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<ATL>'I Don't Like My Children to Grow up in this Bad Area': Parental Anxieties  
about Living in Informal Settlements</ATL>

<AU>PAULA METH</AU>

<H1>Abstract </H1>

<ABSTRACT>Growing research on informal settlements considers the experiences of children, but seldom outlines the daily parenting experiences of adult men and women. At the same time, policy on housing in South Africa points to the ways in which the 'eradication' of informal housing will help provide children with better futures. This article explores the social relation of parenting within an informal settlement in Durban, South Africa, bearing in mind the broader difficulties of parenting in poverty, and points to ways in which the material qualities of informal settlements contribute to feelings of anxiety in parents. It questions how these experiences might differ from or be similar to those of parents who live in generic contexts of poverty (but not necessarily informality). It concludes ultimately that living in an informal settlement does actually contribute to particular parental anxieties, but that there is no guarantee that informal housing eradication will remove these concerns.</ABSTRACT>

<H1>Introduction</H1>

This article explores experiences of parents living in an informal settlement, and thus contributes to a growing literature on informality (see Roy, 2005; McFarlane, 2012). It initially adopts a fairly conventional approach to understanding informality, whereby particular poor qualities (largely material, but also social) of informal settlements define the informal status of the settlement being examined. The article follows the definitions of informality of the World Bank, United Nations and the South African state. Such interpretations might be summarized as employing an approach to informality that emphasizes the material qualities of informality, the distinctive nature of the informal sector (housing in this case) and its presumed separation from all that is formal (following Roy's 2005 arguments). However, as the article progresses, and particularly in its conclusions, the pitfalls of such an approach to informality are revealed, and informality is understood rather as a process, or as a 'mode of urbanization' (Roy, 2005: 148), as a way of more fully engaging with the ways in which residents live and recognizing that changes to the materiality of informality (for example, through urban upgrading) have a limited impact if at the same time fundamental changes to people's livelihoods and capacities are not ensured (Roy, 2005; Ross, 2010).

Informal settlements dominate living environments across the global South and are increasingly influencing urban research agendas in which the politics, practices of and 'solutions' to informality are debated. debating the politics, practices of and 'solutions' to informality [AQ: do you mean 'in which the politics, practices of and 'solutions' to informality are debated? yes]. This article concentrates on the poor and their informal settlements, which can be seen as related to but somewhat distinct from 'slums' in terms of the broad UN definition, which includes 'inadequate access to safe water, ... sanitation and other infrastructure; poor structural quality of housing, overcrowding; and insecure

residential status' (UN, 2003: 12). Informal settlements, particularly in the South African context, refer to 'settlements of the urban poor that have developed through unauthorised occupation of land', are characterized by tenure insecurity and are, in variable ways, dangerous and unhealthy living environments (Huchzermeyer and Karam, 2006: 3). Like slums, they are often perceived in very negative terms, particularly by international organizations and the state (but also by some of their residents). This construct of the informal settlement [AQ: add 'of informal settlement?'] is often related to the perceived inappropriateness thereof for human habitation, and more specifically for families and children. However, this negative labelling of place is powerful and has resulted in efforts to eradicate such settlements, yet Huchzermeyer and Karam argue that '...the reality of informal settlements' is inadequately understood (ibid.: 3).

While our research bears in mind the broader complexities of informal settlements, this article focuses specifically on considering the ways in which the concept of 'children' is, at times, employed by the state and development organizations in their pronouncements and analyses of the problems of informality and the related research about the vulnerability of children. In contrast to this, the article then argues, little research has focused on specific parenting experiences within informal settlements, with work on parenting in generic contexts of poverty being far more evident. A key emotional register of parenting is anxiety, produced by a host of factors, yet the role of the informal settlement in shaping particular parental anxieties is poorly explored and it is not clear whether the 'informal' qualities are significant and distinctive for parents.

This article contributes to closing this gap in research by examining the anxieties of parents living informally in Cato Crest, Durban, South Africa, and highlights a range of material anxieties that can be described as informal-specific. These anxieties reiterate some of the more widely acknowledged problems of informal settlements and the risks these pose for children, in particular. They also reveal less obvious concerns that are only evident from a parental perspective.

Furthermore, it argues that there is a lack of detailed research on how and whether these anxieties might shift if housing 'improvement' is implemented and indeed whether many of these anxieties are distinctive in [AQ: add 'differing']-differing contexts of poverty (where housing is formalized, for example). It concludes that there are informal-specific anxieties, and supports, in part, the powerful argument that 'they are not ideal places for children to grow up in', but importantly, that parental anxieties in contexts of poverty cut across the formal-informal divide.

<H1>Eradication of the informal: political discourses on informality</H1>

Public and political discourses on informality in South Africa are fluid, complex and highly context-dependent. During the apartheid and post-apartheid eras approaches to informal housing have varied from downright intolerance (demolition), to support (upgrading schemes) (see Huchzermeyer et al., 2006: 22–23 for a detailed typology of policy responses). National policies such as Breaking New Ground (BNG) (2004) prioritized poverty alleviation through various mechanisms, including in situ upgrading. However, forced evictions and demolitions justified variously at regional scales have occurred (see Symphony Way Pavement Dwellers, 2011, for accounts in the Western Cape, and the KwaZulu-Natal Elimination and Prevention of the re-emergence of Slums Bill of 2007 as examples of a recent policy tool).<F1> Former housing minister Lindiwe Sisulu (in office at the time of research) reiterated her commitment to the Millennium Development Goal of improving 'slum settlements' or 'MDG 7, Target 11' (Huchzermeyer and Karam, 2006: 3). She regularly called for the eradication of slums by 2010 (Ross, 2010: 205), stating that 'we have

declared war on informal settlements’ (Sisulu, 2004) and ‘[a] belief in any form of informality distorts the values that we as a society must uphold, ... the values of equality and dignity for all’ (Sisulu, 2006). Although Huchzermeyer points out that eradication ‘can be misunderstood as a blanket mandate to remove shacks’ (she views it rather as a poverty eradication measure) she goes on to argue that ‘the political message to informal settlement dwellers may be that they are to be eradicated’ (2006: 44).

