CAN THE SUBALTERN ACT?
African American Involvement in Educational Voucher Plans

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Abstract

In this essay I renovate critical educational theorist Michael Apple’s arguments concerning conservative modernization, making them more resonant with processes of identity formation and subaltern agency evident in research with working class and poor Black voucher families in the United States. Based on conceptual and empirical findings, I theorize pro-voucher Black politicians, community leaders, and poor and working class families as representative of a subaltern ‘third force’ in conservative formation. Their tactical investments in fleeting conservative alliances and subject positions, I argue, are likely to play an increasingly significant role in educational and social reform both in the United States and elsewhere. To the degree that such subalternly negotiated alliances are a harbinger of a direction that conservative modernization might increasingly take, this renovation should assist critical educators—along with other critical cultural workers and social actors—in better understanding and contesting post-welfarism in education and beyond.

Keywords: critical theory, educational reform, race and education, state and education.

Resumo

Este artigo renova alguns argumentos do estudioso em teoria crítica da educação, Michael Apple, a respeito da modernização conservadora, a fim de que reflitam melhor os processos de formação de identidade e agência subalterna que se evidenciam na pesquisa sobre as familias negras de classe trabalhadora e pobres apoiadoras de programas de vouchers (vale-educação) nos Estados Unidos. Baseado em evidências conceituais e práticas, teoriza os políticos e líderes comunitários negros e famílias negras pobres e da classe trabalhadora pró-voucher como sendo representativos de uma ‘terceira força’ subalterna na formação conservadora. Esses investimentos táticos em alianças e posições conservadoras passageiras virão provavelmente a desempenhar um papel cada vez mais importante em reformas educacionais e sociais tanto nos Estados Unidos quanto em outros países. Da perspectiva de que tais alianças subalternamente negociadas são um prenúncio da direção que a modernização conservadora poderá tomar cada vez mais, essa renovação poderá auxiliar educadores críticos – juntamente com outros trabalhadores e atores culturais críticos – a entender melhor e a constestar o pós-welfarismo (pós-Estado do Bem Estar Social) na área da educação e em áreas afins.

Palavras-chave: teoria crítica em educação, reformas educacionais, raça e educação, estado e educação.
If you’re drowning and a hand is extended to you, you don’t ask if the hand is attached to a Democrat or a Republican. (...) From the African American position—at the bottom, looking up—there’s not much difference between the Democrats and the Republicans anyway. Whoever is sincere about working with us, our door is open to you.

Wisconsin State Representative Polly Williams, the “mother of school choice” in Milwaukee (Carl, 1995, p. 259).

The White educational left is missing something essential in its inattention to considerable support among marginalized communities for market-based educational reforms. My interest in more fully understanding and theorizing African American advocacy for vouchers in Milwaukee, the subject of this article, is an outgrowth of this concern. While critical educational researchers have demonstrated the particularly negative impact of educational marketization on those already disenfranchised (e.g., Lauder & Hughes, 1999; Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998), not enough attention has been paid to the crucial role the dispossessed have actually played in building these otherwise conservative reforms. Understanding this role as a manifestation of situated and subaltern agency within a moment of post-welfarism—and not as naïve submission—will be critical to a larger project of progressive modernization of the increasingly fragmented relationships among those blocs of social actors in the American social formation most likely to protect previous socially democratic victories from further erosion.

Arguments by critical educational theorists and researchers Michael Apple and Anita Oliver concerning the role of identity formation in conservative movement-making have helped my intuitions about voucher supporters in Milwaukee take more concrete form. Reading their work, I began to consider how identity formation also played a significant role in the Milwaukee voucher context, but not in quite the ways that their analysis of a small-town textbook controversy had uncovered (Apple, 1996; Apple & Oliver, 2003). Although the conceptual tools they have developed have become the foundation of my ability to imagine a more compelling theorization of the dynamics I have perceived in Milwaukee, significant conceptual—not to mention empirical—work remains to be done.

In this article I will renovate elements of Apple and Oliver’s argument concerning identity formation in conservative modernization, making them more resonant with dynamics around African American support for vouchers in Milwaukee. If subalternly negotiated alliances in Milwaukee are a harbinger of a direction that conservative modernization might increasingly take, this renovation should assist critical educators—along with other critical cultural workers and social actors—in better understanding and contesting post-welfarism.

I begin with an assessment of the utility and limitations of Apple and Oliver’s theory of rightist political formation for explaining the mobilization among working class and poor African Americans for “parental choice” and vouchers in Milwaukee, one of the centers of voucher use in the United States. As I engage in this task, I will identify and problematize...
conceptual binaries embedded in this theory which do not adequately account for significant dynamics within market-based educational reform in Milwaukee (and presumably elsewhere). Given this problematization, I then retheorize the pro-voucher coalition of African American political representatives, community leaders, and poor and working-class families as representative of a “third force” in conservative formation, and assess the pivotal role played by such groups in conditional alliances enabling the success of other rightist projects in education and beyond. Employing the concepts of subaltern agency and identity formation in relation to the discursive constructions of African American voucher supporters manifested in interviews, I then argue that the alliances negotiated in such mobilizations are much more fleeting and ephemeral than the concept of “hegemonic alliance,” standing in isolation, might imply. Significantly, the retheorization that this analysis suggests—that conservative modernization at least initially relies on subaltern negotiations—leaves the door more open than White critical educators might have thought for rearticulating marginalized families’ educational concerns to ultimately more effective, meaningful, and democratic educational reform projects.

I turn now to a discussion of the theory of conservative movement formation proposed by Apple and Oliver.

Political, State, and Subject Formation

In their ground-breaking essay “Becoming Right,” Apple and Oliver examine a controversy in a semi-rural western community over the local school district’s adoption of a new and, according to some parents, strange textbook series. Their purpose is to better understand the ways in which rightist educational movements are formed at the level of the local and the everyday (Apple, 1996; Apple & Oliver, 2003). What they find significantly disrupts previous analyses of how the educational Right grows, which “too often assume a unitary ideological movement, seeing it as a relatively uncontradictory group rather than a complex assemblage of different tendencies many of which are in a tense and unstable relationship to each other” (Apple, 1996, pp. 44-45). For Apple and Oliver, the Right is not simply an already-existing “massive structuring force that is able to work its way into daily life and into our discourses in well-planned ways” (Apple, 1996, p. 44). Rather, the Right grows through a complex series of “accidents” and interactions between individuals’ “elements of good sense” and the intransigence of a bureaucratic state (Apple, 1996; Apple & Oliver, 2003).

