

**MORAL ORDER AS NECESSITY AND AS IMPOSSIBILITY:
COMMON SENSE, RACE AND THE DIFFICULTY OF CHANGE
AMONG FOUR 'POOR WHITE' FAMILIES IN NEWCASTLE**

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the lives of four families in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal and what the situation in which these families find themselves tells us about race, poverty and social change in contemporary South Africa by using ethnographic participant observation techniques. Central to the thesis is a concern with contradiction expressed in the entanglement of these four families with a particular moral order. This moral order is the basis of continued material survival, but at the same time, it is not adequate to transform conditions of poverty nor to change feelings of entitlement, making it impossible for these families to imagine their condition as shared with other races. The problem appears to be just about individuals not thinking correctly about their position and about them not seeing how many South Africans are struggling to survive and therefore share similar difficulties. The thesis shows that the difficulties experienced have rather more to do with changing the families' common sense notions. Their common sense is grounded in material realities, in realities of institutions that provide for them but also dictate a particular way of seeing the world, a moral order. Common sense is embedded in the material practices of people, in how they inhabit space and make place for themselves, in how they interact with family, in how they work with the institutions that are the very condition of their survival, and in how they come to understand and judge the past. At the moments when the limits of the moral order become clear, it is then not the moral order that comes into question but rather it is reasserted through explanations based on particular structural changes as contingencies that reinforce the moral order rather than challenge it. It is at these moments that people reassert race since their common sense explanations seem limited.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie proefskrif ondersoek die alledaagse lewens van vier families in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal en wat hul situasie ons kan vertel van ras, armoede en sosiale verandering in 'n kontemporêre Suid-Afrika gebaseer op deelnemende waarneming en etnografiese tegnieke. Sentraal tot die proefskrif is 'n fokus op die teenstrydigheid wat voorkom in die verstrengeling van hierdie vier families met 'n bepaalde morele orde. Hierdie morele orde is die grondslag vir voorgesette materiële oorlewing, maar terselfde tyd is dit nie voldoende om die kondisies van armoede te transformeer of om hul gevoelens van geregtigheid te verander nie en maak dit amper onmoonlik vir die families om hulle kondisie as gedeel en gemeenskaplik met ander rasse te sien. Die probleem blyk om meer te wees as net individue wat nie korrek nadink oor hul posisie nie of nie sien hoeveel ander Suid Afrikaners sukkel om 'n bestaan te maak nie en dus soortgelyke probleme ervaar. Die tesis wys dat dit eerder te doen met 'n verandering in wat die families 'weet' gebaseer op hulle gesonde verstand (common sense). Hulle gesonde verstand is gegrond in materiële realiteite, die realiteite van instellings wat vir hulle voorsiening maak en gevolglik die spesifieke wyse waarop hulle die wêreld sien dikteer; 'n morele orde. Hulle gesonde verstand is gegrond in die materiële praktyke van mense, in hoe hulle in ruimtes leef en plek maak vir hulself, in hoe hulle omgaan met familie, in hoe hulle te werk gaan met instellings wat die basis is vir hulle oorlewing en in hoe hulle sin maak van die verlede asook dit oordeel. In die oomblikke wanneer die grense van die morele orde bereik word, is dit nie die morele orde wat bevraagteken word nie. Die morele orde word eerder gehandhaaf deur regverdigings gebaseer op spesifieke strukturele veranderings wat dit verder versterk, eerder as uitdaag. Dit is in hierdie oomblikke wat mense fokus op ras omdat hulle gesonde verstand se rationalisasies of regverdigings beperk is.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Conceptualising race and history with reference to relevant literature	3
From concepts to methods: How I approached my study (and how it approached me)	8
Mapping Newcastle	12
Outline of chapters	15
CHAPTER 1	
Knowing one's place:	
Poor whites' identification in, and organisation of, space in Newcastle	17
Historical foundations of physical space in Newcastle	17
Inspecting physical space	21
Families placing themselves in space	24
Place, race and body	31
CHAPTER 2	
'Failed families' as a material and moral matter:	
Living the contradictory logic of family as necessity and impossibility	37
Making and unmaking families in Newcastle	38
<i>Mrs D</i>	38
<i>Mrs E</i>	41
<i>Mrs R and Mrs X</i>	47
The moral and symbolic value of the nuclear family	52
CHAPTER 3	
Helping people get by, helping them change:	
Three institutions in Newcastle and the enforcement of moral order	62
Three Newcastle institutions associated with 'poor whites'	63
Inside and out: Explaining and assisting poverty	69
Seeing is believing: Measuring and determining worth	78
CHAPTER 4	
The possibility of a future:	
The limits to agency and the legacies of racial entitlement	88
Victoria and Martilda: Contrasting moral characters	89
A common future: The habitus and the difficulty of changing the past	99
Racial entitlement and the problem of custody over the future	101
CONCLUSION	112
References	118

INTRODUCTION

“Ons is altyd iemand se plan of storie, die arm blankes.”
“*We are always someone’s plan or story, the poor whites.*”
(Treppie, in Marlene van Niekerk’s novel *Triomf*)

So long as we consider things as at rest and lifeless, each one by itself, alongside and after each other, we do not run up against any contradictions in them. We find certain qualities which are partly common to, partly different from, and even contradictory to each other, but which in the last-mentioned case are distributed among different objects and therefore contain no contradiction within. Inside the limits of this sphere of observation we can get along on the basis of the usual ... mode of thought. But the position is quite different as soon as we consider things in their motion, their change, their life, their reciprocal influence on one another. Then we immediately become involved in contradictions. (Frederick Engels, 1877, *Anti-Duhring*)

This thesis examines the lives of four families that live in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal. It analyses what the situation in which these families find themselves tells us about race, poverty and social change in contemporary South Africa. These families are ‘poor whites’, a term that many find awkward and which seems to express a contradiction that may be concealed for various reasons, depending on the position in relation to the history of race and class in South Africa. For some, ‘poor whites’ is a term suggesting shame and that whites are not supposed to be poor. For others, it is a term that should not be used anymore, because white people being poor should not be regarded as remarkable, with poverty not being qualified by race. Thus, using the term is anachronistic at best, and indicates an insistence on racially qualifying poverty in a way that should no longer be necessary in the new South Africa. The Carnegie Commission¹ investigation into ‘poor whites’ as a ‘problem’ to be solved occurred in 1929-1932, but the term has lived on despite political transformation and evokes continued awkwardness in many. While I do not insist that this term will always be valid, its contradictory and awkward nature in South Africa at present is of interest for what it says about the intersection of race, specifically in relation to whiteness, and class today; and how, more than fifteen years after the end of Apartheid, race continues to live on in the practices of people.

¹ See Carnegie Commission findings available in five volumes (Grosskopf, 1932; Wilcocks, 1932; Murray, 1932; Rothman, 1932; Albertyn, 1932; Malherbe, 1932). ² According to the pastor’s wife, Rapha literally means ‘new beginnings’ or ‘making whole’. This reiterates the role of the halfway house as filling the interim between where people were and where they are going - and not just providing food or shelter.

At the heart of this thesis, then, is a concern with contradiction. In its most straightforward sense, this contradiction is expressed in the entanglement of the four families with a particular moral order. On the one hand this moral order has become the basis of continued material survival. At the same time, it is inadequate to transform their condition of poverty and to change their feeling of entitlement, which makes it impossible for them to see people of other races as sharing their condition. At one level, the 'problem' with this group of people in Newcastle appears to be just about them not thinking 'correctly' about their position and not seeing how many black South Africans in Newcastle share similar difficulties. These difficulties involve a struggle to survive, a struggle to keep their families together and a struggle with errant, promiscuous and violent men (cf Hunter, 2002).

What I hope to show is that these people seem to justify and explain the difficulties they experience according to common sense. A common sense grounded in material realities, in realities of institutions that provide for them, but also dictate a particular way of seeing the world, a moral order. People cannot just change their ideas or way of thinking to be more 'correct', since that which enables them to continue living from day-to-day both prevents that possibility and an explanation that might allow them to really challenge the material conditions of their poverty. In other words, common sense notions are not only linked to consciousness, but are also often embedded and entrenched in every aspect of people's lives. To show that these common sense notions are not just products of consciousness, I will use Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) notion of the *habitus*. This will allow me to conceptualise common sense as part of the organisation of body and place as well as of social practice or, as he suggests, the naturalising of people's past positions in society that make them into structures for acting and decoding the world (Bourdieu, 1977: 82, 84-86). The *habitus* justifies a particular social position that poor whites are entitled to, based on common sense notions of, for example, race and specifically being white. Even when these common sense notions seem to fail or are evidently flawed, the institutions, friends, family and others involved in the lives of these four families still justify the world according to a particular moral order that dictates how to survive materially and how to overcome poverty. These people are caught in a situation where they cannot change, since what they are, how they are and how they should change, is

based on common sense - not only their own, but also that of those around them. They seem to be destined to continue making the same mistakes and to remain in poverty as they are struggling to change according to almost impossible means.

I draw inspiration from Oscar Lewis' *Five Families* (1959) and his subsequent work that focuses on poverty (see also Lewis, 1966, 1968 for works that together made him famous for his 'culture of poverty' thesis). Although my study attempts to detail the conditions of families and explore the ways in which their morality shapes their lives, I do not share in his 'culture of poverty' thesis for two reasons. First, I suggest that the lives of families are always produced and reproduced in relation to broader social conditions. While mediated by the habitus, it does not mean that people's common sense notions were ever, or are not isolated from material and ideological conditions in the world; rather people are constantly forming and reforming what common sense is. This relates specifically to the history of values in South Africa, which includes racism. Second, I do not share Lewis' understanding of these values as being consciously transmitted, but rather analyse how these values are entrenched in how people inhabit the world in practice, in what Pierre Bourdieu (1977) has called the *habitus*.

Conceptualising race and history with reference to relevant literature

Theoretically, my thesis is framed by Bourdieu's notion of the habitus, but I also draw on the writing of Melissa Steyn (2001, 2004, Steyn & Foster, 2008), Annika Teppo (2004, Teppo & Houssay-Holzschuch, 2009), Marijke du Toit (2003), Irma du Plessis (2004, 2010), and others to think through race and specifically whiteness, and how being white relates to poverty in contemporary South Africa. While settlers, and later colonists, arrived from Europe in the 17th century, a discourse surrounding 'poor whites' and probably whiteness in general- at least in its contemporary understanding- seems to emerge in the early 20th century, especially in relation to the development of mining and capitalism on the Witwatersrand (Hyslop, 1995; O'Meara, 1983 and Morrell, 1992). Similarly, changes historically in South Africa's political structures usually coincided with a general but also academic focus on 'poor whites' and specifically their upliftment. However, democratisation in '94 signalled yet another shift (Boonzaier and Sharp, 1995). Although not directly addressed in this thesis, the history of whites and whiteness in

South Africa does present the background against which current conceptualisations have been developed and it is with these conceptualisations that I hope to engage directly and contribute towards.

A specific history shaped what it means to be white and Steyn focuses on discursive practices, which she refers to as *white talk*, to create an understanding of how whites currently manage their social position as well as make sense of or build a specific understanding of the ‘new’ South Africa. Steyn defines whiteness as a social positionality justified by European colonialism and imperialism that is embedded in racial ideologies still maintained by a narrative, referred to by Steyn as the ‘master narrative of whiteness’. Therefore, caught up in the ‘master narrative of whiteness’ is a particular history that continues to exist through the justification of privilege and entitlement according to racial lines. What it means to be white remains linked to a specific history, but whiteness also defines the history that justifies the privilege and entitlement based on race. This study elaborates on Steyn’s discussion through an explicit focus on the material and moral dimensions of whiteness in a space where poverty seems to call into question any stable sense of ‘hegemonic whiteness’.

It is, however, not enough to be white, one has to be a ‘good white’ which references the entanglement of race with a moral order often measured and read through material dimensions. Teppo (2004), in her historic ethnography in Ruyterwacht/Epping Garden Village (a suburb in Cape Town), focuses on the social production of space, and more specifically, on the relationship between race, class and space in the neighbourhood. Ruyterwacht has a particular history linked to an understanding of race and more specifically ‘poor whites’ in South Africa. Teppo pays particular attention to the processes, discourses and methods used to turn ‘poor whites’ residing in the particular space into respectable and socially acceptable ‘good whites’. Teppo’s reference to a ‘good white’ relates to Steyn’s notion of whiteness as a social positionality since both seem to imply an ‘ideal’; whether explicitly as whiteness or indirectly as a place in society. In the case of Steyn, this ideal is already attained to a certain extent and therefore only needs to be maintained such as for example white South Africans trying to relate more directly to their white European counterparts. For Teppo, this ideal is in the

process of 'being' as well as 'becoming' within the boundaries of specific definitions of not only whiteness, but identity as a whole.

Teppo investigates the social and racial categories used to define and impose certain identities on people, while showing that people can be active agents who either contest or renegotiate these identities. This is similar to what Teppo and Houssay-Holzschuch (2009) explore in their study of a shopping mall in South Africa noting it as a 'safe place' to display and, I would argue, experiment with new identities. It is a space where race, class and gender are safely staged. Teppo (2004) and Teppo and Houssay-Holzschuch (2009) allude to a situation where people are free to choose whereas Steyn is more critical and demarcates the choices people have, even if only in speech. This tension arises in this thesis in terms of seeing people as free to make choices but at the same time noting that the choices to be made are limited. Du Toit (2003), in her historic overview of white Afrikaner women during the height of Afrikaner Nationalism, also notes that the identity of the ideal 'volksmoeder' was not so much imposed on women as what they were active agents in its formulation. It was an ideal present long before it was taken up in the ideology asserted by Afrikaner nationalist men. The ideal of what it meant to be a 'good mother' linked closely with notions of ideal whiteness and I will argue still are interlinked in contemporary South Africa. Although Du Toit does state that the women were active agents in asserting their identity, she also notes that their choices were limited by strong religious convictions, or in other words, a moral order.

Du Plessis (2010) also explores the notion that identity and specifically one linked to Afrikaner Nationalism and, similarly to Du Toit, notes that it was not always imposed from above, but that people actively took part in the formation of their identity. Du Plessis uses the example of popular Afrikaans fiction to illustrate that this process of identification, although active, is still bounded by moral and material dimensions. She notes that the 'poor white' characters were often depicted as a minority category to uplift not as a duty but as a noble cause by the Afrikaner elite. Even though imagination seems to dictate identity and an understanding of identity since it is fiction under discussion, there are still stark boundaries in place. One can be poor and white, but this does not fit into the 'ideal' imagined by Afrikaner Nationalist fiction. Du Plessis (2004) highlights

the relationship between class and culture as a way to make sense of new and changing identities in post-apartheid South Africa when she explores how a specific neighbourhood, a former 'poor white' township, comprised of council housing in Johannesburg. Du Plessis' focus on how people in a particular place not only make sense of, but also understand their lives materially, symbolically and ultimately through the use of their imagination critically informs this study, inspiring my continual focus on how the imaginations of white people in Newcastle shape their interactions with place and others, and how, at certain moments, it enables them to imagine certain identities but also limits other kinds of solidarities from emerging. Identity is produced and produces a specific kind of citizen, based on an arrangement of space, historically according to race, and now still to a large extent continued based on this legacy.

Du Toit notes that historically, during the height of Afrikaner Nationalism, social work fell to the female domain. This seems to be echoed in both Teppo and Du Plessis's more contemporary work since the social workers, who intervene in the lives of the poor, and for the purpose of this thesis the poor whites, are white women. For Teppo and Du Plessis, the role of institutions, and specifically that of welfare organisations, is fundamental as an instrument for making available and imposing specific identities. It is therefore no surprise that often the passage out of poverty is reliant on embracing a specific identity, an identity framed by a moral order that will have a promised material effect. People have to live up to an ideal where this ideal is linked to a specific identity passed on from the 'volksmoeders' to 'good whites'. Du Toit, in her discussion and her focus on women, forces one to think about the gendered dimensions of white poverty. Even though gender is not explicitly foregrounded in this study, it is clear that the incessant attempt to seek respectability that comes to mark those whose whiteness in Newcastle is threatened, is deeply gendered. Often the older women in the families attempt to retain membership of a moral order for which they do not have the material means to sustain.

In this study, whiteness is a feature of both discursive and economic practices, simultaneously being a material and moral matter. This dual character of whiteness becomes evident when the families in Newcastle attempt to claim privilege based on

whiteness, but who have no economic support or political recognition. In order to understand this dual character adequately, Bourdieu's concept of the habitus has proved most helpful. Bourdieu uses the habitus to describe the set of dispositions creating practice that are in turn determined by structuring structures, such as a specific moral order, which again validate practices that in turn only validate the structuring structures (1977:72-73). “[T]he habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history” (Bourdieu, 1977:82). History shapes people’s practices as it reappears in the present, unconsciously, through how people order the world. This is illustrated by Safiyya Goga (2010) in her a focus on student drinking culture where ritual only serves to reiterate distinctions made in terms such as race. Thus, the habitus explains how particular histories play a part in people’s lives because of the way they think, but more specifically because of how they act, which leads them to establish categories that create order. People live in terms of their habitus, which is continually reinforced by a whole series of apparently objective structures. The habitus becomes entrenched in people’s lives such as when religiously informed institutions resolve any possible contradictions that might occur and once more justify the world as it is where these justifications are based on common sense. In some instances, the habitus produces contradictions, for example the family itself becoming a key site in which common sense notions regarding family are constantly challenged.

Although my thesis questions the universal or trans-historical validity of race, as ‘common sense’, I approach the lack of validity of race differently to Gerhard Maré (2001). For Maré, the emphasis is on ‘race thinking’ (which is especially embedded in South African bureaucratic and political systems) as a means of making sense of race, which is constantly created, confirmed or maintained. Although race does still serve to explain and justify events and behaviours, from past to present, Maré suggests a change in focus, such as shifting to gender, age or class to recognise the ‘fluidity’ of society. The thesis does not share the position that racial categories or racism can simply be overcome by changing one’s thinking; it focuses instead on the specificity of the existence of race in people’s practices. Race is not only part of bureaucratic and political ideas, but is encoded in all spaces and with all bodies and is constantly kept intact through moral

mantras that justify practices without thinking about them. In a sense, everything entrenched in everyday life prevents changing thinking about race. Nicoli Nattrass and Jeremy Seekings (2001, 2005) do not emphasise a change, but to a certain extent imply that a shift has already occurred and class distinctions now trump racial categories. Just as Maré's argument tries, to a certain extent, to wish away race, so does a focus only on class stratification ignore race and the history of race. While Maré's analysis focuses on the ideas of race and Nattrass and Seekings focus on economic conditions, this thesis gives precedence to neither thinking nor specific economic conditions, but rather looks at the interaction between the two.

To further clarify the distinction between race and class I will draw on the work of David Roediger (2007). For him, class has 'objective dimensions' since it is possible to claim ownership or not, of, for example, land or a business. In contrast, "race is constructed differently across time by people in the same class and differently at the same time by people whose class positions differ" (2007:7). Race, according to Roediger, is "in its very essence" ideological and needs to be investigated as such socially and historically (2007:7). I will approach whiteness in a similar manner, i.e. as a kind of ideology, something that is more than an idea or way of thinking, but lived, practiced and constructed. Whiteness, as part of the habitus, is inscribed on the body, on physical space, on institutions and on people's morality. I will show how, for the poor whites under discussion, whiteness was 'hidden' during Apartheid and taken for granted as common sense. However, being white can no longer be over-looked and has become an obvious racial category. Although in some instances, whites experience tension in relation to their privileged economic position and the change in their political status, the four families at the centre of this study do not have a privileged economic position and have also lost their association with the previously dominant racial category. I will focus, as Roediger does, not only on how these four families understand race, but on what this says about them and their current situation.

From concepts to methods: How I approached my study (and how it approached me)

The theory outlined does not only provide an analytical framework but also presents methodological challenges. Numbers and statistics from quantitative data would have led

to insights into the lives of these families and would most probably have echoed much of what Natrass and Seekings (2005) highlight. There are many such quantitative studies currently being undertaken, specifically on the topic of white poverty. For example, Helpende Hand (Helping Hand), a welfare organisation affiliated with the union Solidaritet (Solidarity) is conducting a national study that focuses on several points of access across the country. The participant observation and ethnographic techniques employed in this thesis instead allow for an analysis of space and body and the history specific to space and body to facilitate an understanding of the families presented. Often race seems to be ignored or not talked about specifically as a concept in the interviews. However, this does not necessarily indicate a change in thinking in terms of race or of race having become redundant because of a shift to class. The techniques employed allow for critical thinking about categories used by poor whites as well as by those working with, researching and helping poor whites. These categories often thought of as being objective rather than being shaped by a particular history, are used in questionnaires and statistical data and based on a consensus of shared and coherent meaning as well as an underlying assumption that the consequences of those meanings are harmless or necessary.

It is almost impossible to trace the specific history present in the lives of these families without ethnographic methods. An ethnographic method allows the individual narratives to stand out, in contrast to statistical data that often only presents a sanitised version, leaving out details that might prove awkward. However, a focus on the individual is problematic since this opens the door for those being researched to be portrayed either as a victim or to bear the full responsibility for their condition. In a poor family, a woman who stays with an abusive husband or father is either pitied or blamed for her circumstances and so becomes just another statistic. There is the risk that the narratives, testimonies and stories presented here can also be read in a similar manner.

The habitus situates people according to practices in space and this is true for each individual in the families and of course my own position as well. Researchers often forget that “the ‘objects’ they classify produce not only objectively classifiable practices but also classifying operations that are no less objective and are themselves classifiable”

(Bourdieu, 1984:167). It is not only that people inhabit a particular space according to common sense or their habitus, but also that they place themselves accordingly. This positionality was often difficult for me to deal with, as it conflicted with my own morality and common sense understandings of how to be and how to act. I did not know when to use 'tannie' (aunty) or 'mevrou' (ma'am). I carefully thought over what to wear while replaying the social worker's warning to rather wear long pants as protection against fleas. I had to question my own common sense notions about what it is that I take for granted and had to be careful not to be fooled by my apparent objective classifications. Ultimately, as the researcher, I have the final say as to what is written about or left out, what pieces of narrative are included or left out, as well as how these are translated from Afrikaans to English. I do not want to paint a voyeuristic picture or describe everything not associated with 'normal' as deviant or exotic. But this is not always easy, as the nature of ethnographic research leads one to become intimately involved with your research subjects. At the start of the study, I wanted to focus more on institutions and organisations involved with poor whites, but as I got to know the families a natural shift in focus was warranted.

This does not mean that the interactions were easy. There were visits filled with apprehension just at the thought of going inside a house, or feelings of guilt or wanting to cry through an entire visit. I constantly shifted from either casting the families as victims or blaming them. I had to be physically present to observe the families and spent a considerable amount of time with them, which led to my own emotional involvement. This then creates further tension, as I have to keep an objective distance so as to not impose my own thinking of how things should be since I am white, Afrikaans and can, to a certain extent, still associate with a privileged economic position. I had to think of the families not in terms of their apparent loss of whiteness because of their economic situations but to question why it is awkward to be poor and white. Sometimes I got it right, but other times I hated myself for choosing this topic and sometimes I hated the families for the stupid choices they made and now I even miss them after not having seen them for a while. In the end, only participant observation and ethnographic techniques allow one to get to know the people and through critical reflection allow a representation

of them to give a certain amount of autonomy back to them. In the end, I will try to give a picture of the families, where they live and of course myself as researcher.

I did not initially set out looking for 'poor whites' until the topic, to a certain extent 'chose me', and I had to find 'poor whites'. However, finding 'poor whites' was not as easy a task as I had initially thought, since it was necessary to describe them as poor with good reason. At first, it seemed to be an easy task, as everyone I spoke to initially knew of a cluster of 'poor whites' living somewhere - usually signified by a derogatory name, such as 'Konyntjie Dorp' (Rabbit Town). However, at the same time I started to receive criticism about the choice of topic, especially in the context of South Africa as statistics indicate these people are a small minority, which was in some instances seen as part of the problem i.e. it was not a big enough problem. I soon realised that 'poor whites' had to be poor enough to justify my study. Accessing sites was another hurdle. I visited a caravan park and tried to ask the owner for permission to speak to the people who reside there on a permanent basis. He refused to even meet with me and sent a message via his secretary that 'other students' had done research and had used the residents only to attain 'shocking photos'. I also learned quite quickly that the stereotypes associated with being poor and white often became the centre of interest, investigation or just plain curiosity and the result was that these individuals were made into caricatures or treated as anomalies. In order to take a critical look at white poverty, it was necessary to address all these concerns, namely justification, access and representation. In other words, it was necessary to: find people who were white, poor or struggling, ensure that access was possible and that the methods employed were representative.

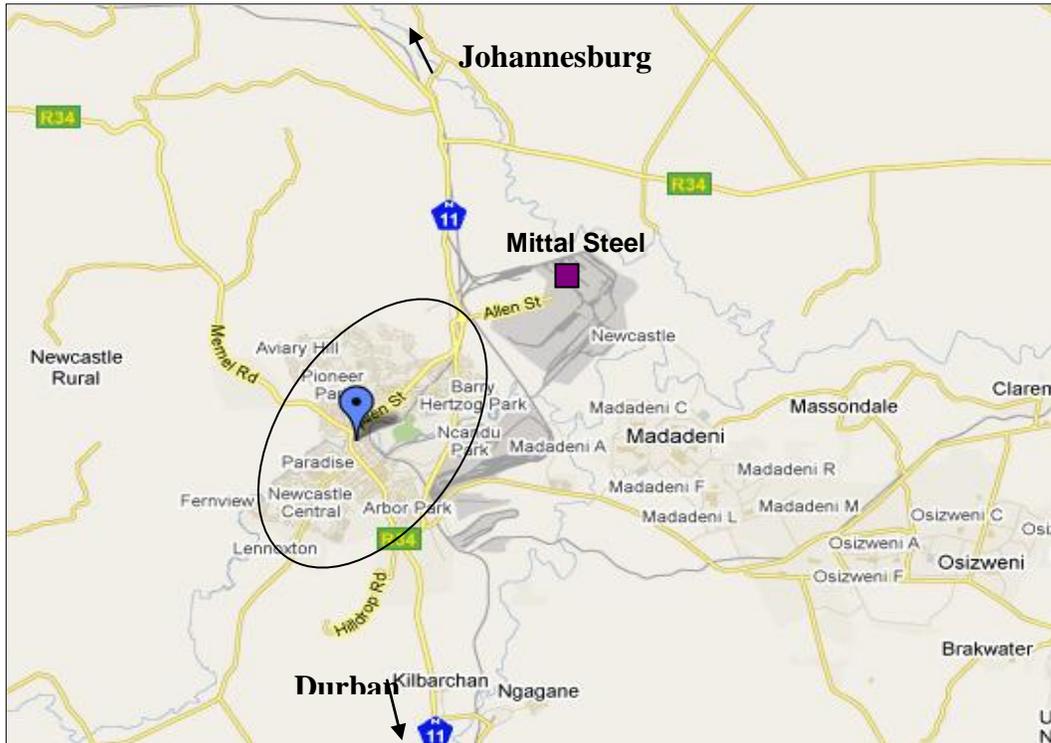
I made contact with a welfare institution that is not directly affiliated with state welfare located in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal. I had learnt that they have a feeding scheme, handing out food parcels containing basic food stuffs every second week to individuals and families of all races who are struggling in one way or another and who require assistance. Through the welfare offices, where I also at first met with reluctance and scepticism, and with the help of one of the social workers, I made contact with five families who were at the time receiving food parcels or who had until recently received food parcels. However, one family disappeared from the welfare institution soon after

contact was made as they were apparently afraid their children were going to be removed from their care. The four remaining families are represented most often by a dominant female voice and for that reason the families will be defined by this voice - referred to as 'Mrs' plus an arbitrary initial to ensure a certain level of anonymity. My contact with the four families was tainted by my initial association with the welfare institution, but I felt that this association weakened over time as the families got to know me and understand my position in relation to their own. This was, in some instances, a relief as the families became more comfortable with me, but in others instances it meant that the families were not as helpful or forthcoming as they were at the start of the study. My contact with the institutions and the assistance they provided to me and to the families created a sense of obligation and indebtedness on my part - even though I realised that the institutions do not necessarily affect people's common sense in a way that will help them out of their impossible predicament, but because they are helping them to survive at a different level.

