

*Dewey and Bourdieu: Experience, Habit, and a
New Direction for Education Reform*

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines John Dewey's theory of experience and interaction along with Pierre Bourdieu's educational theory about social stratification, and argues that combined, these theories should be reconsidered to forge a new path in the wake of negative educative experiences rendered by the impact of the modern educational reform movement, which is driven by neo-liberal aims that focus on practical skills, standardized testing, and school choice. Through the transmission of cultural capital to students and taking into consideration the impact of social stratification, the school can be used as a place where students can seek their purpose in life through positive experiences and interactions that provide the conditions necessary to attain the goals and hopes that they deserve.

Keywords: John Dewey, Pierre Bourdieu, Education Reform, Educational Theory, Educational Policy

RESUMÉ: Ce document examine la théorie de John Dewey de l'expérience et de l'interaction avec la théorie éducative de Pierre Bourdieu sur la stratification sociale. Ces théories devraient être considérées ensemble afin de trouver une réponse aux expériences négatives en éducation. Ces expériences proviennent de l'impact du mouvement moderne de réforme éducative guidés par des objectifs néo-libéraux qui se concentrent sur les compétences pratiques, les tests normalisés et le choix de l'école. Grâce à la transmission du capital culturel aux étudiants et en tenant compte de l'impact de la stratification sociale, l'école peut être utilisée comme un lieu où les élèves peuvent atteindre leur but dans la vie; ceci à travers des expériences positives et des interactions qui fournissent les conditions nécessaires pour atteindre leurs objectifs et les espoirs qu'ils méritent.

Mots-clés: John Dewey, Pierre Bourdieu, réforme de l'éducation, théorie éducative, politique éducative

Introduction

It has been nearly 80 years since John Dewey's, *Experience & Education*, was first published. This work provided a concise and clear summary of Dewey's theoretical work in his long career, as well as an exploration of the existing debates of educational philosophy and practice at the time, centering around progressive education and traditional practical educational practices. Dewey advanced a theory about experience in this book, claiming that experience was the cornerstone of learning and should be given more attention in schools. Dewey's work provides a theoretical framework centering around the importance of experience in education that can connect to practice for teachers and schools. In addition to Dewey, this paper explores the social and educational theory of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu spent his career examining the way that class and culture impact experiences for students, culminating in his theory of habitus and cultural capital, claiming that socialization over time plays a significant role in human development, and that perhaps schools can be used to help ameliorate the problem of a socially stratified society. Both Dewey and Bourdieu understood that experiences and interactions play an important role in the development of children into adulthood.

Understanding that both Dewey and Bourdieu posit that experiences and interactions facilitated by educators and schools make a significant impact on the trajectory of each individual student, this paper argues that the vital issue of equity in the United States k-12 education system cannot be solved by rigid academic content standards, but will require a system that facilitates quality educative experiences that allow students to find a purpose for their life that is guided by their interests and ability. By exploring and employing the theories of Dewey and Bourdieu, it is possible to imagine schools as a space that can provide access to quality educative experience. Through the transmission of cultural capital to students and taking into consideration the impact of social stratification, the school can be used as a place where students can seek their purpose in life through positive experiences and interactions that provide the conditions necessary to attain the goals and hopes that they desire and deserve.

John Dewey and Experience & Education

In *Experience & Education*, John Dewey provides a concise presentation of his philosophical position about the experiences of individuals, along with an account of the many problems that persisted within the educational community at the time. Dewey wrote *Experience & Education* in 1938, which was towards the end of his career. He uses this book to give a comprehensive diagnosis of problems within schools of the time, followed by a prescription found in his theory. At the crux of Dewey's argument was an attempt to bridge the gap that existed between progressive education and traditional education (Dewey, 1938). Dewey, a progressive educator and political philosopher, called into question assumptions of those in the progressive education camp at the time. Dewey claimed that traditional education was not devoid of experience, but that these experiences were "of the wrong kind" (Dewey, 1938, p. 26). Yet, Dewey criticized these practices, calling for their replacement with democratic, student-centered learning.

