

“Feminism” as Ideology: Sarah Palin’s Anti-feminist Feminism and Ideology Critique

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Abstract: The point of this essay is threefold: to describe the main tenets of Marx’s theory of ideology by critically engaging in the work of Marx and Engels, to flesh out the claim that Sarah Palin’s “feminism” works ideologically as Marx and Engels describe, and consequently, to demonstrate that ideology critique is important intellectual work for feminist Marxist scholars. As I suggest in the conclusion, this is work that should inform scholars’ political activism.

Keywords: Ideology, Feminism, Postfeminism, Patriarchy, Abortion, Marx, Sarah Palin, Political Campaigns, US Elections

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1. Introduction

This special issue of *tripleC* explores the relevance of Karl Marx’s works for Critical Media and Communication Studies, in general, and of Marxist concepts for investigating and intervening in struggles involving the production of knowledge and media content, in particular. The issue also attends to the significance of Marx during dangerous “end times” marked by climate crisis (Žižek 2010) and global capital that has grown “more concentrated and predatory than ever” (Eagleton 2011, 7). Capitalism appears to be in crisis, although given past economic and ecological disasters since Marx’s day, it would be more accurate to describe such status as ongoing rather than novel in the twenty-first century. However, as Eagleton argues, the sharpening of capital’s concentration, in addition to its adaptability and ruthlessness over the past three centuries, make Marxism all the more relevant for its trenchant critique of capitalism. Thus, for Marxists it is the worst of times (material reality is most fraught and life at risk) and therefore, the best of times for doing Marxist-informed critique.

We could say the same for feminism. In the wake of “post-feminism,” the “sensibility” in news and entertainment media that recognizes the success of political struggle against sexist oppression only to dismiss it as passé, feminist media scholars find much to study in the endurance and ruthlessness of patriarchy (Gill 2007, McRobbie 2004, Vavrus 2002). Feminist analysis and political struggle, like that informed by Marxism is also precarious work (one hopes), as Eagleton (2011) points out¹. Marxists hope to witness, if not bring about, an end to their object of study (capitalism), just as the teleology of feminism is patriarchy’s downfall². After all, more than two-thirds of the world’s poor, illiterate, and refugees are female; women do the bulk of unpaid work at home and in the workforce, and poor and Third World women undertake the “caring work” (nannying, elder care, cleaning, and sex work) that make First World lifestyles possible (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002). In the US, the most industrialized country with the highest income inequality, feminism appears under attack by the prospects of “postfeminist” media and culture and by right-wing female politicians who call themselves “feminist”. Thus, in addition to bringing Marxism back, it is time to revive the project of a marxist-feminist partnership, but not necessarily a “marriage”, a metaphor that suggests unequal power relations, as Lisa McLaughlin (2002) points out and as Heidi Hartmann’s (2010) seminal (and recently republished) essay makes clear.

The following analysis contributes to the revival of a healthy feminist Marxism and Marxist feminism by exploring the “feminism” of Sarah Palin. Palin declared herself a “feminist” in 2010 and, using a folksy, populist rhetorical style, articulated anti-feminist arguments and policy. At first glance, Palin’s feminism may appear as trivial campaign discourse designed to appeal to right-wing women during the midterm elections. But Palin’s brand of feminism shows the “crafty,” “resourceful” nature of anti-feminism (and ultimately, of patriarchy) that Eagleton (2011, 8) locates in today’s

¹ It is worth noting, however, that Eagleton’s mention of feminists appears with little explanation, and thus, reads as a non sequitur in a book otherwise about Marx and Marxism: “If there are still Marxists or feminists around in twenty years’ time, it will be a sorry project” (Eagleton 2011, 2).

² For Armand Mattelart (1978), critical communication scholars should create conditions that put capitalism into crisis.

capitalism. As an anti-feminist discourse that revises history to claim authenticity, and therefore, legitimacy against a feminism that is allegedly outdated and wrongheaded, Palin's feminism complements postfeminism's contention that liberal and radical feminism is "so done" (Douglas 2010). Conservative Palinite feminism, in contrast, is part of a larger move of the right-wing anti-choice movement to reclaim feminism as theirs. During the US midterm elections of 2010, at least two prominent Senatorial candidates embraced feminism or were cast as feminists by the anti-choice political action committee, the SBA List (Susan B. Anthony List), which generates revised histories of first-wave feminism to support anti-choice candidates.

In addition to contributing to a fruitful partnership between feminism and Marxism generally, I also want to underscore something quite specific about Sarah Palin's "feminism" that is relevant to the work of critical media and communication scholars: Palinite feminism works ideologically in Marx's sense of the word. I stated as much in a recent analysis of political campaign discourse (Rodino-Colocino forthcoming), where I observed that Marx's conceptualization of ideology captures Palin's brand of feminism because it turns the meaning of feminist politics on its head and benefits elites who possess tremendous political-economic power. This observation is worth developing for several reasons.

First, studies that have applied Marxist ideology critique in communication and media studies have been fruitful. Nicholas Garnham (2000) argues, for example, that theories of the "information society", especially Manuel Castell's careful analysis of it, work "as an ideology" in ways that Marx and Engels describe, "to elicit uncritical assent to whatever dubious proposition is being put forward beneath its protective umbrella" (Garnham 2000, 140). Theories of the "information society," specifically, view "networks" (and primarily, the internet), rather than capitalism as primary organizer and driving force, and consequently, place undue and misplaced emphasis on technologies as resources that need to be "accessed" in order to boost productivity and individual wealth³. "Information society" theories, furthermore, exert political and economic power, and like ideology, have material effects. In the U.S., as elsewhere around the world, government agencies and private corporations have funded initiatives to move "information have-nots" to the "right" side of the "digital divide" (Sterne 2000, U.S. Department of Commerce 1995). Without addressing systemic problems, like structural unemployment, however, such efforts help reproduce "that monstrosity, an industrial reserve army", that as Marx explained, was "kept in misery in order to be always at the disposal of capital" (Marx 1867, 314).

