman and Kebba (Chapter Ten), the YMCA struggled against abject poverty and multiple forms of self-managing behaviour, its model proving at best ineffective or peripheral, and at worst contributing to a neo-colonial re-affirmation of global hierarchies and dependencies and a re-assertion of the 'moral empire' they enjoyed at the turn of the last century. I showed in Chapters Seven and Ten, how as a 'charismatic' actor caught up in these processes, I was also implicated in the enactment and reproduction of these inequalities through the performance of my 'whiteness', my 'expertise' and my ability to 'move.' Like the young men from Brighton in Chapter Ten I was part of a new 'poverty tourism' that exposed the contradictions of doing 'good' in the context of inherent global inequality. Combined these activities contributed to the 'fractured landscape' of global 'imagined geographies' that continues to define the context in which International Development and Aid takes place, reinscribing the global hierarchy between North and South (Eyben and Savage 2013).

Furthermore, these more obvious global contradictions can be written back into the UK context where the YMCA is thriving due to an ongoing, and ideological, redefinition of citizenship and social participation that valorises the middle class service culture they promote and pathologises the forms of behaviour they do not. As discussed, defining 'middle class' is a difficult task, but at the YMCA we can see an enactment of what Chris Haylett (2001) has described as the 'middle class imaginary' predicated on a national project of 'multicultural modernisation,' where middle class values are redrawn as the necessary technical aspects of cultural progress:

In these circumstances a representative middle class is positioned at the vanguard of 'the modern' which becomes a moral category referring to liberal, cosmopolitan, work and consumption based lifestyles and values, and 'the unmodern' on which this category depends is the white working-class 'other', emblematically a throwback to other times and places (p. 265).

This project is intimately wedded to processes of ‘state-stripping’, deregulation and privatisation accelerating under the current government which weaken social bonds and undermine forms of community and solidarity. This project is matched by the global push towards marketisation and monetisation, particularly in the alignment between state forms of modernisation and development forms of empowerment. In both contexts, the logic of the market is becoming inseparable from political projects of nation-building which are increasingly cast in an inescapably moral grammar, making negotiation, dissent and democracy more difficult and loading the terms of national debates in favour of the global forces of finance and trade (cf. Ferguson 2007).

As Haylett argues, in this context, the white working class poor are subjected to an ‘othered’ and objectified positioning within the social hierarchy: ‘The shift from naming the working-class poor as ‘underclass’, a racialised and irredeemable ‘other’, to naming them ‘the excluded’, a culturally determined but recuperable ‘other’, is pivotal to the recasting of Britain as a post-imperial, modern nation’ (p. 267). As I have shown the YMCA promotes forms of responsabilisation that overlap with the priorities of the British government who are tethering the idea of a strong nation state to the ideals of self-transforming, autonomous subjects. In the case of Justin this was working well, producing a ‘good boy’ and a solid citizen. However with a number of other young men such as Leo, Noah, Zack and Benny their behaviour was viewed as failing to conform to an ideal model and therefore classed as ‘failed’ or, in Leo and Noah’s case at least temporarily irredeemable. For the young men on the Sports Leadership course, this ‘racialising’ plays out in specific moments and through specific processes, and in this context, the YMCA and its workers can be understood as agents of ‘modernisation’ implicated in a wider homogenisation of the public sphere.

Nevertheless, I have also shown how in both contexts young people were exercising their own agency crafting selves of their own out of the array of opportunities, roles and everyday occurrences available to them in their fragmented social environment. Particularly, in Chapter Eight, I showed how the YMCA was sometimes a single point of light in a rapidly changing and vast constellation of potential avenues that young people were exploring. For some young men this fitted their own projects of self-making: their appearance on the YMCA programme signalling a willingness to become more dynamic and entrepreneurial, a mutuality of place and intention. For these ‘already-entrepreneurs’ the YMCA is part of their ongoing, future oriented outlook, a marketplace for them to acquire new skills and show their worth. For this group, the YMCA becomes a home, a place of family, friendship and love, a respite from the rest of their lives and a buttress against the instabilities of a precarious economy. For men like Justin and Bubba, the YMCA came to occupy a central space in their self-making projects, part of gaining recognition and prestige but also of fulfilling a spiritual goal:

they were literally doing unto others as they had been done to, offering their skills to people who had been like them. This meant more fully practicing the YMCA mode of being, a process of sacrifice they were always struggling to fulfil. Yet in the process they had gained recognition within their respective YMCAs and, in different ways, had gained forms of spiritual credibility which saw them rising quickly through the ranks.