Experiential Continuum and Theory

Dewey's "experiential continuum" (1938, p. 33) seeks to discern "between experiences that are worthwhile educationally and those that are not" (p. 28). If experience is at the heart of the philosophy of progressive education, then experience alone will not suffice, and judgment must be guided in the school setting by professional teachers, which makes the role of the school and those that are charged with educating children incredibly important. Dewey (1938) makes reference to "objective conditions" (p. 41), which are conditions that limit freedom of the individual, but can be manipulated by an outside force such as a teacher in a classroom. Dewey (1938) uses an example of a child, and claims that even when children need to be fed, they need some sort of schedule or outside force that makes a decision as to when the best time to feed might be. Yet, these objective decisions, while they limit freedom, should not pretend to undercut the importance of past experience. For it is with past experience that an understanding of the world occurs, which shapes the outlook of each individual and ultimately impacts the way individuals view learning and life. Traditional education sought to ignore the individual experience of children and set up impersonal experiences that look exactly the same for each child (e.g. common curriculum readers that provided the same lessons for all students). This type of

learning does not take into account individual experience and can ultimately lead to negative consequences for many students and the broader polis. Assuming that all children should receive the same pre-fabricated type of education, and that they will also be able to acquire the same skills that are taught by the teacher in the classroom is an educational goal that leaves many students with various interests no path toward discovering a purpose about which to be ambitious.

Individual experience is the foundational building block that leads to new experiences, because experiences build on one another, which is what Dewey (1938) calls “continuity” (p.36). Continuity of experience is significant because it influences the way that we/students/people etc. perceive experiences and creates a way in which to view the world. Failing to realize the role of past experiences on learning, according to Dewey, can result in a misunderstanding of the way that children and others learn, in turn leading to negative experiences for some and positive for others. From oppressive social systems that exist within schools to pedagogical practice that leave some students out, to irrelevant curriculum, schools can be places that foster negative experiences for some. Whether it be monotonous lecturing in a history course, or the teaching of mathematics with a one-size-fits-all curriculum where the individual needs of students are not met, which can lead to the disinterest of students. Despite the reality that experiences can be both positive and negative, a larger issue is at stake, and that is how the teacher responds to a classroom full of students that have all had different experiences in their lives.

Interaction is a major part of the equation to Dewey's theory of experience in education and for his suggestions for improving education overall. All human beings interact with one another, and in so doing, they learn from one another. Through this process comes socialization, which is a sociological process that takes place through the interaction of social agents and contributes to a person's personality and social development. It is through interaction that people learn about the world and are exposed to new ideas through the lenses of others (Dewey, 1938). Coupled with individual experience or “continuity,” interaction helps form a more complete learning experience. It is through interaction that a teacher can be effective, and this can take place by the way that objective conditions are created when interacting with students. As mentioned earlier, students can quickly form

negative and positive perspectives based on how classroom information is presented, making such conditions immensely important in each educational experience. By paying close attention to the educational environment in which teachers have authority, and by attempting to facilitate a learning environment that is not meant to impart technical information, but guide students toward positive self-directed educative experiences, Dewey's vision for education becomes visible. Dewey's progressive vision is crafted by first taking into account each student's past experiences, which then help organize and direct progressive educational goals that craft positive experiences that are guided by student interest (Dewey, 1938). Dewey (1938) explains the significance of interaction, writing:

The principle of interaction makes it clear that failure of adaptation of material to needs and capacities of individuals may cause an experience to be non-educative quite as much as failure of an individual to adapt himself to the material. (pp. 46-47)

Using the idea that education should be driven by student interest stands in direct contrast with traditional ideas of education which seek to present pieces of information to students with the expectation of student understanding.

Dewey (1938) believed in focusing on the future needs of each student in the school setting, but to him this should not be the only goal. Looking to the future is an important objective in the scheme of learning, but this should not be done in a static environment. Experiences should be crafted and should work to bridge disciplines together that allow students to see how knowledge and disciplines do not have to have rigid walls that can work to restrict a love and enjoyment of learning. The job of the teacher should then be to help contribute to educative experiences that work outside of traditional learning boundaries. However, the idea should not be simply to learn to prepare one for the future and ignore the present.