In documenting and analyzing how vaguely socially conservative but largely non-politicized concerns over a new textbook series led to the growth of the Right, Apple and Oliver draw upon Apple’s earlier theorization of the process of conservative modernization. At the core of this modernization Apple (1996) has identified four powerful groups which together constitute what he calls a hegemonic alliance within the social order of the United States: neoliberals, neoconservatives, authoritarian populists, and a fraction of the new middle class (p. 7). Stated most simply, neoliberals are those social actors who essentially
regard unregulated markets as a panacea for all social and economic ills. They therefore advocate the marketization or even privatization of all public sector services as a palliative for perceived state inefficiency and social inequity. Neoconservatives, on the other hand, call for the recentralization of knowledge and values embedded in the “Western” cultural tradition as an antidote to the social balkanization, moral deterioration, and economic decline they perceive in American society. Authoritarian populists—the third group—demand and assert forms of localized control which they believe will insulate their families from the sinister forces and secular humanism which increasingly pervade public schools. Finally, members of the managerial and professional middle classes, while often not overtly aligning themselves with any of these tendencies, supply the technical expertise and professional knowledge in matters of efficiency, measurement, and management upon which rightist social and educational reforms depend (Apple, 2001).

Taken together, these groups are hegemonic in that they are able to sustain leadership and move forward a particular agenda largely through winning consent to their social vision. Groups within the hegemonic alliance accomplish this in two ways—by compromising with each other over what the elements of that vision are to be, and by (re)shaping the terrain of common sense within the larger culture so that it increasingly resonates with their cultural messages and interpretations (Apple, 1996, p. 15).

Because it is formed and sutured through compromise, the social vision of this hegemonic alliance is never unitary—rather it exists always in a somewhat fragile tension, fraught with contradictions that constantly threaten to undo its continued success (Apple, 1996, p. 15). As the rightist alliance sutures over its internal contradictions and infuses the everyday discourses of American public life with its sense-making constructions, it also, at least potentially, grows.

For Apple, this hegemonic bloc is dynamic (that is, always in formation) in three important ways. First, it is dynamic temporally, in that it can and must respond to changing historical conditions, shifting alliances, the introduction of new technologies, the birth of new social movements, and larger economic trends. Second and thirdly, this conservative modernization is dynamic spatially, discursively speaking, in both a horizontal and vertical fashion. Horizontal dynamism is present in the suturing that takes place as different dominant groups gather together in tense unity under a single “ideological umbrella” (Apple, 1996, p. 15); vertical dynamism is present as the discourses of these dominant groups act in creative ways to disarticulate prior connections and rearticulate groups of [largely ideologically unformed] people into this larger ideological movement by connecting to the real hopes, fears, and conditions of people’s daily lives and by providing seemingly “sensible” explanations for the current troubles people are having. (p. 45)

In short, this is a process of horizontal suturing and vertical articulation.
The politically formative process of disarticulation and rearticulation does not occur, however, in a seamless manner directly governed by the dominant groups’ political will. Instead, as Apple and Oliver demonstrate in their study of conservative formation in the textbook controversy mentioned earlier, “ordinary people” become articulated to larger conservative social movements through a complex series of “accidents” and interactions with the state (Apple, 1996, p. 45).

For Apple and Oliver, it is not just the hegemonic alliance and the subjectivities of those who might be articulated into it that are always in flux—the state, too, is dynamic in an analogous manner; the state “grows” in response to its interactions with assemblages of social movements that constantly seek to reshape it to their vision. Although this growth occurs through a variety of potential responses (e.g., by adopting, mediating, and/or resisting the demands of social movements), families in Apple and Oliver’s study who were concerned about what they perceived as culturally unfamiliar and disturbing materials in the textbook controversy primarily encountered a defensively-postured state resisting further challenges by what it impatiently concluded were the organized forces of right-wing censorship.

Nearly every [concerned] parent (...) stated that their original introduction to the textbooks began when their child came home and was made upset by a particular selection in the texts (...). [Parents] were more than a little surprised to read stories in their children’s books that seemed inappropriate, and were even more surprised and dismayed by what they felt was the board’s and the administration’s “heavy handed” response. (Apple, 1996, p. 58)

The state as enshrined in the bureaucratic offices of the local school district responded to the concerns of ideologically relatively unformed2 and heterogeneous groups of parents by making available to them only two subject positions through which they might be seen, heard, and understood: that of the responsible parent who supported the “professional decision-making” of school district officials and teachers regarding curriculum, and that of the irresponsible right-wing censor. Forced into the latter subject position as a result of their unmet and persistent concerns, many politically unformed parents became quite ideologically formed as they turned to right-wing national organizations for help in overcoming the intransigence of the school bureaucracy. In the process of this “accidental” and highly mediated subject formation, in which the agency of concerned parents became articulated to the agency of the broader Right, the Right grew (Apple, 1996, p. 64).

Possibilities and Limitations: The Battle over “Parental Choice” in Milwaukee

In their study of conservative formation within a small-town textbook controversy, Apple and Oliver have clearly disrupted received and unhelpful notions of a unitary Right
growing seamlessly, in isolation, and through strict intentionality. In many ways reminiscent of Apple’s earlier interventions concerning reproduction in schools (Apple, 1982), the researchers have provided us with a rich account of the complex, mediated, and contradictory ways in which the hegemonic alliance actually grows through articulations with the real hopes, fears, and good sense of ordinary people rebuked by the state.

In this section I explore the ways in which this approach to conservative formation both enables and limits our understanding of another moment in which processes of conservative modernization have significantly altered public policy—the construction of the voucher alliance and the resulting voucher program in Milwaukee. After identifying and analyzing some of the possible limitations of Apple’s framework, I will propose some substantive alternatives.

Jim Carl (1996), in an article entitled “Unusual Allies: Elite and Grass-roots Origins of Parental Choice in Milwaukee,” adopts a theoretical framework for understanding events in Milwaukee that resonates with Apple and Oliver’s own theoretical constructions. However, as we shall see, some elements of the history that Carl narrates seem to fit less comfortably within their framework.