For other young men like Gabriel (Chapter Eight) and Aiden (Chapter Nine) the YMCA was simply a stopping off point, a temporary waystation in a wider journey or one point of reference amongst a crowded landscape of support networks and possible opportunity or modes of self-realisation. These men, could perhaps be called the true entrepreneurs who are not simply entrepreneurs of the self or even the spirit, they are firmly rooted in the multiple material demands placed on their lives and seek an array of parallel paths to success. Both approaches risk much, but for the second group the rewards can be multiplied in line with each pathway, or journey they undertake.

For still others like Benny, Zack and Noah, the YMCA was something of an obstacle, part of a state-sponsored attempt at reform that was doomed to failure, or at least only partial success. Particularly in the UK this group found it difficult to escape the models and messages they had been accustomed to before coming to the YMCA, maintaining problematic behaviours and attitudes that marked them out as problematic themselves. However, it also must be mentioned that amongst these men is perhaps where the bulk of the YMCA's 'good' work was directed, and where the most satisfying transformational gains were to be found. Young men like Benny, who were seemingly beyond the reach of the YMCA at first sight, inadequate at both self-presentation and self-control, slowly and attritionally became part of the YMCA system, the repeated application of relationships, lessons and increasing responsibility grounding down and grinding out his anti-social behaviours. For men like Benny, the YMCA was a perpetual surprise: friendships they did not look for; skills they did not think they needed; satisfactions they thought they were denied and recognition they felt they did not deserve.

This group feature prominently in this thesis, and perhaps deserve further attention. They more than any other represent the original mission of the YMCA, the reluctant heroes and struggling sportsmen who, against the odds, make a name for themselves within the confines of the YMCA and, for a time, becoming part of a wider movement. However, they are almost always drawn from a working class background, troubled young men from troubled communities. Ostensibly they are compelled to join the YMCA programme, but they are also cajoled through sport and the promise of 'fun' and 'pleasure.' Then, as they enter into the YMCA system, they accrue a range of skills, knowledges, behaviours and attitudes that subtly reshape them, until they even begin to question their own past actions

and attitudes. Not only can we say that this is a process of ‘conversion from ‘good’ to ‘bad’ it can also be seen as a conversion from ‘working class’ values to ‘middle class’ ones.

Ironically, at the same time, these men more than any other embody the spirit of the YMCA, the conversion without faith; the transformation without belief; the moral mission without God. Perhaps here then lies the ‘Christian legacy’ of the YMCA, amongst a cadre of young men who by learning to serve, lead and sacrifice at the YMCA, have also learnt the hard-won value of the YMCA’s simple ethical framework. Here YMCA centres are much more than, in Baker’s words, spaces of ‘grace’ infused with benevolence and kindness (Baker 2012), they are also places where ‘brotherly love’ is operationalised becoming an ‘affective technology’ that transforms both the subject and object of that love (Rudnyckyj and Richard 2009). In this sense, the ‘moral economy’ at the YMCA had become an ‘economy of charisma’ where this difficult group had become the objects of both ‘charisma’ and love as they were encouraged to develop their own charismatic personalities. Not only had they been transformed by morality, in the process they had come to know the ‘power of that logo’ (Peacock, Chapter 5), a simple but ever growing reminder of the morality of transformation at work at the YMCA.

