

Interrogating hegemony through graduate
professional development in theory and praxis

A thesis submitted by

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Abstract

This thesis explores graduate professional development in relation to broader theorizations of hegemony and the university. In chapter one, I discuss graduate professional development as a hegemonic crisis, detailing the components of crisis in relation to one another and to the larger, ongoing institutional response. I articulate the recursive nature of constructing a response to the crisis at hand, namely a lack of confidence in the value of graduate education in light of a difficult job market. In chapter two, I explore how university administrators might pursue radical commitments despite being situated in a hegemonic institution. I propose the framing of aspirational radicality as a path forward, and explore its application in graduate professional development. In chapter three, I consider radical reimagining as the first stage of praxis. I use my own praxis, which I call creative expansive vocation and which reconsiders graduate professional development, as a case study.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter One	
Graduate professional development, hegemony, and the university	5
Chapter Two	
Aspirational radicality in graduate education	61
Chapter Three	
A portfolio of possibilities: Radically reimagining graduate-level professional development	96
Appendix: Observed Workshops at Winthrop	149
References	150

Introduction

I remember the moment this thesis project was suggested to me, although I cannot recall the moment I realized that this was, in fact, the project for me. I had been speaking with my advisor, Dr. Sabina Vaught, during the summer between my first and second year of graduate study because I had just found out that my position as a university administrator would be expanding over the course of the coming year to include more of a leadership role with respect to the graduate professional development programming. I had gone to her for suggestions of theoretical works to ground my coming year of learning, and during that meeting she said, “This sounds like it could be the start of a *great* thesis project, too.” At that time I demurred; I wanted to explore radical resistance in the university and I saw graduate professional development as a mundane, neoliberal feature of the university that could not possibly be a site for any challenge to take root.

I could be hard on myself for this response, but to do so would be to blame myself for an institutionally cultivated response. Graduate professional development *does* slide under the radar, it is rarely the project which leaps to mind as an institutional evil or an institutional boon, it is mundane (Smith, 2005). I do not know the point at which this cohered for me and became part of the reason I actively wanted to pursue this project, but I do know that the innocuousness of graduate professional development became a large part of what drew me to this project. While this thesis is superficially about graduate professional development programming, at its core it is a consideration of structures of power within the university and how administrators might navigate

or change those structures. It was the perfect thesis project for me: concerned with theory and structures, with simultaneous focus on putting that theory into practice, on creating change.

This dual focus on theory and practice is of particular importance to me, and part of what makes this thesis project so ideal for me. I made my way to the Educational Studies program after arriving at Tufts as a full-time employee, working as an administrator in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. I knew I wanted to study education because I wanted to continue working in higher education. For me, work and study are not readily extricable; for engagement to be meaningful for me it requires theorizing and study, even if outside of traditional scholarship. So for my thesis to connect so well with my work, to be exploring graduate education and structures therein, is the ideal capstone for my time as a master's student.

While my analysis and focus has evolved from the beginning of this project in the late summer and early fall of 2017, from the very beginning my focus has been on both theory and practice – not splitting my attention, but complementing and strengthening my perspectives. I questioned how graduate professional development became mundane, how it figured into larger structures of the university, and how practitioners might make change (I was, after all, still concerned with radical resistance). Over the course of my research I have made a start, in a way that I know will have material impact on the students and colleagues with whom I work in my career now and in the future.

The following three chapters which comprise this thesis are the fruits of

this research on graduate professional development as a component of higher education and as a site for change. These chapters are written such that each is able to stand on its own as a separate article, although they were developed during the same thesis project. These chapters are thematically connected through their superficial attention to the site of graduate professional development, but each consider the site from a different perspective and with a different focus.

The first chapter of this work attends to graduate professional development as a structural feature of the university, and as an example of hegemonic processes in action. This chapter is a qualitative, data-driven paper that considers graduate professional development at a northeast, highest research level (R1) university I call Winthrop University. I explore graduate professional development as an example of ongoing hegemonic crisis, grounded in Antonio Gramsci's (1971) theorizations of crisis and in six months of qualitative research, comprising participant observation and interviews with graduate students. In this chapter I argue that graduate professional development exposes a recursive, institutional process: crisis is defined, responded to, and assimilated in an ongoing, cyclical fashion that produces a sense of hegemonic inevitability (Harney & Moten, 2013; Robinson, 1983). By using graduate professional development as a case study for hegemonic crisis I open the door to greater depth of analysis of graduate professional development as a subject as well as provide a picture of hegemonic crisis in action, a relatively rare opportunity.

My second chapter is a reflexive work, considering the contradictions and tensions inhered within my role as a university administrator and my

commitments to radical work and practice, using the site of graduate professional development as a case study. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten note, “it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment” (2013, p. 26), a tension I struggle with. In this chapter, I offer a burgeoning theorization of one approach to that tension: aspirational radicality. Through consideration of already theorized radical spaces in the university, such as the undercommons (Harney & Moten, 2013), I propose a way to pursue radical commitments while working in the university. Additionally, I offer an example of aspirational radicality at work by applying these principles to graduate professional development, culminating in the articulation of a praxis which I term Creative Expansive Vocation.

In my third chapter, I explore the first stage of radical praxis, radical reimagining, using graduate professional development as an exploratory space. Beginning with an articulation of the radical commitments and ideals which guide me, I engage in data-driven reconsiderations of seven areas of graduate professional development. Using qualitative data from Winthrop University as case studies of graduate professional development programming, I explore how theories and commitments for radicality might be put into practice. I particularly center collectivity as both a guiding principle and a goal to be pursued, exploring this goal in practice and beginning to articulate the nuances of what such a commitment means (Kelley, 2016; Lawrence, 1992).

Chapter One

Graduate professional development, hegemony, and the university

A politics of recognition is also about definition: if we recognize something such as racism, we also offer a definition of that which we recognize. In this sense, recognition produces rather than simply finds its object; recognition delineates the boundaries of what it recognizes as given. (Ahmed, 2012, p. 45)

The university is in constant motion – acquiescing to and changing through systems of power, continually building walls to keep some out and others in. I am writing because of one of the university’s features – graduate professional development – not about it. I approach graduate professional development as an articulation of how the overarching structures of the university reflect and are reflected in component parts. In this way, recognizing and defining mechanisms of assimilation, oppression, and resistance in the university – specifically, in graduate professional development – sheds light on the university as an institution and its operations. Recognition and definition and the political implications therein are why I write, and why I begin with Sara Ahmed’s words on the topic. Specifically, I discuss graduate professional development through the lens of hegemonic crisis as an example of institutional operation, how it self-propagates, and how it encourages students to self-regulate according to neoliberal logics of assimilation.

Graduate professional development is in flux, and understandings of the

term in daily practice rarely overlap. In the spirit of ensuring shared ground from the beginning, I define graduate professional development here as activities, both formal and informal, led by individuals positioned as experts in particular skills or practices, with the aim of preparing students to be ‘a professional’ in their field. Graduate professional development, here, could occur in a skills-based workshop, or in a conversation between a student and a mentor; it could concern writing a resume, finding a job, writing a grant, or dealing with stress. Broadly, as long as the learning space is readily identified by either student or facilitator as preparatory for graduate students’ professional lives, I recognize it as graduate professional development.

I argue that graduate professional development programming is an institutional response to a crisis that is propelled by graduate job prospects but grounded in fears over the value of graduate education. In this article I explore graduate professional development as a hegemonic crisis: detailing crisis as an institutional narrative, nuancing challenges which propel conversation around the crisis, and outlining select institutional responses to the crisis that use graduate professional development to assimilate dissent. My discussion draws upon a critical qualitative study grounded in the goals and values of institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005), comprising student interviews and participant observation of graduate professional development workshops in the School of Arts and Humanities (A&H) and School of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) at one elite, private, R1 university: Winthrop

University.¹ In the following pages, I analyze the university in process of shifting, exposing the very in-progress mechanisms of graduate professional development both necessitating change and laying the groundwork for institutional re-entrenchment through that change.

Data and context: Winthrop and graduate professional development

This piece derives from six months of qualitative study at Winthrop University. A private, East Coast, R1 university with a historically affluent, White student body, Winthrop spends a significant amount of time, energy, and resources on maintaining the reputation and place it has secured among the elite class of institutions that set standards and expectations for higher education institutions across the country (Karabel, 2005). Approximately 10,000 students were enrolled at Winthrop University across two campuses, 2,000 of whom were School of A&H and School of STEM graduate students at the suburban campus.

At Winthrop, I engaged in participant observation of 20 workshops over the fall semester, collecting anonymous surveys that evaluated and contextualized through students' experiences at each. These workshops encompassed a full range of professional and personal development topics, including career preparation, personal wellness, communication, leadership, and scholarly expertise. It was from these workshops that I identified the 25 students with whom I conducted a total of 38 qualitative interviews. To provide a broad demographic snapshot of my collaborators,

- 72% were female, 28% were male;

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all names in this article are pseudonyms.

- 48% were Students of Color (75% international), 52% were White;
- 40% were international students (90% Students of Color), 60% were domestic students;
- 40% pursued master's degrees, 4% professional degrees², and 56% doctoral degrees.

Furthermore, all students had attended at least one formal professional development workshop through the graduate school, which is where I recruited them. For these students, formal graduate professional development over three dozen workshops; several summer boot-camps; one-on-one tutoring and consultant trainings; funding for conference travel; and teaching opportunities. Formal programming was just the tip of the iceberg, and most students engaged in professional development through their departments in the form of department seminars, one-on-one interactions with faculty, or advising meetings with their advisors. The quality, rigor, and intentionality of these offerings varied from department to department and advisor to advisor.

Winthrop enthusiastically took part in the anxiety, speculation, and obsession that appears ubiquitous around the state of the job market for graduate students (Cassuto, 2015; NSF, 2006; NSF, 2016), and joined its peers in rapidly incorporating professional development programming in the portfolio of graduate education. Nationally, though, scholarly considerations of this change have focused either on specific disciplines, on undergraduates, or on preparation for specific career fields (Ciarocco et al., 2016; Ducheny et al., 1997; Foote, 2010;

² Programs designed to track students into specific positions, such as forensic sciences, or with specifically professional degrees, such as Master of Business Administration (M.B.A).

Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Rizzolo et al., 2016). Where scholars discuss graduate students they primarily focus on preparing doctoral students for the professoriate, specifically on disciplinary reproduction and on creating peer communities of support and engagement to support their entire academic careers (Foote, 2010; Gardner & Barnes, 2007). Professional development is only linked to the *structures* and *guiding forces* of higher education by few (Urciuoli, 2010), and then only to forces related to the topics and methods by which professional development teaches students. Graduate professional development's place within graduate education and higher education structurally, axiologically, and purposefully remains undertheorized. From anecdotal and qualitative data probing how students, faculty, and staff in a graduate context even define professional development, this is a ripe and necessary area of inquiry – for rapid growth without a clear, shared definition is alarming. This paper opens the door onto this realm of inquiry, exploring graduate professional development as an extension of both the university and global, historical ideologies.

Approaching the university.

As an extension of the university, graduate professional development should be placed in context of the critical theorizations concerning universities as sites and structures of power. White supremacy, colonialism, misogyny, anti-Semitism, and classism are foundational to the university, each a major guiding logic throughout history and into the present (Bok, 2005; Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Giroux, 2014; Haiven, 2014; Hamer & Lang, 2015; Harney & Moten, 2013; Karabel, 2005; Slater, 2015; Stein & de Oliveira Andreotti, 2017; Wilder, 2013).

Specifically, the current manifestation of these forces is newly imperial and capitalist in manifestation, growth, and coherence across the institution (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Giroux, 2014; Haiven, 2014; Hamer & Lang, 2015; Washburn, 2005). Stefano Harney and Fred Moten beautifully attend to the multiplicity of the university, defining what it is by defining what it is not: “it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment” (2013, p. 26). The university is a contradictory, multifaceted site for rich, critical conversation and practice, and it is a deeply racist, colonizing, classist site which is violent and assimilative if not guarded against. It is simultaneous, as Harney and Moten articulate.

And so, radicality does exist within the university, and matters both as a topic of analysis in mapping the power structures of the university (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Ahmed, 2012; Ferguson, 2012; Kelley, 2016; Rickford, 2016) and as the foundation for applying theorizations of how graduate professional development as a site operates to the university as a whole. Sara Ahmed (2012) and Robin D.G. Kelley (2016) provide robust and incisive insights with respect to this link, highlighting both how exposing the specificities of university oppressive structures *is* a radical act and how this serves as a foundation for action, however seemingly impossible. I take all of the above as part of the context of the university and thus graduate professional development, not one more than the other: dissent and oppression both inextricable from the institution, neither negating the other.

Theorizing structural power

As graduate professional development is my entry point for deeper understanding of the university, so too are my data entry points for enriching understandings and applications of key theories – beginning with hegemony. For the sake of this discussion, I define hegemony as the constellation of processes and forces which cement the domination of one group over all others in society, based on Antonio Gramsci's theorizations (1971). I begin with Gramsci's theorizations and use his terminology because of the close descriptive fit with the mechanisms I consider, and emphasize placing his theories in conversation with theories of other scholars of power. Within hegemony, I particularly focus on the cyclical, mechanistic, and consent-driven aspects of hegemony as a force which creates an artificial sense of inevitability and inescapability (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Du Bois, 1935; Kelley, 1994; Ferguson, 2012; Marable, 2000; Robinson, 1983; Said, 1978). Meritocracy is one example of a hegemonic mechanism driving inescapability – a bait and switch, meritocracy structures hierarchy by locating it indelibly within a person, hiding structural barriers by upholding the notion that someone's worth (determined by personal characteristics) drives their success (Guinier, 2015; Guinier et al., 1994; Karabel, 2005; Posselt, 2016). Meritocracy structures inescapability, and is one of the many hegemonic mechanisms to do so. In this article I will also discuss three other, related such mechanisms: crisis, commonsense, and professionalization.

Central to Gramscian hegemony is a constancy of motion, and challenges to authority are continually required to re-invigorate and re-legitimize the power

structures in place. A large part of this relegitimization process is securing consent, by which I mean acknowledgment on the part of those in institutions of their subordination to and support for the institution's authority, generated through coercion tactics which range from disciplinary to encouraging. Consent through challenge and resistance to hegemony is crucial, as Kelley articulates:

the notion of hegemony presumes contest, and hegemonic institutions are constantly forced to respond, to fight for territory which is often lost. As Stuart Hall put it in his succinct and oft-cited phrase, 'hegemonizing is hard work.' To conceive of hegemony without placing struggle at the center, or to accept the rather useless dichotomy between 'true' and 'false' consciousness (terms neither Gramsci, Hall, nor Williams ever accepted), is to reduce the concept to a theory of consensus. (1992, p. 294)

Hegemony, change, and resistance are dialectical. The precise manifestation and interaction between hegemony, institutions, and individuals is fluid, and dependent on multiple actors with contradictory and competing goals. Hegemony seems inevitable and all-encompassing, but is only one of several forces – it is not the only player on the board, to quote one science fiction and fantasy author who considers the scope and limits of hegemony (Dickinson, 2016). This article dives into this space of contestation, exploring its boundaries the particularities of how hegemony creates a sense of inevitability that obscures the existence of a contest to begin with.

Grappling with neoliberalism.

One logical framework of hegemony is particularly salient to graduate

professional development in the university: neoliberalism, a hegemonic logic which encourages action and assent along liberal, capitalist value-driven lines. I emphasize the sociohistorical roots of neoliberalism which impact its current iteration as the “free-trade faith” so inextricable from institutions like the university (Bourdieu, 1998, p.100; Falcón et al., 2014; Gildersleeve, 2017; Giroux, 2014; Harvey, 2005; Urciuoli, 2008). And, I emphasize neoliberalisms complexity and ill-definedness: it is sprawling, internally contradictory, and an emergent leading force perpetuating hegemony and its institutions (Duggan, 2003). To quote Lisa Duggan at length,

because neoliberalism is not a unitary ‘system,’ but a complex, contradictory cultural and political project created within specific institutions, with an agenda for reshaping the everyday life of contemporary global capitalism, analyses of its recent history and hopefully future demise must be diverse, contingent, flexibly attuned to historical change, and open to constant debate and revision. Neoliberal politics must be understood *in relation* to coexisting, conflicting, shifting relations of power along multiple lines of difference and hierarchy. (2003, p. 70, emphasis in the original)

I position neoliberalism as a supportive logic to hegemony, neither natural nor casual. Gramsci describes, “when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks” (1971, p. 494).

Neoliberalism is one of these maintaining logics – it is a logical path or algorithm,

rather than a manifesto of values and imperatives (Bourdieu, 1998; Duggan, 2003).

Part of neoliberalism's incoherence stems from its genealogy of liberalism and capitalism – more than additive, the manifestation of these lineages crop up in neoliberal policies and actions with varying justification and material implementation depending on positionality (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Giroux, 2014). As such, I ground my approach to neoliberalism in critical considerations of both liberalism and capitalism, including considerations of individualism, formal equality, competition, neutrality of powered institutions, and meritocracy (Apple, 2004; Crenshaw, 1995; Harris, 2006; Harvey, 2005; Vaught, 2014), and racial capitalism and attendant hegemonic projects such as White supremacy and imperialism (Du Bois, 1935; Ferguson, 2012; Kelley, 1994; Marable, 2000; Robinson, 1983). Each of these scholars speaks with specificity which I do not detail here, not to ellide their work but to gesture to the complexity and tentacle-like qualities of neoliberalism touching and shaping all of these different areas, just as it touches and shapes graduate professional development. Through conversation with these scholars, I emphasize that White supremacy, imperialism, gendered oppression, and other attendant hegemonic projects actively shape the structure of graduate professional development to center capitalist values and outcomes above all else.

Skills and graduate professional development: A hegemonic case study.

To give an example both of hegemony in action and of the complex histories of the university, with a focus on graduate education, I briefly explore a

prior iteration of professionally- oriented change in graduate education which resulted in a focus on skills that continues to have influence into today. As Maren Wood (2018) points out, graduate education and the job market have maintained a fluctuating, rather than steady, relationship over the past half century, belying the comforting narrative of faculty jobs aplenty for each doctoral graduate up until the current moment. At the same time, ongoing historical changes to university demographics throughout the second half of the twentieth century resulted in more historically-excluded students, without familial or social expertise in navigating universities, entering into these institutions (Karabel, 2005). During the 1970s and 1980s, these parallel challenges intersected: a faculty hiring lull at the same time as a doctoral graduate boom (Wood, 2018), and a movement led by Black students and joined by Asian, Latinx, and queer students demanding greater support from universities (Ferguson, 2012; Rickford, 2016). These forces, one specific to graduate education and one broadly impacting universities across the country, forced university action to improve student experience in the moment, with lasting ramifications through to graduate professional development today.

Interacting with one another, these forces propelled attention that cumulatively shifted graduate education towards greater outcome-oriented (jobs) outlooks and explicit breaking down of complex, normalizing processes into accessible skills or ideas. The eventual combination is now called skillification (Urciuoli, 2008) – discrete, acontextual skills or ideas that may be consumed in an almost credentializing fashion to impart mastery. But several decades ago, these reactions were both logical and, in some ways, critical. The institution was forced

to both acknowledge a material reality of graduate student experiences outside the academy and to take active, explicit action to unveil previously invisible or unspoken norms that served to maintain a culture of raced, classed, and gendered exclusivity, framing these practices as accessible rather than permanently unattainable markers of belonging (Assiter, 1995). A focus on skills, bite-sized chunks of professionalization (to economic professions and the profession of being a student in a university), answered both the question of how to ensure that doctoral graduates could get jobs and how historically excluded students could navigate the university, thus becoming a central mechanism for co-curricular education and assimilated into university structure. As universities changed, as neoliberalism grew in prominence, and as economic considerations took on primacy, skills also became key components to graduate professional development, in ways that drifted away from the original intention of breaking down barriers. Skillification, instead, reifies the status quo and instructs students on how to fit expectations and succeed within pre-existing norms. It showcases key hegemonic logics at work in graduate professional development and a history of criticality being assimilated to strengthen and (re)build exclusivity and power consolidation in an institution. This article analyzes and explores a current moment of change that I suggest, if left unchecked, will follow a similar pattern of student challenge, institutional response, and assimilation.

Qualitative research methods and methodology

I approach graduate professional development through using Dorothy Smith's theorizations and methodological offerings of institutional ethnography

(2005). As Smith describes, “it is the aspects of the institutions relevant to the people’s experience, not the people themselves, that constitute the object of inquiry” (p. 38). While I observed workshops attended by students and spoke to students of their experiences, the object of my study was the project of graduate professional development within the university. I analyze the university through Discourse – the content and form of communication as well as the web of associations in which the communication, communicator, and receiver exist (Gee, 2010). I capitalize Discourse to point to its role in larger structures of socialization, particularly hegemonic legitimization and discipline (Fairclough, 2013; Hymes, 1996; Kumashiro, 2008; Smith, Miller-Kahn, Heinecke, & Jarvis, 2004). I attend to structures and mechanisms of power within the institution through students’ engagement and Discourses with respect to graduate professional development. While I interviewed students and attended workshops as participant and observer, I focused upon the powered forces driving their experiences and their Discourses, rather than treating students and facilitators as decontextualized, individualized actors.

Methodologically, I situate my work within critical, feminist scholarly traditions of qualitative research, speaking with both students and the institution in tension, conversation, and relation to one another (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Bloom, 1998; Fine et al., 2003; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Mohanty, 1998; Meiners, 2007; Narayan, 1993; Patel, 2015; Pillow & Mayo, 2012; Vaught, 2017). I particularly emphasize co-constructing knowledge; centering the relationality of my research; and taking collaborators at their word in this research and analysis. My

positionality with respect to my research is particularly important: I work full-time at a university creating and maintaining formal graduate professional development programming, in addition to being a graduate student in an educational studies program. I am powered in a way that other researchers of the university, particularly other graduate students, are not: I have substantial control over the future strategy of graduate professional development where I work, and can and should use this analysis to make change where I work. It is from this position, knowing that I will be making decisions based on these analyses *and* knowing that as an institutional actor I am complicit in the structures of power I interrogate, that I analyze graduate professional development and the university.

Graduate professional development in flux

Graduate professional development is a moment which is very much in progress – an institutional project in the process of consolidating support and legitimating hegemony across multiple fronts, each to a varying degree. It is necessarily incomplete, but the incompleteness is why attention to this space is so powerful. Part of the power hegemony wields is through narratives of inevitability, and attending to how graduate professional development is definitively built through trial and error takes the edge off of hegemonic power, even if only slightly. In this article I explore those mechanisms of consolidation and offer an argument for how they operate, using this particular moment of hegemonic crisis as a case example.

