

Pay Up or Picket: Uncovering Inequities of Graduate Student Strikes at Indiana University

Da'Ja'Nay Askew

Abstract

Graduate student workers have dealt with rising costs of rent, groceries, and gas while wages have remained stagnant. Many graduate students have struggled to make ends meet as they pursue advanced degrees and focus on research. As a result of frustration and inequality, graduate students at Indiana University (IU) have decided to go on strike. In addition to the strike, graduate students attempted to unionize to increase their wages and have a fairer working experience. This report addresses several ideologies regarding the strike including pay gaps, expenses, and fees, and minoritized student activism and lack of participation in the strike at IU. There is not much literature available regarding graduate student strikes due to its novelty in the academy. However, there is a rich history of minoritized student activism and how engaging in activism can be exhausting and tiring. This phenomenon has been used to understand why minoritized students at IU did not participate in the strike while emphasizing how change was made quickly because of activism from individuals in the majority population. In this paper, I will discuss the graduate student strike at IU and critically analyze reasons why minoritized students did not get involved in the picket lines.

Keywords

Graduate student strike, minoritized students, activism, inequity

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Introduction

The graduate student strike is a complex equity issue that spans over multiple concepts, theories, and ideals. This equity report discusses the inequities present in graduate student employment issues through the lens of power, privilege, institutional culture, and decision-making. All these concepts are utilized to guide thoughts and inequities about the strike. Graduate student strikes are an equity issue that needs to be addressed from higher education professionals. The same issues should not be maintained over history, thus illuminating the failure of higher education to implement change. Emerging scholars can aim to reverse this trend by engaging in new research and policy efforts, which is covered in this report. Several ideas for implications for future research and practice regarding the strike are provided along with a conclusion that promotes further thinking and analyzing of this issue.

Graduate students have historically experienced low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of work-life balance while pursuing their degrees and securing funding. Institutions assist graduate students by providing them with academic appointments to enhance their professional development and research agendas. However, these benefits typically come at a cost for graduate students. Unfortunately, many graduate students are not paid a living wage, given the increased costs of rent, groceries, and gas. As a result, several graduate students across higher education institutions in America have decided to challenge institutional funding policies by advocating for increased wages and better working conditions through participating in strikes and unionization efforts. In this effort, graduate students have refused to teach classes, stop grading student assignments, and cease research processes to gain the attention of campus administrators. Indiana University (IU) is one of the leading institutions for graduate student strikes. IU graduate students have formed picket lines, organized strike celebrations, and created student coalitions in advocacy for better pay and work-life balance.

The Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition (IGWC) is a multidisciplinary group of graduate students advocating for higher wages and better working conditions on IU's campus (Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition, 2021). The IGWC partnered with the United Electrical Workers union in attempts to acquire knowledge regarding graduate student worker unionization and potentially form a union at IU. Some graduate student coalition members have even attended faculty council meetings where administrators have discussed unionization efforts along with thoughts about the strike and potential task force formation. These efforts have proven to be effective and higher wages have been granted across IU for graduate students. However, there is still much to unpack about the decision-making processes in these new initiatives including administrative thoughts and oppositions about the graduate student strike along with how the strike has excluded minoritized (non-White) students.

While the graduate student strikes were persisting across the campus at IU, there was one distinctive aspect that stood out. There were no students of color (non-White) out on the picket lines. There were no Black students on the picket lines. This observation was alarming due to the popularity and desire Black students must be engaged in their campus community and fight for equality and equity. Minoritized students, particularly Black students, tend to take on dual roles at higher education institutions. They are both students and activists. Black student activism is prominent at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) due to the plethora of inequities that persist within these contexts. Black students oftentimes feel a sense of responsibility and agency to implement change in their campus communities. However, these efforts can have detrimental effects that impact mental health, socialization, and academic performance (Linder et al., 2019). Moreover, Black students tend to have more financial constraints and responsibilities, thus emphasizing the need for better pay and employment benefits (Perez & Farruggia, 2022). Despite the obvious financial need and mental stress of student activism, Black graduate students remained silent during the strike and refused to show themselves on the picket lines. This is an issue that needs to be addressed and discussed to understand why such happenings occurred, but to also acknowledge the exhaustion that Black students have endured for several years in higher education.

This equity report will analyze inequities present within graduate student strikes and how minoritized students, especially Black students, are at a disadvantage due to their prolonged activism and exhaustion at PWIs. Two differing stances will be emphasized in this report: a) impact of striking on graduate students and the novel perspective of how they specifically affect Black students and b) how higher education administrators and leaders make decisions that influence the lives of those who are less powerful. Graduate student unionization and financial allocations of IU will also be discussed to further demonstrate the inequities of the strike and to provide evidence for the central argument of this piece. This report will be framed by the concepts of power, privilege, culture, and decision-making and guided by critical and structuration theories. A brief review of literature and implications for future research will conclude the report.

