DEBORAH PARTRIDGE WOLFE’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIAL EDUCATION

By

STEPHANIE VAN HOVER

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DEBORAH PARTRIDGE WOLFE’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIAL EDUCATION

By

Stephanie van Hover

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This historical biographic study examines the life, career, and contributions of Deborah Partridge Wolfe, an African-American social educator who sought to develop and improve the democratic potential of education and of American society. Wolfe merits attention as a social educator because her work provides insight into a challenging time period in American education and society (1938-current day) during which she consistently focused on issues related to education for democracy and the meaning of citizenship in a pluralistic democracy. The study describes Wolfe’s life history and provides a chronological overview of her career while establishing an initial historical and intellectual context for the different stages of Wolfe’s career. Additionally, Wolfe’s contributions are related to the larger context of educational and curriculum history. The dissertation then examines different facets of Wolfe’s contributions as a social educator: her work as an educator and curriculum developer, her tenure as educational chief for the Committee on Education and Labor of the United States House of Representatives, her
scholarly and academic writings, and her activity in multiple realms of community life.

Wolfe’s major contributions to the field of education lie in her advocacy for democratic ideals through her work as a social educator. She consistently drew attention to issues of democracy, diversity and equity through her teaching, curriculum development, scholarly writings, speeches, government service, and social activism. The story of Wolfe’s life and career offers insight into the complex social, political, economic, and ethical dilemmas associated with building an inclusive democratic society. Moreover, her career provides a glimpse into the discourse about education, diversity, social justice, and democracy taking place between 1938-2001.
CHAPTER 1
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. Kliebard and Franklin (1983) note that a focus on particular people in curriculum history is “most appropriate . . . for reaching conclusions about curriculum thought, and in a more limited way, curriculum practice” (p. 138).

Kliebard (1992) also asserts that an examination of women and racial minorities, either as change agents or as victims, can have a “demythologizing effect on the way the evolution of the course of study is seen” by demonstrating that the history of curriculum is “replete with false starts, wrong turns, and much backing and filling, as well as an advance here and there,” rather than curriculum as incremental progress (p. 162). A focus on individuals who played a role in curriculum history can provide insight into the
context of a particular time in history; it helps illustrate that the selection of what is taught was made by real people with social convictions, political creeds, professional aspirations, class allegiances, and economic motives (Kliebard, 1992). Also, Kliebard and Franklin (1983) note that examining figures in curriculum may be seen as “barometers of the direction the school curriculum was taking” (p. 146). Davis (1976) agrees, arguing that curriculum history needs accounts of individuals who affected curriculum development. The study of Wolfe’s career offers a source of knowledge and deeper understanding for an interesting time period (1937-1986) in curriculum history during which she worked to address issues of equity and democracy in education and curriculum.

**Overview of Wolfe’s Career**

Wolfe received her bachelor’s degree in social studies education from Jersey City State Teachers College (1937) and her master’s degree in teacher and rural education from Teachers College, Columbia University (1938). 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).

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), 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 (and divorced in 1951). She received her
Doctorate of Education from Teachers College, Columbia University (1945), during a leave of absence from Tuskegee Institute (1943-1945) while her husband fought in World War II. Upon her return to Alabama, Wolfe became the first 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 worked at Queens College, City University of New York, as a faculty member (1950-1984). She married Estemore Alvis Wolfe in August, 1959 (and divorced in 1966). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Wolfe also held positions as a visiting lecturer at Grambling College, New York University, Fordham University, University of Michigan, Teachers College, Texas College, University of Illinois, and Wayne State University. 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.

Between 1937 and 1986, Wolfe published more than sixty-five journal articles. Additionally, she contributed to and edited all the writings associated with educational legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor between 1962-1965. Wolfe’s scholarly writings consistently focused on curriculum issues related to democracy and education, specifically addressing rural education, culturally deprived children, migrant workers, human relations, and social justice.
In her focus on democracy throughout her career, Wolfe argued that the basic and abiding moral purpose of democracy is respect for the individual human being and recognition of the equality of each person regardless of race, creed, gender, or social class. She expressed concern that the culture of schools reflected the controlling ideas, values, and sentiments of middle-class White society and overlooked the needs of migrant children, rural students, inner-city African-American students, and other disadvantaged or disenfranchised groups. She asserted that education should serve as the great equalizer in society and recommended culturally relevant curricular approaches designed to address the needs of all students, to teach democracy, and to improve the equality and quality of education.

Rationale, Assumptions, and Probable Contributions to Knowledge

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 (Crocco & Davis, 1999). Crocco (1999a) argues that many women were overlooked in educational history because they often worked on the margin of their fields because of the gendered nature of the social sciences and education that considered women’s contributions as low-status “practice” rather than high-status “theory” (pp. 2-3). 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 because of their color and the lack of recognition given women in published accounts of the modern civil rights movement (Crawford, Rouse, & Woods, 1993; Crocco, 1999a).
Crocco (1999a) 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.

"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 (Crocco, 1999a; Dewey, 1916). 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 (Crocco, 1999a, p. 6). Makler (1999) argues that exploring how certain women became change agents in the public arena can influence and enrich discussion about democracy and civic participation. Wolfe merits attention as a social educator because her work can provide insight into a challenging time period in American education and society during which she consistently focused on issues related to education for democracy and the meaning of citizenship in a pluralistic democracy.

This study will attempt to relate Wolfe's contributions to the larger context of educational and curriculum history. Wolfe focused much of her work on developing "culturally relevant" curriculum. Therefore, this dissertation assumes the importance of curriculum history, which Kliebard and Franklin (1993) define as "the scholarly attempt to chronicle, interpret, and ultimately understand the processes whereby social groups over time select, organize, and distribute knowledge and belief through educational institutions" (p. 138). Cuban (1992) adds that curriculum history should examine change and constancy in schools with particular attention to the external pressures in society that attempted to reshape schooling. Kliebard (1992) concurs, urging a careful and thorough
examination of intellectual, social, and political forces that shaped the context of a particular time in history. Accordingly, this work draws upon and references biographical and historical sources of information related to education, curriculum, and United States social, political, and economic history.

**Major Theme and Democratic Framework**

One major theme emerges from Wolfe's work: her contributions as a social educator to education for democracy. Wolfe consistently advocated democratic ideals and dedicated herself to making changes in the educational system through her teaching, writing, social activism, and government service. Wolfe's views on democracy will be addressed more completely in chapter 2; however, her democratic ideals clearly embody John Dewey's conception of democracy. Dewey's ideas on democracy, along with other democratic theorists who reflect his views, form the theoretical framework for this dissertation.

Dewey (1916) viewed democracy as a way of life, a mode of associated living, a conjoint communicated experience — a creative and constructive process involving continuous change (p. 101). 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. Barber (1984, 1992, 1998) agrees with Dewey, arguing that our society should strive for "strong democracy" that encourages active involvement in the community and instructs citizens in their obligations and rights, teaches them how to govern themselves, and uses a language of citizenship, community, fraternity, responsibility, obligation, and self-realization. Parker (1996a, 1996b, 1996c) argues that
democracy extends beyond the political realm and raises important issues about the role of citizens in a pluralistic, diverse democracy. Parker emphasizes the need for our society to address the central question of citizenship: "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?" (1996b, p. 113). He asserts that our society must attend to the key issues of political unity within the context of social and cultural diversity.

Dewey (1916, 1927/1954), Barber (1992, 1998), and Parker (1996a, 1996b, 1996c) emphasize the vital role of schools in educating citizens to embrace democracy as a way of being and living with others. Dewey, for example, argued that schools should be democracies in microcosm and should teach students particular processes, values, and attitudes so that they can become active citizens who participate in multiple realms of community life. Barber (1992, 1998) contends that schools teach people how to be citizens in a strong democracy and provide an “apprenticeship in liberty” (1992, p. 7). Parker (1996b) emphasizes the importance of a democratic curriculum that teaches students the knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions for democratic citizenship and encourages respect for all groups of people in American society.

Wolfe’s ideas reflect this conception of democracy as a way of life involving active participation in multiple realms of community life. Wolfe actively served in many organizations that she felt would help democratize American society and its educational system. She frequently dealt with issues of social justice and human relations in her writings, speeches, and teaching. Wolfe contended that education should serve as the “great equalizer” and act as the “keystone to the arch of freedom.” She founded and
served as principal of two laboratory schools in which she attempted to create democracies in microcosm, and she 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.

Strongly influenced by the ideas of progressive educators, Wolfe defined curriculum as the summation of all of the activities of the child and maintained that the child’s needs, interests, and capacities should serve as the central core of the curriculum. She emphasized the importance of understanding the whole child, arguing that teachers teach people, not subjects. To create a meaningful and relevant educational experience for a child, she believed, teachers needed to relate the subject matter to the social and cultural background of the student and attempt to understand how each child learned. Wolfe particularly focused on the importance of children sharing in curriculum planning in order to motivate students to learn and to promote an understanding that democracy requires participation and active involvement. Wolfe also stressed the need for children to move beyond memorization of facts and to learn how to analyze and organize information, draw inferences, develop creativity, work cooperatively, and learn positive human relations.

Wolfe’s college teaching and service in government also reflected her dedication to democracy as a way of life; and throughout her career, Wolfe’s work as a social educator consistently focused on equity, democracy, and social justice in education. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on Wolfe’s beliefs about democracy and her contributions as a social educator.
Overview of the Study

Following this introduction, the second chapter describes Wolfe’s life history, providing a chronological overview of her career while establishing an initial historical and intellectual context for the different stages of Wolfe’s career. The chapter follows Wolfe from her early life history to her course work at Teachers College (1937-1938, 1943-1945), her work at Tuskegee Institute (1938-1950), her career at Queens College (1950-1984), her years as education chief of the Committee on Education and Labor in the U.S. House of Representatives (1962-1965), and after retirement (1986-present). Additionally, this chapter provides more detail on Wolfe’s views of democracy, adding to the theoretical framework of the study.

The following four chapters focus more specifically on different facets of Wolfe’s contributions as a social educator: her work as an educator, her tenure as educational chief of the Committee on Education and Labor in the U.S. House of Representatives, her scholarly and academic writings, and her activity in multiple realms of community life. Further details on Wolfe’s life story will be woven throughout each chapter.

Chapter 3 addresses Wolfe’s work as an educator, examining how her democratic ideals manifested themselves in her work with students. This examination includes Wolfe’s work teaching and designing curriculum for rural children in two laboratory schools in Tuskegee, Alabama, as well as her college-level teaching at Tuskegee Institute, Queens College, and several other institutions where she taught as a visiting professor. This chapter draws heavily on Wolfe’s doctoral dissertation, in which she elaborates her theory of democratic teaching and learning and describes her conception of
a curriculum relevant for rural children. Additionally, several interviews with Wolfe’s former students provide insight into her college teaching.

Chapter 4 investigates Wolfe’s tenure in Congress and how her ideas about democracy affected her work as education chief of the Committee on Education and Labor. The chapter studies her accomplishments as education chief, examining available reports to which she contributed, hearings she organized, different laws she guided through the legislative process, and laws passed by Congress during Wolfe’s tenure.

An examination of Wolfe’s academic work and scholarly writings is the focus of chapter 5. Wolfe’s writings consistently focus on issues related to democracy and education specifically addressing rural education, culturally deprived children, migrant workers, human relations, and social justice. Additionally, her scholarly work and curriculum recommendations reflect the continuing influence of progressive educators on Wolfe’s work.

Chapter 6 details Wolfe’s activities in multiple realms of community life. Wolfe argued for the need to move beyond writing and talking about democracy towards “doing democracy.” To this end, 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 Non-governmental Representatives to the United Nations for Church Women United, National Association of Black School Educators, Kappa Delta Pi, National Organization for Children and Youth, National Council of Negro Women, American Council on Human Rights, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, American Association of University Women, Zeta Phi
Beta Sorority, League of Women Voters, Human Relations Commission, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the New Jersey State Board of Higher Education.

Chapter 7 offers conclusions and final assessment about Wolfe's career and her contributions to social education through her advocacy for a democratic curriculum in her writings, teaching, social activism, community involvement, and government service.
CHAPTER 2
LIFE HISTORY, HISTORICAL AND INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT OF DEBORAH WOLFE, HER WORK, AND HER VIEWS OF DEMOCRACY

Early Life History

Olive Deborah Juanita Cannon was born on December 22, 1916, in Cranford, New Jersey. Her father, Reverend David Wadsworth Cannon, served as the minister for the First Baptist Church of Cranford. The seventh of fifteen children, David grew up in Concord, North Carolina, near the Cannon Towel Factory. His parents were born in the peripheral end of slavery and the family name traces back to their former masters, the Cannons. David attended Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, and then entered Princeton Seminary, New Jersey. For his student pastorate, he was assigned to Ebeneezer Baptist Church in New Brunswick, where he met and later married Gertrude Moody, the oldest of ten children and daughter of the first Black contractor in New Jersey. The couple moved to Norwich, Connecticut, for David's first pastorate, but a few years later he was called to Cranford and the First Baptist Church. David and Gertrude had three children: David Wadsworth, Jr. (b. April 18, 1910), Mary Elizabeth (b. September 25, 1912), and Olive Deborah Juanita (b. December 22, 1916).

Reverend Cannon served as a chaplain during World War I, in which he was seriously injured. He returned home, but due to the extent of his injuries he was unable to pastor again. Wolfe recalls that she knew her father through stories people told her,
visits to the hospital, and his rare trips home. Gertrude, her mother, acted as head of the family, working as a teacher, social worker, lecturer, and an activist for the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the women’s suffrage movement. A childhood friend of Wolfe, Vivian Cobb, remembers Mrs. Cannon traveling to schools and churches to scientifically demonstrate the evils of liquor and cigarettes. Gertrude organized local children into a Loyal Temperance Union, and both Cobb and Wolfe recollect their pledge to abstain from alcohol and tobacco (Cobb Interview, 2000; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Gertrude also involved her children in the fight for ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. As an infant, Wolfe would go with her mother and sister, who handed out fliers and buttons promoting the woman’s right to vote.

Wolfe expressed a strong sense of pride in her family history; she recalls that her parents were determined to teach their children understanding and respect for themselves and their heritage. Additionally, Wolfe believes her parents imbued her with a “deep love of people without regard to race, creed, or color” and a “missionary zeal” to change people’s prejudices through education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The family house was filled with books by and about Blacks in Africa and the United States, including works by Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and others. The family belonged to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League. Also, Gertrude often invited colleagues and fellow activists home for dinner; these visitors included Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie Burroughs, and Charlotte Hawkins Brown. Wolfe’s later work was influenced by these Black writers, political leaders, and educators. Wolfe asserts that while she learned intense pride in her Black heritage and a love of all people, her parents also
readied me for the White world in which I was going to live. Both of them had come through White schools themselves. They had been touched and bothered but had stood stern, strong, and tall in spite of it. So they were prepared to give us this kind of readiness...we learned what most Black people have to learn – that you have to be twice as good to get as far. (Wolfe, 1979)

Wolfe’s active religious life reinforced her respect for all people. Wolfe explained:

Religion is not something you do on Sunday. Religion is something that controls your whole life and your moral values. I am a child of God. That’s what makes me equal to anybody. After all, “of one blood God made all to dwell on the face of the earth.” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

The First Baptist Church served as the center of the total life of the Black community in Cranford: political, social, and economic. The church had a credit union designed to encourage Black home ownership and financial independence from local White banks. Gertrude Cannon spent many hours at the dining room table, teaching members of the congregation about mortgage and loan applications. The credit union encouraged home ownership throughout the city, and, as a result, Cranford never had an all-Black section of town. The church organized social outings, dramatic plays, athletic events, and prayer meetings. Wolfe’s first teaching and speaking experiences took place at First Baptist. Also, the church served as a vital and important source of political activity for the Black community. Wolfe remembers that in the 1930s a series of political meetings at the church convinced the Black voters of Cranford to change from the Republican party of Lincoln to the Democratic party of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, largely because of dissatisfaction with the Republican response to the economic hardships of the Great Depression. Additionally, the church organized struggles against segregation and racism in Cranford. For example, the church initiated a boycott of local
movie theaters that tried to enforce a seating policy that created a “Blacks only” section in the back of the theaters. When the city built tennis courts and closed them to the Black population, the church responded by raising money for its own tennis facilities.

Wolfe attended local schools for her K-12 education: Sherman Grammar School (K-8) and Cranford High School (9-12). Cranford, located in northern New Jersey, had an integrated school system. Wright (1941) examined the history of education of Blacks in New Jersey and described northern areas of New Jersey as “influenced by the cosmopolitan spirit of New York,” where most cities felt no need for separate schools (p. 200). Southern New Jersey, however, supported a strictly segregated system of education in which Black schools suffered from inferior buildings, overcrowding, and lack of supplies. Despite integration, Wright reported that the schools of northern New Jersey did not employ many Black teachers--less than 3-8% (p. 190). Black teachers graduating from New Jersey normal schools often struggled to find teaching positions and generally were forced to seek employment in Black southern New Jersey Schools (Wright, 1941, p. 189). Throughout her education in Cranford, Wolfe never had a Black teacher.

Wolfe vividly recalls her first day of school, when White children followed her singing, “Nigger, Nigger, never die/Black face and shiny eyes/Crooked nose and crooked toes/That’s the way the Nigger goes.” She ran home crying to her father, who told her, “Black is honorable.” Wolfe reminisced, “I’m so glad he said honorable. Honorable has deep character and knowing who you are and being affirmed by your parents” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe’s parents emphasized the vital importance of education. Gregory (1995) noted that “in most Black communities, a great value is placed on the role of education
because many believe it is the only means for successful employment in American
society” and that there is “a strong belief and commitment to advancing in order that each
generation can go further and achieve more” (p. 6). David, Mary, and Deborah Cannon
excelled academically in grammar school and entered the college preparation track in
high school, a path unusual for Black students in Cranford. Wright (1941) found that
Black students were often encouraged to enter the vocational track instead of the more
challenging college preparatory courses. Wolfe was active in both academic and athletic
activities, including the National Honor Society, the History Club, tennis, and basketball.
All three Cannon children went on to earn advanced graduate degrees.

The Depression hit Cranford hard in 1929, but Wolfe recalls:

It didn’t really affect my family because we were poor all of the time. We never
had a great deal of money, but we never went hungry. We’ve always owned our
home, which made the difference because we never had to worry about being put
out of our house. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Financial concerns did, however, prevent Wolfe from attending her “dream” college,
Oberlin College in Ohio, which admitted Blacks as early as the mid-1860s and held a
reputation of being a liberal institution friendly to both women and Blacks (Graham,
1999). Instead, after graduating from Cranford High School in 1933, Wolfe entered
Jersey City State College, which had a manageable tuition of $100.00 per year.

**Jersey City State**

At Jersey City State, Wolfe majored in social studies education because she
believed "that the only way to change the nature of our society is to understand society
and its people" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Jersey City State was a small school with only
about five Blacks in the entire college. Wolfe’s program included a variety of education courses, and she had two elementary teaching internships: a second grade placement in Westfield during her junior year, and a fourth grade experience at the Jersey City State laboratory school in her senior year. In this second internship, Wolfe worked with “one of the most creative teachers you could ever have, a woman who let me fly and didn’t fence me in” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe describes her fourth grade classroom as a place where every student was busy, where “all kinds of activities were going on in every different corner, so when you walked in you knew this was a place where students are living and learning and not just sitting still waiting for the teacher to tell them what to do” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe commuted to Jersey City State each day from Cranford and worked five jobs to earn the money for train fare, tuition, and books. She taught piano lessons, tutored other students, worked in the cafeteria, and assisted a professor with secretarial duties. During her junior and senior years, Wolfe served as principal and teacher of the adult night school in Cranford, which was founded and supported by the Works Progress Administration. Her responsibilities included organizing the classes, conducting teacher meetings, teaching courses, and fulfilling administrative responsibilities such as attendance records. Wolfe attributes the night school experience with helping her formulate her philosophy of administration, which she described as democratically shared leadership.

While at Jersey State, Wolfe won a Lisle Fellowship for a summer program held in Lisle, New York, by Dr. and Mrs. DeWitt Baldwin. The Baldwins had been missionaries to Burma, and upon their return to the United States they decided to find a
way to promote world peace through creating an environment in which young people from different countries could live and work together towards mutual respect and understanding. In 1936, they established an interdenominational, international, intercollegiate, interracial summer program and invited young people from all over the world to attend. The students took seminars in sociology and psychology and also ventured out into the surrounding areas to perform community service in “deputation teams.” These teams of four to six persons participated in a wide variety of activities that included the following: directing a community center for migratory laborers, teaching daily in Vacation Bible School, and planning for a community homecoming (Partridge, 1958a). The program, with its emphasis on “World Peace through World Understanding,” challenged the students to meet and get to know people from vastly different backgrounds (Partridge, 1958a). Wolfe’s roommate was a White girl from apartheid South Africa who immediately expressed her dislike of Blacks. Wolfe decided to “indirectly” educate the girl about American Blacks. She read her poetry including Paul Laurence Dunbar’s “Dawn,” Countee Cullen’s “Leaves,” and other poems by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps. She played R. Nathaniel Dett’s “Juba Dance” on the piano. Wolfe recalls that the two never became friends, but learned respect for each other’s cultural backgrounds. Wolfe truly enjoyed the experience, and she later served on the board of the fellowship. She attributes the Lisle program for influencing her views toward community involvement and positive human relations (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

During her junior and senior summer breaks from Jersey City State (1936-1937), Wolfe accepted a teaching job that, in her view, “changed her whole life” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Gertrude Cannon returned from one of her visits to Black schools for
temperance education and told her daughter about the awful conditions of the schools in southern New Jersey, particularly the schools for the children of migrant laborers. Inspired by her mother’s stories, Wolfe found a job teaching the children of migrant workers in the Eastern Shore of Maryland for the Federal Council of Churches, which established summer educational programs for migrant laborers. Wolfe worked with the pre-school and school-age children, teaching them during the day, organizing recreational programs at night, and arranging church activities on weekends. She found this experience rewarding, but a harsh lesson in “man’s inhumanity to man” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe recalled that children of migrant workers were not welcome in local schools or churches, and that the summer programs provided the only education these children received. The living conditions of the children shocked Wolfe. Entire families lived crowded into one room, and the whole community shared one bathroom and a kitchen. The Depression had exacerbated the pre-existing economic plight of migrant workers; most lived in abject poverty. Wolfe felt frustration that “here I was trying to teach them values and goals and to inspire them to dream great dreams, but they never saw what life was supposed to be like, what the goal was. If that’s the case, how can you aspire to it?” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She struggled with how to make education relevant for these students, given their abysmal living situation. Wolfe believed that the students needed “some special kinds of courses to relate their work life to their educational life” and that “the typical school curriculum was not addressed to agricultural needs and all the other problems that they had” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). This concern
with the curriculum needs of rural children led Wolfe to Teachers College and Mabel Carney.

**Teachers College in the Late 1930s**

After graduating from Jersey City State in 1937, Wolfe entered Teachers College, Columbia University, to pursue a Master’s degree in rural and teacher education. Wolfe chose Teachers College because she felt that it “was the outstanding institution in teacher education” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Cremin (1962) attributes the preeminence of Teachers College at this time to Dean James Earl Russell, who had transformed Teachers College from a “struggling professional school into a world-renowned center of pedagogy” (p. 172) through his ability to merge professionalism and progressivism into a reformist philosophy of teacher education during his administration from 1898-1927 (p. 175). Russell established a conceptual framework for teacher preparation based on four major goals: a liberal education, concentration on the materials the student was preparing to teach, knowledge of the learner and learning, and formal instruction in pedagogical skills and procedure (Cremin, 1962, pp. 173-174). Closely tied to Russell’s conception of teacher preparation were his beliefs in the nature of education, that “democracy demands a very special sort of education, one closely linked” with the “common life of the people” and the responsibility to serve the common good (Cremin, 1962, p. 174). To this end, Russell extended the college’s interest beyond public schooling into multiple realms of the community, including private schools, reform schools, hospitals, settlements, houses of refuge, and other philanthropic institutions (p. 174).
This merger of progressivism and professionalism created an environment hospitable to all the major streams of progressivism in education and secured for Teachers College its position as the “intellectual crossroads” of the progressive movement (Cremin, 1962, p. 176). Cremin (1962) argues that in progressivism teachers found an ideology that supported their quest for status, while in professionalism progressives had the “key to their demand for scientifically trained pedagogues who could bring into being a new society ‘more worthy, lovely, and harmonious’” (p. 175).

When William Fletcher Russell succeeded his father as Dean in 1927, he immediately allayed concern that he might be content to maintain the status quo by engaging the College in “self-examination and intellectual soul-searching” that initiated a major reorganization culminating in radical changes by 1938 (Cremin, Shannon, & Townsend, 1954, p. 131). The redesign plan included organizing the college into five divisions, creating an Advanced School of Education, establishing a new professional doctorate of education, and developing general course offerings (pp. 138-141). Wolfe entered Teachers College in 1937 in the midst of these organizational changes and while the college was still recovering from the financial hardship of the Great Depression.

During the early years of the Depression, low enrollment numbers hurt the College financially, but by 1936-1937 the numbers rebounded and passed their highest previous figure (Cremin et al., 1954, p. 164). The financial crisis affected the College, but was “neither as significant or as lasting as the effect upon the thinking of the Teachers College faculty” (p. 164). During this time period, the faculty, staff, and administration of Teachers College engaged in dialogue about academic freedom, the rights of workers and students, teacher unionization, and issues related to Communism, socialism, and
They also sought the answer to the challenge issued by George Counts in 1932: “Dare the school build a new social order?” (Counts, 1932; Cremin et al., 1954, p. 149). Cremin et al. (1954) note that because of the “radical” nature of these debates, Teachers College was “news” during the 1930s and was described by the media as “one big unhappy family, in the best sense of the word” (p. 247). Dean William F. Russell actively encouraged intellectual debate among the faculty; in his annual report of 1937 he asserted that Teachers College adhered to no single point of view, took no single position, and issued “no statement to which everyone agreed” (Cremin et al., 1954, p. 246).

Wolfe remembers the charged academic atmosphere of Teachers College during this time, asserting that “there was no other school in the country that had so many leaders in educational thought, all the curriculum and philosophical leaders. It was the intellectual heyday, the height of Teachers College” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She took courses from the prominent educators of the time: William Kilpatrick, George Counts, William Bagley, John Childs, and others. When she returned to Teachers College in the 1940s for her doctorate, Wolfe would work closely with other well-known figures: Florence Stratemeyer, Hollis Caswell, Ruth Strang, Ernest Osborne, Harold Rugg, and Roma Gans. During Wolfe’s time at Teachers College, the faculty engaged in extensive intellectual argument over real issues related to the needs of American teachers and schools; as Cremin et al. (1954) note, these conflicts were rooted in basic philosophical differences (p. 249). This philosophical discussion comprised the historical context that informed Wolfe’s conception of progressive education, democracy and education, and her beliefs about the nature and purpose of education. The progressive ideas that Wolfe encountered at Teachers College clearly influence the majority of her work.
During her masters program, Wolfe took a course in teacher education from William Chandler Bagley and encountered one aspect of the philosophical debate between conservatives and progressives: the role of subject matter in the curriculum. Widely recognized as the leader of the conservatives or "essentialists," Bagley defended the role of organized subject matter. He took issue with the progressives' assertion that, according to conservatives, subject matter must be memorized and that knowledge only has one function, the instrumental function. Bagley argued that conservative educators emphasized understanding over memorization and that students needed systematic study; he contended that by denying the importance of organized subject matter, progressives weakened the "educational fiber" of the nation (Cremin et al., 1954, p. 251). Bagley asked on behalf of the essentialists:

Should our public schools prepare boys and girls for adult responsibilities through systematic training in such subjects as reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and English, requiring mastery of such subjects, and, when necessary, stressing discipline and obedience, with informal learning recognized but regarded as supplementary rather than central? (Cremin et al., 1954, p. 251)

Wolfe fell firmly into the progressive camp; she said she could not accept Bagley's philosophy "in terms of the return to essentialism and basics" and that she believed that teachers "teach students, not subjects" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). However, Wolfe admired Bagley tremendously as a man "because he looked at people not in terms of their color, their age, their sex, or any other superficial factor. He respected each student as an individual, as a human being" (Wolfe, 1979). She said:

Can you imagine a kid my age, feeling respected by a great man who was so highly regarded? He made you feel that, here is a man who is venerable [and] who has contributed to the thought life of humankind, yet he was so natural, so real, so wonderful. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)
Also, Bagley invited and inducted Wolfe into Kappa Delta Pi, an organization in which Wolfe became very active; she later established chapters at Tuskegee Institute and Queens College. Bagley wrote Wolfe a letter of recommendation when she left Teachers College in 1938; while he noted that “Miss Cannon is an exceptionally competent student” and “well suited for the work she wishes to do,” he qualified his statement by writing that “she is one of the very best students of her race that I have ever known” (Bagley Letter May 13, 1938, Queens College/CUNY Archives).

Wolfe’s professor for her foundations of education course was William Heard Kilpatrick, who challenged Bagley’s conservative essentialism. The spokesperson for the progressives, Kilpatrick argued that the traditional curriculum emphasized “subject-matter-set-out-to-be-learned” (Kilpatrick, 1934, pp. 346-347). The new curriculum, with a philosophical tradition grounded in the ideas of Pierce, James, and Dewey, “aimed at self-direction through the purposeful efforts of children to overcome obstacles and solve problems” (Cremin et al., 1954, p. 251). Kilpatrick asserted that the new curriculum was more democratic because it taught intelligent self-direction, a habit of mind required of citizens in a democracy. Kilpatrick’s own project method de-emphasized and later discredited the role of subject matter in the curriculum and promoted “purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment” (Kilpatrick, 1918, p. 320). Kilpatrick recommended reorganizing the curriculum into a succession of projects, which he viewed as the “best guarantee of sharpened intellectual acumen and enhanced moral judgment” (Cremin, 1962, p. 217). Kilpatrick argued that projects, or “purposeful activity,” always proceeded through four steps: purposing, planning, executing, and judging. He recommended that
schools teach children how to think, not what to think. In the debate over the role of
subject matter in curriculum, Kilpatrick asked on behalf of the progressives:

Should our schools make central the informal learning of experience and activity
work, placing much less stress on formal systematic assignments, discipline,
obedience, and instead seek to develop pupil initiative, discipline, and
responsibility as well as mastery of basic subjects, by encouraging pupils to show
initiative and develop responsibility, with teachers, while in control, serving
primarily as guides? (Cremin et al., 1954, p. 250)

Kilpatrick was a tremendously popular teacher at Teachers College; by the time
he retired in 1938 it was estimated that he had taught 35,000 students (Kliebard, 1995, p.
141). Wolfe remembers Kilpatrick’s course and that he “taught wonderfully and it was
an intellectual experience,” but she questioned his reliance on lecture. Given his
emphasis on teaching the whole child through the project method, Wolfe thought that
Kilpatrick should teach his own students by “precept and example.” She compared
Kilpatrick’s teaching to that of Harold Rugg, explaining that Rugg “was more
approachable and practiced what he taught; he argued that one must be a student of
society in order to be an effective teacher, and he demonstrated that in what he said as
well as his participation in the broader community” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe felt
Kilpatrick made very little attempt to know or understand his students, but his ideas
fascinated Wolfe and influenced her work (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe viewed progressive philosophy as a different approach, a move away from
previous educational thought, with the potential to democratize education and foment
change in the larger society. She believed progressive education indicated that the
curriculum was to be based upon life and should be altered according to the needs of
society and the learners in order to make education relevant to the needs of the individual
student. Zilversmit (1993) asserts that by the 1930s, there was some agreement on a “definition” of progressive education. Progressive educators advocated a child-centered curriculum that de-emphasized subject matter knowledge and focused on meeting the emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of the “whole child.” Additionally, progressives advocated an active role for children in determining the content of their education (Zilversmit, 1993, p. 18). During her master’s degree program, Wolfe chose to focus on rural education in order to develop progressive “solutions” for the education and curriculum of migrant workers.

**Rural Education and Mabel Carney at Teachers College**

Wolfe chose to focus on rural education and teacher education. She admitted it “was awfully unusual for a girl growing up as I did in the suburbs of New York City to get a master’s degree in rural education,” but her experiences with migrant workers had inspired a desire to improve the education of rural children (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). By the time Wolfe entered her master’s program, Teachers College had “grown gradually into an increasing appreciation of the rural life problem, and into a consciousness of its obligation and opportunity in this field,” and various departments were “cooperating in advancing the welfare and opportunity of country children” (Carney, 1918, p. 149, p. 155). Rural education, however, had endured a hard struggle to gain national attention (Cremin, 1962).

At the turn of the century, the attention of the nation was primarily focused on the urbanization and industrialization of America and the resulting societal problems, including immigrant exploitation, slums and tenements, and widespread corruption. At
the same time, however, rural America was suffering hardship and poverty but was receiving much less attention. Many farmers had abandoned rural areas for cities, and the remaining agricultural workers faced expensive land and increasing debt (Cremin, 1962). Blacks in rural areas, particularly in the south, suffered also from segregation, sharecropping, and hard work for very low wages (Anderson, 1988). The conditions of rural schools varied widely, but they were often in poor condition, with underpaid and unqualified teachers teaching multi-age groups in one-room schoolhouses (Cuban, 1993). Other problems facing rural schools included: lack of professionally prepared superintendents, health needs of students, poor textbook supplies, lack of building standardization, taxation issues, and general neglect (Carney, 1918, p. 149).

Dean Liberty Hyde Bailey of Cornell’s Agriculture School brought attention to the cause of rural education in the late 1800s and early 1900s. He championed country life, a way of life he saw in danger of disappearing, and called for a “new species of curriculum” that would educate farmers and teach reverence for the soil (Cremin, 1962; Kliebard, 1995). Bailey believed that education could serve as the harbinger of reforms to rural areas (Cremin, 1962, p. 77). Other educators followed in Bailey’s footsteps, touting the importance of improving rural education and generating increased attention to the plight of rural farmers. Congress had to contend with insistent demands from two groups: urban workers promoting industrial skill training, and rural leaders advocating for the preservation of their way of life (Kliebard, 1995).

Eventually, “sensitive to a fertile field in which Progressivism might work its uplifting influence,” President Theodore Roosevelt appointed a Commission on Country Life in 1908 and charged it with “gathering information and formulating
recommendations for alleviating rural distress” (Cremin, 1962, p. 82). The Commission sent out a lengthy questionnaire to more than half a million farmers and rural spokesmen throughout the nation. One question was designed to gauge satisfaction with rural schools. Almost universally, the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with local schools and a desire for education that had a direct relationship to the way of life of rural workers. While the Commission did very little with its report, it inspired many educators to focus on rural areas, and they unleashed a flood of literature on various aspects of country life. One book in particular met with amazing success: Country Life and the Country School, published in 1912 by Mabel Carney (Carney, 1912; Cremin, 1962).

Mabel Carney was born and raised in rural Missouri. She taught for fifteen years, serving as a rural school teacher, critic teacher, and director of teacher-training in Illinois, Washington, and Minnesota (Daniel, 1952). Carney (1912) wrote her book on rural education, Country Life and the Country School, for teachers and teacher educators. She introduced and outlined the “farm problem” and then described ways for a rural teacher to assume leadership in the revival of country life (Cremin, 1962, p. 84). Carney recommended improving the physical environment of the school, “making it a community center, ‘vitalizing and enriching the course of study’ with agriculture, domestic science, and elementary rural sociology, and waging campaigns for the consolidation of overly small school districts” (Carney, 1918; Cremin, 1962, p. 84). Carney also suggested a plan for a modern schoolhouse, plans for daily school work, types of literature, music, and art best suited for a rural school, and a necessary list of supplies and tools. Carney’s book was a bestseller and was widely used as a text for the training of rural teachers. She utilized it in her own rural education courses at Teachers

Carney accepted a position at Teachers College in 1917, where she reorganized and expanded the rural education program to include coursework in teaching, supervision, teacher training, administration, and curriculum development (Daniel, 1952). Carney (1918) described the purposes of this department: “to prepare leaders for the various fields of rural education and country life; to promote the general advancement of rural education and country life throughout the United States; and to collect trustworthy data concerning the conditions of rural education and country life” (pp. 150-151). She believed her department would grow out of the social, economic, and educational needs of the open country and demanded that faculty be “wholeheartedly devoted to the rural cause and steeped in rural education and country life experience” (Carney, 1918, p. 152). To this end, Carney required teachers and students to spend considerable amounts of time in rural areas. She emphasized the need for both intellectual and moral preparation of rural educators and firmly believed that rural education should not be viewed as vocational education, but rather as part of academic elementary and secondary education.

Carney’s dedication to the educationally and socially disadvantaged included a commitment to the educational opportunities for Blacks (Daniel, 1952). Wolfe calls Carney a fighter, a woman who was genuinely dedicated to the acceptance of Black students at Teachers College through her words and actions (Wolfe telephone interview, 2000). Carney actively recruited Black students to Teachers College, established a Negro Education Club, created a mentoring system with faculty who had demonstrated
interest in the Black experience, and developed a course, Education 245D-246D/"Special problems in the education of Negroes in the United States," that was offered each winter, spring, and summer session. This course dealt with segregation and other issues affecting the education and social life of Blacks (Crocco, 1999b; Daniel, 1952). Additionally, Carney organized a series of lectures on Black issues that featured prominent political and intellectual leaders. Wolfe recalls attending these lectures, describing the featured speakers as “fighters of freedom before the official struggle began” (Wolfe telephone conversation, 2000). The guests included Mary McLeod Bethune, Eleanor Roosevelt, Walter G. Daniel, Mordecai Johnson, and W.E.B. DuBois. In the 1930s, there were about 250 Black students at Teachers College; the numbers increased to between 500 and 600 students during the summer “extension” sessions (Crocco, 1999b). Carney retired from Teachers College in 1942. To thank Carney for her “distinguished contributions to democratic education, race relations, and Negro welfare,” Howard University conferred her with an honorary doctorate (Daniel, 1952, p. 562).

Carney served as Wolfe’s major professor during her master’s program and supervised Wolfe’s thesis, which focused on creating a relevant curriculum for migrant labor. In her master’s thesis, Wolfe sought to provide extensive background on migrant labor, detailing where and how migrant workers were used. She discovered that all fifty states utilized migratory labor in agricultural areas, and therefore she “made it abundantly clear that this was a universal problem” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The crux of Wolfe’s research focused on how educators needed to change the nature of the curriculum in order to utilize the experiences of migrant workers to teach basic skills and knowledge. She recommended using experiences in their lives, particularly their agricultural work, as a
means for teaching all subjects. Additionally, Wolfe emphasized the importance for teachers to recognize that they are teaching people, not subjects, and to understand the whole child, including his or her living situation and community life (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The curriculum recommendations outlined in Wolfe’s thesis clearly reflect the progressive influence.

Tuskegee Institute and Rural Laboratory Schools

Wolfe earned her master’s degree in 1938; her graduate degree placed her in the upper echelons of educated African-Americans during this time period. Johnson (1938) reported that between 1914 and 1936, only 1,476 Black Americans earned masters’ degrees, 75% of which were conferred by northern universities. Women comprised a very small percentage of these graduate degrees (Johnson, 1938).

After graduation, Wolfe accepted a job at Tuskegee Institute to develop their rural elementary education program and laboratory schools. The president of Tuskegee Institute, Dr. Frederick Douglas Patterson, had written to Mabel Carney to recruit applicants for the newly created rural education faculty position. Carney recommended Wolfe and attempted to allay Patterson’s concerns about Wolfe’s youth and inexperience. Carney’s letter of recommendation stated:

Miss Cannon is one of the most able young women I have ever known. She has an exceptionally keen mind and also an outstanding personality. Although only 22 years of age she possesses the maturity, mentality, and even the experience of a woman much older in years. There is no doubt, in fact, that Miss Cannon will go far in the teaching profession and reflect much credit upon any institution or agency with which she is associated. It is not my usual practice to recommend candidates so young for teacher training and supervision, but I make an exception in Miss Cannon’s case because of her outstanding ability, and recommend her highly for both these fields. (Carney letter, July 28, 1938, Queens College/CUNY Archives)
Through Carney’s insistence, Patterson invited Wolfe to Alabama for an interview and subsequently offered her the position. Wolfe said, “I had always wanted to see Tuskegee. You hear about Booker T. Washington and this institution built by Blacks. So there I was, a New Jersey girl going to Alabama. It was to be my first all-Black teaching experience” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Although she had to deal with a challenging new position and the segregated southern society of Alabama, Wolfe said that “the thing that kept me there was Tuskegee Campus, where we had some of the finest trained Black people in the world” and what she considered the “inspiring” philosophy of Booker T. Washington that served as the educational mission of the Institute and which influenced Wolfe’s work in rural education in Alabama (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Tuskegee Institute had first opened its doors on July 4, 1881. In 1880, Wilbur F. Foster, an ex-Confederate colonel and lawyer in Macon County, Alabama, ran for state Senate on the Democratic ticket. Convinced that if he won the Black vote he would win the election, he campaigned on the promise to establish a school for the county’s Black population. Foster won the Senate race and kept his promise; in 1881 the Alabama state legislature appropriated money for the establishment and maintenance of a normal school for Blacks in the town of Tuskegee, Alabama. The committee overseeing this school appointed Booker T. Washington, a graduate of Hampton Institute, the new president of the “Normal School for Colored Teachers at Tuskegee” upon the strong recommendation of Samuel Armstrong, President of Hampton (Anderson, 1988; Butler, 1977; Bond, 1962).
General Samuel Chapman Armstrong founded the Hampton Institute in 1868 with the help of the American Missionary Association and the Freedmen’s Bureau (Bond, 1939). A White man, Armstrong held particular views regarding the ability of Blacks; he “maintained that it was the duty of the superior White race to rule over the weaker dark-skinned races until they were appropriately civilized” (Anderson, 1988, p. 38).

Armstrong intended Hampton to serve as a normal school, to train teachers for the South’s Black educational system (Anderson, 1988, p. 34) and to serve as an “institution for teaching appropriate attitudes toward work and thereby correcting the moral failings of an underclass” (Kliebard, 1999, p. 14). He believed that ex-slaves needed training to overcome their “defects of character,” which he described as indolence and laziness. Armstrong believed that industrial education held the potential to socialize Blacks to become more productive laborers and therefore an economic asset to the South. The mission of Hampton as a normal school became confused with vocational and trade training because Armstrong employed a manual labor routine in order to “work the prospective teachers long and hard so that they would embody, accept, and preach an ethic of hard toil or the “dignity of labor” (Anderson, 1988, p. 34). Of the 723 graduates of Hampton’s first twenty classes, 84% became teachers. Despite these statistics, many people viewed Hampton as an industrial school designed to train students in vocational trades.

Washington attended Hampton Institute and worked his way through the program, graduating in June of 1875 (Jackson, 1983). He spent some time teaching in Black schools, but returned to Hampton to direct a program for the education of American Indians. After assuming the presidency of Tuskegee, Washington developed a
philosophy similar to Hampton’s for Tuskegee; he encouraged Blacks to remain in the South and to support themselves economically through agricultural, domestic, and vocational labor. He advocated a paternalistic relationship between Black workers and the White man in which the “the material and business interests in the southern communities would become so linked together, so interlaced, that instead of strife there would become peace and union” (Anderson, 1988). In this way, Washington predicted that Black workers could control southern agricultural and domestic labor. He viewed industrial education as an opportunity to help Blacks become economic assets to the South and to achieve economic independence from Whites (Kliebard, 1999). He wrote in his autobiography:

Almost the whole problem for the Negro in the South rests itself on the question as to whether he makes himself such an indispensable service to his neighbor, to the community, that no one can fill his place better in the body politic. (Washington, 1901, p. 308)

While Tuskegee did promote vocational and industrial training, the director of the school’s Academic Department described the primary mission of the school as “largely to supply measurable well-equipped teachers for the schools” (Anderson, 1988, p. 73). Therefore, similar to Hampton Institute, Tuskegee was a normal school designed to train teachers to work in Southern Black schools. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute, however, differed from Hampton in several ways. The faculty of Tuskegee was entirely African-American, a significant departure from Hampton whose faculty was white. Washington recruited his faculty from graduates Hampton Institute and Fisk University, as well as northern universities. Also, Washington’s philosophy of education focused more on skill training and creation of an independent class of Black laborers rather than Armstrong’s
emphasis on moral redemption. Washington viewed Blacks as competent, resourceful, and energetic, a direct contrast to Armstrong’s perception of Blacks as shiftless, indolent, and lethargic (Kliebard, 1999, p. 16).