The term crisis comes from Antonio Gramsci's theorizations of hegemony (1971). Gramsci characterizes crisis as an important component of hegemonic

growth, acting as a valve by which threats to hegemonic power might be identified, quelled, and absorbed to strengthen the institutions and structures which maintain the status quo. The history of skillification which I outlined above, a phenomenon prompted by changes to the university and the larger context which has been absorbed and re-enacted by the institution (Ferguson, 2012; Karabel, 2005; Wood, 2018), is one example of how crisis works. Spurred by both external and internal movements, skillification concluded with an institutional response that neutralized student challenges and has been used for strengthening the university ever since.

The example of the hegemonic crisis which led to current skillification emphasizes just how much hegemonic crisis is characterized by absorption – the institution seeming to give in while actually absorbing the threat and consolidating power, locking down consent and closing a door for future challenge (Gramsci, 1971, p. 450). For, if the institution has already responded to that particular crisis, unless something new happens or there is a different but related crisis, that challenge cannot be taken up as effectively again. As Gramsci notes, crises are periodic, and the skills that came from this prior crisis arise again in graduate professional development – the crisis is different, although the arena is the same.

In the analysis which follows, I explore graduate professional development as a hegemonic crisis. My entry point onto exploring hegemonic crisis is the institution's response, graduate professional development. Pivoting from this entry point, I begin by introducing the internalization of crisis which

propels the institution's response to the crisis' trigger. I use another feature of hegemony – commonsense – to discuss internalization of a narrative of crisis which is visible in the form of graduate professional development. Second, I attend to one example of ongoing, internal challenges which nuance and propel the institution's response of graduate professional development, attending to resistance as in conversation with the institution, rather than not flatly dissenting. Finally, I explore two burgeoning examples of coerced consent generation which complement the primary crisis response, graduate professional development, and which provide crucial detail on the consent generation process, particularly professionalization (Harney & Moten, 2013). I take the incompleteness of this crisis as an opportunity, and explore the crisis through the simultaneous inconsistencies and harmonizations that build towards assimilation.

The external made internal: Responding to hegemonic crisis

I begin by exploring how crisis is recognized and defined, how the institution internalizes a particular understanding of crisis that drives the form of the response. I open this exploration with an example, a moment which occurred at the oral qualifying exam (oral quals) of a White, female doctoral student in the School of STEM, named Florence, whose story provides a particularly visible example of one of the ways in which the institution internalizes and responds to the crisis at hand. Florence had an air of intensity or determination, but not single mindedness, who came to Winthrop for her master's and stayed on for a Ph.D. program because she was so enamored with her research. She shared,

during my interview portion of it, I had one of the faculty go on this long-

winded [*here, she chuckled*] explanation of how academia is saturated with Ph.D. students, and there's like minimal... hardly... you know, your chances are one in something ridiculous. [...] And he just kind of went on this long tangent about it, and that was the preface to his question asking, "well, why do you want to be in academia?"

Florence laughed before delivering the punchline: "And I just said, 'well, I don't.'" At that, she laughed more, cynically and exhaustedly, and I laughed with her. Florence could tell something was off about that interaction, and while she focused on the faculty's assumption of her career path intentions, I was struck by the structural nuances she articulated. In that moment, the de facto institutional representative (the faculty) had attempted to repurpose the exam from a hallowed marker of growth to a soothing of institutional anxieties around the future of doctoral student getting jobs as faculty. The faculty exercising his institutional power in this way shifted the focus from Florence's scholarly capacity to the institution's problems, in which she, as a presumed future colleague, was expected to invest and then alleviate.

In assuming Florence's career choices and asking her to defend those choices, the oral qual committee member engaged in recognizing and thus defining a crisis, one stemming from the graduate job market but snowballing to conflate many of dimensions of graduate education and neoliberalism with economic outcomes of graduate students. Graduate professional development is at the center of this crisis. To state it explicitly, I define the graduate professional development crisis as a question of the usefulness of graduate education to

students getting jobs. In some ways, calling it the ‘graduate professional development crisis’ is a misnomer, as the crisis is actually triggered by the job market but the primary institutional *response* takes the form of professional development, but I use this term because materially the response is recursively built upon the institution’s understanding of the crisis. The institution understands the threat to hegemony in a certain way, and builds responses based on that interpretation – thus, the response to the crisis is a response to the institution’s interpretation of the instigating trigger, here, difficulties facing graduate students getting jobs. Florence’s faculty’s response was to ask her to justify her interests in the professoriate, a response that indicates an interpretation of the crisis as a weeding out of the undeserving, with no care about why jobs are scarce to begin with.

The following two sections explore the institution’s internalizing narratives of the graduate professional development crisis. I begin by discussing the internalizing process through the hegemonic mechanism of commonsense, then turn to these internalized narratives in action as they drive programming strategies. Both are crucial components of the institution’s ongoing responses to the graduate professional development crisis, propelling ideas for how the university (particularly graduate education) can rehabilitate its reputation as being a “mess” or “ruin” (Cassuto, 2015; Hayot, 2018; Readings, 1996) and highlighting how crisis is internalized. Finally, I attend to the retroactive relationship the responses have to internalized understandings of what the crisis is, exploring how in the ongoing crisis of graduate professional development the

institution's responses might recursively change its definition of the crisis moving forward, nuancing the definition and future responses stemming from that newly nuanced definition.

Commonsense narratives of the job market.

I argue that the constructed narrative of the academic job market as it applies to graduate professional development shapes the institution's response. This internal positioning takes on greater precedence or weight than the actual shape of the instigating context, here the job market – I discuss this through a story told to me by Chloe, a Latina, female, doctoral student. Everyone at Winthrop knew Chloe to be outstanding – a scientist graduating at the end of the year, she excelled in her doctoral program, having taken part in numerous outreach efforts in conjunction with the graduate school and her department and was heavily involved in an metro-area group celebrating and teaching science to the public. In other words, she set herself up to successfully pursue virtually any career path, which her advisor saw.

But she did not want just any career: Chloe wanted to be a professor at a public university. Her advisor was less than thrilled. “When I told my advisor that I want... that this is what I wanted to do, I want to focus on teaching more, he was a little bit disappointed,” she told me. “Because he was like, ‘oh, you're so good at research!’ and I was like, well, yeah I'm in grad school I have to be! And then I talked to him about why my favorite parts of grad school are teaching, that I love teaching undergrads; he was really supportive of me.” Chloe herself analyzed his initial reaction and his subsequent turn-around a few minutes later. She explained:

So, he expects me to, or expected me to, have the same exact job that he has because he wants the best for me, and to him that's the best. So I had this conversation with him, like I'd rather be at a teaching intensive institution because I don't want pressure from both sides – I want to be able to do research but to focus on my teaching... and personally I want to teach at a public school. That's where my roots are, and I feel like I would be really more comfortable teaching in public school. And he was like, 'Oh, teaching – you should look into Bowdoin or Vassar,³' and I was like, well, I said public school. So, he's still, like, in his mind he wants the best for me. He's like, okay, you want to go a teaching intensive institution?

You have to be at a good one.

Chloe hit the nail on the head – her advisor was clearly contextualizing her prospects through his understanding of the job market and the elite positions which he felt she could land. To use a capitalist framing, the scarcity of academic jobs made top-tier positions even more valuable, thus making it his responsibility to ensure that excellent students like Chloe land those top jobs.

Chloe's advisor propelled a narrative he believed without questioning, an important mechanism in the process of institutional internalization of the crisis: common sense, referred to in this paper as "commonsense" to differentiate from colloquial use. Commonsense refers to fragmentary, contradictory, ubiquitous knowledge tied to discipline and consent generation, manufactured to seem natural and inevitable – Chloe's advisor's unconscious narrative of the naturalness

³ I use the names of different but structurally similar institutions, here, to provide a sense of what Chloe's advisor pushed her towards.

of educational hierarchy translating to a jobs hierarchy and a responsibility to uphold that hierarchy is one example. As Gramsci describes,

every social stratum has its own 'common sense' and its own 'good sense,' which are basically the most widespread conception of life and of man. Every philosophical current leaves behind a sedimentation of 'common sense': this is the document of its historical effectiveness. Common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life. 'Common sense' is the folklore of philosophy, and is always half-way between folklore properly speaking and the philosophy, science, and economics of the specialists. Common sense creates a folklore of the future, that is as a relatively rigid phase of popular knowledge at a given place and time.
(1971, p. 630, footnote)

While it is a bounded, epistemological product, commonsense also triggers consolidation, legitimation, and reinscription through the creation of unquestioned inevitabilities which aid in the generation of consent – there is no dissenting against a natural, inevitable fact (Apple, 2004; Hill Collins, 2000; Kumashiro, 2008). Fragmentary, contradictory, ubiquitous throughout the masses though it may be, commonsense controls possibilities for dialogue, thought, and action (Apple, 2004; Hill Collins, 2000; Kumashiro, 2008; Leonardo, 2004; Tupper & Cappello, 2008), particularly when values come into play.

Institutionalization of commonsense logic.

I attend to commonsense and these internalized narratives because of their material impact on students. Chloe resisted her advisor's narrative, but her desire to be personally fulfilled by working at the types of school she once attended was not institutionalized – her advisor's was. His perspective took on institutional weight through its reiteration in school-level graduate professional development workshops. The internalized narrative of the crisis, the potential for devaluation of graduate education due to job market difficulties of graduate alumni, drives threads of the institution's response. This was particularly visible through the career-oriented workshops, where of the two career-centric workshops at Winthrop, one for academia and one for all other positions (I only observed the academic one), the academic jobs workshop was almost twice as long as the non-academic workshop. On a less formal level, this impacted the direction of Chloe's advisor's advising – he was her primary source of information about the profession of “faculty member” (Humble, Solomon, Allen, Blaisure, & Johnson, 2006; Laverick, 2016; Lyons, Scroggins, & Rule, 1990), as well as an institutional actor charged with helping her to graduate and in her career. Thus, his insurances on her career path took on the weight of the university – by virtue of his position, his opinions were more than his opinions, all the more so because his perspectives reflected the institution's commonsense narrative. This is not to disparage or criticize her advisor – he was eventually receptive to Chloe's needs, after breaking through his commonsense assumptions. And, he is representative of larger institutional structures and mechanisms (Smith, 2005).

Commonsense narratives of the jobs students deserve matter because they

are the paths by which faculty, students, and the institution understand the external triggers for the graduate professional development crisis. Difficulties in the economic sphere after graduate school could be interpreted in many different ways, but these pre-existing logics channel the crisis to a particular form – specifically, indignation, unacceptability, victimization, and anger at unfulfilled promises (Benton, 2009; Cassuto, 2015; Corrigan, 2018; Hayot, 2018; Wilson, 1998). And, because the form of a challenge impacts the form of the response, these commonsense narratives also shape institutional response – if the institution accepts that students deserve certain jobs, getting students those jobs better be part of its response to crisis. I discuss what this means, materially, for graduate professional development momentarily, but here emphasize that all of these materialities stem from a fundamental narrative that by virtue of their position as graduate students, a particular kind of job is deserved, and the institution must do everything it can to make that happen.

Narratives of the job market say more about the institution and its power structure than the individuals who propel that narrative (Smith, 2005). Commonsense narratives both *I* boundaries and limits of that institution (Harney & Moten, 2013; Robinson, 1983) – clearly leading to institutionally mandated outcomes while mystifying other options – and discipline students (and faculty) based on those limits. In this way, the university defines itself by its associations, and graduate professional development becomes less about what students *do* than *where* students work.

Current implementations of professional preparation.

Commonsense narratives about the job market work to manifest and materially impact students in the form of graduate professional development programming. Here, I examine that manifestation to articulate how internalization of the hegemonic crisis determines the response of the university, with an eye to spectacle. During the year I conducted my study, Winthrop had 42 workshops scheduled; five years prior, six workshops were held over the entire year. Workshop numbers roughly doubled each year for three years before plateauing – this was lauded as huge success: Winthrop listened to students and looked at the job market, realized there was an unmet need, and, boy, did they sure fill it! This strategy did several things: it positioned Winthrop as agreeing that something was wrong with graduate education and that there was not enough emphasis on discrete skill preparation (Benton, 2009; Cassuto, 2015; Hayot, 2018), and it implied that quantity was the fix.

The spectacle of graduate professional development programming did not occur in a void, and in the following pages I consider how that spectacle is linked to narratives of hegemonic crisis and to hegemonic values and ideologies. Here, I connect the dots between the internalized narratives of crisis with the institutions response, particularly through the lens of graduate professional development programming as a spectacle which performs responsiveness. After situating my discussion of graduate professional development programming within discussion of spectacle, I attend to two components of this programming which unveil particularly robust aspects of the internalized narrative of the graduate professional development crisis: the temporal component, that is newness will

solve the problem, and the role of skills, building on my prior discussion of skillification as a remnant of a past hegemonic crisis.

A spectacle of responsiveness.

To reiterate, I identify the crisis at hand as concerning how the university might maintain the value of graduate professional development in the face of a difficult economic climate for graduate alumni. I explore the internalization of this crisis through the performativity of the explosiveness of graduate professional development growth. 600% growth over five years is a highly-designed spectacle – it implies both university recognition of the need for change and a resounding response, seemingly leaving no room for critique. I use spectacle in the theoretical sense, highly visible, performative acts which propel a particular institutional narrative – here, a liberal one of care, benevolence, and staid support for all students to pursue their career dreams, (Apple, 2004; Bell, 1995; Crenshaw, 1995; Harris, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, 1995; Vaught, 2014) – in response to turmoil, real or threatened (Kumashiro, 2008; Smith et al., 2004). Here, I particularly explore the spectacle of graduate professional development where it abuts more personalized, effective forms of professional development including mentoring.

The graduate professional development spectacle, in particular, promotes the idea that spectacles might be as intimate as an advising meeting, transferring power from individuals to the institution. Two workshops were particularly pointed examples of this: “Lab Management,” delivered by a White, male, STEM faculty member (Dr. Jones) lauded for his devotion to student learning, and

“Celebrating and Considering Women in the STEM Fields,” and delivered by a Woman of Color, STEM faculty member (Dr. Bakshi) who did annual field research and who delivered the talk in her third trimester of pregnancy. Jones exemplified this idea in his opening positioning, telling attendees “these are a lot of things I tell my students.” He spoke about practices he learned through experience, about structuring research to make time for life outside the lab, and encouraged a proactive approach to mental health and counseling. By mapping the space of the workshop onto his individual advising sessions with students he transitively positioned attendees as surrogate advisees, making each feel singular and special in a mass educational space. This was extraordinarily powerful, and made for an extremely effective workshop. I was moved, and others in the room were, too. And, it positioned only some forms of mentoring as deserving of institutional resources, attention, and celebration: those explicitly in the name of the institution, with high return on investment (serving many students at once), and clearly limited in scope.

Mentoring has an odd place in professional development programming, due to its invisible nature and its value to students. Mentoring comprises the bulk of professional development for students (Humble, Solomon, Allen, Blaisure, & Johnson, 2006; Laverick, 2016; Lyons, Scroggins, & Rule, 1990), and it can be crucial as a rare support mechanism in a distinctly unsupportive environment for students of Color, first generation, Queer, and marginalized students fortunate to work with supportive mentors, particularly mentors who faced similar institutional obstacles (Gardner & Holley, 2011; Gregory, 2001; López, 2014;

Perlow, 2018). And, it has historically occurred out of sight and out of institutional control, a problem when the institution is attempting to perform and make visible as many opportunities for students to learn about norms and opportunities in their chosen career fields as possible. The emphasis on mentoring and bringing that relationship to a mass audience (relatively) is a way around that, a way for the institution to promote and take credit for the good aspects of mentoring while both maintaining institutional control and a highly visible, legitimating spectacle of graduate professional development.

Bakshi's workshop also demonstrated this mentoring strategy, as she positioned the back half of her talk as addressing something most people do not speak about with young, female scientists when they start out: the realities of sexual harassment, disrespect, and power shifts on the part of senior male faculty who treated the field site as a personal sanctuary. In doing so, she shared invaluable information and positioned a lecture-style workshop as an intimate space. Again, her workshop made a difference for students with few if any opportunities for such discussions, particularly with peers who could affirm the visibility of what was discussed. And, it propelled a benevolent, liberal positioning that legitimized the institution without changing structures contributing to students being harmed in the first place (Harris, 2006; Vaught, 2014). Here, graduate professional development acted as junk food, making students and the institution feel better in the moment without providing any long-term, structural impact unless students themselves took on that work. To be clear, I believe Bakshi came from a space of critical skills focus, akin to the beginnings

of skillification in its attempts to break down institutional barriers through frank articulation of norms, but in the current structure of graduate professional development it supported a spectacle-oriented, institutionally benevolent narrative of mentoring as distributed by the university on a mass scale.

These workshops showcased the deep generosity of the facilitators in taking often uncompensated time to support students, in ways that reflected well on the institution as coordinator and leader in this space. The performed mentoring of these workshops was both intentional and cultivated by the institution, not a spontaneous demonstration on the part of the faculty. These workshops demonstrated responsivity to students and to faculty, as well as demonstrated the correct way to do professional development: en masse, mediated by the institution, and instigated through independent student interest rather than institutional outreach. Students were positioned as independent actors making the choice to enter into this shared institutional space, with the workshop a passive resource they may consume or not as they chose. The workshops began the process of transferring responsibility of responding to the job market from the institution to students, bolstering institutional legitimacy while recursively setting up a new narrative of culpability should the professional development not lead to the jobs students are 'supposed' to have: it is the students fault for not doing more.

Temporal boundaries.

Propelling and justifying the spectacle of the workshops' growth, the quasi-mentoring content, and the positioning of students as drivers and consumers

of institutional content is a narrative of newer as better. That is, that the old model of professional development was unacceptable, and so the school has moved on. Grounded in neoliberal values (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Harvey, 2005), the narrative thrives through the implication that if the old state of professional preparation left the institution unprepared for the crisis then it must have been bad to begin with. In other words, the institution created boundaries for what is acceptable along distinctly neoliberal, commoditizing, mass educational lines (Ferguson, 2012; Kelley, 1992; Robinson, 1983; Said 1978). Remnants of crises past contribute to this narrative – the past skills crisis and past demographic crises were propelled by the need to *correct* institutional action in some way. That response works in the institution’s favor, in many ways, as a move away from the old model is a move toward new, consumer-centric models which both assimilates response to the crisis and expands the institution’s footprint along distinctly neoliberal lines. Here, I explore the temporal boundary marked by the spectacle of graduate professional development as both a necessary component of the internal narrative responding to the graduate professional development crisis and an excuse for the strategies in this response.

Overall, the temporal boundary was disciplined primarily through a narrative of how lucky students were. Students were told things were not always this way, and that indeed many Winthrop faculty were not given the resources that students had access too. Appropriately, the first workshop of the year (“Introduction to Teaching”) hit upon this Discourse within fifteen minutes. The facilitator began by explaining that she primarily worked with faculty, that these

workshops were the rare exceptions she worked with graduate students, and told the class, “You guys are lucky, getting trained.” While she framed this in a historical sense – these workshops are new, no one was paying attention to these needs before – she set a tone of enforced gratitude with respect to graduate professional development. The narrative of luckiness regimented institutional boundaries of response, reinforcing the narrative that the new is an improvement over the old and that really nothing existed prior to the institution benevolently stepping in.

It was the creation of commonsense in action, and a visible way in which the institution grappled with the temporal aspect of the graduate professional development crisis – why this is happening now (Kumashiro, 2008). Luckiness positioned the current form of graduate professional development as better and more responsive, disciplining by stating a new truth that the old was bad and the new is good. This commonsense also had the effect of positioning the new as responsive and defensive against the big bad outside world of uncertain job markets, and the old as no help at all. It justified the spectacle and proclaims responsiveness all at once.

Positioning graduate professional development programming as better partly *because* of its separation from older ways of doing things serves both to divest the current institution of blame for the crisis around the value of graduate education in the face of hiring difficulties and to enhance the impact of the institution’s activity in the crisis response narrative. It is a key piece of what comprises the spectacle of graduate professional development programming. Not

only is there so very much available now, but in comparison with a vague “before” it is evidence of institutional care and responsiveness on top of any benefit the programming might have on its own. This temporal juncture is part of the institution’s process of internalizing the crisis to create a response – the institution recognizes and thus defines the shape of the crisis, and builds a response accordingly. Here, temporality is one aspect of that definition, a causal link was made between what programming was done before the ‘crisis’ which necessitates a shift now. Students are lucky to be now and not back then, and they can see how lucky they are across the whole menu of the institution’s workshops. Time and spectacle further one another in graduate professional development programming, driving response and nuancing definitions of the crisis.

An emphasis on discrete skills.

Given the role of newness within the spectacle that is graduate professional development programming, it logically follows that the final component of this programming that I consider depends upon the reinvigoration of the skills conversation which is the outcome of a past crisis around belonging and preparedness in the university. I began with the skills crisis as an example of hegemonic crisis largely because of its role in current graduate professional development – its reconfiguration into a process of packaging complex ideas or practices into discrete, consumable skills for students to amass and master, often called skillification (Urciuoli, 2008).

Conservatively, 16 out of the 20 workshops I observed were grounded in specific skills – such as resume writing, finding grant funding, preparing an oral

presentation. The workshops at Winthrop were structured like a menu from which students could partake – superficially responsive, but both divorced from context and propelling an invisible narrative of consumerism and gratitude for minimal effort. Skillification is symptomatic of labor dehumanization with respect to the break-down of complex activities and decisions into discrete units, part of the process of commodifying universities as producers and students as consumers (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Giroux, 2014; Noble, 2003; Washburn, 2005), and a remnant of past hegemonic crisis consolidation. Through skills-based content the university could position itself as producer and deliverer of content: propelling a narrative of completeness as well as one of consumer-centric student behavior, encouraging student docility and placing culpability for fulfilling graduate professional development on students themselves.

The comments of Yvonne – a White, female master’s student in dual degree program straddling one social justice program across the School of STEM and a different school, the School of Social Work – clarify this. Yvonne loved the opportunities on the School of STEM side of her program, but lacked a synthesizing element across the two programs. She told me, “I don’t feel, yet, that I have a path to success, post-graduation, in any sort of way. And, I feel like it’s a disservice to the school itself. If you’re not turning out people who can speak to the quality of the program...” As she trailed off, I offered, “Then what are you doing,” to which she nodded in agreement. Yvonne positioned herself as a passive customer *and product* – a testament to the strength of the skills discourse which positions students as receptacles rather than actors.

The current manifestation of skillification creates consumers and scapegoats, propelling a process of transferring culpability for the crisis point (jobs) from the institution to students. Simultaneously, it creates a sense of abundance, of the university providing a wealth of resources, and fosters the *appearance* that the university is taking responsibility for providing all the building blocks students might need to succeed. Yvonne directly takes up this implication, self-positioning herself not only as a consumer but as someone *produced* as a result of the university's charge to develop her. Yet, skillification and the spectacular form of graduate professional development attend not to her but to the narrative of crisis – not taking responsibility beyond acknowledgement and delivery of building blocks. The school did this too well with Yvonne, convincing her that it had responded to the jobs crisis to the point where she would just have to follow along and reap the benefits. Skillification is the final, epitomizing piece to the programmatic manifestation of the internalization of the graduate professional development crisis: it is the link between the spectacular form by which such programming has grown and material justification for the improvement of such programming over time – and, it is easily legible as helpful to getting jobs.