Positionality Statement

Before I share my reflections and opinions regarding the graduate student strike and discuss previous literature, I would like to disclose my social positionalities and identities. I am a first-generation, Black woman pursuing doctoral studies at Indiana University. I study topics related to the minoritized and Black student experience, primarily from a Black Joy perspective. I engage in scholarly work to challenge Westernized epistemologies and dominance in order to welcome new ways of thinking and raise awareness of continuous systems of oppression present in higher education institutions. I aim to challenge prevalent deficit models of Black communities and introduce the concept of abundance when speaking and thinking about them. My identities influence my scholarly work as I infuse myself and other members of my community into my research.

As a current graduate student who has been affected by the strike and low wages, I am qualified to discuss this topic and hopefully bring more attention to the needs of graduate students, especially those who are marginalized. I have signed a union card to indicate my stance in the strike and stand in solidarity with my counterparts. Even though I was not actively engaged in the strike, I was aware of the inequities and power dynamics present at IU and I wanted to protect my identity and reputation as a stellar doctoral student. As a Black woman, I have been greatly impacted by the inequities of higher education and I am aware that my intersecting, salient identities of gender and race further oppress me in society. I feel that it is my duty as an emerging scholar to make change in higher education and the social world at-large. I would be doing my community and myself a disservice if I did not pursue my work and engage in activism. This paper will primarily highlight inequities of the graduate student strike and how Black students have been impacted. My personal experiences and narratives have been used to frame this project.

Key Guiding Concepts

Most equity issues can be analyzed through various concepts and theories that provide structure for the issue while probing possible solutions. The graduate student strike encompasses several conceptual perspectives, but for the purposes of this paper and simplicity, there will be a focus on only two categories: a) power and privilege and b) institutional culture and decision-making.

Power and Privilege

The concepts of power and privilege are fundamental when discussing equity issues, especially those related to social justice and activism. Power and privilege are interplays of individual's identities and their social positions in society (Lechuga, Clerc, & Howell, 2009). Lechuga, Clerc, and Howell (2009) posited that, "Privilege is always at someone else's expense and always exacts a cost. Everything that's done to receive or maintain it" (p. 231). In other words, while one group receives power, privilege, and access to resources, the opposing group becomes oppressed and marginalized. These concepts are particularly relevant to the graduate student strike due to the power dynamics of involved constituents.

Graduate students do not have much power compared to institutional leaders and administrators. Unfortunately, individuals with the most power tend to make decisions for groups who are depowered, and these decisions are implemented in systemic operations of higher education institutions, thus leading to the discussion of decision-making and institutional culture.

Institutional Culture and Decision-Making

Culture influences individual and institutional behavior while subconsciously creating social norms that constituents abide by to thrive in particular spaces (Bess & Dee, 2008). Higher education institutions tend to be bureaucratic and founded in power and politics that are rooted in cultural illustrations. This specific organizational technique permeates in the graduate student unionization efforts and strike. The decisions being made regarding graduate student strikes and unionization are made by individuals with power and privilege, thus manifesting this culture across IU's campus. Discussing institutional culture is a fundamental piece to addressing decision-making along with power in hierarchical systems. Institutional culture is demonstrated with the graduate student strikes due to the desire to maintain culture that was created by previous leadership at the university. Unionization efforts tend to be unfavorable due to the sacrifice of power required to make change regarding graduate student worker conditions. Having an established culture creates norms and sends messages to constituents about what is acceptable and unacceptable, thus highlighting the importance of addressing institutional culture and how it can manifest into systems of oppression while creating individualized value systems. The power dynamics in decision making for the graduate student strike illustrates who is and who is not important on IU's campus. Graduate students are valued less and are not seen as important and institutional administrators and leaders. Uncovering literature related to graduate student strikes and Black student activism assist in revealing gaps of knowledge that can be utilized for future scholarship.

Literature Review

History of Graduate Student Strikes

Despite the perceived novelty of graduate student strikes, there is a brief history of graduate students advocating for their rights in American higher education. In the early twentieth century, higher education became more popular and necessary for social mobility (Gasman, Spencer, & Orphan, 2015). This was even true for Black students who were given more access to higher education through the formation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Black students were enrolling in college at higher rates and were beginning to resolve the economic trauma caused by slavery (Gasman, Spencer, & Orphan, 2015). However, Black students were not always welcome to PWI campuses and even encountered issues at HBCUs regarding policies and student well-being.

From 1924-1925, students at Fisk University in Tennessee launched a strike against administrative policies of the institution's current president, Fayette Avery McKenzie (Lamon, 1974). There was disruption regarding Fisk University, "being a Negro college or a college for Negroes" (Lamon, 1974, p. 226). Additionally, there were some tensions between the Black community in Nashville and Fisk University. President McKenzie was accused of dictatorial rule on campus. He had discontinued the school's magazine and newspaper, canceled the baseball team and cut the football team's budget, and outlawed most extracurricular activities (Lamon, 1974). All activities had to have a teacher chaperon and students decided to fight back as a result. Students stood out on picket lines, stopped going to classes and returned home for the semester, and boycotted the institution in partnership with the local community (Lamon, 1974). Students at Fisk University demanded a greater role in administrative decisions, alumni representation on the board of trustees, and more personal freedom. After the strike, President McKenzie resigned despite support of the board of trustees to maintain the rules of restrictions (Lamon, 1974). A Black president was elected soon after McKenzie's administration. The

story of Fisk University underscores the history of inequities in higher education while illustrating how power, privilege, culture, and decision-making continue to persist. Also, this event shows how minoritized students continue to be at a disadvantage, which is a juxtaposed conception because Fisk University is an HBCU. Students have encountered concerns with their living conditions and campus experiences within higher education. As time moves and education evolves, students begin to face issues regarding advanced graduate education and working conditions to fund their degrees.