Washington faced an enormous task in organizing, building, and expanding a school for African-Americans in the deep South. He had to recruit Black students to attend Tuskegee, while at the same time convincing Southern Whites that education for African-Americans would not “spoil” them or lure away cheap labor sources (Jackson, 1983). While the students of Tuskegee cleared the land and erected the buildings, Washington traveled the country, attempting to raise money and build support for his school. He gained national attention after his 1895 Atlanta Exposition Address, in which he stated:

> To those of the White race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, were I permitted I would repeat what I say to my own race, Cast down your bucket where you are. Cast it down among the eight million Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides. Cast down your bucket among these people who have, without strikes and labor wars, tilled your fields... There is no defense of security for any of us except the highest intelligence and development of all... In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all essential to mutual progress. (Washington, Address to the Atlanta Exposition, Atlanta, Sept. 18, 1885)

According to Jackson (1983), after the Atlanta Address, many Whites donated money to Tuskegee because Washington appeared to have the “right” answer to the race problem. Many of these White philanthropists became vocal advocates for the Hampton-Tuskegee model, encouraging the establishment of similar vocational schools across the South to educate the Black population in the “correct manner” (Anderson, 1988; Bond, 1939).
The Hampton-Tuskegee model did not go unchallenged, however. Washington’s ascendance to prominence in the late 1800s attracted many dissenters from his views. Several critics argued that Washington was able to secure money from Whites because “he was expressing and projecting the ideas of the American White” (Jackson, 1983, p. 29), which in their view only served to hurt Black hopes for educational opportunity and equality. In the 1890s, Harry Smith, editor of the Cleveland Gazette, expressed concern that industrial education would not prepare young Blacks for the “higher duties of life.” A series of editorials in the Washington Bee also attacked Washington’s views. In 1896, one article commented:

It is a notorious fact that the utterances of Mr. Washington are nothing more than to make himself rich by assuring the White people of this country that the Negroe’s place is in the machine shop, at the plow, in the washtub, and not in the schools of legal and medical professions; that [the Negro] has no business to aspire to those places as they are reserved for the proud Caucasian. (cited in Anderson, 1988, p. 65)

Further criticism of Booker T. Washington, also by the Washington Bee, urged Blacks to “relegate industrial education to a secondary role and place top priority on the training of lawyers, doctors, scientists, and other professional persons” (Anderson, 1988, p. 65). Others attacked Washington for his silence about the disenfranchisement of Blacks in the South; they argued that given his prominence, he should be promoting active citizenship for Blacks instead of hindering opportunities for civic participation. A more recent critic, historian James Anderson (1988), contended that after slavery, Southern Blacks had worked hard to create educational opportunities for their children; many possessed a “fundamental belief in learning and self-improvement and a shared belief in universal education as a necessary basis for freedom and citizenship” (p. 3). The Hampton-
Tuskegee philosophy, according to Anderson, hindered the development of a rigorous universal education designed to improve economic opportunity and equality for southern Blacks.

W.E.B. DuBois, the first Black man to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard, became the most famous and vocal critic of this model and Washington's ideas. While he appreciated Washington's effort to promote an education that would foster economic independence for African-Americans, DuBois criticized the apparent neglect of the intellectual education of future Black leaders, or "the talented tenth" (Kliebard, 1999). DuBois worried that the philosophy of industrial education sent the message, "Take the eyes of these millions off the stars and fasten them in the soil; and if their young men will dream dreams, let them be dreams of corn bread and molasses" (DuBois, 1973). He questioned whether Hampton and Tuskegee provided the job skills required by a modern industry and worried that "Negro youth are being taught the technique of a rapidly disappearing age of hand work" (DuBois, 1912). Instead, he believed that education should address the realities of the new workplace (Kliebard, 1999). Also, DuBois felt that Washington was being submissive to Whites and that his Exposition Address startled the nation to hear a Negro advocating such a program after many decades of bitter complaint; it startled and won the applause of the South, it interested and won the admiration of the North; and after a confused murmur of protest, it silenced if it did not convert the Negroes themselves. (DuBois, 1901, pp. 41-49)

But Washington remained true to his philosophy, building a talented faculty dedicated to the industrial education mission and firing any detractors who emphasized academics over skill training. In 1896, George Washington Carver joined the faculty as Director and Instructor in Scientific Agriculture and Dairy Science, a boost to the school
(Jackson, 1983). The school continued to grow, and by the turn of the century had graduated over 423 students. A study by DuBois (1900) noted that the majority of these graduates went into teaching, and therefore Tuskegee remained essentially a teacher training normal school. Nevertheless, vocational skills training defined Tuskegee’s reputation. Anderson (1988) notes that “when Hampton and Tuskegee are taken on their own terms, as normal schools, there is no logical reason why they should have given priority to technical and trade training. Yet with all the talk about industrial training, both contemporary observers and later historians mistakenly assumed that trade, technical, and commercial training formed the essence of Washington’s educational philosophy” (p.75).

Washington did use his prominence and Tuskegee’s reputation to launch a program designed to improve the medical condition of African-Americans. A study by Monroe Nathan Work determined that Blacks had extremely high morbidity and mortality rates (Smith, 1995). At that time, the White medical community argued that the high rates of sickness and death among Blacks were proof of biological racial inferiority. Work disagreed, asserting that poor public health efforts created the situation and that the health of Blacks could improve through “application of sanitary science and preventative medicine” (Smith, 1995, p. 38). After Work published his findings, Washington launched a major Black health campaign, supported with money donated by Anson Phelps Stokes, a northern industrial philanthropist. Washington asserted that

without health ... it will be impossible for us to have permanent success in business, in property getting, [and] in acquiring education. We must reduce our high death-rate, dethrone disease, and enthrone health and long life. (Smith, 1995, p. 38)
He addressed his critics, declaring, "We may differ on other subjects, but there is no room for difference here. Let us make a strong, long united pull together" (Smith, 1995, p. 38). In his fight for a health program for African-Americans, Washington departed from his accommodationist stance to argue that segregation contributed to the health problems of Blacks by forcing them to live in the most unimproved and unsanitary areas (Smith, 1995). Washington died in November 1915, living long enough to observe the first National Negro Health Week.

Major Robert Russa Moton, another Hampton graduate, assumed the presidency of Tuskegee with a pledge to follow Washington's vision for Tuskegee and to continue his health program. Under Moton, Tuskegee's student population grew, he hired new faculty, and he expanded several departments. Due to external and internal demands to improve the educational standards at Tuskegee, Moton departed from Washington's philosophy of education by initiating a college-level program for students entering with high school degrees in 1927 (Anderson, 1988; Butler, 1977; Jackson, 1983). The 47th Annual Catalog of the Institute stated:

Under the modified social and economic conditions following the close of the World War, it has become necessary that Tuskegee Institute should simply intensify the instructional processes, to make more thorough the methods of educational procedure and raise the degree of academic and technical attainment required in a more exacting economic environment. Therefore, in addition to those courses of secondary grade, in the specialized vocational schools, leading to special diplomas, there have been added the following new courses on the college level.... (Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, Annual Catalog, 1927-1928, p. 14)

This "reform" led to an increased focus on academic study at Tuskegee, and raised the percentage of students taking college-level courses. Prior to these changes, most students were studying at or below the high school level, receiving the equivalent of a tenth-grade
education upon completion of the course of study at Tuskegee. After these reforms, the academic standards improved (Anderson, 1988). Moton continued Washington's health program by recruiting continued support for the National Negro Health Week, holding a yearly health meeting at Tuskegee, and lobbying the federal government for support. He also gave the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) permission to launch the notorious “Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male.” This study lasted forty years; White medical doctors studied the symptoms and progression of syphilis in Black males, but did not treat them for the disease. Macon County, with 35% of the population infected by syphilis, provided ample numbers of cases. The USPHS provided their “subjects” with annual physical examinations, aspirin, free hot meals, and financial support for burial expenses (Smith, 1995, p. 113). Despite the controversial nature of the study, Moton felt it would provide positive publicity for Tuskegee while assisting the health community in learning more about how to treat and control syphilis in the Black community. Later, the study garnered widespread criticism for its racist and cruel use of Black males for study of a disease that could easily have been treated.

In 1935, Moton resigned because of poor health, and Dr. Frederick Douglass Patterson became Tuskegee's third president (Butler, 1977). Patterson was born in Washington, D.C., in 1901. He attended Prairie View State College in Texas, but later transferred to Iowa State College, where he earned a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1923 and a Master of Science degree in 1927. Patterson then went to Cornell University, where he earned a Doctor of Philosophy in bacteriology in 1932 (Butler, 1977; Jackson, 1983). He took the helm of Tuskegee on October 28, 1935, in the middle of the Depression when sources of revenue had seriously declined, student income was
inadequate, and the endorsement funds were meager (Jackson, 1983). His inauguration generated much concern for the future of the school; many felt that he would initiate a conversion to the liberal arts and humanities college model and de-emphasize Tuskegee's traditional vocational focus. Patterson immediately indicated that the educational tradition and policy would not change under his administration and asserted his belief that the Depression highlighted an increased need for a rigorous technical program of education for Blacks (Butler, 1977). In fact, he later wrote numerous articles in educational journals advocating vocational training and guidance for the education of Black students (Butler, 1977). He did pledge, however, to continue to raise the standards of excellence for Tuskegee. To combat the effects of the Depression, Patterson established a plan to keep school expenses to a minimum, postpone major construction, and concentrate on raising educational standards (Jackson, 1983).

Wolfe became a faculty member of Tuskegee in 1938. At that time, 95% of its student body came from the southern states of Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and Texas (Partridge, 1945). The Institute had very strict rules for students, including uniforms, required attendance at church services, and explicit discouragement of fraternization between sexes. Also, the general student body was required to live in dormitories and forbidden to leave the Tuskegee Institute campus (Butler, 1977; Harper Interview, 2000). At Tuskegee, five departments collaborated in the education of teachers. The School of Education centered its attention on the preparation of rural elementary teachers; however, teachers also took courses from the Department of Physical Education, the School of Home Economics, the School of Agriculture, and the School of Mechanical Industries (Partridge, 1945).
When Wolfe arrived at Tuskegee, rural education, secondary education, and elementary education were considered separate programs with different requirements and purposes. After Wolfe headed a re-organization in 1938-1939, the School of Education stated its single purpose as “the development of a practical educational program for the education of teachers for work in instruction, supervision, and administration in rural schools” and required the same basic course work for all education students in the first two years (Tuskegee Institute Bulletin, 1939-1940). Additionally, the School of Education reorganized its courses into three broad areas of professional work: special methods and the campus school, materials and methods of curriculum study, and an internship for student teachers (Partridge, 1945). The philosophy of education at Tuskegee viewed the teacher as a community worker and leader. Therefore, during their internship, Wolfe mandated that student teachers live in the community of their school. Wolfe noted that this requirement reflected Washington’s conception of “let down your bucket where you are” and her own belief that a “teacher must be interested in all areas of community living if s/he is to guide in the development of wholesome and well-rounded children” (Partridge, 1945).

Wolfe was not only the director of the elementary education program and supervisor of student teachers, but also the principal of two of Tuskegee’s rural laboratory schools, 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. Johnson (1934, 1941) studied the social and cultural situation of the rural Black population living “in the shadow of the plantation” in Macon County, Alabama. The 1930 United States Census stated that there
were 2,803,756 Negro families and of these, 78.2% lived in the South. Eighty percent of Black families living in Southern rural areas were tenants on large plantations owned by Whites, and White farmers controlled a larger percentage of the viable farmland (Johnson, 1941). For example, in Macon County, of the 180,692 acres of farmland, 104,417 acres were owned by White landlords and developed by Black tenant farmers (Johnson, 1934, p. 10). Tenancy created a situation of dependency between the Whites and Blacks and contributed to the crippling poverty of Black farmers. Also, health problems were rampant among the rural Blacks, who suffered from syphilis, influenza, scarlet fever, and many other ailments and diseases (Johnson, 1934; Smith, 1995).

Johnson's study also examined the educational situation of Black farmers in Macon County. He found that the oldest members of the community tended to be illiterate. Of 612 families interviewed, Johnson determined that 25% of the male heads of the family and 20% of the female heads were functionally illiterate. In general, all of the interviewees recognized the importance of education, hoped that education could alleviate their economic plight, and expressed commitment to the education of their children. Numerically, however, Johnson discovered that of the 612 families, there were 782 children; 553 were enrolled and 229 not enrolled in school (1934, p. 133). Most schoolchildren dropped out before age 14. The factors preventing attendance at school included: distance to a school, lack of a qualified teacher to run the school, the need for children to work in the fields, and the attendance fees that schools charged fees.

Anderson (1988) notes that during this time period, public elementary schools were frequently not available to Black students, and that "high schools were virtually nonexistent, and the general unavailability of secondary education precluded even the
opportunity to prepare for college” (p. 285). In Alabama in 1930, only 5.8% of 109,216 children of high-school age were attending high school (Bond, 1939). Schools were strictly segregated, and Black schools and teachers had a fraction of the monetary support that White schools received from the state and local governments (Bond, 1939).

In this context, Wolfe established the two laboratory schools in rural Macon County, Prairie Farms (1938-1941), and Mitchell’s Mill (1941-1943). Wolfe describes Prairie Farms as “the government answer to the plea of the late Booker T. Washington for a live-at-home, crop-rotated salvation for the American farmer” that offered “new light and hope” to Black citizens (Partridge, 1945, p. 31). In 1937, the federal government’s Resettlement Administration relocated 34 Black families from unproductive farms in the eastern section of Macon County to a 3,169 acre settlement in Shorter, Alabama. Shorter was located in the western part of Macon County, halfway between Montgomery and Tuskegee. The government renamed the settlement the “Prairie Farms Security Project at Shorter, Alabama.” The families lived on their own farms, which ranged from 39-134 acres, and, with government loans, built frame houses. Wolfe recalled that “it was wonderful watching these people coming to get their new farms set up, to see people who had been trying to scratch the soil -- they had been waiting for a long time for their ‘40 acres and a mule’” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Tuskegee Institute selected the community as a site for one of its rural laboratory schools and assigned Wolfe the job of principal.

Wolfe arrived at Prairie Farms in 1938, expecting to find a school. Building plans had been delayed, however, and Wolfe opened the Prairie Farms Laboratory School in a local church and an abandoned old building. On the first day, 181 children from Prairie Farms and the surrounding area arrived to register. In some instances, students had
walked as far as ten miles to attend school. Macon County did not provide school buses for Black children and, for many of the children, Prairie Farms was the only opportunity for an education. Wolfe, with the assistance of three student teachers from Tuskegee, organized the children into groups and taught in the makeshift surroundings while the new school was being built. In December 1938, construction of the five-room Prairie Farms School was completed. The school had a seating capacity of 175, with facilities for home economics, farm shop, a health center, a teacher’s cottage, and space for a playground. By this time, student enrollment had swelled to more than 250, and the students helped decorate and furnish their school by hanging the curtains, whitewashing the walls, and assembling the chairs, tables, and desks. The community celebrated the school's opening on January 29, 1939, and dignitaries from Tuskegee Institute, the Macon County Board of Education, and the Farm Security Administration were present. Wolfe said, "You should have seen us the day we marched singing down the highway from the old school to the new. It was a great day, with a big celebration -- the Tuskegee Institute Band played, farmers barbecued pigs all night long, and we had a wonderful picnic" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She stayed at Prairie Farms working as principal, community worker, teacher, and intern supervisor until 1941, when Tuskegee transferred her to Mitchell’s Mill.

In contrast, Mitchell’s Mill was a “depleted, dejected community” that had been the site of a lumber company (Partridge, 1945, p. 56). The mill closed during the depression, and many workers left the area in search of job opportunities. The remaining families barely survived, and the authorities at Tuskegee became interested in helping the "plight of the underprivileged.” They began a self-help cooperative project, but could not
energize or involve the community, and the project came to an end (Jackson, 1983; Partridge, 1945). As a result, the State Welfare Board took over Mitchell’s Mill and leased it to a White man, who turned the area into farmland and hired the local families as day laborers. Located only two miles from the city of Tuskegee, the area was viewed as the “slum” of greater Tuskegee. The families lived in deplorable conditions, in two or three room shacks with “almost no provisions for personal hygiene” (Partridge, 1945, p. 61). Health problems were rampant. Tuskegee Institute became involved again in 1937, selecting the school at Mitchell’s Mill as a laboratory school. It sent two interns each quarter, but the interns did not live in the community. Tuskegee transferred Wolfe to the school in 1941 to improve the situation. She originally viewed this transfer as a demotion, but realized that Tuskegee believed that she would be able to make a difference and improve the educational opportunities of the children of Mitchell’s Mill (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She turned Mitchell’s Mill into a community school, requiring interns to live in the teacherage and work in the community. Wolfe stayed at Mitchell’s Mill until 1945.

During Wolfe’s years in the laboratory schools at Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill, she continued her relationship with Mabel Carney, who “gave close concern and supervision in our growing development of the rural education department.” Wolfe reflected that “in a lot of ways, I feel I never would have been able to do what I did at Tuskegee if I hadn’t had the formal kind of training and continued relationship with Carney at Teachers College” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Carney also arranged donations of supplies and books to Wolfe’s laboratory schools (Wolfe telephone interview, 2000). Wolfe applied many of Carney’s ideas to building and organizing the schools in both
communities, as well as in her teacher preparation courses. Also influenced by the ideas of Washington, Wolfe emphasized industrial and vocational education in the laboratory schools, as well as teaching health education to students and community members. Additionally, Wolfe’s curriculum reflected many of the progressive concepts she had encountered at Teachers College. These ideas also influenced her college-level teaching. As while serving as principal and teacher at both laboratory schools, Wolfe also taught courses for Tuskegee. During school sessions, the students traveled in buses from Tuskegee to the laboratory schools to attend Wolfe’s courses (Pappy Telephone Interview, 2001). Wolfe taught classes on the Tuskegee campus when her laboratory schools were on summer break.

While at Tuskegee, Wolfe met and married her first husband, Henry Roy Partridge. Partridge had a master’s degree from Cornell in agricultural economics and had spent some time studying for his doctorate. President Patterson wanted to start a new program in commercial dietetics (hotel management) at Tuskegee and asked Partridge to put aside his doctoral studies in order to attend Cornell University Hotel School. When Partridge returned to Tuskegee, he became involved in both commercial dietetics and agricultural economics. The commercial dietetics program was widely attacked by Tuskegee’s critics; many argued the new school would only serve to create “good servants” for White people (Anderson, 1988).

The couple married on June 1, 1940, nine months after the outbreak of World War II. When America became involved in the war, Partridge volunteered for military service, went through basic training in Alabama, and was sent to fight in Europe. Tuskegee Institute dedicated itself to the war effort, turning the male dormitories into
housing for soldiers training to fight (Pappy Telephone Interview, 2001) and for the renowned “Tuskegee Airmen” learning to fly at Tuskegee’s Moton Airfield (Jackson, 1983). In fact, before she left for Teachers College, Wolfe took flying lessons from one of the Black airmen and asked him why women were not permitted to be “Tuskegee Airwomen” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Tuskegee also trained technicians, support personnel, and nurses for the war effort. Guyman (1952) estimates that 2,700 of Tuskegee’s alumni and current students were involved in World War II. President Patterson made several speeches promoting Tuskegee’s efforts to support the war and reminded the nation of the Negro soldiers who suffered “abridgement of their rights and privileges” while fighting for American democracy. Patterson questioned why “Negro servicemen and servicewomen may not expect and receive the full protection afforded by their government” as they fought for Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” (Tuskegee Institute Annual Report of the President, 1942-1943).

While her husband was at war, Wolfe went back to Teachers College (1943-1945) on a General Education Fellowship to pursue a Doctorate of Education. As president of the Colored Alabama State Teachers Association, Wolfe had traveled to all of the counties in Alabama and visited Black schools; she was overwhelmed by the critical problems of poor teacher preparation, the low educational level of school supervisors, the health problems of rural students, and the generally depressing situation of rural Black elementary schools. She was determined to improve her ability to assist in alleviating some of these problems and improving the education of Blacks in Alabama. This goal compelled Wolfe to return to Teachers College in 1943 (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).
Teachers College in the 1940s and Wolfe’s Doctorate of Education

Wolfe returned to Teachers College on a leave of absence from her faculty position at Tuskegee from 1943-1945 in order to earn her Doctorate of Education (Ed D.). Teachers College in the 1940s also was dealing with the Second World War, which affected the Collage in several ways. The war industry lured many teachers away from education into more lucrative professions, selective service called young men into the armed services, and there was a decreased demand for teachers because of low birth rates during the Depression. The College suffered from declining enrollment and financial struggles; total educational income fell off almost a third between 1939 and 1943 (Cremin et al., 1954).

The effects of the war also compelled the faculty and administration to address the question: “How can Teachers College not only carry on but also maintain its preeminence?” (Cremin et al., 1954, p. 178). In response to this question, the College released its first all-faculty statement, entitled Democracy and Education In The Current Crisis, in which the authors argued: “Our problem is to prepare for adequate national defense under such an aroused and alert public opinion that democratic values will not be destroyed, but will rather be strengthened by this determined united effort of our people.” The report elaborated a sixty-point creed that explored the “most significant meanings of the democratic ideal as applied to American life” (Cremin et al., 1954, pp. 178-179; Faculty of Teachers College, 1940). William F. Russell and Thomas H. Briggs expanded the ideas addressed in the report, writing a book entitled The Meaning of Democracy, published in 1941. These publications would influence Wolfe’s conception of
democracy; in her dissertation she applied many of the ideas outlined in the “creed” to her development of and argument for a democratic curriculum for rural Black students.

Wolfe entered the Advanced School to pursue her doctorate of education, a degree that had “ever increasing acceptance both at the College and in the field” and was recognized as a “Teachers College degree” (Cremin et al., 1954, p. 194-195). When Wolfe graduated in 1945, she was one of forty Teachers College students graduating with an Ed D. She chose the degree because she wanted to focus on practical applications of curriculum theory as it would occur in the field and thus improve her ability to teach. Wolfe had entered the program with a clear goal in mind: to develop a curriculum relevant for the rural laboratory schools of Tuskegee Institute, and to improve preservice teacher preparation in that context. She intended to learn how to

use my knowledge of psychology and sociology to plan a program of teacher education for students; to figure out how to use my experience [in Black rural areas] to call attention to what difference the surroundings, the environment, and the social situation make on the quality of education; to plan a curriculum for both children and preservice teachers that considers the total societal situation. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Her committee included Dr. Ruth M. Strang, Ernest G. Osborne, and her major advisor, Florence B. Stratemeyer. According to Wolfe,

My committee members influenced me in different ways, and I chose them for different reasons. Stratemeyer was my main advisor because she was in teacher education. I wanted Ruth Strang because she was in child growth and development, one of my emphases. And Ernest Osborne was interested in the social foundations of education. It was very good because each of them were very different, but they made a good combination and worked well together as a group and worked well with me. Each had something to give. Strang was a prolific writer, and she helped me with the whole writing experience. Osborne was a global person, interested in people...and the big picture. And Stratemeyer, her strongest skills were with the details; she had the ability to help you ferret out your ideas, develop them, analyze them, and write clearly. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)
Wolfe's dissertation, *A Plan for Redesigning the Curriculum of the Rural Laboratory Schools of Tuskegee Institute*, incorporated many ideas and philosophies from her masters and doctoral course work at Teachers College and her experiences in Alabama (Partridge, 1945). Wolfe valued writing her dissertation, asserting that it was a joy, a real joy, to be writing something that you really felt was going to have some meaning to you as you went to work, and as you helped other people in the world, working in the rural South and working in teacher education and in Black colleges in particular, I thought that was very helpful. (Wolfe, 1979)

For her master's degree, Wolfe commuted to New York City from Cranford, New Jersey, but for her doctoral program, Wolfe lived on campus in Whittier Hall. She took 18-19 credits per semester, including the short summer session. Wolfe renewed her active involvement with a number of groups, including Kappa Delta Pi, the Negro Education Club, Pi Lambda Theta, and the student council. She became a charter member of the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and attended the first meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1945. Wolfe found this meeting "an experience in racism," as the conference hotel had a "no Blacks" policy and she had to stay at the Black YWCA in St. Louis and commute to the meeting each day. Furthermore, she could not eat at the hotel and had to find other places for her meals. Wolfe recalls that Teachers College professor Roma Gans and a fellow doctoral student of Wolfe's, Walter Anderson, decided that Wolfe would eat with them at the hotel dining room. They "made a sandwich" of Wolfe and walked into the restaurant and ate a meal with her, "daring them to make me leave." Wolfe says she will always be grateful to them, as they had "the guts to not only talk about ending racism but to fight discrimination with action as well" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).
In the summer of 1944, Wolfe earned a scholarship to attend a summer session at Vassar College to study childhood growth and development. She enjoyed the program and remembered the experience as "very hands-on and taught by a person who really believed in what she said" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The highlight of that summer for Wolfe was getting to know "First Lady" Eleanor Roosevelt when Mrs. Roosevelt invited the Vassar Child Development group to Hyde Park for refreshments and discussion. Wolfe recalls sitting in the yard and listening to Mrs. Roosevelt, who would "talk about all the things that would interest us as college people who were interested in changing the world." Wolfe calls Mrs. Roosevelt one of her heroines "because she was the first First Lady who really cared about all the people and made it abundantly clear that she was not prejudiced" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

After her summer experience at Vassar, Wolfe returned to Teachers College to finish her doctoral program. Wolfe graduated with her Ed.D. in 1945. She believed that her doctoral program was such a rich experience. It deepened my belief in progressive education, and I was more able to explain it. [I was] more articulate and able to use illustrations and examples from teaching so my students could see philosophy at work. I had more than a verbal commitment, I could apply what I learned. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Return to Tuskegee Institute

Upon her return to Alabama, Wolfe became the first faculty member of Tuskegee Institute (other than President Patterson) with an earned doctorate. Her advanced degree placed her among a very small percentage of Blacks with doctorates during this time period; Anderson (1984) noted that between the years 1940-1949 only 145 Blacks earned
doctorates (p. 25). Her husband returned from the war in 1945; their son, Henry Roy Partridge, Jr., was born on April 23, 1947. Patterson asked Wolfe to found and serve as director of the education graduate program, which she did from 1945-1950, working with Grambling Institute of Northern Louisiana and with Jeanes teachers. Jeanes teachers were Black supervising teachers who were trained with money from a fund established by Anna T. Jeanes, a Quaker woman who wanted to further rudimentary education in small Negro rural schools. The fund, started at Jeanes’s death in 1907, was directed “solely towards the maintenance and assistance of rural community and country schools for Southern Negroes” (National Association of Supervisors and Consultants Interim History Writing Committee, 1979). Wolfe worked to train the Jeanes teachers and provide them with graduate course work so they could teach teachers in rural areas and supervise schools. She recalled that she “made a more rigorous program for them than the one I completed at Teachers College” by requiring all students to complete a master’s thesis. At Teachers College, students could write a master’s thesis or take additional coursework. Wolfe made this decision because she believed that, “given the nature of the background of most of our students, who came from predominantly historically Black colleges, I felt that they needed the experience of writing at a high level” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). By 1953, Tuskegee had 116 graduate students enrolled in the program.

Wolfe viewed Tuskegee as an exciting place to work, but the segregation, racism, and “real lack of democracy” of Alabama in the 1940s startled her (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Johnson (1941) examined segregation in Macon County, particularly noting the “rules of racial etiquette” that characterized the relationship between Whites and Blacks.
in Macon County. He asserted that the "personality of Negro youth was shaped by interaction with the social institutions characteristic of the South" and that Blacks were very aware of both written and unwritten rules of segregation (p. 307). For example, Blacks could never marry, dance, eat, or play games with Whites. Blacks and Whites had to use different hotels, eat in separate restaurants, shop in separate stores, and sit in different sections in movie theaters, trains, and buses. Courts, juries, and lawyers were also segregated. Lynchings and rapes of Blacks by Whites were frequent, yet often unreported. In daily conversation, Blacks always used "Mr. and Mrs." or "Sir and Ma'am" when addressing Whites, while Whites never used these terms when speaking to Blacks (Johnson, 1941, pp. 308).

Wolfe felt particularly frustrated with the tactics that Macon County officials employed to prevent Blacks from voting. Gertrude Cannon, who had dedicated many years of her life to the fight for women's suffrage, made her daughter promise to register to vote when she turned 21. Wolfe became 21 in Alabama and discovered the Jim Crow laws of the local township prevented her from registering to vote. Macon County also enacted a law that prevented Blacks from participating in the Democratic Party (Tuskegee Civic Association, p. 7) in order to discourage Black political involvement. Additionally, Blacks could only register on a particular week once a year and had to appear before a five-member board. The board required Blacks to pay a poll tax, which Perry (1945) described as a "euphemism for vote tax" that had disenfranchised most Black voters in Alabama. The poll tax was "accumulative," which meant the County assessed the tax on the entire period of liability. For example, a man forty-five years old who had never voted had to pay $36.00, $1.50 per year he did not vote (from age 21-45).
The Board also asked Blacks to prove that they had at least $300 in the bank, demonstrate an ability to read and interpret the Constitution, and have at least two White people vouch that they were a “good Nigger” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Finally, the laws required that at least three of the five members of the voting registration board had to be present.

Wolfe arrived at the registration office with two White friends, proof of her bank balance, the amount necessary for the poll tax, and confidence in her knowledge of the Constitution. However, while Wolfe tried to register to vote every year she lived in Alabama (1938-1950), each time she arrived, only two members of the voting board were present and they turned her away. One study in 1936 noted that “there is not anywhere in the South today a full participation by Negroes in the rights and privileges which they as citizens are entitled to” (Odum, 1936). She joined a group of Blacks in a class action suit against Alabama; eventually the group won, but by that time Wolfe had left Alabama.

When she moved back to New Jersey, she was able to register to vote by going to the town hall and filling in a form.

Wolfe also found travel difficult in the South. For example, she went to visit her husband in basic training in Gadsden, Alabama, before he left for the war. The trip, which should have taken two hours by bus, lasted ten hours. Blacks were required to sit in the back of the bus and every time the bus became too full, all of the Black travelers were forced to get off and wait for the next bus. This happened five times en route to Gadsden. When she finally arrived at her destination, Wolfe found that the Army provided no sleeping accommodations for Black Army wives. Wolfe was also outraged that the White Baptist Church in Tuskegee refused to allow Blacks to attend services. She explained, “That bothered me more than anything else. How could any person who
calls himself a Christian treat another in that way? The God I serve has no color” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe took another leave of absence from Tuskegee Institute (1950-1951) to work on advanced post-doctoral study at the University of Pennsylvania in research methods and statistical analysis. Wolfe felt “wed to a particular philosophy” -- that of Teachers College -- and she wanted to experience a different graduate program in order to be able to teach her students at Tuskegee more effectively. She felt that, compared to Teachers College, the University of Pennsylvania was more subject-oriented, more traditional, less welcoming to Blacks, and less willing to deal with issues related to race, diversity, and gender. She did appreciate the smaller class sizes and the different perspective that, according to Wolfe, “made me more well-rounded” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). While at the University of Pennsylvania, Wolfe taught education courses as a visiting professor at New York University and Queens College, City University of New York (CUNY).

During this year away from Alabama, Wolfe made the difficult decision to leave Tuskegee Institute and accept a full-time faculty position at Queens College. She chose to leave Tuskegee Institute for both personal and professional reasons. Personally, her marriage to Partridge fell apart; the couple divorced in 1951. Professionally, Wolfe felt frustration that she had not been promoted at Tuskegee; men with lower degrees and less experience were receiving the “full professor” title while Wolfe was overlooked. She believed that “here I was so mistreated as a woman... If I were a man, I would have been made a [full] professor right away” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Discrimination against female faculty at historically Black colleges was pervasive during this time period; less
qualified men were often promoted more rapidly than women with higher degrees and more experience (Crocco, 1999b; Gregory, 1995). Secondly, Wolfe’s advocate, Dr. Patterson, resigned the presidency of Tuskegee in order to become educational director of the Phelps Stokes Fund. Wolfe felt a sense of loyalty to Dr. Patterson, once he announced his decision to leave Tuskegee, she saw no reason to return to Alabama. Wolfe and her son moved back to Cranford, New Jersey, to live in the house of her childhood with her mother and stepfather.

Queens College

In 1951, Wolfe joined the faculty at Queens College, City University of New York. The City University of New York was founded with the establishment of a free academy by the State Legislature in May, 1847. This all-male free academy was to “perform the functions of the high school, the academy, the polytechnic school, and the college” (Gordon, 1975). In 1854 the free academy obtained the authority to grant academic degrees, and in 1866 it was renamed the College of the City of New York. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the consolidation of various towns and cities into the greater city of New York, combined with new waves of immigration, changed the demographic organization of the city and increased demand for accessible college-level education in New York City. In the 1920s, Hunter College and City College joined CUNY. In 1930, the new Board of Higher Education established Brooklyn College and in 1937 it authorized the creation of Queens College in the borough of Queens in Flushing, New York (Gordon, 1975; Roff, Cucciara, and Dunlap, 2000).
Wolfe was invited to work in the Department of Education of Queens College, CUNY, by Dean Harry Rivlin. The New York Board of Higher Education approved her appointment as Assistant Professor of Education on February 19, 1951, at a compensation of $4524 per year (Rivlin Letter February 20, 1951, Queens College/CUNY archives). She became the first Black professor on the faculty of Queens when she accepted a position in 1951. Queens College issued a press release announcing “another first”, “Dr. Deborah Cannon Partridge, formerly of Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, has been appointed as the only Negro member of the faculty of Queens College, New York” (Press Release, March 1951, Queens College/CUNY archives). She earned tenure on September 1, 1954 (New York Board of Higher Education Letter, February 16, 1954, Queens College/CUNY archives). Wolfe was pleasantly surprised to find three of her former Teachers College classmates on the faculty: Dorothy Gray, Lorene Fox, and Helen Storen. When Wolfe first arrived, Queens College and CUNY reflected the general mood of the nation in the decade following World War II. In the early 1950s, according to Gordon (1975), “a nation weary from war cultivated prosperity and ideas of ‘normalcy,’ had babies prolifically, and worked out its more troublesome neuroses in an anti-communist crusade at home and the Cold War abroad” (p. 250). The CUNY system reacted similarly, avoiding systemic change while coping with the “witch hunt” for Communists among academic circles. In addition to the Red Scare, CUNY faced other challenges during this time. As the G.I. Bill drew hundreds of thousands of former soldiers into higher education, CUNY struggled to cope with rising enrollment (Gordon, 1975; Roff et al., 2000). At the same time, Departments of Education in the CUNY
system had to contend with severe teacher shortages, as an influx of "baby boomers" dramatically increased school enrollment.

To deal with these challenges, the Queens Department of Education conducted an extensive reexamination of their programs of study for the preparation of elementary and secondary teachers. Dean Rivlin identified particular problem areas for the college, which included inadequate attention to preparing junior high school teachers, a need for a reorganization of elementary course work and the introduction of new course work, and the necessity of enriching the graduate courses in education (Report of the Department of Education for the Academic Year, 1951-1952, Queens College, CUNY, Archives). By 1957, the Department had introduced new elementary and secondary course sequences, which enabled faculty teaching educational psychology courses to cooperate more effectively with those teaching elementary education curriculum and methods courses. This, according to Rivlin, assisted in "relating the students' understanding of child psychology and their insight into curriculum and methods" while enabling future teachers to be "concerned with the child's personal and social adjustment" and his or her "intellectual development" (Rivlin, 1957, p. 22). He implemented this change partly in response to the many critics who attacked the intellectual rigor of teacher preparation. The department also initiated a special program designed to quickly train teachers for the junior high school, but the faculty voted to discontinue the program as the inroads made toward the alleviation of the teacher shortage "were not commensurate with the heavy demands made on the staff" (Rivlin, 1957, p. 4). The Queens Department of Education continued to seek ways to recruit and train teachers. Rivlin explained:
We are engaged in an educational project that stirs the imagination as we try to give all children the elementary, the secondary, and the higher education formerly reserved for a few. Our schools are swamped, and changing educational procedures make this educational inadequacy even more marked because the new procedures demand more teachers and better teachers than did the school practices of a quarter of a century ago. (Report of the Department of Education for the Academic Year 1956-1957)

As another aspect of the reorganization, the college developed new advanced seminar courses for the “ablest” graduate students to explore the social and philosophical foundations of education and to gain insight “into the applications of psychological theory and practice to the problems of working with children” (Rivlin, 1957, p. 3). Wolfe taught these seminars many times during her career at Queens College, as well as elementary methods, elementary curriculum, and educational psychology courses. She appreciated the way that the administration allowed the faculty latitude and flexibility in planning their courses and the fact that there was no prescribed course of study. As a result, Wolfe continued to assign readings written by progressive educators despite the attacks on progressive philosophy and its subsequent demise in the 1950s (Cremin, 1962; Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

While the Queens Department struggled with problems of rising enrollment and teacher shortages, the CUNY system also had to cope with increasing numbers of high school graduates and demands for vocational and technical training. The New York Board of Higher Education responded to these challenges by initiating the only major reform of the 1950s, sponsoring the creation of community colleges in New York City in 1953 (Gordon, 1975; Roff et al., 2000). The decade ended with the launching of Sputnik, which startled the educational community into action, particularly when government funds began flowing into schools in order to facilitate the development of the
mathematics, science, and technical skills of the nation's youth (Gordon, 1975). As Cremin (1962) notes, “When the Russians launched the first space satellite in the autumn of 1957, a shocked and humbled nation embarked on a bitter orgy of pedagogical soul-searching” (p. 347). That same year, after eighteen years as Dean of the Department of Education, Harry Rivlin resigned from Queens in order to move to another educational position. Wolfe recalls that Rivlin was “a scholar who worked hard and expected it of others” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Rivlin was replaced by John Ames in the 1957-1958 school year.

At Tuskegee, Wolfe had been required to work all twelve months of the year, but at Queens the faculty could elect not to teach in the summer session. Wolfe chose not to work at Queens during the summer and instead became a visiting professor at a variety of different institutions. For four years (1950-1954), she worked at New York University’s Center for Human Relations. Wolfe was responsible for the human and child development area of human relations and became very interested in this issue. During other summer breaks she taught at the University of Illinois, Urbana campus (1956), Wayne State University (1961), and the University of Michigan (1957). She also taught courses as an adjunct professor during the regular school year at Fordham University (1952-53) and Teachers College (1953-1954).

In 1959, Wolfe married Estemore Alvis Wolfe, a teacher in the public schools of Detroit and secretary-treasurer of the Wright Mutual Insurance Company. Estemore was very active in a number of organizations, and the two shared a number of interests: music, religious activities, and professional affiliations. Wolfe described her second husband as “gregarious, outgoing, and socially oriented” (Wolfe, 1979). Although her
husband lived in Detroit, Wolfe stayed in New York after her marriage and continued working at Queens until she took a leave of absence from 1962-1965 to work for the United States House of Representatives. The marriage ended in divorce in 1966.

**House of Representatives**

Wolfe took a leave of absence from Queens College from 1962-1965 to serve as the education chief of the Committee on Education and Labor of the United States House of Representatives. In the 1960 presidential campaign, Wolfe had worked for a group called "Educators for Kennedy," and when John F. Kennedy was elected, he invited Wolfe to be the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). Wolfe talked with Abraham Ribicoff, Secretary of HEW, who told her that she could make the position whatever she wanted it to be. Wolfe thanked the administration for its offer, but declined because of the lack of clarity in the job description. Wolfe was concerned that had she accepted, she would be the highest Black in government, and because the job was so unstructured, she might not perform her duties well. She worried that "America doesn’t judge Blacks as individuals -- they judge us as a total group, and if you fail they make a generalization about the whole race, and that’s a real responsibility" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Ribicoff mentioned Wolfe’s name to Adam Clayton Powell, Chairman of the Education and Labor Committee of the U. S. House of Representatives. Powell offered Wolfe the position of education chief, meaning that she would have the responsibility for coordinating “all educational matters coming before the full committee, to keep the members informed, and to teach the [committee members] about the

The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (Public Law 79-601) created the U. S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor by combining the Committee on Education and the Committee on Labor that had operated separately since 1883 (House Rules, 96th Congress) (Reeves, 1993, p. 4). Reeves (1993) describes the Committee as important in the policy process as the authorizing committee for major legislative programs involving issues such as labor, manpower, poverty, school lunch, and other aid to education. Its style, along with its importance, intrigues the student of congressional committees. It is fractious. It is raucous. It has had colorful leadership throughout its history. It authorizes big-money programs and subscribes least to the philosophy of “to get along, go along.” Education and Labor epitomizes not only the fundamental party and liberal-conservative dichotomies but those aspects of the legislative process that reflect the divisions in society. It is never dull. It might be described as the naughty child of Congress...a highly partisan, “policy-oriented” panel that exhibits little integration. (pp. 4-5)


Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. was an African-American Baptist preacher from Harlem, New York, who served the Twenty-Second District of New York in the U. S. House of Representatives. Powell had the reputation of being “one of the most influential and powerful Black politicians of his day and one of the Congress’s most warmly disliked members” (Reeves, 1993 p. 132). While Powell’s constituents and the
Black community loved and respected him, his Congressional colleagues generally questioned his strength of character and moral integrity. Regarded as a brilliant man and effective speaker, Powell championed Black issues in Congress. He became both famous and notorious for attaching his “Powell Amendment,” a bill that denied federal funds to states that discriminated on the basis of race, to dozens of appropriation bills. Powell often irritated his fellow Congressmen through his unwillingness to follow the rules, his general arrogance, and his constant legal problems (Hamilton, 1991; Reeves, 1993). He was renowned for his extreme absenteeism, his flashy lifestyle, and his willingness to exploit any opportunity for personal gain. Powell was alternately described as egocentric, brilliant, flamboyant, flashy, charming, irresponsible, womanizing, immoral, beautiful, erratic, articulate, verbose, and expert at thinking on his feet (Hamilton, 1991; Reeves, 1993). The most consistent word associated with Powell’s name was “controversial” (Hamilton, 1991).

Powell’s ascension to the Chairmanship of the Committee on Education and Labor attracted many critics. A New York Times editorial asserted that Powell’s “racist attitudes,” his “miserable record” as a legislator, and his “extreme absenteeism” were deplorable, and that Powell was not “the kind of legislator who ought to be chairman of a committee of the Congress” (Hamilton, p. 330). The president of the AFL-CIO, George Meany, announced that he believed Powell would “make a ‘terrible’ chairman given his history of ‘stirring up racial hatred at the least provocation’” (Hamilton, 1991, p. 331). Many House members, particularly Southern conservatives and Republicans, resented Powell’s chairmanship, questioning how a man of his flamboyance, irresponsibility, and legal problems could achieve such a position (Hickey and Edwin, 1965, Powell, 1971;
Wilson, 1960). Powell’s supporters, however, brought attention to Powell’s consistent record of working indefatigably to introduce and promote civil rights legislation. A. Philip Randolph highlighted Powell’s strong record on labor and civil rights. The retired president of the United Mine Workers, John L. Lewis, asserted that “Representative Powell has a fine voting record on matters of interest to working people” and should not be denied a chairmanship “simply because he is a Negro” (Hamilton, 1991, p. 331). One member of the Black community, Jackie Robinson, offered his support while issuing a muted warning: He “wanted [Powell] to move beyond fiery speeches to ‘aggressive’ follow-up and use his chairmanship to ‘affect the course of Negro progress’ in labor and education” (Hamilton, p. 331). Many of Powell’s supporters agreed with Robinson, asking Powell to step up, act like a leader, and move beyond rhetoric to action.

Powell became chairman of the Committee on Education and Labor in 1961, at a time when the focus of the nation had shifted from international to domestic policy and the Democratic administrations of Kennedy and later Johnson pushed education, labor, and other social issues to the forefront of their legislative agenda. For a committee that, prior to the 1960s, had very little major legislation to its credit, this new focus on social issues made it one of the busiest and most prolific committees in Congress during Powell’s tenure as chairman (1961-1967). According to Reeves (1993), as a chairman:

[Powell’s] personality and behavior, along with changes in committee rules, committee size and party ratios, subcommittees, and committee staff, made the committee more decentralized, democratic, universalistic, and complex at the same time that it remained highly partisan and conflictual. [Powell’s] ideological leanings and activist stance helped alter committee jurisdictions and functions, transforming the committee from a legislative barrier to a battering ram for social legislation. (p. 107)
Initially, his colleagues regarded him as a good chairman, but Powell's personal conduct and legal problems raised many questions and eventually destroyed his reputation and career. After an investigation revealed financial indiscretions, Congress stripped Powell of his chairmanship and denied him his seat in Congress, an action later overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court (Hamilton, 1991).

One of Powell's actions as chairman increased the budget for committee staff. Reeves (1993) and Hamilton (1991) note that Powell did an excellent job of hiring highly qualified and hard-working staff, delegating responsibility to them, and relying on them heavily to keep the committee running smoothly. Powell hired Wolfe as a committee staff member and asked her to serve as education chief. Wolfe admired Powell's dedication to Black issues and his leadership style, and she believed that he made an excellent chairman. She recalls that Powell insisted that everyone address her as "Dr. Wolfe," which she felt "signaled his respect for her talents and pride in her race" (Hamilton, 1991, p. 348). However, she admitted that Powell did have his faults: a short attention span, frequent absences, and displays of "egocentric" behavior (Hamilton, 1991).