Mapping Newcastle

The physical space individuals inhabit and, in this case, where these families live, is also under scrutiny in this thesis, especially in terms of how history is translated into the present through these places, neighbourhoods, houses and other spaces the families inhabit (Bourdieu, 1984:173). The families live in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, a town located on the old route between Johannesburg and Durban. To some it is a town and to others it is a city with a unique history relating to the Anglo-Boer war and the Zulu wars. According to the Newcastle Integrated Development Plan Review (2009), 95% of the population is urbanised and live in either urban or mining settlements, with the remaining 5% residing on farms. The population of Newcastle, according to the racial categories set out in the review, is: 90% African, just over 5% White, 3% Indian and the remaining 2% are defined as Coloured. Many of the historically racialised spaces and areas are slowly starting to diversify, but many of the neighbourhoods remain segregated according to race. The predominantly urban nature of Newcastle is thanks to industry, with: Mittal Steel focusing on steel production, Karbochem focusing on chemical production, and a textile industry that was set up by Asian immigrants. There are many other industries that also contribute to Newcastle's economy, but the three mentioned are the most

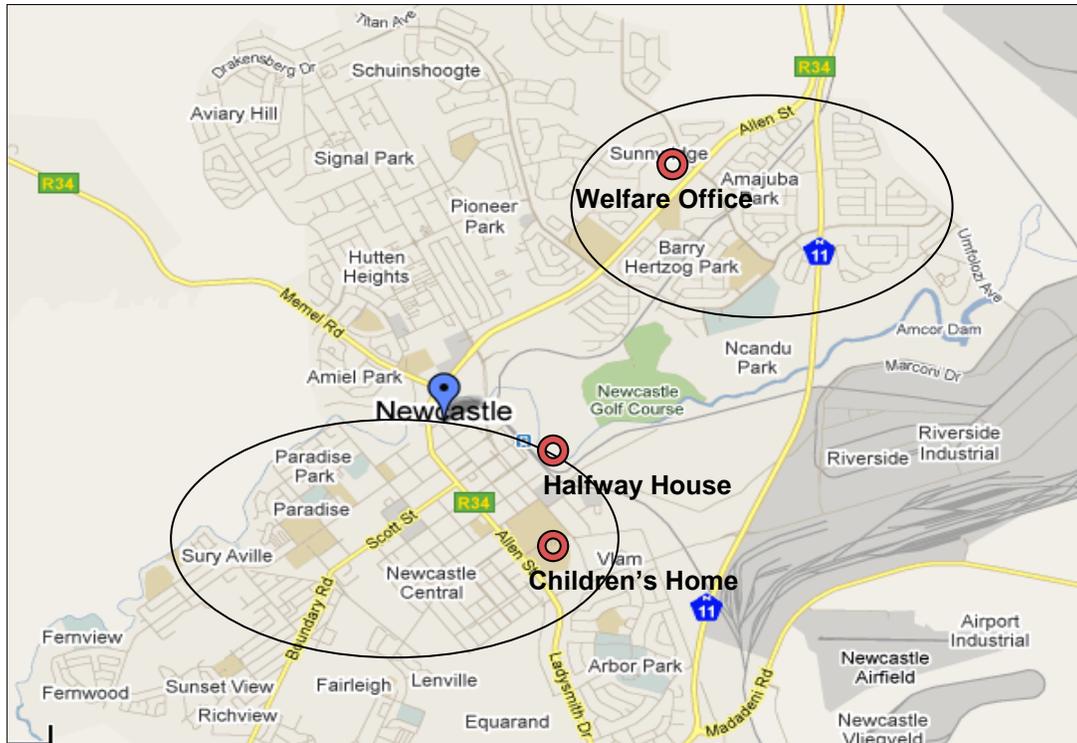
influential. Map I shows the geographic citing of Newcastle and indicates different neighbourhoods referred to in the study in order to orientate the reader.



Map I: Newcastle and surrounds
(Source: GoogleMaps)

The grey areas to the top and right of the oval on the map indicate the main areas of industry, with Mittal Steel indicated specifically. The centre of the oval represents the town centre. To the right of the oval are the townships Madadeni and Osizweni, which neighbourhoods are still populated predominately by black residents. The areas known as Lennoxton, at the bottom of the oval, and Paradise, located close to the centre of the oval, were traditionally reserved for Indian residents and are still predominantly marked by this racial category. The areas in the top half of the oval, namely Aviary Hill, Pioneer Park, Barry Hertzog Park, Ncandu Park and Arbor Park were historically designated as white neighbourhoods, with those located to the left of the oval viewed as having higher status than those located closer to the areas of industry. The higher status areas have, to some extent, become racially diversified, but the majority of whites still reside in these areas where there are only with a few black residents. The lower status neighbourhoods, namely Barry Hertzog Park, Ncandu Park and Arbor Park have changed in terms of their racial composition from being predominantly white to being predominantly black.

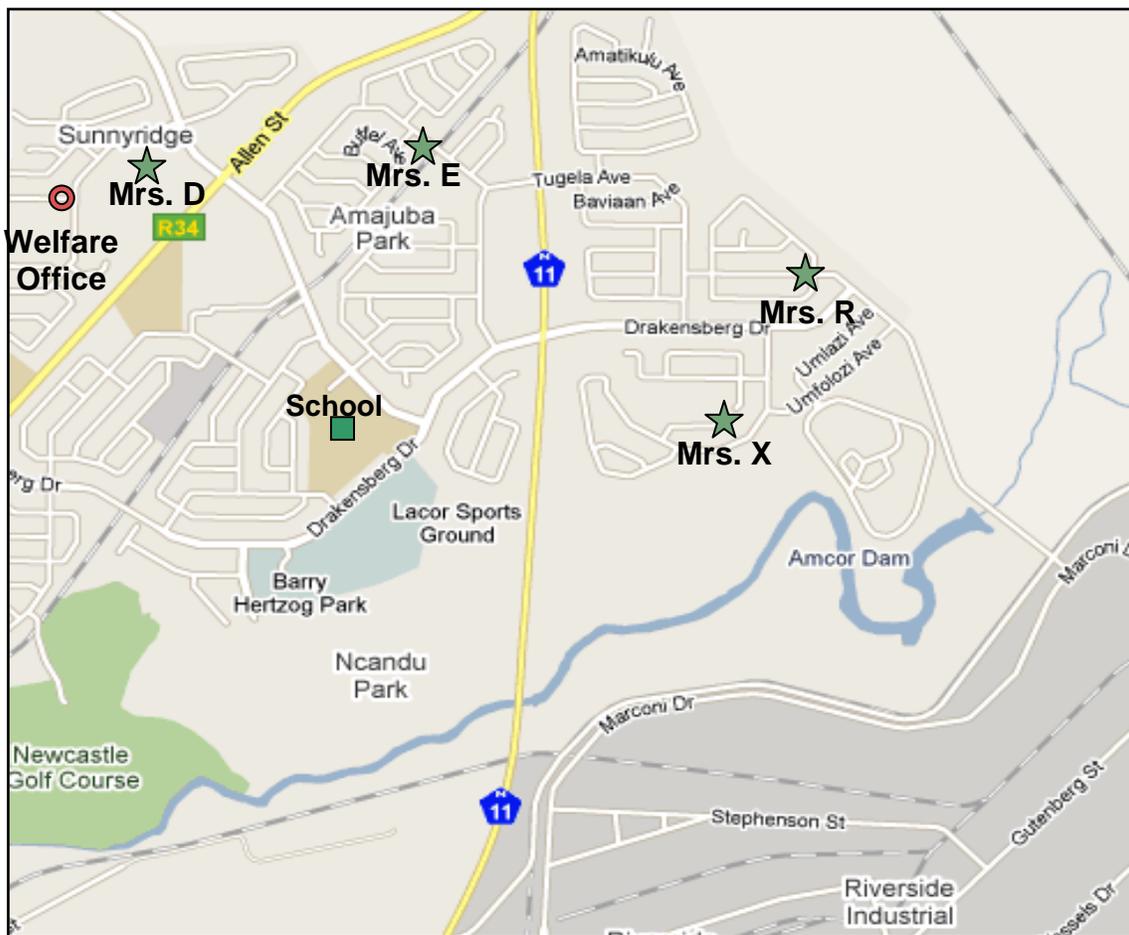
Map II represents a zoomed view of Map I, illustrating where the families live in relation to the centre of town as well as indicating several key institutions mentioned in this study.



Map II: Newcastle town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods (zoomed view of Map I)
(Source: GoogleMaps)

The areas in the top oval were traditionally regarded as having a lower status, which was marked by their close proximity to the areas of industry. However, with major restructuring of the labour force and the operations used in industry, many individuals are now forced to seek employment in the town centre, with new developments located in the areas at the bottom of the map outside the bottom oval.

Map III represents a zoomed view of the top oval section on Map II and indicates in more detail where the families live. The map indicates where the different families live in relation to each other as well as in relation to the welfare office and the school. It is important to note that although a major highway passes through the neighbourhoods, there is no access to the highway via an on-ramp or off-ramp.



Map III: Neighbourhoods where the families in the study reside (zoomed view of Map II)
 (Source: GoogleMaps)

Outline of chapters

The four families at the centre of this investigation live in a town that is different in interesting and unique ways to metropolitan areas. Newcastle and its specific history allow for an understanding of people's sense of place, which is undoubtedly more complex and interesting because it is a town.

Chapter One emphasises how, for poor whites in Newcastle, racism is embedded in a broader landscape in which people place themselves. Racism is part of common sense, but it is not just a matter of consciousness; rather, it operates on a deeper level and structures how people perceive and act in the world. In Chapter Two this common sense, or the habitus, is understood as a moral system that informs how people understand good or bad and governs how people live in the world, but does not necessarily overcome contradictions and, in some instances, actually produce them. Because this common

sense in Newcastle suggests that nuclear families are best, despite people's palpable inability to maintain them, people continue to act in expectation of nuclear families. Thus, they come to experience the family as the site of their incapacity and their moral failing, rather than as a failure of their common sense or their morality. In Chapter Three this morality is shown to be at the heart of people's common sense and to be entrenched for these families in Newcastle by a series of institutions that, while helping the poor get by materially, aim to produce good white subjects. Disciplined by these institutions, people are expected to act in particular ways with the promise of personal redemption from their circumstances. These institutions have a particular vision of how outer transformation mirrors inner transformation, which results in people performing accordingly for these institutions in order to ensure their continued support. While these institutions do help people, they do not actually achieve the possibility of people leaving poverty. What they do achieve, as highlighted in Chapter Four, is the entrenchment of a particular understanding of 'good' and 'bad', which, among other things, is racialised. In the examination of two daughters who occupy different poles in the evaluative system of morality stressed by the institutions, provided in Chapter Four, what emerges is that following the institutional logic actually does not help people out of poverty. Even at the moments when the limits of their moral order become clear, people in Newcastle do not question it. Instead, they reassert the moral order through reading particular structural changes as contingencies that reinforce it, rather than challenge. In other words, people reassert race, and specifically whiteness, precisely at the moment when their common sense explanations seem most limited in understanding the world.

CHAPTER 1

Knowing one's place:

Poor whites' identification in, and organisation of, space in Newcastle

“Ons hét die oorlog verloor. Kyk waar bly ons.”

“We lost the war. Look at where we live.”

(Poor white character living in a caravan park, from a TV series on Kyknet titled *Getroud met Rugby*)

In this chapter, I will show how people in Newcastle, and specifically the four families in the study, remain spatially divided in relation to the history of the town. The chapter will show that people have learnt to identify their place in the town along racial lines to such an extent that it has created a racial social understanding of space. This then shapes the physical space and leads people in their self-understanding to interact with their own physical spaces according to racial terms that emphasise difference. People continue to live in what were historically designated white areas, continually attempting to create whiteness in the physical spaces that are now racially mixed. I hope to illustrate how race and place exist together by means of “thick descriptions” in order to show that racial common sense is embedded in how people place themselves in the world (Geertz, 1973). History lives on in places and spaces, structuring the present in such a way that people still live according to historicities without realising this and being unable to choose otherwise than to reproduce this past.

Historical foundations of physical space in Newcastle

People speak from a place. Given the deep connections between forms of language and particular places, the use of specific varieties ‘sets’ people in a particular social and/or physical place so to speak, and confers the attributive qualities of that place to what they say. (Blommaert, 2005:223)

The site of Newcastle was first marked in 1854 as Post Halt II after being chosen for its central strategic location between Johannesburg and Durban. In 1864, the town of Newcastle was established, the fourth in KwaZulu-Natal after Durban, Weenen and Pietermaritzburg (Tourism Newcastle, 2010). Although still a town, some describe it as a city based purely on the number of people residing both in and around it. Historically, Newcastle was a central point from which to distribute mail. It was also used as a

strategic point in the Anglo-Boer and Zulu wars, but now hosts various types of industries. These include Mittal Steel, Karbochem (synthetic rubber plant), coal mining, the textile industry and the service industry. The industry focus is Mittal Steel (previously known as Iscor (South African Iron and Steel Corporation), which produces more than 1.5 million tons of long steel products annually. Not only did this parastatal historically employ large numbers of workers, both black and white, but even after privatisation, Mittal Steel still serves as one of the main sources of employment in the town. Historically, Iscor not only provided employment and boosted the subsequent growth of Newcastle, but was also responsible for planning and building entire neighbourhoods through their housing scheme. To a certain extent, Newcastle was a planned town linked to its industrial development and Iscor, where many of the features of racial segregation could have been planned for and built in. Mittal Steel was (as Iscor), and still is, a powerful stimulus to industrial development and indirectly influences various other sectors by creating other development opportunities.

Iscor's first steel works started production in 1934 at its Pretoria plant, with its specific focus being supplying rail to the South African railroad network. Plants at Vanderbijlpark, Saldanha and Vereeniging soon followed, with Newcastle added to the Iscor portfolio as the third integrated steelworks and long product mill. Construction of the plant started in 1971, with production commencing in 1976 (South African Steel Institute, 2010). Iscor expanded rapidly and operated as a parastatal until the late 1980s, enjoying protectionist trade policies associated with state ownership. It dominated the domestic steel market and consequently its workforce grew to nearly 60 000 employees. At the end of Apartheid, the South African government announced the intended privatisation of various companies and Iscor was in line as one of the first. It was opened to the public, with shares being sold publicly in 1989. Although the company did fare reasonably well after privatisation, with Iscor able to focus on export markets, the protectionist trade policies associated with the company when it was a parastatal had lapsed and the company had to improve its efficiency for the first time, as there was no state support or protection from competitors nationally and internationally. Laksman Mittal, a prominent international executive bought up a large number of shares and Iscor briefly became known as Ispat. The majority of shareholders agreed that if Mittal could

increase Iscor's turnover by at least 700 million Rand, he would receive a substantial payout as well as shares (South African Steel Institute, 2010). Mittal instituted a streamlining process in Iscor to reduce costs. The consequence was the retrenchment of many employees through labour reduction strategies as well as the implementation of more technologically advanced operations. Iscor, once dependent on a multitude of workers, was able to perform the same tasks with less than half the staff with restructuring still constantly taking place. Mittal reached his target and received 52% of the shares in Ispat (ArcelorMittal, 2010). On 14 March 2005, Ispat Iscor Limited was officially renamed Mittal Steel South Africa Limited. This development followed the December 2004 merger of Ispat International and LNM Holdings, the parent company, which formed the Mittal Steel Company N.V. In 2007, following the merger between Arcelor and Mittal Steel, which became the world's largest steel company, formerly Mittal Steel South Africa Limited became known as ArcelorMittal South Africa Limited (ArcelorMittal, 2010). Under Mittal Steel, the company's operations are now conducted through their four primary plants: Vanderbijlpark Works and Saldanha Steel, which focus on flat steel products; and Newcastle and Vereeniging, which focus on long steel products (South African Steel Institute, 2010).

Historic and economic developments, locally and globally, influenced how Newcastle developed as a town. Iscor, as a parastatal, and now Mittal Steel, as part of the Arcelor Mittal group, play a prominent role in the lives of the families in the study whether through the creation of employment for a male figure associated with the household, having grown up in an Iscor house or still living in an Iscor house. Iscor not only helped build Newcastle in terms of the economic opportunities, growth and development, but quite literally also built Newcastle. Its housing department was responsible for building, renting and later selling houses in Newcastle, specifically for their employees and eventually to the general public. These houses are still referred to as 'Iscor houses' ('n Yskor huis). Even now, years after the housing department was shut down after the privatisation of the company, it is still possible to drive through the town and recognise an Iscor house. Historically reserved for the white workers employed at Iscor, whole neighbourhoods still consist of only Iscor houses. While Iscor houses may be similar to other houses, their appearance conjures a memory that ties them specifically to the

history of Iscor, Iscor in Newcastle, and to its workers in particular. People in Newcastle are immediately able to recognise an Iscor house through its features, while also recognising features that tie it to a particular position in the company held by the occupant. The architecture, of all Iscor houses, is more or less the same, but subtle distinguishing marks, such as the addition of 'modern' glass sliding doors, allows one to read status and class from the built environment. An Iscor house is usually characterised by the same layout inside and out, oversized windows, seventies-style slanted walls, miss-shaped slate stone paving and built squarely in the middle of a reasonably sized yard with a strikingly barren garden. In some cases, even the wire mesh fences with their curved metal gates remain intact. These houses are spread across town and making up the bulk of the houses in Newcastle. In some neighbourhoods they are less numerous, while in others, especially those close to the area of industry on the town periphery, they comprise whole neighbourhoods. For many, an Iscor house exemplifies home.

The housing scheme operated by Iscor did have the consequence (whether officially or unofficially) of classifying and grouping inhabitants according to a hierarchy based on the company's bureaucratic setup. Managers and professionals (such as engineers) had access to neighbourhoods with a higher status, while the average labourer only had access to less popular areas associated with their comparatively lower status. The physical space comprised of neighbourhoods and areas around town that came to be tied to the social status of its inhabitants, which related to a position in the company. The distinction based on status in the company and made legible through people's houses, was further entrenched through ownership, because ownership was not available to all. If one rented physical space, as many part time labourers had to, Iscor was responsible for upkeep and maintenance. This ensured that the houses remained physically the same and that the social and economic status of the inhabitants was recognisable from the street. If one bought the house, it was possible to change it, given that resources, such as capital were available. Yet, in many cases, the acquisition of the property used up available resources, with little remaining then with which to effect remodelling.

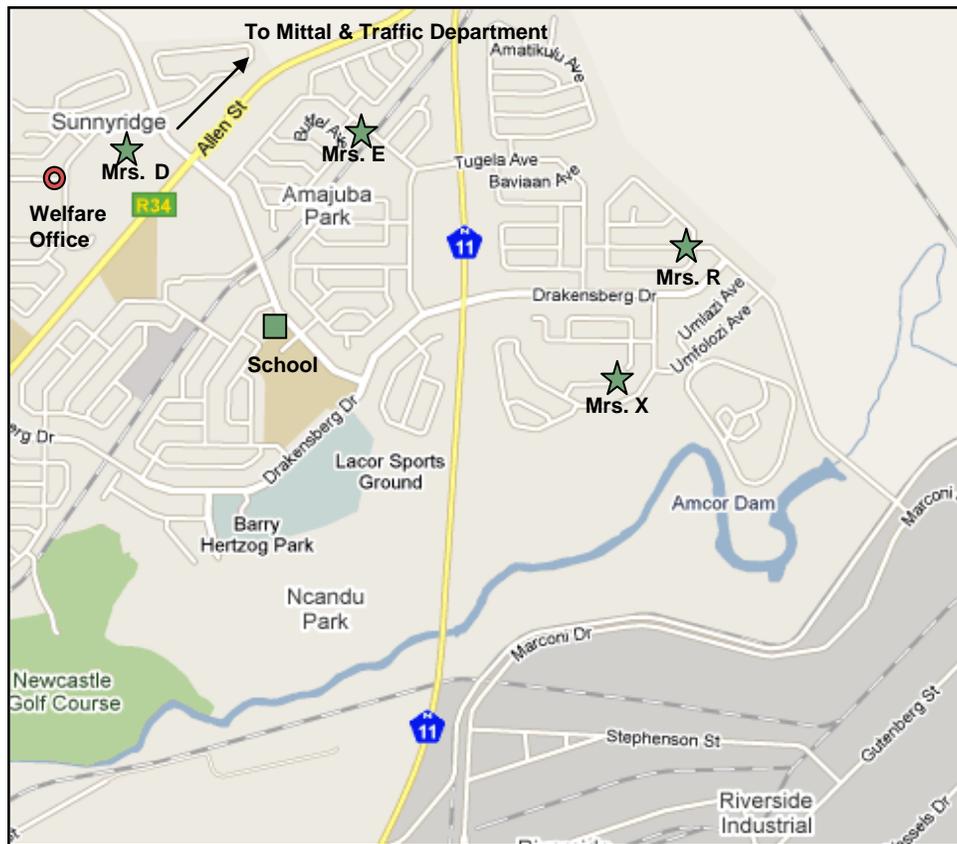
The neighbourhoods where higher status employees resided were recognised as being more affluent than neighbourhoods where employees with a lower status resided. A

‘good neighbourhood’ was linked to types of occupations in a company and came to be associated with other ‘good’ things, such as education, shopping facilities or shared public spaces. The associated importance or quality of goods and services still reference the past in terms of Iscor’s hierarchy and is still now located in specific areas.

Inspecting physical space

Starting from the town centre of Newcastle, as I did when doing my fieldwork, one needs to drive along the main road (R34/Allen Street), heading out of town in the direction of Mittal and the traffic department, in order to visit the families studied.

The main road separates this area at the edge of town into three neighbourhoods, with the first to the left and up the hill. Some of the few Iscor houses in this area that have not been remodelled, are divided up into duplex style living apartments with furniture spilling into the yard. In contrast, other houses in the neighbourhood are well tended to and have perfectly kept gardens, especially those located close to the NG church in the area. Mrs D and her children live in this neighbourhood, renting an awkwardly remodelled garage that serves as a flat. The cement floor of the garage is covered with sheets of black rubber carrying a distinct plastic odour. Wiring hangs from the ceiling and I am told that only one appliance can be run off the extension cord that runs from the main house through a window. The house to which this ‘flat’ is oddly connected has other remodelled parts added on. Yet, it remains an Iscor house and is flanked on every side by Iscor houses. Mrs D and her children are not the only ones renting space as there are lodgers staying inside the main house as well. Mrs D and her children cannot afford to live in the area in a house of their own, but they can live there by renting the flat. This allows them to claim physical space, while at the same time claiming the associated social space. Through the security gate at Mrs D’s ‘front door’, one sees Mittal Steel with its giant furnaces and tall towers pumping smoke and creating an eerie black silhouette on the horizon.



The other two neighbourhoods, at the bottom of the hill, comprise almost entirely Iscor houses, but most of these have not been remodelled. The families living here generally own the houses - but barely. Mrs E and her family live in an Iscor house bought in 1999 for ninety two thousand rand with the package her husband received after his retrenchment from Mittal Steel. The house they bought was not the one they previously lived in and rented: theirs was in a more desirable area located closer to the centre of town. The house they bought was the only house and physical space that they could afford. On opening the metal gate that is barely attached to the wire mesh fence, the sound of yapping poodles is heard. As you approach the front door, the poodles can be seen jumping up and down behind a bedroom window. From behind a lace curtain, the inhabitants survey potential guests. When the wooden front door opens, one steps immediately into the front room, defined as a 'lounge'. A corridor to the right leads to the rest of the house. The front room is strikingly bare. It has nothing but Mrs E's knitting, brown furry couches and a fitted brown carpet. The carpet is worn down and I can feel the cold cement under my feet and see its grey undertone in certain spots. Arranged awkwardly in a row against the wall are the brown couches and since on most visits I

would sit at one end and Mrs E at the other end, this only further emphasised the disturbingly empty room. The depressing brown creeps from the floor, to the couches and up the walls, brown from dirt and neglect. The room feels brown. In the far corner is a hip-high dividing wall that defines the kitchen area, which is an old fridge and sink. Apart from the poodles that continue yapping, there is an array of cats that wander through to see the visitors. There is a ginger cat, a black cat, a white cat and a every combination cat:, all with the same scrawny-looking frame. Mrs E's daughter wrote in a creative arts project completed at the children's home that she has two dogs and fourteen cats at home.

At Mrs R's house, grass and weeds stand defiantly uncut in the yard. The chicken wire fence is still in one piece, but bulging as if it has been stretched in places. The front door is hidden, since parts of the Iscor house is boarded up and the windows are dark with the curtains drawn. Walking up the stairs, one sees a sickly looking dog, his bowl containing sparse white bread crusts that spill out onto the ground beside it. Inside, the house it is dark and a moment is needed for your eyes to adjust to the dim light. To the left is a room with a dining room table, but no area of the table is visible. In every corner there are items such as old toys, blankets, electronic equipment and a great deal more, the items being indiscernible because of the dark and the sheer amount of things. This room leads off to the lounge area where several brown and grey velveteen couches are arranged to face a 'modern' metal and glass wall unit containing several televisions and a stereo. Some of the televisions are in working order and some are not; each has a story explaining its current state plus a different owner, ranging from the five-year-old girl to the grandmother. Next to the televisions are a few plastic flowers with a red Valentine heart and a teddy bear still in its original cellophane wrapping. The dust on the wall unit is so thick that this bear seems to be grey, rather than its original brown. The wall unit also houses a collection of photo frames featuring the two children covered in a halo of dust. On the opposite wall, off-centre and at a strange height is a digital photo frame that flickers through more images of the children and family. As you sit on the velvet couch, it gives way because from years of use and it almost swallows you up. There is also a sudden, very strong smell of sweat and urine as if you have disrupted the status quo. On the carpet, which is worn down that the pattern only has the main threads left and none of

the cross threads, a lonely ray of sunshine hovers in which dust dances. I can smell the stale cigarette smoke that lingers in the room and think that the ashtrays have been hidden because of my visit.

Families placing themselves in space

In this extract, Mrs R comments on her home and the neighbourhood:

(Mev R loer deur die kant gordyn oor iemand verby loop.)

Mev R: Jy weet ons is die enigste blankes wat hier bly. Want dit was die goedkoopste huis in die dorp.

M: Maar dit is 'n lekker huis.

Mev R: Is 'n baie lekker huis, maar dit is ook nie. So jaar of wat terug, hierdie huis, nou oorkant die pad, nou nie so oor nie, maar so oor. Daai een waarom sulke geel mure gebou is né. Nee, hulle het nou die dag daai man gestee met 'n mes.

