Democracy and Social Action: An Introduction to the Ideas of Deborah Partridge Wolfe

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Abstract:
This paper will provide a brief overview of Deborah Partridge Wolfe's life and career, examine her conceptions of democracy and democratic education, and explore how Wolfe's understandings of democracy manifested themselves in her work as an educator and curriculum developer.

Introduction

Throughout her work as an academic, an educator, a social activist, and a public servant, Deborah Partridge Wolfe sought to develop and improve the democratic potential of education and of American society by teaching respect for all people and by trying to inspire in her students a willingness to recognize the equality of each individual. Thus, an examination of Wolfe's career in education contributes to the history of education by providing insight into the work of a social educator who spent much of her life and career as an advocate for democratic education. Further, a study of Wolfe, a previously overlooked female African-American educator and curriculum developer, can add to the historical record of the curriculum field.

Wolfe's work as a social educator has been neglected in the research on American education, and this study adds to a growing body of work that focuses on previously overlooked women's roles as social educators within the history of education and the curriculum.[1] Crocco argues that many women were overlooked in educational history because they often worked on the margin of their fields due to the gendered nature of the social sciences and education that considered women's contributions as low-status "practice" rather than high-status "theory."[2] Wolfe fits within this group, as she focused much of her attention on practical methods of democratizing curriculum. Additionally, many African-American women were ignored due to their color and the lack of recognition given women in published accounts of the modern civil rights movement.[3] Crocco asserts that many women receive only biographical attention and that it is necessary to move beyond biography and examine women's ideas about and contributions to social education.[4]

"Social education" refers to education for democracy; in other words, it is education that addresses what skills and knowledge individuals need to live effectively in a democracy. Examination of women's contributions as social educators can add to the history of education by providing insight into the fluid, contested nature of social education, particularly the conflicts over the meaning of citizenship in a pluralistic democracy.[5] Makler argues that exploring how certain women became change agents in the public arena can influence and enrich discussion about democracy and civic participation.[6] Wolfe merits attention as a social educator because her work can provide insight into a challenging time period in American education and society (1937-1986) during which she consistently focused on issues related to education for democracy and the meaning of citizenship in a pluralistic democracy. This chapter will provide a brief overview of Wolfe's life and career, examine Wolfe's conceptions of democracy and democratic education, and explore how Wolfe's understandings of democracy manifested themselves in her work as an educator and curriculum developer.

Overview of Wolfe's life and career

The youngest of three children, Olive Deborah Juanita Cannon was born on December 22, 1916 in Cranford, New Jersey to David and Gertrude Cannon. She attended local schools for her K-12 education, excelling academically. Wolfe entered Jersey City State College in 1933, graduating with a Bachelor's degree in social studies education in 1937. While attending university, she taught night adult education in Cranford, New Jersey (1936-1938) and spent two summers teaching the children of migrant workers on the eastern shore of Maryland (1936-37). Wolfe's experiences teaching migrant workers inspired her to pursue a Master's degree in teacher and rural education from Teachers College, Columbia University (1937-1938). At Teachers College, Wolfe worked closely with rural educator Mabel Carney and also took courses from other renowned educators, including William Heard Kilpatrick and William Chandler Bagley.

After graduating from Teachers College in 1938, Wolfe joined the faculty at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama (1938-1950). She established and served as principal of two laboratory schools (1938-1943), Prairie Farms and Mitchell's Mill. Wolfe also worked as supervising teacher (1938-1950), faculty member (1938-1950), and head of the Department of Elementary Education (1938-1950). She married Henry Roy Partridge in June 1940 (divorced, 1951). While her husband fought in World War II, Wolfe returned to Teachers College, Columbia University, on a leave of absence from Tuskegee Institute (1943-1945) and earned her Doctorate of Education in 1945. During her doctoral program, Wolfe took courses with many prominent progressive educators including Hollis B. Caswell, Harold Rugg, John Childs, Florence Stratemeyer, and Roma Gans. The progressive ideas that Wolfe encountered at Teachers College during her master's and doctoral studies clearly influence the majority of her work.

