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Geog 696
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Article Debrief: Photographing dispossession, forgetting solidarity: waiting for social justice in Wentworth, South Africa by Sharad Chari

Summary of Main Points

One purpose statement was difficult to find in this article, I found multiple sentences that could be seen as the purpose statement, which is a pretext to the entire article, it is unorganized and disconnected. Within the multiple phrases that could be the purpose statement, the topic is still not clear and continues to leave out a specific location and indicate method. It was clear that photography was going to be used but the exact methods to utilize the photos were never described in full. Specifically, it is not mentioned until the end of the third paragraph and then not elaborated until the end of two paragraphs later. Also, Chari says his research over six years included interviews, conversations, observations, and archival research but these are hardly elaborated on in the article

Chari does identify the gap in literature in which his research fills multiple times, "while this activism in South Durban has been relatively well explored... we know far less about how living in this toxic sink has prompted specific forms of frustration, critique and documentation... my concern is with some of the means through which people reflect critically on their material situations as a precondition for collective action... " (pg 52). In general he says his research "resonates with and extends geographical work on photography"

Over all, this article wasn't convincing or clearly written to be beneficial. In order to understand the central concern, re-reading and backtracking through the past paragraphs was

necessary. This was mainly a result of bad formatting. The headings (Introduction, The camp, and forgetting, The lanes and the mechanical reproduction of frustration, The photographer as spatial critic, Conclusion) were not good indicators of what was about to come. Instead, the loose heading made the article hard to follow and would have been much easier to read if there had of been helpful headings to break it up.

Summary of Points Made in Discussion

The most common statement made about this article was “something about photography.” The class unanimously agreed the purpose and methods of this article were not clearly described in the article, but that it had something to do with photography. Another general consensus was that everyone had to flip all over the article to find the purpose statement and that it was not well organized. One of the views of the article was it was a “comparative historical analysis with empirical analysis.”

One of the concerns of the class was that only five photographs from three different periods were used for the entire research, not providing much context or depth in the results. Furthermore, the article is basically his opinion on each photograph, which the class thought was not a thorough analyzing method. In addition, the class thought Chari should have provided an explanation for his own perspective since this was an article based on the author’s sole interpretation. The class proposed a method of using focus groups from South Africa to each interpret photographs as a better way to analysis the data rather than the one perspective. In general, the class though the article was a good example of how not to write or format an article.