Sharnoff (1993) examined one of the first graduate student worker strikes in American educational history with the 1991 strike at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Students were fighting for better pay, better working conditions, and employee acknowledgement from the university (Sharnoff, 1993). Graduate students did not have a definite role on campus. They were expected to work as full-time faculty members yet be treated and paid as students. The ultimate concern is defining the role of graduate students, were they employees or just students? This is an issue that tends to surface in modern times due to the ambiguity of roles and responsibilities that graduate students have. Many students teach, administer final grades, conduct research, and still take classes on top of that. So, how would one define what a graduate student is?

Sharnoff (1993) also underscored the unfavorability expressed for not supporting the graduate student strike at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Faculty did not advocate for student well-being because graduate students were seen as colleagues and competitors instead of mentees and students (Sharnoff, 1993). This idea illustrates the concepts of power and privilege while revealing the consequences and threats that power can have on certain groups of people. If graduate students received better pay and negotiated working conditions with the university, then it would be perceived as a threat to power because graduate students essentially have power and are on the same level as faculty. In other words, power would be neutralized between graduate students, faculty, and administrators, thus explaining the reason behind the lack of faculty support and denial of the strike at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. It is paramount to highlight this literature because similar issues persist today and show that problems are not being solved. The same outcomes are repeating themselves throughout higher education history and systems need to be deconstructed and rebuilt to make change. Indiana University's graduate students took the necessary steps to make change and enhance graduate student well-being.

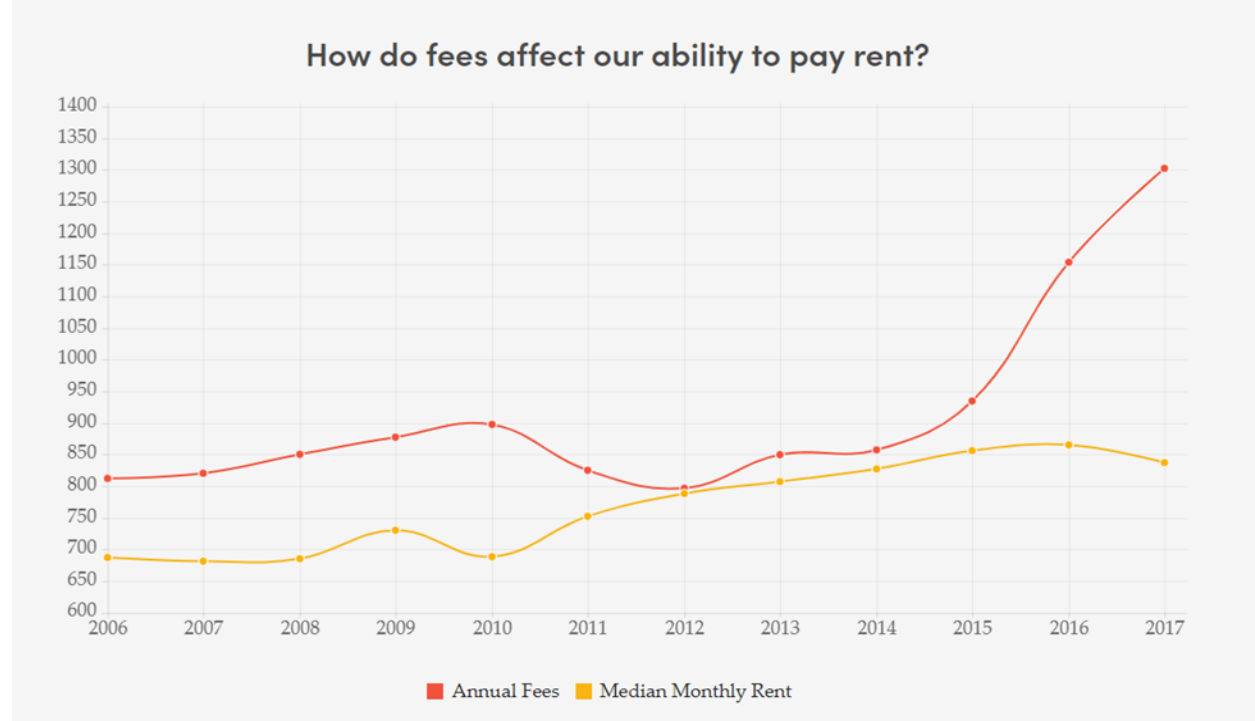
Graduate Student Strikes and Unionization at IU

Indiana University has been one of the leading institutions in forming graduate student strikes. Students have taken precautionary measures to ensure that their voices are heard, and that change will eventually come. Graduate students partnered with the United Electrical Workers union to form the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition (IGWC) in efforts to unionize. The IGWC cultivated an agenda for change that consists of several components: a) end all fees, b) protect and improve benefits, c) implement an effective grievance procedure, d) have fairness for international students, and e) provide a living wage with annual raises (Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition, 2021). The IGWC aims to form a union to receive such benefits while having space to negotiate employment issues with the university. It is reasonable to question why graduate students are fighting tirelessly and consistently for a better well-being, despite their temporary attendance at IU. However, living costs, groceries, gas, and tuition continue to rise while wages remain stagnant.