Dana Cloud's (1998) *Control and Consolation in American Culture and Politics – Rhetoric of Therapy* draws on Marx and Engels' conceptualization of ideology to critique "therapeutic discourse" that serves as a source of consolation in the face of downsizing, outsourcing, falling wages. Psychotherapy, since its popularization at the turn of the twentieth century, redirects workers' discontent, revolutionary thought, sentiment, and action inward, to self-improvement, personal responsibility, and adaptation. Such discourse blames individual workers and privatizes a key material, political-economic problem of capitalism: the drive to cut labor costs and boost profits for business owners. By substituting consolation for political and economic compensation, especially in the case of Gloria Steinem's feminist-therapeutic turn, "therapeutic discourse" consequently, "has become a commonplace diversion from political engagement in contemporary American society" (p. xi). Such "diversion" reinforces capitalism and other oppressive systems including patriarchy and white supremacy. Cloud's and Garnham's studies contribute to scholarship in communication and media studies that engage in analysis of Marx's primary texts on ideology (Cloud 2001, Fuchs 2009, 2011; Hall 1985, 1986; Larrain 1982), consider the place of ideology critique in communication and media studies (Dorfman and Mattelart 1991; Garnham 1983; Golding and Murdock 1997; Goldman 1992; Kellner 1989, 1995; Mosco 1994; Murdock 1997; Smythe 1997), and more specifically, that argue that Marxist communication studies have focused too closely on ideology critique, to the exclusion of other moments in commodity production (Garnham 1979; Smythe 1997), comment on the Frankfurt School's ideology critique (Aune 1994, Schatz 2004), and expand on and apply Marx's conceptualization of ideology (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Ewen 1976; Mattelart 1991; Wernick 1991; White 1992; Williamson 1984)⁴.

As fruitful as these studies are, however, misinterpretations of Marx's ideology have dampened its application in Critical Media and Communication Studies. Thus, a second reason to closely engage with Marx's and Engels' primary texts on ideology is to correct and revitalize Marxist ideology critique in the field. Stuart Hall's (1986) explanation of ideology, for example, misreads Marx

³ Information and network technologies may also tap additional surplus value by dividing, deskilling, and speed up work, and, of course, are also products of such labor, sold as commodities.

⁴ Key Frankfurt School works the conduct ideology critique analyzed by critical media and communication scholars include Adorno (1997), Adorno and Horkheimer (1994) and Marcuse (1972).

and Engels' *The German Ideology* (which constitutes just one location in Marx's oeuvre that develops the concept) as arguing for "fixed correspondences" between class position and the ability to produce ideology. Hall mistakes Marx and Engel's brief discussion of "ruling ideas" for a conceptualization of ideology (Hall 1986, 31; also see Hall 1985, 97; and Larrain 1991). On the basis of this misreading, Hall calls for a conceptualization of ideology that allows for "no necessary correspondences" (1985, 94) and, more generally, for a "Marxism without guarantees" (Hall 1986) as the title of this seminal essay suggests.⁵ Following this, Hall's reading of ideology informed work in critical media and communication studies (Grossberg 1986; Lewis 1992; Makus 1990). Thus, the concept of ideology needs to be polished and publicized as a tool for critical communication and media studies.

Finally, conducting a close analysis of Marx's "ideology" may suggest that rather than bring such a conceptualization "back," readers may determine that such critique has never quite left. Some scholars have engaged in Marx's ideology critique without recognizing it as such. As Christian Fuchs argues is the case with Dwayne Winseck's analysis of record industry rhetoric, "you are more into ideology critique than you think you are" (Fuchs and Winseck 2011, 262). I suspect that my own research would show that I was similarly "more into ideology critique" than I may have acknowledged. Thus, I hope the following essay will inspire others to overtly embrace ideology critique of media and culture as Marx theorized and practiced.

Marx practiced ideology critique in two ways: intellectually and politically. What I mean by this is that Marx engaged in ideology critique of media, as his philosophical and journalistic writings show. Marx also meant to press criticism into action through practice ("praxis"). As Saul Padover's (1974) translation of Marx's essays on freedom of the press and censorship demonstrate, Marx's investigative journalism on poverty and the Prussian press' censorship of his analyses moved him more radically to the left, from a liberal democrat to a communist (Rothman 1975). For Marx, ideology critique and political activism were deeply interconnected. When Marx famously said, "Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it" (Marx 1983, 158, emphasis in original), he meant to argue for the importance of the interrelationship between critique and political action. As Steve Macek (2006) explains, this aphorism highlights the importance of understanding capitalism, as means to inform political activism, which can also, in turn, inform critique of capitalism. Such insight, put into practice, guards against retreating into idealism thorough ideology critique, which Garnham (1983) cautioned against.

Because Marx's ideology critique promises intellectually and politically fruitful interventions, it is time to revive both the concept and method in Critical Media and Communication Studies. Or, borrowing from the Occupy Wall Street movement, it is time to "occupy ideology". Such occupation requires that we read Marx's (and Marx and Engels') writings that use the term "ideology" in addition to those that do not. A philosopher, historian, and journalist, Marx was a prolific writer. Thus, synthesizing Marx's oeuvre is not easily given to summary in one essay. Nevertheless, the following essay analyzes key texts from Marx's writings to explore his theorization of ideology. The point of this essay is threefold: to describe the main tenets of Marx's theory of ideology by critically engaging in the work of Marx and Engels, to flesh out the claim that Palinite "feminism" works ideologically as Marx and Engels describe, and, consequently, to demonstrate that ideology critique is important intellectual work for feminist Marxist scholars. As I suggest in the conclusion, this is work that should inform scholars' political activism.

2. Marx's Conception of Ideology*

2.1. "Ideology" in Marx's Early Writings

Central to Marx's conceptualization of ideology is the notion of *distortion*. But it is a specific kind of distortion that serves a particular function. In the early stages of his intellectual development (through 1844), Marx developed the idea of *inversion* that formed the foundation for his theory of ideology⁶. In *Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State* (written in 1843; Marx 1992), Marx borrows from Feuerbach to critique Hegel's theory of the state for taking for its subject an "abstract person" rather than foregrounding "the realization of the real, empirical person" (Marx 1992, 98). Hegel's conceptualization of the state, consequently, "does not proceed [as it should] from the real person

⁵ Colin Sparks (1989) explains Hall's debt to Ernesto Laclau's *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (pp. 85-86).

*See italicized, bolded items in Table 1, p. 9.

⁶ The following interpretation of Marx's theorization of ideology, developing through three stages of Marx's writings, is indebted to Jorge Larrain's (1991, 1996) analyses.

to the state, but from the state to the real person" (ibid., 98). As Jorge Larrain (1991) argues, Marx faults Hegel with inverting reality on this point – in conceptualizing the state as an abstraction from which real people (as real subjects) emerge, rather than the other way around. What Marx calls "human activity" (i.e., human history, humans' making history), then, "necessarily appears as the activity and product of something other than itself" (Marx 1992, 98). Representing human activity and real human existence as products of an abstract "Idea," then, leads Hegel to "convert the subjective into the objective and the objective into the subjective with the inevitable result that an *empirical person* is *uncritically* enthroned as the real truth of the Idea" (ibid., 98f). This inversion, Marx argues, stems from the philosopher's purpose: "For as Hegel's task is not to discover the truth of empirical existence but to discover the empirical existence of the truth... In this way Hegel is able to create the impression of *mystical profundity*" (ibid., 99). Thus, even in this early passage (and throughout the work), we see a budding historical materialism, an argument for "real," "empirical existence" that determines history, from the ground up, as it were, rather than proceeding from the Idea (the abstract) on down.