Upon her return to Alabama, Wolfe became the first female faculty member of Tuskegee Institute with an earned doctorate, and she founded and served as the director of the education graduate program (1945-1950). Her son, Henry Roy Partridge, Jr., was born on April 23, 1947. After leaving Tuskegee Institute in 1950, Wolfe joined the faculty at Queens College, City University of New York, becoming the first Black faculty member (Queens College Press Release, 1951, Queens/CUNY Archives). Wolfe worked at Queens from 1950 to 1984, teaching many different courses, supervising interns, working closely with Queen's laboratory school P.S. 201, and participating in a variety of student and faculty organizations. She married Estemore Alvis Wolfe in August, 1959 (divorced, 1966). During a leave of absence from Queens (1962-1965), Wolfe moved to Washington D.C. in 1962 to serve as education chief with the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor, chaired by Adam Clayton Powell.

Additionally, Wolfe emphasized the need to move beyond talking and writing about democracy to "doing democracy." Therefore, throughout her career, Wolfe actively served and continues to be involved in numerous societies and educational organizations that reflect her interest in achieving social justice and quality education for all, including the National Association of Black School Educators, Kappa Delta Pi, National Council of Negro Women, American Council on Human Rights, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, American Association of University Women, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, League of Women Voters, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the New Jersey State Board of Higher Education.

Wolfe's conceptions of democracy and democratic education

Wolfe argued that democracy should serve as the background and intent of curriculum. Her democratic ideals clearly embody John Dewey's conception of democracy, along with other contemporary democratic theorists who reflect Dewey's ideas.[7] Dewey viewed democracy as a way of life, a mode of associated living, a conjoint communicated experience – a creative and constructive process involving continuous change.[8] He felt citizens should be involved in various aspects of community life and should value practical judgment, deliberation skills, reflection, and a shared fund of civic knowledge. Wolfe's conceptions of democracy reflect this idea of democracy as a way of life involving active participation in multiple realms of community life. Influenced by her life experiences, religious faith, and education, Wolfe possessed a complex conception of democracy that incorporated her beliefs about human relations, social justice, equality, and citizen participation. While recognizing democracy as government of, for, and by the people, Wolfe argued that democracy extends beyond government, that

> democracy recognizes the equality of each individual, but it also requires each person to share their talents and abilities so we can build the kind of nation, the kind of government, the kind of group, that is richer because it is the combination of all of our strengths. We each have a responsibility to develop democracy, maintain democracy, and continuously improve it. Democracy requires respect for all people and a willingness to grow. In fact, democracy holds the potential to help us all grow.[9]

Owing in part to her struggle to exercise her right to vote, Wolfe strongly believed in the vital importance of full participation of all people in democratic society, and in the responsibility of each citizen to use the ballot and vote in each and every election. She asserted that every opportunity and right in a democracy comes with a corresponding responsibility. These responsibilities make it possible for each citizen to grow and discover great strengths, talents, and abilities. While Wolfe contended that democracy is the best form of government that mankind has developed thus far, she viewed it as imperfect and yet to be realized. She noted that if America had truly "achieved" democracy,

> I wouldn't have to talk about race relations and the inequities experienced by Blacks even in 2000. It's sad that we have wasted so many of our best people just because of injustice, because of race, creed, color, or some other superficial factor that divides humankind. The essence of democracy is respect for each individual and we certainly haven't achieved that yet.[10]

Additionally, Wolfe emphasized the importance of balancing minority and majority rights in a democracy. She argued that democracy demands respect for the minority, and while the majority may prevail, it cannot take away the rights of the minority. She contended that this issue extends beyond party politics into the relations of groups of people, and she explained that "one of the real problems in racial understanding in America is that for too long one race has been the majority and they have not been able to empathize with the role of the minority."[11] Above all, Wolfe insisted that democracy requires a commitment to an ideology based upon respect of all human kind.

In terms of education for democracy, Wolfe argued that the central purpose of a democratic education is the general welfare of all children and the recognition that each individual would be served with justice and equality of opportunities regardless of intelligence, race, religion, social status, economic conditions, or vocational plans. She contended that education should serve as the "great equalizer" and act as the "keystone to the arch of freedom." For Wolfe, a democratic education also included fostering respect for and practice of civil liberties; maintaining and creating the economic, political, and social conditions necessary for the enjoyment of liberty;

emphasizing the right of the community to share in determining the purposes and policies of education; utilizing democratic methods in classroom, administration, and student activities; encouraging teachers to teach that rights and authority are inextricably linked to responsibility and accountability; and creating leaders who demonstrate that far-reaching changes can be accomplished through democratic methods.[12]