Carl begins his analysis of factors leading to the rise of the “parental choice” debate in Milwaukee by describing the emergence nationally of a hegemonic alliance in the early 1980s, which he calls the conservative restoration (a term also used by Apple in earlier works). Within this alliance, in relation to issues of parental choice, Carl depicts the tensely intersecting agendas of two of the dominant groups delimited by Apple—neoliberals and neoconservatives. According to Carl (1996), local neoliberal education reformers, on the one hand, believed that the extension of private markets into the state’s education systems would bring improvement in educational attainment as well as profitability. On the other hand, local neoconservative educational reformers privileged private schools for their supposed traditional academic curriculum, religious training, and strict discipline (p. 268). Although Apple is much less cursory in describing the complexity of these positions and interactions (Apple, 1996, pp. 27-31), the parallels are quite clear and, as will be shown below, useful for understanding certain dynamics within the Milwaukee context.

However, Carl also acknowledges that “not all proponents of vouchers in Milwaukee can be described as agents of the conservative restoration” (1996, p. 268). Rather, he outlines a “conditional alliance” between state-level neoliberal reformers and Milwaukee-based supporters of a handful of independent community schools. According to Carl,

Five factors generated this conditional alliance: dissatisfaction among many black Milwaukeans with a school system that failed to deliver acceptable educational outcomes for disproportionately high numbers of black students; the existence of community schools whose multicultural supporters had sought public funding for two decades; the growth of black political representation in Milwaukee during an era when government policies tilted rightward, as personified by state representative Polly Williams; the efforts of Governor Tommy Thompson’s administration to craft neoliberal and neoconservative
In analyzing the conditional alliance that Carl describes, Apple and Oliver’s model seems to offer two possible inroads for making sense of African Americans in Milwaukee who have supported publicly-financed vouchers as a means of enrolling their children in Milwaukee’s independent community schools. The first possibility—one which Apple would presumably not endorse given his discussion of race and class as central dynamics in unequal power relations—is that we see the Milwaukee-based voucher supporters under the leadership of African American state representative Polly Williams as becoming part of an alliance of dominant groups. In such a scenario, we would read Polly Williams’ group as having horizontally sutured itself together, through compromises, with moderates and neoconservatives, thereby sharing in the [always partial] exercise of hegemonic control over education debates in Milwaukee. The second possibility, again experimenting with Apple and Oliver’s framework, is that we see Polly Williams’ group as vertically articulated to right-wing movements in the manner of the ideologically relatively unformed “ordinary people” of the textbook controversy, a possibility that Apple would presumably reject given the many decades of educational activism by African American families in Milwaukee.

Although these seem to be the two theoretical spaces conceptually available in Apple and Oliver’s framework for interpreting the conditional alliance around vouchers in Milwaukee, in what follows I will show the partial inadequacy of both. In fairness, Apple and Oliver do mention that “rightist policies are often compromises both between the Right and other groups [italics added] and among the various tendencies within the conservative alliance” (Apple, 1996, p. 45). However, if the compromises “between the Right and other groups” are to be understood as a conceptual category outside of the two possibilities I have mentioned, Apple and Oliver have not yet adequately described or theorized this possibility.

Before analyzing the ways in which each of the two theoretical possibilities described above partially explains and partially misconstrues the reality of the conditional alliance in Milwaukee, I want to introduce a set of binaries that underlie Apple’s conception of rightist formation. Later I will problematize these in hopes of opening up a “third theoretical space” for analyzing the conditional alliance in Milwaukee, and by extension similar alliances in other settings.

At least temporarily and within the Milwaukee context, despite our contrary intuitions, Polly Williams’ pro-voucher faction embodies characteristics that seem to locate it within Apple and Oliver’s framework as a dominant member of the alliance. For example, Williams’ explicit recognition of the limitations of historical alliances with White liberals (Carl, 1996, p. 274) clearly indicates carefully formed and sophisticated tactical ideology in response to political experience. Her often-expressed realism and lack of naiveté regarding both the political climate of the late 1980s and the self-interestedness of moderates willing
to ally with her is further indication of this; it is also indicative of the suturing nature of her relationship with neoliberals, in which neoliberal language concerning competition and markets became fused with her own vision of community control. As Carl notes, “Unlike her New Right allies, who argued that the social safety net ought to be lowered or dismantled, Williams believed that blacks needed to take control of publicly funded programs and institutions that targeted their communities” (1996, p. 274). In short, Williams had not allowed her vision to be subsumed into that of the Right, as in the case of the concerned parents by the end of the textbook controversy; neither she nor her faction “became Right” in any way that would preserve the normal stability of that terminology.

While Williams’ faction resonates with certain characteristics of membership within an alliance of dominant groups as described by Apple and Oliver (and as depicted in the column of scenario one in table 1), it falls far short in other respects. It is very difficult to conceive of Williams’ faction and its poor and working-class Latino and African American supporters as a dominant group within the political landscape of Milwaukee. The most cursory examination of social and material conditions that frame the everyday lives of low-income African American and Latino families in Milwaukee renders this a conceptual impossibility, as does the long and frustrating experience African American parents and community leaders, including Williams, have had in failing to gain greater responsiveness from the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) bureaucracy (Carl, 1995; Fuller 1985).

This marginalization, then, seems to point us away conceptually from locating African American supporters of vouchers in Milwaukee within the alliance of dominant groups (scenario one in table 1), and toward scenario two, resonant with the experiences of the ordinary, ideologically relatively unformed parents described by Apple and Oliver in the “Becoming Right” piece. Immediately we are struck by the parallel between the encounter of the concerned parents in the textbook controversy with an unresponsive state bureaucracy, on the one hand, and the experiences of Williams and her followers as they sought redress with MPS, on the other. Williams and her followers, clearly, were pushed toward rightist social movements because of the perceived intransigence of state actors. Furthermore, within this educational struggle, it is easy for most progressives to identify the “real hopes and fears” of Williams’ faction with which we presumably are highly sympathetic. Finally, as mentioned previously, the Williams’ faction in the conditional alliance rests much more comfortably, relative to power, on the side of the “not-yet-dominant” in table 1.

Nevertheless, as alluded to earlier, aspects of the Williams’ faction are more than a little incongruous with the “ordinary people” formulation of scenario two. To argue that her group remained ideologically largely unformed or characterized in its ideas by common sense understandings would be to deeply insult the decades of struggle around education in which groups of African Americans in Milwaukee (and elsewhere) have engaged (Carl, 1995; Fuller, 1985; Holt, 2000). Furthermore, the relationship of Williams’ faction to the neoliberal groups with which she worked was not simply vertical; again, the sophisticated manner in which Williams was able to negotiate her interests with those of neoliberals demonstrates a significant degree of “horizontal” relationship between the two.
If the conditional alliance described by Carl does not fit conceptually into the two available scenarios, how then should it be theorized? And if this practical example and its theorization apply in other settings, what are the implications for our understanding of the Right’s success in the present moment in other contested spheres?