M: In sy huis?

Mev R: Ek weet nie waar. Nee, nou jok ek. Ekskuus, hy het iemand doodgestee met 'n mes. Ek meen.

M: Dis bietjie crazy.

Mev R: Die polisie het hom gekry agter, agter ABSA bank. Daar het hulle hom en sy meisie gekry en gearresteer, want hy het iemand doodgemaak. Jy weet mos, dagga is hulle lewe. Hulle rook hom van die oggend tot die aand toe. En die kinders. Dit is hoekom ek vir my kind gesê het, Boetie los dit. En uh, dis 'n wrede plek die om te bly. Ons is die enigste blankes, hulle ignoreer jou, hulle is baas hierso. Dis hulle area, hulle vat oor hierso. As hulle wil partytjie, jy, jy kan nie uitloop en sê hoor hier sit af daai musiek nie.

M: Is daar hulp tussen hulle dan vir mekaar?

Mev R: Nee man, hulle staan bymekaar, hulle staan bymekaar. En hulle sal nie ... hier [naam] wat hier agter ons is, hy is ook 'n swarte. Baie Christelike mense: hy is 'n onderwyser en sy vrou is 'n onderwyseres. Ag hulle is baie nice: hulle sal met jou gesels, en vir ons vra hoe gaan dit met die kinders, en alles. Hoe kan ek sê? Hulle sal nie vir jou sê, hoor hier, hier is vir jou 'n bak kos of, um,

ek wil nou juis kyk of ek hom vyfuur vanmiddag in die hande kan kry nie - ek soek van hulle vye. Nee, hy, hy is baie ordentlik. Seker deur die werk wat hy doen wat hy 'n onderwyser is sal hy nou kom met baie mense bymekaar.

(Mrs R peeps through the lace curtain as someone walks by.)

Mrs R: You know, we are the only whites that live here. Because it was the cheapest house in town.

M: But it is a nice house.

Mrs R: It is a very nice house, but it also isn't. A year or so ago, this house across the road - not over there but over there (pointing to the wall as though we could see the houses on the other side of the street) that one with the yellow walls around it, hey. No, they stabbed a man with a knife the other day.

M: In his house?

Mrs R: I don't know where. No, now I am lying. Sorry, he had stabbed someone to death with a knife. I mean.

M: That's a bit crazy.

Mrs R: The police found him behind, behind the ABSA bank. They found him and his girlfriend there and arrested them, because he had killed someone. You know, dagga is their life. They smoke it from the morning to the evening. And the kids. That is why I said to my son, leave it. And, uh, it's a cruel place to live. We are the only whites; they ignore you; and they are the master here. It is their area, they take over here. If they want to party, you can't walk out and say, hey turn off that music.

M: Do they help each other?

Mrs R: No man, they stand together, they stand together. And they won't ... here [name] that lives behind us, he is also black. Very Christian people: he is a teacher and his wife is a teacher. Oh they are very nice; they will chat with you and ask how the children are and everything. How can I say, they will not say, listen here is a bowl of food or, um, I want to see if I can catch them at five o'clock this afternoon - I want some of their figs. No, he ... he is very respectable. Probably because of the work that he does - he is a teacher so he is exposed to all types.

Mrs R focuses on the prevalence of crime in their neighbourhood and a supposed increase in crime is associated with the changing racial composition. Mrs R and her family do share a physical space with their black neighbours, but do not want to share a social space, since on most of my visits to their home, there is a sense that nobody is at home with the curtains always drawn and the 'stoep' boarded up with cheap plywood. In contrast, in the neighbourhood where more whites are still residing, Mrs D keeps her front door ajar and openly associates with the neighbourhood she and her children reside in, even though they are only renting and have access to a relatively small area.

Mrs E also describes the area in which she lives, commenting on the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. In comparison to the other neighbourhoods, Mrs E and her family live in an area with vacant plots scattered between the Iscor houses where 'new' non-Iscor houses are being built. After collecting Mrs E from her house for one of our visits, she commented on a 'new' house as we drove past. In her view, 'new' black residents were moving into the neighbourhood and living on their plots while completing the building work, either in half-built houses that had no plumbing and windows or in a shack in the corner of the yard. This was, according to her, because 'they' (hulle) can only build when there is money. These 'new' houses, when compared to the old Iscor houses, have unique modern layouts, heavy wooden front doors with ornate carvings, neat tile roofs, cemented or paved driveways and well-tended gardens (some even have a vegetable patch). Since the building process is a prolonged one, the differences are easily noticeable to onlookers. Mrs E realises, that in comparison, her house is still an Iscor house and will probably remain one without new or modern additions. Her criticism of the prolonged building process and specifically highlighting race, speaks more to her own position, her own lack of resources and being white than to the limited resources available to her 'new' neighbours.

There are a few schools located in the area under discussion, but only one that the white children from the neighbourhood still attend. The headmaster, a middle-aged white male, is not originally from Newcastle, but from a neighbouring town. He describes the area and the neighbourhoods in which the school is located, but focuses on both the black

inhabitants as well as the white inhabitants. He attributes the characteristics associated with the physical space in terms of neighbourhoods to the whole town by comparing it to another town, Vryheid, which is located only a few kilometres away. On being questioned about the future of Mittal Steel and Newcastle, the headmaster describes Mittal Steel, the type of employment available, contract work and the fact that many children have left the school as their parents moved away because of retrenchment and restructuring. This extract then follows:

Hoof (H): Wat met Mittal vorentoe gaan gebeur, die weet ek nie; maar laat ek vir jou sê, ek het van Vryheid af gekom en die kind in Vryheid is 'n ander tipe kind as die kind van Newcastle. Dat jy meer jou plattelandse kind, meer stabiele kind, uh, jou kinders daaruit is, is uit 'n meer, uh, uh stewige huis gesin; veral as dit kom, ek wil amper sê, uh, ja; ek dink ek wil amper sê; 'n beter gedisipleneerde kind. Um, terwyl, terwyl jy hierso, uh, jy hierso jou kinders het wat die ouers nie regtig meer beheer het.

M: Dink u dis ook oor die tipe werk? Die klas van werk?

H: Dit kan wees, dit kan wees. Ons het ook vroër gesels oor die myn gemeenskap en, en, uh, uh, dit kan wees; want kyk daar is jou gemeenskap, daar is hoofsaaklik jou boere gemeenskap.

M: Meer 'n konstante gemeenskap?

H: Ja, meer konstant, meer stabiel. Jou ou daar het sy eie besigheid, daar is nie ...

M: Familie besighede?

H: Ja, familie besighede. Terwyl hierso is hulle werkers, um, en um ...

M: Blue collar?

H: Ja, ja. So daai tyd het daar ook heelwat kinders van hier af ook gekry wat regtig oulike kinders is. Um, maar, um, daai kinders het net ander waardes en normes, het, daarmee sê ek nie hulle is nie stout nie. Hulle is ook maar stout en hulle eksperimenteer ook as daar 'n 'party' is; dan loop dinge ook maar skeef onder hulle, met hulle 'after party' of wat ookal. Maar dit is, dit is anders ... (Hy trek 'n lang asem in.)

Headmaster (H): What is going to happen to Mittal in the future, that I don't know.

But let me tell you, I came from Vryheid and the child from Vryheid is a different type of child compared to the child from Newcastle. It is more your rural child, more stable child, uh, your children there are from a more, uh, uh, stable family home, especially when it comes, I want to almost say, uh, yes, I will say, a better disciplined child. Um, while, while here, uh, here your children have parents who do not really have control.

M: Do you think it is also about the type of work? The class of work?

H: That could be; that could be. We discussed the mining community and, and, uh, uh, it could be; because you see your community there is mainly your farming community.

M: More constant community?

H: Yes, more constant, more stable. People there have their own businesses, there is no...

M: Family businesses?

H: Yes, family businesses. While here, they are workers, um, and um ...

M: Blue collar?

H: Yes, yes. So during that time many children also came from here that were really good children. Um, but um, those children just have other values and morals. Now I am not saying they are not naughty; they are also naughty, they also experiment, and if there is a party things go wrong with the after party or whatever. But it, it, it is different ... (He takes a deep breath.)

The hierarchy and social status of the neighbourhoods, the school as well as the whole town is compared to Vryheid. Things and people are 'different' based on the physical space inhabited as well as the type of physical space. The main distinguishing characteristic the headmaster points out is ownership of public space, such as farmland, businesses and an investment in residential property because of business ventures in town as well as then the social space that becomes associated with it. There is a relationship between the ownership of property and perceived social position or status. Once there is ownership and consequently power over a physical space, it is possible to manipulate the social space attributed to it. Iscor historically owned the bulk of the houses in Newcastle

as the town expanded and developed. This bulk ownership meant that houses had a similar appearance and it is these remnants of likeness that remain after Iscor was privatised and which still today renders a house an Iscor house. The inhabitants renting Iscor houses had no power over the appearance of the houses and therefore had no control over the associated social space they inhabited. This includes power over goods and services, with certain kinds of social capital being necessary to appropriate physical space and the same capital ensuring access to and distribution of goods and services.

Not only do things and people become associated with the area and neighbourhood they are from and reside in, but the area also shapes and affects things and people. In one of my discussions with a social worker, she described this process in terms of the place or space you are from being written on your body.

Maatskaplike werker (MW): En dan begin daai sterk patroon. Um, en dan, jy weet, en dan spoedig as jy nie 'n motor het nie en jy moet orals heen loop met jou voete, dan begin jy lyk asof jy 'n verwaarlose persoon is, want jy kom daar aan verbrand met jou klere dalk stukkend en verwaarloos en verbleik. Ja, ja, so spoedig dan lyk jy soos iemand wat niemand meer regtig wil help nie en dan, dan word jy ook in elk geval nie meer regtig in ag geneem vir die posisie waarvoor jy eintlik in staat kon gewees het nie. Jy gaan dan miskien kan aansoek doen vir 'n laer een. So dit het 'n slegte impak, want as jy eers daar onder beland het is dit weer bitter moeilik om weer terug te klim op met die leer.

M: En ek lei ook af dat jy dan baie moedeloos is.

SW: Jy is baie moedeloos ja, nee. Want dit het aan jou selfbeeld gevat.

Social worker (SW): And then that strong pattern starts. Um, and then, you know, and if you don't own a car and you have to walk everywhere, then you start to look neglected, because you arrive sun burnt and your clothes are torn and unkept and faded. Yes, yes, so very quickly you look like someone that no one really wants to help and then you are not really considered anymore for the positions that you could have been capable of. You might be able to apply for a lower

position. So it has a negative impact, because once you have landed at the bottom, it is very hard to climb back up the ladder.

M: And I assume you get very despondent.

SW: You get very despondent yes, no. Because it eats at your self-esteem.

Through this writing on the body, the people become trapped in the physical space as well as in the social space they inhabit. Their place in space is inscribed on various levels, ranging from their daily practice, to the physical layout of the town, the appearance of the houses and the very bodies that they inhabit. A further illustration of this process, among many examples, is offered by Mrs D. Mrs D, who was only recently employed as a porter at one of the hospitals in town, has a stringent work schedule. She is dependent on the kindness of others for transportation opportunities in order to get to work on time on the other side of town and for her children to make it to school and day care. Consequently, her two children are often left to their own devices; they must get ready for the day, dress and eat on their own as well as be on time for the person picking them up. She often arrives earlier than her shift or has to stay long past her shift has ended, since she has to work around others' time schedules. Mrs E's daughter is in the children's home located in the centre of town. Her daughter may return home, but then she cannot attend the same school. This is because they do not own a car, cannot afford the daily taxi fair and cannot justify a young white girl travelling alone in taxi every day. Similarly, Mrs R recalls her struggle to access medical facilities for her sickly grandson, with Mrs X also commenting:

Mev R: Ja, ek en Ouma X kom nou al baie jare saam en, um, sy help my, staan my by. As ek moet hospitaal toe gaan, dan gaan sy saam. Waar ek haar hulp nodig het, daar is sy maar. En ek kan dit van niemand anderste sê nie.

Mev X: Mense wat kwansuis kom, haar vriende is, as sy vra, hoor hier vat my net, of petrolgeld, dan moet sy gaan rondspring vir bietjie petrol geld. Ek sê dis 'n blerrie skande daai, oraait ek sal jou vat.

Mev R: Sien, want hierdie karretjie is [my skoonseun] se pa se karretjie.

Mrs R: Yes, Grandma X and I have known each other for a few years now and, um, she supports me. If I have to go to hospital, then she goes with me. Where I need her help, then she gives it to me. I cannot say that of anyone else.

Mrs X: People that are apparently her friends, and if she asks, just take me, or petrol money, then she has to run around for a little petrol money. I say it is a damn shame that, alright, I will take you.

Mrs R: You see, because this little car is [my son in laws'] dad's little car.

Not only do the families 'become trapped' in their neighbourhoods because of a lack of transportation, but they also become 'trapped' or 'branded' certain 'types' of people, people who live specifically in these areas, or in the case of the headmaster's claim, who live in this town. These women are judged as unfit care givers, either for leaving their children home alone, having a child in the children's home or for not taking a sick child to hospital, while relying on charity and favours from others, which they often beg.

Place, race and body

Pierre Bourdieu describes a site as the absolute point in a physical space where one is situated, located or positioned - in other words, the place where these families exist (2009:123). However, we do not only exist physically: we also always inhabit social space. The social space is defined by its position relative to others or "as a juxtapositional structure of social positions" (2009:124). This relational practice creates a hierarchy and mirrors structured hierarchies that already exist in society. According to Bourdieu, this is one of the key characteristics related to social space, and that "there is no space in a hierarchized society that is not itself hierarchized and that does not express hierarchies and social distances" (2009:124).

In Newcastle, Iscor was privatised and Mittal Steel became prominent in the town, but the legacy of the company and the definitions rendered in social and physical space remained. The housing scheme succeeded not only in embedding the hierarchy of the workplace, but also disguised it at the same time, by rendering it natural and based on common sense. Many individuals left town due to downsizing and restructuring associated with privatisation. At the same time this shift coincided with political change

in South Africa. In neighbourhoods traditionally associated with lower status, 'new' black residents moved in, since houses were available and prices were affordable. The natural common sense notions of status associated with physical space could remain intact since race invariably became linked to the social space. The common sense notions used during Apartheid, in terms of status, remain intact while, in turn, defining whole neighbourhoods according to these terms. The common sense notions associated with status and, similarly, with race, become written in and on place, space and bodies and further justifies the common sense notions they are based on in the first place. Therefore, one cannot just stop thinking in terms of status or racial terms, as Maré (2001) suggests, since status and race infiltrate the body and social practices in a variety of intersecting spheres.

In neighbourhoods with higher status, which have a majority of white residents, the ability to dominate the space is made available. "The project of maintaining good 'property values'... produces or exacerbates racial and class exclusion, which condemns a majority to inferior housing while a few reap windfall profits" with even more excess capital as consequence (Young, 2005:132). "Capital makes it possible to keep undesirable persons and things at a distance at the same time that brings closer desirable persons and things ..., thereby minimizing the necessary expense ... in appropriating them" (Bourdieu, 2009:127). Certain kinds of capital are necessary to appropriate physical space; the same capital ensures access and distribution to goods and services. In Mrs D's neighbourhood, houses located closer to the church are better maintained. The church is associated with an investment of capital, not only in the financial sense but also in terms of social capital; so being close to the church leads to an association with the social space. According to Bourdieu, "the value of different regions of reified social space is defined in this relation between the distribution of agents and the distribution of goods in the social space" (2009:125). The families feel that they have become trapped in the physical and social space, rather than acknowledging that they do not have the capital, whether economic, cultural or social, to fit in or move up or out; hence they resort to the negative stereotyping and stigmatisation already associated with their neighbourhoods and themselves. According to Bourdieu, "those who are deprived of capital are either physically or symbolically held at a distance from goods that are the

rarest socially ... The lack of capital intensifies the experience of finitude: it chains one to a place” (2009:127).

Type of ownership and place serve as an important link in understanding social status and race. In some instances, it might be better to rent a space in a more desirable neighbourhood rather than owning something similar in a less desirable area - even though the latter is comparatively cheaper. Owning a property in a less desirable area, with no possibility of affording one in another area, means that people become physically and socially stuck. Here ownership does not necessarily secure access to higher status. However, renting in a less desirable area is associated with even less status and relates specifically to what one rents. Mrs R and her family rent out the room in their back yard (buitekamer) previously reserved for domestics to fellow whites and even had a family living there at one stage. This is reminiscent of ‘bywoners’, a historical term referring to landless white tenants (Teppo, 2004:28). Here status is linked not only to physical location but also to the type of space one inhabits at the location. According to Iris Young, “the size, style and especially location of the house, along with its landscaping and furnishing, establishes the individual’s location in the social hierarchy” (2005:132). The ‘buitekamer’ is regarded in racial terms and therefore linked to social status. Individuals, who have to rent this physical space, need to be associated with a lower status to keep intact the notions used during Apartheid and to now justify status according to race.

In the lower status areas, there is a concentration of negative stigmatizing and therefore the goods and services available further deteriorate. One neighbourhood made up of mostly Iscor houses, known as Arbor Park, was nicknamed Abor-deni since black residents were moving into the neighbourhood from the township named Madadeni. The nickname not only signifies a perceived change in the racial composition of the area, but also an apparent decline in the area as a whole. In the inhabitants’ “crime talk”, although disconnected and repetitive, there is also a re-establishment of order and meaning in creating unmistakable oppositional categories (Caldeira, 2000:20). According to Teresa Caldeira, the most important of these oppositional categories are good and evil. This can, in turn, be traced to a clear timeline of before associated with good and after associated

with bad. Before the increase in crime, before the families were ‘forced’ to live where they are now, before government changed, before when things were better is contrasted to the now, when there is social decay, fear and violence (2000:20). The contrast between the past and the present is over-emphasised and becomes based on a Utopian view of what was, in contrast to the over-exaggerated harshness of the now. The change in name (even if unofficially) from Arbor Park to Arbor-deni marks a similar opposition between good and evil, as well as referring to the then and now. The past and race become invariably linked to each other and nostalgia becomes a way of expressing a Utopian vision of the past and what was, whilst expressing dissatisfaction with the present as a way of speaking about race without necessarily using race terms explicitly. A particular expression of past comes to express race on many different levels of daily practice, such as the physical layout of the town, the look of the houses and on the very bodies that the people inhabit.

‘Crime talk’, as another type of expression regarding race, offers a language and avenue to express feelings relating to change: “crime supplies a generative symbolism with which to talk about other things that are perceived as wrong or bad, but for which no consensus of interpretation of vocabulary may exist” (Caldeira, 2000:34). The families are experiencing a loss of social status, spiralling downward mobility and are in a place where they do not feel comfortable. They are aware of stark stereotypes and prejudices that surround them, but in dealing with this, they do not question the stereotypes; “but instead dissociate themselves from the images and try to associate them with others, usually neighbours” (2000:54). Not only does a focus on crime and the social decay commonly associated with it offer the possibility to dissociate oneself from this, but it also further entrenches racial segregation. Since Mrs R and her family live in a crime-ridden neighbourhood where they are the exception to the rule, it justifies isolation based on fear and violence. They do not fit in, but also have very good reason not to try to do so. According to Caldeira, to maintain ones’ social position, it is necessary to create social distance between those with higher status and those holding a lower social position (2000:68). The families cannot become upwardly mobile and move out of their neighbourhoods in order to create the distance necessary to differentiate themselves from their neighbours. They therefore create social distance by setting up a “kind of symbolic

fence, both marking a boundary and enclosing a category, and therefore avoiding dangerous categorical mixtures” (2000:68).

Social distance is created in the place, but also around the place where these families live. The neighbourhoods historically associated with lower status, now have a comparatively lower status; thus the social distance needed for those who are ‘better off’ to feel safe in their higher status position has to increase. The social distance is related to the physical space as well as to the social. The social distance is imposed when the bodies of these individuals literally become trapped in the space they inhabit. The social distance is further entrenched when the ‘right’ white middle-class appearance can no longer be maintained: the inhabitants are either not white enough or too white. Whiteness as an ideology becomes written on the body, rendering different shades of whiteness visible from the outside. It is possible to *see* who and what these people are, based on their appearance and where they live. Also, how and what they look like is a product of where they are. Since the families are located far from goods and services, their appearance changes accordingly and becomes visible in certain situations on their bodies.

Mrs E generally walks to get around town and has a dark leathery skin, skinny hunched-over frame and worn shoes. Mrs R, in contrast, prefers to stay at home if no lift is offered or no petrol money available; and since she also feels unsafe in her neighbourhood, she generally stays indoors. Consequently, her face and hands are ash white in contrast to her harsh pencilled-in black eyebrows. On the one hand, the bodies of these individuals are constricted to such an extent that they inadvertently become black. This is clearly illustrated in a newspaper article when the reporter investigating ‘white poverty’ voices her concern about the race of the woman she is interviewing because of the woman’s appearance and dark skin colour and indirectly makes inquiries “om dood seker te maak sy is régtig wit” (to make sure she really is white) (Le Roux, 2009). In being poor and isolated in a squatter camp both this woman and (I would argue) other white individuals, who are struggling financially, become black or coloured and thus keep the social distance necessary to maintain a safe middle-class. In contrast, it seems some individuals become whiter, as their isolation and alienation increases. This keeps at a distance other

characteristics commonly associated with white poverty and isolates them to this group: they are viewed and judged as racist, lazy and backward. They are, in fact, too white.

If class and race worked together to define each other during Apartheid, some have said (such as Natrass and Seekings, 2005) that class has now replaced race as the major form of social stratification. However, where black and white experience poverty, whites seem to maintain race as a defining social category. According to Bourdieu, “the stigmatized area symbolically degrades its inhabitant, who in return, symbolically degrades it ... the only thing they share is the common excommunication” (2009:129). Poor whites protest against this excommunication by clinging to the terms of race. Yet these terms are not always obvious or explicitly stated; instead they are encoded in expressions of other things. In other places, this might be in expressions relating to the success and failure of the country, the new government, or the economy (Steyn, 2001).

Race becomes encoded in interpretations of physical space and place, as I have shown in this chapter, and also in a system of morality that is connected with the family and religion, as the next chapters will seek to demonstrate.

CHAPTER 2

'Failed families' as a material and moral matter:

Living the contradictory logic of family as necessity and impossibility

This chapter will consider how, in the four households in which field research was done, the concept of the family simultaneously occupies both 'material' and 'moral' worlds. I will attempt to show precisely how difficult it has been for people to keep their families together in the face of various emotional and economic circumstances, including frequent abandonment by men of partners and children. I will also show how the concept of family operates as a kind of moral value that in spite of the difficulties that these households face (and specially the difficulties the women in these households face), it remains valued and even an aspiration of most of my informants. I hope to show that it is precisely this gap between circumstances and ideals, which structures the experience of many in the households and that even if people do not achieve these aspirations and this is acknowledged, it does not result in a revision of their aspirations. Rather, as people become ever more aware of this gap, so their sense of failure seems to increase.

Central to this chapter, then, is an exploration of the contradiction between family conceived as a material reality and as a moral imperative - of the impossibility of maintaining a failing family and the contradictory social necessity to have a nuclear family. I have approached these 'four families' as households, which borrows from Rayna Rapp (1982), who suggests that in considering families, we start with households as spatially discrete empirical objects from which to view *how* families exist in different spaces. This is an important methodological consideration because it does not regard the family as a self-evident truth and, as I will describe in this chapter, because it allows me to grasp the way that people constantly move between places, creating no stability to the family empirically in Newcastle. Yet family operates as a local moral concept structuring people's sense of how things 'ought' to be.

The testimonies I present in this chapter, reveal how my informants speak to their own difficulties with family and to their ideas about what families should be. The testimonies are filled with stories about seeking out family, protecting family or keeping family intact

at any cost. However, there is also an emphasis on what is and what should be, not only in terms of family, but also in terms of resulting expectations regarding gender roles. A focus on the practices in households also speaks to how family is understood. Different meanings are articulated in relation to the concept of family and these meanings are often associated with, for example, what it means to be an Afrikaner or specifically a ‘moeder’ (mother) or ‘vader’ (father). For the purpose of this discussion, the emphasis will be on family and who is included or excluded, while keeping in mind that “the family is the normative, correct way in which people get recruited into households” (Rapp, 1982:51).

Making and unmaking families in Newcastle

The following section pieces together ‘family’ from the testimonies gathered. Although each family is unique in their history and conditions, certain themes re-occur. The women, as the most prominent narrators, constantly seek out family, preserve family or try to maintain what little remains of family, despite extreme circumstances such as poverty or violence. They anchor transitions in their family life with key moments that often relate to a shift in relationships, changing material conditions or a change in place. Although these are moments of failed marriages, domestic abuse, unemployment and relocation, they seem to come together to create a sense of ongoing tragedy.

Mrs D

Mrs D is divorced and has two children from the marriage: her daughter attends pre-school and her son is currently in the later stage of primary school. Mrs D has lived in Newcastle or the surrounds ever since her family moved from Secunda during her high school years.

Mev D: Ek het toe hier in [hoërskool naam] het ek matriek geskryf, en ek het begin werk by Iskor klub as 'n ‘waitress’. Na my sussie se dood, toe is ek Glencoe toe, en daar het ek gewerk as, uh, 'n ‘cashier’. En toe het ek begin verpleeg. Toe ek klaar was met my opleiding in Dundee Hospitaal, toe het ek terug gekom, hier 'n rukkie gewerk, toe is ek Pretoria toe - daar gewerk. Toe raak ek mal en kom terug en ek trou (giggel) en dit was 'n groot flop.

M: Het jy gekom om te trou? Of het jy terug gekom en toe kry jy die trou man?

Mev D: Weet jy ...,ek en hy het mekaar geken toe ek nog op skool was.

M: Was hy saam met jou op skool?

Mev D: Nee, hy is wat nege jaar ouer as ek, hy het gewerk by Iskor. En ag weet jy, ek was agt jaar getroud gewees né.

(Seun roep my buitentoe, dogterjie sing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star op haar eie wysie en met haar eie woorde, Mev D tel weer op waar ons was toe ek binne toe terug keer)

Mev D: Maar ons was agt jaar getroud gewees en ek't geskei van hom af, want ek kon dit nie meer hanteer nie. Dit was op 'n stadium toe ek baie siek was en ek was amper dood gewees. Ek het 'n hartaanval gekry by die werk. Na die TB wat ek gekry het, ek het TB opgetel by die provinsiale hospitaal, hier aan die begin toe ek nog swanger was met [my dogter], dit het my liggaam baie gekou, ag ja, alles het ingegee toe kry ek 'n hartaanval by die hospitaal, word opgeneem in ICU, vier weke daarna is ek opgeneem met dubbele longontsteking. En toe het ek ook begin met skeisaak en kyk toe het ek net mooi genoeg gehad.

Mrs D: I wrote matric here and then I started working at Iscor Club as a waitress. After my little sister's death I went to Glencoe and there I worked as a, uh, cashier. And then I started nursing. After I finished my training at Dundee Hospital, then I came back here for a short while to work; and then I went to Pretoria - worked there, then I went crazy. I came back, and got married (giggles) and it was a big flop.

M: *Did you return to get married? Or did you return and then meet your dream man?*

Mrs D: You know ... we knew each other when I was still in school.