Wolfe's conceptions of education for democracy clearly reflect the substantial and lasting influence of the progressive ideas she encountered at Teachers College, particularly the educational thought of John Dewey George Counts, Harold Rugg, and John Childs. Dewey "believed that democracy necessitated a reconstitution of culture, and with it the curriculum," and he conceived of school as an embryonic community that reflected the larger society.[13] He argued that the school should work as a lever of social change to improve the larger society by making it more "worthy, lovely, and harmonious." [14] Wolfe, too, insisted that curriculum makers should consider the cultural background of a community within the context of education for democracy and design a curriculum to fulfill the "democratic needs" of the community in order to encourage the larger society to change, improve, and "go to the next level."[15] Also, she frequently emphasized the need to "re-direct culture" in order to improve society.

Accordingly, Wolfe considered herself a social reconstructionist, arguing that "[the] school ought to reflect the community in the fullest sense of the word, but at the same time, the school should take the community beyond itself...as far as you can take it," because "[as a teacher] I've got to change people and the way they think about each other and the world in which they live." [16] She noted that her conceptions of social reconstructionism were shaped by the writings of George S. Counts, Harold Rugg, and John Childs. Counts argued that the "child-centered" focus of the progressive movement should include a stronger emphasis on societal issues, and in 1932 issued his famous challenge, asking educators, "Dare the school build a new social order?"[17] Rugg, another active social reconstructionist, argued that the school should act as "a conscious agent in the progressive improvement of the social order" and provide an education "in which every community agency...would become the adjunct of a new 'school of living' that would lead in the business of intelligent social change."[18] Additionally, John Childs joined Counts, Rugg, and other social reconstructionists in "calling for an educational agenda that would not shrink from describing the society to be created out of the disappointments of the early 1930s and later out of the ruins of World War II," and asking teachers to "create a new world order."[19]

Wolfe also cited the ideas of Hollis Caswell and William Kilpatrick as other major influences on her thinking. Cawell defined curriculum as "all experiences children have under the guidance of teachers."[20] Kilpatrick advanced the Deweyan notion that "education be considered as life itself and not as a mere preparation for later living," and proposed a curriculum, the "project method," emphasizing "wholehearted purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment."[21] Both advocated a democratic curriculum filled with experiences that fostered the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to be active citizens in a democracy.

Wolfe's contributions to education for democracy as a curriculum developer and educator

Throughout her career as an educator, Wolfe defined curriculum as "all the experiences children have under the guidance of the school" and asserted that education for democracy should serve as the background and intent of the curriculum. [22] In order to successfully implement a democratic curriculum, Wolfe argued, educators must consider and understand the cultural, sociological and psychological context of the student, the school, and the larger community. Additionally, Wolfe emphasized the vital importance of understanding the "whole child" – the needs, interests, purposes, growth, learning, and community of each student – with the aim of providing curricular experiences "suited to individual needs and abilities and guiding the individual into the types of experiences best suited for him/her." [23]

These conceptions of democracy, curriculum, and education manifested themselves throughout Wolfe's career as an educator and curriculum developer. She founded and served as principal of two Tuskegee laboratory schools in which she attempted to create democracies in microcosm. And at both Tuskegee Institute and Queens College, Wolfe consistently emphasized the importance of diversity and equity issues within a pluralistic democracy by calling attention to students whom she believed had been ignored by the educational system and through her attempts to develop curriculum that met the needs of all of her students. This section will chronologically examine Wolfe's work as a curriculum developer and educator, specifically focusing on her contributions to education for democracy.

Re-designing the curriculum of Prairie Farms & Mitchell's Mill

From 1938-1943, Wolfe served as principal, teacher-trainer, and community organizer for two laboratory schools of Tuskegee Institute: Prairie Farms (1938-1941) and Mitchell's Mill (1941-1943). Both of these farming communities exemplified the myriad problems facing rural Blacks in Macon County, Alabama, during the 1930s and 1940s, including poverty, poor hygiene, malnutrition, health problems, and the deleterious effects of segregation. Through her experiences at these schools, Wolfe realized that the existing curriculum did not meet the unique problems and needs of Black rural children. Therefore, for her Teachers College doctoral dissertation, Wolfe developed an extensive curriculum and course of study for her two rural laboratory schools by exploring the sociological and psychological factors that influenced the development of a democratic curriculum for rural Black students. Entitled *A plan for redesigning the*

curriculum of the rural laboratory schools of Tuskegee Institute, this dissertation represents Wolfe's most significant piece of curriculum development and clearly reflects the progressive influence on her work as an educator.