**Toward a “Third Space” in Conservative Formation**

In the battle over publicly-financed private school vouchers in Milwaukee, as I have shown, Williams’ group of African American voucher supporters cannot properly be theorized as either a dominant group sutured within a hegemonic alliance, or as a group of ideologically relatively unformed, ordinary people articulated into the Right as a result of the state’s unresponsiveness. Despite its theoretical elusiveness, Williams’ faction was absolutely central both to the emergence of parental choice programs in Milwaukee, and to the claims to respectability and legitimacy that voucher programs have since attained in national and even global educational debates. Given this, a further theorization of African American supporters of vouchers in Milwaukee is crucial to the project of more fully understanding and contesting the Right’s continued success in dismantling key vestiges of the American social democratic accord.

As the Milwaukee parental choice case suggests, the hegemonic alliance was not able to impose voucher programs in Milwaukee or elsewhere until the birth of a more fleeting conditional alliance, in which dominant groups were nevertheless the major, and exponentially more powerful, players. Although Carl does not “unpack” his use of the term conditional alliance as much as we might hope, his usage, especially in relation to the Milwaukee example, seems to imply an alliance that is much more fleeting and ephemeral than a stand-alone hegemonic alliance restored over 30 years, successfully suturing new compromises among its dominant members while articulating ideologically relatively unformed, ordinary people into its ranks (see Apple, 1996, p. 61; and footnote 2 in this article).

In theorizing the qualities of the non-dominant but ideologically more formed groups that join with dominant ones in order to build successful conditional alliances, a useful approach might be to envision the opposite poles of the qualities of scenarios one and two in table 1 as horizons, with the parent textbook activists as described by Apple and Oliver largely encapsulated within the descriptors in the column of scenario two. Dominant groups, such as neoliberal forces, on the other hand, would largely align with the characteristics in the column of scenario one. Different “third space” groups with which the Right formed conditional alliances, such as pro-voucher African American families in Milwaukee, would occupy various points along each of the eight categorical horizons.

In accordance with the sketch presented earlier, African American voucher families in Milwaukee—as an example of a social force implying a third scenario, or third space tendency in conservative formation—should be located along the respective horizons in table 1 as relatively formed, ideological, and suturing in a horizontal manner with dominant
groups (all descriptors on the left side of the table). At the same time they remain largely not-yet-dominant, pushed toward rightist social movements by an unresponsive state, and constituted by real hopes and fears to which progressives can be sympathetic (as encapsulated more within the right side of the table).

Just as we need to realize the heterogeneous qualities of groups that are sutured and articulated to the hegemonic alliance in conditional alliances, we also need to think clearly about the quality of the conservative victories implicit in such alliances. Whereas the first two scenarios of the Right’s growth—through horizontal suturing and vertical articulations—represent fairly unequivocal victories for the rightist project, the third scenario involving subalternly negotiated alliances presents a more nuanced, ambiguous, and contradictory sense of victory. Is the political success of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program simply a monolithic loss for those supporting radically democratic reform in education, or is it also a partial victory? More will be said about this in relation to African American tactical mobilizations for vouchers later.

**Identity Formation and Subaltern Agency: A Reconceptualization**

In order to develop a more nuanced conceptualization of the importance of such third space groups in conservative formation, it will be useful to further sharpen our focus upon the process of what Apple and Oliver (along with other theorists) have called “identity formation” (Apple 1996; Apple & Oliver, 2003). In the voucher example, identity formation occurs as various factions of the conservative alliance, African American educational activists, and low-income families in Milwaukee suture their interests together within tensely constructed and maintained alliances. In the earlier years of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, discourses circulating through the Milwaukee Public Schools system, as well as through the voucher alliance, positioned African American families and offered identities in particular ways. Primary among the subject positions in circulation among teachers, administrators, and other professionals in the Milwaukee Public Schools were those predicated on culturally-based, racially-based, and/or biologically-based deficit models. African American families fleeing public schools and embracing the proposed voucher system frequently cited instances in which public school failure was blamed on the supposedly culturally-rooted unruly behavior of students of color. Similarly, families complained about the regularity with which their children were pathologized and abandoned to special education programs and “alternative” schools after being marked with disability labels (Corporation for Educational Radio and Television, 1993).

In contrast to this, school marketization efforts in Milwaukee seemed to offer much more dignified subject positions to disenfranchised parents and guardians, perhaps most significantly that of rational consumer. Rather than pathologizing “Black” cultural forms through racist social scientific normative discourses, market-oriented voucher advocates first positioned parents and guardians as ideal consumers whose sole constraint consisted of artificially-limited market-defined choice. While positioning low-income parents and
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guardians of color as rational educational consumers empowered to make the best choices for their children dehistoricizes their agency by largely failing to see it as emerging within unequal material and discursive relations of power, neoliberal discourse at the same time allows parents and guardians to be seen, heard, and understood, and perhaps most importantly to act, in ways that are often simply not possible within the everyday life of urban public schools.

An analysis predicated on questions of identity formation allows for the possibility of a micro-level examination of the tactical choices groups of parents and guardians make in negotiating their sets of perceived educational options on a terrain that is not largely of their own choosing. Rather than focusing only on the structural dynamics around educational marketization which will likely further marginalize low-income urban communities of color (Lauder & Hughes, 1999; Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998), I wish to follow Apple and Oliver’s lead in taking seriously the everyday dilemmas, consciousness, and agency of voucher families as they attempt to negotiate educational structures which, intentionally and/or functionally, have not been designed with their best interests in mind (Apple, 1996; Apple & Oliver, 2003). Thus, while I am deeply concerned about the likely outcomes of market-oriented educational reforms in Milwaukee and elsewhere, I also want to take utterly seriously a consideration of how conservative educational mobilizations succeed by seeming to speak to marginalized people's very real fears and desires. It is through understanding this articulation, as a matter of identity formation and subaltern agency, that the process of conservative formation will perhaps most effectively be interrupted and supplanted with a more socially democratic (and ultimately more effective) educational vision.

