

Annika Björnsdotter Teppo

THE MAKING OF A GOOD WHITE

**A Historical Ethnography of the Rehabilitation
of Poor Whites in a Suburb of Cape Town**

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*"Dit is dr. Anton Rupert wat gesê het: 'Die mens wat nie in wonderwerke glo nie, is geen realis nie.' So ook kan gesê word van die Afrikaner wat nie glo dat sy Skepper 'n duidelike hand in die lotgevalle van die Afrikanervolk openbaar nie."*¹ (Bezuidenhout 1969: 62.)

*"'n Boer maak 'n plan."*² (An Afrikaans saying)

¹ "It is Dr. Anton Rupert who said: 'Who ever does not believe in miracles, is not a realist.' This can also be said of the Afrikaner who does not believe that the fate of the Afrikaner people has undoubtedly been steered by his Maker."

² "An Afrikaner makes a plan", an old saying referring to the Afrikaner ideal of a virtuous, resourceful, far-seeing and simultaneously cunning person who, in a difficult situation, has taken all the possibilities into account beforehand, and has based his calculations on cold rational planning and information.

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1. INTRODUCTION

"...There are very nice, lovely people here. So when someone talks about Epping, they say ooh, she comes from Epping. And my kids will never be shy to tell anyone that they grew up in Epping Garden Village. But then there is some that won't tell people that they grew up here. I don't know why, because it is a decent place." (Tannie O., 79 years, Epping Garden Village.)³

"...I was told that when you sit in the train you could tell which of the women were going to Epping because they looked so common. This I heard long before I moved in here. When I found out it was this place that was called Epping before, I was shocked. But then I already lived here." (Tannie V., 63 years, Epping Garden Village.)

This study is a historical ethnography of the social construction of White⁴ identity and the category White in the South African poor white suburb of Epping Garden Village/Ruyterwacht⁵ in Cape Town. It is centred on the process, discourses and methods of turning a group of people labelled as poor whites into socially acceptable good whites. It also investigates what happened to the lives and identity of the residents in the course of becoming good whites. For this purpose, the thesis studies the endeavours to produce racial and social categories by defining and imposing White South African identities on the residents of the suburb from the 1930s until the 1990s, and how these categories are now being contested and renegotiated.

³ The quotes in this thesis are verbatim, but all the names have been changed.

⁴ In this thesis, I use a capital W in White when I refer to it as a South African category or a concept. I have omitted the quotes around the terms 'good white' and 'poor white', and will only use the term 'poor white' in its specific South African context. For the sake of simplicity I also use lower case letters and omit quotes when I discuss whites in general. My intention is not to naturalise 'whites' as a racial group, any more than 'coloureds' are, and I whole-heartedly acknowledge the artificiality of any racial terms, which are, however, widely used concepts in South African everyday parole.

⁵ The suburb was originally named Epping Garden Village. The name was changed to Ruyterwacht in 1986. In this thesis the name Epping Garden Village, or its abbreviation EGV, will mainly be used in the first seven chapters, thereafter Ruyterwacht is used.

BACKGROUND TO POOR WHITES

In South Africa, Whites or ‘Europeans’ were always treated as a separate category that was perceived as being opposite to the category of Natives or Non-Whites. This was already the case before the notorious *apartheid* policy was implemented.⁶ There were and are certain discourses concerning racial identity⁷, class and the division between the European, civilized Self⁸ as opposed to the primitive, African Other that maintain their importance to all South Africans. One of these discourses was the so-called poor white problem that emerged after the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). This problem was brought on by the new phenomena of urbanisation, economic depression and the emergence of a vast white, landless class – most of whom were rural Afrikaners.

In the early twentieth century an increase in white poverty generated spatial and social closeness between lower class whites, coloureds⁹ and Africans who had to share quarters and the daily struggle for survival. In the 1930s unemployment was rife, and an estimated third of all Afrikaners lived under the subsistence level. In 1929-1930, 17.5 per cent of whites were found to be ‘very poor’, and 31 per cent were classified as ‘poor’ (Malherbe 1932: 228-229). Some whites were impoverished to the level of the Africans, and some Afrikaners were even domestic or farm workers for Africans or coloureds.

This contributed to the White elite’s eugenically predisposed fears of the dangers of racial and cultural miscegenation, and the dissolving of the racial hierarchy that would occur without social and economic barriers. The church, welfare organizations and English-speaking and Afrikaans intellectuals were all keen to deal with the problem, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s. Their efforts to uplift the poor whites became a symbol

⁶ The Afrikaans word for separateness: a system of legally enforced racial discrimination, which was established in South Africa in 1948, and which ended as an official policy in 1994.

⁷ In this study, identity refers to the collective meaning of the term, a cultural identity, or a White identity, not to the psychological, widely popularised notion of an individual identity.

⁸ The anthropological terms ‘the Other’ and ‘the Self’ refer to the relation of cultures. ‘We’ are the Self, while the alien, the less familiar, is called ‘the Other’.

⁹ Although the South African convention also insists that I should use inverted commas around the word coloured, I have omitted them, since I do not want the reader to think that I regard the coloured identity as something *more* artificial than the white identity. To me, they are equally constructed. Following the punctuation of the word white, I only use a capital C when I refer to coloureds as a category.

of national unity (*volkseenhed*) and the reconstruction of the post-war Afrikaner *volk*.¹⁰

A poor white person did not fit into a society built on the presumed supremacy of the White man. To keep the White race pure and ‘civilised’, to create a sense of self-value, a social, spatial and economical distance from the Natives (as the Africans were called) was needed. The efforts to sustain and increase these racial distances characterized much of South Africa’s twentieth century political history.

Ideas of racial upliftment concurred with the newly developed industrial capitalism. The poor whites originated from farms, and needed to be trained to suit the capitalist regime, and become hard-working, obedient citizens. Thus it was all the more important to separate working-class whites from blacks, and to ensure that there were no class-based alliances between them (Freund 1992: xvii). South African whites had to be integrated into a racial class – particularly in the urban areas.

It was to these ends that the South African elite¹¹ established suburbs for poor whites. In 1936, Jan Hofmeyr was the first South African poor white area to be established in the immediate vicinity of central Johannesburg. The field site of this study, Epping Garden Village, was established on the Cape Flats near Cape Town in 1938. Eventually every South African town of substance had at least one poor white area. Initially all these purposefully built suburbs were aimed at accommodating and racially uplifting suitable whites.

However, as Cape Town and Johannesburg differed demographically and socioeconomically, everyday life in their poor white suburbs differed. Cape Town was markedly English and provincial, while Johannesburg was a cosmopolitan and busy industrial mining city, which was also more Afrikaans-oriented. In the process of making good whites any ethnic differences between whites were underplayed, and no separate areas were established for English-speakers or Afrikaners. Despite these differences, all the poor white suburbs served the same purpose – the making of good

¹⁰ See Groenewald 1987: 62-63; Dubow 1995: 170-180; Freund 1992: xvii; Parnell 1992: 126-129.

¹¹ The ‘elite’ who carried out the upliftment of the poor whites, changed during the time span that this study covers. In the 1930s, this elite consisted of the English-speaking upper middle-class and the newly established Afrikaner upper middle-class. They were businesspeople, clergymen and academics. This changed after the onset of apartheid, as the Afrikaners took over the process of upliftment, defenestrating the English-speaking elite from its key position. After the era of apartheid the new elite (who has little interest in poor whites) consists mainly of upper class whites, who still have the economic power, and educated Africans, who hold the keys to political power.

whites. In this process any ethnic differences between whites were underplayed, and no separate areas were established for English-speakers or Afrikaners, who were also treated similarly.

The empirical part of this thesis shows how various *rehabilitation*¹² measures were targeted at diverse areas of Epping Garden Village residents' lives. The professionals (such as social workers, teachers, *dominees*¹³ and medical doctors) guided the residents of poor white suburbs in the areas of:

- a) Work and use of free time
- b) Cleanliness and health
- c) Morals and sexuality
- d) Bodily appearance and behaviour
- e) Family life
- f) Social and racial relations
- g) Correct use of space and spatiality

The above themes included standardised bodily models and experiences, which were centred on the binary opposition of primitive and civilised.¹⁴ These models and experiences were presented to the poor whites as guidelines for the proper presentation of the self and social body (the human body in its social and cultural context, and the symbols and practices of values and attitudes attached to it).

In the twentieth century South Africa, both the ideologies and practices that constituted the daily process of the rehabilitation of the poor whites were utterly concentrated on their bodies. Hence, also the analysis presented in this thesis is focussed on the measures and discourses around the ways their identity and the experience of whiteness were created and categorised through the process of *embodiment*.

The term embodiment has been understood in multiple ways in ethnographies, depending on the wider context and theoretical approach that

¹² The expression was popular in South Africa, although, as Parnell notes, "what was meant by rehabilitation was never made absolutely clear" (1988a: 590). In this analysis, rehabilitation means the measures used in order to turn the poor whites into good whites.

¹³ Afrikaans word for a Protestant church minister.

¹⁴ Whilst analysing sixteenth century travel accounts, Michel de Certeau noted that in these early ethnographies "a series of stable oppositions globally upholds the distinction between the primitive and the civilized man". These binary oppositions were, e.g., nudity vs. clothing, ornament vs. finery, leisure vs. work, cohesion vs. division, pleasure vs. ethics. De Certeau recognised these divisions as fundamental to the later development of ethnology. (De Certeau 2000: 141-147.)

individual studies take in respect of their subject. Thomas Csordas has pointed out that these theories tend to be polarised around a continuum between two organising principles. At the one end the theories of such thinkers as Mary Douglas and Michel Foucault are to be found. In their writings a *semiotic, socially structured body* is simultaneously a subject and/or an image of social order. At the other end of this continuum are those theories – such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s – which see the *body as a lived and experienced* phenomenon. (Csordas 1994: 10-12) Paul Johnson contributes to this analysis by reserving the middle ground between these views for the *productive and produced body* as presented in the works of Karl Marx and Pierre Bourdieu. (Johnson 2002: 170-173.)

The above division allows for several approaches and dimensions to the study of embodiment. In this thesis, the body is mainly seen from two perspectives: on one hand as produced and practiced, and on the other hand as socially structured.

The theoretical approaches used in this thesis are complementary and partly overlapping. Still, it is their combination that will help to answer to the questions that motivate this thesis. How were the social bodies constructed in the poor white suburbs, and what did they signify in the South African social order and social categories? What was their place in the social and symbolical structures and how were these positions produced and protected?

The Practices of Rehabilitation

Until the early 1990s, the *raison d’être* of Epping Garden Village was to execute a civilizing process (Elias 1978) on lower class whites and thus outline the boundaries of White identity. Although the parameters that defined the content of the categories White and poor white transformed over time, they were always imposed in a seemingly coherent manner. Their enforcement was realised through a process of embodiment by introducing a complete set of bodily values, and a White way of life for the residents. These values and norms helped the elite to exert bio-power¹⁵ effectively, and to accomplish the process of re-forming its citizens’ bod-

¹⁵ With its roots in the seventeenth century, the notion of an all-penetrating power over life, bio-power originates from Michel Foucault. He divided this power into the “anatomy-politics”, which means the disciplining and controlling of human bodies, and the regulatory controls of the body which he named the “bio-politics” of the population (1979: 139).

ies, as Mellor and Shilling have named the process (1997: 35-62).¹⁶ This process was crucial for the larger project of white South African identity formation, since it slowly inscribed the boundaries of the category White in their bodies.

The first task of this analysis is thus to turn to the ethnographic material in order to examine the impact of these practices of producing embodiment and uplifting the *habitus* of those perceived as poor whites. The attempts to uplift¹⁷ them also created social differentiation. Pierre Bourdieu's writings and his notion of distinction are helpful when we ask how the social spaces and structures of differences emerged in Epping Garden Village. He did not create structural rules but concentrated on the socially formed dispositions that formed the embodiment of the subject, whose own will is secondary, as it is socially formed by the practices of making habitus. For Bourdieu, the habitus of each individual is shaped in a social game, which also changes its players, none of whom is a disinterested outsider, while they might make an effort to seem so.

The end product of the rehabilitation conducted in the suburb was supposed to be a successful and respectable citizen who moved out to live in a middle-class area. But while many of the poor whites of Epping Garden Village managed to leave the suburb, some never did. After the Second World War, when the majority of South African whites became a relatively wealthy elite group with a proper lifestyle, those who could not succeed became stigmatised.

In the era of apartheid, the poor white suburbs became places where those who were unable to comply with the ideals of being a good white were placed, or into which they just drifted. Simultaneously, social and spatial propinquity between middle-class whites and poor whites diminished. Consequently, the residents learned what Erving Goffmann has called "impression management" (1959). Even during my fieldwork (1997-2001) the residents were still keen to present me their commitment to being good whites, thus dissociating themselves from the stigma of being a poor white.

Nevertheless, the process of making good whites was not simple or

¹⁶ It was one of this study's points of departure that more than anything, the making of the good white was a historical process. Also Ian Burkitt has discussed the ideas of re-formation of the body. He points out that while "the human body is not formed anew in each generation and shaped exactly according to the social influences of the moment; however, the body is open to *re-formation* at the point where bio-history and social history meet" (1999: 17).

¹⁷ To 'uplift' was used as either a noun or verb as an alternative for the expression 'rehabilitation' (see below). It originates from the Afrikaans word *opheffing* (to lift up).

effortless, and it did not always proceed smoothly. The history of the suburb shows how the residents of Epping Garden Village were constantly monitored and disciplined to an extent quite unknown before. The cultural forms resulting from the embodiment of those categorised as poor whites were not only dictated from above, but also forged by resistance to and accommodation of the demands of social institutions and the state.

Admittedly, the elite strove to create an imposing structure in order to control the embodiment of the poor whites and to turn them into acceptable whites. However, throughout the existence of the suburb there were moments of escape and evasion, which also affected the process of making good whites.

The idea of also looking at "subtle movements of escape and evasion" rather than conceiving daily life in terms of a rigid set of regimes originates from de Certeau (Buchanan 2000: 100). In Epping Garden Village both the residents *and* their uplifters (whom, for a variety of reasons I will discuss in the empirical part of this study) could not always follow or implement the ideals of a good white.

The ideas of producing proper embodiment by means of distinction are thus complemented by de Certeau's suggestion of not only studying representations, but also looking at the modes of behaviour, such as the everyday *tactics* used by the residents in order to manage their lives in the suburb (de Certeau 1984: 37). This interplay of accommodation with and resistance against the embodied order is central to the analysis. This study is thus in agreement with Willis' view of culture as not only "transferred internal structures", as something that has been authored by few cultural leaders, but also "at least in part as the product of collective human praxis" (Marcus 1986: 177).

The Structure of Social Categories

Then what guided the praxis? The logic behind the practices of rehabilitation can be analysed by looking at what the poor white body signified, and how it structured the social categories, and marked their boundaries. Thus, when the structural and representational side of embodiment and categorisation is looked at, this thesis relies on the works of Mary Douglas. In Douglas' views, the body is a social text, and the logic of social relations is engraved in the symbolic structures of the body.

Douglas has pointed out how every culture controls its bodies and shapes them to fit its own concepts. Biological bodies become culturally

expressive through the process of embodiment. In this process, minor physical differences are given a great social weight. The differences in the social body are expressed in a different manner in different cultures. Douglas portrayed the body as a medium in the drawing of social categories' boundaries, and elaborated on the danger of moral pollution ensuing from the transgression of those boundaries (1966, 1970).

In addition, Douglas' (1970, 1996) theories on social boundaries and her group-grid theory are used to illuminate the transformations in the social structure of Epping Garden Village/Ruyterwacht and to analyse the changes in the life in the suburb. This application allowed me to build social typologies from my fieldwork data. It also helped to attain an understanding of how the social/racial categories, their boundaries and their differentiation have changed in the suburb, and of their significance in the present, post-apartheid era.

The elite often re-forms social bodies to suit its purposes. In the case of the poor whites, the elite used the medium of the social body to smother racial and cultural hybridity, which it saw as anomalous and threatening to the prevailing order. The ensuing bodily experience was reinforced by the capitalist institutions of wage labour, the nuclear family and ideals of home ownership. The forms of bodily control to which the elite subjected poor whites in return for accommodation and jobs were undoubtedly governed by a capitalist ethos. Social engineering and the production of White identity in South Africa were processes influenced by the conglomeration and interaction of intellectual and economic forces.¹⁸ The subjects of these – apparently – abstract forces were residents of Epping Garden Village.

Thus, the second task of this analysis is to look at the interplay between the maintenance of social identity, its categories and boundaries in the larger South African¹⁹ White society and local, embodied poor white experience. The idea of the body as a symbol and a metaphor for social cohesion and differentiation is central in the analysis of the treatment of the poor white body. What were the dangers following transgression of

¹⁸ The economic perspective on the social position of poor whites has produced some important analysis, such as Dan O'Meara's *Volkskapitalisme* (1983) and Charles Van Onselen's studies of the social and economic history of the Witwaterstrand (1982).

¹⁹ South Africa was not the only colonial country where the boundaries between poor whites and good whites were constructed and contested as something socially distinct. In Indonesia and Latin America, for example, these processes also shaped the historical consciousness of their subject. (Wray and Newitz (eds) 1997; Killian 1985; Stoler 1997.)

these bodily and social boundaries? How were the boundaries around the category White produced and protected during the immense changes that shook South African society in the twentieth century?

WHITE SPACES, STARK BOUNDARIES

The practices studied in this thesis occurred in a certain place, and were backed by certain ideas in respect of the management of space. *Space* is always a culturally organised phenomenon. The social, mythical and geographical dimensions of human life manifest themselves in spatial terms and in the ways in which humans outline space and its boundaries to reflect cultural ideas. Spatial organisation and built environments not only reflect and contain the categories of culture, but are also actively used in cultural processes, such as constructing the identities of individuals and communities (Rapoport 1994: 482-483).

A *place* becomes visible through the narratives, the socially constructed discourses of its inhabitants, but also through praxis (Rodman 1992: 640-643). In recent anthropological discussions an interest in the place has been rife, and it has also inspired a multitude of differing discussions. For the purposes of this study, I am interested in the place in a very narrow sense: how it is used in order to produce racial differentiations and boundaries. As de Certeau noted: "space is a practised place" (de Certeau 1984: 117).

In South Africa, urban space was used to produce and re-produce racial categories. The use and separateness of space are particularly important phenomena in the history of the South African nation-building process. The spatiality of apartheid continues to exert a strong influence on the present use of space (Robinson 1996: 1; Goldberg 1993: 185-205). Michel Foucault perceived the use of discursively constructed power as controlling and reforming the body, which he saw as a dense index of institutional forces, discourses and space. The latter he perceived as fundamental in any exercise of power (1976, 1980). The ideas of space and body are connected, since the body not only creates meanings for spaces and places, but is also in itself a socially controlled physical space.

Urban space is often considered a potentially dangerous area that needs to be supervised, since people and bodies move and mix there relatively freely. In South African society both the human body and urban space were tightly controlled. Under apartheid rule, but also prior to that, the politics of segregation wished to ensure that no racial or spatial mixing

would take place (Dubow 1995:171). This was by no means a unique way of perceiving the urban areas, since all over the Western world urban space was seen as dangerous and detrimental,²⁰ producing degeneration and cultural hybridity. These urban fears lead to the spatial rendering of the poor by locating them where they could be observed and disciplined (Goldberg 1993: 200; Marriott 1999: 87-88).

Epping Garden Village was thus a place largely defined by the mutual concerns regarding the use of space and the control of the social body of the poor whites. The politics of space segregated people from one another, and aimed to ensure that people lived in an environment that was seen as natural for their designated racial group.

In the South Africa of the twentieth century, this eugenic environmentalism produced mimetic urban spaces.²¹ Like was supposed to produce like, hence in order to create proper white people, proper environments were needed. Consequently, everyone classified as White had to be situated in a space that would uplift this person. It was considered self-evident that the Whites needed more of everything: larger houses, more space in the yard, better services, and, in order to maintain all this, higher incomes. When offered suitable spaces to surround their properly educated bodies, even the poor whites would turn into good whites.

During the twentieth century, the category poor white – while hardly visible in the everyday life of the majority of South African whites – became increasingly central to the White imagination. This category was important for keeping proper whites and poor whites separate and also for keeping the whites from racially mixing with the coloureds or Africans.

The term ‘poor white’ was originally coined in the U.S in the 1870s, and was thereafter rapidly adapted to South African circumstances (Gi-liomee 2003: 315-317). It is often a problematic notion, for it is easily taken for granted, as the American term ‘white trash’ is.

When studying the Hillbillies of Detroit, John Hartigan noticed that ‘white trash’ is a socially constructed category, which is not neutral, but a result of certain historically defined social and racial hierarchies, which it also further serves to reinforce (1997b: 47). Similarly, the South African

²⁰ Totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century Western world attempted to ‘purify’ the urban space in respect of their ideological emphasis. The Nazis turned the culturally colourful and multicultural Berlin into a monocultural statue city. In the Soviet Union, the urban design of Moscow emphasised Stalin’s endless ambition and desire for power. These attempts were accompanied by ‘purifications’ of any unwanted social elements from these spaces.

²¹ On the principals of *mimesis*, see Taussig 1993: 255.

term 'poor white' can be regarded as more than just a stigma attached to an anomalous group, and can be helpful in making the boundaries of the categories of class and race visible.







In this study a 'poor white' refers to a person who has been labelled or classified as a poor white, not just any pale-skinned person who exists under conditions of poverty. Similar to any racial classification, this classification also operates on an *ad hoc* basis, and none of the signifiers of its categories are ever permanent. Sometimes an individual's racial status changed, but the poor white has persisted as a social category throughout the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first, although the content of the category has changed in South Africa over time.

Saul Dubow pointed out what an intriguing social category the poor whites are, commenting on the anomalous nature and unacceptability of being a poor white (see Dubow 1995: 171). But while South African whites as a racial category and the racial essentialism at the bottom of this category has been studied,²² the poor whites have thus far been ignored as a significant underlying category in the process of building a collective white identity after the onset of apartheid.

This is therefore a perfect situation for studying embodiment and boundaries. The ways the social boundaries of the human body, class and space were drawn and are presently being redrawn in Epping Garden Village are vital in order to develop an understanding of the discourses on White identity and poor white as a category, which still influence popular thinking and everyday lives of South Africans. Towards the end of the empirical part, this thesis concentrates increasingly on the strategic and situational aspects in the building of identity, and the perpetual nature of its construction.

²² Most notably, Vincent Crapanzano in his 1986 book "Waiting: the Whites of South Africa" studied the life of white South Africans. See also Ribeiro 1995.



-  Country border
-  Province border
-  Historical border (Transvaal)
-  Bigger city
-  Smaller city
-  National Route

Sources:
 Christopher, A. J. (1994): *The Atlas of Apartheid* (Routledge, London);
 www.newafrica.com (2000)

Map 1: South Africa

2. THE POOR WHITE CATEGORY

The category poor white not only gained significance but also changed internally in the twentieth century South Africa. Being a poor white meant different things in the 1920s and in the 1990s.

Since the foci of this analysis are on the category of poor white and its production through the process of embodiment, its background and historical nature need to be understood before delving deeper into theoretical conversations on the production and boundaries of this category. This chapter therefore concentrates on the poor whites as a social category, providing a historical overview of the factors and forces that affected its construction.

WHITES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The history of South African whites began from the moment the Dutch East India Company landed on the shores of Table Bay in April 1652. They established a small colony and a garden in order to provide passing ships with supplies for the long voyages to the East. They occasionally traded with the neighbouring Khoisan²³ people, but otherwise kept to themselves, as the Company policy dictated.

For a while the colony remained just a stopover for passing ships, but gradually the Cape's free burghers²⁴ were allowed to establish their own farms. They imported slaves to satisfy the need for labourers, and began to move towards the interior. The colony expanded further, the process being hastened by new immigrants from Europe. Nevertheless, the population of whites did not exceed 2.000 until 1717 (Christopher 1994: 13).

By that time, a small number of burghers had left the Company area.

²³ A compound term used for the surrounding Khoikhoi people ("Hottentots") and the San hunter-gatherers also known as the "Bushmen" (Elphick and Giliomee 1989: 4).

²⁴ Free burghers of the Cape: Dutch-born citizens released from their contracts with the Company and set up as independent farmers (Elphick and Giliomee 1989: 11 and 457).

They drifted into Africa, and became known as *trekboere*.²⁵ They were independent and completely isolated from the intellectual developments that occurred in Europe in the eighteenth century.

As the colony expanded, a collision with the Khoisan people was unavoidable. With their superior weapons, the Europeans soon decimated the Khoisan. The survivors were left with no option but to work for Europeans who used them for labour and sex. In and around Cape Town, they were also inter-mixed with the slaves from Indonesia and Eastern Africa. The offspring of these unions formed the basis of today's coloured population. (Elphick and Shell 1989: 194-214.)

In 1795, the British invaded the Cape Colony. They found a colony of approximately 25.000 slaves, 20.000 white colonists, 15.000 Khoisan and 350 'free blacks' (freed slaves) (Elphick and Shell 1989: 208-220). Power was restricted to a white elite in Cape Town, and differentiation on the basis of colour was deeply entrenched. The British influence grew, and more British immigrants arrived, many of them soon becoming urban dwellers. They began to dominate politics, trade, finance, mining and manufacturing, while the Afrikaners, or the *Boers*, remained in the countryside. The whites were now split into two competing language groups, and into two different cultures. (De Klerk 1975: 22-32.)

Although the property accumulated in the hands of whites, race and class were not identical in Cape Town in the eighteenth century. There were black property owners, and white poverty was present from the very beginning. The East Indian Trade Company authorities and particularly the church diaconate helped the impoverished white *burghers* who could no longer return to Europe. The allocation of the resources was racially divided from the start: the white burghers were allocated 5 rix-dollars a month, while blacks were only allocated 2 rix-dollars. (Worden, van Heyningen & Bickford-Smith 1998: 67-69.)

In the nineteenth century Cape Town, a white working-class was already established: white women were mainly in domestic service, while men had a wider range of occupations with these varying from dock labourers to skilled artisans. White labourers and artisans commanded higher salaries than coloured workers in equivalent occupations. (Worden et al. 1998: 178-179.)

²⁵ Lit. a travelling farmer. Independent, self-sufficient and isolated settlers became an archetype Afrikaner. They were semi-nomadic pastoralists, and apparently not so far removed from the Khoisan. Reputedly courageous and fiercely independent, they relied on their rifle and the Bible.

Poverty became more visible in the early nineteenth century Cape Town. The migration of impoverished families from Britain and the rural Cape hinterlands added to the group of often homeless and unemployed people. This visibility of white poverty was greatly enhanced against the background of the emerging new middle-class elite. The 1820s saw the first 'moral panic' about the uncontrollability of the lower classes. (Worden et al. 1998: 120-121, 136, 248.)

The border wars with the Xhosa and the Sotho-Tswana commenced at the end of the eighteenth century. After the arrival of the British, these wars became more brutal and fierce. The first half of the nineteenth century saw the rise and fall of Shaka's militarist Zulu state,²⁶ and the most mythical occurrence in the Afrikaner history, the Great Trek (*die Groot Trek*) of the Boers. Called *Voortrekkers* (fore-trekkers), these waves of Afrikaners strove to get away from the English-dominated towns. More wars followed from this migration. (De Klerk 1975: 32-49.)

Boer republics were formed, but only two of them, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, proved more lasting. However, when diamonds were discovered in Kimberley in 1869 and gold in Transvaal around the same time, the British decided to annexe them.

The 1877 annexation of Transvaal caused a rebellion. The first Anglo-Boer War, known to Afrikaners as the First War of Independence, broke out in 1881. The Afrikaners won it rapidly, and established the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR, South African Republic). In 1886, a huge reef of gold was discovered in the Witwatersrand (the area around Johannesburg). This stimulated the growth of Johannesburg into a vast city. It also caused the British to attack the ZAR. The Second Anglo-Boer War began in 1899. (De Klerk 1975: 65-68, 81.)

In the first phase of the war, the vastly superior numbers of the British army defeated the military force of the Afrikaners. In the second phase, the Afrikaners began a successful guerrilla war against the British. In the urban areas the British ruled, but in the countryside the situation was reversed. This taxed the strength of the British, who decided to put a stop to the guerrilla war with a scorched earth policy. They systematically destroyed farms, slaughtered cattle and detained women and children in concentration camps. By the end of the war 26.000 people, mainly children, had died of disease and neglect in the camps. This finally broke

²⁶ Much has been written on those wars, and much on the history of other than white South Africans, which I was regrettably not able to include in this thesis.

the backbone of the Afrikaners, and they surrendered in 1902. (De Klerk 1975: 82-89.)

Despite the promises of the British, the Africans were given no power in the new post-war state. Voter franchise was only given to whites. Later, in order to secure the rebuilding of the country, the British actively sought partnership with the Afrikaners. However, the position of Afrikaners was dire after the war. When the Union of South Africa was established on 31 May 1910, most of its poor white people were rural Afrikaners. (De Klerk 1975: 92-97.)

The Afrikaners, scattered, impoverished and traumatised by the war, had no common historical purpose or identity to begin with. Their identity building was undertaken by many areas of society, notably so by the 'language movement' of the early twentieth century. Afrikaans, scorned formerly as a *kombuistaal* (kitchen language), is a mixture of High Dutch, local dialects and languages spoken by Indonesian and African slaves. Through the language movement it was purified and re-invented as the primordial mother tongue of the Afrikaners, and given the legal status of a language in 1918 (McClintock 1995: 368-369). Another central driving force in the identity building was the Dutch Reformed Church, which, while drawing its inspiration from a form of racialised Calvinism, promoted the idea of Afrikaners as God's chosen people.

In addition to the problems caused by the war, drought and the structural shift to a larger world capitalist system had made smallholdings unviable. After the war many impoverished Afrikaner farmers and especially share-croppers, called *bywoners*, had to leave their farms and look for their fortunes in cities, where they often shared quarters with Africans and coloured people with whom they competed for manual employment. (Kingham 1997: 139.) The lowest class of whites were perceived as losing their 'civilisation', degenerating racially and also threatening the ruling elite as a class – especially in the urban areas where the social hierarchy and racial separateness of the countryside were loosened.

At the levels of the social body and urban space these concerns began to manifest themselves in the ideas of social pathologies that seeped into the mainstream of the society from the gutters of the urban ghettos. In these fears, the images of deteriorating space and a decaying social body were combined. At the end of the nineteenth century these anxieties found their racial expression in the concept of 'poor whiteism', a term which became everyday language and a grave social concern for the South African elite.

POOR WHITEISM

Until the 1880s, poverty in Europe was seen as the individual's failure. Now it became seen as a failure of the physical and economic environment (Bundy 1984: 13). Simultaneously, new threats were perceived. For many concerned Europeans it began to seem that a way to improve people's lives was through a state that would implement a eugenic policy. Before long, the white South African elite followed suite.

In South African social sciences, the 1880s were long accepted as the start of the period in which the number of poor whites grew rapidly. Colin Bundy criticised this belief by pointing out that there was already a large number of landless and unskilled poor whites in the Cape well before 1890. Even before urbanisation there were considerable differentiation and class formation and various types of white poverty existed, especially landless rural poor such as *bywoners*, agricultural labourers and farm servants. There were also small-town unskilled and low-paid wage earners, and a *lumpen* proletariat element. The racial relations between these whites and the people of colour were fluid and interactive. In the 1890s the poverty became ethnicised, and redefined as a social problem to be tackled by state action. (Bundy 1984: 2-4.) Eugenic thinking played a large part in these attempts.

Eugenics

During the eighteenth century race became defined as a part of scientific discourse in Europe and the United States. The differences in the representations of the Other were interpreted as biological and natural differences of race. The scientific idea of race was then applied to the human species in the framework of already existing power relations. (Miles 1994: 51, 63-64.)

The evolutionist thinkers of the nineteenth century perceived the differences between races from the viewpoint of biological and cultural evolution. They were pessimistic about the possibility of uplifting the 'child-like savages', whom they saw as relics that had missed the train of biological and cultural progress. Only an interbreeding with a more evolved race, such as the Nordic race, could save them. But while this miscegenation could perhaps aid the development of savages, it would conversely deteriorate the pure Nordic or white racial stock. (Voget 1975: 178-185.)

At that time it was believed possible to define race on physical grounds with, for instance, skull index measurements (Gould 1981: 30-143). This view presented individuals primarily as representatives of their race. One's appearance, talent and character were seen as little more than inherited racial features (Kemiläinen 1985: 13-15).

These ideas were central for the beginning of the eugenic movement, which gained momentum in Europe and the United States in the early twentieth century when eugenic associations, research centres and journals were established.²⁷ The goal of eugenics was to co-operate with nature in elevating all of humanity by promoting 'better' races. The eugenic movement was thus inclined towards Social Darwinism and population politics. (Hietala 1985: 106-121.)

By the early twentieth century, eugenics had become more than just a belief in the power of the hereditary. There was also a strong environmentalist tendency within eugenics that maintained that humans needed favourable social and economic conditions in order to fulfil their inherent abilities fully (Dubow 1995: 123). This meant inconsistencies regarding the eugenic idea of degeneration. Some believed it was curable and preventable under the right circumstances, while some maintained that degeneration was inherited and irreversible.

The decline in the quantity of population everywhere in Europe had raised concerns, and the population was also seen as qualitatively declining – particularly in the urban areas. (Hietala 1985: 106-121.) The supporters of racial hygiene/eugenics²⁸ insisted that it was the state's duty to use 'positive' or 'negative' measures to improve the racial quality of the population. Positive methods propagated by eugenics were mostly prophylactic: enlightening, educating and propaganda. Negative methods consisted of marriage restrictions, isolation and sterilisation of

²⁷ The Englishman Sir Francis Galton, Charles Darwin's cousin, first used the word 'eugenics' in 1885. He is saluted as the father of modern eugenics, since his writings (for example *Hereditary Genius*) were the *primus motor* of the eugenic movement. A French count, de Gobineau, had preceded him with his famous *Essai sur l'inegalite des races humaines*, published in 1798. This is considered the first eugenic publication.

²⁸ Some preferred to separate racial hygiene and eugenics into two different categories since they maintained that eugenics stood for positive measures and racial hygiene for negative measures. However, the assumptions behind both these ways of thinking were the same. The terms can be used synonymously, despite the fact that many sources differentiate between 'bad' racial hygiene, which was known as a Nazi science, and 'good' eugenics, which was popular in other Western societies also *after* the Second World War. Both these ideologies are bound together by their view that the quality of the offspring in any given population could and should be controlled (Mattila 1996: 14-16).

people (Mattila 1996: 15-16). These methods also became tools of racial discrimination, and one of the outcomes of the eugenic movement was that the elements of populations seen as racially detrimental – such as the Jews in Nazi Germany - became separated, classified and annihilated (Hietala 1985: 107, 161-162). After the World War II ‘racial hygiene’ was thus rejected as a Nazi science (Weindling 1989: 10).

While Franz Boas (1940: 42; 1945) had in the 1940s already demonstrated that a person’s ‘race’ cannot be used to assess his mental qualities or capabilities, these ideas have proven persistent since some scientists (Jensen 1998; Brand 1996) still lean on racial premises, echoing the dogmas of the eugenic movement. Despite all the evidence to contrary, scientists keep on theorising on alleged links between ‘race’ and intelligence. A well-known recent example of this is a discussion around Herrnstein and Murray’s book *The Bell Curve: intelligence and class structure in American life* (1994).²⁹

In South Africa, eugenics became known at the end of the nineteenth century when Social Darwinism became fashionable. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were already several societies concerned with racial hygienic issues.³⁰ The philosophy and agenda of these societies were adopted from the United Kingdom and from the United States. Consequently, South African racial thinking was linked to the mainstream of eugenic thought in the Western world. (Dubow 1995: 130-131.) Throughout the twentieth century South African racial policy and social engineering drew on eugenic principles (while they were never completely guided by them, see Posel 2001).

Worden et al. mention the fact that while in the 1880s the nature of poverty changed and became more visible in Cape Town, this development was greeted with urban phobias and fears of degeneration (1998: 218, 248). Bundy argues that the sudden surfacing of the ‘poor white problem’ in the South African consciousness was the new way of perceiving white poverty, and that “a set of awarenesses and anxieties may have crystallised in the form of the poor white question” (1984: 2-3).

One of these awarenesses was the rise of eugenics. Eugenics suited the

²⁹ The study raised stormy responses, which were published as a book called *The Bell Curve Wars* (for a review of these positions see Gould 1994; Gardner 1994; Fraser 1995).

³⁰ Two of these were the Fortnightly Club, established in 1906, and the Native Affairs Society of the Transvaal, established in 1908. The development of eugenic thought was also boosted by the appointment of the South African Native Affairs Commission in 1903. (Dubow 1995:130.)

South African society in which most social phobias were connected with urbanisation and industrialisation, and which eugenics too saw as injurious to humankind and the racial quality of Europeans. The South African whites, particularly Afrikaners, were seen as degenerating as the result of the environmental factors and miscegenation. Simultaneously, the presumed natural superiority of the whites made the upliftment of the poor whites a potentially worthwhile effort. (Dubow 1995: 139-140.)

However, biological determinism that was included in the eugenic discourse was a politically sensitive issue from the start. Since the majority of poor whites were Afrikaners, it would have stigmatised a large portion of them as biologically (and thus irremediably) inferior. This was unacceptable to the Afrikaner nationalist movement. Therefore, the environmentalist aspects of eugenics, which emphasized the reversible nature of degeneration, were favoured. Racial degeneration was seen as something that developed in a bad environment, and could be cured in a good environment. (Dubow 1995: 170-175.)

This did not mean that the biological aspects of eugenics were completely discarded. In public debates they were often visible, and combined and conflated with social and environmental explanations (Dubow 1995: 180). Even during my fieldwork in South Africa (1997-2001), I was often offered biological explanations, such as inbreeding, to explain the existence of poor whites.

These interrelated biological and environmental concerns, combined with the South African native question (*die Swart gevaar*), characterised South African eugenics. After World War I, the country's knowledge of eugenics also became professionalised and institutionalised. In this process eugenics became a tool for social engineering. In the 1930s the eugenically inclined Race Welfare Society was committed to fighting feeble-mindedness, hereditary diseases, poverty and the degeneration of the poor whites.³¹ The Society set out to influence opinions that would encourage birth control for lower-class women. These endeavours always had a eugenic concern as a hidden agenda. (Dubow 1995: 136-137, 170-180.)

The dangerous feeble-minded were seen as a grave threat to the future of the race. The feeble-minded were prone to crime, prostitution and social irresponsibility. According to eugenic theories they were only slightly below normal and thus often undetectable. Theories on feeble-

³¹ It is noteworthy that later some of this society's prominent members (such as H. Britten and Dr. A.M. Moll) established careers in the housing of the poor whites.

mindedness assumed that it was concentrated within the white poor. (Chisholm 1989: 168-172.) As invisible entities, they could easily impair the social body from the inside.

From the 1930s onward poor whites increasingly became the targets of eugenic concerns. There were also doubts about their racial purity. A popular eugenic statement of the time argued that racially mixed people were in a state of physical, mental and moral disharmony. The poor white problem had to be solved and their supposed racial degeneration had to be reversed, if the whites were to utilise their hereditary powers.

An efficient way to incorporate the poor whites socially, politically and racially in the mainstream society was to direct the attention towards the education and training of the children. At the beginning of the twentieth century a free and compulsory school system was formulated. This system was attached to institutions, such as the reformatories and industrial schools for the maintenance and discipline of children of dangerous classes. (Chisholm 1989: 9-10.)

Racial segregation was another presumed cure for the problem. The idea of forced racial segregation implied that some people – such as racially weak poor whites – were vulnerable to racial intermingling, and would cease racial miscegenation only when forced to do so – preferably in a remedial environment.

POOR WHITES AS AN INTELLECTUAL, ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUS CONCERN

To further understand the social concerns regarding the poor whites in South Africa, it is essential to understand the many concurring ways of thinking that perceived poor whites as inferior. In the popular and social scientific views of the 1930s, poor whites were perceived as a social pathology.

A Festering Wound in the Social Body: the Organic Analogy

The *organic analogy*, the idea of the human body as a metaphor of the society, was a powerful constitutive image in many twentieth-century discourses on nation building and social formation. Although the organic analogy has changed its manifestations in Western culture, it is an inherent way of conceiving social structures and processes through the me-

dium of the human body. It was a useful concept for the social sciences in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but it has also persistently occurred when and where there is a perceived social or cultural deviance or anomaly, which is then perceived as a social pathology. (Harris 1998: 4.)

The idea of a social pathology has been used in political state propaganda, and is a popular form of common knowledge in Western societies, where the images of decay, dirt, and impurity have often been used to outline and condemn the polluting, degenerating Other (Goldberg 1993: 200).

In sum, the organic analogy tends to show a people, or *volk*, as an organic entity and the society as a body where anything strange and ambiguous is potentially contagious and thus dangerous. This danger is thus controlled by the elitist power that penetrates all levels of a society.

In applying the organic analogy, the Nazis compared the Jews to parasites or disease that had to be cured through eugenic methods. The fear of the Other as a dirty or sick part – a social pathology of the collective body – was a common notion in Western societies during the twentieth century: nothing illustrates this better than the expression 'ethnic cleansing'.

In South Africa, scientific racism was supported by biological and medical arguments. It also employed several manifestations of social pathology in its discourses. Racial miscegenation and the paradigm of degenerationism (the discourse on the downfall of the white race in Africa), which included the poor white debate, were presented in the language of the organic analogy – markedly so in the social scientific research.

The best known example of research on the poor white problem in South Africa is the first Carnegie Commission investigation (1929-32) – a massive developmental research project on the South African poor whites. It was the first systematic attempt to understand and change the living conditions of the poor whites. South Africa was seen as a vast open-air laboratory for these social experiments (Dubow 1995: 14).

Funded by the US Carnegie Corporation,³² it represented the top social research of its time. The Carnegie Commission's work supported the prevailing status quo in South Africa, and the conclusions of its work show

³² In the programme of the *Volkskongres* of 1934 the Dutch Reformed Church stated that it had initiated the investigation of Carnegie Commission in 1927 when the president and secretary of Carnegie Corporation had visited South Africa. (Programme of the National Conference on the Poor White Problem, Kimberley 1934.)

that it had been strongly influenced by eugenics.³³ The project resulted in a five-volume report on the poor white question (*Armblanke-vraagstuk*). The Carnegie Commission's report covers all areas of the poor whites' life, from a study of the rural poor to the education and living conditions of all poor whites, including a detailed study of mothers and daughters of poor families.

The work of the Carnegie Commission laid the foundation of the South African social sciences. New chairs were founded and sociology became established. (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 103.) It was also an eye-opener for many concerned citizens. And its influence was crucial when the solutions to the poor white problem were later developed.

The Commission's conclusions include concern regarding the alcoholism, nomadism (trek spirit) and degeneration of the poor whites (all three popular eugenic discourses of the 1920s). Throughout the work poor whites are classified into different types. Racial miscegenation is seen as bad and it is stated that whites should learn racial pride. The hereditary side of degeneration is, however, not a concern. Dubow notes that although the Commission's work as a whole rejected the explanations of biological deterioration and emphasised the influence of the external circumstances in the downfall of whites, it still used the terminology and ideas from biological eugenics (1995: 170-179).

The Commission's approach leaned heavily on the then prevailing social theory and research that often used concepts reflecting a social problem and social pathology. Having adapted the Social Darwinist views that were popular at the time, the social scientists logically connected those concepts to the theoretical principles of evolutionary development through the idea of an organic analogy. (Groenewald 1987: 69.)

The Carnegie Commission's research on the poor whites was representative of the use of the organic analogy. Metaphors employed in their study were largely organic, perceiving them as a social pathology.

“Just as a sore or a boil upon a body is merely an unsightly symptom of an impure bloodstream which courses through every part of the whole organism, so the Poor Whiteism may be regarded as a symptom of a deeper underlying disease in our social organism.” (Malherbe 1932: 3.)

³³ The Carnegie Corporation funded several eugenic projects in the United States as well, the most famous of them being the Station for the Study of Evolution at Cold Spring Harbour, Long Island (see Jacobson 1998: 78).

Being a poor white was considered an illness, an unhealthy and unnatural state of being.

“The Poor White Problem includes two main questions. There is, first, the question of the extent and causes of this social ill; and secondly, the question of the means by which it may be cured and prevented.” (Malherbe 1932: v.)

This social malady could be cured if, once isolated and analysed, the right measures were taken, and the ideal of a healthy and functional member of society, a good white, was pursued. The cures varied from proper education to prevention of racial mixing, since:

“ ..long-continued contact with inferior coloured races has in some respects had deleterious social effects on the European.” (Malherbe 1932: xix.)

One of the important considerations was money. Even the most liberal social engineers of that time (e.g., the leading Carnegie Commission investigator E.G. Malherbe), agreed that material support alone was insufficient to drag poor whites out of their degraded state and inferior mentality, if they did not internalise the right (i.e. middle-class) values (Malherbe 1932: xvii-xviii).

Family was the point of departure and very central to these discussions. In Europe, the process of linking morality to economic factors and governing families through normalisation had begun a century earlier when the influence of the traditional patriarchal family had grown progressively weaker and thus also its mission to ensure public order and govern its members. In order to feed the growing population and reorganise the labouring population in a disciplined manner, a liberal state needed an independent and self-governing family.

Philanthropy offered effective advice and preserved norms instead of repressing its subject or handing them gifts and charity. It educated women and children, choosing the family as the locus of social control and surveillance. In the liberal state, the poor were to become moral citizens of substance who did not turn into passive parasites of the society, but learned how to help themselves. (Donzelot 1979: 48-70.)

The family was guided towards autonomy. The more economically independent it was, and the better it solved its own problems, the smaller the risk of outside intervention was. The inability to be economically in-

dependent was thus perceived as a consequence of the lack of education and morality. If the family failed in these expectations, it risked becoming an object of surveillance. The family was private no more. It either controlled itself or it was controlled by the state. (Donzelot 1979: 58-70.)

The change took place from "a government of families to a government through the family". From the end of the nineteenth century, European philanthropy was professionalised. Social workers and psychologists took over the task of policing families. Those families receiving support from the society were often also likely candidates for tutelage, ceasing to exist as an autonomous agency. (Donzelot 1979: 92-168.)

The general eugenic ideas of the early twentieth century were concerned with families: this applied to both South African and European social work. In South Africa, the ideal of a good family guided the upliftment process since it served multiple purposes. A discourse on the *volksfamilie* (the people's family) was not only a locus of the reproduction of the labour force (van Onselen 1982: 39), and the conserving patriarchy (McClintock 1995: 233, 378-379), but also a place where a pure elite race of good whites could be created.

Thus the Carnegie Commission's work also represents the first significant attempt to turn the South African working-class family into a target and an agent for transmitting the norms of the state into the private sphere.

The Commission's work also acknowledged the principles of eugenics, namely that the quality of the population had to be controlled, and that the right racial qualities could be found in the right environment. It also believed in the harmful effects of racial mixing. (Malherbe 1932: xvii-xviii.)

The eugenic predisposition inherited from the Commission was obvious in the subsequent projects in South Africa, which too involved the low-class whites. Between 1938 and 1943 comparative intelligence testing was conducted on a massive scale. These tests were used for two purposes: to evaluate the relative intellectual abilities of blacks and whites, and to measure the intellectual capabilities of the poor whites. (Dubow 1995: 223.) Chisholm notes that the scientific racism of these tests was evident: poor results registered by blacks tended to be interpreted in terms of irretrievable biological heredity, but bad scores by the white poor were mostly attributed to environmental factors which, it was felt, could be improved (1989: 175-177).

The contemporary approach thus made a careful optimism possible. Since the emphasis was not on the biological definition of race, uplifting

the white poor was regarded as possible. The image of a racially degenerated poor white was, however, never very far, even during the apartheid era when it was not an officially canonised belief.

Poor Whites in the Economic Nation-building Process

One of the aspects of the poor white problem was the flood of white labourers to the cities where they faced competition from Africans. To alleviate this situation, the ‘civilised labour’ policy was introduced in the civil service in 1924. The aim of this legislation was to employ as many whites as possible, paying them ‘civilised’³⁴ rates even when they did unskilled work (Horrell 1978: 7). Skilled employment became reserved for white workers, whereas non-white workers were largely reduced to unskilled or semi-skilled labourers.

The Carnegie Commission’s work was soon followed by new local initiatives. Afrikaner nation building mobilised itself around the poor white problem. A secret Afrikaner organisation, the *Broederbond*,³⁵ decided to make the poor white problem its main focus. The Broederbond was represented by Afrikaner cultural organisations, particularly the umbrella cultural organisation the FAK (*Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings*). One of the aims of the Bond (as the Broederbond was popularly known) was to infiltrate every important institution’s key positions. (O’Meara 1983: 62.)

In the 1930s and 1940s Afrikaans, the language and the culture, was the pivot of the *Broederbond*’s nation-building attempts. At that time the Bond’s energy was concentrated on three different areas, namely finding a new outlook and expression for Afrikaner identity, *Afrikanerdom*, and Afrikaner nationalism; organising Afrikaner workers in ethnic trade unions and, finally, fostering Afrikaner business interests. (O’Meara 1983: 66.)

If the lower-class Afrikaners were, however, to organise themselves into a division of class, this would threaten the Afrikaners’ potential unity. This was especially the case in the 1930s when the Afrikaner nation was politically, socially and culturally divided. (O’Meara 1983: 65, 71.)

The project of building an Afrikaner *bourgeoisie* linked prominent

³⁴ John Western has noted that in South Africa the term ‘civilised’ has a latent meaning: White (Western 1997: 11).

³⁵ Lit. “the alliance of brothers”.

Afrikaner organisations such as the *Reddingsdaadbond*,³⁶ *Broederbond*, and the *Ossewa Brandwag*³⁷ with sources of capital. Subsequently, the aims of these organisations and their sources of capital influenced the economic ideology behind the upliftment of poor whites.

A need to turn a white urban underclass into suitably disciplined workers with no communist sympathies was one of the major agendas of the capitalists involved. The dangers of communism, *die rooi gevaar*, had to be battled. (O'Meara 1983: 86-87.) The Rand Revolt of 1922 had already shown that the white workers were prepared to seize the arms (Giliomee 2003: 334-336). It was also feared that a racially degenerated white working class would become class conscious, and ally themselves with Africans. This would lead to a Marxist revolution with the elite itself losing its position.

An important turning point was the first FAK *volkskongres*³⁸ in Kimberly in 1934, which concentrated exclusively on poor white issues. This conference united the Afrikaner intellectuals, churches and *Broederbond* in a joint crusade against white poverty, adopting several resolutions exclusively directed at the upliftment of the white population. (Report of the National Conference 1934: 292-317.)

It is representative of Afrikaner disunity at the time that the Western Cape, Orange Free State and the Johannesburg area each formed separate camps. Cape Afrikaner nationalism was prompted and symbolised by the powerful insurance companies SANLAM and SANTAM. Together with the Cape National Party and the *Nasionale Pers*³⁹ they formed a firm political and economic alliance in the 1930s. The purpose of this alliance was to mobilise and centralise the available capital in the Western Cape. (O'Meara 1983: 96-101.)

The idea was to use the ideological power of *Broederbond* to draw money from Afrikaner pockets. Wealthy farmers, the *petit bourgeoisie* and even the working class were all to contribute to the centralisation of Afrikaner capital by investing their savings. The first challenge was the mobilisation of such capital. O'Meara states that for these purposes the whole idea of Afrikaner nationalism, its goals, strategies, alliances, pri-

³⁶ The RDB (Rescue Action Society) strove to awake mass Afrikaner consciousness regarding economic issues, centralise Afrikaners' savings in Afrikaner financial institutions and to convert the Afrikaners to support Afrikaner traders (O'Meara 1983: 137).

³⁷ Lit. "ox wagon sentinel".

³⁸ Afr. "people's conference".

³⁹ The National Press, a mighty publishing company.

orities and class character had to be redefined. The labouring classes had to be integrated into the *volk*, and mobilised for the economic struggle, since any resistance from the white working class would threaten the *petit bourgeoisie* and the developing economic movement. (O'Meara 1983: 107-116.)

Poor whites were to have their own role in the process of building the great nation, and the ideology of teaching the poor to save and re-educating them was central to these attempts (1934 Conference Report). Harmonising class relations was seen as important for the unity of the Afrikaner *volk*. The virtues of hard labour and saving were emphasised, and working-class Afrikaners were controlled by a Christian-nationalist dogma. (O'Meara 1983: 158-164.)

In the 1930s and 1940s the *Broederbond* blamed the vulnerable position of unskilled Afrikaner workers on the English, Jewish or communist enemies of the *volk*. The white working class was taught that economic prizes were achievable by emphasising the racial rather than the class barrier. (O'Meara 1983: 82, 89.)

In his account of the invention of tradition in colonial Africa, Terence Ranger notes how the white workers in South Africa used invented rituals of European craft unionism to exclude Africans from participating the unions, and to claim craft status. Importing European traditions into Africa also made it easier to rule the Africans as an underclass. However, this increased the demands on the whites, since they had to become an organised and respectable racial elite. (Ranger 1983: 215-220.)

Peter Worsley has noted the position of working-class whites in South Africa as a "labour aristocracy", and how they were well aware of the meaning of institutionalised inequality in respect of their own prosperity. They were willing to defend it with racism of a "more atavistic order, rooted in fear, on the part of those at the lowest levels of class hierarchy, that their social status will now be reduced to that of Blacks". (Worsley 1984: 240-242.) However, it was the white South African elite who had carefully planted seeds of this 'atavistic' racism.

Christian-national Ideology and the Poor White Problem

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) led the actions against white poverty from the very start. It had extended its influence in the middle years of the nineteenth century, and in the 1880s it took a new interest in the poor

whites. Between 1880s and 1930s the church established settlements⁴⁰ for the upliftment of the poor whites. There were also institutions for orphans and the disabled and teahouses for the aged. Between 1919 and 1932 the church had also built 160 boarding school houses in the Cape ‘for the needy’. In 1932 approximately 8.000 children lived in these boarding houses. (Albertyn 1932: 50-55; Joubert 1972: 49.)

The DRC was also the spiritual leader of the nation: its Christian-national ideology was at the heart of Afrikaner nationalism and the apartheid policy. This philosophy developed as a fundamentally racist theory during the era of segregation, and after World War II a shift took place from eugenic and Social Darwinist ideas towards an emphasis on cultural essentialism and nationalism.

Christian-national ideology was a semi-science that used apt parts of scientific theories to support itself, and was partly based on a religious-mystical framework. Thus this philosophy was partly pure myth, which was allegedly based on common sense and the white man’s experience in Africa. It consisted of holistic biological, theological and cultural explanations of human difference. This ideology was constructed by the brightest minds of the Afrikaner nation: intellectuals, theologians, social scientists, politicians and economists, most of them also members of prominent Afrikaner institutions and organisations such as the DRC and *Broederbond*.

The leading Afrikaner eugenicists of the time were on a crusade for a purer, stronger *Boerevolk*. In their thinking, racial miscegenation was appalling to all *racially worthy* Afrikaners,⁴¹ since they regarded themselves as a new, distinct biological race (Dubow 1995: 269-271). These ideas were popularised and merged with the Christian-national ideology by the leading Afrikaner race theorist Geoffrey Cronjé, who also harboured eugenic fears of miscegenation. Cronjé supported the policy of total apartheid, emphasising the importance of maintaining the racial purity of the Afrikaners. This racial purity was endangered because of

⁴⁰ The largest of these four settlements was a northern village of 3070 residents in Kakamas. There were also settlements in George in the Western Cape, in Goedemoed in the Free State and Telagersdrif in the Transvaal.

⁴¹ As to any good representative of the Nordic race. South African eugenics at the time leaned largely on German racial hygienist Eugen Fischer’s work, which was also admired by the Nazis.

⁴² One of Cronjé’s derogatory terms to describe the result of racial mixing, which John Coetzee defines as referring to “a mixture in which not only individual character but all original structure has been lost; what is left behind is shapeless, undifferentiated and pulpy, much like faeces, in fact” (Coetzee 1991: 11).

a *mengelmoes*⁴² of whites and Others living together with no proper distinctions and boundaries (*deurmekaarwonery*). A feeling of equality would develop between them, and lead to the mixed areas becoming dying places (*sterfplekke*) of the white race in Africa. In Cronjé's view the poor whites were also more vulnerable to the dangers of interbreeding than other whites. (Coetzee 1991: 11-13.)