In 2009 the Ministry of Housing was renamed the Ministry of Human Settlements under the leadership of Tokyo Sexwale. Under his control the ministry ‘talks’ more positively of ‘slum upgrading’, recognizing the value of in situ upgrading of suitably located [AQ: rather ‘strategically located?’ or ‘settlements that have a suitable location?’] informal settlements and the challenges of meeting the ever-growing demand for housing (Ministry of Human Settlements, 2011).<F2> These national shifts have also been shaped by local and regional challenges as particular programmes of relocation and/or upgrading have been implemented in relation to wider metropolitan plans. The case of Cato Manor, discussed below, is a relatively positive example of in situ upgrading following the declaration of a Presidential Lead Project shortly after 1994.

Policies of eradication and upgrading encapsulate a particular vision of living that explicitly negates the acceptability of informal settlements. Formal housing is imbued with favourable anticipated characteristics, an imagined alternative future entrenched by the state and institutions responsible for its delivery. Ross (2005) reveals the ways in which the qualities of informal living (in Cape Town, South Africa) are contrasted with formal housing by both developers and state planners through their construction of what a ‘model community’ formed through new build might entail. Concerns about orderliness, both physically, but importantly socially, are key and were tied to the aesthetic qualities of the planned settlement (ibid.: 637). These material qualities emphasized low densities, tarred roads, public open space, consistency of building form and design, reliance on ‘permanent’ materials (brick) and the presence of internal flush toilets (ibid.: 637). Leaving aside the (unfortunate) reality of what was actually built, Ross’s key point is to identify the ways in which notions of decency, responsibility and aesthetic orderliness are embedded in such planning visions, and as such employ negative evaluations of informal living to justify such planning outputs. The intersections here, of material and social assumptions underscoring a move to formal housing, parallel wider public and state discourses about the ‘indecentness of informal living’ more broadly. Significantly, Ross also points out the ways in which residents share some of these ideals, but do so in a complex manner. although not in uncomplicated ways [AQ: do you mean ‘residents share some of these ideals, but do so in a complex manner’?]. Residents expressed hopes that the new housing might provide and promote decency, but concede that they might also require them to change personal habits (Ross, 2010: 43).

### <H1>A focus on children in informality/slum discourse</H1>

Within discourses on the negative qualities of informality, and similarly to the ways in which sustainability is debated, the needs of children in particular are often emphasized, as they epitomize current vulnerability, ‘the future’ as well as challenges of long-term planning. in a similar vein to sustainability studies: [AQ: I think your point would be clearer if you rather placed this at beginning of the sentence: ‘Within discourses on the negative qualities of informality, [add: including sustainability studies] the needs of children in particular are often emphasized, ...’]

We call on all to join us in our bid ... to create a country where slums are eradicated and in their place, decent, secure communities are created where our children can grow up in dignity ... . (Sisulu, 2008)

As identified by the Department of Housing in South Africa, children are included in the category of the particularly vulnerable, the argument being that in slum and squatter settlements 'areas often lack basic service provisions and vulnerable groups such as children, women, people with disabilities and people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS often bear the brunt of this lack' (CSIR, 2006: 27). Children Count (a data and advocacy project based at University of Cape Town) analyses South African children's experiences of a range of housing-related criteria and evidences the negative qualities of informal living. Overcrowding is a distinctive concern, with 63% of children who live informally suffering from overcrowding, compared to only 4% who live formally (Children Count, 2010).

This national concern about impacts on children is paralleled globally as research has grown and [AQ: add 'in places'] within this work it is the ~~where the~~ vulnerability of children (rather than parenting per se) that is key. This is evident particularly in relation to health and crime issues (see Satterthwaite et al., 1996; Bartlett et al., 1999; Chawla, 2002; UN, 2003 and Tranberg Hansen et al., 2008). The UN report *The Challenge of Slums* examines a range of child-specific concerns, such as the prevalence of poor working conditions for children, high rates of child mortality, risks of accidents and exposure to fire, and the threats emanating from the exposure of children to criminal opportunities (UN, 2003). Bartlett et al. (1999) explore dimensions of poor (often informal) housing and identify a host of material and social concerns for poor children, including overcrowding, sanitation, neighbourly relations, poisons, construction materials and violence, among others.

Within this work there is some analysis of the particular experiences of parenting. The social impact of single parenting, specifically relating to loss of income and the subsequent impact thereof on care giving (Satterthwaite et al., 1996 and UN, 2003) as well as the emotional impact of a shift to single parenting on children are identified (UN, 2003: 71). Generic parental concerns (crime, dangerous environments, and so on) are also identified by Bannerjee and Driskell (2002). Satterthwaite et al. (1996: 96) considers risks for parents and points to parental stress and mental-health problems occurring as a result of poverty in the living environment and over-crowding (Bartlett et al., 1999: 80–81). However, some work on children does not address parenting explicitly, for example, in Tranberg Hansen et al. (2008), the terms parent and carer do not appear in the index.

This relative focus on children suggests a tendency towards the bifurcation of research on children versus adults and a lack of focus on their relational qualities. This is perhaps a function of the rise in popularity of childhood studies across the social sciences as well as the strength (in principle) of the global rights of children witnessed through the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the UN in 1989 (Chawla, 2002: 5). The plight of children living informally is an important policy and research issue. However, this article argues that too little is known about the corresponding experiences of parenting in informal settlements, how they feel about and view living informally, and how these experiences might relate to, overlap or contrast with the experiences of children. Furthermore, little research exists that considers whether the experiences of parents living informally differ from those living in poverty but in formal housing (although see Ross, 2010 where this comparison is considered) [AQ: please clarify — do you mean: 'for another view on this issue, see Ross, 2010?']. More research on this issue is vital, given its political importance, as government departments use eradication or upgrading of informality as a key tool for development for the betterment of 'children's futures'.

## <H1>Debates on parenting in poverty/parenting in informal settlements</H1>

Literature focusing on parenting in situations of poverty is relatively extensive within disciplines such as Anthropology, Sociology, Social Work, Psychology and Education Studies, both within South Africa and more globally, although the focus thereof is variable and at times patchy. For example, Swartz and Bhana argue: 'very little is known about the phenomenon of young fatherhood in contexts of pervasive and chronic poverty' (2009, 4), claiming that such research focuses largely on the global North. Within South Africa, experiences and practices of parenting and caring are explored in a wide range of contexts, including poor urban townships, informal settlements and rural settlements.