Theoretical Contribution

I suggest that a study of the YMCA can challenge several assumptions in current social theory by returning to the four interdependent central points I set out in the introduction: moral networks of development; the morality of FBOs; the neo-Weberian framework for development and the ‘neoliberalisation’ of youth. Firstly, the current anthropological literature on morality is insufficiently grounded in the body and embodied practice. Countering overly reductive ideas of moral programming, as I have explored a Foucauldian reading of YMCA activities points to a specific conjunction between moral discourse and ethical practice that is mutually constitutive. Analysing development practice through affective regimes can help to shown how morality and ethics interrelate on an everyday level and what forms of personhood and behaviour they correspond to. As Rudnyckyj and Richards (2009) suggest, by combining an understanding of affect with an understanding of the production of subjects we can gain deeper insight into the workings of ‘governmentality’.

Furthermore, these embodied packages need to be performed and reiterated in order to make them successful, creating powerful gendering matrices in the process. As we have seen the YMCA encourages specific performances of masculinity which are grounded in

concerted moral frameworks. Students are taught to cater their behaviours to specific settings and associate these settings with particular feelings. Pride, self-worth and self-mastery are consequently embedded in the more general feeling of a good performance, and in particular a performance of values associated with Mind-Body-Spirit progression. This not only encourages young men (and women) to repeat and rehearse specific attributes and behaviours, it brings abstract codes of morality and ethical behaviour into the concrete and everyday. Yet, as the students learn to be moral they are also learning to learn, learning how to acquire skills and knowledge that will serve them well in the future and how to put those skills and knowledge to good use. These forms of performance are also geared for further performativity, structured around a sense of situational awareness that allows YMCA clients to become more flexible, more adaptable, more open and more entrepreneurial. They are, in effect, learning how to be ‘entrepreneurs of the self’ by being entrepreneurial. This learning process rests on a set of carefully negotiated contradictions: they learn to be ‘whole’ whilst performing to different audiences in multiple settings; they learn how to rely on themselves and their own judgements and talents whilst building productive relationships with others; and they learn how to be both moral (selfless) and mercenary (selfish). These sets of binaries operate as moral coordinates at the YMCA, strung out through the various levels of the organisation but embodied in their daily practice, discourse and reflection to create moral guidelines for all to follow.

At the same time, this project has offered several new routes for studies of a development industry which is quickly becoming an adjunct of the globalised marketplace. We could even argue that development organisations like the YMCA are contributing to a clear obfuscation of *immorality* by creating a moral haze that deepens the historic inequalities at the heart of charity, what Fassin (2011) terms an ‘aporia’ (p. 38). As witnessed in the recent Ebola epidemic in West Africa, development is increasingly being defined by the ‘politics of emergency’ which creates starker forms of ‘social triage’ that prioritise the wealthy and expose the poor and vulnerable (Ibid: 50-51). Discussing the origins of humanitarianism he notes how the ‘the mystical language of salvation and sacrifice’ used by NGOs increasingly operationalises a register of moral absolutes: ‘This moral language about evil and supreme good, attains here a sort of paroxysm to which many humanitarian actors would not subscribe. Still, a euphemised version of it may be heard daily in the offices of nongovernmental organisations and on their fields of action’ (Ibid: p38). As Fassin has argued it is precisely because organisations like the YMCA claim the moral high ground that they remain ‘untouchable,’ free of critical scrutiny as their ‘activities involve persona and institutions believed to be above suspicion because they are acting for the good of individuals and groups understood to be vulnerable’ (p. 30). Extending this critique he notes how these

forms of social triage sever the ‘gift’ of Aid from its recipient making it fundamentally unequal and founded on the self-protection of the giver. As he describes here, paraphrasing Foucault, the asymmetry of giving is akin to being a ‘bad shepherd’:

The shepherd (pasteur) directs all his care towards others and never towards himself. This is precisely the difference between the good and the bad shepherd. The bad shepherd only thinks of good pasture for his own profit, for fattening the flock that he will be able to sell and scatter, whereas the good shepherd thinks only of his flock and of nothing else. He does not even consider his own advantage in the well-being of his flock. . . . The shepherd (pasteur) serves the flock and must be an intermediary between the flock and pasture, food, and salvation, which implies that pastoral power is always a good in itself (Foucault 2007: 126, 127, 130, 132; cited in Fassin 2011: 172)

Fassin’s arguments take the critique of development to its very core, suggesting that only through these types of ‘aporia’ can development and the inequality that gives rise to it exist: ‘Contrary to contradictions, aporia are not a matter of organisational dysfunction but rather the dysfunction intrinsic to their very functioning’ (p. 50).