The material realities, strategies, and programs which comprise graduate professional development are thus a complex crucible. There, the institution's internalizations of the job market difficulties, fears over possibilities of graduate education decreasing in value, and hegemonic ideals and value propositions are combined and synthesized with the goal of arriving at a stable state of acceptance

and consent in the status quo. The institution's primary response – graduate professional development programming – recursively drives internalized notions of what it is the institution is responding to as much as it is driven by those interpretations, allowing for precision and a closed loop of hegemonic argument (Ferguson, 2012; Robinson, 1983). It is a hegemonic laboratory, testing how ideologies can adapt and continue to fit into current needs, how hegemony can continue to entrench and secure its borders.

In conversation and in the university: Nuancing institutional internalizations of crisis

Thus far I have focused on the institution's movements with respect to creating and articulating an institutional understanding of and response to the graduate professional development crisis, linking commonsense narratives to the tangible manifestations which form the response to crisis. Here, I dig into that transformation through challenges brought forth by students, receptive to the reminder that the university is not the only actor, the only player in the game (Dickinson, 2016). Hegemonizing is hard work, as Hall and Kelley point out (Kelley, 1992, p. 294), and resistance is a key driver of that work – thus, resistance is a crucial factor in the process of the institution responding to crisis. Not only from a theoretical or structural perspective, taking the long view with respect to hegemonic expansion, but also in a very personal and material sense – most who resist the institution do not actually want it to fail completely. Most – students, faculty, staff – just want the university to do better, whatever that might mean for them. Here, I discuss the specificities of power dynamics in hegemonic

crises with an eye to challenge and resistance – honoring and mapping the specificities by which the institution is called to improve while attending to the ways in which student suggestions depend on university consolidation and maintenance of power. As the institution’s definition and response to the hegemonic crisis depends primarily on internal positionings, such discussion provides vital depth to this snapshot of hegemonic crisis in progress.

Lila Abu-Lughod’s theorizations against romanticizing resistance provide crucial perspective, here. Abu-Lughod proposes a shift in the way resistance is treated analytically: not one-dimensionally or signaling the ineffectiveness of power, but as a complex act, process, or site of negotiation or struggle with power (1990). She writes, “in addition to questions such as whether official ideology is really ever hegemonic or whether cultural or verbal resistance counts as much as other kinds, we can begin to ask what can be learned about power if we take for granted that resistances, of whatever form, signal sites of struggle” (1990, p. 47). Abu-Lughod reminds us that there is no ‘escaping’ hegemony, per se, although there is reckoning with it, struggling against and with it. Or, as Ahmed notes, “only the practical labor of ‘coming up against’ the institution *allows this wall to become apparent*” (2007, p. 174, emphasis in original). How students and the institution engage in conversation against and with one another help make the wall of crisis more apparent, exposing the boundaries and limitations of hegemony and nuancing the process of institutional internalization building a response to crisis. In the following sections I explore these ongoing conversations, first by discussing how critical resistances and challenges are to hegemonic crisis

succeeding in assimilation, then through a close reading of one student's critique of the university. I use this close reading to highlight the negotiational nature of student critiques, even in those which appear to uphold the worst-case scenario of the crisis at hand: irrelevance of graduate education.

Cyclical crises and the necessity of challenge.

I begin by situating my analysis within conversations on challenge and resistance. For, the university is not in a vacuum, and challenges are critical for the maintenance of 'healthy' hegemony (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Du Bois, 1935; Duménil & Lévy, 2011; Marable, 2000; Robinson, 1983). The institution's goal when a crisis rolls around is to absorb and neutralize the situation, which consolidates hegemonic power through the injection of the 'new blood' of the response. Here, presumably that would take the form of proving that there is value to graduate education, and moreover that it is so valuable that it can weather any economic difficulties – the proof being created by graduate professional development programming. This is the recursive nature of internalized notions of the crisis: internal narratives drive the response, which nuances the internal narrative of the crisis, which just so happens to be perfectly addressed the response.

The crisis response thus becomes part of the hegemonic structure, providing strength for the future. Gramsci's consideration of crisis in the political realm is helpful here:

The crisis creates situations which are dangerous in the short run... the traditional ruling class, which has numerous trained cadres, changes men

and programmes [sic] and, with greater speed than which is achieved by the subordinate classes, reabsorbs the control that was slipping from its grasp. Perhaps it may make sacrifices, and expose itself to an uncertain future by demagogic promises; but it retains power, reinforces it for the time being, and uses it to crush its adversary and disperse his leading cadres. (1971, p. 451)

Crises are not the only mechanisms by which spontaneous consent is generated, but is a particularly powerful one – ensuring ongoing fitness by absorbing that which will strengthen the structures and institutions of hegemony while discarding that which is no longer appropriate or effective (Gramsci, 1971; Ferguson, 2012; Said, 1978; Robinson, 1983). These moments, thus, are rich sites for the construction of new boundaries for the status quo (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Ferguson, 2012; Kelley, 1994), as skillification and its new role justifying and propelling neoliberal processes exemplifies.

Crisis occurs in cycles, providing a mechanism for hegemony to grow and change (Gramsci, 1971; Ferguson, 2012; Robinson, 1983). Responding to crises guarantees that the changes enacted within hegemonic logics and processes hit the correct nail on the head – by reacting to and assimilating logics of resisters hegemony renews and strengthens logics and its fundamental set of earthworks, as Gramsci describes (1971, p. 494). It is from this perspective of cyclical crisis and bolstering institutional fitness that I attend to the challenges of the university, in conversation with Abu-Lughod (1990). If the crisis of graduate professional development is a question of the value of graduate education in the face of a

changing economy and job market, a strong enough response will undoubtedly not just reaffirm but also double down on graduate education's relevance. The recursivity of the institution's internalized positioning and response to crisis further bolsters this end result – a perfect response guarantees hegemonic survival, and what better way of ensuring a perfect response than tailoring the narrative of the crisis to lead directly to that response. It is a rich site with high return on investment potential, to intentionally borrow some of the neoliberal language used in these Discourses.

The worst-case scenario.

To restate it, the graduate professional development crisis circles around the question of how useful graduate education is to students beyond their time as graduate students – for the university, that usefulness is measured in students being hired for positions worthy of their academic training. The story which I explore, here, answers that question in the negative: that it is not useful. Even so, the critique validates assumptions and values encouraged by the university, providing a view on negotiation at the heart of non-critical resistance. This story was shared with me by Julia, a White, female, international, sixth-year doctoral student in a humanities program. Julia emigrated from a country with significant human rights concerns and from which she hoped to distance herself. When we spoke, she expressed both hope and fear at the prospect of her graduation – excited to finish her dissertation, but dreading the implications graduation brought to her as an international student. Her choices were to find a job that would provide visa sponsorship, or return to “her” country where she feared violent

retribution for her locally politically challenging research. The stakes of preparing for and finding a job where she wanted and in the field she wanted were materially immediate and high for Julia.

Julia felt that she had been failed in this regard, and that she would have been better off not only going to a different school but pursuing a different graduate degree. As Julia explained, for the positions she might prefer – teaching-oriented positions or industry jobs at arts and humanities programs in the non-profit, education, or artistic realms – did not value the doctoral degree as highly as they valued other terminal, master’s degrees that are more professionally and experientially focused, like the M.F.A., M.B.A., or other such degrees. She said,

I've already considered, it's going to sound so crazy. I literally considered, after finishing this, getting some magical loan from somewhere... Getting a loan, and I was thinking I should just go get an M.F.A. after this Ph.D., because I'm not hireable with this Ph.D. Can you imagine? [...] it's maybe not the best idea, because it's kind of weird. [But] I haven't been feeling like there's any value in this degree. And I hate to say this, and I don't mean the school, but I mean, um, the department has been so devalued for me.

This is the nightmare scenario which the graduate professional development crisis hinges upon: for graduate programs to become irrelevant due to their lack of built-in preparation for jobs for students after graduation. In the pages which follow I tease out the specificities of Julia’s critiques, particularly in the ways they inadvertently still depend upon core institutional values.

Pinpointing the institutional nightmare.

My earlier articulations of how the institution interprets and shapes the graduate professional development crisis clarify how Julia's critiques threaten the institution. Her comments lined up nearly exactly with the institution's fears: she was not prepared for a job by virtue of her graduate education, and had in fact identified a different pathway that would have served her better. Yet, her critiques were not of the *idea* of the university but with how that idea played out for her in practice. Even as she identified her experience as a failure, and the department as failing her, she identified it as a failing of Winthrop and her department rather than a failing of graduate education as a whole. This implies that there was a possibility for success, Winthrop just could not make it reality. Julia did not provide a path for the university to take in making that success a reality, but she also did not write it off as a possibility – showcasing Abu-Lughod's points about resistance as in conversation rather than starkly, radically oppositional (1990). For, by accepting that it *could* happen and critiquing Winthrop's methods rather than goals, Julia was engaging in building a narrative to respond to the crisis of the academic job market on the same level as the university – albeit bluntly.

Through her focus on her end employability, Julia identified a link between graduate education and a particular scholarly goal – the same tenure-track faculty goal that the institution encourages for its own reproduction, needing a steady supply of doctoral graduates from which it may choose the best faculty (Cassuto, 2015; Giroux, 2014; Washburn, 2005; Torres, 2011). This is a neoliberal conflation of the value of education with the corresponding job which

can be accessed post-graduation, positioning individuals as the only unit which matters to the university and as lacking authority (in contrast to the institution which, and I intentionally anthropomorphize here, embodies authority) and subsuming education into the service of economic gain.⁴ She *agreed* with the institution that such values are the most important aspect to both choosing to go to graduate school and to making the most out of the experience.

Challenge as building a response.

As much as Julia questioned and challenged the institution by calling her degree non-valuable and refusing to engage with graduate professional development advising from her department, her critiques also still reified the university as a space to receive professional training and in which students were subordinate. Julia wanted to be the consumer to the university's product, a Ph.D., but on her terms. As Abu-Lughod asserts, "we respect everyday resistance not just by arguing for the dignity or heroism of the resistors but by letting their practices teach us about the complex interworkings of historically changing structures of power" (1990, p. 53). Julia's critique depended on both the institution's existence and on an increasing ubiquity of centralizing economic concerns. She wanted the university to exist, just in a way that would actually prepare her for work afterwards. Her critiques were biting – "I just have the feeling that I haven't learned anything. Like, I've took classes that are helpful, maybe two of them out of ... I don't know how many. In my department I don't know if I've learned

⁴ In Julia's case, an important area of analysis here should be her particular intersection of international study, immigration in the United States, and graduate education. This is outside the scope of this paper, but a rich and urgent site of future inquiry.

anything beyond that.” But, these comments display more *disappointment* than disbelief in the institution itself. Even in her critique she turned to graduate education – she would rather have gone for an M.F.A. Julia wanted Winthrop to have provided more opportunities for her to learn about professional development outside the university in-house, not for the university not to exist at all.

Julia critiqued the institution’s response in her department as inadequate, and explicitly stated that her graduate education had been devalued as a result. She did not name an alternative, but for the sake of this discussion and for the arc of hegemonic crisis that does not matter – what matters is that the institution only needs to fix it for graduate education to be valuable again. As a reminder, the institution’s response depends upon the institution’s definition of the crisis, and what Julia’s critiques might offer is a better definition of the crisis through her articulations of where her experience went wrong. By crafting a response to Julia’s specific experiences, the institution might identify another nuance in its understanding of the job market crisis which marked Julia’s experience and which drives graduate professional development– thus the response also has a hand in creating that which it responds to, and the success of hegemony becomes inevitable (Ferguson, 2012; Robinson, 1983). Indeed, I spoke with a new student in that same program who came to Winthrop (who actually applied to no other schools for her doctoral studies) because they had begun to respond to some of the issues brought up by Julia. Challenge within hegemonic crisis is deeply necessary to the institution’s abilities to not only respond to crisis but to do so in a way that strengthens the institution for the future.

Crises are a cyclical component of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971; Ferguson, 2012), and cyclicity marks the response process within a single crisis as well. As I discussed in the first section, the institution responds not to the objective event or context triggering the crisis but to the institution's internal narrative making sense of that event or context. As the response to the crisis is honed through conversations with students, the institution's narrative of the crisis is further honed. The idea being, if the response was wrong it must be because the understanding of the underlying crisis was wrong, and can now be corrected. In this situation, this means that a difficult job market for graduate alumni was first interpreted by the institution as a question of the value of graduate education, which the institution's response of graduate professional development attends to. Graduate professional development is proof of the value of graduate education by virtue of supporting students get jobs. So, when students like Julia enter into conversation with the university and critique the university's initial response, it is an opportunity for power consolidation and for perfecting both the response and the narrative of the crisis itself. Assimilation and consent is far from straightforward, but attention to student (and faculty, and staff) challenges as complex and as conversations with the university shed light on an otherwise slippery process.

Securing legitimacy and generating spontaneous consent

Thus far I have discussed the process of assimilation, focusing on the recursiveness of institutional response generation through definitions of the crisis and through how student critiques of the university strengthen and enrich the

internalized, constantly nuanced responses brought about by those definitions. Here, I attend to the consent and legitimation generated from such a response, on a personal and a programmatic level. Assimilation, the absorption of challenges into hegemony for the purpose of strengthening and rejuvenation, requires hard hegemonic work. To return to the example of skillification, such assimilation took the form of the institution absorbing ownership and responsibility for dissemination of those skills as well as of institutional legitimacy – skills to flourish in the institution are valuable, therefore the institution itself is valuable.

With respect to these processes, I particularly attend to legitimation and pre-emptive securing of consent on the part of those who might resist. Consent generation is an educative process (1971, p. 527) which in its ideal state occurs, when a perfect formulation of directives is matched by a perfect arrangement of the organisms of execution and verification, and by a perfect preparation of the ‘spontaneous’ consent of the masses who must ‘live’ those directives, modifying their own habits, their own will, their own convictions to conform with those directives and with the objectives which they propose to achieve. (1971, p. 539)

Consent, then, might be synonymously understood as an unconscious, unquestioned choice which seems inevitable (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Du Bois, 1932; Kelley, 1992; Robinson, 1983; Said, 1978). The positivity through which this occurs is key: part of power is its encouragement of consent, “‘Yes, tell me more. Yes, say that. Say that and say much more about that.’ Power is that which speaks in the affirmative,” as Foucault (paraphrased by Ferguson) notes (Ferguson, 2012,

p. 210). Assimilation through generating spontaneous consent is thus meant to be experienced as a net good.

For example, Harney and Moten's notion of professionalization is a method of consent generation: the process by which disciplines teach students to accept crucial, commonsense assumptions and axioms based on tenets of the field, inevitably circling back around to self-validate that which the field holds as true (2013). Professionalization is a mechanism that creates inevitabilities, solidifying boundaries through the perpetuation of an insider/outsider dynamic in which the insider is automatically accepted and welcomed while the outsider is kept at a distance and distrusted, across multiple field and institutional levels (Harney & Moten, 2013). Simply, it is "that which reproduces the professions," (2013, p. 32). Within such reproduction is the recreation of institutional boundaries within students' minds, setting up clear borders of what is possible, creating consent as an unquestioned given. Harney and Moten call to "think about the way the American doctor or lawyer regard themselves as educated, enclosed in the circle of the state's encyclopedia, though they may know nothing of philosophy or history" (p. 34). This call points to professionalization's promotion of expertise based on partiality, and to its mechanistic praise of successfully recreating professional norms and boundaries.

Professionalization is just one example in a storied history of consent generation (Du Bois, 1935; Ferguson, 2012; Robinson, 1983), albeit one with topical overlap with graduate professional development. In this section I explore consent generation in the crisis response process, learning from the nuances of

consent generation and assimilation professionalization and theorizations of hegemonic assimilation, to arrive at a fuller picture of the ongoing hegemonic crisis and its end goals. In the pages which follow, I discuss two examples of consent generation: an example of personal spontaneous consent with the institution's narratives and chosen responses, and an example of program-level spontaneous consent generation that complements graduate professional development programming. I discuss both spontaneous consent as a goal of institutional responses to crisis and the role successful examples of assimilation play in the response creation and crisis definition process.

Generating personal moments of spontaneous consent.

I begin my discussion of consent with an example of how the forces propelling graduate professional development also encourage graduate students toward spontaneous, personal declarations of consent. In the following pages I discuss both how students are led toward spontaneous consent and how such consent plays into the ongoing, recursive process of institutional response to crisis. This example is the idea of student self-sufficiency and capitalist-informed pragmatism, and is visible in the explanations two students who collaborated with me in this qualitative study gave of how they chose the workshops they attended. These students interpreted the skillified menu of graduate professional development offered to them by Winthrop as a strength, offering their own interpretations of what success might look like for the institution to learn from and incorporate into future responses and crisis definitions.

The first student who articulated this consent narrative was Chloe, the

STEM student who wanted to teach undergraduates and who had career goals her advisor could not comprehend from his institutional perspective. Chloe described her process of deciding what to pursue outside her research as beginning with a question: “what skills do I need, and what skills can I get better at?” As I mentioned earlier, Chloe was an outstanding student – an ideal doctoral student by almost any measure – and the kind of person who not only loved learning for learning’s sake but also actively pursued her own self-improvement at every opportunity. She took a broad approach to skills, including practice speaking to different audiences as one example of a skill, and so was able to negotiate a way of consenting with the institution’s professional development structure that also fit her own desires for learning expansively. Such negotiation also opens the door for institutional coercion –encouraging and positive (Ferguson, 2012) – to accept neoliberal, discrete, individualizing lines of logic as her basis for preparing for the future. In doing so she reproduced the institution’s narratives and provided a possibility for building an institutional response to the crisis: consent in the name of a skills-based cost-benefit analysis.

Personal instances of spontaneous consent highlight how even in achieving its goals of consent and assimilation, hegemony is in conversation with those consenting – the flip side of Abu-Lughod’s comments on resistance (1990). But, this conversation is for further perfection and strength in the its responses which might lead to further consent on the part of even more students. While Chloe described the underlying values of this particular articulation of consent, Tracy, a White, female, professional doctoral student, described a potential

process which the institution could, theoretically, learn from to generate specific student responses for the coercion of more students to consent with the institution.

Tracy rhetorically asked,

how can you be encouraged by these workshops to apply them in your daily life? [...] I see it as how I'm building it, it's just cut up in... as presented, it's just cut up in different ways. So I'm formulating it in my head, and how I can put it together and thread it together to things that make sense, and that I can apply on a daily basis.

While, like Chloe, Tracy honestly loved learning and discovering new ways of more deeply exploring herself and her practice, her ways of navigating the institution also led to a way of putting an active spin on the individualizing, consumer nature of skillification. She readily took on the responsibility of navigating and synthesizing the menu of skills provided by the institution – accepting and consenting to the institution's process of providing professional development while offering an example to the institution for how to package that offering to future students.

Both Tracy and Chloe are examples of a burgeoning response to professional development crisis being developed by the institution and driven by individual students' articulations of consent: framing skillification as a natural space for self-driven, active learners to apply their far-reaching curiosity and expertise learned from graduate education. For Tracy and Chloe, skillification was a good thing – cutting complex activities into discrete skills (Urciuoli, 2008) allowed them to put those pieces back together themselves to create a self-driven

curriculum. Not only did their consent validate the menu-like model of official graduate professional development offered by the school, but it also provided a ready-made narrative to offer other students and to nuance the definition of crisis. For, one of the possible hegemonic implications of the consent Chloe and Tracy give is that part of the reason the crisis came about is the lack of opportunity students had to be self-driven. Thus, the implication would be that neoliberal, free-market notions of education are correct (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Giroux, 2014), and it was the lack of any route for students to pursue that self-driven skillification that the job market difficulties occurred. In this way, while crisis is still in process consent-generation is not a final state but a part of the ongoing definition and response-development process.

Writing it into programs.

Individual articulations of spontaneous consent as encouraged by graduate professional development programming are complemented by consent-generating mechanisms in professionalizing programs. The history, context, and current manifestation of professional graduate degrees is important although outside the scope of this paper (McEwan & Trede, 2014), and so I do focus on programs with explicit training to *be in their professions*, often with a general master of arts or sciences as the credential, rather than *professional degree* programs. I turn to these programs as parallel institutional responses to graduate professional development, programs which respond to the crisis question “does graduate education have value in the economic moment of today?” from a discipline-specific rather than graduate school-encompassing perspective. As a grounding

example in this discussion I focus on a program with explicit professionalizing goals that structure all aspects of the program, from admission to post-graduate plans. I explore how Discourses of professionalization in this program provide further depth to the institution's definition of the crisis, and how it provides a closed system of consent generation experimentation that contextualizes the institution's more open-ended responses, like graduate professional development programming.

One of many methods of consenting.

Here, I explore the mutual link between professionalization in graduate programs and the university's chosen response to the graduate professional development crisis. I begin by teasing out the shared Discourses underlying both explicit professionalizing goals of one program and graduate professional development programming. Later, I will suggest implications which derive from this link between Discourses. This example of professionalization in curriculum was shared by Beckett, a White, male, American student starting in a two-year, nationally top-ranked, terminal master's program in religion. Beckett's primary reason for going to Winthrop was that he did not get into a top-tier doctoral program, and Winthrop's program was known as being a preparatory feeder program for the highest ranked doctoral programs in the field. Virtually the entire curriculum at Winthrop was designed to get students like Beckett into these doctoral programs, yet only incidentally were students trained students to *be* either a doctoral student or a faculty member.

The program's primary task was to get students to craft an application

which would get them into a top doctoral program. Beckett explained, “A lot of the application and who they accept is gonna depend heavily on how good you did on putting together that application. Which, again, is related, but orthogonal to sort of what you’re gonna do in twenty years, what your research is gonna be.” In the hyper-meritocratic logic of the program, the goal for students was to successfully get to the next stage – first a top tier doctoral program, then a tenure-stream faculty member, and finally receiving tenure. As he summed up,

That’s when that whole chain of applications becomes sort of, like, learn this, but this isn’t – I mean, it’s true about applying to undergrad, too, like having to get good at putting together an application, so anytime you have a big applicant pool for a small number of slots you’re going to get this process where a really good high school advisor at a good high school is gonna help you polish yourself, and that starts to feel weird too, like that starts to feel professionalized in a way, sometimes, where it’s like it helps you do just the right things.

Rather than training for either an ‘end’ goal (being a good faculty member) or for values or ideologies, students hyper-focused on reaching the next stage in a chain of applications. Enforcing this goal is the fact that students who decide that a doctorate is not for them do not have to take this writing class – they take some other elective instead. This was no secret, either – students knew this was the curriculum coming into the program, and indeed chose the program for that very reason. In this way, the entire curriculum was one exercise in professional development, as Beckett himself noted.