Thus, seen from “below,” from the vantage point of poor and working-class families of color, free market educational discourses seem to open a space to African American parents and guardians in interesting and contradictory ways (and in a manner not always present in the often pathologizing discourses of urban public schools). To approach this question of how offered subject positions are tactically “taken up” and “inhabited” by parents and guardians, we are aided by the work of critical cultural theorist Michel de Certeau. Although de Certeau problematically posits a monolithic sense of “power structure” (after all, in the case under examination, it is impossible to comfortably attribute the status of power structure to only either MPS and its allies or the pro-voucher forces), nevertheless a further engagement with his ideas will prove useful in examining the forms of agency with which African American parents and guardians negotiate their best interests.

In characterizing the mechanisms of power operating within the modern social formation, de Certeau (1984) endorses French theorist Michel Foucault’s “microphysics of power,” in which one finds “miniscule” technical procedures acting on and with details, redistributing a discursive space in order to make it the means of a generalized ‘discipline’ (surveillance)” (p. xiv). Nevertheless, de Certeau faults Foucault’s analysis for once again “privileg[ing] the productive apparatus” in failing to discover “how an entire society resists being reduced to [discipline],” and particularly “what popular procedures (also “miniscule” and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them in order to
evade them” (p. xiv).

De Certeau uses the term *strategy* to identify a deployment of power to promote or maintain the interests of a power structure, and *tactics* to refer to the operations by which the less powerful defend or promote their interests. De Certeau’s project is to make Foucault’s analysis of power more complete, specifically by discerning an “anti-discipline” in the “ways of operating” that “constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production” (1984, p. xiv).

In the Milwaukee example, some disenfranchised African American “users” (that is, parents) negotiated the space of two powerful competing alliances, MPS and pro-voucher conservatives, deciding for tactical reasons, that at least for some, and at least in the short term, a conditional alliance with conservative forces represented greater opportunity than previously largely failed alliances with sympathetic forces within Milwaukee Public Schools. De Certeau would argue that parents and guardians are never passive or without agency within this process of alliance-building and subject formation. They, to use another one of his terms, “make do” within the identity options that are made available to them, turning subject positions as much as possible to purposes that they feel will best serve their educational and social interests (Apple, 1996; De Certeau, 1984).

Such a focus on identity formation as a component of subaltern agency allows us to discern that the articulations and alliances formed around vouchers in Milwaukee are much more transient, ephemeral, opportunistic, and unstable than current literature, including Apple and Oliver’s “Becoming Right” piece (Apple, 1996; Apple & Oliver, 2003), implies (Apple & Pedroni, in press). Nevertheless, despite the often transient nature of such conditional alliances, crucial and lasting gains are in fact won by educational conservatives as a result of the reforms that these alliances are able to engender. The effect of voucher mobilizations on legislation and on the global currency of private vouchers is not nearly as ephemeral as the conditional alliances that undergird and enable their initial success.

Therefore, as I argued earlier, a more nuanced theorization of groups such as the grassroots supporters of vouchers in Milwaukee—which cannot be adequately posited either as dominant elements within a hegemonic alliance, or as relatively ideologically unformed and ordinary individuals articulated into the Right as a result of the state’s intransigence—is crucial to the project of a more full understanding of the Right’s continued success in dismantling key vestiges of the American social democratic accord.

The current under-emphasis on the importance of subaltern agency in hegemonic successes might result from our inclination to theorize elements within conservative modernization as “groups” unproblematically embodying “ideal types,” rather than as “discursive tendencies.” While some individuals and organizations can be more or less correctly categorized into one of Apple’s four elements, there are also (almost) always contradictory tendencies within these groups and individuals. The fact that these tendencies are not embodied as ideal types (e.g., few groups or individuals are monolithically neoliberal or neoconservative), but rather are mediated in contradictory ways, actually expands conceptually the spaces for progressive rearticulation within the formation of these
subjectivities.

Since we still want to foreground the ways in which these discourses construct and are constructed by real social actors, thus sidestepping the disposition of some post-structural theorists to see the world as made up only of competing discourses which somehow exist beyond history and human agency (Pedroni, 2005), we may want to refer to Apple’s four elements as embodied tendencies. To not do so restricts our likelihood of apprehending the importance of subaltern groups in hegemonic successes, since subaltern groups, unlike those closely aligned with more powerful embodied tendencies, often act tactically, in a manner suggested by de Certeau, and often not through the deployment of largely internally cohesive discourses which seek to (re)narrate a set of relationships between elements such as the state, the economy, individuals, and the social formation (De Certeau, 1984). The ability to materialize elaborate and cohesive intellectual discursive production is more typically a privilege of the powerful, who, as de Certeau suggests, shape and control the terrain upon which ideological and material battles over such things as access to education are fought. On the other hand, subaltern yet politically savvy groups, such as the African American and Latino supporters of private school vouchers in Milwaukee, quite often operate in a tactical relationship to power, sensing the need to act within the spaces that the powerful provide, sometimes in ways that creatively turn the strategic deployments of the powerful back against the powerful, and other times in ways that are ultimately self-defeating for subaltern groups, as powerful groups accomplish their objectives precisely because of tactical “poaching” by subaltern groups. This latter scenario, I would argue, is the far more likely long-term outcome of African American support of private school vouchers in Milwaukee.

In fact, my analysis of data gathered in a series of interviews and observations of parents and guardians, as well as other African American voucher advocates in Milwaukee, indicates that this is indeed the case (Pedroni, 2004). African American articulation to neoliberal interventions including voucher programs seems to be largely tactical and opportunistic, rather than strategic and ideologically disciplined. As shall also be evident in my brief analysis of interviews conducted by a conservative videographer supported by the Bradley Foundation in the next section, African American voucher advocates rarely offer “intact” neoliberal or neoconservative discourses as underpinning their investment in vouchers. Although their discourses include occasional neoliberal and neoconservative elements, they also contain other elements that run significantly counter to each of these discourses. Because of their tactical relationship to dominant groups, and because of their investment in other mobilizations that are in clear opposition to the project of conservative modernization, African American supporters of vouchers in Milwaukee (and I believe this will manifest itself more broadly) do not typically “become Right” in terms of identity formation, despite their tactical investment in neoconservative and neoliberal subject positions (Apple, 1996; Apple & Oliver, 2003). One brief example from Milwaukee will help illustrate this point, though many examples surfaced during my research and have been analyzed elsewhere (see Pedroni, 2004).
Listening to African American Voucher Families in Milwaukee

Laura Fordham (pseudonym) is an African American parent of a child utilizing vouchers provided through the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program to attend a participating nonsectarian private school. The interview from which I draw this brief analysis was recorded in 1998 shortly before the Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, thus lifting an Appeals Court injunction predicated on issues of separation of church and state. The interview, conducted by a Bradley Foundation-supported European-American professional videographer closely affiliated with neoconservative Catholic educational organizations in Milwaukee, took place in Madison, Wisconsin, shortly after a well-publicized speak-out and rally among voucher proponents protesting the injunction (phone interview with videographer, April 22, 2000).