As education chief, Wolfe acted as the liaison between the House of Representatives and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare on all educational matters. She researched and wrote legislation, arranged and attended hearings, drafted reports, provided the members of the committee with pertinent information, and briefed her counterpart in the Senate. She explained:

I was responsible for guiding all education legislation through the process in the Committee for Education and Labor from its conception until it became public law. My first job would be to...talk with the lawyers, whose specialty is writing
legislation, and I would be the one to provide the substance so they could put it into legal terminology. Then I would sit down with Adam Clayton Powell and decide which subcommittee [the bill] would go to. I coordinated with the staff of the subcommittee to determine when we would have hearings, and I would invite people who asked to be heard, as well as people I felt could give some background data. We wanted to make sure we had enough expert witnesses testifying on all aspects of the legislation. I talked directly with the Congresspeople, and would ask "are there areas in this bill that you would like to have more explanation [on] through witnesses?" I'd write up the testimony, summarize changes needed for the law, prepare presentations, and get Adam and the other [committee members] ready to answer questions on the floor of the House. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Hamilton (1991) notes that "Powell was particularly impressed at the way [Wolfe] carefully organized committee hearings, preparing a brief summary for each section of the bill to be considered, and presenting the witnesses in a consecutive, orderly manner that would facilitate the committee members' ability to follow the testimony" (p. 348). In a letter to Queens College requesting an extension of Wolfe's leave, Powell wrote that "I have found Dr. Wolfe to be exceptionally competent and knowledgeable regarding all levels of education. She has developed many Committee Prints... that have been of immeasurable value to Members of Congress as they make important decisions on education matters" (Powell Letter July 11, 1963, Queens College/CUNY Archives).

During her tenure as Education Chief, Wolfe guided many bills through the committee, and 35 laws were passed, including the Economic Opportunity Act (War on Poverty), the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Through her work as education chief, Wolfe had the opportunity to meet and work with both President John F. Kennedy and his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson. She recalls that she had a "nice, but short, relationship with Kennedy" and that in terms of
educational philosophies, “Kennedy and I agreed.” Wolfe, however, viewed Kennedy as a sheltered “aristocrat” who “hardly knew any Negroes,” but she believed that had Kennedy lived, he “would have been fighting for civil rights” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

During his election campaign and his presidency, Kennedy made some superficial overtures to the Black community; for example, he telephoned Martin Luther King, Jr., when he was jailed in Georgia, and insisted on the inclusion of Blacks in the Coast Guard marching band. He did appoint several Blacks to judgeships and high-level administrative posts, but he decided to pursue a “no-legislation” policy for civil rights. This decision caused civil rights critics to assert that while the president was “charming and sympathetic,” he was “harshly realistic in his political calculations” and would not truly support a civil rights agenda until the time was right for him (Hamilton, 1991, p. 343). Wolfe also worked closely with President Kennedy’s brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, while developing legislation to address the problem of juvenile delinquency. Robert Kennedy, according to Wolfe, was more of a “man of the people. He saw the depravity, the differences between class and caste and race. He was real, [there was] nothing superficial about him, and I could talk straight to him and get right to the point” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe spent considerably more time working with President Lyndon B. Johnson; she remembers him frequently visiting Congress because “when he wanted legislation passed, he’d fight for it… He’d call or come see me, call me by my given name, and ask, ‘Deborah, how’s [the bill] coming?’” Whenever Johnson signed educational legislation into law, Wolfe was invited to the White House ceremony. Comparing President Kennedy and President Johnson, Wolfe asserts that “they were different as day from
night, yet both of them were wed to education as the 'keystone to the arch of freedom'" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Johnson, Wolfe contends, knew more about education and more about Blacks. She believed that “[Johnson] wanted to go down in history as the education president, and he should because we never had so much educational legislation passed during any other period in history.” In his first State of the Union address, Johnson called for an unconditional declaration of "war on poverty" in the United States; many aspects of this "war" came under education and labor, leading to a period of unprecedented passage of legislation related to education, labor, and improving the situation of poverty in America. Unfortunately, this "war on poverty" was affected by the troubles of the "other war": Vietnam. The rising monetary cost of involvement in Vietnam, the high casualty rate, and the protests breaking out across the United States distracted Congressional attention from Johnson's social agenda and slowed passage of legislation for education and poverty (Reeves, 1993, p. 92).

The civil rights agenda also came to the forefront during this time period, as in hundreds of cities, Blacks demonstrated, calling for equal rights in voting, employment, education, and housing. Wolfe played an active role in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. At that time, she was the vice-president of the National Council for Negro Women, she was active in the NAACP, she served as "grand-basileus" of her Black sorority Zeta Phi Beta, and she was very involved in several other organizations associated with the fight for civil rights. She did extensive public speaking in support of the Black movement, and she was able to work on the educational aspects of Johnson's civil rights legislation. Wolfe participated in the now-famous march down Constitution
Avenue, in the second row of marchers behind Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She sat in the grandstand behind him as he gave his famous “I have a dream” speech. She remembers:

Here we were, of all races and creeds, walking down Constitution Avenue. We actually held hands, Black and White together, and sang “We shall overcome” and other songs of love, harmony, and peace. Constitution Avenue is, in itself, a symbol of America and what it stands for: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” I think the whole emphasis of the Constitution is that each individual is important in order to make America really a democracy. On the grandstand, I sat next to a Jewish White man from Boston and he asked if I was a life member of the NAACP. I said no, but I had been a member my whole life. Right there on that day on that platform I wrote a check for life membership for the NAACP. I thought it was so significant that this White man, this Jewish White man from Boston, asked a Black woman who was fighting for civil rights, to become a life member. You could feel the momentum, the spirit of unity, the potential of America; all of us working together for justice, equality, and opportunity. That one day exemplified the American dream like no other day in my life. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

She was very close to the King family and deeply saddened by Dr. King's death (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She was scheduled to give a speech in Atlanta the day King was shot; she changed her presentation into a memorial and went to visit the King family and assist in organizing the funeral. She recalled:

We wanted to make sure we did things right, the way [Dr. King] would have loved it to be done. It was a mixed group because you couldn’t talk about Martin King without realizing [that] here was a man for whom race was not a matter, age wasn’t a matter, we were all brothers and sisters. You wouldn’t think Black or White, because it was Black and White together we shall overcome...That day it was Black and White mourning his death. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe’s later work as a public speaker was strongly influenced by King’s message of peace and reflected Wolfe’s admiration of his commitment to social justice and equality.

Wolfe left her position as education chief in 1965. Her son had stayed in Cranford during her time in Washington and was about to become a senior in high school. Although he had visited her during summers and worked as a clerk in the House
of Representatives, she recalls, "It was time for me to go home and take care of my boy. There are certain times when a child needs the parents. It was the last part of his senior year, and I went on back. Although I would have loved to stay [as education chief], I was never sorry" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Return to Queens

Wolfe returned to Queens in 1965. The circumstances of the 1960s had led to major changes in the CUNY system, including the launching of a doctoral program, elimination of free tuition, and creation of the open-admissions policy. The doctoral program, initiated in the early 1960s, developed after the municipal and community colleges were federated into a university in 1961. The first class of Ph.D’s graduated from CUNY in 1965 (Roff et al., 2000). Also, because of increasing enrollment of students in the 1950s and 1960s, CUNY could no longer afford the free-tuition policy and started charging tuition in 1976 following a severe financial crisis. In the spring of 1976, CUNY was unable to meet its payroll and closed for two weeks at the beginning of June (Roff et al., 2000, p. 125). Jack Zevin, a professor of social studies education at Queens College, recalled arriving to work and finding the gates of the university chained shut (Zevin Interview, 2001). The college administration fired many non-tenured faculty to save money (Dill Interview, 2001; Zevin Interview, 2001). The Board of Higher Education reacted to the situation by imposing tuition; however, the personnel cutbacks remained in place. Zevin and Nancy Dill, a professor of elementary education at Queens College, described the change in climate of the College of Education, asserting that it took over ten years to recover from the events of 1976 and rebuild some sense of trust in
the CUNY administration (Dill Interview, 2001; Zevin Interview, 2001). Wolfe, a tenured full professor, escaped unharmed by the personnel cutbacks; she joined marchers in protesting the unfair treatment of non-tenured faculty (Zevin Interview, 2001).

The open admissions policy emerged out of concern that CUNY's student population did not adequately reflect the ethnic and economic composition of New York City. In the 1950s, substantial numbers of middle-class Whites had left the city, to be replaced by Puerto Ricans and Blacks. However, in 1960, 20.7% of the city's White college-age population attended CUNY, while only 6.2% of the non-White groups did. Wolfe recalled that in her early years at Queens, students attended tuition-free and admission was based only on academic excellence. While she found it stimulating to work with such academically gifted students, the student body was predominantly White and heavily Jewish. She felt this policy might preclude less academically advantaged minority populations from entering CUNY (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Given this shift in the city's demographic population, CUNY hoped to respond to new demands from the politicized minority populations of New York, and to reach out to the "educationally disadvantaged" (Gordon, 1975). After much debate, on July 9, 1969, the Board of Higher Education passed a resolution that specified that CUNY "shall offer admissions to some University program to all high school graduates of the city" (Roff et al., 2000, p. 122). The plan guaranteed that students "graduating with an average of at least 80%, or who were in the top 50% of their high school graduating class, would have a place in a four-year college" and that all others "could attend a community college" (Roff et al., 2000, p. 122). Lavin, Alba, and Silberstein (1981) argue:
Under open admissions, CUNY exhibited the features of a system of universal higher education; like the primary and secondary schools, it was free and publicly supported, and it provided a next rung on the educational ladder for those who had advanced beyond the earlier steps. The open-admissions policy attempted to lay to rest the often-debated question about who should be educated. This was the question on which selective admissions policies had been based and which in part had led to differences in the educational attainment of various class and ethnic groups. (p. 307)

Open admissions dramatically increased enrollment in CUNY; the different Colleges had to rent additional space. The Queens Department of Education was desperately crowded; as early as 1956, Dean Rivlin had noted that the “present quarters are grossly inadequate” (Report for the Academic Year 1956-1957, p. 17). Additionally, because of the varying academic ability of entering students, the Colleges had to offer remedial courses in mathematics, writing, and study skills. Also, the state offered financial support to CUNY for students who struggled to pay tuition. Another policy change in 1970 helped further to diversify CUNY’s student population: The university no longer required applicants to be citizens of the United States, only “bona fide residents of New York City.”

Wolfe spent the remainder of her academic career at Queens, from 1950 to 1986. During her long career at Queens, Wolfe taught many courses, including elementary methods, foundations of education, elementary education workshops, and student teacher supervision. She became actively involved with the laboratory schools of Queens College, particularly P.S. 201. She witnessed several more reorganizations of the college and of its Department of Education, including the division of the department into a Department of Elementary Education and a Department of Secondary Education (Dill Interview, 2001). Wolfe appreciated the
democracy in the administration; we chose our own personnel and budget committee, and the faculty did the supervision. We even evaluated [each other's] teaching. This provided an opportunity to participate in the administration of the school and of the department... There was great freedom of choice in terms of what you taught, and no dictatorship in what you taught or how you taught it. There was peer evaluation, [but that was] very helpful and commendable. There was a lot of faculty participation in the total administration of the school. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe enjoyed her years at Queens, despite her long daily commute from Cranford each day, which averaged two or three hours each way. She tried to find faculty housing near Queens College, but most affordable local apartment buildings had all-White policies.

At Queens, Wolfe became involved in numerous committees and school groups, including working on the faculty council, serving as affirmative action officer, and sponsoring Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society in Education. She initiated a travel-study abroad program to Africa, and worked on a program that assisted students who entered Queens at a lower academic level. She formed close working relationships with her colleagues. Wolfe retired from Queens in 1986 as a full professor. At the time of her retirement she belonged to a very small group of Black female academics; a study in 1985 by the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found that in institutions of higher education, there were only 801 African-American tenured full professors (Gregory, 1995, p. 41).

Retirement

After Wolfe's retirement from Queens College in 1984, she remained highly active, continuing her lifelong involvement in numerous organizations. This deep involvement in multiple realms of community life will be discussed in more detail later in
this study. Through her activities, Wolfe achieved many “firsts” for a Black female. She became the first Black woman to be named a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, to become a member and later chair of the New Jersey State Board of Higher Education, and to serve as a member of the Educational Foundation of Kappa Delta Pi. She was the only Black member of Seton Hall University Board of Regents, the advisory board to Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College, the Coordinating Council on Education for New Jersey, and the board of the American Association of University Women. In appreciation for Wolfe for her lifelong commitment to education, institutions have awarded her more than twenty-six honorary doctorates; also, a high school in Macon County, Alabama, was named after her, as was a dormitory at Trenton State College in New Jersey. Additionally, Wolfe has traveled around the world on speaking engagements and personal vacations, including Kuwait, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Senegal, Austria, England, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, and Belgium.

Reflecting on how her gender affected her career, Wolfe posited that if she were a man, she might have been a minister first and a teacher second. As it happened, she became a teacher first, and a preacher later in life. While teaching at Queens, Wolfe studied theology at Union Theological Seminary and was ordained to the Christian ministry in 1970. She serves as Associate Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Cranford, New Jersey. From 1989-1991 she taught feminist theology as a visiting scholar and lecturer at Princeton Theological Seminary. She was the first woman elected President of the New Jersey Convention of Progressive Baptists, and she serves as Parliamentarian for the Progressive National Baptist Convention. Beyond her involvement in numerous
organizations, her speaking engagements, her travels, and her role as an associate pastor, Wolfe enjoys her "career" as mother and grandmother, spending time with her son and grandchildren.

**Wolfe's Conception of Democracy**

Following this overview of Wolfe's life and career, this study turns to a closer examination of her work as educator, education chief, academic, and social activist. A commitment to democratic education emerges as the predominant theme in Wolfe's career. 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. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

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. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

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” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Above all, Wolfe insisted that democracy requires a commitment to an ideology based upon respect for all human kind. The following chapters will illustrate how Wolfe’s conception of democracy manifested itself throughout her career and will describe the influences on her views of democracy. The study now turns its attention to Wolfe’s work as an educator.
CHAPTER 3
WOLFE'S WORK AS EDUCATOR & CURRICULUM DEVELOPER

A Brief Overview of Wolfe's Conception of Curriculum and Education

Throughout her career as an educator, Wolfe consistently 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 (Partridge, 1945, p. 5; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). 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" (Partridge, 1945, pp. 172-173). She explained:

In order that the school may guide children into worthwhile and purposeful experiences, it must know both the children and the culture in which they live. It must know the background and past experiences of the children, and their present abilities, capacities, interests, and developmental needs. It must know the community and its opportunities and limitations and how these are affecting the lives of the children. It must study the adults in the community and recognize their influence on the development of children. (Partridge, 1945, p. 180)

The curriculum, Wolfe asserted, should be organized around the major areas of living, "make provisions for a continual widening of understanding of how to meet
them," and involve students in the curriculum-making process (Partridge, 1945, p. 168). She noted that subject matter would be learned in the pursuit of solving the many problems of living and would be indispensable in interpreting experiences and achieving knowledge and understanding. However, Wolfe emphasized that subject matter should be regarded as a means for learning, not the ends. Rather, the experiences of the curriculum should teach students how to think, engage them in the learning process, and educate for active participation in democracy. Wolfe contended that

there is no knowledge that is forbidden. Any area of human knowledge and all areas of human knowledge should be considered as part of the curriculum. If you’re going to say that education is life, the boundaries must be life itself so that every aspect of human endeavor is a legitimate part of our curriculum. A teacher teaches the learner not merely a content area. We teach people, not subjects. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe also strongly believed that the whole school had to be involved in curriculum development; she regarded this as extremely important “because it provides continuity of experiences and eliminates the unnecessary repetition of activities” and “is in keeping with the principles of democratic administration” (Partridge, 1945, p. 171). Wolfe noted that a curriculum handed down to the teacher by an administrator would be ineffective. Rather, a vital curriculum was one that involved the cooperative efforts of all concerned and ensured “freedom to think and explore with children” and adults (Partridge, 1945 p. 171; Wolfe Letter, 2001). Additionally, Wolfe emphasized community involvement, asserting that

the school ought to reflect the community in the fullest sense of the word, but at the same time, it should take the community beyond itself to the next level – as far as you can take it. A school is part of the community, an integral part, [a place] where people can talk about dreams for children, dreams for the school, dreams for the community. You can’t do education with just the children – it has to be the whole community. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)
These conceptions of curriculum and teaching form the crux of Wolfe's educational philosophy and manifested themselves throughout her work as an educator. Wolfe credited the educational philosophy of John Dewey with a highly influential role in these conceptions (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Dewey defined education as "that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (Dewey, 1916, pp. 101-102). Similarly, Wolfe considered education as life and curriculum as a means to construct experiences relevant to the lives of learner with the intention of promoting growth and fostering democratic habits of mind. Additionally, Dewey "believed that democracy necessitated a reconstitution of culture, and with it the curriculum" (Cremin, 1962, p. 124), and he conceived of school as an embryonic community that reflected the larger society. 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" (Cremin, 1962, p. 118; Dewey, 1916, p. 51). 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" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). 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" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She noted that her conceptions of social reconstructionism were shaped by the writings of George S. Counts, Harold Rugg, and John Childs (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Counts had studied under Charles Judd and Albion Small at the University of Chicago before joining the Teachers College faculty in 1927 (Cremin, 1962, Cremin et al., 1954). He 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?" (Cremin, 1962; Cremin et al., 1954; Kliebard, 1995). Educators, Counts asserted, needed to turn their attention to the larger social matrix in which all education takes place and recognize societal influences on children and schools. He believed that teachers could play the primary role in formulating desirable societal goals and use their power to help create a great new society "immeasurably more just and noble and beautiful than the America of today" (Counts, 1932, p. 55; Cremin et al., 1954, p. 252). Counts faced opposition, for example from Dean William F. Russell of Teachers College, who expressed concern that Count's call for a "new social order" might play into the hands of Communists and Fascists (Cremin et. al, 1954, p. 252). Others embraced Counts' new emphasis on societal change; several of his colleagues at Teachers College formed an informal discussion group to discuss the reconstruction of the American school, and members included William Heard Kilpatrick, John Childs, Jesse Newlon, John Dewey, and Harold Rugg (Cremin, 1962).
Wolfe cited the ideas of Harold Rugg as another major influence on her thinking. Rugg had earned his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois in psychology, sociology, and education, and he taught at the University of Chicago with Charles Judd until he accepted a position as Director of Research for the newly established Lincoln School at Teachers College, Columbia University in 1920 (Cremin, 1962; Kliebard, 1995). Rugg became an active social reconstructionist, arguing 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” (Rugg, 1928, p. 11). Kliebard (1995) noted that Counts and Rugg promoted a “curriculum movement deriving its central thrust from the undercurrent of discontent about the American economic and social system” and “saw curriculum as the vehicle by which social injustice would be redressed and the evils of capitalism corrected” (p. 166).

Additionally, John Childs, also a professor at Teachers College, 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” (Dennis, 1992, p. 6). Childs argued that appropriate education should take into account the social realities of the day and play an important role in ameliorating the troubling problems in society. He asserted that experimentalism demanded activism and that experimentalism’s “emphasis on experience, on experimental activity, on the creative role of intelligence, and on the values and procedures of democracy” could bring “these elements in the life of the American people into fuller consciousness,” therefore
enhancing “their influence in public affairs, including the enterprise of education” (Childs, 1956, p. iv).

Wolfe’s understandings of curriculum and education reflect the substantial and lasting influence of Hollis Caswell, John Childs, William Kilpatrick, and other progressive educators she encountered at Teachers College. Therefore, following this general overview of her work as an educator, this chapter will closely examine Wolfe’s conceptions of curriculum and education, explore the specific progressive influences on her educational thought, and investigate how Wolfe applied these ideas as an educator -- from her teaching and designing of curriculum for rural children in two laboratory schools in Tuskegee, Alabama, through her college-level teaching at Tuskegee Institute, Queens College, and several other institutions where she served as a visiting professor.

Wolfe As Teacher And Curriculum Developer At The Laboratory Schools Of Tuskegee Institute

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). Through her experiences at these schools, Wolfe realized that the existing curriculum did not meet the unique problems and needs of Black rural children. Frustrated by a dearth of trained personnel and a lack of release time to develop curriculum, Wolfe decided to return to Teachers College to pursue a doctorate in education and to deepen her knowledge and understanding of curriculum development. Wolfe geared her coursework at Teachers College toward enriching her conceptions of curriculum and teaching, and for her dissertation Wolfe developed an extensive curriculum and course of study for her two rural laboratory schools (Teachers College
Transcripts, 1945). Wolfe's dissertation represents her most significant piece of curriculum development and clearly reflects the progressive influence on her work as an educator.

The influence of Wolfe's major professor, Florence Stratemeyer, was evident in Wolfe's choice of a title for her dissertation: A plan for redesigning the curriculum of the rural laboratory schools of Tuskegee Institute. Stratemeyer's writings urged a continuous reexamination of basic curriculum issues and of point of view and practice in order to achieve a redesign of education that would function effectively in the lives of all students (Stratemeyer, 1947). In her dissertation, Wolfe introduced her definition of curriculum, explored the sociological and psychological factors that influenced the development of a curriculum for rural Black students, and outlined her conception of a redesigned, democratic curriculum. For this study, Wolfe developed both a curriculum and a course of study for teachers at Prairie Farms and Mitchell's Mill. She differentiated between the two, defining curriculum as "all the experiences children have under the guidance of the school" and a course of study as a "manual or guide designed to aid teachers in the development of the curriculum" (Partridge, 1945, p. 5). Wolfe established three objectives for her project: to study the background factors influencing the redesign of the curriculum of the rural laboratory schools of Tuskegee, to determine directives for improving the curriculum pattern and indicate the implications for curriculum organization, and to make plans for developing the program with the "critic teachers" of the laboratory schools (Partridge, 1945, p. 5). Wolfe emphasized the challenge inherent in determining specific directives for curriculum, arguing that "the desirable curriculum, like the growing child, is never static," but rather is "dynamic and constantly readjusting
its aims to meet the present and growing needs of the person it serves’ and the changing social world of the student (Partridge, 1945, p. 3).

In her introduction and throughout the dissertation, Wolfe’s conception of curriculum clearly reflected the influence of Hollis L. Caswell. Caswell had emerged as a major figure in curriculum development in the 1930s following his innovative work formulating state-wide curriculum programs in Alabama, Florida, and Virginia (Kliebard, 1986; Seguel, 1966, Tanner & Tanner, 1990). In 1938, Dean William F. Russell of Teachers College named Caswell chair of the newly organized Department of Curriculum and Teaching, leading the trend “to give curriculum making departmental status in colleges preparing teachers, supervisors, and curriculum directors” (Cremin et al., 1954; Seguel, 1966, p. 172). Seguel (1966) credited Caswell with enhancing the visibility of the curriculum field and ensuring that “knowledge about curriculum making would be systematically gathered, increased, and disseminated” (p. 172). Wolfe participated in Caswell’s doctoral seminar on curriculum development; she also read many of his scholarly articles and published books, specifically recalling the influence of Curriculum development (1935), and Education in the elementary school (1942) (Partridge, 1945; Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

According to Seguel (1966), Curriculum development embodied “a comprehensive statement of the frontier thinking of the period [and]Shortly became a ‘must’ for all those interested in the curriculum” (p. 161). Caswell wrote this book in 1935 after participating in more than six state and three city curriculum revision projects. His book provided the “perfect seedbed for his ideas” and addressed a variety of issues related to curriculum, including the challenges of contemporary life to the school, an
analysis of the social responsibility of the school, significant influences on curriculum development, concepts of the curriculum, and principles basic to curriculum development (Caswell & Campbell, 1935, pp. xi; Seguel, 1966; p. 161). In this work, Caswell moved away from the standard conception of curriculum as a written course of study and defined curriculum as “all experiences children have under the guidance of teachers” (Caswell & Campbell, 1935, p. 69). The curriculum, Caswell argued, extended well beyond experiences made available for children, and involved all of the experiences students underwent in school, including the “living through of actual situations” and the “reaction of a variety of elements” (Caswell & Campbell, 1935, p. 81). Therefore, the process of curriculum making required careful consideration of pupil interests, activities, aim, method, content, and “everything that influences the experience of the learner” (Caswell & Campbell, 1935 p. 66).

Influenced by Jesse Newlon’s work on the Colorado curriculum in the 1920s, Caswell advocated active teacher involvement in curriculum development. Newlon had “moved teachers to the very center of curriculum making” by forming committees of classroom teachers, asking them to familiarize themselves with available literature in their professional fields, and encouraging them to rework courses of study (Cremin, 1961, p. 302). While Newlon’s approach heightened teacher morale and enthusiasm, their initial motivation to learn eventually slowed down (Cremin, 1961; Seguel, 1966). In order to avoid this pitfall and maintain continuous teacher study and growth, Caswell shifted the focus from “teacher as course producer” to “teacher as improver of instruction” (Seguel, 1966, p. 144). Caswell viewed curriculum development as a continuous process built into the instructional process; therefore, the teacher held the role
of chief curriculum maker. The curriculum and course of study could only guide the teacher in bringing together varied elements in the learner’s experience into desired relationships. The actual implementation of the curriculum lay in the hands of the teacher (Seguel, 1966, p. 163). Wolfe recognized the active role of the teacher in curriculum development, noting in her dissertation that “this study does not attempt to plan a complete course of study or curriculum, since it is felt that these should finally be made by the particular teacher for his particular school working cooperatively with his students and patrons” (Partridge, 1945, p. 5).

Caswell’s 1942 book, *Education in the elementary school*, also informed Wolfe’s curriculum development. In this book, Caswell addressed major issues and problems facing schools, discussed the aims of education, and identified issues specific to children of elementary school age. In one section, Caswell discussed eight characteristics of a good elementary school program, and referred to these items as “points of fundamental concern” (Caswell & Foshay, 1942/1957, p. 55). These included: conceiving of the elementary program as a broad and integrative whole, providing a rounded program of living for children, contributing maximum realization of democratic ideals in the actual living of pupils, basing the program on an analysis of the interests, needs, and capacities of the children it serves, affording children guided experiences compatible with their maturity in all areas of living, playing an integral part in the immediate community, constructing physical facilities and providing instructional supplies that facilitate desirable pupil activities, fostering the growth and welfare of all members of the professional staff, and organizing the general life of the school so as to foster democratic values (Caswell & Foshay, 1942/1957, pp. 55-70). Caswell’s “points of fundamental
concern” clearly resonated with Wolfe and influenced her conception of curriculum; she incorporated all of these ideas into her curriculum, tailoring them to meet the particular needs of rural Black students.

In order to develop an effective curriculum, Wolfe argued, educators must understand the sociological and cultural background of school communities. Wolfe defined culture as:

“the accumulated experience of a group”, including psychological as well as material aspects or traits. Each culture or “society taken in its totality has its distinctive traits which individualize and differentiate it from all others.” [Culture] is learned behavior; it is distinctly human and thus human nature is essentially “culture nature.” (Partridge, 1945, p. 74)

In Wolfe’s view, culture exerted a powerful controlling force on education and therefore,

the task of education, as a creative social force, becomes one of analyzing, evaluating, integrating, and we hope, of redirecting culture. Our schools programs can only be intelligently built [if] we are intelligent about the traditions, the trends, and the emerging condition of American culture. (Partridge, 1945, p. 75)

Wolfe’s discussion of the role of the cultural foundations of education and the need to redirect culture reflected the influence of John Childs, particularly his contributions to Readings in the foundations of education, Vol. I., a textbook collaboratively written and used by Teachers College professors for their Foundations of Education courses (Foundations of Education Faculty, 1941).

In the 1920s, John Childs left missionary work in China to attend Teachers College and Union Theological Seminar for a doctorate in philosophy and education. While William Heard Kilpatrick served as his mentor, Childs also took three philosophy courses with Kilpatrick’s mentor, John Dewey (Dennis, 1992). Childs embraced
Dewey’s philosophy of education; Cremin et al. (1954) argued that Childs’s 1931 dissertation, *Education and the philosophy of experimentalism*, “still stands as one of the earliest systematic extensions of Dewey’s philosophy into the educational realm” (p. 248). In his dissertation, later published as a book, Childs argued that four distinct aspects of American life conditioned the thought of experimentalists: absence of a fixed system of ancient traditions, the primitive quality of life on the frontier, a reality dedicated to the ideas of social democracy and human progress, and the industrialization of society and development of the machine in serving human ends (Dennis, 1992, p. 60). He asserted that experimentalists rejected any empirical reality, and accepted ambiguity, precariousness, uncertainty, indeterminateness, contingency, and incompleteness (Cremin et al., 1954; Dennis, 1992, p. 62). In this type of world, “man’s creative intelligence becomes basic in dealing with the problems of living” and “the ultimate aim of education is the development of individuals who know intelligently how to govern their lives” (Cremin et al., 1954; Childs, 1931, p. 54). Childs (1931) emphasized the centrality of ordinary human experience and the need to rely on the scientific method. He averred that “thinking is inquiring, and starts with a problematic situation,” a “situation of ambiguity” (Childs, 1931, pp. 108-109). Therefore, in his view, knowledge is our judgment and interpretation of experience, however, knowledge always comes after experience, and the use of creative intelligence occasions this knowledge. Childs believed that “for the experimentalist the only justification for the existence of a school is that it can, through intentional effort, produce an environment in which the experiences of youth will be more truly educative than they otherwise would be,” and that it can “develop individuals
who through critical experimental procedures come to possess the resources needed to carry on this responsible work of social reconstruction” (Childs, 1931, pp. 80-81,89).

Childs, like Dewey and other progressive educators, believed in the importance of education for democracy. He argued:

The democratic way of living is more than a process of intellectual inquiry, and education in and for democracy involves the introduction of the young to many additional values. A democratic society has every right to require schools to cultivate its young in those common appreciations and behaviors that are the ultimate ground of its health and security. (Childs, 1950, p. 1952)

In order for meaningful democratic education to occur, however, Childs emphasized the necessity of understanding the culture and sociology of the community and the school. Thus, Childs (1959) contended that the development of the program of the school involved an evaluation and interpretation of the ways of life and thought of its society, and he underlined the importance of engaging in the process of cultural interpretation and evaluation (Childs, 1959, p. 102-105; Dennis, 1992, p. 138). He elaborated on these issues in a section of the textbook *Readings in the foundations of education*.

The Teachers College Foundations of Education faculty prepared *Readings in the foundations of education, Vol. I* in 1941 and dedicated the book to William Heard Kilpatrick. Harold Rugg, who served as general editor, noted that this textbook provided readings to accompany the first semester of Foundations of Education coursework, which focused on the study of the total culture. The faculty later wrote Volume II, the textbook for semester two, which examined the technical problems of education, including the principles of educational philosophy and psychology, curriculum and teaching, organization, and administration. Rugg explained that the first semester “is weighted on the side of sociology” and the second on the “side of psychology and the techniques of
education” (Rugg, 1941, p. vi). Wolfe took both semesters of Foundations of Education and referred to sections from both textbooks in her dissertation (Queens College Archives, CUNY, Teachers College Transcripts, 1945). In her discussion of the sociological bases of curriculum, however, Wolfe particularly relied on the section edited by John Childs that focused on the cultural and community foundations of education. This section aimed to make possible the clarification of the fundamental ideas involved in the conception of education as essentially social in character. The nature and interrelations of culture, society, the community, and the social process are developed. Particular attention is given to the national state as the prevailing and dominant form of social organization in the contemporary world. Education is presented as an essential function of cultural and social development and survival. (Rugg, 1941, p. xii)

John Childs edited and introduced this section, and contributed an article on “the characteristics of culture.” He argued that account must be taken of the actual conditions that prevail in a particular society at a definite time, and in order to promote general “human ends or values there must be knowledge of these actual living conditions and of the ways existing technological and institutional arrangements bear upon them” (Childs, 1941, p. 197). Wolfe quoted Childs several times when defining culture. Additionally, Childs noted that “the very materials which constitute the subject matter of the school are derived from the life of society...[and] the group’s ways, both of action and thought, are the ultimate source from which the aims of the school and the content of its curriculum are drawn” (Childs, 1941, p. 127).

Influenced by these concepts, 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” (Partridge, 1945, p. 76). Wolfe conceived of group culture as an organic whole, one that molded the institutions, folkways, mores, and behaviors of members of a society. American Blacks possessed a unique group culture, although one strongly affected by the larger, dominant White culture. Wolfe noted that an historical evaluation of views toward Black Americans revealed a persistent conception of Blacks as inferior, wild, ignorant, immoral, “naked savages.” In fact, certain philosophers, historians, and scientists attempted to scientifically prove the inferiority of Blacks, and, according to Wolfe, these writings frequently served to confirm and nurture the dominant societal belief asserting that differences between Blacks and Whites were due to biological rather than cultural factors. Consequently, Wolfe argued, the “mores, folkways, and subjective attitudes” of Black American culture had to be considered within the context of the larger American society, which clearly viewed the Black as inferior. She contended that daily interactions between Black and White Americans also shaped the culture of the Black southern communities of Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill. In order to create an effective curriculum, these unique cultural and sociological factors had to be considered, explored, and understood.

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. Therefore, in her dissertation, Wolfe
discussed her conception of democracy and examined the sociological needs of her laboratory school communities within the context of education for democracy. She 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.

Democracy and education in the current crisis articulated a “creed of democracy” that exerted a strong and lasting influence on Wolfe’s conception of democracy and democratic education. Written in the early years of World War II, the document reflected faculty collaboration in order to address the role of education in averting the “threat to American democracy” from totalitarian regimes. The faculty argued that educators held the responsibility to assist the people of America in “gaining a more adequate understanding of the ideals and of the conditions of the democratic way of life” (p. 10) and that “the defense of our nation demands that we understand what democracy is, that we passionately believe it superior to all other ways of living, and that we apply it consistently to making our country the best possible for a free people” (p. 4).

Consequently, the faculty explored the meaning of democracy, outlining nine key components: democracy as the basis of American life and education, the moral meaning of democracy, the sovereignty of the people, the compatibility of democracy and a strong government, democracy’s faith in intelligence, the creative role of minorities, the abuse of civil liberties as an attack on democracy, the economic foundations of democracy, and American democracy and the world situation (Teachers College Faculty, 1940, pp. 4-9).
Following this discussion, the faculty presented a sixty-point "creed of democracy" designed "to aid in promoting a widespread reconsideration of democracy and a consequent clarification of its meanings" (Teachers College Faculty, 1940, pp. 10-13).

In these nine components and sixty-point creed, the faculty described democracy as a system of social and political organizations forming the basis of American life and education and constituting the "core of moral and political traditions of the United States" (p. 4). More importantly, however, the faculty conceived of democracy as extending beyond the political into every realm of human association. Additionally, the faculty insisted that American democracy represented the achievement of a long human struggle and could not perpetuate itself automatically. In order to continually renew and enrich democracy, the faculty stressed, a vital need existed for a deliberate education designed to teach the meanings, faith, attitudes, and habits inherent in a democratic way of life. Therefore, the "primary obligation of the American educational system is to provide the most effectual conditions for the young to attain the equipment in knowledge and attitude required to carry on our democratic way of life" (p. 5).

The faculty also examined the meaning behind popular sovereignty and "government of, for, and by the people," insisting that final authority in the American political system rests in the hands of the people. Thus, America had to avoid any situation in which deliberation, free discussion, voting, or other rights could be substituted or eliminated through use of brute force or repression. As democracy demanded and recognized the "creative role of minorities in its social and political processes" and gave them "encouragement and protection so that their proposals for change may have fair consideration," any situation that abused or suppressed civil
liberties could destroy the potential for democracy (p. 7). These tenets of democracy, the faculty suggested, required faith in the intelligence and educability of man (p. 6). In order for democracy to flourish, the citizens must not only vote, but also must possess "knowledge of the essential objectives of a democratic society, of the nature of interests and needs – social as well as individual, and of the bearing of changing conditions upon life-interests and purposes" (p. 6). This statement clearly highlighted the importance of education for democracy.

Additionally, the faculty extended their discussion into the economic and moral realms of democracy. In terms of economics, the faculty argued that "great discrepancies in wealth and its consequent power among a population tend to destroy the very foundations of popular sovereignty" and that insecure economic conditions are not compatible with the American democratic way of life (p. 8). Morally, the faculty asserted that
democracy makes respect for the individual being its basic and abiding moral purpose. It seeks to develop a way of living together – social, economic, political – which is in harmony with this regard for the intrinsic worth of each person. This has led it to affirm the ideal of equality of opportunity, and to oppose all discriminations based on factors of race, wealth, family, religion, or sex. The maximum growth of each individual is the democratic aim. (Teachers College Faculty, 1940, p. 5)

This notion comprised the central core of Wolfe's conception of democracy; she consistently argued that democracy demands equality and respect for all citizens and an equal opportunity for each individual to fulfill his or her democratic ideal. In fact, Wolfe's dissertation responded directly to a challenge issued by the faculty of Teachers College:
The curriculum of many American schools should be refashioned to meet more exactly and fully the needs of citizens living in a complex industrial society. It should develop more adequate understandings of democracy and devoted loyalty to it. Educational opportunity should be more equitably distributed among our population. Flagrant neglect of the educational and economic needs of millions of American youths gives rise to one of our most serious internal liabilities. (Faculty of Teachers College, 1940, p. 2)

Wolfe designed her curriculum to provide rural Black students the opportunity to “develop more adequate understandings of democracy” and, more importantly, to create a curriculum for democracy that considered the unique sociological and cultural context of Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill. 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” (Partridge, 1945, p. 79). 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. 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. (Partridge, 1945, pp. 79-80)

To 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 then examined five other tenets of democracy within the context of Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill: a 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 noted that while “government of, for, and by the people” served as a central tenet of democracy, only 100 of the 22,708 Blacks in Macon County were registered voters (Partridge, 1945, p. 83). Citing a survey conducted by Tuskegee Professor Charles G. Gomillion, Wolfe stated that in Prairie Farms only two of the 92 potential voters had exercised the right to vote, while at Mitchell’s Mill there were no registered voters among the Black population (Gomillion, 1938, p. 31; Partridge, 1945, p. 83). Wolfe noted that

although the Constitution declares specifically that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged ... on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude,” southern tradition is strongly opposed to permitting Negroes to vote. (Partridge, 1945, p. 83)

The poll tax, voter qualification laws, rules of the Democratic Party, and other “Jim Crow” stipulations effectively excluded Blacks from participation in democracy.

Therefore, according to Wolfe,

any realistic consideration of the sociological bases of the curriculum redesign of the schools of Macon County must bear this condition in mind. As we aim for our democratic principles of government of, for, and by the people may we agree with President Roosevelt’s slogan, “The right to vote must be open to all citizens without tax or artificial restriction of any kind”...[and] only then can the Negro be truly loyal to American democracy. (Partridge, 1945, p. 86)

In order to achieve this objective of voter involvement and civic responsibility, Wolfe argued, the teacher planning 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” (Partridge, 1945, p. 86). Additionally, Wolfe insisted that teachers must teach students the ideals of American democracy and loyalty to the American faith and possess a “strong determination to help Negro boys and girls achieve the desired sense of civic responsibility which recognizes that with every right there is a corresponding responsibility” (Partridge, 1945, p. 86).

Wolfe argued that, in terms of the democratic tenet “respect for civil liberties,” the residents of Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill suffered from serious abridgement of their basic rights as citizens in a democracy (Partridge, 1945 p. 87). She listed the essential and unalienable rights guaranteed citizens in the United States: free speech, unhampered access to the facts on important questions, the voting franchise, religious liberty, impartial justice, equal protection of the laws, and the “great triad named in the Declaration of Independence of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (Partridge, 1945, p. 87). Referring to Gunnar Myrdal’s 1944 study The American dilemma – The Negro problem and modern democracy, Wolfe noted that the title alone spoke volumes about the status of civil liberties for Blacks in America. Specifically, Blacks in southern communities suffered from lynchings, inequality before the law, denial of the right to vote, lack of access to public libraries, segregation in transportation, restaurants, schools, houses of worship, and businesses, and other instances of “Jim Crowism.” Therefore Americans, according to Myrdal and Wolfe, needed to “close the gap between what they profess to be American civil liberties for all and what they actually practice” (Partridge, 1945, p. 87). Wolfe argued that education for children in these communities should focus
on discussing the guaranteed civil liberties of citizens in a democracy and examining the discrepancy between the ideal and the current reality.

In her discussion of "respect for the role of minorities," Wolfe referred to the "moral uneasiness" of relations between the White majority and the Black minority in America. Wolfe argued that "the acid test of the status of civil liberties is the freedom enjoyed by minorities" (Faculty of Teachers College, 1941, p. 7) and noted that America "boasts that [unlike totalitarian states] it believes that racial, cultural, and political minorities should be tolerated, respected and valued" (Partridge, 1945, p. 90). Once again, Wolfe asserted, "American idealism is in conflict with American practice," as White Americans carried negative views and held little respect for Black Americans. For Wolfe, this situation challenged the teacher to become conscious of the problems and deprivations of Blacks in the minority role and to directly address vital issues: discussing integration versus segregation, developing Black leaders with constructive programs for the advancement of their race, raising involvement of the Black public in working toward major social change, fostering inter-racial understanding, and generating different methods of gaining social equality and protection of civil liberties (Partridge, 1945, pp. 92-93).

Wolfe then turned her discussion of the tenets of democracy to the issues of "economic opportunity" and "faith in the intelligence and the educability of man." In terms of economic opportunity, Wolfe noted that Blacks, already part of an underprivileged minority in the south, were frantically searching for economic security. In this search, Blacks faced many "regional" handicaps, including discrimination in the employment and advancement of Blacks in industry, competition against large numbers
of unemployed Black workers, being confined to "Negro jobs," and a dearth of opportunity for college-educated Blacks in various professions. Wolfe warned that the economic insecurity of the Black population could severely threaten democracy; that

the moral and political phases of American democracy demand that certain economic conditions be maintained. A population with a few rich and millions of poor will tend to destroy the foundation of popular sovereignty. It is not surprising that the poor, in an attempt to meet their need for security, are tempted to exchange their birth right for a bowl of porridge. The desire for political and civil freedom is replaced by the urge for economic security and freedom from want. Liberty must be nourished by security. (Partridge, 1945, p. 93)

Given the vital role of economics in democracy, Wolfe argued that curriculum developers should examine the economic security of the school community. She contrasted the exciting economic potential of Prairie Farms, where Black farmers were buying their own land, with the miserable sharecropping situation of Mitchell’s Mill and “its attendant ills of seasonal labor, low pay, inadequate living conditions, and limited economic resources” (Partridge, 1945, p. 95).

Finally, Wolfe argued that the democratic tenet of “faith in the educability of man” should be uniformly applied to White and Black students. She asserted that “certain stereotypes about the Negro’s mental ability must be eradicated; means of enlightenment must be equalized; and the Negro must be accepted as an integral part of the American social scene” (Partridge, 1945, p. 98). The survival of democracy, Wolfe averred, depended upon an educated citizenry possessing the ability to make sound judgments. And in terms of Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill, Wolfe insisted that

any consideration of education in rural areas must be based on the premise that the basic objectives for rural children are the same as for any other children. To do otherwise would violate the democratic American principle of equality of opportunity. (Partridge, 1945, p. 100)
Summarizing her ideas on democratic education, 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. 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. Wolfe emphasized that these “principles are equally as applicable and pertinent for Negro education in American democracy” (Partridge, 1945, p. 103). And in order for these democratic principles to be meaningfully integrated into a curriculum, Wolfe reiterated, an understanding of the sociological and cultural context of the school and community was of vital importance. As she explained, 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.

Understanding the psychological bases of curriculum also comprised a central theme in progressive curriculum development that Wolfe applied to her work with Prairie Farms and Mitchell's Mill. Zilversmit (1993) argued that, in general, an important aspect
of progressive education was "an intense concern for the psychological development of children" that emerged from a new awareness of psychological thought as well as Dewey's emphasis on understanding the emotional needs of children (p. 12). Therefore, according to many progressive educators, the curriculum developer must understand the psychological needs of children in order to create a relevant and appropriate curriculum.

Caswell (1935), for example, had urged curriculum developers to draw on psychology in order to understand the particular needs of each child and to consider all elements in the experience of the learner. These psychological factors, Caswell argued, "will influence in important ways the organization of a school, the pupil-teacher relations, the development of the curriculum, the variety and kinds of opportunities afforded children, the organization of instruction, the plans of grading and grouping pupils – in fact every aspect of the school program" (1935, p. 87).

Mabel Carney (1936) concurred with Caswell, asserting that "farm life yields experiences considerably different to those of city life and these different experiences result in social, economic, and psychological differences on the part of country people...for which modifications and adaptations should be provided in their education" (p. 448). She called attention to the existence of a "distinctive rural psychology," revealed in such "typical rural traits as conservatism, independence, inhibition, and lack of organization and leadership" (p. 449). Additionally, Carney noted that understanding the psychology of learners was doubly important "in the case of Negro rural life" where schooling often attempted to "thwart the progress of the race and thrust it back into servitude" (p. 450).
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” (Partridge, 1945, p. 106). 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.