Richter's (1999) contributions to the field of parenting in poverty have illustrated the emotional costs and implications of parenting in such contexts. On the issue of poor women in South Africa, she argues that 'some women, without sufficient material and social resources, are psychologically overcome by adversity' and that 'caregiving dysfunctions place at risk the social and psychological capacities of young children' (ibid.: 193). She emphasizes potential impacts of parental anxieties on both children and parents, yet the impact of poverty on the quality of care is not straightforward. Bray and Brandt's work (2007) explores the intersections between poverty and child care, drawing on empirical research in Masiphumelele, a poor, largely informal settlement on the fringes of urban Cape Town. Alongside concerns related to the 'health and safety aspects of poor-quality housing' (ibid.: 4), they argue that concerns about permanence, mobility and 'rights to residence' have an impact on women's 'sense of worth and stability and their confidence in being able to provide quality care for their children' (ibid.: 5). This claim supports a more widely held notion that mobility (often as a result of poverty or lack of rights) fosters disrupted care relations for children, with negative outcomes (ibid.: 5). However, their research also reveals that care relations are far more complex and indeed richer than previously assumed: 'material provision alone does not determine care ideals or the nature of care practices in this resource-poor community' and 'poverty is not an entirely deterministic force' (ibid.: 13–14).

However, the material significance of poverty in financial terms for young fathers is key. Swartz and Bhana (2009) conclude that 'they place enormous store on their own financial presence in the lives of their children and elevate it to the most important feature of fatherhood, with tragic consequences since their poverty and unemployment militates against sustained financial involvement' (2009: 55). Richter and Morrell's (2006) edited collection, *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*, provides an extensive overview of fatherhood in a broader South African context and specifically links patterns of fatherhood to historical political and economic trends, including migrant work, high levels of unemployment and the 'historical legacy of racial emasculation' (Morrell and Richter, 2006: 5, 8). Here poverty is intertwined with broad structural trends that shape men's experiences of fathering.

Some of the literature dealing with parenting in poverty examines aspects of parenting in contexts that include informal settlements. Indeed, Swartz and Bhana's book (2009) draws on research undertaken, in part, in the same case-study settlement as this article. Yet I argue that despite the use of informal settlements as case study material or case study location in some ~~In view of this, but reflecting more broadly on~~ 'parenting in poverty work', the particular material specificities of informal settlements are less likely to be at the centre of analyses which produce in-produceing an understanding of parenting (see, for example, Richter and Morrell, 2006 where the specificities of informal living is not a focus). [AQ: please help – I'm unsure who is "reflecting more broadly" – your own study, or that of Swartz? The next sentence also needs further clarification. Perhaps rephrase. Do you mean: "In view of this fact, this study reflects more broadly on 'parenting in poverty work', as the

particular material specificities of informal settlements [add: in Swartz and Bhana's book? or add: in previous research?] are less likely [specify: less likely than what? Or do you mean 'are not primarily centred on analyses that produce an understanding of parenting?'] to be at the centre of analyses in producing an understanding of parenting (see, for example, Richter and Morrell, 2006). The qualities of the neighbourhood, housing and the socio-material make-up of parents' living environments and the relationships between these spaces and the state (in terms of legality, permanence, or other issues) do not always receive specific attention in theoretical analyses. This is an observation rather than a criticism, and perhaps the significance of spatial qualities as an issue for analysis is issue [AQ: please confirm which issue you are referring to here? Should this read 'the issues of permanence and legality?'] is of particular rather concern for geographers and planners. However, given the political concerns about the materiality of place outlined earlier (namely, proposals to eradicate informal settlements) it is arguably a significant focus.

Some research has focused more explicitly on place in relation to parenting. Kejerfors' (2007) thesis on the shanty town of Buriti Congonhas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, explores the relationship between parenting, context and child development. He adopts an ecological approach and examines how a range of material factors shape this relationship, including the number of rooms per house, building materials, facilities and services in the settlement. The average house has 4.6 rooms and 64% of parents claimed relative satisfaction or satisfaction with the quality of their housing (ibid.: 141). The majority of houses are multi-storey brick buildings, and the settlement has drainage and lighting (ibid.: 93). Crime emerged as parents' primary concern, with 79% keeping their children indoors or near the home (ibid.: 148) and preventing them from using neighbourhood facilities such as playgrounds and soccer fields (ibid.: 149). In relation to housing, Kejerfors concludes: 'the parents who were dissatisfied with their accommodation did not seem to be more or less accepting or rejecting towards their children' (ibid.: 142). Kejerfors' case study This case [AQ: do you mean Kejerfors' case study?] is particularly useful in illustrating how the material qualities of this informal settlement are not particularly significant in shaping particular parenting experiences and also how varied informal living/slums can be. Materially, this settlement is very different to those found elsewhere in the world, and this materiality is significant. However, Kejerfors' conclusions do correspond in part with those of Bray and Brandt (2007), indicating that poverty and materiality are not the only indicators of care quality.

Scheper-Hughes examined the intersection between maternal love and high child mortality in the shanty town of Alto do Cruzeiro in north-eastern Brazil, arguing that as a survival strategy, mothers practised 'mortal selective neglect' or 'passive infanticide' (1989: 325) with their infants who appeared doomed. She points to 'poverty, deprivation, sexism, chronic hunger, and economic exploitation' as the 'real pathogens in this environment' (ibid.: 327). Scheper-Hughes makes regular reference to the poor qualities of the slum settlement in her analysis, although she concentrates her arguments on wider socio-economic and cultural explanations.

Finally, Ross's (2010) analysis of everyday life in relation to place in post-apartheid South Africa work [AQ: add a quick summary here to make this paragraph flow better: e.g. 'Ross's analysis of everyday life in a post-apartheid community in Cape Town'] is of great value to this study, as she traces the movement of one community from an informal settlement in Cape Town to the formalized 'village' consisting of state provided housing. The materiality of housing is explored in detail, particularly in relation to the search for 'decency' by both planners and residents. Ross does not explicitly analyse parenting per se, but intra-family/household relations are a primary focus of her work. This study is one of very that



detail the social outcomes of housing change in South Africa, and as such offers vital insights to planners and geographers.

### <H1>Geographies of parenting in South Africa</H1>

In South Africa, experiences of parenting are strongly shaped by context (see Walker, 1995: 429), which are intimately tied to the geographies of apartheid (and post-apartheid), structures of economic inequality and state policy making.