Hegel errs again, in Marx's view, by also inverting the relationship between civil society and the bourgeois state. According to Marx's reading of Hegel, the bourgeois state is left to overcome its own contradictions (that stem from the clash of private interests that it serves) and determine civil society (Larrain 1991; Marx 1992). In regards to conceptualizing the relationship between the bourgeois state and civil society, Marx argues,

"Hegel's chief error is that he regards *contradiction in the phenomenal world as unity in its essence, in the Idea*. There is however [sic] a profounder reality involved, namely an *essential contradiction*, e.g., in this case the contradiction in the legislature is itself only the self-contradiction of the political state, and hence of civil society" (Marx 1992, 158).

For Hegel, an abstract idea determined reality, and such a position inverted reality. Another key point here is that because the bourgeois state really is an abstraction, Hegel's inversions sprang from reality not misunderstanding; they were not "mere illusions" or falsehoods (Larrain 1991, 12). To underscore this, Larrain draws readers to Marx's observation that "Hegel should not be blamed for describing the essence of the modern state as it is, but for identifying what is with the *essence of the state*" (Marx 1992, 126-127, emphasis in original)." Marx continues, "That the rational is real is *contradicted by the irrational reality* which at every point shows itself to be the opposite of what it asserts, and to assert the opposite of what it is" (ibid., 127). Thus, Hegel's inversion covers up the contradictions of the bourgeois state that serves private interests but is beholden to rival influences. Such a cover up also lends legitimacy to the state by precluding critique of its essence.

Marx (1992) further explains how inversion works in *A Contribution to Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (written from 1843-1844), which builds on Feuerbach's critique of religion to argue that if in religion, the powers of man appears in an inverse relationship to those of God, it not only reflects reality but also points to deficiencies for which religion serves as compensation. Larrain (1991) points to Marx's argument (borrowing from and then exceeding Feuerbach's) that "Man makes religion, religion does not make man" (Marx 1992, 13; see also Marx 1992, 244). Reading further around this quote, we see that Marx moves immediately from this Feuerbachian formulation to arguing, "Religion is indeed the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself or has already lost himself again." This points to the **compensatory function** ideology serves. From here, Marx cautions readers, "But *man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is *the world of man*, state, and society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an inverted world." The inversions that constitute religion are, in other words, real not imagined; religion reflects the inverted world in which "man, the state, and society" coexist.

Adding, "Religion is the general theory of this world...its universal basis of **consolation** and **justification**," Marx highlights ideology's function as symptomatic of and compensation for an unjust world. Although he quips that religion is "the opium of the people," Marx emphasizes, "*Religious* suffering is at one and the same time the *expression* of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions" (ibid., 244). Religion springs from real suffering, wrought by real contradictions, as Hegel's notion of the state sprang from real inversions that masked actual contradictions. Thus, "the struggle against religion is therefore indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion" (ibid., 244). Addressing religious suffering, moreover, requires action in the real world, real action by real people, not mere philosophizing. Extinguishing the illusions people have about their spiritual relationship to the world under Christianity, for example, requires that

people change lived conditions. Putting it poetically, “The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to *call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions*” (ibid., 244). For Marx, contra Feuerbach, the truth (alone) will not set people free, but action in the real world, informed by the truth, holds such potential.

2.2. Historical Materialist “Ideology”

Thus, in these early writings Marx previews a theory of ideology that constitutes his historical materialism: humans make ideas and history, and therefore, intervention in the material world brings about changes in that world. Additionally, the material world is, under capitalism, fraught with contradictions that cause suffering and beg remedy through intervention into these contradictions. Although Marxist scholars typically point to *The German Ideology* (written from 1845-1846) as offering a “first formulation of the materialist conception of history” (Larrain 1991, 16), or even to the “outline” of historical materialism “jotted down” in his “Theses on Feuerbach” (1845; Kumar 2006, 79), Marx’s earlier criticism of religion (1843-1844) proved a significant starting point for Marx’s critique of the real, sensuous world. As Marx put it in *A Contribution to Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, “The criticism of religion is therefore in *embryo* the *criticism of that vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo*” (Marx 1992, 244). As Larrain (1991) points out, theory, in this text, serves a central and material purpose in history-making and in the proletariat’s revolution. Marx contends that “the proletariat finds its *intellectual* weapons in philosophy” which can lead to “emancipation [that] will transform the *Germans* into *men* [sic]” (Marx 1992, 256). The point of criticism, even at this early stage in Marx’s intellectual development, is liberation in the material world as this metaphor makes clear: “Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that man shall continue to bear that chain without fantasy or consolation but so that he shall throw off the chain and pluck the living flower” (ibid., 244).

On this last point and in *The German Ideology* (1996), Marx and Engels criticize the Young Hegelians for positing ideas as “the real chains of men,” to which they would “have to fight only against these illusions of consciousness” (Marx and Engels 1996, 41)⁷. The source of oppression, is therefore, not products of consciousness, but products of the real, material world. Thus, **action** is required for liberation. But by critiquing mere ideas, the Young Hegelians support the status quo and thus, “are the staunchest conservatives.” For by “only fighting against ‘*phrases*’...to these phrases [the Young Hegelians] are only opposing other phrases” (ibid., 41). No matter how “world-shattering” their statements, then, “they are in no way combating the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world,” and as a result, such intellectual work amounts to “only further embellishments of [the] claim to have furnished...discoveries of universal importance” (ibid., 41). Dana Cloud (2001) alludes to the importance of this passage to underscore the significance of materialist rhetorical critique to “explain the connections between phrases on the one hand and economic interests and systems of oppression and exploitation on the other” (Cloud 2001, 7). Thus, when Marx said, “Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to **change** it” (Marx 1983, 158), he was elaborating on this argument and calling for action in the material world⁸. In this way, Marx was developing his theory and method of historical materialism that approached history as contingent, human-made.

The German Ideology is also noteworthy for contributing to Marx’s historical materialism generally and for its conceptualization of ideology as a “camera obscura” specifically. In an oft-cited passage leading up to this concept, Marx and Engels (1996) discuss the relationship of human beings to material reality, the mode of production (called “productive forces”), relations of production (called “the intercourse”) and ideas:

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men [sic], the language of real life...Men [sic] are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. —real, active men [sic], as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse correspond to these... (p. 47).

⁷ The Young Hegelians were leftist Prussian intellectuals who followed and responded to Hegel. Marx became a young Young Hegelian while studying philosophy at the University of Berlin in the late 1830s.

⁸ Emphasis in original.

Ideas, in other words, are manufactured by people (who engage in “mental production”, 47) but are constrained by material conditions. But as Marx and Engels later explain, material reality under capitalism can be a tricky thing; it produces and is produced by contradictions that turn reality upside down. Marx and Engels (1996) preview this argument by suggesting that “If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the *inversion* of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process” (Marx and Engels 1996, 47). Thus, like the bourgeois state Hegel describes, ideology inverts reality because reality is indeed inverted. This is a key ingredient of ideology that makes it an especially useful tool for analyzing Palin’s feminism and other cultural artifacts that represent an inverted world (Larrain 1996).