In this program, the goals and ideologies of skillification and spectacle as a foundational facet of institutional response were remixed and re-synthesized for disciplinary and site specificity. For, the starting point and the tools remained the same between this program and graduate professional development: the value of graduate education is still being proven using professionalizing strategies, the evidence is post-graduation placement, and the method is through highly visible and performative emphasis on learning discrete pieces of a puzzle in order to get to the next step. Thus, while this graduate program and its curriculum is distinctly outside of graduate professional development programming, its professionalizing goals stem from the same hegemonic source.

What constitutes preparation.

Given the shared foundations between professionalizing programs like the religion programs and graduate professional development programming, I now turn my attention to what lines of inquiry and analysis such professionalizing programs open for school-wide programming and strategies. For, the program generated consent from students with seeming effortless: Beckett, all students, and all faculty in his program were explicitly on board with both the end goals of the program as primarily preparing students for entry into doctoral programs and the curricular ways in which this was propelled. Students entered into the program professional barriers at the ready, already having started on the path to professionalization by virtue of buying into the need for such a program (Harney & Moten, 2013). Within the larger life cycle of the institution grappling with a question of whether graduate education still has value, this program is a

successful example of a positive answer with firm grounding in the short term and with an interest in bringing skillification to more and more of the discipline (Urciuoli, 2008).

For, while Beckett did brainstorm some ideas about how to prepare to be a good doctoral student and faculty member on his own, particularly how to simulate the process of writing a dissertation, he did so purely out of his own enthusiasm. The department's hyper-focus on preparing students for the next step, instead, propelled and rewarded treating careers as comprised of discrete stages which might be won or lost, and which could be credentialized (Falcón et al., 2014; Gildersleeve, 2017; Giroux, 2014; Urciuoli, 2010, 2014). One by-product, for religion students, was that they were deterred from taking a holistic, critical approach to their work – scholarly and professional – in the name of successfully competing. For the school, the program was not only proof positive of the value in skillification as a way to explicitly and visibly value graduate professional development. Its success (the top program of its kind in the nation) could provide a compelling argument for the value of pursuing more programs like this in the future, and for pushing for further skillification in graduate professional development programs. And, it suggested another revision for the institution's definition of the causes for the job market difficulties comprising the crisis: that the focus on *getting* the position was neglected while students were instead taught idealistic notions of how to be in the position. Thus, any response must focus on the immediate goal of getting students into jobs over what they would do when in those jobs.

What the religion program showcases, then, is a possible future of even further skillification and short-term focus. Context matters, of course, and such a short-term, competition-focus would not perfectly translate across to school-wide initiatives for graduate professional development programming, but it does expose just how far graduate professional development programming and the institution's definition of the crisis are from end states. And, in that vein, in combination with the example of personal spontaneous consent it provides a robust and active example of how spontaneous consent and assimilation are actively being pursued by the university along neoliberal, skillifying, and professionalizing lines (Bourdieu, 1998; Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Ferguson, 2016; Harney & Moten, 2013; Urciuoli, 2008). Perhaps these institutional success have gone unnoticed by the university, and perhaps Winthrop will have moved to integrate and amplify the nuances brought by these examples if I return in five years – for now, they are just part of the churning process of crisis response and institutionalization.

Looking towards the whole: A conclusion

In this paper I have discussed graduate professional development as a hegemonic crisis, using Gramsci's descriptions of a confluence of hegemonic forces in conversation with all within and around particular hegemonic structure. Three points facilitated my discussion: first, I discussed how graduate professional development is a hegemonic crisis, triggered by an external factor but made material to the university through institutionalized narratives. Second, I detailed how student challenges to the university propelled and deepened these

internalized narratives of graduate professional development, placing them in conversation with the institution and recursively nuancing the original definition of the crisis. Third, I explored select assimilation and consent generation tactics on the individual and the program level, placing the goal of the institution's response in conversation with the process of the crisis as a whole. Throughout, I emphasized the ongoing, in-progress, cyclical state of graduate professional development as a hegemonic crisis.

Attention to mapping in this way is powerful, as Ahmed describes in the opening quote:

A politics of recognition is also about definition: if we recognize something such as racism, we also offer a definition of that which we recognize. In this sense, recognition produces rather than simply finds its object; recognition delineates the boundaries of what it recognizes as given. (2012, p. 45)

Exploration of graduate professional development as a crisis allows for definition not only of the boundaries, or lack thereof, of that crisis but also of prevailing forces of both the university and hegemony as a whole. For, even as the university is a bastion of hegemony it is not one-dimensional, as this glimpse of a crisis shows, and definition is as useful in efforts to curtail hegemonic spread as in efforts to map its mechanisms.

This article, thus, opens a double door to further inquiry. First, onto further, deeper exploration of graduate professional development as reflective of and as constructing university hegemonic structures. The study leading to this

article was necessarily bounded, and took a distinctly formal view of graduate professional development – yet, as I have discussed, the bulk of what comprises graduate professional development occurs outside formal, school-wide programming. A subset of the current rising attention to graduate mentoring, such ‘informal’ professional development is a rich area for future inquiry.

Second, this article opens the door to discussion of how to disrupt or work towards radical futures in this area and in the institution. Attention to areas where consent generation fails, where assimilation does not work, was outside the scope of this paper, but is a critical piece of the story. Exploring these areas of hegemonic failure both deepens our understanding of the hegemonic assimilative process and points to new directions for disrupting the consolidation of hegemonic power. Several such areas were unearthed over the course of my study – for example, students using the scientific process as a guiding practice in lieu of neoliberal, professional ideals – which give evidence to the richness of this line of inquiry. To return to this exercise of recognizing and defining, attention to areas both where the institution has less of a formal role and where the institution is failing offers rich potential to understand and thus take one step towards curtailing hegemonic expansion, wherever it may occur within the university.

Chapter Two

Aspirational radicality in graduate education

I was introduced to the idea of working in the university as an administrator in the second year of my undergraduate studies, and my understanding of the many ways of being in the university has continued developing with nuance and complexity ever since. From at first mild interest, to pursuing that career path, to engaging in critical study of the university at the graduate level, my relationship with the university has been anything but static. I am acutely aware of the White Supremacist, imperial, misogynist, anti-Semitic, classist foundations of the university – historically and currently – and yet still see the university as a space where struggling against this foundation is more useful than abandoning it as a hopeless space. In light of these tensions, my goal here is to articulate some possibilities for work and practice, specifically with respect to my experiences in graduate education and professional development.

In this article, I critically consider the (im)possibilities of working as an administrator in the university and of propelling radical work through that position. Currently, I hold a role in one university's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences where I have a substantial degree of influence over the shape and strategy of the school's graduate professional development programming. And so, I find myself in a position to synthesize my work and scholarship to assert intentionality in my relationship to the university and in the work I do. Indeed, it is my responsibility as a feminist researcher to do so (Bloom & Sawin, 2009; Fine

et al., 2003; Hill Collins, 2000; Mohanty, 1998), to choose the form of my relationship to the university going forward – the consideration which drives the argument of this article. In the following pages I situate myself within conversations of radicality and resistance in the university, analyzing the nuances brought by my role as an administrator and what that brings to my opportunities for resisting in the institution. Finally, I turn to a consideration of one project in the university – graduate professional development – and outline a praxis which acts as the focus for my radical, resistive work moving forward, which I call creative expansive vocation. I argue that it is possible to engage in critical, radical (or at least aspirationally radical) work in the university, and offer the following discussion as one model of how that might manifest.

Theories of the university and reflexivity

I ground my discussions which grapple with my place in the university in key bodies of theory concerning the university and professionalization, radicality, praxis, and critical reflexivity. In the pages which follow I outline my approach to these key theories, as well as begin discussing how these theories fit into my ongoing efforts to engage in work in the university. These bodies of theory include contexts I work within and against, core ideals which my work serves to propel, and ways of approaching myself and my work. Critical reflexivity, in particular, situates myself as the ‘data’ of this article, and sets the stage for how I approach analyzing my experiences and my positionality within the university (Abu-Lughod, 1993; Lyle, 2017; Mohanty, 1998). Together, these bodies comprise my starting point for asking myself where I fit into the university and

ongoing conversations propelling radicality.

The university

I begin with the context of the university because it is one of the two poles of consideration and tension which propel this article. Easy as it is to see the university as a monolithic, hegemonic space, I challenge myself to hold the contradictions of this site as central to my approach to being in the space. For, I approach the university as a fundamentally, structurally inhospitable space for humanization and collectivity *and* a space where the hopeful, hopeless possibility persists that moments of radicality might nevertheless blossom and survive (Ahmed, 2012; Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Ferguson, 2012; Giroux, 2014; Harney & Moten, 2013; Kelley, 2016; Rickford, 2016). The university is certainly marked by hegemony – the continual re-entrenchment of structures of power upholding the state and dominant, supportive, private institutions as authorities over marginalized and othered groups, a characterization inspired by Gramsci's theorizations (1971). Hegemony derives from people's ideas, and in aggregate *shapes* people's ideas and perceptions to support those in power, consenting to their authority. Like a snowball rolling down the mountain, hegemonic ideas might appear weak or irrational to begin with, but rapidly aggregate links with pre-existing bodies of thinking to soon become forces to be reckoned with.

Yet, the university is not a single thing: it is a space for radical thinkers to converge (Shear & Zontine, 2010; Falcón et al., 2014; Harney & Moten, 2013; Rickford, 2016) just as it is an assimilative, hegemonically legitimating space (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Ferguson, 2012; Giroux, 2014; Gregory, 2001;

Haiven, 2014; Hamer & Lang, 2015; Karabel, 2005; Perlow, 2017; Washburn, 2005). True, the university's historic and current character as an oppressive site is particularly well-documented and richly theorized (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Ferguson, 2012; Harney & Moten, 2013; Kelley, 2016; Karabel, 2005; Wilder, 2013). It is a bastion of hegemony, reinscribing hegemony on multiple fronts, from the last possible formal education of students, to setting and guarding elite modes of thought and action, to defining what is and is not knowledge (Duggan, 2003; Ferguson, 2012; Harney & Moten, 2013; Posselt, 2016). And, it is more than hegemony – as Stefano Harney and Fred Moten characterize, “it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment” (2013, p. 26). To situate the university as being otherwise is a simplification, and a refusal of the rich possibility within its walls. My article sits in this tension.

Professionalization.

Within the university I particularly focus on professional development at the graduate level, with its own specific and nuanced hegemonic manifestations. I understand professional development as comprising formal and informal activities which teach students how to be in their field and their careers, typically organized around skills. It has grown in national and school level attention over the past five to ten years, to the point where 12 out of the top 17 national universities according to U.S. News and World Report (2018)⁵ prominently feature graduate-level

⁵ This count only includes schools which specifically use the phrase “professional development.” The schools are: Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, MIT, Stanford, Duke, Dartmouth, Northwestern, Brown, Cornell, Rice.

professional development on their websites, and the university where I work is no different. Most discussion of professional development has focused on undergraduates, on preparation for specific fields, or on the creation of peer communities to last across faculty careers (Ciarocco et al., 2016; Ducheny et al., 1997; Foote, 2010; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Rizzolo et al., 2016; Urciuoli, 2010), and there has been little attention paid to the role of professional development in the larger work of hegemonic expansion and legitimization.

Harney and Moten's discussion of the recreation of hegemony in professionalization (including but not limited to activities explicitly named "professional development") is the exception to this lack of attention (2013). Harney and Moten discuss the role of professionalization – "that which reproduces professions" (p. 32) – in building unquestioned logics and premises that propel hegemonic goals and strategies. Professionalization, as they describe, is a perfect example of the insidiously neutral ways in which hegemony builds new walls, expands its boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and equips students to self-moderate themselves in the name of being a professional. It is one example of how mechanisms of White supremacy, colonization, and oppression in the university (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Ferguson, 2012; Wilder, 2013), and is the crucial theoretical context for the work I do in the university.

Radicality

While hegemony marks the university, it is also a place where radicality stubbornly maintains a presence as well. I approach radicality as the struggle for liberation, part of which means denying, refusing, and counter-suggesting

possibilities against the powered, hegemonic realities of the institution or space which limits and refuses the humanization of all. This working definition is grounded in a deep and ongoing genealogy of scholarship promoting, celebrating, and complicating radicality as a complex, impossible, and necessary goal (Bell, 1992, 1995; Baldwin, 1962; Hill Collins, 2009; Kelley, 1994, 2002, 2016; Lawrence, 1992; Meiners, 2007; Mohanty, 2003; Patel, 2015; Rickford, 2016). Radicality is both counter to the very character of the context within and upon which it works and all the more urgent because it is not supposed to be able to exist – hegemony is supposed to be impenetrable and totally saturated into the structure of the institution. Kelley (2016) points to this in his work considering activism and Black survival within the university – White supremacy is foundational to the university, *and* radical action must strive against that foundation nevertheless. Kelley's considerations of grappling with complicity, particularly where they intersect with calls for radical action to pull actors and structures from hegemonic oppression into radical liberation, for a recognition that as it is impossible to extricate hegemony from the makeup of institutions and people the alternative is to remake hegemony's place and welcome those once defined by it (Baldwin, 1962; Freire, 1968; Hill Collins, 2009; Kelley, 2016).

Part of that remaking, for me, is the move from individualization to collectivity, mirroring the radical movement from freedom to liberation. Such a movement from freedom to liberation centers shifting power from the status quo to a different, possible future, rejecting pre-existing boundaries and acceptance on the terms of hegemony and propelling different, self-determined markers of

agency, power, and liberation (Mohanty, 2003; Patel, 2015; Rickford, 2016). Collectivity mirrors this movement, not only centering the collective over the individual but configuring the individual as an *extension* of the collective (Baldwin, 1962; Freire, 1968; Kelley, 2016). Freire, Kelley, and Baldwin further nuance this understanding, arguing that part of collectivity and liberation is that it is only achieved when everyone – oppressor and oppressed, both (but not alike) – rejects oppression, which dehumanizes all involved. This is a struggle – and as many Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars embrace, just because liberation may not happen in our lifetimes does not detract from the value of the act of struggle itself (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lawrence, 1992).

Collectivity, as part of liberation, is thus something to pursue, to act in service of, without requiring any formality or for there to be an end, detailed state of affairs to pursue. Kelley, quoting Baldwin, explains, “here is the catch: if we are committed to genuine freedom, we have no choice but to love all. To love all is to fight relentlessly to end exploitation and oppression everywhere, even on behalf of those who think they hate us” (2016, para 31). Collectivity and liberation epitomize the shifts radicality brings to my relationship with the university and to my work, providing a concrete example of how radicality shifts my perspective and of how I apply these core ideals to myself and my work.

Praxis

I turn, now, to the approaches I take in engaging in struggle and working on and in the university. My method for doing so is praxis –theory driving and

being driven by practice, in an ongoing, transformational way. Praxis is intentional, and is explicitly theoretically⁶ grounded practice with attendant guiding axiologies and tenets. As Paulo Freire describes (1968), praxis is in continual process and driven by tension – it is “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 51). I widely ground my understanding of praxis, reflecting the interdisciplinarity of my field, in scholarly discussions of critical practice within the university (Ahmed, 2012; Mohanty, 2003; Perlow, 2018; Kelley, 2016), critical and critical race pedagogy (Falcón et al., 2014; McLaren, 2009; Shear & Zontine, 2010; Vaught & Hernandez, 2013; Winn, 2018), critical race praxis (Lawrence, 1992; Stovall, 2016; Yamamoto, 1997), and activism in feminist ethnography (Bloom & Sawin, 2009; Fine et al., 2003; Hill Collins, 2000; Mohanty, 1998). Practically, as well, I approach praxis as work on the institution while in the institution: constant tension, constant complicity, constant struggle for radicality.

In this article I work towards the articulation of a praxis. In my approach, though, I stress the nature of praxis as *intentional* and requiring re-thinking; it aims to *break apart* distorted cultural representations undergirding intergroup tensions, to *challenge* group deployment of oppressive rhetorical, institutional and economic structures, and to *rearticulate* group identities and *conceptualize* redress of justice claims, when appropriate, to

⁶ Here, I use theory expansively to include personal, community-driven, experiential considerations and formulations of how the world works in addition to academic scholarship, drawing on academically and experientially conscious scholarship particularly in Critical Race Theory, TribalCrit, and feminist methodology (Brayboy, 2005; Harney & Moten, 2013; Lawrence, 1992; Mohanty, 2003).

foster intergroup healing and reconciliation. (Yamamoto, p. 879, emphasis added)

Conceptualizing praxis with intentionality matters, both for understanding the present (from which praxis springs) and for realizing the future (for which praxis strives). I conclude with my praxis for this reason – my primary focus is on the intentions and the radical commitments which drive my praxis. Without that foundation, my praxis is adrift.

Reflexivity

Finally, before moving to the bulk of my analysis, I attend to the ‘data’ grounding my work and this written piece: critical reflexivity. I define reflexivity as critical reflection on my thinking and action, attending to how I take up, complicate, and engage with theorizations and ideologies – how my thoughts and actions manifest theories and lines of logic. I have worked on professional development for several years, culminating in a promotion to lead this programming for graduate students in the school where I work. My work and my scholarship are truly intertwined. I follow critical feminist traditions of reflexivity, interrogating my relationship(s) to the institution, to the contexts of power which surround me, and to traditions challenging hegemony and pursuing decolonial futures in complex, contradictory ways (Abu-Lughod, 1993; Fine et al., 2003; Mohanty, 1988; Narayan, 1993; Patel, 2015; Pillow & Mayo, 2012; Vaught, 2017). I engage in a reflexivity that “is *ongoing* and *relational*” (Lyle, 2017, p. vii, emphasis in original), theorizing my experiences and analyses to nuance and more deeply analyze my praxis and its impact of the university.

Praxis is the starting point and the ending point of my critically reflexive methods and methodologies, aligning deeply with critical feminist methodology (Bloom, 1998; Fine et al., 2003; Narayan, 1993; Pillow & Mayo, 2012). Critical feminist methodology is praxis on multiple levels: most literally, critical feminist research entails reflection, consideration, and action within the world for the creation of new knowledge, changing disciplines and practice, in the same way as praxis. On an ethical or moral level, as well, critical feminist methodology demands action and an activist orientation – if research inherently challenges power dynamics and structural oppression (Fine et al., 2003; Mohanty, 1998; Narayan, 1993; Patel, 2015), the outcomes of such research must be used to create critical, resistive praxis (Bloom & Sawin, 2009). Alternatively termed “socially engaged research” (Harding & Norberg, 2005), this is a direct call for research to change current power dynamics and to directly impacts the lived reality of research participants. Praxis is thus a necessary component to any critical feminist research, the creation of which I explore here.

Working in Graduate Professional Development

I am driven to write this article because of my role as a university administrator and as a scholar of critical educational studies. I am lucky in that I have a disproportionate ability to affect change within the university, particularly within the institutional project of graduate professional development, and with that comes responsibility to pursue radicality in my work. This article analyzes my approach to that pursuit, considering how I might define my work in the university as a critical, aspirationally radical practitioner working in a definitively

hegemonic institution. To begin that conversation, I discuss radical work in the university, attempting to identify a working relationship I may cultivate with and against the institution. With this relationship in mind, I consider an approach to the hegemonic project over which I have most influence: graduate professional development. I outline some key hegemonic mechanisms at work in graduate professional development programming, and end by proposing an aspirationally radical praxis with which I might approach working on that project. I term this praxis “creative expansive vocation,” and explore how this particular constellation of liberatory and radical ideals provides me with a starting point for working on the institution while I am in it. The analysis in this article comprises a starting point for institutional transformation and for sharpening my own radicality as an administrator.

Me in the academy

Moving towards acceptance of the university as inescapably contradictory has been crucial to my ability to work in the university. As I consider myself in the university, I frequently find myself returning to Harney and Moten’s beautiful description of the university’s contradictions, “it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment” (2013, p. 26), alternately in hope and in dread. For, I not only find myself in the institution but working for the institution in a complicit, structurally questionable way – while I am my own person and engage in more activities than the institution necessarily directs me toward, my work focuses on strengthening and furthering institutional strategies, policies, and projects. I love

working in the university because of those radical people I have been fortunate enough to meet. And, at the risk of melodrama, I truly do despair in the face of what the university is in this moment – oppressive policies consolidating and condensing rather than shrinking, hegemonic logics becoming more difficult to escape or argue against, in short, an uncertain future (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Haiven, 2018).

My relationship to the university is not the only question under consideration in this article, yet it understandably looms large for me. It is, also, a necessary first step to any attempt at intervention on the institution – my relationship with the university necessarily opens some doors and closes others, and identifying a way to begin acting upon my analysis requires knowing which door(s) I am willing and able to take while adhering to my principles. In this section I offer a theorization of aspirational radicality for university administrators, particularly considering spaces where administrators may or may not do work, attending to theorizations of the undercommons (Harney & Moten, 2013) and (in)visibility (Brayboy, 2004; Phelan, 1993) in making sense of aspirationally radical possibilities for work. I build upon current theorizations of radicality in the university to build more opportunities for challenging the institution, focusing here on work administrators – those seemingly compromised by the institution – may pursue.

Aspirational radicality.

I start by exploring what I mean when I use the term “aspirationally radical.” To begin, I want my work to change the university, and I want to use my

position to make that change. This desire is rife with contradictions. I am encouraged by the work of Sara Ahmed and Robin D.G. Kelley to work on the institution while in it (Ahmed, 2012) and to refuse the binary of winning or losing being the only possibilities, a zero-sum game of absolute success or total failure (Kelley, 2016). And, Lila Abu-Lughod reminds me that resistance is always a conversation with power, warning against romanticization (1990). These considerations are not two sides of the same coin, but simultaneous components of the phenomenon that is striving towards radicality while in the university.

For instance, when I advocate for limiting the number of career preparation workshops (resume-writing or interviewing, for instance) to not rise above a certain proportion of all workshops throughout the year, I simultaneously and inextricably engaging in resistance of and *negotiation* with the institution. The goal of limiting the number of career preparation workshops, with their explicitly and solely capitalist goals, is to save room for other discussions, like those examining being a woman in male-dominated fields, challenging racial microaggressions, scholarly activities, or balancing work and life. Yet, I must do so using the language of the economy – arguing that the other workshops develop soft skills that students need first before highlighting them on a resume or cover letter. The form of my resistance uses the university’s narrative of economic primacy to create space for more critical conversations (in ways I discuss later in this paper), but by using those arguments I am acknowledging their power and value. And, as critical mentors point out, by using these logics I also reproduce these logics – I limit myself and what radicality I might deploy by treating a

limited set of resources to zero-sum logic. I do not consider how such topics might be *subverted* to provide crucial, materially-linked skills while engaging in complex, non-economic conversations.