The political geographies of parenting are illustrated by Ross (2010), who outlines the various ways in which women's capacities to care for their children in a particular informal settlement in Cape Town are shaped by wider structural and cultural processes: the role women play in caring for the children of wealthier families, women who work those working [AQ: rather: women who work?] as migrant urban workers, and the politics of parenting that result from complex kinship relations, including the difficulties children experience when their mothers form new sexual relations (ibid.: 80). She concludes that 'poor women may have to sustain their children by moving away from them, by sending them away and/or by disguising their relationship to them' (ibid.: 80). Hence, gendered labour relations are central to experiences and practices of parenting, and the migrant labour system and the prevalence of domestic work are thus critical. These are entrenched within apartheid economic and geographic structures and continue to directly structure parenting in South Africa.

Black African women in South Africa 'constitute approximately 90% of the domestic workforce' and the sector employs 20% of all employed black women in the country (du Preez et al., 2010: 395, 397). Their work regularly requires the performance of parent-like tasks for the employers' family or household, with variable protection from exploitation (hours, conditions and pay) despite changed legislation in the post-apartheid era (ibid.). Women's working conditions (long and irregular hours and poor pay) explicitly undermine their efforts to care for their own children. The migrant labour system, historically designed to supply 'permitted' labour (often male) to cities and maintain reproduction in black homelands, has spawned a gendered migrant geography that persists into the post-apartheid era, despite changes in labour legislation, and has a 'network' structure rather than being unidirectional or circular (du Toit and Neves, 2009: 15). Relations cross urban-rural divides and have produced spatially extended household systems where 'a key role is played by the [female] gendered arrangements around care work and household reproductive labour' (ibid.: 14).

Unemployment shapes parenting in its impact on men's capacity to provide for their families [AQ: add 'for their families?'] and also to pay ilobolo (a form of bridewealth) to secure their [AQ: add 'own marriage to the mother of their children'? - it isn't necessarily tied to children, its just marriage in general, so it needs to be left as is] marriage (Kaufman et al., 2001: 153). This has led to a slump in marital rates and a shift towards expression of manhood through 'men's success with women', including the fathering of children (Hunter, 2006: 103, 106). However, the parenting roles of fathers are more complex than simply 'producing' children. [AQ: than what? e.g. 'more complex than it seems'?]. Bray and Brandt's research in a poor informal community in Cape Town reveals how children cherished their relationships with their fathers and other adult men (including grandfathers, uncles and stepfathers), which, although these often rested on material contributions, nevertheless functioned 'as a trope for a deeper social and emotional connectedness' (2007: 8). Changing gender and economic relationships have also meant that poorer women increasingly do not pursue marriage, with girls in urban areas perceiving marriage in negative terms (Kaufman et al., 2001). Furthermore, 'the stigma of single motherhood has receded'



(Denis and Ntsimane, 2006: 247). These socio-economic transitions contribute to the current complex household structures in areas of high unemployment.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa is also directly changing caring and parenting relationships. As adult mortality rates rise, fostering and the role of the extended family has become evident (Mathambo and Gibbs, 2009). In the province of KwaZulu-Natal (in which Durban is located), 27% of children (aged 0 to 17) were orphaned in 2008; of this number, 6.3% were double orphans and 4.3% were maternal orphans (Children Count, 2010). Children Count (ibid.) emphasizes that these figures do not necessarily indicate [AQ: add 'the level of'] child care, given the complexity of caring relationships, although maternal orphaning is likely to have a higher negative impact on child care.

Urban places witness and shape a particular set of parenting experiences, but the specific socio-spatial relations in informal settlements are less clear. In the next section, I describe the context of Cato Manor, [a part informal/part formalising settlement in Durban, South Africa](#) [AQ: add 'an informal settlement near the city centre of Durban,] in South Africa, before exploring the qualities of living informally in relation to the anxieties of parents. It aims to answer why Sakhile (♂, Cato Crest) states that he does 'not like [his] children to grow up in this bad area' and tries to assess the distinctiveness of informal living more generally. <F3>

#### <H1>Mixed methods in Cato Manor, South Africa</H1>

This article draws on three projects on gendered experiences of violence and place and the management of violence and everyday life, conducted in South Africa between 2001 and 2009 in the settlement of Cato Crest, within Cato Manor. The first project focused broadly on Cato Manor. Research was concerned with understanding the broader socio-spatial interconnections between living informally and experiences of violence, and focused on the experiences of adults living within this area, first on women's experiences, then on men's, and finally on views of leadership. It was through the broader findings of these three projects that parenting anxieties within informal settlements emerged as a core theme. <F4> As a result, the empirical material explored in this article is limited to accounts of parenting anxieties, rather than a full analysis of parenting practices per se. This shapes the tone of arguments here and accounts for the rather 'negative' interpretations of informal living presented here. Further in-depth research to explore the complexities of parenting within informal settlements with a focus on parental strategies and a wider range of emotional registers (pride, joy, and so on) would be of great value.

The perceptions of parental anxiety explored in this article focus almost entirely on the local scale — the informal structure (the mjondolo) and the surrounding neighbourhood. <F5> Participants recognized the role of wider scales in shaping their fears, perceptions and experiences, including the city, and comparisons with the rural or traditional home. Analytically, recognition of these scalar intersections is key, as it sharpens an understanding of perception, particularly in relation to the idealization of rural 'homesteads'. These intersections are explored where relevant, but are not a primary focus of this study.

A mixed-methods qualitative approach informed these projects (Meth, 2003; [Meth and McClymont](#) 2009), the aim being to ensure that participants were provided with a range of spaces within which to disclose difficult experiences, as well as to enhance triangulation of the findings. Seventeen women in Cato Manor were recruited for the first project. These attended three focus groups and completed diaries, which proved to be extensive, deeply moving written accounts of their lives (Meth, 2003). Twenty men from Cato Crest formed the participants of the second project. These men attended four focus groups and one-on-one interviews. All participants completed diaries (which were similarly in-depth) and took

photographs, with five men contributing drawings through their participation in life history interviews and evaluation interviews (see Meth and McClymont, 2009). The final project involved interviewing six community leaders in order to understand the governance structures in the settlement. The projects adopted a grounded empirical approach informed by a dynamic theorization of gender and place. ~~These projects included some ethical and emotional difficulties y were all not without ethical and emotional difficulties~~ (see Meth, 2003; Meth and McClymont 2009), both ~~of which could be regarded as a function of the topic itself and of researchers' identities. However, but~~ the evaluation interviews that formed part of the projects indicated their wider value for participants (ibid.). ~~[AQ: please clarify - do you mean: 'These projects included some ethical and emotional difficulties (see Meth, 2003; 2009), both of which could be regarded as a function of the topic itself and of researchers' identities. However, the evaluation interviews that formed part of the projects indicated their deeper value for participants (ibid.)']~~ The partial accounts provided ~~by participants and hence my partial analysis~~ ~~[AQ: add 'by participants'?] must be recognized as such. Participants' quotations are used liberally within this article to illustrate a range of parental anxieties, and they serve to elucidate the views and perceptions of how participants live as parents and how they feel about their lives.~~