According to research conducted by the IGWC (2021), graduate students had to pay \$1,302 in institutional fees while the median rent in Bloomington was \$837 in 2017, showing that graduate students were sometimes paying more in fees than rent (Figure 1).

Figure 2

How Graduate Student Fees Affect Ability to Pay Rent

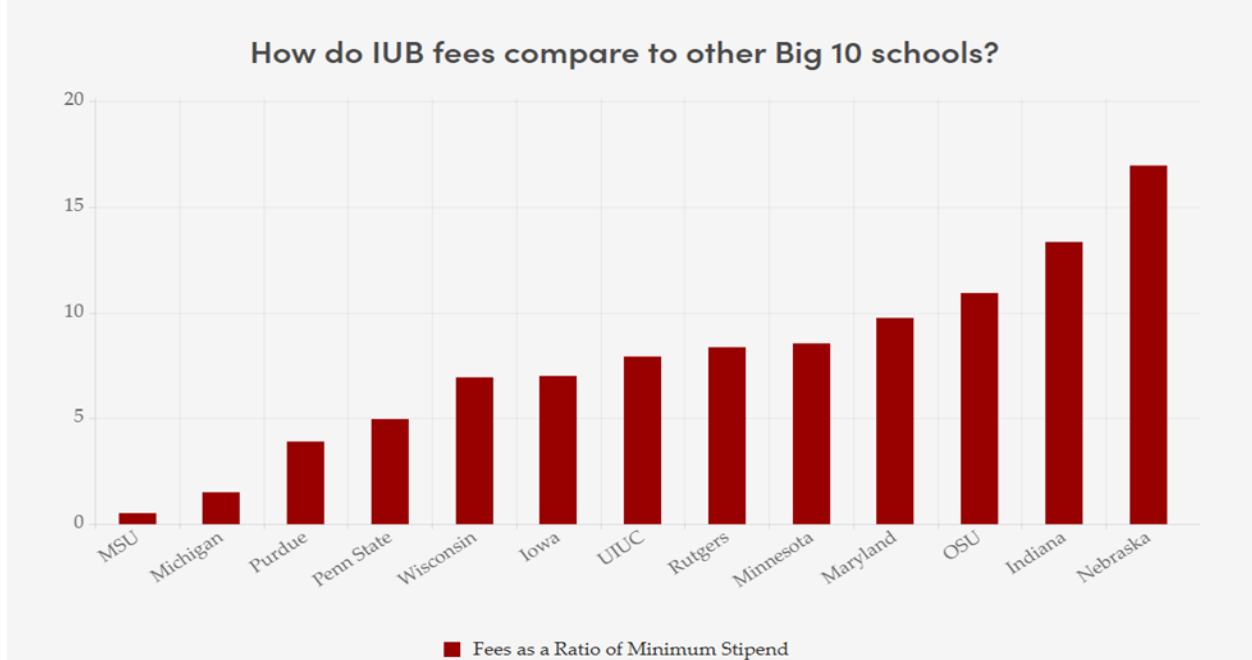


Note. By the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition (IGWC), 2021, chart that displays annual fees and rent payment for graduate students at Indiana University.

To make matters worse, the cost of living in Indiana, and Bloomington specifically continue to increase, making financial constraints a stressor for graduate student workers. The average cost of living for single adults in Indiana annually is \$38,097 (*Costs of Living in Indiana, 2021*). The living wage in Indiana is considered \$27,955 annually (*Costs of Living in Indiana, 2021*). On average, graduate students were receiving a stipend of only \$15,000 annually prior to the strike, which shows a significant difference in living wage and average living costs (Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition, 2021). For graduate students to afford the average cost of living in Indiana, they would need to be paid \$23,097 more annually. Moreover, IU has some of the highest institutional fees in the Big 10, with 13% of graduate student income is dedicated to fees, which total to \$5,436.71 each academic year (Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition, 2021). This trend is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

