Critique of CRA Paper First Draft

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Critique

The article strives to provide a retrospective summary of the title VI litigation involving southern and border states, analyze the impact of the Civil Rights Act (CRA) on public HBCUs, and review the literature and propose a research agenda for the next generation of legal policy scholarship in this field. The author is particularly clear in regards to the history of compliance with title VI of the CRA through analyzing various acts between the years of 1964 and 2013. The author also facilitates intrigue throughout the paper through mentioning emotionally connotative ideas such as the American Creed and social justice. Some confusion results due to lack of proper APA formatting, in text citations, and organization.

The purpose of the article is to, “illustrate the complexity and ambiguity surrounding the legal requirements of the CRA”. Although an incredibly broad purpose, the author does demonstrate some aspects of complexity and ambiguity surrounding the CRA. In paragraph 5, the author explains that the paper seeks to “1) provide a retrospective summary of the Title VI litigation involving southern and border states”. The paper does serve this purpose when it clearly states the history of legal influence the CRA held in the southern and border states over the years of 1964-2013. Each legal synapsis occupies its own paragraph. In the final section of the paper, the author presents the proposed “research Agenda” for future studies. The historical timeline from the past to current day did create a thread that the reader could follow throughout the paper.

The paper also seeks to, “2) analyze the impact of the CRA on public historically black colleges and universities” through offering historical examples of how the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) neglected to enforce the CRA. The examples given strongly support the author’s purpose of exposing the complexity and ambiguity of the legal requirements of the CRA, however the examples are so scattered and hidden within the historical descriptions they lose their strength. I often found myself re-reading previous paragraphs to find the connection to the OCR examples. I do not think the author arranged them in a way that allowed the reader to logically connect the various instances of ambiguity when it came to enforcing the CRA.

Next, the paper seeks to, “3) review the literature and propose a research agenda for the next generation of legal-policy scholarship in this field”. In the final section titled “Proposed Research Agenda” the author clearly suggests the three research questions that will be pursued in the future. I do not see evidence of the author’s proposed outcomes of the research questions’ impact on the next generation of legal-policy scholarship in this field. What purpose would additional research serve? Furthermore, the final thoughts of the paper do not have a summation statement or paragraph. It ends very abruptly with the description of the final research question. Strong research papers include a summary which highlights the main arguments and conclusions within the paper.

The paper defined important terms such as: CRA, Social Justice, HBCUs, Historical legacy of public HBCUs, Attributes and goals unique to HBCUs, and the American creed. It did not include these key terms under the abstract as there was no abstract

Additional arguments such as, “Few would argue with the empirical evidence presented …HBCUs have a historical and continuing dual mission of providing a high quality education and addressing the educational needs of first generation students with limited income and preparation for college level work”, (9) were strong but hidden within paragraphs that did not follow the empirical evidence referenced. The points would be much more compelling if the evidence was clearly explained then immediately analyzed.

Overall, I felt distracted by the author’s presentation of arguments and ideas. While reading the paper I had to construct an outline in my annotations to connect evidence with the arguments rather than focusing on the author’s purpose. I do not agree with the author because the paper lacked focus. I am left feeling like the research questions have not been fully analyzed. I think the paper contains the right information but it is not presented in a compelling way. The strongest part of the author’s argument is the connection of historical inequities to the American creed that all people are fundamentally equal and have inalienable rights to freedom, justice, and fair opportunity. This argument roused an emotional response in me that fostered an urgency to understand the argument and take action. Unfortunately, the research questions that followed did not propose viable applications for their answers causing me to lose any support that I gathered while reading the final argument.

I hold a similar position as the author that there are fundamental legal ambiguities within enforcing the CRA due to historical inequities. I would find the author compelling if the data was presented in more professional figures, if there was focus to the questions proposed, and if the purpose and conclusion of the paper were clearly stated. There are too many portions of the author’s argument that are supported by the feeling of pursuing justice rather than the data of the inequities referenced.