

Social Justice Feminists and Their Counter-Hegemonic Actions in the Post-World War II United States, 1945–1964

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Building upon the theoretical framework of Italian activist and scholar Antonio Gramsci, and using historical and public administrative sources, this article argues that while social justice feminism as a social movement in the United States declined by 1940, former participants continued their counter-hegemonic actions after World War II. Facing a new political and cultural hegemony increasingly dominated by fears of atomic annihilation, Soviet domination, and domestic Communist infiltration, women progressives, such as Frieda Miller and Esther Peterson, developed new approaches to continuing their counter-hegemonic aims, particularly through reviving an alternative view of public administration. Miller and Peterson thus helped prepare the way for women's activism in the United States to shift from economic security to equal rights by the mid-1960s, thus establishing an increasingly effective counter-hegemonic effort against the continuing patriarchal hegemony.

Keywords: social justice feminism, Antonio Gramsci, hegemony and counter-hegemony, social movements in post-World War II United States, feminist agency

Since his seemingly obscure death in a Fascist prison in 1937, the posthumously published work of Italian scholar and activist Antonio Gramsci has firmly established the concept of cultural hegemony and its ramifications. Gramsci argued that conceiving and implementing ideas in social discourse help to create either new inclinations or disinclinations among the general populations in advanced capitalist societies. His most important work emphasized how social elites establish

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cultural hegemonies as a way of placating, and therefore neutralizing, nonruling classes, thus promoting the quiet, yet effective, continuation of existing economic orders. Gramsci's theory for advancing a countervailing non-elite agency lay in formulating a set of political and cultural ideas, or "counter-hegemony," that would eventually establish a classless society (Adamson 1983; Gramsci 1971, 1987, 2007).

Previous scholars have argued that from 1899 through 1940, social justice feminism acted as a counter-hegemonic movement against two dominant cultural beliefs in the United States established after the Civil War: industrial capitalism and patriarchal dominance. In those years between the conclusion of the Victorian era and the advent of World War II, social justice feminists used a strategy of promoting and passing women's labor legislation as an "entering wedge" for the eventual inclusion of all workers under state protection. By the 1920s, this strategy also encompassed the strengthening of women's participation in the national party system, particularly through the national Democratic party. During the last stage of the movement, social justice feminists from 1933 through 1940 helped promote and pass the Social Security Act of 1935 and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938, thus satisfying their original aim of cross-gender inclusion of labor under state protection. At the same time, the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee "Women's Division" became a formidable force for the activities of women within the nation's oldest party. By 1940, however, the shift of attention from domestic reform to international conflict effectively ended social justice feminism. Moreover, the rise of a new postwar political and cultural hegemony focused on the threats of atomic conflict, the Soviet rise to world power, and the supposed infiltration of domestic Communism. The "Cold War consensus" offered little hope for aggressive attempts at continued reform (Chafe 2003; Weisbode 2016).

This article continues the examination of Gramscian theory and its interrelationship with the development of counter-hegemonies after the demise of social justice feminism. Despite such difficulties, former social justice feminists continued their counter-hegemonic actions in the United States after World War II, particularly through the revival and continuation of an alternative view of public administration. By the early 1960s, the efforts of public administrators Frieda Miller and Esther Peterson, directors of the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor (the "Women's Bureau") also prompted the shift of women's activism in the United States from economic security to

equal rights by the mid-1960s, thus helping to form increasingly effective counter-hegemonic efforts against a still-prevailing patriarchal hegemony.