The concept of apartheid was introduced at the FAK's⁴³ 1944 *volkskongres*. At this conference it was made clear that the Christian duty of whites was to guard over the non-whites. No further blood mixing was to be allowed, and the society would be fully controlled by the whites. Detribalisation through the degeneration of the natives was to be halted and instead everyone would be encouraged to find pride in their own *volk*, and each separate *volk* should then develop into an organic unity.

The churches, particularly the Dutch Reformed Church, responded to the poor white problem in their own way. They took some practical steps to uplift the Afrikaner community, but, more importantly, became involved in the formation of public policy. The causes of poverty had to be discovered and remedied. From 1935 onwards the church followed a segregationist 'missionary policy', seeing its Christian duty as uplifting the 'lower' people, and preventing miscegenation. (Kingham 1997: 139-141.)

The poor white problem was one of the main issues of Christian-nationalism, and the Christian organisations would play leading roles in the upliftment of the poor whites.

The *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging* (hereafter ACVV) was established as an Afrikaans social work organisation in Cape Town in 1904. The rise of the ACVV occurred coincided with that of Afrikaner nationalism. The executive members of the ACVV were mostly the wives of *dominees*, teachers and university academics, in other words, wives of those men who were the pillars of Afrikaner nation-building in the 1920s and 1930s. From its earliest years the ACVV initiated its branches by contacting the local *domineesvrou* (the reverend's wife). (Marijke du Toit 1992: 3.)

The ACVV grew steadily. At the end of the 1930s it had almost 8.000 members. The organisation covered all of South Africa, cities as well as rural areas, or the *platteland* as they are called in Afrikaans. Concern for

⁴³ The FAK, an abbreviation of Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations), was an umbrella organisation that was, in fact, a façade for the Broederbond.

poor whites was a crucial part of the ACVV's policy and was also written in its constitution, but, as du Toit points out, the organisation also had a strong nationalist agenda.

The social work conducted by its members included many home visits (*huisbesoeke*) and thus also personal contact with lower classes. During these visits the ACVV, through charitable deeds instead of political pathos, often succeeded in gaining the loyalty of the poor, illiterate people who were otherwise untouched by the political rhetoric of Afrikaner ethnicity. In addition to the policy of uplifting the *armblankes*, one of the unifying traits was *die Roomse gevaar*, a fear of the Catholic church's influence. Another very essential feature in the ideology of the ACVV was the fear of poor whites being vulnerable to racial mixing. (Marijke du Toit 1992: 10-13.)

The intensity of the ACVV's activities becomes clear when perceived against the background of an ultra-patriarchal society. Du Toit argues that the ACVV can be perceived as the Afrikaner women's strategy to claim a place in South African society's public sphere (1992). This development is on par with Ann Stoler's account of gender and race in the former colonies, where she explores the use of gender roles in the former Dutch colonies. Stoler demonstrates white women's central role in the reorganisation of racial and class lines in these colonies at the beginning of the twentieth century. Theirs was the task to stop Europeans (and, particularly European men) from becoming too familiar with the natives, and thus to uphold the segregated society (Stoler 1997: 30).

From the archival findings it becomes evident that the ACVV kept a watch over people's living arrangements, morals and racial purity. In a report dated 30th June 1938, a dismayed ACVV worker described how whites and coloureds were living in the same areas and houses in Woodstock, even using the same bathrooms.⁴⁴ (KAB A 1953.) The purpose of the report was to emphasise the importance of determining separate living areas for different races.

The Cape Town branch of the ACVV first tried to remove white people from racially mixed circumstances by trying to convince them to move out. Sometimes the children of white families sharing a house with coloured families were taken into care. After a while these measures began

⁴⁴ The report was also published in *Die Burger* of the following day with only slight editorial corrections under the title: "*Verbastering weens saamwonerij: Stadsraadsbesluit in die lig van die feite: ontsettende onthullings van ACVV-werkster: blywende opheffingswerk onmoontlik*".

to feel inadequate for it was felt that what was really needed were segregated living areas for lower-class whites. (Du Toit 1992: 17-18.)

The housing companies that mushroomed all over South Africa were a response to these environmental, economic and biological concerns. Their original mission was to build new suburbs where the most vulnerable, but not hopelessly degenerated whites were given an environment that would uplift and educate them, segregate them racially and ensure that they became proper Whites.

Citizens' Housing League: Made to Measure

In the early twentieth century South Africa, fear of racial degeneration and social illnesses was followed by periods of moral panic. In 1901 a plague epidemic swept through Cape Town. Africans were removed from the centre of Cape Town and segregated in a guarded camp in Uitvlugt, since they were thought to be the carriers of the plague (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 19-21). Similar developments took place in Johannesburg where the Africans were also removed from the city area on medical grounds (Parnell 1988b: 308).

South Africans embraced the linking of the ideas of race and contamination. Maynard Swanson's essay "*The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900- 1909*" points out how the image, or organic analogy, of a social disease, and the fear of illness were used to rationalise the racial segregation in the urban space. (Swanson 1977.)

In 1918 the Spanish flu swept through Cape Town. This epidemic, together with the Depression and concerns about the poor whites lead to the professionalisation of poverty relief. The Cape Town and Wynberg General Board of Aid was established in 1919. (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 102-103.)

During the early twentieth century Cape Town also experienced a shortage of proper, affordable housing (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 146). In November 1926, the *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging*, Dutch Reformed Church, and community and business leaders organised a meeting in Cape Town (CHL Review 1980: 4). This lead to the first South African housing company, the Citizens' Housing League Utility Company (hereafter CHL or the Company), being established (Bosman 1941: 199-212).

From the beginning, the Housing League built segregated areas. Their first 'sub-economic'⁴⁵ housing scheme for poor whites was the Good Hope Model Village⁴⁶ in Cape Town (CHL Review 1980: 12). In 1934 the *National Conference* (Volkskongres) on the *Poor White Problem* already praised the Cape Town Utility Housing Company for its effectiveness.⁴⁷ This praise was in all probability well received by the chairman of the Company at the time, Martin Adams, who represented the CHL at this conference (CHL Board minutes: 1934).

When concern about interracial sexual relations peaked in the 1930s and 1940s, the resultant moral panic provided an added impetus to the housing schemes. André du Toit notes that the concern felt at that time far exceeded the degree to which these liaisons really took place. The actual occurrence of mixed marriages was less important than a possible new social order – which they symbolised – arising in the cities. (Dubow 1995: 275; Andre du Toit 1982: 63.)

This panic reflected awareness of racial boundaries and racial hierarchy, and a constant fear of boundary violations. In coloured Cape Town this fear was increasing, since there was no good way to distinguish the whites and coloureds – seeing that external signifiers of race were often difficult to detect. The problems were conceptualised in social and spatial terms, as the illnesses and social evils were perceived to be originating from the depths of the racially mixed areas of District Six, Woodstock and Observatory.

Slum clearance legislation gave the authorities a method with which to apply racial segregation.⁴⁸ Prior to this, all the racially motivated removals had been justified by using public health as an excuse. (Parnell 1988b: 311.) Later, after the introduction of the Group Areas Act in the 1950s, these developments would not only lead to the creation of housing schemes for whites, but also to the major remodelling of the Cape Town City centre and the destruction of mixed racial areas such as District Six.

⁴⁵ Sub-economic, subsidised housing for those unable to afford the 'economic' rents of the free market.

⁴⁶ GHMV was opened in April 1932 when 103 cottages were erected along the Koeberg Road in the area known as Brooklyn (later Ysterplaat).

⁴⁷ "The Conference wishes to draw the attention of the public to the value of the work of the Cape Town Utility Housing Company, and recommends the institution or support of similar utility companies in the other cities of the Union." (Report of the National... 1934: 294.)

⁴⁸ The Housing Act of 1920 acknowledged the need for public intervention in the housing of the poorest of the whites, while the Slums Act was passed in 1934. It extended the power of the local authorities to acquire slum properties for demolition and rebuilding.

"The trouble", said one member of the party, "is that the white man in the slum loses courage because he is sinking. The coloured man gains courage because he tries to get up." (Cape Times 17.7.1927.)

The Citizens' Housing League built Epping Garden Village in the area known as Epping Forest. It provided the space that helped to turn the people who came from the countryside or racially mixed areas of Cape Town into 'proper' whites. In 1938, 700 houses were made available for *respectable* poor whites (CHL Special report: 1947).

HOW THE RESIDENTS OF EPPING GARDEN VILLAGE BECAME POOR WHITES

Concrete examples of how the category of poor white was conceptualised in the twentieth century South Africa can be found when we examine Epping Garden Village itself. It was the place where the upliftment of the people was carried out in practice. Since it was established as a part of the solution to the poor white problem, it was also, from the start, perceived by outsiders as a place where poor whites and all the 'wrong' associated with them resided.

EGV was a place where this category's development from a nation-building tool into a stigmatised social category can be perceived in practice. However, there were local variations – manifestations of Afrikaner nationalism and racial ideas – in which Johannesburg and Cape Town differed. Understanding their details would require a though comparative analysis between the two suburbs. Nevertheless, I believe a lot can be learned by only looking at one.

The formation of the category of a poor white began in the late nineteenth century, and underwent considerable changes in twentieth century. In the 1930s this category was more forgiving than today, and there was still an expression used for respectable white poverty. The honourable *blanke armes* worked hard to better themselves, while the parasitic *arm blankes* had no intention of doing so (Marijke du Toit 1992: 7). In contemporary South Africa there is little left of this division.

For the purposes of this thesis, the process of upliftment and the ensuing formation of the poor white category in Epping Garden Village have been divided into several phases. These phases could also be described as overlapping developments.

The First Residents: 1938–1948

While Epping Garden Village was established to prevent and stop the slide of the respectable white poor into the abyss of degeneration, the suburb simultaneously offered a physical locus for it. It marked this part of the white population as a separate category of possible degenerates who might, under circumstances of urban decay, endanger all the whites. The symbolic significance of the category poor white grew, both when the first official boundaries were drawn and when the state secured them.

Since whites were seen as genetically superior and only in need of a chance at life in a good environment to succeed, it was regarded as possible to upgrade them all to good whites. And, indeed, this optimism seemed correct at first when the Citizens' Housing League were allowed to choose the residents they wanted to uplift.

At the time, the residents were carefully handpicked – a process which included strict selection procedures in which respectability and upward mobility were emphasized. An example of this selection could be 'Mrs. Mulder's' story. *Mrs. Helen Mulder* is not an actual person. She, like all the other people who have authentic-sounding names in this thesis, is a combination of several real life histories gathered during the fieldwork. These life histories, or their fragments, have been used here as apt illustrations of the historical facts, phases, or events. The following story represents the residents of the first generation.

In March 1947 young Mrs. Mulder had just discovered that she was pregnant. She was still wondering where she would place the baby's crib in their tiny one-roomed home, when her aunt Augusta told her that the Citizens' Housing League (hereafter CHL or the Company) gave 'nice and cheap' houses for young, white families who had a permanent income of more than £10 but less than £20 per month. Her husband Charles earned £14 a month, and she was a housewife, so they could at least try. The next day, she fetched the application forms from the headquarters of the CHL in the SANLAM⁴⁹ building in Wale Street.

Soon afterwards their home in Woodstock was visited by a social worker who wanted to make sure that they were who they had claimed to be: honourable, proper white people whom the CHL wanted as tenants. The visit also served to discover if the Mulders had any social problems such as alcoholism or marital troubles. The social worker looked pleased

⁴⁹ A large South African insurance company that was an essential part of Afrikaner nation building.

enough, and when she left, Mrs. Mulder felt that the visit had gone well.

A few weeks later the selection committee invited the Mulders to a personal interview, a further verification of the respectability that the CHL⁵⁰ wanted to foster in the area. There were only a few exceptions to these rules during the first years.

After a successful interview, the officials granted the Mulders a house, and they moved to Epping Garden Village in July 1947. The houses were spacious, new, and whitewashed. Every house stood on a big plot, where residents could cultivate vegetables and fruit to enhance their diet. Gardening and the work it entailed were seen as beneficial for the body and rehabilitation of the residents. Mrs. Mulder loved the gardening. She was happy to decorate her house and create a good home for her children.

The social housing scheme served several purposes of upliftment simultaneously. Cheap rent gave people a chance to save money to buy their own homes. The spatial layout and social services in Epping Garden Village were particularly designed to further the upliftment *and* surveillance of the population that was chosen to live in the suburb.

Three days after the Mulders had moved in, a social worker visited them to explain the rules of the suburb and see that everything was in order. The Mulders were young, in their early twenties, and did not mind the social worker popping in occasionally. Mrs. Mulder, who always wanted to do her best, was appreciative when the social worker gently pointed out shortcomings in her housekeeping, and was able to help her with good advice. Mrs. Mulder became friendly with the social workers, and soon they stopped visiting to check if the Mulder home was neat, and simply came around for a cup of coffee and the news.

In the first years the social workers dealt mainly with poverty. Many of the residents came from impoverished backgrounds in the countryside, and were first generation city-dwellers – only 25 per cent of the first generation had been born in Cape Town. The Mulders, and many other young people in EGV, did their best to graduate to the ranks of the middle-class. A house in a new area was a big step up on the social ladder.

After a few months in EGV, the Mulders' son was born, later a daughter followed and another son. Mrs. Mulder stayed at home with the chil-

⁵⁰ CHL has had many different names through the years. It is sometimes referred to in this thesis and by my informants as the Company, although its first name was the Citizens' Housing League Utility Company. Later, the last two words of the name were omitted. After 1991, the Company existed under name Communicare, a name that won the naming competition that the Company had arranged to proclaim their new image (and their new multicultural agenda) in post-apartheid South Africa.

dren, while her husband Charles worked first for the railway, and later at the docks.

Although the move to the new environment meant also becoming objects of the social workers' continuous observation, the residents from the first generation did not seem to mind. They were grateful to the Citizens' Housing League for the chance they had been given. During the time I knew her, Mrs. Mulder never expressed any negative feelings towards the Company. Actually, in her first interview with me, she wanted to show me her beautifully arranged kitchen cupboards. Only later on did I realise that this was a routine of the older generation in the suburb: when a person of professional status visits, you make a point of showing how neat you are.

By and large the Mulders were fulfilling the agenda that the social uplifters had in mind for these poor white residents: they would be rehabilitated, and thereafter buy their own homes elsewhere. Subsequently, in the second half of the 1940s the residents began moving out to better areas. However, while many families managed to move out to neighbouring, more middle-class areas, the Mulders stayed on. Mrs. Mulder hinted to me that the reason for this was that Charles liked to bet on horses. His gambling caused difficulties for the family, but despite this they, in her own words, "held their heads above the water".⁵¹

Having experienced poverty, Mrs. Mulder was extremely good with money and saved all her receipts. She still remembered the amount of their first rent: £2.10. She would start sentences with, "In 1976, when a jar of jam only cost 89 cents..." and she still noted all her expenses in a small, blue-edged Croxley notebook.

Over the years the Mulder family's standard of living increased. In the sixties Charles's income grew substantially and he was given a company car. They spent many wonderful holidays driving around the country. These holidays ended when Charles died of cancer in 1984.

The photograph in Mrs. Mulder's bedroom showed a tall, dark handsome man with warm eyes, slightly exotic features and very curly hair. Although Mrs. Mulder never volunteered the information, and I never asked, it is entirely possible that Charles had been born coloured.

This does not contradict the unofficial CHL policy of the time. Although the first residents were chosen very carefully, my archival material shows that their racial purity was not as important as their ability to *become* good whites, the perceived potential for upliftment. A suitable

⁵¹ "Ons het ons koppe bo water gehou."

tenant, who behaved and managed his finances correctly, who appeared neat and civilised, could be of darkish complexion, although too obvious blackness was frowned upon.

The Second Generation: after 1948

Contrary to what was happening in Europe, the idea of a welfare state for everyone was rejected when the National Party gained power in 1948 on the grounds that there was a need for 'separate development'. While the trauma of concentration camps had made the idea of race as a basis of social engineering thoroughly unpopular in Europe, 'race' became an unbending rule in South Africa. In fact, racial ideas had grown more radical during the Second World War, and there was an enthusiasm for social engineering. This forced the state to look after the well being of *all* Whites merely because of their assumed racial superiority.

The moment of change in the Citizens' Housing League's racial policy, and key moment in the history of Epping Garden Village, began in the early 1950s, right after the onset of apartheid. At this time the combination of spatial layout and social services was adapted for the purposes of apartheid urban planning and total segregation via the Group Areas Act.

The apartheid state put a different face on its ideology, namely 'separate development for separate cultures'. In Epping Garden Village, the selection of residents changed. The emphasis was shifted to the racial purity instead of the social quality of the people. In practice, this meant that the Citizens' Housing League lost their right to choose those who would be included in the white race, as the racial status of a person was now defined by the state.

The more clearly defined the boundaries of the category of a proper White became (especially after the 1948 election), the more the existence of poor whites conflicted with the prevailing order, and the more marginal and less respectable they became.

Control of the social body and urban space became state-regulated as well. The hardening of the category White brought social changes in the life of those seen as poor whites. In Epping Garden Village these changes were manifested in the ways the bodily control shifted from the control of neatness and appearance to the rigid, official control of racial and social mixing and use of space. Since failed whites could no longer be re-interpreted as coloured and since the rising white affluence in South Africa increased the expectations in respect of whites, the bodily and spatial

control of the poor whites grew harder. Racial boundaries could not be allowed to leak.

While the upliftment led to a rise in the standard of living of the residents of Epping Garden Village, the price of this rehabilitation was submission to strict supervision and a competition to obtain whiteness. The effect was social backstabbing, which often alienated people from one another, resulting in a distrustful atmosphere.⁵²

During the 1950s and 1960s respectable families of dubious whiteness became an exception. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the state now defined who was white. The Company could no longer use its own judgement: an ID book stated a person's race unambiguously. Secondly, in the 1950s the influence of the exodus of the newly uplifted whites to privately owned houses began to have an impact. This tendency further accelerated in the 1960s when white South Africans' standard of living escalated. This led to a lack of suitable tenant candidates. The Company saw no other choice but to accept those whites whom they would not have accommodated before.

Mr. and Mrs. Mulder, however, remained in the suburb. Mrs. Mulder's living room was decorated with the photographs of her three children in different phases of their lives. In one large photograph her elder son, Will, sports a police uniform. During my fieldwork it became obvious that a vast majority of the next generation born in the suburb managed to ascend to the ranks of the middle-class,⁵³ and Mrs. Mulder's children were no exception. After matriculation her daughter found work with an insurance company, and the youngest son married a schoolteacher and moved to Springbok, where he runs a business. Much was expected from the new generation whites and the Mulder children fulfilled these expectations.

⁵² This surveillance was a common enough phenomenon in countries that practised welfare. In this regard Pivem and Cloward discussed the racist and economically oppressive practices of capitalist (USA) social welfare (1972:138). Andrea Dworkin elaborated on their points by referring to these practices as particularly compelling and controlling regarding female dependants whose lives became totally transparent and regulated in the USA from the 1940s onwards. The similarities between these practices and the South African ones are striking. (Dworkin 1983: 162-168.)

⁵³ The expression *middle-class* as it is employed here demands an explanation. For the white South Africans themselves the idea of the middle-class stands for normality or standard. The ideal of this standard, however, grew high during apartheid. It became normal to have a house and lifetime employment, which guaranteed a good salary, medical aid, and a housing subsidy. This, in turn, has led to white South Africans feeling betrayed in the new, democratic dispensation despite the fact that Africans, who form the vast majority of the population, live in absolute poverty and for whom the 'middle-class' represents a fabulously wealthy elite.

Mrs. Mulder's offspring were not the only children to leave the suburb. This was common throughout Epping Garden Village. The children of the first generation of residents received a better education than their parents had had. The booming economy and state support for first-time white homeowners also helped their social aspirations.

Most of the second generation (those who had either been born or grown up in Epping Garden Village) began to leave the area at the end of the 1950s. This development continued in the 1960s and 1970s. The population in the suburb shrank from 8.605 people in 1960 to 5.531 in 1980. While some of the offspring moved to other parts of the country, many stayed in the northern, Afrikaans suburbs of Cape Town, such as Goodwood, Panorama, Vasco and Parow. Their elderly parents remained in EGV. They had done well for themselves, and those who stayed were no longer considered poor whites, but had become respectable citizens. In EGV they were the elite.

Mrs. Mulder's daughter Mary married in 1974 and moved to Belville.⁵⁴ She and her husband had insisted that Mrs. Mulder join them in their big house, but she did not want to go. Here she could get everything she needed, she had no great expenses, this was her home, and her friends were here. She saw her daughter every Saturday when they went shopping at the malls along the N1-highway in her daughter's new Toyota Corolla.

Mrs. Mulder told me that she has always been very happy in Epping.⁵⁵ In the beginning, the neighbours had been like a family. People were close, women helped one another, and social relations had been good, but this is no longer the case, she said.

She told me that the community had changed a lot during the past years, and she missed the way it had been. Many of her friends had passed on, and the new people who moved in were 'different'. Despite the changes that had occurred, she was on good terms with all her neighbours, and you could not sit in her kitchen for an hour without someone popping in, bringing avocados or a watermelon from their garden, or just to exchange news.

Mrs. Mulder was proud of her suburb and thought it was a decent place, although she knew many people who had grown up in Epping, but would never admit to their origins. She acknowledged that her view of

⁵⁴ A middle-class Afrikaans suburb in northern Cape Town.

⁵⁵ As mentioned earlier, the name of the suburb was changed from Epping Garden Village to Ruyterwacht in 1986. However, during my fieldwork many senior people still called it 'Epping' in their everyday discussions.

the area is not shared by middle-class white South Africans of today, but in all probability John W. Yates-Benyon, a social worker in EGV in the 1950s, would have agreed with her. In his books *The Sad and the Sinful* (1964) and *The Weak and the Wicked* (1959) he related several colourful anecdotes of life in the suburb, but also described everyday life at the time as quite normal and very sedate.

“Apart from the cranks, most of the villagers led normal exemplary lives, attending church on Sundays, spending the lazy summer Saturday afternoons lounging on the warm cricket field, and visiting one another on a constant round of social relaxation. The inhabitants lead much the same sort of lives and have the same problems as those of my own particular suburb, or in any other for that matter. But other, richer districts seldom have social workers laid on to unlock the cupboards of smugness and release the skeletons for healthy evaluation. Yet, make no mistake, there are wolves masquerading as sheep in every fold, a cuckoo in most gilded aviaries.” (Yates-Benyon 1964: 28-29.)

This is the last available description of the area that emphasises its normality instead of its pathological nature. To a certain degree during the 1950s, but particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, the poor whites became increasingly stigmatised. It was considered a person’s own weakness if he could not ‘lift himself up by his own shoe-laces’.⁵⁶

In the mid-sixties it became clear that some whites could not to be uplifted by means of social engineering. As the number of poor whites during the 1960s, their social marginality grew. The sincere compassion for the unlucky part of the *volk* gradually turned into contempt towards those few who, even with all the support, did not join the middle-class. Because they lived in the same areas as the original poor whites had, they were conflated with them, while in fact the first generation of collective poor whites had largely moved on to the ranks of the middle-class.

In the racially defined state the poor whites now fully defied the category White, transgressing its boundaries. In the social order that denied the possibility of the existence of failed or economically disadvantaged Whites, they became anomalous. Stigmatisation of the poor whites increased. This era witnessed the fervent attempts of the middle-class to uplift the individual problem cases, using the same methods as for the original, carefully picked and socially less ‘problematic’ poor whites.

⁵⁶ Originally an Afrikaans saying: ‘Jy moet jousef aan jou skoenveters oplig.’

Consequently, a high degree of dependency developed in the suburb, and more and more EGV residents became institutionalised, responding less and less to welfare efforts.

The poor white suburbs became ever more clearly, and incorrectly, stigmatised as institutions where the white misfits were stored away. In reality, the aging, middle-class-oriented first generation co-existed uncomfortably with the 'problem cases'.

In the 1970s the *Afrikanerdom* began to disperse politically and spiritually. In the 1980s it was clear that there would be no return to the *volk's* previous unity (see Adam 1979: 129, Giliomee 1979a: 124, De Klerk 1975). This disillusionment with apartheid was also manifested in Epping Garden Village. Although the control of the boundaries of the category of a 'good white' with its ensuing supervision of the social body and urban space was still strict in the beginning of this era, it was gradually slackened as the hopelessness of overall upliftment for everyone became evident.

The Arrival of Those Who 'Could not Lift Themselves Up': 1960-1990

Johann Swanepoel was born near Port Elisabeth in 1954, and moved to Epping Garden Village with his parents and thirteen siblings in the 1970s. His father was an alcoholic tyrant, and his mother, despite her sweet nature, often lost patience with her husband. Consequently, she often wore nasty bruises when Johann's father had used his fists to silence her. It is hard to imagine the Swanepoels being allowed into Epping Garden Village in the 1940s or early 1950s. In the 1970s, however, they were given a four-bedroom house next to the Mulders.

Although the family was given a house on the precondition that they would be rehabilitated, the social workers soon realised that the Swanepoels were a lost cause. Epping Garden Village was the best place to hide these individuals: there at least they could benefit from the evidently effective infrastructure designed to help them.

In the 1950s and 1960s tension between neighbours grew, and the area became a less pleasant place. There was more gossip, and the social workers' methods grew more prescriptive as the residents became increasingly institutionalised. Problematic children were taken from their parents and conversely, problematic parents lost their children. 'Work-shy' men were sent to work colonies. Consequent to the harsh supervision and gossip,

private life was not really private in Epping Garden Village.

It did not take the Mulders long to see that the Swanepoels were not their type. The marital quarrels often started at 9 p.m. when a tired Mr. Mulder wanted to sleep, but by which time Mr. Swanepoel had had too much to drink – which he often had – and would chase his family out into the night, threatening them with beatings. Empathetic Mrs. Mulder often consoled the sobbing Mrs. Swanepoel until late at night and made hot chocolate for the young Swanepoels. Soon the Mulders were fed up and on one of the social worker's friendly visits Mrs. Mulder told her the whole story.

Johann, who was a teenager at the time, remembers the social workers speaking seriously to his mother. Afterwards his mother was annoyed with Mrs. Mulder, and would not sit in her kitchen again. Johann thought it was a pity, for he missed the hot chocolate. He also remembers the relief he felt the day his mother applied for divorce and was given the sole tenancy of their house.

By that time most of his siblings had left home, and eventually they all moved out of EGV. Only Johann, who describes himself as 'mommy's boy', wanted to stay near his mother. He told me that he had married and even bought a house in the 1980s, but his wife had divorced him 'for some reason', and he lost the house. Gentle and soft-spoken, Johann told me that he had been a hard-working man all his life. Nevertheless, the archival material proclaims him a "work-shy alcoholic".

At the time of the interview Johann had no permanent home: he was renting a garden shed of four square meters, which he shared with his male partner. This *hokkie* was located in the backyard of a house owned by a coloured family – a fact of which he was deeply ashamed. He suffered from alcoholism and depression, and deep scars on his arms show where he had tried to end his life with a razor blade a few years before. He tried to be neat, to keep his clothes clean and shave regularly, but these attempts are marred by his skeletal thinness and toothless mouth.

He said his siblings want nothing to do with him. He has shared his life with the same male partner for fifteen years, but they are not happy. His partner drank a lot, and had unprotected sex with African prostitutes who would exchange sex for liquor. This worried Johann who was terrified of HIV/AIDS, and they fought often.

Johann complied with the negative stereotype of a poor white. He had a disability pension of 520 rand (approx. 52 Euros) per month, of which 300 rand went towards his rent. He lived from day to day, doing odd jobs here and there for ten or twenty rand. He feared being evicted from his

present home, and had already made a plan: if he loses his place, his next home will be located in the coloured squatter camp on the fringes of the suburb.

In the 1980s, a significant percentage of the new tenants were people who could not make it anywhere else. They were the unlucky and the unable: single mothers, senior people, the disabled and alcoholics. These new tenants were increasingly dependent on welfare.⁵⁷ They are the ones whom the middle-class blames for spending their days walking around the suburb from house to house, *kuiering*⁵⁸ and gossiping over numerous pots of tea, without ever trying to ‘better themselves’.⁵⁹

The End of Apartheid

The early 1990s saw a collapse of the Afrikaner elite’s interest in the upliftment of poor whites. After the 1994 election the new ANC-lead government immediately removed the extensive state support for the poor whites. This had drastic consequences for many residents of Ruyterwacht who had become entirely dependent on the institutions of whiteness.

In the 1990s, EGV changed. After the ending of state subsidies for poor whites, the social workers were withdrawn and socially aspiring coloureds bought houses in the suburb. In 2001, they formed approximately 40 per cent of the residents, while the lowest social layer of white residents had moved, or was on its way to caravan parks, granny flats and squatter-camps. The coloureds are youngish and professional, in many ways filling the gap left by the second generation children who had left the suburb.

The poor whites are still socially marginal, and a stigmatised category. Now their existence is a sign of the failure of the middle-class upliftment

⁵⁷ In 1942, only 2.5 per cent of the households received actual monetary subsidies. In 1986 the housing clerk of the area reported that 61 per cent of the households were receiving a state welfare grant, while only 39 per cent of households lived on a salary or other income. (CHL: 1942, 1986.)

⁵⁸ A popular Afrikaans term for ‘informal visiting’, ‘having a good time with friends’, ‘socialising’.

⁵⁹ ‘Bettering oneself’ is a familiar concept for any good middle-class Afrikaner. In Stellenbosch I learned that a good person never gives up trying to aim higher and make himself a better person bodily and spiritually. We are all born faulty, and there is always room for improvement. Not trying is considered a laziness of the worst kind. This concept is in accordance with the Calvinistic ideas of the God’s elected people incessantly working towards the fulfilment of God’s will on Earth, this labour being the only true sign setting apart those predestined for salvation (on Calvinism, see Dumont 1986: 52-59).

project, and a warning of the consequences of a social downfall for middle-class Whites. They serve the role of the Other in the self-definitions and imagination of the Afrikaner middle-class.

In Cape Town, the boundaries of racial categories are altering. The ideals of middle-class whiteness are still strong, and well-internalised bodily control (in work, sexuality, social boundaries and bodily discipline) is a sign of a successful person. At the same time, the White middle-class is gradually relaxing and opening up racially, while the aspiring coloureds are moving in the historically White areas. Since they present the right bodily signs and values, their existence is not seen as problematic.

Although for some residents in Ruyterwacht the present gentrification and the moving in of coloured people into the suburb represents a sign of decay and a downfall of South Africa, most I interviewed saw it as a sign of the suburb's upward mobility. The main difference is that the coloured people will have to generate their success themselves, without the generous help of state subsidies – or social workers.

Pamela Uys thoroughly resents the social problems and gossiping in EGV as she feels that this was not what she was used to in the middle-class suburb in which she lived with her violent former husband. She moved to the suburb in 1987, since she had, and still has, nowhere else to go.

Pamela has her pride, her whiteness and her commitment to middle-class values. She has a roof over her head, and more or less enough to eat. Despite the hardship she endures, she is in a reasonable state of health. She considers herself honourable, and the other residents consider her honourable as well, despite the fact that she is very poor.

For a poor old lady Pamela is very smartly dressed. Her appearance is neat, and no matter how warm the weather is, she never reverts to *plakkies*⁶⁰ or shorts. She is always seen wearing a well-ironed white shirt, or a dress, pantyhose and proper shoes, and her white hair is immaculately arranged. She pays ample attention to her clothing, trying to make the most of the little money she has. She is appalled by the unstylish dress, the obesity and uncleanness of many white women in the suburb and strives to distinguish herself from them.

She does not seek the company of the new coloured residents who flocked to the area in the course of the 1990s. "*They make way too much noise*", Tannie Oosthuizen, Pamela's next-door neighbour says as I chat

⁶⁰ 'Plakkies' are inexpensive rubber thong-style sandals, often used as beachwear.

with her on the garden gate where Pamela has escorted me. "And anyway, they are hotnots⁶¹. Better than kaffirs⁶², of course, but still, one cannot trust them." Pamela nods vigorously.

She believes that the presence of coloureds draws criminal elements to the suburb. Burglar bars on the two little windows and two security gates in front of the door do not add to the appeal of her tiny flat, but Pamela finds them necessary. She tells how all the seniors in the suburb live in constant fear of burglars. Pamela was attacked and badly beaten at her front door a few years ago. Now she has bought herself a gun. Let them try again!

Pamela is lucky to live in Epping Garden Village, and she knows she will never leave the suburb to move back to a white middle-class suburb. She aims to live in peace with everyone, and tries to tolerate the changes around her. And things could be worse: her new neighbours might be coloured, but they do have a car and a telephone, even a cell phone, and the husband works for the police force.

Success or Failure?

In my residence in middle-class Stellenbosch, I came across many people who had well defined ideas of how white people should present themselves. Poor whites do not fit these ideas. A feeling of embarrassment is paramount when the middle-class discusses poor whites. Of course, everyone had family who had been poor whites, but that was long ago. The *volk* had rescued itself, and those left behind are too shameful to mention.

In the 1960s and 1970s the aftermath of the successful upliftment lead to labelling, humiliation and the institutionalisation of those whites unable to fit the ideal of a good white. After its initial achievements the poor white project stagnated. The current sad stereotypes of poor whites and the open contempt with which today's middle-class regards them emerged during the apartheid era when they also became a permanent feature in the middle-class imagination.

At the end of the 1980s the time was ripe for a new description of white poverty. The Afrikaans authors Jeanne Goosen, in her well-known novel *Ons Is Nie Almal So Nie* (1992), and Marlene van Niekerk, in her inter-

⁶¹ A pejorative name for a coloured person.

⁶² A pejorative name for an African (black) person.

national prize-winning novel *Triomf* (1994), feed and reflect the imaginations of the South African middle-class who, over time, has increasingly lost touch with the everyday life of poor whites.

These books and discourses surrounding the poor whites illustrate that through their very marginality and invisibility they have a central position in the White South African identity. They are perceived through what Stuart Hall has named the discursive strategies and stereotypes of "the West and the Rest" (Hall 1999: 122). In everyday South African usage this discourse on whiteness is split into two opposing parts: good, successful middle-class whites, and the failed, pathetic poor whites.⁶³

During the apartheid era the poor whites became an Other for the middle-class South Africans. A dialectical relation developed between poor whites and the middle-class, as is so often the case in the relations of Self⁶⁴ and Other (Miles 1994: 25). In this dialectic the characteristics attached to the Other reflect the opposites of those attributes attached to the Self, and vice versa. Accordingly, when the Europeans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries defined Africans as 'black' and 'savage', they simultaneously represented themselves as 'white' and 'civilised'. The same discourse that glorified the white elite and the middle-class as superior and was used to control the 'savage' Africans, also turned against the poor whites, presenting them as inferior.

Richard Dyer points out that all white cultures tend to foster a white identity that is built on compelling paradoxes of representation and universal claims to the prototypical humanness of whites which expresses itself as "narrative structural positions, rhetorical tropes and habits of perception" (2000: 543-544). In short, white supremacy is taken as a norm, and anyone who cannot live up to this norm is perceived to be a failure. These narratives may lead to the othering of lower-class whites, sexual minorities and other whites who do not fit into the framework of the mainstream whiteness (McGuinness 2000: 227).

In South Africa, poor whites became endorsed with all the signs of the Other. This is not unusual in the colonial context - as the fate of the Irish Catholic immigrants (Ignatiev 1995) or lower-class Southerners in the

⁶³ Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking whites have different versions of this, but the similarity of these versions is overwhelming and far exceeds the differences.

⁶⁴ The anthropological term 'Self', derived from the psychological term 'self' (meaning one's identity and its representations), is used in this study in its anthropological, collective meaning. It refers to 'us', the group of identification as opposed to 'the Other'.

⁶⁵ While the Irish immigrants were stigmatised by all the classic signs of the Other - they were supposedly over-sexed, alcoholic, and unable to do sophisticated jobs (Ignatiev 1995) - the Southerners were met with discrimination and disgust in Northern American

United States shows (Killian 1985: 107-108).⁶⁵ People of different race or ethnicity are not the only Others for the Western Self. Lower-class whites still do not fit into the discourse that presents whiteness as a form of power, they defy the assumed superiority of whiteness with their mere existence. They are often objects of unreserved prejudice and contempt from middle-class whites, whether they are known as 'white trash', 'petits blancs' or 'armblankes' (Wray and Newitz (eds) 1997; Killian 1985: 99; Stoler 1997:14).

But no society took better care of their poor whites than the Afrikaners did during apartheid. The middle-class Afrikaners were genuinely concerned about their fate. The poor whites were still related to middle-class whites, and still part of the *volk*. Perhaps they could be improved.

In her celebrated book *Triomf* (1994), the novelist Marlene van Niekerk is rather compassionate and protective of the poor whites. However, she still relies on the shameful stereotypes attached to them. In *Triomf*, the poor whites are depicted as hell-raisers who live totally outside the moral order of normal society. They are an incestuous, work-shy, pathetic bunch of degenerates sitting in the midst of incredible filth and hopelessness, making plans that will never materialise. Van Niekerk's poor whites rape their mothers and sisters and wear no, or too loose underwear. Images of a decaying (social) body and social marginality flow from the pages of *Triomf*.

Whether van Niekerk's original intention was to symbolically present the brutality of apartheid or the decay of the Afrikaner nation remains irrelevant, since most people I met had primarily accepted the book as an accurate description of present poor whites. The area where I conducted my fieldwork is in Cape Town, whilst the suburb of Triomf is located in Johannesburg, and although I met several people who one way or another did fit the descriptions in van Niekerk's novel, they were a minority. Despite this, Stellenbossers often asked me whether I had read *Triomf*, and remarked on what a marvellously realistic, although depressing piece of work it was.

THE POOR WHITE STIGMA

After the Second World War the most important task of the South African nation builders was to ensure that the position of the poor whites would be uplifted. The existence of the poor whites represented a racial weakness and an illness of the social body.

Solutions to the poor white problem were offered from three different directions – the economic elite, churches and universities - all of which had a particular ideological emphasis and a different set of methods. The people who promoted these ideas originated from the newly established Afrikaner middle class, but also partly from the English-speaking South Africans.

Firstly, there was the influence of the economic nation-building project that was supposed to raise the Afrikaner's standard of living by centralising Afrikaner capital to promote Afrikaner businesses. The elite saw the possibility of the lower-class whites developing class-consciousness and even allying with the Africans as detrimental to the developing Afrikaner capitalism. From the point of embodiment, it is apparent that the capitalist system was interested in making healthy and well-maintained bodies for labour purposes (Turner 1984: 76). A potentially harmful working class would become more manageable if integrated with the white middle class, and turned into a productive labour force.

Secondly, there was the influence of the Christian-national ideology developed and applied by the Dutch Reformed Church and its related Christian organisations. The Dutch Reformed Church played a major role in attempts to solve the poor white problem. The church promoted a system of values with nationality seen as God-given and racial mixing as unnatural and detrimental to the white race.

Thirdly, these clerical ideas were on a par with the contemporary popular social scientific discourse, offering its eugenically-biased methods and ideas for the upliftment of the poor whites. In the beginning of the twentieth century the eugenic ideas were embraced all over the Western world. Eugenic ideas from the US and Europe formed the foundation of South African attempts to uplift the poor whites. The biological, hereditary attributes of the white race were not perceived as important as cultural and environmental influences. This environmentalist tendency within eugenics meant that in order to guide the human evolution properly, human (white) potential could only be realised fully under optimal social and economic conditions. These conditions were to be available in social housing projects, such as Epping Garden Village.

It is difficult to estimate how much each separate train of thought affected the practical methods, or the success of the upliftment of the poor whites. Often the ideas of these various trains of thought were so entangled and their dogmas amalgamated to such an extent that, while it is possible to identify the initial main ideas of each approach, they became inseparable in practice. This is one of the most formidable features of the poor white project: the united thoughts behind it made it powerful and all pervasive. This all-inclusive quality was transferred to and reflected in the everyday life of the residents of Epping Garden Village.

In the first decades of the twentieth century this amalgamated set of ideas became the social norm, and a framework for the social engineering. It also created a framework for the rehabilitation of the white poor, which were guided towards the ideals of the category a good white. The present strong and consistent stigmatisation of the South African poor whites shows that there is still an ideal of a good white. There have indeed been many ideals of proper White behaviour, while the content of the category poor white and discourses of whiteness have varied.

A person could be branded as a poor white by mere association, such as residing in a suburb like Epping Garden Village. The term poor white thus largely referred to a perceived category. In this thesis the term is used rather eclectically, and applied to those who were labelled as such.

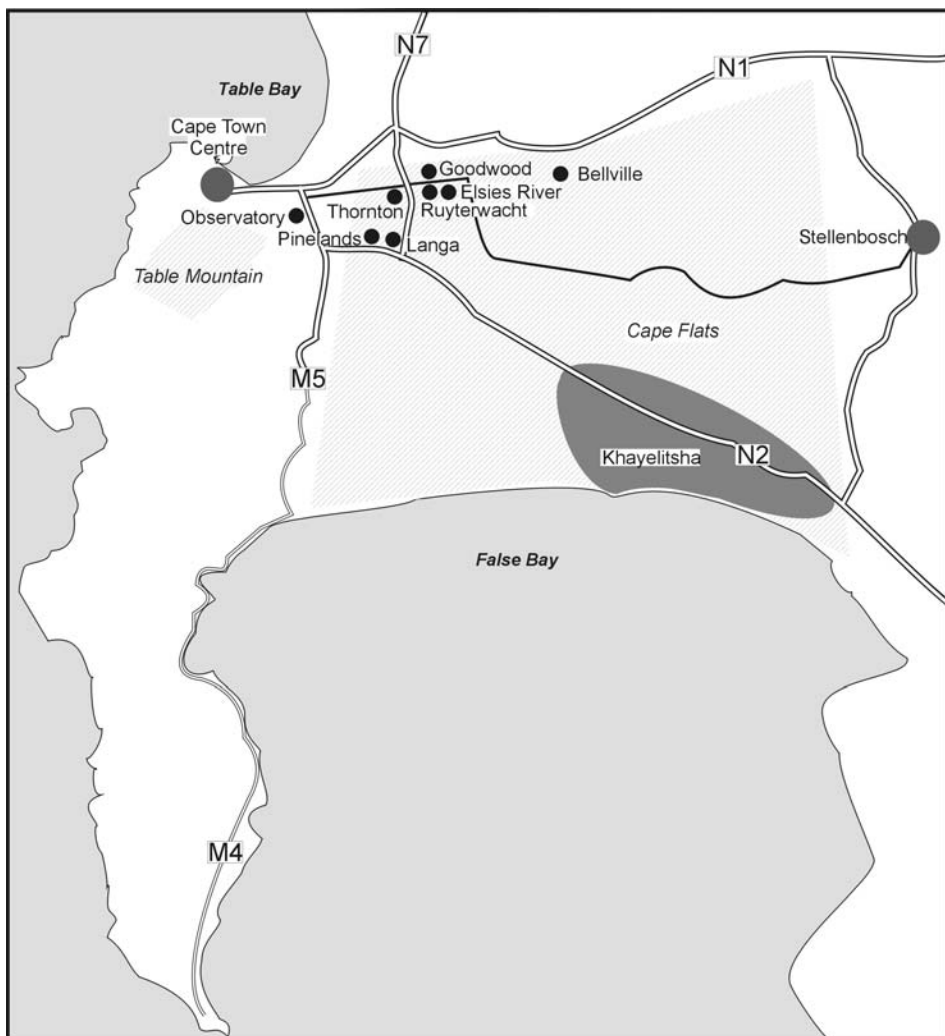
Studying the practices of upliftment in Epping Garden Village shows how and on what terms the category White was constructed in the twentieth century. In the 1930s and 1940s the residents were chosen for their potential to become good whites. The emphasis was on finding low-income residents who were respectable and socially ascending. But while Epping Garden Village was established in order to prevent and stop the degeneration of the respectable poor, it simultaneously offered a physical locus for it. Steadily, the suburb became ever more stigmatised.








The gradual abolition of the strict selection process can be seen in the people who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s, when EGV became largely institutionalised. The residents grew increasingly marginalised, and became more stigmatised. Currently they represent the downside of whiteness in the South African imagination. Although there were 'losers' in the first generation and 'winners' even in the era of institutionalisation, it can be said that there were particular embodied ideals, whiteness or a White identity that the uplifters attempted to impose on the residents of the suburb.

Afrikaner nation-building has come a long way from uniting the intellectuals behind the common cause of building a nation for the benefit

of 'racially superior' whites to today's harsh reality where there is no respectable White poverty, and those known as poor whites are an embarrassment to the middle-class whites. The identity of a good white is maintained not only in opposition to people of colour, but also in opposition to poor whites.

At present there are no longer uplifters who are interested in constructing good whites in the suburb, although the residents are still concerned about fitting into the framework of a good white. The recent social and political changes in South Africa have deprived them of their previously 'privileged' position, and they are seeking ways to adapt, or at least survive.



- | | |
|---|---|
|  National Route |  Table Mountain / Cape Flats |
|  Main road |  Khayelitsha squatter region |
|  Smaller road | |
|  Suburb | |
|  Town region | |



Source:
Cape Town Street Guide 1999/2000
(Map Studio, Durban)

Map 2: Cape Town area

3. FIELDWORK: FACING THE ISSUES OF TRUST AND BETRAYAL

“Annika, you are a foreigner and have read a lot of nonsense about us from the media. That worries me, for the media is not concerned about the truth. I will tell you the truth. The truth is, the Afrikaner never oppressed anybody. It is good for you to visit those poor white areas, there you can see how we have helped the people.” (Anel, 30, educator, Stellenbosch 1998.)

During most of our four-year-stay in South Africa my base was in the strictly middle-class-only Stellenbosch. Stellenbosch is considered a special place by *Afrikanerdom*. The home of the Afrikaner *intelligentsia*, reputedly tolerant, but also historically connected with the fabled and feared *Broederbond*,⁶⁶ all Afrikaner thoughts and ways of life are united there.

In Stellenbosch I lived with my young daughter within close quarters of two *verligte* (liberal) Afrikaner families. This helped me gain insight into middle-class Afrikaner ways and ideas, as I was solemnly educated - often through embodied experiences - in how to build and maintain an Afrikaner middle-class identity. Although what I found is by no means a complete and fully representative picture of the life of the Afrikaners, life in Stellenbosch helped me to get an invaluable insight into life in Epping Garden Village which, before 1990, was seen as a very Afrikaans suburb.

Epping Garden Village (Ruyterwacht) is located between the two main arteries N1 and N2 on the Cape Flats, the vast sandy plains surrounding Cape Town, and half an hour's drive from Stellenbosch. I began what was to become a three-and-a-half year fieldwork on the 21st of September 1997. The methods chosen for the fieldwork of this study were unstructured and semi-structured interviews and participant observation. I did participant observation, kept a field diary,⁶⁷ recorded 32 full-length (last-

⁶⁶ A secret organisation consisting of eminent Afrikaners, which was vastly influential during apartheid.

⁶⁷ In my field diary I aimed to follow the principles of thick description. Clifford Geertz (1973: 5-10) stated that the aim of doing ethnography is to dig into the deeper (thicker) layers of cultural meanings with regard to any given event.

ing from one to five hours) interviews, and conducted 40 other rather detailed interviews by taking notes by hand, sometimes typing them from memory. I also shot hours of videotape, and took photographs.

Part of the participant observation was taking part in public occasions (e.g., a ball, a festival of the Islamic community, a Dutch Reformed Church service, a community day etc.), while another part entailed private meetings and occasions. The number of people acting, one way or another, as my informants eventually numbered in the hundreds. In the early days of my fieldwork I used the 'snowballing method' to find informants, but in the end I was connected with a great number of people who were not limited to Ruyterwacht or Stellenbosch.

At the start EGV/Ruyterwacht seemed to be any middle-class white suburb to my unaccustomed gaze. Although there were fewer cars and people dressed less expensively, the poverty and the crowdedness to be found in squatter camps were absent. I was soon to discover that in the minds of the middle-class, poor whites belong to another world, and that their existence is a sensitive issue. Middle-class (whites), whilst avoiding the usage of politically incorrect expressions regarding people of colour, uninhibitedly call the poor whites *slegmense* (rubbish people). They are 'lazy', 'stupid', 'low-class', even 'low-lives'.

"Ag, man, that guy has a real poor white mentality. He drinks and he lies and he still thinks he is the man." (Kooos, 24, student, Stellenbosch.)

They are often considered hopeless, since they could not make it out of their wretched status even during apartheid. At the same time, some middle-class whites could pity and even feel protective towards poor whites.

During fieldwork anthropologists often find themselves in uncomfortable and compromising situations. I encountered disturbing reactions every time I discussed the topic of my thesis with middle-class people. Most white middle-class people whom I met confronted the topic with embarrassment, contempt or sarcasm, and even straightforward aggression, although I also experienced their attempts to relieve the social tension generated by the topic by joking.

Particularly middle-class Afrikaners reacted to my research topic with a fear of betrayal. Some feared that I would 'pull a crapanzano'. In 1986 Vincent Crapanzano published a book "*Waiting: The Whites of South Africa*" about the whites of a Western Cape town. The book was considered to be a very unrepresentative piece of writing on South African

whites, and furthermore, a betrayal of the confidence of his informants (Hugo 1987), causing a stir amongst the local academics. It is therefore interesting that nine years after the publication of the book, Goodwin and Schiff in their book on Afrikaners describe experiences that were similar to mine fifteen years later.

“In the course of the evening ‘Crapanzano’ became a verb: ‘Please don’t Crapanzano us in your book’. The evening grew more relaxed, but their fears were clear and their warning explicit. We promised to do our best to let the Afrikaners do the talking in our book.” (Goodwin and Schiff 1994: 15-16.)

Crapanzano’s ‘betrayal’ was not forgotten, and the *inkruiper* (treacherous interloper) was never forgiven. These reactions are indicative of the fear of outsiders, which I also encountered.⁶⁸

In comparison to the relentless poverty of the coloured and African informal settlements, the former poor whites still have many advantages in their areas. However, during the period of my fieldwork the newspapers and other researchers conducting fieldwork increasingly reported white poverty and new white squatter areas, particularly in the East Rand of Johannesburg.⁶⁹ These reports proved accurate when I conducted a short comparative fieldwork in Jan Hofmeyr in Johannesburg.

This area shares many traits with EGV, although life there is rather different at the moment. Historically different race relations influence the life in these two suburbs. As a whole, the Western Cape is known for its coloured population and as more liberal and laid back, and indeed race relations are tenser in Jan Hofmeyr, where the white residents are rather anxious over the new black residents in the suburb (Guillaume and Teppo 2002: 123-132).

⁶⁸ A senior academic whom I often met at the endless Stellenbosch dinner parties (they constituted a large part of the town’s social life) had developed the habit, after his second bottle of wine, of beginning to question me. His words were always almost exactly the same. *“Annika, have you heard of this anthropologist, this man named Crapanzano? They said he was a spy. He would come here and write stories about the people, there in Wyndal. Stories that some said were not true. Have you heard of this Crapanzano? You have? Is that what you are going to do? What?”*

⁶⁹ As a whole, white South Africans are still least affected by poverty and unemployment. The 1996 census found that less than one per cent of the South African poor was white, and while the overall unemployment figure increased by 1.8. per cent from 34.4. per cent in 1996 to 36.2 per cent in 1999, white unemployment increased by 1.5 per cent from 5.3 per cent to 6.8 per cent (October Household Surveys of 1996 and 1999, the expanded definition).

My first challenge was to find the correct approach to the field. A student who had studied EGV/Ruyterwacht for his honour's thesis in the 1990s wrote discouragingly:

“Because I presented myself as a researcher for Communicare, people were suspicious of my motives for researching their households. They continuously evaded certain issues and attempted to conceal information, which might adversely affect their qualification for welfare benefits. In entering this field, I was immediately enmeshed in a system of power relations that exist between welfare dependants and the officials who supervise the various welfare efforts.” (Browne 1995: 19.)

Browne describes how EGV families clearly resented scrutiny of their lives and the invasion of their privacy, but still did not feel they were in a position to refuse to participate. This was also my experience as a researcher affiliated with a local university. Fieldwork in a poor white area was a tough and consuming experience. People would not open up easily, and rapport developed only slowly, if at all. Thus the confidence or the lack of thereof, was a crucial issue during my whole fieldwork. In general, I was not trusted, and I found my informants were not entirely convinced of the benevolence of my motives.

It was therefore difficult to know whether my informants told me what they saw as the truth. When their stories were compared with the archival records, a frequent finding was that the informants had hidden agendas, and that many went to great lengths to avoid discussing negative issues and aspects of their lives with me, a stranger. The issues people did not tell me, or that were very seldom mentioned and even then merely hinted at, appeared abundantly from my archival data. Sometimes I was able to connect the archival information to real people who were still living in the suburb. I often discovered more from the archival records than the residents were willing to disclose, and I hope all my informants will find that my efforts to disguise everyone's true identity in this study is to their satisfaction.

Fieldwork in EGV/Ruyterwacht was a vastly informative experience of how inventive humans are when they are discussing personally sensitive topics. To find more approaches to these subjective accounts, microhistorian Carlo Ginzburg (1989) has suggested the notions of looking for clues and conducting detective work. These notions were useful, and truly needed in the constant comparisons and the cross-checking of stories before the picture began to clarify.

In EGV I was an outsider, a professional, and later I realised that my involvement with the University of Stellenbosch automatically placed me in a category of people to whom the residents would not tell everything, omitting things that could have placed them in a negative light. (Towards the end of the fieldwork I learned to notice these small, deliberately located silences.) Stellenbosch had trained most of their social workers. How could they know I was not there to discover things that would be turned against them in the end? While it is understandable that people did not want to talk about difficult issues, it made my fieldwork difficult, and the archival data invaluable.

ARCHIVAL MATERIAL AND ITS ANALYSIS

The aim of the archival study was to uncover discursive topics that were connected to the construction of the category White. While I gathered many individual life stories from the data, it would have been ethically risky to focus on those alone. Therefore, I concentrated on certain themes of rehabilitation.

This thesis's documentary sources consist mostly of the minutes of the board and of the different subcommittees of the Citizens' Housing League/Communicare, although there is also material from some other archives (see the list in the References). Of the Citizens' Housing League material, the Social Welfare Committee's minutes and reports are the main source of textual material for this thesis in which they have mainly served a dual purpose.

Firstly, through these minutes and reports I was able to achieve an understanding of the general developments in the suburb. Some gaps in the data, such as the lack of census data, were impossible to fill, and it was necessary to use other indicators. Despite my prolonged efforts, I found it a hopeless task to try and obtain detailed census data for the era between 1950 and 1979, although this data most certainly did exist – the apartheid administration was infamous for keeping precise records of everything. I was therefore often compelled to rely on coarse estimations when investigating this period. Secondly, comparing the archival material with my fieldwork data allowed me to approach many research questions holistically, which would have otherwise been too difficult to achieve. The archival material acquired from the Citizens' Housing League was problematic in several ways. Firstly, it consisted of the social workers' reports on the residents. These reports were written for a reader who was already

very familiar with the subject, and aware of the tones and nuances in the text. Therefore, in order to understand the particular ideas in the material, my first task was to learn to understand Afrikaner culture in general. Even the statistics presented were collected with an agenda in mind, and although the methods used were good in the 1940s, a researcher today finds many gaps and problems with the subjective and inconsistent approach used. Secondly, there were many gaps in the material. The reports were by no means complete, and several sources had to be consulted before any statements could be made. The third problem with the archival material was its bias. It mostly showed the residents' deviance and resistance, predominantly reflecting the negative side of their lives. Instances of tolerance, solidarity and laughter were more difficult to find.

Due to the data's incompleteness, the full quantification of the archival material was not viable, in the sense of measuring the number of occurrences of, for example, certain behaviour in the data. A critical data reduction decision in this study was to determine the unit of analysis. The empirical part of this thesis is thus concentrated on the *themes of upliftment* since the main interest is in the making of a good white.