M: *Was he at school with you?*

Mrs D: No, he is nine years older than I am. He worked at Iscor. And you know, I was married for eight years.

(The son calls me outside; the daughter sings Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star to her own tune and using her own words. Mrs D continues where we left off when I return.)

Mrs D: But we were married for eight years and then I divorced him because I could not take it anymore. That was when I was very sick and I almost died. I had a

heart attack at work. After the TB that I developed, I got TB at the provincial hospital at the start of my pregnancy with [my daughter] - it affected my health and really destroyed it. Yes, everything gave in after the heart attack at the hospital - taken to ICU, four weeks after that I was admitted with double pneumonia. And then I started the divorce proceedings because then I had had enough.

After her divorce, Mrs D and her children went to live with her parents who still lived in Newcastle. During this time, Mrs D's mother fell ill and subsequently passed away. Mrs D and her children stayed on with her father, but were soon evicted as rent and bills were not paid. After their eviction, Mrs D, her children and her father moved into a halfway house for the destitute and homeless (Rapha). Her father's alcoholism apparently escalated and Mrs D had to force him to leave the room he was sharing with her and her children in the halfway house.

Mev D: Ja nee, kyk, hy suip soos 'n vis hoor. En dis ook hoekom ons nie meer met mekaar praat nie. En toe van daar af, toe my ma oorlede is, toe sal ek uitvind, hy het nooit die huishuur betaal nie. Hy het nooit water en ligte betaal nie. Die huis wat hulle toe gehuur het, ons is toe daar uitgegooi. En ek het geen ander heenkome gehad nie; want toe het ek ook nog geen werk gehad nie. Toe het ek by Rapha gaan bly.

Mrs D: Yes, no, see he drinks like a fish; and that is also why we do not speak to each other anymore. When my mother passed away, then I found out he had never paid the rent. He had never paid the water and electricity. We were thrown out of the house we were renting. And I had no other place to stay because I didn't have a job then. That is when I went to stay at Rapha.

Mrs D found employment as a porter at the private hospital and accommodation in the 'flat' they are currently renting with the help of her sister. Her sister also lives in Newcastle with her husband and child, but the relationship is sometimes strained, even though her sister and brother-in-law are her children's godparents.

Mev D: Um, ek raak partykeer baie kwaad vir haar; want dit voel vir my asof sy, omdat ek sukkel ... dit voel asof sy baas speel oor my; en dan kry ons ons dae wat sy dit invryf. Sy is jonger as ek, maar sy moet die ousus wees.[...] Sy sal vir my sê, jy weet, ek is jonger as jy, maar ek moet vir jou sorg - so iets. En dit maak my seer.

Mrs D: Sometimes, um, I get really angry with her; because it feels as if she ... because I am struggling ... it feels as if she is bossing me around; and then we also have our days where she rubs it in. She is younger than I am, but she has to play the big sister role [...] She will tell me, you know that I am younger than you, but I have to look after you - something like that. And that hurts me.

Mrs D and her ex-husband remain estranged and neither she nor her children currently see him. The reasons given for this include alcoholism, molestation and physical as well as verbal abuse.

M: Wat se werk doen hy nou?

Mev D: Hy is 'n boemelaar. Hy is 'n boemelaar, want hy wil nie werk nie; want dan weet hy hy gaan moet onderhoud betaal.

M: What kind of work is he doing now?

Mrs D: He is a homeless tramp. He is a beggar because he does not want to work because he knows then he will have to pay maintenance.

Mrs E

Mrs E recounts her life story based as a chronology of her relationships. A shift in her relationship status usually coincides with other changes, such as moving or changing occupation. What follows is her description of her life until her marriage to Mr E.

Mev E: Ek is eintlik in Pretoria gebore; daar groot geword. Toe is ek daar deur die skole tot in matriek, en van daar af is ek na my ma toe, want my ma en my pa was - toe ek agtien was - was hulle geskei. En, uh, toe het die welsyn besluit hulle kan net vir my suster en my twee broers besluit waarnatoe moet hulle

gaan; hulle kan nie vir my bely nie. Toe sê hulle ... toe baklei my ma en pa. Toe sê ek vir hulle, ek is agtien, ek wil nie by een van julle bly nie. Ek gaan en ek gaan my eie potjie krap. Kry ek swaar, 'tough luck'; ek gaan dit die moeite werd maak

M: Hoe oud is Mevrou nou? As ek mag vra? Kom ons sê, hoe jonk is Mevrou nou?

Mev E: Ek word nou 52. [...] Toe trou ek. Toe was ek negentien. Toe trou ek met 'n outjie wat ek agtergekom het, na agt maande, hy neuk rond met ander vroumense. Toe sê ek vir hom, 'okay, tough luck', maar kom ek vat jou, jy gaan die skeibrief betaal, jy gaan die skei saak neem en, uh, toe is ons geskei. En die einste dag toe ons geskei is, laat ons afloop uit die hof se trappe af, toe sê hy vir my, kom ek koop vir jou 'n pakkie chips en 'n koeldrank. Toe sê ek vir hom, 'thank you, tickets'. Toe sê ek vir hom ek wil niks te doen hê nie, los my uit. Toe gaan ek en toe gaan werk ek.

(Die gesprek volg dan Mev E se werksgeskiedenis en daarna die volgende.)

Mev E: Toe ontmoet ek weer 'n ou, min wetend hy drink en hy slaan. Ek was vir nege jaar geslaan. Toe op daai stadium, toe het ek, uh, 'n seun. Hy is vandag 26; toe was hy 'n babatjie van ...

M: Hy was Mevrou se seun van die man?

Mev E: Van my tweede man. Toe was die laaitjie op 'n stadium 4 maande oud. Toe sê ek, 'sorry', ek kan dit nie meer 'handle' nie. Ek gaan net, ek vat nou my goed en ek waai. 'Trust' my nou: ek het my kind gevat en na my ma gegaan.

M: En waar was Mevrou se ma op daai stadium? Nogsteeds in Pretoria?

Mev E: Ja. En toe het ek by haar gaan bly. Toe ontmoet ek nou vir Mnr E. Na, uh, ek is ... hy is in '78 gebore; '85 toe bly ek by my ma; '87 ... ja, '87 toe ontmoet ek Mnr E. En, uh, toe sê hy vir my, nee, ek moet vir hom kom kuier in Newcastle. Nou ek't nie geweet waar is Newcastle nie [...] Toe sê ek nou vir my ma waar is dit. Nou my ma se ... se ... hoe kan ek sê, my stiefpa se seun het hier gebly. En ek het weer vergeet, want ek was 12/13 jaar terug hier. Toe sê sy vir my man daar waar ons was. Toe sê ek vir haar, O. Toe vra Mnr E vir my ek moet vir hom kom kuier net vir 'n maand.

M: Nou wat ... was hy in Pretoria om te ...

Mev E: Nee.

M: Hoe het mevrou en hy ontmoet?

Mev E: Ek het en hy het ... in die week toe skryf ek 'n brief en ek skryf al my besonderhede en ek het 'n kind en almal..

M: Daai van ek soek 'n maat. (F knik haar kop franties.)

Mev E: En my suster sê toe vir my (keel skoon maak) ja, maar wie sê hy gaan vir jou terug skryf. Ek sê. 'tough luck'; ek sê vir haar, weet jy wat, wat ek voel - vrede. Ek sê, as 'n man nie belangstel in my nie, ek, ek voel ek kan my kind self groot maak. Toe skryf hy vir my terug na 3/4 maande. Okay, die 16de Junie '87, toe het hy my kom haal sak en pak.

M: Baba en al. (Mev E glimlag.)

Mrs E: Actually, I was born in Pretoria; grew up there; attended school there until matric; and from there I went to my mother, my parents got divorced when I was eighteen. And then the welfare decided that they can only make decisions about my sister and two brothers - where they should go - they could not make decisions for me. That is what they said. Then my mother and father fought. Then I told them, I am eighteen, I do not want to live with either of you. I am going to pay my own way. If I struggle, tough luck, I will make it worthwhile.

M: How old are you now, if I may ask. Or rather, let us say how young are you now?

*Mrs E: I am turning 52. Then I got married when I was nineteen, to a man that I discovered after eight months was cheating on me with other women. Then I told him, okay, tough luck, but I am taking you to pay for the divorce proceedings. And then we got divorced; and that same day we got divorced, we were walking down the stairs of the court and he said to me, let me buy you a packet of chips and a, uh, cold drink. So I said to him, thank you, tickets; I told him I want nothing to do with him. Then I went to work.
(The conversation continues with Mrs E recounting her work history and then the next section follows.)*

Mrs E: Then I met another guy, not knowing that he drinks and hits. I was hit for nine years. At that stage, I had a son and I, uh, now he is 26 - then he was a baby of ...

M: He was your son from this man?

Mrs E: From my second husband. Then the little guy was 4 months old. Then I said, sorry I cannot handle it anymore, I am just going to take my stuff - and I left. Trust me, I took my child and I went to my mother.

M: Where was your mother at that stage? Still in Pretoria?

Mrs E: Yes. And then I went and lived with her. Then I met Mr. E. After, uh, I was ... he was born in '78; '85 I lived with my mother; yes, in '87 I met Mr E. Yes, uh, then he said to me, no, I have to come visit him in Newcastle. Now I did not even know where Newcastle was [...] Then, I asked my mother: Where is it? Now my mother's ... how can I say this, my stepfather's son lived here. I had forgotten since it was 12 or 13 years since I had been here. Then she told the man where we were. Then I said, Oh. Then Mr. E asked me to visit him for only a month.

M: Now ...was he in Pretoria?

Mrs E: No.

M: How did you and he meet?

Mrs E: He and I did ... during the week I wrote a letter; and I wrote down all my details and that I had a child and everything.

M: Those, I'm looking for a partner ... (F nods her head vigorously.)

Mrs E: And my sister said to me (clears her throat), yes, but who says he will write back. I said, tough luck. I said, you know what, I don't care. I said, if a man is not interested in me, I don't care - I can raise my child on my own. Then he wrote back after 3/4 months. Okay, the 16th of June '87 he came to fetch me with everything.

M: Baby and all. (Mrs E smiles.)

Mrs E and Mr E have two daughters; both were placed in a children's home from an early age, coinciding with Mr E's retrenchment that left the family struggling financially. The eldest daughter fell pregnant at sixteen and had to live with her boyfriend's parents

during and after her pregnancy, as she could not continue to live at the children's home. This relationship did not last and the boyfriend's parents are now the guardians of the granddaughter. The eldest daughter is currently living at home with her mother and father. The youngest daughter is still in the children's home, but often visits her parents as she and her mother have a close relationship. Mrs E's son from a previous relationship is in Dundee, where he is employed, but she does not see him often as neither can afford the travel expense. It seems that after her husband's retrenchment, both the family and the relationship between Mrs E and Mr E fell apart.

Mev E: Ja, maar toe kon ek, ek gee nie om om te sukkel nie en swaar te kry nie; net solank ek eet, my krag is betaal, ek het 'n dak oor my kop en my kinders het 'n slaapplek. Ek sê dit is al waaroor ek bekommerd is. En, um, toe sê die welsyn nou vir my, nee, ek moet kom om elke keer 'n kospakkie te kom haal. En op 'n stadium het ek verskriklik maer geword, so maer hulle was ge- 'worried'. [...] want daar was nooit kos nie, want hy het ... as [Mnr E] sy geld kry, het hy dit of gaan uit drink.

M: Is dit dan nou sy pensioen wat hy gekry het?

Mev E: Ja. Of hy het dit gaan uitdrink of hy het by meide betrokke en alles.

M: Bly hy dan nou nog in die huis?

Mev E: Ja. Toe besluit ek, 'okay', nou kom praat ek met die welsyn en kry hulle raad. Toe sê ek vir haar ek het op 'n stadium gekom want ek, ek 'worry'. Maar ek gaan uit die hoofslaapkamer uittrek, want ek kan dit nie meer vat nie - hy bad nie, niks nie.

M: Hy het bietjie opgehou met dinge.

Mev E: Ja. Toe trek ek nou uit, toe trek ek by my een meisiekind in.

M: Dis 'n drie slaapkamer?

Mev E: Ja. Toe trek ek [...] nou by [die jongste dogter] in, in die kamer in. Toe sê hy vir my, ja, maar jy kan nie daar slaap nie en, um, toe sê ek vir hom, 'shame'. Toe sê ek vir hom, man, ek hou my nie op met 'n man wat my rond neuk nie, want jy het trou gesweer die dag toe ons getrou het.

M: So hy is bietjie rof met mevrou.

Mev E: Ja, en, uh, toe sê die welsyn nou, 'okay', in daai stadium, los hom, los vir [oudste dogter], want ek moet haar wasgoed doen, sy maak nie haar bed op nie, sy dra niks by in die huis nie. Nou sy aard na haar pa, haar pa gee ook niks om nie. Hy worry nie hoe dit raak nie.

Mrs E: Yes, but I could ... I don't mind struggling and suffering, just as long as I eat, my electricity is paid, I have a roof over my head and my children have a place to sleep. That is all that I'm worried about. And, um, then the welfare said to me, uh, no, I have to come every week to fetch a food parcel; and at one stage I got very thin, so thin they were worried.[...]because there was never any food, because he had ... if Mr E got his money, he spent it all on alcohol.

M: Is that the pension he receives?

Mrs E: Yes. Either he went and spent it on drinking or he was involved with black women and everything.

M: Is he still living in the house?

Mrs E: Yes. Then I decided, okay, now I am going to the welfare to ask their advice. Then I said to her that I am at the stage now where I, I worry ... but I am going to move out of the main bedroom, because I can't take it anymore: he doesn't bath, nothing.

M: He stopped doing things.

Mrs E: Yes. Then I moved out and I moved in with my one daughter.

M: Is it a three bedroom house?

Mrs E: Yes, then I moved [...] into [the youngest daughter's] room. Then he said to me, yes, but you cannot sleep there. And I said to him, um, shame. Then I said to him I do not keep myself busy with a man that cheats, since you swore an oath of fidelity the day we got married.

M: So he is a bit rough with you?

Mrs E: Yes, and, uh, then the welfare said - at that stage - leave him alone, leave the [oldest daughter] alone, as I have to do her laundry. She doesn't make her bed, she contributes nothing to the house. She is like her father; her father also does not care. He does not worry what it's like.

Mrs E also has a sister who lives in Newcastle, but the relationship has been under severe strain since the death of their mother. They do not speak to each other and even though the cousins attend the same school, they avoid each other. Mrs E's youngest daughter told her mother that the cousin apparently gossips about the fact that they are in the children's home, saying that it is because their mother cannot take care of them properly. I asked the social worker about the sisters' relationship and she alluded to both sisters and their families being in similar socio-economic situations.

Mrs R and Mrs X

Mrs R currently lives with one of her daughters, her son-in-law, her two toddler grandchildren and her youngest son. Mrs R and her son only moved from the halfway house a few years ago in order to help take care of the grandchildren as the youngest has been chronically sick since childbirth and both parents work - the father at Mittal Steel and the mother at a fast food outlet.

M: Hoekom het julle dan nou Newcastle toe getrek sewentien jaar terug?

Mev R: Okay, um, ek was getroud met my kinders se pa, toe's hy dood [van] kanker. Maar dinge het nie so goed gegaan tussen ons twee en ons is uitmekaar uit. En toe het ek hierdie man van my ontmoet; toe is ons getroud; toe is ons weer geskei; en toe is ek maar nog al die jare in Newcastle. My kinders het hier groot geword, hulle is getroud hierso, twee is toe terug ... en my seuntjie is gebore en my jongste seun is hier. Ek het net die een van hierdie man, ek het net die een. Maar die meisiekinders se pa is dood. Hy het 'n hart aanval gehad, die oomblik toe hy die hartaanval het, toe versteen die bloed in sy hart.

M: *Why did you move to Newcastle seventeen years ago?*

Mrs R: *Okay, um, I was married to my children's father and then he died [of] cancer. But things did not go that well between us and we separated; and then I met this husband of mine; then we were married; then we were divorced; and so I have been in Newcastle all these years. My children grew up here, they got married here, two went back ... and my little boy was born and my youngest son is here. I only have the one from this husband, I only have the one. But*

the girls' father passed away. He had a heart attack; the moment he had the heart attack the blood clogged in his arteries.

Mrs R and her second husband moved into the halfway house (Rapha) with their son after her husband was retrenched from Mittal. The husband lived with them in the halfway house for some of the eight months they were there, until Mrs R divorced him.

Mev R: Ek en sy pa is geskei, want sy pa is baie aggressief. Ek het meer pakslae deur hom gekry as wat ek kon vat. Hy's 'n aggressiewe mens van nature.

(Kleindogter sing: Everybody! No, no, everybody!)

Mev R: Hy't nie gedrink nie. So hy was maar so baie aggressief. (Sy praat al hoe sagter tot sy stil is.)

Mrs R: His father and I got divorced because his father is very aggressive. I got more beatings from him than I could take. He is by nature an aggressive man.

(Granddaughter sings: Everybody! No no no everybody!)

Mrs R: He did not drink. So, he just was very aggressive. (She speaks quietly and her voice trails off.)

During my visits I only met with Mrs X at Mrs R's residence and never alone. Mrs X was not forthcoming in inviting me to her house and although I did broach the topic she kept details about her family life and home to the bare minimum. She gave short answers and then changed the topic. My understanding is that Mrs X has two sons, both of whom live with her. One son is married to his second wife and he has a child from a previous marriage - Mrs X's only grandchild. Mrs X hardly ever sees this grandchild and I suspect the biological father, Mrs X's son, doesn't either.

M: Het Tannie kinders?

Mev X: Ja, ek het twee.

M: Hoe oud is hulle nou?

Mev X: Hulle is getroud. Die ene is getroud en die ene, 'n vrou moet nie naby hom kom nie. Hy hardloop weg.

M: Is hulle ook in Newcastle?

Mev X: Hulle is ook in Newcastle; hulle bly by my.

M: Aunty X, do you have any children?

Mrs X: Yes, I have two.

M: How old are they?

Mrs X: They are married. The one is married and the other, a woman cannot get close to him, he runs away.

M: Are they also in Newcastle?

Mrs X: They are also in Newcastle; they live with me.

Mrs X was however, very outspoken about Mrs R's relationship with her ex-husband. During one of my visits, the ex-husband had come to take his and Mrs R's youngest son on a fishing trip to a nearby dam.

Mev X: Jammer om dit te sê, dan kom daai vark van 'n man, van wie sy geskei is, dan kom vloek en skel hy haar hierso. Het vanmôre weer vir hom gesê, het nie omgee wat ek vir hom gesê het nie. Sy het naderhand gelag daaroor, toe sê sy, ja, nou het jy jou Moses tee gekom; jy't gedink jy kan sê wat jy wil.

Mev R: Jy weet, hy stap hier in by die huis in om sy kind te kry. En dan, nee, en dan is hy in die yskas. En vat dan wat hy wil vat. En dis nie my goed daai nie, Michelle. Dit is hulle goed en hulle pa en ma se goed. Dit is nie my goed nie. Dan sê ek vir hom, weet jy wat jy kan nie dit nou eet nie, want dit is nie my goed nie. En dan poep hy net sulke lang poepe.

Mev X: Hy is nie ...

Mev R: Daai man gee nie eens vir my 'n gryntjie brood vir sy kind nie. Hy het vyf jaar laas onderhoud betaal.

M: Werk hy nou hierso?

Mev R: Nee, waar?

Mev X: Net sodra hy hoor sy gaan hom dagvaar dan los hy sy werk.

Mrs X: Sorry to say this, then that pig of a man whom she divorced, he comes here and swears at her and fights with her. Just this morning I said it to him again, I don't care what I said to him. After a while, she started laughing, then she said, now you've met your match, you thought you could say what you want.

Mrs R: You know, he walks into this house to get his child. And then, no, then he is in the fridge. And he takes what he wants. And it's not my stuff that, Michelle. It is their stuff and their mom and dad's. It is not my stuff. Then I say to him, you know what you cannot eat that, because it is not mine. And then he just farts these long farts.

Mrs X: He is not...

Mrs R: That man does not even give me a breadcrumb for his child. He has not paid maintenance for five years.

M: Does he work here now?

Mrs R: No, where?

Mrs X: As soon as he hears that she is going to sue him, he leaves his job.

Mrs R often mentions her mother who lives in Middelburg with her sister. Her brother was in Newcastle, but has now moved to the Johannesburg area.

Mev R: My sussie is die oudste, dan is dit ek en dan is dit my broer. Nou ek sien glad nie my broer nie, want ek stel nie belang nie. Hy het tot nou die dag, het hy hier aangebly. Toe het hy by my gebly, maar hy't sommer goed onder my neus gevat en verkoop en, uh ...

M: Is hy dan nog in die dorp dan?

Mev R: Nee hy is in, uh, Randfontein. In Johannesburg. Hy's in daai wêreld nou. My sussie is in Middelburg. Nou ... sy kom nie Newcastle toe nie, ek moet ... haar werk hou haar besig; daar is nie tyd om te kuier nie. Ons is maar wyd verspreid. Verder van die familie, hoe minder probleme het jy.

Mrs R: My sister is the eldest, then it's me, and then it's my brother. Now I do not see my brother at all because I am not interested. Until recently he was still staying here. He stayed with me, but he just took things from right under my nose and sold them and, uh ...

M: Is he still in town?

Mrs R: No, he is in, uh, Randfontein. In Johannesburg. He is that area now. My sister is in Middleburg. Now ... she does not come to Newcastle, I have to ... her job keeps her busy; there is no time to visit. We are very spread out. The further away you are from family, the fewer problems you have.

In the simplest terms, these women search for the support and love that family should provide in the broader context of sometimes very restrictive material possibilities linked to their economic circumstances. Their economic circumstances often influence their position in terms of the physical space they inhabit and in terms of their social space.

The taken-for-granted hierarchies or the naturalness of a division of labour - based on the logic of the family - comes under strain in attempts to move beyond constricting material conditions, as the alternative of conforming to family may only lead to deteriorating circumstances. The men in the families are absent, as they cannot live up to the ideal of the family; they are dominated and restricted by what it means to be part of a family and by what it means to be a husband and a father (Hunter, 2002:106). The women stay behind and continue to negotiate and engage with the extremely difficult material struggle of maintaining the ideal family, as I will show.

The last quotation included in this section suggests that family is a burden and this is an underlying aspect of many of the other quotations. Absent fathers, abusive husbands, unemployment and constant movement or relocation add to the burden. Yet, people still constantly seek to keep family together by hiding the flaws or papering over the cracks that appear. Even when the cracks become large chasms, the concept of family is not questioned; instead it urges them to work even harder at being a family in a hopeless attempt to prevent them from conceiving themselves as being a failure.

The moral and symbolic value of the nuclear family

These testimonies and stories speak of lives spent trying to conform and attain or maintain an ideal nuclear family, i.e. a father or husband at the head of the house and the breadwinner, a mother or wife as the caregiver and obedient, well-behaved children. The ideal of family seems a burden rather than a supportive certainty and begs the question of why people want to be a family at all. To answer this question:

[w]e must ask of the modern family what Foucault inevitably asked of the concepts he interrogated: not simply “What does this concept *mean*; what does it refer to”; but, “How and to what effect is this concept deployed, what does it *do*?” (Original emphasis, Ferguson, 1999: 205)

Susan Ziehl notes that “the family as an ideology, that is, a set of ideas which masked rather than reflected the reality of people’s lives” (2003: 210). Rapp refers to this distinction in terms of family as a moral concept and the reality of family in which “the norms concerning families are that people should be loving and sharing within them and that they should be protective” (1982:56). The reality is instead often divorce, domestic violence, child abuse, alcoholism and desertion. There is a disjuncture between what families are supposed to be and what they actually are, which further creates expectations around gender roles, for example. Just as the nuclear family does not reflect reality, so too do the expectations; but this does not mean that the consequences are not real. A ‘gap’ is created between reality and the ideal family (what is expected) that constantly needs to be overcome or negotiated. The gap between family as a moral concept (and the work of norms) and the actual situation of these people, structures their experiences in such a way that they feel a constant ‘lack’ that can only be overcome by being the ideal family, even though previous attempts ended in bitter failures or resulted in bleak and violent circumstances.

Following his research in the Copperbelt region, James Ferguson argued that “the nuclear family became for some both an object of fantasy and a symbol of a comfortable, respectable, up-to-date Christian middle-class life” (1999:175). This is echoed by Anthony Giddens, who adds, “families that did not conform to the white, suburban, middle-class ‘ideal’ were seen as deviant” (2001:175). Even if, as in the case of South Africa, “the nuclear family household represents a minority of all households, [this] is not

evidence that it does not 'predominate' " or that it should lose its importance as a moral norm (Ziehl, 2006:98). The aspiration to the ideal family creates a relationship between materiality and morality as two separate spheres, which still constantly and dependently inform each other.

Regarding the specific gendered voice associated with the testimonies, which speak about family and the relationship between the material and moral conditions this entails, Rapp notes that often "it is women who bridge the gap between what a household's resources really are and what a family's position is supposed to be" (1982:57). The gap is not only the result of the disjuncture between normative considerations and material conditions, but a lack in the one, signals possible shortcomings in the other. It is then no coincidence that women's voices dominate in the testimonies or that they are the ones who reach out for help and aid when the disjuncture between what is and what is supposed to be threatens the normative dimensions and material dimensions of their families. I suspect that the men were kept at a distance, physically and in our discussions as they cannot be trusted to tell the right kind of story that will hide the cracks in the family, such as wayward children, bad mothers or absent or unemployed fathers. Alternatively, the absent men are made into scapegoats for all deviations from 'family', both in terms of transgressing norms and in terms of not providing the material means necessary to maintain a family. In both cases, the women dominate the discussion about family life and keep intact the remnants of their family and of themselves as mothers and wives. Since the distinction made in terms of gender and the understanding of (specifically) a nuclear family is structured around a division of labour, women, wives and mothers are traditionally bound to the inside of the home while the men, husbands and fathers work outside the home (Rapp,1982:53). Men are easily written 'out', while the family is kept intact in accordance with normative dimensions and expected material dimensions, such as maintenance payments.

However, the normative dimensions of family are not as easily over-ruled, with many violations and transgressions of what should be family being forgiven, such as Mrs D relates about growing up in her own family.

Mev D: Ek dink dit het met my eie ouers te doen gehad. My ma en pa het ook nie 'n wat wonderlike huwelik gehad nie. My pa het ook maar my ma verskriklik getrap en so aan, en sy het net vasgebyt. Sy het ons groot gemaak dat sy gee nie op nie, en met die gevolg is ... nou loop jy met daai, daai ding in jou kop: ja, 'okay', jou huwelik werk nie, jou verhoudings werk nie - maar 'n vrou gee nie op nie, want Ma het jou so geleer.

M: So wat doen jy?

Mev D: Dan hou jy jou mond en jy gaan net aan.

(Lang pouse, 'n motor ry verby.)

Mev D: My ma het haar mond gehou totdat sy dood is. En ek het my ma gesien en na my eie situasie gekyk en besluit, 'no ways', ek gaan dit nie doen nie. Nou moet ek van vooraf begin op my eie.

Mrs D: I think it has a lot to do with my own parents: my mother and father also did not have the best marriage. My father also belittled my mother terribly and so on and she just held on. She raised us believing that you do not give up and the consequence now is that you walk around with that thing in your head: yes, okay, your marriage is not working, your relationships are not working, but a woman does not give up - because that's what Mom taught you.