In Wolfe's view, culture exerted a powerful controlling force on education. Thus, Wolfe explored the sociology of the Prairie Farms and Mitchell's Mill schools, specifically focusing on their cultural identity as Black rural communities in the southern United States. As Wolfe explained, "attention must be given to the Negro within American culture and his particular needs" because "any realistic consideration of sociological bases must recognize the crucial nature of the...Negro in Southern communities."[24] Also, as Wolfe believed that the tenets of American democracy should form the basis of all school curriculums, she argued that the sociological and cultural factors of a community had to be understood within the context of education for democracy. She insisted that this understanding would inform the curriculum developer as to the "democratic needs" of a particular cultural group.

In terms of "democratic needs," Wolfe specifically focused on respect for the human being, government of, for, and by the people, respect for civil liberties, respect for the role of minorities, economic opportunity, and faith in the intelligence and educability of man. Wolfe's choices for the "tenets of democracy" clearly reflected the influence of the Teachers College faculty's publication *Democracy and education in the current crisis*, published in 1940. The essence of democracy, according to Wolfe, was "respect for the individual human being" and development of "a way of living which is in harmony with the recognition of the intrinsic worth of the human being."[25] Yet Wolfe also noted that the average Black child of Mitchell's Mill or Prairie Farms grew up learning the basic inequality of human beings, suffered from abridgement of their basic rights as a citizen, and were excluded from participation in democracy. She explained:

> Even before the child goes to the Negro school, glances, names, discussion in the home, a hundred daily experiences have taught him subconsciously, where his place is, with whom he can play, how to speak to white folks, and what to say to 'white trash' ... walking to school he sees white children ride by in a bus, he sees their big brick house, their churches to which their parents go, their stores and homes. He reads the textbooks which tell only of the glorious past of white men. As he grows, back doors, balconies, the rear of the bus and the Jim-crow car of the train, the separate railroad stations, all have a definite and inescapable meaning.[26]

For Wolfe, this situation indicated the cultural and democratic deprivation of the children of Mitchell's Mill and Prairie Farms, and highlighted the need for "Negro schools to take into consideration the peculiar problems of Negro children" that included caste and class status, the lack of recreational facilities, poor health facilities, lack of sufficient funds, and little opportunity to develop self-respect or self-realization. This situation, according to Wolfe, demanded an education in democracy that would foster respect for self and for all human beings. Wolfe insisted that the curriculum of Mitchell's Mill and Prairie Farm must address issues of social justice, social activity and understanding, tolerance, political citizenship, and encouraging students to vote "despite the many limitations and encumbrances that they must face."[27] Wolfe argued that the special problems and deprivations of Black rural communities deserved a curriculum tailored to provide a democratic education that started with the needs of the learner, educated the child, and encouraged the child to create a better social order.

Wolfe also emphasized the importance of examining the psychological bases of curriculum construction in order to understand the needs of children. According to Wolfe, "democratic education in America recognizes as its enduring purpose the fullest possible development of the individual within the framework of society," which is possible only "through a school curriculum that recognizes the needs of the society and the nature and the needs of the children."[28] Therefore, within the context of Black rural communities, Wolfe explored the needs of the "whole child": the development of the self, the significance of growth (physical and intellectual), social and emotional development and needs, and the significance of the nature of learning.

After an in-depth examination of the cultural, sociological, and psychological factors that effected the physical, emotional, social, and mental development of her students, Wolfe generated suggestions "as to the nature of experiences with children."[29] She argued that the study of Prairie Farms and Mitchell's Mill revealed a need for improvement of health and living conditions, improvement of race relations, widening of recreational opportunities, enlarging social services (religious, health, farm), widening participation in group living and civic affairs, and extending opportunities for creating, interpreting, and appreciating the beautiful. And as Wolfe conceived of curriculum redesign as an ongoing process, she "made no attempt" to give an "inclusive list of experiences to be included in the curriculum," but rather provided suggestions of the types of experiences that could be incorporated. In general, Wolfe's curriculum experiences provided opportunities to foster community and school relationships, taught skills necessary for active citizenship in a democracy, encouraged utilization of life situations to enlarge meanings, and de-emphasized memorization of arbitrary subject matter and embraced experiences that facilitate the development of students' ability to analyze and organize experience, to draw inferences, and develop creativity and inventiveness.