Guided by the central themes of this thesis, the relevant parts of the minute books were photocopied, highlighted and entered into computer files. These computerised files began in 1928, and ended in 1994. This lengthy period of time could naturally not be considered as one, unchanging period, and the data could not be handled en masse. For the observance of the dynamics of different social phenomena during the area's existence, it was necessary to divide the data into sections of five or ten years. In the end I compiled ten text files⁷⁰ that were relatively easy to compare with one another. Nine of these text files consisted mostly of the agendas and minutes of the Social Welfare Committee and the Board of Citizens' Housing League. They included routine reports and case descriptions that the social workers wrote on the residents of Epping Garden Village, and the decisions, based on these presentations, that the board made. There were also some statistical data. I compiled a log file of the attached statistics and special reports that I then used and analysed separately to support or question the narratives that arose from the Social Welfare Committee's minutes.

The goal was to get both accurate microhistorical descriptions, an

⁷⁰ 1) Ruyterwacht in the 1930s; 2) Ruyterwacht 1940-1944; 3) Ruyterwacht 1945-1949; 4) Ruyterwacht 1950-1954; 5) Ruyterwacht 1955-1959; 6) Ruyterwacht in the 1960s; 7) Ruyterwacht in the 1970s; 8) Ruyterwacht in the 1980s, and 9) Ruyterwacht in the 1990s, and the special reports file, 'log file'.

understanding of the everyday life in the area, and to investigate them against the larger background of South African society of the time. The dangers of such a large mass of qualitative data are that one either tends to be bogged down by detail, or that one is too keen on seeing the big picture and thus neglects the everyday reality of the people, which should be the focus of a historical ethnography. Whilst trying to achieve both the goals, one can become overwhelmed by the data, which can be too abundant to be analysed within a reasonable period of time. I found a qualitative analysis program, *Atlas/ti* helpful in solving these problems.

First **the preliminary categories or codes** of the analysis of the data had to be defined. The next phase was coding, where the relevant data was categorised and marked in the ten text files.

Coding is a process of simultaneously reducing the data by dividing it into units of analysis and then coding each unit. In this study, each code covered a certain theme in the archival material. The relevance of these codes was largely defined by a) my preliminary research interests (such as race, space or social body), and b) the theoretical interests of this thesis (such as understanding the construction of a social category of a good white through embodiment methods). I also based these codes on the c) other themes (such as social relations, gender, control, cleanliness, and leisure) that had emerged during the fieldwork. These codes were then constantly modified throughout the process of analysis.

To give a picture of the size of the task at hand: in the final analysis, 41 'basic' codes had been used. Some of these were combined with one another to form eleven 'super-codes'. These codes and their combinations produced 4937 quotations. (List of codes in a frequency table, see Appendix 3.)

The fieldwork material consisted of participant observation, conversations and interviews. They were compared to and combined with the themes emerging from the archival material. After each new bout of fieldwork, I noted the key issues in my research diary. Later on, when more material had accumulated, I was able to compare the entries from the diary, interviews and archive material with newspaper articles, election and census statistics and other written sources. In the last phase I used theory to approach the story that had emerged from this combined body of data.

As the coding proceeded, general questions became more specific, and the coding developed as new categories were identified. After the coding had been completed, it was possible to make queries, to compare and combine several different categories in different time periods for the purposes of analysis. For instance, *what was the result when the code 'female*

role' was combined with the code 'relation to work', and how did these two differ in the 1950s and in the 1970s?

The answer to the above query was a list of quotes that presented every quotation where 'female role' and 'relation to work' co-occurred in the 1950s and 1970s. The quotations were then compared with other quotations, thus making generalisations possible.

The themes that I found and compared form the basis of the empirical chapters. Chapters five, six and seven of this thesis were largely written on the basis of this archival material, while chapter eight was mainly based on my fieldwork. Although useful, these historical sources did not give a complete picture of the life in the area, since those who used the power, not their subjects, wrote them. Thus, my fieldwork in Stellenbosch and EGV brought another, decisive dimension to the archival data.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF WHITES IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the South African debate it is often correctly emphasised that the people of colour were oppressed and deprived during the era of segregation (1910-1948) and apartheid (1948-1994). Less well known are the details of how racial segregation and its effects affected the white population, apart from the obvious accumulation of wealth.

Unlike their fellow citizens, contemporary white South Africans have seldom been subjects of anthropological research. Early studies on white South Africans were van den Berghe's *Caneville, the Social Structure of a South African Town* (1964) and Brian du Toit's *People of the Valley* (1974), which was a study of Afrikaner rural inhabitants in a remote valley of the Gamkaskloof. A controversial view presented by Crapanzano (1986) has possibly influenced some young researchers (e.g., Ribeiro 1995), but was much criticised by South African anthropologists (Hugo 1987: 328-358). Boonzaier and Sharp undertook one of the few attempts to look at the white South Africans of the 1990s. However, it is not a thorough research, merely a suggestion. (Boonzaier and Sharp 1995.) Local anthropologists have not examined the manifestations and ideas of whiteness in South Africa, and it can be safely concluded that these discourses have to date been under-researched.

In the field of cultural studies a new interest in studying South African whites emerged at the end of the millennium (see, e.g., Steyn 1997, 2001; Nuttall 2000) in the wake of the US-originating whiteness studies. During

the past ten years⁷¹ discussions on whiteness have become very popular in the intellectual circles of the United States. The topic has been embraced by literary and film critics, historians, sociologists and anthropologists.⁷² It has been seen as a new way to criticise the discourses of race and to eradicate racial inequality in the United States as well as elsewhere in the world (Hartigan 1997a: 495-496).

Ruth Frankenberg defines whiteness as a place, a *social construction* from which white people look at their social relations. Therefore 'whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices of race privilege and dominance that is usually normatively and structurally invisible, containing material and discursive dimensions. The colonial discourses clearly show the invisibility of whiteness and its unproblematic nature in the eyes of white/Western people. (1993: 1-6, 16-18.)

The study of whiteness means a shift of focus from the ways in which the centre of power determines racial margins to the ways in which that centre formulates itself. In other words, the emphasis is turned from the 'Other' to the 'Self'. Thereafter it is possible to perceive how the dominant group simultaneously constructs and reproduces its centre of power and its disempowered margins - such as the poor whites.

In the United States the main emphasis of the whiteness studies has been on making visible the invisible power position of whiteness by pointing out how the whites benefit from their social position, which they perceive as normal and natural (Lipsitz 1998).⁷³ In South Africa, the power position of whites has never been invisible. That makes it easier

⁷¹ African-American intellectuals such as W.E.B. du Bois, in his 1920 essay collection *Darkwater*, had looked at and dealt with issues of 'whiteness' long before it became an academic fashion. He perceived white American society from a marginal social position, which also made it possible to observe it critically.

⁷² Many basic whiteness studies emerge from a variety of disciplines. To mention but a few: Theodore Allen (1994,1997) and David Roediger (1991) were among the first to study whiteness from a historical perspective. David Ignatiev (1995) wrote an important historical account on the treatment of the Irish in the USA. Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) conceptualisations were ground breaking for whiteness studies, while Toni Morrison (1992) introduced the study of whiteness into the field of literature studies. Black feminist critique has been involved via the works of bell hooks (2000), while George Lipsitz (1998) has written studies on the economic advantage of being white; and Anne McClintock (1995) has looked at colonial history and whiteness.

⁷³ South African Melissa Steyn further defines whiteness "as a social positionality occupied by people of European descent as a consequence of the racial ideologies of European colonialism and imperialism". In the present social science debate this narrative has been named "Master Narrative of whiteness", which Steyn defines as "the colonial narrative, which had come to dominate other possible explanations for the differences between Europe and its Others". (Steyn 1997: 5-10.)

to study them, but it also makes it easy to stereotype and oversimplify the white experience. The shades of white seem to disappear where they should most be looked at.

The study of whiteness can be helpful to those anthropologists undertaking studies of Western cultures instead of concentrating on alien, exotic cultures. Studying whiteness offers the anthropologist an opportunity to 'decolonize anthropology' (Harrison 1991). But whiteness studies could also be a potential new way of justifying the self-absorbed concentration of the academic world on the dominant white centre, and lead to the legitimisation of white racism and nationalism instead of removing whiteness from its authoritarian position (Dyer 2000: 542). Some academics have therefore abandoned the whole discourse as an altogether too dangerous one.

Hence, also when studying South African whites, there is a need to stay alert and be aware of the pitfalls in the discourse of whiteness, and of the complexity of the whole concept of being White. Frankenberg notes that since whiteness has had many different phases and forms over time and space, it is a complexly constructed product of local, regional and global relations, past and present. Whiteness is a constantly changing category constructed together with class, gender and many other racial and cultural categories. (Frankenberg 2000: 454.) Mark McGuinness therefore warns us against forgetting to deconstruct whiteness when looking at the Other (2000: 225-230).

While both the United States and South Africa were melting pots of whites of 'all colours' (Jacobson 1998: 91-135), whiteness in both countries differs demographically and historically. Thus, transferring a North American discourse without significant critique to a South African context as such is not viable. Undoubtedly parts of this US-originating discourse on whiteness, such as the interest in hybridity in whiteness, the studies that demonstrate the othering of lower class whites, and discussions on the representations of Self and the Other *within* whiteness, are relevant when studying South African whites. These ideas and interests to be found in the whiteness studies have also influenced the background of this thesis.

While the anthropologically inspired approach to South African whiteness is still seeking its expression, local historians have conducted convincing work on whites. The work of Carnegie Commission was an indisputable starting point for the academic interest in poor whites. Many South African historians in particular have also thought the poor whites a worthy topic (see Dubow 1995; Freund 1992; Hyslop 1995; Marijke du

Toit 1992 and 2003; Morrell 1992; Parnell 1988 and 1992; Pirie 1982; van Onselen 1982; Vincent 2000).

However, all the above-mentioned studies (with the exception of du Toit) were concentrated on the Johannesburg area. In addition to the spatial gap in the poor whites research, there is a temporal one. Even those who did venture to examine the poor whites did not examine them during or after the apartheid era, and there is no apartheid era ethnography or history on them. However, due to their very marginality they were and are a crucial group for the formation of white South African identities and the category White.

4. THE WHITE BODY AND ITS BOUNDARIES

The purpose of this chapter is to give a theoretical insight into the construction of the category of the poor white. In the previous chapters it was shown how this category developed within the triangle of economic circumstances, contemporary practices and intellectual currents. This category was produced and reproduced through the practices of embodiment, on which the empirical chapters of this thesis will focus. Both the transformation of this category during the twentieth century and its symbolic boundaries become visible, when the shift in the practices of embodiment is studied.

The theoretical approach to the study of the category poor white and its making through embodiment consists of two partly overlapping levels of thought. On one hand are the ideas of body as the locus of power and social control, which perceive the body as semiotic and structurally signifying in the sphere of the social, while on the other hand the body is produced through practices and ensuing bodily experiences.

In the twentieth century South African society the body was strictly controlled. In Epping Garden Village, the field site of this study, the practices of embodiment were governed by the state, but were also affected by their seemingly passive subjects. In this chapter, the different aspects of the social body and embodiment and their relation to category White in the twentieth century South Africa are discussed.

THE BODY

In Western thinking, a human being is divided into mind and body. This division was inherited from the Greek philosophers through Descartes. The body was considered a mere impediment, whereas the mind was the primary factor that defined humans as social beings (Sahlins 1996). For a long time sociological theory too regarded civilisation as only possible if and where bodily desires were controlled. In the 1960s, this mind-body division was challenged by contemporary intellectuals such as Michel Foucault, who introduced the body as a focal point of the modern discourse on power. (Turner 1984: 41-49.)

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault also argued that the human body only becomes useful when it becomes politically controlled for then the elite can both submit it to rigid discipline and use it for its advantage in production (1980: 33). He pointed out that the state's gaze on the human body made it a subject of power in the seventeenth century. If the body could be understood, it could also be analysed and manipulated (Foucault 1980: 156-158).

The era of industrialism demanded more from the body. In the eighteenth century, pietistic asceticism and interests in capitalism were combined with medical instructions for a healthy life, the result being a moral order that produced disciplined labour. The duty to be healthy became a part of life management and self-control. From the religious point of view, illness was the result of immorality. (Turner 1984: 83.)

'Normality' became the measure of human behaviour as the medical science took over many of the tasks that had previously belonged to religion.⁷⁴ At the end of the eighteenth century medical technology was extended to the areas of urban planning and legislation (Foucault 1963: 38-39). In the twentieth century psychology, medical science and psychiatry supported the control of normality and made it scientific and thus seemingly value-free. Legislation affirmed these norms. (Foucault 1980: 335.)

In late modernity, bodily control is internalised and mostly a self-evident and unnoticed part of our daily lives. It can be perceived, for example, in the control of sexuality, which is still regulated by written and unwritten laws, and forms the crux of political battles, such as battles regarding abortion (Turner 1984: 39). Bryan S. Turner notes that people believe that they control their bodies themselves, while in fact the reproduction of the population is subject to institutional regulation: power, ideology and economy (1984: 59).

During the last decades, the influence of the degree of the social construction of the body has been disputed. The human body and embodiment, i.e. the way the culture marks and shapes bodies, have become popular topics in social, philosophical and anthropological debates. There are those who believe in the human body only as a biological entity, and those who see all the meanings, features and margins connected with the

⁷⁴ Interestingly, Foucault has argued that the medicalisation of the human body includes the social ways in which a group protects itself and excludes the perceivably harmful elements, establishes forms of assistance, and reacts to the poverty and fear of death (Foucault 1963: 16).

body as socially produced. An extreme version of this thinking is to question the possibility of obtaining any valid knowledge pertaining to the human body, as all biological knowledge is culturally defined. This discussion is largely concentrated on the issues of how, and to what extent, the human body carries cultural meanings. This discourse is known as the *social constructionism of the body*.⁷⁵ (Shilling 1993: 70.)

This study subscribes to Mary Douglas' claim that the body is the most powerful and most readily available symbol in all societies (1970: viii, 70). Its meaning and the regulation of these meanings vary culturally. The notion of the body as an image of a society is a central one for this thesis since throughout the twentieth century the white South African community wrote its commandments on the bodies of poor whites.

The Symbolic Boundaries of the Poor White Body

Douglas sees the human body as a perfect *tabula rasa*, the form and structure of the human community is culturally defined in it. The body is a metaphor of the sacred, but also of potential danger, and its hidden parts and secretions symbolise disorder and chaos. These hidden parts have to be excluded and enclosed with rituals (such as circumcision) and taboos (such as menstruation) to protect the social order. Bodily rituals and taboos reflect the commitment of a community's members to shared symbols. The nature, content and timing of bodily functions are always culturally interpreted and regulated. (Douglas 1970: 98-99.)

Each culture has sensitive areas, such as sexuality and eating, which are risky and problematic, because they are surrounded by ideas of pollution. Where the system is most controlling, its margins are also most visible. Douglas argues that every system of ideas is most vulnerable at its boundaries, and therefore all boundaries are dangerous. Bodily margins symbolise and represent cultural margins. An individual's bodily and emotional experience, or his cultural and social experience, cannot be disconnected. (Douglas 1966: 121.)

In our everyday lives, these dangerous areas of life are primarily regulated in the vulnerable margins of the human body, in other words, in the bodily orifices and surfaces. When an individual allows anything inside

⁷⁵ While in the Cartesian dualisms it was habitual to divide the world between bodies and objects, contemporary theorists have pointed out that "the 'mind' is an effect of bodily action in the world and of becoming a person from a recognition of one's position in a diverse network of social relations" (Burkitt 1999: 13).

his body, he takes into account social rules, as the individual and social margins of the body are conflated. Bodily margins and the image of body are therefore readily available sources of pollution beliefs. (Douglas 1966: 128.)

While the human body is the strongest metaphor of the society, in the late nineteenth century illness became the strongest metaphor of structural crisis (classifying what is considered deviance, such as homosexuality, as an illness is a good example). Thus illness indicates disorder metaphorically, literally and politically (Turner 1984: 114). Since the poor whites were conceptualised as social pathologies, their presence was also tolerated to the same, varying degree that the mainstream white society tolerated disorder and illness. For instance, in the 1930s, some concerned politicians tried to utilize the perceived threat of mixed marriages as an electoral weapon. In their campaign, working-class Afrikaner women were represented as particularly inclined towards marrying African men (Hyslop 1995: 57-59). This insinuated that they were more susceptible to sexual relations with blacks - allowing them inside their bodies *and* thus also in their communities, which indicated vulnerability to racial pollution and miscegenation.

While some historians have discussed the White South African's pre-apartheid era 'racial obsession' as instances of individual and collective madness (Hyslop 1995: 59; Coetzee 1991: 30), it can also be viewed from the perspective of drawing of the social boundaries, and creating structure for social categories.

Concepts of pollution, or purity and dirt are attached to the body and the cultural regulation of its functions and proper usage. Douglas points out that purity is a closely controlled concept that fortifies and reflects the worldview and symbolic order in all human societies. Dirt, therefore, must be avoided, for it represents danger that attacks the social margins. (Douglas 1966: 161.) Ideas of purity and dirt reflect cultural ideas and maintain the symbolic boundaries. While in, say, India the boundaries between castes system are guarded with ideas of purity and dirt, in South Africa the (often conflated) boundaries of race and class were also thus protected.

The transgression of these boundaries offends the social order, and symbolises chaos and social disorder. For instance 'wrong' sexual behaviour awakes disgust, which is a warning signal and a guardian of the culturally defined boundaries.⁷⁶ The connections between the ideas of dirt

⁷⁶ Miller (1997) described this aversion in length in the *Anatomy of Disgust*.

and low morality are obvious. During my stay in South Africa I repeatedly encountered the negative stereotype of poor whites as morally and physically filthy. In the jokes South Africans made about my research topic, this stereotype frequently occurred. Males were presented as unwashed, lazy and smelly, while the poor white women were promiscuous, perhaps prostitutes.

"So Annika, you go [into Ruyterwacht] and you interview the poor white, but ha ha, first you have to lift up the lid from the garbage can where he lives!" (Piet, 28, Saldanha.)

Different boundaries are frequently combined with one another. E.g., racial boundaries are often more symbolic than based on any perceptible physical differences. Still, these symbolic boundaries contribute to the formation of concrete spatial boundaries, which, in turn, can never exist without a symbolic dimension.⁷⁷ In South Africa, the boundaries surrounding the poor white bodies were drawn in the realms of the cultural and moral, and conflated with racial, gender, class and spatial boundaries.

While many societies treat their poor as marginal and potentially contagious, and tend to form boundaries to keep them away, in South Africa racial thinking placed the poor whites in an exceptional position. In addition to the stigma of being poor, they were also suspected of frequent transgressions of racial boundaries, and thus being polluted by racial miscegenation. Therefore, in *the structural and symbolic sense*, blaming the poor whites for an inability to control their bodily functions in culturally sensitive areas such as sexuality, was also to blame them for an inability to maintain the social boundaries around the category White, which seemed threatened.

Practices of the White Body

In order to belong to the category White at all, and to overcome the prejudices described above, the residents of Epping Garden Village had to constantly demonstrate their keenness for and commitment to White

⁷⁷ Symbolic boundaries have been studied from many different perspectives, see e.g. Lamont 1992, 2000. Cynthia Fuchs Epstein (1992: 233) defines them as marking social territories, "signalling who ought to be admitted and who excluded".

bodily values (e.g. cleanliness). Since the poor white body had been defined differently from other white bodies, it did and still does not command respect similar to that of a middle-class white body. Different bodily behaviour is also expected from poor whites.

In fact, the poor whites – or those labelled as such - had to obey the taboos and rituals of whiteness *more* meticulously than the middle-class whites ever did, since symbolically they were keeping disorder at a distance, protecting the white society proper from racial intrusion. For a poor white, who was often suspected of transgressions also in this area of life, sexual chastity was one of the ways to display a commitment to the maintenance of social boundaries. For example, in the socially ascending poor white families, girls were strictly guarded against premarital sexual relations.

One way to approach local individuals and their consciousness is by concentrating on the bodily experience of being a poor white. An individual's bodily experience is always a culturally constructed and varying experience of reality. It is framed and articulated in the expression of that experience which is, however, never the same as reality (Bruner 1986: 6). Thus, there is a multitude of experiences (such as the poor white experience) which all have their own constitution (Geertz 1986: 380).

Marcel Mauss has described as "body techniques", which he portrays as "the ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies"(1979: 97). In South Africa, these bodily practices had a certain manner when they concerned those seen as poor whites, and the poor white experience can be examined through these practices.

Mauss also coined the word *habitus* to describe the bodily positions and habits that different cultures imprinted in human bodies (1979: 101). Pierre Bourdieu developed this term further in order to develop an understanding of the relationship between social structure and practice. For Bourdieu, habitus refers to socially acquired, embodied systems of dispositions, which generate practices and perceptions. Habitus means classificatory and judgmental propensities which are imprinted in the deep structures of society. These propensities are manifested in attitudes and embodied phenomena such as bodily behaviour and individual taste. Habitus is the unconscious, embodied disposition in which individuals read and interpret events in everyday life, and the fields in which they operate. It is a predisposed orientation to being in the world, which sits deep in human minds and, just as importantly, in human bodies. Therefore, habitus is the key concept that connects human practices with social structures. (Bourdieu 1994: 95-110.)

In Bourdieu's theory of practice, the notion of habitus, on the one hand, aims to go beyond the theories of methodological individualism such as phenomenology, that explain practices as a non-reflected basis for social life. On the other hand, this notion seeks to avoid the structuralist or structural functionalist views, which tend to perceive practice as too constituted and pre-ordained. For him, social life is an interaction of structures, dispositions and actions which, together with social structures (fields, institutions and discourses) and embodied knowledge produce orientations to practice, which, in turn, influence social structures. (Postone, LiPuma and Calhoun 1993: 4.)

Habitus is relational, manifested in a multitude of human characteristics in different cultural and historical locations, and in what Bourdieu called 'social spaces'. These semi-autonomous social spaces or *fields* are characterized by their own agents (such as poor whites, social workers and middle-class whites), their own history and their own logic. The fields are built with different principles of differentiation, namely capital, which can be economic and cultural. Economic capital refers to material resources, while cultural capital refers to knowledge and skills such as education. Bourdieu pointed out that these capitals can also be seen as *symbolic* capital once it is perceived and recognized as such in a system of classification (Bourdieu 1998: 85). Thus, the quantity of cultural and economic capital that an agent (a group, class or a person) has, grants it (them or him/her) a certain position and a tendency towards certain habitus (Bourdieu 1998: 6-9). However, each field is dependent on other fields. Capital rewards gained in one field may be transferred to another. Moreover, each field, connected to class relations, is a site of internal struggles and battles over the power to define a field. (Postone et al. 1993: 6.)

A person living in a poor white suburb could claim symbolic capital by showing identification with the middle-class habitus. If there was no money, one could still always compete with the neighbours over who had most avidly internalised the White way of life with all its trappings.

Habitus can be simultaneously individual and collective, manifested in the individual behaviour, and the likes and dislikes of a whole class of people. The idea of habitus helps to understand the principles of differentiation in different societies. This task is carried out by understanding the structures of differences, which reveals what is important in any social world, and how the power is distributed, and what kind of capital is important. (Bourdieu 1998: 31-32.)

Despite all the pressure to contrary, sometimes being as middle-class as possible was *not* the best tactic of day-to-day living in a poor white

suburb. Other things, such as an ability to manipulate social workers, could be equally important.

Bourdieu's model of the role of habitus is not merely a mechanical and determinist one, but lies halfway between forces of structure and agency. In other words, between the material, or structural influences shaping human action as opposed to self-directed, individual action having the potential to alter social structures. The ideas of habitus, capital and field are central to the understanding of how those seen as poor whites were primarily turned into proper whites through their shared bodily experiences and body techniques, and what the social positions they took were, and what kind of social dispositions they produced.

Social Games and Tactics in the EGV

For Bourdieu, habitus is not only differentiated, but also differentiating, and leaves some space for individuals' agency. In the structured world, individuals gain agency by strategically engaging the rules of social situations, manipulating them as best they can. While doing this, they become totally absorbed in these practices of social games – in a sense they play the game, while the game also plays them. (Bourdieu 1998: 76-81.)

A social field with its own games and rules developed in the Epping Garden Village. The players were the residents and the professionals, who came to work in the suburb. The rules defined the way the game was played, but left room for individual manoeuvring. After they had moved into the suburb, the residents sooner or later gained an understanding of how the game worked, and to tell a good move from bad. They developed skills in playing, and therefore agency. They learned to read the field, and understand what was going on at any given moment.

Habitus was a key to this ability to understand the social situations connected to embodiment and strategic action. E.g., it was good and useful to look proper, and to emphasize your whiteness, but it could be even more proper to show disinterest, and to withdraw from the field of the social, simultaneously distancing oneself from the rest of the residents and their marginal social position.

Many behaviours that occurred in Epping Garden Village were therefore not only due to the constraints of social control, they were also conscious, and sometimes utilitarian, responses by residents who aimed to play the game of good white the best they could.

LiPuma has pointed out that a theory that explains social order and

dynamics in one field, cannot explain those classification systems that go through all fields (1993: 28). He suggests that Bourdieu's ideas of social structure should be combined with a more detailed and central theory of culture and the symbolic order if it also wants to explain the cultural and historical specificity of the social phenomena under discussion (LiPuma 1993: 33). In this thesis, Bourdieu's ideas have only been utilized to explain the dynamics in the field that was formed *within* the suburb. It has been complemented with ideas from other theorists, such as Mary Douglas and Michel de Certeau.

The players in EGV were not living in an isolated island, but surrounded by a society and its racially formed power relations that constantly affected them. The suburb was continually subjected to *strategies* developed by those in power.

According to de Certeau, a strategy is the "calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject, with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated" (1984: 35-36). He summarises his concept of strategy by stating that "strategies are actions which, thanks to the establishment of a place of power (the property of a proper), elaborate theoretical places (systems and totalizing discourses) capable of articulating an ensemble of physical places in which forces are distributed" (1984: 38).

Ian Buchanan has noted that in de Certeau's understanding of everyday life, the power structure is thus interpreted in the cultural logic, which is thus more reminiscent of a menu with several options than an all-imposing grid (Buchanan 2000: 100).

In the apartheid era in South Africa, however, the social order was often unyielding. The options on the menu were fewer, and defined by one's racial status. The social control to which Whites were subjected was much more finely tuned than that of Africans. Instead of the open oppression that was found in the townships, details of everyday life were controlled. In the face of this powerful strategy, many EGV residents also developed what de Certeau has named 'tactics': ways to subtly escape and evade the grip of power (1984: 30-38). In Epping Garden Village, one of these tactics was to play the game of a good white.

After the end of apartheid when the official control evaporated, the power structures in EGV were also loosened and the options on this menu were thus increased. However, the models and boundaries inherited from the previous order still influence those options. The games of being a good white are still being played, and tactics are still being employed. Their logic has remained the same, but the content has changed. The struggle

for symbolic power is a very defining aspect in all this. Symbolic power has indeed proven difficult to achieve, despite the residents' efforts. This has everything to do with the fact that the poor whites are still perceived as what we, following Eriksen's (2001: 265) lead, could describe as the *ethnic anomalies* in the South African society.

The Poor Whites as Ethnic Anomalies

In all societies, bodily control is simultaneously a strategy of internal categorisation as well as of exclusion. Every culture has its own bodily classification and traditions that help to strengthen communities' identities. Every classificatory system also contains phenomena that do not fit in, and each culture must resist those doubts that undermine its basic assumptions. Douglas notes that all cultures must *deal with the anomalies* that its classificatory system produces, or they lose their legitimacy.⁷⁸ This is an important point when we look at the treatment of poor whites in their ambiguous position between the racial categories of White and Non-white, being officially White, but still not considered pure and complete members of that category.

The content of the term poor white changed significantly during the twentieth century, and their degree of anomalousness varied. Still, the central principle of the making of the category White remained constant: the people known as poor whites were the last people to be included.

The ways the society managed their anomalousness affected their treatment, and the ways poor whites (and other South Africans) experienced their social position. Uplifting the habitus of poor whites was seen as a cure for their marginality. If they were no longer poor and uneducated, they would definitely become more White. Adding to their symbolic

⁷⁸ Ambiguity can be erased *through interpretation*. The Nuer people interpret deformed babies as hippopotamus children. Since hippos belong to the water, these babies are drowned. The existence of an *anomaly can be physically controlled*. In some West African societies twins are killed immediately after birth. This habit eliminates social deviance in this society that believes that two human beings cannot be born from the same womb at the same time. In Western societies plastic surgery is used to 'correct' errors in beauty. A rule on *avoiding anomalies fortifies cultural definitions of normal*. When fat people are discriminated against, thinness becomes culturally rewarded. Anomalies can be *classified as dangerous*. Witch-hunts often target people who do not fit the cultural models. Ambiguous symbols can be used in the same way in rituals as they are used in poetry and mythology: to *strengthen the meaning*, or to draw attention to other levels of being. (Douglas 1966: 39-40, author's emphasis.)

(cultural) capital would make them more credible Whites and differentiate them from coloureds and Africans. These differences would be most efficiently visible if they were shown in the embodiment of poor whites. Making them cleaner and healthier and more refined was effective and permanent. They needed strong, resilient bodily and symbolic boundaries, which the proper habitus thus fortified.

The circumstances of the surrounding society shape the boundaries around the perceived social threats. Following Douglas' lead, Bryan S. Turner (1984) suggests that the inside of the body is the symbol of privacy and unbroken social system, whereas the outside represents the society and the field of social action. Therefore, the human body is analogous to community. The world outside one's own community can be regarded as strange and dirty, whereas the inside is pure and healthy.

Under conditions of social conflict, concern about the established bodily and social boundaries escalates, and the margins of bodies and communities are fortified. By the same token, bodily margins can become zones of violence. This happens in wars, where the enemy's women are raped in order to pollute their sacred inner space - the womb. Conversely, the Other becomes a threat to the individual and social body, and can be classified as dirt.

“Racially degraded people – women and men – are also devalued as dirt: Experienced as deep-down filthy; sexualised as dirty; desired as dirty for fucking and for genocide. Racist ideology spells out how the degraded race is filthy and intensely sexed, dirty and sensual, contaminating.” (Dworkin 1987: 203.)

In order to understand the pervasiveness and the sheer energy that was invested in the gaze to which the boundaries around poor whites were subjected, it is essential to recognize the fragility of the category White in South Africa. The vulnerability of racial and social margins was indeed laid bare in the Cape Colony where nobody knew who was *really* White.

THE WHITE NIGHTMARE OF RACIAL MISCEGENATION

In the eugenic thinking, the human body was perceived as the key to the success or downfall of a 'race'. Relationships and marriages between individuals as well as the relationships between groups of people needed

regulation. The means to this end were legislation, social and spatial control.

According to eugenics, being a member of a 'race' meant a racial duty attached to certain norms of bodily behaviour. Those who did not follow these norms revealed themselves as racially unworthy. An individual had to prove his or her racial worthiness continuously. The most important duty for a member of a race was to practice racial purity, since bastardisation was believed to cause the decay of a race (Röhr 1996: 97). Ideally, a white person and the white race were not only superior to any other race, but pure and intact.

In South Africa these eugenic thoughts emerged in both English and Afrikaner academics' work, which were laden with racial essentialism (Crapanzano 1986: 20). Their thinking deeply influenced the ideological fathers of apartheid (Ribeiro 1995: 9).

"The mixing of blood between the white and black races produces inferior human material in biological terms (physically and mentally). Miscegenation between whites and non-whites is therefore shown by biological research to be detrimental." (Cronjé 1946: 74.)

An ability to abstain sexually and to control the direction of sexual desires was therefore a sign of a pure race. Since the Africans were seen as child-like, they were not expected to be capable of managing their instincts, whereas white men had to fight the temptation, and not spread their seed among the lower races.⁷⁹ This was presumably easy for a racially worthy man, but for an already weak specimen, such as a poor white, this task might prove impossible. Cronjé, a vital philosopher behind apartheid, was forever afraid of *bloedvermenging* (mixing of blood) between whites and people of colour (Ribeiro 1995: 25).

The African was seen as racially polluting, physically dirty, and equipped with sexually inferior habits and properties. He threatened the cleanliness and health of a society. In South Africa (as everywhere else) racism is combined with the images of sexuality and dirt. Africans were made to live in the midst of physical dirt under conditions that also reflect their sexual denouncement (Dworkin 1987: 205-207).

⁷⁹ White women were scarce in the colonial hinterlands. This fact provides a new viewpoint of the shibboleths of the 'white man's burden'. The existence of a large 'mulato' or 'mestizo' or 'coloured' population in all the former colonial countries proves that these ideals of racial exclusivity in sexual behaviour were never attained.

Throughout colonial history the conquered people or the opposing sides have been seen as objects of desire, but also as disgusting. Robert Young has examined the sexuality between the Self and the Other, and the ensuing hybridity. He notes how English-ness has been formed in this relation with the Other, and hybridity was seen as unnatural, whereas purity of race was the ideal (1995: 3-6).

In German eugenic writings of the 1930s, the idea of a pure biological race was frequently combined with the idea of an uncontaminated cultural unity, a 'racial soul' (*die Rassenseele*),⁸⁰ which was collectively inherited by members of the same race. The mixing of races would disturb and destroy this unity (Teppo 1996: 85). In the eugenic thinking, the ideas of race often claimed to lean on 'scientific' biological ideas, but in fact they were deeply influenced by cultural ideas and practices (Teppo 1996: 120).

In colonial settings such as in South Africa, the threat of racial miscegenation was seen as imminent. In this society, where inter-racial relationships occurred (if not always openly), the social, spatial and symbolic barriers between racial categories had to be constructed stronger than in those societies where people did not constantly have close encounters with the Other.

White: a Hazy Category

Discourses and signifiers of whiteness have varied in twentieth century South Africa. In South African society, and particularly in Cape Town and its surroundings where the racial purity of people was often questioned, inclusion in and exclusion from the white race were based on physical features, language and social (cultural and economic) status. Also, as Graham Watson has shown in his study on the process of passing for white, on ad hoc decisions (1970: 18-19).

⁸⁰ In the German thought of the 1930s, *Rassenseele* was a biological expression of *Volkseele*, 'the soul of the nation'. After World War II, the blatantness of these terms was avoided in South Africa by including the essence of both the terms in the Afrikaans expression *volksiel*. Now, in the organic analogies of the Afrikaner intellectuals, the *volk* was seen as an organic unity, which was simultaneously a biological and a social entity. "Thus one speaks of the organic understanding or view of the nation: the nation as a natural, organically grown entity with an inner, deeper unity" ("Aldus word dan van die *organiese volksbegrip* of *-opvatting* gepraat: die volk as 'n natuurlike organies-gegroeide geheel met 'n innerlike, diepere eenheid") (Cronjé 1958: 38).

Embodiment and distinctions in the presentation of self (Goffman 1959) are often the way the category of a poor white is constructed, not only in South Africa, but in the United States as well. There, white trash is connected with dirt, bodily demeanour and tastelessness – everything that is low and dangerous in modern society (Kipnis and Reeder 1997: 113-130). Style and appearance have become signs of institutionalised social order (Chaney 1993: 38-39).

The embodied and individual style, more than class position, can show a person's racial position, and where his or her identity is located. This is particularly important in South Africa, where the racially bound styles can still be spotted in everyday life. Africans do not wear khaki shorts, and no coloured person wants to be seen in a traditional African costume. Although these signifiers are gradually relaxing and vanishing in the present South Africa, particularly in the youth culture (e.g., white youngsters greet one another with an 'African handshake'), they are still a long way from becoming insignificant.

These recent signs of relaxation of racially defined boundaries of style are also signs of *hybridity*. Hybridity in its meaning of 'impure', 'racially contaminated', or 'a genetic deviation' was a zoological term to describe the offspring of 'mixed-race crossings'. The epistemological origins of the term 'hybridity' are therefore to be found in scientific racism. At the end of the twentieth century, 'hybridity' and 'hybrid' were re-established to mean cultural synthesis, and celebrated as new forms of creativity. (Ifekwunigwe 1999: 188-189.)

We often take the hybridity of the Other for granted, seeing the Self as something static, and accept the tendency towards hybridity as the sole attribute of the Other (McGuinness 2000: 229). Hybridity in South African white cultures has never been properly examined, although it – or its rejection – was at the very core of the apartheid ideology. Hybridity in the Afrikaner culture, breed and language (save for certain canonised parts and practices, such as the many words from African, Malay or San languages found in Afrikaans) was and is a sensitive topic.

In his essay on Sophiatown, Ulf Hannerz explores the 'mosaic' view of culture in comparison to the 'ecumene' view. The mosaic approach to culture perceives cultures as separate entities and creolization as harmful. In his view, the culture promoted by apartheid was an extreme example of a mosaic culture, while hybridity and creolization tend to flourish under conditions of inequality. (Hannerz 1997: 167.)

Following his argument, it is evident that the poorest of South African whites were seen as the most receptive and closest in physical proxim-

ity and racial mixing to the impure cultural influence of the Other, and therefore they had to be protected from outside influences with social engineering techniques. One vital part of this social engineering was the planning of the urban space, which will be studied in more detail later.

Apartheid legislation concerned itself with every realm of space and social action. In South Africa racial miscegenation became officially regulated when apartheid legislation prevented marriages and sexual relations (The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act Amendment of 1950) between whites and non-whites. The Group Areas Act of 1950 segregated public and urban spaces. This did not end all interracial relationships, but rather initiated an era of double standards.

The preoccupation with the sexuality of the Other was an underlying theme during the apartheid era. Below a “Johannesburg Attorney who holds a degree in Psychology” describes an interracial sexual encounter in his steamy “shocking exposé of sex across the colour line in Hillbrow, Johannesburg”.

“He was a new man, pulsating with new emotions, new desires. In no time their bodies were riveted, electrically, ecstatically. Her skin was a shade or two darker than his as she cuddled up to him purring like a kitten and unblushingly brushing her breasts against him.” (Des Troye 1963: 18.)

The woman is brazen, driven by her feral instinct, whereas the (white) man, exhausted by the weight of his civilized self, feels a new sense of revival as he connects to this primitive woman-animal. This text was written in the 1960s, but even during my stay in South Africa I often could not help but notice how strong the allure of the Other still is.

The Western Province has a large coloured population, a consequence of racial mixing between whites and the Other. Despite the denials by white South Africans that I so often heard, proof of the extensive racial interbreeding in the earlier days of the colony is immense.⁸¹ In fact, during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries Dutch East India Company had a policy against bringing European women into colonies. They also

⁸¹ During my fieldwork I often heard a claim that the coloured population of the Western Cape is the offspring of the ‘detrribalised’ blacks and Khoisan, and the Malay population, and that very light coloureds are a result of relationships between whites and Malays or Khoisans, but rarely with the blacks who are still seen to be on the lowest step of the racial hierarchy.

encouraged the system of concubinage with the local women, a custom that was also condoned by the British Empire. The remains of this practice were condemned only in the early twentieth century. (Stoler 1997: 16-17.)

Thus in South Africa the category White was vague from the start, and racial scientists experienced difficulties in placing the Afrikaners in the racial hierarchy. Some eugenicists defined the Afrikaners as an entirely new race and a British racist discourse promoted the idea of the Boer as a racial degenerate (Dubow 1995: 270-275; McClintock 1995: 270). It was difficult to define who qualified as a white in South Africa (Western 1997: 207). Since many old Afrikaner families also had African ancestors, the category White needed additional definitions and support. The very people who were supposed to be the essence of the *volk*, were also threatened by their own Otherness. Segregation by spatial and legislative measures strengthened the feeble category White.

Fierce Calvinism further reinforced people's beliefs in sexual chastity, whereas the existence of the coloureds proved the opposite. This also made the moral self-image of the white population questionable. Their ancestors had defiled themselves in the gutters of illegitimate sexuality, and their offspring had to correct their errors. Dan O'Meara assesses certain aspects in H.F. Verwoerd's (South Africa's sixth Prime Minister - a known apartheid social engineer) personality and beliefs as follows:

“Verwoerd’s constant need to prove his claim to ethnic purity may well have been tested at another, personally more difficult level. In 1927 he had married Elisabeth (Betsie) Schoombee. Common racist gossip among English-speaking opponents of Verwoerd made frequent reference to the fact that ‘anyone’ could tell that Betsie Verwoerd’s appearance was not as pure white as her husband’s ideology. Given white South Africa’s hyper-active racial sensors, it is possible that Die Hollander heard and was wounded by such frequent allusions to his wife’s presumed racial origins.” (O’Meara 1996: 93.)

In the end, even the fiercest architects of apartheid could not tell who was really white. The extent of the complex task that the apartheid race classifiers had in their endeavour to discover who was truly white and who coloured, is illustrated by Watson in his case study of white/coloured families in his book *Passing for White* (Watson 1970:18-22). Thus, essentialism was necessary in the formation of the racial categories if any

credibility was to be maintained. Vincent Crapanzano noted this tendency during his fieldwork in South Africa in the 1980s.

“South Africa’s apartheid, understood, as here, in its broadest sense, is an extreme case of the Western predisposition to classify and categorize just about everything in essentialist terms. In this view, once an object has been classified, it is forever that object or being. It has an identity. It partakes of a particular essence.” (Crapanzano 1986: 20.)

The artificiality of the category White becomes visible when one grasps how fragile its boundaries really are. Common sense dictates that physical features should be the most important way of telling a white from a coloured person. The socially constructed nature of these categories becomes very transparent when one sees the difficulties an uninitiated person has when making these racial distinctions.⁸²

Most South Africans are skilled at and systematic in these classifications. The signifiers of race are based on physical features, language and the social (cultural and economic) status, even taste. Small things, such as taste in music, clothing,⁸³ or pronunciation of Afrikaans, matter. This ability is a product of a learning process and socialisation. I came to understand some aspects of this process by observing my own changing perceptions. During my first two years in South Africa I lived through numerous moments of confusion and feelings of absurdity when everyone else was always able to tell a dark-skinned White from a light-skinned Coloured, a Malay face from Indian features, and a coloured person from an African.

I seemed to be oblivious to these classifications and sub-classifications, until one day I realised I was able to make them myself by following minuscule embodied clues such as behaviour, the way the person carried oneself, clothing, the way the person looked at me, and related to me. It was still a tricky game, and often one that regularly confused even South Africans. More than once I bore witness to conversations during which people argued over the ethnicity of a third party, finally arriving at a consensus.

⁸² In the Western Cape I was told that before the time of TV (1975) and even thereafter SA whites who did not often see or socialise with ‘coloureds’ (i.e. people from other provinces), were often also confused. I was also, twice, thought to be a coloured person. Let it be mentioned here that I have a very pale complexion.

⁸³ One such distinction is the idea of a ‘Slamse (Islam) smaak’ – which is the perceived as the Cape Malays’ taste for glittery, shiny, mostly cheap articles.

The conversations followed a basic pattern, which is exemplified by the dialogue below:

A: *She is a Naika.* (An Indian woman.)

B: *No way man, look at those eyes, sy is mos 'n kleurling*
(She is coloured.)

A: *Ag, man, there is no way a coloured girl has a hair like that.*

B: *But I have seen that many times on a meidjie.* (Coloured girl.)

This continued until the disputants had agreed on a clue that really settled the issue. A person who has no identifiable race is a strange, if not impossible anomaly. In everyday social interaction it was and still is crucial to know a person's race. In the census of 1996 only less than one per cent of South Africans had declared their race as 'Other' when the alternatives given were white, African, Indian and coloured.

What makes these distinctions even trickier – particularly in coloured Cape Town – is the commonness of Southern European, in particular Portuguese, immigrants in South Africa. In the prevailing racial ideology the Southern Europeans were seen as White, resulting in many South African whites using 'Latin blood' as an explanation for their darker complexions. This has also made darkish whites claiming Southern European ancestry the butt of many jokes.

Several social scientists have presented estimations on the number of mixed marriages and the generality of mixed descent in the group classified as White during apartheid. These estimations vary from ten per cent to 40 per cent (van den Berghe 1964: 36).

Since it was difficult to tell whites and coloureds apart purely from physical difference, other things became important. *Being White in South Africa meant, and still means for many people, living and acting according certain embodied standards and ideals.* The essence of whiteness was about *what* you were, but equally importantly, *how* you were.

Passing for White

Racial segregation in the twentieth century South Africa created a group of people called the 'pass-whites', or 'play-whites'. They were by birth or race classification coloured people.⁸⁴ They were of a light complexion, and lived in the areas reserved only for whites, thus grasping an opportunity to climb into a far more advantageous social position as a White.

Pass-white is an important notion in the discourses of whiteness in South Africa. They existed in the remotest boundary of the white race, in constant danger of being expelled from it. Conversely, it was dangerous for a dubious-looking white to be seen as a pass-white. Therefore it is important to examine how and on what grounds they were included or excluded from the racial category White.

Turning into a White was a long and complicated process, called *passing for white*. It often meant moving to another part of the country, where the aspirant White was not known as a coloured person, or moving to an area where it was possible to establish a 'respectable' way of life. In South Africa, this was easiest to do in Cape Town, which was big enough and coloured enough to hide the trail of this transformation.

In Cape Town, this meant settling in the areas such as Observatory, Woodstock, Lansdowne, Claremont and Wynberg. A good education and an ability to speak English (instead of coloured Afrikaans) were also helpful. Quite often the pass-whites also adopted English as their home language. (Watson 1970: 15-18.)

The next phase was to find White employment, preferably in some occupation where one did not have to produce an identity card. Government occupations, especially railways were not a good alternative, since they were largely for Afrikaners, however, Tramways,⁸⁵ as an example, was seen as a viable option. Then was the time to move into a real white area, or close to one. After that the next steps were to make white friends, join a white church or club and try to get one's children into a white school. Then, finally, it was time to get an identity card, but only when there was a relatively high certainty that you would be classified White. (Watson 1970: 60.)

⁸⁴ The apartheid regime was infamous for its methods of physically evaluating the racial category of a person – a heritage from the era when similar measures were popular in Europe. The tests included the measuring of the curliness of a person's hair by slipping a pencil through it, or looking at the pigmentation of several parts of body (including mouth, eyelids or genitalia).

⁸⁵ The company that managed the tram and bus traffic in Cape Town.

The world of the pass-whites was insecure. They could be uncovered in various ways at any time. Sometimes white-looking parents had darker children, called 'throwbacks' who revealed a coloured family history. The position of these children in the pass-white families was difficult. During my fieldwork, I heard numerous stories of how these children were hidden from visitors, or treated harshly by their families.

Once you chose the route of becoming a White, there was rarely a return. The pressure to succeed was tremendous, since the original identity, family relations and friendships had to be sacrificed. During my stay in South Africa I heard several stories of dispersed families and broken relations between siblings – always from the coloured people though, never from the whites. Watson describes how in the 1970s the coloured people's reaction to those who passed for white varied from sympathetic to hostile (1970: 23-24). Reuniting these broken families in the post-apartheid South Africa was not a simple matter either.

“My auntie passed for White, she moved to Johannesburg and they did not see each other for 50 years. Then one day few years ago she just came back. But the family does not want her back any more. They think that she wanted to be a White, so let her be white now.” (Colin, 36, Cape Town.)

In everyday life, falling between racial categories is still not considered fitting. Previously, legislation made it impossible. In many of the stories families split into two sections, which had no contact with each other. Some light-skinned coloureds, however, opted to stay coloured for ideological or family reasons, and decided to strive to become a part of the coloured elite rather than to become a lower-class white (Watson 1970: 24). I often came across this ideal narrative of a coloured person not abandoning his background and staying with his own people instead of trying to identify with the whites.

“My father could have passed for white but he opted for marrying a woman of dark complexion and working for his own people.” (John, 34, Cape Town.)

Still, for many coloured families, looking and acting as white as possible became an object of envy and desire.

“So my grandmother wanted my mother to marry another kind of man than my father is. You see, my father has a curly hair and he is clearly of darker complexion, whereas my mother has straight hair and a light skin. My granny was not very impressed when they got married.” (Colin, 36, Cape Town.)

In the Western Cape in the year 2000, being pale was still a considerable asset for a coloured person in everyday life.

There are some middle-class whites who declare their racially mixed origins quite openly. However, during my fieldwork it was pointed out to me that it is considered a strictly private matter, and it was potentially very insulting to probe these issues. It is still offensive, or at least very insensitive, to ask a dark white, or a coloured person about his possible African ancestry. Normally this information was only submitted to me after a long friendship, if even then.

CONCLUSION

Mary Douglas (1966) observed that under the circumstances of a perceived threat of social decay, the human body – as a symbol of the social body – is closely scrutinised by experts. The construction of the category White in South Africa can be approached through Douglas’ argument of bodily control growing stronger where social control grows and the concerns regarding the body symbolise the concerns regarding the margins of a social group.

While the South African society was being rebuilt in the first half of the twentieth century, the social definitions of the human body also had to be redefined. The organic unity of the nation, the health of its symbolic body, now depended on the bodily behaviour of its people. The newly established Afrikaner elite was also driven by a need to define themselves as well as their social boundaries. This was an important and difficult task, since the racial boundaries in South Africa were traditionally blurred. A strong and unambiguous White category was needed. The existence of whites who did not fit the picture of a proud and racially conscious European was a problematic ethnic anomaly.

In keeping with the intellectual currents of the Western world in the early twentieth century, White people, to protect their racial essence, its purity and boundaries, were not supposed to mix with racially ‘inferior’

people, since that would lead to degeneration. Lower class families were seen as especially vulnerable to this downfall.

Thus far from the 'collective insanity' or a pure strategy driven by sly self-interest, drawing of racial boundaries and formation of racial categories were reflections of a set of complicated, historically formed social situations and a social order of a nation in making. These boundaries were guarded by not just violence, but different methods of surveillance, including the control and reshaping of the body through use of medical science and education (see Foucault 1980, 1990).

In South Africa, where the boundaries of racial categories were simultaneously vitally important and constantly transgressed against, a multitude of concrete spatial and legal boundaries was used to fortify symbolic boundaries. These boundaries were also applied to the residents of Epping Garden Village. Everyone had to be a member of a racial category in order to belong to social order at all.

While the social control from the above was strong in EGV, it was still not the only socially driving force in the suburb. Chris Shilling noted that "the body is not only affected by social relations but forms a basis for and enters into the construction of social relations" (1993: 199). Social relations therefore not only create embodiment, but are also seen as affected by it (Burkitt 1999: 7).

Those who did not fit the category of good white, had to be made fit. The habitus of the residents was constantly affected, and thus constantly changing. By learning the social rules of the suburb they could find agency, and their agency found multiple forms. The game of the good white was one of the tactics that the residents of Epping Garden Village employed in order to conform or cope with the social categorisation that tended to see them as anomalies.

Throughout the history of EGV, the uplifters aimed to build the residents an identity of a good white with an embodied order and a proper habitus. In the natural centre of this ordering was a gendered, racialised, isolated and subordinated poor white body. This expert power and the surveillance of urban space and social body were also, from the very start, an inseparable part of social engineering in South Africa.

5. HOUSING SCHEMES – A PERFECT SOLUTION

“Once an aggregation of houses is transformed into a living community, the emphasis of its primary functional aim shifts from public health to social rehabilitation. Housing now ceases to be merely protest against squalor, disease and poverty. It now means a new way of living, new habits and new attitudes. Housing, moreover, now facilitates the canalisation and harnessing of the tenant’s physical and mental powers for his community.” (Britten 1942: 23.)

The South African social housing projects for whites were not just attempts to alleviate poverty but also elite endeavours aiming to build civilisation in the social and racial margins where the infiltration of ‘primitive’ culture was seen as threatening. Their purpose was to create welfare and help people, but also to construct firm, well-ordered boundaries for those essential social categories where a perceived chaos was seeping in. In this chapter, this process, its background and the techniques that were employed to create this order spatially are studied.

Firstly, the spatial planning of Epping Garden Village and the symbolic meanings attached to its spatial organisation are analysed as parts of a massive project to create social and symbolic order and boundaries in the everyday life of the poor whites. Secondly, to reach an understanding of the social forces behind the establishment of Epping Garden Village, the history of a Cape Town housing company, the Citizens’ Housing League and its originators – and their intellectual ideas - are examined. Thirdly, the establishment of Epping Garden Village is studied.

INVENTING WHITE SPACE IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the early twentieth century, a mythologised nationalism that can be compared to other fabrications such as the *Third Reich* or Soviet Union was developed and effectively propagated. Many academic writers have pointed out that a considerable part of this national mythology and traditions was formed around the idea of the Afrikaners as God’s chosen people, and the guardians of ‘race’ and ‘civilisation’. (See Kinghorn 1997:

140-141; Dubow 1995: 281-283; O'Meara 1983: 172-173.)

The Afrikaners had developed a sense of belonging to the soil: they had taken it over, and it also belonged to them (Schutte 1989: 222). During my fieldwork I was often told that originally the country had been 'empty', and the Afrikaners had only settled on land that had been either 'deserted by African tribes', or had never been claimed by anyone.

But being white stretched further than those advantages enjoyed by the Afrikaners. In the colonial countries, land seemed as plentiful as it was scarce in Europe. Every man could be a peer of a realm by virtue of being white. Terence Ranger points out how "almost everywhere in Africa white agriculturalists saw themselves not as peasants but as gentlemen farmers" (1983: 213). Thus, the ambiguities of urban life were perceived as dangerous and detrimental, whereas the countryside became sacred. A good example of this is the way in which the Karoo still lives as an archetypal 'pure' space in the South African imagination and mythology.⁸⁶

Prior to the onset of apartheid, the Afrikaner nationalists, in a manner similar to the Nazis, had already created multiple national symbols by inventing traditions (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983: 1-14). These invented traditions included the veneration of the first Afrikaners to travel northeast (*die Voortrekkers*), revival of Afrikaans as the sacred language of the volk and the worship of Afrikaans woman as the *volksmoeder*, guardian of the moral order and racial purity of the Afrikaners (McClintock 1995: 368-369). These traditions were then put on a pedestal where they confirmed and sealed the social order. They could be presented spatially as great shows of national unity, celebrations or memorial sites.

An example of a spatial presentation of the process whereby *Afrikanerdom* reinvented itself was 'the second trek' (*die Tweede Trek* or '*Eeufees*')⁸⁷ of 1938. It was a suitably modified re-enactment and commemoration of the original *Voortrekkers*' Great Trek away from the British influence in 1838. Pomp and circumstance surrounded this process. The famous *Ossewaens* (ox-wagons) travelling slowly across the country was a concrete demonstration of the way in which the Afrikaners had taken over the space, and the relationship to the land had originally been formed. The wagons were greeted with big festivities in each town. The second trek was followed by a wave of enthusiasm, supporting the process of Afrikaners becoming a unified nation.

⁸⁶ For more on the meaning of wilderness in the colonial imagination, see e.g. Short 1991: 8-27.

⁸⁷ Second trek or centenary.

Anne McClintock rightly points out that the *Tweede Trek* "celebrated unity where none had existed before". She also draws attention to the similarity of these celebrations and their symbolism to the Nazi dogma of *Blut und Boden*,⁸⁸ which she sees taking a new form in the Afrikaners' celebrations. (1995: 370-371.)

In order to create unity, the nation-builders' regime used different means of negative ethnicity throughout the twentieth century. The English were the original archenemy, and at a later stage the perceived threats came from communists, blacks, Catholics and Jews. Invented traditions and modern bureaucracy were harnessed to create oneness, and the ideas of Afrikaner ethnicity (*Afrikanerdom*), *ons eie*,⁸⁹ and the promoted larger-mentality⁹⁰ created togetherness. The ideals of a good white were important concepts in these endeavours. Self-promotion combined with an acute sense of threat and danger had been characteristic of South African whiteness from the earliest times. The ideology and its symbolism of *Afrikanerdom* were anchored and reflected in the use and design of the urban space.

Spatial Segregation

In South Africa, formal urban segregation already began in the nineteenth century, soon after the abolition of slavery in 1834. The regional practices of segregation varied greatly, although there was a prevailing consensus that 'urban areas belonged to the white man'. In 1920, the Housing Act made central government funds available to local governments to build housing for the poor. These areas were to be racially segregated, and spatially separated from one another. The Natives (Urban Areas) Act was passed in 1923. It required the local authorities to establish separate locations for the Black population, and to control the influx of blacks into towns. The Slums Act of 1934 was introduced as 'non-racial legislation', but in practice it was used to exclude blacks from the inner cities. (Christopher 1994: 35-38.)