M: So what do you do?

Mrs D: You keep your mouth shut and just carry on.

(Long pause; a car drives by.)

Mrs D: My mother kept her mouth shut until the day she died. And I looked at my mother and at my own situation and decided, no ways, I am not going to do it. Now I have to start all over again, on my own.

The role of the woman and the wife is to bridge the gap between what the family is and what the family is supposed to be; and I believe that, in many cases, this means hiding inconsistencies. Mrs D stayed with her husband for six out of the eight years they were married, which she claims were loveless years. Her husband abused her verbally, emotionally and physically during their relationship and in the end he had an affair with a

young man living in their home, which later caused suspicion about her husband's relationship with their son. When Mrs D eventually left her husband, she had to start over, which meant a loss of her family, a loss of her abilities as a mother and a wife and also a loss of the material conditions she and her family were used to. The material consequences of the family falling apart might also justify keeping things together, even though normatively the family does not exist.

I asked Mrs E why she and her husband do not get divorced as, according to her, they are separated. Her answer was simple: she did not want to put her children through the trauma of a divorce and the welfare suggested she stays with her husband. I suspect that the reason the welfare made this recommendation had more to do with the material consequences of a possible break-up, rather than trying to keep the family intact. If Mrs E and Mr E get divorced, both parties be worse off as there is currently still some pooling of resources, but a divorce will mean that at least one party will lose a home and welfare will gain yet another client.

Mrs R also alludes to both the normative and material dimensions that lead to family making sense when she reminisces about her ex-husband.

Mev R: Hy het my op sy hande gedra, hy was 'n ander man, ander mens. Destyds om alleen jou kinders groot te maak is nie 'n grap nie. En, ag nou maar, 'n vrou wil nou ook nie alleen wees nie.

Mrs R: He treated me like a princess; he was a different man, different person. Raising your children alone then, was no joke. And, well, a woman also does not want to be alone.

However, according to the normative dimensions of family and the expectations structured around gender roles, a good wife or mother cannot stay with a husband or father simply to maintain or attain material conditions.

Mev R: Want 'n vrou wat vir 'n man gunsies doen en daarvoor betaal word, daar's net een woord daarvoor vir haar, en dis 'n prostituut - klaar.

Mrs R: Because a woman who does favours for a man and gets paid for them, there is only one word to describe her, and that is a prostitute - finished.

This extract follows Mrs R's re-telling of her ex-husband's proposition to tempt her and their son to move back in with him. He stated that he had a job and would look after them, or rather, take care of their material needs. I suspect the reason why he wanted his family back together was because he is equally caught up in the normative ideal of being a family. Similarly, his ex wife seemed flattered by the offer, but a focus only on the material was not enough to sway her. Her decision was swayed by normative considerations regarding, for example, love and trust associated with the family as she regarded being with her husband only for material gain as being morally wrong. Even if the primary role of men, husbands and fathers is described in material terms, it does not mean that this is enough to amount to being a family (Hunter, 2002:108). There is the same amount of moral pressure on men and women as they strive to live up to the ideal family and often morality and not materiality is the main concern.

From a woman's point of view, however, the husbands and fathers often initiate the break-up of the ideal family when they lose that which defines their place materially, not only in the family but also outside the family. In the testimonies of these women, it is at those moments when the men, fathers and husbands in the family lose their employment (whether due to retrenchment, being fired or not being able to find alternative employment fast enough.) that they cannot live up to the material expectations. The expectations structured around the ideal family for both the men and the women who strive to uphold it, seems to become more difficult to contend with as outside factors add further strain, especially on the men. It is not as easy to find work as a white semi-skilled labourer these days as it might have been under the previous political dispensation (the old South Africa) or in the current global economy that is evidently still recovering from a recession. Added to this are material inequalities that remain gendered, with some "men relatively wealthy, marginalised others and ... a group of severely impoverished

women” (Hunter, 2002:116). Men are caught in a situation in which they are expected to work to fulfil the material conditions of family, but they cannot find work and therefore cannot fulfil the normative conditions of family. Rapp explains this as the conditions that come to define the formations of the nuclear (especially working class) families, as they are “formed via marriage, which links men and women ‘for love’ and not ‘for money’... one must work for the sake of the family, and having a family is the “payoff” for leading a good life” (1982:54). Similarly, Mark Hunter (2002) notes that it is not that marriage or family become unaffordable according to material terms, but that it becomes unaffordable to maintain family in both a material and normative sense.

The fact that family values structure expectations around, for example, gender roles or responsibility - even when households obviously do not fit into the mould - does not discount the progress made in terms of women’s rights, for instance. The focus is rather on how these issues interrelate, especially in families that are already struggling as they are poor. How does one negotiate being a caring, nurturing mother with the demands of having to be a strong independent woman? The tension increases in situations where women are supposed to stand up for themselves and their children by, for example, leaving an abusive husband. The situation seems to be exacerbated in poor and struggling families and it is usually these families that receive the most critique regarding both the ‘old’ normative values relating to family and the values relating to the ‘new’ and transformed gender roles. The challenge here is not to pathologise those who are poor and struggling, and in this case white, but to point out that the balance between what is expected - both in terms of normative family values and new gender equality views - are easier to maintain in middle-class communities. For example, women can work in the same environment as men and remain excellent caregivers, since they can afford the best quality care for their children or because tensions between husband and wife are mediated and hidden by visiting a therapist. I suspect that the deviations from the norms of the ideal family are similar when focussing on the middle-class, but because they have resources that are not available to the poor and the working class it is easier to overlook and forgive, so that reality seems to be the ideal. This does not mean that families do not fall apart in the middle-classes for the same reasons, but that the breakdown is framed more eloquently by hired lawyers. In addition, this does not mean that family is all about

money and that if the material dimensions of family are met then the normative dimensions naturally follow. It is just easier to try to live up to the ideal when certain aspects already seem to be in place.

If either the normative or material dimensions are lacking, it seems that families try to overcompensate to make up for the deficit. For example, a single mother is still subject to normative family values that still structure expectations and these now increase as the mother has to be a father as well. “Mothers, especially single-parent households, are burdened with the exclusive responsibility of nurturing their children, even though they may no longer be willing to sacrifice unconditionally their individual freedom for their progeny” or be able to (Bourgois, 1997:260). The men are forced further from their families as they become redundant or are replaced. Mrs D reiterates this tension in her explanation as to why she does not place her children in foster care.

Mev D: Toe sê ek vir haar, weet jy, ek het nie verniet baklei nog al die pad om my kinders net in pleegsorg te sit nie. Ja, ek kry swaar, ek kry nie 'n baie goeie salaris nie, ek is 'n enkel ouer, maar my kinders het 'n dak oor hulle koppe - alhoewel nou nie die beste nie. Hulle eet elke dag, hulle eet nie net een maaltyd nie; hulle kry hulle broodjies in vir skool; hulle kry kos as hulle van die huis af kom. [...] Dis nie fancy nie, maar hulle kry kos en ek probeer om vir hulle groentes en vleis te gee.

M: Nou hoekom sê sy dit dan nou, die [vrou]?

Mev D: Wel, nee, sy was onder die indruk gewees ek kan nie sorg vir my kinders nie.

M: Kom ons kyk van buite af, dink jy baie mense dink dit?

Mev D: Ja, ek dink baie mense dink dit, ja. En dit maak my gefrustreerd, weet jy. Ek het nou 'n paar dae terug gesit en huil en toe dink ek by myself, jissie, dalk is dit beter, dalk is dit beter om my kinders in pleegsorg te sit. Dalk is dit.

M: Nou wat beteken dit as mens se kinders nou in pleegsorg is? Hulle bly dan nou nie meer by jou nie?

Mev D: Presies.

M: Hoe is dit dan nou anders as die kinders in die kindershuis?

Mev D: Gewoonlik wat hulle doen met kinders in pleegsorg, dan soek hulle mense wat, wat nie kinders het nie, of mense wat finansiël sterker is. Dit gaan alles oor geld. Finansiël speel 'n baie groot rol. Maar dit gaan nie net oor geld nie; dit gaan oor liefde ook. En op die oomblik is dit ook nie alles reg daar nie, want 'n kind het 'n pa en 'n ma nodig, en ek is net 'n ma, alhoewel ek probeer 'n pa ook wees. En soos ek sê, daar is nie 'n mans figuur nie, bid elke aand en vra Here asseblief gee my net 'n man. Maar ek het nog nie 'n man in my lewe nie en ongelukkig is die lewe so dat daar is baie mans wat nie regtigwaar die moeite werd is nie. En ek gaan nie my kinders weer blootstel aan 'n klomp paddas nie.

Mrs D: Then I said to her, you know I did not fight all this time for nothing, just to put my children in foster care. Yes, I am struggling. I don't get the best salary, but my children have a roof over their head. Granted not the best. They eat every day, they do not just eat once a day; they get sandwiches to take to school, they get food when they come home from school. It is nothing fancy, but they get food and I try to give them vegetables and meat.

M: Now why did the [woman] say this?

Mrs D: Well, no, she was under the impression I cannot care for my children.

M: Let's look at this from an outsider's perspective - do you think many people think that?

Mrs D: Yes, I think many people think that, yes. And it frustrates me, you know. A few days ago I sat crying and thought: maybe it is better - maybe it is better to place my children in foster care. Maybe it is.

M: What does it mean if your children are in foster care? That they are not with you anymore?

Mrs D: Exactly.

M: How is that different to the children's home then?

Mrs D: Usually what they do with children in foster care, they look for people who do not have children or people who are financially better off. Everything is about money. Finances play a big role. But it is not just about money; it is about love as well. And at the moment that is also not all there, because a

child needs a father and a mother, and I am only a mother, although I try to be a father as well. And as I say, there is not a male figure. I pray every night and ask God, please just give me a man. But I do not yet have a man in my life and unfortunately life is such that there are not many men who are really worth the effort; and I am not going to expose my children to a bunch of frogs.

Mrs D has failed as a wife as she could not keep her husband. She is apparently failing as a mother as she cannot care for her children, and now she is failing at being a 'father' as well. Either she has to live up to the normative and material expectations structured around being a father as well or she has to find a man to fill this gap. This is not just for her sake, but also for the sake of her children and ultimately to be a family again. It may seem that she and her children are better off now without a man in their lives, and Mrs D acknowledges this, but even with dramatic changes in gender relations and roles, there is no alternative to the family. This makes the integration of these changes tricky and sometimes even contradictory. Being a family seems to become a constant trade-off between material and normative expectations and if any part of it is missing people experience a lack and feelings of inadequacy.

Mrs D stayed in what she claimed to be a loveless marriage for several years, possibly to keep the material dimension intact, but also to ensure the love, care and support her children need from a father. The reason that Mrs D did not leave her husband was based on expectations of her as a mother and wife and to keep the family intact since that is what is necessary for children growing up.

M: Maar dink jy dis so belangrik nou om 'n 'partner' te hê?

Mev D: Dit is belangrik ja, want my kinders het 'n pa nodig. Hulle is klein. Al [my seun] se probleme weet ek sal stop sodra hy 'n vaderlike figuur in sy lewe het. Dieselfde met [my dogter]. [My dogter] word groot sonder 'n pa. Sy't nog nooit regtig 'n pa gehad nie en jy kan sien sy mis, sy mis daai iets in 'n gesin.

M: *But do you think it is that important to have a partner?*

Mrs D: It is important yes, because my children need a father. They are young. I know all [my son's] problems will stop as soon as he has a father figure in his life. The same with [my daughter]. [My daughter] is growing up without a father; she has never really had a father and you can see she misses that something in a family.

The consequences of failing as a family relate to more than transgressing normative and material dimensions of what the ideal should be. The consequence is not only a failed family but also a legacy of failed families for the next generations, who will be doomed to repeat the past and becomes the primary incentive to keep the ideal family dream alive for mothers and fathers, wives and husbands. The attempt, at the very least, to keep alive the hope of succeeding at being a family means that their children will have a chance at being perhaps a better family, just as they are trying to be in many instances better than the families in which they were raised. Being a good family is ultimately about being good people and if they are not a family or fail at being a good family, the people are inadequate failures and their children are destined to share a similar fate.

The ideal family is defined both in terms of normative and material dimensions; but these dimensions often do not work together and sometimes even work against each other. Family is about material security as it recruits people into households; but is also about living up to normative ideals and being a good moral person, mother, father, husband, wife or child. Sometimes in the effort to be a family or make a family, choices are made that do not make sense economically or morally, for example a wife staying with an abusive husband or a father who cannot look after his children.

It is not that these people are flawed or cannot be good families. Common sense dictates the way things 'ought' to be and this is embedded in their everyday practices, justifying their constant effort to live up to the ideal of family even if it is sometimes detrimental. But then, how does the morality remain intact if the material condition of these families seems to suggest that they should reject the concept of family? Attention now needs to shift to a powerful material enforcer of this morality in these people's lives - welfare institutions.

CHAPTER 3

Helping people get by, helping them change:

Three institutions in Newcastle and the enforcement of moral order

-The attempt to impose upon man, a creature of growth and capable sweetness, to ooze juicily at the last round the bearded lips of God, to attempt, to impose, I say, laws and conditions appropriate to a mechanical creation, against this I raise my sword pen-

(*A Clockwork Orange*, by Anthony Burgess)

“To institute, in this case, is to consecrate, that is, to sanction and sanctify a particular state of things, an established order.” (Bourdieu, 1991:119)

The families mentioned in the study and others who are struggling often rely in part or solely on institutions for survival. This chapter will focus on three institutions identified during the research as playing a prominent role in the lives of the families. The chapter aims to show that the institutions seek to impose a morality around poverty and specifically white poverty as well as prescribe how to overcome poverty. These institutions can impose this morality based on a related position of power. They have the power to help people survive (sometimes on a day-to-day basis), they have the power to take away (refuse to provide assistance or even remove children) and they ultimately represent the promise of something better. A strong religious discourse, based on Protestant Christianity, underwrites the moral order, which dictates a transformation of self (the inside) to change external conditions (the outside) and to ultimately move beyond poverty. John and Jean Comaroff also note this relationship and state that “inner and outer transformations go together”, but that the outside becomes a way to read the inside (1997: 227). To overcome poverty, it is necessary to transform the self or reform the soul, but the only way this can be measured is through the outside. The inside is measured through external conditions achieved by subscribing to the techniques set out by the institutions, such as intervention, correction and rehabilitation that “act in the depth on the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations” of people (Foucault, 1991:16). The consequence is not always change or the expected alleviation of poverty; rather this leads to the classification of people and a justification of their circumstances. All those poor and struggling are in need of a transformation of self in order to change their circumstances. The consequence is the elimination of difference rather than of inequality (Procacci, 1991:164).

In the following section, I will describe each institution, detailing what they do, their moral compass and the extent of their engagement with the families. This description will allow me to provide a more detailed discussion of the relationship between the ‘four families’ and the institutions and to demonstrate the analysis I have just proposed. At the beginning of my fieldwork, it was through one of these institutions that I met the four families whose lives I have so far described.

Three Newcastle institutions associated with ‘poor whites’

The first institution I will consider is the ‘Christelike Maatskaplike Diens’ (CMD) (Christian Social Services). Although, they function as a social services office and operate along similar lines as state welfare, the institution does not receive any funding from the state. They facilitated my initial contact with the families, with the help of one of their social workers at their Newcastle office. The social worker informed me about the food parcel system they have in place and that a family receiving such a food parcel was a strong indication that the family was struggling to survive. All of the families proposed for inclusion in the research by the CMD and considered as fitting my inquiry around white poverty were recipients of food parcels or had until recently still been recipients of food parcels.

The CMD offices are located at one of the many Dutch Reformed churches in town in the neighbourhood in which Mrs D and her family live. The church is a face brick building in a dark chocolate colour with a pointed architectural feature used instead of a traditional church tower. The grounds are neat and regularly maintained with a palisade fence echoing the architectural focus point. Adjacent to the church are cement steps leading up to the offices of CMD. In the reception area is a short corridor leading to several offices allocated to different social workers and storage rooms for donation items ranging from clothes to food. I assume that the offices and storage rooms were used for Sunday school classes as the walls in each are painted in bright colours and depict a childlike rendition of a Bible story. There is also a larger meeting area and this is where I first met Mrs R, Mrs E and Mrs X who, seated on green plastic chairs at tables covered with cheerful tablecloths, were waiting for their food parcels.

According to the official website of the Dutch Reformed church, the CMD is a welfare service affiliated to the church that delivers material, social and spiritual services to all individuals in crisis, no matter the race, gender or religion (NG Church, 2010). The main services they deliver, according to their website, can be summarised as prevention, care and aftercare (CMD, 2008). Although there are different institutions and organisations that operate in Newcastle and all have a different focus, the social worker explained that in order to meet the demand and the different needs of the community in the town, the organisations first focus on the neighbourhoods in which they are located and then according to their area of specialisation. For example, the CMD might identify an individual with a substance or alcohol abuse problem who lives in the specific area they service and will continue to assist the individual but will also refer the person to the SANCA (South African National Council for Alcoholism (and Drug Dependence)) office as the problem falls specifically within their area of expertise. Similarly, the CMD's association with the NG church means that other institutions refer members of the congregation to them, although, according to the social worker, most of the time individuals involved with the CMD have approached them for help or assistance.

The CMD was launched nationally fifty years ago and assisted only members of the NG church, which was historically mainly white Afrikaners. Currently, however, they claim to assist anyone in the community in which they operate or are located in (Christian Social Services, 2008). The social workers employed at the CMD mimic the change in the racial and language composition of their client base. Traditionally only white female employees directly associated with the church; now there are male and female as well as white and black social workers employed at the CMD. The inclusion of all races, with a focus or exception made only in terms of the neighbourhood they operate in, is especially evident on Friday mornings when the food parcels are handed out: white and black people wait patiently and after receiving a parcel walk out of the church grounds.

The CMD is often referred to, by the families and the social workers themselves, as 'the welfare' or social services based on their association with other welfare institutions, state welfare as well as because of the role they play. However, the majority of their funding is not from the state as it comes from the Dutch Reformed Church (national and local),

outside sources (such as the National Lottery) and donations, which comprise a significant percentage. The institution is dependent and to a large extent supported by the congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church in Newcastle as well as operating from the premises of one of the churches. Businesses associated with the NG Church are also often those that contribute financially. Individuals in the congregation where CMD is located and in other congregations in Newcastle that are associated with the NG Church make monetary donations and donate clothing and food. However, as one social worker explained, donations, especially from older members of the different congregations, are still given on the assumption that they will only be used to serve the white families they assist. She added that they are thankful for the donations but employ them according to the need in the area they focus on and are located in and not according to race. A justification in terms of area and not race pretends race and space are not related, which only further obscures just how related the two are, as illustrated in the previous chapter.

Closely affiliated with the CMD is the Mōrester (Morning Star) Children's Home and this association also extends regionally with the KwaZulu-Natal CMD. The Mōrester Children's Home opened in Newcastle and another branch is now situated in Ladysmith, approximately 100km from Newcastle. Currently the children's home in Newcastle caters for children in their high school years, while the children's home in Ladysmith caters for younger children. The children's home in Newcastle uses the original boarding facilities at one of the high schools located in the town centre that are not in use anymore. The children's home is still reminiscent of a traditional boarding school, with large areas for eating and socializing and with the majority of the sleeping quarters being upstairs. The only difference is the offices located on the ground floor that are allocated to administration personnel and social workers. During my visits, the children usually stood around outside the front door, played in the courtyard area, lounged on the couches watching television or huddled over cellphones in groups.

Mōrester Children's Home is presented on their website, as an institution that cares for children in need (Mōrester Children's Home, 2010). The children are placed in their care by the Commissioner of Child Care, which provides an indication of the direct role the state plays in this institution, but it is also involved indirectly through the provision of

certain funding. Children are removed for reasons that include: negligence, situations of failed foster care, being orphaned, displaying uncontrollable behaviour, living in unfit circumstances that include lack of food or clothes, parents being unemployed, physical or sexual abuse and problems related to alcohol and drug abuse. The children's home renders services ranging from individualised therapy to simply serving healthy meals to live up to their mission statement, i.e. "To care for our children in a safe environment so that they can reach their full potential and live as well adjusted adults in society, in honour of God" (Môrester Children's Home, 2010). Their focus is thus on the emotional, spiritual and social needs of the children, echoing their vision of "A home for today and a dream for tomorrow" (Môrester Children's Home, 2010).

In contrast to the CMD, a percentage of the children's home's income is subsidised by the state. For the rest, they are reliant on donations from businesses, different congregations not only related to the NG church and compassionate individuals. They also organise events to help make up the deficit in their income, with individuals contributing not only financially but also through planning, organising and participating. One such example is a celebrity makeover show that visited Newcastle to raise money for the children's home. The catering and venue were donated by the business associated with the specific services and individuals donated their time to work at the function so that all the proceeds from the tickets sales could go to the children's' home.

The last institution the chapter will focus on is Rapha, which functions both as a church with its own congregation and as a centre that provides shelter and food. According to the pastor's wife, Rapha is better referred to as a halfway house², rather than a homeless shelter or mission. The individuals that end up at the centre are usually homeless and tend to stay for periods ranging from a few months to a few years. The halfway house is located in the centre of town behind the town's cemetery in what used to be the old commando barracks. The property and the structures on the property belong to Mittal Steel with the company currently lending it to the halfway house while still paying the

² According to the pastor's wife, Rapha literally means 'new beginnings' or 'making whole'. This reiterates the role of the halfway house as filling the interim between where people were and where they are going - and not just providing food or shelter.

rates and taxes. The pastor's wife communicated the possibility that Mittal Steel will donate the property to the halfway house in three years time.

The grounds are neat and the buildings seem freshly painted, although there is no grass growing in the yard, which comprises only patches of dirt. Maintenance of the buildings and the grounds is the responsibility of the male inhabitants, while cleaning and communal cooking is the responsibility of the female inhabitants. These chores and others are expected in return for the room and board. Adherence to strict rules is also expected, such as a curfew for the children on the grounds or having to sign in and out when leaving the grounds. These rules, strict discipline and organisation are credited to the experience shared both by the pastor and his wife from their time spent in the police services. As well as contributing and obeying the rules, inhabitants that stay on for long periods have to make a monetary contribution. For many of the inhabitants this is deducted from the grant they receive from the state, since they do not have any other income. Other than the money indirectly received as payment, the halfway house receives no subsidies from government and does not want to since, according to the pastor's wife, their inhabitants are 99% white and Afrikaans. It is not that they do not want to help other races, but that the inclusion of other races and consequently then receiving state funding will mean that their focus will have to shift in accordance to what government dictates. I think they view their independence from government as a justification to run the halfway house on their own terms, focusing predominately on whites. I think that those involved at the halfway house feel that their institution is one of the last that takes care of whites, who would otherwise have fallen through the cracks. Ultimately, the white character is justified by the pastor's wife in relation to its location in the town centre, whereas other races associated with poverty are located in other areas. The halfway house does reach out to other racial categories by focussing on the specific areas, such as for example their plans to build a similar centre in Madadeni, traditionally a township and now a mainly black neighbourhood.

The three institutions are inter-linked, directly or indirectly. The halfway house takes in people that the CMD have identified as being destitute and the CMD continues to support families where children have been removed and placed in the children's home.

Donations the organisations receive are also shared between them and the other welfare and charity organisations in town. If the CMD receives a surplus of donations, such as children's clothes, they distribute this among their beneficiaries and the children's home. If the halfway house has received too many Christmas gift donations than the number of children currently living there, they distribute the gifts to the children's home and other institutions in town. The institutions all know how the other institutions operate and what resources are available to them. The social worker currently involved at the children's home previously worked for the CMD and many of her old clients are still involved with the CMD or have lived in the halfway house. Similarly, the parents of some of the children in the children's home have lived or are living in the halfway house.

The people and families these institutions help rely on them for their day-to-day survival and often for long periods of time - sometimes from one generation to the next, as with the CMD children grow up in the children's home and people live at the halfway house for years. The following quote by Mrs R emphasises the crucial role of the CMD.

Mev R: CMD help ons baie, want tussen my en Tannie X, was dit nie vir hulle nie ... ag nee, ons sou al lankal onder gegaan het ... lankal.

Mrs R: CMD helps us a lot, because between Auntie X and I, if it was not for them ... oh no, we would have gone under long ago... long ago.

Another characteristic the three institutions share is their apparent dependence on the community, a term often used by them in describing the work they do, which is in the community, and where they receive their funding from, which is from the community. As I understand it, community refers to on the one hand, those people identified as their clients while on the other hand, it refers to people who give donations whether monetary, material or other. In terms of the donations made and upon which all three institutions rely, the community sometimes specifically refers to the business community who seem to make the largest contribution. The institutions are not only dependent on the community for financial support, but also for any other form of support, such as pledging

time as a holiday parent, assisting with employment opportunities for those who are struggling or helping to prepare a meal. The pastor's wife from the halfway house notes:

Pastoor se Vrou (PV): Donasies wat inkom, mense wat betrokke raak, um, dis ook hoekom ons sê dit is die gemeenskap se sentrum hierdie, want die gemeenskap sorg dat hierdie plek aan die gang is.

Pastor's Wife (PW): Donations that come in, people that get involved, um, that's why we say it is the community's centre - because the community make sure that this place continues to operate.

There is, however, no single cohesive community, as suggested by the institutions, but rather different communities, such as: the poor people in Newcastle; the wider religious community including most of the congregations in Newcastle or the people from whom they receive donations. The process of summoning community serves to create and legitimise a set of moral injunctions that justify the actions and activities of the institutions. The summoning of community is therefore an ideological attempt to coerce people to act and react in certain ways.

Although the CMD is directly associated with the NG Church, the children's home is also a beneficiary associated with the different congregations in Newcastle. The halfway house, functioning first as a church, is also linked to other churches in town, though they are less dogmatic than the NG Church. Therefore, the institutions have a moral code based on a religious discourse that is grounded in Christianity. The CMD was started as part of the NG Church, the halfway house is run as a Church and the children's home mission statement already stresses the importance of religion.

Inside and out: Explaining and assisting poverty

The reasons given by the institutions for poverty illustrate the different aspects demanded by the religious discourse in order to create moral subjects capable of overcoming their current situation emotionally and physically. The CMD social worker notes:

MW: Gewoonlik is armoede nie alleny in 'n gesin nie, dit is gewoonlik ge-‘link’ aan ander tipe van goed, soos ‘either’ werkloosheid, of, um, jy weet onstabiele kinder lewens, waar hulle nie regtig geleer het om lank by een werk te bly of lank op een plek te bly byvoorbeeld nie. Um, so daar is baie goed wat ge-‘link’ is met die armoede - verhoudings probleme is ook maar baie keer ge-‘link’ met, met, met die situasie van ons sukkel by die huis. As die armoede by die voordeur [...] instap, dan stap die liefde by die voordeur uit. Ja, so iets.

SW: Usually it is not only poverty in the family - it is usually linked to other things, like unemployment, or, um, you know, an unstable childhood, where they never really learnt to stay in one job or live in one place for a long time. Um, so there are many things that are linked to poverty. Relationship problems are also often linked to the situation of we are struggling at home. If poverty walks in the front door [...], then love walks out the front door. Yes, something like that.