The daughter of the interview subject, Laura Fordham, attends a private nonsectarian elementary school in which her mother also works as the admissions chairperson. For Ms. Fordham, the overriding factor in using a voucher to choose this particular school is its proximity to the family’s home. In Milwaukee, this is not an inconsequential issue. With the advent of busing, many public neighborhood schools in the urban core were closed. This has presented significant difficulties related not just to the daily transportation of children; distance has also formed a significant obstacle to parental involvement in the public schools, particularly when many families do not own cars. This in turn has exacerbated the sense that public schools are frequently out of touch with the communities they serve.

As Ms. Fordham explains, “If she has to go back to the public schools, then she would be bused possibly across town. Well, I would not allow for her to be bused across town. First thing’s, she’s a chronic asthmatic kid. And for her to be bused, it would be impossible.” Ms. Fordham’s decision to relocate her child to a neighborhood private school came only after considerable effort to make the public school option work. “I could not transport her to school back and forward every day. I did that for her first year (...) that was seventeen and a half miles away. So when she become more chronically ill, and my husband becomes ill, she had to stop going to school there, because I couldn’t take her to school. Plus we couldn’t afford it.”

Ms. Fordham is nostalgic for a time “when the schools were so much better than they are now, the public schools at least (...). You could go to school down the street and meet your neighbors.” That is, public schools were also important centers of life within the community. “Now, the way the [public] schools are going, they tell you where your kid can go. Where with the Choice program, you’re able to put your kid (...) where you want them to go (...). And you’re able to afford it.” Today in Milwaukee, private voucher-accepting neighborhood schools are often called upon by parents and guardians to fulfill the community role the neighborhood public schools once played. “And that’s important, because we find that for our private schools are closer around in the circle than public schools are.”
Beyond the absence of public schools within some Milwaukee urban neighborhoods, Ms. Fordham also characterizes the experiences of many public school children in the following way: “They are in the classroom, and they’re crowded. And if a kid is a little slower learning he [doesn’t] have the time to take (...) so after a while he’ll just stop going to school, or he’ll miss school because he didn’t know his lesson, or he had nobody to pay attention to him.”

Fordham’s characterization of the public school beset by overcrowding contrasts markedly with the figure of the public teacher in the interviewer’s own narrative, in which public schools are seen as failing not because of overcrowded classrooms, but because of their monopolization by teachers’ unions which protect unworthy teachers while sheltering bloated and inefficient school bureaucracies from market discipline (Creative Media Services, 1998). An indictment of overcrowded classrooms, rather than union monopolies and a lack of competitive educational markets, points to a diagnosis and prescription for urban public schools which can only sit awkwardly within the neoliberal frame of “market efficiency/inefficiency.” The awkwardness of this articulation is tempered only by considerable work, which allows for a type of hegemonic suturing (Apple, 1996) that never resolves the inhering contradictions.

This divergence of assumptions between Ms. Fordham and the interviewer is furthermore evident as they negotiate the content of the interview. For example, in relation to the issue of consumer choice within educational markets, he asks, “Why should that be your choice? As a parent, or as a grandparent, or as a family member, why should you have the right to [choose] that?” While the interviewer positions Ms. Fordham as a consumer within an educational marketplace, she answers from a very different subject position—that of a member within a community and society: “One of the things I feel is going to improve our society is if we can educate our kids better.” Again, Ms. Fordham’s “parent as community member” sits awkwardly with the interviewer’s own “parent as consumer.”

**Disarticulation and Rearticulation**

These brief excerpts represent, at the micro-level, an important instantiation of the tense, contradictory, and often successful process of articulation and conditional alliance-building within the movement for vouchers. While the tensions and contradictions in such articulations are vividly evidenced in the differing purposes, resources, and identities that the interviewer and the interview participant bring to the interview, clearly they also share a limited common purpose which allows them to stand together “in the same room,” however awkwardly. Both the interviewer (as a neoliberal and neoconservative advocate of educational marketization and Catholic schools) and the interview subject (as a parent concerned about her child’s education) are interested in furthering at least a specific, limited version of parental choice in Milwaukee. One can imagine that this parent and others similarly positioned, in contrast to the interviewer, are unlikely to favor “choice” beyond the low-income parameters within which it was initially established.
In significant ways, then, the subaltern and tactical agency that Ms. Fordham and other African American parents, guardians, and community leaders have demonstrated within the contested terrain over vouchers is a testament to the strength of their potential political agency, rather than, as is sometimes suggested, an indication of naïve submission to hegemonic conservative educational and economic discourses. This remains true even if these parents, guardians, and community leaders are ultimately proven wrong, as I believe they will be, in their assertions that their actions will be of maximum benefit in the long run not just for their children but also for other children left behind in newly market-disciplined urban public schools. And I believe this tactical agency will in all likelihood be further instantiated in future mobilizations, quite possibly around other traditionally conservative themes, many of which have long been issues of concern for large numbers of African American families, including support for school prayer and “religious freedom,” as well as antipathy toward abortion and the interests of sexual minorities.

Reflecting on the pivotal role played by subaltern groups, I want to suggest that the conservative hegemonic alliance in the late 1980s recognized that it almost wielded the power to get vouchers through. Although by itself the hegemonic alliance was not able (yet) to successfully realize its marketization agenda concerning education and vouchers, the Right could “stretch” its power by bringing parts of a traditional liberal constituency—a portion of African American low-income families—on board. Articulating the privatization agenda in education to these parents and guardians’ “good sense” and perceived interests would enable the Right to tip the scales of educational power away from an alliance of liberal groups including teachers’ unions, other trade unions, the American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League, and feminist and environmental organizations and toward the amalgamation of groups pursuing conservative modernization in education. Given the Wisconsin political climate of the late 1980s, in which progressives wielded very little power, coupled with a long and historic movement among African American families in Milwaukee for community-controlled schools that would protect their children from the sometimes reprehensible racial practices of Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee presented itself as an ideal battleground upon which the conservative alliance might win crucial ideological battles over the character, form, and funding of education in the United States (Carl, 1996). Such a victory would also have promising implications for farther-reaching conservative goals involving the broad privatization of the public sphere and the deresponsibilization of the state.