GRAMSCIAN HEGEMONY AND COUNTER-HEGEMONY

Although Gramsci's ideas have been used extensively (see e.g., Letherby 2003), we must describe his theoretical framework. His approach to societal change did not fit within the usual Marxist framework of economic determinism as the means of overcoming advanced capitalism (Marx 1977, Marx and Engels 1989). Instead, the Italian scholar and activist used a multifaceted approach to describe how ideas and their subsequent societal and cultural influences help create new predispositions, or lack of predispositions, among common populations (Harootunian 2015, 115). Part of Gramsci's Marxist reformulation centered on how cultural discourse operated as an amorphous process constructed from a three-layered interaction: the "spontaneous philosophy" of individuals, the "world views" of societal groups united by cultural and economic solidarities, and most importantly, the "dominant hegemonic view" of the ruling class (Gramsci 1971, 323). To maintain long-term societal stability, Gramsci argued, a capitalist ruling class must use peaceful means, instead of violent coercion, to convince the other, "subaltern" classes of the validity of values and norms (Gramsci 1971, 333; Gramsci 1996, 91; Gramsci 1991).

Gramsci's major theoretical breakthrough lay in his recognition of the inherent instability of hegemonies due to the fluidity of societal interaction and the constant threat of new influences. The constant need of the ruling class to justify its cultural hegemony allows for the development of counter-hegemonies from either the society's intellectuals or the subaltern classes. The most fruitful counter-hegemonies, moreover, result from a combination of theoretical formulations and practical means (Adamson 1983, 170–79; Bates 1975, 353–57; Gramsci 1971, 323). Gramsci defined the continual battles between opposing hegemonies as a continual "war of position," through which counter-hegemonies would most effectively use class unity to oppose capitalist accumulation and "popular democratic currents" (Femia 1975, 34¹; Gramsci 1971, 328; Gramsci 1992, 169; Urry 1981).

1. Notably, Gramsci vainly tried to institute such efforts in the mid-1920s among Italian workers and peasants that would oppose both Italian capitalism and fascism (Gramsci, 1993, 20–43; Harootunian 2015, 115–20).

While social justice feminism started as a counter-hegemonic movement in the early twentieth century against the major hegemonic forces then present in the United States, *laissez-faire* capitalism and patriarchy, it faced challenges in both developing and influencing events.

Social Justice Feminism and Counter-Hegemony, 1899–1940

Social justice feminism began as a counter-hegemonic movement as a reaction to one of the most seismic, if nonviolent, societal transformations in human history: the Second Industrial Revolution.² From 1865 through 1920, the hegemonic-changing forces of this industrial transformation made the United States an urbanized, industrialized power with new, centralized communication and transportation systems (Hounshell 1984; Scranton 1997). The Second Industrial Revolution also affected intellectual thought, particularly through the incorporation of the *laissez-faire* principles first eloquently enunciated by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*. The idea of Social Darwinism, or the idea incurred from Darwin's nascent evolutionary theories that only the "fittest" of any species survived and applied to societal conditions, found an especially congenial base of support from such rising financial scions as John D. Rockefeller, Sr., and Andrew Carnegie (Hawkins 1997; Hofstadter 1992).

As women's organizations in the United States encountered the ramifications of the Second Industrial Revolution, social justice arose as a solution to the ongoing quandary of reconciling industrial and technological advancements with the dignity of working people. The term's social and religious implications appealed to an American middle class; in addition, reformers in the late nineteenth century took the term "justice," used previously in a legal context, and redefined it in terms of the social gospel to question social and economic inequities stemming mostly from, they believed, the new industrial order (Dawley 1991; Diner 1998; Kloppenberg and Fox 1997; McGerr 2005).

By the 1890s, a counter-hegemonic movement known as progressivism arose in the United States. This movement, which eventually lent its name to the years between 1890 and 1920, originated from a desire to re-establish order in a society dissatisfied with the Industrial Revolution's negative effects, such as unsafe labor conditions (Diner 1998; McGerr 2005). Social justice

2. The development of social justice feminism is extensively discussed in Sklar 1998 and McGuire 2004.

feminism came out of this burgeoning counter-hegemony, and its main initiator, Florence Kelley, came from an interesting mixture of ideological, cultural, and practical origins. Kelley became general secretary of the National Consumers' League NCL, a newly created national federation of women's consumer organizations in 1899 at the age of 40 (Sklar 1995). A graduate of Cornell College, a former public administrator in Illinois who promoted the first hours law for women in the United States, and a trained lawyer, the new NCL head possessed a wide variety of experiences that provided a natural basis for a new counter-hegemonic vision.