The considerations inherent within my desire to change the institution while I am employed by it are contradictory but not mutually incompatible, and I view resisting romanticization as the key. Abu-Lughod advocates for this, for viewing “resistance as a *diagnostic* of power” (1990, p. 42, emphasis in the original), attending to the form and specificity of resistance to map workings of power in scholarly analysis. Viewing resistance as complex and in conversation with hegemony offers greater insights into both power and the act of resistance. Abu-Lughod’s points echo Kelley’s reminder that “winning is not always the point. Unveiling the university’s exploitative practices and its deeply embedded structures of racism, sexism, and class inequality can be profound acts of demystification on their own” (2016, para. 13). Resistance is not always about ‘winning,’ or overthrowing the entire system – to hold that as the ultimate goal is, in fact, so unrealistic as to negate all effectiveness. Accepting all resistance as butting up against powered structures resists determinism of all forms – inevitable hegemonic assimilation or a ‘pure’ resistance (Abu-Lughod, 1990) – and makes changing the university secondary to committing to working to bring about a more radical future (Kelley, 2016). Hope and futility exist in equal measure, and neither negates the other.

Leadership in and around the undercommons.

These aspirationally radical intentions, must be applicable in practice,

within the necessary limitations to my work brought about by my ex officio complicity with the institution. I attend to working within those limitations, here, particularly in juxtaposition with the undercommons, Harney and Moten's description and suggestion of a space underneath, outside, and within the university (2013). Harney and Moten describe the undercommons as a fugitive space where those in but not of the institution might take what they can from the university without losing themselves in the process, drawing upon a long, complex, Black radical tradition and centuries-long discussion of fugitivity. Here, I attend to a small piece of the undercommons not to presume to make a statement about the undercommons or this tradition, but to consider how a radically aspirational administrator might work in such a way as to honor and learn from this tradition and the complexity it unveils within the university. For, the undercommons is not a space for institutional agents – it is not a space for me. By its very nature, the undercommons is hidden from the institution and its actors – thus, administrators and leaders with goals for radicality must be left out of the very thing which they – we – hope to foment. And by positioning myself as attempting to change the institution while within the institution, I position myself as someone to remain cordial but cool towards, if not avoid.

Yet, fugitivity and location in the undercommons are not the sole indicators of the how radical work is; indeed, knowing and taking seriously limits of one's positionality is crucial to radical action. Vaught (personal communication, June 2018), Phelan (1993), and Brayboy (2004), who draws on Phelan, attend to this line of praxis through their considerations of visibility and

the potential dangers of visibility. As they theorize, even well-meaning actions in support of underserved students might harm those students who want or need to remain invisible, and a romanticized desire to keep an eye out for those to be supported might cause harm. In other words, work that does not happen in the undercommons does not necessitate lack of radicality – *how* work occurs defines its radicality or lack thereof. There are other ways for radical work to both take place outside of and to *radically avoid* the undercommons – part of my reflexivity, my theory-driven considerations of my thoughts and actions, and the work of my praxis is identifying what those ways are, what places a radically aspirational administrator might make for herself in the institution.

Hegemony is set up as inevitable, as the only option, and therefore asserting that radicality could be *pursued* even within hegemonic spaces is also an act of defiance. Kelley's call to act despite the impossibility of 'winning' holds true here, as well (2016) – there is no possibility of success, however it might be defined, if no one is working in the space. A space may be *unradical* – Vaught and Judge's term, referring to thinking and moving with radical intention while acknowledging, if not accepting, the inherent limitations of possibility wrought by a hegemonic state and structure (2017). So, rather than bringing danger and reproducing hegemonic fantasy by trying to force a fit with the undercommons, as an aspirationally radical administrator I do the work needed where I am, as Vaught has called for in several individual and public conversations.

With respect to the undercommons, however, not observing does not mean *ignoring*. Rather, I suggest the aspirationally radical administrator might engage

in a kind of un-seeing – attending to *theoretical*, critical, radical scholarly conversations on strategies to resist the institution (such as the undercommons and academic thievery) to know where *not* to walk, making space without intruding. I want the undercommons and those in the undercommons to succeed at evading my knowledge, and can contribute to that success by working in different parts of the institution, steadfastly not looking while I engage in unradical work elsewhere (Brayboy, 2004; Phelan, 1993; Vaught & Judge, 2017). In action it is superficially small but strategically and manifestly *central* to being aspirationally radical as a university administrator and with respect to praxis. And, by recognizing and defining the limitations of administrative positions, we can remake what is possible within those boundaries – finding or creating those radical spaces for administrators to work in (Ahmed, 2012; Mohanty, 1998). As Ahmed notes, “a politics of recognition is also about definition: if we recognize something such as racism, we also offer a definition of that which we recognize. In this sense, recognition produces rather than simply finds its object; recognition delineates the boundaries of what it recognizes as given” (2012, p. 45). In this way we, the aspirationally radical administrators, can re-produce a place for our work – one of strategic complicity, resistance, and critical action – and strive towards (im)possibilities of liberation and collectivity.

That to which I apply praxis

Above, I articulated an approach to begin working on and in the university that centers being an aspirationally radical accomplice in the administration. I now critically consider a project of the university within and upon which I work,

which is the focus of the praxis I consider in this paper. I purposely situate this discussion after articulating my relationship to the university because that relationship is the lens through which I view the projects upon which I work: full of potential, marked by hegemony. Here, I articulate some of the forces uncovered through that lens. I stress that this is a selection of powered mechanisms, and that this is a complex constellation which I approach with equal complexity. As much as I am in conversation with the university and the current hegemonic status quo (Abu-Lughod, 1990), I refuse to be *defined* by what currently is. To set myself as *in opposition* is to set limits to my praxis and to reify hegemony as driving my praxis. Certainly, the way things are drive my considerations of praxis without limiting them.

The purpose of graduate professional development.

I frame my description of graduate professional development through the moment which sparked my ability to explicitly articulate hegemony's role in university framing of graduate professional development. Recently, I had the opportunity to attend an annual Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) meeting. At a panel during the meeting, one assistant or associate dean shared a story about an alumna, Winona, who had earned a Ph.D. in English. Winona had worked with the dean through the school's professional development programming before she secured a lucrative, recognizably "successful" position, becoming the face of all the wonderful things one might do with a Ph.D. in English outside the academy. However, Winona was miserable when she started her job. She was unable to engage with any of what drew her to graduate school in the first place – her

passion and interest in her chosen field – it took her several years to make peace with her job. I vividly remember the moment it clicked, for me: Winona’s graduate professional development had not actually prepared her to *do* anything with her degree, it had prepared her to justify and defend the utility of her degree.

The professional development program for graduate students at Winona’s school did not seem dissimilar to my institution’s, or any major institution’s for that matter. Indeed, my familiarity with that type of graduate professional development programming allowed me to recognize the rhetoric, anecdotal and inferred, that she should learn how to *use* her degree – how to turn a “useless” thing (outside of the academe) into a *useful* thing (anywhere else) through particular skills, practices (like translating her scholarly activities to industry terms), and professional norms (Cassuto, 2015; Hoyat, 2018). Graduate professional development attended to general doctoral skills, not to Winona’s scholarship or her interests which might apply more broadly to fields outside the academy. Rather, Winona’s school’s graduate professional development aimed to get her a job, and then another job, and to keep her employed. In the following pages, I pull out two, interwoven hegemonic aspects of this aim: graduate professional development as correcting graduate education and a deficit model of education. With securing jobs as the goal, I introduce how these two forces are parallel paths along which current graduate professional development programming goes about achieving this goal.

Making up for graduate education.

I begin my discussion of the interwoven hegemonic forces in the job-

securing role of graduate professional development with a consideration of the confusion, if not disdain, such programming implies regarding the value and role of graduate education. Most view doctoral education as job training – a position which is reflected in much of the scholarship about the life cycle of graduate students to faculty or the history of universities themselves (Cassuto, 2015; Foote, 2010; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Gardner & Holley, 2011; Haskins, 1923; López, 2014). There is clearly more to graduate education than graduate programs being simply job training, but it matters that all of these other activities – deepening and nuancing scholarly understandings, learning to teach and to learn from peers in and outside a classroom, developing a rigorous approach to debate and communication, for example – are so easily swept under the rug. From this perspective, then, graduate professional development is the augmentation of graduate education as a job training mechanism – enhancing programs’ abilities to get students into those jobs, making them as competitive as possible.

At the same time, graduate professional development seems to be framed as a *corrective* mechanism for when programs are ineffective as job training, which is where Winona’s program seems to fall. Most of these situations seem to be in the humanities: with graduate professional development called for to offer students another path to employment when academic, tenure-track positions are far from guaranteed (Benton, 2009; Cassuto, 2015; Corrigan, 2018; Hayot, 2018; Wilson, 1998). In this way, graduate education is still job training, but job training for the wrong job – for pre-existing jobs which students must contort themselves to fit. Graduate professional development is positioned as the scaffolding students

need to *correct* their studies and to get some value out of their education. In both situations – graduate programs as successful and unsuccessful job trainings – an end job or *job title* is the focus, with graduate professional development enhancing pre-existing structures and functions of the university rather than allowing students to truly find a place for themselves.

A deficit model of education.

The second major component of the job-securing nature of graduate professional development is an encouragement of a banking, or deficit, model of education (Freire, 1968; Gill, 2010). Students go to formal professional development programming because they do not have the ideas or skills they need for the job they want to have. This model is framed as a good thing. Framing graduate professional development as a banking model has deep historical roots, and is linked to the rise in what scholars term “skillification,” complex ideas or practices being packaged into discrete, consumable skills for students to consume and display (Urciuoli, 2008).

To begin teasing out the complex historical roots of graduate professional development as banking, I turn to historical changes in university demographics (Ferguson, 2012; Karabel, 2005; Rickford, 2016) and associated attention to the disadvantages historically excluded students faced in learning about professional and cultural practices and norms, particularly in the 1970’s. In response, centers, departments, and positions were created to support students previously excluded from the institution – particularly Black, Asian, and Latinx students under the auspices of diversity work (Ahmed, 2012; Ferguson, 2012). These new offices

sparked a cultural shift in attending to historically excluded student experiences, a component of which included outlining key institutional processes and practices in discrete steps to frame these norms and practices as learnable (Ferguson, 2012; Urciuoli, 2008), rather than permanently unattainable markers of belonging. In this historical context, breaking apart complex, intertwined practices of belonging and professional practice and treating them as bankable information, or skills, was a policy driven by radical goals of breaking down exclusivity in the university.

I contend that this historical moment of combatting exclusivity in the university (from a distinctly liberal, rights-based perspective [Fishkin, 2014; Karabel, 2005]) sparked the skillification which drives professional development today. Such skillification builds upon the discrete, skills-centric approach of the movement against exclusivity but in the context of a consumer-oriented set of values many name neoliberalism – a hegemonic value system which uses business and capitalist values as guiding ideals for all institutions, including universities (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Giroux, 2014). Skillification, thus, is an example of hegemonic assimilation of radical ideals, spinning the original resistive goal to benefit the institution and secure the status quo of exclusivity and institutional power consolidation. Here, though, the focus is on the economic hierarchy of more education leading to a particular level of employability, rather than inclusivity.

In the current moment of graduate professional development, the banking model and attendant skillification propel a performance of hegemonic ‘goodness’ through the inherent responsiveness of the policy and its role in ensuring student

employability post-graduation. That is, if students identify an area as lacking (for example, grant writing for non-profit organizations), the school can readily and quickly respond by creating a session on that particular area. At the same time, such a strategy implies that the school is the only source for this information, that there are no other ways for students to explore this area – faculty, staff, and alumni who might mentor students in this area are not considered. Students are positioned as consumers and schools (not programs or faculty) as producers (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Giroux, 2014; Noble, 2003; Washburn, 2005), doubly so when students are viewed as the products themselves (being turned from unemployable to employable). Students learn how to write grants for non-profits, to continue using the above example, through sitting in a workshop with dozens of other students and listening to institutionally-identified experts, not through working directly with a faculty to write a grant and learn experientially.

To link back to graduate professional development's corrective role in graduate education, the banking model structure also implies the need to actively correct programs and their curriculum. The implication, here, is that programs (curriculum and faculty, both) are not adequately meeting student needs and that the school must intervene. Students need to know how to write grants for non-profits in order to be successful professionals, to continue the above example, and their programs are *failing* in providing them with adequate preparation to do so. Regardless of whether this is the intent of the university, this plants a seed for hegemonic assimilation to build a future where graduate programs are indirect

targets of banking models of graduate professional development.

Equality and meritocracy.

Throughout the prior introductions of the two forces propelling current graduate professional development strategies to ensure students secure jobs, I have alluded to a benevolent core of attempting to help students gain access to knowledge otherwise inaccessible to them. Here, I briefly pull out a rather malevolent byproduct of this core: the ways in which graduate professional development cements the power and centrality of an in-group, into which historically excluded students are now, benevolently, invited. While graduate professional development is framed as an equality-minded set of programs, particularly from the perspective of those who view gatekeepers and barriers as the primary modes of inequality (Fishkin, 2014), it also creates an assumption that some students ‘naturally’ fit while others do not. By choosing a strategy of responsiveness *when students ask* and maintaining the same, decades-old position of a binary between ‘normal’ and ‘deficient’ (previously excluded) student, graduate professional development programming positioning concretizes the status quo rather than negating it. Norms are acknowledged as not always perfect, as sometimes requiring adjustment, but also as definitively neutral.

Beyond maintaining internalized narratives of belonging, such positioning doubles down on deficit model logic. It treats students as vessels to be filled with knowledge, cementing the institution’s hierarchization of students with access to knowledge of norms and values as worthy students and all others needing that knowledge as requiring correction (Gill, 2010). Students are then ‘lifted up’ if

they agree to institutional judgments, take on extra work, and treat themselves as empty vessels for institutional knowledge.

Students only succeed if they prove their worth, and once they have done so prove they deserve a certain outcome (here, a job). This builds upon pre-existing notions of what graduate alumni deserve, notions built into the structure of graduate education. For example, for someone with a Ph.D. there is a hierarchy of acceptable positions, and that they are entitled to one of these positions by virtue of their education, going all the way back to their admission into graduate school and their relationship to the ‘future of the discipline’ (Posselt, 2016). Students who prove their worth by pursuing both are doubly worthy – having a graduate degree *and* having professionalized themselves along institutional lines (Harney & Moten, 2013). Thus, hegemonic walls keep in as much as they keep out, and structure a sense of what those in its walls deserve.

To summarize a complex structure and set of consequences, the university encourages mindsets of entitlement amongst students such that by virtue of *earning* a graduate degree they *deserve* particular kinds of work, and it positions professional development (in whatever form) as necessary to successfully land those degrees. Within that structure, students in need of development – empty vessels in need of filling with institutionally approved professional knowledge – find their way to that knowledge through three paths: prior knowledge of the directions they should be going, an advisor telling them or pushing them to attend sessions, or luck and time to happen upon programming. In this way, graduate professional development disproportionately supports students who *already have*

some institutional knowledge, and positions students who are marginalized, alienated, or overlooked due to minimal advising to need to do *more work* than those who know what to do. Graduate professional development thus entrenches institutional othering of students who do not have deep wells of personal or familial experience to draw upon with respect to career advancement (Rivera, 2015), completely undermining intentions of equality and opening gates to all.

Grounding myself in praxis

I now bring my two prior considerations together to articulate a guiding praxis for doing aspirationally radical work on the hegemonic project of graduate professional development. To reiterate, as theory in and from practice, praxis is not only application in the moment but also the guiding principles, ideas, and ideals which shape that application (Freire 1968; Lawrence, 1992; Vaught & Hernandez, 2013; Yamamoto, 1997). Praxis is continually honed and gains renewed clarity as it is applied, in the same way as I understand my role with respect to the institution more deeply the more experience I have in navigating the institution. I term this praxis creative expansive vocation. I choose to name my praxis rather than articulating it but leaving it nameless both because I find it a more complete guide for my own actions when named, and because the words which comprise this name are deliberately linked to key facets of my praxis, forcing me to pause, reconsider, and explicitly theorize using my praxis with far more frequency and nuance than I would without an intentional name. In the following pages I explore creative expansive vocation as an praxis ideologically grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT), Feminist scholarship, and radical

notions of collectivity and mutual humanization. I begin by articulating the constellation of ideologies which comprises this praxis, using the intentional name “creative expansive vocation” as a guide to my discussion, then move to a discussion of how this praxis relates to theorizations and intentions of mutual humanization, and finally end with its relationship to radical commitments to collectivity.

Creative expansive vocation

My praxis, creative expansive vocation, is a way of working on graduate professional development such that enhances students’ capacity to consider and apply their graduate education in their lives, however that might look. Here, I briefly introduce the intentions of creative expansive vocation, then discuss the core tenets or principles which my titling points to. I particularly attend to the genealogical grounding of creative expansive vocation as a set of principles for myself, and the links I draw between these theories to create a praxis for graduate professional development.

As Harney and Moten push the definition of “study” to encompass all theorizing, including that which might not use academic terminology (2013), I turn to creative expansive vocation to begin pushing our use of professional development to encompass all application of graduate study. Creative expansive vocation is an intentional name, chosen in opposition to the hegemonic status quo but driven by conversations of radicality across critical scholarship – from democratic meritocracy (Guinier, 2015), to critical race praxis in legal theory and education (Stovall, 2016; Yamamoto, 1997), to community cultural wealth

(Yosso, 2005), to the formation of schools outside and resistive of the state schooling apparatus (Rickford, 2016; White, 2015), and more. Creative expansive vocation remixes, not shedding all approaches to professional development but expanding their possibilities. Specifically, creative expansive vocation describes an approach to realigning career and life-long-learning goals to emphasize humanizing fulfillment, or liberation (Freire, 1968), across all areas of life – personal, activist, professional. Creative expansive vocation as an intentional, wide-ranging, and creative approach to graduate professional development which enhances all areas of students’ lives, to expand their capacity for applying their passion in liberatory ways.

The title of my praxis explicitly links the theories which inspire and ground this set of principles for action. Creativity and expansivity gesture to the centrality of continuous growth and learning to my praxis, linking to values of radicality and liberation and histories of formal and informal programs for teaching and studying outside the credentialized curricula of educational realms (Ferguson, 2012; Freire, 1968; Kelley, 2016; Rickford, 2016). “Creative expansive” also emphasizes imagining futures that do not necessarily fit pre-existing or normalized modes of employment, personal passions, or activism. It calls for new ways of working, new ways of engaging in action, for rejecting traditional career paths and making new ones. It is particularly genealogically informed by scholarship of CRT scholars who push what expansivity might really mean (Crenshaw, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Freeman, 1995).

Grounding these values of creativity and expansivity is the term

‘vocation.’ This term is inextricably linked, again, with CRT – not decontextualizing or divorcing this term of its specificity to that movement and the Civil Rights movement, but issuing a challenge to my praxis to keep the tenets and concerns of CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) central to my intentions and practices. Charles Lawrence describes these intentions of vocation too beautifully not to quote at length:

This Article [“The River and The Word”] has its genesis in the history and tradition of radical teaching among dominated people of color who have made the struggle for liberation and humanization their life's work. We have inherited this vocation from parents and grandparents and from countless others who have resisted racial oppression. The meaning of ‘vocation’ is central to the definition of this work. One is called upon to accept a legacy, but a vocation implies choice. One must choose to accept the gift and burden of this inheritance. One must choose to embrace the values of humanism. One must choose to engage in the practice of liberationist teaching. One must choose to join the river of struggle. (1992, p. 2298)

Vocation thus crucially nuances what I have described thus far with respect to the goals of creative expansive vocation and the graduate professional development it pushes for: the work students do must not only propel their scholarly interests but also propel humanism and challenge hegemony wherever students might be. It calls for doing work where students are, treating liberation and a radical future as both *work* and *a conscious choice* (Ahmed, 2012; Baldwin, 1962; Freire, 1968;

Hill Collins, 2000; Kelley, 1994; Lawrence, 1992). Vocation, as a principle in my praxis, disrupts and defamiliarizes (Kaomea, 2003) the notion of what ‘counts’ as work or a livelihood, embracing the term’s scholarly, practitioner lineage and radical commitment rather than capitalist appropriation.

These principles guide my work with intentionality and space for transformation. I developed creative expansive vocation as a personal way to grapple with working on the project of graduate professional development, but find that this praxis configuration contains seeds for application across much of my work in graduate education, given its grounding in imagination, expansivity, and liberation as a choice and practice (Crenshaw, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lawrence, 1992; Freeman, 1995). Fundamentally, it helps me think through my approach to graduate professional development, providing me with a concrete set of principles with which I might take my next steps as an aspirationally radical administrator.

Aspiring to collectivity and mutual humanization.

I have described creative expansive vocation’s utility as a grounding set of praxical principles for myself, and here briefly theorize its link to application. In particular, I highlight how aspirational this praxis is – linking to my prior considerations of aspirational radicality as an administrator. As a brief reminder, I recognize that I am complicit in the workings of the university and yet still push for radicality wherever possible, hence my self-characterization as an aspirationally radical administrator. Thus, sharing my praxis and entering into conversation with peers and mentors is part of my commitment to my radical

aspirations and to pushing the work I do as much as possible. I focus on how praxis bolsters my commitments, here, beginning with the radical goal which most impacts the direction of my application, mutual humanization (Freire, 1968), including its relationship to my aspirations towards collectivity.

My understandings of collectivity and vocation are grounded in the goal of mutual humanization (Freire, 1968). Mutual humanization underscores the universal damage done by oppression, stressing that any movement toward humanization must work to humanize both oppressed and oppressor. Explicitly grounding my praxis and my notions of radicality in mutual humanization means I must work on the institution while I am in the institution if I can. Creative expansive vocation is a call for me to be better, to work to simultaneously support those doing the work of pulling their peers along (Baldwin, 1962; Gardner & Holly, 2011; Gregory, 2001; Perlow, 2015) and to push for critical reconsideration and liberation (Freire, 1968; Guinier, 2015; McLaren, 2009). Working to support the goal of greater equity, justice, and liberation is two fronted, and an act of navigating a field of eggshells to ensure that those othered by the institution receive the support they need without exposure and harm, and that those embraced by the institution are pushed towards criticality.

Working towards mutual humanization is also work towards a radical goal with little to no basis in the reality of the institutions in which this work must take place. It directly connects creative expansive vocation, as one of the driving goals of this radical work, with theorizations of where radical practice might occur. Above, I discussed how there must be complementary movements for radicality

parallel to but outside the undercommons (Harney & Moten, 2013), that radicality must exist everywhere and must refuse hegemonic claims to dominance even when hegemony is most dominating, such as in university administration. Mutual humanization pushes this further, and actively requires that the work to push for liberation and to remain open to being pushed myself be done in every area possible. Viewing aspirationally radical work in the administration of the university through the lens of mutual humanization unveils the strengths and necessity of such an approach, positioning it as something *to aspire to* constantly and in the face of overwhelming impossibility.

Collectivity.