It is also worth noting that Marx and Engels (1996) do not argue that ideology springs exclusively from members of the ruling class, as Stuart Hall (borrowing from Laclau) suggests is the case. Although Marx and Engels claim that “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force” (Marx and Engels 1996, 64), they mean to elaborate on the argument that material reality determines ideas, not the other way around. Additionally, here Marx and Engels refer to “ideas,” not “ideology,” a key point that seems forgotten by arguments like Hall’s that interpret Marx’s notion of ideology as claiming ruling class origins. That this is not the case should be clear enough by reading a bit further down, where Marx and Engels describe how the division of labor

manifests itself also in the ruling class as the division of mental and material labour, so that inside this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the perfecting of the **illusion of the class about itself** their chief source of livelihood), while the others’ attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of this class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves... (Marx and Engels 1996, 65; emphasis added).

Thus, ideology may be produced by members of the ruling class who are its “**conceptive ideologists**,” including politicians like Sarah Palin. Ideological content, furthermore, may emanate from any individual or cultural organ attached to any class or class fraction, as Marx and Engels do not specify a “necessary correspondence” between ideological production and class, as Hall (1985, 1986) argues. Additionally, this passage suggests that ideologists who are **members of the ruling class create illusions about themselves**. Marx and Engels do not elaborate on what “illusions about themselves” means in practice. Thus, a number of questions arise: do ruling class conceptive ideologists “perfect illusions” about the role of capitalists, as a class in society? Do conceptive ideologists of the ruling class “perfect illusions” about the forms their power should take? The extent of their control over working conditions, pay, civil rights, and public debate (and our media system)? It is important to keep these elements of ideology in mind when analyzing Palin’s feminism, as it appears to speak to elites and nonelites, but it may also **convey illusions that capitalist patriarchs and their representative hold about themselves as a class, illusions that reinforce the synergistic relationship between capitalism and patriarchy**.

2.3. “Ideology” in Marx’s Mature Writings

In later works, from *Grundrisse* (written from 1857-1861, published in 1939) through *Capital* (vol. I, 1867; vol. II, 1885, vol. III, 1894), Marx distinguishes between appearances or “phenomenal forms” on the one hand and real relations or “the essence” on the other (Larrain 1991, 31). Under capitalism, these two spheres are contradictory, and yet, constitute material reality. Thus, Marx refines and makes more complex earlier arguments that ideas must be understood as springing from and thus reflecting material reality: **under capitalism, material practices are real and yet can work ideologically**. The **wage**, for example is a real, phenomenal form that compensates workers for their labor, but the wage hides the fact that workers are not paid for all of their labor-time. The wage mystifies “the essence” of profit-making in the capitalist mode of production, the production of surplus value. As Marx explains in *Capital vol. I*, surplus value is the ratio of “surplus labor” to “necessary labor”. Surplus labor is the time a worker works for the capitalist beyond the time it takes for her to produce the equivalent of her wage through necessary labor. The more surplus labor, the more surplus value she produces for the capitalist. Surplus value may be increased by extending or intensifying the workday, thereby expanding “absolute surplus value”, or by short-

ening the amount of time it takes for workers to produce their subsistence, thus expanding “relative surplus value.” Relative surplus value increases as an effect of reducing the amount workers need to produce to cover living expenses or as an effect of devaluing labor power (Marx 1867). None of this is revealed in the wages workers receive or in the prices of commodities. In the chapter in *Capital* on wages, Marx (1867) explains,

On the surface of bourgeois society the wage of the labourer appears as the price of labour, a certain quantity of money that is paid for a certain quantity of labour. Thus people speak of the value of labour and call its expression in money its necessary or natural price. ...In the expression – value of labour, the idea of value is not only completely obliterated, but actually reversed. It is an expression as imaginary as the value of the earth. These imaginary expressions, arise, however, from the relations of production themselves. They are categories for the phenomenal forms of essential relations. That in their appearance things often represent themselves in inverted form is pretty well known in every science except Political Economy.

Let us next see how value (and price) of labour-power, present themselves in this transformed condition as wages.

...As the value of labour is only an irrational expression for the value of labour-power, it follows, of course, that the value of labour must always be less than the value it produces, for the capitalist always makes labour-power work longer than is necessary for the reproduction of its own value... [A] part only of the working day...labour-is paid for, [but it] appears as the value or price of the whole working day of 12 hours, which thus includes... unpaid [labour]. The wage form thus extinguishes every trace of the division of the working day into necessary labour and surplus labour, into paid and unpaid labour. All labour appears as paid labour (Marx 1867, 373-375).

The wage’s great ideological triumph, then, is to obscure the fact that workers are not paid for all of their work. The notion “wage” rests on a theory of value (the classical political economists’ theory of value) that makes an essential inversion regarding “value” as something natural that can be expressed simply by a “price.” As Marx argues, “value” has no inherent value and, under capitalist production, is produced by the additional, unpaid labor of workers that wages-for-hours-worked hide. Thus, Marx argues,

...[T]he money-relation conceals the unrequited labour of the wage labourer. Hence, we may understand the decisive importance of the transformation of value and price of labour-power into the form of wages, or into the value and price of labour itself. This phenomenal form, which makes the actual relation invisible, and, indeed, shows the direct opposite of that relation, forms the basis of all the juridical notions of both labourer and capitalist, of all the mystifications of the capitalistic mode of production, of all its illusions as to liberty, of all the apologetic shifts of the vulgar economists (Marx 1867, 375).

Throughout *Capital, vol. I*, Marx notes how capitalist production works through these phenomenal levels of appearance that appear natural, are “real,” and yet hide their inner workings, which bear contradictions. Thus, Marx discusses how “productive power,” which workers sell to capitalists, “appears as a power with which capital is endowed by Nature a productive power that is immanent in capital” (1867, 228). Earlier in his analysis, Marx discusses the transformation and circulation of money as involving “two antithetical phases” wherein money is transformed into a commodity, and another, “the sale”, through which the commodity is transformed again into money. “M-C-M,” Marx concludes, emphasizing the level of phenomenal appearance that is also constitutive of material reality, “is therefore in reality the general formula of capital as it appears prima facie within the sphere of circulation (ibid., 106). Appearances, puzzles, and mystifications work alongside material reality throughout *Capital*, which sets as one of its tasks as to “solve the riddle presented by money” (ibid., 33).