By 1948 townships were an integral part of the organisation of urban

⁸⁸ A Nazi term for 'blood and soil', which means the holy union of the land and a *volk* and its genetic inheritance.

⁸⁹ Lit. our own. An expression of something or someone typical and dear to the Afrikaners, e.g., "ons eie Hansie Cronje".

⁹⁰ A term used for the Afrikaners' infamous in-group mentality that leaves little or no space for foreign ideas or people.

space, but there were still many urban areas where racial boundaries were not that strict. After the National Party had won the election in 1948, the apartheid regime gradually extended the spatial segregation to all areas of life. (Christopher 1994: 65.)

Segregation operated at the personal level, aim being to eliminate almost all the personal contact between members of different population groups. Most importantly, Whites were to be separated from all Non-Whites. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Immorality Act Amendment (1950) were designed to keep the Whites racially pure. Public spaces from beaches to post offices were segregated in the Separate Amenities Act of 1953. The segregation of personal, everyday life stretched all the way to the use of white domestic space, where black and coloured servants were to have separate premises and entrances. (Christopher 1994: 141-143.)

At the national level, the country was divided into Bantu Homelands and white areas under the Native Affairs Minister, H.F. Verwoerd, who had been appointed in 1950. Segregation in the urban areas was also tightened. The Population Registration Act⁹¹ and the Group Areas Act of 1950 were two major pieces of legislation designed to this end. The Group Areas Act was to bring about total urban segregation once people had been racially classified. Towns and cities were to be divided into group areas for the exclusive ownership and occupation of a designated group. Anybody who was not a member of that group would have to leave and resettle in his or her 'own' area. This all would result in a total segregation – *apartheid*. (Christopher 1994: 65, 103-105.) Black and coloured areas redefined as white were demolished or redistributed. The 'gentrification programme' ensured that whites received the best houses in the nicest areas and at low prices. (Christopher 1994: 140.)

Perhaps the most well-known and emotionally charged example of the creation of White urban spaces was the establishment of the suburb of Triomf in the place of the African freehold township of Sophiatown in Johannesburg. This area, known for its vibrant intellectual life and artists, was razed at the end of the 1950s to build an area for working class whites. In Cape Town, the symbolically vital coloured area of District Six was erased from central Cape Town in the early 1970s. However, the area

⁹¹ The Population Registration Act meant the classification of the whole population into different groups. The three basic categories were Black, White and Coloured, the latter later being split into several subcategories such as Cape Malay, Griqua, Indian, Chinese and Cape Coloured (Christopher 1994: 103). In practice, everybody had to carry an identity document, the hated *Dompas*, to prove his or her 'race'.

was never rebuilt, leaving a huge empty space, politically too sensitive to touch in the heart of the city. (Western 1997: 75, 150-158.)

The 'Cosmic Effect' of the Poor White Embodiment

Since the seventeenth century, social engineering in any society in the Western world and in colonial countries preoccupied with the idea of race had created a set of concrete geographical locations or places and more abstract social spaces. Colonialism and nationalism produced a larger framework of order in South Africa, where class, race and gender defined individuals' social and physical places.

In this framework, the standing of those seen as poor whites was ambiguous. They were landless and fortuneless wrecks that had fallen out of the grace of whiteness. Most of them were urban, which meant that they had lost touch with the soil as well. In the twentieth century, their position was further blurred by fashionable eugenic thinking, which declared people's spiritual values and intellectual abilities as biologically inherited, or in particular as environmentally curable (see chapter two). Either way, those unable to fit in their right places in this framework needed treatment.

The cure would take place in the urban space in which people lived. For this purpose, the concept of poor white *suburbs* was developed and communities were imagined and created. In these suburbs, every *household* was to be a unit that produced people who were supposed to fit in with the larger framework, and thus perpetuate it. Ideally, an ideal family lived in the house according to certain, gendered rules and standards, consisting of human *bodies*. Thus also the small space of the human body had to be accommodated to fit the social order.

Data I gathered during fieldwork produced knowledge of the ideologies and practices of suburb, house and body. They were present in the ways people represented themselves, in their narratives and ideals, and in the ways the elite wanted them to become.

Most importantly, *all these ideologies and practices were underlain by the principle of social organism*. The ideas of the biological superiority of the white races, and the idea of a nation-state as an organic unity was attached to the urban space and even the home, which was also conceptualised as an organism. Underlying this all was the most important organism and strongest metaphor of all, the human body, a biological and social organism. Mary Douglas argued that the human body is *the* natural symbol

(1970: 17). Therefore the treatment of the human body reflected the social construction of good whites, and simultaneously the social construction of good whites consciously employed bodily metaphors.

Douglas extended the manifestation of social boundaries and concerns to the spatial level. Uses of space and social body are interrelated, while social concepts are mapped out in space and imprinted in the human bodies – often simultaneously. Douglas perceived the uses of public and domestic spaces as anchored to fragmentary symbols of social order, which she called 'cosmic effects' (1990: 395). Maya temples or the pyramids would be the most obvious examples of the anchoring of these cosmic effects to the universal reference, the movement of the stars, and simultaneously symbolising the social hierarchies.

In Douglas' thinking a cosmic effect does not have to be as grand as this. A more familiar example that she gives is that of Irish farmhouses where the west room was reserved for the retired parents when their son took over the farm. They would literally be spending their last years in the setting sun. (Douglas 1990: 396.)

Neither do these cosmic effects occur in the same frequency in every culture. Douglas connects the occurrence of these effects in their deepest and fullest forms with a community that values the dominance of a whole over a part. In these communities, "rich cosmic effects make use of the closure of body's limits to symbolise the closure of a community". (Douglas 1990: 395-398.)

The closed white spaces of apartheid were the cosmic effect or equivalent of the white race as a closed social category. The fears in respect of the poor whites reflected the fears in respect of the vulnerable boundaries of whiteness. The willingness to discipline the white social body, to close access to it, and quite concretely, to keep the Other away from it by condemning any miscegenation were attempts to control this category. After 1948, as the category White became more strictly defined, the control of the social body grew stronger. During apartheid the poor whites became a minority, and no longer fitted the category of a good white. Consequently, they – together with their areas – were reclassified as anomalies, or dirt – *die slegmense*.⁹²

⁹² Lit. rubbish people or rotten people, people who have deteriorated.

HOUSING POOR WHITES IN CAPE TOWN

“Shame, Cape Town, shame! It is time we awoke, or else great tragedies will overtake us.” (Zerilda Steyn in Cape Argus on the housing situation 18.7.1929.)

In the first decades of the twentieth century the life of lower class whites in Cape Town was different from that in Johannesburg, which has been understood as the traditional heartland of ‘poor white problem’. There were several reasons for these differences.

The social status of poor whites in Cape Town and Johannesburg differed. The working class whites were poorer in Johannesburg, most of them Afrikaans-speaking *bywoners*. They had gathered on the Witwatersrand from all over the country, tempted by the various opportunities that had developed around the booming mining industry (van Onselen 1982b: 111-114). In Cape Town many lower class whites spoke English as their first language, and the structure of livelihood was largely based on agriculture and manufacture. In comparison with the Transvaal, Afrikaner national identity in Cape Town was a moderate one (Bickford-Smith et al. 1990: 80). Race relations were more relaxed, urban space was less segregated, and the Cape Province allowed her people of colour more political rights. (Christopher 1994: 30-49).

While Johannesburg was at first dominated by whites and Africans, and then during apartheid became increasingly African, Cape Town was predominantly coloured, and Africans were a minority until very recently. Also the membership of category White was a very vague issue in the Western Cape. Many people in and around Cape Town were walking the thin line between White and Coloured (Western 1997: 36). Some racially ‘grey’ areas such as Observatory and Woodstock were in fact never really properly segregated.

The Men and the Woman behind the Housing Schemes

In 1997, people involved in the Cape Town housing schemes, either as officials or as tenants, described them to me as ‘typically Afrikaner projects’. Initially, this was not correct. In Cape Town, English-speaking

intellectuals and church officials, such as Bishop Lavis,⁹³ were central to the establishment of the Citizens' Housing League.

As described above, the three ideological *primus motors* behind the establishment of the housing companies were the Christian-national ideology, economical upliftment of the Afrikaners and the social sciences' contemporary theories. These three directions are personified and illustrated consecutively by examples of creative and successful people who were prominent in the early days of the Citizens' Housing League, namely energetic *domineesvrou* Zerilda Steyn, SANLAM's chief economist 'Tienie' Louw, and University of Cape Town's eminent professor Edward Batson.

The poor white problem had an appeal for the young teacher *Zerilda Steyn* (1892-1963). After her marriage to the Reverend H.P.M. Steyn in 1916, the couple travelled to the United States where they studied theology. (CHL Review 1970.) On her return to South Africa Mrs. Steyn, appropriately for a woman of her social standing, dedicated herself to good causes. In addition to her activities in the *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging* (hereafter ACVV), Steyn was nominated Chairwoman of the Cape Town Board of Aid.⁹⁴ Thereafter, she became a guiding force behind the establishment of the Citizens' Housing League.

She was to become a well-known and emblematic character who, according to her contemporaries, was "a wonderful, warm personality, a remarkable lady" (a discussion with S-P Cilliers). Her fame began when her attempts to improve the poor housing situation in Cape Town lead to the press calling her "Cape Town's lady with the lamp", or "the heroine of the slums" (Cape Times 14.3.1930; The Sjambok 18.4.1930). With her reputation boosted by the media, she became the symbol of the fight against the poor housing conditions of the lowest class of whites. Steyn embodied the myth of the *volksmoeder* – in her the homely virtues of motherly care and politically inclined concern for social morality were unified.

⁹³ An Anglican Bishop and known philanthropist, S.W. Lavis (1873-1965) was one of the prime movers behind the establishment of the Citizens' Housing League. He was a long-term manager who remained with the Company until his death.

⁹⁴ The Cape Town and Wynberg General Board of Aid was established in 1919 after the flu epidemic that had alarmed Cape Town. It was a first step in the process of the professionalisation of poor relief in Cape Town. "Drawing its support from charitable organisations, the Provincial Administration and the municipalities of Cape Town and Wynberg, the Board of Aid inaugurated a co-operative system of poor relief." (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 103.)

Although, in the 1930s, there were public allegations of her treating the coloured poor roughly, and "prying into people's private affairs" (The Sjabok 18.4.1930), her reputation was unsullied enough for her to become the official chairman of the Citizens' Housing League in 1945 – a post she had de facto occupied from the start.

The Afrikaner establishment celebrated and decorated her: she received an honorary DPhil degree from the University of Stellenbosch in 1961. Steyn devoted the best part of her life to the CHL, and her reign only ended in 1963 when she died of a heart attack at the board meeting she was chairing. (CHL Review 1970.)

Edward Batson (1906-1999) was University of Cape Town's legendary professor of sociology, appointed in 1935 when he was only 29 years old. A talented statistician, he was an innovator of his time. (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 103.)

Batson was known for his liberal views. In his works he shows contempt for prejudiced assumptions in social work and racial discrimination, which he saw as irrational and cruel, and preventing South Africa's growth as a nation. He was sympathetic towards and concerned about the poor, striving to create a South African welfare state. He was critical of the work of the Carnegie Commission, and he wanted to prevent what he called 'Social Disservices', by which he meant South African racialised social services (Batson 1943: 39).

"To provide for one section of her people and neglect the other will not give South Africa social security." (Batson 1943: 89.)

Batson became involved in the work of the Citizens' Housing League in 1935. In 1942 and 1946 he helped the Company conduct several surveys in order to assist with the scientific management of the housing company. He guided the social workers and offered recommendations until 1948, after which he was no longer seen at the meetings of the Board, not even as a consultant on special assignments. (The income survey of 1950 was done entirely without his involvement.) His career as professor continued for decades after his work with the CHL ended.

Many a director of the Housing League was a professor of sociology or social work at the universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town. Some of them were members of *Broederbond* and race welfare societies.⁹⁵

The most famous of the persons in the initial phase of the Housing League was young professor *Henrik Frensch Verwoerd* (1901-1966), who would later become Prime Minister and well known for his fervent

racism. In 1932 he was nominated to a newly established chair of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch. He was strongly influenced by the Carnegie Commission's methods, and a firm supporter of individual upliftment. Supported by the ACVV, he emphasised the importance of training welfare workers scientifically. (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 103.)

Not a separatist nationalist or follower of the racist theories in his youth, Verwoerd was known for his attempts to bring the English and Afrikaners together to promote welfare activities (Miller 1993: 637-638). The archives of CHL disclose that Verwoerd became a member of the board of the CHL in 1935, but gave up the task in 1936 when his political career kept him too busy to attend its meetings (CHL Board minutes: 1935-1936). Soon after that he converted towards Afrikaner nationalism, admiring Germany and anti-Semitism (Miller 1993: 660).

Verwoerd's work on the board of the Housing League was thus relatively short. It is probable that his role as an initiator of the scientific training of social workers influenced the policy and practices of the Housing League for much longer than his role as a board member. Although Verwoerd gave up his professorship in Stellenbosch in 1936, the University of Stellenbosch remained close to the Citizens' Housing League, and the department of Sociology and Social Work was often involved when housing policies and methods of housing management were formulated for the CHL.

In his early thinking, Verwoerd often contradicted himself. Although in his youth a man who harboured liberal sentiments, who did not believe in the biological differences between races or in the different abilities of different races, he was still opposed to the ideas of racial mixing (Miller 1993: 660-661). This ambiguity also characterises the first years of the Housing League. As in Verwoerd's life, also the Housing League's liberal sentiments were later to succumb to more rigid ideas of racial separateness.

One of the central figures in the first decades of the Citizens' Housing League was SANLAM's skilled strategist Dr. *Marthinus Smuts 'Tienie' Louw* (1888-1979), an economist and a keen *Broederbond*.

A clergyman's son, he was brought up in an anti-British home environ-

⁹⁵ Specialists of the human mind were included on the board. Dr. A.M. Moll (on the board from 1944-1947) was a well-known psychiatrist who represented the best of South African psychology (Chisholm 1989: 168-169). He was interested in finding a connection between criminality and mental defects and was also known to be a member of the eugenically inclined Race Welfare Society. (Dubow 1995: 137.)

ment. He grew up to become a fierce Afrikaner nationalist. He studied physics and mathematics at Stellenbosch and started off as a teacher in 1908. He displayed a talent for organisation from very early on, becoming headmaster of a primary school in Ladybrand at the age of 24. In 1918 he joined the insurance company SANLAM as an actuary. From there onward he experienced a phenomenal career. He was nominated as SANLAM's general manager from 1946-1949. He was also the chairman of the FAK, and on the directorate of the *Reddingsdaadbond*.⁹⁶ (Dictionary of South African biography 1987: 471; Bezuidenhout 1969: 13.) He has been characterised as “the most prominent Afrikaans economist of the first half of the century” (CHL Review 1970: 45).

Apart from lucrative business activities, his mission was to create an economically solid *Afrikanerdom*. His means to this end were the savings and the accumulation of Afrikaner capital for the use of Afrikaner corporations that, in turn, would benefit the *volk*. (O'Meara 1983: 107.)

Louw became involved with the Housing League in 1929. He had met the young Verwoerd during his studies in Stellenbosch, and he also knew Zerilda Steyn. Together with another Stellenbosch intellectual, Dr. Eben Dönges, who was at the time⁹⁷ an advocate, a well-known *broeder* and a journalist, he participated in the establishment and stabilisation of the Housing League. Louw's role was that of an organisational and financial planner, and the indisputably successful start of the Housing League was partly due to his talent. (Bezuidenhout 1969: 36-39.)

Louw served as a director in the Citizens' Housing League between 1937 and 1941. After retiring as a director of the parent company, he was a director and chairman in the subsidiary companies of the Housing League (CHL Review 1970: 38). All in all Louw served the Housing League for 24 years, purportedly never gaining any personal monetary profit from his work. (Bezuidenhout 1969: 124.) Louw was the philanthropist, the fierce ideologist and the profit-accumulating capitalist in the same person – and each of these elements served him equally well.

The housing schemes served the double purpose of nation-building

⁹⁶ The RDB (Rescue Action Society) strove to awake mass Afrikaner consciousness regarding economic issues, centralise the savings of the Afrikaners in Afrikaner financial institutions and to convert the Afrikaners to support Afrikaner traders.

⁹⁷ In 1948 Dr. Theophilus Ebenhaezer Dönges (1898-1968) was a tireless nationalist who became the first minister of Interior of the apartheid government. He introduced the Mixed Marriages Act, Group Areas Act and other apartheid legislation. In 1967 he became the president re-elected of the Republic of the South Africa. (South African Encyclopaedia of Bibliography V.)

and economic upliftment of the poor whites. While the CHL had many *broeders* among its directors, the archives never provided any proof that the CHL was under direct orders from the Broederbond. Nevertheless, the housing schemes undoubtedly supported Louw and his fellow Broederbonders' attempts to uplift their fellow Afrikaners.

The CHL had a strong ideological emphasis on saving and the wise use of money. These values could be further promoted in the poor white areas, where people would be literally taught to support the accumulation of capital. Once 'uplifted', the people would feed capital into the system.

During the 1940s a trio consisting of Louw, Dönges and Professor G.W.O. Schumann would establish and control the finance companies Federale Volksbelegging, Bonuskor and Saambou as subsidiaries of SANLAM. These building societies also helped them in their constant and successful attempts to control the flows of Afrikaner capital from different sources, particularly in the Cape Province. SANLAM and its subsidiaries formed the economic power in the Cape as a counterpart to the equally Broederbond-dominated Volkskas Bank in the north. (O'Meara 1983: 195-198.)

CHL can thus be placed among typical Cape Afrikaner enterprises with its multiple connections, just as the Afrikaner nationalism and Broederbond itself was internally divided into the northern section and the Capetonians (O'Meara 1983: 106).

From its founding, the Citizens' Housing League's relations with the nationalist politicians were close, and from the presence of the *Broederbond* activists on its board, it becomes evident that the *Broederbond* kept an eye on the development of the Company. After the first years the Company's control was transferred to Afrikaner hands: the first two CHL chairmen were English-speaking, with all subsequent chairmen being Afrikaners.⁹⁸ The presence of eugenically inclined people on the board suggests that the CHL management might have been influenced by racial theories influencing although this is difficult to assess or measure.

The Carnegie Commission's work had a significant influence on the Housing League. It seeped in through Zerilda Steyn, who actively took part in social discussion. She participated in the *volkskongres* of 1934 and gave a speech on the housing situation (CHL Board minutes: 1935). At

⁹⁸ Another Company director who was also a known *Broederbond* leader was dominee P. du Toit (on the management board from 1939-1949). Du Toit was also one of the founders of the NRT (*Nasionale Raad van Trustees*), a body designed to form Christian-nationalist trade unions which would serve as a liaison body with the Afrikaner nation.

the time Verwoerd was vastly influenced by the American professor C.W. Coulter, who represented the American sociology in the Carnegie Commission (Miller 1993: 642-643). Batson, who was critical of the Carnegie Commission, otherwise approved of a social scientific approach. It can thus be safely said that in the early years, all the CHL founders aimed towards the same goal: creating a system of scientifically guided social work.

In the 1950s and 1960s the CHL grew into a vast organisation with a dozen areas with more than 10.000 housing units under its management. In 1969 the Company had property worth 12 million Rand,⁹⁹ and it took care of an array of tasks. It was not only making dwellings available for poor whites, but also looking after the aged, building houses for sale, providing social services and running several subsidiary companies such as the Utility Trading Company and the Utility Pharmacy Limited and the Utility Construction Company.

In the 1950s and 1960s the apartheid urban politics began to influence the CHL's actions. While the CHL was very critical of the apartheid government's housing regulations in their official 1970 report, they would have to obey. They furthermore built coloured townships, constantly demanding the right to build other than what Zerilda Steyn had once bitterly called the "cramped and cheerless structures" on which the National Housing Board insisted. (CHL Review 1970: 19.)

By the end of the 1960s, CHL had grown to be such a vast establishment that the power over the residents' everyday life had been gradually transferred almost totally for the professionals working in the suburbs. The directors had more urgent matters to attend to than interfering with the details of running a housing scheme, and the archival findings reveal that their direct personal involvement gradually diminished.

However, in the 1930s and 1940s, things were still different. From their head quarters in the SANTAM building in Wale Street, the board of directors not only set the policy and aims for the CHL, but also decided in detail on the building of the housing schemes, and how they were run. They chose the inhabitants from prospective tenants as well as undertaking the supervision of the social workers' professional standards. In the middle of the nation-building fever in 1930, the board of directors made a decision to build Epping Garden Village for poor whites.

⁹⁹ At the time, a high school teacher earned approximately 2.500 Rand per year.

CONSTRUCTING EGV, A WHITE SUBURBAN SPACE

The plans to raise a poor white area for former slum-dwellers did not please the middle-class people in the areas neighbouring the planned suburb. Residents of Goodwood protested against the establishment of this new area, which they saw as threatening to turn their respectable neighbourhood into a murky slum crowded by criminals.

“We are not snobs, but it is too much to expect us to mix with slum people,” declared a Goodwood resident at the meeting of the Goodwood Village Management Board last night to protest against the Citizens Housing League scheme to erect 700 houses in Epping Forest. “There were enough poor whites in the district without adding to their number . . . the vacant ground should rather be used for playing fields for the children in Goodwood.” (Cape Argus 15.7.1930.)

The protests were ineffective, and Dr. D.F. Malan¹⁰⁰ officially opened the first houses in Epping Garden Village (EGV) in September 1938 when nearly 500 houses had been completed (CHL Review 1970: 24). The extension of the suburb took place between 1945 and 1947, after which there were 1.868 houses (CHL, SWR: 1948).

Epping Garden Village was built on land full of pine trees on the sandy dunes of the Cape Flats – a vast area east of central Cape Town. The Cape Flats used to be marsh, pestered by winter floods, and not very well suited for human settlement. Despite this, the 1940s saw a steady stream of coloureds and Africans in search of a better life in Cape Town building their *pondokkies*¹⁰¹ on the Flats. There were frequent floods, and the poverty made the living conditions in the area appalling. (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 107.)

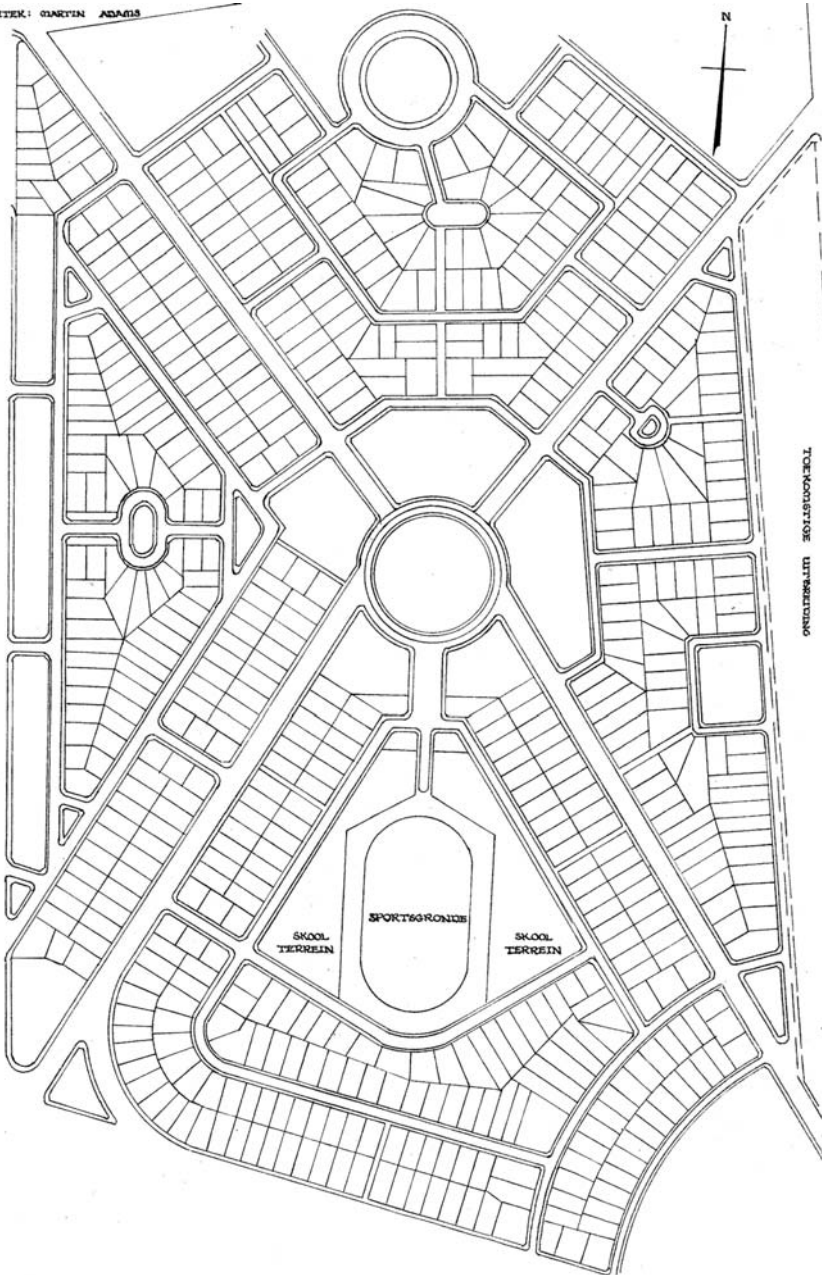
Epping Garden Village was situated at Goodwood in an area known as Epping Forest. The choice of name – in which ‘Forest’ was turned into ‘Garden’ – was symbolic of the area: it reflected the dreams and aspirations of the suburb’s builders to turn the marsh and wilderness into a garden, a shantytown into a leafy suburb, and equally unrefined human substance into cultivated people.

The South African Railways, with the consent of the Department of

¹⁰⁰ In 1948 he was nominated the first Prime Minister of the apartheid government.

¹⁰¹ A pondokkie or a ‘hokkie’ is a hut made of cheap building materials such as cardboard and corrugated iron.

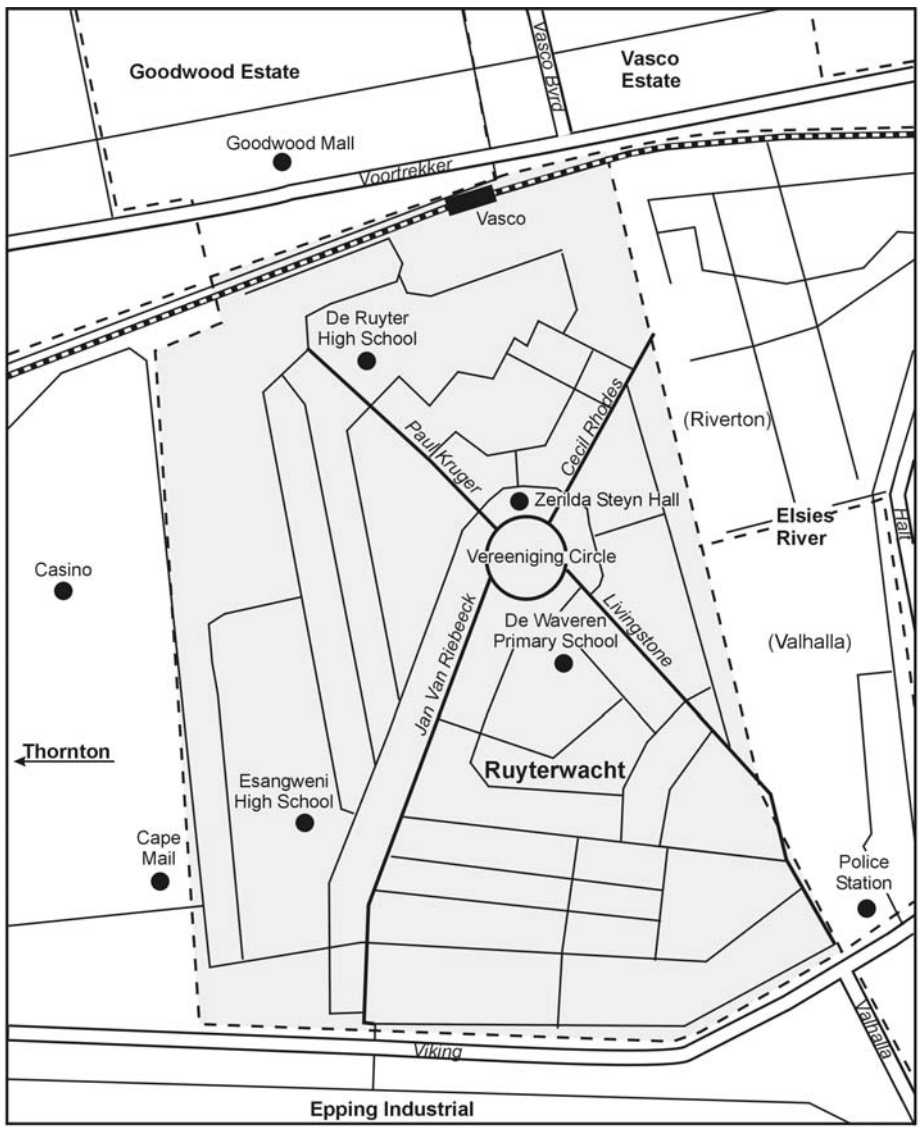
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





AANLEG VAN EPPING TUINDORP, VASCO

UTILITEITSMAATSKAPPY

Picture 1: The original plans of EGV (Source: Bosman 1941)



-  Main Through Route
-  Main road
-  Smaller road
-  Railway
-  Suburb Boundary

-  Railway station



Source: Cape Town Street Guide, 1999-2000 (Map Studio, Durban)

Map 3: Ruyterwacht in 2001

Lands, gave the first 50 morgen¹⁰² of land to the CHL in 1935. Except for the poor whites, the plan was also to accommodate railway workers who lived under "unsatisfactory conditions" in Cape Town. Therefore 350 out of the first 700 homes were earmarked for white railway workers. (CHL Board minutes: 1935; Bosman 1941: 250-252.) The participation of the South African Railways is not peculiar, since it was one of the main employers for impoverished Afrikaners in urban areas. In accordance with the civilised labour policy, the Railways began employing masses of poor whites in the 1930s, expelling African and coloured workers (O'Meara 1983: 90). At that time, the South African Railways provided housing for its white employees, largely neglecting its workers of colour.¹⁰³ The Railways was committed to the support of Afrikaner nationalism, although the provision of proper accommodation for its workers also served as class control by capitalism (Pirie 1982: 152-153).

The Epping Garden Village's location was practical for the Railways' purposes, since a station towards the north of the area offered its workers easy access to their places of work. The northern border of Epping Garden Village is thus a railway line. The suburb was surrounded by fields that later served as buffer strips on its eastern and western borders.¹⁰⁴

Since Epping Garden Village was situated outside the municipal area of Cape Town, the CHL had to provide municipal services. This included roads, sewerage and electricity. (Cape Times 1.12.1936; CHL Review 1970.) The building of the area was funded with a loan from the Central Housing Board. It cost £275.000 to establish the suburb, while the cost of one house was approximately £306 (Bosman 1941: 313).

Layout of the Public Space

The urban planning of the segregation era had a few specific characteristics. The ideal was the suburban lifestyle of the European (and American) middle-class, and in the 1930s the Housing League sent its officials to

¹⁰² A measure of land then used in the Netherlands and South Africa equal to about 0.8 hectare or two acres.

¹⁰³ By 1980 the South African Railways had assisted 90.000, mostly white, people to obtain houses, and provided 35.000 places in hostels for blacks (Pirie 1982: 145).

¹⁰⁴ The western buffer strip ended on the busy N7 highway, the eastern buffer strip was a more uneven and narrow piece of land bordering on the coloured area of Elsie's River. Later a highway was also built on the southern side of the suburb. Behind the southern highway the vast Epping Industrial Area, built in 1947, begins.

study model cities in England, Germany, and Sweden. Although the official main target was the combination of rural calm and urban economic opportunities, the South African race issues featured in the planning from the start.

The difficult task of the planners was not only to create areas that would discourage working-class whites from forming class-based alliances with one another (Worsley 1984: 25), but also to ensure that these areas would keep them from forming alliances with other races. The suburb's space had to be simultaneously easy to control *and* beneficial for the social health of the poor whites.

The layout of the Epping Garden Village was created to reproduce a rigid social order and racial identity. From early on the area was isolated from the surrounding coloured area, Elsie's River, by buffer zones, fences and industrial areas.

The Dutch Reformed Church was involved in the development of the area from the beginning. The church perceived the establishment of poor white areas as essential for the conservation of a "genuine Afrikaans-Christian" lifestyle and values.¹⁰⁵ The suburb was to be a healthy counterpart to the dirt and racial mixing of the urban setting. It was to bring a touch of the countryside's innocence to the urban environment, which was seen as menacing and corrupting to traditional Afrikaner-ness (see Albertyn et al. 1948: 39).

Undoubtedly, the planners of the Citizens' Housing League had a notable example in the earlier campaigns to create garden villages in Cape Town. In 1923 Garden City Trust¹⁰⁶ had established Pinelands, a leafy and spacious upper-class suburb. It had been constructed according to English urban planner and philosopher Ebenezer Howard's thoughts which he had presented in his book *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1902).

His thoughts of a human-size city soon grew to be the ideal of Britain's 'garden city' movement of that time. A garden city would represent a

¹⁰⁵ "There is a real need for model villages or residential areas near our cities. An example of this is the village of Epping Garden near Cape Town...Most of the houses are inhabited by less affluent Afrikaners...with a true Afrikaans spirit ruling in the village...in spite of all the men working in the city, the home atmosphere is Christian-Afrikaans. The new situation, created by the influx into towns, necessitates the church to strive for the construction of similar villages or residential areas in future. Not only in the countryside, as has been the case thus far, but particularly near the cities. In this way newly arrived congregation members can acquire healthy and affordable housing, and the church can maintain its influence over them." (Albertyn et al. 1948: 39-40, *Afrikaans original translated by Ilse Evertse.*)

¹⁰⁶ GCT was not a housing company, but a non-profit organisation founded in 1919.

union between the urban areas and the countryside, since at the outset it would be limited in size and density. It would provide all the urban services, but it would also be equipped with ample green public areas and private gardens, and be surrounded by a permanent agricultural zone, a green belt. These 'horizontal walls' would boost the feeling of unity in the community and keep it separate from the surrounding urban communities. (Howard 1902; Mumford 1961: 586-587.)

Howard's green, utopian dreams were useful for the creation of a racially segregated city. The shaping of the Pinelands, Epping Garden Village and many other South African suburbs were affected by his ideas (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 144). Epping Garden Village was thus built according the ideals of the garden city: it was planned to be an open, lush and green suburb with big plots and attractive public spaces (Mumford 1961: 586). However, as elsewhere in Cape Town at the time, the practical style adopted from the United States also influenced the planners (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 144).

These ideas lead to the area being planned being a homogeneous whole or a *neighbourhood unit*.¹⁰⁷ A neighbourhood unit meant an area that was a self-sufficient social unit that would provide facilities for work and co-operation between a stable nucleus of residents (Mumford 1961: 569-570). Both Epping Garden Village and its predecessor, Good Hope Model Village, were supposed to be geographically consistent units standing apart from the outside world. Their independence was to be strengthened by the social ethos and social coherence of the population, which would then be perfected by the residents' activities. The ideal was a peaceful and safe *gemeenskapseenheid*, a social unit. (Bosman 1941: 280-282.)

These ideals were further reflected in the way the planner Martin Adams¹⁰⁸ used several smaller neighbourhood units in the layout. These units could, for example, consist of a central space surrounded by houses with a single entrance road circling the central space and exiting again via the entranceway. A neighbourhood unit was supposed to diminish crime, restlessness and other urban perils. It was effortless to spot any deviant activities, since the houses were only surrounded by wire fencing, and each house faced several neighbours at once. (Bosman 1941: 280-281; Mumford 1961: 571.)

¹⁰⁷ Having begun as a popular concept in the United States, it was a model developed by American urban planner Clarence Perry in the 1920s.

¹⁰⁸ The original plans of EGV were designed by Martin J. Adams (1870-1941) in 1936. He was later nominated the second chairman (1931-1941) of the Citizens Housing League (CHL Review 1970: 9). See picture in page 112.

Since the spatial planning of the area served racial segregation's purposes, it also adapted easily to apartheid. However, being an early pioneer of its kind, the suburb also differed from the optimal of the apartheid era urban planning. It was on the wrong side of the railway track, and the buffer zone between Epping Garden Village and Elsie's River was partly too narrow. (Western 1997: 113.)

The isolation of the suburb and the few driveways – only two entered the area – made the monitoring of in-going and out-coming traffic easy, and it was also easier to protect the area from the unsuitable elements. (Bosman 1941: 280-281.)

The atmosphere in the suburbs was thus that of a *panopticon* (Foucault 1980). The original layout even included strategically dispersed homes for schoolteachers, dominees and police who would thus have a wide view of the suburb from their strategically placed houses on the street corners. The area was characterised by the openness of spaces, and the lack of private gardens. The yards only had low fences, if any. The only privacy was to be found within the houses, which were also carefully designed for the purposes of rehabilitation.

Houses and Gardens

The cottages of Citizens' Housing League's first housing schemes – Good Hope Model Village and Epping Garden Village – were also planned, free of charge, by Martin Adams. He drew four different types of cottages for the area. The majority of the houses had only two bedrooms, but some boasted three or even four. The houses were whitewashed, and had wooden floors.

The design of the houses shows how important the nuclear family was considered for rehabilitation. The houses needed to be large enough to be suitable for standard white families.¹⁰⁹ Overcrowding was perceived as a constant problem that had to be avoided through the several small bedrooms in the houses. Ideally, there would be enough space for everyone to have a bed in a bedroom and there were to be no more than three children per bedroom. Children of opposite sexes had to have separate bedrooms after the age of seven. Parents were also to have a separate bedroom. Ide-

¹⁰⁹ In 1950 Batson defined a standard family as consisting of a man, aged between 21 and 64 years, a wife between 21 and 59 years, a girl aged under four years, a girl aged 10 or 11 years, and one boy aged 16 or 20 years (CHL, SWR: 1950).

ally, bathrooms and toilets were to be separate. (CHL, SWR: 1947.)

This strictly defined use of space would help to prevent potentially morally dangerous situations. These dangerous situations consisted not only of the obvious cases of illegitimate relationships, unmarried couples or unwanted pregnancies, but also of cases where a widowed father had to employ a female housekeeper to look after his children, or where the children of the same age, but different sex, had to share a bedroom. (CHL, SWR: 1947.)

Every house and yard offered a multifunctional structure for social rehabilitation. Placing the houses on big plots not only provided the residents with an opportunity to cultivate their own vegetables, but was also seen as supporting a healthy family life. Every house had a garden; even flats had their own little piece of garden where possible. Gardens were seen to have economic, aesthetic and psychological value. They could add to the economic independence and well-being if families were to grow their food themselves. Their aesthetic value was seen as important for developing the inhabitants' sophistication and sense of beauty. Working in a garden in the fresh air would be psychologically good for residents with their bodies getting used to work in a healthy environment.

In addition, thriving gardens in the suburb were a demonstration of the endless, collective efforts of the white settlers in their persistent battle against the wild, untamed African nature. Each little kitchen garden with its European aestheticism expressed the cultural values of its owner. Those spaces were thus no longer African or primitive, but rendered European, and civilised.

Symbolism and the Suburb

The whole spatial layout in Epping Garden Village was laden with symbolism of colonial ideals and the unity of the white South African nation. The employment of the symbols of the imperial monarchy often occurred in colonial Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth century (Ranger 1983: 229-236). This also happened in Cape Town when some royal personages came to the openings of the housing areas and donated large sums of money (CHL Review 1970: 44). The street names were constant reminders of this. In Ruyterwacht one can still find Princess Alice, Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth Streets. The monarchy at that time represented the highest level of civilisation, and by attending the openings of the housing schemes, royalty exhibited its personal concern about the

well-being of the poor whites and their integration into the colonial hierarchy as a racial elite.

Apart from the names of the British royalty, many street names, such as Gerrit Maritz and Paul Kruger reflected Afrikaner nation building. The founders of the Company not only indulged in a nationalist streak, but also built the area to be a monument to their devotion by naming streets and buildings after themselves. Thus the connection with royalty and Afrikaner nation builders was made at street level.

The aims to unite the Afrikaner nation-building and European traditions are at their most obvious in the planning of the main streets. Epping Garden Village is divided by its four main parkways. Livingstone, Rhodes, Jan van Riebeeck¹¹⁰ and Paul Kruger¹¹¹ are all wide and showy promenades, starting from the fringes of the area, and meeting in a huge central *Vereeniging* (unification) circle, which is still the most notable landmark in the area. Thus the names of the main streets leading to the circle symbolised the unification of the British and the Afrikaner colonialists in the same goal. This was another gesture that emphasised the existence of a White nation rather than simply Afrikaner nation building: e.g., in Jan Hofmeyr in Johannesburg, the streets were all given Afrikaans flower names.

Inside the circle was a well-tended garden, which later became known as the 'Garden of Remembrance'. The name came from the fact that the ashes of the Housing League chairman and architect, Martin Adams, were buried in the Garden.

The garden inside the circle was the sacred ground of nation building. It was the end and the beginning, a gravesite and later also a background for many family celebrations and weddings. The centre of the Village was originally formed around this circle. All the important services were concentrated around the circle: the post office, shops, day hospital and later the Community Hall (a.k.a. the Zerilda Steyn Hall) where the social workers and administrators of the Company worked. In the original plans, the schools with their sports fields were built on the south side of the centre, with the primary and secondary schools facing each other.

¹¹⁰ The East Indian Trade Company official who was given the task of establishing an outpost at what became Cape Town.

¹¹¹ The president of the independent Afrikaner republics.

Myth of Origin

The schools are geographically and symbolically central to the community – after all, they were the most important places for the upliftment of the poor white children. The schools in Epping Garden Village were also crucial to the control of the racial boundaries in the area (more on the topic in the next chapter).

The name *Ruyterwacht* was mentioned for the first time in connection with the schools when a headmaster created a myth of origin for the suburb. During my fieldwork the people still remembered the story, and it was occasionally told to me by Ruyterwacht residents as a historical fact. The informants explained that where the suburb of Ruyterwacht is now situated, a *veepos* (cattle watchtower) used to stand. In previous centuries there were several of these towers around Cape Town and armed riders patrolled the area between them in order to keep thieving natives out.

In the archival material the story of the alleged Ruyterwacht *veepos* surfaces for the first time in March 1951 when the principal of the primary school in the Princess Elisabeth Street wanted to change the name of his school. He wrote to the Education Department stating that after having read some old maps he was convinced that one of these towers, called Ruyterwacht and established by Jan van Riebeeck himself, had stood in the area of the school. It would therefore be suitable for the school to be called Ruyterwacht Primary. A month later the education department agreed. (CSA: C 32/605/G.)

Maps from van Riebeeck's era in Cape Town's State Archives do not, however, corroborate the headmaster's claims (CA M1/273; M1/381). In his study on the East Indian Trade Company's outposts in and around Cape Town, Dan Sleight also used these maps to locate two outposts called *Ruijterwacht*, but both were located far from Epping area, where the observatory in the suburb of Observatory now stands. Moreover, there was no outpost located in or near the vicinity of the present suburb of Ruyterwacht. (Sleight 1993: 128.)

The story was a good and evocative one, however, and in 1986 the name of the suburb too was changed from Epping Garden Village to Ruyterwacht. The Ruyterwacht primary school emblem still portrays an armed rider and the Latin words "*semper vigilante*": always on guard. In the twentieth century, the perceived threat was not cattle-thieves, but racial mixing and thus the downfall of the poor whites. The motto of the emblem also reflects the principal philosophy according to which educa-

tion was to be a way out of humiliation and racial mixing, and the key to maintaining the supremacy of the white race.

The myth of origin exemplifies the turning of Ruyterwacht into a micro-universe with its own primordial boundaries and rules. As many myths of origin have their roots in the actions of gods or godlike characters, also this myth had its origins in Jan van Riebeeck, an Afrikaner cultural hero and a celebrated ancestor. The past was harnessed to justify the social and spatial boundaries, and to prove their authenticity as a manner of survival since the first days of the colony. An ever-vigilant guarding gaze would make the cosmic effects of boundary maintenance last until the end of time.

CONCLUSION

In the planning of housing schemes for lower class whites, the ideals and notions of racial purity, modern family-centred philanthropy and economic nation building were combined and carried out. Despite the bitter aftertaste of the Anglo-Boer Wars and the Afrikaners' nation-building agenda, the English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans worked together during the early days of the Citizens' Housing League.

Epping Garden Village was located in the Western Cape, where it was sometimes difficult to easily tell who was really White, and thus racial boundaries were more difficult to draw than in other parts of South Africa.

In the poor white suburbs, social boundaries manifested themselves in the use of urban space. This cosmic effect of the idea of the Whites in the bounded space as a closed and controlled social category was evident in the concerns and practices surrounding the social body. These practices were established when the gaze of the state, and those myriad implementations that this gaze implied, targeted the people living in the poor white areas.

The residents of Epping Garden Village were to be uplifted into economically active citizens with middle-class aspirations. The space they lived in was to aid in these endeavours. It was formulated according to the plan to create optimal conditions for their development.

Epping Garden Village was constructed for the purposes of everyday bodily control as well as for the healing of the body of the nation. The

supervision of the residents was extended to the smallest details, and the planning of the area reflected the transparency of its people's lives. Within the area, public space began at the doorstep. Most of the houses faced one another, and the open yards gave very little shelter from intrusive looks.

Epping Garden Village was designed to suit the purposes of the segregation era (1910-1948) social engineering. In the planning of the area both the utopian ideas of a garden city and the US-originating town planning were employed. The idea of a garden city paved the way to viewing the city as an organism. In social sciences as well as in the everyday thinking the ideas of the city as an organic unity fit in well with the ideals of the *volk* or people as an organic unity. Both had to be protected and cut off from the surrounding primitive wilderness and threatening social pathologies by controlling the bodies and spaces.

The spatial design of each street, building and yard in the suburb was carried out in order to form a whole. In this unity, the cosmic effect of all the parts functioning together was to uplift and unite the residents with the idealised category White, bonding South Africa with the rest of the civilised world, creating reconciliation between the English and Afrikaners – and building a social boundary to keep out unwanted ideas, people and cultures.

These boundaries are still visible in the street names as well as in the usages and symbolisms attached to certain places in the area. For instance, the gardens of Epping Garden Village also symbolised civilisation, and the racial integrity of its hard-working, self-supporting and cultivated residents. The planning of the suburb copied the lifestyles of the American and European middle-classes, creating mimetic spaces of whiteness and thus "engaging the image with reality thus imagined" (Taussig 1993: 255).

After 1948 the CHL became bound to the aims of the apartheid government. The CHL urban planners were thus facing the paradoxical task of producing economically autonomous families in a society that promoted harsh social and racial control and under the circumstances of hardening totalitarianism.

6. THE ERA OF FAITH AND HARD WORK: SHAPING A WHITE IDENTITY IN EPPING GARDEN VILLAGE IN 1938–1950

Developments in the political history of South Africa as well as the changes in its economy and culture can be examined by studying the various stages of upliftment as practiced in Epping Garden Village. The years between 1938 and 1950 form the first of three differentiated time periods of social upliftment in the housing projects.

This process of upliftment or *rehabilitation*¹¹² aimed to build the embodied category of a good white at different levels of everyday life by using a compilation of means. The directors of Citizens' Housing League supervised this process closely, promoting certain tastes and lifestyles for the carefully selected, respectable part of the working-class families that fulfilled certain preconditions and could thus be deemed White. The residents were taught how to distinguish themselves as the category of good white through incorporation of *habitus* or cultural dispositions. The residents, in turn, responded to these attempts in various ways. The more a resident was able to prove himself, the better he ranked on the *social field* that had developed in the suburb, and the better he knew how to play the games of prestige and resources. The analysis of this process of categorisation is the focal point of this chapter.¹¹³

This chapter first examines the selection of the residents and the methods of rehabilitation and social control in Epping Garden Village during this period. Then it describes and analyses the practices of rehabilitation in different areas of life until the beginning of 1950s when a clear shift occurred in the paradigms of running a housing scheme and bringing about upliftment.

THE FIRST GENERATION

In 1938, when Epping Garden Village (EGV) was established, the Citizens' Housing League (CHL) had only been operating for nine years. At this time there was a huge enthusiasm for nation building, but little

¹¹² On the content of this term, see footnote 12.

¹¹³ On *habitus*, see chapter four.

money, and the CHL was still designing its methods of rehabilitation.

It was considered important that the upliftment of the poor whites was conducted 'scientifically'. The various social sciences' theories – as formulated by their practitioners abroad – were introduced. The influence of the Carnegie Commission's research, as well as Professor Batson's thumbprints could be observed in the ways the Company ran its housing projects. The selection of suitable families was seen as the key to success, and the first generation of residents chosen to reside in EGV had to meet certain prerequisites.

At the time, being a poor white and respectability were not mutually exclusive qualities. In the minds of South Africans there was still a difference between *arm blankes* and *blanke armes* (Marijke du Toit 1992: 7). Also the Carnegie Commission's research report had divided the poor whites into the 'naturally poor' who were poor because of their personal qualities, and the 'deserving poor' who were destitute because of external circumstances. (Rothmann 1932: 166; Albertyn 1932: 1-21.) In the 1930s, the housing companies only wanted to accommodate the *deserving* poor who had the potential to become good whites.

Parnell describes the selection procedure to qualify for a poor white housing estate in Johannesburg as stringent (1988a: 585). Evidence shows that it was no less difficult to obtain a home in Epping Garden Village in the 1930s and the 1940s. Settling in the area was, furthermore, a complicated process. Before the residents were selected, a detailed application form had to be filled in, and be accompanied by references from the applicant's employer and church minister. Then a social worker visited the applicants in their homes and interviewed them. Only after this pre-monitoring were the applicants interviewed by the selection committee. (CHL: Report of the Selection Committee 1937.)

Nuclear families with children and an income of more than £10 a month but less than £20 were favoured in this selection procedure. These were people who already had a stable lifestyle brought about by parenthood and a permanent income, but who were still starting their careers. They were the candidates most likely to succeed. (CHL, SWR¹¹⁴: 1937.) The heads of these families were in the prime of their working age. In 1942 only 32 persons, or 0.6 per cent of the Epping Garden Village residents received an old age pension. (CHL Survey: 1942.)

¹¹⁴ Citizens' Housing League, Social Welfare Committee Resolutions, Minutes and Reports. All the quotes with regard to the CHL originate from the archives of Communicare (formerly the Citizens' Housing League).

The CHL wanted to ensure that it chose people who did not have any significant problems and who were thus capable of rehabilitation. It was also important to establish that the residents were 'white' enough and hence personal contact was needed. However, those who were seen as worthy were helped abundantly. In my interviews with the oldest generation I was told that some prospective but destitute residents were even helped to obtain jobs so that their income would qualify for a house in the suburb.

Professors of sociology and social work of the universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town helped to define the criteria for the selection process, and the Citizens' Housing League's selection committees hand-picked the tenants of the first 700 houses in the area. The first residents were working class whites, and, as previously negotiated with the South African Railways, railway employees and their families.

In 1942 there were 3.096 residents with an average of 2,68 children per family, in 1946 there were 3481 residents and an average of 2,67 children per family. The number of residents increased when the suburb was extended during 1945–1947 and the number of residents increased to 8.698 in 1950. The post-war baby boom hit the Village as well, for in 1950 the average number of children had risen to 3 children per family. (CHL Survey: 1942, 1946, 1950; CHL, SWR: 1952.)

The first residents were reasonably educated. In 1942 a majority of the grown-ups, 76 per cent (996 out of 1.314) had completed standard 6, which equals eight years of formal schooling. Cape Town offered them plentiful job opportunities, and at that time there were only three unemployed people in the Village. (CHL Survey: 1942.)

During the first years the educational standard rose, and in 1946 the second generation, the adult children of the families, were already better educated than their parents. Their increased professional opportunities, the post-war economic boom and the change from traditional manual occupations to new, clerical jobs – all these changes giving preference to whites – are reflected in the occupational structure of the suburb.¹¹⁵ Table 1 demonstrates how the second generation moved towards white-collar occupations and away from unskilled manual occupations. The children were moving up fast. (CHL Survey: 1942, 1946.)

¹¹⁵ For the post World War II developments in South African white professions, see Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 121-122; Giliomee 1979b: 160-161.

	PARENTS 1942	CHILDREN 1942	PARENTS 1946	CHILDREN 1946
Subordinate Commercial ¹¹⁶	4 %	15 %	4 %	30 %
Unskilled Manual ¹¹⁷	33 %	18 %	23 %	3.5 %

Table 1. (CHL Survey: 1942, 1946.)

Between 1942 and 1946 the parents' share of all the white-collar occupations remained 5 per cent, whereas that of the children grew from 16 to 31 per cent. In 1946 these figures had thus become consistent with the national average of the Afrikaners in white-collar jobs, which was 27.5 per cent in 1936 and 29 per cent in 1946 (Giliomee 1979b: 169; Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 122).

People who arrived in Epping Garden Village during this time were often rescued from destitution. In its first survey the CHL found that almost 26 per cent of families came from dwellings classified as 'not fit for human habitation', and 36 per cent from what was defined as overcrowded¹¹⁸ conditions (CHL Survey: 1942).

The drought and economic depression of the 1930s had led to many subsistence white farmers being forced off their land and this was reflected in the origins of the residents of Epping Garden Village, most of whom were first generation city-dwellers. The Company ruled that everyone moving to the Village had to have been resident in Cape Town for at least for two preceding years. However, of the first 680 families, only 25 per cent *originated* from Cape Town, whereas 63 per cent of these families originated from the rural towns and villages of the Cape Province such as Ladysmith, Worcester and Caledon (CHL Survey: 1942).

Four out of five residents spoke Afrikaans as their home language, and one out of five spoke English. They were mostly members of the Dutch Reformed Church (72 per cent), Church of England (11 per cent) or Apostolic churches (8 per cent). (CHL Survey: 1942.)

Politically, they were known as supporters of the National Party.

¹¹⁶ Clerk, salesman, shop assistant, typist.

¹¹⁷ Bill poster, charwoman, delivery boy, dock labourer, sweeper, washerwoman.

¹¹⁸ At that time, the rule of thumb was that two adults and a child needed at least one bedroom in a home with a living room.

Social Services in the CHL Housing Project

At the beginning of the twentieth century members of the public became interested in social work among the white working class in Cape Town, and the ACVV showed a keen interest in these issues as well.

In 1934 the social services in the housing estates became professionalised. The Citizens' Housing League hired two young ladies who had graduated from Department of Sociology and Social Work of the University of Stellenbosch to become their first housing estate social workers. In February 1935 the board of CHL decided at a meeting to "appoint a sub-committee to control and supervise the work of the Social Workers".¹¹⁹ This sub-committee had its first meeting, chaired by Zerilda Steyn, on the 8th of March 1935. At this first meeting a suggestion regarding the social workers' list of duties was formulated. (CHL Board minutes: 1935.) Later this committee became known as the 'Social Welfare Committee'.

By that time the Cape Town City Council was also interested in 'housing management'. For the municipal housing schemes, the model for the housing management was imported from the United Kingdom. The Octavia Hill system emphasised the meaning of personal contact and trusting relationships between the tenant and the landlord. A female housing manager was to supervise both the payment of the rent and the social conditions of the tenant. (Robinson 1998: 460-461.)

The Octavia Hill system was introduced in Cape Town in 1934 when the city council decided to apply this method in order to bring upliftment to municipal housing schemes. (Bosman 1941: 259-268.) The first Octavia Hill Housing Manager in Cape Town, Margaret Hurst, was imported from the United Kingdom.

At the end of the 1930s, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and East London also nominated Octavia Hill housing managers, who then began training South African women in this method. In 1939 the government decided to spend £660 on the training of female housing managers in the Octavia Hill system. They would then be employed in the housing schemes throughout South Africa, the building of which had first been supervised by the public health departments. Over 50 Octavia Hill housing managers were trained in South Africa between 1938 and 1960. (Robinson 1998: 463-467; Britten 1942: 23.)