In 1907 Kelley turned her attention to finally implementing that vision. In *Muller v. Oregon*, 208 US 412 1908, an Oregon bakery owner challenged the state's new hours law for women workers before the United States Supreme Court. Kelley, her research secretary, Josephine Goldmark, and famed Boston attorney Louis Brandeis researched and wrote what became known as the "Brandeis brief," a legal document that used not only judicial precedents but also sociological evidence, especially industrial reports from European sources. The nation's highest court agreed with this new approach, declaring the law "reasonable." Thus, the US judicial system began to recognize that the messy realities of industrialism warranted serious consideration (Woloch 1996; Goldmark 1953). For the next seven years, the NCL legal network continued to work on other cases, such as *People v. Schweinler Press*, 214 NY 395 1915, in which the New York Court of Appeals declared a night-work law for working women constitutional, and *Bunting v. Oregon*, 243 US 426 1917, where the Supreme Court upheld men's working hour limitations (Urofsky 2015, 148–154). Through such cases, Kelley conceived social justice feminism's major counter-hegemonic goal: to use women's labor legislation as an entering wedge for the eventual inclusion of all workers under state protection (Storrs 2000).

Social justice feminists also began forming cross-class and cross-gender alliances to implement their counter-hegemonic aims. Persons such as Rose Schneiderman, a former garment worker and president of the New York Women's Trade Union League, and Frances Perkins, an upper-middle-class, college educated woman, united their efforts by the early 1910s (Schneiderman 1926; Perkins 1929; Orleck 1995). Not all women workers supported social justice feminism; waitresses and female printers, for example, resented prohibition of overnight work because of the opportunity to earn higher income (Cobble 1992, 165, 285; Storrs 2000, 51–52). But the formation of such alliances showed that social justice feminism hewed closely to the Gramscian goal of uniting classes

against the prevailing hegemony. In addition, when a fire in New York City's Triangle Shirtwaist Factory killed 141 workers in March 1911, the resulting controversy prompted the state legislature to create the Factory Investigating Commission (FIC), Kelley and other social justice feminists formed alliances with legislative leaders Alfred E. Smith and Robert F. Wagner, Sr., to promote and pass more than 50 labor legislation laws in the following four years.

After 1918, however, disillusionment over the US effort in World War I and the decline of progressivism presented a far different situation (Dawley 2003). Social justice feminists' efforts to continue the counter-hegemonic "entering wedge" strategy became thwarted, while the Supreme Court's ruling against women's minimum wage legislation in *Adkins v. Children's Hospital*, 261 US 525 1923, effectively ended the NCL legal network. By the mid-1920s, Eleanor Roosevelt, in conjunction with her protégée Mary Williams Molly Dewson, began an alternative means of achieving social justice feminism's counter-hegemonic aim: the growth of women's participation in the Democratic party (Ware 1981; 1987; Cook 1999). In addition, government officials such as Mary Anderson pursued an alternative view of public administration that rejected the seemingly dominant "administrative orthodoxy" of efficiency and objectivity (Anderson 1951; Lindenmeyer 1997; Wilson 1887, 212–13; see also Adams 1992; Goodnow 1900; Luton 1999, 2003, 171–72; Raadschelders 2010; Roberts 1994; Stillman 2005, 2015).

In his work, Gramsci discusses the part played by "organic crises," or crises where the collapse of prevailing hegemonies spark new political and cultural contentions, allowing for the possibility of total societal transformation (Gramsci 1971, 275–76). The organic crisis prompted by the onset of the Great Depression in the United States proved to be such a catalyst (McElvaine 1993). Not only did Franklin D. Roosevelt, elected US president in 1932, pledge to use government as an active force for economic recovery, but he also eventually encompassed the idea of social justice in domestic reform (see, e.g., Roosevelt 1938, 15–17). Social justice feminists quickly seized this new opportunity. Frances Perkins became US Labor Secretary, while Eleanor Roosevelt and Dewson worked to make the Women's Division of the DNC a major counter-hegemonic force. Dewson assumed the new full-time Division directorship in October 1933 and increased the organization's influence through campaign organizing and proselytizing for the New Deal.