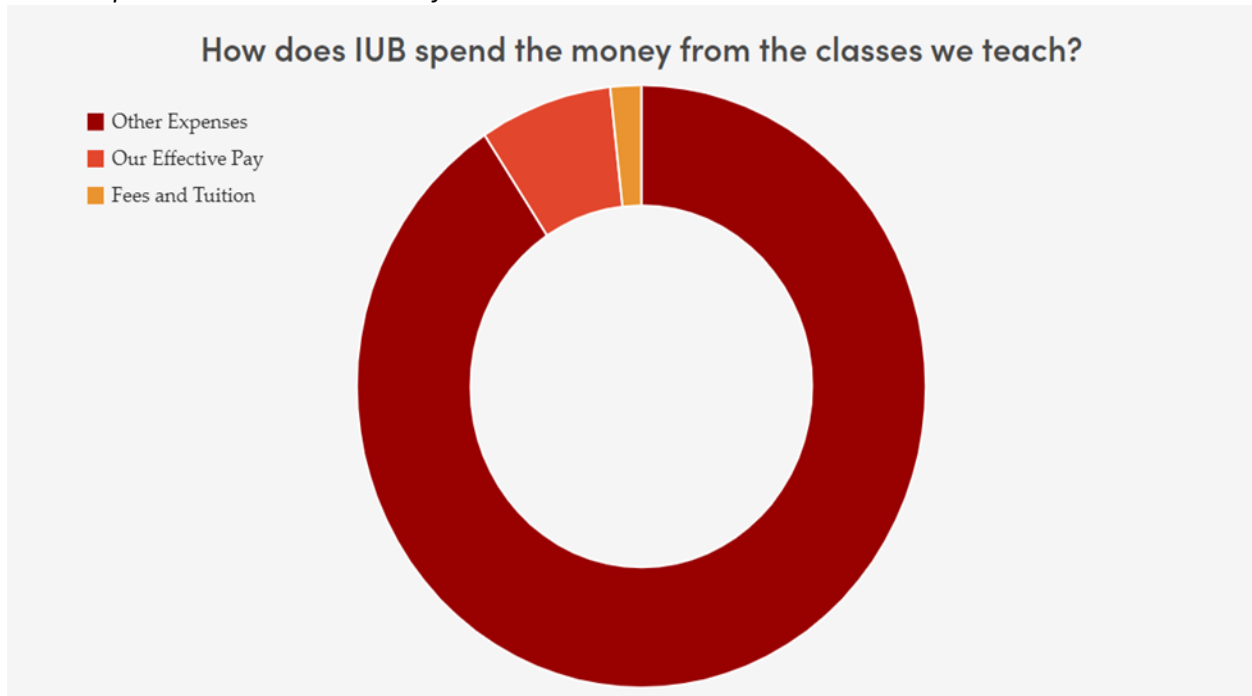
How IU's Fees Compare to Other Big 10 Institutions



As mentioned earlier, graduate students tackle several responsibilities, including teaching courses for undergraduates. Graduate students at IU teach 31% of the undergraduate courses while only receiving an average of \$12,782 out of the \$169,600 that the university earns from each course, which is depicted in Figure 3 (Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition, 2021).

Figure 3

How IU Spends the Revenue Earned from Graduate Assistant Courses



Note. By the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition (IGWC), 2021, chart that illustrates how Indiana University utilizes the finances from revenue earned by graduate assistant courses.

As evidenced by the data from the IGWC, graduate students are not able to survive on their stipends and are well underpaid a living wage. This is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed by higher education institutions. It is unfair and despicable how poorly graduate students are treated and reimbursed for their hard work and dedication to students and improving the university. Unfortunately, some students feel these burdens more than others. Minoritized students typically face much financial hardship upon entering college and money only gets tighter as graduation nears. This is especially true for Black students.

Financial Hardships of Black Students at PWIs

According to White (2020), more than 71% of college students reported feeling financial stress, and the effects are even worse for Black students. Black students tend to accumulate higher levels of student loan debt and have lower levels of savings and wealth, thus contributing to more financial stress while underscoring the power of inequitable social oppressive systems (White, 2020). Even when trying to socially mobilize, many Black students fall short due to discrimination within the labor market and discrepancies of economic security (White, 2020). Additionally, Black Americans are more likely to feel disadvantaged due to racism, multigenerational oppression, implicit bias and discrimination, which may manifest as financial stress (White, 2020). It is important to acknowledge that the oppressive systems in place lead to such detrimental effects of Black student mobilization. The blame must be removed from minoritized (non-White) communities, specifically Black populations that are viewed through a deficit-model. Despite the struggles that many Black students encounter, they continue to fight and advocate for their rights and make changes on their campus communities, which dates to early history.

History of Black Student Activism

Black students engaging in activism work in higher education contexts is not unfamiliar. Although slavery was abolished in the 19th century, Black people still endured acts of prejudice, discrimination, and overt racism that demonstrated the disdain for these communities; and this was not exempt to higher education institutions. College campuses across the United States still had segregated buildings and Black students were not able to enjoy the same luxuries and privileges as their White counterparts, thus resulting in poor educational outcomes and experiences (Slonecker, 2008). Black students began to realize that their educational pursuits often resulted in understanding the history of oppression and discrimination against individuals who counter the hegemonic, dominant culture, especially Black communities (Franklin, 2003).