Experience & Education provides a theoretical and philosophical framework for schooling that is consistent with a broader democratic aim that can help construct a fulfilling and productive life for students. Dewey (1938) makes it clear; when students feel like they are part of a democratic community, rather than peons in an authoritarian regime, an orderly classroom community can be created where the primary job of a teacher is to help facilitate educative

experiences, utilizing knowledge of past experiences to help with guidance. Understanding that this theory of continuity and interaction is not a magic bullet for all students, considering students that may have had negative past experiences or students with exceptionalities is of significant importance. Nevertheless, when teachers create objective learning conditions that enable educative experiences and allow for freedom of both the mind and body, a sound practice of habit that helps control impulses and thinking can be created, leading to a new type of freedom.

Dewey's ultimate goal of educating the whole child through positive experiences and interactions, which lead to a purpose in life for the individual is a theory that relies on the consistent exposure and exploration of activities and curriculum that interests individual students. In order for this to happen, each child must have access to experiences from which they can find interest, which is impacted in major ways by the environment in which each child happens to be born. Sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, spent a significant amount of time studying how schools can provide students who are born into circumstances that limit their access to social and culture capital of those in the dominant cultural group.

The Social Theory of Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu spent his career writing about social class and the way in which education impacts social class development. One of Pierre Bourdieu's most well-known contributions to social science and the field of sociology is through what he called the habitus. In order to understand the meaning of habitus, one needs to first understand that cultures vary from place to place and that in each place there is a dominant culture that sets the standards for everyone else in that community/society. Bourdieu (1979) often refers to this dominant culture as the legitimate or privileged culture (p. 27). Bourdieu believed that social classes were produced by the inculcation of a system of dispositions and beliefs by parents and teachers, thus causing the reproduction of the dominant social class. This collection of dispositions is what Bourdieu called habitus, and it should be noted that these dispositions involve action rather than just psychological inculcation. Bourdieu (1972) wrote in his first major work, *Theory of Practice*: "Through the habitus, the structure which has produced it governs practice, not by the processes of a mechanical determinism, but through the mediation of the

orientations and limits it assigns to the habitus' operations of invention" (p. 95). Bourdieu believed that the power possessed by the dominant culture was reaffirmed through existing structures and was revealed in the habitus.

Cultural Capital

If the habitus is a set of dispositions that reveal a power structure in a society and helps to reproduce social position (Brubaker, 1985), then there is a missing element that is needed to understand the nature of such dispositions, and this is found in what Bourdieu called cultural capital. According to Brubaker (1985), Bourdieu realized that some people had a "dispositional lag" (p. 14) and that certain classes are not able to keep up with the rapidity of social change and dynamism of a changing society. Bourdieu believed that these dispositions could be found in the culture of the dominant class. Bourdieu (1986) acknowledged that the French education system reproduced existing social class within French society, and that students in a lower subjugated class left the education system lacking important knowledge and wherewithal needed to join the dominant class and find success in that society. From this, he postulated the idea of Cultural capital. In an article written by Bourdieu (1986), he defines cultural capital as:

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee. (p. 47)

Bourdieu (1984) often refers to the dominant culture as the "legitimate" culture in his works (p. 70). Bourdieu generally understands the legitimate culture to be the class of the aristocracy, or those that have wealth within society, and he sees these traits held by aristocrats as the cultural capital that is lacking in those that come from lower classes with less wealth (Bourdieu, 1984). When children are raised by parents and families from the legitimate culture, they possess an understanding of what society deems important or significant. This understanding gives these individuals an advantage and

allows them to reproduce and possess the cultural capital of their family (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu (1984) gave examples of dominant cultural capital, and argued that it was "accumulated" and came in the form of: "crystallized history, aristocratic names and titles, châteaux or 'stately homes', paintings and collections, vintage wines and antique furniture" (p. 71). Bourdieu understood that the understanding of these cultural dispositions come with time, which is what disadvantages those in the subjugated class thus reproducing the existing class system. Robert Moore (Grenfell, 2008) argues that cultural capital, as a form of symbolic capital, serves the purpose of demonstrating power. This does not mean that power primarily comes from economic means, as Marx suggests, but means that symbolic capital and cultural capital are homologous and connect power to culture and the symbolic. This symbolic capital instills agency within the dominant class, and "reproduces the system of unequal relations in the economic field, (relations of class and power) and in doing so, reproduces the fundamental structure of social inequality" (Moore, 2008, p. 104).