Teaching and writing at Tuskegee Institute & Queens College

Wolfe's conceptions of curriculum and education also manifested themselves through her college-level teaching at Tuskegee Institute (1938-1950) and later at

Queens College (1950-1986). The goal of education for democracy continued to form the background and intent of her curriculum and teaching. And as with her work in the Tuskegee Laboratory schools, Wolfe made every attempt to understand the cultural, sociological, and psychological context of her students and their community in order to construct curriculum experiences that encouraged her students' growth. For example, Wolfe recalled that when she first arrived at Queens College, the majority of her students were white and Jewish. In keeping with her philosophy of understanding the "whole child," Wolfe took several courses at a nearby Jewish theological seminary. She explained:

> In a democracy we are diverse, and I feel like I can't really know you until I understand what prompts you, by what values you live, and how those values affect your life. I went to Jewish seminary because at Queens I taught a lot of Jews. And I can't teach people until I understand by what values they live. I was trying to get a feel for the religion...I was the first non-Jew to study there, and I am still invited to celebrate all the high holy days. Through my experiences at the seminary, I found that many of my students were Jewish culturally, but not always religiously.[30]

In addition to enacting democratic curricula in her own college-level teaching, Wolfe maintained her interest in and dedication to assisting democratically disenfranchised students through her work in the Queens laboratory school (P.S. 201), and by calling attention to marginalized groups in society through her teaching, scholarly writings, and speeches. Many of Wolfe's writings and specifically addressed the unique curriculum needs of migrant children, rural students, inner-city youths, females, Blacks, juvenile delinquents, and other overlooked, disadvantaged, or disenfranchised groups.[31] Revisiting many of the ideas elucidated in her dissertation, Wolfe challenged educators to recognize the cultural and sociological differences among children from varied socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Further, she stressed the importance of altering the existing curriculum, dominated by middle-class values, to meet the specialized needs of disadvantaged and at-risk groups of students.

In her speeches and writings, Wolfe's terminology and conception of who comprised a "disadvantaged" or "deprived" group altered slightly during the course of her career, often shifting as her geographic location, teaching position, or historical context changed. In the initial stages of her career, while at Tuskegee Institute (1938-1950), Wolfe focused her curriculum writings on migrant children and Black rural children.[32] After her move to Queens College, CUNY (1950-1986), Wolfe continued to concentrate on curriculum issues related to Black rural children, but expanded her focus to include children of the urban center, females, juvenile delinquents, and other "overlooked" groups in society.[33] In the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s she generally referred to these children as "culturally disadvantaged," "culturally deprived," "children of the ghetto" or "socially disadvantaged" and dedicated several articles and speeches to interpreting these terms and analyzing their meaning within the context of curriculum development and education. During the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, Wolfe gradually began to use the term "at-risk" when referring to disadvantaged students.[34]

While Wolfe's terminology changed slightly over time, her basic focus remained the same: she was concerned with children who suffered from deprivations associated with poverty, societal apathy, and other issues related to caste, class, gender, race and/or ethnicity. In particular, Wolfe was interested in examining how the existing school curriculum failed to meet the needs of these children and generating curriculum ideas to improve the quality and equality of educational experiences for at-risk students. Wolfe consistently argued that the school culture and curriculum reflected the "controlling ideas, values, and sentiments" held by middle-class society.[35] The objectives stressed, the subject matter provided, the skills, ideas, problems, and activities taught in classrooms epitomized middle class values and ignored the unique cultural needs of many segments of society. She explained that "the present curriculum is based upon traditional activities and skills, arbitrarily taken from middle-class culture with emphasis upon West European culture and languages."[36] She particularly noted that history and language arts textbooks typically neglected to include any meaningful attention to groups other than Whites. Such a limited curriculum, Wolfe contended, aimed at such a small percentage of society, threatened and impeded the fullest development of children. The curriculum, as it existed in the majority of American public schools, violated Wolfe's assertions that a curriculum should recognize individual student differences and motivate students to learn.[37]

Wolfe also argued that stereotyped notions of academic success doomed students lacking the experiential background to academic failure. This situation, Wolfe noted, was intensified by the growing use of intelligence tests stressing linguistic, reading, and mathematical ability. Wolfe averred that these intelligence tests were "culturally loaded," and included materials completely unrelated to real-life experiences of many children. These tests, Wolfe insisted, penalized children "already deprived from the great body of knowledge which has been accepted as 'valuable' by the majority and ruling classes."[38] Also, Wolfe lamented, schools accepted the results of these tests to "classify children into classes and groups" therefore exacerbating an already terrible situation.