Wolfe examined the fundamental psychological concepts of personality development within the sociological context of Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill. She noted that as a child’s personality developed within the context of larger society, in Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill the child’s personality developed within a segregated and stratified social system. In his 1941 book Growing up in the Black belt, Charles Johnson argued that even southern Black rural society was divided into three major classes: upper, middle, and lower. The lower classes were further subdivided into upper-lower, middle-lower, and the “Folk Negro,” characterized as the “tenants and renters, unskilled and semi-skilled workers, personal and domestic workers earning barely enough to live and not enough to live comfortably” (Partridge, 1945, pp. 113-114). Wolfe explained that the majority of children from Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill were “folk Negro,” and therefore the curriculum developer should pay particular attention to their specific psychological needs and their community as "a factor in personality development" (Partridge, 1945, p. 114).
One of the most important factors in curriculum development, according to Wolfe, was the understanding of the "whole child." Wolfe's conception of the "whole child" in the curriculum reflected the influence of William Heard Kilpatrick. Born in 1871 in rural Georgia, Kilpatrick taught in the public schools and Mercer University before joining the Teachers College faculty in 1913, where "he was destined in the next twenty-five years to become one of the most popular, and at same time controversial, figures on campus" (Cremin et al., p. 47; Kliebard, 1995). Kilpatrick gained international prominence in 1918 with the publication of his article, "The project method" (Kliebard, 1995). In this article, 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 emphasizing "wholehearted purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment" (p. 323). Kilpatrick argued that the "cold storage" view of knowledge, which emphasized memorization of stagnant subject matter, did not prepare children for a democratic society (Kliebard, 1995, p. 143). Instead, he believed "purposeful activity" could teach students how to think, rather than what to think, and therefore create intelligent citizens prepared to contribute to the improvement of democratic society (Cremin, 1962; Cremin et al., 1954; Kliebard, 1995). As Cremin (1962) noted, "in a curriculum reorganized as a succession of projects [Kilpatrick] saw the best guarantee of sharpened intellectual acumen and enhanced moral judgment” (p. 217). Kilpatrick (1918) explained, "The regime of purposeful activity offers...a wider variety of educative moral experiences more typical of life itself than does our usual school procedure, lends itself better to the educative valuation of these, and provides
better for the fixing of all as permanent acquisition in the intelligent moral character” (p. 330).

Kilpatrick’s project method favored the “child-centered” approach to curriculum development. He placed the child’s interests at the center of curriculum, suggested that curriculum planning start with problems of living, and argued that “children would learn as they pursued a topic that interested them” (Zilversmit, 1993, p. 14). Each project proceeded through four steps: purposing, planning, executing, and judging (Cremin, 1962; Kilpatrick, 1918). Kilpatrick recommended that teachers actively involve students in the development of curriculum and construction of projects, and encouraged the development of “purposeful activity” that mobilized a child’s natural desire to learn and met the emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of the “whole child” (Zilversmit, 1993, p. 18). Therefore, teachers needed to understand the particular interests of their students so that they could guide children in choosing projects that would “enlist their interests and would encourage their active participation in learning” (Zilversmit, 1993, p. 14). In fact, Kilpatrick accepted the post-World War I school of progressive thought that increasingly emphasized “the role of schooling in promoting ‘mental hygiene,’ that is, creating classroom settings that promoted psychological health” (Zilversmit, 1993, p. 15).

For Wolfe, understanding the “whole child” also meant exploring the child’s physical, emotional, social, and mental self. Therefore, she examined contextual factors that effected the physical, emotional, social, and mental development of her students.

Physically, the children attending Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill represented a wide age-range and growth pattern. Many of the elementary-level students had been unable to attend school for periods of time and were entering adolescence. Wolfe noted that many
"Negro rural school children of Alabama" were not in the appropriate grade level for their ages and tended "to make slow progress" (Partridge, 1945, p. 109). She emphasized the significance for curriculum of determining children's ages so educators could "provide for students who are really high school age" and the "special problems of adolescence" (Partridge, 1945, p. 109). Also, Wolfe cited a study that found that rural children lacked proper nutrition, suffered from irregular habits of eating and sleeping, were often underdeveloped, and had very poor dental care. From her personal experience with rural students, Wolfe observed that the rural Black suffered from improper diet, an unsanitary environment, ignorance of personal hygiene, and major health problems including malnutrition, syphilis, malaria, tuberculosis, hookworm infestation, and rabies. She noted that the teacher in this situation had to understand the particular physical needs of children in this setting, given both the wide age range and attendant health problems of rural Black children.

Wolfe also emphasized the "importance of social development and the establishment of an appropriate environment for developing the social actions of the child," given that "the individual must live in close relationship with other persons" and that "successful living in a democracy calls for an individual who is sensitive to social values and needs, who has a concern for the common good, and who is willing to cooperate for the common welfare" (p. 124). In terms of social development, however, Wolfe argued that rural Blacks suffered the disadvantages of segregation and low caste status that prevented the opportunity to "fulfill the basic needs of developing personality" (p. 125). This situation created added pressure for the school to provide the sense of
belonging “which is denied him by the larger social environment” and teach the social skills necessary for active participation in democratic society (Partridge, 1945, p. 125).

In terms of understanding the “whole child’s” mental ability, Wolfe addressed the issue of White society’s perception of Blacks as biologically inferior from an intellectual standpoint. She cited studies proving that “not only are Negro children educable, but there are many that are superior [to White children]” and that the “Negro group contains about the same proportion of gifted children that may be found in the total population” (p. 122). She also dealt with the controversy over whether rural children were less intelligent than urban children. She argued that rural students were as capable as urban children, but their “cultural deprivation” impeded their academic success. Therefore, in a place like Macon County with the old plantation system and low socioeconomic levels, students did not perform as well academically as urban children with more advantages.

Beyond understanding the “whole child,” Wolfe contended that a curriculum developer must also understand the nature of learning, which she classified as a psychological process. Motivation, according to Wolfe, played a central role in the learning process. She explained that motives serve as energizers, selectors, and sustainers, and that they direct student learning toward the desired goal. Learning should be a goal-directed activity, she stated, designed to meet the felt needs or purposes of the learner. The teacher, Wolfe wrote, “has the responsibility of helping the learner to recognize his needs and define his purposes” (Partridge, 1945, p. 130). To facilitate learning, the teacher should encourage student participation in the planning of the learning experience and choose materials meaningful for the student. Of course, the teacher also should tailor the learning experience to the particular needs and maturation
level of the learner. Further, Wolfe asserted that the learning experience required both firsthand and vicarious experiences that recognize the needs of the "whole child" and create a pleasant and motivating environment for the student (Partridge, 1945, pp. 131-132). Wolfe's discussion of the nature of learning clearly reflected the influence of Dewey, Childs, Caswell, and Kilpatrick.

Following her examination of the sociological and psychological factors of Prairie Farms and Mitchell's Mill, Wolfe laid out in her dissertation her directives for redesigning the curriculum. Wolfe adopted four objectives, based on the recommendations of the Educational Policies Commission publication Purposes of Education in American Democracy, to serve as the democratic foundation for her directives: self-realization, human relationship, economic efficiency, and civic responsibility. Moreover, "upon these objectives and a basic understanding of the communities and their particular needs," Wolfe determined directives for her curriculum that had "definite implications for the nature and organization of experience, the guidance program, the use of materials, the administration of the school, and the work in the community with adults" (Partridge, 1945 p. 138). Wolfe's eight directives stated:

1. The objective of education and therefore the directives for curriculum design are both individual and social, since they call for the highest development of the individual as a member of society. This directive demands that children's needs, interests, and capacities serve as the central force of the curriculum. However, it likewise recognizes that these children must be studied in relation to the society of which they are a part.

2. Because of the distinctive characteristics of the rural environment and also the constitution and conditions of the rural school itself, distinctive curriculum provisions must be made for these rural schools.
3. Although the objectives of education are universal, the Negro school must perform a distinctive social task growing out of distinctive problems of Negro life in America in addition to those general aims.

4. Knowledge of the nature of learning and the factors which facilitate and limit it is a prerequisite for planning the learning situation through curriculum redesign.

5. Since learning is goal-directed activity, children must share in the planning of curriculum experiences. It is also demanded by society, for growth in understanding of democracy requires participation in democratic activities.

6. A well-rounded program of living requires balance of experiences. The child must be viewed in terms of his total life activities in school and out of school.

7. The boundaries of the curriculum should be life itself. This compels the school to broaden the scope of life experiences. The school has a moral obligation to improve and extend the life of its learners, and lead out into wider interests, understandings, and purposes. In such a way, then, the development of skills is not important in and of itself, but only insofar as it helps in the development of broader meanings in the solving of persistent problems of living.

8. The school is an integral part of the immediate community it serves and all agencies contribute to education, hence the curriculum must recognize adult needs as well as child needs and plan for experience in relation to the total community pattern. (Partridge, 1945, pp. 137-138)

Wolfe noted that the curriculum must be coterminous with life itself and must begin with the needs of the learner. Therefore, given her four objectives, eight directives, and examination of the sociological, cultural, and psychological needs of Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill, Wolfe generated suggestions “as to the nature of experiences with children” (p. 139). 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 (p. 139).

For example, Wolfe suggested experiences that might encourage improvement of health and living conditions, her first stated “curriculum need.” She recommended that the school conduct a community survey to discover the general condition of houses in the area. Students could then work together in order to make the community more sanitary and aesthetically attractive. This process would involve students in learning how to build and fix houses, do housework, develop sanitation plans, examine the quality of drinking water, improve ventilation systems, and find and destroy mosquito breeding areas.

Additionally, Wolfe suggested that students create a school lunch program, which would involve students in planning meals, enlarging the school garden to produce more vegetables, constructing menus, and considering issues of nutrition and health.

To improve race relations, Wolfe advised studying the history of Blacks within the history of America and “interpreting social conditions in the light of ideals of American society and pointing directions for needed changes in practice” (Partridge, 1945, p. 145). For example, Wolfe noted that students could examine laws regarding segregation in public conveyances and buildings, or discuss the maltreatment of Black Tuskegee soldiers during World War II. In order to foster better relations between races, Wolfe recommended exchanging exhibits, materials, or books with local White schools, and inviting “liberal Whites to talk with the children” (Partridge, 1945, p. 145). To widen recreational opportunities, Wolfe’s suggested experiences included cooperating in improving the school playground, working with teachers and parents in planning for community play nights, coordinating a Saturday afternoon recreational program,
initiating a story hour, and improving the library and teaching the community how to use it (Partridge, 1945, p. 146).

Wolfe recommended several experiences for increasing participation in group living and civic affairs. She advised teachers to organize student councils and class organizations, to discuss the “rights of the individual versus group rights”, and to address issues related to student responsibility in the larger school and community life. Additionally, Wolfe emphasized the need to incorporate experiences that taught students how to develop “understandings and techniques” that facilitated and encouraged student engagement in democratic group discussion (Partridge, 1945, pp. 148-149). To improve economic stability, Wolfe’s suggested experiences such as encouraging students to widen the development of a school cooperative that could buy and sell goods, teaching children how to use native and easily accessible resources in useful ways, fostering participation in fund raisers for the school and larger community, engaging students in the study of various occupations and consideration of problems involved in planning a career, and involving children in farm projects (Partridge, 1945, pp. 150-153). Finally, to encourage students to create, interpret, and appreciate the beautiful, Wolfe offered experiences that included learning to sing songs, listening to records on the Victrola, dramatizing plays, reading a variety of stories during story hour, taking nature hikes, and visiting local museums, including the George Washington Carver Museum at Tuskegee Institute.

In keeping with her philosophy of engaging the whole community in education, Wolfe also suggested experiences for the adults of the community. For example, she recommended formation of a Civic League whose aim would be the extension of political rights of members of the community and the encouragement of more Blacks to pay poll
taxes and register to vote. Wolfe incorporated other suggestions for social action, including organizing adult groups to work toward ending segregation, discrimination, and "cultural isolation"; striving to remove discriminatory practices in politics; studying the place of the Black in America so the adults "may see what is possible when there is fuller integration of the Negro into the complete life of the community"; forming a farmer's union to work toward improving economic and living conditions; and widening health services and extending general educational opportunities.

These suggested experiences reflected Wolfe’s personal creativity as well as the influence of several different educators. For example, Wolfe incorporated some school-wide, community, and individual projects that epitomized Kilpatrick’s project method. Also evident is Caswell’s emphasis on affording children guided experiences compatible with their maturity in all areas of living. Carney’s call for teaching fine arts, her argument that “curriculum modification of the rural type is practiced not to make farm youth different from other children but to make them more like others,” also appeared in Wolfe’s suggestions. Also evident is the influence of Counts, Rugg, and Childs and their call to social action and sociocultural reconstruction. Additionally, Wolfe suggested several experiences that fostered vocational and useful daily skills in students that she believed would contribute to their education -- for example, constructing and cleaning homes. This mirrored Dewey’s statement that

the problem of the educator is to engage pupils in these activities in such ways that while manual skills and technical efficiency are gained and immediate satisfaction found in the work, together with preparation for later usefulness, these things shall be subordinated to education. (Dewey, 1916, p. 231)
Certainly, many of Wolfe’s suggestions also reflected Booker T. Washington’s emphasis on teaching vocational skills to Black children. Wolfe noted that Washington encouraged educators to start where the learner is, meet his needs, and teach him to study actual things instead of mere books alone (Partridge, 1945).

When Wolfe returned to Tuskegee in 1945, she provided teachers with her course of study and supervised the implementation of her curriculum at Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill, but she no longer acted as principal and critic teacher. The president of Tuskegee, pleased to have a faculty member with an earned doctorate, asked Wolfe to focus on college-level teaching and to organize a graduate-level program for the department of education. However, Wolfe’s conceptions of curriculum and education also manifested themselves through her college-level teaching at Tuskegee Institute and later at Queens College.

**Wolfe As College-Level Educator At Tuskegee Institute (1938-1950)**

Wolfe taught undergraduate and graduate level education courses and supervised student teachers during her time at Tuskegee Institute. Her philosophy of curriculum development and teaching reflected the ideas outlined in her dissertation: 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. Additionally, the goal of education for democracy continued to form the background and intent of her curriculum and teaching. Her teaching approach and course content reflected her determination to teach by “precept and example” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).
From her personal experiences in Alabama, Wolfe possessed a fairly deep understanding of the sociological and cultural context of Tuskegee Institute. The college served as a haven for Blacks within segregated, stratified Southern society. In terms of the context for democracy, Blacks in Alabama were often denied their right to vote, suffered from innumerable instances of prejudice and racial hatred, and lived within the strict rules of segregation and Jim Crow. On campus, however, students lived in a very different world. Tuskegee had strict rules for students: They were not permitted to leave campus unattended, lived in gender-segregated dormitories, attended vespers at least twice a week, and wore uniforms. The uniform for women included a blue cape, which symbolized Booker T. Washington's "unveiling of ignorance" (Pappy Interview, 2001). Fraternization between the sexes was frowned upon. Despite the strict rules, the majority of students attending Tuskegee possessed a deep sense of pride in the history of their college and enjoyed being surrounded by bright, educated Blacks (Harper Interview, 2000; Pappy Interview, 2001; Reid Interview 2001; Wright Interview, 2001). More than 85% of Tuskegee's student body came from Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and Texas. Because the majority of these students came from rural areas, the program of teacher education centered around the preparation of rural elementary teachers (Partridge, 1945).

In keeping with her belief in understanding the "whole child," Wolfe consistently examined her students' background and entering educational level and attempted "to know them at a personal level" in order to understand their physical, mental, emotional, and intellectual needs (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She noted that understanding "the whole person, what makes them tick, and what might be missing in their lives that you, as
a teacher, can help them find” comprised an essential ingredient of good teaching (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe found that “students entering Tuskegee had sub-marginal high school educations” but were “eager to learn” despite their limited background. She believed that because the students often entered Tuskegee with “nothing,” college provided an incredibly rich experience, an opportunity to become more educated in the “fullest, wholest sense” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe also gained a better understanding of her students through personal conversation, visiting their homes, and sharing her personal life story. Lillian Thomas, a former student of Wolfe’s at Tuskegee, recalled that Wolfe “got to know me as a person, and got to know all of her students well” by asking questions and encouraging students to share personal background information and experiences (Thomas Interview, 2001). Kathryn Reid, born and raised in Tuskegee, Alabama, remembered Wolfe visiting her family on weekends and calling her parents “mother and father” (Reid Interview, 2001). Several other students referred to Wolfe’s personal interest in their lives, her ability to relate to their needs, and her willingness to share her own life history (Harper Interview, 2000; Pappy Interview 2001). Wolfe asserted that she attempted to communicate meaningfully with all of her students; she regarded communication as a means “to build commonality of thought, words, and deeds” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She argued that “talking to” was different from “communicating with” -- an essential difference that she felt improved her teaching and allowed her to better understand her students (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

As Wolfe gained an understanding of the sociological, cultural, and psychological background and context of her students, she constructed a curriculum relevant to their needs. As in her dissertation, Wolfe used democracy as a background for developing her
curriculum and teaching. Given the sociological and cultural context of Tuskegee, Wolfe recalled that she was "determined to use my ability to help people know how to overcome difficulties like segregation...to learn to live with others, be tolerant of difficulties, and to bring about peace and goodwill to all human kind" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She attempted to teach democratic habits of mind while teaching students how to be effective teachers. Wolfe wanted to encourage students to appreciate differences and similarities among people of different classes, races, and religions, and to learn to accept themselves. Additionally, she attempted to construct experiences for students to teach them how to think critically, view ideas with skepticism, engage in democratic discussion, and consider ways to become socially active (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

In terms of specific course content, Wolfe recalled teaching methods courses by melding progressive education with the philosophy of Booker T. Washington. She introduced progressive concepts of curriculum and teaching methods while also emphasizing Washington's "lay your bucket down where you are" through encouraging teachers to become community workers who taught their students practical skills in the "common occupations of life" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She began each semester with a course outline, but inevitably altered it in order to tailor curriculum experiences specifically to the particular needs of her students (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Also, given the educational level of her students, Wolfe often had to bolster their reading and writing levels.

Generally, Wolfe recalled that she focused more on teaching methods than subject matter in her courses. She argued that
knowing teaching is more important than having knowledge of subject matter... because subject matter can be picked up anytime. Knowledge changes too rapidly – our goals must be to help people understand who they are, help them understand how knowledge is developed so that they are equipped to extend their knowledge, and help them to recognize the method of learning so that they can approach any new experience unafraid. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe encouraged her students to change the nature of the curriculum so that they could use experience to teach basic skills and knowledge and to construct “purposeful activities” that taught reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and other subject areas. With regard to specific teaching methods, Wolfe advised students to utilize whatever was “necessary, expedient, and desirable;” she asked teachers to consider available materials, the specific needs of the individual child, the amount of time available to teach a certain content, and the best grouping situation or teaching approach (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe recommended flexibility and variety in instructional approaches. Above all, Wolfe urged her students to understand the cultural, sociological, and psychological background of children and to recognize how context affects the nature of the learning process (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe could not recall the specific readings she assigned at Tuskegee but noted that they were most likely scholarly writings of the progressive educators she encountered at Teachers College. She did remember using poetry as often as possible; for example, she required every student to read, memorize, and discuss Langston Hughes’s poem “Negro”:

I am a Negro:
    Black as the night is Black,
    Black like the depths of my Africa.
I’ve been a slave:
    Caesar told me to keep his door-steps clean.
    I brushed the boots of Washington.
I’ve been a worker:
  Under my hand the pyramids arose.
  I made mortar for the Woolworth Building.
I’ve been a singer.
  All the way from Africa to Georgia
  I carried my sorrow songs.
  I made ragtime.
I’ve been a victim:
  The Belgians cut off my hands in the Congo.
  They lynch me still in Mississippi.
I am a Negro.
  Black as the night is Black,
  Black like the depths of my Africa. (Hughes, 1994, p. 24)

Wolfe argued that poetry served as “a form of social action” that could develop “wonder, imagination... and go beyond the physical,” lead students to great depths, and teach basic truisms. Additionally, Wolfe believed that beautiful poetry by prominent Black writers could teach Tuskegee students a sense of pride in their heritage (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Ironically, Langston Hughes disapproved of Tuskegee’s mission; early in life he admired Booker T. Washington, but following a 1932 trip to Tuskegee, Hughes expressed rage and disappointment at the segregationist policies there that only taught students the “common occupations of life” and denied them courses in the liberal arts or higher theoretical sciences (Berry, 1983, p. 140). Hughes’s poem “Red Flag on Tuskegee” described his intense frustration with the philosophy of Booker T. Washington and Tuskegee Institute (Berry, 1983). Regardless of his views toward Tuskegee, Wolfe respected Hughes as a great Black poet and used his poetry for her entire teaching career. She used other poetry, music, and art, including Rudyard Kipling’s “If,” and verse written by her brother, David Cannon, published in a book entitled Black Labor Chants after his unexpected death from a brain aneurysm in 1938.
In terms of her teaching approach, Wolfe asserted that she taught by “precept and example”; “there shouldn’t be any difference between what you say and what you do” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Therefore, students were bused out to Prairie Farms and Mitchell’s Mill where Wolfe held her classes throughout most of her time at Tuskegee (Pappy Interview, 2001; Reid Interview, 2001). Pappy and Reid remembered traveling out to the rural schools and being able to see Wolfe teach students in a classroom setting. All of Wolfe’s former students interviewed for this study described Wolfe as a dynamic, vociferous, outgoing teacher who wanted everyone to learn (Harper Interview, 2001; Pappy Interview, 2001; Reid Interview, 2001; Thomas Interview, 2001). Pappy recalled that Wolfe used both lecture and projects to teach students, and that she “demanded that you do hard work and bring it in correctly -- students had to be sure they got it right” (Pappy Interview, 2001). Thomas also remembered Wolfe’s high standards for required projects. Additionally, Thomas appreciated Wolfe acting as a role model for a successful, “well-educated Black woman” (Thomas Interview, 2001).

Influenced by John Dewey’s conception of an “embryonic community,” Booker T. Washington’s emphasis on the teacher as community worker, and her own notion that teachers must understand the cultural context of their students, Wolfe required student teachers to live in the laboratory school community during their internship (Partridge, 1945; Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe insisted that student teachers must board in the “teacherage” residence and become active in the community, including home visits to each of their students. She explained:

I believed that teachers should live in the community and know their students. I visited every single child I ever taught [at Tuskegee’s laboratory schools]. And I insisted that my student teachers visit their children. You can’t teach people if
you don’t know what they come from. I stayed in homes the like of which you have never seen in your life. I slept on straw mattresses, [which were] very uncomfortable. But here I realized one night, can you imagine how students can think the next day when they have such poor meals and poor sleeping places? I never said a word. I ate the food the like of which I was praying every minute ...., but you know, you’re a guest in someone’s home, so you eat it. The parents, I knew every one of them. They knew I was concerned about their child, and they knew my student teachers were concerned about their child. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

For Wolfe, the school comprised an integral part of the community, and teachers should lead members of the community to “take the school and the community beyond itself to the next level” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She recalled meetings in which the community discussed “hopes and dreams for our children” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Thus, Wolfe encouraged her student teachers to help the community in any way possible and to construct experiences for students that would strengthen the bond between school and community. Former Wolfe students Harper, Pappy, Reid, and Thomas vividly recalled living in the community of the laboratory school, making home visits, and working closely with Wolfe during the course of their student internships (Harper Interview, 2001; Pappy Interview, 2001; Reid Interview, 2001; Thomas Interview, 2001).

Wolfe left Tuskegee Institute in 1950 to accept a faculty position at Queens College, City University of New York. In this move from a historically Black college in the rural South to an urban White college in a large northeastern metropolis, Wolfe did not alter her philosophy of education and curriculum, but rather changed her focus from rural Blacks to her students at Queens, as well as to the generally overlooked cultural groups of the urban center.
Queens College

Wolfe taught at Queens College (CUNY) from 1950-1984, with the exception of a leave of absence from 1962-1965 to work in the U. S. House of Representatives. During her thirty-four years at Queens, Wolfe remained true to her philosophy of education: to understand the sociological, cultural, and psychological context and needs of the learner and the community and to develop a curriculum that educated students for democracy. Additionally, 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.

Wolfe became the first Black faculty member at Queens when she joined the Department of Education in 1950. In her move from a historically Black college, Tuskegee, to the “historically” White Queens College, Wolfe endeavored to understand the sociological and cultural context of her new teaching environment. Wolfe admitted that she encountered “culture shock” in her return to the Northeast. Although delighted that she could now vote easily, Wolfe continued to encounter challenges because of her race. She explained that “I came to Queens College only to find I was “up South” and geography made very little difference (Wolfe Speech W, n.d). She noted that in the Northeast, racism manifested itself in more subtle ways than in the South, but nevertheless it continued to exist. After growing up in Cranford, New Jersey, attending Teachers College in New York City, and working as a visiting professor at New York University, Wolfe understood the culture of Manhattan rather well. She described Manhattan as “one of the best places to live because it had people of all ethnic
backgrounds, races, and religions, but at the same time all these people sectionalize themselves into little ghettos and only meet downtown” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The borough of Queens, however, was a different world (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Queens, the largest municipal borough of New York, stood out as an eclectic area with a distinctly different character from Manhattan (Ellis, 1997; Seyfried & Peterson, 2000). When Wolfe first arrived at Queens College, the population of Queens was predominantly European-American (U.S. Census Data, 1960), and she encountered a largely White student population living in a borough experiencing rapid growth and change. In the 1920s, Queens experienced a population influx – a growth rate of 130% accompanied by a building boom. The opening of the Triborough Bridge and Grand Central Parkway from the bridge to Kew Gardens in 1936, of Queens College in 1937, and LaGuardia Airport in 1939, as well as the World’s Fair of 1939-1940, all contributed to the placement of Queens on the national map (Seyfried & Peterson, 2000). After World War II, the population surged again, but leveled off in the early 1960s and actually declined from the 1970s to the 1980s (U.S. Census Data, 1980). Physically, Queens became a mature urban territory filled with apartments, attached housing, and a dynamic business district. During Wolfe’s time at Queens (1950-1986), the population of both the borough and the college grew increasingly diverse (Mullin Interview, 2001; U.S. Census Data, 1980). Today, the borough of Queens is multiethnic -- the most diverse area in the city of New York -- with Greeks, Italians, Blacks, Japanese, Koreans, Colombians, Asian Indians, Puerto Ricans, Israelis, Maltese, and several other groups represented in the population (Seyfried & Peterson, 2000).
As she had done at Tuskegee, Wolfe attempted to understand the sociological and cultural context of Queens College and of her students (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe found her students “superficially sophisticated,” living in a world that was not integrated. She noted that when she first arrived, the majority of her students at Queens 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. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Also, as with her students at Tuskegee, Wolfe utilized discussion, communication, and home visits to gain a deeper understanding of her students on an individual level. As the student population changed, Wolfe continued to examine the background and culture of her students. Several of Wolfe’s former students from Queens College recalled her warm interpersonal style and various methods of getting to know students (Bronars Letter, 2001; Sabatino Interview, 2000). One of Wolfe’s former students, Bunni Sabatino, recalled spending time in Wolfe’s office talking about her family background and life growing up in Queens (Sabatino Interview, 2000). She also remembered Wolfe visiting students at home in order to meet their families and friends. Throughout her years at Queens, Wolfe spent time developing her understanding of the “whole person” of each student and often maintained relationships with her students beyond their graduation (Sabatino Interview, 2000; Wolfe Interview, 2000a).
Wolfe continued to use goals of democracy as the background and intent of her curriculum; however, at Queens, the “democratic needs” of her students differed greatly from those in Tuskegee. Students at Queens possessed and utilized the right to vote and did not face daily struggles with racism and segregation. Rather, Wolfe believed that her Queens students required a democratic education in diversity, given the "Whiteness" of their world. She noted that

part of learning how to live with others is being tolerant of differences -- democracy is an appreciation of difference, the recognition that diversity makes our democracy better and richer. [In America] we are so fortunate that right in our own midst we have a chance to see likenesses and differences and one of the things that we struggle to understand is that we are more alike than we are different. You can’t tell what type of blood one has from the color of skin. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Therefore, to encourage consideration of issues related to diversity and equity, Wolfe incorporated readings, music, and poetry from different cultural and racial backgrounds. She continued to require that every student read, analyze, and discuss Langston Hughes’s poem “Negro.” However, 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 (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She invited Langston Hughes to visit her classes; he accepted and read aloud several poems and engaged Wolfe’s students in discussion (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Additionally, Wolfe required students to visit diverse schools in New York City and reflect on what it meant to teach respect for diversity and equality. In these various ways, Wolfe attempted to address the “democratic needs” of her students.
During her years at Queens, Wolfe taught a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses, including general elementary methods, elementary social studies methods, foundations of education, philosophy of education, the school and community, and innovations in education (Mullin Interview, 2001; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). In Wolfe’s promotion papers of 1957, Dean Harry Rivlin assessed Wolfe’s teaching, noting:

Dr. Partridge has been effective as a classroom teacher on several levels. As an instructor in our introductory courses, Education 1 and 2, she has helped beginning teachers to understand the basic principles of modern education and to evaluate their application to school practices. As an instructor in the undergraduate courses in methods of teaching, she has helped her students to understand the techniques of elementary school teaching today. Her interest in her students and her rich background make her a most effective supervisor of student teaching who encourages her students not just to come to her with their problems, but to attempt to solve them themselves. In our graduate program, we have taken advantage of the breadth of Dr. Partridge’s experience by having her work with the many types of problems that are brought by the teachers to the sessions of our workshop in elementary education. (Queens College Archives/CUNY, Promotion Papers 1957)

Former colleagues Nancy Dill and Jack Zevin described Wolfe’s teaching as dynamic, energetic, and interesting (Dill Interview, 2001; Zevin Interview, 2001). Robert Mullin, also a former colleague, frequently observed Wolfe’s teaching and explained that she was a dynamic, fun, and lively teacher [who] related well to her students. It was never just a lecture. Hers was an interactive classroom. She frequently used anecdotal stories from her teaching and life experiences to present different points of view and insights. She was a very special member of the faculty: visible, important, and articulate. (Mullin Interview, 2001)

Wolfe’s former Queens students describe Wolfe as a vivacious, outgoing, stimulating teacher who engaged their interest and encouraged them to learn (Bronars Letter, 2001; Sabatino Interview, 2000). Sabatino described different projects she constructed for Wolfe’s class, recalling that each project encouraged her to think critically about key issues in education and create experiences to meet the needs of elementary learners. In
her own elementary classroom, Sabatino attempted to mirror Wolfe's teaching style; as she remained in the New York area, she frequently returned to Wolfe's methods course in order to demonstrate the success of the project method in her instruction (Sabatino Interview, 2000). Another former Queens student, Joanne Bronars, recalled:

[Wolfe] was a dynamic and interactive teacher who was a friend to her students while at the same time retaining her professional status as a professor. I remember that she 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. She was a model in both her life and her teaching, and an inspiration to us. (Bronars Letter, 2001)

Wolfe recalled certain aspects of her teaching at Queens College. For example, for her methods course, Wolfe recollected that:

I tried to ensure that they had the knowledge and understanding of the material to be taught; we reviewed basic educational principles and knowledge and they taught each other before they taught students. We discussed why you teach, what you teach, how you teach, what kinds of methods, all kinds of ideas, and how to use as much imagination and creativity as you can. In every methods course there were several opportunities to work directly with children. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

In her foundations of education course, Wolfe remembered asking students to examine the sociological and psychological foundations of education within the context of education for democracy (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She assigned the works of Counts, Childs, Rugg, and other Teachers College educators; however, she also "believed in generating a wider range of readings" and thus "incorporated writings about special racial and ethnic and cultural groups so students would get to know the backgrounds of many different peoples and perspectives" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe also became heavily involved with the laboratory school, Public School (P.S.) 201, during her years at Queens College (Mullin Interview, 2001; Wolfe Interview,
Wolfe’s relationship with P.S. 201 began in 1954 and ended upon her retirement in 1984 (Mullin Interview, 2001; Wolfe Interview, 2000a; Wolfe, n.d.). In a 1968 letter to then Queens President Joseph P. McMurray, Wolfe noted that P.S. 201 “was Queens College’s first laboratory school,” that it held the distinction of “being the first laboratory school or campus school in the city of New York,” and that it had achieved success in “working with the community serving the school as well as South Jamaica, since 140 children from that area” were being bussed to P.S. 201 (Queens College/CUNY Archives, Wolfe Letter to President McMurray, Jan. 22, 1968). Robert Mullin, who was also very involved with P.S. 201, described Wolfe as the “initiator and coordinator of Queens College work at P.S. 201” and explained that the school was “demographically very diverse -- almost a small United Nations -- with students from all kinds of backgrounds and socio-economic statuses, and many African-Americans bussed in from South Jamaica. Over the years it became even more diverse and multi-ethnic” (Mullin Interview, 2001).

Wolfe drafted a handbook that provided a general description of the Queens College – P.S. 201 project, presented information on Queens education courses related to P.S. 201, and addressed the role and responsibilities of the cooperating teachers, student teachers, and college instructors for student teachers placed at P.S. 201 during their internship (Wolfe, n.d.). Wolfe introduced her handbook by noting that “the value of a school-college cooperation in the education of teachers is indisputable” and that “P.S. 201 has been an integral part of the Queens College program” by “providing the necessary first-hand experiences for students as they moved progressively through the Education sequence” (Wolfe, n.d., p. 3). The major activities of the laboratory school,
according to Wolfe, included experimentation in curriculum, experimentation in teacher education, participation of P.S. 201 staff in college classes (as resources and as students), and collaboration between college and school personnel for research projects and teaching resources.

Wolfe noted that “all professional education courses offered at Queens College provide opportunities for some direct contact with children in a gradual induction program from observation, participation, to full-time student teaching”; she maintained that “P.S. 201 has shared in each of these experiences” (Wolfe, n.d., p. 6). She listed the Queens education courses offered the same year that she drafted the handbook and explained exactly how student teachers would interact with students and teachers at P.S. 201. Mullin recalled that many students from Queens were actively involved and frequently visited P.S. 201 through their course work in both pre-teaching and student teaching situations (Mullin Interview, 2001). Wolfe’s handbook described a variety of experiences for college students at P.S. 201: guided visits to the school, studies of school-age children, intensive classroom observation of teachers and/or students, visits to teach a lesson, graduate research studies, and supervised student teaching. Wolfe, who continued to emphasize the importance of school and community relationships, always took both her undergraduate and graduate students to visit the laboratory school and observe teachers at work (Mullin Interview, 2001; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Additionally, Wolfe placed many of her student teachers at P.S. 201 for their internship.

In her handbook, Wolfe carefully explained the roles of the cooperating teacher, the student teacher, and the college instructor in the student internship at P.S. 201. As at Tuskegee, Wolfe encouraged the student teacher to become active in the school and the
larger community, she noted that the student teacher “will find it helpful to consider that it is his role not only to participate in the activities of the school but also to make worthwhile contributions to its program,” to enter into the “full life of the school,” and “to use community resources” (Wolfe, n.d., pp. 9-10). As to her role as college instructor, Wolfe explained:

The college instructor’s role varies according to the nature of the course. For example, in Education 1, 2, or 3, he largely observes with the students and serves as an interpreter of what has been viewed. However, in his role as a supervisor he becomes more actively engaged in the direct activities of the school. The college supervisor of student teachers serves in the capacity of a middleman with very definite functions to perform for the student teacher, for the college administration, for the other instructors, and for the cooperating school and its cooperating teachers. In guiding the student teacher, he visits the classroom periodically to observe the student at work with children. He counsels and helps the growing teacher by providing ideas and materials to be used in improving teaching and through the dynamic evaluation process. He joins the cooperating teacher in helping the student in planning and evaluating the day-to-day experiences of the classroom. His visits are followed by conferences either with the student alone or with other students. The major emphasis of the college supervisor is upon the improvement of teaching by the student teacher. No college instructor can go into a classroom of children and not recognize the constant need to relate any subject matter being taught in Education classes to the dynamic nature of children in this changing society. (Wolfe, n.d., p. 11)

Wolfe enjoyed her role as supervisor of student teaching; she believed that the internship provided her the opportunity to observe “idealism and realism” brought “into closer kinship” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe stated that she truly loved her years at Queens and felt a deep sense of loyalty to the college, faculty, and students (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). However, she also believed in the importance of diversifying her teaching experiences and expanding her horizons; thus, she often opted out of teaching summer courses at Queens in order to
work as a visiting professor or adjunct professor at different institutions during their summer sessions.

Wolfe served as visiting professor during summer sessions at Grambling College (Summer 1944), New York University (Summers 1951, 1953, 1954), University of Michigan (June, 1952), Texas College (Summer 1955), University of Illinois (Summer, 1956) and Wayne State University (Summer, 1961). She also taught courses during the regular school session as an adjunct professor at Fordham University (1951-1953) and Columbia University, Teachers College (1953-1954). Of these experiences, Wolfe noted that "the student populations in each of these schools were so different and I think [recognizing the differences of the students] was so important because I altered my teaching approach. I followed my philosophy of 'you don't teach subjects, you teach people'" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She believed that each opportunity added a different dimension to her teaching experience. For example, at the University of Illinois she worked with many Midwestern White students who had never encountered a Black professor before. Yet Wolfe followed her philosophy of understanding the "whole child" and his or her context, and she visited as many students as possible at their family homes, even recalling several visits to Illinois farms (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Texas College, on the other hand, was an historically Black Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) school (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe was asked to teach graduate level classes there, even though Texas College was not prepared at that time to offer graduate level work, so the situation presented many challenges. Wolfe also served as an adjunct professor (in addition to her Queens responsibilities) during regular school years at Fordham University and Teachers College. She remembered that the Fordham students "were so
polite” and that “the Jesuit culture of the campus was so unique” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Working as a visiting professor at Teachers College allowed Wolfe to return to her pedagogical roots and visit with former colleagues (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). All of these experiences, Wolfe contended, added to her teaching background and expanded her educational horizons.

Wolfe retired from Queens College in 1984 (Press Release, 1984, Queens College/CUNY Archives).

Conclusions On Wolfe’s Work As Educator And Curriculum Developer

Wolfe’s contributions to each of her teaching experiences were significant for distinctly different reasons. At Tuskegee, Wolfe believed she had the unique opportunity to enrich the educational experiences of students in a community “thirsting and eager for knowledge and learning” (Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Raised and educated in a “White world,” Wolfe embraced the environment of a historically Black college and appreciated working with “the finest trained Black people in the world,” many of whom had “competed on the open market and earned advanced degrees from White [colleges and universities]” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She admitted that, with regard to her students, she “had to learn a great deal about differences in expectations, differences in background, of training” and realized that “if you are to work with culturally and educationally and economically disadvantaged individuals, you must use special kinds of techniques” (Wolfe, 1979). Her major contributions as an educator at Tuskegee, Wolfe argued, were her successes in helping “all learners,” her efforts to be a teacher “concerned with each individual” who “recognized that no two people are alike,” and her
attempts to empower her students (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She provided an illustration of her educational mission with a story about a young male student, Roosevelt Bell, who attended one of her Tuskegee Laboratory schools:

Roosevelt didn't know where his mother or his grandmother were, but his great-grandmother had taken him in. [He] walked ten miles each way to get to Prairie Farms School, [waking up] when you can’t see in the morning, and he couldn’t see when he got back home. But that boy, all I had to do was to give him just enough stimulation and a bit of information, and off to the races he would go. And nothing made me so happy as to see him grow. Just a few years ago, when I went back to speak in Birmingham, Alabama, my telephone rang in my hotel room [and it was Roosevelt]. Not only had he finished high school, gone to Morehouse College and finished in three years, but gotten a master’s degree at University of Alabama and was director of the social work division of the medical school at the University of Alabama – this, a boy who…lived in the backwoods and who slept on mattresses made of corn shucks. I spent a night in his home. (Wolfe, 1979)

Wolfe noted that by providing Bell with curriculum experiences that were relevant to his background, she encouraged him to grow and watched with delight as his “mind unfolded” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Bell later held public office in Alabama, and Wolfe saw her former “backwoods” student become a Black leader in the political sphere of American democracy.

While at Tuskegee, Wolfe developed a deep admiration for the educational vision of Tuskegee’s founder, Booker T. Washington, despite the criticism leveled at his views and the mission of his school (Wolfe Interview, 2000a; Wolfe Speech G, n.d.). Critics of Tuskegee argued that Washington’s emphasis on the “common occupations in life” reinforced White societal beliefs in the inferiority of the intellectual capability of Blacks; they asserted that the exclusion of a liberal education from Tuskegee’s curriculum and the inclusion of manual labor and industrial training hampered the development of Black leaders and denied many Blacks the opportunity to compete on the open market in the
American economy. Also, many critics contended that Washington’s silence on issues related to Black voting, office-holding, and political activism had discouraged Blacks from pursuing social and political equality.

Washington’s philosophy, particularly his discouragement of Black social activism, could be considered at odds with Wolfe’s philosophy of education and democratic activism. However, it appears that Wolfe’s grounding in progressive educational philosophy led her to interpret the ideas of Washington in a manner consistent with what she already knew and believed about the purposes and means of education. For example, in a speech on the “characteristics of the educated man,” Wolfe drew parallels between the educational philosophies of John Dewey and Booker T. Washington. She argued that, much like Dewey, Washington stressed the need for “learning by doing” and called for a balance between the theoretical and practical, the concrete and abstract. Wolfe read many of Washington’s works and contended that Washington emphasized the need to teach problem-solving skills, self-discipline, moral standards, and a sense of service. She argued that Washington’s writings are “replete with illustrations of his concern not only for ‘book learning’ but real understanding,” similar to later assertions by progressive educators (Wolfe speech G, n.d., p. 6). She particularly valued Washington’s emphasis on the importance of community and his conception of education as “a total process” (Wolfe Speech G, n.d., p. 20). In her own writings, curriculum, and teaching, Wolfe conceptualized the role of the school as a means to improve the larger community and inspire members to engage in political activism – a distinctly different approach from Washington, whose critics asserted that he encouraged Blacks to “lay down your bucket where you are” and refrain from any type of
activism or social reconstruction. Wolfe reconciled her social reconstructionism with Washington’s views by arguing that he intended for Blacks to make their community all that it could be. Wolfe’s enduring respect for Washington’s philosophy manifested itself in many of her later writings and speeches; in retirement she reflected that she would have enjoyed writing a book on Washington’s philosophy and the vitality of his educational ideas (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe has referred to her decision to leave Tuskegee Institute as extremely difficult (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She explained:

My jobs geared me in the direction to be of real help. One of the major hesitancies I faced leaving Tuskegee and going to Queens is that Queens didn’t have the same stimulation of helping those who needed help most. It had some of it – city colleges were looked down upon so that was very challenging. And we had some of the brightest minds...However, I felt it was very important to go [to Queens] because I became the first Black to work at a City University and I had to prove that Blacks can do as well as White academics. Well, that’s been my job all along. [Also], I was anxious to teach [White students] because I believed that part of prejudice stems from ignorance. The only way you’re going to change attitudes is by stepping out and teaching and doing. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Throughout her teaching career and particularly at Queens College, Wolfe consistently drew attention to issues of 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. However, while Wolfe enacted democratic, multicultural curricula, she did not often write about it. She was not known for extensive publication of scholarly books or articles about her work in rural schools, college classrooms, and urban laboratory schools. 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 (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe believed that she could impact more lives by applying ideas of democracy in the classroom and educating students for active citizenship.

Wolfe remained a progressive educator and a social reconstructionist throughout her career (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She noted that the attacks on progressive education resulted from a “misinterpretation” of the essence of progressivism (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). In fact, Wolfe continues to read current educational scholarship and argues that many current educational ideas, for example, individualized instruction, are progressivism in “other words, with a different twist” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She argued that “today more than ever,” the school curriculum needs democracy as its purpose and intent (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Reflecting on her career in teaching, 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. (Wolfe, 1979)

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. (Wolfe, 1999)

Wolfe also addressed these issues of democracy and education in her writings and speeches, which will be examined in Chapter 5, and in her work for the U. S. government, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. During a leave of absence from Queens College from 1962-1965, Wolfe served as Education Chief of the United States House of Representatives. This study now turns to Wolfe's contributions to education for democracy as Education Chief.
CHAPTER 4
WOLFE'S WORK AS EDUCATION CHIEF OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES' COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

Introduction

From 1962-1965, Wolfe served as Education Chief of the United States House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor. She began work in this position during the second session of the 87th Congress (January-October, 1962), worked for both sessions of the 88th Congress (January-December, 1963; January-October, 1964), and stayed through the first session of the 89th Congress (January-October, 1965). The official duties of the Committee on Education and Labor include attention to all proposed legislation, messages, petitions, memorials, and other matters relating to: education or labor generally, child labor, convict labor, entry of goods made by convicts into interstate commerce, labor standards, labor statistics, mediation and arbitration of labor disputes, school-lunch program, vocational rehabilitation, wages and hours of labor, welfare of miners, United States Employees' Compensation Commission, and any issues pertinent to Gallaudet College, Howard University, Freedmen's Hospital, and Saint Elizabeth's Hospital. (Extracts from Public Law 601, 79th Congress, Committee on Education and Labor Legislative Calendar October 13 1962, p. 7)

Wolfe worked for the Committee on Education and Labor during one of the most prolific, comprehensive, and innovative periods of educational legislation in United States history, during which time the Democratic administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson initiated an active domestic legislative agenda designed to improve the educational opportunities of many groups in American society (Bernstein, 1996;

In her position as Education Chief, Wolfe continued her work as a social educator; she viewed herself as a "teacher" for the members of the committee as she attempted to facilitate a deeper understanding of important issues in education by exposing members of Congress to a wide variety of perspectives on education through hearings, "field trips," and reports (Wolfe, 2000b). Additionally, the legislation passed during this time clearly reflects Wolfe's interest in education for democracy, inasmuch as the majority of these laws extended access and funding of education to many previously overlooked groups and attempted to redress inequities in the educational system and larger society.