Whilst these are contentious arguments, Fassin’s critique is perhaps doubly valid for religious organisations that purport to offer moral guidance and moral purpose and suggests how new convergences of theory and development practice can shed further light on the implication of ‘everyday’ moralities. Understanding how religious practice inserts itself into the public sphere needs greater attention as FBOs continue to occupy the ambiguous space of being both accommodated and compromised in a neoliberal climate. As my study shows, a Weberian reading of development can uncover processes of sacred-secular interrelation at a deeper, more entrenched level than was previously imagined. At the YMCA, late 19th Century Protestant models of personhood steeped in moral values can be deeply embedded in secular practice. The YMCA model of becoming ‘Our Brother’s Keeper’ resonates with these ideas, forming a moral framework for working spiritually in secular domains. As Bornstein has identified, these practices can go to the very heart of processes of neoliberal statecraft, exposing its contradictions:

Faith-based development, unlike ‘secular development,’ provides a space in which to negotiate and contest realms not evident in strictly economic discourse, such as good, evil, morality, and witchcraft. Perhaps it makes explicit some of the unspoken assumptions of neoliberal economic discourse. Perhaps neoliberal economics shares the logic of Protestant NGOs. Perhaps neoliberal economic discourse is not so secular after all. The faith in faith-based development gives voice to the morality of development: Christian business is good development; doing well can be morally dangerous (p. 170).

As Weber (2003 [1959]) maintained, the relation of the state to religion is one of ‘elective affinities’ that mutually reinforce one another (cf. Osella and Osella 2009). In this thesis I

have developed this argument by suggesting that the YMCA not only abetted the development of early models of the liberal state, but it helped to define and shape it.

Taking this further, the YMCA offers a unique opportunity to explore the role faith plays at the intersection of the secular and sacred realms. For Weber, the modern state would gradually become more rationalised and devoid of enchantment, the magic of ‘charisma’ stemming from the Holy Spirit giving way to the charismatic leader, manager and overseer (2003 [1959]). However, in this thesis I explore how a system of brotherly love and leadership which encompasses the magical and the managerial simultaneously serves as a secret enchanted garden at the heart of modernity. For Christians, like James Gomez being your ‘brother’s keeper’ is an integral part of their brotherly love but it is also a foundation for their own ‘charismatic’ identity. From this position they translate their practical development actions through the filter of their beliefs, giving the everyday, workaday routine its own inherent magic.

However this process has to be understood amidst a wider politicisation of faith that disrupts and challenges Euro-Centric models of secularisation. As The Gambia prepares to declare itself an Islamic Republic, it is no longer sufficient to follow a Weberian line of disenchantment. On the contrary, both Marshall (2009) and Bornstein (2006) have recently argued that in the Global South the role of religion in public life is avowedly political, creating new possibilities of political sovereignty that are both religious and secular, and generating new political configurations structured around democratic citizenship recast in terms of a belief in God. The power base created by NGOs like the YMCA may become progressively salient to forms of political authority as its ability to mobilise funds, resources and personnel becomes more noticeable. Added to this, the steady stream of personnel issuing from the YMCA are highly skilled individuals, well-endowed with transferable skills such as communication, leadership and management but also well-equipped with certificates demonstrating their technical prowess. Like the cadre of educated young men who would become first the administrators of colonial regimes and second leaders in newly freed African states, they are a ready-made elite, prepared for a new political landscape that folds the entrepreneurs of the spirit into the engineering of the nation. They are also part of a new inequality that recreates these colonial hierarchies in the post-colonial context, allowing the privileged few to hoard resources and networks and widening more general feelings of exclusion and marginalisation in the peers they have left behind (see Cohen 2004).