Protests and activism surfaced because of knowing this truth and hoping for improved educational conditions. Black student activism and protests date back to the 20th century with Oakland College students in Alabama going on strike to protest segregation, racial insensitivity of White faculty and administrators, and strict rules in 1931 (Franklin, 2003). During the Civil Rights Era, Black college students began rapidly protesting with initiating sit-in campaigns to combat segregation on campuses starting in Greensboro, North Carolina, with other southern states following suit (Franklin, 2003). Some Black students even experienced physical violence and harm because of enduring racism and discrimination. Gershenson (2001) posited that, "Lynchings of Blacks in the South were still prevalent, with the incidence of such brutality increasing during the depression years" (p. 277). As evidenced, Black students rightfully had reasons to protest and advocate for their rights, given that higher education institutions should be deemed as safe spaces for educational and social well-being.

One of the most notable activism movements was at Columbia University in 1968 after the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964. Columbia University in New York wanted to build a campus gym facility

on land occupied by primarily Black middle-class families and many students resided in that same neighborhood. Black students persisted in their advocacy by standing against the building of the gym facility through protests and cultivating Black Student Power, which was a support group for Black students (Bradley, 2003). The consistent efforts of Black student activists led to the creation of more campus structures that gave students a voice and neutralized power between students and administration (Blakemore, 2020). In 1969, after a year of protests, Columbia University dropped plans of building the gym facility on land reserved for Black families (Blakemore, 2020). This remarkable effort of Black student activism illustrates the power of centralizing Black voices and resiliency against discrimination and unfairness within the Black community. As one could imagine, such efforts can be taxing and tedious for students trying to focus on their education. It is paramount to discuss how activism can be detrimental to Black student holistic well-being, even when their efforts are fruitful.

Modern Black Student Activism and Its Effects

Engaging in activist work is still prevalent within modern contexts of higher education. Students with minoritized identities (non-White), specifically Black students, frequently engage in activism as a means of survival, not choice (Linder et al., 2019). Agents of higher education institutions frequently fail to consider their roles in perpetuating systems of dominance and oppression, resulting in students engaging in additional labor to raise awareness about these issues (Linder et al., 2019). Moreover, Black students must often engage in activism work to bring awareness to large social movements, such as Black Lives Matter. Chambers and colleagues (2021) found that Black student participation in Black Lives Matter protests at PWIs results in threats to their personal safety and overwhelming accounts of emotional distress (Chambers et al., 2021). Similarly, Jones and Reddick (2017) found that Black students engaging in activism work contributes to institutional change that should be the responsibility of administration. In addition, it was reported that Black student activists are emotionally exhausted due to assuming the roles of institutional administrators through cultivating diversity efforts (Jones and Reddick, 2017). As illustrated, student activists are growing tired from adopting roles that other institutional constituents should be taking leadership on, thus introducing the conceptualization of what it means to be a student activist on a PWI.

Student activists have dual roles on campus and are often excluded from educationally beneficial opportunities due to their exhaustive labor of advocating for their communities. Connor, Crawford, and Galieto (2021) investigated the mental effects of student activism and found that 60% of respondents in their study reported adverse consequences to their well-being, thus highlighting the power and exhaustion student activists face to raise awareness about inequities and marginalizations on their campuses. Linder et al. (2019) utilized Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF) as a guiding framework to underscore the exhaustion and hypervigilance that persists in the Black student activist experience. RBF asserts that minoritized individuals, particularly student activists, have a decrease in energy due to the presence of discrimination and racial microaggressions (Linder et al., 2019). Minoritized individuals often must decide if dealing with a racial issue is worth the energy and the effort or if they should proceed and let the issues continuously fester. The exhaustion from RBF can sometimes lead to complete silence from student activists, thus addressing the un-involvement of minoritized students in the strike and unionization efforts.

RBF can be used to conceptualize why minoritized students chose not to be directly involved with the strike nor gain any public attention. Given the recent events in history of the murder of George Floyd and Breanna Taylor, many Black students at IU went above and beyond to show their support and have their voices heard. For instance, several murals of “Black Lives Matter” were hand painted by a group of student activists and displayed in many areas of the Bloomington community over the summer in 2020 to showcase their solidarity for the injustices against Black individuals. Additionally, Black student activists at IU work consistently in the community, working to create partnerships for the

betterment of youth in Bloomington. With all this effort, it would be difficult to participate in a strike. Minoritized students have contributed enough of their energy to other inequities on IU's campus and the participation in a strike would be a large undertaking.

It is imperative to understand the role that capitalism and race play in the graduate student strike.

Individuals with privilege tend to gain resources and other social benefits from the backs of those who are oppressed. This is evident in the strike because of the power dichotomy between students and administrators. Looking more closely, minoritized student activists participate in much groundwork of advocating for equity, yet administrators and institutional leaders get the recognition. If minoritized student activists were to stand on the picket lines and be public about their stance, there probably would not be much change made. Capitalism contributes to this discussion because individuals who are oppressed are expected to do the heavy lifting of social justice issues, which is why it is not always taken seriously and why change is prolonged. On the other hand, individuals in the majority population are not expected to make such efforts in social justice; so, when they do, it is a significant action that often leads to change.