In order to combat the deleterious effects of the existing curriculum and testing structure, Wolfe elucidated specific curriculum recommendations designed to facilitate "culturally aware" teaching that would meet the needs of all students, regardless of cultural background. Wolfe excoriated the commonly held conception of the United States as a cultural "melting pot." She argued that this "theory of assimilation" obfuscated the fact that children in schools came from many different complex cultural

backgrounds. Wolfe insisted that the United States had a "pluralistic society made up of many different cultures and subcultures" and she emphasized the importance of attention to culture and respect for difference through "culturally aware" teaching practices.[39]

"Culturally aware" teaching practices, Wolfe argued, would reaffirm the democratic ideal of respect for all people while creating positive attitudes toward all different cultures. Wolfe asserted that many textbooks and popular media promoted racist propaganda; therefore, she stressed the importance of teaching students critical thinking skills in order to enable them to view all information skeptically and to recognize and "stop all racist propaganda...[and] to destroy the misinformation." Noting that "propagandists have long recognized the fact that a dramatic picture, a clever cartoon, or an attractive poster will sometimes do more to change public opinion than the proverbial thousand words," Wolfe encouraged teachers to ask students to create their own pictures, posters, cartoons stressing the positive aspects of living in a pluralistic society.[40]

Wolfe recommended other "intercultural" teaching tools including movies, documentaries, plays, television excerpts, music, records, song lyrics, work experiences, field studies, surveys, field trips, service projects, interviews, and radio programs that facilitated discussion of issues related to diversity, pluralism, democracy, and equity. In particular, Wolfe insisted, poetry could serve as "a form of social action" that might develop "wonder, imagination...and go beyond the physical," lead students to great depths, and teach basic truisms.[41] Wolfe also suggested holding a "festival of nations" by encouraging students to research their cultural background through an examination of folk art, handicrafts, foods, dances, athletic games, customs, values, and other manifestations of culture. Wolfe asserted that these could familiarize students with different cultural or racial conflicts and issues while also demonstrating the "universality" of certain ideas.[42] Wolfe encouraged teachers to "understand the problem of cultural differences" and work to create a climate of learning. She noted that "only as each child is accepted and appreciated can we truly teach the meaning of democracy and the benefits of living in a culturally pluralistic society."[43]

Wolfe utilized all of her "culturally aware" suggestions in her own college-level teaching. She insisted on teaching by "precept and example."[44] For example, Wolfe required all of her students, White and Black, to read, analyze, and discuss Langston Hughes's "I am a Negro" in order to spark conversation about diversity and equity. Wolfe's motivation for using this poem differed; at Tuskegee, Wolfe hoped to enrich students' conception of their Black heritage and encourage them to honor their "Blackness." At Queens, Wolfe intended to expose students to different cultural groups, to encourage "empathy with the struggle," and to think critically about what "Negro" meant as a teacher, a person, and as a citizen.[45] Wolfe incorporated readings, music, and poetry from many different cultural and racial backgrounds. A former Queens student, Joanne Bronars, recalled "I remember that [Wolfe] used the arts, especially music and poetry, in her teaching. This inspired me the most. I used some of her poetry examples in my own teaching, both of children and of college students."[46]

Final comments on Wolfe's work as educator and curriculum developer

Throughout her career as an educator, Wolfe consistently drew attention to issues of democracy, diversity, and equity long before "multiculturalism" and "culturally relevant teaching" became catchphrases in the field of education. She developed her curricula, chose her readings, and taught her classes with the intent of addressing key issues related to active citizenship in a multicultural democracy. Wolfe encouraged her students and schools to teach for what Barber refers to as "strong democracy," and provide an "apprenticeship in liberty" by inculcating the necessary processes, values, and attitudes for active citizenship in a pluralistic democracy. Through her writings and teachings, Wolfe continually grappled with Parker's question, "How can we live together justly, in ways that are mutually satisfying, and that leave our differences, both individual and group, intact and our multiple identities recognized?"[47] And by attending to the key issues of political unity within the context of social and cultural diversity, Wolfe, in her laboratory schools and college classrooms, attempted to create "democracies in microcosm."