**Wolfe's Responsibilities As Education Chief**

As Education Chief, Wolfe's responsibilities centered on guiding education-related legislation through the committee and subcommittee process: arranging hearings, researching background information for legislation, drafting reports, preparing members of Congress for the presentation of bills to the House Rules Committee and for the introduction of legislation on the floor of the House, and working with her counterpart in the Senate. When a bill related to education was introduced in Congress, it was assigned to the Committee on Education and Labor. The chairman of the committee, Adam
Clayton Powell, would then confer with Wolfe and other staff members in order to delegate the bill to a subcommittee. There were three standing subcommittees for education: the general subcommittee on education, the special subcommittee on education, and the select committee on education (U.S. House of Representatives Legislative Calendar, Committee on Education and Labor, 1964).

Once the bill was assigned to a subcommittee, Wolfe would work closely with the subcommittee’s staff people to help plan the legislative calendar, coordinate hearings, write up the testimony from hearings, research background information, provide summaries of the bill for the subcommittee members, and put together the final draft of the legislation. If the subcommittee approved the legislation, the bill moved to the full committee. At this point in the process, Wolfe would distribute a concise explanation of each aspect of the bill to the full committee and answer any questions posed by members (Hamilton, 1991). The full committee would then vote on whether to move the bill to the House, make changes to the bill, or scrap the legislation. If the legislation survived the committee vote, Wolfe would help prepare the bill and the committee members for the House Rules Committee, which determined if the bill would be introduced to the House, when it would be presented, and what the guidelines would be for debate. When the bill was debated on the House floor, Wolfe always sat with the Committee as the “educational consultant.” While she was not permitted to present information, members of Congress could walk up to her and ask questions about the bill on the floor. Wolfe explained that she “helped people from both sides of the aisle understand the legislation” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).
If the bill passed the House vote, it would move to the Senate’s Committee on Education and Labor. Wolfe would work closely with her counterpart in the Senate and provide him with background information, reports related to the bill, transcripts of the House Committee’s hearings, and suggestions for potential witnesses for Senate hearings. If the legislation was altered or changed by the Senate Committee, Wolfe assisted in arranging a joint House-Senate meeting in which members would attempt to reach consensus about any changes to the bill. A similar process occurred if a bill was introduced to the Senate and came to the Committee on Education and Labor after passage in the Senate. If the bill successfully passed through Congress, Wolfe always tried to attend the White House signing ceremony in order to see the legislation become official (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe’s Role As “Educator” Of The Committee

Wolfe continued her work as an educator while working for the Committee on Education and Labor. Through hearings, field visits, and reports, Wolfe provided committee members with extensive information about important issues in education, exposed them to the latest educational research, and introduced them to a variety of perspectives on key educational legislation. In these ways, Wolfe considered herself the “teacher” of the Committee in her efforts to facilitate a deeper understanding of the myriad issues facing the Committee during her tenure as Education Chief (Wolfe telephone interview, 2001).

Arranging hearings for several pieces of educational legislation considered by the committee comprised a major portion of Wolfe’s work as Education Chief. Wolfe
explained that "[the] hearing is the major method through which the Congress people are educated about a particular issue" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe's predecessor had merely invited those witnesses who requested an appearance before Congressional subcommittees. In a departure from this policy, Wolfe, while still working closely with the sponsors of each bill, tried to carefully organize the hearings and to invite a wide variety of expert witnesses who could give testimony that would provide members of Congress with multiple perspectives on the issue at hand. Wolfe also advertised hearing topics and dates and scheduled witnesses who requested an opportunity to testify. Once she and the committee staff members drafted a list of potential witnesses, Wolfe stated that she worked hard to ensure that the hearings were balanced and structured in a way that would enrich the subcommittee's grasp on different aspects of the legislation.

In the hearings, representatives of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) typically would present testimony first because "they had the obligation and responsibility to administer the law, knew [the] laws already in existence, could address potential overlap, and could attest to the importance of new legislation" (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Next, expert witnesses addressed the subcommittee, followed by the volunteers who requested a time slot to present information. Finally, a staff member read aloud statements, letters, and reports written by interested parties unable to attend. A reporter transcribed all testimony, which Wolfe and other staff members would later organize into cohesive reports that were issued by the U.S. Government Printing Office and made available to Congress and the general public. After the hearings closed, Wolfe would meet with the subcommittee members and determine if they had any additional questions or areas in which they felt the need for more witnesses.
The hearings for consideration of legislation that would create an agency focused on economic support and education of “the aged and aging” constitute a typical example of the process. From February-May 1962, the General Subcommittee on Education held extensive hearings in Washington, D.C.; Sacramento and Berkeley, California; Wheeling, West Virginia; and New Brunswick, New Jersey. The purpose of these hearings was to “fully educate [the sub-committee]” and “[to] look at the older individual as a whole person, not as just a pensioner, or a hospital patient, or a jobless worker...but also in terms of his contribution as a parent, homeowner, worker, consumer, citizen, and taxpayer” (Problems of the Aged and Aging, 1962, p. 1). To this end, the invited witnesses included HEW personnel, members of Congress from districts with a high percentage of elderly voters, gerontologists, economists, directors of organizations for retirees, mental health workers, heads of other commissions related to the elderly, elderly people representing different economic backgrounds, and many others (Problems of the Aged and Aging, 1962). At that time, Wolfe recalled, “I didn’t realize we’d need [assistance for the aged and aging] because I was so young back then” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The bill eventually became law. Wolfe explained that it “created programs for aging or senior citizens so that [they] could continue to learn and grow” and “[provided opportunities for] lifelong learning for adults, since living is for learning and when you stop learning, you’re dead already” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). In Wolfe’s view, this opportunity for lifelong education and growth reflected a key aspect of her conception of democratic education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Through these hearings, Wolfe also believed that she had the opportunity to broaden committee members’ horizons and enrich their conceptions of education. For
example, when the subcommittee held hearings on the extension of the Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act (P.L. 87-276), a variety of experts testified, including child psychologists, legal experts, military personnel, and educators who focused on the needs of disadvantaged students. One aspect of the hearings dealt with the issue of “missing fathers” in the Black community. Wolfe asserts that in the Black Muslim community of the early 1960s, “you didn’t hear anything about their children having trouble because fathers played an active role in the upbringing of children” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Therefore, she wanted to familiarize members of Congress with the Black Muslim perspective. Activist Malcolm X attended the hearings, prepared to discuss the issue of juvenile delinquency from the viewpoint of a Black Muslim. Wolfe recalls that several of the subcommittee members attempted to challenge and confront Malcolm X because of his controversial reputation, but he answered each question “calmly, completely, articulately, and thoroughly” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She remembers feeling a great sense of pride in the Black community while listening to Malcolm X and believed that she introduced an important perspective on solving the problems of juvenile delinquency.

In some instances, Wolfe would extend the “education” of committee members beyond hearings. When the committee was dealing with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-10), Wolfe introduced and explained the concept of integrating certain types of technology into classroom teaching. She arranged a “field trip” to nearby Montgomery County, Maryland, where the committee members could see examples of technology used within a classroom context (Hamilton, 1991; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe later borrowed some of the machines and created a laboratory
in the committee offices so that committee members could “come and try them out for themselves” and “learn by doing” (Hamilton, 1991; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe explained that she “wanted the [committee members] to have practice [with the technology] so they could see what it would mean to a child” and because she felt that “[the committee members] must be convinced before they presented the legislation to the full committee or the House floor” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe also recalls arranging several “field trips” for Attorney General Robert Kennedy when they were working together to extend the Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offense Control Act (P.L. 88-368), the same bill for which she invited Malcolm X to testify at subcommittee hearings. The original law (87-274) was passed in 1961 and funded for two years. It included sections related to law, education, and labor, and was to be administered by the Attorney General, the Secretary of Labor, and the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). The purpose of the law was to “provide federal assistance for projects which will demonstrate or develop techniques and practices leading to a solution of the Nation’s juvenile delinquency control problems” because “juvenile and youth offenses diminish the strength and vitality of the people of our nation” and because “this situation requires prevention and control, and intensive and coordinated efforts from private and governmental interests” (P.L. 87-274, 1961). After two years, when the bill came up for renewal, Wolfe found that very little had been done in this area. She remembers:

I went up to Bobby Kennedy and asked [him] “how do you expect me to get this [bill renewed] if you don’t have a record to show what [has been done with] the money that they have already given you?” Somebody said to me, “Deborah, that’s the president’s brother you’re talking to” and I replied, “I don’t care. If he expects me to get this passed, he better get busy and get something to show why
it's important." Well, Bobby appreciated [my candor] and he got busy. And he
did something with that act, because it was passed again. (Wolfe Interview,
2000a)

In order to demonstrate to Robert Kennedy the urgent needs of Black juveniles,
Wolfe “took him on a trip around Washington” to the predominantly Black northwest and
was getting at, he saw the deprivation, saw the differences between class and caste and
race” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe remembers that he later funded and designed an
imaginative playground for children living in northwest Washington, D.C. On another
occasion, she said that she “took [Robert Kennedy] on his first trip to Harlem in New
York City, so he could see where the Puerto Ricans and Blacks lived [in order to]
immerse him in what America really is” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The Juvenile
Delinquency Act (P.L. 88-368) was finally reapproved on July 9, 1964, and it initiated a
special project in the Washington metropolitan area to demonstrate the “effectiveness of a
large-scale, well-rounded program for the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency
and youth offenses,” including the provision of guidance, counseling, establishment of
halfway houses, and methods of increasing job opportunities for juveniles” (P.L. 88-386,
1964). Wolfe later wrote several articles dealing with the issue of juvenile delinquency,
after her interest in this issue deepened through working on legislation with Robert
Kennedy and in arranging the hearings that included the testimony of Malcolm X.

Other than hearings and field trips, the “education” of the committee also
included written reports. During her tenure as education chief, Wolfe researched, edited,
and/or contributed to more than nine reports that provided committee members and the
general public with extensive background information about the need for particular

Wolfe’s role in the drafting of these reports varied. For several reports, Wolfe assisted committee members in constructing summaries of research trips or fact-finding missions. For example, after the Special Subcommittee on Education went to the Soviet Union in the fall of 1961 to observe and study higher education, Wolfe worked with the subcommittee staff and the chairwoman, Edith Green (D-Oregon), to construct a report on their findings. The report contained statistical material from Soviet officials and educators, corroborative material from U.S. educators, firsthand observations of the subcommittee members, and conclusions from the visit. The seven Congressmen and three staff personnel traveled to Moscow and five of the 15 Soviet Republics, visiting several higher education institutions in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tashkent, and Tbilisi. Additionally, the subcommittee members interviewed a wide variety of Soviet educators, administrators, and government personnel (Higher Education in the Soviet Union, 1962).

Wolfe assisted in organizing the personal reflections of the subcommittee, the interview data, the statistics provided by Soviet and American officials, and the conclusions of the subcommittee. The subcommittee determined that while higher education in the Soviet Union was expanding, the United States was well ahead in student enrollment and quality
of education (Higher Education in the Soviet Union, 1962). This work sparked Wolfe’s interest in the Soviet Union; she visited the country several times and wrote articles on different aspects of the Soviet educational system.

In addition, for the 1962 Interim Report on Education and Citizenship in the Public School System of Puerto Rico, Adam Clayton Powell sent Wolfe to Puerto Rico to investigate “all matters concerning education” (p. v). Wolfe’s five-day trip (July 26-30, 1962) included meetings with numerous dignitaries and educational administrators, tours of several schools, and perusal of materials provided by the Puerto Rican Secretary of Education. Following her visit, Wolfe drafted an in-depth report that provided a brief history of relations between Puerto Rico and the United States, discussed the organization of the education system, examined planning and control of the curriculum, and generated recommendations and needs for Puerto Rican education. Wolfe focused on the bilingual nature of Puerto Rican education, and particularly emphasized the “tendency for the Puerto Rican to consider himself Puerto Rican with little understanding of his citizenship as an American” (p. 16). Wolfe recommended the “development of a more comprehensive social studies program with direct emphasis upon the meaning of American citizenship” that educated people for participation in American democracy (p. 15). She also suggested increased federal funding for education, revision of education materials, greater emphasis on teaching the English language, and more focus on teaching American culture and history (pp. 15-16).

In other situations, Wolfe worked on reports that were the final products of ad hoc committees assigned to research particular problems or issues in education. For example, Integration in public education programs constituted the final report of the ad hoc
Subcommittee on Integration in Federally Assisted Education. The purpose of this subcommittee was to "study the extent to which there had been compliance with the Supreme Court decision [Brown v. Board of Education] ruling the unconstitutionality of segregated education" (Integration in Public Education Programs, 1962, p. v). Through hearings, extensive research, and statistical surveys, the committee examined the status of integration in public schools and colleges between 1954-1962 -- whether schools were truly integrated, whether states worked with "all deliberate speed" to achieve desegregation, whether the Federal Government contributed funds to those schools violating the desegregation law, whether the problems of desegregation occurred nationwide or were concentrated in any particular geographic regions, what methods states and school systems used to comply with the Supreme Court order, and in what areas changes and improvements were needed to further the implementation of the 1954 Supreme Court decision (Integration in Public Education Programs, 1962, p. v). The ad hoc subcommittee released its report on these issues on May 17, 1962, the eighth anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education.

For the Integration in Public Education Programs report, Wolfe directed and coordinated the collection of data, helped organize two weeks' worth of hearings, and edited the final report with the assistance of committee staff. She worked closely with the researchers who contributed to the report, which included personnel from the Southern Education Reporting Service, the Southern Regional Council, the Office of Education, the Library of Congress, the Housing and Home Finance Agency, and the Department of Commerce. The report provides a detailed look at the status of integration in public education programs at the elementary, secondary, and higher education levels in
1962. Wolfe and her team of researchers found that in 1954, seventeen states maintained legal segregation. By 1962, most of these states had made some attempt at desegregation, but segregation persisted in Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, and South Carolina. In higher education, the report stated that many publicly funded state colleges were beginning to desegregate both in principle and in practice. The subject and content of this report reflect Wolfe’s interest in extending a quality education to all citizens in a democracy and her personal interest in the status of desegregation in Alabama.

For other reports, Wolfe organized information provided by reference services. In Federal Assistance for Educational Purposes (1962), for example, Wolfe organized information provided by the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress. This report was commissioned by Adam Clayton Powell, who articulated a need for “compiling a list of current education laws,” since “many legislators, educators, students, and citizens have raised questions regarding the kind of legislation necessary in view of the present education laws” (Federal Assistance for Educational Purposes, 1962, p. iii).

In his foreword for the report, Powell also asserted that:

Americans have always boasted in their faith in education as a tool for making democracy work. Legislation is one of the major strategies for achieving that goal. Therefore it is most necessary that those persons entrusted with this major responsibility be students of the history and development of education in America with special consideration for the role which the Federal Government has planned in this development. (Federal Assistance for Educational Purposes, 1962, p. iii)

To this end, Wolfe structured and arranged a digest of laws illustrative of financial assistance provided by the federal government to states, localities, and institutions of higher education. Wolfe also included a history of educational assistance proposals for
legislation that had received consideration by the Congress from 1789-1962. Wolfe's preface to the report mirrors Powell's comments by noting that legislators had a responsibility to be familiar with the history of educational legislation, particularly since "much of the legislation introduced into Congress is never enacted, so it becomes difficult to determine which of the public laws passed are currently in operation" (Federal Assistance for Educational Purposes, 1962, p. v). The report provides extensive detail on federal assistance for public education, examining such areas as assistance to schools in federally impacted areas, school construction, college housing loans, the cooperative research program of the Office of Education, land-grant colleges, the National Defense Education Act of 1958, The National School Lunch Act and Special Milk Program, public library services for rural areas, and the vocational education program (Federal Assistance for Educational Purposes, 1962). Also included is the history of proposals considered by Congress from the 4th Congress, 2nd session (December 1796-March 1797) through the 87th Congress, 2nd session (January 1961-October 1961).

Finally, Wolfe also worked on reports designed to provide background information for legislation considered by Congress. For example, when the Committee on Education and Labor was working on the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Wolfe and co-editor Dr. Andrew Brimmer coordinated a team of researchers to draft a report on poverty in the United States. Adam Clayton Powell noted in his foreword that he commissioned the report because "in order to intelligently legislate in this area, it is necessary to understand the problem of poverty" (Poverty in the United States, 1964, p. iii). In her preface, Wolfe explained that "this committee print was prepared as a handbook of basic information relative to the problems of poverty in the United States"
In order to write the report, Wolfe elicited information from numerous government agencies, including the Housing and Home Finance Agency, Department of Labor, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Farmers Home Administration, Small Business Administration, President’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, Bureau of Census, Small Business Administration, Area Redevelopment Administration, Department of Justice, Council of Economic Advisors, and the Department of Defense. Additionally, Wolfe’s co-editor, Dr. Brimmer, who then served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce, assisted in interpreting the census data. The report outlined a general view of the problem of poverty in the United States, including an ethnic composition of those classified as poor, the income and welfare of the aged, the special problems of children and youth of the poor, American Indian poverty, and the rural poor. The geography of poverty was also discussed, with a focus on concentrations of poverty in both non-urban and urban areas. In addition, the report examined poverty as a “way of life,” with attention to matters of housing, expenditure patterns, and educational attainment. Wolfe included a selected bibliography and numerous appendices that summarized in graphic and statistical form a large body of information relating to poverty in the United States (Poverty in the United States, 1964). Wolfe expressed hope that “the information here presented will be of assistance as consideration is given to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 as we wage an all-out war on poverty” (Wolfe, Poverty in the United States, 1964, p. v).

Wolfe took a personal interest in the legislation passed by Congress that she worked on during her tenure as Education Chief, particularly because she possessed intimate knowledge “of the sweat and tears it took to produce” legislation (Wolfe, 1964).
During this time, the Committee on Education and Labor dealt with many education bills that later became law. The laws clearly reflected the political and social context of the 1960s, as well as Wolfe’s interest in democratizing education by extending access of education to previously overlooked groups, increasing funding for education, increasing the role of the federal government in education, and by attempting to redress inequities existing in the American society of the 1960s.

**Educational Legislation Passed During Wolfe’s Tenure As Education Chief: The Kennedy Administration (1962-1963)**

In the 1960s, the educational system was straining from rising student enrollment, and states and cities struggled to bear the costs of educating more students at the elementary, secondary, and higher education levels (Graham, 1981). Additionally, the Cold War and the launching of Sputnik pressured Congress to focus on improving American education in order to surpass the scientific achievements of the Soviets. Following his election in 1960, President John F. Kennedy prioritized education and, deviating from the historical precedent of previous presidents, announced his intention to increase federal aid and support for education (Bernstein, 1996, p. 183). Kennedy appointed a task force on education, which recommended increased financial support for public schools, particularly those in low-income urban areas, and for more grants and loans to colleges in order to construct academic facilities (Bernstein, 1996, p. 184). In 1961, Kennedy sent a general aid-to-education bill incorporating many of the task force’s recommendations to Congress; the bill passed the Senate in the spring, but went down to defeat in the House “by a coalition of Republicans who opposed general aid, Catholics who resented fellow-Catholic Kennedy’s exclusion of aid to parochial schools, and
southerners who feared the civil rights wedge of federal school funds” (Graham, 1981, p. 156). As a result of these controversies, several of Kennedy’s larger education bills remained mired in committees (Bernstein, 1996; Graham, 1981). Finally, according to Graham (1981), a frustrated Kennedy

settled for a makeshift package of separate, more traditional categorical measures that extended the popular impact laws and the National Defense of Education Act and provided additional federal aid for vocational education, manpower training, the physically and mentally handicapped, and such specific educational facilities as libraries and medical schools. (1981, pp. 156-157)

In her role as Education Chief for the U. S. House Committee on Education and Labor, Wolfe was directly involved in the crafting of these “smaller laws,” which she believed democratized education by increasing the access to, and the quality of education for, previously overlooked groups of students (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). For example, a series of public laws addressed the special educational needs of citizens with disabilities by providing assistance to deaf, blind, physically handicapped, and speech-impaired students. Public Law 87-276, approved in September of 1961, encouraged and facilitated the training of more teachers of the deaf and speech-impaired. The law appropriated more funding and grants-in-credit for accredited public and nonprofit institutions of higher learning with approved training centers for teachers of the deaf or speech pathologists (P.L. 87-276, 1961, p. 575). To further assist the deaf, Public Law 87-715, passed in 1962, provided for the “production and distribution of educational and training films for use by deaf persons” in order to bring “understanding and appreciation of those films, and provide enriched educational and cultural experiences” (Public Law 87-715, 1962, p. 761). Public Law 87-294 addressed the needs of the blind by increasing appropriations for the American Printing House for the Blind. Congress authorized the
money in order to encourage “wider distribution of books and other special instruction materials for the blind...[and to] promote education of the blind” (P.L. 87-294, 1961, p. 627). These laws increased attention to students with disabilities by extending government support and educational access for the deaf, blind, and speech-impaired. While Wolfe believed these laws increased access to education, she asserted:

We’ve been very slow to make arrangements and make public funds available for difference of any kind, and yet we say “government of the people, for the people, by the people” – [that statement] means all of the people, without regard to handicap, or race, religion, and all the others. We often forget the handicapped. Even now, we have not done all we should for them. It’s interesting how slow we’ve been [in that regard]. We have a long way to go. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Two laws passed during this time period increased access to professional medical training. The Practical Nurse Training Extension Act of 1961 (87-22) provided grants and scholarship for practical nurse training programs, thereby increasing the opportunity for many more students to enter the nursing profession. Public Law 87-262 established a teaching hospital at Howard University. By providing a historically Black college with the means to train doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel, this law allowed larger numbers of Black students to enter the medical profession (P.L. 87-262, 1962). Wolfe recalled that these laws reflected the growing need for medically trained professionals in the 1960s, and, more importantly, they improved the opportunity for a larger number of students, regardless of income level or race, to enter the medical professions (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Other laws passed during Kennedy’s presidency included the extension of the National Defense Act of 1958 (P.L. 87-344), Impacted Aid (P.L. 81-874), and the Vocational Educational Act (P.L 88-210). The extension of the National Defense Act
allowed the government to continue to pour money into educational research and
development, provide loans for higher education, and construct schools. Wolfe recalled
that the extension of the National Defense Act continued financial support for the
programs created in the original law and added a section providing more money for
counseling services for students. Impacted aid, according to Wolfe, addressed the issue
of itinerant military personnel who moved from place to place without paying local taxes.
She explained:

The biggest percentage [of local taxes] goes to schools, so certain communities
were negatively impacted by large numbers of military people. For the impacted
aid plan, the federal government, in lieu of taxes, paid money to the local school
districts for the education of military offspring. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Finally, the Vocational Education Act, Public Law 88-210, allowed more students to
participate in vocational education programs. Designed to strengthen and improve the
quality of vocational education in the United States, the law defined vocational education
as “vocational or technical training or retraining which is given in schools or classes
under public supervision and is conducted as part of a program designed to fit individuals
for employment as semiskilled or skilled workers or technicians in recognized
occupations” (P.L. 88-210, 1963). Wolfe, still strongly influenced by the message of
Booker T. Washington, viewed vocational education as an opportunity for “educationally
disadvantaged” students to learn a trade that would facilitate economic freedom and
develop their sense of personal self-worth (Wolfe, 1964).

The most important piece of Kennedy’s educational legislation to pass Congress
was the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963. Kennedy’s successor, Lyndon B.
Johnson, signed the bill into law, but the basis for the bill emerged from the
recommendations of Kennedy’s educational task force (Bernstein, 1996). The Higher Education Facilities Act, approved on December 16, 1963, increased funding to higher education through “authorized assistance to public and other nonprofit institutions of higher education in financing the construction, rehabilitation, or improvement of needed academic and related facilities in undergraduate and graduate institutions” (P.L. 88-263, 1963). Congress justified the increased expenditure by stating that “the security and welfare of the United States require that this and future generations of American youth be assured ample opportunity for the fullest development of their intellectual capacities.” (P.L. 88-236, 1963). One of the three titles in the law specified the allocation of grants and loans for the construction of public community colleges, defined as “an institution of higher education which is under public supervision and control and is organized and administered principally to provide a two-year program which is acceptable for full credit toward a bachelor’s degree.” (P.L. 88-326, 1963, p. 376). For Wolfe, the crux of the law was funding for community colleges, which she believed had the potential to democratize education. She explained:

[Public Law 88-204] opened up the opportunity for higher education. Our society is growing more and more complex, and the knowledge is growing so rapidly that if you’re going to keep pace, if you’re going to be able to make a living, in order to be a functioning citizen that can vote intelligently – if you’re going to do anything, you need more formal education. [Community colleges] are good because they are also directed towards those who are mechanically and occupationally directed. We wanted to make sure people had a way of making a living – it helps your personality, self-image, self-esteem, and makes you a better person. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe remembered Kennedy’s dedication to “education as the keystone to the arch of freedom,” and she believed that he contributed to the democratization of American education through a legislative agenda that expanded access to different types
of educational opportunities and dramatically increased federal funding for education. Heath (1975) concurred, but asserted that Kennedy failed to fulfill his potential to effect change in the educational system “partly by lack of nerve, partly by higher priorities in foreign affairs, and partly by weak leadership and thin Democratic margins in Congress” (Graham, 1981, p. 157). In fact, Lyndon Johnson once commented to an aide that “Kennedy couldn’t have gotten the Ten Commandments through Congress” (quoted in Isserman & Kazin, 2000, p. 103). After Kennedy’s death, Lyndon Johnson inherited Kennedy’s legislative agenda, but experienced much more success in passing significant educational legislation through Congress (Graham, 1981).

**Educational Legislation Passed During Wolfe’s Tenure As Educational Chief: The Johnson Administration (1963-1965)**

The Kennedy assassination plunged the nation into a period of deep mourning. Wolfe remembered her sadness at Kennedy’s death, lamenting what he “might have accomplished” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She asserted that Kennedy had begun to understand that “there could not be real freedom in America unless it was for all” and therefore “would have been fighting for civil rights” and continuing his attempts to pass major educational legislation that democratized education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). However, she considered Kennedy’s successor, Lyndon Johnson, an “amazing man” who “wanted to go down in history as the education president” and who truly understood the value and importance of improving the quality of education for all (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). As Bernstein (1996) noted, “if faith in education was a passion for Kennedy, it was an obsession with Johnson” (p. 183).
Wolfe recalled that Johnson immediately began pushing Kennedy’s leftover educational legislation through Congress (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Isserman and Kazin (2000) concurred, arguing that Johnson had to “move swiftly to reassure the country as a whole, and the Democratic party in particular, that he was indeed a legitimate successor to John Kennedy” and that the “best way to do so would be to show that he could be more successful than Kennedy himself in pushing ‘Kennedy programs’ through Congress” (p.104). In the spring and summer of 1964, Johnson pushed numerous bills through Congress, including the Civil Rights Act and the War on Poverty legislation (entitled the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964).

Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act in August of 1964, thus initiating Johnson’s "War on Poverty." Wolfe and the Committee on Education and Labor were integrally involved in facilitating the passage of this legislation. In fact, the report edited by Wolfe, Poverty in the United States, provided the Committee with background research for the bill. Other reports, drafted by different government agencies, also informed Committee members (Bernstein, 1996). Wolfe remembered the “intense partisan debate and disagreement” surrounding the law that she considered “one of the most important” passed during her tenure as Education Chief (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

In order to pass his War on Poverty legislation, Johnson realized he had to win the support of southern Democrats, particularly those in the House (Bernstein, 1996; Gelfand, 1981). The southern House Democrats, concerned that the War on Poverty would take money from rich Whites and redistribute it to poor Blacks, threatened to thwart passage of the bill. Therefore, in his speeches promoting the Economic Opportunity Act, Johnson attempted to assuage Southern hostility by insisting that his bill
did not hand out money to "shiftless Negroes," but rather provided job training and assisted the unemployed in finding work. Also, he made highly publicized visits to poor White areas, including the mining areas of Appalachia, in order to emphasize that poverty was also a White problem. And in an attempt to further disarm the southern Democrats in the House, Sargent Shriver asked Phil S. Landrum of Georgia to steer the poverty bill through the House of Representatives. Landrum, a member of the Committee on Education and Labor, was a southern conservative widely viewed as "a certified racist" and sworn enemy of organized labor (Bernstein, 1996, p. 107). Johnson hoped this "southern strategy" would facilitate passage of his bill through the House.

Wolfe remembered Adam Clayton Powell announcing Landrum's role as manager of the Economic Opportunity Act. Wolfe viewed the decision to give the bill to a "southern White man from Georgia who intensely disliked Adam Clayton Powell, believed in Jim Crow, and was extremely overt in his [distaste] for Blacks," as politically astute (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She noted that Landrum, who wanted this bill as a "feather in his cap," worked hard to successfully shepherd the legislation through the Committee and the House (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Additionally, according to Wolfe, Landrum treated her with the utmost respect and courtesy as she provided him with background information and assisted him with different aspects of the legislation (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She recalled:

I was so [amused] because normally he would not have wanted to hear any Black woman telling him what to do, but he was so anxious and happy to have the opportunity to manage a major bill. He told his staff "when Dr. Wolfe comes in you just let her come right on in". I was so pleased that he respected my knowledge, even if he didn't respect me. And that's the only thing I wanted - I'm not caring about me, I just wanted to get the bill passed. And we worked as a
team. He was determined to get [the Economic Opportunity Act passed]. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Another major tactical problem facing Johnson, according to Bernstein (1996), “was keeping Adam Clayton Powell, chairman of both the House Committee on Education and Labor, and the Subcommittee on the War on Poverty Program, reliably at work for the bill” (p. 107). Powell was widely regarded as unpredictable and particularly notorious for disappearing on extended trips to Bimini and Puerto Rico. He had a very poor attendance record in the House, as well as a reputation for being overly sensitive to perceived criticism of his ability as Chairman (Bernstein, 1996; Hamilton, 1991). Johnson, however, needed Powell’s assistance in pushing the bill through his Committee expeditiously and was aware that Powell had to be treated gingerly (Dallek, 1998; Hamilton, 1991). To keep Powell focused on the task at hand, Johnson and Shriver dangled the offer of one million dollars for a community action grant for Haryou, a juvenile delinquency program for young people in Harlem (Bernstein, 1996). Additionally, House Speaker John McCormack went on record praising Powell and his committee for their excellent work and wrote Powell a letter commending his accomplishments as Chairman (Hamilton, 1991). Powell responded positively, took his leadership role seriously, and rushed the legislation through his committee. Dallek (1998) noted that Powell “played hardball with opponents...gaveling down committee members raising hard questions” and stampeding any opposition (p. 110). As a result, the subcommittee acted rapidly, holding twenty days of hearings between March 17 and April 28, 1964. Wolfe recalled the frantic work pace during this period (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Following the hearings, the full Committee on Education and Labor
reported the poverty bill favorably on a straight party-line vote on June 3, 1964. The bill subsequently passed both the Senate and the House, and Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act into law in the Rose Garden on August 24, 1964 (Bernstein, 1996; Dallek, 1998; Hamilton, 1991).

Wolfe described the Economic Opportunity Act as

a real revolution, a war on poverty. We know that one of the major reasons we have poverty is because people are poorly trained and educated for the work world. The emphasis was to change the whole nature of opportunity, to literally wage a war on poverty. [This law] approached poverty not just by giving money, but by furnishing educational opportunity, guidance, and counseling. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe believed the Economic Opportunity Act held the potential to provide greater economic and educational opportunity for Blacks in both rural and urban areas. She asserted that, next to the Civil Rights Act, the Economic Opportunity Act was “the most significant piece of legislation affecting the American Negro” passed by Congress during her tenure as education chief (Wolfe, 1965, p. 88).

In order to educate the Black population on the democratic and economic potential of the Economic Opportunity Act, Wolfe wrote an article on 1965 for the Journal of Negro Education, specifying how each title in the law could assist the American Black. In her article, Wolfe introduced the problem of poverty and the American Black, noting that “the incidence of poverty among nonwhite families is two and a half times greater than among White families” and that “Negro families constitute the bulk of all nonWhite families with low incomes in the United States” (Wolfe, 1965, p. 88). Additionally, Wolfe analyzed each aspect of the bill, assessing the potential of the separate titles to alleviate the crippling poverty of many Blacks in the United States.
The first section of the act, Title I, appropriated money for the establishment of youth programs that would prepare young men and women for "the responsibilities of citizenship" and "increase [their] employability... by providing them rural and urban residential centers with education, vocational training, useful work experiences... and other appropriate activities" (P.L. 88-452, 1964). Suggested programs included work-training programs, job corps, conservation camps, youth camps, and other programs for young people. Wolfe noted that the "job corps should appeal to many Negro youth who have been deprived of educational opportunities and economic rewards" and who faced racial discrimination while attempting to secure employment (p. 89). Additionally, the Work Training Program described in Title I would allow young men and women to work while simultaneously attending school, which Wolfe asserted "[would] stimulate continued interest in academic attainment and provide economic support at the same time" (p. 89). Wolfe emphasized the extraordinary potential of these programs to assist Black youth in acquiring occupational and vocational training, receiving guidance and assistance in finding jobs, and therefore eradicating many conditions contributing to the cycle of poverty.

Title II focused on the creation of community action programs designed to mobilize resources to combat poverty in urban and rural areas, including adult education and voluntary assistance programs for needy children. Wolfe referred to this section as the "heart of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, since it is the title which provides opportunity for total community attack upon the problems of poverty" (p. 90). She described the potential benefits of community action for American Blacks, asserting that "it would be highly beneficial to the Negro community if its citizens would join forces
with all citizens in eradicating the causes of poverty through the development of positive programs of improvement” (p. 90). These “positive programs,” according to Wolfe, could be designed to support employment, job training, counseling, health, vocational rehabilitation, housing, home management, welfare, and special remedial and other non-curricular educational assistance (p. 90). This approach clearly reflected Wolfe’s belief in the vital role of the community in providing opportunities for the “whole child” to succeed. That Wolfe regarded this title as the “heart” of the Act also drew attention to her conception of communities working together to solve educational problems. Additionally, Wolfe called for commitment to the struggle to eradicate poverty, stating that “the war on poverty can only be won when each man and woman, Black and White alike, dedicates himself to a cause greater than himself” (p. 92). Title II also included programs designed to provide basic education for educationally deprived adults. Wolfe emphasized the particular importance of this section for Black communities with high percentages of illiteracy.

Title III specifically addressed the needs of rural areas, with the intent of raising and maintaining the income and living standards of “low-income families and migrant agricultural employees and their families” (Wolfe, 1965, p. 90). This section appropriated money for federal grants and loans for farm families and designated assistance for the migrant-agricultural employee in the areas of housing, sanitation, education, and day care for children (p. 90). In 1965, 47% of the poor Negro families in the South were located in rural areas. Therefore, Wolfe emphasized the importance of this section and its implications for the Blacks of the rural South. This title also reflected Wolfe’s continued interest in improving the opportunity of rural children and the lives of
migrant workers. Wolfe noted that she had “studied over a period of years the serious problems of the migratory worker,” and therefore she “highly recommended that attention be given to the fullest utilization of the provisions made available [for migrant workers] through this Title (p. 90).” Wolfe added that every Black “has a stake in the fullest development of rural as well as urban America” (p. 91).

Title IV dealt with employment and investment incentives for small businesses. Wolfe argued that this section could assist Black business owners, and she cited the positive results of two demonstration projects implemented with Black businesses in Harlem and South Philadelphia. She asserted that the increase in appropriations for small business loans could potentially assist many previously overlooked and ignored Black businesspeople in receiving funding. Title V introduced the concept of work experience programs, designed to “expand the opportunities for constructive work experience and other needed training available to persons who are unable to support or care for themselves or their family (PL 88-452, 1964). According to Wolfe, this title could assist Blacks receiving help from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program in acquiring work skills and employment. The final section of the act, Title VI, discussed the administration and coordination of these many programs. Wolfe concluded her discussion of the Economic Opportunity Act by issuing a challenge to her audience to utilize each title “to the fullest extent by Negroes, since they have such a high stake in the program,” because “our society demands that Negro citizens become so involved with the total program that the day will come when all men will live as brothers” (p. 92).

Wolfe was involved in several other minor legislative proposals left over from the Kennedy administration that passed through Congress in the early days of Johnson’s
presidency. Public Law 88-321 increased the budget of the President’s Committee on Employment of the Physically Handicapped, a task force that investigated different ways to assist citizens with disabilities in finding jobs in suitable environments (Public Law 88-321, 1964). In Public Law 88-579, Congress established a National Council of the Arts in order to promote wider access to the arts and humanities. The law stated that “the growth and flourishing of arts depend upon freedom, imagination, and individual initiative” and committed the federal government to facilitating the development of the arts in the United States. In Wolfe’s view, this legislation contributed to democratic education. She explained:

[Public Law 88-579] is important because the arts have always been something peripheral, something special, as if [the arts] are only for certain people. The establishment of the National Arts Council made us look at art as an integral part of what it means to be an educated person and made the arts more accessible to a wider variety of people. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Also, the National School Lunch Amendment (PL 87-823) expanded the free and reduced lunch program, which, as Wolfe noted, enhanced opportunities for learning because “children can’t succeed in school if they are hungry” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Additionally, an amendment to the Library Services Act (PL 88-269) raised the amount of monetary assistance to libraries and extended federal support to non-rural areas. Wolfe believed this law “provided lifelong learning for adults and children” and enabled more students to access library services (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

As Johnson settled into the presidency and prepared for re-election in November of 1964, he formulated a domestic legislative program that would carry his personal stamp and move away from the “Kennedy legacy”. At the University of Michigan
commencement on May 22, 1964, Johnson described his philosophical vision of a “Great Society” that demands an end to poverty and racial injustice...but that is just the beginning. The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and enlarge his talent...where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness...where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community. (Isserman and Kazin, 2000, p. 112)

Wolfe recalled that increasing federal funds to improve the quality and equality of education comprised a major component of this “Great Society” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). In fact, Johnson sent an educational legislative package to Congress in January 1965 that created a community action preschool program called Head Start, increased federal funding to the poorest schools, appropriated funds to improve school libraries, created federally funded supplementary education centers, developed regional science laboratories, re-organized state departments of education, and allocated money for scholarships, loans, and work-study for qualified students to attend college (Bernstein, 1991, p. 192)

The bill, entitled the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), was introduced on the floor of the House and the Senate at the same time. Wolfe asserted that this act was “the one that most clearly defines the responsibility of the federal government to all the children of the United States” and vastly increased federal funding of education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Johnson hoped to move this monumental piece of legislation through Congress quickly, which appeared very possible because of Johnson’s enormous personal popularity, his landslide victory in the election of 1964, and the Democratic dominance of the 89th Congress. Also, Johnson was “a towering figure in
the Senate anterooms where deals were cut, a wheeler-dealer who...[called] in his debts to secure the votes he needed for advancing his legislative and personal agenda” (Isserman & Kazin, 2000, p. 105). Wolfe remembered Johnson’s frequent visits to Congressional offices during consideration of the ESEA; he would enter her office to ask her about the status of the bill, and she noted that “I got to know [President Johnson] as a person during this time and he called me by my given name, Deborah” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe recalled, however, that several challenges threatened to slow passage of the ESEA, particularly the church-state controversy that again loomed as a possible hurdle. Extensive debate, according to Wolfe, swirled over this issue until Francis Keppel, U. S. Commissioner of Education, defused this problem by shifting the proposed federal aid to the student rather than to schools (Bernstein, 1996; Wolfe Letter, 2001). Thus, the onus of the law focused on improving the education of each child, rather than on denying federal funds to a particular group of schools. Wolfe noted that this allowed funding to assist all children “wherever they attended school” (Wolfe letter, 2001). She personally believed that “we, of course, need separation of church and state, but we also have a responsibility for every child,” and while “we should not give aid directly [to the parochial child], we should provide access to books and facilities” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Additionally, to further avoid the church-state controversy, the bill did not address teacher salaries in different kinds of schools. Finally, Keppel conducted several meetings with Protestant, Catholic, and teacher groups to ensure support of the legislation; in the end, many of the parochial school representatives realized that their main aim was “to establish the principle of federal aid for their schools,” but not focus on
the details (Bernstein, 1996). This, Wolfe noted, was “a new concept,” and “we had to fight to have this title included” in the ESEA (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

A second factor slowing passage of this bill was, again, Adam Clayton Powell (Bernstein, 1996; Hamilton, 1991). The House Rules Committee had twice rejected Powell’s budget requests for his committee. Hamilton (1991) noted that “thanks to his widely publicized spending habits, Powell was the target of some who wanted to decrease his appropriations” (p. 387). Powell had attracted scrutiny and criticism from his colleagues after a highly publicized travel junket overseas a year before, in the company of two female staff members paid for by committee funds. Additionally, many questioned Powell’s burgeoning committee budget and his use of government funds for personal travel, his habit of putting family members on the payroll, and other budgetary issues (Hamilton, 1991). Powell retaliated by holding the Elementary and Secondary Education bill hostage in his Committee, threatening to stall the legislation until he received the allocation of funds he requested. However, House leaders forced Powell to take action by adopting a resolution “keeping the committee in continuous session until the education bill was voted out” and by denying Powell his requested budget increases (Bernstein, 1996, p. 195). They also threatened to remove Powell as Chairman. Powell “returned to the fold,” wrote a letter of apology to the President, and moved his committee swiftly to consideration of the legislation (Hamilton, 1991). The only other roadblock was Congresswoman Edith Green, Powell’s nemesis, who strongly disagreed with several components of the bill. This time Powell took measures against Green, and the Committee passed the legislation.
On March 26th, the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 passed the House by a vote of 263-153, and on April 9th, the Senate approved the House bill 73-18. President Johnson signed Public Law 89-10 into law in Stonewall, Texas, on April 11, 1965 (Bernstein, 1996). The Congressional Quarterly Almanac of 1965 noted that the factors that contributed to Johnson’s success were:

- the decisive Democratic majorities elected in 1964
- the personal leadership of President Johnson
- the shaping of legislation to obtain maximum political support in Congress.

On a number of occasions (most notably in connection with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act), the word was passed to approve the bill and worry about perfecting the details later. (1965 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 65)

The Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-10) was designed to “strengthen and improve educational quality and educational opportunities in the Nation’s elementary and secondary education” (PL 89-10). This was the bill that inspired Wolfe to take the Committee members on a field trip to view the latest innovations in educational technology (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe also remembered spending inordinate amounts of time researching each aspect and title of the bill in order to provide committee members with background information. Each title, according to Wolfe, had many different components, and she had to deal with people who “only talked about the one title they were interested in and working for” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Members of Congress, however, needed to understand each title and how it contributed to the law in its entirety. Wolfe, therefore, had to “understand each title and the whole picture” in order to assist and educate Committee members (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Title I appropriated federal funds to local educational agencies for the education of children of low-income families, in order to “expand and improve their educational
programs by various means (including preschool programs), which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children” (P.L. 89-10).

Title II allocated resources for schools through grants for the acquisition of school library resources, textbooks, and other printed and published instructional materials for the use of children and teachers in public and private schools. Title III created a program generating federal support for supplementary educational centers and services to “stimulate and assist in the provision of vitally needed educational services not available in sufficient quantity or quality, and to stimulate and assist in the development and establishment of exemplary elementary and secondary school educational programs to serve as models for regular school programs” (PL 89-10). These programs included: guidance and counseling, remedial instruction, physical education, social work services, work-study programs, vocational guidance, specialized instruction and equipment, dual-enrollment, and technology training. Title IV was designed to enable the “Office of Education more effectively to accomplish the purposes and perform the duties for which it was originally established” by providing grants to institutions of higher education for research and development in the field of education. Title V allocated funds to strengthen State Departments of Education, and Title VI dealt with the intricacies of administering this law.

Wolfe called this law “one of the most important pieces of educational legislation ever passed” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She argued that while the law increased federal funding drastically, it more importantly attempted to equalize educational opportunity in American society. Also, the law included elementary education in its scope; she explained that the federal government had usually “felt more comfortable” dealing with
higher education and often neglected elementary and early childhood education. This law, Wolfe asserted, “defined the responsibility of the federal government to all the children of these United States” and lay down the gauntlet to continue improving the educational system and to do “more to help the learners” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She noted that “people love this law – it’s been renewed, and renewed, and renewed – for very good reasons” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Another major piece of legislation passed during Wolfe’s tenure as Education Chief was the Higher Education Act of 1965. This law, which appropriated federal funds for loans, scholarships, and work-study programs in higher education, represented a combination of ideas inherited from Kennedy’s educational agenda and the recommendations of the Gardner task force of 1964. Johnson fully expected this law to easily pass both houses because it appeared less controversial: There were no religious issues involved, all members of Congress would benefit from federal funds for colleges in their states, and colleges across the country were in desperate need of financial assistance (Bernstein, 1996).