The social worker highlights a break-down in relationships as leading to poverty, but also as a possible cause of poverty. Her focus is on factors associated with an inner transformation, rather than on a change in specific physical conditions. However, a change in the material conditions necessarily leads to problems in personal relationships. This highlights the link between the inner and outer in explanations of poverty. Similarly, in order to overcome situations of poverty it is necessary to transform the inner and the outer, a transformation of self as well as a change in the material conditions or environment. Unemployment, described materially as a loss of employment or unavailability of employment, is linked to an internal process of not being equipped to keep employment. There is an emphasis on learning skills, but in an abstract sense: so, for example, one needs a job and needs to work hard but one also needs to learn to live a stable and consistent life. Although hard work and a stable family life are fundamental to the religious discourse that keeps the social order intact, the emphasis on permanence and stability allows for better rehabilitation, intervention and correction. In turn, the different techniques of discipline reaffirm and keep in place the social order justified by a religious discourse. According to Procacci, those that are more mobile elude social control and are quite simply more difficult to manage or define (1991:161).

The social worker at the children's home offers similar explanations for poverty, but speaks more directly to the situation that governs the removal of children from their parents' care.

Kinderhuis Maatskaplike Werker (KMW): Veral nou met die nuwe kinderwet, gaan dit al hoe moeiliker wees om kinders van ouers te verwyder. Um, ek dink vroeër jare was dit makliker. Maar, um, dit moet werklik omstandighede wees om 'n kind te beveilig. Ek dink dit is die groot rede, om kinders te beveilig. En dan praat 'n ou ook nie net van armoede nie. Dan praat jy dan nou meer, armoede ook, want die ouers kan nie bekostig om die kind in die skool te hou nie. So jy beveilig tog hierdie kind deur hom nou maar in 'n plek te plaas waar hy wel kan sy akademie toegang hê. Dit is dan nou ook 'n manier van beveiliging. En dan ook beveiliging deur die omstandighede, jy weet, die kinders word blootgestel aan, aan slegte dinge, jy weet, aan, aan, um, verwaarlosing, aan, um, seksuele misdrywe, en al daai tipe van goed - wat dan ook natuurlik saam met armoede gepaard gaan. Dit is ongelukkig so. Dit is hand aan hand met mekaar.

Children's Home Social Worker (CSW): Especially now with the new children's law, it is going to be more and more difficult to remove children from their parents. Um, I think it was easier in the past. But, um, it really has to be in circumstances to protect a child. I think that that is the biggest reason to protect children. And we are not only talking about poverty. You are talking more about ... poverty too, because the parents cannot afford to keep the child in school. So then you do protect this child by placing him somewhere where he can have access to an education. That is also a way of protecting. And then also protection from the circumstances, you know, the children get exposed to very bad things. You know. To, um, neglect; to, um, sexual offences - and all those type of things that are also naturally linked to poverty. It is unfortunately so. These things go hand in hand with each other.

The removal of a child from the parental home allows for better control and management associated with a focus on the transformation of the inner (such as receiving an

education), the outer (such as receiving three meals a day) and ultimately becoming better than from where they were removed. The social worker from the children's home focuses specifically on the external situation (outer), such as lack of food or clothing, as a measure to see if the child is taken care of in terms of both inner and outer needs. She also highlights how the external can influence the internal simply by exposure. This is especially problematic as the child is seen as a clean slate, also justified through a religious discourse. This means that the outer, to which the child is exposed, is as troubling as a lack of external wants or needs being met. The children have to be removed to ensure that the self remains good and pure and that it is guided along the lines of a specific moral order. This further illustrates the relationship that the inner and the outer share with each other and clearly shows, although indirectly, the apparent lack of transformation of the parents. Having children placed in the children's home is not the only indicator of a lack of transformation: the looming threat also serves as a further indicator. It also serves to motivate people to remain under scrutiny. It justifies the interference and forces them to attach value to the disciplinary techniques - whether intervention, rehabilitation or correction - as then at least they seem to put in an effort to transform their self as well their current conditions. Similarly, the value of the children's home, and other institutions in these people's lives, is founded on their ability to assist in the transformation of self and to change external circumstances. Those rehabilitating, intervening and correcting do so according to a moral code underwritten by a religious discourse that is expected to be internalised by those being helped - but more so by those helping. Not only are people managed and kept in check according to the moral code, but so are those that intervene.

The halfway house operates in a similar manner also with a focus on both the inner and outer as an explanation for poverty.

PV: Ons vra vir die ouens wat hier kom bly vir 'n ruk, 'n bedraggie. Um, maar ons missie is om mense te help. So ons gee kos, ons gee verblyf, maar dan gee ons ook die opheffings deel daarvan en geestelike werking rondom dit. So ons doen berading, ons doen, um, bevryding, ons dryf duiwels uit. Ons doen alles op 'n Christelike basis, want hierdie is 'n kerk en dit word gefunksioneer op 'n kerk.

So dis 'n Christelike basis, dis die hoeksteen. Um, ouens wat nie hier is om gehelp te word nie, of nie die Here wil dien nie, gee ons 'n kans. As hulle nie gehelp wil word nie dan vra ons hulle om te gaan. So ons is nie 'n hawelose sentrum; dis nie 'n sentrum waar haweloses net instap nie [...] Kyk, baie keer dan kom die welsyn en sê, wel, uh, ek het hierdie persoon en hy het, dit en dit het gebeur, kan jy hom help. Dan vat ons hulle in. Maar ons probeer terselfertyd terwyl hulle hier is hulle bely te kry, hulle kry om te hoor wat is hulle probleem, hoekom is jy in die situasie waarin jy is. Ja, en dan begin, jy kan nie net van jou bagasie ontslae raak nie, of jy kan nie vorentoe beweeg as jy nie van jou bagasie ontslae raak nie. Om dit te doen moet baie mense introvert gaan kyk na wat, wat het in my lewe gebeur; hoekom is ek wat ek is.

M: En in u ervaring, wat is gewoonlik die gebeure of 'issues'?

PV: Wat 'n mens plat trek?

M: Ja

PV: Molestering. Verkragting. Drankmisbruik. Jy weet, al daai negatiewe dinge. Baie van hulle kom uit huise uit. Hulle is wat hulle is as gevolg van die huise waaruit hulle kom. En hulle huise, jy kan sien die oupa en die ouma, die ma en pa, die kinders. [...] 'Vicious circle' aanmekaar. En vir ons is dit bloedlyn vloek en jy kan hom breek.

PW: We ask those who come to stay here for a while for a small contribution. Um, but our mission is to help people. So we give food, we give accommodation, but we also give the upliftment part of it and the spiritual workings around it. So we do counselling, we do, um, exorcisms, we drive out demons. We do everything on a Christian basis, because this is a church and it is run as a church. So the Christian basis is the cornerstone. Um, people that are not here to get help or do not want to serve the Lord, we give them a chance. If they do not want to be helped, then we ask them to go. So we are not a homeless centre, this is not a centre were the homeless can just walk in. [...] Many times the welfare say, uh, there this person and he has, this and that happened, can you help him. Then we take them in. But at the same time while they are here we try to get them to talk about their problem, why are you in the situation you are in. Yes and then start

- you cannot just get rid of your baggage, or you cannot move forward if you do not get rid of your baggage. To do it, one has to look introvertedly at: What happened in my life? Why am I what I am?

M: In your experience, what are usually the events or issues?

PW: That brings a person down?

M: Yes.

PW: Molestation. Rape. Alcohol abuse. You know, all those negative things. Many of them come out of homes. You can see the grandpa and the grandma, the mother and father, the children. [...] Vicious cycle continuously. And for us it is a bloodline curse and you can break it.

The pastor's wife clearly states that their intervention is reliant on and focuses on a dedication to a transformation of self in line with a moral order based on a religious discourse founded in Christianity. This focus determines the explanation and understanding of past situations that led to poverty in the first place. The outer conditions are reliant on the inner to such an extent that the outer can only be rectified by changing the inner, which, in this case, is through religious interventions, such as exorcisms. Although it is apparent that the people cannot be helped without looking after their outer needs as well (the pastor's wife mentions food and shelter) their emphasis is predominantly on looking after the inner or the self. This warrants that the outer needs only be met if one chooses to dedicate to an inner transformation. Their emphasis on the self or the soul of those in the halfway house is further justified by the lasting effect a negative self can have on the future of children. Similarly, poor external conditions are blamed on previous generations since their lack of inner transformation lead to the repeat of deteriorated living conditions.

The focus so far has been on specific explanations of poverty understood as a relationship between the self and external conditions. To varying degrees, the self and the transformation of self are at the centre of most of the institutions' efforts to try and change external conditions and thus alleviate poverty. To transform the self means to encompass all the different aspects of being a good person, with these characteristics

being based on the religious discourse of Christianity. The next section will look specifically at what these characteristics are and how they are imposed on people.

The children's home is a site that cares specifically for children, who have a more susceptible self. Since there has been less contamination from the outside or witnessing others with a lacking self, discussions around their transformation more often mark what is necessary or expected. The social worker at the children's home notes the different characteristics that need to be focused on when she mentions the main goals of the institution.

KMW: Ons doel hier is vir my vreeslik belangrik, is om hierdie kind ... kyk ons kan maar sê wat ons wil, om 'n kind te verwyder uit 'n huis, maak nie saak wat die omstandighede is nie, bly 'n krisis in daai kind se lewe. Um, hy sit met verwerping, hy sit met allerhande onsekere gevoelens ... Hy is kwaad vir die wêreld, hy is kwaad vir almal.

M: Dis dan nou bo op die krisis wat gelei het tot ...

KMW: Ja dis reg. Ja. So dis die kind wat ek dan hier ontvang, jy weet. En my doel is om hierdie kind 'n huis te bied en ek praat ook met my kinders; ek hou daarvan om met hulle eerlik te wees. (Foon lui, gesprek gaan aan na sy aflui.) Die kinders kom hier, hulle beweeg aan, hulle kry 'education', onderwys en dan ongelukkig beweeg hulle dan terug na die ouer huis toe en die bouse kringloop gaan net voort. So dis wat ek probeer breek, jy weet. En dan beweeg jy terug na die slegte omstandighede toe, ek kan vir jou gesinne gaan wys. En dan raak hulle buite egtelik swanger en weereens het sy nie werk nie, sy het nie 'n inkomste nie, niemand sorg vir hierdie nuwe baba nie. En op die ou end beweeg hierdie baba weereens terug kinderhuis toe. So iewers moet 'n ou hierdie bouse kringloop probeer keer, en hierdie kind net iets gee. As ek hom net iets kan gee, um, waaraan hy kan werk, jy weet, bou. Verantwoordelikheid, respek, al daai goedjies wat 'n ouerhuis veronderstel is om hierdie kind te leer - as ek dit vir hulle kan leer. Werk. Baie mense sê 'n kind mag nie in 'n kinderhuis werk nie. Ek, ek, ek kan dit nie verstaan nie. 'n kind in 'n ouerhuis, jy moet bed opmaak, jy moet jou kamer aan die kant

maak. Verstaan jy? Om die verantwoordelikheid te leer en te besef wat jy 'n kind leer, om net daai simpel eenvoudige dingetjies te doen - huiswerk te doen.

CSW: Our aim here is, and this is very important to me, is to ... this child ... we can say what we want, but to remove a child out of a home, no matter what the circumstances are, remains a crisis in a child's life. Um, he has to deal with the rejection, he has to deal with all these uncertainties... He is angry with the world, he is angry with everyone.

M: That is on top of the crisis that led to ...

CSW: Yes, that's right. So, this is the child that I get here, you know. And my aim is to give this child a home. And I talk to my children; I like to be honest with them. (Phone rings, discussion continues after she hangs up.) The children that come here, they move on, they get an education and then unfortunately they move back home and the vicious cycle just continues. So that is what I want to break, you know. And then you move back to the bad circumstances - I can show you families - and then they fall pregnant out of wedlock and again she does not have a job, she does not receive an income, nobody cares for this new baby. And in the end this baby comes to the children's home yet again. So somewhere a person has to break this vicious cycle and give this child something. If I can only give him something, um, with which he can work, you know, build. Responsibility, respect, all those little things that a parent's home is supposed to teach this child - if only I can teach that to them. Work. Many people say a child should not work in a children's home, I do not understand that: in a parental home a child has to make his bed, he has to tidy his room. You understand? To learn this responsibility and to realise that you are teaching a child just by letting them do those simple little things - doing homework.

The main goals highlighted by the social worker from the children's home links mainly to a transformation of self. The external conditions that the children are exposed to lead to the possibility of the self being corrupted, a self that needs to be kept intact according to

an established moral order. In some instances, this has already happened, since the social worker describes them as angry or overwhelmed by rejection and neglect. These children need more rehabilitation, intervention and correction to transform the self and to become a good person. This does not mean that the other children (or people in general) do not need to work on the inner self; on the contrary, the focus is then to learn how the inner and outer are inter-linked. Learning to be responsible, respectable, hard working, dedicated and many of the other characteristics dictated by the religious discourse, is not enough. The characteristics attained through a transformation of self need to be translated into concrete actions, which leads to external conditions being such that they imitate the transformed self. The transformations of self should be such that, even when faced with corrupting conditions, their internal moral compass will lead them out of these situations and on to better.

The transformation of the self leads to improved external conditions and the improved conditions in turn, provide the possibility for further improvement of the self. The benefits of transforming the self are less explicitly discussed by the institutions other than in reference to an explanation of past conditions or that it will lead to a better life. The negative consequences associated with not transforming the self or of not becoming a better person (with a focus specifically on family) is discussed more often.

MW: En van dit kom ook van een generasie na 'n ander. Um, ek dink daar is spesifiek van die persone wat ons vir jou gegee het, wat ook nou al 'n paar generasies hier by die kantoor betrokke is. Um, en wat mens regtig ook kan sien, jy weet, dat dit oorloop van die een generasie na die volgende.

M: So dink jy armoede word geleer?

MW: Ek dink armoede word tot 'n sekere mate aangeleer. Ja. Daai hulpeloosheid van hoe kom ek uit hierdie situasie uit is definitief iets wat, wat, wat van die een persoon na die ander kan oorgaan. Want as die ouer nie die vaardigheid het nie of die motivering het nie, um, dan leer hulle nie noodwendig dit vir die kinders aan nie.

SW: And some of it comes from one generation to the next. Um, I think there are specifically some of the people we have referred to you, that have already been involved with this office for a few generations. Um, and what a person can also really see, you know, is that it spills over from one generation to the next.

M: So do you think poverty is learnt?

SW: I think poverty is learnt to a certain extent. Yes. That helplessness of, how do I get out of this situation. It is definitely something that can be passed on from one person to the next: because if the parent does not have the ability or motivation, um, then they do not necessarily teach it to the children.

The social worker highlights that a lack of change internally in the current generation will also influence the future generation's inner transformations and their efforts to overcome their external conditions, since with every generation the level of transformation needed increases. Every generation carries not only their own but also the 'sins of their fathers' as dictated by the religious discourse of Christianity. The heavier the burden of sin to overcome, the better a person has to become or the more transformation of self is needed. To a certain extent, a person's future can be predicted based on their own and those in their past's transformations of 'selves' read through their current and past external situations. This is of worth because: first, it leads to a situation in which people have to be helped (usually by institutions) to transform, since they cannot change by themselves in most cases; second, people have to be managed to facilitate this change, which distinguishes them from those who cannot or will not change and which only serves to again justify the need for help and intervention.

Seeing is believing: Measuring and determining worth

The ideas relating to a transformation of self can only be read through the outside. Respectability, responsibility and the other characteristics that make someone a good person are only seen in the way someone is on the outside. In order to see whether someone has changed or to what extent they have internalised their transformation of self, the institutions look at their outside. In many cases this constitutes their actions, but more concretely it is their surrounding external conditions that become a mark of whether

change has taken place or if intervention is justified. In short, the external conditions surrounding people become an indicator of their worth.

KMW: Want weet jy, wat ek agtergekom het is dat, um, baie van die kinders, dat hulle dan in die gewone huislike omstandighede was. Pa en ma skei dalk, pa is dood of ma is dood, en dan eindig hulle dan in buitekamers. Van ons blanke kinders, uh, op 'n stadium het een van die organisasies, uh, uh, een van die politieke organisasies, het spesifiek vir my kom vra, maar hulle wil geld gee, want, om net blanke persone te help. En hulle kon nie glo, nou dit is nie deel van my werk om mense te gaan wys waar mense bly nie. Maar omdat hulle gevoel het ons moet werklik arm gesinne help, kon hulle nie glo in watse omstandighede my blanke gesinne bly nie. En hulle harte was toe nou nogal oop daarvoor.

CSW: *You know, what I have realised is that many of the children were living in a normal situation. Mother and father maybe got divorced, the father passes away or the mother does, and then they end up in someone's backyard. Some of our white children ... at one stage a political organisation came to us and said they had money to donate to help white people ... and they could not believe ... now it is not part of my job description to go and show people where people live. But since they really wanted to help poor families ... they could not believe the circumstances my white families were living in. And their hearts were open to it.*

Being able to see where these people live defines who and what they are. The social worker at the children's home does not classify the type of person by mentioning specific characteristics or personality traits, but instead focuses on the external surroundings to describe the people. The people are defined as poor and struggling, while also setting up how outsiders should and will react when witnessing their circumstances. This means that only by seeing where people come from can one understand what type of people they are and what type of disciplinary techniques are necessary, or in other words what extent of self transformation is needed.

Just as the external conditions become a measure of whether a person has undergone a transformation of self or whether there is a need for self-transformation, so do the implementation and commitment to disciplinary techniques introduced by the institutions serve as an outside marker of the process of self transformation. In other words, in order to receive help and assistance, people have to show that they are worthy. But because the external conditions already indicate a lack of self transformation, the only manner in which someone can obtain assistance is by trying to become a better person or to be in the process of self transformation. This means that people have to partake in processes or techniques of intervention, rehabilitation and correction that endow the institutions with a certain amount of disciplinary power associated with these disciplinary techniques. “Disciplinary power ... is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility” (Foucault, 1991:187).

Mev R: [Maatskaplike werker se naam] moet ook weer een of ander tyd hiernatoe kom. Sy moet my net ‘n week voor die tyd sê, dat ek my huis net kan skoonmaak voor sy kom. [...] Ag weet jy wat, Michelle, die mense moet my vat soos wat ek is. As hulle my nie so wil aanvaar nie, dan is dit hulle probleem. En [die maatskaplike werker] weet ook, sy ken [my kleinseun] se goed, want, uh, sy het vir ‘n tydjie gewerk met sulke kinders. En die dag toe ek nou al [my kleinseun] se papiere vir haar vat né, en ek sê [maatskaplike werker] dit is die storie, toe huil sy net so hard.

Mrs R: [Social worker’s name] has to come here some or other time. She must just let me know a week in advance so that I can clean the house before she comes. [...] You know what, Michelle. People just have to take me as I am. If they cannot accept me, then that is their problem. And [the social worker] knows, she knows about [my grandson] and stuff, because she worked with similar children for a short period. And the day I took [my grandson’s] papers to her and I said, this is the story, she cried so much.

Mrs R and her family receive assistance from the CMD and therefore have to open their home to visits from the social worker. Mrs R is aware of the fact that her home reads as a

marker of both her and her family's processes of self transformation. She knows that she has to clean and present herself in a certain manner to continue to be worthy of the help and assistance offered. Even though she states boldly that people should accept her as she is, she still makes excuses for the family and the condition of their home. There is a chronically sick child that takes up all their time and effort, leaving no time to work on the outside situation. Mrs R or her family can therefore not be defined as bad people; on the contrary, she wants her worth to be read by her actions related to caring for her sick grandson, how she is living, rather than her home and where she is living.

People are placed in a field of surveillance and observed by institutions as well as everyone in society and ultimately by themselves.

Mrs E: En toe het iemand gaan praat, toe het iemand kom praat by die welsyn, ja, dat ek kan nie vir my kinders sorg nie en, uh, en so aan. Toe word my kinders nou deur die CMD net van my sorg af weggeneem; maar skool vakansies en naweke kan hulle gekom kuier het.

Mrs E: And then someone went to talk - then someone went to talk to the welfare: yes, I cannot take care of my children and, uh, and so on. Then my children were taken away by the CMD just from my care; but they could come and visit during school holidays and on weekends.

Someone watching Mrs E and her family reported her to the welfare and not only were her children taken away, but she also became an active client at the welfare office. Others testified to her failure at being a good person and this led to the intervention of the welfare as well as justified their constant presence. Therefore, the sense of worth attributed to external conditions and one's concrete actions have value outside the scope of the institutions. The society in which Mrs E and her family live also subscribe to the moral order of having to be a good person or undertaking the process of becoming one - and this is measured by outside conditions. For example, being a good parent means having your children in school, having food on the table and meeting all their basic material needs. One cannot measure the love parents have for their children in the abstract, so the material becomes an indicator.

Mrs D also comments of an awareness of the external serving as a measure for how successful her transformation of self is, even if this transformation is still in progress.

Mev D: Weet jy, dit was vir my verskriklik erg gewees, want toe ek daar aankom toe sit ek nou skielik, ek wil amper sê gomgatte, want meeste van hulle is niks anderste as gomgatte nie. Magtig, dis mense wat nie eers bad nie. En, um, nou moet jy saam met hulle om tafel sit en eet en toilette en al daai goed deel met die mense. O nee vrek.

(Sy steek nog 'n sigaret soos sy die vorige stompie dood druk.)

M: As daar dan nou nie ook mense wat in 'n soortgelyke posisie is as jy dan nou nie?

Mev D: Die groot ding is net né, daar word almal onder dieselfde kam geskeer. So almal word soos 'lowlifes' behandel. [...] As jy daar instap word jou gawe om vir jouself te dink, word weggevat van jou af.

Mrs D: You know, it was terrible, because when I arrived there I was suddenly with, I want to say scumbags, because they are nothing but scumbags. Goodness gracious, they are people who do not even bath. And, um, now I have to sit at a table with them and eat and share toilets and all those things with these people. Oh, no way.

(She lights another cigarette as she stubs the previous one out.)

M: *Are there not people in a similar position to you?*

Mrs D: The major issue is that, there everyone is treated the same. So everyone gets treated as a lowlife. [...] When you walk in there, the ability to think for yourself is taken away.

Other people also influence how Mrs D's external conditions are read. Sharing a space with apparent degenerates, means that she shares their external conditions and is therefore associated with their sense of self. Inside she is the same as the other inhabitants of the halfway house because of their common outside. Further, the shared external conditions, related to a sense of self in need of transformation, are such that constant surveillance becomes justified and mandatory. However, Mrs D uses the same

outside conditions to determine the worth of those around her and to differentiate herself from them. This increases her own worth and is why she left the halfway house at the first possible opportunity.

Mev D: Weet jy, toe ek daar aangekom het, het ek dit 'n wit plakkerskamp gedoop. Ja, en ek dink nog steeds aan daai plek as 'n wit plakkerskamp. (Lag.)

Mrs D: You know, when I got there, I called the place a white squatter camp. Yes, and I still think that it is a white squatter camp. (Laughs.)

This does not mean her external conditions do not determine her self or that she did not experience any transformation of self. On the contrary, during our discussions she often reflected on her time in the halfway house and the amount of ‘Christian growth’ (“Christelike groei”) she experienced. It was only after her self had transformed that she left the halfway house; therefore her increase in worth is associated with her inner transformation, rather than with a change in her external conditions.

The pastor’s wife also makes the link between a person’s external conditions as a measure of their apparent worth, but like Mrs D, she describes her apparent distinction based on a better self.

PV: Baie mense, ek sal met jou praat en dan kom ek agter hulle dink jy is ook deel van die mense wat hier bly. Jy het geen opvoeding nie, jy het geen ... jy weet jy is maar net hierso. Maar hulle, ons het nou beginne 'n punt daarvan maak dat mense besef maar ons is gekwalifiseerd; ons het, uh, kwalifikasies agter ons naam; ons is opgelei; ons het universiteit toe gegaan, tech toe gegaan.

M: Maak dit 'n verskil aan mense dan?

PV: Ja. Weet jy, tot die welsyn aan die begin, het hierdie ‘attitude’ gehad van, um, maar ons doen hierdie werk en ons weet beter en ons het hulle al 'n paar keer op hul neuse laat kyk. As ons sê, horie maar die regte sê dit en sien dit uit hierdie lig uit en dan begin hulle, besef, o, maar jy is eintlik nie so ‘n paloeka soos ons gedink het nie. Omdat ons in die winter, loop ons met tekkies en jeans rond, sweetpakke. Ek en [ander dame wat hier werk] dra deesdae minimum ‘make-

up', my hare is nog nat, jy maak dit net vas en jy gaan aan. Mense het daai idees omdat jy so 'casual' is en saam met die mense, um, inskakel, dat jy nie iets weet nie. Omdat jy in 'n sentrum soos hierdie betrokke is, dat jy dalk, jy is net hier, jy is hier geplaas. Maar ons is opgeleide gekwalifiseerde mense, ons ken die lewe; ons het ons eie huise gehad, ons eie besighede. Ons was suksesvol gewees in daai opsigte.

PW: Many people - I talk to you and then I realise that they think you are also part of the people that live here. You have no education, you have no ... you know ... you are just here. But they - we have now started to make a point of letting people know we are qualified, we have, uh, qualifications behind our names; we are trained, we went to university, went to tech.

M: Does it make a difference to people then?

PW: Yes. Do you know that at the start even the welfare had this attitude of, um, but this is our work and we know better, and we have left them with egg on their faces a few times. When we say, hey, but this is what the law says and see it in this light, and then they start to realise, oh, but you are actually not as stupid as we thought. Because we walk around in sneakers and jeans, tracksuits ... [the other woman that works here] ... and nowadays I wear the minimum make-up, my hair is still wet - you just tie it up and carry on ... people have this idea that because you are so casual and, um, interact with these people that you do not know anything - that because you are involved with a centre like this, you are maybe, you are just here - you were placed here. But we are trained and qualified people, we know about life, we had our own homes, our own businesses. We were successful in that respect.

Success serves as another marker to measure a transformation of self. A successful person necessarily is a good person and will have external conditions that match this. It is the success of the pastor and his wife that distinguishes them from the other people living with them in the halfway house. They do not need to change, since their transformation of self has already been proved by their many successes. Although it is more abstract than concrete external condition, success can still be read on the outside

and the pastor's wife specifically highlights their education, their past ownership of businesses and their positions of authority. This not only justifies their self-worth but also justifies why they can help those that need to change as they apparently remain good regardless of their external conditions.

Success as a measure of worth, also speaks to status as more success is often naturally associated with more status. The dimensions of success highlighted by the pastor's wife emphasise what it means to be successful in general terms - and more importantly, what it means to be a successful white (Roediger, 2007:12). Just as in the previous chapter, where the ideal of family necessitated living up to the moral and material dimensions of what it means to be family, so too does being the ideal white relate to a moral and material dimension. The normative ideals of being specifically a white Afrikaner entail being a good, moral Christian. It is no coincidence that for the poor whites under discussion, the transformation of self, necessitated by the institutions, corresponds to this ideal. Similarly, the material ideals of owning property, being professionally employed or occupying a position of authority are equated with success and therefore improve one's worth or status. The 'outside' is read as an indication of the 'inside', but the relationship between the transformation of self and external conditions is mediated through whiteness. Status is already associated with whiteness, which is in turn associated with material success and moral integrity, and is understood to be based on common sense. Therefore, all whites are supposed to be successful and not living up to this ideal justifies intervention by the institutions to start the process of transformation of becoming good people and white.