By the mid-1930s, social justice feminists substantially fulfilled their counter-hegemonic aims of providing an opening for the governmental

protection of workers and increasing women's participation in national politics. After the Democratic party retained Congressional control in the 1934 national elections, President Roosevelt announced in his 1935 State of the Union Address that social justice would be a primary aim of his Administration (Roosevelt 1938, 15–17). By the late 1930s the US Congress passed the Social Security Act, providing old-age assistance, and three years later they enacted the FLSA, mandating national maximum hour and minimum wage standards. By 1936, moreover, the Women's Division became an effective part of the increasing Democratic political gains in the United States. Notably, Roosevelt's seemingly sweeping inclusions did not include all citizens in the country. Scholars have noted how the Social Security Act and FLSA discriminated against both women and people of color (Kessler-Harris 2001; Klein 2004; Poole 2006; Scharf 1980). Even with these considerations, social justice feminism in large part effectuated its major aim of including all workers within state protection, particularly given the social and cultural difficulties of the time concerning race and gender.

By 1940, the increasing likelihood of the US involvement in World War II effectively ended domestic reform and social justice feminism. Subsequent efforts to continue the former social movement's aim would constitute a complex process.

FRIEDA MILLER AND THE ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, 1944–1953

The years 1941 through 1945 showed the difficulty of continuing social justice feminism's counter-hegemonic aims. Franklin D. Roosevelt declared in a presidential press conference that “Dr. New Deal” would be replaced by “Dr. Win the War,” and his sole effort to sustain the prewar economic situation, the 1944 “Economic Bill of Rights,” only led to congressional legislation extending benefits to returning veterans (see, e.g., Fraser and Gerstle 1989). Events after World War II showed no change in direction, with Roosevelt's successor, Harry S. Truman, reluctantly supporting the Fair Employment Act of 1946 and firing Perkins from her long-held cabinet position, while the Republicans captured Congress (Blewett 1974; Weisbode 2016). In addition, the cultural hegemonies altered by the organic crisis of the Great Depression began to reassert themselves. Fears of a revival of the Great Depression proved ephemeral as a substantial number of the population began

enjoying an unprecedented prosperity (Chafe 2003). Interestingly, this did not mean a return to the general acceptance of *laissez-faire* capitalism. The general mood of conformity prompted by the creation of what historian Elizabeth Cohen aptly calls a “consumer’s republic” became stronger in the 1950s as an increasing middle class turned to home ownership and consumer goods as social and cultural hegemonies (Cohen 2003).

Even with all these difficulties, one determined woman would revive and continue the counter-hegemonic aims of social justice feminism: Frieda Miller, who succeeded Mary Anderson as the director of the Women’s Bureau in 1944 Laughlin 2000. Born in 1889, the University of Wisconsin graduate moved to Philadelphia in 1918, where she became secretary of the local branch of the Women’s Trade Union League. Over the following 10 years, Miller expanded her connections in the social justice feminist network, particularly with Frances Perkins, then New York State Industrial Commissioner. In 1929, upon Perkins’s recommendation, Miller became the head of the Commission’s Division of Women in Industry and Minimum Wage. Four years later, she helped shepherd through the New York State legislature a new minimum wage law for working women (Martin 1976; Montgomery 1980, 478–79). Becoming New York’s Industrial Commissioner in 1938, Miller restructured the state’s employment service (Montgomery 1980, 479). When political power shifted to the Republicans in 1943, Miller became a special labor advisor to the US Ambassador to Great Britain, John Winant, where she took note of the growing agitation for postwar social change and the issuance of the Beveridge Report in 1942, which recommended that the national government provide extensive social services for the British people from the “cradle to the grave” (Chandler 2002, 25; Cobble, 2014a; Trattner 1999).