A useful explanation of ideology under capitalism also appears in *Capital vol. III* (edited by Engels). Without using the word, “ideology,” the following discussion of “**competition**” walks readers through the dynamic process of ideology as it works in capitalism through material (in production) and discursive (via conceptions) means that involve **inversions** that are real (i.e., they are phe-

nominal) that hide (or mystify) yet positively signify, and that **enable capitalism to work (i.e., benefit the ruling class)**:

What **competition** does not show, however, is the determination of value, which dominates the movement of production; and the values that lie beneath the prices of production and that determine them in the last instance. Competition, on the other hand, shows: 1) the average profits... 2) the rise and fall of prices of production caused by changes in the level of wages... 3) the fluctuations of market-prices... All these **phenomena seem to contradict the determination of value by labour-time** as much as the nature of surplus value consisting of unpaid surplus-labour. Thus **everything appears reversed in competition**. The final pattern of economic relations as seen on the surface, in their real existence and consequently in the conceptions by which the bearers and agents of these relations seek to understand them, is very much different from, and indeed quite the reverse of, their inner but concealed essential pattern and the conception corresponding to it (Marx 1894, 146, emphasis added).

Perhaps what Marx calls the “**Fetishism of commodities,**” widely known as **commodity fetishism**, best encapsulates his theory of ideology, illustrating a mature historical materialism that critiques real phenomenal forms that obscure deeper (and also real) relations. Without using “ideology,” Marx illustrates how commodities work ideologically to **conceal** the labor that produced them (and the “dead labor” they thus constitute); they appear as things that have exchange value and thus, appear as relations between things instead of relations between people (i.e., relations among the many workers from whom capitalists extract surplus value in the process of producing the things that become commodities). The opposite, as Marx shows throughout *Capital*, is true. Commodities are real, they are phenomenal forms, but they hide deeper relations between people that constitute relations of capitalist production, specifically, the exploitation of labor. Treating commodities as having values expressed in the money form (i.e., bearing prices) mystifies the process of producing value and lends a veneer of equality, since prices suggest the trade of equivalent values. Profit appears to emanate from simply making more money than commodities cost, as a simple subtraction of cost-price from selling price, instead of emanating from worker’s production of surplus value, which can be calculated by the ratio of surplus to necessary labor. Viewing commodities as things traded for money, again, **turns upside down** the social and contradictory relations between classes. “A commodity” Marx (1867) argues,

is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour (Marx 1867, 46-47).

Fetishizing, or treating commodities as things, then, **benefits the ruling class** of capitalists by **lending an air of fairness and thus legitimacy** to relations of production. Marx compares “**Fetishism of commodities**” to a form of capitalistic worship and in this way, harks back to his early critique of religion,

In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands. This I call the **Fetishism** which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities (Marx 1867, 47).

Bourgeois political economists, as Marx calls them, thus, have served as **conceptive ideologists** for capitalists who benefit from mystifying exploitative relations of production, and in this way, erect an economic religion of sorts. Synthesizing elements of ideology from the three phases of Marx’s intellectual development, commodity fetishism explains how material practice and language together **distort, invert, conceal, justify, compensate and serve the interests of the ruling class**. If ideology turns reality upside down, additionally, this appearance points to real inversions,

real contradictions that need righting so that people can “pluck the living flower” and enjoy the sweetness of real liberation.

Distorts an inverted world. Represents capitalist relations of production as inverted, which they are in reality. Thus, there is nothing “false” about ideology. Examples include wages and commodity fetishism.
Conceals political-economic contradictions.
Offers justification for capitalism.
Promises compensation and consolation for oppression under capitalism.
Serves the interests of the ruling class.
Conveys illusions members of ruling class have about themselves.
Ideology critique informs activism against capitalist exploitation and capitalism in general; such activism may inform ideology critique.

Table 1: Elements of Marx’s Theory of Ideology

Additionally, Marx and Engels argued that ideology does not spring exclusively from the ruling class, but that generated by ruling class members and their associates may point to illusions they hold about themselves. Finally, for Marx and Engels, conducting ideology critique promises to inform **practices (i.e., actions and activism)** necessary to ending oppression wrought by capitalism. As I discuss below, Sarah Palin’s brand of feminism exemplifies Marx’s theory of ideology and its critique underscores the need for feminist activism aimed at eradicating the oppressive, synergistic systems of capitalism and patriarchy.

3. Palin’s “Feminism” as Marx’s Ideology*

In a May 14, 2010 speech at a fundraising breakfast for the pro-life political action committee, Susan B. Anthony List (SBA List), Sarah Palin embraced “feminism.” Palin praised the group for “returning the women’s movement back to its original roots,” which spring from the goals of the “earliest leaders of the women’s rights movements, [who] were pro-life...[w]omen like your namesake..and Elizabeth Cady Stanton” who demanded women’s suffrage and an end to abortion. In her book *America by Heart*, released in November 2010, Palin elaborates on her connection to Stanton and Anthony, praising “our foremothers in the women’s movement [who] fought hard to gain the acceptance of women’s talents and capabilities as equal to men’s” (Palin 2010a, 140). Stanton and Anthony’s embrace of the “laws of nature” and laws that “nature’s God entitle them” earned Palin’s praise. Palin interprets these words, part of the Declaration of Sentiments written in 1848 following the Seneca Falls convention for women’s rights, as proof that “original feminists” “didn’t believe that men were oppressors, women were victims, and unborn children merely ‘personal choices.’” (ibid., 141). “They believed,” Palin continues, “that we were children of God, and, as such, we were all – men, women, our littlest sisters in the womb, everyone – entitled to love and respect” (ibid., 141). According to Palin, abortion is unnatural, ungodly, inhumane, and anti-feminist.

Examining how Palin’s appropriation of SBA List feminism works ideologically requires that we ground our discussion in an understanding of feminism. Although it is beyond the bounds of this essay to give a full historical account of feminist political movements and debates around feminism’s definition, it is helpful to share details relevant to our discussion. First, regarding the “first wave” feminists with whom Palin claims to “feel a connection,” it is important to understand that nineteenth-century feminists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton agitated for women’s right to vote because, among other goals, they wanted to stop marital rape. One way of thwarting women’s service as “slaves to men’s lust” in marriage, as Stanton put in commentary in *The Revolution* in 1868, was to extend suffrage to women as well as rights to education (Beisel and Kay 2004, 512). These goals served each other: stopping marital rape served as a rhetorical exigency that demanded remedy by politically empowering women (by extending suffrage). Stanton and Anthony deemed abortion “infanticide” but did so to highlight the brutal results of men’s sexual abuse of women that, in turn, demanded women’s political empowerment. Second, they represented one faction within the nineteenth century women’s movement in the US, and a radical and controversial one at that, which viewed abortion as the “natural consequence” of husband’s raping their

*See italicized, bolded items in Table 2, p. 13-14.

wives (Beisel and Kay 2004, 513). Like other suffragists of the day, Anthony and Stanton also drew on racist, nativist discourse and racist financiers to organize for women's suffrage.