Cato Manor lies within seven kilometres of the city centre of Durban. Post-apartheid, the settlement has been the site of an intensive and substantial state-led regeneration project, with an emphasis on the provision of small formal housing units as well as related community and business facilities. The development was facilitated by a mix of central and local state involvement as well as funding from the European Union (EU), making the site a key case study in urban change and housing provision. Regeneration has occurred alongside land invasions by squatters, so that across Cato Manor there now exists mix of informal and formal housing; many parts have been completely upgraded, while other sections are still awaiting redevelopment. At the time of research most of Cato Crest (within Cato Manor) still consisted of informal housing, although it has subsequently benefited from formalization (see Figures 1 and 2).

<INSERT FIGURE 1 AND CAPTION NEAR HERE>

Cato Crest in particular suffers from acute levels of crime and high levels of community tension, a function of unemployment, the settlement's rapid formation as residents poured into the area in response to high levels of violence elsewhere in the city during the late 1980s and complex leadership struggles. Neighbourly tension is high and housing delivery has proved divisive at times (Meth, 2010). However, Cato Manor does now benefit from various facilities. Within Cato Crest specifically there are schools, community buildings, a library and a crèche.

<INSERT FIGURE 2 AND CAPTION NEAR HERE>

The article turns now to explore a range of parental anxieties in relation to various material elements of informal living. It does not concentrate on the political and legal qualities of living informally (such as vulnerability to eviction, tenure insecurities, anxieties over corruption of housing delivery) and neither does it explore concerns about identity (that residents felt they lived and behaved like animals; see Meth, 2010), which arguably also shape parental anxieties. The material anxieties addressed here are explored from the perspective of parents, in order to facilitate an understanding of the relational nature of parenting, and to provide key insights into both gender and intergenerational relations. The

emphasis on material elements is a function of the key issues parents themselves identified within the research focus on place.

## <H2>The materials of informal housing</H2>

Informal settlements across the world are constructed from a wide variety of materials, and difference in fabric and materiality exist even within single settlements. Within Cato Manor residents made use of mud, wood, plastic and metal sheeting to construct their houses; very few properties are principally constructed from brick or concrete. This is a key feature of this particular and many other South African informal settlements, differentiating them substantially from the shantytowns studied by Kejerfors (2007) in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Informal housing in Cato Manor is relatively poor in quality, vulnerable to damage and located within polluted surrounds (see Leclerc-Madlala and Janowski, 2004). Thandeka (♀, Jamaica) explains: 'We have been in the mjongdolo for very long, the walls are falling apart; the material we used to build is rotten and during rainy days all the water comes in'. Fears relating to flooding and vulnerability to leaks are standard concerns; Durban's mild subtropical climate and the steep topography of Cato Manor make this site flood-prone.

A more significant issue, related to construction materials, settlement density and lack of electricity, is the risk of fire, exacerbated by a lack of medical care (UN, 2003: 74). A resident explained that 'the mjongdolo are built from any material, most of which are easily burnt, for instance, plastic material' (Thandekile ♀, New Dunbar), and that '[t]here is no electricity here at Cato Crest. Our shacks are being burnt quite often, because we use candles and paraffin stoves to light and cook' (Phiwe ♀, Cato Crest).

## <INSERT FIGURE 3 AND CAPTION NEAR HERE>

For parents and adults, the desperation and tragedy and **emotional stress** **emotional stress?** that stem from loss of life as a result of fire is acute, with one woman describing herself as 'afraid' of losing more lives 'especially the children' (Phiwe ♀, Cato Crest). This is a particularly severe problem when parents feel that they failed to rescue their own children:

A young lady came to my house the other day, crying that her house was on fire and her children were in the house. It was so sad when she told me that her breasts were painful; she was breastfeeding. Days went by, and this woman told me that she hears her child crying in her ears every day, asking her to take him as he is burning.  
(Thandeka ♀, Jamaica)

Sadly, parental presence is not enough to prevent deaths: Bhekithemba (♂, Cato Crest) explains that he witnessed a 'house burn with man, his wife and children. All were died inside that mjongdolo. I couldn't sleep at night after that incident because I was fear maybe my house will burn while I sleep.' He explicitly ties the experience of parenting to living informally, saying: 'It is hard to live with the family in this area because these informal houses are dangerous in term of the fire'.

The materials used for constructing informal housing in Cato Manor were also perceived to enhance the vulnerability of properties to attack and burglary, with Andile explaining that criminals simply 'kick and enter' (Cato Crest ♂, Focus Group 2). 'Our homes are made of boards and mud; criminals carry their own hammers, and they remove the nails from the boards and get in' (Cato Manor ♀, Focus Group 2). Houses are vulnerable, even in cases where part-formalization had occurred (Nomonde ♀, Cato Crest).

This vulnerability of residents' homes was a key concern that participants often expressed in terms of parenting:

You are not safe in shack because you do not know what might happen to you ... It is either they will bungle into your shack and demand your cell phone, television set or money. Worse than that, they might rape you together with your children, or rape you in front of them, or they could rape your children in front of you. (Siphiwe ♀, Cato Crest)

## <H2>Housing size</H2>

The size and internal layout of informal structures was a direct source of anxiety for parents. Shack housing usually lacks solid internal walls, and room boundaries are denoted using curtaining, boards or furniture arrangement. Occupants sleep in shared spaces or in areas such as the kitchen (Lihle ♀, Old Dunbar). Many parents expressed anxiety about the early sexualization of children and teenagers in informal settlements, implicating the home as contributing to this problem[AQ- add 'as the source of this problem?']. A large number of study participants expressed the anxiety that 'Boys and girls ... have relationships at a young age' (Siboniso ♂, Cato Crest). For many, this was tied to parents' inability to enjoy sexual relations in privacy as a result of the size and layout of the houses. These concerns were raised by both men and women, confirming Swart-Kruger's (2001:10) findings about how space and boundaries are used to manage privacy.