With the aspirational nature of mutual humanization, radicality, and creative expansive vocation in mind, I return to collectivity, which is foundational to my understandings of radicality and thus to my praxis of creative expansive vocation. To reiterate, radical collectivity reframes individualism such that the individual is understood to be an extension of the collective, with their actions and goals in service to radical goals of liberation (Baldwin, 1962; Freire, 1968; Kelley, 2016). Like mutual humanization, collectivity is an aspirational goal – there is no global, formal coalition of former oppressors and oppressed who now work for liberation, but present conditions cannot define future aspirations (Bell, 1995; Lawrence, 1992; Rickford, 2016). Rather, to work towards and for collectivity is to work guided by principles and goals of liberation *as if* multitudes are doing the same work across the institution, the state, and the world.

To center collectivity and mutual humanization through the application of

my praxis is to commit to action in service to goals and ideals of liberation. It is to choose, as Lawrence describes (1992), to *struggle* with no end in sight and no clear path towards liberation. Creative expansive vocation is a tool to support that struggle – an algorithm of sorts to support individuals who choose to become extensions of the collective to engage in struggles which seem murky at the best of times. Creative expansion vocation does not carve a path to any answers, and neither collectivity, mutual humanization, nor liberation are answers themselves.

The absence of answers, then, leaves only the struggle, and the act of praxis. Praxis is transformative – of the space where it is enacted, of itself, and of the one enacting it (Freire, 1968; Yamamoto, 1997) – and thus in fact necessitates that wherever the starting point may be, the end result will not be the same. No matter how radical my praxis (or any praxis) is to begin with, through the act of application and the choice to align with a radical collective in the struggle for liberation the manifestations in application will become forces for greater depth and engagement with what liberation might look like. In this way, then, creative expansive vocation is a temporary praxis at best – destined to change beyond recognition, eventually, but still ‘succeeding’ through maintaining its core driving goals of liberation, collectivity, and struggle.

Toward implementation: A conclusion

This was a very personal article for me to write, for in these pages I grappled with the core of who I choose to be as a professional in the university. An inherently hegemonic space, the university stubbornly remains also a space for some faculty, students, and staff to share nourishment for critical and radical

thinking, but these spaces are few and far between, in the administrative halls where I work. Throughout this article I have articulated how I choose to commit myself in the university as aspirationally radical, grappling with what I can do in the university that remains true to myself and to the collective ideas towards which I devote my efforts. Positioning myself as aspirationally radical points to the choice I make: radical realities may not exist in my lifetime, or in the next five generations' lifetimes, but I still commit to pursue those radical futures (Bell, 1995; Kelley, 2016; Lawrence, 1992). It may be futile, but it is worth hopeless pursuit nevertheless.

As I have discussed, articulating a praxis which I call creative expansive vocation – even if only to myself – keeps me on the path of pursuing radicality. I ground creative expansive vocation in the same principles that propel my understanding of radicality: notions of radicality as a choice to work, or a vocation (Lawrence, 1997), and notions of Theorization and Study as powerful and unbounded by the university (Harney & Moten, 2013). Together, my praxis propels a mission of pursuing radicality through challenging institutional and career boundaries, through creatively expanding notions of what work might be, particularly for graduate alumni, and how work might further humanization of all involved.

This article opens a door for me, and for administrators like me, I hope, to further reconsider and broaden our understandings of what radicality might look like in the academe. It is a beginning as all praxes are beginnings, until they are not beginnings at all but endings that pave the way for a different beginning

(Freire, 1968). Through that broadening, it encourages more articulations of praxes across more areas of the university. It encourages questions of how aspirational radicality impacts the work itself, and it agitates for conversations between aspirationally radical administrators to move towards collectivity together.

Chapter Three

A portfolio of possibilities:

Radically reimagining graduate-level professional development

When I was first hired as an administrator at the university where I work, I knew what professional development meant, but could not really have defined it with any specificity. After several years working on this institutional project, I now describe current professional development as educational programming outside students' degree curriculum which spans formal and informal activities and which aims to enhance student success in the various areas of their lives – academic, personal, professional, and beyond. I was experientially taught it meant being responsive to providing students with workshops and sessions about topics and skills. Strategizing for professional development workshops for the coming year meant reviewing student, administrator, and faculty suggestions for session topics, and deciding what was really an unmet need and what was beyond our capacity to provide (using specific lab equipment, for example, would fall in the latter category). In many ways this is laudable – it is responsive, and directly driven by student requests in a way many university programs simply are not. And, it is also very much a banking model of education (Freire, 1968), in which the university positions students as in need of consuming ideas and topics for their own development. It is the type of project I always aimed to critically change when I thought of what I would do with my graduate studies – a prospect much more complex in reality than idealization.

As someone who works in the university, whose area of work overlaps

with my area of study, I am called to critically consider my own actions with respect to analysis and practice. This is the question of “what next?” or, “well, now what are you going to do about it?” I know I must do something, but how I act on that call and what shape it takes is the unknown. This article discusses the critical, reflexive analysis I have been engaging in as I begin to answer this ongoing question, driven by qualitative observations and conversations with collaborators. Specifically, in this article I propose and explore the utility of centering radical reimagining in efforts to impact institutional cultures, structures, programs, and policies for radicality.

Even in the terribly hostile space of the university, aspiring radical administrators, students, and faculty need to engage in work that propels liberation and resists hegemony, wherever possible. I propose radical reimagining as the first stage of radical praxis to do this work. By radical reimagining, I mean critical reconsideration of pre-existing spaces with an eye to possibilities for liberatory futures, synthesizing returns to hegemonically suppressed pasts and new, currently impossible futures (Rickford, 2016). In this article, I turn to seven potential areas of application in graduate professional development as the space to explore how this might occur, deepening my above framing of radical reimagining throughout. I begin by situating my radical commitments within critical bodies of literature and within the context I aim to impact, and introduce the data which propels my discussion of applying praxis, drawn from six months of critical, qualitative research. As I said, I bring these commitments to bear in the form of a radically intentioned praxis I call creative expansive vocation, which I

apply in the form of seven, interconnected radical reimaginings of graduate professional development. Across these seven sites I articulate my commitments in practice, as well as explore the transformational nature of praxis and radical reimagining. Praxis is nothing if not transformative, and I turn to radical reimagining as a way to critically and productively lead that transformation.

Situating my radicality

Radicality is the backbone of this article and thus the starting point for my articulations of the ideas which propel and contextualize the analysis of this article. While much of my discussion comprises nuancing and deepening my own understanding of what radicality can be, I begin by situating radicality as the denial, refusal, and counter-suggestion of possibilities against the powered, oppressive realities of the institutions or spaces which limit and curtail the humanization of all. This initial perspective is grounded in a deep and ongoing genealogy of scholarship promoting, celebrating, and complicating radicality as a complex, impossible, and necessary goal (Bell, 1992, 1995; Baldwin, 1962; Hill Collins, 2009; Kelley, 1994, 2002, 2016; Lawrence, 1992; Meiners, 2007; Mohanty, 2003; Patel, 2015; Rickford, 2016). By this description – complex, impossible, and necessary – I mean that radicality is both counter to the very character of the context within and upon which it works and all the more urgent because of the depth to which dehumanizing ideologies penetrate structures and institutions in that context. Kelley (2016) considers this with respect to activism and Black survival in the university: White supremacy is foundational to the university, and radical action must rail against that foundation nevertheless.

Kelley's considerations of grappling with complicity, particularly where they intersect with calls for radical action to pull actors and structures from hegemonic oppression into radical liberation, for a recognition that as it is impossible to extricate hegemony from the makeup of institutions and people the alternative is to remake hegemony's place and welcome those once defined by it (Baldwin, 1962; Freire, 1968; Hill Collins, 2009; Kelley, 2016).

I approach radicality as messily in conversation with and pushing against the current, harmful status quo, including institutional structures. Vaught and Judge's notions of *unradicality* and their centering of the inevitability of institutional ties nuance this approach (Vaught & Judge, 2017). Vaught and Judge define unradicality as thinking and moving with radical intention while acknowledging, if not accepting, the inherent limitations of possibility wrought by a hegemonic state and structure. In conversation, Harney and Moten (2013) push me to consider the visibility and hegemonic legibility of radicality to the institution and to me given my administrative place in the institution. These perspectives nuance and strengthen my approach to radicality, challenging me to resist romanticization or un-specificity in positioning radicality as the grounding for my praxis.

For instance, collectivity is central to my understanding of radicality, and it is antithetical to everything that I have learned through my traditional schooling and cultural upbringing of hyper-individualism and meritocracy. This makes the act of centering collectivity active work on my end. I constantly push against my instincts to reify the individual, even when discussing collectivity or

collaboration.⁷ I understand collectivity to be the individual as an *extension* of the collective, rather than the collective as an aggregate of individuals (the reifying, hegemonic view of collaboration and identity politics). By this, I mean understanding the primary unit of discussion as the ideals, goals, and commitments – to liberation, to one another, to mutual humanization (Freire, 1968), for example – as the drivers of action and choice, with individuals propelling these goals, and these goals creating *the collective* by gathering people with shared commitments. Kelley, explicating Baldwin, nuances collectivity through his discussion of radical love, noting, “But here is the catch: if we are committed to genuine freedom, we have no choice but to love all. To love all is to fight relentlessly to end exploitation and oppression everywhere, even on behalf of those who think they hate us” (2016, para 31). Radical love is an expression of the collective – it drives action, drives the choices individuals make, and drives meaningful, material change for all within the collective, ideally everyone. And, it is in motion – collectivity necessitates struggle, for like liberation it is a goal to strive towards and does not currently exist in a detailed state for pursuit. Collectivity necessitates attention to both liberation and a reframing of where individual responsibility begins and ends, which I will continue to contemplate throughout this work.

Radical reimagining

I particularly apply my understandings of radicality through radical

⁷ I am so grateful to those mentors who push me to do this work even when I am unaware I am falling into a hegemonic trap – I am stronger and those I interact with, collectively, are stronger for it, as I will explore throughout this piece.

reimagining. Radical reimagining goes beyond the ways we all can and hopefully do imagine to specifically and intentionally conceptualize ways of being that reject oppressive, hierarchical mores foundational to hegemony (tangible and ideological) in the present (Kelley, 2002, 2016; Rickford, 2016). My approach to radical reimagining is grounded in the work of Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars and Black Radical theorists (Bell, 1992; Kelley, 2002; Rickford, 2016) who directly, critically engage with imagination and reimagination as a powered, social act, and with the many scholars in critical education and elsewhere who engage with acts of reimagining without necessarily using these direct terms (Glen, 1988; Haiven, 2014; Perry & Delpit, 1998; Stovall, 2016; Winn, 2018; White, 2015).

I additionally center the joy and creativity of this form of radical action. Kelley's exploration of this activity using the term "poetry" or "poetic knowledge" is particularly incisive:

Progressive social movements do not simply produce statistics and narratives of oppression; rather, the best ones do what great poetry always does: transport us to another place, compel us to relive horrors and, more importantly, enable us to imagine a new society. We must remember that the conditions and the very existence of social movements enable participants to imagine something different, to realize that things need not always be this way. It is that imagination, that effort to see the future in the present, that I shall call "poetry" or "poetic knowledge." (p. 9)

"New," here, is only new *to the hegemonic status quo* – reimagining encompasses

a (re)claiming of pasts (and presents, and futures). Radical reimagining is directly insurgent to hegemony in its denial of hegemonic inevitabilities, its reclaiming of pasts which have been obfuscated and ignored in service to hegemonic values, and its advancement of radical futures outside of any hegemonic oversight.

Professionalization, the hegemonic university, and reflexivity

Additional to its core values and commitments, radicality does have a crucial context of oppression in and on which it works, although the relationship is not strictly oppositional. For this article, that context is the university. I understand the university as rife with tension – it is a space where radicality persists (Kelley, 2016; Rickford, 2016) and it is marked by hegemony – which I define as the continual re-entrenchment of structures of power upholding the state and dominant, supportive, private institutions as authorities over marginalized and othered groups, inspired by Gramsci's theorizations (1971). Hegemony derives from people's ideas, and in aggregate *shapes* people's ideas and perceptions to support those in power, consenting to their authority. Indeed, the university's historic and current character as an oppressive site is particularly well-documented and richly theorized (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Ferguson, 2012; Harney & Moten, 2013; Kelley, 2016; Karabel, 2005; Wilder, 2013).

And, the university is multifaceted – as Stefano Harney and Fred Moten characterize, “it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment” (2013, p. 26). It is not a single thing, and is a space for radical thinkers to converge (Falcón et

al., 2014; Harney & Moten, 2013; Rickford, 2016; Shear & Zontine, 2010) just as it is an assimilative, hegemonically legitimating space (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Ferguson, 2012; Giroux, 2014; Gregory, 2001; Haiven, 2014; Hamer & Lang, 2015; Karabel, 2005; Perlow, 2017; Washburn, 2005). One fiction author iterates some of this radical potential in an imagining of a utopian, radical university, imagining:

The universities were places for self-perfection, places for the highest education in life. Everyone taught everyone else. All were teachers, all were students. The sages listened more than they talked; and when they talked it was to ask questions that would engage endless generations in profound and perpetual discovery.

The universities and the academies were also places where people sat and meditated and absorbed knowledge from the silence. Research was a permanent activity, and all were researchers and appliers of the fruits of research. The purpose was to discover the hidden unified law of all things, to deepen the spirit, to make more profound the sensitivities of the individual to the universe, and to become more creative. (Okri in Mohanty, 2003, p. 169)

Perhaps an impossible description, this passage reminds me that while the university is inherently hegemonic and repressive, oh, is it a site of such *potential* – for moments, programs, and radical experiences, now and in the future.

In this piece, the site of potential I work on and in is graduate professional development, which spans formal and informal spheres to educate students on

extra-academic ideas and skills. Currently, the potential inherent in this site is difficult to see – consumer-centric, individualizing, and with an emphasis on discrete skills over complex considerations or processes (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Freire, 1968; Giroux, 2014; Gill, 2010; Urciuoli, 2008). And, it comes out of a history of historically excluded students calling for greater supports from the university, which took the form of formal discussion about skills and insider information on how to succeed in academia and other industries, typically couched in the language of a “student-centered approach” (Assiter, 1995; Ferguson, 2012). Thus, graduate professional development is completely typical of the university – it is mired in hegemony and littered with remnants of hegemonic assimilative efforts, and it is evidence of radical work to be done in this space.

Such radical work needs to contend with the core driving ideals underlying professional development, which Harney and Moten discuss using the term professionalization (2013). Describing how a field builds an accepted and assumed reliance upon its logics, its axioms, and its fundamental premises, they map how any questioning of these now-facts becomes incomprehensible. Harney and Moten offer a way of considering “that which reproduces professions” (p. 32) as being linked to mechanisms of colonization and control. Characterizing professionalization as “a circling, an encircling of war wagons” (2013, p. 34), they map how university acts of preparing students to be professionals also equips students with a piece of the university to self-moderate them in a future where they, in turn, reproduce the institution and its hegemonic foundations. Such

mechanisms are par for the course with the university and its deep history of White supremacy, colonization, and oppression (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Ferguson, 2012; Wilder, 2013). Professionalization is not the only mechanism of graduate professional development – in fact, in my first reimagining I explore another crucial mechanism, skillification, and its histories of assimilated criticality – but I highlight it because of the links it exposes between foundational hegemonic ideals and professional development activities.

Reflexive praxis

Praxis is the starting and ending point of these methods and methodologies, for critical feminist methodology undergirds this consideration (Bloom, 1998; Fine et al., 2003; Narayan, 1993; Pillow & Mayo, 2012). Critical feminist methodology is praxis on multiple levels: most literally, critical feminist research entails reflection, consideration, and action within the world for the creation of new knowledge, changing disciplines and practice, in the same way as praxis. On an ethical or moral level, as well, critical feminist methodology demands action and an activist orientation with respect to the positioning of the research as necessarily challenging to power dynamics and structural oppression (Fine et al., 2003; Mohanty, 1998; Narayan, 1993; Patel, 2015) and to use the outcomes of the research to materialize these challenges in praxis (Bloom & Sawin, 2009). Alternatively termed “socially engaged research” (Harding & Norberg, 2005), this is a direct call for research to change current power dynamics and to directly impacts the lived reality of research participants. In this way, critical feminist research becomes a different type of praxis, concerned with using

that research to spark action in the moment and throughout the ongoing future. I engage with praxis as methodology, data, and product in this paper – praxis is transformative, and is thus active within many stages of practice and intentionality. An act of praxis on its own (Rickford, 2016), reimagining is also part of a collective process of praxis – with the many acts of reimagining comprising ongoing, collaborative praxis.

Grounding this praxis, I draw upon six months of qualitative research at the School of Arts and Humanities and the School of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) at Winthrop University, a private, R1 institution. At Winthrop, I engaged in participant observation at 20 formal professional development workshops and conducted 38 interviews with 25 master's and doctoral students across all broad fields in the Arts and Humanities and the Sciences. Students were selected by virtue of having attended at least one professional development workshop, and so all were linked by some degree of investment in their own formalized professional development. These students' experiences varied across and within programs, with student reports ranging from highly positive – that between formal workshops and informal mentoring in their program they were well on their way to a long and fulfilling career – to distressingly negative – that they were actively discouraged from professional development in their target areas due to the department not agreeing with their career choices and aspirations.

Critical reflexivity of my time as a practitioner, in a space upheld by hegemony and dependent on those in the institution consenting to the authority of

the institution, helps me put my praxis into action (Abu-Lughod, 1993; Lyle, 2017; Mohanty, 1998). I define reflexivity as critical reflection on my thinking and action, attending to how I take up, complicate, and engage with theorizations and ideologies – how my thoughts and actions manifest theories and lines of logic. I follow critical feminist traditions of reflexivity, interrogating my relationship(s) to the institution, to the contexts of power which surround me, and to traditions challenging hegemony and pursuing decolonial futures in complex, contradictory ways (Abu-Lughod, 1993; Fine et al., 2003; Mohanty, 1998; Narayan, 1993; Patel, 2015; Pillow & Mayo, 2012; Vaught, 2017). Particularly, I engage in reflexivity that links and draws on all of my experiences to iterate new possibilities for action and analysis in the university – not falsely separating my experiences as student, practitioner, or scholar.

Articulating my radical principles.

Given my emphasis on intentionality, specificity, and critical application of radicality, it is only appropriate for me to outline the ideas and considerations which comprise my praxis for approaching graduate professional development, which I term creative expansive vocation. The focus of this paper is on the transformative nature of praxis – of itself, of those engaging in that work, and of the space it is applied – and so my discussion of my praxis, here, focuses on the principles which constitute that praxis. I outline the intentional linkages and positioning of this praxis elsewhere (Hajmiragha, 2018) and because my emphasis in this piece is on praxis as constantly in motion and self-recreating, I will limit my discussion in this work to the throughlines which drive my praxis in creation

and application.

Briefly, creative expansive vocation calls for realigning career and life-long learning goals to emphasize humanization and liberation as work that may occur across all areas of life – personal, activist, and professional. There are two main sets of principles which guide me in this work, the first of which is “vocation,” with inextricable links to Critical Race Theory (CRT) – not decontextualizing or divorcing this term of its specificity to that movement and the Civil Rights movement, but learning from these theorizations to propel the work of challenging White Supremacy everywhere possible (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Charles Lawrence describes these intentions of vocation too beautifully not to quote at length,

This Article [“The River and The Word”] has its genesis in the history and tradition of radical teaching among dominated people of color who have made the struggle for liberation and humanization their life's work. We have inherited this vocation from parents and grandparents and from countless others who have resisted racial oppression. The meaning of ‘vocation’ is central to the definition of this work. One is called upon to accept a legacy, but a vocation implies choice. One must choose to accept the gift and burden of this inheritance. One must choose to embrace the values of humanism. One must choose to engage in the practice of liberationist teaching. One must choose to join the river of struggle. (1992, p. 2298)

Vocation calls for doing work wherever we are – students, practitioners, activists

– and for treating liberation and a radical future as both *work* and *a conscious choice* (Ahmed, 2012; Baldwin, 1962; Freire, 1968; Hill Collins, 2000; Kelley, 1994; Lawrence, 1992). Vocation *is* my commitment to radicality and collectivity. It articulates my conviction to challenge systems of oppression regardless of whether a path to ‘success’ is readily visible.

Complementing this humanizing and liberatory force for work and action, I am driven by notions of Theorization and Study, which I capitalize to differentiate from colloquial usages of these terms. I use Theorizing and Studying to describe thinking about how the world works – for example, Study need not be limited to the scholastic setting, (Harney & Moten, 2013) but might also describe how a union member analyzes and makes sense of whose interests are or are not supported by new management policies. Reflected in the terms “creative expansive” in my praxis’ name, Theorizing and Studying emphasize continuous growth and learning, linking to and learning from histories of formal and informal programs for teaching and studying outside the credentialized curricula of educational realms (Ferguson, 2012; Freire, 1968; Kelley, 2016; Rickford, 2016). Emphasis on Theorizing and Studying as not bounded or ‘owned’ by the academe drives my praxis to pay attention to areas explicitly ignored by the academe and hegemony as well as pushes me to consider my own and the program’s positionality with respect to whose expertise is validated.

The work of radical reimagining

Vocation and notions of study and theorizing are more than the sum of their parts. Through their emphases on looking outside the academe and

rethinking what ‘counts’ as worthwhile work, these theories necessitate radical reimagining at the core of my praxis. They propel radical reimagining as both the first step of this praxis and as a way of thinking promoted by the praxis. These values promote reconsidering and pushing against the limitations on thinking and action falsely placed by hegemony and the university. And, they drive me not only to imagine futures that do not necessarily fit pre-existing or normalized modes of employment, personal passions, or activism, but require me to support and open opportunities for those around me to do so as well, and to view those goals as one and the same.

I now return to collectivity, to more explicitly link the values of radicality which ground my work and this praxis with my writing and considerations. As I have stated, creative expansive vocation is not merely the expansion of possibilities for individuals to apply their passions for their own edification, but the expansion of possibilities for collective work in and after graduate school. Vocation points to and comes from work being *for* the collective – one works so that we may be, to extrapolate Lawrence’s words (1992). Creative expansive vocation is my attempt to inject that radical perspective into the academy, to poison hegemony and transform it into something with radical *possibility* that may eventually lead to liberatory realities.

Praxis at work

Praxis necessitates application, and the ideals I have just outlined are only guiding principles once put into the real world – they cannot guide without action. In this article, I engage in what I propose as the first step of application, radical

reimagining, across seven aspects of graduate professional development. In each of the seven discussions, I attend to the particular transformations that praxis brings to these areas, and consider how those transformations nuance and support my praxis in pursuit of collectivity and liberation. These seven components are:

1. the purpose of professional development activities,
2. the relationship these activities have to the job market and capitalism,
3. whom these activities are ‘for,’
4. who has the responsibility for driving students’ professional development,
5. the role of leaders of professional development programs,
6. the structure of professional development programming,
7. and the content of these programs.

For each of these components I discuss both the constellation of forces at play within this area of graduate professional development and to how my guiding principles might drive a praxis in these areas. Finally, I radically reimagine a different iteration of graduate professional development for each point of discussion, guided by my praxis and principles.