Our understanding of how Palinite feminism works ideologically also calls for a definition of feminism that can include various moments in its history, a definition that gets at its root as a political movement. As bell hooks (1984) argues, engaging in intellectual and political feminist work requires consensus about feminism's meaning. Hooks' description of feminism as "a movement to end sexist oppression," enables intersectional analyses that take race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, and class into account. Rather than hinge on "equality," which begs unproductive (and counterproductive) questions like "equal with whom?", feminism understood as seeking to "end sexist oppression" emphasizes the constructive goal of the movement. The purpose of hooks' "feminism," furthermore, "is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men" (hooks 1984, 26). Additionally, this notion of feminism can be pressed into the radical transformation of society because it challenges systems of domination, namely patriarchy, but it may also contribute to anti-capitalist revolution. Thus, for hooks, "feminism is neither a lifestyle nor a ready-made identity or role one can step into" (ibid., 26). Feminism is best rendered through verbs not adjectives.

Palin's brand of feminism appears as a movement that supports an identity and a proliferation of adjectives. Additionally, looking at the historical record, Palinite feminism works against the goals of first-wave "original feminists," from whom it claims to descend. Palin's vice presidential candidacy in 2008 provided glimpses of the feminism she would embrace during the 2010 midterm elections. One came from "dissident feminist" and anti-feminist Camille Paglia when she noted several days after the Republican's nominating convention that Palin "represented an explosion of a brand new style of muscular American feminism" (Paglia 2008, para. 10). A second appeared in Palin's much maligned 2008 interview with Katie Couric where the candidate answered affirmatively when asked if she considered herself a feminist (Gallagher, 2010).

Sarah Palin's SBA-List speech in May 2010 describes her brand of feminism as one that harks back to the ("muscular") pioneering spirit of American frontierswomen that stood in sharp relief to the feminized, inauthentic feminists of the East Coast. Just over halfway through her 34-minute speech, Palin thanked the organization "for being home to a new conservative feminist movement" that has begotten "an emerging conservative feminist identity" before bemoaning that for "[f]ar too long when people heard the word "feminist" they thought of the faculty lounge at some East Coast woman's college [sic], right?" In contrast to passive academic feminism, Palin's springs from the hardy Western frontier,

I'd like to remind people of another feminist tradition, kind of a western feminism, it's influenced by the pioneering spirit of our foremothers who went in wagon trains across the wilderness and they settled in homesteads. And these were tough, independent pioneering mothers whose work was as valuable as any man's on the frontier. And it's no surprise that our western states that gave women the vote, the right to vote way before their East coast sisters in a more genteel city, perhaps, got it right. These women, they had dirt under their fingernails, and they could shoot a gun, and push a plow and raise a family all at the same time... These women, our frontier foremothers... loved this country, and they made sacrifices to carve out a living and a family life out of the wilderness. They went where no women had gone before. I kind of feel a connection to that tough, gun-totin' pioneer feminism of women like Annie Oakley and them (Palin 2010b).

Palin, thus, assumed a "tough mother" voice and strong "mother tongue" (Foust 2004; Jetter, Orleck and Taylor 1997; Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles 1996; Rodino 2005, Tiece 2012) to conjure images of "tough, gun-totin' pioneer feminism" Palin associates with icons like Annie Oakley. The adjective-heavy language that describes "western," "pioneering," "frontier," "tough," "gun-totin" feminism contrasts with descriptors for the "East coast," "genteel" feminism that Palin opposes (Palin mispronounced the "g" in "genteel" by giving it a French-sounding "zh" like the "g" in "mirage"). In this way, Palin's is a form of identity feminism that promises **compensation** (i.e., being considered an "authentic feminist") and works against the political goals of ending women's oppression by posing feminism as a static lifestyle and title (brand?) to embrace rather than as a movement that requires activism (i.e., actions and verbs). As hooks explains, even when such lifestyles appear quite radical, for example, in visions of a "counter-culture" that consist of a "woman-centered-world wherein participants have little contact with men" (hooks 1984, 26), such formations involve "diverting energy from feminist movement that aims to change society" (ibid., 26). Additionally, in as much as Palin **congratulates** the SBA List for fostering "a new conservative feminist

movement” she does so for its production of an “emerging conservative identity” that harks back to an earlier one shared by women with dirty hands that sowed fields and raised children in the Wild West.

Although they did such undainty work, US frontierswomen were not necessarily suffragists. This was true for Annie Oakley, whom Palin singles out for representing “pioneer feminism” that won voting rights (or at least enjoyed them) before their East coast sisters. Despite her career as show-woman sharpshooter who entertained audiences for four decades and who symbolized the modern, liberated woman, Oakley opposed extending suffrage to women. Pointing to negative outcomes of opening suffrage to all women, Oakley was known for saying, “If only the good women voted” (Kasper 1992, 213). “Little Sure Shot,” furthermore, refused to support the suffrage movement because it was unladylike. Additionally, divisions that formed between the radical National Women’s Suffrage Association (founded by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton) that barred men and the American Woman Suffrage Association (founded by Julia Ward Howe and Lucy Stone) that welcomed them threatened to alienate audiences and, consequently, hurt Oakley’s show business (Riley 2002). Added to the misinterpretation of Anthony’s and Stanton’s reasons for calling abortion “infanticide” and the lack of appreciation for their radical stance (not to mention their radical newspaper *The Revolution*), Palin’s embrace of Oakley for representing early feminism and American women’s voting rights turns history on its head, as Marx’s “ideology” does. Additionally, the **inversion** represented here exists in reality: in the end Palin supports the confluence of capitalist and patriarchal – not feminist – interests.

Perhaps more counterproductive to the feminist movement – and indeed, more dangerous to women than her inversion of history – is that Palin’s policies stand to oppress women. In *America by Heart*, Palin discusses how her brand of feminism opposed those of “the left-wing,” who, during her 2008 vice presidential run, “didn’t know what to make of an Alaskan chick out on the campaign trail talking about the Second Amendment, kids (the more the merrier!), and America’s urgent need for greater security through energy independence” (Palin 2010a, 137). Although this seems in some ways, like a casual “throw away” line, one that echoes nearly verbatim an aside in her SBA-List speech, it alludes to policy positions that include loosening restrictions on gun ownership and opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; positions that most women oppose (Public Takes Conservative 2009; Saad 2009; Walsh 2008). Palin also opposes material support of poor households through state subsidy and instead supports the Earned Income Tax Credit that reduces tax burdens on low-income households, a position that threatens US single-mother headed households, 42% of which survive below the poverty line, a rate that is more than three times that of the general population (Single Mother Poverty 2011).⁹ Thus, Palin’s brand of feminism serves to **justify** policies that, rather than end women’s oppression, **marginalize women’s political voice and erode their financial wellbeing**.