After returning to the United States to become Women’s Bureau director, however, Miller realized that such agitation only existed as a muted echo, at best, in the United States. She thus quietly established counter-hegemonic means through a revival of the alternative view of public administration. Miller accomplished this goal through a priority forced upon her by the war’s looming end: the reconversion of 11 million veterans, nearly all males, into their previous peacetime jobs, and the corresponding loss of employment opportunities for women replacement workers. Miller ordered the Women’s Bureau to conduct an extensive survey of women throughout the United States, and, most significant, scheduled a special conference in early 1946 that brought together national labor leaders and the officials of women’s

organizations. Not only did the conference lead to some answers, including model language for any future union contracts concerning women workers, but Miller quickly established her prominence in national women's labor issues (Montgomery 1980, 479; Kessler-Harris 2001, 304). Miller subsequently created a special advisory committee on working women issues, including as members veteran labor activists, such as Pauline Newman, and rising figures such as Esther Peterson (Cobble 2014a, 20; Montgomery 1980, 479).

In pursuing a new agenda, Miller and the proponents of an alternative view of public administration established the following goals: economic and social security for everyone in the United States, an end to sexual discrimination against women, and the extension of civil rights for African Americans. Therefore, the feminist movement in the United States, instead of remaining relatively dormant in the years between 1945 and 1965, revived and continued counter-hegemonic means (Cobble 2014; Rupp and Taylor 1987). This counter-hegemonic regeneration, however, echoed contemporaneous developments in academia. Women scholars delved deeply into the social conventions that identified both the activities of women and the definitions of gender in the United States. Ten years before Betty Friedan examined middle-class women and their discontent in *The Feminine Mystique*, for example, sociologist Mirra Komarovsky argued in her groundbreaking work *Women in the Modern World: Their Education and Dilemmas* (1953) that problems confronting such women did not come from psychological, but social factors. This academic re-examination of seemingly sacrosanct boundaries particularly proved apropos in a society that, in celebrating the nuclear family, conveniently elided memories of the Great Depression and the continuing disadvantages facing minority women (Coontz 1992, 24–26, 31; Jamison and Eyerman 1994, 44, 134–36; Lynn 1994, 104; Tannant 2006, 107–94). Former social justice feminists, such as Peterson, noted these complex circumstances by the early 1960s.

Despite the continuing relevancy of domestic reform, however, the ambitious agenda proposed by Frieda Miller and her supporters encountered mixed success. From 1951 through 1961, efforts to extend comprehensive social security coverage to all citizens, to expand FLSA minimum wage requirements to uncovered workers, and to institute “equal pay for comparable work” for working women all failed to receive approval from either Congressional committees or final enactment. Miller's testimony in favor of the bills thus became a vain effort (Cobble

2014a, 32–33, 39–43). On the state level, however, some progress occurred in economic security and the elimination of sexual discrimination. In California the statewide labor union Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) Women's Auxiliary helped successfully lobby for the continuation of wartime childcare programs. Overall, 18 states passed "equal pay for comparable work" laws by the late 1950s. But major successes still did not exist at the federal level (Cobble 2014a, 39–43).

By the end of the 1950s, however, Frieda Miller's influence vanished in the wake of what became known as the "second Red Scare," a successor to the first such period after World War I, when anti-Communist hysteria rose to a peak between 1919 and 1921, and a corresponding development to the rise of the Cold War consensus. By 1956, an estimated five million federal workers underwent loyalty screening, with approximately 14,700 employees being either dismissed or resigning, based on charges ranging from previous participation in the Communist Party to suspicions of homosexuality (Johnson 2003; Storrs 2013, introduction, 3). A federal security investigation of Miller's alleged Communist connections continued for more than five years, forcing her to leave the Women's Bureau in the spring of 1953. Miller never worked in the federal government again (Montgomery 1980, 480; Storrs 2013, 228–29). By the early 1960s, however, a new proponent would show how political strategizing and organizing could make some significant, if partially limited, advances.