Transmission

Cultural capital can help explain values and norms of various social classes, but understanding how to transmit cultural capital to those who lack cultural capital is a question that Bourdieu had a hard time answering. In other words, how can the cultural capital of an individual be changed to fit the beliefs, norms, and values of the upper class? It is not as simple as having someone go to an art museum and tell them how they should look at art, or have them listen to music and explain to them the nature of good music. Bourdieu (1984) posited that there is a certain amount of cultural capital that can be unconsciously absorbed in school or other places within society, but this is unpredictable and depends on myriad factors, including class, intelligence, and also the particulars of a given field. Moore (2006) wrote that cultural capital can be both "objectified," which is a material representation, and also "embodied," which is found in a person's lifestyle, and body language (p. 105), adding to the understanding of Bourdieu's view of cultural capital.

Bourdieu believed that symbolic capital could be transmitted through formal education (Moore, 2009). However, Bourdieu was never certain exactly how this could take place. Bourdieu believed that cultural capital and habitus

both require **time** in order for inculcation to occur, which is different from the accumulation or transmission of financial wealth, which could take place immediately. Bourdieu differentiated from objective capital and embodied capital, and realized that in order for culture to be inculcated into a person's habitus, time is necessary. This then turns into a question of pedagogy; how can the cultural capital that children bring to the environment (including their experiences) be leveraged to provide a more inclusive and positive learning environment? Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) wrote that schools must dedicate a significant amount of time to the use of pedagogic action and pedagogic work so that students can be inculcated with cultural capital, which will give them necessary skills and advantages.

Field

In the collected work of Pierre Bourdieu, the term field presents another key concept that is necessary to understand how culture and habitus are transmitted. Bourdieu (1986) presented the formula: "[habitus] (capital) + field = Practice" (p. 51). This formula demonstrates what Bourdieu believed was needed to define practice, which is the transmission of culture. Karl Matan (2008) argued that dispositions (habitus) and position in the field (capital) both come together to form practice.

Education

Bourdieu's theories about social class were based primarily on the work that he did within the field of education. While he had other experiences that shaped his knowledge and research, education was at the forefront of what he studied, and the mechanism by which to change the social inequality that he studied. Bourdieu wrote extensively about using school as a mechanism to inculcate high-culture in students from the lower subjugated social class. Bourdieu (1979) wrote of education:

Differing through a whole set of predispositions and prior knowledge which they owe to their backgrounds, students are only formally equal in their acquisition of high culture. They are separated not by divergences which, each time, distinguish statistical categories differing in a different respect and for different reasons, but by systems of cultural features which (whether they acknowledge it or not) they share in part with their class of origin. (p. 21)

Bourdieu understood that the class of origin from where students come plays a key role in determining the class in which they will live their entire life. Bourdieu (1979) wrote that teachers work to recreate existing class systems by the curriculum that they choose and the way in which they treat their students. When students from the lower social class lack the language skills of the dominant class, disadvantage and stratification ensues. Students, according to Bourdieu (1979), served to understand culture rather than to create culture. From the time that students enter school, they begin to learn the way that the dominant culture in their field operates. In *The Inheritors*, Bourdieu (1979) looked at higher education in France and acknowledged that students from the dominant culture in society have little problem understanding how the higher education system works, and this even includes students that tend not to possess the most intellectual promise; however, students from the lower working class have catching up that they try to do, which is difficult. Rational goals that schools set create problems immediately, as they simply do not take into account the reality of social class in schools, and the symbolic power held by teachers (Bourdieu 1979). Taking this reality into account is a step in the right direction, and in-so-doing, demystification can begin to take place for students in lower social strata for this rational pedagogy proposed by Bourdieu and Passeron (Bourdieu, 1979).

Reform Context

Since the 1980s, the modern incarnation of education reform has drifted in a direction that intensifies the problems written about by Dewey and Bourdieu. School reform in the 21st century rigidly focuses on academic content standards, job-skills, testing, and the increased proliferation of choice – leading to the redistribution of money away from public schools—and policies that allow students to skirt democratic interaction altogether (Ravitch, 2010; Pinar, 2012; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2013). Debates about how best to operate public schools have existed since their inception, with some consequential arguments between progressive educators. Since the Progressive Era in the early twentieth century, a debate has endured between pedagogical progressives and administrative progressives (Labaree, 2005) over how best to organize schools in the United States. Labaree (2005) argues that the administrative progressives have won this debate and that pedagogical progressives exist largely only in schools of