¹¹⁹ The members of this committee were Mrs. H.P.M. Steyn (Zerilda), Mrs. Harold Jones, Bishop Lavis, Rev. F.X. Roome, Mrs. F.H.P. Creswell, Miss D. Syfret, Rev. W. Mason and young professor H.F. Verwoerd.

In Cape Town the nomination of a British housing manager had at first been opposed, since the language skills (inability to speak Afrikaans) and cultural differences were seen as problematic. It was also believed that a housing manager trained abroad with this method was not informed enough regarding the local 'circumstances' (race issues). (Robinson 1998: 463, 474.) The critics of the Octavia Hill system also felt that this approach did not involve itself sufficiently with the tenant's life. The system had the housing managers visit tenants every time they collected rent, which differed from the Housing League's approach that believed in visiting people on a regular basis solely for social work purposes.

Thus, although influenced by them, after an initial interest the Citizens' Housing League did not adopt Octavia Hill's 'foreign' methods (Bosman 1941: 263-268). The CHL opted from the start for local, bilingual social workers, trained either at the universities of Cape Town or Stellenbosch, and nominating male social workers to oversee female social workers (CHL Board minutes: 1934).

Although in practice there were many parallel methods and similar procedures in the municipal and League-run housing estates, the CHL was comparatively race-conscious and formal in its approach. This led to the development of two parallel housing-related systems of social work in Cape Town. The CHL looked after whites, while Octavia Hill-trained workers looked after the coloured suburbs of Cape Town (Robinson 1998).

At the time of the establishment of the Epping Garden Village in 1938, welfare services were already seen as an essential part of social housing. The social workers were thus present in the area from the very start, aiming to rehabilitate its residents: to transform their morals, behaviour, and attitudes. The process and methods were similar to those that occurred around the establishment of social services in Europe, but the emphasis was more on the ideas of race. These racialised social services became one of the main means of uplifting and rehabilitating the poor whites in twentieth century South Africa.

The Citizens' Housing League wanted to achieve rehabilitation at the levels of "health improvement, economic rehabilitation, social rehabilitation, and education". The CHL considered the removal of the families from their previous, unhealthy conditions as its biggest contribution to their health. *Health improvement* would also mean monitoring each family to ensure that they had enough food, erecting health centres, and giving lectures on health matters such as nutrition and preservation of teeth. *Economic rehabilitation* began as a "direct result of cheaper rent".

Advice was offered on employment and budgets, and families were helped to apply for social welfare assistance. Problematic families would be dealt with by *specialised case work* during which the social workers directly intervened in their lives. The tenants were also to enjoy the advantages of *education*. (CHL Special report: 1947.)

The scientific effectiveness and the aptness of the whole system would be monitored by effective *social research* (CHL Special report: 1947). The gathering of sociological data began in 1941 when on the recommendation of social scientists, the Company began conducting surveys of the area's residents. These surveys covered, among other things, their income, education, and use of money. The first survey was carried out by social workers trained by professors Batson of the University of Cape Town and Wagner of the University of Stellenbosch. In the files of the CHL it was called a 'total survey' since 680 of the 699 families who lived in the area had been interviewed by the surveyors.

As soon as a house had been allocated, a social worker would make a first home visit to explain the rules of the suburb to the new residents. From then onward the social worker became a part of their life. She would record the progress of the family by filling in major events on a record card. She would visit all the tenants in order to keep an eye on them, but when they were experiencing problems, these visits would be more frequent. She would decide on the need for a bigger house, repairs and renovations, and would help the families with their budgeting. She was empowered to advise and assist the families with all their problems, such as unemployment or illness. She also had to deal with the failure to comply with the prescribed way of living. (CHL, SWR: 1937.) From the start, she would thus elucidate the boundaries of the category good white, keep explaining the rules until everyone had internalised them. If they did not understand, she would personally show how to clean the house or organize a closet.

“The Social Worker should have authority to visit any house in a friendly way, but where a housewife is untidy or any other problem situation arises, the Social Worker should visit the home very often and help and correct the family in as tactful way as is possible. Inspection of such houses should be done regularly.” (CHL, SWR: 1937.)

In theory social workers had vast powers over people's lives. In practice they were in control of the Company's resources. They decided who was in dire need of foodstuff or money, and who was not. They organised in-

formative leisure activities such as classes, clubs and societies. They were generally dedicated and helpful, and during this period attempts to build trust relationships and affect the residents' lives with positive encouragement are often described in the archival material.

Being helped also meant a loss of privacy for the family concerned. The social workers were adept at finding out what was going on in the families and if things went wrong, they did not hesitate to use the powers given to them.

The process of steering a wayward person back on to the right path constituted several methods of control. *Persuasion and home visits* were the gentlest methods. *Reprimanding* and serious *conversations* with the *dominees* were used. The wrongdoers could also be denied *economic resources*. Some of the problem cases had to be sent to an *institution*. These institutions varied from the work colonies, mental hospitals and industrial schools to children's homes. *Removing the children* from homes perceived as unsuitable was a procedure that often occurred in my archival material. In the worst cases a *notice to vacate* was given and *criminal charges* were pressed.

The residents were not only directed by social workers: police, *dominees*, medical doctors, teachers and other professionals were also present. In order for these professionals to run things effectively, they had to know what was going on. The relevant information could be achieved from either the professional or social networks. Organisations, such as the previously discussed *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroueverening* (ACVV) and *Society for the Protection of Child Life* (SPCL), participated in this interchange of information. Different authorities often co-operated, and an overlapping and very effective network of professional experts grew almost organically in the area over the years, ensuring that the residents' lives were transparent.

Information was also obtained from the social networks that the professionals built with the residents. Over the years information accumulated as everything was written down. Consequently the professionals knew about almost everything that happened in the area.

"There were watchful eyes" (F., 80 years, long-term resident.)

DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC CAPITAL

Despite the expanding economy of the post-depression years and the resolutions of the 1934 *volkskongres* to work towards the solution of the 'poor white problem', the Afrikaners remained poor in the 1930s. In 1939 there were still 298.000 white persons living on a monthly income of less than £12 (Giliomee 1979b: 154).

New and cheap houses in the poor white areas were popular. In 1946 the Company had received 594 applications for houses before the end of September, of which 410 were approved and 179 families were put on the waiting list. The emphasis remained on large families with small incomes. Despite the extension added to EGV, there were still not enough homes for the poor whites. (CHL Special report: 1947.)

“During the past few years, almost every application coming before the Selection Committee has been an urgent case. Applicants plead that they live in garages and tents, have received notice to quit their abodes and have nowhere at all to go, are already homeless. It is not a grateful task to listen to desperate story after desperate story, and have no better news to tell than that even your Company has no accommodation to offer for months to come.” (CHL Special report: 1947: 9.)

Life in a housing estate proved to be a source of increasing economic well-being for the residents. The total monthly income of EGV residents with a regular income rose during the first four years.¹²⁰ According to the Epping Garden Village survey report of 1942, more than 60 per cent of the 680 families had improved their financial position as a result of cheaper rent. This was considered a success. In 1946 67,2 per cent of 738 tenant households had increased their income since moving to the area, and the number of families with debt decreased from 63,2 per cent to 8,5 per cent between 1942 and 1946. (CHL Survey: 1942, 1946.)¹²¹

In general white South Africans' standard of living, particularly that of

¹²⁰ Income was defined in the surveys as follows: “1) Payment received by a working man or woman assuming that he or she works the regular prescribed hours per week. No overtime is included and no allowances have been made for periods of sickness and unemployment. 2) All pensions and other monetary allowances.”

¹²¹ The increase in income in Epping Garden Village was similar to that of its Johannesburg opposite number and contemporary, Jan Hofmeyr. It had also witnessed a dramatic upward trend in the income of its residents during the first two years between 1936 and 1938 (Parnell 1988a: 590).

the Afrikaners, began to rise during the 1940s. Giliomee suggests that not only the economic mobilisation of the Afrikaners, but also the expanding war economy largely helped to eliminate the 'poor white problem' (1979b: 159).

In the 1940s, some of the residents began to grow too prosperous to stay in the Company's Villages: Zorgvliet, Good Hope Model Village and EGV. The Social Welfare Committee noted that arrangements had to be made to transfer these families to the 'economic'¹²² hire purchase scheme that was under construction in Thornton as soon as houses were available "as the board cannot allow them to remain in occupation of 'sub-economic' houses" (CHL, SWR: 1942).

Thornton was opened in 1944, and the end of 1940s thus witnessed the beginning of the outflow of the newly rehabilitated whites from EGV. Clearly the majority of residents were becoming less poor, but parallel to this 'economic rehabilitation' there were some less positive developments, such as internal differentiation. Between 1942 and 1946 the number of families receiving some form of help from the welfare rose from 25 per cent to 31,7 per cent. Twenty-four per cent of the families had not experienced an increase in their total (net) income, and 8 per cent of the families had actually seen their income decrease. (CHL Survey: 1942, 1946.)

The beginning of the internal differentiation can also be seen in the ways the assistance changed. Social benefits were relatively modest during the first years. In 1942, 91 per cent of financial assistance consisted of free schoolbooks or state-aided butter. Other available forms of assistance were pensions for the old, mothers' pensions or pensions for physically disabled persons. In 1946 only 80 per cent of the welfare recipients received butter or schoolbooks, but the relatively small number of people who received a pension had grown. Between 1942 and 1950 the share of families receiving a government grant-in-aid increased from 2,5 per cent to 15,6 per cent. (CHL, SWR: 1950.)

In the 1930s and the 1940s the Company's attitude was that its tenants were to be protected from their own social incompetence. In order to carry out this protection, the CHL collected detailed data on the residents. E.g., after conducting the 1942 survey the CHL knew exactly how much

¹²² Sub-economic housing was directed to the lowest income group. E.g., in the early 1950s this (nationally standardized) group included those families whose main breadwinner was earning less than £30 per month, while economic housing was directed at those who had managed to raise their income above this maximum (see Parnell 1988a: 598-599).

money each family had spent on furniture during that year. The CHL condemned the purchase of expensive furniture and cars on a hire purchase agreement that exceeded the tenants' income and status. People were not to present a status that was perceived to be above their level, and too lavish spending was also seen to contribute to discord among tenants. The discussions held on the ownership of motorcars illustrate this attitude. At first the residents were only allowed to have cars if the CHL judged they could afford them. They were not yet at a stage where they would be allowed to use money freely, or to show off their status as whites.

"...this Committee is of the opinion that the privilege of possessing a motor car should be determined by the Social and Economic circumstances of the applicant. In the case of those tenants who have abused this privilege, every effort should be made by the company through its Social Workers to resort to the method of moral persuasion in convincing the family of the unwisdom of the possession of a car." (CHL, SWR: 1942.)

At the beginning of the 1940s people were indeed penalised for owning cars, and the Company thoroughly investigated the circumstances of every family applying for a right to own one. During the Second World War car ownership decreased, but in 1950 25 per cent of tenants had cars. The CHL found this to be too high a percentage, and a recommendation was made that only those who used cars in order to earn their living should be allowed to own a vehicle. (CHL, SWR: 1950.)

"Recreation is as necessary to a working class family as to other families but it is possible to obtain it in much cheaper ways. A car is the outward appearance of prosperity - as is a house and furniture. Is it not the satisfaction of owning a car rather than the satisfaction derived from its use that induces the low paid worker to buy a car? This same question applies to such articles as Radiograms and very expensive furniture. A large number of tenants buy Radiograms although they never buy records and very seldom listen to any other radio station besides Cape Town. A small radio set would suffice, yet it is the appearance of the Radiogram which gives the satisfaction." (CHL, SWR: 1950.)

The fear of people being unable to manage was not entirely unfounded. There were many tangible issues that needed attention, such as malnutrition, alcoholism, TB and illiteracy. These problems were tackled ef-

fectively; in 1941 for instance, a feeding-scheme was established for 29 undernourished children found during inspections of the Village (CHL, SWR 1941: Report on the undernourished children). Mothers were instructed on how to plan diets and budget for food. They were given lectures and demonstrations; manure and vegetable seeds were distributed free of charge for the tenants' kitchen gardens.

The underlying agenda of adding social status to the lives of the poor whites becomes clear when the way in which luxuries and symbolic power were distributed to the tenants is studied – a white was allowed two times more meat than a non-white, while non-whites were handed twice as much beans than the whites (CHL, SWR: 1942).

The residents of the first generation were generally grateful to the CHL, but everything did not go as smoothly as planned. Everyone was not improving, and the internal differentiation was already a fact in the 1940s. Moreover, some people took advantage of the situation and - to the horror of the social workers – a new kind of tenant was emerging:

“Mr. Oosthuizen is not ashamed of requesting and receiving assistance. He has gradually degenerated into the habit of actually demanding assistance. He believes in his ideas and statements and sees no harm in his behaviour. He appears to think it is an honest way to earn a livelihood ‘There is no harm in asking’. This attitude and belief has grown to be part of his ‘culture’.” (CHL, SWR: 1949.)

During the first decade, the stereotype of the passive and parasitic poor white had begun to evolve in Epping Garden Village. Despite all the resources and all the attention, some residents had become institutionalised.

DISTRIBUTION OF CULTURAL CAPITAL THROUGH BODIES AND EMBODIMENT

In addition to economic capital the residents were given cultural capital. The professionals used their resources systematically in order to establish a proper and uniform White habitus for everyone. The ideas concerning acceptable ways of handling race relations, sexuality, appearance, work ethics and family life were imposed using body techniques, such as the ideas and practices concerning cleanliness. The spatial design of the suburb and a certain amount of symbolic violence supported the process

of rehabilitation. From the very beginning, the uplifters controlled the boundaries around the social bodies of the residents.

The aim was that the people would acquire an ideal way of being White, and the level of this success had to be consistently presented in everyday life. The signs of a good white were shown spatially and at the bodily level, in one's house and family, and in the public spaces. Willingness to work, to show a proper habitus, and an ability to develop one's whole life in the right direction were expected.

Simultaneously, the social games started in the suburb when the residents began employing their tactics and manipulating the social situations. What Bourdieu would call a "field" – an area of everyday life or a social space where social games could take place (1998: 77) – developed in Epping Garden Village. Respectability and a membership of the middle-class were the prizes set for the winners of this game. From the start some people were more willing or more able to rid themselves of the looming stigma of being poor white. Those people had much more to win, and thus also more to lose. During these years there was still a chance of respectability even for the White poor.

Despite the unequal power relations, the residents' everyday life was not completely invaded by the regime. The residents developed devices to cope with the surveillance, and discovered ways to escape the all-seeing eye of the professionals. The case of Mr. Oosthuizen above shows that the residents began to see their relationships with these professionals as tactical¹²³ ones – despite the fact that these interactions also had a negotiated and mutual side – and attempted to use them to their own advantage.

Men and Women at Work: Toiling, Gendered and Regulated Bodies

The poor white bodies had to be disciplined, regimented and moved if the correct way of living was eventually to appear self-evident and unrehearsed. The relationship between work and honour was central to the category of a good white. The ideal gender roles too were clear in the archival findings.

Men's glory was to work and provide for their families, look after their women, and to protect them. The white male body was supposed to be a hard-working, disciplined body. A White man was never lazy. If he could

¹²³ Here I am referring to de Certeau's (1984: 36-38) idea of tactics as the ability of the one in a weaker position to manipulate the strategy given from those above.

not find any other job, the Railways and some other institutions offered sheltered employment for him.

In practice, some men were not able to fulfil the expectations harboured of them as breadwinners. They could not keep their jobs and they often struggled to find new ones. Drinking and relations with other women were considered offensive, but the ultimate sin was for a man to be ‘work-shy’. The first work-shy men appeared in the archival data in 1943.

“These two ‘won’t works’ are well known at the Labour Bureau where they have often refused work or accepted it and resigned after a few weeks. It appears to be a typical case for a Labour colony but unfortunately there is no such institution in existence at present. The father joins in the drinking parties at the house.” (CHL, SWR: 1943.)

The demands expected of female behaviour were far stricter, and labelling occurred easier than with men. An alternative to this labelling was to assume the powerful role of an all-mighty Afrikaner mother, a *volksmoeder*. In this image, correct behaviour was connected to sexual virtue (*kuisheid*). As Louise Vincent points out, the romanticised category¹²⁴ of *volksmoeder* was appealing, particularly to those women whose own position in the society was ambiguous. The role of the *volksmoeder* offered working-class Afrikaner women a way to fight back against their marginalisation. (Vincent 2000: 67-68.)¹²⁵

In the 1930s the ACVV was an organisation with a considerable influence on poor white women’s lives. It was known to take a positive stand regarding the use of contraceptives by poor white women, mainly because ‘birth spacing’ would save women’s strength and contribute to them being proper *volksmoeders* (Klausen 2001: 20). It seems, however, that contraceptives failed to gain popularity. Instead, from early on, EGV became derogatorily known as a *konyntjiedorp*¹²⁶ and ‘nappy valley’ where families were big. In all likelihood the improved living conditions in EGV combined with Afrikaner politician’s pronatalist ideologies and

¹²⁴ At the turn of the century the ideal image of an Afrikaner mother was that of a praying mother, *biddende ma*.

¹²⁵ For discussions on *volksmoeders*, see also Marijke du Toit 2003 and Anne McClintock (1995: 378-379). On the position of Afrikaner women in South African nation-building in the early twentieth century, see Marijke du Toit 1992.

¹²⁶ Lit. a village of rabbits. A seemingly joking expression that in fact implies that the people living in the suburb breed like animals, are too weak to control their sexuality and too uneducated to limit the number of their children as a civilised person would.

the idealisation of *volksmoeders* tipped the scales in favour of large families.

This was the time after the extension of white franchise, which gave white women the right to vote in 1930. The law also increased gender equality, although in the form of increased control.¹²⁷ Since the white women's rights had recently been upgraded, they had to earn their place in the power structures of society, and prove they also deserved full citizenship. The easiest way to prove their worthiness was by adapting the general concern about racial purity and emphasising the role of women (they may only be women, but they are still White) in the nation-building process.

Afrikaner mothers were to be the sentinels of the honour of their *volk*. Theirs was the mission of protecting the purity and thus the organic unity of the white race. More concretely, they supervised the cleanliness of their own bodies, as well as that of their families and houses. The burden of educating the new generations to be proper whites rested on their shoulders. *Volksmoeders* were the true guardians of the category of a proper white. Undoubtedly, this role appealed to the women in Epping Garden Village. It gave them a dignified status in the community as well as a place in the nation-building process.

Ideally, the female body was a domestic and self-sacrificing mother-body. In practice, many women worked outside home either to compensate for men's failure to provide for their families, or because they needed the money. Often, they had no choice.

“No mother’s allowance is available for Mrs. C., as it is felt that her children were institutionalised to enable her to find employment. She is having difficulty in finding work as she is not in good health, has only passed Std. 6, and is not bilingual. She has no qualifications or experience in work other than domestic, but her physical condition does not allow her to enter into domestic service. She obtained a job at the Dry-Cleaning Depot at Stuttafords but collapsed on the first day of employment.” (CHL, SWR: 1945.)

¹²⁷ The Immorality Act was amended in 1927 to prohibit extra-marital intercourse between all Whites and Africans presumably for eugenic reasons. This was an extension of pre-Union laws of 1902 and 1903, which had forbidden the sexual intercourse only between “Black men and White women”. (Horrell 1978.)

The archival findings show that during the first years women were actively discouraged from working outside the home, since their homes and families were seen to be their first priorities. Girls often had to cut their education short for the sake of their families, and the theme of a female being an asset to the family in this manner occurs frequently. The social workers, being educated women themselves, wanted to guarantee the girls an opportunity for education.

There were little professional prospects for uneducated white women. The jobs for which they were qualified were badly paid, and there was no career to be pursued. The most honourable work was a woman's work in the home. A woman who did not properly carry out her domestic duties was defying the boundaries of the category of a good white, and deserved chastisement.

“He furthermore finds his work too fatiguing at the age of 63 years, with the result that when he returns home to a household which is always in confusion he often gives his wife and children rough treatment.” (CHL, SWR: 1947.)

Despite all these pressures and feminine ideals, there were allegedly several prostitutes in the area, a claim not totally unfounded since the earliest archival material several times mentions houses of ill-fame and prostitution at the poverty-ridden Epping Garden Village. In comparison with life in the slums, life in Epping Garden Village was comfortable, but some families were still barely able to feed their children (as the existence of 41 undernourished children in 1941 demonstrates) (CHL, SWR: 1941). In the interviews, some senior residents told me of their difficulties to survive in the 1930s and 1940s.

“I always prayed, even if there was nothing in the house. Since I came here it did not go so bad, but before that, more than once, there was nothing to eat. The children would cry for a piece of bread and there is nothing, and then I'd just pray. Tomorrow something happens. And those days you know, it was bad days. Those days I even asked the people to scrub their kitchen floors for a sixpence. And they said no, they'd do it themselves. I walked and I asked, walked and asked.” (Female, long-term resident, 82 years.)

She did the honourable thing, pinched her pennies and starved, but not everyone was equally resistant to relatively easy money, which prosti-

tution could provide. The risks involved were stigmatisation and being expelled from the suburb, or worse: the women could be, for instance, branded as unfit mothers.

In spite of possible negative consequences, the archival material has an abundance of examples of women's slipping morals. They were labelled sexually deviant, bad mothers or bad housekeepers. In the archival files the social workers often described these women as slovenly, nervous or in the worst case, hysterical. The ethos seemed to be that if the women could not handle the toughness of their lives, there had to be something wrong with them.

These developments and ideals lead to the category of a sexually pure 'proper woman' becoming well internalised, and rarely questioned by women themselves. If a woman resisted the positive *volksmoeder* model role, she risked being perceived as leaning towards the negative stereotype of a whore. Thus the concept of *volksmoeder*, initially tempting and empowering, further ossified the gender roles in the area.¹²⁸

In addition to time-consuming demands to work hard and be proper, all the residents were presumed to have productive leisure. Organising the residents' leisure was an important part of the social workers' initial task description. Planned leisure would ensure that the tenants would not engage in any counter-productive activities, but instead divide their free time between sport, church and gardening.

Extensive club work was organised from the start. In the 1930s and 1940s leisure activities were organised by gender. There were boys' clubs to boost male socialisation, and the social workers did their best to awaken the ladies' interests in sewing and decorating.

For men there was sport and garden work, for women there was guidance in good housekeeping and care of their children. The women were constantly educated to become more moral and skilful people. Educational movies were shown weekly at the community hall, and the domestic science¹²⁹ students from the universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town visited and taught them household and gardening skills. There were lectures on medical topics: child health and children's diseases, and lectures on handicrafts and cooking.

¹²⁸ Dworkin (1983) examines the allure of the political ultra-right, and its promises to women of conservative families who would otherwise be bound to total powerlessness. By giving a selected few women a task and a seeming purpose in life, it recruits them to work for a repressive power structure, which, in the long run, tends to deny women their rights.

¹²⁹ Home Economics.

In 1942 the residents were allowed to organise a dance in the community hall once a month. The social workers were concerned that only the residents from Epping would attend and the residents would become isolated, as experience had shown that the middle class rarely volunteered to spend their free time with poor whites.

“It is a well-known fact in Good Hope Model Village that people across the road in Brooklyn refuse to attend dances in the Martin Adams Hall, because the hall bears the stigma of being a social Hall for poor whites.” (CHL, SWR: 1942.)

The social workers were correct, and after first few dances the people were left to spend their time among themselves. However, the dances became vastly popular in the suburb, and are still organised.

For the rest, the resident activity tended towards the sporadic, and was characterised by short, fervent periods of mobilisation and long periods of oblivion and passivity. This tendency towards passivity was already known to the social workers in the 1940s. They found it difficult to persuade people to attend the stimulating activities that they co-ordinated right from the start.

“Experience in Good Hope Model Village proved that if any organisation depended for support on Good Hope Model Village Tenants only, that undertaking was a hopeless failure.” (CHL, SWR: 1942.)

The social workers’ contempt and frustration are visible in this material. But in the 1940s the optimism had as yet not disappeared completely.

“Tenants in Epping Garden Village differ from those in Good Hope Model Village at the present time. They are still pulling together, but with the years, the same attitude might manifest itself amongst tenants and members of the public in that neighbourhood; and it is felt that such an event as the Dance Orchestra competition would definitely counteract this.” (CHL, SWR: 1942.)

The social workers’ fears were justified, and the careful optimism died when within a few years a passive attitude also became the norm in EGV. These first years were full of social workers’ attempts to organise group work, and consequent disappointments.

“...the tenants in the Company’s villages have not developed the habit of using their leisure creatively. An investigation into the way in which housewives, men and young people spent their leisure would undoubtedly reveal surprising results . . . Attempts have been made in the past to organise certain group work and although it has been a failure in most cases, the reasons for the failure have never been analysed.” (CHL, SWR: 1945.)

Despite these feelings of failure, the survey of 1946 revealed that 17 per cent (594 of 3481) of the residents were active members in associations, clubs and committees, which varied from *Reddingsdaadbond*¹³⁰ to *Volk-spele*¹³¹; and there was even a pigeon society.¹³²

Becoming a good white was not a part-time commitment. In their reports, social workers often evaluated the people’s use of (free) time when discussing their degree of upliftment.

“The house is poorly furnished, the bedding is filthy and the house smells unpleasant. The floors and walls are dirty. Mr. Smith has not attempted to improve his garden although he spends a lot of time at home.” (CHL, SWR: 1948.)

Thus, during the first years work was seen as the best bodily technique for upliftment of poor whites. Since some residents did not improve, new bodily techniques were needed to battle these newly perceived problems, and the advances in medical science seemed to provide some answers.

In the 1940s, expertise in the analysis of the body reached a new level as the influence of nurses, medical doctors and psychiatrists began to increase in the housing schemes. The Company first employed a psychiatrist in 1944, and psychological jargon began to penetrate the social workers’ observations.

¹³⁰ The *Reddingsdaadbond* was a society concerned with the economic survival of the Afrikaners.

¹³¹ Afrikaner dances and songs that were considered very traditional, while they were actually largely created in the early twentieth century in order to strengthen the process of nation building.

¹³² The occurrence of crime was low, although the first statistics show that at the beginning of the 1940s crime was increasing. In 1940 there were 15 cases, in 1941 17 cases, in 1942 28 cases and in the first three months of 1942 already 13 cases. The majority of the criminals in these cases, however, were runaway (ex-)husbands who would not support their families.

“The psychiatrist’s opinion is that at this stage she is absolutely incapable of ”pulling herself together” and from childhood she has built up what has now become a ”conditioned reflex” in that, to all difficult situations she reacts emotionally and is incapable of reacting in any other way. He has hopes that regular psychiatric treatment will bring her to a more reasonable outlook on life, which will allow her to live a normal married life.” (CHL, SWR: 1948.)

Medical certificates became a routine part of many procedures, such as applications for housing. Some residents learned that through the medical professionals it was sometimes possible to turn the attempts to supervise their embodiment to their own advantage. Doctors’ certificates were presented to various ends, such as to get a transfer closer to a station, or to a larger house, to get children sent to or returned from an institution – and to avoid or acquire employment. Sometimes the certificates were also played off against each other, as residents had learned that professional opinions could differ.

“Sarie, 16 years, and Marie, 14 years, were admitted to the Housecraft School at Riebeeck West in January. After the Easter weekend, when home, they refused to return, but sent two Medical Certificates signed by Dr. de V., stating they were unfit for manual labour. The Principal of the school arranged with the Social Worker to have the girls re-examined by Dr. O. who found them fit and strong for the course in January. Everything was arranged with Dr. O. to examine the girls, but instead Mrs. F. took them back for examination to Dr. de V., contrary to instructions.” (CHL, SWR: 1945.)

This does not imply that people were not genuinely ill, but the residents did use their health as a means to get what they wanted. This was known to the social workers, who were not always satisfied with the certificates they were given.

“Transfer from Epping Garden Village to Good Hope Model Village: It was decided that the family be transferred to Good Hope Model Village. Mention was made of the fact that an unduly large number of tenants were submitting medical certificates indicating that chest and bronchial ailments were caused by the pine trees in Epping Garden Village, and the Director of Welfare Services was instructed to request

doctors to exercise care in issuing such statements.” (CHL, SWR: 1949.)

Since the social workers could contest the doctors’ opinion, the power of the medical profession was not absolute. It was, however, not a common occurrence. Around this time a caste of the professionally ill emerged in the Village.

“Both Mr. and Mrs. S.’s health should be taken into consideration when attempting to judge the family. A full medical examination would be necessary. They, however, exaggerate their ill health, as a method to escape their responsibilities and to obtain money from every possible source.” (CHL, SWR: 1948.)

Evidently a doctor who would co-operate with the Company was needed. Medical practitioners therefore moved into the area in 1949. (CHL, SWR: 1949.)

This process of medicalisation and the arrival of the medical authorities had several implications. While the residents were better taken care of, they were also supervised more intensively regarding bodily issues. They received effective health education: prevention of tuberculosis was made an issue, and campaigns against alcoholism were also launched, but the medical intervention helped the uplifters to penetrate their lives even more intensely. It helped to form the category of a good white and to determine the boundaries of wanted and unwanted embodiment even better. The residents, however, also grew accustomed to using medical opinions as weapons in the battles between themselves and the Company, and in their attempts to increase their social position. These can be seen as the first instances, where the residents of the suburb learned to use the middle-class desire to uplift them to their own advantage.

Paradoxically, while the residents were kept far from direct power over their own lives, they were still expected to develop into economically autonomous, competent and productive citizens. Social workers evaluated the manifestation of these prized qualities by looking at the level of internalisation of body techniques in the correct external presentation of self.

The Correct Ways of Presenting Self in Public and Private Spaces¹³³

In a poor white suburb of the 1940s, where everyone was almost equally poor, there were few ways to make a social distinction. For the more successful residents, a need to make this distinction grew along with the growth of the internal differentiation. Residents showing the internalisation of proper embodiment had less trouble with the social workers, and more social status and privacy.

Archival findings show that the Company monitored the inhabitants' hygiene and sexual behaviour, interfering with every detail of their personal lives. Their behaviour, and moral and physical cleanliness were incessantly evaluated, regulated and corrected by the authorities. They were under watchful eyes in their private homes as well as in public spaces, and in the semi-public garden spaces.

One good way to prove commitment to upliftment and to proper white values was the representation of self: to try and look and behave properly. Soap was cheap and good manners cost nothing. In the accounts of the social workers, family happiness was seen as dependent on its hygiene. Most of the families also complied with this ideal. In its first survey, the Company announced that in 1938, before settling in Epping Garden Village, 93 per cent of the people had "satisfactorily kept homes". The social workers' efforts made this figure even higher, and in 1942, approximately 97 per cent of the families had learnt to keep their homes clean and neat.¹³⁴ As with other areas of life, the beginnings of the internal differentiation can also be seen from the result of the 1946 survey. At that time 'only' 90 per cent of females were found to be living in homes that social workers were willing to classify as "clean and neat". (CHL Survey: 1942.)

The difference between being honourable poor whites and parasitic *armblankes* was a very fine one (Marijke du Toit 1992: 7). One important way to draw the difference was to create an apt social image, a habitus showing one's cultural competence. Appearance and taste were this kind of status-generating bodily/spatial behaviour. The ways the people represented themselves in the public space and used their private space were

¹³³ Appearance and Taste, Cleanliness, Female Role, Male Role, Space-use of.

¹³⁴ "... 'Clean and Neat'. These are adjectives applied to premises which, according to the Social Workers' reports, are kept in a satisfactory condition. This does not apply either to the building structure or environment, and is subjective data based on the Social Worker's impressions." (CHL Survey: 1942.)

(and still are) measures of a good white. *Arm is niks, maar vuil!*¹³⁵

These ideas are abundantly represented in the archival material. The ideals of appearance and taste are organised around the oppositions of male/female, public/private, healthy/sick, clean/dirty, hard-working/lazy, moral/immoral, normal/pathological, and ignorant/civilised.

“Mr. M. is a sickly nonentity in the house and Mrs. M. is an untidy, slovenly woman.” (CHL, SWR: 1938.)

“The children and Mrs. C. are always very untidy and look in need of bathing.” (CHL, SWR: 1939.)

“Mrs. L. has regained mental equilibrium and the house is spotlessly clean and tidy.” (CHL, SWR: 1940.)

“Mrs. R. is a very ignorant uneducated type and of a nervous disposition.” (CHL, SWR: 1941.)

This supervision was gendered. Men had more freedom, since they belonged to the public sphere and were thus never expected to do much inside the house. Men spent their days elsewhere, in professional life. They had more opportunities to escape the social control of the suburb, while their families were always there. Although male sexuality was supervised, it was not the main target in the attempts to discipline the male body. The main male responsibility was to support his family.

Men’s appearances and tastes were seldom criticised, while women were particularly under scrutiny. The social workers’ reports and the board resolutions were laden with evaluations of what was seen as an appropriate representation of self, and what was seen as unacceptable. The ideals of a carefully groomed body and good and respectable personal appearance were strongly present in the data of this study. Women were to learn proper manners (and watch those of their families), and learn how to dress. Their clothes were supposed to be neat, and attractive. Make-up on women was nice, but too much of it was seen as tasteless.

“The oldest child, a daughter who is very attractive looking, even with the elaborate make-up she uses sometimes.” (CHL, SWR: 1938.)

¹³⁵ ‘Being poor is no shame, but there’s no excuse for being dirty!’

Domestic space was seen as a part of a woman's representation of herself. The proper appearance of the domestic space, its cleanliness and maintenance were important. They also told volumes of women's moral qualities.

"She appeared to be a hardworking, respectable type and her cottage, though extremely poorly furnished, was always kept neat and clean." (CHL, SWR: 1947.)

"On different visits the house was found to be untidy, with unswept bedroom and kitchen floors and dirty clothes scattered around. One feels that Mrs. Jones takes no pride in her home, and she fails to create a homely atmosphere." (CHL, SWR: 1946.)

The women also had to ensure that the domestic environment conformed to the aesthetic ideals. The social workers tried to awaken people's interest in decoration and possessed a keen eye for detail. Nothing regarding issues of proper taste, appearance or housekeeping was too small to mention.

"The beds were made and the dining room floor was shining - even the back stoep¹³⁶ was swept and the bath as clean as possible under circumstances. More often though the place was very much on the untidy side. It will encourage Mrs. O. a lot if we could have her back stoep painted red for her, and also if we could get her some coloured paper to paste on her bathroom window panes, which are at present simply smeared with some concoction passing by the name of brown paint. This looks very ugly and untidy." (CHL, SWR: 1938.)

In order to teach the women what a home should look like, the social workers even furnished a model cottage in the 1950s. These ideas were resilient, for during my fieldwork forty years later I often came across different expressions of the idea of the cleanliness of a house revealing its owners' morals.

For men and women, bad behaviour in public spaces was a short cut to being labelled deviant. Misbehaviour on the streets and in other public spaces, however, caused more trouble for women, who were seen as belonging inside the boundaries of the private sphere.

¹³⁶ Patio.

“It is said that Mrs. H. is addicted to alcohol. On several occasions she has run into the street and drawn attention to herself by behaving in an improper manner. On occasion she uses very bad language and makes as much noise as possible by knocking things about in her room and in the passage.” (CHL, SWR: 1946.)

In contrast to the masculinity of public spaces and femininity of private spaces, the semi-public garden spaces represented a zone where both the feminine and the masculine were able to conjoin and demonstrate their best talents. A lovely garden and a neat house were symbols of successful whiteness, and of an internalised work ethic. Gardens gave men a chance to show how hard and persistently they could work to make the sandy soil of the Cape Flats bloom, while women had an opportunity to show their aesthetic sophistication in the planning of the flower beds, and money-saving skills in the clever planting of suitable vegetables.

These gardens became a true source of pride to the residents, and the yearly garden competitions became popular. In each area adjudicators, consisting of social workers and experts, chose the most beautiful garden. According to the Company’s own survey of 1946, 67 per cent of the families in EGV had a “well kept garden”.¹³⁷

To this day elderly ladies in the suburb in particular regard having a lovely garden as a matter of honour, and men can get quite enthusiastic when describing their garden projects.

While some families were fervently shaping the appearances of their homes and their bodies to create good model lives, some began to give up. There was just no time or energy, no purpose and no point in learning the complicated bodily techniques and rules of distinction. Since the connection between maintaining the bodily discipline and the high moral standards was strong in Epping Garden Village, the increasing presence of ‘fallen’ women and ‘work-shy’ men placed more pressure on the rest of the residents. Emphasising one’s own integrity and well-internalised rules of embodiment could diminish the stigma of being a poor white. This tactic was also a tool of distinction, as it showed the degrees of internal differentiation between residents.

Occasionally this led to extreme shows of morality as some residents tactically over-emphasised their roles as good citizens. This in turn fed

¹³⁷ The social workers had emphasised the need to create ‘civilised’ spaces from the very beginning. The first social services for municipal housing schemes were provided by the City Council in 1925 when a prize of £25 was handed out to those Maitland residents who had the neatest and most attractive houses and gardens (Bosman 1941: 256).

social competition. The other side of social competition was increasing passivity, which can also be understood as an evasion of the professionals' constant meddling in the residents' lives. Consequently, the social relations in the suburb grew complicated, and at times plain chaotic.

A SOAP OPERA OF SOCIAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL CONTROL

“If you live or work in Ruyterwacht you have to play their (the residents’) game. The name of the game is holier than thou.” (F., 27 years.)

Towards the end of the 1940s the social competition between the residents turned fierce. In their everyday lives many residents were able to manipulate the social networks of the area to their own ends. The morals of the residents were constantly evaluated in gossip, which became a source of social control, and an effective social weapon. The distrust between residents grew when it became commonplace to control an unpleasant neighbour by leaking detrimental information about him or her to the social workers.

My senior informants described this turn by saying that after the early years “something happened”, and “things were not any more just what they used to be”. This change of atmosphere was also visible in the archival findings.

“Mrs. M’s neighbours are causing her considerable worry and distress. She has lived in the neighbourhood since 1939 and her domestic and private affairs are subject to much gossip. She is not in good health and recently underwent a serious gynaecological operation. She is also very nervous. The unpleasantness of the neighbours has a debilitating effect upon her health and nerves.” (CHL, SWR: 1948.)

It was possible to take advantage of people's competition for resources and social status, and get the residents to tell on their neighbours. Controlling their everyday life was much easier if the residents supervised one another. Potential trouble could be prevented when it was reported beforehand, and any attempts to lead the social workers astray were soon revealed by an envious neighbour who could thus earn some moral mileage for himself.

“It was stated by neighbours however that Mr. E. and this girl are living together as man and wife. During a recent interview with Mr. E. he confessed that this was the case.” (CHL, SWR: 1949.)

In the archival findings the language of guilt, shame, confessions and reprimanding characterises this hide-and-seek-game, which could turn dramatic at times. Social workers were never out of work, for there always seemed to be people in need of help. The reactions to this varied from isolation from other residents and the evasion of the uplifters to adaptation to situation and playing along in the constant social drama of the suburb.

The Central Role of the Nuclear Family Unit¹³⁸

It is still important to remember that Epping Garden Village was never a closed institution, but an outwardly normal suburb. It was thus essential for the elite to present the process of upliftment as philanthropy towards families, which was the accepted form of intervention at the time – also in Europe (Donzelot 1979). Philanthropy was an excellent method with which to combine assistance and medical-hygienist thinking into one functioning system. The most important unit of rehabilitation was thus the family, and families were treated as wholes.

Ideally the basis of every household in EGV was a married couple. Those couples caught co-habiting “as man and wife” were promptly given two options: either get married or leave. In the case of extramarital affairs, the transgressors were punished and separated. Solid married life was a sign and a condition of people’s successful upliftment.

The marital relations of the tenants were thus kept under the Company’s watchful eye. This surveillance did not mean the mere control of sexual exclusivity, although it was a large part thereof, but also the stability of the relationship between the spouses. During these first years divorce was actively discouraged, and a woman’s lot in a marriage was to endure. A deserted woman received plenty of sympathy, whereas a woman who could not or did not want to stay in an unsatisfying union was readily deemed bad.

¹³⁸ Codes used to produce the text of this sub-chapter were: Families and Social Relations, Control and Social Relations, Parenthood and Institutions, Parenthood and Social Control; Parenthood and Social Relations; Parenthood and Professional Co-operation; Marital Relations; Marital Relations and Space, use of; Marital Relations and Space-exclusion.

“Mrs. V. has deserted her husband and children three times since the family assumed tenancy in March, 1947. Each time she maintained that her husband had ill-treated her and each time she worked herself up into an intense emotional outburst threatening suicide and the like. It became evident that she was very nervous and emotionally unbalanced and if her husband had ill-treated her, which he denied, he was probably driven to it by her nagging and unpredictable behaviour.” (CHL, SWR: 1949.)

Towards the end of the 1940s the attitudes towards women in difficult marriages grew more sympathetic. The social workers helped the women greatly, since the latter were able to keep their wayward men at bay by reporting them. Social workers were often the first ones to discover marital trouble.

“...Mr. B. was reported to be ill-treating his wife. The matter was only investigated after Mrs. B. came to the office for advice.” (CHL, SWR: 1950.)

Alliances developed between the women of Epping and the social workers. In the case of divorce, a woman who divorced a philanderer, an alcoholic or a work-shy person, could rely on the social workers' help. If a man deserted his family and just disappeared, the police were sent after him since 'non-support of a family' was a criminal offence.

The CHL not only settled family disputes, but also in the case of divorce often decided the future fate of the house and children, and administered families' maintenance grants. It exerted power over the residents' family relations, regulating the children's life in the families and the ways parenthood occurred in family life.

The Company's power was increased by the fact that the families competed against one another. In the race towards whiteness, it was in everybody's interest to get rid of, or re-orientate those families perceived as problematic. This regulation was further fuelled by the fear of degeneration that would spread like a contagious disease through the neighbourhood if the 'weaklings' were allowed to stay.

“The social worker has again received complaints from neighbours about the N. children and the Secretary Manager has received a petition signed by 10 neighbours re the matter . . . The Principal of the Epping Garden Village school reports that these children have a very

deteriorating influence on other children especially those in their own neighbourhood . . . Mrs. N. refused to allow the children to be removed from the home. The social worker considers that unless these children are removed from the home the family must be moved away for the sake of the surrounding tenants. Because the family has responded from one aspect of the social work, social worker feels that it is unfair to deprive them of a cheap home and allow their environment to degenerate.” (CHL, SWR: 1940.)

The Company is the Mother, the Company is the Father

From early on the taking of the children from their parents and placing them in foster homes and institutions became the trademark of social work in the eyes of the residents – a situation which lasted up to the 1980s, and was still reflected in my informants’ accounts.

“When I came to this area people seemed to think I had two things to do: hand out food parcels and take their children away.” (Social worker.)

As the poor white adults were often seen as being beyond redemption, the emphasis was on the upliftment of the children. The education system promoted rehabilitation. Schools in the area carried out this task, but sometimes it was not enough. Parents of problematic offspring were given a chance to send their children to boarding schools at government expense. These boarding schools were in the countryside where children, ‘corrupted’ by their urban environment, were supposed to learn a healthier way of life. During the holidays children could be sent away to the Company’s holiday camps.

A family whose children were not educated to be hard working, sexually controlled and neat citizens ran a real risk of losing them altogether.

“As the B. children’s upbringing has been totally devoid of even the most elementary training in personal habits and cleanliness, it was suggested to Mr. B. to place them in the care of a suitable foster mother or in an institution.” (CHL, SWR: 1942.)

Moreover, if the child did not turn out a proper white, the record of the parents would be negatively affected. If the children were troublesome,

the whole family was easily labelled as bad. The failure to bring up good citizens meant that the parents had failed to exert proper discipline over their children, or had even set a bad example for their children in the first place.

“The mother is not a strong character and have no control over the children although she has shown remarkable response to the supervision of the social worker. The home is kept in a very satisfactory condition.” (CHL, SWR: 1940.)

A result of the failure to be effective parents meant that institutions took over their role. Sometimes the families contacted the authorities themselves in order to put their offspring on the right path *before* their records were affected. If the CHL was responsible for the children’s upbringing, the parents were blameless.

In the suburb, the Company had the authority of an omnipotent parent. There were, however, unexpected dangers in relying too much on the authority of this parent. The Company wanted to teach the children how to respect their parents and the authorities, but it occasionally happened that after the children had been temporarily removed from their parents, they no longer wished to return. A rift was thus created between the parents and the children, the latter only being aware of their parents’ helplessness and the humiliation of their poverty.

“The children appear to be discontented with their home since their return and this has made Mrs. H. antagonistic towards all help from outside, e.g. sending them to a clinic or a children’s institution.” (CHL, SWR: 1944.)

In these institutions, such as a boarding schools or children’s homes, the children were not only taught practices of ‘proper’ embodiment, but obtained a glimpse of a lifestyle that was not possible at home, and where the embarrassment of being poor was not present. Even in the earliest archival material the alienation of children occasionally manifested itself. In the 1940s there were already cases where children were dissatisfied with their home-lives, and would discuss their parents with social workers. It was not unusual for the social workers to find themselves in the middle of a family power struggle.

“Investigation of the family circumstances has proved that Mrs. B., the stepmother of the children, is a most difficult person. She is emotionally unstable and lacks self-control. Under the circumstances she is not a suitable person to be entrusted with the upbringing of the seven stepchildren. During the Christmas holidays when they were all home on leave, one of the children came to the office to complain about their stepmother and stated that they were most unhappy with her.” (CHL, SWR: 1949.)

One could not even rely on one’s children. This was consequently reflected in the social relations. The most ambitious parents exerted extremely strict discipline in respect of their offspring. Knowing the potential dangers of unlimited social mixing, the parents kept their children’s social relations under control. They were not allowed to socialise with kids from unsuitable backgrounds.

“Another tenant of a respectable type has stated that they have also considered leaving as Mrs. W. and her children have a very undesirable influence over the children of the neighbourhood.” (CHL, SWR: 1942.)

If not carefully looked after, a child of an aspiring family could drift into ‘bad company’, which was plentiful in the Village. These aspiring families tended to become very exclusive units, striving to keep the evils of outside world at a distance.

Not only did isolation from the social environment benefit a family by preventing the ever-present danger of racial downfall, but it was then also possible to indicate detachment from the stigma of the place, and set oneself above other poor whites. It was therefore important to choose friends very carefully, and not to trust anyone easily.

By keeping a social distance it was possible to save face and have pride. From the residents’ perspective, the tactic of an ideal family in Epping Garden Village was a closed unit that minded its own business, and kept to its own. The theme of nuclear families isolating themselves from the other tenants was a recurring theme in both the interviews and in the archival material.

The social order in Epping Garden Village was rigid and hierarchical. At the top of the hierarchy were the people with the most successful middle-class aspirations, and at the bottom were those who never managed to look or behave white enough. They had to be excluded, since there was

no space for the anomalies in a suburb struggling to remain within the social boundary that separated the Whites from the Other.

Pass-whites and the Company's Dilemma of Colour¹³⁹

"We all had to be so white, white, white." (F., 90 years.)

As the Company struggled to secure the racial boundaries in Epping Garden Village, pass-whites and coloured servants were two unwelcome groups that constituted a tricky problem for the Housing League. A third of the first residents in EGV had until that time lived in the 'Non-European' or racially mixed settlement areas, such as Observatory, Elsie's River or Woodstock (CHL, SWR: 1942).¹⁴⁰

The spatial connection between poor whites and coloureds was old and well known in Cape Town, and racial intermingling was known to take place in the white working-class areas (Watson 1970: 2-11; Western 1997: 208-214). The racial ideals and practices were often contradictory.

During my fieldwork I often heard the claim that the poor white areas such as EGV were havens for pass-whites. From the archival material it becomes evident that the uplifters knew that not every apple in the basket was the kind of fruit they wanted. Although the Company formally promoted the benefits of racial segregation from the very beginning (Bosman 1941: 270-273), it was more ambiguous and flexible in this regard than the apartheid government.

The official rule was that the residents had to be White – or at least appear to be – but the way the racial purity in the area was monitored was full of inconsistencies and ambiguities. The rules were strict: persons classified as non-whites were not even allowed to stay overnight. If someone was caught trying to pass for white, or had too dubious-looking relatives, they would have to leave the suburb for good. This monitoring also covered the children who were born in the area.

In reality, while proclaiming their commitment to the upliftment of the white race, the first selection committee was not very strict about racial

¹³⁹ This and following sub-chapter on domestic servants are based on the information obtained by combining the following codes: Ethnicity and Appearance; Ethnicity and Social Relations; Ethnicity and Space-exclusion; Pass-Whites.

¹⁴⁰ Families moved from, for instance, Parow-Bellville area (27%), Vasco - Elsie's River (12,5%), Maitland (12,5%), Woodstock (10,15%) and Goodwood (8,94%).

purity. They accepted people with a slightly coloured background who were then immersed in whiteness with the Company's silent consent.

In this era, as shown earlier in the fourth chapter, there was no standard definition for a real White. Occasionally, the professionals in Epping Garden Village disagreed on the definition of a White. The church, the social workers, the principal of the primary school and the residents all had their own agendas and definitions. Inclusion in and exclusion from whiteness were therefore processes of endless negotiation.

Pass-white people lived under the constant fear of being discovered. In Epping Garden Village this led to classic witch-hunt situations at times as is described by Cardozo (1970), when no one could be trusted and the neighbours would blame one another to save themselves from persecution. These situations, together with the other tensions, impaired the social relations in the suburb.

A power struggle around the question of the pass-whites is a concrete illustration of how the category White was socially constructed and defined, and how ambiguous the professional uplifters were.

At the end of the 1930s and in the 1940s the headmaster of the primary school orchestrated hunts to find the pass-whites. He would compile lists of 'doubtful' children, requesting the Housing League to research their backgrounds. He would also refuse to take in children who were too dark, and attempted to have families regarded as white evicted if their offspring did not look white enough. This did not please the officials of the Company who had already accepted these families.

“COLOUR QUESTION AT EPPING GARDEN VILLAGE: Family S. The children of these tenants, as well as the mother, are so noticeably coloured that the principal of Epping Garden Village school is unwilling to register them at his school. He is in a difficult position, however, as the fact that the family was admitted to the Village was a tacit assumption that they were European. The following children were also mentioned as being doubtful . . .” (CHL, SWR: 1939.)

Consequently, these families were permitted to stay in the suburb, but their children had to attend school elsewhere. The principal's ad hoc usage of personal power and the local character of this racial boundary are well illustrated by the fact that the same children were well accepted in white schools in the neighbouring, more middle-class areas.

In the archival material there were several mentions of the principal having pointed out a family, or having refused children as coloured, but

only one of these families had to leave the suburb. In reality there must have been many more, for, as discussed earlier, the data of this study does not cover every individual social work case.

The decision of the 1941 Social Welfare Committee as quoted below, refers to the Company's continuous co-operation with the headmaster, and reflects tiredness and disillusionment with his mission for racial purity.

“The social worker reported on the five cases which were investigated by them and stated that they were not prepared to make any recommendations in connection with the colour of the various families investigated. After discussion it was decided and the secretary - manager was instructed to notify the principal of the Epping Garden Village school that the board is not prepared to do anything further in the matter.” (CHL, SWR: 1941.)

Clearly, the officials of the Citizens' Housing League knew that the people they allowed to stay were not always as white as they should have been, but they applied their own rules.

“In the investigation report, colour was stated as doubtful but the member of the selection committee who passed the family stated: ‘I have noticed the remark about colour. I should say that they rank as European.’ Further investigation showed that Mrs. A's mother, is the coloured caretaker of N.N. Hall . . . A sister of Mr. A. who often visits the family is also undoubtedly non-European in the opinion of the social workers.” (CHL, SWR: 1939.)

The struggle was not fought just between the Company and the headmaster. Allowing too coloured people in was a blow to the fragile whiteness of the other residents, endangering their still dubious position in the racial hierarchy. Social pressure could be harsh on the people who did not fit the ideals of whiteness, as they endangered the racial purity of the whole Village. The children had to carry their part of the burden.

“This daughter has a very dark complexion and straight black hair and for this reason is called ‘black hottentot’ by her school fellows . . . she is very unhappy and sometimes refuses to go to school. At the Bellville school she was considered as European. Mrs. W. is aware of the girl's

unhappiness and tells her not to worry as she knows she is European.”
(CHL, SWR: 1942.)

In the archival material there are several references to the enthusiasm of some of the residents to get rid of these 'unsuitable characters'. The neighbours were quick to draw attention to the suspected colour of the other residents, and they provided information on the 'dubious' appearance of their neighbours' children to social workers.

“The lady members of the committee and the Social worker investigated and decided that Mrs. A. and her children could pass as European. Complaints have again been lodged by a few other tenants in the Village and by the principal of the school concerning their colour.”
(CHL, SWR: 1940.)

The social workers showed sympathy towards the people in this difficult position, and the moral dilemma of sending away a well-liked family whose children's complexions were just a little too dark, surfaces several times in the material. In comparison to some residents and the primary school principal, the social workers seemed more ambivalent¹⁴¹ and hesitant when the whiteness of people was discussed, contested and decided upon.

“In spite of the fact that they were declared by the Minister of Religion as being European, Mrs. F. appeared to the Social Worker to be a coloured woman. Those children seen by the Social Worker, however, looked European, although the neighbours state that some of the others have a coloured appearance. Mrs. F. keeps her house and children very clean and tidy and appears to be a most agreeable person.”
(CHL, SWR: 1948.)

Even a relatively dark complexion could be overcome with the right behaviour. A socially respected family was also more prone to be accepted by the neighbours as a White family.

¹⁴¹ This ambiguity is reflected in a 1941 decision when the Social Welfare Committee attempted to create a unified opinion on the definitions of a white person by ruling that all the 'dubious' cases should be scrutinised by the whole selection committee. It is also illustrated by a 1947 decision when the Social Welfare Committee refused to take action concerning several allegedly racially mixed families in the suburb.

“In reply to a question the Committee was informed that the W’s are model tenants and that no complaints had been received from neighbours either in regard to their behaviour or their ethnic origin. It was therefore decided that the family should be allowed to remain in the house.” (CHL, SWR: 1950.)

For the purists such as the principal, the drawing of the boundaries of whiteness was more simple: being White was a biologically determined issue, genetically inherited and indicated by the outward appearance or the family tree. Compared to him, the officials of the Company seemed confused.

Once under doubt, it was people’s duty to prove their whiteness and in doing so they developed multiple tactics. Birth certificates, testimonies from church ministers and affidavits were presented. Sometimes social workers did a great deal of detecting work to catch the pass-whites. Previous schools were phoned, homes were visited and relatives were contacted. Any ‘wrong’ decision by the welfare workers would cause a stir in the neighbourhood, and a series of complaints.

“There has been some doubt as to Mrs. L.’s ethnic origin, but although she has a somewhat dark complexion it is most unlikely that her presence in the village will cause any disturbance, as her features are distinctly European.” (CHL, SWR: 1952.)

Since there was no money to prove a social position, a light skin colour was one of the main points that concretely kept poor whites apart from the coloureds. It was also a coloured person’s passport to a white life. A light complexion was a valued possession, and it was wise to take good care of it. Brown patches and freckles were the impurities of colouring that had to be kept away, whereas it was good to have ‘European features’.

“All the social workers have visited the home and agree that Mrs. A. is definitely conscious of her colour, although at times when well-dressed she could pass as European.” (CHL, SWR: 1942.)

For the Company a White person was a person who behaved like one. In those 26 quotes in which racial categories were evaluated and established, whiteness was constructed by the right appearance *and* behaviour and a right genetic make-up. This conflation of race and social status can be seen from the cases where a family who had been found too dark were

still accepted as White, for they were well-behaved people, and suited the ideals of whiteness.

For the social workers of the CHL, these conflicting ideas meant engaging in a delicate balancing act between legislation, residents, other professionals and their own agendas. Giliomee points out that while racial zealots such as Geoffrey Cronjé promoted ideas that were welcomed at the grassroots level, it is still to be doubted whether his thoughts gained popularity around coloured Cape Town. Cronjé was particularly preoccupied with the influence of the coloureds, whom he called *insluisers* (steal-ins) who had secretly contaminated the blood of the Whites. (Giliomee 2003: 471.) However, I did not find evidence of this kind of purely biologically inclined racial fanaticism in the social workers' records.

The Case of the Domestic Servants: Resistance or Compliance?

The position of 'Non-European' servants was a constant point of friction between the social workers and the residents of the Village. The rules were unwavering: no sleep-in maids. Despite this, many domestic workers stayed overnight in the area to the indignation of the League's social workers.