However, the success and apparent worth associated with the pastor's wife and her family is difficult to maintain, even if they are white, as it is an ongoing process of having to constantly prove that they are successful, regardless of their external conditions. Quite simply, their outside does not match their inside, and they have to justify that this is not because they need to change, but because they have already changed. Added to this, is the constant observation from outside and inside the halfway house. It is no surprise then that she and her husband are making plans to build a consistory just outside the halfway house compound, in order to change their outside to match their inside. The question that

remains is whether their inside, the transformation of self, really matches the outside that they are planning.

Mev D: Die grootste grap vir my van alles is, hulle sit in presies dieselfde bootjie as die mense wat daar bly.

M: Hoe bedoel jy? Hulle bly ook daar?

Mev D: Ja. Hulle bly ook daar. Hulle kry ook nie 'n inkomste nie.

Mrs D: For me the biggest joke of all is they are in exactly the same boat as the people that live there.

M: What do you mean? They also live there?

Mrs D: Yes. They also live there. They also do not receive an income.

The focus on external conditions as a marker of a transformation of self creates the illusion that everyone sharing similar conditions is the same. The consequence is similar to what Procacci claims, that difference is eliminated, not inequality (1991:164). A change of self does not really lead to improved conditions; rather improved conditions are naturally associated with a better self. Those who are struggling and poor share similar external conditions, which are linked more concretely to a lack of resources rather than a lack of self. However, the association of the outside as a marker for the inside creates a situation in which poverty can be alleviated through individual intervention, rehabilitation and correction. In cases where this fails, it is not that people did not reform their self, but that they did not reform enough. In order for the external conditions to change, people have to believe they will change and any waiver in this belief justifies the outside conditions in turn signalling that more change of the self is necessary. When the external conditions do change, this is then not attributed to altering circumstances, but believed to be influenced by the effort put into transforming the self. This keeps the moral order intact, where good things ultimately happen to good people based on witnessing their good life. What is not as clear, other than in through injunctions that people must become even better people, is why good people continue to live in poverty, and whether a morally good person inside will *always* achieve outside success. The difficulty of being good, but not achieving success, will be explored in the next chapter

and race will emerge as a powerful way to explain the 'blockage inside' that good people face when not achieving success.

CHAPTER 4

The possibility of a future: The limits to agency and the legacies of racial entitlement

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The traditions of all dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brain of the present.

(The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, Karl Marx 1852:595)

The four families, who are struggling to get by and to be good people, hope for things to be better in the future. In fact, the protestant ethic (Weber, 2002: 120-121) seems to promise ‘this-worldly’ success, provided you have the right ethos and the right moral character with respect to your life, your community and your God. One way to think about a better future, even if it is too late for yourself, is in terms of your children, who just might achieve success in this world, if they can be morally good enough. How people talk about their children becomes an interesting way to assess how they conceive of the future, what obstacles they see to success and how much faith they have in the moral system.

I could not speak directly to the younger generations in the families visited, since this did not fit ethically with the scope of the study. Rather, what follows is built out of different accounts provided by the institutions or the parents to illustrate the possible future the children of these families face. This will be done by concentrating on Mrs E’s two daughters, Victoria* and Martilda*. There are two main reasons why this family provides a good illustration of the future that many individuals who share the fate of my informants face. First, the family has a history with welfare and other institutions for a few generations, with both Victoria and Martilda placed in the children’s home from a very young age. Second, because Victoria is seventeen and her younger sister Martilda is sixteen, they are older than the children of the other families studied and are about to start their own lives and have to become ‘successful’ adults. Among other things, I hope to show how the contrast in the sisters’ situations suggests problems associated with the discourse of personal transformations central to local institutions, which was addressed in the previous chapter.

I also hope to illustrate how discussions of a future in Newcastle, attribute poverty to political change when people face difficulties in transforming according to the moral order, which is based on religious discourse. Rather than question or refuse the religious discourse, people blame ‘outside’ blockages, such as government or reinscribe the racial character of poverty. They do not see their plight as a common product resulting from the transformation of a parastatal, which historically guaranteed jobs, into a private company that constantly has to restructure in order to remain globally competitive.

Victoria and Martilda: Contrasting moral characters

Victoria, the eldest daughter, had to leave school and the children’s home when she became pregnant at the age of fifteen. Apparently, everyone from her mother to social services warned Victoria about teen pregnancy and the impact it would have on her future. Nevertheless, when visiting her foster parents on an ‘out weekend’, she was allowed to sleep over at her then boyfriend’s house. During her pregnancy and after their daughter Lilly* was born, Victoria lived with Lilly’s father, who was still her boyfriend at the time although the situation was not ideal as he still lived with his parents. After drunken brawls, during which Victoria was apparently attacked, hit and strangled by both her boyfriend and his parents as well, Victoria moved back to her parent’s house. Lilly stayed with her paternal grandparents, who have full custody of her because if Mrs E’s house was unsuitable for her own daughters, it would not be suitable for her granddaughter.

Victoria did not finish school after her pregnancy and now works, even though as Mrs E states:

“Ja, want, um, ek meen, almal het met haar gepraat en vir haar gesê maak jou skool loopbaan klaar. Dan word dit vir jou gesê, ja, maar jy’s outyds.”

“Yes, because, um, everyone spoke to her and told her to finish her schooling. Then you are told you are old fashioned.”

When I first met Mrs E and her family, Victoria was living at home and working in a factory store selling socks. She was soon demoted after the boss caught her smoking

outside and leaving the shop unattended. Rather than take the pay cut from R900 to R500 per month, which equated to a cut in hours as punishment, she found new employment managing a biltong shop in town. Transport to and from the factory shop was not a problem as a friend in the neighbourhood worked with her and gave her a lift; now she has to use a lift that is not provided for free. Apparently, Victoria's attitude to work has not changed significantly: Mrs E has visited her at the shop and found her outside smoking and chatting to the car guards in the parking lot, while the biltong store is unattended. According to Mrs E, all the money Victoria earns, she spends on herself, buying clothes and other 'luxury' items and the little she has left over, she spends on her baby.

Mrs E not only commented on Victoria's state of employment, but also on her love life. With each discussion and with each visit, Mrs E brought up a different love interest. When I first made contact with the family, Victoria was romantically involved with a much older man who lived in the Pretoria area. He expected her to visit him on weekends, but the biltong shop owner expected her to work weekends. According to Mrs E, the choice to be made was clear as the man could look after Victoria. Mrs E also suggested that the Pretoria love interest had to compete with the on-off relationship Victoria still had with her daughter's biological father. Mrs E often compared these two love interests, saying the Pretoria love interest had a steady job and a place to live and was willing to look after Victoria and Lilly. In comparison, according to Mrs E, her granddaughter's father was unemployed, still living at home and violent. Over time, the love interest from Pretoria waned and Mrs E spoke of him less and less and became worried about Victoria contemplating moving back in with her granddaughter's father. However, during my last conversation with Mrs E, she told me about a new love interest in Victoria's life and that he was the reason she was spending hardly any time at home anymore.

Mev E: Nou lyk dit vir my dit 'worry' haar nou nie, want sy het op 'n stadium al vir ons gesê, vir my gesê, sy is lus en teken [haar dogter] af en gaan, en gaan maak 'n ander 'baby'.

M: En gaan maak 'n ...?

Mev E: 'n Ander kind.

M: Met wie? Met enige iemand?

Mev E: Enige iemand. Toe sê ek vir haar, nee.

M: Hoekom wil sy dan nou nog 'n kind maak? Maar ek verstaan nie, wat sal dit help om nog 'n kind te hê?

Mev E: Jy kan dan nie eers na daai kind kyk nie.

M: Maar wil sy dan nou 'n kind maak by iemand anders dat hy nou vir haar en die kind sorg?

Mev E: Nee. Sy dink dit is nou net so maklik om net 'n ander kinder te hê.

M: Om net aan te beweeg?

Mev E: Ja. Dit 'freak' my 'n bietjie uit. (Stem breek op oor sy huilerig raak.) Sy werk, sy het 'n kind om na te kyk. [...] wat sy net sien wanneer dit haar nou pas of wil sien. Dan as sy die kind gesien het, dan is dit 'goodbye', nou gaan ek jol. Ek gaan maar drink by vriende. Dan dog ek jis, wat as daai welsyn jou vang. En dan? Daar gaan moeilikheid wees.

Mrs E: It doesn't seem to worry her because at once stage she told me, said to me she feels like signing away [her daughter] and making another baby.

M: And making another ...?

Mrs E: Another baby.

M: With whom? With anyone?

Mrs E: Anyone. So I said to her, no.

M: Why does she now want another child? I don't understand; how will it help to have another child?

Mrs E: You cannot even look after that child.

M: But does she want to make a baby with someone else so that he will look after her and the child?

Mrs E: No. She thinks it is just that easy to have another child.

M: To just move on?

Mrs E: Yes. It freaks me out a bit. (Voice cracks as she becomes teary.) She works and she has a child to look after. [...]who she only sees when she wants to or when it suits her. Then when she has seen the child, then it is goodbye, now I

am going to go party. I am going to go drink with friends. Then I think, shit, what if the welfare catches you. And then? There is going to be trouble.

In Mrs E's description, institutions (welfare) emerge as a type of disciplinary apparatus policing any transgressions of the expectations related to a transformation of self. Being or becoming a good person includes expectations relating to motherhood and whiteness. Victoria, is apparently not acting as a 'good mother' should, she cannot hide her lack of transformation of self forever and if she is caught out she will be punished, by being denied all contact with her daughter or any possibility of regaining custody of the child in the future. Her punishment is precisely related to her transgressions and since she is not fit to be a mother, she will not be a mother. Not being a 'good white' is also punishable, with people being stripped of their whiteness. Since they do not live up to the ideal of what it means to be white materially, by having a privileged economic position, the four families can only relate morally to what it means to be white. This relates again to the transformation of self, as they have to be good people. Therefore, if they are not good people, they lose their association with whiteness entirely. This loss is expressed in a yearning for the privilege and entitlement associated with whiteness, which is often no more than a nostalgia for the time when they were still 'white'.

I asked Mrs E about her expectations for Victoria's future and she seemed as unsure as Victoria is herself.

Mev E: Ek het al gedog, ja ag, ek weet nie wat gaan jy maak nie; want as jy self al vir my gesê het jy weet nie wat wil jy hê nie... nou wat wil jy dan hê in die lewe?

Mrs E: I have thought, yes, I don't know what you are going to do; because if you have said to me yourself that you don't know what you want ...Now what is it that you want in life?

Martilda is the younger daughter and is now in grade 11 in a high school that serves the needs of children with learning disabilities. She has been in the children's home throughout her school career. Martilda's mother, the social workers at CMD and the

social worker at the children's home are all proud of the progress she has made in terms of: the leadership roles she fulfils, both at the school and at the children's home; as well as Marthilda seeming to be on track to complete a 'normal' matric certificate. According to Mrs E, she and her youngest daughter share a relationship that resembles a friendship more than the traditional mother-daughter mould, especially when compared to the somewhat strained relationship she has with her eldest daughter. In conversations about Martilda, Mrs E accentuates the 'r' in her name often jarring the flow of the conversation. Mrs E thinks that Victoria is jealous of Martilda's success at school as this is something that Victoria cannot achieve.

Mev E: Want [die maatskaplike werker], want sy is nou 'n prefek by die kinderhuis, sy is onderhoofmeisie in die koshuis. Nou [die maatskaplike werker] het al vir haar gesê sy het haar nodig daar, want sy kan nie altyd iemand kry wat betroubaar is soos Martilda nie, die takies wat sy moet doen. [...] Sy het Martilda nodig.

M: Maar dis goed vir Martilda.

Mev E: Ja, maar die verskil wat ek gesien het van Martilda en Victoria ... Martilda is meer verstandig. Victoria weet nie presies hoe om met geld te werk nie. Sy sal nie na my toe kom en vir my sê, Ma, kyk, hier's geld, gaan koop 'n brood nie. Martilda, as sy haar sakgeld kry by die kinderhuis, dan bêre sy dit, dan weet sy dit is vir Ma en dit is nodig. Dan kom sy, as sy by die huis kom party Vrydae, dan sê sy vir my, Ma kom gou saam met my. Dan steek sy haar palm uit en sê vir my, dé sorg dat daar kos in die huis is.

Mrs E: Because [the social worker], because she is now a prefect at the children's home, she is deputy head girl in the hostel. Now [the social worker] has told her that she needs her there, because she cannot always find someone as reliable as Martilda is in doing the tasks that she has to do. [...] She needs Martilda.

M: But that is good for Martilda.

Mrs E: Yes, but the difference I have seen between Martilda and Victoria ... Martilda is more sensible. Victoria does not really know how to manage

money. She will not come to me and say, Mom, see, here's some money, go and buy bread. Martilda, when she gets her pocket money from the children's home, then she saves it, then she knows it is for mother and it is needed. Then when she gets home some Fridays, then she says, Mom, come with me. Then she puts out her hand and says, make sure there is food in the house.

According to Martilda's mother, her dreams for after school are to do something with computers and Mrs E believes that this is in line with her scholastic abilities. As I got to know Mrs E, it became clear that Martilda is her pride and joy and, according to her, destined for greater things than she herself has achieved. I shared her excitement and was very positive about Martilda's bright future - so much so, that when I visited the children's home as the completion of my fieldwork approached, I could not wait to ask about her future.

M: Wat is die kans dat sy dan nou kan aangaan na skool, want ek lei af sy doen redelik goed by [die skool] akademies ook?

KMW: Weet jy, ek kan vir jou kyk, sy doen nie so goed nie. [...] Ons het nou eers, hulle rapporte vanoggend kry. Martilda gaan swaar kry. Dit is een van my kinders waaroor ek bekommerd is dat hierdie bouse kringloop voort sit.

M: Met haar suster het dit alreeds.

KMW: Alreeds, sy's al 'n enetjie verder, want sy het al swanger geraak terwyl sy nog hier binne was. Jy weet. [...] So sy is nou alreeds daar; maar Martilda gaan nie sommer ook 'n ander werkie kry as wat byvoorbeeld, um, soos die plek waar haar sussie werk nie. Dit is 'n betroubare kindjie, maar sy het nie die intelligensie vermoë om verder te gaan nie. Dis jammmer. Dis vir my sleg. Sy is nie net 'n akademiese bekommernis nie en ek is met jou eerlik as om vir jou te sê wat fout is. Sy sal maar 'n pakker of so iets moet wees. Sy het nie die akademiese vermoë om dit te kan doen nie. So daai realiteit sal 'n ou met die ouers moet opbring. Dat dit wat sy doen, dat sy dit doen met oorgawe doen, dat sy dit goed doen.

M: Wat ek dan nou ook so half tussen die lyne lees is dat sy dan nou ook as sy klaar maak met skool moet teruggaan na die ouers se huis toe.

KMW: Ja, ja. (Kort stilte.) Sy sal maar moet ongelukkig terug beweeg. Um, maar intussen werk ons maar hard om haar te bemagtig om sterk te staan buite, dat sy weet sy het 'n verantwoordelikheid, wat ek graag aan my kinders bring dat hulle weet hulle het 'n verantwoordelikhied. Jy weet jy is nie nou 'n meisie en jy gaan nou by die huis sit en kinders kry, verstaan jy. Dit is nie die realiteit nie. Die realiteit is die man, witman veral, kry moeilik 'n werk vandag, dit is 'n realiteit. So, ons vrouens sal moet saamstaan om die huishouding te maak, en dit is wat ek vir my kinders help: dat hulle besef hulle gaan nie soos mamma daai voorreg hê om by die huis te kan sit nie. Nee. Hulle sal moet weet hulle gaan ook verantwoordelikheid hê. Hulle sal moet gaan werk, al is dit 'n klein werkie, al is dit 'n eenvoudige werkie. Ek kan nie van my kinders verwag om vreeslike computer mense te word daar buite nie, want hulle het nie daai vermoë nie. Jy kry van die kinders wat dit het, maar nie almal het dit nie.

M: What are the chances that she will be able to continue after school because from what I gather she is doing quite well [in school] academically too?

CSW: You know, I can check for you but she is not doing that well. We only received their rapport cards this morning. Martilda is struggling. She is one of my children that I worry about this vicious cycle continuing with.

M: With her sister it has already.

CSW: Already, she is one-step ahead of her because she got pregnant while she was still here. You know. So she is already there; but Martilda will not really be able to get a job, other than, for example, um, the place where her sister is working. She is a reliable little child, but she does not have the intellectual abilities to go further. That is a shame. It is hard for me. She is not only an academic worry and I am being honest with you now, in telling you what is wrong. She will have to be a packer or something similar; she does not have the academic ability. So that is the reality that will have to be brought up

with the parents. That, that which she does, she does diligently, that she does it well.

M: I am reading between the lines then that she will also have to return to her parent's home when she finishes school.

CSW: Yes, yes. (Short pause.) She will, unfortunately, have to move back. Um, but in the meantime we are working hard to empower her to stand strong on the outside, that she knows she has a responsibility, which is something I like to give to my children - that they know they have responsibilities. You know you are not the girl who is going to sit at home and have children, you understand. That is not the reality. The reality is that the man, especially the white man, has difficulty finding work these days. So we women will have to stand together to make the household work and that is how I help my children. That they realise that they are not going to be like mom and have the privilege to sit at home. No. They have to know they will have responsibilities. They will have to work, even if it is a small little job, even if it is a simple little job. I cannot expect my children to become important computer people on the outside, because they do not have those abilities. You get children that have it, but not everyone has it.

Even though the remarks become generalised towards the end of the discussion, the children's home social worker is still referring to Martilda's situation. This is evident in her referral to a future associated with employment opportunities in the computer discipline. The CMD social worker strongly echoed the remarks made above, but was not directly aware of Martilda's most current school results. She did emphasise that one of the issues Martilda faces is the situation at home.

MW: Welsyn het tog invloed, byvoorbeeld Mev E se jongste dogter, doen so fantasies op skool um dat sy eintlik nou ook blykbaar 'n normale matriek, al is sy in 'n spesiale skool, gaan sy nou kan aangaan om 'n normale matriek byvoorbeeld te probeer maak. En um. Waar baie van die goeters dan agterna plat val is die oomblik as hulle uit die welsyn sisteem is, dan is daar nie altyd die hulpbronne nie, of daai hulpbron van 'n arm gesin wat in elkgeval nie die hulpbronne het nie

en dan kom die groot probleem van welsyn weer in, ons het nie die mannekrag of die hulpbronne om 'n gesin nog te help [...] na die tyd nie. Dan val die goete dan nou weer daar plat, want nou is daai kind weer in 'n siklus van 'okay', ek het nou wonderlik aangegaan byvoorbeeld in die kinderhuis.

M: Ek het nou my matriek.

MW: Ek het nou 'n matriek, maar nou kry ek nie werk nie. Ek het nie 'n ouer wat my met 'n skoen êrens in 'n 'job' situasie kan inskop nie.

M: Of wat vir my kan betaal om te gaan swot?

MW: Of wat vir my studiegeld kan gee of wat ookal nie, so nou sit ek, ek sit by die huis. Daar is niks nie, so die eerste en beste ding is kom ek kry 'n man, kom ek kry 'n kind. Kom ek probeer iemand kry wat my kan versorg. En dan maak hulle nie noodwendig die regte keuses nie. Hulle verval baie keer presies in daai selfde sisteem van nou het ek 'n kind, ek kan nie vir hom sorg nie, ek het 'n man wat nie sy verantwoordelikhede nakom nie. Daai bese siklus gaan dan net weer aan.

SW: Welfare does have some influence. For example, Mrs E's youngest daughter, she does so well at school, um, that she can apparently complete a normal matric - even if she is in a special school - she is going to go on to try and finish a normal matric, for example. And um, where many things fall flat afterwards is the moment that they are out of the welfare system. Then there are not always the resources, or only the resource of a poor family who does not have resources anyway. And then the big problem of welfare comes up again - that we do not have the manpower or the resources to help a family [...] afterwards. Then things fall flat because now that child is again caught in the cycle of, okay I did well in the children's home.

M: I have my matric.

SW: I have a matric now, but I cannot find work. I do not have a parent who can put me into a job situation somewhere.

M: Or who can pay for my studies.

SW: Or who can give me money to study or whatever. So now I sit; I sit at home. There is nothing. So the first thing, the best thing is I'll get a man, I'll have a

child. I'll try to find someone who can look after me. And then they do not necessarily make the right choices. They fall into the same system of: now I have a child and I cannot care for him; I have a husband who cannot attend to his responsibilities. That vicious cycle just continues.

Martilda and Victoria, apparent opposites on the 'inside' in terms of personality, as well as on the outside in terms of possible opportunities, seem almost destined to share the same future – a future similar as outlined in the testimonies, to the life their mother has led. The moral code that predicts and justifies a specific future underwrites both these sister's lives.

Martilda, although still being reformed internally in the children's home, has shown promise of being reliable, responsible and hard working. However, her personal transformation is not sufficient to provide a way out of poverty, since her external environment, that is her parent's home, to which she will return after school, also needs to change. Victoria, on the other hand, has already transgressed in terms of what was expected of her transformation of self, by apparently being immoral, lazy and irresponsible. In addition, her external conditions fluctuate between her parents' home and similar circumstances, and according to the moral code, her current situation and future seem to be one of poverty. In spite of institutions and organisations intervening or still remaining active figures in their lives, the future seems to be mapped out for both sisters. I was very hopeful the first time I met and got to know Martilda. Not only for her sake, but for the sake of her mother, especially since Mrs E often started crying or became terribly upset when relating the latest drama in Victoria's life. The discussion with the children's home social worker shattered this hope. I remember very clearly feeling my heart break when I realised that the chances of Martilda, or any of the children from the families I visited, fulfilling their dreams are slim. It is in everyone's interest that these dreams are reduced to realistic and achievable goals. The focus, highlighted in the previous chapter, on a transformation of self, is not enough to signal or justify an overall change. The institutions with interventions, rehabilitations and corrections, focus mostly on the external conditions that in most instances remain the same, since the structures and processes that underwrite these conditions have not changed.

A common future: The habitus and the difficulty of changing the past

The story of Martilda and Victoria presents the moral code that emphasises a focus on the inner or the transformation of self to lead to a change in the outer or then external conditions. Martilda seems to have changed her 'self', since she is reliable, a hard worker and dedicated, but she is still destined, seemingly without any doubt, to remain in a situation of poverty similar to that of her sister and her parents. The choice Martilda has to live a different life, seems to be dependent only on her transformation of self, but if this is really the case then why does her potential future, as sketched in the testimonies, not change accordingly? The answer, according to the moral code, is simply that her transformation of self was not complete or entirely sincere; she did not really make the choice to change herself and therefore her conditions. Rather, the answer as this chapter will attempt to illustrate, is that she did not have a choice to make in the first place, regardless of making the right choice or not.

The future set out for Martilda and Victoria can be explained further by thinking through Bourdieu's concept of the habitus. The habitus is an internalised structure or set of structures developed in accordance with pre-existing external structures that determine not only how individuals act, but also how they react to the world (Bourdieu, 1977:78). According to John Thompson, the habitus is a set of dispositions that "generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are 'regular' without being consciously co-ordinated or governed by any 'rule'" (1991:12). Another important characteristic of the habitus often emphasised by Bourdieu, is that it is history transformed into nature, in other words, the habitus seems based on common sense (1977:78). With the habitus, the state of the body is highlighted, rather than a state of mind, since the habitus and individual histories orient individuals and write on the bodies of these individuals how they should act (Thompson, 1991:13). In other words, individuals have a set of norms through which they understand the world, as well as a set of competencies that allow them to act accordingly in situations, whether good or bad. The state of the body or bodily habits are ingrained in everyday social practices to such an extent that they form part of the doxa, that is, they are taken for granted. This leads to the "almost miraculous encounter between the habitus and a field, between incorporated history and objectified history, which makes possible the near perfect anticipation of the future" inscribed in all aspects of existence

(Bourdieu, 1990:66). Rather than a transformation of self influencing external conditions, or the inner shaping the outer, the choice to transform inner or outer as well as the bodily practices available to achieve this, is governed by the habitus. Change, and an understanding of change, thus has limited possibilities, as prescribed by the habitus. When the limitations of change and transformation are apparent, the habitus supplies individuals with alternatives to explain misfortune. Instead of questioning the limited scope of competencies available to facilitate change, surrounding a lack of transformation of self or then external conditions not changing in accordance, the habitus supplies individuals with alternative explanations. The habitus makes available specific structural explanations to justify the unchanging external conditions for individuals in Newcastle, which is grounded in their specific individual and local histories. “Since individuals are the product of particular histories, which endure in the habitus, their actions can never be analysed adequately as the outcome of conscious calculation” (Thompson, 1991:17). Although practices and perceptions are the product of the habitus, it is the relationship between the habitus and the specific social contexts that ultimately influences how people act. The social context (again linked to their specific individual histories) is shaped not only by being from Newcastle but among others by their social class and their working background. These are factors that Bourdieu describes as leading to different kinds of capital linked to a distribution of resources (1991:14).

Granted, things have changed in South Africa, but this change is not perceived in an unmediated way. It is perceived through a framework already given, where the “traditions of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the present” (Marx, 1852:595). Even if poverty is general or not classified in racial terms, people’s sense of these changes is mediated by their habitus and they therefore interpret the loss of employment or their failing families as an attack by government on white people and not as the result of economic transformation. The informants in the study perceive themselves as victims of political and economic changes, both locally and globally, without being able to separate the legal entrenchment of non-racial equality with the privatisation of the economy. There is a sense that these people are suffering and that their suffering is unique precisely because they are white.

Racial entitlement and the problem of custody over the future

A focus on the future of the families in Newcastle attributes poverty to structural explanations; therefore it does not refuse or question religious discourse of self-transformation, but focuses on ‘outside’ blockages. One such structural explanation that often arises is in terms of Mittal Steel, or similar industries, and centres on retrenchment associated with a change in government, rather than say an unstable economy. The CMD social worker highlights the role she thinks government and the current political environment have to play in the lives of poor and struggling whites.

MW: En die groter klomp mense wat hier by ons beland is juis mense wat nie meer die hulpbronne daar buite het nie. Daar is byvoorbeeld nie familie of vriende wat meer kan help nie, of wil meer help nie. Jy weet, die politieke situasie in ons land het ook 'n groot impak op hoe hierdie goed gebestuur kan raak. Want as mens nou terugkyk na, um, jy weet, '94 en nou kom daar 'n sisteem in werking van, um, jy weet, swart bemagtiging - swart mense moet eerste die poste kry, dan mag blankes daarvoor in aanmerking geneem raak. Daar was 'n groot tydperk van blanke mense wat in posisies was wat gevra is om die swart persoon onder hom op te lei en sodra daai persoon 'n sekere vlak van opleiding bereik het dan is die blanke persoon uit die werk gesit, ge-‘retrench’ of wat ookal. So mens moet ook kyk na die, na die ouderdom situasie van ons blanke populasie. So, met ander woorde, waar, um, waar jou persone nog uit die ou staatsstelsel voordeel getrek het, jou blanke mens uit die ou stelsel voordeel getrek het, is mense van waarskynlik vyftig plus. So hulle het nog 'n finansietjie of wat ookal wat hulle opgebou het as gevolg van voordeel trek. Maar nou het daar ‘n nuwe generasie in plek gekom. Mense - twintig, dertig veertig jaar oud - wat nie meer noodwendig in 'n pos aangestel word wat sy kwalifikasies ‘match’, um, wat 'n finansie kry wat sy opleiding en, um, ‘skills’ pas nie, wat nou 'n laer inkomste kry bloot omdat hy nou maar 'n blanke persoon is. Um, jy weet, as hy nou in die moeilikheid beland, hy word ge-‘retrench’. Onmiddellik moet sy ouers wat in daai vyftig-, sestig-jaar-oud kategorie is intree en hom versorg, want hy het waarskynlik nou ook al 'n gesin met klein kindertjies. So die, die fondse wat daai persone gehad het [raak minder]. Daai vyftig, sestig kategorie raak minder.