The Higher Education Act of 1965 extended federal support of higher education by strengthening “the educational resources of our colleges and universities” and by providing “financial assistance for students in postsecondary and higher education” (P.L. 89-329, 1965). Wolfe called this law “a real expansion of federal support for colleges and universities that examined the total picture of higher education” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She asserted that the Higher Education Act of 1965 started where the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 left off and “looked at higher education as a broad whole with widespread assistance for many different programs” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The
first section of this law increased grants to colleges and universities for the development of community service programs that could assist "the people of the United States in the solution of community problems such as housing, poverty, government, recreation, employment, youth opportunities, transportation, health, and land use" (P.L. 89-329, 1965). Additional appropriations targeted colleges that were "struggling for survival" and were "isolated from the main currents of academic life." Also, the legislation increased financial support of students through the allocation of funds to provide educational opportunity grants to "assist in making available the benefits of higher education to qualified high school graduates of exceptional financial need, who for lack of financial means of their own or of their families would be unable to obtain such benefits without such aid" (PL 89-329, 1965). The law also created a National Teacher Corps, in order to "strengthen the educational opportunities available to children in areas having concentrations of low-income families...to encourage colleges and universities to broaden their programs of teacher preparation" (PL 89-329, 1965) and to attract and train qualified teachers and teacher-interns to work in low-income areas. The Higher Education Act also increased money for college library assistance and library training and research, extended college work-study programs, expanded the definition of "institution of higher education," and amended certain sections of the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963. The law did indeed pass fairly easily, and Johnson signed the Higher Education Act in the Strahan Gymnasium at Southwest Texas State College in San Marcos on November 8, 1965 (Bernstein, 1996, p.210)

Bernstein (1996) noted that "the 1965 education legislation was a grand breakthrough in public policy. After decades of effort the right of the federal government
to give financial assistance to the nation’s schools and colleges was conclusively established” (p. 212). Problems later arose in the administration of these laws, and many educational researchers questioned their overall effectiveness, but in 1965, Johnson was thrilled that the “great, fabulous 89th Congress” had enacted the “keystones to the arch of freedom” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 212). Wolfe argued that Johnson should “without a doubt go down in history as the education president” because “we never had so much educational legislation passed in one small period” and because “he fought so hard for each and every bill” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She resigned her position as Education Chief in 1965 and returned to her faculty position at Queens College. The Vietnam War eventually stalemated Johnson’s domestic legislative agenda; by the late 1960s, Johnson could no longer afford both “guns and butter,” and the attention of the nation focused on the growing casualties of the war in Asia rather than the war on poverty in the United States (Helsing, 2000).

**Wolfe’s Reflections on her Work as Education Chief**

Wolfe has referred to her position as Education Chief of the Committee on Education and Labor as one of the most significant and challenging periods in her career as an educator (Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She enjoyed the opportunity to work with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, Chairman Adam Clayton Powell, and the members and staff of the Committee on Education and Labor during the “period of American life when we did the most comprehensive rewriting and innovating in education legislation” (Wolfe, 1979). She noted that in her life she has attempted to “be of real help and assistance to others so that they can improve their living” and that in her
position as Education Chief, she believed that she fulfilled this hope by "affecting many people" and assisting students of all ages by working on educational legislation designed to improve the quality and equality of education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a; Wolfe Letter, 2001).

Wolfe also appreciated the opportunity to witness the enactment in schools of legislation to which she had contributed. She argued that educational scholarship is not just important in terms of investigation, but in the actual ability to apply ideas in schools - I argue that the test of all educational research is in the application. I held the laws of the United States Congress up to these standards as well as my own scholarly writings: I always asked, do these ideas work in the schools, can they increase the equality of education, and how will they assist the learner? (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

She believed that the laws enacted during her tenure as Education Chief truly did make a difference in American education. For example, Wolfe noted that each time a community college invited her to speak at a commencement ceremony or special event, she felt a "great sense of pride" as she toured campuses built because of a law she had worked on, such as the Higher Education Facilities Act. She recalled that "at first there was a great hesitancy" towards community colleges, but they are "now generally accepted" and assist more students in continuing their education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Also, Wolfe noted that whenever she spoke with individuals who went through Head Start, or attended Howard University Medical School, or benefited from the innumerable programs created by the legislation passed between 1963-1965, she felt a great sense of satisfaction in her work actually "doing and affecting" people. She argued that the legislation she worked on went beyond rhetoric and improved the lives of the poor, contributed to equalizing educational opportunity for minority groups, and
generally improved education for all learners at all levels “from the womb to the tomb” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Additionally, Wolfe believed that many of these laws specifically improved educational opportunities for Black Americans (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Also, during her time as Education Chief, Wolfe made contacts and friendships with many different people in Washington, D.C., “from both sides of the aisle” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe hoped that she encouraged members of Congress to view education as a means to assist children rather than merely as a “partisan issue” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She felt honored when several Republican Congressmen approached Wolfe during Richard Nixon’s presidential campaign in 1968 and asked her to assist in drafting the Republican education platform. Wolfe said that this

was one of the highest compliments paid to me because that’s what I wanted [the members of Congress] to realize – education is a concern for all of us, regardless of political party, and should not be a partisan issue. To be identified by Republicans as someone who could help them, well, that was a high honor indeed. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

For Wolfe, this invitation demonstrated that her colleagues in Washington looked beyond her color and gender and respected her as a professional educator with a doctorate who knew and understood education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe also asserted that her tenure as Education Chief improved her work as a teacher educator and scholar. She left Congress with an in-depth knowledge of the educational system, the laws affecting education, and the mechanics of federal support for education. She believed this knowledge enriched her teaching and allowed her to talk with her students and colleagues about myriad federal programs and educational grants available to improve the system from pre-school through higher education (Wolfe
Interview, 2000a). A former colleague at Queens College, Robert Mullin, recalled Wolfe’s extensive knowledge of all federal educational programs enacted during the 1960’s and said that this “greatly assisted the Queens education faculty,” who appreciated having such a resource close at hand (Mullin Interview, 2001). Additionally, different topics Wolfe encountered during her tenure in Congress sparked her interest and became the topic of future scholarly writings. Wolfe dedicated several articles to issues of juvenile delinquency, the educational system of the Soviet Union, as well as general descriptions of the legislative process.

This study now turns to a closer examination of Wolfe’s scholarly writings and speeches, including those emerging from her work as Education Chief.
CHAPTER 5
WOLFE'S SPEECHES AND SCHOLARLY WRITINGS

Introduction

Throughout her career in academia, Wolfe published articles in journals and contributed two chapters to edited books. Her curriculum vitae lists 85 published writings; of these, 12 were publications and reports related to Wolfe's work in the House of Representatives, 55 were scholarly writings in the field of education, and 17 were other projects pursued by Wolfe (Wolfe Vitae, 2001). The author was unable to locate all of Wolfe's writings because they were unavailable from Wolfe's personal collection, her papers archived in Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, the Queens College archives, the Library of Congress, and inter-library loan requests from at least 35 other major libraries. Those publications that could be located will be discussed below.

In addition to her writings, Wolfe also engaged in an active speaking career both around the country and around the world. Wolfe provided the author with over 75 written speeches; many are without dates, several do not have titles, and the majority do not list the location of the speech or organization addressed. These speeches, however, provide valuable insight into Wolfe's conceptions of education over several decades of her career in academia and during her retirement.

It is important to note that, consistent with her philosophy of democratic action, Wolfe prioritized her involvement in multiple groups, her teaching and "doing"
democratic curriculums in schools, and her extensive public speaking over the
publication of research-based scholarly articles. In reflecting on her writings and
speeches, Wolfe noted:

I never felt the kind of [publishing] pressure I see people dealing with now. I
never published just to be published. I usually was invited to contribute. As I did
a lot of speaking, I'd write my speeches in such a way I could also use them for
publishing purposes. I'm sorry I did not [do more] book publishing. I feel I could
have contributed more had I done more long, really serious publishing. ... It's
really a wonderful way to convey your ideas and to contribute to the field over a
longer period of time. However, my choice was participation. I participated in so
many professional organizations – that meant I traveled more, wrote shorter
papers, and was speaking all over the world. I liked the personal touch. (Wolfe
Interview, 2000a)

She added:

I did not conduct a lot of research studies...; so many people say that means we're
not scholarly – that's what they say about me. I think scholarship is not just in
terms of investigation but the ability to apply. My test is in my application. I
know the techniques of research, but I laugh at some of these people that do such
foolish things just to have it as research. I don't have time for that. It makes me
so upset – I'm a teacher. That's where I want to put my energy – can I change
and influence lives. And that's why I can give you the name of students of mine
who have made a difference in life. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

That said, this study now turns to the speeches and writings of Wolfe that
consistently focused on issues related to democracy and education. More specifically,
three major themes emerge from an examination of Wolfe's work. First, Wolfe
continued to pursue her interest in curriculum development, writing many speeches and
articles advocating culturally relevant curricular approaches designed to teach
democracy, to improve the equality and quality of education, and to address the needs of
all students, particularly "disadvantaged" and "at-risk" students. Secondly, Wolfe
frequently wrote and spoke about issues of diversity and equity, often discussing
struggles faced by Blacks and women in society and in education. Thirdly, topics related
to democratic education and democratizing society were addressed in Wolfe’s work, particularly her belief in the potential of education to serve as the great equalizer in society, to foster “responsible freedom,” and to facilitate positive human relations. While the three themes often overlap, these areas clearly emerge as foci for Wolfe.

The continuing influence of the progressive ideas Wolfe encountered at Teachers College is evident throughout her writings and speeches; however, as her career progressed, the work of many different sociologists, psychologists, educators, and social activists influenced Wolfe and enriched her thinking about education. This chapter will explore the major themes that emerged from an examination of Wolfe’s writings and speeches, as well as investigate the different influences on her work as a scholar.

Curriculum Issues

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 (Partridge, 1948a, Partridge, 1948b). 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 (i.e., Partridge, 1953c, Wolfe, 1962a, Wolfe, 1968a). In the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s she generally referred to these children as “culturally disadvantaged,” “culturally deprived,” 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 (i.e., Wolfe 1962a; Wolfe, 1968a, Wolfe, 1969c).

When referring to “socially disadvantaged” groups, Wolfe used Edmund Gordon and Doxey Wilkerson’s (1966) definition:

A group of populations which differ from each other in a number of ways, but have in common such characteristics as low economic status, low social status, low educational achievement, tenuous or no employment, limited participation in community organizations, and limited ready potential for upward mobility. These are people who are handicapped by depressed social and economic status. In many instances, they are further handicapped by ethnic and cultural status. (Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966, pp. 1-2)
Wolfe explained that these students generally exhibited two main characteristics: "They are from the lower socioeconomic groups in the community and they are notably deficient in the 'school's cultural' and academic strengths" (Wolfe, 1969c, p. 2). She further noted that "socially disadvantaged" students could be considered high-risk for academic failure because they were often hampered by lack of money, low standardized test scores, erratic school attendance, and race, class, and/or cultural characteristics that placed them at a disadvantage in many American schools (Wolfe, 1969c).

Wolfe also frequently used the terms "culturally deprived" or "culturally disadvantaged" when discussing high-risk children, however, she always issued the disclaimer that "these terms do not take into account the fact that every group has its own unique culture" (Wolfe Speech E, n.d., p. 5). Wolfe excoriated the commonly held conception of the United States as a cultural "melting pot" (Partridge, 1958b; Wolfe, 1962a; Wolfe, 1968a). She argued that this "theory of assimilation" obfuscated the fact that children in schools came from many different complex cultural backgrounds (Wolfe, 1968a). Wolfe insisted that the United States was a "pluralistic society made up of many different cultures and subcultures," and she emphasized the importance of attention to culture and respect for difference (Wolfe, 1962a, p. 142). In a 1968 article Wolfe bolstered her argument by citing William E. Vickery and Steward G. Cole, who, in their book Intercultural Education in American Schools, asserted that no one culture contains all favorable elements, but each group that makes up the total American population has unique values, and that the nation will be richer and finer in its cultural make-up if it, the country, conserves the best that each group has brought...Minority groups have been so conditioned by their heritages that the historic past could not be sacrificed even if they chose to forget their past experiences. Their natures, characters, and personalities are built out of a culture
different from our own and the method of effective cultural transmission requires that the fundamentals of their heritages be preserved for generations. (p. 31)

Wolfe concurred, contending that “Negro, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Southern rural or mountain Whites [and other] economically disadvantaged people are the bearers of cultural attitudes alien to those which are dominant in the broader communities they inherit” (Wolfe, 1969c, p. 2). These groups, Wolfe insisted, held different values, beliefs, and understandings than middle-class White society; she specifically noted that the “bi-cultural” child might value property, cleanliness, sexual relations, use of leisure, hard work, language patterns, expected masculine and feminine roles, relationships, and self-images in vastly different ways from “mainstream” society (Wolfe, 1968a). Also, according to Wolfe, these children often suffered from deprivation, for example, inadequate affection, love, or emotional support; the absence of a person serving as a good example; a home environment with little to no intellectual stimulation; and nutritional neglect (Wolfe, 1962a, p. 142). Rural children, also considered by Wolfe as “culturally disadvantaged,” faced challenges in their unique cultural context, including poor nutrition, irregular sleeping habits, severe health problems, malnourishment, and tooth decay (Wolfe, 1962a, p. 140).

During the 1960s Wolfe became interested in another “deprived” group of children: juvenile delinquents. She defined “juvenile delinquent” as “any child or youth whose conduct deviates sufficiently from normal social usage to warrant his being considered a danger to himself, to his future interests, or to society itself” (Wolfe, 1962b, p. 89). In Wolfe’s view, educators should not place the sole blame for delinquency on the child; she concurred with psychologist Donald Block, who argued that society must
"look on delinquency as an interaction between people, rather than as a phenomenon, occurring principally in a person" (Wolfe, 1962b, p. 89). As with her conception of "socially disadvantaged" or "culturally deprived" children, Wolfe asserted that educators could not separate juvenile delinquents from their cultural background or community, but rather had to understand the context or social milieu in which they lived and their negative behavior occurred. And consistent with her views on the power of education, Wolfe believed that a curriculum specifically tailored to the unique needs of juvenile delinquents could assist them in developing "integrated personalities, healthful habits, attitudes, and interests, and a sense of civic responsibility" (Wolfe, 1962b).

In the late 1970s, Wolfe continued to draw attention to the unique needs of "overlooked" children, including juvenile delinquents, urban children, rural students, and immigrant groups. She referred to these children using a variety of interchangeable terms including "culturally deprived," "culturally disadvantaged," "socially disadvantaged," as well as "high-risk students," or the "urban poor" (i.e., Wolfe Speech O, n.d.). Wolfe’s interpretations of the meaning behind all of these terms remained the same: children who came from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and whose lives differed dramatically from "mainstream middle-class" America. Also, Wolfe spent more time specifically discussing the problems facing "ghetto children" living in American cities in the 1970s, including: "White flight," other demographic changes including an influx of Southern Blacks and immigrants into the city centers, slum or near-slum living conditions in the heart of the city, high rates of unemployment, language issues related to increased numbers of Mexicans and other non-English speakers, overcrowded inner city schools that resembled "immense and impersonal educational ‘factories,’" and a standardized

During the decade of the 1980s and throughout her retirement years (1986-present), Wolfe’s speeches often included the terms “culturally deprived” and “socially disadvantaged,” but she increasingly referred to “at-risk students” (Wolfe Speech E, n.d.; Wolfe Speech F, n.d.). While many of her speeches using this term are not dated, references to certain historical events in the body of the speech situate them in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In one of these speeches, Wolfe noted that “for a number of years we have struggled for a term in our educational vocabulary to accurately describe the students in our society who have needed extra help to reach the inflexible standards which prevail in our schools” (Wolfe Speech E, n.d.). She reviewed the chronology of terminology changes for deprived children, from “culturally disadvantaged,” “culturally deprived,” “socially disadvantaged,” “ghetto children,” to the more recent “at-risk” (Wolfe Speech E, n.d.).

Wolfe considered poverty, single-parent families, homelessness, low grades, teen pregnancy, physical or emotional handicaps, substance abuse, physical and/or psychological abuse, youth unemployment, juvenile crime, racism, sexism, and other prejudices as contributing factors to the academic failure of at-risk children. She repeatedly emphasized the need to differentiate “at-risk” from “disadvantaged,” arguing that many educators consigned all poor children, all minorities, and all behavior problems into a general “at-risk” category. Wolfe, however, contended that behavior problems should be a separate issue and not used to characterize an entire group of children struggling academically due to deprived backgrounds. Schools, Wolfe asserted, should
attempt to understand the unique cultural and sociological context of disadvantaged children and differentiate academic difficulties from truancy and poor behavior. And to her audiences, Wolfe stressed that “at-risk” students were not only urban, but rural children as well. She cited one statistic noting that “contrary to the popular belief that at-risk children are found almost exclusively in inner city schools in poor neighborhoods, as many as 60% live in rural and suburban areas” (Wolfe Speech E, n.d., p. 1).

Furthermore, Wolfe urged educators to truly attempt to understand the children behind the statistics and ask important questions, including: “Who are these young people ‘at-risk of school failure’? How well do we really understand their needs? What do we know about the link between their learning skills and their at-risk status?” (Wolfe Speech E, n.d.). She also asserted that educators could, with an appropriate curriculum, empower at-risk students to succeed academically (Wolfe Speech F, n.d.).

The report A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, published in April 1983, could have influenced Wolfe’s choice of the term “at-risk student.” A Nation at Risk set an alarmist tone for educational reform by announcing that America’s “once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world” due to the failures of the “mediocre” educational system (p. 1). Citing a series of statistics, mostly taken from standardized testing reports, the report called for extensive reform of the educational system in order to re-establish America’s international and economic dominance. Some critics questioned the content of the report, arguing that American economic competitiveness with Japan and other nations was a function of monetary trade and industrial policy, and of political decisions made at the federal level, rather than a
function of the failure of the nation's schools. The report discussed the "risk" of educational failure to the nation rather than "at-risk" students, but the term "at risk" became more prevalent in educational vocabulary after 1983.

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 in 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 (Wolfe, 1962a, p. 142). 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 (Wolfe Speech F, n.d; Wolfe, 1962a; Wolfe 1969a; Wolfe, 1969b; Wolfe 1969c). 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" (Wolfe, 1962a). Additionally, history and language arts textbooks typically neglected to include any meaningful attention to groups other than Whites (Wolfe, 1970b). Such a limited curriculum, Wolfe contended, aimed at only a certain percentage of society, threatened and impeded the fullest development of all 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 all students to learn (i.e., Wolfe 1962a, 1968b).
Wolfe also argued that stereotyped notions of academic success doomed to failure those students lacking the experiential background to do well in school. This situation, Wolfe noted, was intensified by the growing use of intelligence tests stressing linguistic, reading, and mathematical ability (Wolfe, 1962a, p. 143). 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” (Wolfe 1962a, p. 143). Also, Wolfe lamented, schools accepted the results of these tests to “classify children into classes and groups,” therefore exacerbating an already unjust situation.

In order to combat the deleterious effects of the existing curriculum and testing structure, Wolfe outlined specific curriculum recommendations designed to facilitate “culturally relevant” teaching that would meet the needs of all students, regardless of cultural background. She argued that all students “must have appropriate...[curriculum] experiences and...reading materials that relate to their own culture and experiences” (Wolfe, 1962a, p. 143). While Wolfe’s writings and speeches span from the 1940s to the present day, the essence of her philosophy toward curriculum remained essentially unchanged throughout her career and reflected the ideas discussed in her dissertation; she consistently argued that educators should understand the sociological and cultural background of the learner and assess the individual needs of each child. However, Wolfe’s articles and speeches also provided specific applications of her curriculum philosophy and discussion of how these ideas could assist high-risk learners. These applications and recommendations included teaching ideas, curriculum directives, school
re-structuring suggestions, workshop descriptions, and discussion of successful programs that provided an alternative to the existing curriculum. A chronological overview of Wolfe’s curriculum recommendations follows.

Wolfe addressed several articles to the specific needs of students in rural schools, suggesting alteration of the existing curriculum and the introduction of guidance programs. In two early articles, both published in 1948, Wolfe recommended guidelines and directives for designing the curriculum taken almost verbatim from her dissertation research. She briefly described the specialized needs of rural children and Blacks and reiterated key themes from her dissertation: attention to the sociological, cultural, and individual needs of the students, involving students and their community in curriculum development, organizing the curriculum around major areas of living, including a balance of experiences with the intent of goal-directed learning, and using subject matter as a tool (Partridge, 1948a; Partridge, 1948b). Listing the directives she outlined in her dissertation, Wolfe recommended significant alteration of the rural curriculum in order to enrich the educational opportunities of Black children. Wolfe also drew attention to the viability of introducing guidance programs into rural schools (Partridge, 1948a; Partridge, 1953c).

Wolfe’s interest in guidance programs, which she first addressed in her dissertation, reflected the influence of Teachers College professor Ruth Strang. Strang taught educational psychology courses at Teachers College and served on Wolfe’s doctoral committee. A prolific writer, Strang focused on a wide range of educational topics, including child development, school guidance programs, and training school personnel (i.e., Strang, 1937, 1938, 1940). Strang’s work in the area of psychology
influenced Wolfe throughout much of her career, particularly in Wolfe's discussions of
the developmental levels of children and the need to implement guidance programs.

Wolfe strongly advocated the introduction of guidance programs into rural schools, and
focused specifically on this topic in a 1953 article (Partridge, 1953c).

In her 1953 article, “Introducing a guidance program into the rural school,” Wolfe
argued that “when ‘curriculum’ is defined as the summation of all activities of the child,
it becomes the major strategy of guidance” (Partridge, 1953c, p. 109). She cited Strang,
who in her book Pupil Personnel and Guidance, wrote that

> curriculum making and personnel work should be inseparable, for there is no way
> of meeting the needs of individual pupils without first ascertaining what those
> needs are. In the ideal school, curriculum making will become a process of
> formulating individual goals and progressively modifying them in accordance
> with the developing capacities, interest, and needs of individual pupils. (Strang
> 1940, p. 90)

Guidance, according to Wolfe, “is the individual and developmental approach to
education. It aims at discovering and developing individual potentialities and helps boys
and girls to get the most of their school years” (Partridge, 1953c, p. 109). Wolfe believed
that a guidance program assisted the teacher in ascertaining the unique needs and abilities
of students and facilitated development of an appropriate curriculum. She conceptualized
guidance as a key component of curriculum, rather than as a separate program. For
Wolfe, the organization of the school, the system of grouping, the kinds of marks, grades,
or evaluation, and the method of record-keeping all influenced how well the curriculum
could serve as a guidance instrument (Partridge, 1953c, p. 109). Wolfe recommended
several approaches that she believed would assist the school in providing better guidance
for children: grouping children by age groups (i.e., 10-12 year olds) rather than utilizing
rigid grade lines; organizing the school day into long blocks of time rather than short class periods in order to allow meaningful instruction and investigation of problems; rejecting marks and grades in favor of descriptive statements that provided analysis of student growth, evidence of growth, and recommendations for future growth; and collecting cumulative records, similar to a portfolio, that would help teachers understand individual children (Partridge, 1953c, pp. 109-111).

In the mid-1950s and 1960s, Wolfe’s curriculum writings shifted from a focus on rural students to specific curriculum recommendations for “culturally deprived” and “at-risk” students (Partridge, 1953a; Partridge, 1958b; Wolfe Speech F, n.d.; Wolfe Speech O, n.d; Wolfe, 1962a; Wolfe 1962b; Wolfe, 1968a; Wolfe, 1969c). She argued that in order to reach all children, particularly those from deprived backgrounds, teachers should implement a curriculum that: emphasized recognition of individual differences, started with the learner wherever he or she is, realized the importance of motivation in relation to genuine learning, and allowed the learner to share in the planning of curricular experiences (Partridge, 1953a; Wolfe Speech F, n.d.; Wolfe 1962a, p. 142; Wolfe, 1968a). Additionally, Wolfe recommended that teachers and schools do the following: emphasize health education; improve human relations through study of all peoples and cultures; widen recreational opportunities; enlarge social services; increase participation in group living and civic affairs; extend opportunities for creating, interpreting, and appreciating the beautiful; improve economic stability through improved personal and vocational guidance; extend knowledge of the cultural heritage of students; offer opportunities to discover children’s talents and abilities; and utilize life situations to enlarge meanings, develop the ability to think and solve problems and generally motivate
learning; and de-emphasize memorization of arbitrary subject matter and embrace experiences that facilitate the development of students’ ability to analyze and organize experience, draw inferences, and develop creativity and inventiveness (Wolfe Speech F, n.d; Wolfe 1962a, p. 142-145).

While many of these curriculum recommendations reflected the ideas outlined in Wolfe’s dissertation, she dedicated more time to discussing specific teaching approaches that were “culturally aware” applications of her curriculum philosophy (Wolfe 1968a). “Culturally aware” teaching practices, Wolfe argued, could reaffirm the democratic ideal of respect for all people while creating positive attitudes toward different cultures. Wolfe argued 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 racist propaganda... [and] to destroy the misinformation” (Wolfe 1968a, p. 71). 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, and cartoons that stress the positive aspects of living in a pluralistic society (Wolfe, 1968a, p 71).

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. Also, Wolfe suggested holding a “festival of nations” by encouraging students to research their cultural backgrounds through an examination of folk art, handicrafts, foods, dances,
athletic games, 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 (Partridge, 1958b; Wolfe, 1968a). 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” (Wolfe, 1968a, p. 73).

Wolfe’s use of the term “intercultural” indicated the influence of the Intergroup Education Movement on her thinking. Intergroup education, also known as intercultural education, emerged in the 1920s “coincident with an upsurge in Ku Klux Klan activities and anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish sentiment in the Midwest and the eastern United States” (Bernard-Powers, 1999, p. 195). The Progressive Education Association established a Commission on Intercultural Education that attracted the attention of Kilpatrick, Rugg, Counts, and other prominent progressive educators who believed that intergroup education held the potential to “realize democracy through the schools” (Bernard-Powers, 1999, p. 195; Graham, 1967). The movement strengthened and expanded in the late 1940s during World War II as an educational response to the racial and ethic tensions around the world and in the nation. Democracy appeared fragile during the 1940s, particularly given the reports of anti-Semitism by the Nazis, the growing sentiment against Germans, Italians, and Japanese in the United States, and the racial conflicts erupting in major American cities when “African Americans began their major exodus to northern cities” (Banks, 1991, p. 461; Banks 1995; Bernard-Powers, 1999; Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997).
Proponents of intergroup education intended it to “help reduce prejudice and create interracial understanding among students from diverse national, religious, and racial groupings” as well as facilitate the development of more “democratic racial attitudes and values” (Banks, 1995, p. 8). Intergroup researchers, educators, and psychologists believed these positive “democratic attitudes” could be fostered through intergroup relation centers, curricula and units for schools, and other programs (Banks, 1991, 1994, 1995). Social studies educator Hilda Taba emerged as one of the leaders of the Intergroup Education Movement, establishing the Intergroup Education in Cooperating Schools Project (1945-1948), which drafted curriculum ideas, organized workshops, and conducted research in schools (Bernard-Powers, 1999, pp. 196-197). Taba and her staff focused on “issues of gender, problems experienced by newcomers, economic instability, housing patterns, community relations” and other multicultural issues (Bernard-Powers, 1999, p. 201). Gordon Allport’s research on prejudice and Kenneth Clark’s studies on racial attitudes also contributed to the movement and informed the work in public schools, as did other scholarship by John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Allison Davis, Robert Havighurst, and William Kilpatrick (Bernard-Powers, 1999). Several of Wolfe’s articles in the area of curriculum during the 1950s and 1960s clearly reflected the influence of the ideas promulgated by the intergroup movement, particularly her work investigating the nature of prejudice and her writings on human relations.

In order to intelligently discuss the potential of the curriculum to combat prejudice and improve human relations, Wolfe argued that it was imperative to first understand the concept of prejudice (Partridge, 1958b; Wolfe, 1969a). The connotation
of the word ‘prejudice,’ Wolfe noted, had changed over time. The “Ancients,” Wolfe asserted, defined prejudice as “a judgment based on previous decisions and experience” (Wolfe, 1969a, p. 57). The term gradually acquired the meaning of “a judgment formed before due examination and consideration of the facts” and an “emotional flavor of favorableness or unfavorableness that accompanies...a prior and unsupported judgment” (Wolfe, 1969a, p. 57). The “unfavorableness” concerned Wolfe, who believed that prejudice acted as the “great deterrent to the promotion of better inter-group relations” (Wolfe, 1969a, p. 57).

Wolfe’s understandings of the concept “prejudice” were informed by several writers, including Gordon Allport (1954), author of The Nature of Prejudice, Kenneth Clark’s (1955) book Prejudice and Your Child, and Dorothy Baruch, who wrote the 1946 book Glass House of Prejudice. Wolfe argued that Allport, a Harvard social psychologist, exhibited the “greatest insight into the origin of prejudice,” which he defined as “a judgment without sufficient warrant, arousing an emotional resistance to contradiction” (Wolfe, 1969a, p. 58). Allport wrote that “a prejudice, unlike a simple misconception, is actually resistant to all evidence that would unseat it. We tend to grow emotional when a prejudice is threatened with contradiction” (Allport, 1954, p. 16; Wolfe, 1969a, p. 59). Prejudice, Allport argued, often spurred people to “negative action;” these negative actions ranged from talk to avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and, in extreme cases, extermination (Allport, 1954, pp. 14-15).

Wolfe cited a study conducted by Piaget and Weil, who found that children were not born prejudiced, but rather acquired their “ethnic, religious, and racial attitudes” (Wolfe, 1969a, p. 57). For Wolfe, this indicated the potential of education to combat the
effects of societal prejudices. Baruch also emphasized the responsibility of the schools to prevent the development of prejudice in children and stem “the contagion of the teacher’s prejudices” (Wolfe, 1969a, p. 57). Baruch argued that

children in the classroom are quick to see what is going on as the labels are dealt out. And the attitude of their teachers gives them silent permission to follow suit. Of course, there are teachers in our schools whose attitudes toward minority groups are constructive and sound. But if our educational system is to achieve real quality there can be no place for teachers who are controlled by hatred and intolerance. (Baruch, 1946, p. 75)

Wolfe argued that prejudice affected Black children psychologically, contributing to a “generally defeatist attitude and a lowering of personal ambition” and anxiety about “larger society” (Wolfe, 1969a, p. 60; Clark, 1955, p. 65). Clark concurred, but noted that prejudice “hurt” the White child as well, because “children who are being taught prejudices are given a distorted perspective of reality and of themselves, and are being taught to gain personal status in unrealistic ways.” (Clark, 1955, p. 65). The specific prejudice most often faced by Blacks, Wolfe averred, manifested itself as “racism.” She described racism by referring to the definition elucidated in Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton’s book Black Power: The politics of liberation in America:

The predication of decisions and policies on the considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group. Racism is both overt and covert. It takes two closely related forms: individual Whites acting against individual Blacks, and acts by the total White community against the Black community. (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Wolfe, 1969a, p. 60)

Wolfe believed that schools could ameliorate the negative effects of prejudice and racism by implementing curricula that emphasized the teaching of respect for diversity and pluralism. In a 1958 article, Wolfe suggested “preparing teachers for prejudice,” utilizing “culturally aware” teaching approaches and meaningfully integrating multiracial
history into the curriculum. She reiterated her familiar message, urging teachers to take
time to investigate the backgrounds of their students and the larger community and to
develop teaching approaches and educational experiences that met the unique needs of
their students and fostered respect for diversity (Partridge, 1958b). Wolfe also stressed
the importance of Allport’s (1954) suggestions that prejudice would be reduced if
interracial contact situations: they were cooperative rather than competitive; the
individuals experienced equal status; the individuals had shared goals; and the contact
was sanctioned by authorities such as parents, principals, and teachers (Allport, 1954;
Banks, 1994, p. 44; Partridge, 1958b).

To “prepare for prejudice,” Wolfe argued that teachers could gain a deep
understanding of intergroup relations through workshops, intensive training sessions,
first-hand experiences in community life in a diversified setting, and other courses in the
“sociology of American life, psychology of human adjustment, philosophy of intergroup
relations, and curriculum development” (Partridge 1958b, p. 52). Human relations
workshops, Wolfe asserted, could encourage teachers, administrators, and communities
to work “cooperatively to bridge the gap between...‘talk democracy’ and ‘do
democracy’” (Partridge, 1951; Partridge, 1953d, p. 303; Partridge, 1958a). According to
Wolfe, the concept of “human relations” included the “vast sphere of interpersonal and
intergroup relations” as well as “intercultural relations, which refers specifically to the
relationship between groups that have different cultural patterns” (Partridge, 1953d, p.
303). Wolfe added that “in all cases the field of human relations is based upon the
premise that every individual is entitled to the rights and dignities which all of us desire
for ourselves” (Partridge, 1953d, p. 303). Wolfe provided specific examples of human
relations workshops that she organized and participated in to illuminate the potential of these approaches to mitigate or eradicate prejudice in schools.

Wolfe organized a 1951 study course for improving human relations while she served on the “Intergroup Committee” of the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers. This study course focused on different ways to foster mutual respect and understanding for people from different cultural backgrounds. Wolfe urged participants to develop positive “face-to-face relationships” in which teachers, students, and parents discovered common goals and worked together to achieve them. She also recommended implementing a curriculum that made the public school “a laboratory for democracy,” a “working model of democratic practice” (Partridge, 1951, p. 20). A second workshop, the 1951 “Human relations at New York University,” investigated modes of facilitating positive human relations in schools (Partridge, 1953d). Participants examined different curricular approaches to improving intergroup relations, explored cultural differences between children, and visited different communities with representatives of a variety of groups including the NAACP and the Anti-Defamation League. The knowledge attained in human relations workshops similar to these, Wolfe argued, could assist teachers in combating prejudice and racism in the classroom and develop “world-mindedness” (Partridge, 1958a). Wolfe’s interest in human relations workshops, as well as her writings about prejudice and the curriculum, indicated her awareness of and involvement in the Intergroup Education Movement.

While the Intergroup Education Movement garnered attention in the 1940s and 1950s, it “died without a requiem” when the Civil Rights Movement began in the 1960s
and the demand emerged for a separate and distinct “Black Studies” (Banks, 1995, p. 8; Lybarger, 1991). Banks argued:

Intergroup education emerged when the nation was sharply segregated along racial lines and was beginning its efforts to create a desegregated society. The early goal of the Civil Rights Movement was racial desegregation. By the late 1960s, many African-Americans had grown impatient with the pace of desegregation. Imbued with racial pride, they called for Black Power, separatism, and Black Studies in the schools and colleges that would contribute to the empowerment and advancement of African-Americans. (Banks, 1995, p. 9; Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967)


According to Grant and Ladson-Billings (1997), Black Studies, as a discipline addresses academic and social concern for the betterment of society and the well-being of Black people. Its scholarship, curricula, cultural production, research, and social action repudiate the presumed neutrality of knowledge, the separation of art from life, and the complicity of universities with societal injustice. Black studies encompasses a particular epistemological, axiological, and ontological mission across the disciplines. (p. 13)

San Francisco State College founded the first department of Black Studies in 1966, following extensive student strikes and protests (Lee & Slaughter-DeFoe, 1995). This department, headed by Nathan Hare, intended to “bring both the college to the community and the community to the college,” increase the enrollment of Black students in the college, improve overall treatment of Black students, and increase the involvement of Black students in decision-making bodies (Lee & Slaughter-DeFoe, 1995, p. 356). Across the country, most of the major universities and colleges were establishing separate Black Studies departments; by 1971 approximately 500 existed, although that number
dropped to 200 by 1974 (Lee & Slaughter-DeFoe, 1995). This period, according to Banks, also saw Blacks demand “community control of their schools, Black teachers and administrators, and the infusion of Black history into the curriculum” (Banks, 1995, p. 10).

In her 1971 book chapter, Wolfe focused on specific curriculum ideas that meaningfully integrated “Black Studies” into the early childhood, elementary, secondary, and college-level curriculum (Wolfe, 1971). Wolfe emphasized the vital need for meaningful integration of Black Studies into the existing curriculum and development of “relevant curricula which are perceived by the learner as having meaning in his present life and the expectation that it will have utility in future learning or coping situations” (p. 59). In particular, Wolfe stressed the need for Black Studies to reach the needs of “ghetto children” and to facilitate the eradication of the “blight of the ghetto and its concomitant problems” (p. 59). To define Black Studies, Wolfe referred to work by Lawrence C. Howard and Lebert Bethune.

Lawrence Howard conceptualized Black Studies as the study of the past, present, and future of people of African descent. The curriculum would examine the life experiences of Blacks in America, assess the Black man’s outreach to the peoples of the Third World, investigate White European influences on Black culture, and celebrate the legacy of the Black experience (Howard, 1969; Wolfe, 1974, p. 60). Lebert Bethune argued that Blacks shared a common historical experience, a similar set of African cultural antecedents, and a shared aspiration for full freedom. He asserted:

It is the … dynamics of its movement, the nature of its composition and the consideration of its contemporary attributes and problems which constitute the
Afro-American experience and must, therefore, be reflected in Afro-American studies. (Bethune, 1969, p. 9)

Wolfe summarized Black Studies as

the organizing of knowledge around the experiences of people of African and African descent. It is both historical and contemporary since it must deal with the experience itself with its real issues and problems as lived in the past and present. The Black experience is interdisciplinary. (Wolfe, 1971, p. 61)

Wolfe outlined five purposes for Black Studies:

1. To build an understanding of the history of Africa and its development with special emphasis upon Black Africa, including a study of government, family and community structure, art, literature and language, music, drama, laws, education, customs, religion, occupations, and every aspect of the culture of the people.

2. To heighten awareness of the effect of the migration of Black Africans to the Western Hemisphere, particularly to the United States.

3. To deepen the appreciation for the contributions of Black people to the entire development of civilization.

4. To foster an understanding of the unique "Black experience" in America as it is reflected in:
   a. Afro-American modes of cultural expression;
   b. Afro-American social and political institutions;
   c. Historical developments within the cultural, social, political, and economic contexts of American life as a whole.

5. To study the problems which Afro-Americans face in American communities today and, wherever possible, actively cooperate with individuals and organizations of the Black community in their solution. (Wolfe, 1971, p. 61)

Wolfe subsequently generated a wide variety of "needed experiences" to fulfill her expressed purposes of a Black Studies program. She organized her curriculum suggestions by educational level: early childhood, elementary, secondary, and college/university.

For early childhood education curriculum experiences, Wolfe encouraged teachers to foster development of a positive self-image in an "atmosphere where there is
an appreciation of the worth of each individual” (p. 61). In terms of specific activities, Wolfe recommended using Black, White, and Oriental dolls in play and teaching situations; using a camera to take pictures of students from all backgrounds working together; to create an “Our Community” book with pictures and stories about members of the larger community; to study Black people and their heroes; to celebrate meaningful dates in Black history; to introduce students to different types of music and instruments; and to read to students poetry and stories from Black writers and poets, for example, Langston Hughes’s Black Misery (pp. 61-62). Wolfe argued that in an early childhood classroom, plenty of opportunities existed to meaningfully integrate “Black Studies” into the curriculum while teaching other necessary skills and knowledge.

For the elementary curriculum, Wolfe generated several different approaches to incorporating Black studies into the curriculum. In the lower grades, Wolfe advised studying Black Americans through the use of an Afro-American Calendar. She noted that “the students would not only study about the particular person but would spend some time learning about the period in which they lived, the place they were born and reared and educated, and the problems they faced” (p. 66). Wolfe also provided a brief illustration of an interdisciplinary unit for fifth or sixth grade students. For each subject area, Wolfe listed names of prominent Black persons “who might be studied as a background to understanding the contributions of the Black American” (p. 65). For example, in a music lesson, teachers could examine the musical legacies of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Marian Anderson, Charity Bailey, Sammy Davis, Ella Fitzgerald, or Aretha Franklin (p. 64). For an alternative approach to Black Studies in the upper grades, Wolfe recommended “beginning with the present situation and its problems
and tracing backwards to the coming of the Black man to America” through use of encyclopedias, music, poems, art work, films, books, and articles (p. 65). Or, she suggested, teachers could begin an examination of the Black Man in Africa and follow a time line to present day, focusing on such topics as “Black Militancy, The Black Man Today, The Total American Life, and Racism and its Problems” (pp. 66-67). Most importantly, Wolfe emphasized, teachers needed to maintain continuity of experience so each grade could capitalize “upon the learnings of the previous grades” and concepts could be “broadened and extended as children delved more deeply into the problems of the Black man” (p. 67).

Wolfe also stressed the importance of providing extensive attention to Black Studies in the secondary school. She noted that increasing numbers of school districts were encouraging secondary curriculum and textbook changes to facilitate inclusion of Black Studies, including: Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin (p. 68). Instead of generating specific curriculum recommendations, Wolfe highlighted successful Black Studies programs implemented in high schools in several of these states. For example, at Atlantic City High School in New Jersey, a team of teachers revitalized the syllabus of an American History course, calling the new class “Solutions to History in Crisis: American History in the High School” (p. 68). The stated objectives were:

1. To appreciate the role, significant contributions, and achievements of minority groups in the making of America.
2. To develop a sense of belonging so that each student will know who he is, where he came from, and where he is going. Each student has a responsibility to correct the wrongs of the past.

3. To provide a meaningful course of study for terminal students, a course that relates to the present and prepares for the future.

4. To enable each student to develop an understanding that the basis of a truly democratic American lies in the recognition of dignity. (p. 68)

The teachers involved the students in the curriculum redesign and developed seven units: Origins of the American People, The American Constitution, Living in America, Labor and the American Economy, American Culture, America’s Wars, and American Protest Movements. These units included attention to key figures and issues in Black Studies and raised key questions about prejudice, racism, and problems facing Black Americans. The other programs described by Wolfe also incorporated issues, trends, and problems in Black History. She did warn secondary teachers that they must “plan experiences which will involve students emotionally with different cultures,” since facts alone “are not enough to change attitudes” (p. 67).

In her section on university-level Black studies programs, Wolfe summarized the findings of an “informal survey” she conducted in the fall of 1969. She determined that both a major and minor were offered in the area of Afro-American studies at Howard University, but she also investigated ninety-nine other Black Studies programs on predominantly White campuses. Wolfe described the wide variety of course offerings on this topic and provided examples of degree programs in Black Studies. From her study, Wolfe concluded that a university Black Studies program should include: a psychological home for Black students with special emphasis upon counseling services and congenial recreational and housing facilities; presentation of Black writers, artists and musicians as
part of the total college cultural program; consideration by the entire college of the major issues in Black-White relationships; increased enrollment of Black students in predominantly White universities; additional Black faculty and resource personnel; infusion of the Black man in courses in history, sociology, and so on, that are not traditionally identified as Black studies, and sensitivity training (p. 76).

Black Studies at any level, Wolfe contended, required teachers who possessed the content orientation to deal with Black Studies, the "positive attitudes necessary for dealing with such an important and sensitive issue," and "a sincere concern and interest in Black people" (pp. 76-77). Thus, Wolfe argued, teacher education needed to emphasize culturally appropriate teaching methods, provide opportunities to interact with Black communities, engage teachers in sensitivity training, and instill "a feeling of dedication and hope...and of respect rather than cynicism" (p. 77). Wolfe also noted that the "crisis in race that exists on the school and college campuses of our nation is only a reflection of a larger, more serious crisis in the country," and "any curriculum change which consciously and directly focuses upon the Black experience will require the cooperation of the community" (p. 77). Schools, Wolfe heavily emphasized, should serve as examples for how to behave in a civilized manner and foster better relations between the races (Wolfe, 1971, p. 77).

In several other speeches and articles, Wolfe also called for schools to meaningfully incorporate Black heritage and Black history into the curriculum (i.e., Wolfe Speech M, n.d.; Wolfe Speech Q, n.d.; Wolfe Speech OO, n.d.; Wolfe, 1976a). In a 1976 speech she lauded the United States Congress for extending "Black History Week" by designating February as "Black History Month," but she asserted that "it
would be better if there were no need for any special time at all. When Blacks are included as an integral part of the history of the United States where they belong, Black History Month can disappear” (Wolfe Speech OO, n.d.). Wolfe argued that a study of Black history was vitally important, explaining:

"History is the scaffold upon which personal and group identities are constructed. It is a living library which provides a script of roles and models to which growth can aspire. By telling us who we are, history tells us what we can do. By telling us where we have been, history tells us where we can go. So why celebrate Black history? Because I want to know who I am. Yes, I am all that has gone before me – the sum total of all of human life. That means Blacks and Non-Blacks must understand the history of Blacks if they are to be truly cultured, truly civilized... Black history is important because people need a sense of history in order to make history...and because a people without a historical sensibility cannot break the tyranny of the given. (Wolfe Speech Q, n.d.)

Wolfe noted that the Black American’s history “is intricately interwoven with that of the nation” and that attention should be paid to “[the Black’s] fight for freedom, his struggle to be included in the mainstream, [and] his demand for the rights and privileges of full citizenship” (Wolfe Speech OO, n.d.). Meaningful inclusion of Black history in the curriculum, Wolfe asserted, would also include attention to well known facts and figures in Black history, key events in Black history, important problems and issues facing Black Americans, artistic and cultural contributions, and lesser-known people who contributed to American society (Wolfe Speech Q, n.d.). Attention to Black history could, in Wolfe’s view, “provide formal and informal educational experiences that are multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-cultural for all learners” and fulfill the realization that “we are a pluralistic society” and “education of the individual should be and is as complex and varied as the many cultures which comprise our society” (Wolfe Speech M, n.d.).
Reading over the titles of her publications in the area of curriculum and reflecting on her writing, Wolfe noted that she particularly enjoyed writing articles that generated specific curriculum suggestions for "overlooked, disadvantaged" groups (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). While Wolfe’s curriculum focus varied from rural schools to Black Studies programs, all of these writings reflected Wolfe’s continued dedication to progressive philosophy, with the added influence of various psychologists, sociologists, and educators.