Neither these reimagining exercises nor my specific discussions which at each point necessarily comprise a unified whole or a single vision for graduate professional development. Instead, they cumulatively provide insights into how radical ideals might be applied across different settings – how praxis might look in action. I do not attempt to make them cohere because this article’s focus is on the first stage of praxis, radical reimagining, in which part of the power of application comes from embracing a many radical futures as possible. Part of

hegemony's power is its seeming inevitability (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Du Bois, 1935; Kelley, 1994; Ferguson, 2012; Marable, 2000; Robinson, 1983; Said, 1978); radical reimagining rejects the notion of a single way of doing things, hegemonic or otherwise. Many futures are possible, and the following are seven possible starting points.

The purpose of graduate professional development.

To begin my set of seven reimaginings, I consider the underlying goal, or purpose, of graduate professional development. With this first reimagining I begin my exploration of applying my critical principles and goals, particularly with respect to the ways in which those goals combine and come through in praxis. In this section I particularly attend to praxis as it directly intervenes upon a hegemonic manifestation or structure – in this case, a deficit, skillifying undercurrent to current graduate professional development. In my exploration of application I explore how I and my praxis might learn from and build upon graduate professional development, not unilaterally opposing at every point but intentionally reconsidering the purpose as a whole, particularly through teasing out the radical histories which were assimilated into the institution to produce the current status quo. Radically reimagining means working from reality in all its complexity, and I begin exploring the implications of this feature here.

Skillification.

In order to ease discussion of how creative expansive vocation provides a specific direction for application, I return to one manifestation of the deficit, meritocratic, job-oriented goal of graduate professional development as an

example: skillification (Urciuoli, 2008). Skillification links the skills discourse within higher education to neoliberalism's organization of the economy and conceptualizations of economic value through the emphasis on specific learned skills – 'hard' and 'soft' skills, alike (2008). It is the deficit model of professional development writ visibly, alienating and dehumanizing students to accept the university's statements about what comprises a graduate education and a fulfilling career. In this way, skillification is an ideal analytic example for applying creative expansive vocation to rethink the goal of graduate professional development.

Despite its current neoliberal nature, skillification also has roots in critical conversations around opening doors and remedying the historical exclusion faced by Students of Color, Black students in particular, along with women, Jewish students, and queer students. Simultaneous with a lull in faculty hiring, Black students led a movement of historically excluded students across the nation to demand greater inclusivity and representation within curricula, programs, and faculty (Ferguson, 2012; Wood, 2018). Alongside the creation of new centers and programs, skills and an emphasis on making visible previously invisible lines of logic and professionalization gained prominence as a remedy to both calls for inclusivity and calls for greater professional supports for doctoral students. Indeed, this is the root of the responsivity and proactivity I note in my introduction to this article. Despite the decades of neoliberal influence to shift this skills emphasis to skillification as it exists today, there is a critical, radical core to this emphasis which might be revisited and radically reimagined.

For, as it currently stands, the workshops at Winthrop closely matched

neoliberal, professionalizing notions of how skills should be provided to students – which is ripe for reimagining and shifting. Professional development sessions at Winthrop primarily took the form of lectures about topics like cover-letter writing, managing labs, productive writing, or grant writing (Appendix 1), all discrete, directly job-applicable topics easily legible on any resume. I did observe that some facilitators push the boundaries of where skills end, “Managing Labs” was a particular standout, with the facilitator advocating for proactive mental health and work-life balance practices. But the reality of the *structure* of these workshops was one which fit a framework of discrete skills to be mastered and individually applied. Shifting these workshops toward a radical reimagining that revisits the critical roots of skills discussions using creative expansive vocation is the focus of the next few pages.

Expansivity.

To think through radically reimagining the goal of graduate professional development to incorporate its critical past, I particularly draw on the notions of expansivity, or Theorization and Study. To reiterate, Theorizing and Studying push me to consider how the research and scholarship of graduate education need not be limited to any one sphere or area but are applicable and beneficial to all components of one’s life – personal, scholarly, professional, or otherwise – in an integrated, complementary way. I use the term expansivity to refer to the impact Theorizing and Study have with respect to my praxis, pushing against institutionally constructed boundaries that encourage a particular status quo.

Centering expansivity shifts the focus of graduate professional

development from consumable nuggets of knowledge to conversations around inquiry and application – from acontextual ideas to the roots of where those ideas come from. Tangibly, each workshop could shift focus from skills to questions, from how to write a grant to how grants fit into the academic landscape and how to use that knowledge in application to write one. Such a shift also encourages repositioning students from consumers to actors, again very much a radical reimagining that gains strength from the critical past as much as it does from a possible future (Rickford, 2016). Such directions also complement ongoing, critical conversations about how faculty, students, and administrators might challenge what many define as the neoliberal turn in higher education, students as consumers being one of the hallmark traits of this turn (Bok, 2005; Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Duggan, 2003; Falcón et al., 2014; Gildersleeve, 2017; Shear & Zontine, 2010; Washburn, 2005). Focusing on the expansivity of career possibilities as a focus for graduate professional development tangibly shifts the goal of such programming toward greater radical possibility. It impacts the rhetoric of graduate professional development, the scope of programming, and the transparency of fundamental assumptions – directly in line with skillification’s original, critical intentions of challenging historical exclusivity.

With an eye to practice, such a focus also provides insight into the act of drawing inspiration from praxis to specifically detail a tangible set of goals for implementation. It is easy enough to say the goals of creative expansive vocation are those of the reimagined graduate professional development, but such a statement lacks specificity. By explicitly linking one core ideal of creative

expansive vocation to a particular section of the goals of graduate professional development I bring further nuance and depth to my praxis, beginning to map how it manifests differently across spaces of graduate professional development and implementation. No praxis uniformly applies, even within a single context, and mapping what comes to the fore and where enhances intentionality and keeps that praxis honest. The reimagining which follows is one extrapolation of this intentionality.

Reimagining 1: The purpose of graduate professional development.

Drawing inspiration from undergraduate advising and advising for graduate school selection, institutions shift what used to be workshops to sessions for students to take part in guided conversations and practice cases about bringing their passions for their studies and their fields into as much of their lives as they want. These sessions resist the separation of scholarship and intellectual debate from seemingly unrelated practices in business, and allow students to practice advocating for themselves and for bringing their passions to their place of employment – framed as a form of work-life balance – and to discuss the many ways those passions might be pursued outside of traditional employment, as well. Alumni attend and lead some of these sessions, identified by self-characterizations of their activities in ways that may or may not be tied to formal career paths or set job positions. Linking to student desires for expanded experiential learning, these sessions emphasize students bringing their studies into the world, in a way that is most fulfilling to them and their values, looking to alumni for inspiration.

Extricating graduate professional development from the job market.

While reimagining skillification's role in graduate professional development allows criticality to resurface, dealing with capitalism in graduate professional development is an entirely other, untenable situation. Core to creative expansive vocation is a focus on applying scholarship and intellectual pursuits to students' lives and for collectivity after they graduate, which is in direct tension with a jobs-centric, economic model of professional development. And at the same time, the context which prompts this response, and which students react to as well, complicates this: we know that the more education (credentials) people have, the higher they tend to earn⁸ (Torpey, 2018), and we know that for people earning the highest degrees possible (doctorates), faculty positions (particularly tenure-track ones) have become fewer and farther between (NSF 2006; NSF 2016). This is not to say that master's degree students are 'safe' from these trends – with increases in bachelor's degree holders, credentialism pushes positions to require higher and higher degrees, thus placing master's degree students in a position where their credential no longer gives them an edge (Cassuto, 2015; Hoyat, 2018; NSF, 2006; NSF, 2016; Torpey, 2018). All of this is to say, jobs are important.

Materially, it matters whether students are able to secure positions after graduating from their programs, particularly given the opportunity cost and real cost of pursuing education (Goldrick-Rab, 2016) and for programs recently under fire for not being 'marketable' enough (Benton, 2009; Corrigan, 2018; Hayot,

⁸ Both this and the following statements are, of course, grossly generalized – intersectional attention to race, class, field, and gender in this area and in professional development's impact on this area is ripe for interrogation and practice – but mirror the narrative of the job market at the same broad, inaccurate level adopted by the institution.

2018; Wilson, 1998). Students need to know how to survive in a competitive capitalist environment, but if the tools are presented without comment or context those tools become axioms and givens (Harney & Moten, 2013; Urciuoli, 2008, 2010). In this way, the jobs preparation component of graduate professional development is set up as one of two pillars of graduate education, of equal or greater importance to the scholarship, diminishing the importance of that scholarship by virtue of its existence being necessary. *And*, by providing another mechanism for students to learn about buried professional norms, more oppressed and underserved students are able to be read as competitive candidates despite structural attempts to maintain a hierarchy of elite students moving to elite jobs (Rivera, 2015).

Winning and losing.

This is the untenable tension of graduate professional development with which creative expansive vocation must somehow grapple: jobs are not and cannot be everything, and in the capitalist society in which graduate professional development exists to ignore them would be a disservice to students. Crucial to this point are the reminders of Rickford and Kelley: Rickford attending to the fact that radical activities are contextual and linked, creating larger conversations of reimagining and resistance (2016), and Kelley reminding, “winning is not always the point. Unveiling the university’s exploitative practices and its deeply embedded structures of racism, sexism, and class inequality can be profound acts of demystification on their own” (2016, para. 13). For, discussing jobs does not have to be hegemonic – as I just discussed, such discussions may actually be

deeply disruptive to the hierarchized status quo. But, context is key, which seems to be the crux of how capitalist considerations flourish so well: these considerations become not one of many concerns students address, but *the* concern to tackle.

Many of the students with whom I collaborated over the course of my study referred to graduate education *as* jobs-training – period. One of the ways in which creative expansive vocation might intervene in support of liberatory futures is to attend to all the ways that graduate education is more than job training, even as it provides the necessary resources and instruction in that area to help students economically survive. Challenging notions of hegemonic binaries – either something is or is not job training, there is no in between – *is* an act towards radicality. Thus, the question shifts from “how can we extricate capitalism from graduate professional development” to “how can we resist capitalism’s monopoly on conversations and focuses of graduate professional development?” Winning is shifted for both greater realism and for greater momentum in moving towards liberatory futures.

Part of centering liberation as a goal is that it is something to work towards rather than bring to material reality – liberation is not something to expect in my lifetime and perhaps not for many lifetimes, but that does not diminish the importance and the meaningfulness of centering it as a commitment in work and action (Bell, 1995; Lawrence, 1992). Embedded with this is the contradictory, challenging implication that in the meantime, work towards liberation may not fully escape complicity with hegemony – work towards

liberation is thus an exercise in pushing aspirations of radicality as far as they go within a context that resists any non-assimilative change. This exercise of considering the how to take capitalism out of graduate professional development is an example of this work: I must engage in a fever fantasy that capitalism could be removed from this space to start and to provide as much freedom of experimental reimagination as possible, however impossible the prospect may be. This should not be seen as a failure, but as a successful set up for an experiment (Kelley, 2016; Rickford, 2016). The following radical reimagining is a suggestion of such experimentation, exploring what liberation might mean in this space through pushing the imaginings of relationships between capitalism, the job market, and graduate education.

Reimagining 2: The job market and professional development.

A university develops a new assistantship model which pairs students – with the same stipend they would receive for any other assistantship – with local businesses, non-profit organizations, artists, educators, and activists for one year to work on a project the organization needed support with. These organizations would apply to the university to be matched with students, who would indicate their interest to the university along with their academic and practice interests. Students would need to articulate their considerations, questions, and ideas about the type of practice they hoped to work on – but while sometimes the assistantship lined up precisely with their scholarship it equally frequently would match their questions or ideas in complementary ways without being within their self-defined area of expertise. Students are encouraged to push their comfort zones – students

who perennially submitted papers and presented at conferences might be matched with projects directly working with those whose lives are impacted by their scholarly work, while students who had ample practical experience in their target fields might be encouraged to work with organizations or policy-makers rethinking the structures and forms of that work and its impact on community members.

Who graduate professional development is for.

In the prior radical reimaginings I have applied creative expansive vocation to previously exposed areas, the goals of and the role of the jobs market in graduate professional development; I now attend to how praxis might expose hidden nuances. In this section I explore who graduate professional development is for – ostensibly, students – and the ways in which this manifests. This section is the first of three to consider collectivity as a state for pursuit in graduate professional development. Here, I set the stage of the status quo and identify a way to begin centering students as agents of their own education. Through a consideration of professionalization and graduate professional development, I attend to how, currently, students are actually secondary to this process, with the school's re-creation the focus of these activities. I work towards a reimagining of how students might be centered rather than the school, and how this application of praxis provides a way of engaging in analysis *through* practice.

Students are central to graduate professional development, whether an institution has a mission statement for professional development programming or not. For both the current iteration and creative expansive vocation, graduate

students are pointed to as the reason for the programming's existence – supporting them in succeeding, whatever that might mean, specifically. Yet, despite their centrality the current model of graduate professional development cannot be said to be strictly *for* students, as opposed to the recreation and maintenance of institutional norms, values, and ideals (Ferguson, 2012; Posselt, 2016). That recreation might entail a shift to encompass and secure institutional buy-in from more students than who have historically found a place in the institution, and student success might be an ancillary benefit to the institution and a primary goal of administrators, but graduate professional development is part of professionalization, with primary benefit to the institution (Harney & Moten, 2013).

For the school.

I briefly return to professionalization to tease out the role students and the school play in this process. To reiterate, Harney and Moten lay out professionalization as operating through the creation of a circular logic of professional norms, by which students are socialized to take as a starting point field axioms which discipline the discipline (2013). Professionalization is one of many hegemonic mechanisms by which inevitabilities are created – others including the assimilation of African-American studies departments, the enshrining of racism in capitalism, and structural enclosures curtailing possibilities for Black youth through educational, disciplinary mechanisms (Ferguson, 2012; Robinson, 1983; Sojoyner, 2016).

And, for some students, professionalization is something laudable,

something they explicitly came to graduate school for. Yvonne, a White, female master's student in a dual degree program, was in just this position. Yvonne explicitly wanted to be told how to become a professional, to be told what to do in order to succeed in her career. She felt that she lacked this guidance, and told me, "I don't feel, yet, that I have a path to success, post-graduation, in any sort of way. And, I feel like it's a disservice to the school itself. If you're not turning out people who can speak to the quality of the program..." As she trailed off, I offered an end to her sentence, confirming that I understood what she meant: "Then what are you doing," I said, to which she nodded in agreement. For Yvonne, professionalization is both an overall good thing for her and an activity which reflects well on the institution. On the flip side, in its absence her experience, the product coming out of her graduate education (her knowledge and degree), and the school are all lessened.

Professionalization is such a strong force at maintaining the existence and primacy of the institution and hegemonically structured disciplines (Harney and Moten use public policy as an example [2013]) because of the recreation of assumptions within the hearts and minds of students at the core of this activity. Yvonne did not question that she was lacking in some way and that she required further professionalizing education outside of her coursework and research – her attempt to pursue professionalization thus fit right in with the inevitability of adhering to and upholding professional and institutional norms. And, her pursuit of professionalization bolsters the positioning of students as the consumer or the vessel of the knowledge or ideologies. Under the logics of professionalization,

students matter inasmuch as they are the space where professionalization occurs – they give evidence to the school’s success, to the continued value of the existence of graduate education, to the quality of the program.

For students?

As I mentioned in my opening to this section, I turn to collectivity to make sense of radical possibilities in light of the university being the primary beneficiary of graduate professional development, rather than students. Additional to this consideration highlighting how the university is the central beneficiary under consideration for graduate professional development is a consideration of working towards collectivity. I consider how creative expansive vocation might prompt and support rigorous discussion of professionalization in a way that allows students to learn what they need to survive while encouraging critical perspectives on its role and operation. Women and Faculty of Color, particularly Black female faculty, have discussed the practice of surviving and carving out a place in a hostile academe, and resisting assimilative messages, for quite some time and in some depth (Gregory, 2001; Guinier et al., 1994; Hill Collins, 2000; Perlow, 2017). Centering my commitments to collectivity and liberation through creative expansive vocation, and attending to what reimagining might entail, I consider the productive space of synthesizing histories of criticality and resistance with the current needs of students, attentive to the past and responsive for the present and the future.

My starting point for this synthesis lies in the start of skillification – as a brief reminder, the junction between Black student-led agitations for active

supports for their entrance into the historically exclusionary space of the university (Ferguson, 2012) and doctoral hiring difficulties (Wood, 2018) – when an emphasis on skills was a critical act of refusing segmentation and exclusion. The goal at that time was not only to provide students with explicit discussion of norms for navigating the university and professions, but to also refuse the exclusionary nature of those spaces. The neoliberal shift to skillification has completely reversed that goal, and now skillification serves to reify and regulate belonging. What radical reimagining using creative expansive vocation might pursue, then, is a return to the critical goal of refusing exclusive boundaries. Centering the voices of those faculty – particularly female, Black faculty and other historically excluded faculty – in critical conversation about professionalizing norms and practices might simultaneously make these skills and knowledges visible and reject their disciplinary power. Collectivity, here, is work to make sure no one comes up against a *boundary* in the future, rather than making sure any who comes up against a boundary knows how to *traverse* it. Such a strategy works to disrupt inevitabilization whilst maintaining student access to tools to support their navigation in a hegemonic, hostile world. Thus, graduate professional development is not for students but for liberation, which students might work to bring about.

Such a reimagining that centers critical pasts and experiences of those resisting in the present highlights how the commitment to liberation and to collectivity is a struggle in progress. It suggests a subtle shift, but one along a distinctly radical and dissenting path. And, one that requires constant commitment

to maintain – thus, attention to critical pasts serves both to rejuvenate and to teach about hegemonic tendencies, to know where to struggle. Students were and continue to be used as excuses for hegemonic assimilation and consolidation of power in the name of equal access – knowledge of this strategy and of alternative, collective possibilities resist this inexorable pull, negotiating with hegemony for space at every juncture. Collectivity, here, attends not only to the students in the institution but all possible students, and not only learns from those who have successfully navigated the institution but those whose success was stolen from them and assimilated into the hegemonic structures they fought. It is the commitment to together pursue liberation, everywhere.

Reimagining 3: Who professional development could be for.

Each fall, during the first month of classes, the director of graduate professional development programming goes to each graduate program and speak with all new and returning students. All programs have some form of advising session or professional seminar (pro-sem) where students gather with some regularity, and the director requests that each program allow 30-45 minutes at one of their first meetings to speak with students about the professional development programs, about who ‘needs’ professional development, and about making the most of their time in the institution while students. The director uses institutionally legible language intentionally in the description and in my opening introductions to students, and begin to break down some of the assumptions inherent in such language. All of these meetings have the goal of pushing students out of the institutional mold of consumer and passive participant, and of

supporting them in asking the institution questions about who is really supported by graduate professional development programs, and who is not. The director asks that all students from returning years attend, as well, so that they might engage in generational conversations while also propelling change from year to year.

Who is responsible for driving graduate professional development

Continuing in this direction of exploring the pursuit of collectivity in action, I consider the work between students, faculty, and administration to nuance, shift, and reframe conversations with the university to claim agency and power in a distinctly inequitable hegemonic context. I do so through attention to a perfectly logical, yet contradictory part of the current form of graduate professional development: reliance upon students to know where they should be focusing. This is an expectation that students will either self-identify or identify with faculty help where they should be put their energies as consumers of skills, topics, and ideologies. For students who know what they do not know, approximately, the onus of identifying where to focus is not large. But for students lacking support or prior experience, the responsibility is considerably larger, and prompts students to call for *more* institutional involvement in their studies, an institutionally invaluable response.

Inviting institutional control.

As I said in my introduction to this section, students do not make these choices alone, but are influenced by ambient hegemonic forces which push them towards consenting institutional agreement. Shelly, a White, female, doctoral

student in a humanities department, exemplified the effects of these forces. In her eighth year of the program, Shelly was only then realizing key steps expected of new graduates in her field. She said,

I was supposed to learn through osmosis that I... that, [selecting a dissertation committee and publishing articles before graduating] was my responsibility and I needed to be proactive about it. Um, yeah. Um, well, because everything seems to be, everything post-coursework seems to be voluntary, um, it's a) hard to know that you're supposed to do it and b) hard to feel a pressure to do it when you don't feel like you really know what you're doing, which is how I feel most of the time. So...

Shelly treated her graduate coursework and post-coursework responsibilities as she had her undergraduate schooling: meeting expectations and requirements set by others. In speaking, she expressed a desire for this to continue, if not to quite the same degree.

Shelly requested that the university extend their control over her education even more than it already had – she was asking for explicit professionalization to be written into the curriculum or into her advising (Harney & Moten, 2013). Professional development, in the way that Shelly experienced, sets up a question – do students really want to figure out the way on their own? – and when students answer with a resounding yes, they are told “‘Yes, tell me more. Yes, say that. Say that and say much more about that.’ Power is that which speaks in the affirmative,” as Ferguson paraphrases Foucault (2012, p. 210). Power disciplines through encouragement as much as it does through deterrence, pushing students to

a particular decision and rewarding them for making that decision. Shelly's past experiences with deficit education trained her to be a consumer, she was not provided any support in making the leap from consumer to producer of knowledge, and while she was being structurally punished for not making that leap herself (not graduating on time) the school set up a mechanism by which she could continue her passive consumption in a different deficit model system. It is no wonder she bought in and called for more programming of such nature.

Navigating assimilation and consent.

Shelly's call was an invitation for hegemony to further assimilate scholarly activities into professionalization, in the same way that hegemony assimilates across contexts, institutions, and historical and global spaces (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Du Bois, 1935; Ferguson, 2012; Gramsci, 1971; Kelley, 1994; Marable, 2000; Said, 1978). And, she did have a point – by leaving her and students like her rudderless, the institution set some students up to succeed and others to fail, which tends to fall out along raced, classed, heteropatriarchal lines (Guinier et al., 1994; Rivera, 2015). Students need jobs to survive, as I noted earlier, and they need to know how to navigate institutional spaces to land those jobs, which Shelly points out. This is the same root as what has become skillification, with the same potential pitfalls which skillification did not avoid – a desire to support students in gaining access to historically inaccessible information that turns into a reification of the boundaries which made such information exclusive to begin with.

Focus on the *mechanism* of professionalization (Harney & Moten, 2013)

and taking an expansive view of what graduate professional development does and could continue to entail points to the possibility of removing the encircling mechanism, the institution, from the equation as much as possible. Similar to prior reconsiderations of the roots of skillification to learn from that critical moment, this would entail work to deny and resist the act of making boundaries in the first place, rather than teaching skills to enter into those spaces without critically working on them at the same time. In this way, graduate professional development might be shifted towards pursuing collectivity and solidarity through the support of students, faculty, staff, and community members, locating responsibility outside the institution while also not solely burdening students.