Thirdly, Bourdieu can aid both of these understandings by showing how bodily practice is dis-embedded from cultural context and re-embedded at specific strategic junctures for development purposes. This is important for grasping how ideas of knowledge becomes easily ‘transmissible’ amidst a ‘black-boxing’ of technicalised development

expertise as a package of embodied behaviours that require adaptation and internalisation (cf Mosse 2013). The YMCA uses sport as a 'regime of knowledge' (Hyde 2011), contained within a package of embodied practices that apply moral precedence on the successful implementation of individual behaviours and actions. These practices link into a neoliberal prioritisation of the self-contained, self-engineering person as well as neoliberal structures of self-regulating civil society and state policy. By providing the means for citizens to self-regulate, the YMCA is in effect doing the job of neoliberal policy, providing ready-made entrepreneurs for the fragile but flexible markets.

Teresa Hyde (2011) has argued in relation to the import of American therapeutic regimes into Chinese medical facilities, the effects of these process are also unevenly internalised by the array of actors involved, adapted and mutated in line with contingent and rapidly changing historical specificities. She asks 'what counts is how these knowledge regimes become internalized, thus begging the question, what exactly is the responsibility of the Chinese and American NGOs that fund Sunlight, evaluate its effectiveness, and give carte blanche to its internal operations?' (p.171). Only through an ethnographic understanding of the interrelating aspects of two (or more) of these emergent processes in transmission can the full implications of such bodily packages be understood as sites of negotiation, tension and difficulty as well as vehicles for hope and despair.

A further theoretical insight rests on the precarity of the neoliberal promise for young people bearing the brunt of neoliberal reform underwriting a dangerously polarising dynamic of youth development. In the competitive marketplace, as a category 'youth' is increasingly framed in utilitarian terms, viewed as either a resource or a debilitation. Youth then becomes a 'moral index' for governments and civil society to judge themselves by, as they look towards youth to build conceptual and actual futures for their nations and citizens (Durham 2004). Viewing youth as a vehicle for 'global morality' also helps trace how marketised subjectivities are being normalised and internalised in the everyday lives of young people and in turn, how a 'notion' of youth is helping embed the ideology of the market into everyday life. In the Global South, many NGOs form an important antidote to the discourse of 'youth in crisis,' offering a method of recycling failed youth and generating positive narratives of youthful citizenship (Durham 2004). At the YMCA, the rhetoric of youth 'reclaimed', has ramped up over the last decade as youth as a social issue has been placed at the centre of international humanitarian policy.

This rhetoric also needs to be analysed as a gendering process that places emphasis not only on youths but certain types of youth which fit the priorities of the market. As we have seen the YMCA promotes a form of caring masculinity based on the ideals of equality enshrined in the secular state. Yet, the forms of entrepreneurialism that they are promoting

may be feeding into class inequalities as ‘managerial’, middle class masculinities are prioritised over working class and other subordinate masculinities. In this climate qualities associated with specific forms masculinity such as risk-taking and aggressiveness are painted as part of being successful, abnegating other forms of self-realisation and empowering young men who subscribe to these behaviours over others.

The sport-for-development industry is currently expanding on the back of these types of behaviours encouraging ‘soft’ forms of competitiveness and self-work which chime with the ‘hard’ set of behaviours required by the market. However, this is helping to naturalise the requirements of the market. As these forms of masculine behaviour become more prevalent they are creating ‘new’ hegemonies of homogenous gender identity and recreating the patterns of unequal gender order whilst re-entrenching aggressive intra-gender behaviours (Connell 2012; Connell and Wood 2005). As we have seen, though there are female managers at the YMCA, on the whole, men remain the key ‘brokers’ of gender relations (Connell 2005b) and even where women are in positions of power they reproduce the dominant style of masculinity. My analysis has shown, that even where these styles of masculinity are promoted as part of a regime of ‘care,’ ‘love’ and ‘self-care’ it can in fact replace and reorient old prejudices and problems, silencing debate and ambivalence with its drive towards ‘the bottom line’ of profit-making and success defined along increasingly narrow parameters (Connell and Wood 2005).