However, Wolfe occasionally enjoyed challenging herself and addressing an article to a specific subject area, although she herself was not a content area specialist, or writing about an issue that challenged her progressive beliefs (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Specifically, Wolfe wrote on verse-speaking as a creative art (Partridge, 1948), the place of drill in elementary education (Partridge, 1953a), the teaching of beginning reading (Partridge, 1953b), and trends in science education (Wolfe, 1970a). In general, however, Wolfe typically concentrated her curriculum writings and speeches on how to make the curriculum meaningful and relevant for students from a wide variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Issues of Diversity and Equity


Wolfe’s discussion of the problems endured by Black Americans often reflected the historical context of the speech or article. While many of her speeches are undated, historical references within the body of the speech usually situate them within a certain
In the 1960s, for example, in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, Wolfe described the ongoing struggle of Blacks to achieve equal rights in a country where Blacks could not “live where they want to live, work where they want to work, study where they want to study, travel where they want to travel, [or] play where they want to play” (Wolfe Speech PP, n.d; Wolfe, 1970b). Wolfe stressed the plight of the “segregated urban ghetto,” arguing that White society sent Blacks in the urban center a clear message: they were separate, unequal, and inferior. She embraced the Civil Rights Movement, but often warned of the enormity of the task facing the Movement and of the substantial gains Blacks would have to achieve in order to foment significant societal change (Wolfe Speech PP, n.d).

In the late 1960s and the 1970s, Wolfe began concentrating on the problems of Black families, particularly those in the urban ghetto, explaining:

The [child growing up in a] Black family in the urban ghetto is more likely than the White family to be on the lowest economic rung. His parents are still ‘the last hired and the first fired’ and hence he knows economic insecurity early in life. Not only is his family economically deprived but the Black urban child is likely to experience instability in his home as well. The impact of family disruption is accentuated by the incapacity of those involved in the rearing of the children to do an adequate job of it, because all too often they have had little experience with family stability. The circle is indeed vicious. Since the Black family in the urban ghetto must depend upon the mother for economic security in many cases, a great toll is paid in the development of a positive self-image among Black youth. Especially is this true among Black males who still find it more difficult to find a job than the Black woman...The male models available for the growing boys are themselves demoralized. (Wolfe Speech P, n.d)

In several of her 1970s speeches, Wolfe also drew attention to the issue of school desegregation and busing. Grant and Ladson-Billings (1997) define desegregation as a “term to denote the bringing together of students from different racial and ethnic background who have previously attended racially or ethnically homogeneous schools or
who would do so otherwise” (p. 25). School desegregation, they noted, was spurred by the 1954 Supreme Court Case Brown v. Board of Education, which held that separate school facilities for Blacks and Whites were inherently unequal (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997). Many cities, however, in both the North and the South, were very slow to desegregate, and in the 1970s busing evolved as an approach to accelerate integration.

Reviewing the case history associated with desegregation and the busing issue, Wolfe argued that school busing facilitated racial integration and therefore served a valuable purpose, acting as a “major weapon in the fight to broaden educational opportunities for all and to eradicate social and economic inequities which clearly exist in our society” (Wolfe Speech JJ. n.d.). She strongly disagreed with President Nixon’s opposition to busing, noting that she saw “no other way at present to circumvent this separateness in our society” (Wolfe Speech JJ, n.d.). Wolfe asserted that there “is an inherent inequality in a segregated school” and that a school devoid of minority group children will “suffer from a lower quality of educational experiences” (Wolfe Speech JJ, n.d.). She admitted that busing could not act as a “permanent panacea,” but it presented the only viable alternative at the time.

On another note, in the late 1970s, Wolfe reflected on the shift in terminology used to describe Black Americans; from “colored” and/or “Negro,” to “Black” and/or “Afro-American.” She commented:

I like to be called Black. I grew up in the period, of course, that Negro was the accepted term, and I remember how I fought very hard to be sure my students always capitalized ‘n,’ especially since I teach at a White institution; they always seemed to forget that. I was glad when people were secure enough to call themselves Black ... and you know, in my home, we’ve always had this picture of “the Negro,” we call it, which again emphasizes it and I just think Black – and when you say White, which is...nobody’s really any one of these colors. So this
business of color is just a phony thing in the first place. Somebody was getting after me about trying [to ask] what terms I should use when I try and differentiate the different minorities, whether they should be called Hispanic or Latinos or Native Americans...I say, why don’t you just call them White, red, yellow, brown, and Black? Any term you use is an artificial one, and the reason I like using Black is it shows a kind of acceptance, and an ability to overcome that which they have tried to give us as a negative. I think that anything we can do to help [people] become sensitive of what happened to Black children because of the negative terms that have been used that relate to us, the better we will be in overcoming the sensitivities that many feel...about using the term Black. (Wolfe, 1979)

In the 1980s and early 1990s Black Americans, Wolfe contended, continued to confront major problems, including poverty, urbanization, discrimination in housing and employment, ethnic polarization, hate crimes, single motherhood, crime epidemics, disease, illiteracy, drugs, homelessness, a growing digital divide in access to technology, teenage pregnancy, gangs, gun violence, and high drop-out rates (Wolfe, 1990a). Wolfe repeatedly reminded her readers and listeners of the democratic message sent by the Teachers College Faculty in 1940: that “respect for the individual being is the basic and abiding moral purpose of democracy” (Wolfe Speech N, n.d.). She asserted that while “recognizing the intrinsic worth of each individual” comprised the central core of the moral meaning of democracy, “nowhere in America have Black Americans been respected” (Wolfe Speech PP, n.d.). This condition, she argued, could be changed by a revitalization of the Civil Rights Movement through political and social activism and through education (Wolfe, 1990a).

When reviewing the past achievements of the Civil Rights Movement, Wolfe often focused on the legislative victories won for and by Black Americans (i.e., Wolfe Speech A, n.d.; Wolfe Speech B, n.d.). She asserted that
1957 to 1968 witnessed the most dramatic series of changes in the status of Blacks in America since the Civil War and Reconstruction. Finally roused to action, the United States Congress passed four significant pieces of legislation touching on voting, school desegregation, fair employment practices, and public accommodations. (Wolfe Speech A, n.d.)

Wolfe identified the major pieces of legislation as the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the Civil Rights Act of 1960, the Anti-Poll Tax Amendment of 1964, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Each of these laws, Wolfe asserted, contributed to assuring Blacks of their "unalienable rights" (Wolfe Speech B, n.d.). However, she warned that "we shall never resolve the Civil Rights issue without comprehensive laws, but Civil Rights legislation can take full effect only when a new way of thinking replaces ingrained prejudice and racial and sexual animosity" (Wolfe Speech B, n.d., p. 1).

Wolfe also drew attention to a series of educational legislation aimed at eradicating major societal and civil rights issues often faced by Black Americans: poverty, discrimination, and inequality. Wolfe listed and described laws including the War on Poverty, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and other legislation passed by Congress during her tenure as Education Chief (1962-1965). In a speech given in the late 1970s, Wolfe argued that while these programs "were designed to bring poor children through the school system, to provide access and to solve the problems of poverty and discrimination through education," something "went wrong" (Wolfe Speech I, n.d., p. 2). She noted that Black students were "losing ground" in education, and the academic achievement gap between White and Black students was growing. She argued that these past educational efforts were failing for two reasons. First, Wolfe stated, the laws were based on flawed theory: "we held the wrong assumptions about the causes of poverty, discrimination, and student failure in schools" (Wolfe Speech I, n.d., p. 4).
Wolfe explained that while the educational legislation removed legal barriers to education, the laws often established institutional barriers in the form of testing and tracking. Secondly, she asserted, "we were never able to generate strong political coalitions to save our programs or demand new ones" (Wolfe Speech I, n.d., p. 4). Large, strong coalitions supporting the programs created by the laws never materialized, and the money was often cut off and the new programs dismantled. Thus, Wolfe argued, an examination of civil rights and educational legislation emphasized that laws must be accompanied by a "deepening of conscience" and political action (Wolfe Speech B, n.d.).

Wolfe believed that Black activist Martin Luther King, Jr., had contributed to the "deepening of conscience" through his fight for "human dignity, freedom, and peace" before his "brutal assassination on April 4, 1968" (Wolfe, 1990a, p. 1). His teachings, Wolfe argued, held many lessons for Black Americans; she reiterated this message in speeches dating from the 1970s to the present day. Wolfe asserted that King preached for physical, social, and moral solidarity and demonstrated that the "struggle against racism, sexism, class, and caste" was no easy task. Also, King taught that "there can be no freedom without struggle and direct action by the oppressed people...that laws and resolutions alone can bring no meaningful change...[and] the oppressed people must struggle now and not wait" (Wolfe, 1990a, pp. 4-6). These ideas of King's, Wolfe noted, could assist Blacks in continuing his fight for equality.

Wolfe contended that the 1990s and the "21st Century" required renewed political and social activism by Black Americans in order to stop the "seemingly interminable backslides on civil rights" and to avoid sacrificing "another Black generation to severe poverty, to massive unemployment, to drugs, illiteracy, to doubt and defeatism about the
value of an education for upward mobility in our nation” (Wolfe, 1988c). Wolfe lauded the new generation of Black activists, including Jesse Jackson, who continued to fight for equality and a “move to higher ground” for Blacks in the United States. Wolfe urged all Black Americans to engage in social and political activism, to register to vote, and to become a political force that threatened the status quo of both political parties. She exhorted young Blacks to cease chanting, “‘Run Jesse [Jackson] run [for President]’ on Monday, and then neglect to be registered so they can vote on Tuesday” (Wolfe, 1988c).

Political and social action, Wolfe insisted, could generate change and provide Black Americans a sense of satisfaction in fighting for our humanity, struggling to overcome the odds of double talk, double-standards and double jeopardy, holding on to what we are rightfully entitled, and getting our fair share, indeed our double-portion of that which we have been so long denied, working to build affordable housing, to house the homeless families, to rebuild the cities, to get decent, quality education for our children, to get them into college, to make their college experience affordable, complete and rewarding. (Wolfe, 1988c)

While emphasizing the importance of political and social action, Wolfe also stressed the vital role that education could play in changing society and attaining full civil rights for Black Americans.

Wolfe’s educational message for Black Americans remained consistent throughout her speaking and writing career: she believed education could serve as a change agent in society, provide opportunities for Black Americans, and teach respect for diversity. However, she noted that American schools had rarely, if ever, met the unique needs of Black Americans (Wolfe Speech M, n.d.). Wolfe referred to the message written by Horace Mann in “The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order”:
Of one thing, at least, we can be sure: that is the unsoundness of relying upon the school as a cure-all for our ills. Better schools cannot of themselves save a population which is condemned by economic pressure to remain in a half-starved, poverty-stricken environment. No amount of health education in the classroom can overcome the effect of poor housing and lack of space in congested cities. Schools for Negro children can perform the older function of the school; but even more they can venture beyond the frontier and plan for a new order in those aspects that affect the race. To do this, however, they must function as coordinate elements of a unified system, and not in utter isolation from the world of action and social change. (Mann, cited in Wolfe Speech M, n.d., p. 5)

Unfortunately, Wolfe asserted, Mann’s dour message remained true for Blacks in American society. She argued that “education is potentially the greatest force for progress in the world today,” but in order to effect change and inspire progress in American society, the educational system had to reach all children, including Black American children. Wolfe contended that all educators should be dedicated and committed to providing Black students with “an education which will produce a truly educated person – a learning person, a growing person, a continually changing person, but above all, a secure person” (Wolfe Speech M, n.d.). She reiterated the importance of incorporating culturally appropriate teaching methods and altering school curricula to meet the needs of all children. Wolfe envisioned schools that concentrated on “the processes of learning and growing and developing, including developing thinking skills, developing understanding of the self and the community, which involves recognition of the self and the state of self confidence...[and] developing positive future-focused role images” (Wolfe Speech M, n.d.). Wolfe called for all institutions to encourage Blacks to enter studies in computer science, business, physics, chemistry, bio-medical sciences, and other “careers of the future” (Wolfe, 1988c). She consistently emphasized the importance
of integrating Black Studies and Black history meaningfully throughout the curriculum (Wolfe, 1990a).

Wolfe also advocated for schools to teach political and social activism, particularly “the constructive uses of power and how to obtain it” (Wolfe, 1988a). She noted that Faustine Childress Jones, in her book, *The changing mood in America*, wrote:

> Missing from the common educational pattern are political and economic education and an understanding of one's community, with a view toward how to improve its functionality and a will to do so. Thus many young adults lack the ability to cope with life as it is not because their formal or non-formal teaching has not been geared toward that end. Theirs has been a sterile education, designed for upward mobility. Such realities as the uses of power have to be learned from experience and from other segments of the population…. (Jones cited in Wolfe, 1990a, p. 14)

Wolfe argued that education at all levels must “be prepared to do more than react -- it must engage all of its talents in solving ... problems” and “address the crises” facing American society. Education, according to Wolfe, should “ask the student and the teacher to act upon their world” and “be actively involved in change, in the community, and in action programs” (Wolfe Speech I, n.d.). Throughout her career and into her retirement, Wolfe regularly drew attention to issues facing Black Americans and the important role of education and social action in fighting for equality.

The role of women in society and their quest for equality represented another interest of Wolfe’s, and she dedicated several speeches and a book chapter to this issue (Wolfe Speech BB, n.d.; Wolfe Speech XX, n.d.; Wolfe, 1976a; Wolfe, 1989c). Drawing attention to the challenges facing women in American society, Wolfe stressed the need for women to join together and fight for political recognition, educational opportunity, and economic security. Additionally, she continued to emphasize the potential of
education to assist in the struggle for equal rights. She also highlighted the unique struggle of the Black woman fighting for equality on "two fronts" – as Blacks and as women. The majority of her speeches and writings in this area appear to be situated in the decade of the 1970s; a speech dated 1989 is actually a re-working of an earlier 1974 chapter.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed the rise of the Women's Movement (Deckard, 1979; Wolfe 1974). During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the struggles and discontent of Black Americans held center stage; however, young women learned "both the rhetoric and organization of protest" and gained a growing sense of their own "second-class status" as they participated in the Civil Rights Movement (Deckard, 1979). The student protests against the Vietnam War also contributed to the growth of the Women's Movement. Deckard (1979) argued that the radicalization of both the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-War Movement generated an increasingly censorious critique and analysis of American society. This analysis compelled many females to cast a closer look at the treatment of and discrimination against women (Deckard, 1979).

Also, in the mid-1960s Betty Friedan's best-seller *The Feminist Mystique* drew attention to the psychological costs of the ideology that consigned women to the role of full-time housewife. Wolfe argued that Friedan's book decried "the loss to the nation of intellectual talent because educated women were dominated by males who kept them 'barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen'" (Wolfe, 1974; Friedan, 1964). In October 1966, the National Organization for Women (NOW) formed, with a charter membership of 300, with Friedan as its first president. The stated purpose of NOW was "to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now,"
exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men” (NOW Statement of Purpose, 1966). NOW actively pursued women’s rights through sex-discrimination cases, task forces, media campaigns, and other approaches.

In the 1970s, the rising feminist consciousness created a demand for Women’s Studies programs in universities (Deckard, 1979; Lybarger, 1991). Universities across the country, sensitized by the intense Black Studies campaigns, generally acceded to feminist demands fairly quickly and by 1974, 78 institutions had Women's Studies programs. These programs, according to Deckard, were intended to “teach about women” while preparing “women to change society” (p. 386). During the 1970s, the feminist movement splintered into several different factions with varying degrees of radicalization. However, the general purpose remained similar - to draw attention to discrimination against women and to fight for equality. Wolfe described the 1970s as a decade dictating “affirmative action in providing for the full utilization of the skills and talents of all women” (Wolfe, 1974, p. 180). She specifically addressed issues related to the Feminist Movement in a 1974 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Yearbook chapter.

In the chapter “Woman power and education,” published in the 1974 ASCD Yearbook, Wolfe elucidated specific challenges and problems facing women in American society, particularly focusing on discrimination and disparities in both the general labor force and in the field of education. Wolfe noted that women in the 1970s increasingly chose to work outside of the home for economic as well as psychological reasons, to fulfill the “needs and ambitions of the woman as a person” (Wolfe, 1974, p. 180). Unfortunately, Wolfe averred, “evidence of discrimination against these women”
manifested itself in wage discrepancies and continuing societal disapproval of women working full-time. Citing statistics from a fact sheet generated by the Women’s Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, Wage, and Standards Administration, Wolfe noted that working women represented 43% of the full-time labor force, yet comparison of the median wage of salary incomes revealed that women were paid considerably less than men with median earnings at 60% that of men (Wolfe, 1974, p. 181). She examined the disparity among wages within different occupations and found that the greatest wage gap existed in the field of chemistry and other traditionally male-dominated fields. Wolfe lamented the continuing societal emphasis on “women’s occupations,” arguing that “even though women are increasing in numbers in colleges and universities, [universities] are perpetuating the trend of occupational segregation” (Wolfe, 1974, pp. 181-182). She called for “openness” toward encouraging women to enter a wider range of occupations in order for America to “capitalize and utilize to the fullest extent resources found in the woman power” (p. 182). Wolfe also stressed the need for equal pay for equal work, regardless of gender.

In the field of education, Wolfe argued, women faced similarly daunting challenges. While women comprised the majority of the teaching force, they represented a small minority of administrative and supervisory roles and positions. Wolfe contended that “sexism permeates every level of education,” from male-dominated school boards to curriculum and textbooks (p. 182). Referring to a study of textbooks conducted by the New Jersey chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), Wolfe noted that in 150 reading texts, 1500 of the stories featured males, while only 500 featured females; the majority of the stories showed boys in adventures, and girls watching or playing
subordinate roles (p. 182). These findings, Wolfe stressed, highlighted the “sex stereotyping prevalent in all aspects of the curriculum,” which was filled with materials that perpetuated the “concept of a female role which is long outdated and inconsistent with a basic philosophy of utilization of all America’s citizens” (pp. 182-183).

According to Wolfe, in higher education, women also dealt with a variety of blatant manifestations of discrimination. Citing a study by the National Education Association, Wolfe pointed to the salary disparities between male and female faculty. Additionally, she noted that women faculty members constituted only 19% of all faculty in four-year institutions, and at administrative levels, only 32 of 953 presidents in the study were women. Wolfe found the statistics of tenure status by sex even more alarming, as the percentage of men faculty members obtaining tenure greatly outnumbered that of women.

For Wolfe, the situation of women in the labor force and in the field of education highlighted the need for social action by women. She wrote that “records of the ages tell us that every group that has wanted political recognition, educational opportunity, and economic security has had to fight for them, organize for them, work for them, [and] pay for them” (p. 185). Women, Wolfe argued, must be willing to organize and work for equality in society and equality in education and employment. Education could help by re-orienting the self-concepts of little girls, teaching them to be powerful American citizens “without the hindrances of being females” (Wolfe, 1974, p. 186). School curricula and classroom materials, Wolfe averred, must reflect an honest picture of women and meaningfully incorporate women’s studies while highlighting the “powerful force of the intellectual potential of women” (p. 186). Teachers could help girls and boys
appreciate females as citizens in every area of human life while bolstering the “ego and sensitivity of boys so they can deal with woman power” (p. 186). Wolfe also called upon historians to begin including women and their contributions in the history of America and of civilization. Reflecting her lifelong commitment to social reconstructionism, Wolfe concluded by asserting that “education has a unique responsibility…since in our society we believe that the public school is the means by which and through which we perpetuate the American dream and as we move ahead in the 1970’s …we must remove every possible trace of discrimination in any form” (p. 186).

Wolfe also focused her attention on the status of Black women in society (Wolfe Speech BB, n.d.; Wolfe Speech XX, n.d.; Wolfe, 1989b). She explained:

Black women have suffered cruelly in this society from living the phenomenon of being Black and female in a country that is both racist and sexist. There has been very little examination of the damage it has caused on the lives and minds of Black women. Because we live in a patriarchy, we have allowed a premium to be put on Black male suffering. No one of us would minimize the pain or hardship or the cruel and inhuman treatment experienced by the Black man. But history, past or present, rarely deals with the malicious abuse put upon the Black woman. (Wolfe Speech XX, n.d., p. 3)

In these speeches, Wolfe typically highlighted Black women’s contributions to the Civil Rights Movement and to the Women’s Liberation Movement; described the names, positions, and accomplishments of Black women actively participating in the political arena; cited statistics describing the economic, educational, and political status of Black females; and called for greater social activism by Black women. She noted that Black women played active, if often overlooked, roles in championing equal rights for women and Blacks. Wolfe called for Black feminists to establish an independent Black Feminist organization, arguing that “our above-ground presence will lend enormous
credibility to the current Women's Liberation Movement, which unfortunately is not seen as the serious political and economic revolutionary force that it is” (Wolfe Speech XX, n.d., p. 3). Increased social activism by Black Feminists could, Wolfe asserted,

strengthen the current efforts of the Black liberation struggle in this country by encouraging all of the talents and creativities of Black women to emerge, strong and beautiful, not to feel guilty or divisive, and assume positions of leadership and honor in the Black community. We will encourage the Black community to stop falling into the trap of the White male Left, utilizing women only in terms of domestic or servile needs. We will continue to remind the Black Liberation Movement that there can’t be liberation for half the race. We must together, as a people, work to eliminate racism from without the Black community which is trying to destroy us as an entire people, but we must remember that sexism is destroying and crippling us from within. (Wolfe Speech BB, n.d., p. 5; Wolfe Speech XX, n.d., p. 3.)

Wolfe also encouraged Black women to join the larger women’s feminist movement and typically White organizations like NOW in order to fight for equality. She noted,

however, that

we still don’t have a wholesale commitment on the part of the Black women to the women’s movement. We’re caught up in another problem, within our own subgroup, and some women in their great desire to answer questions about the emasculation of the Negro male, are hesitant about being identified too closely with the women’s movement, lest they lose their relationship with what we have been trying to develop of a closer interaction between all Blacks, male and female. (Wolfe, 1979)

Wolfe added that

I’ve had … difficulty in getting Black women involved in the [Women’s Liberation] Movement. They feel that it’s not their movement. They very often refer to it as a White middle-class movement. I feel that any time that you deal with the generalizing of freedom and making it possible for all, you’re helping everybody, without regard for race, sex, or any other factor. And I therefore believe that the women’s movement ought to be as important to Black women as it is to White women. I feel further that it’s one of the most unifying opportunities. I see Black women and White women who’ve never had any interactions before recognizing the commonalities that they share. And as they build these kinds of bridges, if we can build bridges among the women, then it would be easier to build it over the whole society. (Wolfe, 1979)
Wolfe observed that, in her own involvement in women's groups,

if you close your eyes you wouldn’t know if you were in a women's group or a Black group, because the same strategies of behavior that they’re talking about for acceptance into the total stream of life were the ones Blacks have gone through. So Black women and White women now are united because they’re all women, and White women for the first time, many of whom were quite prejudiced about Negroes or Blacks, begin to understand how it might have felt to be Black when they begin to analyze how women are treated in our society. Now women are not treated altogether as badly as [Blacks] are… but you know, some of the same behavior patterns exist in terms of the treatment of women. (Wolfe, 1979)

While the majority of Wolfe’s writings and speeches about women’s rights are dated in the 1970s, Wolfe’s interest in this area continued throughout her career in education and into her retirement. Wolfe remained very active in a wide variety of organizations promoting equal rights for women and continued to teach and speak about women’s issues. However, she admitted a certain reservation to being labeled a “feminist.” Wolfe explained:

I’m determined that people be accepted without regard to sex, but I’m hesitant about the concept “feminism.” I’m fighting for rights for women and I belong to all the women’s organizations… but I don’t want to have rights that will exclude other people. I think many [feminists] go to an extreme – I want everyone to have equal rights [because] that’s what I’ve been fighting for – equal rights for Blacks, women, anybody, and everybody. You can’t have democracy without equality. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Attention To Issues Of Democracy And Education

served as a common thread throughout all of Wolfe's writings and speeches, this theme differentiates itself by its scope; rather than recommending applications of her curriculum philosophy or focusing specifically on issues of diversity and equity, in these speeches and articles Wolfe addressed broader issues related to democracy and education. Wolfe reiterated her conceptions of American democracy, discussed challenges facing American democracy, and explained how the American educational system could meet these challenges.

When explaining her conceptions of democracy, Wolfe continued to consistently argue that "respect for the individual human being" served as the basic and abiding moral purpose of democracy (i.e., Wolfe Speech N, n.d.; Wolfe, 1976a; Wolfe, 1978; Wolfe, 1988a). She frequently referred to Charles Merriam, who, in his 1931 book The New Democracy and the New Despotism, asserted:

> The essential dignity and worth of men, the importance of protecting and cultivating his personality on a fraternal rather than a differential principle, and the elimination of special privileges upon unwarranted or exaggerated emphasis on the human differentials is the essence of democracy. (Merriam, 1931, p. 11)

Wolfe's discussions of democracy also reflected the continuing influence of the Teachers College faculty's publication Democracy and Education in the Current Crisis, published in 1940, as she addressed other tenets of democracy, including 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. However, from the 1960s to the present day, Wolfe's attention to the concept of "responsible freedom" within the context of American democracy became more prevalent in her speeches and articles (i.e., Wolfe, 1967b; Wolfe, 1976a; Wolfe, 1978).
Wolfe noted that after watching the “golden age of Greece” crumble away, the philosopher Plato concluded that “man had been given more freedom than he could manage” (Wolfe, 1967b, p. 153). Freedom, Wolfe argued, “always gives all of us more than we can manage unless we are aware of the responsibilities that go hand in hand with that freedom” (Wolfe, 1967b, p. 153), and she added that “all too often it is assumed that freedom can be enjoyed without accepting responsibility for its preservation and extension” (Wolfe Speech YY, n.d., p. 1). Every freedom guaranteed in American democracy had a matching responsibility, and Wolfe believed that “there is no such thing as social, religious, and political freedom unless personal liberty be its concrete fact and symbol” (Wolfe, 1957b, p. 155; Wolfe, 1967).

Democratic freedom, Wolfe averred, did not allow citizens to “do as one wishes”; rather, freedom enabled citizens “to make choices among meaningful alternatives... to live one’s life as one sees fit...to use and direct one’s capabilities [and]...to participate in the functioning of government” (Wolfe, 1978, pp. 159-160). Wolfe questioned whether American democracy had, in fact, achieved responsible freedom; she envisioned American society standing at the “crossroads of freedom, perched precariously on the brink” (Wolfe Speech YY, n.d., p. 5). In Wolfe’s view, a series of external and internal challenges hindered the development of responsible freedom in America (Wolfe Speech YY, n.d., p. 5). Wolfe’s discussion of these challenges facing democracy and freedom often mirrored the historical context in which the speech or article was written.

In the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s Wolfe frequently referred to two major “challenges” facing American democracy: the challenge from within, and the challenge
from abroad (i.e., Wolfe, 1967b; Wolfe 1976a, Wolfe, 1978). Wolfe conceived of the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Movement as contributing factors to the "revolution that seeks total racial and sexual equality," the revolution she viewed as the challenge to American democracy from within (Wolfe Speech P, n.d.; Wolfe, 1976a; Wolfe, 1978). This revolution, Wolfe argued, raised an important democratic question: "Can American democracy survive its new racial, ideological revolution... Can this total equality be gained without breaking the fabric of American democracy?" (Wolfe, 1976c; Wolfe, 1978). Wolfe questioned whether America was capable of redefining and restating the ideal of freedom to include all citizens (Wolfe, 1967b).

Wolfe described this issue -- how to give full human membership in American culture to all peoples regardless of race, religion, sex, or national origin -- as "the most challenging issue in [America's] national life" (Wolfe, 1980, p. 2). She noted that our whole society bears the marks of the waves of migration, willing and unwilling, of those who were moving towards a dream and of those who were fleeing a nightmare, and of those who were flung, bound and blind, or herded and helpless, into the holds of ships, or trucks, or railroad cars. These marks take different forms, the former Jim Crow laws in the American South, real estate clauses in the American North, signs which proudly announce that members of some group of human beings -- Jews, Blacks, Oriental, Mexicans -- are not wanted here; rules against asking or mentioning race or religion set up to counteract employment policies which are discriminatory and inhuman, cheap evasions of issues like special classifications for those of mixed inheritance. Such racial and ethnic snares are compounded by sexual discrimination. (Wolfe, 1980, p. 4)

The ongoing struggle to rid America of these "marks," Wolfe argued, threatened the strength of American democracy from within. She asserted that only "time would tell" if the country could cope with the pressure created by the search for equality. Wolfe never
resolved this issue; in speeches dated in the 1990s, Wolfe continued to ask these questions for the 21st century.

For Wolfe, both the revolutions taking place across Third World countries and the threat of Communism represented the "challenge from abroad." By "Third World revolutions," Wolfe alluded to civil uprisings in countries across Africa and Asia in the 1960s and 1970s. Wolfe asserted that these countries -- with underdeveloped, rural societies, high illiteracy rates, low per-capita incomes, and little citizen participation in the political process -- were looking to both America and the Soviet Union as they tried "to make choices about the direction of their future" and search for a "model system" of government (Wolfe, 1978, p. 160). Wolfe raised a series of questions related to this external challenge:

Do the developing nations see American democracy as a vehicle by which they can satisfy their rising expectations, or do they see it as a decadent eighteenth-century dream whose usefulness has run out? Is American democracy a workable system, and therefore one that can be copied by others? Can we prove to the world that our democracy is the true, revolutionary path for all mankind? Can we show the world that we can hold, that we actually do hold these truths to be self-evident, that all persons are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights? Did Americans make freedom and equality look too difficult to attain? (Wolfe, 1976a, p. 10; Wolfe, 1978, p. 159)

Or, she wondered, would these developing countries look to the Communist governments of the Soviet Union and China?

Wolfe traveled extensively through both the Soviet Union and China and wrote three articles comparing the Soviet and American educational systems (Partridge, 1958, 1959; Wolfe, 1962c). Communism, Wolfe observed, threatened the American democracy through its attempts to dissolve the class system and provide equal economic opportunity to all workers. Wolfe noted that "the weakness of democracy gives strength
to other ideologies such as communism" (Wolfe, 1976, p. 10). Emerging countries, Wolfe asserted, looked to America as the shining example of democracy in action. And yet while Americans professed "equality of opportunity" as a tenet of democracy, in reality "irrational barriers such as race, religion, sex, or economic status" continued to prevent full realization of the democratic ideal (Wolfe, 1978). However, Wolfe stressed, the beauty of democracy manifested itself through the struggle for equality; American citizens were free to express themselves individually or collectively against discriminatory practices, and citizens continued to hope that "in our lifetime we will see those barriers dropped" (Wolfe, 1978, p. 160). Also, she noted that

> the challenge to freedom has its compensation. It is forcing America to redefine its own values. It is making us restate the ideal of freedom for those who lived in the complex society of the 1980s, 1990s, and indeed the 21st century. The process of redefinition and restatement can and must strengthen our faith in the durability of a free society. (Wolfe, 1985)

"American freedom" should provide a tempting invitation for a nation to become a democracy, but Wolfe warned that American struggles demonstrated the incredible difficulty inherent in achieving democracy.

In the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Wolfe continued to draw attention to the struggle for freedom and equality in America. However, after the "fall of the Iron Curtain" in 1989, the issue of communism ceased to appear in Wolfe's speeches. She began to focus on other challenges facing American democracy, including the startling world-wide population explosion, the expansion of the American ghetto, pollution, poverty, war, racism and prejudice, violence, and drugs. A rapidly growing population, in Wolfe's view, could strain already scarce natural resources and exacerbate the disparity between the "haves" and "have-nots" of the world (Wolfe Speech M, n.d.).
Despite economic growth and technological progress, Wolfe noted that the “poor are still with us,” and population increases could only worsen the situation. Other inequities continued to exist within American society. Wolfe argued; women were still paid less than men for equal work. Black students faced an ongoing struggle to gain access to a quality education, and many other manifestations of prejudice and discrimination persisted. Wolfe noted that drugs, gang violence, and other problems were wreaking havoc in the urban centers of American cities. In a bleak commentary on American societal problems, Wolfe lamented that a new stereotype was emerging: that “Black man” and “murderer” were becoming interchangeable terms (Wolfe, 1988e). Wolfe argued that these societal problems could hinder the development of freedom and thus prevent America from fulfilling its true democratic potential. However, Wolfe still envisioned the potential for education to teach responsible freedom and to democratize American society.

One of the purposes of education, Wolfe argued, “is to give to individuals the capacity for freedom” (Wolfe, 1988e). Thus, Wolfe stated,

A most important task in the world today is education. Education is the one best hope for a world which stands at a crossroads where mankind has never stood before. On way leads toward the brightest future man has ever known — a world truly at peace, where the scourges of hunger and disease, poverty, and ignorance not longer exist; where all humankind, everywhere, can know the standard of material comfort which most Americans enjoy today; where kindness, justice, and wisdom govern the affairs of men; where each individual has the opportunity to fulfill himself/herself to the utmost of his/her ability. The other way can only lead toward catastrophe for all humankind. (Wolfe Speech FF, n.d., p. 7)

Wolfe argued that schools “mirror the society of which they are a part” and therefore acted as a reflection of the “deterioration of urban life, racial conflict, injustice, [and] the paralyzing consequence of irrelevant traditions” existing in American society.
For society to be improved, Wolfe asserted, American education must be "democratized and humanized... schools need to be overhauled," educators should cease isolating "schools from the problems of the real world" and teach students the "capacity for freedom" (Wolfe Speech N, n.d., p. 10; Wolfe, 1988; Wolfe, 1990). Wolfe suggested five major steps citizens could take to democratize American education: recommit to the idea of respect for all human beings, remove barriers to the full equality of every human being, prepare teachers "dedicated to people," develop curricula related to the needs of the "full life of humans," and create a new concept of school administration based on humanism (Wolfe Speech N, n.d., pp. 10-11).

Wolfe urged schools to recommit themselves to respect for all human beings. She argued that schools must become more people-centered rather than subject-centered, and should devote attention to human qualities of thinking, feeling, believing, and valuing (Wolfe Speech N, n.d., p. 12). Teachers, Wolfe asserted, should become more concerned with "what happens in the hearts and minds" of students and shift public attention from test scores to the learners taking the tests. Thus, schools needed to recognize that learning involves not only acquisition of new knowledge or experience, but also the discovery of the meaning of these experiences and knowledge. If schools are to be made more human, it will be necessary to redress this imbalance and devote far more time and energy to the personal meaning aspects of learning. (Wolfe Speech N, n.d., p. 12)

In order to "remove the barriers to the full development of every human being," Wolfe asked schools to raise a series of questions, including:

Does the marking system generate a positive self-image or does it emphasize failure? Do the methods of discipline lead toward 'self-discipline' or encourage elimination of 'trouble-makers'? Is the class size conducive to the best learning, giving ample opportunity for a wide variety of learning styles? Is there curriculum tracking which nurtures development and growth of a caste system?
How are intelligence, achievement, and aptitude tests used and interpreted? Is the time schedule sufficiently flexible to provide for varying programs to meet individual needs? Do teachers feel free to experiment with content and procedure? Do students feel they are part of the planning team? Do parents? (Wolfe Speech N, n.d., pp. 12-13).

To "prepare teachers and administrators dedicated to people," Wolfe encouraged schools of education to reevaluate their teacher education programs. She recommended that colleges of education use an interdisciplinary approach that fostered respect for culturally diverse children. Also, Wolfe suggested that teacher education programs require extensive field trips, pre-teaching experiences, and time in schools with a wide range of children and situations. Wolfe importuned teacher educators to nourish strong feelings of dedication and hope. This approach, Wolfe averred, might help White middle-class teachers to overcome interpersonal difficulties with students from different classes and races, as well as teach future teachers "an essential respect for all students and the cultures from which they come" (Wolfe Speech N, n.d., p. 14).

When explaining her recommendation to "develop curricula related to the full life of humans," Wolfe reiterated the ideas outlined in her dissertation, her scholarly writings, and her speeches addressing curriculum issues. She pleaded for teachers to understand the sociological and cultural backgrounds of their students and to develop curriculum experiences meaningful for the unique needs of each child (Wolfe Speech N, n.d., p. 15). Wolfe argued that the curriculum must include "formal and informal educational experiences that are multi-ethnic, multiracial, and multicultural for all of our learners," and she encouraged the formation of close relationships between schools and the community (Wolfe 1976a; Wolfe, 1990).
Finally, Wolfe suggested that schools develop a sense of community and "create a new concept of administration based on humanism" (Wolfe Speech N, n.d., p. 16). She believed that administrators should "build democratic principles and practices," "ensure that every person connected with the school system...feels accepted and appreciated," and create a "truly community-centered school...responsible for providing opportunities for appropriate learning experiences for all members of the community" (Wolfe Speech N, n.d., p. 16). Wolfe argued that these five suggestions held the potential to democratize education and foment positive change in society. She explained that our education must indeed attack the problems of our society and I see education in the future as a total experience of the community with everyone teaching and everyone learning – a truly dynamic process towards a society of life long learning. [I] see learning as creative, as fun, as free, as relevant, as year-round, as continuous, as multi-faceted, as multiracial, multi-classed, multi-grouped, as philosophically diverse and multi-media [as our society]. (Wolfe, 1976a)

Wolfe believed that education should promote political and social action on the part of all Americans -- every color, caste, gender, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity. She asked:

Can we Americans engage the world and through hard work advance the cause of human freedom and individual rights? I believe we can. I am involved in many organizations that are dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. That indeed we are endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights and among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I know however that we must continue to work for these freedoms, for I know that liberty and freedom are not something that can just be handed down to us. But, we must constantly earn these freedoms for ourselves. We must help our children to understand the values and goals which created this great nation and help them be willing to sacrifice to maintain a society where all men are indeed equal...We must speak out, we must write, we must testify, we must publicize, we must pressure, we must network [to guarantee our freedom]. (Wolfe Speech FF, n.d.)
Assessments Of Wolfe’s Speeches And Scholarly Writings

Wolfe’s writings and speeches examining issues of democracy and education consistently focused on the “beauty” of democracy, the continual struggle to realize the ideals of democracy within the United States, the challenges facing American democracy, and the power of education to democratize society and inspire citizens to social and political action. In describing her scholarly writings and speeches, Wolfe noted that she consistently focused on ways democracy could “be used as a background for developing the curriculum or teaching” and on different approaches to fostering positive interpersonal and intergroup relations through “building a sensitivity for the needs of special groups like Blacks, women, or other disadvantaged students” through “developing world-mindedness and fighting prejudice” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She said

[in all my work] I think you can see an appeal for a sensitivity to the need for making a difference in what you select to teach and the way you choose to teach according to who you are teaching; to appreciate cultural differences and build sensitivity to variation and diversity. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe also observed that her geographical and historical context influenced her work and the disadvantaged groups she concentrated on: rural children in the 1940s and 1950s, culturally disadvantaged groups in the 1960s, Blacks and Women in the 1970s, and at-risk children in the 1980s. She argued that regardless of the group she chose to write about, the overarching message she attempted to convey was that “in a nation where there are citizens who come from every country in the world, who represent every race, creed, color, we cannot afford overlooking anyone’s contributions. We must value the dignity of every child” (Wolfe, 1970b, p. 350).
While Wolfe chose not to conduct extensive research studies or write articles for publication in scholarly journals, she did draw attention to important issues in education: how to develop “culturally aware” curricula, the importance of educating for diversity and equity, and the role of “responsible freedom” in a democratic society. Additionally, she encouraged all educators to move beyond rhetoric -- from “talking democracy” to “doing democracy” through political and social action. She stated that “my role is to open up people’s eyes and imagination and thinking. I want to open their minds” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).
CHAPTER 6
WOLFE’S INVOLVEMENT IN MULTIPLE REALMS OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Overview of Wolfe’s Activities

Throughout her life and career, Wolfe actively served and continues to serve in numerous societies and organizations that reflect her interest in democracy, education, religion, and the potential to change society through social and political activism. She explained:

Why join? I cannot bring God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven unless I’m involved in demonstrating not just by words but more importantly by my deeds – because what you do speaks so loudly, you can’t hear a word you say. So that when I find something that is on my wavelength in terms of my basic philosophy, my basic goals, my basic reason for living, my raison d’etre, I have to get involved. That’s the way I grow, [through] everything I joined. As I talk, I’m thinking about individuals who I met who influenced my life... Each one of them [are] not only names and causes but are personalities that affect me and help me to be a bigger, richer person so that when I meet someone I have more to give. [My involvement in these organizations] makes life for me richer, happier, everything. Why do I do it? These are not unrelated. Every one of them has a core relationship – they are all concerned with changing people, building philosophies that will be guiding, making this world a better place [and] helping people to understand that we’re more alike than we are different. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe belonged to and actively participated in the following programs, societies and organizations: Advisory Board of the Educational Testing Services, Advisory Council for Innovations in Education, Advisory Committee to the Elizabeth and Arthur Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College, African Study Abroad Program, American Academy of Political and Social Science, American Association for the Advancement of

Because of a variety of constraining factors, including the availability and accessibility of documentary sources, incomplete records, and the limitations of the extent of human memory and the power of recollection, the precise dates of Wolfe's involvement in these organizations were often hard to determine. Wolfe held office or some type of leadership role in the majority of these groups, but, again, the dates of her official terms and the exact titles of her offices were frequently difficult to establish. However, an examination of Wolfe's activities provides an important look at Wolfe's work as a social activist striving to democratize education and improve society. Thus, this chapter will investigate Wolfe's involvement in these multiple realms of community life by highlighting organizations in which Wolfe played a particularly active role and for which historical evidence regarding her involvement was available. Specifically, these are: Kappa Delta Pi, the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), the National Parents and Teachers Association, the New Jersey Board of Higher Education, the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Science Services, her activities at Queens College, CUNY, the Young Women's Christian Association, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the Graduate Record Examination Committee, and the First Baptist Church of Cranford, New Jersey.
Kappa Delta Pi

William Chandler Bagley founded Kappa Delta Pi, an international educational honor society, in 1911 at the University of Illinois. When Bagley joined the Teachers College faculty in 1920, he opened the Kappa chapter of KDP at Columbia University (KDP Online, 2001). Wolfe joined the Kappa chapter of KDP in 1938; she was invited to join and initiated by Bagley (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The stated mission of the society was to recognize scholarship and excellence in education, to promote the development and dissemination of worthy educational ideas and practices, to enhance the continuous growth and leadership of the diverse membership, to foster inquiry and reflection on significant educational issues, and to maintain a high degree of professional fellowship (KDP Online, 2001).

Wolfe actively participated in KDP throughout her life from 1938 to the present. She embraced the mission of KDP, explaining in a 1979 interview that she joined because she viewed

[KDP as a means for] pulling people together on the basis of a common cause and purpose, without regard to race or creed or color, and it has been one of the best organizations for doing that, achieving that goal. (Wolfe, 1979)

In a 2000 interview, Wolfe reaffirmed her respect and admiration for the mission of KDP but admitted that, in retrospect, she did feel as though she suffered race discrimination in KDP. She noted, “I ran for president twice but they weren’t ready for a Black president...but I kept on going because of Bagley and my students at Queens College” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).
Wolfe founded the Kappa Gamma chapter of KDP at Queens College, CUNY, in 1964 and served as the faculty advisor. Wolfe recalled that she encouraged students from a variety of backgrounds to join KDP. She hoped that the society could serve as a means through which and by which I can encourage students who show unusual ability and great promise an opportunity for more leadership, not on a campus-wide level, but on a regional and statewide and national level. And so I see KDP not only for my own enrichment, which it must be, but also for what it can do for the students with whom I work, and their opportunity to become broader (Wolfe, 1979).

Wolfe attended the annual national KDP convocation for as many years as possible; she remembered that she always attempted to bring “Black and White students” from her Queens chapter with her in order to highlight the need for respect for diversity in education and to encourage students from different backgrounds to engage in leadership roles at the national level (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She elaborated,

I deliberately take at least one Black student and one White student to every convocation or regional meeting to show these other folks what they better be doing – it’s been very important [because] I think we’ve told a story that way without saying anything. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe also encouraged other Queens College faculty to become involved in KDP; for example, in 1966 she issued an invitation to then College President Joseph P. McMurray (1965-1970) in 1966; he accepted and was the guest speaker at the initiation ceremony. Also, the Queens College KDP chapter honored Wolfe with a dinner tribute on May 3, 1984, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Queens chapter of KDP as well as Wolfe’s pending retirement. The evening, organized by Wolfe’s former students, honored Wolfe’s extended and active service to the Queens KDP chapter (KDP Program, 1984). Former student Bunny Sabatino thanked Wolfe with a short speech:
I was very much afraid that I could never find the appropriate words to convey the way we feel about you. I know that my life has been greatly enriched by my having had you as my teacher and having you now as my friend. I believe that everyone here tonight feels the same way, so please accept this gift...as a token of our esteem for a truly great educator, humanitarian, and friend (Sabatino, 1984).

Wolfe also served KDP at the national level. Frank E. Marsh, current chair of the KDP Foundation Board, recalled that he met Wolfe in the 1960s through KDP, they served on a variety of committees together, and during his tenure as President of KDP (1972-1974) Marsh recollected that Wolfe assisted KDP in several capacities. According to Marsh, for most of his term as Chairperson of the KDP Foundation Board (1988 to present), Wolfe acted as secretary of the KDP Foundation Board; she recently resigned from that position but continues to serve on the Foundation’s Board of Directors (Marsh Letter, 2000). Marsh asserted that Wolfe brought “important and unique contributions” to both KDP and the field of education through her educational, religious, and political background. Additionally, Marsh explained, Wolfe’s experiences as education chief, as a member of the New Jersey Board of Education, and as an active participant in the civil rights struggle provided myriad opportunities for her to be a “persistent and respected voice often crying in the wilderness” as a “champion for higher education for all Americans” (Marsh Letter, 2001). Finally, Marsh contended that Wolfe’s religious interests and her role as an ordained minister also brought an important element to her views on education and contributions to KDP (Marsh Letter, 2001).