The concept of race is implied in this phenomenon because it is a salient factor that is the driving force of discrimination, oppression, and marginalization in various contexts. Minoritized students engaging in the strike would lead to more scrutiny and potentially harsher institutional policies going against the strike. Black students were encouraged not to participate in the strike and be on the picket lines due to historical discrimination and marginalization. I was even told by several of my mentors not to engage in such activities because the institution administrators will punish me more harshly compared to my White counterparts. I was not on the picket lines, but I stood in solidarity with other graduate student strikers and chose not to work as a way of advocating for better wages. As predicted, my choice to not work backfired on me. I am confident that other minoritized graduate students were advised to not participate in the strike due to the same punishment. It is essential to address these inequities and apply them to future scholarship and institutional policies and practices.

Implications of Future Research

Graduate student strikes are a relevant topic that is novel in the literature. There are not many studies or scholarly articles that discuss the inequities of graduate student strikes, so there is much room for new research and implications. Below is a list of implications for future scholarship.

Investigating Graduate Student Employee Stipends over the Years

The central issue of the graduate student strike and unionization efforts at IU is the low pay students receive for working. Future research should explore the history of graduate student employment pay and potentially complete a comparative analysis to measure differences between historical and current times. It would be useful to investigate living costs, grocery costs, gas prices, tuition rates, and institutional fees to gain a better understanding of economic contexts. Conducting this type of research will illuminate the persistent issues of inequities within graduate higher education and show that problems have not yet been solved. This scholarship would be suitable for historians and individuals interested in deconstructing the higher education system and move towards equity and inclusion.

Examining the Role of Faculty in Graduate Student Strikes

Sharnoff (1993) emphasized the role faculty have in graduate student strikes. At the University of Massachusetts Amherst, faculty members were not in favor of the strike in 1991 and had a perspective that if they had to struggle to get their degrees, then current graduate students should have to endure similar challenges (Sharnoff, 1993). Given the rigor and difficulty that comes with graduate study, one would think that faculty would want their students to have a better experience than them,

but this was not the case at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Luckily, many faculty members at IU were supportive of graduate students striking, but it was difficult for them to truly show their support with the restrictions of administration. One potential method to investigate this issue is to conduct qualitative interviews with faculty members to gain their opinions and thoughts about the graduate student strikes and hear their stories about their experiences as graduate students. This type of research will give faculty a voice and provide them with an opportunity to make change for students, given their power within the institutional context. Moreover, observations of faculty council meetings at IU would be useful in gathering data and background information about faculty attitudes towards the strike and unionization efforts while examining current efforts being done to make a change for graduate student employees.

Analyzing Graduate Student Strikes from a Critical and Black Feminist Perspective

Critical theory and critical race theory are fundamental frameworks when analyzing inequities in various contexts. These theories are especially applicable to graduate student strikes. Studying the strike from a critical lens will surface historical underpinnings that have caused such inequities in the first place while giving space to those individuals who are oppressed and whose voices are left unheard. Additionally, utilizing critical theory and critical race theory would contribute greatly to higher education scholarship due to their relevance and controversy in the field.

Black Feminist perspectives suggest that if the most oppressed population in the world cannot have liberation, then it would be nearly impossible for other minoritized groups to be free (Collective, 1977). This perspective parallels the graduate student strike as well as other inequities because oppressed groups need to be acknowledged in order for change to occur, and it is difficult to make change when the root of the problem is still unsolved. Analyzing the graduate student strike from this perspective will address historical marginalization of certain groups and emphasize economic struggles that graduate students are dealing with. Some ideas for this topical area of research would be expansive literature reviews on critical theory and Black Feminist theory as it relates to the strike along with other conceptual work.

Unpacking the Minoritized Student Experience in Graduate Student Strikes

The secondary argument in this report is to discuss how minoritized students, specifically Black students, experienced the strike while unpacking the reasons for their lack of participation. Linder et al. (2019) mentioned the concept of Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF) in minoritized student activism, suggesting that minoritized students often must navigate systems that were not designed for them; and as a result, they become exhausted and fatigued from their efforts. This ideology can be associated with the graduate student strikes because minoritized students are probably tired from battling with other inequities, so they decided to remain silent and let members of the majority population fight this battle. It would be interesting to conduct interviews with minoritized graduate students to understand their perspective about the strike while also hearing their stories about why they chose to not participate along with their financial constraints that motivated them to maintain their funding. Using critical narrative inquiry and interviewing would be an appropriate method for such scholarly research.

Quantitative Studies Regarding the Perceptions of Graduate Student Strikes

The previous implication for future research is mostly applicable to qualitative scholars, but there is still opportunity for individuals who are competent in quantitative research. Survey methodology would be useful in gathering general data about graduate student strikes including differences in stipends across various disciplines, current employment roles of graduate students, rates of strike participation across demographics, and average rent payments. There are several areas that can be explored with quantitative research that can assist in providing groundwork for other studies.