education at colleges and universities. The difference between administrative progressives and pedagogical progressives largely centers around their definition of the purpose of education. Administrative progressives have traditionally supported vocational schooling and schooling that is organized toward job training, while pedagogical progressives advocate for schooling that enables children to find their purpose and potential; however, this essential breakdown misses a great deal of nuance (Labaree, 2005). Pedagogical progressives have had a vision for schools that aim to make schools more democratic and driven by student interest, rather than centered around a teacher in a classroom, or a set of rigid academic content standards, which dominate the U.S. public education landscape. Labaree (2005) argues that administrative progressives have won this debate and that the evidence of this can be found in the fruits of the modern education reform movement where rigid tests regimens dominate and education has been commodified (Ravitch, 2010; Saltman, 2009).

The debate over how best to organize schooling is ongoing, and much of the debate has not changed since the early twentieth century (Labaree, 2005). A major result of the modern education reform movement has been the creation of learning standards that essentialize curriculum (Pinar, 2012). Standards based curriculum often looks at the memorization of facts the central goal of learning, making standardized tests based on the memorization and facts (Ravitch, 2010). Some scholars believe that this type of curriculum has risen simultaneously with the growth of trans-national corporations that seek to create replacement workers to fill the needs of these corporations, whatever they may be (Quantz, 2011). Richard Quantz (2011) uses the term Puzzle Master when describing a ritual behind the way in which curriculum is taught in schools, which is the assumption by students and faculty members that there are always correct answers to know and perpetuate a curriculum of knowing *the* correct answer.

Practical curriculum, or curriculum that is oriented toward fact-based memorization, dominates public school courses as a result of the legal mandates stemming from the modern school reform movement. All 50 states have standards and curriculum required to be taught by their respective states to some degree (Sleeter & Stillman, 2005; Journell, 2009). Practical curriculum and memorization based

coursework has been around since the beginning of the American school system, but the reform movement brought about high-stakes testing, which ties teachers' evaluations and school district report cards to data produced by standardized tests, leading to the domination of this type of schooling (Ravitch, 2010). Practical curriculum consists of a series of facts or knowledge statements that are sought to be understood, and these facts can be used in a practical way in the "real world" in which students will eventually inhabit. Practical curriculum is easy to criticize from an epistemological perspective because it assumes that there is specific knowledge every person ought to possess, and does not take cultural background into account. Practical curriculum often assumes that there is only one answer to questions that are most certainly debatable. Using an example from Quantz (2011), a teacher is often symbolically viewed as a key-master, someone who holds all of the correct answers, and students learn to obey authority and accept certain ideas and concepts as legitimate knowledge.

In addition to rigid academic content standards, the modern education reform movement has focused a great deal on accountability (Ravitch, 2010; Henig, 2017)). The reform proposals that led to what is now known as the accountability movement, have relied heavily on the idea of offering choice to students and families. School choice became a sub-movement of the larger reform movement. The movement toward school choice also introduced school voucher proposals, which aim to take money from local or state school coffers and redistribute this money to parents for sending their children to private schools or charter schools which have little to no democratic accountability (Henig, 2017). The way in which the education reform movement has changed the focus of schooling away from the principle of students finding their purpose and interest provides context for revisiting the theory and philosophy of Dewey and Bourdieu, orienting curriculum and standards to providing children with the conditions from which their purpose and goals can be fostered.

Dewey and Bourdieu

John Dewey and Pierre Bourdieu were from different eras and both had different careers, yet their theories about education intersect. The area of intersection to which I pay special attention is found in the position that experience plays a major role in the development of a child and profoundly

impacts the person that they will become. To Dewey, experience and interactions are crucial in helping a student find a purpose in their life, and to Bourdieu, the lack of many experiences and interactions stifle students who are in margins of society. Dewey believed that schools had the potential to provide a public good for both society and the individual if students had to opportunity to explore their interests rather than using the school as a means of indoctrination about how to become adult, which Dewey considered a great injustice (Labaree, 2005). Bourdieu, on the other hand, also saw problems arising from the school system that reproduces class dominance and societal oppression of those in subjugated groups. To Bourdieu, the way to offer children the opportunity to succeed is to ensure they are inculcated with the capital of the dominant social class. This takes a great deal of time and requires a different field in order for cultural transmission to take place. Bourdieu did not look at this solution as the ideal, but he looked to it as a practical solution to meet the needs of those who lack capital, offering them a degree of equality through obtaining the cultural capital of the hegemonic class (Bourdieu, 1979).