Most anti-feminist of Palin’s policy positions, however, is her stance on abortion. Even in cases of rape and incest Palin opposes abortion (Goldman 2008)¹⁰. Although she alludes to God and her Christian religious philosophy in defense of the right of women to enjoy equality with men (although she also acknowledges differences between men and women), Palin articulates her position on abortion as exemplifying “new,” true feminism:

Together the pro-woman, pro-life sisterhood is telling the young women of America that they are capable of handling an unintended pregnancy and still pursue a career and an education. Strangely, many feminists seem to want to tell these young women that they’re *not* capable, that you *can’t* give your child life and still pursue your dreams. The message is: ‘Women, you are not strong enough or smart enough to do both. You are not capable.’

The *new* feminism is telling women they are capable and strong. And if keeping a child isn’t possible, adoption is a beautiful choice. It’s about empowering women to make *real choices*, not forcing them to accept false ones. It’s about compassion and letting these scared young women know that there [is help] for them to raise their children in those less-than-ideal circumstances (Palin 2010a, 153, emphasis in original).

After this explanation, Palin shares her own experiences with “less-than-ideal circumstances”: learning of her son Trig’s Down’s syndrome during her pregnancy and the momentary temptation to consider abortion. “God will never give me something I can’t handle”, Palin told herself. “Less-than-ideal” circumstances also include teen pregnancies like the one her teenaged daughter Bristol experienced. Bristol’s decision, despite her youth and unwed status, to bear the child was “[n]ot an

⁹ See also: http://www.issues2000.org/Sarah_Palin.htm

¹⁰ Palin supports abortion only when pregnancy endangers the mother’s life.

easy road, but the right road” (Palin 2010a, 155). Palin omits discussion of rape and incest, however. In doing so, Palin lets the phraseology “less-than-ideal circumstances euphemize bearing children as a result of such tragedies. Restricting abortion in cases of rape and incest, of course, limits women’s choices, and therefore, disempowers women. Palinite feminism **promises compensation and consolation** for supporting policy positions that would further oppress women.

This stance also **turns upside down** Anthony’s and Stanton’s arguments for women’s suffrage, particularly men’s sexual abuse of women, which, as a “natural consequence,” drove women to abort babies. Recall that the goal of Anthony’s and Stanton’s feminism was not to criminalize abortion, but to highlight the consequences of men’s sexual abuse of women to mobilize support for women’s voting rights. When Palin argues that Anthony and Stanton advocated for unborn children and women because the rights of both were connected, she also neglects the primacy of women’s sexual exploitation in Anthony’s and Stanton’s feminism,

Founders of the American women’s movement such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton did not believe abortion was good for women. Quite the contrary, they saw the rights of the unborn child as fundamentally linked to the rights of women (Palin 2010a, 156).

Palin’s version of SBA-List feminism **distorts** suffragists’ use of abortion as a rhetorical exigency meant to highlight women’s sexual oppression not to support legal restrictions on abortion. Anthony and Stanton intended for women to have more not less control over their bodies and hoped to secure such control by expanding women’s political power.

Palin also sidesteps the racism, classism, and covert and overt links to eugenics that underlay their and other American suffragists’ opposition to abortion. The historical record shows that Anthony and Stanton concurred with postbellum physicians’ stated goal of preserving white middle class women’s fertility in the face of immigration and loosened restrictions on citizenship. And, although Stanton and Anthony did not lobby for the criminalization of abortion for white women, they articulated fears of falling Anglo-Saxon power when they likened abortion to infanticide. As Stanton argued in *The Revolution* in 1868:

The murder of children, either before or after birth, has become so frightfully prevalent that physicians...have declared that were it not for immigration the white population of the United States would actually fall off! (Beisel and Kay 2004, 512).

Stanton’s position represents the “positive eugenics” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that encouraged wealthy white women to procreate and discouraged poor, racial minority and newly immigrated women to seek birth control and abortion. Although Palin singles out Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger as the “[o]ne great exception to the culture of life promoted by early feminists” (Palin 2010a, 157). Other first wave feminist “exceptions” include Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Victoria Woodhull, who advocated prevention of the “unfit” from bearing children in ways that suggested control over women’s bodies, and fertility more specifically, by government (Carpenter 2010; Perry 2005). Woodhull, who cautioned against breeding “imbeciles”, furthermore, held a position quite contrary to Palin’s championing of “life” in “less-than-ideal circumstances”, a position that informed Palin’s “decision” to bear her youngest child. Thus, in some ways, first wave feminists’ advocacy of birth control for undesireables runs counter to both Palin’s version of feminism and to the very premise of feminism as a movement to free women from sexist oppression. **Palin’s feminism distorts an already inverted feminism**, just as capitalist ideology distorts an already inverted economy.

The racism mobilized in eugenicist arguments against abortion for whites (“positive eugenics”) and for abortion for poor southern European and Asian women (“negative eugenics”) also traded on the “wages of whiteness” (Roediger 2007), the notion that whiteness, more specifically, Northern Europeanness, conferred cultural authority that compensated for various forms of political-economic power. Historians David Roediger (2007) and Alexander Saxton (1971) have demonstrated that to unite white workers even socialist labor organizers drew on fears that Chinese workers would steal whites’ jobs. When considered together with her regressive stance on immigration, including support of Arizona’s “papers please” law (SB 1070) that required individuals who “look” like immigrants to carry immigration documents (Condon 2010; Palin 2010a), Sarah Palin’s feminism **updates wages of whiteness for today’s conservative women**.

Palinite feminism also **serves the interests of the ruling class** by supporting patriarchal capitalism. By opposing direct subsidies to poor families and supporting restrictions on abortion, Palin’s

policies and their defense through her “feminist” discourse support the availability of poor American women as sources of cheap labor desperate to work any job. In this way, Palin’s policies and rhetoric serve to maintain the “reserve army of labor” Marx has described as essential to the production of surplus value (Marx 1847, 1867), and thus to the very reproduction of capitalism. Such policies also support patriarchy. Unable to find sustenance through state support, poor women would remain eager to work, or, perhaps marry a man, since men out earn women and, reflecting global divisions of poverty, two-thirds of American adults living in poverty are women. At least twice as likely to live in poor households than white women, Latinas and African American women may feel even more pressure to work than whites (Kendall 2010). By opposing choice, Palin’s “feminism” also promotes patriarchy by denying women reproductive rights that men enjoy without question (and as one recently proposed bill underscores, Gumbrecht 2012), and may make them even more vulnerable economically. Thus, Palinite feminism underwrites policies that support what Marx (1867) called the “dull compulsion of the economic”, that under capitalism, “completes the subjection of the labourer to the capitalist.” Since Palin’s policies and rhetoric subjectify women workers (including unemployed and underemployed women), her “feminism” reinforces sexist oppression.