In the process, the immediate and long-term conservative agendas around privatization in education and elsewhere would not be the only part of the hegemonic project that would be served. It will be useful here to reinvoke the conceptualization Michael Apple has proposed of the conservative hegemonic alliance as constituted through a series of tensely negotiated and maintained compromises among disparate but overlapping powerful interests (Apple, 1993, 1996, 2001), or what I have proposed calling discursive tendencies. In regard to the contestation of such a tense alliance, critical theorists in education and elsewhere have correctly argued that one strategy to forward the agenda of a radically
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democratic social and educational project might be to carefully discern these fault lines within the hegemonic alliance so that potential tensions among the different positions might be exacerbated, thereby pushing the project of conservative modernization in the direction of crisis. Just as progressives hope to strategically promote their interests through capitalizing on these points of suture on the Right, so too the Right has an interest in continuing to capitalize on and subvert tensions among real and potential progressive allies.

For many African American urban leaders who have, sometimes even tepidly, supported vouchers, the reaction of some progressive Whites has been quite illuminating. It is characteristically a reaction which, previously content to see Blacks as “wisely” coalescing with predominantly White progressive initiatives, now sees these same Blacks as foolishly allying themselves with dangerous forces. A tacit message appears to be that Blacks don’t know the real dangers of allying with “reprehensible” conservative people; only White liberals know that. It smacks of a feeling of the “White man’s burden,” where liberal White educators are now angry at the “Black children” who they had gathered under their umbrella, because those children are showing independence of mind.

Toward a Theory of Subaltern Agency and Identity in Educational Research

Public school has a lot of changes that I felt that needed to be made. I’m not knocking public schools. Public school has a lot of good things to offer. But public school also on the other hand has a lot of improving to do. And I resented that being African American—and of course I live in one of the poorer neighborhoods—my children were stigmatized by that. And they felt like they were giving you something. I’m a working mother. I pay taxes (...). And my taxes help pay for public education. So as far as I was concerned, it was a paid education. You know, and I didn’t appreciate the stigma like you have to take whatever I give you, you know. It’s free. You ain’t paying for nothing. And you know, that was the stigma. And it was so hard to get anything done. I was always (...). It was always a fight. And I was looking in search of something different.

Sonia Israel, mother whose two daughters attended an Islamic voucher school (in Pedroni, 2004, p. 156)

In this article I have utilized a conceptual and empirical discussion of the discursive overlaps, tensions, and power differentials among constituents of the Milwaukee voucher alliance to suggest the importance of subaltern agency and identity formation within the process of conservative formation. Based on the conceptual and empirical juxtapositions in which I have engaged, I have argued for an expansion and reconceptualization of the theories of conservative modernization offered by Apple and Oliver in their essay, “Becoming Right.” The modifications that I have proposed incorporate processes of identity formation and subaltern agency among third space groups as key components of the fragile and uneven process through which conservative educational mobilizations
experience varying degrees of success or failure.

I have argued that the success and maintenance of such educational projects is predicated neither on a direct imposition of a conservative educational agenda onto unwitting and passive subaltern populations (e.g., voucher parents and guardians), nor on the “welling up from below” of a reified [parental] identity that somehow fits seamlessly into conservative educational mobilizations. Rather, utilizing but also expanding Michael Apple’s theories of conservative modernization, I have pointed to the formation of fleeting and conditional alliances among differently empowered and socially-situated actors. Within this process of subalternly negotiated alliance-building there is always a highly structurally and discursively limited agency on the part of the dispossessed who are mobilized over the issue of their consent, as well as a contested discursive space within which potentially more socially democratic articulations and educational visions might be formed.

While the empirical and conceptual work conducted in this article provides critical educators with new understandings of the significance of participation among the marginalized in conservative educational reform—and therefore assists us in building more meaningful and effective urban educational reform movements—this work also suggests significant theoretical revisions around notions of subaltern agency and identity as these transact with more dominant structures and discourses within particular historical moments and sociocultural fields.

We can no longer assume that the subaltern simply “become Right” in the process of conservative educational formation. Much like Sonia Israel’s strategic use of the subject position consumer or taxpayer in the quote that opened this section, the forms of agency that voucher parents and guardians manifest frequently demonstrate a creative “inhabiting” of the very educational structures and discourses that would seemingly contain and further marginalize them. That is, a discussion of the discourses and subject positions that are “on offer” by various social movements and institutionalized educational forms only tells us part of the story. Such subject positions are not simply offered—they are also inhabited. And it is this latter part of the formulation of identities that has been inadequately theorized and sometimes even neglected within critical education theory.

Stuart Hall has accomplished much in helping critical theorists become more aware of this conceptual “blind spot.” In essence, he argues, a successful construction of a theory of identity that is simultaneously nonessentializing yet politically possibilitarian has remained elusive. Current attempts at this project

offer us a formal account of the construction of subject positions within discourse while revealing little about why it is that certain individuals occupy some subject positions rather than others. (...) Discursive subject positions become *a priori* categories which individuals seem to occupy in an unproblematic fashion. (Hall & Du Gay, 1996, p. 10)

He continues (and I quote him here at length, finding his thoughts immensely relevant
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to the tensions around identity formation explored in this article):

What I think we can see [in one of the seminal works on identity cited by critical and post-structural theorists—*Discipline and Punish*] is Foucault being pushed, by the scrupulous rigour of his own thinking, through a series of conceptual shifts at different stages in his work, towards a recognition that, since the decentring of the subject is not the destruction of the subject, and since the “centring” of discursive practice cannot work without the constitution of subjects, the theoretical work cannot be fully accomplished without complementing the account of discursive and disciplinary regulation with an account of the practices of subjective self-constitution. It has never been enough—in Marx, in Althusser, in Foucault—to elaborate a theory of how individuals are summoned into place in the discursive structures. It has always, also, required an account of how subjects are constituted; and in this work, Foucault has gone a considerable way in showing this, in reference to historically-specific discursive practices, normative self-regulation, and technologies of the self. The question which remains is whether we also require to, as it were, close the gap between the two: that is to say, a theory of what the mechanisms are by which individuals as subjects identify (or do not identify) with the “positions” to which they are summoned; as well as how they fashion, stylize, produce and “perform” these positions, and why they never do so completely, for once and all time, and some never do, or are in a constant, agonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating the normative or regulative rules with which they confront and regulate themselves. (pp. 13-14)

Hall faults critical and post-structural theories of identity for deferring the question of how the subject is constituted. That is, the subject is “hailed” and interpellated through discourse, through the limited number of subject positions that are on offer, and by the constraints embedded in each—but what is it in the subject that allows it to be hailed in the first place? For Hall, this question is only likely to be advanced “when both the necessity and the ‘impossibility’ of identities, and the suturing of the psychic and the discursive in their constitution, are fully and unambiguously acknowledged” (Hall & Du Gay, 1996, p. 16).