Both Dewey and Bourdieu were concerned with the experiences of students and both understood the significant impact that these experiences have. Experiences can make the difference between realizing potential, or becoming part of a system of oppression through existing beliefs, norms, and values. At the center of Bourdieu and Dewey's agreement about experience is the understanding that schools and the education system work to subjugate students. In the progressive sense, this subjugation comes in the form of training students to think in existing, established ways that prevent students from realizing their potential or purpose (Labaree, 2005). Dewey wrote about traditional schooling and curriculum: "externally presented material, conceived and generated in standpoints and attitudes remote from the child, and developed in motives alien to him" (Dewey, 1902, p. 205). This material that was alien to children can lead to a miseducative experience and ultimately prevent them from finding their purpose. Like Bourdieu, Dewey argued that the acquired habit of each individual plays a monumental role in development, and that habits are not just learned by repetition, but are internalized over time, which eventually become a set of dispositions (MacMullan, 2013). John Dewey believed that habit greatly impacted the way individuals think

and live. Sullivan (2001) defined Dewey's definition of habit, writing:

Habit is not so much the recurrence of particular acts but is instead a style or manner of behaving that is reflected throughout one's being—that is, throughout the way one goes about thinking, as well as acting (p. 31).

This understanding of Habit is similar to Pierre Bourdieu's (1979) theory of Habitus. It is in the school that children often begin to see themselves in the context of their social class or assignment, and where they form much of their identity. Teachers have a great deal of influence, as do those that set curriculum for children in each school. The habituation of experiences that take place in school add to their dispositions that are accumulated during maturation, and these can determine the students' outcome for the rest of their life.

The modern school reform movement creates schools that are in direct opposition to what John Dewey advocated. Standards based curriculum works to reproduce existing class structures and limits the ability of students to find their passions in life, which was of central concern and critique for Bourdieu. The movement in support of school vouchers and charter schools has some potential to create additional opportunity for students to find their educative purpose, but reality has shown that these options have taken money from existing public schools and created a competitive drive for schools to meet the standards set by the reform movement (Ravitch, 2010; Henig, 2017). Charter schools are required to meet standards set by the state, which essentially create locational changes for students who seek to attend these schools, and have fewer regulations that could lead to negative experiences for students (Henig, 2017). The public school system, where students from many different cultures, social classes, races, and backgrounds come together in a democratic environment, has the greatest potential to deconstruct the erected walls of inequality in society. By recognizing the importance of experience, cultural capital, and student interest, a new type of school reform that focuses on students can be realized. This could potentially be facilitated at a much younger age to provide each community the autonomy to meet the needs of their children and potentially bridge the gap between the lack of capital and the ability to find purpose, which is something that the reform community misses. Much of the current aim of educational

reform is centered around job preparedness which is wholly different from finding a life that is desired by each individual.

Conclusion

John Dewey and Pierre Bourdieu both realized that schools have the potential to provide students with much more than facts to be memorized. To both of these theorists, education and schooling had the potential to positively impact the life of individuals. For Dewey the key to finding a purpose in life comes from the exposure to positive educative experiences and interactions that center around the interests of each individual students. To Bourdieu, the lack of certain experiences and interactions can lead to class domination that create inequality throughout society as a result of the lack of cultural and social capital, clearly inhibiting individuals who are dominated and in the margins of the dominant class. This paper argues that the public-school system has the potential to provide greater equality for students and more experiences and interactions to students of various backgrounds, which can help mitigate the problems of social stratification for students. Rather than continuing the school choice model which creates a more stratified educational system, public education should be sought where all members of a democratic society meet together and learn from one another. Additionally, utilizing Dewey's theory of experience and interaction, students should be educated in a way that is tailored to their individual interests, allowing them to explore a life where they might find fulfillment and purpose. These ideas fly in the face of the current system which focuses on standardized testing and graduation rates, rather than meeting the needs of each individual student. Shifting the aim of education to one that is more sensitive to the realities of students from all walks of life is the type of reform needed to bring about positive change in society.

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