Intentions matter, and the ripple effect from those intentions can be subtle. Ensuring that students who otherwise would not be able to professionally navigate a space learn how might either break down or strengthen barriers, it all depends on the conversations and associated learnings that happen along the way. Now, turning to mentoring networks as a semi-unstructured mechanism of graduate professional development rather than mass workshops is no guarantee for the total expunging of hegemonic ideas – professionalization exists in apprenticeship models just like in mass workshops (Guinier et al., 1994; Harney & Moten, 2013). What it does offer, though, is both experimentation in the name of pursuing liberation (Kelley, 2016; Rickford, 2016) and more room for conversation, for questions, and for reconsideration. In other words, more room for shaking up the unquestioning-ness and inevitabilities of hegemony and professionalization (Harney & Moten, 2013). The transformations wrought by changing intentions on

praxis and reality are subtle but impactful, a useful trait when flying under the hegemonic radar.

Reimagining 4: Who is responsible for pursuing professional development.

A Director of a graduate professional development program works with other Deans and university leaders to amp up advising resources for faculty and staff who act as mentors for graduate students, specifically advising students with respect to professional development. They work with students to build mentoring networks, acting as support mechanisms for students and mentors rather than a separate entity or a source of professional development knowledge or wisdom. The school only acts to provide a set number of advising open blocks during which faculty are not allowed to book meetings, and are intended for use as meeting times for students. These are not the only times when students may meet with faculty, but are protected times that convey institutional weight for faculty who might need convincing. Such blocks will shift throughout the year to cover several days of the week and times, for students or faculty with other commitments, to mitigate the disproportionate scheduling burden of students who are 'nontraditional' according to the university.

Leading with colleagues and experts.

Concluding my three-part consideration of pursuing collectivity through radically reimagined possible relationships between students, faculty, and administration, I reconsider possibilities of administrative collaboration. Here, I first situate the current collaborative structure, outlining hegemonically

consolidated structure which maintains a facade of coordination without relinquishing any control. I then turn to possibilities of rethinking collaboration, taking advantage of superficial resemblance to fly under the radar while propelling distinctly critical, collective goals. In exploring this facet I briefly divert to my own reflexive experiences as a graduate education administrator who does work in the graduate professional development realm as the critical qualitative data grounding this discussion.

I work within a Graduate Dean's Office – graduate professional development and the leaders of graduate professional development are thus placed at the school level. In semi-frequent conversations that have taken place throughout my time at this university, including my years prior to and currently acting in a leadership capacity, we have referred to this question as one of location – where should graduate professional development be located, always circling back to the Office of the Dean. Yet, calling it 'location' is obfuscatory, for what is really being asked is *who* leads the strategy, resources, assessment, and design of graduate professional development programming.

Recently, I have come to learn that the current model of professional development employed by most universities – including my own – is called a distributed coordinated model, a term drawn from computer science, specifically computer networking. A distributed coordinated model allows for greater use of limited resources in delivering programming (or in the original computer networking model, for linking multiple computing processes which occur simultaneously but still controlling the output) (Tanenbaum & van Steen, 2007),

which in the university setting entails one coordinating leader (me) who links multiple offices with their own separate professional development offerings to create one single vision or program primarily through resource allocation and influence. This model allows for collaboration, but only in a limited way: primarily, it consolidates and centralizes power in one coordinating leader.

Leading towards collaboration in a centralizing space.

The work in this arena, then, is similar to the student work which prompts Kelley's comments about having a different goal than 'winning' (2016), in that it attempts to hold the institution to its purported values. The values behind the distributed coordinated model of graduate professional development are collaboration, diverse perspectives, and community buy-in. While the reality of this model may not uphold these values, there is no reason why they cannot be pursued, however impossible it may be.⁹ And, these values are a robust part of critical and radical work (Bloom, 1998; Falcón et al., 2014; Patel, 2015; Rickford, 2016; Winn, 2018; Yosso, 2005). Radical reimagining entails synthesis of past, present, future, and possibility, and highlighting the critical way of viewing these ideals might be pursued in a similar way to highlighting the critical roots of skillification for a radically reimagined present and future.

Through such synthesis of *possibility* creative expansive vocation may offer a mechanism to reconsider what a distributed coordinated model might

⁹ I say "perhaps impossible" not out of cynicism or pessimism but out of conscious attention to historical attempts to hold institutions accountable to values – across the curriculum, admissions, and governance, to name a few (Ferguson, 2012; Karabel, 2005; Pulido, 2014) – and the ways in which these attempts were absorbed by the institution and twisted to serve as power-consolidation mechanisms instead.

allow with respect to leadership. Specifically, for a different model of leadership that allows for greater buy-in and equity amongst on-campus partners in pursuit of collectivity. I am pushed to reconsider my place in making unilateral decisions, rather than engaging in a conversation between the partner offices, actors, and students on campus, even in aspirational radicality. I am pushed to consider the place for thievery and stealing space from the institution (Harney & Moten, 2013) and the place for explicit debate which may just uncover a wall I am beating my head against (Ahmed, 2012). I am pushed to not just act in the interest of radicality but to *partner for and in* radicality – something all but guaranteed to fail, but nevertheless necessary (Kelley, 2016; Rickford, 2016). In this way, aspirational radicality in the space of leading collaborations is also an act of pursuing collectivity – if I bring my collaborators together because of shared commitments to expansive graduate professional development, that is a movement in pursuit of radical collectivity. It may not be collectivity made manifest, but, again, aspirationally radical goals are for more than just the present.

Reimagining 5: Who leads professional development, and how.

In five years, the job I currently hold does not exist anymore – I have strategized myself out of a position. Which is not to say that professional development is not happening and that students are not being supported in applying their passion to their post-graduate lives – far from it. Rather, the privilege of supporting students falls to the departments, who receive funding from the institution – drawn from what used to be my salary and the cost of the professional development workshops. The faculty teaching support center will

hire one graduate assistant to keep abreast of conversations and best practices in the realm of graduate student mentoring and extracurricular support, as well, to act as an additional resource for the center in supporting departments in planning the seminars and activities for their students. The graduate school will also share additional funding with the graduate student government to add a piece to their annual symposium of graduate student work which augments these spaces but which are run directly by students.

Structuring professional development.

The most visibly familiar form of graduate professional development programming is that of workshops. Mentoring and individual advising remains the primary mode of professionalization across the university, but it is not formalized, not visible, and not necessarily something students might easily pursue if they do not already have access – thus, I focus on formal structures of graduate professional development for the sake of this discussion. Students attend workshops as they deem necessary, with few additional formal programs (a short job shadowing program and summer boot-camps, for example). In this section I apply creative expansive vocation to this structure, both pushing my theorizations of this structure through attention to implementation and considering possibilities for deconstructing this structure while maintaining legibility. Specifically, I describe the ways in which workshops operate as a menu for professional development topics, encouraging students to maintain a passive consumer perspective on graduate professional development through rhetoric and a credentializing mechanism. Finally, I attend to possibilities for deformatizing this

space while maintaining legibility for students entering into graduate professional development from a hegemonic standpoint for the first time.

To open the door to discussion around the credentializing, pacifying structure of graduate professional development, I return to Yvonne, the dual degree student. While Yvonne identified a lack of direction with respect to her professionalizing training, she did express having had a better experience with one of her programs (located in the School of STEM) than the other (a School of Social Work). Articulating what her issues were with the School of Social Work, she shared a moment from a recent town hall with that school's Dean as an example:

the majority of suggestions [the Dean] offered were to [students] saying 'I want more career services. I want to have something that helps me get more set up for having a job, or finding a job, or my resume. [She laughed, wryly] And almost every inquiry about that [the Dean] said, 'That sounds like a great thing for student groups to organize. That sounds like a great thing, you've got experts in resumes in your field, why don't you get a student group together.' And it was kind of like... but that's not what we're paying for [...] I'm here for the professional guidance of the school that I'm in.

Yvonne explicitly positioned herself as paying for expert guidance as *part* of her degree. Indeed, she pointed to the School of STEM's offerings, taking the form of a menu of workshop options, as optimal in the context of her poor experience with the other school – a position suggesting that passively consuming expertise is

the best way to engage in professionalization. For Yvonne, the credential encompassed all of the above – coursework and research that comprised the curriculum of her degree, *and* the input and availability of expert, professionalizing advice to allow her to use that degree.

To reiterate, basing the structure of graduate professional development on workshops encourages students to take a passive, consumer-centric role with respect to this programming. I return to skillification, the neoliberal movement towards discrete separation of complex processes and ideas into consumable, resourced skills (Urciuoli, 2010), to attend to the hegemonic logics which push this positioning for students. For, the menu-like array of graduate professional development workshops is the extrapolation of skillification. Workshops as a menu formalize and cement the notion of skills as discrete, remixable building blocks toward practice. This structuring promotes the banking model of education in its additive, be-all-end-all approach (as if a single workshop on managing labs could suffice even as an introduction), which is further promoted in the credentialing mechanism as a marker of knowledge attained. No practice, no demonstration, no critical thinking is necessarily required for either workshop attendance or this credential, serving to entrench consumer models of studenthood as well.

Credentialism and the will to institutionality.

This argument for credentialism and institutional culpability for graduate professional development is part of the neoliberal shift from skills to skillification, and entrenches a passive, consumer approach to graduate professional

development. Such an approach sets students up as deficient and in need of intervention, but this positioning is also actively embraced by students like Yvonne. Indeed, this positioning is further centered as a statement of what students deserve – they deserve to be provided with these consumable, professionalizing resources.

To tease this phenomenon apart, I turn to Ferguson’s notion of “the will to institutionality,” an extension of Foucault’s considerations of institutional power’s assimilative and disciplinary use of truth and knowledge. Ferguson describes,

The will to institutionality also seems to presume another distinction – between the promise of formality and the presumed ephemeral nature of informality. Formalizing certain forms of difference gives those forms permanence and institutional protection and will lift difference from the netherworld of marginalization and informal curiosity. (2012, p. 225)

Ferguson specifically discusses university assimilation of radical Black and Queer movements in the 1960’s onwards, and I do not presume to strip that specificity or directly map his usage of this term onto graduate professional development. But attention to these mechanisms and hegemonic distinctions as features of hegemonic systems, including the university and graduate professional development, provides crucial insight – particularly with respect to the promise of formality and fear of informality.

Using the will to institutionality as a lens contextualizes the forces which propelled Yvonne’s professionalizing desires. For Yvonne, part of the promise of

graduate education appeared to be this promise of permanence and formalization. As the Dean of the School of Social Work pointed out, plenty of her peers could share this information, but because of the necessary informality and lack of credentialization this mode was unacceptable for her. I take the time to state with specificity the powered forces at play in Yvonne's requests because of their utility in radically reimagining structures and goals for graduate professional development as reimagined by creative expansive vocation. Naming the will to institutionality as a factor in Yvonne's – and other students' – desires for graduate professional development exposes the institutional borders being shored up (Ahmed, 2012; Ferguson, 2012) and thus pinpoints where radical reimagining might have the most impact.

Structuring for de-structuring.

Using creative expansive vocation to identify a direction, if not a specific set of actions, for challenging the will to institutionality, I consider how an aspirationally radical administrator might steal superficial legitimacy (Harney & Moten, 2013). Such stealing of superficial legitimacy skirts institutionality, walking a delicate line between pushing students out of their comfort zones to question disciplinary and industry norms while engaging in conversation and negotiation with students like Yvonne who might agitate for institutionalization. In order to avoid that institutionalization there would need to be a level of informality, of quasi-collectivity among those collaborating and driving professional development programming. In this way, the structure to focus on would be the *network* of aspirationally radical administrators collaborating across

the campus to drive aspirationally radical programming.

Formal programming, then, would be performed for the institution but not the only mechanism – it would certainly offer benefits to students, but would primarily act as an entry point into a conversation. It could introduce questions of what graduate professional development might be and what students might do with their degrees for their lives, but steer clear of claiming to be the sole place to develop answers. I recognize within my own description echoes of the undercommons (Harney & Moten, 2013), but stress the inextricable institutionality at the core of graduate professional development as led by administrators, no matter how aspirationally radical they may be. Such restructuring could never run itself, which is the goal and the precarity – entirely dependent on the active, radical motivations of administrators. The structure would be human – fallible, resistive, in negotiation, ephemeral, and active (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Freire, 1968; Kelley, 2016; Rickford, 2016).

I conclude this reimagining with a brief note about praxis as deconstructing itself for reconstruction as much as anything else. This is the latest of several points where I have engaged in teasing apart hegemonic activities to highlight hidden criticality or potential weak points, and it bears reminding and re-contextualizing how radical reimagining and praxis come together to impact everything, including praxis. The first stage (at least) of praxis is radical reimagining (Rickford, 2016; Yamamoto, 1997), and part of that stage entails pulling the past and the possible into the same space. This has an impact on both hegemony and on the praxis itself. Take attention to skillification, to return to a

thread which has woven through this article, as an example of how deconstructing the current hegemonic mechanism reveals a critical seed intent on destroying barriers and exclusion. Such deconstruction begs a question of a praxis that has the intention of opposing hegemony: what else can be learned from hegemonic spaces? What else is being missed and overlooked because it is clothed in superficial hegemony? And, what other areas of overlap and intersection are there between radicality and hegemony to learn from? Thus, a praxis reconstructs – taking from hegemony what *could further* the pursuit of liberation, nuancing itself and its relationship to the present in the process. Praxis is transformational (Freire, 1968; Yamamoto, 1997), and transformation is rarely straightforward or expected.

Reimagining 6: How professional development might be structured.

Additional to departmental pro-sems, students participate in joint co-seminars across multiple programs. Such co-sems will not be as frequent – twice per semester at most – but will involve cooperation and coordination across departments as faculty identify discussion topics which push students in each department to challenge and intentionally use their disciplinary norms, and to emphasize links between disciplines and applications which students might otherwise not notice. Co-sem partnerships will rotate each semester or each year, depending on internal research, exposing students to new ideas and challenging notions of complementary and oppositional disciplines. School-wide workshops will coordinate with co-sems to provide augmentative sessions, taking care to build upon disciplinary conversations rather than overriding or engaging in redundant programming.

Translating goals into content.

While the content of the graduate professional development programs – workshops, experiential opportunities, boot-camps, to name a few – are the tip of the iceberg of what graduate professional development *is*, they are the most visible component to students. This has the effect of conflating content with goals, leadership, structure, and so on – skillification, hyperindividualization, and professionalization, thus, become ideology and action in a way that becomes invisible and normalized (Apple, 2004; Duggan, 2003; Harney & Moten, 2013; Kumashiro, 2008; Urciuoli, 2008, 2010). In this final section I attend to the effects of conflating the content of graduate professional development workshops with the intentions of such programming, looking to theory to drive the specific application of my praxis. I specifically attend to one workshop which pushes the boundaries of what graduate professional development content might touch upon, and use creative expansive vocation to suggest further avenues for pushing and opening up possibilities for discussion.

Cutting through skillified noise.

I begin with a consideration of the pitfalls to skillification and professionalization, beyond the effects they have on promoting a passive, consumer mindset amongst students alongside reifying capitalist norms. Even within the highly skillified and professionalized current iteration of graduate professional development it is apparent that such a conflation has a stifling effect, particularly when the skillifying narrative discourages students from attending complex, discussion-based workshops which are critical to their success. It is the

problem of convincing students to pursue conversations and skills with little immediate benefit but with long-term and deep, structural import. The workshop “Lab Management,” at Winthrop, exemplified one approach to this conundrum. Led by a White, male, STEM faculty member with his own lab, this was one of the most supportive, frank, and incisive spaces I have seen about what true work-life (im)balance means. The faculty took the position that to manage a lab one first needed to understand what healthy work in a lab looks like – manage yourself, first, and only then is it possible to manage others. He discussed the necessity of taking advantage of the counseling and mental health resources on campus and throughout their careers, sharing his own personal stories to normalize what is often a toxically under-discussed topic, particularly for STEM students. He talked to them frankly about the choices they would have to make, not telling them what to do but presenting them with considerations and treating those participants as intelligent, full people who could make their own decisions. All of this from a workshop purportedly about managing labs – a hierarchized, capitalist-laden (“management”) topic if ever there were one.

Yet, every single thing the faculty member said – needing to understand yourself and manage yourself in the lab in a healthy, empathetic, growth-oriented way before ‘managing’ others (which he really treated as building relationships and helping others manage those relationships) – is true. Just, it was from a different perspective than those attending the workshop anticipated. It broke ways with the simplified, skillifying narratives which run through professional development, and did precisely the oh-so-difficult task set to creative expansive

vocation: hijacking commonsense logics for humanizing purposes, moving towards liberation and collectivity through the values discussed and the questions posed. While not the only workshop to do this work, it was a particularly well-hidden example of challenging the current manifestation of skillification and professionalization.

Reimagining temporality and success.

I now bring creative expansive vocation to the mix, applying my praxis specifically to the strategy demonstrated here by the faculty member who led “Lab Management” and attending to the ways in which my praxis might learn from or enhance this strategy of pushing hard boundaries of skillified content. As part of this exploration of application, I push for a reconsideration of what success means for graduate professional development when in pursuit of collectivity and liberation (Rickford, 2016). Rickford attends to this in his work detailing the simultaneously ephemeral and long-lasting project of reimagining and radical praxis in Freedom Schools and the Black nationalist movements in the 1960’s through early 1980’s. He shows how each individual school, movement, and community organization was not alone, but part of a larger, national and global movement challenging hegemony, imperialism, and capitalism (2016). Intimately related to Kelley’s calls to eschew notions of winning or losing, ephemerality as a *feature* of radical reimagining and radical collective work allows for action less curtailed by the desire to be accepted or permanent, and for more openness for collectivity.

In the realm of graduate professional development, what an embrace of

ephemerality might mean is a tricky question. With respect to the conundrum I pose here, about how to draw students to workshops that may not seem immediately relevant or appealing, the tactics taken by the “Lab Management” faculty facilitator may be ideal. Naming the workshop one thing and engaging in critical or boundary-challenging, collectively mindful conversations is an avenue at taking success where it may be, without expectation of longevity. Such a strategy allows for a widening of what success or ‘winning’ might look like, to redefine the futility which Kelley points to (2016) as work towards liberation. And, it stings – professionalization is so intertwined with some of the worst imperialist, capitalist, colonial, White supremacist facets of the university (Chatterjee & Maira, 2013; Harney & Moten 2013; Wilder, 2013) that anything other than resounding, permanent, undoable success at restructuring graduate professional development tests convictions that liberation is a pursuit and not an end goal within our lifetimes. Yet, such is the work, and the more expansive definitions of success might become the easier grappling with the hopeful futility of liberation becomes, as well.

It is only appropriate that the workshop which prompted this consideration of translating the goals of creative expansive vocation into content or topical direction for graduate professional development was “Lab Management,” given the centrality of failure to the workings of labs and scientists. More than any other consideration of applying creative expansive vocation, this question of translating goals into content requires experimentation and an open mind with respect to what success might entail (Kelley, 2016; Rickford, 2016). For, opening

conversations to provoke critical questions through topics which are in large part driven by capitalist, professionalizing considerations is far from a formulaic activity. It is organic, responsive, dynamic, and requires engaging in praxis in the moment, analyzing and transforming based on new theorizations on the fly. It is a microcosm and a necessary component of praxis, and a fitting final application of creative expansive vocation.

Reimagining 7: How programming content might reflect goals and values.

Evaluation and feedback at workshop sessions focus on the questions and ideas attendees have for their futures, rather than new workshop topic ideas or justifying the workshop itself. The school then works to incorporate these questions and ideas in future sessions and in additional resources inside and outside the university. Sessions provide multiple entry points for students with various degrees of familiarity with the discussion topics, and pairs students at varying degrees of familiarity with one another to challenge assumptions and push their critical engagement in all components of their graduate experience. Workshop facilitators and advisors also explicitly discuss harmful assumptions around “professional expertise” with students – for example, harmful cultures of work-life balance (or lack thereof) – so they might avoid reproducing them, and might actually challenge them. Together, facilitators, advisors, and students identify critical directions for future professional engagement at the school and in their lives after graduation.

Toward implementation: A conclusion

In this article, I proposed and explored radical reimagining as a first step of praxis for application within the hegemonic university. Approaching the university from a critical, complex standpoint, I explored possibilities for applying praxis within the project of graduate professional development – articulating possibilities for moving towards liberation and areas of consideration for practitioners moving beyond the first stage of praxis into material implementation. I grounded this consideration in an articulation of my radical commitments which formed my praxis, which I termed creative expansive vocation. Primary in these commitments is an approach to radicality and the pursuit of liberation as a choice or vocation (Lawrence, 1992), the application of which I deepen through attention to Theorization and Study (Harney & Moten, 2013) as broad actions which connect multiple areas of lives and careers, and which encourage an expansive and creative view to how liberation may be pursued.

To explore radical reimagining and the nuances of praxis in application, I discussed my praxis at seven junctures of graduate professional development:

1. the purpose of professional development activities,
2. the relationship these activities have to the job market and capitalism,
3. whom these activities are ‘for,’
4. who has the responsibility for driving students’ professional development,
5. the role of leaders of professional development programs,

6. the structure of professional development programming,
7. and the content of these programs.

Across these seven areas I provided preliminary examples of radical reimagining at work, of my praxis in application. And, I discussed the ways in which praxis might be nuanced and deepened, how it is transformative. For, radicality is an ongoing pursuit – liberation and collectivity for pursuit of that liberation does not exist right now, and may never exist in even a nascent form during our lifetimes. Yet, it is still a laudable goal to pursue – indeed, it is *the* goal. This article considered what pursuit of an impossibility looks like, how radical reimagining might keep that futile future in mind while working to ameliorate the present for those currently affected by the very materially important structures of hegemony.

This article is very explicitly only about the first step of praxis, and so necessarily opens the door for both application and for further radical reimagining. As Rickford (2016) notes, radical reimagining in aggregate – in application, in reconsideration, in reimagining and re-application again – is a praxis, and this article certainly opens a door for reconsidering and radically reimagining both within the space of graduate professional development and within the university. Conversely, ephemerality was a major component of my considerations of how radical reimagining transforms the possibilities of praxis, and bears exploration within the university, particularly given the almost antithetical position the institution has taken to temporary approaches to success. And of course, application requires reconsideration, for it necessitates transformation, and so that door is left permanently, happily, open.

Appendix: Observed Workshops at Winthrop

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Teaching • Resume Writing for Graduate Students • Introduction to Grantsmanship: Funding • Leading Group Discussions • Organization and Time Management • Lab Management • Graduate Student Job Searches: Cover Letters • Graduate Student Writing: Communicating Persuasively • Celebrating and Considering Women in the STEM Fields • A Healthy Approach to Stress and Procrastination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Grantsmanship: Overview • Building Productive Writing Habits • Graduate Student Job Searches: LinkedIn • The Art of the Scientific Talk • Graduate Student Job Searches: Crafting a CV • Visualizing Data • Preparing to Present a Talk • Your Rights as an Author • Designing Poster Presentations • The Academic Job Process
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