Directions for Future Research

One direction that would supplement this research is to convey a fuller portrait of gender relations at the YMCA. As I have discussed a focus on processes of masculinisation does not limit analysis to a focus on men, though due to the other foci of the research in this case it was appropriate. However, as I moved through my fieldwork I noticed a parallel funding emphasis on programmes and activities for young women, particularly around sport. In the UK young women were an integral part of the YMCA and actively helped shape and refine gender coordinates. Though I had few young women on my courses they did undergo similar processes to the male students and offer a deeper way of understanding YMCA masculinities as both disembodied and dis-embedded. In The Gambia, I was told that funding was available for girls-only sports programmes and to start girls’ basketball and football teams. In wider Gambian society negotiations around girls doing sport fed into wider discussions around gender and the proper roles and behaviour of women and girls, particularly around issues related to the Islamisation of the state and the tensions between different forms of Islamic practice. As discussed earlier some girls would participate in sport

against the wishes of their families, sometimes even changing from Niqab to shorts en route to the sports field. For a time I even played for a mixed gender handball team where the young men and women could have been part of an urban scene in any cosmopolitan city. These changes signify a need to understand the intergenerational and inter-gender negotiations at work in Gambian society as part of closer participation in global forms of self-making and consumption, and would again offer a route to understand how the local geographies of inequality are being remade along global lines.

To add to this fuller depiction of gender, more work could be done on sexual minorities and 'subordinate' or non-hegemonic masculinities at the YMCA. In the UK, the YMCA promotes an inclusive environment and is a great place for members of sexual minority groups to escape other forms of social and familial repression. As Eric Anderson's (2011) work in British schools has shown, non-normative masculinities are becoming more 'normal', at least more acceptable and less prone to bullying and stigma in the UK. Places like the YMCA offer a way of accelerating this process by allowing young men and women to express themselves freely within the confines of the entrepreneurial, self-development criteria outlined above. As mentioned earlier, YMCAs have a rich history of association with civil rights and a long history of indirect association with the LGBTI movement and a further understanding of how this relates to their Christian values could give valuable insight into the particular gender models they are promoting. In The Gambia, this becomes even more pressing as homosexuality in particular is a criminal offence marked with threats of beheading, exile and incarceration. Across Africa homosexuality is being increasingly persecuted as part of a drive against neo-colonial impositions of human rights and Western practices. Normally this is fuelled by a Christian political lobby, but in The Gambia the rejection of neo-colonial 'human rights' links more to the creation of an Islamic state. NGOs and FBOs play a vital role in these processes as conduits between the Global North and Global South but they have to be very careful not to rock the boat. Only time will tell if the YMCA in Gambia can navigate these increasingly choppy waters and keep keeping both its global funders and its local sponsors and supporters happy.

A final area for further research and linked to this is to understand more about the complex global machinery of the YMCA movement. As I have discussed the YMCA stretches across the globe and works in all kinds of environments, usually without issue. However as religion has become more of a contested and contestable issue for global civil society, so YMCAs have faced increasing controversy calling for new strategies of engagement and activism. For example, the YMCA has offices in Palestine that have come under attack from Islamic militants in the past. Perhaps, we should even be surprised that the YMCA has a presence in Palestine at all, pointing to a need to understand more fully the

YMCA's role in local communities. As a movement, they also have the ability to mobilise a huge amount of resources and personnel and have an active voice in places like the UN and the ILO as well as liaising with many different national, regional and international authorities, experts and networks. YMCA England for example play an important role in shaping youth policy in the UK and it would be interesting to look more closely at the relationships they foster between the state, other services providers, other faith-based groups and between YMCAs themselves. This would deepen the application of 'charisma' to the YMCA by showing how networks of Christian YMCA leaders govern the YMCA and drives it moral agenda. Only by tracing some of these networks and understanding more fully how the global network turns into the reality of the work completed at local centres can the full impact of the YMCA be understood as they move into a new and unprecedented era of success and transformation.

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