1961–1964: ESTHER PETERSON AND THE REVIVAL OF COUNTER-HEGEMONY

In late January 1961, President John F. Kennedy announced his new federal sub-Cabinet appointments. Few received any significant popular or press attention, particularly that of Esther Peterson to the directorship of the Women's Bureau. On the surface, Peterson received the appointment solely due to her major campaign efforts on behalf of Kennedy in the previous year. But a closer look reveals how the actual circumstances can belie such usual assumptions for two reasons. First, Peterson's husband, Oliver, endured continual investigations as a State Department employee from 1949 through 1962 because of his former leftist associations (Storrs 2013, 230). With such complicated, and potentially damning, familial circumstances, Peterson's appointment remains an extraordinary occurrence. Second, despite her own mainstream political credentials, Peterson retained a formidable array of

progressive activism, from her being an organizer for the American Federation of Teachers in the mid-1930s to being the first national legislative representative for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and the first woman lobbyist for the newly formed AFL-CIO (Cobble 2014b; see also O'Farrell 2006, 1078; Peterson and Conkling 1995). She also knew of Miller's previous efforts due to her serving on the Women's Bureau's special advisory committee. Thus, as one scholar notes, Peterson's extensive experiences in "the labor movement and social justice feminist politics" made her a ready proponent of the alternative view of public administration (Cobble 2014a, 49).

Peterson's determination to revive the counter-hegemonic aims of the alternative view of public administration is seen in her formulation of two aims: (1) the creation of a special presidential commission to consider the social and economic status of women in the United States and (2) the promotion and passage of a congressional equal pay act. But the Women's Bureau director also took care to establish alliances, given the Kennedy Administration's initial indifference toward domestic issues and the Southern Democratic and Republican conservative coalition's continued power in Congress (Reeves 1993). Thus, shortly after assuming office, Peterson's lobbying effort for the proposed presidential commissions combined efforts with women reformers and with old colleague counsel Arthur Goldberg, now US Labor Secretary. By the spring of 1961, Peterson's careful efforts bore fruit, as Kennedy issued Executive Order 10980 creating the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) (Cobble 2014a, 49; Stebenne 1996, 124, 251–52).

As the PCSW's vice chair, Peterson became determined to remedy one of the failures of social justice feminism: its inability, or at times outright refusal, to encompass questions of race in its counter-hegemonic aims. From 1933 through 1940, the Women's Division failed to include all women voters, particularly African American women. However, the political situation was complicated: the skepticism of African American women towards the national Democratic party after 1936 continued, given its long-held opposition to the civil and political rights of their race; the control of the US Congressional hierarchy by Southern white male Democrats endured; and the presence in the Women's Division leadership of Southern white women was firmly enmeshed in their regional racial outlook (Higgenbotham 1990; Materson 2009; White 1999). Ironically, a counter-hegemonic movement helped continue the continuing racist hegemony. After World War II, however, this unfortunate oversight slowly yet surely became remedied through the

efforts of such organizations as the Young Women's Christian Association and the American Friends Service Committee, which began to educate their members and the general public about racism and integration (Izzo 2018; Lynn 1994, 103–12). The input of African American women increased in the now-powerful national trade unions such as the United Packing Workers of America local president Addie Wyatt (Cobble 2004, 32, 79, 201; Lichenstein 1995). Not only did these organizational efforts help bridge pre-World War II feminism and the civil rights and women's movements of the 1960s, they also convinced Peterson of the value of reaching across racial lines (Cobble 2004, 155).