This was seen as a large-scale problem: in 1941 as many as 47 families out of 680 (6,9 per cent) employed domestic servants, who were mostly coloured and 120 families (17,6 per cent) had their laundry done by a domestic worker (24,5 per cent all in all). In 1946 27 per cent of families employed servants either occasionally for laundry, or on a daily basis (CHL Survey: 1946).

In a report presented in November 1947, the social workers described the situation.

"...in attempting to check this, the social workers have time and time again, been met with the retort that offenders will do nothing about finding other accommodation for their servants, until all the tenants are forced to conform with the Company's policy on this matter. As offenders are far too numerous, and there is also many who are unknown to the social workers, it is quite impossible to deal with this problem by visits and letters of warning." (CHL, SWR: 1947.)

The reason for this general disregard of the Company rules was that it was difficult to get a domestic worker who would not need to sleep in, or

who lived near enough to be able to commute. For the residents, the risks involved in the transgression of these rules were considerable, since jealous neighbours frequently informed the social workers of these offenders. Still, it was a risk the residents were willing to take.

It is conceivable that the residents saw themselves as deserving servants because they were White. But a more important reason for these offences probably lies in the cleanliness required of the home and family of apprentice Whites. The burden of these exhausting expectations fell on the women, and often the only way to cope with them was to have domestic help. Therefore, keeping coloured servants at all costs can be seen as compliance with the prevailing ideals rather than as a strategy of resistance.

The Company, however, regarded the obstinacy of the residents in this matter as serious and of great importance. The fear that the continuous presence of a coloured element would lead to racial mixing and the moral degradation of the area underlies the social workers' reports.

The situation posed a difficult problem. As Whites, the people of Epping were entitled to have domestic help in the house and garden to contribute to the proper standards of cleanliness. One of the perks of being a middle-class White was to have a live-in maid, and according to the ideal, a White woman was rather more suited to giving orders than doing harsh and tedious physical labour around the house.

This dilemma was worsened by the fact that poor whites were not seen as being quite as morally mature as other Whites, and were regarded as much less deserving. This distrust indicates the adolescent status of poor whites as semi-members of the civilised society. Close connections with servants were considered dangerous, since they could push the poor whites away from the threshold of whiteness to which they were so tenuously holding on.

“In spite of their poverty Mrs. S. employs a coloured servant to do her laundry. She is too familiar with this servant, whose child sleeps on the children’s bed.” (CHL, SWR: 1949.)

The emphasis of these prohibitions was thus not only on coloured women and the fear of mixed racial offspring, but on children as well. In other words, proximity with the coloureds as such was perceived as a bad thing for poor whites who were already perceived as existing on the margins of the category White.

CONCLUSION

Epping Garden Village was built to be a structure that would serve to shape the *blanke armes*, respectable poor whites to move to the category of a good white. The right spatial setting and economic support were important, but not sufficient in themselves. In the suburb it was possible to combine several methods to reach the goals of rehabilitation. White habitus was to be constructed at many levels. Body techniques were central in the attempts to get the residents to internalise the ‘proper’ ideals of work, bodily behaviour and race.

Throughout this era, which lasted approximately from 1938 to 1950, the drawing of social boundaries around the poor whites affected the process of embodiment. The suburb’s space was divided along gendered lines, and the tasks that were to be performed in those spaces were also gendered.

The embodied nature of this process of building social categories can be understood by taking Mary Douglas’ (1966) point that the protection and drawing of social boundaries take place via the medium of human body into account. The maintenance of these social boundaries in EGV was connected to the bodily ideals of a good white. Although men and women had different roles and ideals, both were supposed to continuously prove themselves. Men were to show dedication in public life, particularly at work, while women were to look after the private spaces of their homes and look after their families’ embodiment. Free time was filled with rehabilitating activities, such as education, clubs and gardening. Gardens were central semi-public spaces where both men and women could demonstrate their commitment to rehabilitation.

The degree of the poor white project’s success in Epping Garden Village during these first years is not easy to measure. The fact remains that the standard of living rose for the residents, regardless of whether this was a consequence of Afrikaner economic mobilisation, or the expanding war economy, or both.

According to the plan, newly rehabilitated Whites were supposed to give up their houses for the next generation of residents to be uplifted. The migration from EGV to the ‘economic’ area of Thornton at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the social aspiration of the adult children are proof of the success of the rehabilitation. Simultaneously, an internal differentiation became applicable.

At the end of the 1940s the social workers began showing signs of frustration with some residents’ inability to improve. They were turning

passive and institutionalised instead of being uplifted. A failed man was often described as 'work-shy' or an alcoholic, while a failed woman was untidy and morally dubious. The end of this era witnessed a hardening in the suburb's atmosphere, reflected in an increase in gossip and social competition.

While upliftment was carried out and boundaries were constructed from *within* Epping Garden Village by the means of body techniques, it was also *surrounded* by a more concrete racial boundary. The racial status of those seen as poor whites was too ambivalent to be exposed to further contact with people of colour and the residents were encouraged to keep away from them. Their marginality made them susceptible to the dangers of racial mixing - as Douglas (1966) suggested, all social margins are considered most vulnerable to pollution.

During this era whiteness *had to be deserved* by complying with the cultural ideals. Thus, people who did not have White backgrounds could become whites, if they were considered *deserving*. Occasionally a fairly dark person could be accepted as White because of his social aptness. Conversely a White person of light complexion who lived in poverty and moral degradation could be redefined as Coloured, or regarded as 'not really White'. Emphasis was on the socially defined quality of the race instead of the biologically defined racial purity. *The demand for whiteness was never changed, but the practice of who could become White was often redefined.* This emphasised the artificiality and porosity of the boundaries of the category White.

Cultural and economic capital marked the boundaries of the category White. A tactical ability to produce a right habitus or to present oneself as White could be more important than the person's 'actual' race. The ideas of biological race and the signs of habitus were therefore conflated from the start, and the social boundaries that seemed so firm at first sight were in reality quite permeable. In practice, this flexibility only made these boundaries more effective in protecting the authority of the category White, since there were fewer anomalies, such as very pale and educated Coloureds.

These transgressions of the biologically defined racial boundaries were only possible as long as the general credibility of the category White was not under threat. This added to the ambivalence of the position of the poor whites and increased the pressure on the residents. As they lived on the boundary of social acceptability – in fact, they *were* the boundary – it became crucially important for them to comply with the ideals of a 'proper white' habitus.

During this era most of the residents internalised the ideals of whiteness, and began to strive towards them. There was little *open* resistance towards the Company's strategy, while internalised middle-class values and the budding social games between those who had newly acquired the status of apprentice Whites created tensions and social distance between the residents. The seeds of internal differentiation had thus been sown in the early years of Epping Garden Village.

In EGV people were given cultural and economic capital. As the residents gained economic resources, skills, and learned how to make social distinctions with their habitus, they also attained various degrees of agency. The successful residents managed to leave the suburb, turning their newly acquired cultural and economic capital into symbolic capital. Some had no desire to leave, others no choice but to stay in the suburb, where they tried to claim symbolic capital as the residents of a poor white area – a difficult task in a society where living in a poor white suburb was increasingly stigmatising.

In this social field the game was played with several developed responses or *tactics* and influenced by pressures from the outside society and professionals. The residents began to play this 'identity game' or the 'game of a good white' that would last for decades. Not everyone played from an equal footing: the social ambitions of individual tenants and their possible personal shortcomings (such as an addiction to alcohol) shaped the way each resident played the game. There were, however, some traceable ways of relating to the social game in the suburb that emerged from the archival material and interviews.

Firstly, many residents opted to 'keep to themselves', and lived in isolation. While it might seem like a withdrawal from the game, it has already been mentioned and will be further elaborated on in the following chapters on how the choosing of what Bourdieu (1998: 87) would call a *disinterested* path, could be a powerful tactic.

Secondly, there was the possibility of striving to excel at being a good white and drawing support for this from the power structure. This could include turning against others, and informing on your neighbours to professionals. This was tempting, for example, to those who befriended the social workers, or to those who wanted to highlight their own commitment to being a proper White. This approach had its dangers though, such as becoming unpopular in the community.

Thirdly, one could take a purely utilitarian approach. The suburb was there to be used for all that it was worth. There were also risks in this approach, for if you were helped a lot, you were also under the profes-

sionals' eyes a lot. Once again, however, you could expect trouble from your neighbours if you went too far, or were less than perfectly White. However, sometimes the personal circumstances of a resident were such that this was the best or only path to follow. The pass-whites are a good example of those who aimed to use the suburb as a tool in their own ascent to whiteness.

A form of utilitarianism was to remain passive towards rehabilitation. Passive resistance was commonplace, and increased during the following era, while open resistance was seldom seen. Neither was there any visible resistance to the prevailing order; on the contrary, poor white areas became known as strongholds of the apartheid driving force, the National Party.

The residents often combined several of these tactics in order to live in the area. This is not to say that there was no sincerity in the suburb's life and social relationships, quite the opposite: in all my findings people played the game with the best intentions of uplifting themselves, very seldom doubting the system itself. Also, the larger the differences between the residents became, the more these games accelerated, and the more elaborate they were. But some residents had just no energy or ability to develop skill at these games.

7. THE ERA OF STAGNATION AND DISINTEGRATION 1950–1990

The poor whites formed a social boundary against the perceived dangers that were threatening white society. But this boundary could also be a door for the otherness to seep in and thus it had to be guarded carefully. Deep apartheid meant a complete closure of the white community. Bodies, homes, suburbs were closed as well as the previously porous boundaries of the category White. At the practical level this meant a collective hardening of the rules of whiteness.

In Epping Garden Village, the social game reflected these categorical changes. The tactics became harder, and those, who could, played – but not everyone could. During this era white South Africans' standard of living escalated, and many new residents in the suburb had no longer been recruited from the rows of the most 'respectable' White poor. Thus some of the new residents were now less able or willing to control their habitus and to trade the cultural and economic capital handed to them for the symbolic capital in the surrounding White society.

These structural changes went hand in hand with the increasing social differentiation among the residents of EGV. In this chapter, the intensification and eventual failure of the elite's attempts to define and maintain the category White, and the escalating disarray within this category are presented.

APARTHEID

The National Party¹⁴² election victory in 1948 began the era of apartheid in South Africa. New racial legislation introduced thereafter increased state supervision, and consequently extended the official control of space and social body to everyone. While the Immorality Act (1950) made cross-racial sexual relationships illegal, the Group Areas Act (1950) imposed spatial segregation between different racial groups, and the Population Registration Act of 1950 made the racial classification of all citizens

¹⁴² The NP was a racially oriented party mostly supported by the Afrikaners.

compulsory. There were a multitude of racial categories for this purpose (in footnote 89).

These draconian laws were passed to guard the racial boundaries and make them watertight. The ensuing racial classification was supposed to be clear-cut and watertight, but from the start it was inconsistent and flexible, affected by ‘common sense’ and practices of everyday life. The signs of ‘race’ were both cultural and biological, supporting one another in a tautological manner (Posel 2001: 4-16).

During apartheid, the Afrikaners felt internally and externally threatened. These fears manifested themselves in various social fears such as the fear of degeneration, foreigners, communism and the Catholic Church.¹⁴³ *Apartheid* (lit. separateness) policy would ensure the emergence of a safe and proper social order. In the 1950s and 1960s the Afrikaner nation was unified behind this one great cause.

The apartheid regime was infamous for its harsh legislation and its drive to create authoritarian personalities, a process during which hard measures were frequently taken. It controlled its subjects with hard hand, accepting no opposition. The onset of apartheid hit Africans particularly hard. They were deprived of their basic human rights as they were forced to live in crowded townships or ‘homelands’ under constant surveillance. However, also whites living in their privileged suburbs were effectively supervised.

The ethnic mobilisation, political control and rapid economic development accumulated wealth for white South Africans, particularly for Afrikaners. This accelerated in the 1960s, causing a decrease in the value of the poor white project, since the poor whites became an insignificant minority in South Africa. Concern about the *volk’s* economic position was no longer relevant, and the poor white problem no longer unified the white nation.

At the end of the 1960s the majority of the *volk* had been uplifted. At the same time they had internalised the bodily control, ideals and behavioural patterns of whiteness. When the standard of living escalated, the expectations of whiteness grew. Being White meant being superior and civilised, therefore the bodily behaviour of the whites also had to be superior and civilised. In reality, this notion did not work. Residents of EGV were doing many things which good whites would never have done. *Perhaps they were not really White.*

¹⁴³ “*Die rooi gevaar*”, “*die Swart gevaar*”, or “*die Roomse gevaar*” (see the second chapter).

Being simultaneously poor and white no longer suited the White category. Thus, in the racially ordered state, the poor whites defied the category White, transgressing its boundaries. They became anomalies in a social order that increasingly rejected the possibility of their existence. The growing stigmatisation of the poor whites was a response to their changing position.

Their ambiguity had to be erased by imposing rigid, authoritarian ideals of bodily behaviour on the residents of EVG. In the privacy of the homes this pressure merged with the older ideals of a patriarchal, colonial society.

THE SECOND GENERATION

The beginning of the apartheid era brought tangible changes to the social and racial order in Epping Garden Village. The new racial policy of 'separate development' ended any flexibility there had been in the definition of residents' racial categories. Now the state defined who was to be classified as White. Also more funds were directed towards the rehabilitation of poor whites. This new affluence together with hardened racial boundaries created heightened expectations towards those deemed White. The pressure for all whites to fit within the defined social and racial boundaries grew. Middle-class moral panics concerning the poor whites' perceived inability to conform to these boundaries were common.

The suburb became increasingly institutionalised. The Citizens' Housing League was forced to moderate its initially strict selection criteria, and started accepting people who would not have qualified as tenants during the first years. Almost anybody who could prove he was classified White was now acceptable. The new residents were often dependent on state welfare grants, and they often had social problems. This added to the perceived need for more effective supervision. As a result, the social division and competition between the residents grew concurrently with the social tension.

After 1950 the state and social workers' supervision – and hence the control of space and practices of embodiment – increased for all whites. The disparity between the structure imposed from the above and the everyday tactics of the residents grew, and the goal of rehabilitation thus slid further away.

In 1950 already the CHL declared that it sorely needed all the respectable tenants it could get in order to carry out upliftment. This need was

further fuelled by the fact that the process of internal differentiation had not ended. On the contrary, between 1942 and 1950 the share of families receiving a government grant-in-aid had increased from 2,5 per cent to 15,6 per cent (CHL, SWR: 1950). Despite the long waiting lists for 'sub-economic' housing, the Citizens' Housing League already had trouble finding suitable tenants for the area in the 1950s.

A Struggle to Keep the Community 'Normal'

Initially, when the tenants were chosen, income limits were an important factor. At the end of the 1930s and beginning of the 1940s the income limits for a house in Epping Garden Village were £6 and £15 a month for the main breadwinner of the family. After the Second World War the National Housing and Planning Commission set income limits of £25 and £30 per month for the a family's breadwinner in respect of the granting of a new tenancy in a public housing scheme. (CHL, SWR: 1946.)

At the beginning of the 1950s some families in the Company's 'sub-economic' housing schemes started doing progressively better,¹⁴⁴ and in 38,4 per cent of families the head of the family earned more than £30 a month (CHL, SWR: 1954). After the main breadwinner of a family had attained this maximum level, the Company began urging its tenants to leave their rental homes in 'sub-economic' Epping Garden Village behind, and to buy their own houses in more middle-class 'economic' areas such as Thornton. The ideals of health and educating people to save were used to validate this practice.

“By allowing families with larger incomes to enjoy the benefit of sub-economic housing we are preventing others from being able to maintain a standard necessary for health and efficiency. It is therefore recommended that families whose incomes are above that standard be asked to find other accommodation . . . the realisation that they cannot remain indefinitely in a cheap home may encourage such tenants to save for the future instead of investing in expensive luxuries.” (CHL, SWR: 1950.)

¹⁴⁴ In Epping Garden Village, 48.6 per cent of the families earned more than £30 per month (in 1946 approximately 9 per cent of the families earned this much). And 22.4 per cent of the families had subsidiary earners (earners in addition to the main breadwinner). (CHL, SWR: 1954.)

The question of an optimal minimum income limit was equally complicated. The National Housing and Planning Commission had ordered that in housing schemes such as Epping Garden Village the prospective tenant had to possess a regular income of more than £25 per month. This led to a dilemma: the schemes were to help poor people, but an acceptable resident had to be able to pay his rent.¹⁴⁵ This caused a situation where many housing areas in South Africa did not cater for the truly poor (Parnell 1988a: 594). The CHL considered it irrational to keep the poorest whites living in areas where they would be forced to pay high rents, and decided not to introduce a minimum income scale (CHL, SWR: 1954). In Johannesburg the minimum income scale kept the poorest of whites outside the cheap housing in the 1950s (Parnell 1988a: 598). In the meantime, the most successful residents began leaving Epping Garden Village.

Towards the end of the 1940s the first generation tenants who had been successfully rehabilitated began to buy their own houses. In 1950, 133 families out of approximately 1,600 were listed for transfer to Thornton. Although the social welfare committee was dissatisfied with the figure – having expected it to be far larger – it was indicative of a change that substantially affected life in the suburb.

“The Rev. du Toit brought it to the notice of the Committee that a considerable number of members of his Church Council were among the persons whose incomes had become too high for sub-economic lettings and were therefore being obliged to move to Thornton. He requested the Committee to consider the possibility of arranging such transfers to Thornton in a manner which would ensure that members of the Church Council do not all depart from Epping at the same time.”
(CHL, SWR: 1952.)

The first wave of successful residents left between 1944 and 1954. In the 1950s the CHL started to have second thoughts about the wisdom of this move. They felt that these people were an asset to the community, and that it would be beneficial if some of them could be brought back into the area to set a good example for the increasing numbers of welfare-de-

¹⁴⁵ The Citizens' Housing League attempted to solve this quandary in the 1940s by establishing an experimental scheme, known as a 'group A scheme' for the very poor. In 1942 the government allocated £480 for the housing of 24 low-income families. This remained an experiment, and the government funding was later withdrawn.

pendent residents.¹⁴⁶ The CHL feared that the community would become an outcast, barred from 'normal' social life, when all the "fit European workers" left, and only "pensioners and other aged persons, semi- and unfit persons, widows, etc." remained. The income limits were thus causing problems, which the CHL tried to solve by selling some of the houses to tenants. This would ensure the continuity of "a normal community" as more middle-class residents would move in. (CHL, SWR: 1954 Annual report for the Board.)

"...by a careful selection of suitable purchasers, ensure the presence of a stable nucleus, which was to act as assistance to the churches, the Company's own welfare staff and others, in rehabilitative measures." (CHL, SWR: 1954.)

The selling schemes started, and in 1955 the first house was sold to a private buyer from Epping Garden Village. The professionals noticed that the people were not keen to buy houses in the suburb, and initially very few houses were sold. In 1969 only 56 houses of the 1.868 were privately owned (CHL Review 1970: 12).

Despite all attempts to create a good and orderly suburb, it was difficult to keep the right kind of tenants in the area. At a tenants' meeting it was revealed that the main reason for good tenants departing was their "objectionable neighbours" (CHL, SWR: 1955).

Selection Criteria Changes

The official control of racial relations meant that the officials of the Citizens' Housing League largely lost their ability to pass people for white. It was now unable to accommodate the slightly racially ambiguous, but otherwise respectable, people that it had accepted during the segregation era. In addition, while the CHL had in 1938 been able to choose its desirable residents from a large number of poor whites, in the 'miracle decade' of the 1960s, the middle class expanded, and there were fewer needy whites than before.

In the 1950s the emphasis of the state housing policy shifted to build-

¹⁴⁶ EGV was growing at that time and between 1945 and 1950 the population grew from 3.484 to 8.698 as the Village was extended. After this leap the numbers stabilised, and in the 1960 census there were 8.605 residents in the suburb.

ing privately owned homes, and the CHL stopped building poor whites areas. In the 1960s, although there was a shortage of houses to let to the lower middle-income group, the CHL proclaimed that "the needs for the really sub-economic group were catered for" (CHL, SWR: 1962). Due to the economic boom and state housing loans, the housing crisis in Johannesburg had also been solved by the mid-1960s (Parnell 1988a: 596).

The professionals began having doubts concerning the quality of the tenants and the selection procedure at the end of 1950s when the atmosphere in the area deteriorated. The CHL's difficulties in finding suitable tenants worsened in the 1960s when the civil servants, most of whom were low-income whites, became eligible for substantial housing subsidies. Later the housing subsidies were extended to the private sector, and first-time homeowners (most of whom were white) could receive assistance with the building of homes (Parnell 1988a: 597).

In the 1970s the Company had difficulties in letting all three-and two-bedroom houses in its Villages, due to "a lack of suitable applicants". Maximum income limits¹⁴⁷ were adjusted again and again in the 1970s to attract residents. (CHL, SWR: 1972.)

The selection committee's minutes from the 1970s show that people with debt, alcoholism and marital problems were given homes if they merely manage to create an impression that they were interested in being rehabilitated. Although very few people were now refused, the committee kept up the pretence that the residents were monitored. Their interests and hobbies were listed, and gardening and church attendance were seen as signs of hope: the Company's goal was still to turn them, against all odds, into good whites. (CHL, SWR: 1972-1979.)

A comparison with the stringent selection principles applied in the 1940s shows that in practice the objective to select perfect citizens was abandoned. The houses were given to people who were not in paid work, or did not bring their young, nuclear families along. In the 1970s approximately a quarter¹⁴⁸ of the families who were allocated a house in Epping Garden Village consisted of young people who had grown up in the area and whose parents were still living there. Ten per cent of the newcomers were single-parent families. State welfare grants were now the most important single source of income in the suburb. (CHL, SWR: 1972-1979.)

¹⁴⁷ I.e. from R150 at the beginning of the decade (1972) to R540 per month (1979), subject to those applicants with sub-economic incomes receiving priority.

¹⁴⁸ Forty-one out of the 169 families who moved there between 5.2.1975 and 31.7.1978.

In 1978, the area received 735 pensions, 314 (42.7 per cent) of these were old age pensions, 210 maintenance grants, and 150 disability grants (CHL, SWR: 1978). Some families most probably received two pensions, but as there were 1868 households in the suburb, even a careful estimation shows that at least a third of the families received these state welfare grants.

In the 1960 census, 8.605 people were listed as living in EGV, whereas according to the 1980 census, only 5.531 persons were left. The population in the suburb was ageing, since the upwardly mobile younger generation tended to leave the area. In 1986 the post office of the area paid out 1.135 pensions per month, and although there were more old-age pensioners, their relative share of all the pensions paid had fallen to 33 per cent. The housing clerk of the area reported that in 1986, 61 per cent of the households were receiving a state welfare grant, while only 39 per cent of households lived on a salary or other income.¹⁴⁹ (CHL, SWR: 1986.)

In EGV, grants and pensions often became an honourable way out of a situation when a white person could not or would not work. These cases emerge in the material from the beginning of the 1960s and included both men and women.

“She was here, she was divorced with many children and what could she do now? She applied for a maintenance grant and then, when the children left she would go to a doctor and he would give her a disability pension. She could not possibly work, she had never ever worked.”
(Social worker.)

The development of an ageing population and a growing dependency rate accelerated between 1978 and 1986. One of the two primary schools was closed in 1985, since there were no longer enough children for both. In 1986 approximately a third¹⁵⁰ of 80 families who had been allocated a house in the suburb between August and October, were single-parent families, while old-age pensioners headed 13, and 4 were headed by disabled persons.

The young, ambitious and 'rehabilitable' families who had been chosen to be the first generation of tenants had gradually been replaced by people who could not look after themselves, or who had fallen on hard

¹⁴⁹ In 1942 only 2,5 per cent of the residents had received the government grant-in-aid.

¹⁵⁰ Twenty-five out of 80.

times and had nowhere else to go. The CHL now had to accommodate those people whom they had initially rejected. In fact, they had to accept almost anyone who wanted to move in.

Apartheid and Suburban Space

While the residents changed, and the dependency rates increased, the external, physical boundaries of the suburb were protected more vigorously than ever. After the introduction of the Group Areas Act in 1950, the insufficiency of the buffer strip on the eastern side of EGV was noticed, and spatial changes were seen as inevitable. Also some residents complained about the proximity of the coloureds.

The plans to create a buffer strip proceeded slowly. In 1966 the coloured area adjoining EGV, on the Elsie's River side, was declared a slum.¹⁵¹ This placed it under the Slum Clearance Act, and it could now be demolished. The CHL helped Goodwood Municipality to find accommodation in the nearby Bishop Lavis Township for those coloured families rendered homeless. The demolished area became a middle-class, coloured area, but to emphasise the separateness between the coloureds of Elsie's and the whites of EGV, fences were erected at the end of Rhodes Street and Settler Street in 1966. The isolation from the surrounding coloured areas became an integral part of being a good white. The residents were safe from their own racially ambiguous position through the fence and a buffer strip between EGV and Elsie's River.

In the interviews the residents told me how safe life in the suburb used to be during apartheid. One could leave the front doors open and things in the yard, and nothing would vanish. It was safe to walk outside, even in the evenings. Most of the crime in the white areas was petty crime, whereas coloured Bishop Lavis Township was increasingly unsafe.¹⁵² (CHL, SWR: 1955.)

These problems did not affect Epping Garden Village, which had its own form of vigilantes. In conversations with the coloured people who lived in the vicinity during apartheid, it became clear that the neighbour-

¹⁵¹ This area is known by the Land Claims Commission as 'Epping Forest Buffer Strip'. It was pronounced a buffer strip under the Group Areas Act Proclamation 14/1958 and in the Amendment of the Proclamation 48/1963, and in 2001 there were a dozen pending land claims to it. (discussion with Don de la Harpe.)

¹⁵² The first serious problems in Bishop Lavis were reported in 1955, after which the problems with gangs and drugs only increased (CHL, SWR: 1955).

hood had a reputation for being racist, and not allowing outsiders (people of colour) in the area.

“A bruine (coloured person) did not go to those places with no good reason. They had their sons and their dogs and they would come and ask what you were doing there and then they would beat you up anyway.” (Archie, Cape Town.)

The 1980s were a restless time of riots and taxi wars in the Cape Flats. The murder statistics rocketed in the coloured areas. The anxiety caused by this was reflected in the concerns of EGV’s residents. Emergency plans for the complete evacuation of EGV were drawn up (CHL, SWR: 1986). In 1986 a wall was raised on the western side of EGV to keep away the unwanted elements.

Despite the increase in the internal class differentiation, almost all the voters in the suburb still supported the party that had given them and their children the privileges of whiteness. The area was still known as a National Party stronghold, and a locus of conservative politics. It is symbolically significant that on the first of June 1981 the area was renamed *Ruyterwacht* (mounted guard). It is most certainly not coincidental that the name not only reflects the imagined history of the area (see chapter five), but is also the name of the *Broederbond* youth organisation, *Ruiterwag*, which apprentice *Broederbonders* joined before they could become part of the ‘real thing’.

The pace of social changes in Ruyterwacht was accelerated in the mid 1980s. The Social Welfare Committee was disbanded, and the last reports by social workers were submitted to the Committee in 1986. A new, more tolerant generation of social workers took the reins, and the social pressure decreased. This relaxation of the atmosphere paved the way for the complete political and social change that took place at the beginning of the 1990s.

RESOURCES AND TIME

While the apartheid era meant tightening control, the residents in EGV were financially more secure than before. During this era the power over everyday life in all the Company’s suburbs was directed from the headquarters towards the social workers and other professionals within the area. They used their various methods of rehabilitation and control,

which, combined with the regulations of the apartheid regime, produced an increasingly suffocating rule in the Village. People were still commanded, but also seduced into whiteness. They were given a taste of the benefits they would enjoy in full measure once they were successful. The apartheid government made more money available for rehabilitation. While the carrot grew bigger, the stick became heavier.

Rent relief schemes, the first of which was granted in 1954, were a typical rehabilitative measure of this era. They gained increasing popularity during the years to follow. Rent rebate was a fragile thing though: if you were, for instance, caught drinking with your money, you lost your rebate.

Residents in need were not only given cheaper rents but also material assets, and during this era the inflow of resources directed at them bulged. The Company provided milk, butter, oranges, free wireless licences and cheap furniture schemes for its residents. Sometimes the money for these products and goods came from its own coffers, but often the Company negotiated for subsidies with like-minded state organisations. It became expert at obtaining maintenance grants and getting money from the Welfare Department.

A study of the Company's finances would not provide a realistic picture, since most of its funds were obtained from outside sources and then diverted directly to its tenants. In the early 1960s there were 288 welfare agencies in Cape Town – almost half of them were run by religious organisations, and 96 of these organisations were for whites only (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999: 192). At the end of the 1960s the Company itself had just a small emergency fund from which occasional payments were made to families in severe financial distress.

The CHL sponsored the Epping Vigilance Association, which provided destitute families with money, groceries and foodstuffs. Various other organisations (such as the Lions Club and Rotary) also assisted families financially when requested to do so.

Although the 1980s were politically a turbulent period in the surrounding Cape Flats, little changed in EGV/Ruyterwacht where the CHL employed a servant who worked full-time for its senior tenants. Christmas parties could still take place at a hotel, and the dinner given for seniors was paid for by money from the club run by the CHL. Social clubs and other activities for seniors were important, for there were suddenly many more elderly people – between 1980 and 1991 the number of residents over 65 increased from 150 to 750.

Work and Gender¹⁵³

During the 1960s there was not only an improvement in the economic conditions and housing situation of the poor whites, but unemployment largely ended for white South Africans. The economy became state controlled, indicated by the annual expenditure on the public sector, which rose from 36.5 per cent in 1946 to 53 per cent in 1976 (Giliomee 1979b: 165).

The ruling Nationalist Party ensured that mostly Afrikaners were employed in the civil service. In 1976, 60 per cent of the white labour force in public and semi-public sector were Afrikaners, while the English-speaking South Africans moved away from the public sector. They were pushed by the demands of bilingualism in the civil service, and pulled by the profits that were to be made in the private sector. (Giliomee 1979b: 165.)

In 1977, 65,2 per cent of Afrikaners were in white-collar occupations. Afrikaners were also reasonably successful in business, and the economic gap between the Afrikaners and the English-speaking South Africans narrowed remarkably between 1946 and 1976, although it was never completely closed (Giliomee 1979b: 169-174).¹⁵⁴

At the same time, deviations from the norm of a hard-working white man became indefensible. The method of handling 'work-shy' men grew increasingly harsh and effective during the 1950s and the 1960s. At the beginning of the 1950s the Company began sending lazy or 'work-shy' men away to work colonies such as Sonderwater (work colonies were later euphemistically known as Rehabilitation Centres).

“WORK COLONY CASES: EUROPEANS: Referring to the latest policy of the Department of Coloured Affairs when handling work colony cases among the Coloured community, the Chief Welfare Officer reported that in terms of Section 16 of the Work Colonies Act, work-shy Europeans could be placed under the supervision of the Probation

¹⁵³ Codes: Female Role, Male Role, Relation to Work.

¹⁵⁴ Ratio of income of Afrikaners to English

Year	Personal income	Per capita income
1946	40:60	100:211
1960	47:53	100:156
1976	50:50	100:141

(From Giliomee 1979b: 174).

Officer for automatic transfer to a work colony when trying to avoid commitment to a colony by taking employment temporarily. Noted.” (CHL, SWR: 1964.)

Coercion worked, and the decrease in unemployment and vandalism were noted with satisfaction.

“In reply to a question by Rev. C., the Chief Welfare Officer stated that unemployment had decreased considerably in the Company’s European villages during the last eight months . . . The Committee noted that the incidence of vandalism had decreased in the company’s European villages during the past few months.” (CHL, SWR: 1965.)

The last work colony case appeared in the archival material at the end of 1970s. The men of EGV had developed a reputation for being *skollies*, no-good half-criminal wastrels.

While many poor white women never had a job outside their domestic environments, tolerance towards women pursuing professional careers grew. In 1950 only 2,5 per cent of EGV mothers were partly or wholly responsible for the family income (CHL Survey: 1950). There were several reasons for this. To begin with, women were badly paid.

“Mrs. S. is in receipt of a maintenance grant of £13 per month and the Dutch Reformed Church still contributes £1 per month. The eldest daughter, Marie is now working in a Cosmetic Factory and earns £2 per week.” (CHL, SWR: 1952.)

Why would anybody want a repetitive, tiresome and potentially dangerous job in a factory, when she could stay at home and honourably receive a larger income? During the time when the first work-shy men were being sent to labour colonies, social workers began experiencing difficulties with keeping women in paid labour.

“The social worker was then informed that the daughter’s earnings had fallen away at the end of April when she ceased working. Otherwise the income was unchanged. The social worker arranged for this daughter to call at the office for the purpose of being directed to the Juvenile Affairs Board for employment, but as yet she has not turned up.” (CHL, SWR: 1952.)

In these cases gender roles worked for women: in the archival material women were never called work-shy, or sent to work colonies, whereas an unemployed white male became easily labelled as such.

Conversely, the gender roles limited women's chances of taking part in professional life. Occasionally the social workers had to alleviate friction that had occurred between spouses when the wife wanted to work or had to support the family. In these cases a husband, unemployed or injured, could not bear the fact that he was not fulfilling his masculine role. This role pressure must have affected the women's enthusiasm to take on work outside the home.

Also the fear of losing available benefits became a factor that came to affect the women's decisions to leave their professional life.

“A case was brought to the Selection Committee where application was made for Mr. M. to become the tenant of the house which was registered in the name of the widow he had married, formerly Mrs. B. There was nothing adverse in the case, but Mr. M. and his wife were both employed, each earning £26 per month, meaning that the total income exceeds the family's maximum by £22 per month. The Committee decided that in this case the tenancy could not be granted to Mr. M. and that the family should be asked to leave unless the total income is reduced to within the prescribed limit, i.e. if Mrs. M. ceases working.”
(CHL, SWR: 1952.)

In 1952 the Company decided to look at the incomes of all families where both the spouses were working. A cheap rent was not the only social benefit a family could lose as a result of too high an income, but maternity grants and maintenance grants were endangered as well. From this perspective it seems strange that any woman would have worked outside her home if she could have avoided it. (CHL, SWR: 1952.)

Therefore, if women wanted to earn an income for themselves, they had to find ways of making money without threatening the prevailing gender roles and without losing their subsidies. One way to attain this was to find work that could be done at home. An informant who moved to the area in the 1950s held several jobs through the years, most of which she managed from her home. She was an agent for dry-cleaners and for the shoe-repairman; she sold vegetables and worked in a store on Saturdays. In our conversations, she called none of these activities work. Officially, she had always been a housewife. In reality, the number of women who

contributed to the family income must have been much higher than the one indicated in surveys.

Although married women were still considered as being in the best place when they were housewives, a professional career was also perceived as somewhat of a good thing for a woman. For some, a career was an escape route from the poor white status.

“The daughter has been advised to leave the house. As a nursing assistant she shows ambition.” (CHL, SWR: 1954.)

From the start the uplifters’ ideas concerning female work were more permissible and flexible than those concerning male work. During this era, the social workers’ attempts to empower women became more career-oriented as marriage ceased to be the only option available. At the end of the 1960s, the housing officials again began disregarding the income of dependants. The income of a wife thus no longer threatened access to the benefits, unless she was a breadwinner.

The ideals of womanhood changed as well: in 1975 there is a first reference to a mother of a family having other than domestic value: “she impresses as an intelligent and independent woman” (CHL, SWR: 1975). Prior to this comment, a mother’s value in these reports had, without exception, been attributed to the way she looked after her family and fulfilled the ideals of the female role. These ideals were reflected in the interviews I had with the senior ladies, some of whom had resided in EGV for decades.

“I have worked in many places and done many things in my life, but first and foremost I will always consider myself as a mother.” (F., 85, a long-term resident.)

Uplifting Free Time¹⁵⁵

A few years after the establishment of EGV, the Company began to have its first doubts about the residents’ commitment to becoming rehabilitated, suspecting that they spent their time on deviant activities. Alcoholism has indeed been a problem in Epping Garden Village throughout its existence. The selling of illicit liquor was commonplace.

¹⁵⁵ Memo on clubwork, codes Sexuality, Deviance, Liquor, Crime.

“I did not drink, so I would not know where to get it, but my brothers knew exactly where to get drink. If they wanted, they just went out and they came back in two minutes with bottles of brandy.” (F., 55, grew up in EGV.)

The archival findings show that despite the social pressures on female behaviour, many women in the suburb struggled with an addiction to alcohol. In 1953 the uplifters’ concern about alcoholism grew, and the Company launched a campaign. The social workers from all the housing schemes prepared special reports on all the families that were known to have or who had in the past had difficulties with alcoholism. They found over fifty families, most of whom came from Epping Garden Village. These families were taken under special observation, and underwent intensive rehabilitative measures. Despite all the work and effort, alcoholism never ceased to occur as one of the main causes of divorces, poverty and evictions in the social workers’ reports.

The social workers battled to make people’s free time productive. For years the Company strove to get the residents to become more active in their own rehabilitation. Social workers tried to get the people to attend clubs, showed them free movies and invited lecturers to educate them. But something was wrong. People were not keen, and despite all the efforts, they rarely became more enthusiastic. They would rather evade these social situations, keeping to their own, away from social relations that could be competitive or even destructive for them.

“It has been found, however, that clubs such as a Women’s Union, Young People’s Guild, have not proved as successful as they might be. Members show enthusiasm for a very short time and then their interest disappears. While collecting information from tenants the social workers questioned tenants regarding their attitude to fellow tenants. The great majority stated – ”I have discovered that it is better not to have any friends. I don’t associate with other tenants beyond greeting them in the street.” The social workers wish to organise more specific groups such as a sewing club in the hope of gaining more response.” (CHL, SWR: 1950, author’s emphasis.)

At the end of 1953 the social workers reported on their attempts to get the residents to use their free time constructively. There were social clubs for the aged, and also clubs for children, adolescent boys and adult women. Children between 9 and 12 had their own groups. These groups were

aimed at those children who were showing signs of becoming troublesome. As a group they participated in simple handicraft projects in order to learn co-operation. The ideological emphasis was on developing a collective White identity, as the quotation below blatantly points out.

“No particular emphasis is placed on learning in the sense of developing individual abilities; the emphasis rests on encouraging and guiding the group members to participate in the group undertakings . . . as the children concerned become adjusted to participation of this nature in a small group they become better able to find their place in the larger, natural groups of the community.” (CHL, SWR: 1953.)

Adolescent boys were taught boxing. The boxing club was successful: in 1953 there were 80 members. During its existence, it produced some successful boxers on a national level. Characteristically, there was also a hidden agenda.

“The work done by the Club goes further than developing technical skill, however. The trainer is a deeply religious person and exercises an influence upon the boys which has a notable effect on their general conduct.” (CHL, SWR: 1953.)

At this time the ladies' club was in trouble. Those residents who had initially run this club, had moved to better-off areas, and only one of the ten original Club Committee members was left. This was a phenomenon parallel to the mass departure of the church councils. Even when the club presented demonstrations of needlework, making of salads, educational films, a games evening, a gifts evening and a debate, it was difficult to get the residents to run it. The aim of the club was defined as "encouragement of a greater measure of independence and self-reliance" (CHL, SWR: 1953). But these characteristics did not seem to be developing in the residents, and the social workers were frustrated.

The escalating affluence of the 1960s showed in the ways the people's leisure time changed. The increased wealth was reflected in the attention paid to the seniors.

“The Company social workers reported upon the success of ‘Aged Week’ which was held in Cape Town from 25th September, 1961, to 29th September, 1961, when many of the aged tenants residing in the

Company's European villages were entertained at cinema shows, a symphony concert and a garden party." (CHL, SWR: 1962.)

There was also occasional resident activity. Between 1956 and 1975 the Epping Vigilance and Welfare Association surfaced several times in the archival data, sometimes commended for their services for the Company. The existence of organisations such as these shows that some of the more middle-class residents wanted to uplift the community from the inside and help their neighbours.

In the 1970s interest in sport, gardening and church activities were important yardsticks when the selection committee evaluated the prospective tenants. There was a certain softening in the value climate: unwed mothers, for example, were now allowed to become main tenants (CHL, SWR: 1977). On the other hand, the Company still interfered with people's business, chasing away the misfits and sending men to work colonies. Despite this, there was something almost pleasant in the atmosphere.

"The Committee noted a report compiled by Mrs. C., Community Organizer, Epping Garden Village, on the activities of the Epping Women's Cultural Club during 1973, that various concerts had been organised for local residents and Church groups outside Epping, that talks on subjects covering flower arrangements, religion, classical music, homosexuality and the preparation of inexpensive fish and meat dishes had been given and that a most successful Cheese and Wine Evening had been held for members and their friends." (CHL, SWR: 1973.)

In the 1980s a change took place in the atmosphere. A new generation of social workers took over, and the Company began organising carnivals and happenings. There was even a 'Miss Ruyterwacht' competition, and the youth were entertained at disco-evenings.

The virtue of mutual help existed throughout this era, since a 1985 Social Welfare Committee record notes that "the volunteers in the community are doing outstanding work". Volunteering helped the upper layer of tenants to fight their personal frustrations with poverty and increasing dependency in the suburb. Markedly a middle-class practice, it was also a method of social distinction. In the volunteer work, the ideals of mutual help and middle-class aspirations were united in a constructive and ben-

eficial manner, and connected with the positive ideals of a good white. I regularly ran into this during my fieldwork.

"I know that God has a task for me here in Ruyterwacht. He has put me in this community to help the others. I have a mission here." (Louise, 56, a long-time resident.)

Appearance and Taste¹⁵⁶

During the era of apartheid the social workers' reports reflected continuing awareness of the appearance, taste and behaviour of the tenants. The previously set ideals of bodily behaviour were strong.

One of the present social workers told me that she had always wondered at the start of her career in Ruyterwacht in the 1980s, why people would first take her into their kitchens when she went on a house call. They would open their cupboards, showing how nice and tidy they were and how neatly the bags of flour and sugar and tins of beans were stashed away. Her experience in the 1980s was similar to mine in 1997.

"Then, we had order. They could come in any time, see through your house and see that it was orderly." (Jacoba, 80, a long-time resident.)

The attempts to uplift the taste and manners of the residents also found new forms. As the female residents became known as a bunch of unkempt, slovenly women, the demands on women's appearances grew. Good women were not only to wear clean and ironed dresses and look after their skins; they were also to strive towards attaining slim figures. In the 1970s it was realised that obesity was a problem in the Village. The Weight Watchers were praised for their efforts to create more acceptable, and, naturally, healthier bodies.

"WEIGHT WATCHERS CLUB: EPPING GARDEN VILLAGE: Mr. M. reported that the club had a membership of 21, and was functioning actively. Dr. J. of the Day Hospital expressed his appreciation of the good work done in achieving what a doctor could not, merely by issuing directions during a single consultation." (CHL, SWR: 1970.)

¹⁵⁶ Codes: Appearance and Taste, Female Role.

Despite all the efforts, the suburb grew increasingly stigmatised. One of my more middle-class informants had thought she would never move to a place such as Epping, and she still remembers the aversion she felt - and obviously still feels - when she saw the 'Epping girls' in the 1980s.

"... I used to go a lot to town and when you are in the train, you can see the difference between the areas. There is a big difference. The people here are all fat, their feet are always dirty, they always wear plakkies, its very seldom you see them in stockings, and they always have this loose tops on. And sometimes they even have got shorts on. Big bums in shorts. It's just plain horrible... They put on beach bum shorts with clean tops. Just picture it! And they are like 200 pounds in weight. You can just imagine what it looks like ... and their feet are dirty. You tell me, 8:30 in the morning how can your feet get so black and dirty? You know the Lord gives us water, why can't they just wash their feet when they go to bed? How can a person go to bed without bathing?" (Maria, 56, a long-time resident.)

During my fieldwork the obesity of poor white women was often mentioned, and seen as bad. A too big female body was a sign of deviance. It reflected an excessive lifestyle, a lack of self-control and self-respect. The social stigma attached to an overweight (female) body is hardly an uncommon feature in any Western country after the 1960s. It is, however, typical of the stigmatisation of the poor whites that as soon as the new social disgrace of fatness was constructed during the 1960s and 1970s, it was promptly attached to poor whites in South Africa.

The popular stereotypes of obese and physically and morally dirty poor whites that developed during apartheid era are similar to images of 'white trash', or 'trailer park trash' still popular in the United States.¹⁵⁷

Richard Dyer points out that there is no such thing as one uniform white culture or whiteness to deconstruct. Whites come in many different shades and grades. Mexicans and Jews are different whites than Swedes, if they are considered white at all. There are several whitenesses and white-dominated cultures rather than a Whiteness and the White Culture. Dyer, however, sees a similarity between all white cultures. They foster a white identity that is built on compelling paradoxes of representation and universal claims to prototypical humanness of whites which expresses

¹⁵⁷ On the 'white trash' of the USA, see Wray & Newitz 1997.

itself as "narrative structural positions, rhetorical tropes and habits of perception". (Dyer 2000: 543-544.)

The demands on South African whites to be attractive and tasteful fit in with Dyer's suggestion. They emphasise the narratives of whites as a 'master race'. They concur with the positions of prototypical humanness and normality attached to all the white cultures, where white supremacy is taken as a norm, and anyone who cannot live up to this norm is perceived to be a failure. In South Africa, these demands were further amplified with the apartheid ideology and its need to create immaculate White bodies within firm social and racial boundaries.

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE SOCIAL RELATIONS

"That was good old South Africa. They were safe there, unthreatened and totally institutionalised." (A former social worker on poor whites.)

The apartheid era in the EGV was characterised by residents' increasing internal segregation. The homogeneity of carefully chosen young families was gone, and social tension between the residents grew. Lower class and lower middle-class residents lived in a state of uncomfortable coexistence in the suburb. The change in the nature of the social relations was tangible, while the social competition for whiteness turned into a deep distrust between members of the community. For residents, the alternative to this social competition was isolation from others in their enveloping poor white community and the welfare system.

Throughout my fieldwork this rift was manifested in the silences of the older, middle-class-oriented residents. They did not wish to discuss the existence of the poorest element in the suburb in length or depth. Instead, they were quite keen on emphasising their own identification with the middle-class values.

The social tension and stigmatisation made leaving as soon as possible a driving ambition for the upwardly mobile residents, and particularly their children. The lack of financial means left other residents stranded where they were, despite an urge to leave the suburb.

The Citizens' Housing League knew that part of the lack of success in the EGV was that the community spirit in Epping had deteriorated. Distrust and secrecy were becoming norms in the area. This change was already visible in 1950 when the social workers complained that an income

survey was no longer easy to conduct, since the people simply refused to co-operate.

The social workers took pride in following the latest trends in social work, and yet they felt outdated. They noted that *"the emphasis had shifted from concern for health and material assistance to techniques of dealing with personality problems. This calls for intensive and time-consuming methods of treatment"* (CHL, SWR: Report on the activities of the social work personnel in 1954). The root of the problems was perceived to be a lack of attention and resources, and it was simply tackled by directing more means towards the Village.

During this era the social workers of the Company found themselves always working with the same, problematic families. A file was kept on every family, some of whom had mountains of memos and reports written about them.

"Sometimes I thought these social workers had nothing else to do, that they created problems for themselves just to keep themselves busy and employed." (Professional, Ruyterwacht.)

At times the extensive support could make people passive and uninterested in solving their personal problems themselves: why bother when a social worker was available to settle the family quarrels? This approach made the residents more dependent on the social workers who were deeply immersed in the social games played in the suburb. Their relatively independent position had endorsed them with more power than ever, and therefore they also became useful tools in the residents' utilitarian tactics.

It was possible to hide behind a social worker when the aim was to get rid of an unwanted boyfriend or to silence a noisy neighbour. As these unpleasant tasks were transferred to the social workers, it was easier to avoid unpleasant social conflicts, and keep the vital mutual support networks strong. It was convenient to let out some social pressure, but to direct the blame at the social workers, and simultaneously use them for one's own purposes.

"I think the people took social workers for a ride." (A former social worker.)

Social workers and housing officials were respected and feared. I was told that the women of the area used some of these officials as a bogeyman

in order to scare their men into better behaviour. People were genuinely scared and untrusting of them.

“The social workers and the housing clerks ruled the people with fear.” (Professional, Ruyterwacht.)

The area developed traits similar to that of a total institution, and reminiscent of those described by Erving Goffman in his book on asylums (1961). This institution was softer, and more difficult to detect. While many residents had nowhere else to go, they were not prisoners. But the institutional nature of the suburb was masked by the simultaneous ideal in which the family homes were proclaimed as private, sacred havens. Those who were seen as worthy of privacy could be given it. The others had to submit to house inspections, which could not be resisted because it would have weakened the resisters’ attempts to be good whites even more.

This not only created a tension in the suburb, but further accelerated the process of some residents turning against one another. Having a social worker busy snooping at the neighbours’ home was much better than having them in one’s own home. It also made some residents give up any pretence of personal upliftment completely, because they knew they would never attain the ideal. The social workers told me of problem families who had had massive files sometimes weighing several kilos.

In contrast there were also many residents who had confidence and trust in the professionals, with genuine liking and friendships frequently developing between the social workers and residents.

A case in point is John W. Yates-Benyon, a social worker in Epping Garden Village in the 1950s.¹⁵⁸ He was also an author who published two books of autobiographical anecdotes on an unnamed ‘housing estate’ where he worked. Yates-Benyon described his feelings as a social worker in a ‘poor white’ area:

“In theory, social workers should, like psychiatrists, priests and medical practitioners, be concerned only with the problem presented by the client. Personal likes and dislikes should play no part in a diagnosis and the planning of the course of treatment. But few of us are the ide-

¹⁵⁸ In his two novels: *The Weak and the Wicked* and *The Sad and the Sinful* he mainly offered his middle-class readers a look at the life of the poor whites. (See Yates-Benyon 1964, 1959.)

ally dehumanised automatons the textbooks seem to take it for granted we become as soon as we graduate.

It is not necessarily what a client does or how he does it that puts a social worker against him. I have been fond of rapists, have enjoyed a lasting friendship with a man who, as a trusted company secretary, swindled a group of widows of all their savings, and have rarely viewed the anti-social habits of my more violently criminal clients with anything greater than a personally sad but grateful 'there but for the grace of God go I' feeling." (Yates-Benyon 1964: 125.)

The lot of a social worker was not always easy. The archival findings show how the professionals possessed an awareness of their power, and a willingness to use it in people's everyday lives. This was combined with moral superiority and religious values.¹⁵⁹ But the social workers also experienced constant struggles with their personal feelings. Failures in the mission of upliftment often lead the professionals to the edge of desperation and beyond. During my fieldwork I encountered several stories and rumours of nervous breakdowns, depressions and even the suicide of a social worker who 'just could not take it any more'.¹⁶⁰

Control of Sexual Relations¹⁶¹

The CHL's concern about the residents' tendency towards an "immoral way of living" continued during this era. An "immoral way of living" could mean living as a couple without being married, extramarital affairs, relations with minors (both men and women had younger lovers), incest or prostitution. Helpful neighbours often provided details of the immorality in question, but the social workers needed to obtain concrete evidence, since being guilty of immorality had dire consequences.

"Soon after her husband's death there was suspicion regarding her morality and there were constant allegations that she was cohabiting

¹⁵⁹ During the apartheid years, the Dutch Reformed Church became known as *the* apartheid church. Christian-national ideology was carried out in practice during the 1950s and the 1960s in a time that Dubow calls the '*quintessential age of the dominees*' in South Africa (Dubow 1995: 247-254).

¹⁶⁰ Later I was convinced that this was an urban legend. Nevertheless, I found it fascinating that the people would keep on telling it. On gossip as a strategy of the weak, see Scott 2000.

¹⁶¹ Codes: Sexuality, Deviance, Social Control.

with different men at different times, made by neighbours, friends and wives of the men concerned. Reports also reached the office that liquor was delivered to the house daily and that heavy drinking was taking place there. Mrs. C. was warned in this connection on several occasions, personally as well as by letter, but was always able to convince the social worker that the complaints were unfounded . . . It has now become quite clear, however, that Mrs. C. is in fact indulging in sexual relations with married men and that liquor is consumed in excessive quantities in her home. The social worker has been obliged to conclude that Mrs. C.'s tenancy is undesirable.” (CHL, SWR: 1954.)

In this case the party found guilty lost her home, but not before a real hide-and-seek-game had been played between this sinner and the social workers.

Couples "living together as a man and wife" kept the social workers busy in the early 1950s, but after 1955 there were only two more cases where couples were caught. It was still mentioned as an issue that affected peoples' records negatively. Getting people to understand the importance of sexual abstinence was a demanding task. Sometimes the thinking behind the control of sexuality was clearly eugenic.

“The Chief Welfare Officer reported that during November, 1966, the Social Worker had tried to discourage Mr. T. and Mrs. N. from getting married as Mr. T. is a subsidised labourer and is borderline feeble-minded while Mrs. N. is also slightly mentally retarded.” (CHL, SWR: 1966.)

Extramarital relations were seen as serious offences, and the social workers went to great lengths to see that marital faithfulness was honoured.

“Mrs. G. was found in the house under rather suspicious circumstances with a Mr. V., a tenant of the village. Both were severely reprimanded, and Mrs. G. seemed to regret her indiscretion. The C.M.R. had asked for a report on this case and requested that Mrs. G. be allowed to take over the tenancy and be transferred to another part of the village. After discussion the Committee agreed that Mrs. G. be allowed to take over the tenancy of the dwelling; that she be transferred to a three-bed-

¹⁶² A study on prostitution in Cape Town in the 1980s showed that one of the 40 interviewed sex workers was born and lived in Ruyterwacht (Visser 1985: 119).

roomed dwelling in another part of the village; and that strict supervision be kept on both Mrs. G. and Mr. V.” (CHL, SWR: 1962.)

Prostitution was another thorn in the social workers’ flesh. Despite the attempts to uproot it, sex work continued in the area during the whole apartheid era.¹⁶² During my fieldwork I also came across several mentions of the prostitutes who lived in the area. In his autobiographical novel, *The Weak and the Wicked* (1959), the former EGV social worker John Yates-Benyon offers an entertaining account of how he successfully spent several nights in a parked car in order to catch a lady who was suspected of running a brothel in the suburb.

It was thus important for the residents to ‘play the game’, as they would say, to look as pure and upright as possible. In Epping Garden Village the residents learned to play the game of a good white, and played it well. One of my successful senior informants, Ms. M., had transgressed against these rules of proper sexual behaviour several times, but was still successful, as she knew how to represent herself.

“I always got what I wanted from the welfare. When people asked me how that was possible, I told them I had a clean record.” (Ms. M.)

The expression ‘clean record’ often came up in my interviews as if the area were a prison, or an asylum – a panopticon, where you had to earn your spurs, and project the right image. A ‘*clean record*’ meant that you did not give the Company any trouble. In short, you proved yourself to be a good white.

Changing Family Relations¹⁶³

In the 1950s, the suburb saw an overall change in marital relations and family life. The problems were becoming worse and more common. New approaches were badly needed in addition to the already tested methods of rehabilitation.

That the Company’s social workers were trusted by the residents be-

¹⁶³ Codes used to produce the text for this sub-chapter were: Families and Social Relations, Control and Social Relations, Parenthood and Institutions, Parenthood and Social Control; Parenthood and Social Relations; Parenthood and Professional co-operation; Marital Relations; Marital Relations and Space, use of; Marital Relations and Space-exclusion; Use of Time.

came obvious from the note in the archival material of 1956 that ‘cases were referred to the Marriage Guidance Bureau, but tenants seemed to prefer to consult the Company’s own Social Workers’. Zerilda Steyn suggested that marital troubles could be prevented with a series of pre-marital guidance lectures in the Villages. If people knew better, they would not divorce.

“These neighbours allege that Mr. N. received liquor at the flat daily (he works night shift), becomes intoxicated, ill-treats his wife and curses and swears so much that they cannot tolerate the situation any longer. When Mr. N. ill-treats his wife she frequently reaches a stage where she is in serious need of assistance, but the neighbours cannot render this without great unpleasantness ensuing.” (CHL, SWR: 1952.)

In 1957 the social workers were still concerned, since the number of divorces was increasing, and the social workers’ home visits were more frequently related to domestic trouble and divorce.