Additionally, **Palin’s feminism supports candidates funded by capitalist patriarch brothers Charles and David Koch**, owners and executives of the energy exploration and consumer product conglomerate Koch Industries. The fourth and fifth richest people in the world (Kroll and Dolan, 2011), the Kochs have developed synergistic relationships with Palin and 2010’s neoconservative Senatorial and Congressional candidates who oppose choice. In 2010 the brothers contributed \$128,000 to the speaker’s bureau employed by Sarah Palin and \$1.9 million to the Tea Party Express that supported neoconservative, anti-choice “mama grizzly” candidates Angle, Bachmann and O’Donnell in 2010 (Good 2010, Loder and Evans 2011, Mayer 2010, Vogel 2011). Thus, despite rallying behind women with “dirt under their fingernails”, Palin’s “feminism” represents the policy objectives of wealthy patriarchs. Palinite feminism, then, offers insights into the **illusions capitalist-patriarchs have about themselves as a class** and, more specifically, illustrates the work of **Sarah Palin as a “conceptive ideologist”** for capitalists, patriarchs, and the synergies between them.

Elements of Marx’s theory of ideology	Palinite feminism as Marx’s theory of ideology
Distorts an inverted world. Represents capitalist relations of production as inverted, which they are in reality. Thus, there is nothing “false” about ideology. Examples include wages, competition, and commodity fetishism.	Palinite feminism (PF) distorts first wave feminism by turning its critique of abortion upside down; PF also obscures the inversion of first wave feminist eugenicists who embraced birth control of those deemed “unfit” racially, economically, and mentally. PF distorts Annie Oakley’s position on women’s voting rights: Oakley opposed extending suffrage to all women.
Conceals political-economic contradictions.	PF conceals contradictions between feminism as a movement against sexist oppression and capitalism that draws on patriarchal relations for survival.
Offers justification for capitalism.	PF offers a justification for sexist oppression of women (i.e., denying women reproductive rights on the basis of its alleged link to “authentic feminism”); offers justification for policies unpopular with women and that stand to erode women’s financial wellbeing.
Promises compensation and consolation for oppression under capitalism.	Claiming lineage from “authentic feminism”, PF promises compensation and consolation for women’s oppression under patriarchy and capitalism (i.e., accepting restrictions on abortion even in cases of rape and incest; supporting policies that ignore women’s preferences and threaten their financial wellbeing); promises an updated “wages of whiteness” for today’s conservative women.

Elements of Marx's theory of ideology (continued)	Palinite feminism as Marx's theory of ideology (continued)
Serves the interests of the ruling class.	PF supports policies that maintain the "reserve army of labor" that capitalism and patriarchy need to survive (i.e., women willing to work for lower wages, in lower-waged fields than men and additionally, make marriage more and divorce less economically attractive for women). Palin's campaign and the campaigns of her "mama grizzlies" were heavily funded by capitalist patriarchs.
Ruling class' "conceptive ideologists" produce ideology that conveys illusions members of ruling class have about themselves.	PF points to illusions that "conceptive ideologists" Palin and her supporters (SBA-List organizers and wealthy patrons like the Koch brothers) have about their role in women's political history; PF is not a grassroots philosophy.
Ideology critique informs activism against capitalism and activism against capitalist exploitation, which may inform ideology critique.	Critique of Palinite feminism can inform feminist activism aimed at ending sexist oppression, which may inform critique of "feminism" as ideology

Table 2: Comparison of Marx's Theory of Ideology with Palinite "Feminism" as Ideology

4. Conclusion

I have argued in this essay that Sarah Palin's brand of feminism works as ideology in the ways that Marx and Engels defined the concept. Palinite feminism justifies women's domination under capitalism and patriarchy by inverting a reality already inverted by these systems of domination. It offers to conceal and compensate for such domination and serves interests of the ruling class (wealthy capitalist patriarchs) over and above women, women of color, and political economic non-elites, including men. Palin's anti-feminist "feminism" refines illusions that capitalist patriarchs, their representatives, and allies craft about themselves. The "feminism" that Palin represents, after all, is not an "authentic," "original" one, but rather, a rendition distorted (and inverted) by patriarchy. Nor is Palin's feminism evidence of an ever encroaching "postfeminism." Borrowing from Susan Douglas' (2010) comical interpretation of postfeminism, I suggest that Palinite feminism is "good, old-fashioned sexism that reinforces good, old fashioned, grade-A patriarchy" (10). At least one poll suggests that Palin's patriarchal "feminism" resonates more with men than with women (Stan 2010). And it works through a folksy, Alaskan brogue and trademark wink. Palin's feminism is good, old-fashioned patriarchal-capitalist ideology.

Understanding how ideology works can help critical media and communication scholars craft more effective critiques and aim actions at the wellspring of anti-feminist ideology –material reality– so that we do not, as Marx and Engels cautioned in *The German Ideology*, fight "phrases with phrases" (Marx and Engels 1996, 41). Thus, questions this analysis raise include: how can Marxist feminist communication and media scholars intervene in the production of capitalist-patriarchal ideology to frustrate efforts to enact policies under its banner? How can we use such knowledge to bring about reform and radical change that emancipate women and workers?

One insight from this analysis is that ideologues seem to want to rewrite history in ways that sanitize it, that imagine the history of the women's movement as not necessarily racist, or concerned with the reproductive capacity of middle class white women. Perhaps an important intellectual project for Marxist feminist scholars is to revive and publicize this history through public scholarship (intellectual work shared with a nonacademic audience) in addition to academic publications and course offerings. The same should be done for the very history of the confluence of capitalism and patriarchy, as suggested by Heidi Hartmann's (2010) description of contradictions inherent in the longstanding capitalist-patriarchy partnership. The family wage, an offspring and enabler of this union, has been decimated over the past several decades, yet patriarchal ideology seems to be working overtime to reclaim the wages of white masculinity. What other texts, images, and dis-

courses work in this way? Critical media and communication scholars are well positioned to analyze such dynamics.

Such critique, furthermore, should highlight the social, cultural, and political economic aspects of this history that are ripe for change and perhaps only threatened by a coming together of people oppressed in multiple ways: by race, ethnicity, immigrant status, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. In some ways, the Occupy Wall Street movement is engaging in such work and borrows from feminist consciousness-raising to do so (Rogers 2011). How else can intellectual and political work inform each other? How can critical scholars of communication and media use ideology critique to inform political action? As Marx's aphorism that the "point is to change it" suggests, such critique would also become more trenchant as scholars become activists and embrace activism in scholarship (Cloud 2011; Macek 2006; Rodino-Colocino 2011). Perhaps there are "intellectual weapons" to be found in philosophy, as Marx (1992, 258) suggested in his early writings. In the end, I am calling on scholars to take action not simply to overturn ideology to reveal "the truth." Borrowing from Marx's critique of religion, I am calling on critical scholars of media and communication to take action to overturn "a condition that requires illusions" (Marx 1992, 244).

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