Siboniso (♂ Cato Crest) made reference to different tenure conditions within the settlement, renting and owning, but in both instances he describes how entire families have to share one room. He argues that, 'If they doing sex in the middle of the night, you find that one of the children wasn't sleep, he or she heard what you do'. Parents point out their unwitting complicity in 'teaching' children about sex, thereby adding to their anxieties. One mother wrote: 'Our children learn such things at a very young stage; moreover, they see it from their parents!' (Ntombifuthi ♀, Old Dunbar). Sakhile (♂, Cato Crest) illustrated how he perceives differences in parenting and sexual conduct in urban informal versus rural settlements (see Figures 4 and 5).

He explains that as a parent he has decided that his children must grow up in a rural area, at the home of his wife's family 'because I don't like my children to grow up in this bad area'. He worries 'about our children, which are still growing, what they going to learn in this earth of corruption'.

<INSERT FIGURE 4 AND CAPTION NEAR HERE>

<INSERT FIGURE 5 AND CAPTION NEAR HERE>

Proximity of living also concerned parents in terms of health, although parents recognized that this might not be restricted to informal housing per se and that formal housing may not provide relief from this anxiety:

People in the area also have many different diseases. I think this is because of the area in which we stay; it is very filthy. I also believe that in a way our children are also harassed by the way we live in our RDP houses.<F6> We all sleep in one room. I believe that children who grew up under such conditions are affected psychologically. Imagine a situation whereby someone has a disease that could be transmitted to others and you all have to stay in that room. Take, for instance, TB. Everyone would grow

up having that in mind that s/he has TB because they stayed and slept in the same room with someone who has a disease. (Ntombifuthi ♀, Old Dunbar)

Ross's work in Cape Town entrenches this finding, pointing out that recipients of new formal housing in Cape Town are provided with structures that have no internal walls aside from those surrounding the bathroom (2005: 637). This challenges the distinctiveness of poor layout as being a feature which is particular to informal housing. [AQ: please could you clarify this sentence: Do you mean 'This verifies the distinctly poor layout of formal housing in poor areas?']

## <H2>Lack of services</H2>

At the time of research Cato Crest was largely lacking in formal electrical connection, flush toilets (within or outside of homes) and formal play areas for children. In Cato Crest, illegal electricity connections were very common; these presented extensive dangers, particularly for children:

A boy was killed ... His mother doesn't know how to steal electricity, but her child became a victim. This was her only child. All I am trying to say here is that people connect electricity illegally in our area and their wires end up killing innocent people. That woman is traumatised even today. (Zodwa ♀, Cato Crest)

The rise in this phenomenon relates to changing consumption patterns as residents purchase 'the appliances stuff' (Nhlahla ♂, Cato Crest), but the consequences can be extreme. 'The wires are exposed; the wires pass through our houses and some are put underground but not in a way that qualified electricians would do. Children touch these wires while playing and die instantly' (Ntombifuthi ♀, Old Dunbar). This has caused parents immense suffering: '[it] breaks my heart ... It hurts me so bad because in most cases children become victims of this form of crime. In 2001 alone, my neighbour's boy died, one other child from another nearby mjongdolo died ...' (Zandile ♀, New Dunbar). Such dangers extend parents' concerns about their their own presence and unavoidable absences [AQ: rather 'regular unavoidable absence'?] and capacity to watch over their kids: 'There is no safety in our area. It hurts me more because I have children. I cannot always be there to protect them and make sure that they safe from the electric wires while playing' (Ntombifuthi ♀, Old Dunbar).

Residents recognized that this practice of accessing illegal electricity connections [AQ: add 'of laying illegal electricity connections'] was a function of informality. However, various parents alleged that their neighbours were responsible for creating such connections either directly or indirectly [AQ: responsible for laying such electricity connections?] (Ntombifuthi ♀, Old Dunbar), and identified the fact that they did not have children [AQ: do you mean 'identified the fact that they did not have children'? or do you mean 'their lack of responsible parenting'?] as an explanation: 'I don't know, maybe the people who doing that, they don't have children, and that thing is abusing the community who got children' (Nhlahla ♂, Cato Crest).

The lack of sewage pipes is also a problem for parents. Residents share communal pit-latrines, which are often located some distance from their homes. The absence of waterborne sanitation services within homes shapes the ways in which residents use their settlement. Chemicals are sometimes used to reduce the odours of pit-latrines and to aid in their functioning, but these posed risks for children and stress for parents: 'there was an incident of three children who were sick and were near to die ... These children were drinking the poison of pit latrine toilet ... someone ... saw the children vomiting a white stuff like the

bubble of soap ... They were sick in the hospital ... in the ward of [ICU]' (Nhlahla ♂, Cato Crest).

The location of toilets outside houses posed further difficulties for parents and shapes their child-minding strategies, particularly when they are single parents. A tragic case described by Nqobile (♀, Cato Crest) illustrates the difficulties that result from ablution and residential facilities being segregated:

In the past week a child was raped ... She is only four years old. Their neighbour, who is a father of three, raped the child. Her mother left her inside the house. She ensured that all the windows were closed and went to the lavatory. He saw that she was left by herself and entered to rape her. (Nqobile ♀, Cato Crest)

However, proximity to the home was also problematic because of the smells and filth associated with the toilets.