In 1960s the Company was urgently looking for ways to relieve the circumstances of those families deserted by the father. Their legal position was awkward, for as long as a woman was married she could not sign anything without her husband’s consent, and could not, for instance, become a main tenant. There were cases where after years of absence a missing husband – still the main tenant – would appear with a new partner and throw out his ‘previous’ family. On the other hand, a wife’s signature was needed to send her husband to a work colony, and this gave women some influence.

The 1950s saw a new generation growing into young adulthood. These children were different from any preceding generation: they dressed oddly, behaved weirdly and listened to bizarre music. Hooliganism and rebellious children, even ducktails, were becoming a problem.

This phenomenon, called “the youth problem”, was first noticed in 1955. It caused a moral panic, and in 1956 the Epping Garden Village Vigilance and Welfare Association made a suggestion that the Company take the initiative in calling a meeting of the representatives of all interested bodies in Epping Garden Village to discuss ways and means of keeping the village youth suitably occupied. The question of an improved police service for the Village would also be discussed.

The youth problem was addressed in terms of free time: the youth needed recreational facilities to vent their energy, and to keep them under

control. Sport was seen as a good outlet for this energy, and the sport facilities that were built in the area were to help with the rehabilitation of the youth. Through *volkspele*,¹⁶⁴ badminton and games these wayward children were supposed to find their way back. Youth clubs were founded, and an extra social worker was hired to supervise these clubs during the evenings.

The youth continued to cause problems in the area throughout the 1960s. During this time the archival material shows more instances of children being institutionalised than at any prior time. An 'uncontrollable' child was easily sent to boarding schools at Riebeeck West, Picketberg, Malmesbury, Laingsburg or Sutherland.

"...If kids are slightly angry and showing some rebellion, remove them. So when I came here there were all these children in not only children's homes but in the platteland and rural areas, in boarding schools . . . So they were sent to boarding schools to get away from this area so the parents could go on in peace with whatever they were doing. They were there subsidised for just about nothing, these white children." (Social worker.)

In the more disciplinarian industrial schools they were also taught to work. Work was a universal medicine, and discipline was seen as good for any man.

"The Committee noted that the sixteen-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. E. was mentally retarded and became such a problem at school that he had to be expelled. Mr. E. wished him to enter the service of the South African Railways but the social worker succeeded in persuading him that an industrial school with strict discipline would be more beneficial for the boy." (CHL, SWR: 1960.)

The downside of this was that the parents could also avoid their duties by sending their children to institutions, and sometimes they were only too keen to get them off their hands. During my fieldwork it was pointed out that many of those institutionalised children were later as parents prone to sending their offspring away as well.

It was economically viable for parents to send children to institutions

¹⁶⁴ *Volkspele*: 'traditional' Afrikaner folk dances and games.

when the state paid for travel, clothes and education, and the parents only had to see to their children's needs during the holidays.

"After R.'s admission to the school Mrs. B. had approached the social worker with the request that his sister also be sent to an institution or school of this nature because Mrs. B. was apparently finding it very difficult to control her." (CHL, SWR: 1962.)

During this time the reasons for sending a child away could be minimal, since the tenants turned to the Company not only when they could not manage their children, but also to solve problematic situations and family tensions which had nothing to do with the child.

*"...the eldest daughter, Linda, an illegitimate daughter of Mrs. G. Mr. G. does not treat the child well and is often brutal towards her, and it has already been necessary to send her away to live with relatives. Mr. G. abuses liquor and this contributes even more to the domestic discord. The essence of the problem is apparently that Linda is not Mr. G's child. The girl is progressing well at school and even though the mother is prepared to allow her to be placed in a boarding school."*¹⁶⁵ (CHL, SWR: 1969.)

These interventions lead to family ties being loosened. It is, again, difficult to say how many of the families in the suburb actually experienced this. However, having a family became a means of earning a living for some of the residents. In order to upgrade their housing conditions people came up with creative arrangements that involved emotional relationships. People would, for example, adopt or take in foster children to obtain bigger houses. Women would marry to get a house, and then divorce to get a maintenance grant. During my research I heard and read of several marriages that were entered into for this purpose.

Despotic and brutal behaviour by men, and particularly by fathers of Afrikaner families, is also prominent in my archival findings. Home was

¹⁶⁵ Original text was in Afrikaans "...die oudste dogter, Linda, 'n onegte kind van Mev. G. is. Mnr. G. behandel die kind nie goed nie en tree dikwels hardhandig op teenoor haar, en dit was al nodig om haar by familie te laat tuisgaan. Mnr. G. maak ook misbruik van drank en dit dra nog meer by tot die onenigheid in die huis. Die kern van die moeilikheid is blykbaar die feit dat Linda nie Mnr. G. se kind is nie. Die dogter vorder goed op skool en alhoewel die moeder bereid is dat sy in 'n kosskool geplaas word."

the one haven where the men could claim their ‘superior white masculinity’ in a manner that their culture, and their role in it, required. The battering of women was widespread, and went mostly unpunished. At times, social workers in their reports would even blame the women for their abuse.¹⁶⁶

The brutality of it all only appeared after dark, when the violence in families completed the vicious circle of domination. By renewing the high ideals of a good white, the uplifters also renewed the aggressive, authoritarian patriarchy. It was re-established with every new generation until the end of the 1980s.

“When I started working here this was just like a quiet little village from upcountry, only that it was in the middle of the city. It was a nice picture, nice and peaceful picture. However, after dark it was as if some evil came out. People started drinking, beating their wives and abusing their children sexually. But you wouldn’t have known hadn’t you been working with these things.” (A social worker in the area in the 1980s.)

Many of the EGV/Ruyterwacht families were thus far from the idealised patriarchal *volksfamilies* which, in the writings of the apartheid proponents, were central to the inner integrity of a civilised new nation (February 1991: 96-97).¹⁶⁷ But the logic of internal differentiation in the suburb worked in this matter as well. Some families brought up very upstanding citizens. In Ronel’s family the social boundaries and ideals of a good white were taken seriously.

She grew up in Epping Garden Village. Her parents moved in from Goodwood, for their family had grown far too big for their two-bedroom flat.

“When we moved into Epping Garden Village in 1961, I was 11. I remember how my mother cried all the time. She did not want to move in there, and she was sure that our lives were spoilt for good. But we could not afford to live anywhere else.” (Ronel, 50.)

¹⁶⁶ For further accounts on male violence/dominance in Afrikaner society, see Russell 1997.

¹⁶⁷ The apartheid ideology used a concept of a *volksfamilie* very similarly to that of the Nazis. On the ideals of family, see Cronjé 1933.

She already had four siblings at the time when they moved, and in Epping Garden Village her mother gave birth to four more babies. In the end there were nine children.

"I remember when the midwife came to help my mother to deliver the baby. And after the baby was born she would always make us milk pudding. Then we could see the new baby and have our pudding. I still hate the thought of that milk pudding." (Ronel, 50.)

In their family the father was an autocrat. He had decided that even if they were poor they were to be respectable. Boys had relative freedom, but the girls were not allowed to go out by themselves, or wear trousers. The girls were only permitted to go to movies with their father. After her matriculation Ronel went to work. Every Friday her father took her salary and for years she never saw a glimpse of the money she earned.

She hated her lack of freedom and choice. The day she turned 21 she left home for good – through marriage. The wedding was celebrated in Epping Garden Village's Garden of Remembrance, and Ronel wore her virginal white dress proudly.

Ronel's professional career turned out reasonably successful, and so did her husband's. They and their children live in a large house in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. Her father died a few years ago, and Ronel visits her elderly mother in Ruyterwacht every week.

Today she proclaims her pride in her roots. Despite the occasional bouts of nostalgia, Ronel did not stay to live or bring up her children in Ruyterwacht. Neither did her sisters or brothers, with the exception of one sister who returned after her divorce to live with their mother in Ruyterwacht, the only one of the nine children who did not 'make it'.

Ronel's father was harsh for a reason. He wanted to raise his daughters to fit in a middle-class life. Emphasising his commitment to middle-class values and social boundaries, bringing up his daughters to be proper women, interfering with their embodiment was just what was expected of him. It helped them all to avoid the stigma of being a poor white, and instead allowed them to be 'poor but honourable' – a theme Ronel repeatedly brought up when we talked. Ronel's mother, whom I interviewed separately, was on the same lines with her late husband and her daughter. Every time I met her, she emphasised how she kept to her self, how disinterested she was. *"I mind my own business. I do not have much to do with these people here, I never had."*

As Ronel's story shows, children did not only survive while growing

up in Epping Garden Village, they were often happily amalgamated with the Cape Town middle class. They learned to comply with the boundaries of whiteness and they learned the right signs of embodiment. Then they moved away, at first to the lower middle-class suburbs of Cape Town. Then some of them would continue climbing higher on the social ladder.

In Ruyterwacht the residents were happy to tell of this MP (Member of Parliament) or beauty queen and that Springbok (national sports team) star who had been born in Epping Garden Village. Yet, only few of them ever wanted to acknowledge their roots.

A study of family life in EGV during apartheid shows the deep categorical inconsistencies that the apartheid policy created in the poor white project. The onset of the apartheid era caused social and racial boundaries to become more strictly defined. This was meant to increase the degree of racial separation and uplift the Whites, but paradoxically this caused the poor whites to grow increasingly anomalous, and therefore, ever more stigmatised. The social system had begun a war against itself (see Douglas 1966: 173-195). While determined to maintain its internal boundaries, it was simultaneously producing a category of people whose mere existence transgressed against those boundaries ever more powerfully.

A Right to Be White¹⁶⁸

Although Jonathan Hyslop (2000) has pointed out that the 1960s and early 1970s saw increasingly intensive attempts to regulate white social behaviour, not many cases referring to pass-whites are to be found in the Citizens' Housing League archival material from this era. Of the 42 quotations mentioning pass-whites¹⁶⁹ in Epping Garden Village, 36 occurred before 1951. The concentration of these cases in these early years demands an explanation.

That those families not White enough were all discovered and sent away is implausible. During my fieldwork in the suburb (1997-2000), I met several very coloured-looking people who had moved in before the removal of the racial barrier in 1990. I was also shown many family photographs in which many people seemed fairly dark. These observations

¹⁶⁸ Codes: Race, Pass-Whites, Whiteness.

¹⁶⁹ Moral panic was at its peak at the end of 1930s (9 cases) and in 1940-1944 (13 cases), and in 1945-1949 (6 cases). At the beginning of the 1950s there were only 6 occurrences of pass-whites, and after that only three more cases, the last in the 1970s.

make it likely that some people did pass for white in Epping Garden Village during the apartheid era.

The absence of conflicts regarding racial classification in the archival material is more likely to be explained by the fact that the apartheid state at this time offered bureaucratic channels to determine race. The power to decide the race of people was shifted from the CHL to the Race Classification Board.

This hypothesis is supported by correspondence found in the State Archives. This is a discussion on whether the supposedly coloured children of the Jacobs family have a right to education in EGV (CSA: C 32/605/G). Although a senior CHL official was involved, this issue was not mentioned in the minutes or reports of the CHL. The absence of this material is an indication that the CHL had lost its sole mandate to decide on the whiteness of the residents at the beginning of the apartheid era. This does not mean that these decisions were no longer made. The CHL kept its power where it could, for example when it was deciding who was White enough to buy its houses.

*“The question whether a buyer is white or not is solely dependent on the decision of the Board of Directors of the CHL according to a majority decision of those present at a properly convened meeting of the Board of Directors and said decision is final and binding for all parties.”*¹⁷⁰ (CHL, SWR: 1955.)

As Graham Watson (1970) has shown, the new means of racial classification were not necessarily more logical than the previous ones. The different officials who were supposed to determine people's 'race' were frequently inconsistent in their policies. Often when one institution acknowledged a person's whiteness, another institution would not do so.

In the archival material there were some families stuck in this bureaucratic dead-end situation, since a member or members of the family were defined as Coloured (CSA: C 32/605/G). In these situations, a family had a limited choice. They could either keep on living in the area and, if the children were labelled Coloured, try to place their children in another, more tolerant school, or they could leave the area altogether. They could

¹⁷⁰ The original text is in Afrikaans: “Die vraag of ‘n koper ‘n blanke is al dan nie, hang uitsluitlik af van die beslissing van die Direksie van die Stedelike Behuisingsbond-Uitlitesmaatskappy volgens ‘n meerderheidsbesluit van die aanwesiges op ‘n behoorlik byengroepte vergadering van die Direksie en sodanig beslissing is finaal en bindend vir alle partye.”

also give up their claim to whiteness and move to a coloured area.

Despite the hardening racial categories, the white society grew progressively more confused in respect of racial issues towards the end of the 1960s. The seemingly unwavering faith in the principles of separate development started to yield as apartheid began to appear an impractical and oppressive impediment to the social order. Regardless of the promises, no separate and equal development ever occurred: Africans and coloureds still spent their days working in the homes of whites, bringing up their children and cutting their lawns, only to return to their slums at nightfall. There was still no infallible way to define exactly who was a Coloured, and there was a constant dispute over their political position.

The loss of heart and disillusionment of the Afrikaner spiritual leaders manifested itself for the first time when the National Party split into *verligte* Verwoerdians and *verkrampste* Hertzogites in 1969 (Grobelaar et al. 1989: 23).¹⁷¹ In 1977, on his return to South Africa, Ezekiel Mphahlele observed:

“Until a decade ago one would have categorically said that the Boer masses all sincerely and passionately shared the thoughts and feelings of the elite who talked kultuur, mother tongue, religion and so on. Today I would not be so sure. Because of the white alliance and other noises from the Western world outside, it may only be the Boere elite who refuse to stop at political and economic victories and keep the ancient fires alive.” (Mphahlele 1977: 25.)

In 1982 the National Party was divided again, this time with more shattering consequences for Afrikaner unity. This time, 17 parliamentarians broke away from the National Party government to form the *Konservatiewe Party* (KP), which was a counter-movement against the loss of heart and liberal influences. The KP leaned on the ‘Verwoerdian’ ideals of separate development (Grobelaar et al. 1989: 13). Their slogans ‘we care about the volk’ and ‘volk knows no classes’ were anachronistic at the time when a whole generation of young Afrikaners were turning their

¹⁷¹ Four National Party MPs broke away and formed the far-right *Herstigste Nasionale Party*, which was to appeal particularly to working-class Afrikaners. It did find some support among working-class whites and farmers, but in the 1970s it became labelled as an unpopular ‘loser party’ or ‘lower-class’ party (Grobelaar et al. 1989: 23). Its slogans, which were borrowed from the time of the building of the *volkskapitalisme* in the 1930s and 1940s, failed to appeal to upwardly mobile middle-class Afrikaners (O’ Meara 1996: 310-311).

backs on the idea of *Afrikanerdom*. The 1980s saw Afrikaner political and spiritual unity shake in its foundations and fall (O' Meara 1996: 368-371).

In the 1980s the ambiguous position of the coloured people created additional ideological inconsistency. While at the onset of apartheid, National Party leaders had emphasised the separateness of the 'Coloured nation', suggesting the establishment of coloured homelands; they were now interested in their cultural similarity with the Afrikaners, calling them 'Brown Afrikaners'. This increased the ambiguity regarding the location of racial boundaries, causing what Hyslop (2000) named a "conceptual confusion".

CONCLUSION

In spite of the economic success that they had achieved, the Afrikaner ideologists became increasingly disheartened after the 1960s. The nation-building project had become stagnant. Racial purity was no longer a concern for the social scientists, and the sounds of internal disarray became audible. The number of the *verligte*¹⁷² Afrikaners was growing (O' Meara 1996: 150-167).

For the poor white project this escalating ideological crisis meant, particularly from the 1960s onwards, middle-class disillusionment with the project and stigmatisation of those seen as poor whites. This was a part of a larger process in which the apartheid racial categories and boundaries were losing their credibility for many of the whites, and the system was losing its integrity.

In the 1970s the *Afrikanerdom* began to disperse politically and spiritually. When the practices concerning the racial boundaries were tightened to the extreme, the already leaky ideological system of apartheid could no longer maintain its consistency and credibility. The contradicting middle-class discourses and reactions to the position of the poor whites, their families and their embodiment indicated a larger social conflict, and the split of the Afrikaner nation. The ideology of the Afrikaners was in a state of disarray.

In the 1980s it was clear that there would be no return to the *volk's* previous unity (Adam 1979: 129). This disillusionment with apartheid also

¹⁷² Liberal Afrikaners. The opposite of a *verligte* (lit. enlightened) Afrikaner is a *verkrampste*, conservative, (lit. 'cramped') Afrikaner.

manifested itself in Epping Garden Village. Although the control of the boundaries of the category of a good white with its ensuing supervision of the social body and urban space was strict in the beginning of this era, in the 1980s it gradually slackened as the hopelessness of upliftment for everyone became evident.

This era witnessed the fervent attempts of the middle-class to rehabilitate the new residents, many of whom had a less 'ideal' background than the original, carefully handpicked residents. During this era the life span of a poor white individual was monitored from crèche to grave. The methods of upliftment – such as the control of embodiment - became increasingly effective and sophisticated. But even this fine-tuned structure could not survive the realities of everyday life, and some people in the poor white areas were just never rehabilitated. Instead, they became institutionalised, responding less and less to welfare efforts. They adapted to the pressures to conform by relying on the tactics that helped them to escape and evade the uplifters' grip rather than to reform.

For instance, the social workers wanted to develop families into autonomous units that, simultaneously, would be open for supervision and education. This ideal of autonomy was reflected in the residents' ideal of 'keeping to one's own', and not to disturb your neighbours or professionals. This ideal was not only a reflection of the autonomy that had now been attained, but also a demonstration of ignoring the game that was being played in the suburb, and being, in fact, above it.

The disinterested attitude is a claim to respectability, and meant to create distance between self and those poor whites. To quote Bourdieu: "*One can be interested in a game (in the sense of not indifferent), while at the same time being disinterested*" (1998: 77). Being disinterested was thus a move in the identity game. This way of playing a social game is well in accordance with what Bourdieu (1998: 88) wrote about the possibility of disinterested acts: that they are only likely to occur in a social world that somehow rewards them.

As the external control, boundaries and stigmatisation grew stronger, the social relations and the internal boundaries of the suburb hardened. This situation produced double standards, and people started to turn against one another. Residents did their best to appear as virtuous as possible. The game played between the residents and the social workers resulted in a social atmosphere that was a schizophrenic mixture of piety and deviance. This in turn affected neighbourhood relations. Deep distrust in the community arose from the interviews and archival material.

During this era all the themes of strategies and tactical responses de-

scribed in the conclusion of the previous chapter grew more elaborate. The residents kept to themselves, took every advantage of the professionals' help and/or took the social workers for a ride. For the residents of Epping Garden Village this did not necessarily mean a decrease in their agency – if you were aware of the rules of the social field, it was business as usual. However, from the perspective of those who lived in the 'normal' White society, the residents appeared marginal and even repulsive.

There were also success stories in which the aspirant whites learned to 'play the game', and presented the right, embodied signs of whiteness. If all this was well managed, the trappings of whiteness were there to be taken. After joining the proper category of a good white, it was usual to cut all ties with the past. During my fieldwork I heard countless stories of those who had left Epping Garden Village never to refer to it again. Senior ladies - the *volksmoeders* - told of their numerous offspring who lived in upmarket areas, and whom they have not seen for years. Paradoxically, the whole process is a reminder of that of passing for white – only this was *whites* passing for White.

In the 1970s a white person who had still not 'made it', and did not fit the picture of a good white, became an embarrassment for all the whites. While the racial ideologies had convinced many White South Africans of their superiority, the poor whites were a living example of the opposite. The existence of this contradiction reflected the large-scale dissolution of the apartheid ideology. Hyslop (2000) notes that the racial-ethnic system lost its coherence as the constant attempts of the apartheid regime to renovate the official ideology only bewildered the whites more, causing a "conceptual confusion which undermined whites' previously absolute sense of ethnic and racial boundaries", a situation a reader of Mary Douglas would identify as a "system at war with itself" (1966: 173-195).

In fact, while the white middle-class largely believed in these boundaries, they had never been very clear or absolute in Epping Garden Village. And while the poor whites were still trained to maintain the racial boundaries, the ideological disorder increased in the other sections of white society, leading the way to the social changes of the 1990s. The apartheid system, unable to convincingly maintain its internal racial categories or their external boundaries, had lost its war against itself.

8. THE ERA OF RENEGOTIATION: RUYTERWACHT AFTER 1990

By the end of the 1980s most South African whites had become convinced that the apartheid policy was not viable. In the face of external and internal political pressures and problems, not to mention the moral issues, the white minority rule had become increasingly untenable (Christopher 2000: 6). In the referendum of 1992, it was determined that a majority of white voters did not find apartheid a credible policy.¹⁷³ The referendum paved the way for the first democratic election in 1994, which led to an ANC¹⁷⁴ victory.

These developments lead to major transformations in both the African majority as well as the white minority's positions. The practices of artificially supporting a rigid category White were abandoned, and the socio-economic position of the poor whites changed dramatically. From an economic perspective, the poor whites of Ruyterwacht can easily be defined as the losers in the new South Africa. The 1990s was an era of uncertainty in Ruyterwacht with the rules that guided the existence of the residents in the area for so long disintegrating.

In the poor white areas, the dissolution of the previous categories of whiteness occurred far swifter than in the other (previously) White suburbs. Consequently, bodily and racial control decreased in Ruyterwacht. My fieldwork proved that at this time very little money or enthusiasm was available for the poor white project. Instead, social life is in the process of transforming and the social categories and the ways they are expressed are being redrawn. The use of urban space in the suburb is now privately controlled with fences and weapons rather than segregationist legislation. The everyday life in the present era is less focussed on the maintenance of racial boundaries, or purity of racial categories, and less concerned with proper embodiment than the previous eras were, although these ideas are far from being abandoned.

¹⁷³ On 17 March 1992 a record number of South African whites cast their vote in the referendum. A 60 per cent majority endorsed the recently elected president de Klerk's reform policy to negotiate an end to white minority rule through talks with the African majority.

¹⁷⁴ The African National Congress, a party supported by the majority of the population, the Africans. During the apartheid era the ANC was banned for decades, and its leaders (of whom Nelson Mandela is the most famous) imprisoned.

The racial ideas are alive and well in today's South Africa. Apartheid dies hard, as Christopher (2000: 8) has pointed out. Racial classification is still in official use, although now in the interest of affirmative action and reversing the effects of segregation. In everyday life, an individual is still forced to be very aware of his 'race'. The absurdity of the situation struck me when I, after my arrival in South Africa in 1997, found that I was defining myself as 'white' in an official document. Far from abandoned, the racial ideas have transformed to suit the new social order.¹⁷⁵

In Epping Garden Village, the changes already became visible towards the end of the 1980s, although the really drastic changes took place after 1991 when the government ended the colour bar. For the first time people of colour were officially allowed to move into the suburb. They were often aspiring young families who brought a particular middle-class flavour to the suburb. At the end of the millennium a visitor could see an equal number of coloured and white residents on the streets. The area seemed peaceful and 'multicultural', and the interaction between old and new residents took place in a relaxed, informal manner that could only rarely be seen in other suburbs.

Despite the relaxation in the general atmosphere, the white middle-class ideals were strong, and a well-internalised embodied (keeping bodily and social boundaries, showing bodily discipline) control was still a sign of belonging to the middle-class. It was not extraordinary to see a well-dressed coloured man on a Sunday afternoon polishing his treasured new Toyota Corolla in the driveway of his house. He would chase off the coloured squatters who pushed their shopping carts past his house in search of cardboard or metal to sell to a scrap yard. He would politely greet the passing old white ladies who might nod back at him, but he would sternly ignore the overweight young white woman begging for money for cigarettes.

In 1997 the use of space in Ruyterwacht was different from the middle-class white areas. Because some of the houses and yards were filled with junk and were very dilapidated, there was a general feeling of poverty everywhere, although some of the houses appeared carefully renovated. During my fieldwork (1997-2001) the area began to look less and less rundown. It was clear that due to the aspirations of the new coloured resi-

¹⁷⁵ At present the new democratically chosen elite is in power. While the whites still have most of the economic power and largely own the means of production, the new black elite has taken over the keys to the political power. During the new regime, the size of the African middle class has doubled, but the poorest Africans' standard of living has barely improved (Terblanche 2002: 64-65).

dents, a rapid process of gentrification¹⁷⁶ was in progress.

These spatial changes reflect the reform of the social categories in Ruyterwacht. The old classifications have changed, or are now being dispersed along new lines. In this chapter, the reorganisation of the social structure and category White in Ruyterwacht at the time of and after the dissolution of apartheid are examined.¹⁷⁷

POOR WHITES OF THE RAINBOW NATION¹⁷⁸

The upliftment of the poor whites might have forced the residents to uplift themselves, but it also created popular negative images of poor whites not only in the minds of residents of the Epping Garden Village, but in the minds of all South Africans. In the post-apartheid South Africa, poor whites seem to be an ironic joke. Not much warmth is felt towards them and almost everyone despises them.

“You are researching poor whites? I hate the poor! They do not want to work. All they can do is to beg.” (Piet, 32, white interior designer, Cape Town.)

“Poor whites? There are no poor whites in South Africa!” (laughter). (Two African students, 23 and 25, Stellenbosch.)

The poor whites were and are considered racist, opportunistic and common by many other whites. For these reasons many middle-class coloureds and Africans also look down on them. The use of the term poor white can be pejorative.

“And I told my neighbour, you can call us hotnots¹⁷⁹ all you like, for you are just a poor white.” (David, 28, middle-class coloured, Kuil’s River.)

¹⁷⁶ Converting a working-class or inner-city district etc. into an area of middle-class residence (Oxford English Dictionary 1993).

¹⁷⁷ The books of the Welfare Committee were closed in 1986. The data for this chapter was therefore partly culled from archival material such as the social workers’ reports and newspaper material, but mainly it was gathered in fieldwork with participant observation and interviews.

¹⁷⁸ Name used for post-apartheid South Africa. The idealist root of this metaphor is that just like the rainbow, South Africa too has many colours living in harmony side by side.

¹⁷⁹ Pejorative name for a coloured person.

The white residents of the suburb cannot expect much support from the present government, since they are still materially better off than most South Africans. Today the social services emphasise the importance of 'helping people to help themselves'. Many of the official support systems, such as child maintenance grants, that previously helped them have also been terminated.

Apart from being considered repulsive, the poor whites also represent the failure of the middle-class project, and thus a danger. Theirs is a fate of poverty and isolation that can befall any white person now that state protection has been lost. While feeling threatened, the middle-class is growing increasingly exclusive. Some are still sympathetic, but an increasing majority blames the poor whites for their own demise. Middle-class whites seldom visit a poor white area. The descriptions I heard of their few encounters with the poor whites sounded disengaged.

"I was just so shocked when I spoke to this woman, a white woman and she had missing front teeth. I have never seen anything like that before. Missing teeth! On a white person!" (E., 28, Stellenbosch, on her experience in a poor white area.)

In the early days of my fieldwork in the suburb I began to notice the difference as well. Some people looked similar to the residents of middle-class areas, but some carried themselves in a different way, walking slowly. They did not seem to have cars, or good shoes. They could be unkempt, or even drunk in public. In many ways, they represented the total antithesis of the ideal white. Gradually, my sense of distinction developed, and I began to perceive the finer distinctions and social layers among the residents themselves, finding the construction of whiteness operating inside embodied everyday values and practices that distinguished the 'tasteful', or the 'civilised', or the 'exclusive' from the 'common'.

These findings are similar to Hartigan's, who found a distinction between proper and improper white poverty in Detroit (Hartigan 1997b: 50). This distinction implies that a lack of money can be acceptable, but lack of honour is not. This division was also visible in South Africa, particularly in the 1930s, when a 'white poor' was different from a 'poor white'. However, the stigma attached to white poverty grew stronger in South Africa during apartheid as discussed in the previous chapter. In my experience at the end of 1990s, even a lack of money was somewhat embarrassing – while it *could* be excused – in a White person.

The Era of Desegregation

The first residents who moved into Epping Garden Village in 1938 often had family or friends in the coloured communities of Cape Town. During the fieldwork, life in a racially mixed environment often surfaced in the memories of older people remembering shared playgrounds and coloured friends. The shared language and cultural background contribute largely to the familiarity that is reflected in the present relaxed relations that I observed between the white and coloured people in the area.

Racial desegregation began before the 1994 election, in fact almost immediately after the Company ended the colour bar in 1991. The original white residents were given one last benefit as Whites: they were given a chance to buy the houses very cheaply. These tenants were, however, at this time becoming increasingly impoverished as a result of the withdrawal of state subsidies for whites. During the past few years some residents have been unable to pay the mortgages on the houses that they had bought, forcing many of them to sell their houses to affluent coloured people. All sales were not bankruptcy sales: some people wanted to move to more White areas. In the end of the 1990s, half of the houses were privately owned.

In the 1991 census, Ruyterwacht had 6.214 inhabitants, of whom only 145 were of coloured, Asian or African racial origins. In the 1996 census, Ruyterwacht had 5.415 inhabitants, of whom 1.100¹⁸⁰ (23 per cent) had defined themselves other than white, most of these residents being coloured (19 per cent). In 2000, 40 per cent of the residents were unofficially estimated coloured.

Whiteys and Bruines

The coloured people have been defining themselves in relation to the white culture for a long time. Mohamad Adhikari points out that at the beginning of the twentieth century the coloured people on the fringes of the white and coloured worlds strove to assimilate the demands of whiteness. Simultaneously, the coloured people were battling with a sense of racial inferiority, while subscribing to the idea of their superiority in relation to Africans. (Adhikari 1994: 124-129.)

¹⁸⁰ To illustrate the rapidity of the change: In the 1991 census only 145 out of 6.415, or 2,2 per cent of the residents of Ruyterwacht were not white.

Throughout the twentieth century their racial status has been intermediate in a sense that the term Coloured was applied to people who were neither White nor African. Thus 'Coloured' functioned as a residual category for those people who had no designated official racial category of their own (such as the Griqua and the Malays). Colouredness carried a stigma of racial miscegenation and impurity. (Adhikari 2001: 14-19.)

Poor whites were also people in an intermediate racial category, residual in a sense that those Whites who did not comply with the rules of being a good white could be categorised as such. Also the marginality, stigmatisation and doubts regarding racial purity were typical of this category. But most importantly, both categories were fuzzy, artificial, confusing and extremely leaky.

One may thus safely state that the category of Coloured is closest in the social pecking order and structurally most comparable to the category of poor white than any other social category in South African society. Sometimes the differentiation is very hard to make. The thin line between a Coloured and a poor white is often evident in everyday life.

"On a lovely summer's eve we are sitting on a terrace of a smart restaurant in Stellenbosch. K. is telling me about the excellent qualities of the brandy I am sipping. The price of the tot would support a poor African family for a week. But I am not thinking about that stuff. It is my night off. Then a rusty car full of poor white boys drives by. Loud music blasts from within the car. K. makes some comment about "hot-nots" that I do not properly understand. "Were those boys coloured?" I ask him, baffled. "Almost," he replies in a sarcastic tone. Everyone at the table chuckles." (Author's field notes.)

In today's Ruyterwacht, the differentiation based on the difference of habitus between a coloured and a poor white is not only blurred, but has been inverted in many cases. Most of the coloured residents hold office jobs; almost all of them have bought their own houses. Previously the highest occupational position to which a coloured person could aspire was that of teacher or church minister. Now that all middle-class occupations are open to them, they are busy climbing the ladder to the positions that were thus far denied them. The middle-class, white model of embodiment plays a central role in this. All the bodily signs of being a good white are there, and consciously represented – the coloured people fulfil all the prerequisites that were ever set for a good white, often better than their White neighbours do. (See table 2 in the appendix 3.)

The coloured people in Ruyterwacht are mostly relatively young families at the start of their professional careers. In the 1996 census, 33 per cent of the children under four years old were coloured. Only nine per cent of all the residents, who were divorced or separated, had defined themselves as coloured, Indian or African.

In Ruyterwacht the new coloured residents are ambitious and socially ascending. The first coloured family in Ruyterwacht was Muslim, a family for whom the area represented only one step in a path of upward social mobility. These coloured families intend to have their children educated at the best schools, and some even contemplate putting their children in private schools.

The previously white high school in Ruyterwacht was designated an 'all race'-model C-school in 1990. In 1999, approximately half of the 500 students at Ruyterwacht High School were white, the other half coloured. Some white children from Ruyterwacht attend school in the coloured Elsie's River, since the school fees there are lower. In the meantime, several aspiring coloured children commute from the coloured township of Elsie's River to the schools in Ruyterwacht.

Recent election results illustrate the coloured peoples' identification with White objectives, since they vote for historically white parties.¹⁸¹ Thus the original residents, coloured people and even the Muslims vote together against the black majority ANC party. The election results amply indicated that the enemy is now only the Africans. The competition for scarce resources and the insecurities of the present South African society seem to be contributing to the racial relations as well.

The coloureds represent a resource in a community where good relations with one's neighbours mean survival. Reciprocal borrowing of money or foodstuff, and exchange of goods and services occur frequently. Having good neighbours is also a matter of security. A relatively young, middle-class neighbour who owns a car and a telephone is an asset in a community of mainly elderly or low-income people who are constantly worried about their safety.

Even though every White person I have interviewed has proclaimed that "here, our coloureds are good", there are complaints. Those com-

¹⁸¹ In the 1999 elections almost 75 per cent of the votes cast in Ruyterwacht were for the New National Party (NNP), 13 per cent for the Democratic Party (DP) and a mere six per cent for the ANC. In the neighbouring, more middle-class 'white' area, Thornton, the NNP only received 40 per cent of the votes, whereas the DP collected 34 per cent and the ANC 13 per cent. In the election of 2000, 90 per cent of the votes were given to the Democratic Alliance (a party combined from the previous DP and NNP).

plaints are not openly directed at the coloured residents whose education, income and social status are generally higher than those of the whites. Their teenage children or "their children's friends" or "the other coloureds from the outside" are instead blamed for bringing harsh elements such as drugs, gangs and crime into the suburb. These complaints also reflect the fact that in general crime has increased in the former white areas.

Not all the Whites in the area are poor, and not all the coloured people belong to the middle class. There is a coloured squatter camp on the fringes of the area and many Whites own attractive homes. In general though, there is a sense that coloured people in Ruyterwacht are materially better off than the whites.

Africans have not really entered this area, whereas the neighbouring middle-class, former white area of Thornton has several African residents. Ruyterwacht has a bad reputation as a racist area. It may also be that the Africans have no interest in living with poor whites and middle-class coloured people who, although they tolerate each other, are equally racist towards Africans.

It is indicative of these changes that a conspicuous shift has occurred in the religious affiliations of the church-going residents of the village. After the end of apartheid the membership of the white Dutch Reformed Church decreased dramatically.¹⁸² In the 1996 census the Dutch Reformed Church still had 671 members, but in 2000 the two Dutch Reformed congregations in Ruyterwacht were united, since there are not enough members to keep two congregations going. The unofficial estimation for this newly lineated congregation in 2000 was approximately 200 to 300 members, while the apostolic and Pentecostal churches in the area are flourishing.¹⁸³ In the 1996 census, there were 65 Muslims in the area, but according to the estimations of the residents and people who work in the community, this number has most definitely grown.

All these changes do not mean that the idea of a good white, or discourses of whiteness have ceased to exist – far from this. Despite all the new divisions, categories and alliances, the fieldwork made it very clear that the essentialist awareness of race is still there.

¹⁸² Signs of this were already visible in 1986 when only 32 of the 132 new adult residents were members of the Dutch Reformed Church, the rest were members of the Catholic Church (13), and different Apostolic and Pentecostal churches. (CHL, SWR: 1986.)

¹⁸³ In 1996 the Apostolic churches had 563 members, and the Catholic Church 203 members, and the Methodist Church 133 members. Since then the numbers have increased according to the interviews during the fieldwork.

“We had to find out for the statistics how many of the students were white, how many were coloured. We did not think we could ask them ourselves, so then we had the prefects tell the class: “All the whiteys stand up, all the bruines remain seated!” It worked well. If somebody tried to stand up, the other kids would correct him right away. Those kids know among themselves who is what.” (Teacher, local high school.)

Ruyterwacht was and still is an area filled with dreams of respectability and aspirations to the material status of the White middle-class. Now it is not only whites pursuing this South African dream. Coloured people seem to conform to these ideals too and often far better than the whites themselves.

Changing Space

During the years of my fieldwork I saw the impoverished and slightly anomic look of the area changing dramatically when, as a consequence of gentrification, renovation and rebuilding, painting and decorating of the houses occurred. While the streets of the suburb are still wide, and the sense of openness prevails in the area, the yards are disappearing behind fences and walls, which make them more private and secure.

Also many of the homogeneous white houses have changed their look. Coloured newcomers upgrade their environment with money and a sense of style, sometimes completely demolishing the house they have just bought and building anew on the foundations. Garages, double-stories and pools are being built, and satellite dishes installed. Expensive-looking cars are parked in front of some houses.

Simultaneously, the increase in poverty can be perceived, and the house neighbouring a carefully renovated house can be utterly dilapidated. Ironically, the large plots once meant for gardening are now proving useful for erecting tents and Wendy-houses, or parking caravans to accommodate those who can no longer afford a house or a flat. Often people pay high sums for these spaces.

Cheap houses are difficult to obtain, since the Company has long waiting lists for flats and houses now that everyone is eligible for them. Living in a coloured suburb would be cheaper, but for the poorest white group it is the last option, since it would mean complete falling from any category White. Some have, however, been forced to leave Ruyterwacht.

Some have moved to Goodwood, some have found refuge with their families, some have simply dispersed to the caravan parks, coloured and even African areas in Cape Flats.

Despite the breakdown of previous social categories and the arrival of coloured residents having caused obvious gentrification¹⁸⁴ of the suburb, the policy of apartheid still influences the white residents' perceptions of space. Spatial patterns and urban planning of segregation and apartheid normalised the racial ideology, and drew its outlines in the urban topography. It will take several decades before the meanings attached to urban space can and will be forgotten, if ever. Memory will perpetuate this construction. People's memories of the apartheid space will regulate social definitions of South African urban space for a long time, in contrast to the memories of the shared historical roots of both the White and Coloured Cape families who lived together in working-class areas.

Some white residents see the arrival of the coloured residents as a welcome change, and appreciate their middle-class lifestyle as a key to a better future for the area. However, for some the presence of the coloureds has brought a sense of spatial invasion that becomes apparent in the interviews with white residents of Ruyterwacht. They feel that their space has been invaded, and complaints are often about petty things, such as the coloured children playing in the streets, or the noisiness and disrespectful attitudes of the coloureds living in the suburb. Coloured street culture – known for its liking of cars, hanging out in streets and playing loud music – has arrived in Ruyterwacht, and on the street corners one can see multiracial groups of people chatting and laughing.

"We are sitting outside Lisa's (coloured female, 27) car. She beams, as she has only had it for a few weeks. She turns up the music. It hurts my ears and I am convinced the whole neighbourhood can hear it. "This is a coloured thing", she laughs happily." (Author's field notes.)

A number of old residents stated that coloured people are noisy and spend too much time out on the streets – an offence against the spatial rules of a good white who 'keeps to himself' and is rather not seen on the streets. Alternatively, many middle-class coloured people look down on the poorest of whites. They see their behaviour as completely embar-

¹⁸⁴ Elijah Anderson, who studied two suburbs of Philadelphia, witnessed "a profound confusion of race and class" (1990: 156) and pointed out that gentrification was the spatial expression of the differences of class and race.

rassing and common, thus sharing the ideals and prejudices of the white middle-class.

White arrogance is commonplace. However, not all the new residents tolerate bad behaviour.

“...And she says to me in Afrikaans, you are staying in a white area, you can be happy you stay in a white area. I was not impressed. And I said to her this is a poor white area, so you can be happy, having me as a neighbour...” (A coloured lady describes an argument with a white neighbour.)

Ruyterwacht in the middle of Spaces and Categories

It is symbolically and cosmologically telling that spatially today's Ruyterwacht is literally squeezed between opposite worlds. Limited by a highway in the south, and connecting to lower middle-class Goodwood in the north, it is surrounded by a luxurious casino in the west and an extremely poor squatter camp in the east.

Since the end of apartheid certain spots in Ruyterwacht are regarded as more dangerous, and the residents avoid them. On the northern boundary of the area are the railway line and Vasco station, which are surrounded by the Goodwood centre and busy Voortrekker Road with its multiple shops and services. Many Ruyterwacht residents do not own a car, and since services in the suburb are scarce, access to the above-mentioned assets is provided by a subway tunnel. However, the tunnel is considered extremely dangerous. Many old people described the daily fear and panic they experience when forced to go through the subway to do their shopping.

“In the suburb, guns are commonplace for those who can afford them. Others get themselves huge, aggressive dogs, batons or baseball bats. Mr. B. is known in the suburb for his affiliation with the far right movement. A pensioner, he has time to patrol the streets. Before we start the interview, he removes a massive gun from his belt. It rests on the table between us during the whole interview. The presence of the gun makes me jumpy, and the interview does not go very well.” (Author's field notes.)

On the western boundary of Ruyterwacht, the building of the Grand West Casino in the space of the former ice rink awoke many hopes in the community. There would be employment possibilities and the area would also be upgraded. When the Casino was established, some residents who had applied for the employment there, said they felt that they were too White to be actually accepted. There were also fears in the community that the residents would gamble there, rather than feed their families. A visit to the Casino in April 2001, five months after opening, confirms these fears. White residents of Ruyterwacht do not seem to be working there, while many, looking fatigued, can be seen by the gambling machines, trying their luck.

The planners of the Casino have used the 'old Cape Town' as their reference. In the Casino, the tourists do not see leftovers of the embarrassing apartheid past of South Africa. Instead, they can stroll through an unreal simulated series of spaces, boasting shops, fountains and a merry-go-round, and enjoy dinner in the restaurant zone inside the casino, called the District. Its multiple ethnic restaurants are placed in the corridors that imitate the long lost alleys of the legendary District Six. Even the marketing directors of the enterprise have seen it apt to bring the politically correct multicultural past of Cape Town back into view, and to elevate it to the pedestal of mythology.

Also the outside of the area, which adjoins the west side of Ruyterwacht, has been cleaned and equipped with new, decorative street lights and well-maintained lawns. The upgrading of the area has affected the real estate prices, which have gone up as well. While a two-bedroom house in Ruyterwacht could still be bought for 80.000 Rand in 1997, in 2001 the price could be over 200.000 Rand.

The emergence of the Casino has also contributed to the safety of the area. The Casino has its own police station, and the areas near the Casino, such as Goodwood railway station, are well supervised. The safety of the nearby streets is guaranteed, particularly in the nearby Vanguard Drive, which now accommodates squatters.

Although everyone in Cape Town knows the Grand West Casino, few people are aware of Ruyterwacht right behind it. There are no big attractions, shops or facilities. Apart from those people who come to see their ageing parents who refuse to leave the area, middle-class people still do not come here.

On the eastern boundary of the suburb, dozens of squatters, who invaded the area in 1992, live in shacks scattered around the old buffer zone between Ruyterwacht and Elsie's River. Although some of the squatters

have jobs in the suburb as maids or gardeners and form a cheap temporary labour reservoir as a group, they are the lowest step of the Ruyterwacht nutritional chain – living off its garbage. They wander around the suburb, searching for anything useful: cardboard, mouldy bread, clothes, or an odd job. Any talk about these categories is useless. They are outside the described system of social order and categories of Ruyterwacht, in the same niche where a caste society would locate pariahs.

Their site is still not serviced, even though Tygerberg municipality had already made promises in this regard in 1997. They do not have toilets or running water, carrying their water from the nearby police station. Garbage lies scattered everywhere and the stink is revolting. Children, whose faces show traces of FAS-syndrome as a result of their mothers' drinking while pregnant, play in the heaps of rubbish where huge rats lurk. The squatters joke that the cats in the camp are afraid of the rats. The squatters fight their daily battles against addictions, poverty and a sense of worthlessness. According to the squatters the Ruyterwachters' attitude towards them is at best paternalistic, at worst spiteful. They do not feel any unity with the coloureds of Ruyterwacht who are keen on defending their newly acquired position in the social order. The squatters say that these coloureds are even harsher towards them than the whites are.

“They think they are White.” (M., squatter, 27.)

Some white community leaders want to build a wall between the squatters and themselves to make a proper distinction. For the residents the squatters' existence cannot be helped, but they should be invisible, and their access to the space of Ruyterwacht must be restricted.

When discussing the position of the area in South African society and in Cape Town, my informants often referred to metaphors of space. Particularly non-verbal communication is very telling. It describes their values and the way they see themselves in the social hierarchy.

Typically, people use the binary opposition of up/down when discussing the suburbs of Cape Town. An example of a usage of this kind is that when Constantia, an upper class area is mentioned, people tend to illustrate it by lifting one hand above the eye level 'up'. When referring to Ruyterwacht, they lower their hand to the level of their stomachs, 'down'. When one of the poor black areas is mentioned, they put their hand even lower down in a gesture that leaves Ruyterwacht in the 'middle' compartment.

These perceptions are quite typical of the way South Africans perceive

the position of poor white areas in general. In middle-class white perceptions, even if these areas are considered very low in the White cosmology, they still belong to the existing universe, areas where you can physically go to, whereas all the African areas are entirely outside this category. In the residents' minds, but also in the middle-class perceptions, these categories live on.

My informants also use language and expressions to verify Ruyterwacht's symbolical position on the lowest step of this hierarchy, or squeezed on the boundary between the categories of White and not White.

"I am flat on the ground." (J., a community leader.)

Being from Ruyterwacht can be a source of shame, but it is also a source of pride. A person, who can trace his place in the classification and accepts it, is, according to essentialist thinking, nurturing a 'real' identity (Crapanzano 1986: 20). He is a genuine person, a *ware Afrikaner*, who knows how to position his identity within carefully marked boundaries, and who thus, despite the fact that he lives in a poor white suburb, has a right to claim respectability.

"I have made something of my life but I am still a flat person. I did not grow proud like those in Thornton. I am not pretending I am something I am not." (J.)

NEW SOCIAL CATEGORIES AND BODILY CONCERNS FOR A NEW SITUATION

At first sight the present social scene in Ruyterwacht seems chaotic after the overdose of order. But underneath there is a consistent cultural logic in which all the poor whites, Muslims, Afrikaners, English-speaking whites, coloureds, middle-class whites and professionals fit.

The poor whites were and are an underclass among whites, but they were still not the 'real' *lumpenproletariat*. They were trained to know their place as a working class, but the internalised racial white middle-class bodily rules nevertheless defined their habitus. This double bind made their position a contradictory and difficult one. They were simultaneously the dominator and the dominated, or rather constricted between them. This position has left little room for manoeuvring. 'Being flat',

accepting this role and understanding its limits became seen as a form of embodied wisdom, a tactical statement of a social position.

Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) studies on the making of a social distinction by the means of economic and symbolic (cultural) capital, and particularly Mary Douglas' long work on the group/grid system are useful when these changes in the social position of the poor whites in the suburb are analysed. The shift of social boundaries illustrates how the end of apartheid brought a change in cosmology to Ruyterwacht (Douglas 1996: 29-30).

Mary Douglas created her group/grid scheme to classify societies. In this scheme, societies are divided along two axes that depict 'group' and 'grid'. The horizontal axe is the 'group' dimension, which describes the degree of social cohesion. The further right one moves on the 'group' dimension, the stronger the control by other people and group cohesion are. The vertical axe is the grid dimension, which indicates the degree of shared classifications or knowledge. The higher one moves along the vertical axe, the more rigidly people are classified at the societal level. (Douglas 1970.)

In terms of Douglas' group/grid theory it can thus be stated that the hierarchical and controlling apartheid society attempted to constrict all its white members into the category of a good white, where a 'high group' and a 'high grid' would prevail. Some poor whites tended to slip out of this category towards the isolation and individualism of the low group end of this continuum (although still controlled by the high grid of the apartheid society). The task of the professionals was to slow down or even reverse this process by emphasising the group commitment and embodied signs of a 'good white'.

From the early 1990s on, a change in power relations has meant that residents of Ruyterwacht are no longer limited to membership of the racially exclusive, high group/high grid category as the post-apartheid society allows a wider variety in social categories. In these categories, the local and historical conditions and the ideas of Western racial discourses are visible, but they are now combined with the ideas of modern consumerism and global, fluid modernity.

Small wonder then that the diffusion of the categories of whiteness in seemingly conservative Ruyterwacht began the moment that official demand for poor whites to fit into the high group/high grid category disappeared.

This change is best exemplified when the group/grid theory is applied to homes. Private homes make a particularly good and concrete example,

since, as Burkitt has suggested, “artifacts and social meanings still refer back to communities of embodied persons” (Burkitt 1999: 146). Homes differ a lot in present Ruyterwacht, and are easily comparable. They reflect long-term trends and practices because peoples’ home decoration styles change slower than, for example, clothing styles. Often the investments made in homes are costly, and need time and planning. In the light of this study’s interest in the overall spatial symbolism and body techniques in Ruyterwacht, and since private homes can also be considered extensions of self and social body, homes are particularly important cultural products for this study (Burkitt 1999: 136).

Douglas (1996) later used the overall principles of her group/grid theory to create advanced classificatory schemes to analyse and classify, for instance, consumer behaviour and movements in popular medicine. She divided people into four main groups, noting that each modern society had members in each of the scheme’s fields, based on the peoples’ cultural position on a scheme, which was based on her original group/grid scheme. Consequently, those at the high group/high grid social end were what she named ‘hierarchists’ who would prefer to follow collective rules and affirm authority.

Following Douglas’ lead, it is possible to analyse the private homes of my informants in Ruyterwacht to see how they reflect the lifestyles and social category of their owners. This leads to the emergence of four main subcategories (see Figure 1.) of quite rough ideal types. Despite the fact that this is only a model of social relations, and should be understood as such, it is helpful when making sense of a complex social situation where the old structures have dispersed and a new process is ongoing.

Previously only the homes of Group C (high group, high grid) were the norm in Ruyterwacht. Today these homes can still be recognised by their conservative style and immaculate neatness. They often boast heavy, dark wooden furniture, heavy upholstered sofas and show cases with glass doors. Their walls are decorated with copper objects, framed photographs of family and cross-stitch work. They might have neat wall-to wall carpets. An Afrikaner ‘country style’ is admired, and the paintings are often South African landscapes or pictures of Africans in their ‘native’ dress.

Each room strives to be a whole, a tasteful composition, and the colours are matched. Lace drawers and hand-embroidered tablecloths are combined with floral patterns. While the sense of space is maintained, there is also a great attention to detail. The furniture and the decoration adhere strictly to mainstream Afrikaner traditions. Usually the gardens of

	<i>High grid</i> (Traditional)		
<i>Low group</i>	<p>B: ISOLATED</p> <p>A poor white man living on the backyard of a coloured family. An old white lady who goes to Apostolic Church with coloureds. Cannot afford constant improvement of home, rather self-improvement, e.g., neat/not neat shows habitus here. This category continues all the way to the squatter camp.</p> <p>ISOLATION & CONTROL: LOW STATUS TRY TO FOLLOW COLLECTIVE RULES</p>	<p>C: HIERARCHIST</p> <p><i>Verkrampste Afrikaner</i> country style Dark furniture, lace curtains Authoritarian Constant improving of home and self Concerned about racial purity Dedication to community Attempts to keep the political power</p> <p>HIGH CONCERN ABOUT BOUNDARIES GROUP COMMITMENT</p>	<i>High group</i>
	<p>A: INDIVIDUALIST</p> <p>‘Arrivistes’ – racially ambiguous Aims to get the political power Bought their houses or well to do Voluntary work Global connections via Internet Mobility; consumerism important Muslim (green stickers, ‘Slamse smaak’) Constant improving of home and self</p> <p>LOW CONCERN ABOUT GROUP BOUNDARIES SUBCULTURE/ INDIVIDUALISM</p>	<p>D: EGALITARIAN ENCLAVIST</p> <p><i>Verligte Afrikaner</i> Much like Group C homes, but more contemporary style, rarest type, Most like Stellenbosch middle class-homes e.g., township-made decorations, brightly coloured walls Some younger white residents Individual styles, constant improving of home and self</p> <p>COMMITMENT TO AFRIKANERDOM, CHALLENGES OLD VALUES IDEALIST CONCERNED ABOUT COMMUNITY</p>	
	<i>(Modern)</i> <i>Low grid</i>		

Figure 1. Following Douglas (1970, 1996)



Picture 2: A thoroughly renovated Group A house



Picture 3: The neighbouring, more original, Group B house
Photographs Annika Teppo

these houses are also impeccable. These homes are not easy to create or keep up. Much love and labour, economic and symbolic capital must be made available.

Today, mostly seniors live in these homes. They also tend to be people who could have left Ruyterwacht for better areas, but decided to stay. They often mention their commitment to the suburb as one reason for staying. In addition to their neat homes, this group also employs other ways of presenting themselves as good whites. These are the people most mindful of social boundaries and signs of proper embodiment. They also tend to put up concrete boundaries such as high fences and burglar bars. They know the social games of being a good white best, and some prefer to emphasise their isolation from the poor whites, particularly from those in Group B.

While the C group was the ideal category in EGV during apartheid, some people kept sliding from this norm to the isolated Group B, which was the stigmatised poor white group (low group, high grid). An individual member of Group B can be either very close to the C group, or very far from it. The further they are to the left, the more isolated they are.

Compared to the relative impenetrability of middle-class private spaces, homes and gardens, some of Ruyterwacht's house yards have remained quite open. These open yards with no, or only very low, fences belong to Group B's rented houses. Nobody in Group B owns their own homes, and not all of them have a whole house to themselves. During apartheid they all had houses and incomes, but now they may live in poverty in messy Wendy houses¹⁸⁵ or caravans.

Their homes are filled with donated furniture and unframed photos. There are knickknacks scattered around: a pretty liquor bottle, a nodding plastic cow. Because there is little money for choices in consumption, distinction has to be made by other means (Douglas 1996: 83). Thus this group can be divided into two sub-groups.

There are those who in the figure above are placed to the extreme right, nearest to the vertical axis. These Group B representatives seek to reproduce traditional C-type homes, but are too poor to manage that. They therefore make the distinction by keeping their homes neat, and by striving to create an impression of spaciousness. They also express the same ideals of a good white, a commitment to community, group boundaries and 'proper' embodiment as Group C residents do. They are very close to the C group, and play the same games, but in practice they cannot afford

¹⁸⁵ Garden flats.

the same lifestyle or bodily concerns. Neither can they afford elaborate security fences.

Then there is the wide range of those who do not care about C group and its commitments. If they have a house, it is dirty and smelly. They do not tend their gardens, which are used to amass old cars and junk. The people furthest away from the vertical axis, at the extreme left side of this category, are closest to the traditional, stereotypical poor whites. Their next step might be sliding out of the suburb, perhaps moving to a camping area or a coloured squatter camp, where their place in the social classification would be redefined, and perhaps be closer to the top of this social hierarchy.

During apartheid, group boundaries were imposed particularly keenly on those who now form Group B, and monetary support was directed at them as well. Despite this, there was some, if a very narrow, space for different ways of life. During my four-year stay in South Africa I regularly ran into the popular idea of a poor white suburb as a hideaway for incorrectly embodied people such as gays, pass-whites and other people interpreted as too anomalous to stay within the main stream of White society.

After the end of apartheid this polarisation changed into a more complicated picture. The hold of the grid, and thus social and racial classifications, was diminished. The first new socially aspiring residents, the first *arrivistes*, entered Ruyterwacht. This group is characterised by their individualism and racial ambiguity – they can be coloureds who do not care about group pressures, or whites who are racially on the borderline and who do not care about the boundaries of whiteness. They do not conform to old racial patterns. In the scheme, this makes them Group A, which is located on the lower left corner, opposite to Group C. Douglas' characterisation of this group fits them perfectly, since they are also prone to submit to the cultural ideals of authority, leadership and domination (Douglas 1996: 46). Their thinking and lifestyle can be challenging to traditional Afrikaner values; they can, for example, be Muslims who strive to create their own community in Ruyterwacht on their own terms (will be discussed in length later).