So met ander woorde, nou kry hierdie dertig/veertig ou, twintig/dertig/veertig-jaar oue kategorieë, kry nie 'n werk nie, omdat daar bloot nie werk is vir blanke persone - of nie vinnig genoeg 'n werk kry nie, of hoe ookal. So hy put die ouer kategorie se fondse uit, um, en hy het self nie, hy het self nie die fondse om op te bou vir wanneer sy vyftien/sestien-jaar-oud kind nou in die moeilikheid beland en swanger raak en nie 'n werk kan kry nie, en die tipe van goete. So dit het 'n verskriklike impak. Die staat se besluite rondom hoe ons, um, blanke mense moet hanteer en raak het 'n geweldige groot impak en ek dink die, die situasie om nou die ding om te keer en te sê '94, na '94 gebore is, kan nou weer kwyt geskel word soos wat hulle beoog van goete soos um ...

M: BEE?

MW: Ja, ja. Wat nou weer kan kwalifiseer vir beste poste, ongeag of hy nou blank is.

SW: *And the largest number of people that end up here with us are exactly those that do not have resources outside anymore. There are, for example, no family or friends left that can help or want to help. You know, the political situation in our country also has a big impact on how these things are managed. Because if a person now looks back to, um, you know, '94, and now there is a system in place of, um, you know, black empowerment - black people first have to obtain posts, then whites can be considered. There was a long period when white people in certain positions were asked to train the black person under him and as soon as the person reached a certain level of training, then the white person was put out of the job, retrenched or whatever. So a person also has to look at the age situation of our white population. So in other words, where, um, people are still advantaged by the old state system, the white people still being advantaged by the system, are necessarily people that are fifty plus. So they still have some finances or whatever built up because of the advantage they had, but now there is a new generation. People twenty, thirty, forty years old, who are not chosen for a position that necessarily matches their qualifications ... um, who do not receive an income that matches his training or skills, who now receives a lower income because he is white. Um, you know, when he gets into trouble, he gets retrenched. Immediately his parents in that fifty-sixty-year-old*

category have to step in and care for him because he probably also has a family with small children already. So the funds, the funds that those people had [are depleted]. That fifty-sixty category is reducing. So in other words, now this thirty/forty-year-old, twenty/thirty/forty-year-old category does not find work simply because there is no work for whites or does not find work quick enough or whatever. So he depletes the older category's funds, um and he does not have any funds to build on himself for when his fifteen/sixteen-year-old child is in trouble and gets pregnant and does not work and all those type of things. So it has an immense impact. The state's decisions around how our, um, white people have to be handled - and to change things, to say, '94, born after '94 can be free from things they are planning, things like um ...

M: BEE?

SW: Yes, yes. He can now qualify for the best positions again, regardless of whether or not he is white.

The current situation of individuals is not attributed to a lack of transformation of self, but to circumstances on the outside, and specifically those outside of their control. Equipping people with the highest skills seems to be what is at stake when an emphasis is placed on upliftment or empowerment in the context of the institutions. The CMD social worker, however, does not focus on a transformation of self and acquisition of further skills or working harder, but instead emphasises an external circumstance dictated by government that 'distinguishes according to race specifically rejecting whites'. The focus is on a fixed physical characteristic (even though whiteness is neither fixed nor purely physical) that no amount of inner transformation can change or, according to the CMD social worker, should have to change. There seems to be a natural assumption that the skills and expertise associated with whiteness is of the highest quality and necessitates no transformation of self. Rather, the change should happen on the outside, with the focus placed on government and its policies as well as changes in the economic sector. Mrs D similarly reiterates what the CMD social worker highlights, stating that prominence should be given to individuals based on skill level instead of race.

Mev D: Ag weet jy, (giggel) ek sit baie keer en dink, ag Vader tog. Kan die son nie maar bietjie op my ook skyn nie vir 'n slag nie. Ek meen, ek sit met kwalifikasies. As ek nie, as ek nie geleerdheid gehad het nie, dan was dit dalk nog anderste gewees. Maar ek het 'n geleerdheid agter my naam. Ek het my verpleging en ek het my rekenaars. Ek wil nie weer gaan verpleeg nie omdat verpleging my geknou het: ek het my lewe amper verloor as gevolg van verpleging.

M: Sal jy weer gaan verpleeg as dit dan nou die enigste opsie is?

Mev D: Nee ek sal nie, want, weet jy, die klomp by die hospitaal probeer my terug druk in verpleging en ek sit net my voet neer. Dit is hoekom ek werk nou as 'n portier. [...] Dis die ding, ek, op die oomblik, moet ek weer eens my mond hou en net aangaan en dit maak my so vies, want wanneer kan ons vir 'n slag ons monde oopmaak? Weet jy? En dit is wat my kwaad maak van hierdie land. Die swartes, en ek is nie rasisties nie, maar die swartes is geneig om te praat van die verdruktes. Hulle moet hulle oë uit gatte uithaal en bietjie kyk wie word regtig verdruk vandag, want dit is baie beslis nie hulle nie.

M: Soos hoe bedoel jy?

Mev D: Dis die wit blankes, vernaam wit blanke vrouens met kinders wat verdruk word. Vrouens wat kwalifikasies agter hulle name het, maar omdat hulle blêrrie velle wit is dat hulle nie werk kon kry wat hulle veronderstel is om te kry nie.

M: En jy het al so 'n situasie ervaar?

Mev D: Ek ervaar dit elke keer. Elke keer, want die meeste plekke soos groot plekke het 'equity policy'. As dit nie was vir die 'equity policy' nie, dan kon ek nou al lankal gesit het met 'n admin pos soos wat ek wou gehad het.

M: Wat dink jy moet mens dan nou doen om dit te verander of te verbeter?

Mev D: Ek dink dit hang van jousef af. Ek dink dit is; nommer een geloof; en, um, nommer twee jy moet daai wilskrag hê om op te staan en vorente te gaan. As jy dit nie het nie, dan gaan jy bly waar jy is.

Mrs D: You know, (giggles) I often sit and think: Dear Lord, can the sun not also shine on me for a change? I mean, I have qualifications. If I did not have an

education, then maybe it would be a different situation; but I have an education behind my name. I have nursing and computers. I do not want to nurse again, since nursing took it out of me; I almost lost my life because of nursing.

M: Would you nurse again if it was the only option?

Mrs D: No, I would not - even though at the hospital they are trying to push me back into nursing. I just put my foot down. That is why I am now working as a porter. [...] The thing is, I, at the moment, I have to keep my mouth shut again and just carry on, and that makes me so angry - because when can we open our mouths for once? You know? And that is what makes me angry about this country. The blacks, and I am not racist, but the blacks are prone to speak of oppression. They should take their eyes out of their arses and see who is really being oppressed today, because it is definitely not them.

M: What do you mean?

Mrs D: It is the whites, especially the white women with children, who are being oppressed. Women with qualifications behind their names. But since their damn skins are white they cannot get the work they are supposed to get.

M: And have you experienced such a situation?

Mrs D: I experience it every time. Every time. Because most places, like big places, have equity policies. If not for the equity policy, then I would have had the admin position I wanted a long time ago.

M: What should a person do then to change or improve the situation?

Mrs D: I think it depends on yourself. I think it is: number one faith; and, um, number two, you have to have the determination to stand up and carry on. If you do not have it, then you are going to stay where you are.

Mrs D focuses on the broader political and economic constraints that she feels prevent her from obtaining the employment she feels entitled to, based on her qualifications and skills, but also based on expectations associated with 'ideal' whiteness. Mrs D's habitus does grant her with access to the same structural explanations as given by the CMD social worker. However, her varying social context, personal history and status related to whiteness does mean that the strategies necessary to justify the structural explanation are

not available to her. As the product of an encounter between the habitus and the social context, practices vary according to levels of compatibility “in such a way that, on occasions when there is a lack of [compatibility] ... an individual may not know how to act and may literally be lost for words” (Thompson, 1991:17). Her explanations vary from structural explanations that blame the government, to a focus on the self, with specific emphasis on the importance of skills and qualifications. However, she does not have the ability to be completely convincing and often slips back into a justification that focuses on race. Race serves to explain the external conditions she and her family are facing and why her transformation of self is not lacking; she is not being overlooked because of a lack of skill or because of a lack of character traits such as being a hard worker or dedicated. Her explanations relating to race illustrate the expectations related to ‘ideal whiteness’ and how people should act to attain this ideal and so continue receiving privilege and entitlement associated with whiteness. She feels a concrete loss of privilege and entitlement, but the question could be asked whether or not she ever had access to it in the first place. That privilege and entitlement associated with whiteness is imagined and is based on the Apartheid fable of a homogeneous narrative of whiteness. Mrs D does not want to continue nursing for an unknown reason, but the important point is that she feels she is losing out on an administrative position, one she feels entitled to because of her skills level and because she wants to keep intact her association with whiteness. Through race and outside structural explanations, she articulates a loss of entitlement and privilege - a loss whether real or imagined.

Mev D: Dit gaan nie meer oor ras nie. Dit gaan oor die mens self.

M: Sou jy sê dit is anders nou om wit en swaar te kry versus, kom ons sê 'n arm blanke in Apartheid?

Mev D: Dit is baie beslis anderste nou. Ek sal sê dit is definitief anderste. In die Apartheidsdae, die swartes praat van hulle verdrukking, maar hulle is nog steeds die kans gegun om verder te gaan leer in ander lande. Hulle het teruggekom; hulle het hulle self in ‘exile’ gaan sit; en hulle het teruggekom en die land oorgevat. Wa, oulik. Um, daar is mense gewees wat, hulle het vloere gewas en vandag ‘run’ hulle besighede. Hulle het nie eers die regte kwalifikasies daarvoor nie. Maar omdat die ‘equity policy’ daar is, kyk ons

vas daarin. Dan kry jy blankes wat die kwalifikasies het, wat die 'know how' het, maar hulle word nie raak gesien nie. En hulle moet nou vloere was, want die verdruktes moet nou eers kans gegee word.

M: Dink jy dat dit gaan uitbalanseer?

Mev D: Nee dit gaan nie. Dit gaan nie uitbalanseer nie, want die blankes in hierdie land het nog nie geleer om saam te staan nie.

Mrs D: It's not about race anymore. It's about the person himself.

M: Would you say it is different now to be white and struggling versus, let's say being a poor white during Apartheid?

Mrs D: It is definitely different now. I will definitely say it is different. In the Apartheid days, the blacks talk about their oppression, but they were still given the opportunity to go and study further in other countries. They came back; they went and put themselves in exile; and they came back and took over the country. Wow, cute. Um, there were people who were washing floors and today they are running businesses. They do not even have the right qualifications, but since the equity policy is there we cannot move past it. Then you get whites with the qualifications, with the 'know how', but they are not acknowledged. And they have to now wash floors, because now the oppressed have to be given a chance first.

M: Do you think it is going to balance out?

Mrs D: No it will not. It is not going to balance out because the whites in this country have not yet learned how to stand together.

Again, even though Mrs D emphasises a shift from race to what constitutes an individual, she still feels that certain qualifications, especially associated with whiteness, should trump blackness with similar qualifications. Certain positions are quite simply not meant for whites, with certain occupations associated with race, rather than being justified by skills and qualifications. The practices made available to her by the habitus do not allow her to sufficiently bury race under the shift of emphasising the individual. Focussing on the individual, borrowed from the institutions, especially one with apparent superior skills and qualifications does seem to bring into question external structures such as

government and big business apparently ignoring the individual and rather making decisions based on race. It seems that the constant focus on the individual and then slipping to race is an effort to speak about whiteness. The shift to the individual, such as in Mrs D's testimonies, only obscures the seemingly objective structures that underlie the habitus and consequently also the fact that privilege and entitlement naturally equate to whiteness, which is rather associated with the 'ideal' of whiteness. In other words, entitlement and privilege is as necessary to the ideal of whiteness as are the concepts 'mother' and 'father' to the ideal family; and which therefore create similar expectations.

This does not mean that people, especially those who are struggling and poor, do not constantly still try to transform themselves or try to change their external conditions in an effort to provide testimony of their inner transformation. The social value afforded to this by the institutions and society as a whole remains fixed and justified according to an apparent objective moral order. The moral order is built around religion, which can be described as one of the most objective structures. The moral order, ergo religion, dictates that a change in self is necessary to ensure a change in external conditions, since, according to Christianity, a good person will make the right choices. However, even if the apparent right choices are made and practices are aligned or changed accordingly, such as moving into cheaper neighbourhoods regardless of race or focusing on trying to curb a drinking problem, most people will remain poor or struggling.

The moral order, based on the religious discourse of Christianity, demands a change in self that pretends that it is not racially exclusive and which then ultimately encourages people to think that the limits of change (inner transformation leading to outer transformation) are backed by government policies. This does not mean that there are not real material conditions that make it impossible for people to survive; rather, the same moral order that is supposed to facilitate change ultimately functions to construct solidarities that may only make change harder to achieve. By providing a framework of meaning that allows poor whites to think that they need to be good or act better and that any failure can then be blamed on the black government, the institutions keep helping people survive, but they also perpetuate racism.

MW: Armoede ja, maak equal. Ons sien ook baie keer met arm blanke mense wat hulle wel sover sal gaan as om byvoorbeeld in 'n swart plakkerskamp te gaan bly. Um, daar is ook nou dele in die land waar blanke plakkerskampe ontstaan. Um, maar daar is 'n groot klomp van die arm mense wat op die ou end van die dag maar besluit dit is vir my makliker ... um, kom ek vat nou maar, byvoorbeeld, 'n swart vrou en trou met haar ek gaan kry 'n klomp kinders by haar en ek gaan bly saam met haar in die plakkerskamp. Ons het op hierdie stadium 'n groot klomp van ons blanke mense wat, wat sover gaan om maar daar deel van daai gemeenskappe te raak. Um, ons het natuurlik ook 'n klomp wat voel hulle juis nie daar betrokke raak nie, hulle wil nie 'equal' raak nie. [...] Ek dink net armoede sal maar altyd daar wees. Die Bybel sê ook so.

SW: Poverty is an equaliser. We often see it with our white people that will go so far as, for example, to go and live in black squatter camps. Um, and there are parts of our country where white squatter camps have sprung up. Um, but there is a big group of poor people that in the end decide it is easier for me to, for example, marry a black woman, have a whole lot of children with her and go and live with her in the squatter camp. We also have a group of people at this stage who go so far as to become part of those communities. Of course, we also have many who do not really want to get involved there, that do not want to be equal. [...] I think poverty will always be there: the Bible also says so.

The same seemingly objective structure underwriting the habitus and religion, dictates a transformation of self in order to change associated external conditions, but it also determines that this is not possible. If poverty will always remain, then unequal conditions will always be there - and then it does not matter if there is a transformation of self. Built into religion is its own objective nature and therefore it is not possible to question it as a moral order.

Mev R: Die Here sal vir ons wys hoekom het Hy dit gedoen. Ons mag nie vra hoekom en waarom nie - die Here sal ons wys. Ekskuus, ek raak sommer baie

Christelik hierso. [...] Hy sal dit eendag vir jou openbaar. Jy jaag nie die Here aan nie. Daar is 'n tyd en 'n plek vir enige ding in die lewe.

Mrs R: The Lord will show us why He did it. We cannot ask why and wherefore - the Lord will show us. I'm sorry, I'm becoming very religious now. [...] He will reveal it to you one day. You don't rush the Lord. There is a time and place for anything in life.

The question is then who is ultimately responsible for the future of these people. If they cannot change their future by becoming better people, there have to be others that influence the future they face. That is why, in the discussions relating to a general future, people refer to outside conditions as ultimately influencing the future. The government, Mittal Steel and God determine what these external conditions are, but these circumstances are such that they happen for a reason. “The veritable miracle produced by acts of institutions lies undoubtedly in the fact that they manage to make consecrated individuals believe that their existence is justified, that their existence serves some purpose” (Bourdieu, 1991:126). Unchanging circumstances or worsening external conditions usually test the transforming self to see whether it has changed sufficiently. So again, the moral order remains objective and so too does religion.

The fact that individuals feel their lives are destined to serve a purpose, based on a particular moral order, only further serves to justify a social order based on race, with specific emphasis on whiteness. The promise of entitlement and privilege according to race keeps these people acting and being white in a very specific way. Although this promise is to a certain extent also the consequence of the moral order and religious discourse, it is ultimately associated with the expectations surrounding what it means to be the ‘ideal’ white. Melissa Steyn (2001) refers to the idea of privilege and entitlement associated with race based on the ‘master narrative of whiteness’. According to Steyn (2001), ‘the master narrative of whiteness’ operates in a cyclical fashion: a sense of superiority justifies the exercise of power, the acquisition of more power and resources and race as dictating privilege. For the four families in the study, the opposite seems to be happening, with privilege and entitlement indicating whiteness and the loss of

entitlement and privilege therefore indicating a loss of an association with whiteness. The natural association of privilege and entitlement with whiteness that was entrenched during Apartheid as being natural or based on common sense, is now the promise of privilege since it never really materialised for these four families and probably never will. If they do experience privilege and entitlement concretely and their economic circumstances change as a result, I doubt it will be because of their whiteness.

The present and the future of those poor and who are struggling, no matter their efforts (whether individual or collective), remains certain “as long as one remains locked in the dilemma of determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity” (Bourdieu, 1977:95). For Martilda and Victoria, the world is at their feet and they have the choice to do or achieve anything. However, they require certain strategies produced by the habitus to achieve their goals and fulfil their dreams and these strategies relate specifically to a predisposed position in society. Therefore, the tools or rather the practices necessary, are just not available to Martilda or Victoria. They will most probably never be or have the ideal of family or meet the expectations associated with being the ideal white. This is not always easy to accept. And it is usually those people on the bottom levels of society who have to face these facts, rather than those who have access to strategies to at least conceal their lack of access to other strategies, such as keeping whiteness intact through maintaining an apparent position of economic privilege even though this is not the result of whiteness. Change is only possible to the extent that the habitus allows and therefore people who impose change on others not sharing the same habitus will not understand why those supposed to change simply will not or cannot. Discourses that attempt to explain the lack of change still keep intact the seemingly objective structures that underwrite the habitus and therefore only serve to justify the habitus again. The result is that people are placed in racial or gendered groupings that ultimately prevent a common identification of poor (or change) in their circumstances.

CONCLUSION

Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions... To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions.

(Marx, *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, 1843:54)

The four families in this study are supposed to be and to act a certain way according to a particular moral order regulating people's behaviour and producing expectations that govern how people 'ought' to behave. These expectations are associated with what it means to be family, to be white, to be a good person and even extend to shape how people live and what their houses should look like. These expectations relate to prescriptions on action and are the result of the past accumulated in individuals, in what Bourdieu (1977) has called the *habitus*, and forms the basis of their practice in and judgements of the world. In the thesis, I have been concerned with the *habitus* of people who understand themselves as white and believe that expectations emerge from whiteness. While they believe that these expectations have become harder to achieve in the 'new' South Africa, I have shown that their struggle to 'get by' can be traced back to before political transformation. The problem lies as much with how their expectations have been formed as it does with a failure to fulfil them.

The four families who are the focus of my study and specifically Martilda and Victoria will "ultimately [be] forced to accept [their] dehumanized status" (Scheper-Hughes 2002:369). Some white South Africans may by virtue of strategies accompanying generations of privilege – not unlike those analysed in Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) – be able to brush over difficulties, inconsistencies and contradictions that govern whiteness in South Africa. However, these strategies are not available to the families in my study and explicit contradictions appear. When these failures to fulfil moral expectations become palpable, it is not without consequence for how people view themselves and others around them. The appearance of contradictions so explicitly produces anxiety in people, an anxiety that we can analyse through the framework of 'structural violence' (Scheper-Hughes, 2002).

Structural violence is similar to the objective violence described by Slavoj Žižek (2008) and he further distinguishes between subjective and objective violence. Žižek illustrates the distinction through a story about a rich Russian family (before the Russian revolution) who in “their benevolent-gentle innocence” cannot understand the ‘sudden’ aggression expressed by the poor children towards their own children at school (2008:9). “What they did not understand was that in the guise of this irrational structural violence, they were getting back the message they themselves had sent out in its inverted true form” (2008:9). Therefore, Žižek suggests that the rich family cannot see the ways in which they have continually and objectively exercised violence against the other poor families. Subjective violence, such as the aggression expressed by the poor children, is experienced against a zero level violence condition, of how things ‘ought’ to be, maintaining and justifying the social conditions of the habitus. For example those that are poor will be involved in crime or become crime statistics by virtue of the fact that they are poor. In contrast, objective violence is necessary to maintain the natural status quo and “is precisely the violence inherent to this normal state of things” (2008:2). It is the violence exercised by the rich family in order to maintain their ‘normal’ social and economic position. According to Žižek, we are caught up in a false sense of urgency to solve and correct subjective violence as we are fascinated by it. Our focus is on domestic abuse, child abuse, alcoholism or substance abuse and this “distracts our attention from the true locus of trouble by obliterating from view other forms of violence and thus actively participating in them” (2008:9).

Analytically, the thesis focuses not only on the subjective violence often inflicted by the men on their partners, but on the structure that underlies this form of violence. The structure relates to the ideal family, sanctioned by a range of institutions and embedded in the habitus. The family becomes a moral and material ideal, while preserving a sense of (racial) superiority. The ideal family is the normal state of affairs but specifically the way things ‘ought’ to be for a white family. The unattainable and often contradictory expectations created by the ideal family and ideal whiteness mean that the four families cannot live up to the ideal and experience family as a site of their own incapacity and moral failing, rather than as a result of a flawed morality or their failing common sense.

Contradictions arise between how things 'ought' to be and the reality of what happens in trying to live up to the ideal. This is also illustrated in the efforts of the institutions to 'help' people in Newcastle transform their situations of poverty. On the one hand, the institutions are instrumental in the everyday survival of people and serve as a kind of shelter from a harsh outside world by creating a sense of community. They also help the children of extremely poor families by removing them from difficult domestic situations when necessary without severing the link between the children and the parents. The institutions do not only play a part, but are often necessary to the very survival of the four families. On the other hand, these institutions preach a moral order which shapes people's conduct, a morality which is extremely hard to maintain, but can also be destructive when creating and reinforcing unattainable ideas about being a family, being a good person and being white. The four families constantly struggle to live up to the moral and material expectations related to the ideal of family, morality and whiteness based on 'common sense'. Living up to this ideal, although apparently distinguishing whites from poor whites, does not guarantee a material change in circumstances nor is it always materially possible to attain this ideal. And yet, people are required by institutions to constantly strive towards this ideal and then, are thus compelled to see themselves as failures when they cannot achieve this.

Therefore, the institutions seem to work as disciplinary devices aimed more at eliminating differences than actually overturning poverty or eliminating inequality and in this capacity serve to reinforce particular religious formations that locally prevent rather than encourage racial integration. A focus on an elimination of difference maintains the status quo of how things 'ought' to be such as explaining or justifying these families' situation in terms of race to keep intact the expectations regarding what it means to be white. While these institutions often help people in very precarious positions, they do not actually achieve the possibility of people leaving their situations of poverty. What they do achieve is to entrench a particular understanding of 'good' and 'bad' through an emphasis on outer transformation mirroring inner transformation, which among other things is racialised. Common sense, or the habitus, understood as a moral system that informs how people understand good or bad, governs how people live in the world. This

does not necessarily overcome contradictions, and in some instances creates contradictions.

As much as their condition of poverty is not their own making, these four families do themselves little favours through their claims to racial entitlement and the barriers they create between themselves and people of different racial groups who may be facing a similar predicament. For example, a high rate of unemployment is not understood as a phenomenon locally and globally or possibly experienced by many. It is experienced as specific to these people's situation because they are white and therefore passed over for possible employment opportunities within the current political climate. They do not or cannot acknowledge that their situation is perhaps similar to others seeking employment in semi-skilled occupations, regardless of race and that the assumed privilege and entitlement associated with their whiteness are expectations related to being the 'ideal white'.

The contradictory character of having to be and become family or having to be and become good people as almost unattainable and unrealistic ideals, I suggest, capture something of what it means to live in Newcastle today and help to show how complicated the problem of racism is as well as how difficult it is to get to the cause of racism. In the moments when the limits of their moral order become clear, when bad things happen or continue to happen to good people, when families themselves are the sites of failure and when whites do not have the assumed privilege or entitlement anymore, it is not the moral order which is questioned. It is possible for outsiders to see the failures of the moral order, but these violations are quickly papered over. People continue to reassert the moral order through explanations based on particular structural changes as contingencies that reinforce the moral order rather than challenge it. It is at these moments that people maintain race since their common sense explanations seem limited. Although race is produced in a very particular socio-historical context in Newcastle and grounded materially, in some instances it appears justified when people feel aggrieved at a loss of privilege for them to turn to race as an explanation, but we cannot accept it as anything less than racism. Even though their racism is an expression of the contradictions they live in, it does nothing to actually help overcome these contradictions

and challenges. Rather, as Marx (1843) suggests about religion, it turns them further away from an adequate understanding of their current situation.

As I have also tried to demonstrate in each chapter, racism is never a matter of either just a change in material conditions or just a change in thinking. Racism is entrenched in people's common sense, but a common sense where "what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying" (Bourdieu 1977: 167). The common sense is embedded in the material practices of people, in how they inhabit space and make place for themselves, in how they interact with family, in how they work with the institutions that dictate the very condition of their survival, and in how they come to understand and judge the past. These common sense categories exist, therefore, without ever being explicitly stated or debated. In order for these people not to be racist, they have to change or question their common sense but this common sense is associated with everyone and everything in their understanding of the world. Even if they do want to change, everyone and everything is against them as everyone and everything is associated with or shares their common sense. This point is further illustrated through thinking about whiteness as an ideology and as part of the habitus inscribed on the body, on physical space, on institutions, and on people's morality. Everyone and everything seem to articulate and underwrite the continued superiority of whiteness.

It may be easier among a different class of white South Africans to demand a change of attitude and to morally condemn people when racist practices are clung to as a way of quite obviously preserving privilege and whether this privilege really is the product of whiteness or just based on a nostalgia for the past is not the issue. However, even in the case of privileged whites, racism is coded in rituals and ways of speech that do not always exist in conscious conversation in a manner that is conducive to rational debate (Goga, 2010; Steyn, 2001). In the case of the poor whites in this study, there is undoubtedly no less of an urgent moral imperative than to change the way that they think about race. I have shown, at least in my discussion of four families in Newcastle that racism has become such a part of their everyday common sense and woven into their daily struggles to survive, that challenging and transforming racist attitudes require changing the conditions that enable such attitudes. I have attempted here, to begin to

show the kinds of conditions that would need to change in order to adequately confront racism.

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