However, while Wolfe enacted democratic, multicultural curricula, she was not known for extensive publication of scholarly books or articles about her work in rural schools, college classrooms, and urban laboratory schools. The majority of Wolfe's scholarly writings were brief articles providing short synopses of her curriculum work. Thus, because she chose not to build a substantial body of scholarly research in this area, Wolfe's ideas did not receive widespread, sustained attention. This choice was consistent with Wolfe's emphasis on "teaching and doing" rather than talking or writing about democratizing education.[48] Wolfe believed that she could impact more lives by applying ideas of democracy in the classroom and educating students for active citizenship.

Reflecting on her career in education, Wolfe noted:

> Being an educator has been my life. I've always wanted to be a teacher since I was a little girl playing school on the front porch [of my parent's house]. As I grew this ambition grew with me. The reason [teaching] is so important to me is because I feel that the teacher, unlike almost any other person, has the opportunity to see the human mind unfold and the human personality develop.[49]

She explained that

> to teach is to grow intellectually, spiritually, and totally in every way. Material things will pass away, but what I have in my heart and my head no

one can take from me. I've talked to the great teachers of the world and they have not been rewarded from money but from what they have done for people and society...It's the joy you receive in knowing that you've helped others become the best they can become. [To] help [students] discover what talents and abilities they have, so they can use them to the best extent and the fullest extent possible...When you change an individual, you change society. Education is the 'keystone to the arch of freedom' and we cannot have a free society without an enlightened citizenry. People must be able to judge the issues so they can vote intelligently, participate intelligently, and help change the nature of society. [50]

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[4] Crocco, *'Bending the Future to Their Will:' Civic Women, Social Education and Democracy*, 2-3.
[5] Crocco, *'Bending the Future to Their Will:' Civic Women, Social Education and Democracy*, 6.
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[19] Lawrence Dennis *From Prayer to Pragmatism: A biography of John L. Childs* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 6.
[20] Hollis L. Caswell and Doak S. Campbell, *Curriculum Development* (New York: American Book Company, 1935), 69.
[21] William H. Kilpatrick, "The project method," *Teachers College Record* 19 (1918): 323
[22] Partridge, "A Plan for Redesigning the Curriculum of the Rural Laboratory Schools of Tuskegee Institute," 76; Wolfe, Interview
[23] Partridge, "A Plan for Redesigning the Curriculum of the Rural Laboratory Schools of Tuskegee Institute," 172-173.
[24] Partridge, "A Plan for Redesigning the Curriculum of the Rural Laboratory Schools of Tuskegee Institute," 76.
[25] Partridge, "A Plan for Redesigning the Curriculum of the Rural Laboratory Schools of Tuskegee Institute", 79.
[26] Partridge, "Redesigning the Curriculum of the Rural Laboratory Schools," 79-80.
[27] Partridge, "Redesigning the Curriculum of the Rural Laboratory Schools," 86.
[28] Partridge, "Redesigning the Curriculum of the Rural Laboratory Schools," 106.
[29] Partridge, "Redesigning the Curriculum of the Rural Laboratory Schools," 139.
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[35] Wolfe, "Curriculum Adaptations for the Culturally Deprived,"142.
[36] Wolfe, "Curriculum Adaptations for the Culturally Deprived" 143.

[37] Wolfe, "Curriculum Adaptations for the Culturally Deprived"; Wolfe, "The Teacher's Role in Maintaining Cultural Pluralism"
[38] Wolfe, "Curriculum Adaptations for the Culturally Deprived," 143.
[39] Wolfe, "Curriculum Adaptations for the Culturally Deprived" 142; Wolfe, "The Teacher's Role in Maintaining Cultural Pluralism"; Wolfe, "New Criteria and New Perspectives for Selection of the Marginally Qualified Disadvantaged Student".
[40] Wolfe, "The Teacher's Role in Maintaining Cultural Pluralism," 71.
[41] Wolfe Interview.
[42] Wolfe, "The Teacher's Role in Maintaining Cultural Pluralism," 71.
[43] Wolfe, "The Teacher's Role in Maintaining Cultural Pluralism," 73.
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[45] Wolfe, Interview.
[46] Joanne Bronars, Letter to author, 14 March, 2000.
[47] Parker, "Advanced Ideas About Democracy."
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[49] Deborah Partridge Wolfe, "Interview with Marcia Greenlee," *The Black Women Oral History Project,* (Boston: Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, *6* November, 1979).
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