They are mobile. Cars and motorbikes are central in their lifestyle, which can be described as consumerist. Of all the residents of Ruyterwacht they are the ones most likely to spend their Saturdays at a mall – which mushroomed around Cape Town after the end of apartheid. They often have computers or computer skills, and access to the Internet, since

they do not see technology as evil.¹⁸⁶ They are often well stocked with home electronics, hi-fi systems and kitchen gadgets, of which they also know the latest models, while there is no or very little inherited furniture that is so typical of Group C homes. They improve their homes and gardens, and paint walls, tile floors and build fences incessantly, in a fervent, sometimes kitsch, attempt to banish memories of the Company's uniform suburban layout and the poor whites.

Group A can afford the signs of a middle-class habitus. They build new rooms, entertainment areas with new *braaioplekke*¹⁸⁷ and garden flats that can be interpreted as rituals against the present insecurities of South Africa (Broadbridge 2001: 139), but which can, from this perspective, also be seen as a part of the process of category formation and maintenance.

Their opinions and group commitments have a wide range, although they are all concerned about bodily boundaries. These concerns tend to be more individual than group-oriented. They are, however, reasonably conservative and authoritarian, thus reminiscent of Group C residents, and draw their symbolic boundaries in a very similar manner. They are also, besides Group C, the other group in Ruyterwacht that is likely to erect high and sometimes remarkably decorative walls around their plots.

"Lindsey, 29, grew up in the previously coloured area of Athlone. She is a personnel manager in a large company. She has been promoted twice during last three years. She and her husband wanted a bigger house in a previously white area, since coloured areas were too restless for their liking. Lindsey is sweet, neat, lively and chatty, and their house is spotless. Lindsey tells me how they have renovated it extensively, and built a granny flat for her old father. She offers us Oros juice, which we sip together as we sit on her leather couch in her neat pink living room. Lindsey is active in the community and her church. She wants to put a halt to the substance abuse and illegal liquor selling she sees around her every day. The youngsters of the community have no values, and she is certain there is plenty of premarital sex going on as well. Racism is normally not a problem for her: she gets along with the more conservative whites quite well, since she is sternly religious and firm in her opinions. She is concerned about the safety and cleanliness of the area, and tells me of her plans to report a messy neighbour

¹⁸⁶ See Hyslop (2000) on the South African moral panic about TV, modernisation among the whites – satanic, impure technology.

¹⁸⁷ Barbeque areas.

to the authorities. As soon as they have this house paid, they will look for a bigger house in a better area – Thornton perhaps.” (Author’s field notes.)

This is thus in accordance with Douglas’ observations that Group A and Group C are the most prone to worry about ”subversion, arbitrariness and anarchy” (Douglas 1996: 46). Group A also tends to be at odds with Group C, occasionally challenging it. However, under duress, they are also prone to form alliances because of their mutual approval of authority.

Middle-class homes in the present South Africa are well fortified and protected. One spatial marker unified houses of groups A and C: During my fieldwork a new yard type was emerging around the privately owned houses. These houses now boasted fences and protective vegetation. Grey vibracrete walls¹⁸⁸ have sprung up around the yards, which are patrolled by vicious *boerboel* dogs (pit bull terriers). These yards belonged to the Group A and Group C residents.

When applying Douglas’ scheme to Ruyterwacht, tiny Group D is closest to what is usually called ‘verligte Afrikaners’. Still holding on to their Afrikaner group identity, they are more modern and egalitarian than those identifying with the hierarchists, but are equally conscious of their social status. They have a sense of belonging with Group C (and, to a point, with B), but not necessarily with their political conservatism and bodily concerns. Sometimes they are displaced and disillusioned Afrikaners who criticise their roots while staying emotionally deeply attached to them. Their position in the low-grid end while still being on the high-group side is sometimes tricky, because the pull of both the demands of the ‘New South Africa’ and previous loyalties can be contradictory.

Their homes are similar to Stellenbosch middle-class homes, being fashionably decorated, yet with a sense of tradition. For example, the walls can be painted in strikingly bright colours such as orange, yellow and turquoise, or these colours can be used in other decorations, and com-

¹⁸⁸ To my inquiry regarding this often-seen material used as fences, I received the following email from a middle-class South African friend: “The stuff is called vibracrete and it’s a kind of cement mixture - not very strong, when they fall they break! Middle-class SAfricans hate the stuff – very, very indicative of the “lower” classes even if they are “passing” for upper class! This reminds me of my one Dutch cousin who once told me one could tell which class a Dutch person was by the size of his/her shoes’ soles - at least Vibracrete is easier to determine!!!!” (E-mail: 3.9.2002).

bined with inherited vintage furniture. There is a sense of space in their homes, connected to the high status of this group.

Members of this group are mobile, although not as mobile as the *arrivistes* of Group A. They have good computer skills, and access to Internet. They are also consumerists and aware of the latest developments in home electronics. They constantly improve their homes and gardens, change the layout of their homes, buy tiles, paint walls and build fences. Their gardens have *braais*, and they might also boast a water element, even a pool. From the outside, their houses can look very similar to Group C homes, but their yards tend to seem less defended and more open.

Taste as a signifier of social class is a key phrase in this category. They are committed to both the group boundaries and modernity. This interplay of tradition and innovation can also be seen in their homes. Being a proper white with all its embodied signs is self-evident for this group. They would blend in with ease with the middle-class in Stellenbosch.

None of these categories is absolute, and they all consist of various positions and places. These places can even be very close to another category. For example, in Ruyterwacht the few people whom I met from Group D tended to occupy a position very close to Group C. I also met some families who and visited many houses which did not fit exactly into one of the categories; others showed signs of identifying with several, but all the family whom I met could be explained in some of the above terms. They were either close to zero (the centre of the figure), or moving towards one direction. For example, I met some Group B families who emphasised their conservative values and group commitment, but lived from hand to mouth, or on whatever welfare they managed to get and kept their homes badly. They wanted to give the impression of belonging to Group C, with which they largely identified, while they were in fact aspiring members of Group B, playing the game of a good white, since members of Group C would probably not see them as their equals.

In short, while Ruyterwacht is destined to continue its existence between 'proper' racial categories, there are different ways and levels of being there, some of those ways being more acceptable than others. The residents' battle to define and keep the suburb in the most advantageous possible position between racial categories is ongoing. Two seemingly different cases illustrate this and while they have certain similarities, they also illustrate how the racial relations were formed and negotiated in the suburb in the 1990s.

The Hierarchists Revolt: How Ruyterwacht Became (in)Famous

“It was the first incidence of violent racism that I remember in the new South Africa. The picture of these slovenly women and men with oily hair waving their fists in the middle of the day, which shows that they were unemployed, and preventing black children from going to school has been ingrained in every South African mind.” (F., teacher, 46, Stellenbosch.)

The morning of the January 30, 1995 was a shock for many people in Ruyterwacht. Buses rolled in, and inside the buses sat hundreds of African teenagers. The area’s former primary school had been turned into a school for Africans. The change was inefficiently organised by the Western Cape Education Department and the residents of the area were badly informed beforehand. During the first days there was no teaching, no learning material or activities arranged for the 3.800 teenagers who soon filled the streets and gardens of the suburb. (Jung and Seekings 1995: 18.)

After a few days some residents reacted to what they perceived as a threat to their suburb. They began a demonstration and erected barricades around the school building. Soon the police and media arrived. Ruyterwacht earned their 15 minutes of fame in the international media as racist remainders from the apartheid era. The Afrikaner spectacle was on the roll again.

The negotiations between the residents and the education department following this incident were not sufficient to overcome the residents’ suspicions. Despite all the politically correct statements and the later conciliatory attitude of the then community leaders, the community never really accepted the school. In the two first years there were two attempts at arson at the school. More than three years after the incident some of the school’s African pupils told me they were still very afraid to walk through Ruyterwacht. At best people tolerated the African children’s presence, but the residents were clearly relieved when the school moved to Khayelitsha and the Cape Technikon took over its premises in May 1998.

The media concentrated on the adverse part of the riots. This sudden outburst of violence in a seemingly sleepy suburb showed how fear and resentment of the new government had been developing under the surface. The riots can be regarded as the first public declaration of a ‘hidden transcript’ (Scott 1990: 225) which reflected, more than anything else, the subordinate position and racist attitudes of the poor whites. But there was

more to it. The protest also contained elements of a sophisticated identity game played by the residents. In this game, the hierarchist (high group, high grid) tactics were visible.

These elements were less visible than the mythical stereotype of a poor white, which was further emphasised by the newspapers feasting on the middle-class stereotypes of fat and socially incompetent, but *potentially violent* poor whites. In 1995 the new government had ruled only for a year, and the fear of a white right-wing uprising still loomed. The poor whites of Ruyterwacht became a symbol of the racist whites who threatened the young democracy. In condemning their deeds, the rest of the white South Africa could wash their hands. The New South Africa needed to protect its boundaries, and the ones used to this end were, once again, the poor whites.

Within the neighbourhood there are those who believe in the supremacy of whiteness, which makes Whites naturally more deserving than other races. But it is an oversimplification to say that race is the only agenda for the residents, or that they are mere indoctrinated ciphers of right-wing ideology.

One consequence of the incident was the founding of a community forum. Despite claims to the contrary, this forum is not well known in the neighbourhood, and people do not seem very interested in its functions. Those persons calling themselves its leaders are white and Afrikaner, politically well-connected, and usually those who represent the 'people of Ruyterwacht' in the media whenever something happens in the suburb. In reality, few residents agree with their ideas, even if they are aware of what those ideas are.

"Community forum? Sjoe, I would rather call it 'a secret forum'."
(Coloured resident.)

In EGV/Ruyterwacht, community leaders came to the fore in the 1980s. It is hardly a coincidence that they gained influence at the same time that Citizens' Housing League (renamed Communicare in 1991) began to loosen its grip on the residents. Communicare too had to subscribe to the new government's non-racial policy, which, among other things, meant the cutting of resources to poor whites. To many of the disillusioned residents it seemed that Communicare had turned against them. The government's much-awaited Reconstruction and Development Policy, the RDP, was targeted elsewhere, at Africans and coloureds. In the New South Africa there would be no special support for poor whites.

“You see, if you want to live in Ruyterwacht you have to accept Ruyterwacht as it is. You have to get used to it. Communicare has stopped uplifting the place any more. We were also disappointed. The old and new government ignored us. You will find that people in Ruyterwacht are not really very much into politics. Cause we don’t like politics. Actually, we hate the politicians.” (Community leader.)

The new community leaders attempted to fill the power vacuum that occurred. They believed in deserving whiteness, but they are also well connected in the community and appreciated by many of its white members. Most of them are traditional male Afrikaners, and they form the essence of the middle-class Afrikaner community in the suburb. They identify mostly with the hierarchist high grid/high group category C. They are thus not a majority, but they are resourceful and loud. Many of them have a sense of mission in the suburb “to help their people” or “to guide them”.

At the time of the incident, the people who would soon call themselves community leaders, were staunch citizens from Group C. They could command the following of other residents from their ‘own’ group, and those from Group B who wanted to emphasise their bonds with Group C. Thus the representatives from Group C could claim a key position in solving the conflict, and adopt the role of negotiators and mediators between the ‘anarchy’ represented by the poor whites and the legally elected government. This position made them experts and gatekeepers who had access to poor whites.

The local and international newspapers were filled with pictures of residents from Group B. These photos showed fat, unshaven and deranged-looking residents raising their fists and shouting at frightened African children. In the end everyone in Ruyterwacht was negatively stigmatised, no matter what their position in the hierarchy of the suburb – which was, in any case, obscure to the South African public, not to mention the international public. The identity game turned against its initiators.

The treatment of residents in the media shows how easy it was to present a negative picture of all the residents of the suburb just by building on an old stigma. It was equally easy to regard all poor whites as an enraged, irrational mob. The elaborate and constantly transforming power structure of the community remained hidden, and the fact that someone must have organised the protest to some end.

Some things did not fit in the stereotype, and therefore it went largely unnoticed that some of the coloured residents were also resisting the ar-

rival of the African children, or that many coloureds had already lived in relative peace in the suburb for years.

The African school children from the poor area of Khayelitsha were not perceived as a threat only because of their race, but also because they were destitute, and thus, in the eyes of the residents, downgraded the area even further. Had an exclusive school for elite blacks been established in Ruyterwacht, rioting would most probably not have occurred. During my fieldwork most residents either denied having taken part in these events, or condemned the riots altogether. Residents are very aware that the incident labelled them as *the* racists in the new South Africa. The school incident seems to have made the (white) community more self-aware and reactive, and more defensive of what they see as belonging to them.

Soon after the school incident, some of the residents of Ruyterwacht, having obviously discovered the might of the media, and being worried about the worsening housing and economic situation of the poor whites, decided to move to a squatter camp that they erected in the centre of Ruyterwacht. One of the people involved explained that by living there "I wanted to show that white people can also squat".

"What happened was that they said they can also squat, but they had homes you know." (A professional, Ruyterwacht.)

The obvious meaning of this symbolic gesture was to earn sympathy for and attract public attention to the worsening position of poor whites. The squatting was also an act of white resistance to a black government, a message proclaiming: 'Look what you have done to us, you are not doing any good, but are dragging us whites down to the same level as you people!' It was also a message to other whites: 'Look what shameful things THEY have done to us, and you are part of it, since you let it happen.' The identity game was again being played with skill, and the residents achieved massive publicity and this time sympathy too.

This event not only (again) reflected Afrikaner taste for spectacle as McClintock (1995: 368-378) describes it, but was also an act of what E. P. Thompson (1991:74) has termed "counter-theatre" in its purest form, orchestrated by the Group C residents. And again, the press presented the most threatening-looking men and the most overweight women in their photos of the event. But this time, having learned from past mistakes, the organisers knew how to stage their media performance.

Arriviste Tactics: Muslims in the Community

In Ruyterwacht, Muslims are the “acquisitive, aggressive, action-oriented *arrivistes*” (as this Group A is described by Douglas 1996: 69) par excellence. Muslims, tempted by the big plots and cheap prices in the area, continue to move in from Cape Town’s packed Malay Quarter (*Bo-Kaap*) and other areas previously classified as coloured. They are in a peculiar position, since they are not only coloured, but also not Christians. Accepting Muslims in Ruyterwacht has proven difficult for some whites, and the Muslims are very sensitive to this. In order to stabilise their position, they have adapted an accommodating approach that seems least threatening and most beneficial to the community.

In public life they are group-oriented, but in their private lives utter individualists. In the community they play the group card, while their private lives can be as modern as the lives of any other South Africans.

Their tactic is to become a part of the community, showing that they too belong to Ruyterwacht. They are well organised, having established a *madrasa*¹⁸⁹ and their own front organisation, Ruyterwacht Islamic Movement. They also have a taste for spectacle and huge public symbolic gestures. In 1996 they also invited PAGAD¹⁹⁰ to march in Ruyterwacht when the *shebeens*¹⁹¹ founded in private houses seemed to be mushrooming – a gesture that later turned against them when PAGAD began to receive negative publicity as a terrorist organisation.

They arrange events such as sales and children’s parties that are open to everyone, and they take an active role in community work. They foster a strong and continuous presence, a strategy that has, thus far, worked well for them. They are becoming a power to be reckoned with, and their presence in the streets and houses of Ruyterwacht is very visible. Their houses are renovated in the best Group A style, and many Muslims have successful careers in business.

The Muslim community is a vibrant and ambitious sector of Ruyterwacht. Lately they have begun to make efforts to find a plot for a mosque in the area. Some members of the white community have resented these efforts, since a mosque is perceived to be noisy and disturbing. In some

¹⁸⁹ An Islamic school.

¹⁹⁰ PAGAD: People Against Gangsterism And Drugs. A paramilitary Muslim organisation that fights, sometimes by illegal and violent means, the mighty drug-lords and zealous drug-trade in Cape Town’s coloured areas.

¹⁹¹ (Often illegal) bars.

views, a more distressing aspect of the mosque is that it is 'out of place', not really 'belonging' there.

"The church bells disturb me on Sunday mornings, but I am not complaining. They should not complain either." (Fatima, a Muslim resident.)

A mosque redefines and rearranges the margins of the community at a spatial level. If built, it will not be silent and go unnoticed: it will proclaim its existence continuously, five times a day. It would not only symbolise change and adaptation, but for some residents it would also denote humiliation and pollution of the original community. As one of the more pro-Muslim inhabitants pointed out to me, the fact that Ruyterwacht is well known for its loud parties that can go on all night does not change the inhabitants' perceptions of the mosque. Discussions and strong emotions around the issue of a mosque indicate where the vulnerable social and cultural boundaries of the community lie.

Thus the Muslims are not yet regarded as part of the larger community by many whites. Still, most of the non-Muslims with whom I have discussed this, see no harm in their presence and many regard them as beneficial to the community.

Towards the end of my fieldwork the issue of the mosque was still open. In November 2000 the residents drew up a petition to protest the plans to allocate a plot for a mosque in the centre of Ruyterwacht.

Kobus, a white community leader who was involved in the squatting incident, was the first to show me the parallel between the school incident and the perceived Muslim invasion. At first he saw them as connected, and bad.

"If you give Muslims their church then you can also (as well) give the school to blacks. If Muslims get their church, the same thing as with the school will happen. The community will stand against it." (Kobus, 13.11.1998.)

This statement contains a sense of power, and also reveals a degree of organisation behind the school incident. It can be organised. The threat of an anonymous mob, poor whites as a savage beast on a leash held by some community leaders was again used. But many of the people who had taken part in the protest had moved out, and the rest of the residents denied any affiliation with the events in my interviews. In practice, it was

empty talk, a non-functional tactic. Therefore it was no surprise that in the course of the fieldwork it became obvious that Kobus had formed amiable relationships with some coloured people.

After two rape incidents in homes in the area, the community formed a well-organised neighbourhood watch. Muslims played an active part in this mobilisation. This also affected Kobus' attitude towards Muslims, which I witnessed in the course of my fieldwork.

“Muslims are really the people you can talk to. They are committed and sensible. We are on very friendly terms: how could anybody ever claim that we are racists here? We work together like a family.” (Kobus, 13.8.1999.)

The fact that the Muslims form competition for the whites could partly explain the initial resistance to them. They are ambitious and often run small businesses similar to those of the whites in the area. If a mosque is established in the area, it will attract even more Muslims, who will then perhaps become a majority. In my fieldwork I sensed that the different groups in the community are exploring one another at present. The official alliances have thus far only been against the common enemy, crime, rather than unity in any 'positive' sense.

The white hard-core group is not only shrinking in number and conviction, those who remain are not even unanimous in their opposition against Muslims. Even though it seems that some of the residents see the arrival of Muslims as a culturally alien invasion, there is very little they can do to reverse the course of events.

For the white residents it is crucial to develop new solutions and alliances. Affluent whites can still fortify themselves in distant suburbs, behind security gates and razor wire. Many Ruyterwacht residents cannot afford isolation. They have to find other ways of dealing with the changes, of drawing and redrawing the boundaries of their community.

In their attempts to gain real political influence in the suburb, the arrivistes of Group A are more similar to the hierarchists of Group C than a first look reveals, since both groups accept authority, leadership and domination (Douglas 1996: 46). In Ruyterwacht, the hierarchists and arrivistes embrace one another across racial lines, perhaps reluctantly at times, but knowing full well it is the only choice for both groups if they wish to keep their suburb secure.

CONTESTED IDENTITIES AND POWER

In the past, the best of those who played the game and knew the appropriate tactics of the social construction of whiteness ended up being the winners. Today, new insecurities have emerged, and many people in Ruyterwacht feel abandoned and afraid. Having been brought up in a world where certain behaviour was fostered, and certain values were sure to make you respectable, they feel lost.

“I am poor, but because I am poor it is not to say I must be dirty and filthy...or that I must swear and I must smoke dagga...God or factories give us cleaning things and I have one panty, one dress, one pair of shoes, but they are clean! Some people say life hits them down and they can't get up. The government can help us. If Mandela and his ministers and the Lord is with them, they will lift the people up and get someone to clean up...but they dump stuff in our places, coloureds dump their garbage in our place. They do not care about us any more. Old people are oxygen thieves. We are worth nothing to the community so we must die.” (Tannie V., 62.)

The loss of power meant a concrete loss of resources. The poor whites no longer enjoy the full benefits of whiteness. Instead, they have become even lower-class citizens than before. This has left some people feeling disillusioned and marginalized.

Many old people are urged to leave by their children. They do not want to. This is home, and here they still receive considerable support from their social networks, churches and social workers.

Being white has not lost its value completely, and whiteness can still earn a living. White beggars are clearly the most successful ones, and more readily helped and supported by other whites. Despite the shame and embarrassment of being a poor white, this line of thought conceptualises whites as still being more human, more deserving than the poor of colour.

“I do not know why, but I feel this strange guilt when I see a white beggar, and, yes, I do hand out money and things for them, but if it is a non-white beggar for me it is much easier just to ignore them.” (S., 35, executive, Stellenbosch.)

The End of the Upliftment as We Knew It: Economic (dis)Empowerment

“I think they (the residents of Ruyterwacht) are not go-getters in the sense that they go, but they don’t get so they don’t go anymore.” (A professional, Ruyterwacht.)

The 1994 election had a direct influence on the social work. After the election the social workers were transferred “to areas where the poorest of the poor are housed” (Ieder en Elk 1994). Ruyterwacht lost three of its five social workers, and the residents were suddenly faced with the reality of making appointments instead of just walking into the office. This also ended the house visits.

For the poorest of whites who stayed on in the area, the changes have been bad news. They are facing an increasing struggle for resources and social benefits.¹⁹² The tactics of the poor are being rediscovered as the families pool their economic resources.

Signs of the new economic empowerment and of a simultaneous disempowerment can be detected. New and sometimes unexpected ways of earning a living, or supporting the meagre main income, have emerged. Men repair cars in their free time. Housebound women are taking on petty manual work, such as typing, sewing and decoration making.

The residents claim that white prostitution has been on the increase since the beginning of the 1990s. Prostitution flourishes on the nearby Voortrekker Road.

One of the clearest signs of people trying to find new means of living is the emergence of small businesses. In just a few years (after 1990) multiple house shops, repair and renovation services and agencies have emerged in the area. Some house shops have been accused of illegally trading in alcohol and even drugs. This has led to many problems between the community and the owners of these shops. On the 24th of October 1996, when the Muslims invited PAGAD to march to those house

¹⁹² According to the 1996 census most whites in Ruyterwacht still had a relatively low education, low income and they mostly held lower middle-class and working-class jobs (see table 2 in Appendix 3). An approximate 30 per cent of those white residents over 15 had reported no income (while presumably a portion of them were wives supported by their husbands) and another 30 per cent had reported an income of less than 1,000 Rand a month.

shops that they suspected of such enterprises, this ceased for a while, but was soon resumed.

Social workers make attempts to make life more hopeful for the poorest residents. The seniors play lotto in the church hall, where they can win canned food and even coffee. Social workers sell clothes in a shop playfully called Cee-cee's (as in *Communicare's*), which is actually a distribution point for donated clothes. Trusted members of the community hand out outdated groceries donated by Woolworth's.

The senior club that used to go to theatres or concerts, had wine and cheese evenings and Christmas dinners in hotels, has also experienced change. Now it concentrates on offering cheap food, and playing games. At present there are still clubs for ladies and seniors, and churches run youth clubs, but in addition to the lack of funds, these attempts lack the zeal of the previous efforts.

The housewives who lived on child grants and maintenance grants are the true losers of the new South Africa. Previously they were deprived of any chance to empower themselves, and they were only expected to raise their children. A passive attitude towards the management of one's own life was seen as almost a virtue. The only way left was to remain within the social welfare system. Their existence still raises contemptuous comments.

"There they were, those women, receiving the money and sitting in the sun." (A professional, Ruyterwacht.)

Currently these women are facing a situation in which the state no longer supports them. The state maintenance grant, which can be as much as five hundred Rand a month, is being phased out as this thesis is being written. Many of these women are approaching middle age and have no occupational skills.

The government's attempts to replace the child maintenance grants with 'empowering projects' in which people learn to help themselves, have not been successful thus far. The reasons for this lie not so much in the people's inability than in the government's inability to provide funding for these projects. Some women are trying to learn skills that they could use to find employment. In many ways they are still in a better position than the poor women of colour on the Cape Flats who often do not know how to read or use electric appliances.

However, the symbolic value of being a housewife is tremendous, and definitely adds to the resistance to giving it up for paid labour. By staying

at home, it is possible to show your commitment to the hierarchist Group C values, and thus delay your slide towards the left end of category B.

The ideal for many South African women is still to stay at home and raise their children themselves. It is often considered a privilege, and something that many professional women in Stellenbosch dream of as well. Staying home with your family means a good life and respect. The older ladies in the Ruyterwacht community most often thanked Communicare for giving them the opportunity to do so. Motherhood is still described as a sacred mission.

“...I said . . . I am not a woman for buying clothes...so my children goes hungry, I will sacrifice everything for them . . . I was very grateful for what they did. They put me into this house . . . I am a mother and I like to call myself a mother because I have always done what my mother did for us. And I wanted to live better to give the children better.” (F., 85)

Some women in Ruyterwacht still see submissiveness as their best strategy. They have not left the fortresses of White South Africa, and they defend the traditional values from behind their husbands’ backs. They have internalised their compliant role, or they are simply realistic about their chances in a hardening economic situation. They may fear the possibility of losing the acceptance and protection of their husbands.¹⁹³ However, the women from the aspiring Group A tend to be particularly resourceful, and strive to find more active roles in the community.

In my fieldwork I found that there are also power struggles amongst the women, particularly between women from different categories, and a lot of repressed anger about their long disempowerment. Alliances of women take place across racial lines, but rarely over class or group lines.

“I still believe that the Afrikaners stand together here. The English and the coloureds are more . . . that is why Liz and I get along like a house on fire.” (A., 27, a coloured resident on her white English-speaking friend, Group A.)

All these women, however, have to define themselves against the patriarchal background of the area. It is not a simple process, and not all women participate. As Russell (1997: 12) notes, the patriarchal character

¹⁹³ For more thoughts on the issue of domesticated females, see Dworkin 1983.

of South African society is still widely overlooked. She sees a connection between Afrikaner men's authoritarian racism in the public domain and their authoritarian sexism in the private domain (Russell 1997: 165). This link is an integral part in the process of the embodiment of a good white, and I found it equally prevailing in the poor whites of Ruyterwacht and in the middle-class whites of Stellenbosch.

Social Relations: Protected Identities and the Representation of Self

In the 1990s the CHL still tried to influence the residents' leisure. The popular South African demon, TV, was now blamed for the residents' passivity and inability to manage their own lives (Nixon 1994: 43-76).

*“TRAGIC CHOICE. On the table side by side;
the Holy Bible and the TV guide.
One is well worn, but cherished with pride,
not the Bible, but the TV guide.
One is used daily to help folk decide.
No! it isn't the Bible, it's the TV guide.
As pages are turned, what shall we see?
Oh, what does it matter, turn on the TV.
Then confusion reigns, they can't all agree
on what they shall watch on the old TV
so they open the book in which they confide
No! not the Bible, it's the TV guide.
The Word of God is seldom read,
maybe a verse before going to bed
exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be,
not from reading the Bible – from watching TV.
So then back to the table, side by side
is the Holy Bible and the TV guide.
No time for prayer, no time for the Word;
the plan for salvation is seldom heard:
Forgiveness of sin so full and free,
love, joy, peace and goodness are found in the Bible and not on TV!!”*
(Ieder en Elk: Dec. 1991.)

The social work has changed, and the children are no longer easily institutionalised. Certain aspects of sexuality, such as living together out of wedlock, have become private again. Families have to solve their lesser problems themselves.

The embodied taste is still a tool in the establishment and maintenance of social distinctions, and in the symbolic ordering of the social space. Lack of personal hygiene came across as the strongest indicator of a low status, and the most definite sign of belonging to the group of the bottom-dwellers. Shorts, *plakkies* and bare feet are still seen as common, whereas real shoes, lipstick and pantyhose are signs of civilisation. Cleanliness is still regarded as important.

“How can a person go to bed without bathing?... But it seems to me its like a virus... I'll make a big hot bath and chase them in there everyday (laughing). There is this man here, and for seven years now I have been looking at him and wanted to bath him.” (F., 60 years, 10 years in Ruyterwacht.)

The dream of upliftment, and better times is still alive, and internalised to a great degree. Some residents have reconstructed their life histories in the process of rehabilitation, and some of them have become part of the controlling, conservative forces in the area.

The hierarchy in the community was and still is constantly changing, and the power relations between the residents are strained. This process of establishing a hierarchy is defined by the residents' own politics of inclusion and exclusion. When the CHL's agenda grew weaker, and the social workers gave up controlling and ruling the residents' lives, these controlling elements were not only taken over by other professionals, but also by some of the residents of Group C, who took it on themselves to continue the mission of rehabilitation.

Although the 1990s were the era of symbolic gestures of resistance at the level of identities, and a relaxation of morality and its guardians, the old, internalised ideals are still strong. On one hand, people still recast the humiliation of personal poverty by being honourable, emphasising those parts of whiteness that they possess: upward mobility, appearance, cleanliness, values, and honour.

“If I was a car I would be a Mercedes-Benz, for it is a smart car.” (F., 76.)

On the other hand, since nobody controls the residents' private lives any longer, there is less pressure on them to exert tactics, which aims to show how well they fit within the framework of a middle-class white. A return to the practical problems of everyday survival is inevitable.

The identities of the residents are challenged and contested, while the ideas of race, class and gender are changing. This makes the remaining social network of those identifying with Group C tighter than before. Identities are protected from outsiders and nurtured within the community. The positive side of the social relations is emphasised, and the mutual support networks were presented to me as strong and vital.

The positive side of belonging to the community is manifested in public situations where the residents readily declare love for and solidarity with one another. In the services of the Dutch Reformed Church (the White church, all its members come from Groups C and B) this becomes very transparent when parishioners are congratulated on their birthdays and then hugged and kissed. This was quite different from the services that I attended in Stellenbosch, where people were only given birthday cards.

In the interviews, the senior lady residents talk about the tea parties they arrange for one another, and of times of sharing when money or food is scarce.

"P. and I. are both over 70. They have very little money to get by with, and they often run out of money before the next pension day. Still, they merrily assure me they do not worry about money, because they have one another. They have such a lot of fun. They sing songs, write little stories and tell jokes to one another." (Author's field notes.)

I am constantly told that many elderly people are helped by their neighbours in numerous ways. Some of the seniors are almost emblematic to the community. They are highly respected and widely appreciated for their honourable lives and their ability to endure difficulties. Highly idealised stories and images of support, and extended mutual help continuously emerged. But support and warmth also have their negative side. Suspicion towards outsiders and protection of one's privacy are integral parts of the life in Ruyterwacht.

In my fieldwork I identified three aspects of this protection that were connected to the identity games and tactics that I described in chapters six and seven. *Firstly* there is the ideal of keeping to one's own.

“I do not bother myself with them.” (F., 70.)

At the start of my fieldwork I found it peculiar that many of the senior (Group C and those from Group B identifying with C) ladies whom I interviewed proclaimed most emphatically that they never visited other people, and that they only minded their own business. People either proclaimed their uninvolvedness with other residents in general, or proclaimed that they were part of a small group of friends with no ties to others (these statements I soon found to be exaggerated).

Social distance could be expressed and maintained in multiple ways. It could be communicated in speech or gestures, expressed in the middle-class ideals of privacy, and culminating in the ideal of ‘keeping to one’s own’. This meant restricting one’s behaviour in speech, action and time, and thus presenting proper *disinterestedness* in the matters of the suburb.

As the upliftment of the people had originally meant living under the pressure of constant surveillance, everyone had a strictly defined part in this game of whiteness, and everybody had to learn how to play. Ruyterwacht residents played that game with me as well when middle-class aspirations and identification affected the ways in which some of them presented themselves to me, presenting a commitment to Group C values.

Some narratives of the past emphasised the virtues of isolation, not only from the surrounding poor white community, but also from the welfare system. It was better to survive without welfare, manage on one’s own rather than ask for help. Women had to balance the demands to look and act as middle-class as possible with the reality of sustaining their families on meagre earnings.

“Our father was a strict man. When I was a child we were so poor we only had one pair of shoes each, but he insisted we do not go to the welfare. We were ten children. He did not even let our mother buy cheap groceries from the Company (CHL) shop,¹⁹⁴ so Mommy had to go to Shoprite¹⁹⁵ and buy a little piece of cheese. Then she would go to the company shop and buy a big piece that would be enough for us all. Then she would take the wrapper from the Shoprite cheese and wrap

¹⁹⁴ From the 1950s to 1970s the CHL also ran a shop to sell subsidised groceries in the suburb.

¹⁹⁵ A ‘proper’ shop that the middle-class uses.

the welfare cheeses in that, and put it on the table. It was ridiculous, but everybody was happy." (F., 50, grew up in Ruyterwacht.)

In the past, those neighbours who were regarded as too common were avoided. Ideally it meant women stayed at home and worked for the family, did not visit one another all day, since only the lowest class of poor whites were perceived as spending their days drinking tea and munching *beskuit*¹⁹⁶ in one another's kitchens.

Currently, making a distinction and creating a good public face in the community means careful impression management. When resources are scarce they must be enhanced with imagination. Thus 'keeping to one's own' also means distinctions in manner of speaking, dressing and expressing oneself. Spatial order becomes important, for example the most valued places in the church are the front benches where you can be seen well, and where those who want to be seen, sit.

The tendency to isolate the self from the unwanted and strange is still strong. When something or someone potentially harmful, e.g., the school incident or Muslims were discussed, the residents solemnly declared their social distance from these. In practice the social distances are far shorter than those in the white middle-class areas, where fences and the prices of housing keep other races at a convenient distance.

The *second* aspect of protection of privacy that was mentioned as a reason for restrained social relations is the fear of gossip. Gossiping is a practice that opposes and is the opposite of a good public image and a proper white identity. Those who want to excel at being good whites do not *skinder* (gossip), or unnecessarily involve others in their problems. People, mostly women, who have plenty of time to socialise, are blamed for gossiping. Previously gossip had been a weapon used to the advantage of those residents who had exploited the Company's desire to master their lives.

"When you grew up in Ruyterwacht, you learned not to trust anyone."
(F., 52.)

Gossip played an important part in the neighbourhood struggles and social relations. Knowledge of neighbours' whereabouts was a concrete form of power that made and still makes the ideal of keeping to oneself

¹⁹⁶ Rusks.

understandable. As shown earlier, many families chose to keep the interaction with their neighbours to a minimum in order to keep malicious gossip under control, often also restricting their children's contact with the surrounding community. The threat of being labelled an outcast was almost always there.

Gossip is and was a tool of continuous hierarchical ordering of people and families. This hierarchy can be seen clearly in the relations of the group of residents who has lived there the longest. Coalitions and cliques are formed, and those who have most effectively internalised a middle-class lifestyle form the local elite. The model of an ideal citizen was originally imposed from above, and was reflected in the relationships inside the community as well.

The *third* aspect of the protection of privacy is the use and practice of space, which also reflect the protection of identity. This does not only refer to the fact that those who can afford it have dogs, guns and burglar alarms. People protect their personal spaces and identities, and there are rules to obey in doing so.

As seen above, one was and is not supposed to spend too much time in other people's homes drinking tea or *kuiering* (visiting), since this is seen as part of the passive poor white lifestyle, leading to gossip. It is also not good to be outside on the streets of the area much. Staying at home is an ideal that repeatedly emerges in my interviews. It was often explained in terms of safety: streets are considered dangerous, especially after dark. This is a trend that has become more prevalent during the last five years.

The informants would emphasise that they never wanted to move out a lot, not even previously, when it was still considered safe. This was particularly important for women. A wife with too much free time was a sign of her neglect of her husband and/or her children, or even of her being lead astray morally. Streets were places for prostitutes and coloureds. During my fieldwork I often came across people who ran different kinds of businesses on the streets, or who begged. Sometimes the goods being traded were illegally acquired, or were from the food parcels donated by charity. Sometimes they were just goods that were not very desirable. People who do this are considered the lowest social caste of Ruyterwacht. They are perceived as having lost all their pride and as being only very little above *bergies*, as homeless alcoholics are referred to. In Figure 1 they would be on the extreme left in Group B. Staying out of the streets is thus an effective way for women to exhibit a social distance from many unpleasant statuses.

Also the narratives around space were telling. Feelings of fear reveal

themselves in the stories told and the hate-speech of the area. Men tell typical stories of violence and self-defence in the suburb. Women's stories are full of warnings. They constantly warn one another and me: do not go outside when it's dark, do not go there, and do not do this. They relate how they were attacked, what property was lost, what physical and psychological damage was done to them or their friends. They feel vulnerable and see themselves as victims or potential victims, whereas men take on a more active role.

DIFFUSED AND RE-FORMING CATEGORIES

While Ruyterwacht is still labelled in the popular South African imagination as the home of white racism, the public is unaware of its multiculturalism and its subtly complex racial relations.

In the 1990s the social control in the suburb that protected the category White was no longer an official concern. The dissolution of the previous racial categories and the emergence of new coloured residents have changed the suburb. Increasing social complexity and a diversity of opinions, ideas and positions characterise Ruyterwacht after apartheid. Variables such as class, culture, gender, even generation, seem to bind people together and to undermine the old discourses of race and ethnocentrism.

The perseverance of the previous South African ideal of whiteness is visible in the white middle-class's commitment to White values and bodily ideals. Although some of them admit their coloured roots, no mass exodus from whiteness has taken place.

For many Ruyterwachters too the real community still means White Christians unified by their common past, class, colour and cultural views. But the idea of community is malleable. In practice, cultural and political views and economic factors seem to be increasingly important. Competition for scarce resources and the insecurities of the present South African society seem to be contributing much more to the racial relations than mere 'irrational racism'.

While the image of a good white still prevails, the social scene is more diverse, and new categories have emerged in the suburb. The previous ideal, the high group/high grid category (now Group C), is no longer an uncontested winning strategy, while the Group A *arrivistes*, young and aspiring and (mostly) coloured families are making Ruyterwacht more middle-class. They do not only bring in more economic capital, but import different forms of symbolic capital as well. The previously uniform

and regulated Ruyterwacht homes are now characterised by variation and distinction, which – as I have demonstrated – are dictated by their own cultural logic.

But even though Ruyterwacht's old and new residents share the physical *space*, they still do not share the *place as an experience*. People do approach one another as individuals, but the separateness of experiences is evident. Ruyterwacht is still a different area for Muslims and Christians, Whites and Coloureds, middle-class and poor respectively. The previous community has mostly disappeared and become a new one with more layers and more signs of hybridity, but the remnants of the old, racial order are there. The suburb is still squeezed between spatial and social categories, and the surrounding social conditions are even more extremely contradictory than before. The embodied order might contain more variation now, but essentialist thinking and the signs of a good white habitus have not disappeared, while the people using these signs have changed, and they are used differently.

The identity building in the suburb has gone through an upheaval. Instead of the professionals managing it, the residents themselves are taking care of it. The games of whiteness are still being cleverly played but the players are now not only White. The residents tactically use the same means that were previously part of the strategy of the apartheid regime: embodiment, identity games and spatially laid out spectacles (such as squatting in the centre of the suburb and demonstrating at the school or at the shebeens).

In Ruyterwacht, the heavy and impractical nitty-gritty of racial differentiation was dropped as soon as the apartheid regime's forced effort to unite symbolic and concrete boundaries ended. This does not mean that these attempts were fruitless, since in today's South Africa a pale skin and straight hair have not lost their symbolic value. The signs of a good white habitus have become permanent features in the symbolic hierarchies and in the maintenance of the social boundaries. And once again, when not being supported by a set of forcibly imposed rules, the racial categories seem almost natural.

9. CONCLUSION: A CATEGORY AND ITS BOUNDARIES

This thesis has demonstrated that the poor whites were and still are a socially constructed category between the racial categories White and Coloured. It has analysed the historical periods during which spatial and bodily arrangements were used in a variety of ways to create the category White.

In twentieth century South Africa racial boundaries frequently equalled spatial boundaries. And from the very start the symbolic and moral boundaries were conflated with ideas of race and class. This study has shown where the symbolic boundaries of the category White were drawn, and how they were manifested in the social field in Epping Garden Village.

The process of curing what was at first regarded as a weakness in the social body began in the early twentieth century when the category White became a political concern. The process of upliftment was set in motion to build a strong, unambiguous category White, which needed strong boundaries within and without. Those boundaries were manifested in urban spaces and in social bodies. Social and bodily control grew stronger concurrently, with concerns regarding bodies symbolising and reflecting concerns regarding the margins of this category.

The South African White experience was built with the embodied presentations of the 'civilised' self and expressions of a sense of racial self-worth and pride. Habitus and taste became markers of moral and class boundaries. Personal hygiene and cleanliness, neat gardens and ordered spaces connected the poor whites and their suburb with 'civilisation' and the traditions of the Western world. This process of hierarchical ordering and exclusion defined a person's direction, whether up or down, on the ladder of whiteness.

However, the racial justifications for this upliftment and ordering were contested and ambivalent from the start. This process also produced inadvertent cultural forms both inside and outside the poor white areas.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Before the era of large-scale political involvement in the category White, it was flexible and pragmatic, which also made it more credible. This was lost. Category White, which was only supposed to produce good whites, produced countless anomalies. Previously the category poor white had been included, if painfully, within the category White, but now it was pushed to the margins, if not excluded. The marginalisation also applied to those places where the poor whites resided.

The external society stigmatised poor whites and, as is often the case with social anomalies, overloaded their existence with ambiguity and paradox. For the mainstream white cultures in South Africa those labelled poor whites were the Other. While the poor whites formed a social boundary that protected the white Self from the Other, they were also considered a part of that Self. They were inside the category White, and outside of it. It is therefore logical that the implementation of the ideals of whiteness took on particularly suffocating and controlling forms within the poor white community.

The position of those labelled poor whites in South African social categories was, and still is, anomalous and sensitive. Their position between Whites and Coloureds made them a racial buffer zone, a margin, and thus particularly vulnerable to pollution. Theirs was the ungrateful task of marking the boundaries of white society. Their position's degree of anomaly thus changed with the ways that the mainstream society drew its symbolic boundaries.

Inside the suburb the residents of Epping Garden Village kept a continuous struggle for prestige going. Different elements of embodiment, habitus and urban space as well as family values and gender roles were used as tokens in this competition, as demonstrated in the empirical chapters of this study. The attempts to become good whites bred both competition and institutionalisation. When even the poorest of whites lived in well-kept areas, a White identity became self-evidently connected to ample living spaces and a higher social status. Whites *had* to have a house in certain suburbs, and they *had* to live in a certain way.

In an environment of constant racial mixing, apartheid's social engineers' task was strenuous. For decades they upheld the cultural categories and boundaries, kept the poor whites in their place in the cultural mosaic, dangled the margins of whiteness in front of them as one would a carrot before a donkey, and saw to it that they did not stray from the right path. But some failed in the task set before them, and today's white, middle-

class South Africans are still embarrassed by their existence. The image of a poor white still shows the white, *ordentlike*¹⁹⁷ Afrikaner middle-class the boundaries of their identity.

The experienced worlds of the social workers and the residents reflected each other, and were mutually dependent. While the residents, in the purest de Certeau sense, constantly used tactics, the social workers too had to do so at times (for example, when the question of pass-whites surfaced in EGV). In the end, both groups had to cope with the demands of the outside world, which set the standards for those who wanted to be included in the category White.

The failure to build a pure and credible category White was at its most visible in EGV, where the true boundaries of whiteness were sited. Before apartheid, an individual's failure to understand the location of a racial category's symbolic boundaries caused a fall from this category, but with the onset of apartheid the symbolic and concrete boundaries of the category White had to be united. However, there were still too many people outside those symbolic boundaries, and no amount of trimming of their habitus, or increase in their cultural or economic capital could change this.

The strategy of the apartheid regime aimed at creating a fixed and flawless social order by means of engineering a social structure. However, a structure is always only an idea, which can never be fully compatible with reality and experience. The South African racially based system produced many anomalies because it had to reject a multitude of elements from its social categories. In the end, those categories could not endure the social changes and the increasing weight of the anomalies that they generated. They lost their credibility, collapsed and were redistributed.

The account of the category White in EGV/Ruyterwacht thus demonstrates the eternal interplay of the forces of structure and agency, as well as the ephemeral, ever-changing essence of identity as an articulated and temporary point of 'suture'.¹⁹⁸ The strategies imposed from above and the tactics adapted by the residents defined the transformation of a White identity – which had little stability, or a primordial 'essence', despite the social engineers' claims to the contrary.

¹⁹⁷ Decent, reasonable, ordinary.

¹⁹⁸ The expression 'suture' in this connotation is used following Stuart Hall (1999: 22).

REDISTRIBUTION?

At the end of the apartheid era this 'conceptual confusion' or the collapsing systemic boundaries altered the previous racial categories. Today the category White has been entirely reshaped in Ruyterwacht, demonstrating how fragile it has always been. The rapidity of the change and the suburb's history are indicative of the White residents' historically ambiguous racial identities. The contestations over and renegotiations of the boundaries of category White have manifested most visibly in urban spaces, which reflect general cultural changes, and also changes in the symbolic categories.

The embodied ideals of a good white still prevail, but those transgressing against them are no longer officially punished. Despite the evaporation of official control, in and around Ruyterwacht one frequently comes across the language of otherness, which combines images of dirt, body and race, and the stigma that stuck to the poor whites from early on. Through ideals such as 'keeping to oneself' and 'minding one's own business', the residents keep their symbolic and concrete boundaries in tact.

This study has shown that the identity games of whiteness continue, and that the boundaries are still being drawn. The residents make tactical choices and use the suburban spaces for their own ends, aiming to influence the strategies imposed from above. While these strategies are now far less draconian and more indifferent, new residents are also drawn into the net of power relations that still exist in the suburb, and their lives are shaped by the contours of the category White.

This claim can, to a degree, be extended to historically disadvantaged South Africans who can now aspire to live in this world that they had for so long only known from the outside. It is a different world than it used to be: vast social changes and the arrival of global capital and business in South Africa have already taken care of that. Nevertheless, both the White areas in general and the previously poor white suburbs will still be profoundly organised and influenced by the former social categories and the ideals of the category White.

The recent changes do not render the study of poor whites less valuable. It continues to contribute to an understanding of racial and social boundaries and conceptual categories that can never be understood too well or studied too closely in a complex and constantly evolving society such as South Africa. When studying racial essentialism and racial categories, or whites and whiteness in South Africa, it is necessary to take the existence of those known as the poor whites into account.

APPENDIX 1: TERMINOLOGY

Afrikanerdom. Afrikaner ethnicity

Armlankes. Poor whites

Armlanke-vraagstuk. Poor white problem

Apartheid. Lit. 'separate-ness', state discriminatory racial policy between 1948 and 1994

Broederbond. Lit. 'the alliance of brothers', a secret Afrikaner organization, founded by Stellenbosch intellectuals in the early 20th century

Bywoner. A landless white tenant, a sharecropper on a farm

Die taal, die moedertaal. 'The language', meaning Afrikaans

Die rooi gevaar. Lit. 'red threat', fear of communism

Die Roomse gevaar. Lit. 'Roman threat', fear of the Catholic church's influence

Die Swart gevaar. Lit. 'black threat', fear of Africans

Dominee. Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church

Domineesvrou. The *dominee's* wife, who also had many important duties in the parish and in the community

Hokkie. A small hut, but when used in the context of animals, a small cage

Hotnot. A pejorative name for a coloured person derived from the word Hottentot

Huisbesoeke. Home visits, a popular method of rehabilitation of the poor used by the ACVV. One of the *dominee's* duties is also to do *huisbesoeke*

Inkruiper. A treacherous interloper who manages to gain one's trust and then turns against one

Kaffir. A pejorative name for an African (black) person

Kuisheid. A woman's chastity (*kuis*: chaste, pure, and virtuous)

Kombuistaal. Lit. 'kitchen language', a pejorative name for Afrikaans used during the first half of the 20th century and thereafter used to rally Afrikaans-speakers to the cause of the *taal*

Ons eie. Lit. 'our own', meaning Afrikaners and everything that is seen typical of and essential to them. Can also be used for prominent or famous Afrikaners, e.g. '*Ons eie Hansie Cronje*'

Opheffing. Upliftment. To 'uplift' (used as either a noun or verb) was an alternative for the expression 'rehabilitation'. It originates from the Afrikaans word *opheffing* (to lift up)

Ordentlik. Respectable, ordinary

Ossewa. An oxwagon, the legendary vehicle of the Voortrekkers

Ossewa Brandwag. Lit. the oxwagon sentinel

Plakkies. Rubber sandals, beach thongs

Platteland. Rural areas

Pondokkie. A hut, see *hokkie*

Reddingsdaadbond. The RDB (Rescue Action Society) strove to awake mass Afrikaner consciousness regarding economic issues, centralise the savings of the Afrikaners in Afrikaner financial institutions and to convert the Afrikaners to support Afrikaner traders

Skinder. To gossip

Skollie. A (white) petty criminal and hooligan

Tweede Trek. Second trek or centenary, also Eeufees

Verligte. Enlightened, liberal Afrikaner

Verkrampte. Conservative Afrikaners

Volk. 'The people', refers to Afrikaners. Also Boerevolk. But also used (often in the diminutive *volgies*) to refer collectively to coloured or black farm workers to distinguish them from the white owners

Volkskongres. The National Conference (in the 1930s)

Volkseenheid. Afrikaner National unity, transcended class or regional (North-South) differences

Volksmoeder. The myth of a good Afrikaner woman, the sentinel of the *volk*'s honour and purity

Voortrekker. Those Afrikaner pioneers who travelled north, away from the British influence during the 1830s

Ware. True, real, bona fide. "'n Ware Afrikaner"

PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

Arm is niks, maar vuil! "Being poor is no shame, but there's no excuse for being dirty!"

Watter mors van 'n wit vel! "What a waste of a white skin!"

Jy raak wit! "You are pushing it! You are trying to exceed your authority!" (Literally: you are becoming white)

Suip soos 'n kleurling onderwyser. "As drunk as a coloured teacher"

Ware Afrikaner. "A real, true Afrikaner"

'n Boer maak 'n plan. Lit. "an Afrikaner makes a plan", but currently used in the sense of 'let's make a plan'.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACVV. *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereeniging*, Afrikaans social work organisation.

CHL. *Citizens' Housing League Utility Company*, later Citizens' Housing League and Communicare.

CMR. *Christelike Maatskaplike Raad*, the Dutch Reformed Church's social work council.

DRC. Dutch Reformed Church.

FAK. *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings*, (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations), was an umbrella organisation that was, in fact, a façade for the Broederbond.

NGkerk. *Nederduitse Gereformeerde kerk* (Dutch Reformed Church).

SANLAM. *Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Lewensassuransiematskappy*, South African National Life Assurance Company.

SANTAM. *Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Trust- en Assuransiematskappy*, South African National Trust and Assurance Company.

APPENDIX 2: EGV IN 1940



Picture 4: In the 1940s pine trees flanked the wide promenades of Epping Garden Village.



Picture 5: Houses were spacious and modern.
(Source: Bosman 1941)

RUYTERWACHT IN 1997–2001



Picture 6: Spaciousness is still a characteristic of Ruyterwacht.



Picture 7: Old houses are currently being completely rebuilt.
Photographs 6 and 7 Annika Teppo.

APPENDIX 3: TABLES

Occupations	whites	% of total	% of total in SA
Middle-class	224	19,1	50
Lower middle-class	498	42,5	29
Working-class	449	38,3	15
TOTAL	1171		

Table 2. Occupational structure of whites in Ruyterwacht and in South Africa (Source: Statistics South Africa 1996 Population Census)

Occupations	coloureds	% of total	% of total in SA
Middle-class	103	26,7	15
Lower middle-class	114	29,6	19
Working-class	168	43,6	65
TOTAL	385		

Table 3. Occupational structure of coloureds in Ruyterwacht and in South Africa (Source: Statistics South Africa 1996 Population Census)

The census used the following occupational divisions:

1. Legislators, senior officers and managers
2. Professionals
3. Technicians and associate professionals
4. Clerks
5. Service, shop and market sales
6. Craft and related trades workers
7. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers
8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers
9. Elementary occupations
10. Other/Not stated

Divisions 1-3 include middle class occupations, 4 and 5 to lower middle class occupations and 6-9 working class occupations (see Broadbridge 2001: 201).

CODES/PRIMARY DOCUMENTS*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Totals
*Appearance and taste CO-OCCUR female role	8	10	24	11	0	4	13	1	0	71
*Deviance & Sexuality	2	6	21	16	1	21	8	2	0	77
*Female role & Relation to work	12	15	25	10	3	14	5	2	0	86
*Home visits & Statistics	5	15	13	5	0	0	4	0	0	42
*Institutions & Parenthood	0	18	11	5	1	13	5	1	0	54
*Male role & Relation to work	5	8	17	9	1	45	17	3	0	105
*Marital relations & Space-exclusion	0	1	3	0	4	15	3	3	0	29
*Marital relations & Space use of	0	1	16	8	0	3	2	1	0	31
*Parenthood & Professional co-operation	1	12	14	1	1	9	2	0	0	40
*Race & Space-exclusion	3	4	0	0	7	10	1	0	0	25
*Whiteness CO-OCCUR Social relations	8	18	43	39	7	22	9	6	1	153
Appearance and taste	15	18	38	30	2	13	116	3	1	236
Behaviour (religious)	1	6	8	4	2	11	37	1	4	74
Cleanliness, control of	9	12	4	5	0	5	1	1	0	37
Contempt	16	3	5	8	2	5	3	0	0	42
Crime	0	3	4	2	1	18	4	2	3	37
Deviance	13	22	44	36	10	52	17	3	0	197
Discussions and persuasion	9	12	13	14	2	21	13	5	0	89
Family relations	7	10	21	8	2	24	19	3	1	95
Female role	25	35	80	43	12	47	28	4	1	275
Good quotes	0	1	2	3	0	3	0	0	0	9
Home visits	20	20	20	9	4	7	5	0	0	85
Illness	2	6	12	16	7	17	0	0	0	60
Institutions	4	29	21	13	8	50	11	4	0	140
Liquor	1	9	23	31	8	31	20	7	2	132
Male role	10	16	33	24	7	51	22	4	0	167
Marital relations	2	8	37	21	7	35	18	6	0	134
Methods of control	9	5	9	5	10	15	2	0	0	55
Miscellaneous	3	1	2	1	0	2	1	2	0	12
Parenthood	7	30	34	12	3	41	21	3	2	153
Pass-whites	9	13	11	6	1	1	1	0	0	42
Professional co-operation	21	46	49	27	19	40	9	5	0	216
Professionalism	3	8	13	13	20	32	9	13	3	114
Race	9	15	11	5	9	20	2	2	0	73
Relation to work	22	19	34	19	4	56	20	3	2	179
Resident activity	0	4	6	2	6	5	1	10	2	36

CODES/PRIMARY DOCUMENTS*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Totals
Resistance	3	2	6	12	4	6	1	3	1	38
Resources	2	9	9	20	5	10	2	0	0	57
Resources of people	9	19	5	12	3	5	9	1	3	66
Resources to people	8	20	14	17	22	30	7	8	4	130
Setting of norms	4	11	3	24	9	10	5	3	2	71
Sexuality	2	6	23	16	2	24	8	2	0	83
Social relations	8	12	36	33	7	22	9	6	1	134
Space-exclusion	12	18	10	24	19	68	21	12	1	185
Space use of	16	31	57	53	18	33	17	17	2	244
Statistics	5	20	14	7	0	1	6	3	0	56
Success!	5	15	2	9	5	22	5	4	0	67
Supervision	22	20	23	29	10	43	13	4	0	164
Social workers' reflections	7	8	5	11	2	8	1	5	0	47
Time, use of	3	3	11	8	9	13	22	7	6	82
Whiteness	2	8	6	13	6	8	9	1	0	53
Youth	2	4	4	4	13	19	6	4	2	58
TOTALS	371	665	949	753	305	1080	590	180	44	4937
**Primary documents" refer to text files explained on page 70.										

Table 4. Codes/Primary Documents

List of Primary Documents:

1. Ruyterwacht in the 1930s
2. Ruyterwacht 1940-1944
3. Ruyterwacht 1945-1949
4. Ruyterwacht 1950-1954
5. Ruyterwacht 1955-1959
6. Ruyterwacht in the 1960s
7. Ruyterwacht in the 1970s
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