Graduate student strikes are relatively novel in the academy given the lack of scholarship and literature available for review. This topic serves as a new area for research and investigation. Following future research implications, it is imperative to apply such scholarship to policy and practice.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Graduate student financial inequities have been present at IU for many years. Graduate students have tried to gain the attention of administrators regarding better pay and work-life balance. Unfortunately, their efforts have failed in previous years. The current strike at IU appeared to have a significant impact on administration and the institution as a whole. There has been much change made to graduate student employment. The current provost launched a specialized task force that consists of financial support and health and wellness committees (Smith, 2022). This task force is composed of faculty and graduate student representatives thus giving a voice to multiple constituents. The minimum stipend has been increased to \$22,000 annually instead of \$10,000 annually (Smith, 2022). There will be a mandatory review process of Student Academic Appointees (SAA) stipends every two years and mandatory and course-related fees are now covered by the university (Smith, 2022). Change has been made, but it has come at a cost for graduate students. Classes were stopped, grades were not entered, and graduate students were spending much time and energy on forming the strike just to gain the attention of IU administration. Unfortunately, change usually occurs under harsh conditions that cause certain individuals to make many sacrifices. However, implementing new policies can alleviate stress for all constituents involved while neutralizing power dynamics and providing spaces for people to be heard.

Unionization Policies

The IGWC's agenda for change includes forming a union for graduate student workers. Forming a union would allow graduate student workers to be protected against firing while being able to file grievances and complaints (Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition, 2021). This is a policy that would be ideal for graduate students but there could be some oppositions. Most unions tend to have members that have been employed for several years, while graduate students are temporary members of the IU community. Also, union representatives would serve short-term appointments and there would be an overturn of representation every few years after individuals graduate. So, there are some factors to take into consideration when forming a union. However, this is a policy that should be implemented to protect current and future graduate students in order to promote equity and better working conditions.

Annual Review of Pay, Raises, and Living Wage Policy

The specialized task force of the graduate student strike at IU has already decided to review wages every two years. This is an appreciative effort, but other expenses rise annually. For example, rent is a consistent expense that increases each year. If graduate student pay remains the same over the years, then being behind on rent would be a commonality for graduate student workers. Implementing a policy where there are annual reviews of wages and annual raises will ensure that graduate students are paid fairly and able to cover their expenses. Furthermore, annual raises would demonstrate the appreciation of the work that graduate students do for the institution.

Minimum stipends have been raised to \$22,000 across the institution, which is significant compared to the previous minimum stipend of \$10,000. However, these wages do not suffice for the living wage and average living costs in Indiana, which are \$27,955 and \$38,097 respectively (Costs of Living in Indiana, 2021). Ensuring that graduate students are paid a living wage is essential for promoting equity and financial security. This is a policy that is paramount for making change for graduate student workers and it is a prominent component of the IGWC's agenda for change.

International Student Fee Policy

Institutional mandatory and course-related fees are now being covered by IU as a result of the strike. International students are required to pay an additional fee of ~\$800 for attending college in the United States. Domestic students can work approximately 15-20 hours per week in their assistantships, along with a maximum of 10 hours per week in a part-time job, thus providing an opportunity to earn more income. On the other hand, international students do not have this same luxury. International students are not allowed to work part-time jobs with their full-time assistantships, which restricts their income to only the stipend they receive from their assistantships. Policies that allow international students to work a part-time job and waive international student fees would be ideal for social mobility and decreased financial strain. If domestic students can have waived fees and part-time jobs, then international students should be granted the same opportunity.

Increase in Assistantships and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Practices

The strike is a generally positive movement, but there have been some consequences. Due to the reallocation of funding to raise graduate student pay and elimination of fees, there is now a lack of faculty research during the summer, delay of information technology (IT) improvements, limits on non-essential business travel, and reduction of event expenses (Smith, 2022). In addition to these challenges, there is a reduction of available assistantships for graduate students due to increased wages. Enforcing a policy that ensures more assistantships are available to graduate students helps to open access to higher education, especially for minoritized students who have been historically excluded from the academy. Following that idea, implementing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) practices within all of the new proposed policies are necessary for equity, access, and fairness in higher education. The ultimate goal of all of the mentioned policies is to ensure inclusion and equity in graduate education while providing students with a more positive experience as they pursue their advanced degrees. It is essential that graduate students are appreciated and heard as they are the backbone of higher education institutions and adopt various roles and responsibilities that keep institutions operating efficiently.

Conclusion

Graduate student employees are known for being overworked and underpaid. There is a small history of graduate students striking for their working conditions, with one of the first occurring in 1991. Sadly, inequities of graduate student wages and working conditions have persisted for many years in higher education history. This refusal of change has festered anger and disappointment in graduate students across the United States. As a result of their frustration, there have been strikes and attempts at unionization. Indiana University (IU) has been the most prominent institution in initiating strikes and unionization efforts. Low wages and the absence of support from administration echo the concepts of power, privilege, institutional culture, and decision-making, which have been used as guiding conceptual frameworks for analyzing this equity issue. There have been several changes made at the institution including increased wages and elimination of institutional fees, but there are some issues that need to be addressed regarding inequities. Minoritized students have been obviously excluded from striking efforts and refused to display public support. Minoritized students have been exhausted from activism efforts, thus explaining their lack of participation in the strike at IU. Several areas for future research and policy implementation can be applied to this topic as it is novel in the academy. It is essential that scholars and higher education administrators continue to advocate for the rights of graduate students and other students to promote equity and make higher education more accessible.

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