[A]ll informants expressed a desire to have toilets located further from their homes ... The overcrowded nature of the community meant that toilets had to be closer to the homes of people than they would like. Yet, ... they also saw a benefit in having them nearby. That benefit had to do with the fear of visiting a too-distant toilet, especially at night, given the high rates of rape and other crimes in the community. (Leclerc-Madlala and Janowski, 2004: 12)

Piped water to occasional standpipes was evident in Cato Crest, an outcome of earlier upgrading efforts by the state. The settlement also has a river running through it, which is no longer used for water collection, as it is highly polluted (Leclerc-Madlala and Janowski, 2004). This and other water sites are used by children 'as a place to explore, play, and collect mud for modelling toys' (Leclerc-Madlala and Janowski, 2004: 17). However, they presented significant risks in terms of disease:

... there are numerous pools of stagnant water of varying sizes that dot the pathways between houses and pit-latrines ... pools of urine compete with stagnant pools of water to create a wet and odorous environment ... Damp soil is a feature of most parts of Cato Crest. (Leclerc-Madlala and Janowski, 2004: 17)

Within Cato Crest there was a lack of formal play equipment for young children, although the wider area contained a park. Parents were concerned about the spaces in which children played. Philani (♂, Cato Crest) photographed a particular site and explained: 'The children used to play there, it is dirty and those things create more disease for the children' (see Figure ~~6XXXX~~). These concerns are corroborated by researchers:

In the surrounding areas are trees and bushes that are used for dumping household refuse ... Broken cars, beds, buckets, pots, furniture, pieces of wood, iron, plastic etc., can be found in piles in the surrounding bush of Cato Crest ... These refuse sites are constantly visited by local dogs and cats that scavenge about, and no doubt provide ideal breeding and nesting places for rodents. (Leclerc-Madlala and Janowski, 2004: 6)

<INSERT FIGURE 6 AND CAPTION NEAR HERE>

<H1>Settlement density</H1>

I think the problem is with our area, mjongdolo. It's not safe and there are neither house numbers nor proper streets. The shacks are closely packed in such a way that even if you can afford to you will not be able to put a fence around your area. These conditions contribute to the high level of crime in the area ... If you have to go somewhere and have to leave the children behind, one has to trust in God because you know they are not safe at all. (Cato Manor ♀, Focus Group 2)

The physical properties of the shack settlement contribute to parental anxiety, the density of the settlement and resulting dark, narrow passageways between housing being key concerns. This housing layout has a direct impact on visibility and access, both of which respondents implicated as contributing to high crime rates in the area. Difficulty of access, particularly for emergency services (police, ambulances, and so on) was commonly cited as a major problem in the settlement, affecting the ability of the police to maintain any regular presence and then to capture suspects. Thandekile (♀, New Dunbar) described the mjongdolos as 'a dark forest where criminals hide'. His account also illustrates adult concern **over the passage of children as they travel through the settlement** ~~[AQ: rather the safety of children outside the home?]~~, as well as the impact **of a more formalized layout on safer movement through a settlement** ~~[add: of safety issues]~~ **on mobility** ~~[of a more formalized layout – AQ: delete? does not make sense]~~:

... [my niece was mugged en route to the shop] ... She told me that people along the streets tried to run after the boy but he got into the mjongdolo area and people couldn't try anymore because they knew they were not going to find him. The shop to which I sent her is in the township, not in the mjongdolo. If he tried to run with the money in the township he was going to be caught because yards are fenced there, so he [would] ... run on the road. There is actually not much place to hide. (Zandile ♀, New Dunbar)

The density of the shack settlement and its capacity to 'shelter criminals' has serious implications: 'At the beginning of this year, a young child [2½ years old] was raped by an unknown person. That child was playing with other children around houses. The shacks are crowded [so] it is not easy to find the person who rape that child' (Sizwe ♂, Cato Crest). The risks to which children are exposed are exacerbated by the spatial form, adding to the pressure on parents to parent more 'thoroughly'. Sizwe continues: 'I think their parents must watch them while they playing to avoid the sexual abuse'.

#### <H2>Undeveloped land/bush</H2>

Various sections surrounding Cato Crest and within the area are undeveloped and covered with bushes and trees that grow rapidly in the mild subtropical climate. Parents expressed anxieties about these areas, describing them as 'forest' or 'bush'. They associated these spaces with criminal practices because they are un-policed and lacked visibility. This account describes the rape of an 11-year-old girl in the surrounding 'forest':

[My neighbour came home to find] ... her little girl was missing .. [her friends] ... told us that the last time they saw her it was when her uncle was calling her by the forest. They found her in the forest, bleeding and tightened to a tree. Her mouth was tightened as well so that she doesn't cry. Fortunately they found her alive ... This is the kind of life we live in Cato Manor, there is no peace at all and I sometimes wish



that if I was rich I would move to other places where rich people stay because they live better than we do (Nomonde ♀, Cato Crest)

## <H2>Ease of residence within informal settlements</H2>

The shacks actually were not the good place to stay with the family. If you a good parent is better to take your child to your original place where you grow up, if you want your child to be a good person ... people who are living in the shacks are people who hiding from violence and people who want to make crime. Today everyone wants to have [their] own shack. (Philani ♂, Focus Group 3)

Informal housing structures are relatively easy and cheap to construct and this has a range of implications for parents, both positive and negative. Obviously this is beneficial to desperate parents who are trying to house themselves and their children following an eviction, fire or relocation. However, it also provides an opportunity for anyone to settle in the area with relative ease (including alleged criminals), and for older children to leave their home and construct their own shacks. Parents blame this trend for compounding the early sexualization of children and cite this ease of access to housing as particular to informal settlements: 'Here we find boys of 15-16 years staying alone, having a girlfriend of 14 years old. Those people are still too young to stay together as a family' (♂, Focus Group 1). This trend of 'teenage desertion' is corroborated by Daniels (2004: 12) in the context of Gauteng. This housing choice is entrenched by the realities of poverty and/or violence, which can force teenagers and young adults out of the 'family' home. However, parents view this with sadness and suspicion:

In informal settlement many children are hiding [from their] parent in the shacks of their boyfriends, [instead of going to school] ... she will visit her boyfriend. Informal settlement is destroying the life of the young people. (Siboniso ♂, Cato Crest).

Ease of access to informal housing on the part of teenagers presented both opportunities and risks for them, as a shack can provide refuge but also leads to vulnerability, as it too becomes an economic asset over which struggles can be waged.