While a comprehensive and satisfactory response to Hall’s concerns lies well beyond the purview of this article—and perhaps the intellectual capabilities of this author as well—I want to suggest that the empirical and conceptual work conducted in this essay points to both the necessity and the possibility of a more adequate theorization of this “latter part” of identity formation. Clearly, pro-voucher African American parents, guardians, and community leaders, to again use Hall’s words, do not occupy offered subject positions “in an unproblematic fashion.” As I argued earlier, and as my empirical work (see Pedroni, 2004) helps demonstrate, parents, guardians, and community leaders adopt, resist, and/or mediate these subject positions in complex, contradictory, and creative ways. These
discursive “performances” are products of a subaltern agency that is clearly rooted in and formed through the raced, classed, and gendered collective and individual experiences and struggles of working-class and poor African American women and men. That is, identities offered through educational discourses and structures are offered not to blank and amorphous subjects-in-waiting.

Conservative educational discourses and their concomitant structural forms instead offer subject positions to lived identities that are already in formation. These identities, formed and in formation, which are the shifting ground upon which conservative educational discourses must seek to become rooted, are themselves the product of individual and collective histories and struggles. In Milwaukee, the genealogy of this agonistic process of agency and identity has included the decades of raced, classed, and gendered struggle over issues of educational access and self-determination among the city’s communities of color, as well as related struggles within other relatively autonomous political, cultural, and economic spheres (McCarthy & Apple, 1988, pp. 67-69).

As this article has argued, subaltern identities do not “naturally” fit into either conservative or radically democratic educational forms and discourses. Nor are such forms and discourses ever simply imposed upon the subaltern. Along with Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, I want to emphasize the necessity of reworking Gramscian and other neo-Marxist conceptualizations of the social, so as to remove what these theorists have called the “epistemological obstacles” to the full realization of neo-Marxism’s radical political and theoretical potential (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). They write:

It is only when the open, unsutured character of the social is fully accepted, when the essentialism of the totality and of the elements is rejected, that this potential becomes clearly visible and “hegemony” can come to constitute a fundamental tool for political analysis on the left. These conditions arise originally in the field of what we have termed the “democratic revolution,” but they are only maximized in all their deconstructive effects in the project for a radical democracy, or, in other words, in a form of politics which is founded not upon dogmatic postulation of any “essence of the social,” but, on the contrary, on affirmation of the contingency and ambiguity of every “essence,” and on the constitutive character of social division and antagonism. (pp. 192-193)

In this article, Laclau and Mouffe’s “unsutured character of the social” is realized in a refusal to ensnare the agency of Black voucher advocates within a paternalistic binary of “false consciousness,” on the one hand, and its transcendence through Black realization of the “correctness” of an anti-voucher stance, on the other. Instead, using conceptual tools borrowed from de Certeau, the acts of parents, guardians, and community leaders as they tactically navigate a complex educational terrain that is not of their own choosing is retheorized as subaltern agency. This notion of subaltern agency has the conceptual advantages of being discursively produced, nonessential in regard to “the social,” yet cast within relations of power (De Certeau, 1984).
It is my hope that understanding the acts of pro-voucher Black working-class and poor families in this way builds upon Apple and Oliver’s crucial work in helping critical educators envision strategies for rearticulating these families’ educational concerns to ultimately more effective, meaningful, and democratic educational reform. Hopefully the conceptual modifications that evidence such as the interviews with voucher parents and guardians suggests (in this article, but also much more extensively in Pedroni, 2004) will assist researchers in other contexts in discerning similar subaltern processes and trajectories and their centrality to processes of conservative modernization. We can imagine that tactical investments in fleeting conservative alliances and subject positions among marginalized communities will play an increasingly significant role both in the United States and elsewhere.

Notes

1 Theorists such as Gewirtz (2002) have noted the displacement in many post-industrial democracies of the welfare state by a new state form—the post-welfarist state—which emphasizes efficiency in the delivery of services to clients and privatization of the public sphere over public sector fulfillment of its obligations to citizens.

2 Apple and Oliver characterize the parents in the textbook controversy as initially having political intuitions that were “not fully formed in any oppositional sense” (Apple, 1996, p. 61). In this article I use the phrase “ideologically unformed” or “ideologically relatively unformed” to refer to this quality of parents’ ideology as conceptualized by Apple and Oliver. By “unformed” ideology I do not mean “without” ideology. Rather, I am trying to capture Apple and Oliver’s sense of their ideology as not (yet) explicitly cohering to a singular ideological stream within conservative thought and conservative discourse in the United States. Their ideology is less “worked out”; they are less overtly politicized, at least initially.

3 Audiovisual copies of this interview were given to the author directly by the videographer. Complete transcripts of the interview upon which the analysis here is based, as well as copies of the original audiovisual interview, are available from the author upon request.

References


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**TABLE 1**
The two scenarios (or ‘Spaces’) of Conservative Formation in Apple and Oliver (2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>1. PART OF THE ALLIANCE OF DOMINANT GROUPS</th>
<th>2. ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO BECOME RIGHT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Neoliberals, neoconservatives, etc.</td>
<td>Parents in textbook controversy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to power</td>
<td>Horizontal</td>
<td>Vertical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to power</td>
<td>Suturing compromises</td>
<td>“Good sense” articulated to conservative project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of ideology</td>
<td>Formed</td>
<td>unformed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of ideas</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Common sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Power</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Not-yet-dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character of ideas</td>
<td>Elements of good sense which appeal to ordinary people</td>
<td>Real hopes and fears to which progressives are sympathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative spatial metaphor</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>Below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to state</td>
<td>Attempt to affect the direction of the state through an assemblage of social movements</td>
<td>Pushed toward rightist social movements when rebuked by an unresponsive state</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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