By the end of 1961, Peterson took effective action for her new goal of inclusiveness through two PCSW appointments: Dorothy Height, the powerful president of the National Council of Negro Women, became a commissioner, while Pauli Murray became a member of the subcommittee on civil and political rights. The results were mixed. Height, a graduate of New York University and a former social worker (Height 2003, 1–131), eventually agreed in early 1963 to head an informal consultation with African American women. Height's efforts, however, encountered mixed results, particularly when her committee member, Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan, insisted that black women's problems stemmed from the traditional matriarchal structure of African American families. Although Height's adoption of Moynihan's argument as the central theme of her final report, issued in April 1963, disappointed some committee members, the previously neglected issue of African American women did receive badly needed attention (PCSW "Transcript of Consultation By Minority Groups," 1963; Mead and Kaplan 1965, 220–21, 227). A happier and longer-lasting result came from Murray's participation. An independent, outspoken lawyer, scholar, activist, and teacher, the 50-year-old Murray garnered her appointment in part through the sponsorship of PCSW chair Eleanor Roosevelt and Peterson (Rosenberg 2017, 245–46). She soon proposed that the best way to counter traditional barriers to women's participation lay in arguing that such discrimination violated the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. While legal experts such as Harvard Law School dean Erwin Griswold initially opposed Murray's proposal, the PCSW eventually adopted the argument as one of its final recommendations. Moreover, Murray soon found herself consulted on such matters as the inclusion of the word "sex" in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and later, on the legal cases that established the unconstitutionality of gender discrimination, such as

Reed v. Reed, 404 US 71 1971 (Rosenberg 2017, 258, 264–65, 272, 279–80; Strebergh 2009, 13, 25–27). Thus, Peterson’s inclusion of women of color not only finally encompassed the issue of race in the alternative view of public administration’s counter-hegemonic efforts, it also helped establish a quiet but definite shift away from economic issues to equal rights, a shift which the women’s rights movement would take full advantage of several years later.

The adoption of the Pauli Murray “equal protection” proposal did not constitute the only far-reaching effect of the new presidential commission. After two years of taking extensive testimony on a myriad of issues confronting working women in the United States, ranging from pay inequality to women’s labor legislation, the PCSW issued its final report in October 1963. In addition to adopting the Murray argument, the report also recommended that the federal government should reaffirm that the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the US Constitution guaranteed equality for women and that equal opportunity should be the “governing principle” in private employment (Mead and Kaplan 1965, 151, 211–13). While such recommendations remained only advisory due to the lack of specific commitments from either the President or Congressional leaders, the report’s call for “equality for all women” did spark a national discussion, not unlike the discourse initiated by a predecessor, President Truman’s Civil Rights Commission. Within three years, frustrated by continuing governmental inaction, Friedan and other women’s rights advocates would found the National Organization for Women (Barakso 2004, 11–19).

While working with the PCSW, Peterson also concentrated on the promotion and passage of an equal pay bill in Congress. While she naturally sought the support of labor leaders and women’s labor advocates, surprising support came from a White House nervous about the continuing effects of a recession on the national economy (Harrison 1988, 89). Peterson further established the need for such legislation through evidence of gender discrimination garnered from labor unions, state departments of labor, and even previous complainants from the Bureau’s files (Harrison 1988, 92). Even so, Peterson remained all too aware of the fact that the passage of such legislation lay in the hands of Congress. Thus, despite concessions from labor on the definition of equal pay and the important sponsorship of the measure by Congressional allies, such as Representative Edith Green of Oregon and Senator Patrick McNamara from Michigan, aroused opposition from Republican Congressmen prevented consideration of the initial bill before legislative adjournment in

the summer of 1962 (Harrison 1988, 98). In early 1963, Congressional opponents focused on the bill's requirement of "equal pay for comparable work," claiming that "comparability" was a difficult term to define, even as supporters pointed out the use of such language in previous federal legislation (Harrison 1988, 98). To win eventual passage, Peterson and other bill supporters reluctantly supported an amendment, not coincidentally introduced by a Republican Congresswoman, that replaced the term "equal pay for comparable work" with "equal pay for equal work." President Kennedy signed the ensuing bill into law during June 1963 (Cobble 2014a, 52–53; 2005, 165).