## <H1>Parenting and informality: a unique socio-spatial experience?</H1>

The material realities of informality are significant for parents. They compound parental anxiety, already fuelled by inequality, poverty, poor health and crime. The socio-spatial effects of housing size and poor construction, layout, high density, environmental degradation, lack of services, the presence of undeveloped land and the relative ease of build have daily impact on parents' strategies and capacities to raise children in ways they desire. An exploration of parents' stories about how they feel about these material realities partially reveals their 'emotional geographies' of caring for children and living informally, bearing in mind that anxiety is only one of many emotional registers parents experience. The collection of residents' stories from Symphony Way (2011) certainly points to a range of other emotions, including hope, anger, love and sadness. Parents' anxieties are important; they shape their psycho-social well-being, their relationships with other adults and children and their perceptions of past, present and future possibilities. Parents construct ideas about places (rural homes and formal housing) in relation to their feelings about parenting, and these perceptions shape their attachments to place and their decision making. Thus, parents' accounts detail some of their parenting strategies, and the ways in which they contrast their urban informal and rural 'home' as more or less ideal spaces for parenting. Their anxieties

overlap with challenges for children described by others (see, for example, UN, 2003), but are also distinct, as they present an adult interpretation of process, significant particularly in relation to their concerns over the early sexualization of children. A detailed account of parents' anxieties, in this case relating to place, provides insights into the daily emotional worlds of adults, which have sometimes been overlooked in accounts of children's vulnerabilities. In this regard, the dominant interpretations of informality (as offered by the UN, for example) as a distinct, problematic housing sector are largely adequate. The material qualities of informality are found wanting, and upgrading may offer some reasonable solutions. However, a broader interpretation of informality as a 'mode of urbanization' and as a process suggests that a more physical-spatial response to informality is likely to prove inadequate, and in this case is not likely to substantially address parental anxiety. Roy (2005: 151) argues that urban upgrading can be seen as limited and that this is a function of the limitation of 'the ideology of space' where 'what is redeveloped is space, the built environment and physical amenities rather than people's capacities or livelihoods', including political capacities.

The significance of the politics of poverty is central here. This interpretation of the limitations of engaging with the materiality of informality leads this article onto its final point. What is rather less clear in this work on parental anxieties, is how precisely these map onto or differ from the anxieties of those who parent in contexts of poverty where housing is deemed 'formal' (that is, where many of the material deficiencies of informal housing are absent), but where problems of density, overcrowding, a lack of services and small house size may persist in some form and thus continue to produce poor material environments. In many cases, poor locations of formal housing cause many difficulties for beneficiaries (Zack and Charlton, 2003). More research, specifically on the social outcomes of new housing for parents and the possible social gains or losses of 'informality eradication' beyond the tragedies of eviction, is essential. Furthermore, it is very hard to assess the relative impact of material housing qualities on parental anxiety in comparison with wider structural and enduring processes of poverty, inequality, unemployment and crime — regardless of housing type. Despite this difficulty, this assessment is precisely what the state has concluded, namely that housing provision is a key solution to the difficulties families and children face who are living informally. Ross's observations are critical here:

Despite the move to formal housing and the amelioration of basic living conditions this has enabled, forms of rawness endure ... Changing people's environments does not necessarily produce radical social change unless accompanied by changes in their material circumstances. This is important to acknowledge in the context of present state policy which aims to eradicate shacks but which has not yet been successful in equitably redistributing wealth, resources and poverty. (Ross, 2010: 209)

This argument is significant for policy debates and housing decision making, as it suggests that merely eradicating or upgrading informal housing is not likely to reduce the anxieties of parents (nor the difficulties children face), although this article has pointed to some fundamental material difficulties that parents in informal living face. However, the persistence **long-term nature of [and durability — AQ: this term is usually only used in a positive sense, delete, as persistence is strong enough, I think. Or rephrase as 'persistence and long-term nature of?']** of the difficulties of parenting in poverty must be acknowledged and recognized more strongly, and more work on the nuances of social outcomes of housing formalization is needed. In addition, references to children and families within arguments about the failings of informal living must be revisited, given the ways in which these attempt

to 'personify' problems as intrinsic to informality rather than to the politics of poverty in the broader sense.

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<H1>Résumé</H1>

**FRENCH ABSTRACT TO FOLLOW**

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The first two projects outlined in this article were funded by the Nuffield Foundation, and I would like to thank the organization for the generous support. Thanks to Khethiwe Malaza, Sibongile Buthelezi and Kerry Philp for their extensive contributions to the collection of data. Thanks also to the editor and referees of *IJURR*, and Eric Olund, Dan Hamnet, Steve Connelly and Margo Huxley for comments on an earlier version of this article.

<NUMBERED FOOTNOTES TO BE SET WITH HANGING INDENT>

<F1>This bill was judged unconstitutional on 14 October 2009 by the South African Constitutional Court, following a challenge from Abahlali baseMjondolo, South Africa's largest shack-dweller movement (Selmeczi, 2011), thereby challenging its intended impact as a blueprint for national policy direction.

<F2>The PIE Act (Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land) was amended in 2006 and appears to be increasingly used as a tool by informal settlements to

prevent ‘unconstitutional’ evictions (see Abahlali baseMjondolo’s press statements in 2011, which regularly refer to this policy instrument) (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2011).

<F3>All references to data refer to diary extracts, unless stated otherwise. The names of all participants are pseudonyms, as agreed. Particular place names within Cato Manor are identified.

<F4>While this article uses the term parent, it employs it loosely, recognizing the complexity of care relationships and the social rather than biological basis of these relationships. Adult parents use the term parent to distinguish themselves from those who are not in a carer relationship [AQ: please specify — distinguish from whom? Those who are not in a carer relationship?] when trying to illustrate their particular anxieties about children.

<F5>Mjondolo is a local term for a shack.

<F6>RDP houses is the standard term for government-provided formal houses, named after the Reconstruction and Development Programme, which was implemented in 1994.

#### <FIGURE CAPTIONS>

[Notes and figure captions with sources under figures]

#### [Figure 1]

**Figure 1** Informal housing in Cato Crest (photo taken by author, 2009)

#### [Figure 2]

**Figure 2** Recent formal housing in Cato Crest (photo taken by author, 2009)

#### [Figure 3]

**Figure 3** House gutted by fire (photo taken by Mondli ♂ Cato Crest, 2006 [year], reproduced by permission) [AQ: can you perhaps provide the year in which these photos were taken/Sakhile’s drawings were done, please?]

#### [Figure 4]

**Figure 4** Cato Crest informal house, illustrating shared space (drawing by Sakhile ♂, Cato Crest, 2006 [year], reproduced by permission)

#### [Figure 5]

**Figure 5** Rural home, illustrating separation of living arrangements (drawing by Sakhile ♂, Cato Crest, 2006 [year], reproduced by permission)

#### [Figure 6]

**Figure 6** Dirty area where children play (photo taken by Philani ♂, Cato Crest, 2006 [year], reproduced by permission)