Peterson fully recognized that the Equal Pay Act of 1963, as with the PCSW, represented only a symbolic advance for women, particularly with no effective enforcement measures. But she could not realize how the bill would become a significant harbinger of a new, powerful legal and social development known as the "rights revolution" (Gerstle 2015, 85; Foner 1999, 299–305). Within a year, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with an almost unnoticed provision prohibiting discrimination on "account of sex." By the end of the 1960s, women's rights advocates seized upon that statutory language to undertake extensive court litigation that finally began to remove gender discrimination, particularly in employment (Collins 2009, 75–83). Correspondingly, the passage of further legislation protecting individual rights, such as the Voting Act of 1965, and the US Supreme Court's increasing willingness to rule in such an area, marked by such cases as *Griswold v. Connecticut* 1965, provided positive precedents for the activism of such groups as Native Americans and gay groups (Foner 1999, 299–305).

In 1964, at the request of President Lyndon B. Johnson, Peterson left the Women's Bureau to become the executive branch's first consumer advocate (Glickman 2009). She never returned to public administrative service, instead serving two additional Democratic Presidents in the fields of consumer affairs and international diplomacy (Molotsky 1997). But her continuing counter-hegemonic efforts by social justice feminists after World War II remained a definitive presence.

CONCLUSION

Events in time do not exist in a series of static vacuums, as they sometimes appear in the light of historical hindsight. Instead, events exist as the result

of obvious, as well as subtle, factors. This is particularly true of the first 20 years of US history after the end of World War II. The period of 1945 through 1965 may appear as a monolithic period during which fears of atomic annihilation, Soviet domination, and domestic infiltration assumed primary importance, only to end in social unrest, protest movements, and the overall trauma of the Vietnam War. But a closer look at the period demonstrates that, at least in the area considered in this article, such seeming stability was incomplete.

Social justice feminism arose as a counter-hegemonic social movement in the early twentieth century determined to counter two hegemonies established after the Civil War: *laissez-faire* capitalism and patriarchy. By the time of social justice feminism's decline at the advent of World War II, the first hegemony appeared to have been successfully overcome. The second remained, however. After World War II, former social justice feminists such as Frieda Miller and Esther Peterson continued to advance a counter-hegemonic agenda that not only tried to continue the economic reforms started before the war but also sought to shift the emphasis from economic security to equal rights.

Miller helped extend the agenda to such issues as gender discrimination and equal pay. She faced two formidable obstacles to continuing counter-hegemonic efforts: (1) a new cultural hegemony enunciating the benefits of middle-class advancement and consumerism, and (2) the Cold War consensus, which focused on fears of atomic annihilation, Soviet domination, and domestic anti-Communism. The continuation of a domestic reform program like the New Deal not only became difficult to enunciate, but any supporters of such a program could also find themselves accused of Communist influence, as political candidates such as Helen Gahagan Douglas knew all too well. Miller carefully undertook her efforts from 1944 through 1953, creating a women's special advisory committee that helped enunciate new counter-hegemonic goals. Thus, she revived and continued an alternative view of public administration dormant since the early 1940s; unfortunately, her efforts soon came to a sudden end due to her facing Communist allegations.

As one who knew all too well anti-Communist hysteria, Esther Peterson also carefully and pragmatically worked to create a presidential commission on women's issues and to promote and pass an equal rights bill through Congress after becoming the Women's Bureau director in January 1961. Through the creation of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, Peterson not only re-established the alternative view of public administration's counter-hegemonic efforts, she also helped both remedy

the prior omission of women of color and continue the shift in aims from economic security to equal rights for women. This became particularly marked in Pauli Murray's conceptualization of a legal attack on gender discrimination under the Equal Protection Clause of the US Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment. By the early 1970s, the nation's highest court would use Murray's argument as a basis to declare discrimination against women unconstitutional in such areas as state probate laws and military benefits. Thus, the seemingly small counter-hegemonic efforts of Miller and Peterson, undertaken in a period of nearly 20 years, finally led to quite consequential changes. As the present political milieu of the United States remains in uncertain flux, it remains important to remember how historical developments demonstrate the continuing relevance of Gramscian thought.

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