Michael Wolfe, the executive director of KDP, also emphasized Wolfe’s contributions to KDP. He explained that Wolfe gave the invocation at every KDP national convocation she attended and often moderated panels. He particularly recalled her work organizing a Civil Rights Panel for the Birmingham, Alabama, KDP
Convocation in 1997. He lauded her involvement in KDP, describing Wolfe as “an exceptional model for others” who “exhibits uncanny enthusiasm for whatever she does” and “is a living example of John Dewey’s principles” (Wolfe Email, 2000).

KDP recognized Wolfe’s contributions in several ways, most importantly by nominating her for membership in its Laureate Chapter in 1988. Marsh explained that “the group of distinguished educators [in the laureate chapter] reads like a Who’s Who of our profession” and includes John Dewey, William Bagley, William Kilpatrick, John Childs and many other prominent educators (Marsh Letter, 2001). The Kappa Delta Pi Record featured Wolfe in an article entitled “Teaching: a lifetime commitment” (Wolfe, 1999), and Wolfe appeared in the Kappa Delta Pi Society promotional video. Additionally, the KDP Educational Foundation supported a Laureate Fellowship with a focus on multicultural education in Wolfe’s honor (KDP Online, 2001; Marsh Letter, 2000). The $1500 Deborah Partridge Wolfe Laureate Doctoral Scholarship in Multicultural Education is awarded annually (KDP Online, 2001).

**National Alliance of Black School Educators**

In 1970, Black school superintendent Charles D. Moody invited other Black school superintendents to a meeting in Chicago, Illinois, in order to share concerns about educating Black Americans and to develop a resource pool for Black educators. He also wanted to provide a forum for networking and dialogue and to determine “whether or not the other Black superintendents were catching the same kind of hell that I was getting” (Moody, 1973). The group formalized its meetings in 1971 by establishing the National Alliance of Black School Superintendents (NABSS). In April 1973 the NABSS
members voted to include administrators and educators and changed its name to the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE). NABSE officially came into existence on November 23, 1973, in Detroit, Michigan, with 284 charter members; it continues to exist today (NABSE Online, 2001; NABSE Speech, no author, 1976). The Constitution and by-laws of the organization state that the purposes of NABSE shall be to make a strong commitment to the education of all children and to Black children in particular; to provide a coalition of Black educators; to create a forum for the exchange of ideas and techniques; to identify and develop Black professionals who will assume leadership positions in the education of Black children. (NABSE Constitution and by-laws, 1973)

Wolfe described NABSE as the first organization of its kind that attempted very directly to get at all of the people in education, no matter at what level they are working, whether it’s in early childhood, elementary, secondary, college, as a superintendent, as general administrators, as directors of supervisors, as members of boards of education. So it’s a great coalition and cross-section of all people concerned and interested in providing the best kind of education for all children, but for Black children in particular. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe, a life member of NABSE, joined in 1973 and remains highly active in the Alliance today (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe served as the first female president and fourth president of NABSE from 1975-1977 (NABSE Conference Report, 1976; NABSE Online, 2001; Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a; Wolfe Vitae, 2001). The responsibilities of the presidency of NABSE included “directing the day-to-day affairs of the Alliance and serving as its chief communicator and contact person” (NABSE Speech, no author, 1976). Wolfe referred to this position as a highlight of her educational career; she expressed pride that she was the first woman to be president of NABSE, particularly since “as so often happens in many
of our organizations, the women may outnumber the men in our membership but they very often don’t get the leadership roles” (Wolfe, 1979).

However, Wolfe became president during a difficult time for NABSE. In a 1976 speech, “The NABSE: Its past, present, and potential,” an unidentified speaker noted that in a relative match-up with the entrenched power groups in American education, the Alliance is a midget among giants. The proliferation of educational organizations striving to achieve a foundation of power and influence on a national level makes it a Herculean task for any new entry to earn its credentials as an association deserving of consultation and/or participation in the formulation of educational policies and programs of national importance. (NABSE Speech, no author, 1976)

The speaker pointed out other challenges facing NABSE, including the need to recruit and involve larger numbers of Black educators who qualified for membership, to make the organization more efficient, to maintain stability, to defuse the growing tension among “factions” within the organization, and to earn recognition and respect from the decision-makers in public education (NABSE Speech, no author, 1976). The speaker described Wolfe, then president, as a leader who would face the challenges “with vigor and optimism” (NABSE Speech, no author, 1976).

During her presidency, Wolfe recruited new members, engaged in fund raising, served as the spokesperson for the organization, and helped organize the annual conferences (Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The fourth annual NABSE Conference, which was held from November 11-14, 1976, in Miami, Florida, celebrated the bicentennial; the theme of the conference addressed the issue of “Black Educators: 200 Years, Now What?” (Wolfe, 1976a). The NABSE Conference Chairman noted that Black educators and leaders marshaled their efforts in scrutinizing major aspects of this nation’s thrust toward the education of its youth, particularly minorities. It examined the different aspects of apartheid behavior which has characterized so
much of American life, and it also enlivened the communal quest for acting upon those guarantees of fundamental rights and equality embodied in the U.S. Constitution’s Fourteenth Amendment. (Jones, 1976)

The keynote speakers, presenters, and contributors to the annual conference report explored issues related to Black Americans in the areas of politics and decision-making, administration and organization in the urban setting; citizen involvement and school governance; desegregation, discrimination and the law; student services and the law; the nature of learning, student achievement, and self-concept; and higher education (NABSE Conference Report, 1976, pp. v-viii). Also at this conference the NABSE collected and donated $10,000 to the NAACP, which “attested to the support that educators have given to this and other organizations which have fought for civil and human rights and equal educational opportunities” (Wolfe, 1976c).

After the completion of her term as president, Wolfe continued to serve NABSE through participating on the executive board, acting as chair of the executive committee, representing the NABSE as a non-governmental organization to the United Nations, and serving on an advisory board committee for a project designed to assist historically Black colleges to “corral a diversified student population and build the kind of faculties that attract people” (Wolfe, 1979). She also remained active in NABSE by attending and speaking at the annual conferences (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

In a speech at a conference in the late 1980s, Wolfe reflected that

[NABSE was founded] out of a frustration for the lack of attention being given to Black superintendents and other Black educators and students. [NABSE] called attention to the fact that despite gains that had been made, we were still wallowing in a sea of inequity. It grew out of a mire of anguish and it flourishes because the storms of life are still raging out of control for large segments of our population. NABSE has survived because it has become a conscious raising force, keeping the issues that we feel are so important on the front burner. It is
good for [Black educators] to get together because getting together gives sustenance to our faith that additional progress can be made. It renews my hope that joining together in partnership and in broad coalition that we will relentlessly pursue the transformation of the dream that Chuck Moody and others had many, many years ago...and transfer that dream into a living reality. (Wolfe, 1989d)

Today, NABSE’s stated purpose is a commitment to improving “the educational accomplishments of African American youth through the development and deployment of instructional and motivational methods that increase levels of inspiration, attendance, and overall achievement” (NABSE Online, 2001). To accomplish these goals, NABSE attempts to promote and facilitate the education of all students, especially Black students; establish a coalition of Black educators and others directly and indirectly involved in the educational process; create a forum for the exchange of ideas and strategies to improve opportunities for people of African descent; and identify and develop Black professionals who will assume leadership positions in education and thus influence public policy for the education of Black Americans (NABSE Online, 2001). NABSE also organizes opportunities for Black educators to participate in professional development programs, share information, and engage in political action in order to advocate for educational policy issues.

Non-Governmental Representative To The United Nations

Wolfe served as a non-governmental representative to the United Nations on behalf of three different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at different times during her long association with the UN: Church Women United, the International Movement for Fraternal Union of all Races and People, and the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE). Her association with the UN began in 1969 and continues to the present day (2001). Wolfe believed that it was a great privilege to work
with groups that fostered positive relationships with the United Nations, an organization whose basic goals she respected and admired (Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

The United Nations (UN) officially came into existence on October 24, 1945. Fifty-one countries signed a charter dedicated to preserving peace through international cooperation and collective security. The Charter described the basic principles of the UN: to maintain international peace and security, to develop friendly relations among nations, to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights, and to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations (United Nations Online, 2001). UN members, totaling 189 countries in 2001, are sovereign nations who agree to accept the obligations of the UN Charter. The UN has six main organs: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, all located in New York City, and the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands. The UN’s relationship with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) comprises one facet of the UN’s attempts to maintain connections with the international community and to generate positive publicity for UN programs, policies, treaties, and peace-keeping missions (United Nations Online, 2001; Wolfe Interview, 2001).

Wolfe described NGOs as organizations, agencies, and institutions that are concerned about the work of the United Nations and want to help [the UN] achieve its basic goals. These organizations are given all the rights and privileges of delegates, except [NGOs] don’t vote, and don’t act as members of committees. [There is] a long list of NGOs, and that’s the group the UN intends to be the information agency. [The UN] counts on [NGOs] to spread the word of the UN and try to get more support for the UN. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

The NGO website states that NGOs are
any non-profit, voluntary citizens’ group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens’ concerns to governments, monitor policies, and encourage political participation at the community level. (NGO/DPI Online, 2001)

Examples of the approximately 1600 UN NGOs include the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the American Cancer Society, Church Women United, Girl Scouts of America, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Sierra Club, World Goodwill, and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., as well as the groups that Wolfe represented.

The relationship between NGOs and the offices and agencies of the United Nations System differs depending on their goals, their venue, and their mandate. Wolfe explained that NGOs receive different levels of approval, also noting that all NGOs hold the right to visit the UN, attend committee and general assembly meetings, and participate in the weekly NGO informational briefings (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). However, only NGOs with consultative status are permitted to speak in UN committee meetings (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The UN grants consultative status to very few NGOs; Wolfe commented that “the UN only recognizes those [NGOs] that have the expertise not available to the UN from other sources and therefore have the privilege of participating in committee meetings” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Regardless of status, NGOs are not permitted to actively participate in General Assembly or Security Council meetings.

The Department of Public Information (DPI) serves as the liaison between the UN and NGOs, helping NGOs to gain access to and disseminate information on a wide variety of UN issues. The DPI and NGOS publicize UN activities on such issues as
peace and security, economic and social development, human rights, humanitarian affairs, international law, UN observances, and international years established by the General Assembly intended to focus world attention on important issues facing humanity. Ultimately, the goal of the DPI and NGOs is to enable the public to gain a deeper understanding of the aims, objectives, and activities of the United Nations (NGO/DPI Online, 2001, Wolfe Interview, 2000a). As Wolfe clarified, the “NGOs have the responsibility of spreading the word about what is going on in the UN” and the UN “counts on us to...try to garner support for the UN’s activities” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

The DPI/NGO Section provides NGOs with the following services: organizing the annual DPI/NGO conference, holding weekly briefings on UN-related issues, conducting an annual orientation program for newly accredited NGO representatives, structuring quarterly communications workshops, maintaining the NGO resource center, processing NGO applications for associative status with DPI, and publishing the directory of NGOs associated with the DPI (NGO/DPI Online, 2001). Wolfe explained that NGO representatives had the opportunity to attend the weekly briefings, use the NGO and UN resource centers, and attend all meetings of committees, the General Assembly, and “all of the other aspects of the UN” (Wolfe, 1979).

During her time as a non-governmental representative, Wolfe attended many UN NGO/DPI briefings. She described them as a forum for the NGOs to obtain information about the UN’s latest activities, missions, treaties, statements, and any other UN-related information pertinent to the general public. During these briefings, the elected NGO chair presided over an informational presentation by experts from the UN; oftentimes the UN secretary general would attend in order to provide the NGO representatives with the
latest announcements (NGO/DPI Online, 2001; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). NGO representatives received handouts summarizing the content of the briefing and were able to ask the presenters questions. Wolfe described the briefings as evidence of a “very nice relationship between the NGOs, the official staff, and official representatives of the UN,” in which NGOs felt free to ask any questions pertaining to UN activities (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

The DPI/NGO Section also organized yearly conferences for all NGOs to attend. Wolfe recalled that representatives attended “from all over the world,” and that the conference used a translation system. Each year, the NGOs focused on an important topic relevant to the UN. NGO representatives could also attend other UN conferences; for example, Wolfe served on the planning committee and attended the International Women’s Conference in Mexico City in 1975. At the time, she represented an organization with consultative status and could therefore attend “both the official conference of regular delegates to the UN” as well as informational forums and seminars sponsored by her organization. She also traveled to two other conferences that addressed equity issues for women: one held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in the early 1980s and another in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985. Wolfe recalled that “it was a thrill to participate with women and men from all over the world as we came to grips with the problems of the women of the world” (Wolfe, 1988b). Wolfe attended numerous other UN conferences, including a world food, population, and housing conference held in Canada.

Wolfe held several leadership positions during her long association with NGOs and the UN. Wolfe served as an NGO conference chair for two years, acted as chair of the African Affairs committee for all NGOs in 1979, and also served on the NGO
executive committee for approximately ten years. In 1983 Wolfe was elected chair of all NGOs for a four-year term. In this role, Wolfe chaired the executive committee meetings, acted as moderator at the weekly briefings, met weekly with all of the NGO representatives, presided over the annual conference, and traveled extensively to give speeches on the UN and NGOs. In a 1983 newspaper article that focused on her involvement with the NGOs, Wolfe explained that as chair, she helped organize briefings, questioned UN officials, prepared weekly reports for all NGOs, evaluated films and publications issued by UN agencies, took part in UN-sponsored conferences, and prepared written opinions and recommendations on behalf of the NGOs (Dallas, 1983).

Wolfe frequently referred to the activities of the UN in speeches before, during, and after her service as chair of the NGOs. For example, at the Kappa Delta Pi national convocation in New Orleans, Louisiana, in April 1988, Wolfe presented a speech entitled “Teaching about the United Nations” (Wolfe, 1988b). In her speech, Wolfe provided a detailed description of the organization, structure, purpose, activities, and original Charter of the United Nations. She noted that “We the people of the United Nations” included billions of people living in nearly all countries in the world “united in a common resolve to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to cooperate in the search for peace, justice, and progress” (Wolfe, 1988b). Wolfe argued that in order to teach about the United Nations, teachers must raise important questions about the world we live in, such as: What signs do you find that a world community is developing? What are common problems that all humans face, no matter where they live on planet Earth? How can we prepare students for the 21st century? What causes ethnocentrism? How can we prepare students to live in a multi-pluralistic world? (Wolfe, 1988b).
Wolfe remains actively involved with the UN’s NGOs and regularly attends the annual NGO conference, enjoying her work and interactions with the international community (Wolfe Phone Interview, 2001). However, she characterized the United States’ attitude toward the UN as “apathetic,” stating:

It is my dear and sincere hope that [we] can revitalize America’s interest in this very important agency, the only one we have like it in the world. [The UN] has a number of weaknesses, there is no doubt, but we don’t have any substitute where all the nations of the world can dialogue. I am very worried about America’s particular stand... and its lack of willingness to support the programs of the UN to the fullest extent. (Wolfe, 1979)

Reflecting on her long association with the UN, Wolfe noted:

Not every nation is a member of the [UN], but it’s been gratifying to see the numbers increase each year that I acted as an NGO representative. It will soon be universal, I hope. That’s our goal -- to sit down as brothers and sisters of the world and realize what affects you [also] affects me. I would like to think of myself as a citizen of the world. I am so very glad that I have been able to make contact with the official delegates to the UN, the secretaries general, the UN staff... and all other NGO representatives. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

**National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers; National Congress of Parents and Teachers**

Wolfe originally joined the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers while living and working in Tuskegee, Alabama. The National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers (NCCPT) formed in 1926, functioning in states where separate schools for the races were maintained. The stated objectives of the NCCPT were to promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, church and community; to raise the standards of life; to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth; and to bring into closer relation the home and the school, “that the parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the training of the child” (PTA Online, 2001).
Wolfe served as president of the Alabama chapter of NCCPT in 1947. Through this role, Wolfe visited all of Alabama’s 67 counties, assessing the educational opportunities for Black children and encouraging closer relationships between parents and schools. She argued that “[education] is a joint responsibility. You cannot know children unless you teach their parents. I loved working with parents ... I don’t think a professional educator can be successful without the parents or grandparents” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe also represented Alabama at the annual meetings of the NCCPT until she returned to New Jersey in 1950.

On June 22, 1970, the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers merged into a single organization, the National Parent Teachers Association (PTA) (PTA Online, 2000; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe became active in the new, combined organization by serving on the past-presidents committee. Wolfe considered this an important facet of her educational career “because I feel so strongly about the need for understanding the role of parents working with the school in developing the best schools possible in our country” (Wolfe, 1979). In speeches to local PTA chapters, Wolfe consistently emphasized the vital need for close relationships among parents, teachers, the school, and the larger community (i.e., Wolfe Speech NN, n.d.).

New Jersey Board of Education and New Jersey Board of Higher Education

“approves educational policies proposed by the Commissioner, confirms the
commissioner’s appointments, and decides appeals of the commissioner’s decisions of
alleged violations of school law and charter school approvals,” and establishes the rules
to carry out state education law (New Jersey State Board of Education Online, 2001). The
governor appoints the members of the Board with the advice and consent of the New
Jersey State Senate; the 13 members serve for six-year terms without compensation.
Also, New Jersey Law states that at least three members of the state board must be
women and no two members can be from the same county (New Jersey State Board of
Education Online, 2001).

The New Jersey legislature created the New Jersey Board of Higher Education in 1967. At that time, on the recommendation of Governor Hughes, Wolfe moved from the Board of Education to the Board of Higher Education. The New Jersey state legislature invested the Board of Higher Education with jurisdiction over all public institutions of higher learning as well as responsibilities and relationships with private, independent colleges and universities in New Jersey (Delehanty Phone Interview, 2001; New Jersey Board of Education Online, 2001; Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe explained that

[the Board of Higher Education] gave me the full sweep of opportunity to work with all higher education in our state, including our community colleges, our state colleges, our state universities, our state colleges of medicine and dentistry, our state institutes of technology, as well as the twenty-odd independent colleges that are in our state. (Wolfe, 1979)

Reflecting on the creation of the Board of Higher Education, Wolfe commented that

theoretically and philosophically, I do not agree with having two boards. I liked it better with a single board because I believe very firmly that education is a continuous experience. We should not have artificial breaks, but being practical I
also know that we weren’t able to do all that we should have done, because there was too much to be done if you had the responsibility for all the elementary schools, all the secondary schools, and all the colleges and universities. So I do think that it has been a wise move that we separated. (Wolfe, 1979)

During her service to the Board of Higher Education (1967-1994), Wolfe attended monthly meetings addressing key issues in higher education. Board of Higher Education staff member Kathleen Delehanty recalled Wolfe’s vibrant presence in all meetings and her ability to defuse difficult situations with a sense of humor. For example, Delehanty remembered one heated situation in which the board discussed investing more money in minority scholarships; according to Delehanty, Wolfe introduced her point of view by comment, “When you’ve been Black as long as I have…” (Delehanty Phone Interview, 2001).

Additionally, during her long tenure on the Board, Wolfe served on numerous committees designed to explore issues and problems in higher education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). For example, she served on the committee created to draft the master plan for New Jersey higher education in 1969; she reflected in 1979 that “it’s been interesting to see how we’ve been able to implement [the master plan] and now, after a ten year period, we’re [drafting] another one. I again serve on that committee so that we can evaluate what we have done as we move forward and make new plans” (Wolfe, 1979). Published in 1981, this second, 212 page, state-wide master plan for higher education addressed issues facing New Jersey colleges and universities, including challenges for the future, policy for upcoming decade, research and the advancement of knowledge, management and accountability issues, the role and mission of specific institutions, enrollment goals and projections, the role of out-of-state students, access to
higher education, academic program quality concerns, quality and development of higher education faculty, financing higher education, vocational and cooperative education, minimum requirements for degrees, and many other areas (Statewide Plan for Higher Education, State of New Jersey, 1981). Another committee Wolfe served on was the Committee on Development of Higher Learning in Newark, New Jersey, which examined the potential to develop cooperative activities among the four institutions of higher education in the city of Newark (Wolfe Vitae, 2001).

Wolfe held several leadership roles during her tenure on the Board of Higher Education. She acted as vice chair of the Board from 1984-1987, working closely with Chairman Thomas H. Gossert. From 1987-1990, Wolfe served as chair of the Board of Higher Education, becoming the first Black woman to hold the post. At a ceremony in Trenton, New Jersey, celebrating her election as chair, Wolfe gave a short speech, noting that

the primary responsibility of the Board of Higher Education is to insure that the best educational opportunities are made available to all in our state who enroll in our colleges and universities. We also want to expand access so that those who have been historically left out or behind, particularly minorities and women, gain admission and pursue their studies in a rigorous fashion. A lifetime of work on behalf of these goals doesn’t seem to be enough to realize them but a lifetime of commitment and of endeavor sees progress and new challenges ahead. (Wolfe, 1987)

She added that higher education in New Jersey was

enjoying the advantages of having a supportive governor and state legislature, who have joined with the board in a partnership of success. That’s the ferment I believe will rekindle the idealism of our youth and lead our institutions to serve them in ways that develop skills and talents associated with scholarship, individual pride, clarity of purpose, and achievement for self and community. (Wolfe, 1987)
Wolfe’s responsibilities as chair included commissioning reports designed to generate responses and solutions to fulfill the major goals of the New Jersey Board of Higher Education, issuing press releases and statements about new policies determined by the Board of Higher Education, and maintaining close relations among the legislature, the Chancellor of Education, the board, and the institutions of higher learning throughout the state. As chair, Wolfe also met regularly with the Chancellor, gave commencement speeches at many graduation ceremonies, attended a wide variety of conferences and workshops, traveled around the state visiting colleges, universities, and community colleges, and organized and led each monthly meeting of the Board of Higher Education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). At the beginning of her term, the Board agreed to pursue seven major goals: strengthen undergraduate education, increase minority student enrollment, insure college affordability, increase higher education’s contribution to New Jersey’s economic development, upgrade New Jersey’s physical facilities, strengthen community colleges, and support and strengthen the college faculty (Wolfe, 1990e).

As chair, Wolfe particularly focused on the issue of minority participation in education. For example, she encouraged and facilitated the appointment of minority members to college and university boards of trustees (Wolfe Speech, 1990c). Each community college, college, and university in New Jersey had a board of trustees consisting of two state appointees, a non-voting alumni trustee elected by the students, the county superintendent of schools, and from seven to eleven trustees appointed by the county freeholders (Wolfe Speech, 1990c). In a 1990 speech, Wolfe stated that “it is...the policy of the New Jersey Board of Higher Education to promote and encourage minority representation and active participation on Boards of Trustees. Our object is to
have on each Board qualified individuals who represent a balance of age, occupations, interest, and ethnic or racial backgrounds” (Wolfe Speech, 1990c). She noted that minority participation had, in fact, increased in New Jersey as the state moved beyond a philosophical commitment to placing minorities on boards of trustees to generating practical strategies designed to recruit and appoint qualified minority candidates.

Wolfe also pursued measures designed to increase minority student enrollment in higher education (Wolfe Speech, 1989e). The Board adopted goals such as establishing broad-based recruitment programs to attract academically prepared minority students to New Jersey colleges; implementing programs designed to prepare minority students who were educationally disadvantaged; encouraging campuses to help minorities integrate into the college community; and increasing the number of minority faculty and administrators who could serve as effective role models for minority students (Wolfe Speech, 1989e). Wolfe lauded the Board and New Jersey for recommitting to the notion that

the multicultural population of the United States gives us a built-in advantage in the immediate future, and if [New Jersey] can control and overcome racism and parochialism we can be as successful in utilizing our cultural diversity to our own self-interest as much as we have been in celebrating our national heritage. (Wolfe Speech, 1989e)

On July 20, 1990, her final board meeting as chair, Wolfe presented a report to the Board of Higher Education summarizing her experiences and accomplishments as chair. She noted that she had visited every college and university in New Jersey, presented numerous commencement speeches (i.e., Wolfe, 1988a, 1998b), and attended more than 20 statewide education conferences and institutes (Wolfe, 1990e). She argued that the board had seen “positive movement in the direction of achieving each of the seven goals”
(Wolfe, 1990e). She reflected that, in particular, the board achieved noteworthy results in increasing minority enrollment and retention, raising the percentages of minority faculty, and facilitating the transition to fiscal and operational autonomy for the state colleges. Finally, Wolfe issued a call for increased funding for higher education in New Jersey (Wolfe, 1990e).

In a tribute dinner for Wolfe on October 19, 1989, Edward Hollander, then the Chancellor of the New Jersey Department of Higher Education, commented on Wolfe's performance as chair. He stated:

[Wolfe’s] leadership is effective. Under her keen and perceptive leadership, the Board of Higher Education functions as a body concerned with influencing positive changes in a direction that will benefit hundreds of thousands of students. Hers is an eloquent, impassioned, and steady voice for access, for fairness, for quality, for excellence, and she carries her timely and prescient message to the halls of power – to the legislature, to the governor’s mansion, to the churches and synagogues, to the chambers of commerce, and before city, state, national, and international conventions and directly to the source of democratic power – to the people. Each one of the groups to whom she speaks will have its say about the direction that our society and its several parts will take in the years ahead, and none of them can soon forget the counsel they’ve gotten from [Wolfe], the lady with the big, clarion voice for social justice. (Hollander, 1989)

Dr. Jean Fitts, who worked under Wolfe in the Department of Education, also noted her contributions as chair of the New Jersey Board of Higher Education when introducing Wolfe at the Thomas M. Campbell Banquet at Tuskegee University in February, 1992. Fitts noted:

Even before she became chair, students, faculty, and [college and university] presidents could count on seeing [Wolfe] appear regularly and often for events on their campuses... [As chair], leading a state board and some 60 institutions toward educational excellence was not easy. Add to that mix working with a long-term Chancellor, a Governor, and a sometimes divided legislature and you have some idea of what chairing a state board of higher education must have been like. In 1985, Governor Thomas Kean issued a challenge to higher educators and urged the legislature to fund initiatives at a level where each college could follow its
own path to excellence; thus, the nationally unique state-funded challenge grant program was launched. During her stewardship, the fully implemented challenge grants brought millions of needed dollars to state colleges, universities, and two-year community colleges. Also during her tenure, the Board of Higher Education celebrated its twentieth anniversary and renewed its commitment to broadening educational opportunity to the citizens of the state...Dr. Wolfe expressed the Board’s theme [during that period], “Excellence through Access,” as an achievement of a “global vision” of higher education. (Fitts, 1992)

Wolfe continued to serve on the Board of Higher Education until 1994, when the Higher Education Restructuring Act of 1994, signed into law by Governor Christine Todd Whitman, dissolved the Board. Whitman replaced the Board of Higher Education with a smaller, more streamlined Commission of Higher Education consisting of 15 members serving 6-year terms. Jean Oswald, an employee of the New Jersey Commission of Higher Education, believed that Governor Whitman felt that the Board of Higher Education had become too bureaucratic with too much authority (Oswald phone interview, 2001). Wolfe noted that she had served on the Board of Higher Education from its creation to its termination, from the “womb to the tomb” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

New Jersey rewarded Wolfe’s service through several commemoration dinners, as well as naming a dormitory at Trenton State College in her honor. Additionally, she received many honorary degrees from New Jersey institutions of higher learning including her alma mater, Jersey City State.

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) dates back to 1882, when 17 of America’s first female college graduates formed the Association of Collegiate Alumnae (ACA) in order to expand women’s opportunities in higher education and the
workplace. The AAUW officially came into being when the ACA and the Southern Association of College Women merged in 1921. AAUW now consists more than 150,000 members and 1,500 branches across the United States. The stated missions of AAUW include: to advocate and lobby for gender equity; to work with teachers, administrators, students, and parents to institute gender-fair education programs in schools; to provide leadership training; and to promote multicultural awareness and action (AAUW Online, 2001). The AAUW website states that “the Association's voice has long influenced legislative debate on critical social issues such as education, sex discrimination, civil rights, reproductive choice, affirmative action, Title IX, welfare reform, vocational education, pay equity, family and medical leave, and health care reform” (AAUW Online, 2001).

Wolfe first joined the AAUW when she became a faculty member at Queens College in 1950. She noted that “for me, at that point, [AAUW] was the organization that represented my colleagues. You have to be a University Woman. We had an excellent branch in New York” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe soon became active on the national level, serving as national education chairperson, national education representative, member of the legislative committee, national legislative chair, and member of the planning committee for the 1971-1973 biennial. As national education representative, Wolfe traveled around the country speaking at different chapters of AAUW and encouraging members to engage in scholarly research on matters related to education. She noted, “I’ve been in every state in the United States for AAUW” (Wolfe, 1979). As a member of the planning committee for the 1971-1973 biennial, Wolfe collaborated with other university women to choose the theme, “The Crisis in Public
Education,” designed to focus attention on key issues in education. Wolfe also represented the AAUW in the National Alliance for Safer Cities, an issue important to her “because I work in New York City, one of the cities which is most concerned with these [urban problems]” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Additionally, Wolfe occasionally served as a witness on behalf of the AAUW before the House Education and Labor Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education (Wolfe Vitae, 2001).

**American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and Science Services**

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) is a “nonprofit professional society dedicated to the advancement of scientific and technological excellence across all disciplines, and to the public’s understanding of science and technology” (AAAS Online, 2001). The mission of the AAAS is to further the work of scientists, facilitate cooperation among scientists, foster scientific freedom and responsibility, improve the effectiveness of science in the promotion of human welfare, advance education in science, and increase the public’s understanding and appreciation of the promise of scientific methods in human progress (AAAS Online, 2001).

Wolfe, a life member of AAAS, joined the organization in the 1960s (Wolfe, 1979). The AAAS provided Wolfe with a forum to encourage Black children to become more interested in science and technology and to urge science teachers to work harder to reach Black and minority children in their classes (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). While belonging to an organization dedicated to the study of science appeared at odds with Wolfe’s belief in interdisciplinary approaches to education and with her concerns about
the overemphasis of compartmentalized subject matter in the school curriculum, she joined because of a lifelong interest in the field of science and a determination to foster a similar interest among Black and minority students (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). In AAAS, Wolfe served as chair of the Teacher Education Committee of the Commission on Science Education, which was responsible for developing guidelines for the preparation of teachers of science in the elementary and secondary schools (Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe’s involvement with AAAS led her to become actively involved with a separate science organization, Science Service, the parent organization of the scientific journal Science News (Science Service Online, 2001; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Science Service began in 1922 with the publication of Science News-Letter, which later became Science News. Additionally, Science Service instituted three science-education programs: the Science Talent Search (previously sponsored by Westinghouse and now by Intel) for high school seniors, the International Science and Engineering Fair (also sponsored by Intel) for ninth- through twelfth-graders, and the Discovery Young Scientist Challenge (supported by Discovery Communications, Inc.) for middle school students (Science News Online, 2001). Wolfe served and continues to serves on the Board of Trustees for Science Service and attends the yearly Science Talent Search (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The Science Talent Search, now in its 60th year, is the nation’s oldest and most highly-regarded science competition; alumni include five Nobel Laureates, ten MacArthur Foundation Fellows, and two Fields Medalists (Science Service Online, 2001).
In 1979, when Westinghouse sponsored the Science Talent Search awards, Wolfe noted that "I am tremendously concerned and interested in [these awards] because, in my 10 years as a member of that group, we only had one Black finalist and that has bothered me greatly" (Wolfe, 1979). In the year 2000, she reflected that while more Black children participated in the Science Talent Search, now sponsored by Intel, she still believed that science education could do more to attract and inspire Black children to pursue careers in science and technology (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe continues her activities with Science Service, embracing the opportunity to attend the Science Talent Search because she relishes learning more about the latest trends in science education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

**Queens College, CUNY**

Wolfe became involved in many facets of campus life while a faculty member at Queens College. During her tenure at Queens (1950-1984), Wolfe served on numerous committees, organized several programs, and acted as faculty counselor to a variety of student groups. For example, she served as chair of the admissions committee for Queens College; her responsibilities included giving critical consideration to undergraduate requirements and procedures for Queens College and making appropriate recommendations; cultivating and maintaining helpful relationships with the secondary schools and with other colleges; identifying problems related to the admission of students; maintaining close contact with people in the university responsible for developing special programs that might affect admissions policies; and advising the
president on the number of students to be admitted to the undergraduate division of a particular college (Wolfe Vitae, 2001).

In 1969, Wolfe founded and served as director of an African study abroad program. She required all students to take an honors seminar on Black Africa before embarking on the study tour, which included visits to numerous countries and African universities (Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe explained that

I started a study abroad program in Africa because it's so poorly known and so misrepresented – by everybody. [People] make these false generalizations. Most have no idea what goes on in Africa. They think of it, they’ve been told that it’s a jungle. Our schools don’t give any wonderful treatment of Africa. [My program] exposed students to Africa as it really is. I refused to take just Black [students]…. CUNY is not a Black school -- CUNY is all races and creeds and the only way you sell the whole concept of America is, when I go abroad with a group of Americans it has to be an integrated group. A multi-ethnic, multi-racial group of students. The minute you get off the airplane you don’t have to say a word – you can see a multi-national team. This solidifies us as Americans and… presents a different picture of ourselves. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe required each student traveling to Africa to take the Black Africa course the semester before the planned trip. She said:

[I teach] the course in Black Africa, which is required before they can go and study abroad, because I have found more and more that cultural shock of both Black and White Americans can be tremendous unless they are ready for the experience of living abroad. I have been working with many universities in Africa and many countries including Senegal, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, and three major countries in East Africa. I used to work in Uganda before we were expelled, at Makere University College, and at the University in Nairobi, Kenya, and the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. I see this [study abroad program] as a growing and continuing interest not only for our students at the City University, because I have also taken other groups such as the AAUW and the NABSE, and the Zeta Phi Beta sorority and other interested citizens. (Wolfe, 1979)

Wolfe participated in numerous other activities and committees at Queens. She was the first affirmative action officer of the college, served on the faculty council,
organized human relations workshops, and acted as coordinator for P.S. 201. In addition, Wolfe served as faculty advisor to Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education and to the Queens/CUNY Education Club (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She reflected that her involvement with student groups allowed her to “know students in a different way in class, and that’s why I gave so much attention to student activities” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe’s tenure and promotion papers noted her contributions to the college by stating:

Dr. Partridge is a devoted member of the College Faculty who is eager to do everything she can for the students with whom she works. She has been the faculty sponsor of the Education Club and is largely responsible for their becoming a chapter of the Future Teachers of America. Her work with the Student-Faculty Advisory Committee is another indication of her ability to guide student activities and to stimulate their thinking about important problems. Dr. Partridge has performed many services of value to the Department and the College in addition to her classroom teaching. [She] was one of the members of the steering committee which helped plan and conduct our evaluation study. For three years she was a member of the Comprehensive Examination committee and was chair for one year. Dr. Partridge was an elected member of the Faculty Council. She has been on the Publications board and the Social Committee [and] is advisor of the NAACP [and] Delta Pi Epsilon. She is in great demand as a speaker…not only locally but throughout the nation. (Tenure Papers, 1957)

**Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA)**

The Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) exists in more than 100 countries; each local chapter is an autonomous community-based, nongovernmental, nonprofit membership association. Each local YWCA chapter is affiliated with the national YWCA but is run by and for local community women and their families. YWCA programs and services vary according to the needs of the women in the community and include leadership training, housing, income-generating projects, health programs,
shelters for victims of violence, vocational skills training, development projects, opportunities to promote women’s rights, pre-school services, after-school care, and activities for older members (YWCA Online, 2001).

Wolfe became involved with the YWCA because it combines religion and education -- the Young Women’s Christian Association. A lot of people forget what the “C” stands for. And it’s concerned about young people and development of leadership among young people and concern with the development of the individual as his or her best self. ‘Y’ and ‘W’ stand for young women and I feel that it’s particularly necessary for young Black women who, from their very unfortunate backgrounds and lack of opportunity, may not be able to participate as fully as they should in an integrated world. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe worked with both local and regional YWCAs. At the national level, Wolfe served on the YWCA committee responsible for planning retreats, workshops, and other activities designed to foster leadership in young women. She believed that she grew as a person while serving on this committee through her interaction with committee members who came from a social work background. Wolfe observed that she “belonged to the world of education” and that working with social workers exposed her to different viewpoints and approaches. She elaborated:

Even though we had similarities, we also had great differences. Social work has as its major goal a group orientation. Education has its major emphasis on the individual and you use groups to develop the individual... It was helpful to me to work with people from a different professional background and orientation (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Zeta Phi Beta

The Zeta Phi Beta Sorority was established on the campus of Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1920 by five women who believed that “sorority elitism and socializing overshadowed the real mission for progressive organizations and failed to
address more fully the societal mores, ills, prejudices, and poverty affecting humanity in
gen​eral and the Black community in particular” and who wanted to “raise the
consciousness of their people, encourage the highest standards of scholastic achievement
and foster a greater sense of unity among its membership” (Thomas, 1998, p. xx). The
founders chose the name “Zeta Phi Beta” at their first official meeting; “Zeta”
represented zeal, “Phi,” scholarship, and “Beta,” sisterly love. Also, the founders termed
their annual meeting “boule” and determined that the leader of the sorority would be
known as “International Grand Basileus” (Harrison, 1998). The sorority’s constitution
elucidated three purposes:

1. Furthering the cause of education by encouraging the highest standards of
   scholarship among college women.

2. [Engaging in] uplifting worthwhile projects on college campuses and within
   communities in which we may be located.

3. Furthering the spirit of sisterly love and promoting the ideals of finer woman
   hood. (Adams, 1965, p. 9; Harrison, 1998; Ross, 2001, p. 244)

The constitution of the sorority also bound Zeta Phi Beta to a fraternity, Phi Beta Sigma,
a situation unique for Black sororities and fraternities (Ross, 2001).

Wolfe joined Zeta Phi Beta in 1943 while in Tuskegee, Alabama, before she
returned to Teachers College for graduate study. She explained that “White and Black
sororities are different [in that] Black sororities initiate graduate students” (Wolfe
Interview, 2000a). She chose Zeta Phi Beta because

it was doing things [and] didn’t have any time for social activities. I asked, what
are you doing for the people? I meant that – to me, we have an obligation. We
were privileged to have an education and our job is to give back to society in
proportion as God has blessed us. I don’t have time just for social activity. I feel
that we ought to use our abilities and our skills and our knowledge to help others,
and for me Zeta was doing more to help the downtrodden and we had some very
fine projects, scholarship programs, juvenile delinquency and youth offenses programs. I was taken by and interested in their programs for youth and [for] helping people move to a higher level of achievement. That’s why I’m a member of Zeta Phi Beta. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe noted that while “[Zeta Phi Beta] is committed to the three major ideas of scholarship, service, and sisterly love, [there is] no use having scholarship unless you use it to serve humankind and in doing so, you build understanding and sisterly love” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe served as the International Grand Basileus of Zeta Phi Beta from 1953-1965, the longest term in the history of the sorority. Administratively, Wolfe enacted several measures designed to centralize the leadership of the sorority and create an efficient organizational structure. She negotiated the purchase of its national headquarters in Washington, D.C. in 1953 (Harrison, 1998). Further, Wolfe published handbooks for appointed officers, created workshops for regional directors, established the structure of the national office, encouraged the publication of the first history of Zeta Phi Beta by Ola Adams, as well as oversaw the printing of many other materials designed to clarify leadership roles and improve the efficiency and organization of the sorority.


More significantly, Wolfe’s role as International Grand Basileus allowed her to implement new programs and policies that reflected her interests in education, democracy, and diversity. For example, in 1954, following the Supreme Court’s decision
in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Wolfe urged Zeta Phi Beta to support school integration and “demonstrate our belief in [integration] by broadening the base of our membership” (Adams, 1965, p. 49). She reiterated her belief in a 1956 speech, explaining that this goal of integration should permeate not only our school life and activities but our sorority life as well. We must accept the responsibilities that accompany this achievement, realizing that integration, like democracy, is a great social achievement, not a legacy; therefore, it may not simply be inherited. (Adams, 1965, p. 49)

As a result, the sorority accepted honorary members from other ethnicities (Harrison, 1998; Ross, 2001). Wolfe commented on this change while giving a speech at the celebration marking the 45th anniversary of the sorority:

Certainly, an organization that has withstood four decades must be founded on lasting values. Truly, a sorority that has become international in its scope, membership, and program must have been built upon a firm foundation and altruistic purposes. In order to have attracted to its membership women of other races, creeds, and colors representing all areas of vocational and professional choices, Zeta must have developed a program and structure commensurate with its values and goals. (Harrison, 1998; Wolfe, 1965)

Also reflecting Wolfe’s dedication to social activism and education were her monthly emphases and slogans. February’s message, for example, was “Let’s improve ourselves,” June’s slogan encouraged sorority members to “Help children and youth solve their problems,” October’s motto stated “Let’s begin with the children,” and December urged Zeta Phi Beta sisters to “Evaluate our growth” (Harrison, 1998, pp. 62-63).

Wolfe’s duties as Grand Basileus also included assisting with the organization of the boules, the Zeta Phi Beta celebration held every 18 months. For example, in 1957 the sorority gathered in Dallas, Texas. In addition to social activities with Phi Beta Sigma, the boule sponsored workshops including “The role of leadership in developing an awareness among youth of intellectual and professional opportunities,” “Vocational
guidance for youth as a directive toward economic opportunities,” “Zeta’s responsibility in guiding youth through richer social opportunities,” and “The role of the college-trained in world relations.” The timing of the 1957 boule coincided with the events of Little Rock, Arkansas, when five Black children attempted to attend an all-White school and were denied entrance. In response, Zeta Phi Beta raised $500 for the students involved and drafted citations praising their bravery (Ross, 2001). The other boules during Wolfe’s administration also reflected a combination of social activities and attention to social and political issues (Harrison, 1998).

Wolfe’s interest in fostering respect for diversity and pluralism also manifested itself through her initiation of a tradition known as the “foreign study tour,” an elective trip taken by Zeta sisters at the conclusion of the biennial boule. The first trip, in 1959, was to Hawaii; Wolfe chose Hawaii because she viewed it as “the answer to Little Rock” -- a pluralistic state demonstrating the capacity of many ethnic groups to live and work together cooperatively (Harrison, 1998, p. 60). Later destinations included Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean, through which Wolfe hoped to expose sorority sisters to different points of view and ways of life. The foreign study tour continues to occur following the biennial boule (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe worked to strengthen the sorority’s relationship with African countries and opened a chapter of Zeta Phi Beta in Monrovia, Liberia. Dr. Marjay Anderson, a member of Zeta Phi Beta, traveled with Wolfe in 1977 to Africa. She recalled that Wolfe had contacts with prominent politicians, academicians, and educators throughout several African countries (Anderson Telephone Interview, 2001). Additionally, Wolfe fostered closer relations and affiliations with groups within the United States, including the
National Conference of Christians and Jews, the National Council of Negro Women, and the American Council on Human Rights. Toward the end of Wolfe's administration, and with Wolfe's encouragement, the membership voted to change the term of Grand Basileus and other officer positions to two years with a three-term limit in order to facilitate more access to and turnover in leadership (Harrison, 1998, pp. 63-64).

Wolfe remained very active in her sorority after the completion of her term as International Grand Basileus. She became chairman of the Educational Foundation of Zeta Phi Beta; the Foundation was established as a separate entity from the sorority. Wolfe explained that Zeta Phi Beta, "a predominantly Black women's organization," espoused a responsibility for "helping other people attain their educational goals" (Wolfe, 1979). Therefore, the Foundation issued fellowships "not only to Black women, but to men and women in general, because I believe so much in affirmative action and I don't feel that I could ever be a party to non-affirmative action – therefore, our awards are advertised for everyone" (Wolfe, 1979). Wolfe also presented many speeches at the Zeta Phi Beta boules, and at meetings of regional and local chapters of the sorority. For example, at the 70th anniversary celebration of the sorority, Wolfe lauded Zeta Phi Beta for actively engaging in "worthwhile activities and contributions...[reflecting] the ideals of scholarship, service, and sisterly love" (Wolfe, 1990). The "worthwhile activities" referred to by Wolfe included programs that created career opportunities for minority students, illiteracy programs, conflict resolution and anger management classes, voter registration and education programs, drug and substance abuse prevention, volunteer opportunities, and women's health and wellness programs (Ross, 2001).
The sorority honored Wolfe’s contributions to Zeta Phi Beta through the creation of an annual scholarship, the Deborah Partridge Wolfe International Fellowship. The award is “available to graduate or undergraduate United States students studying abroad and/or graduate or undergraduate foreign students studying within the U. S., and is awarded for full-time study for one academic year” (Zeta Phi Beta Online, 2001). Additionally, Lawrence C. Ross’s 2001 book *The Divine Nine: A History Of African-American Fraternities and Sororities* profiled Wolfe as a “distinguished Zeta” (pp. 261-267). Sorority sister Marjay Anderson reflected that in Zeta Phi Beta, Wolfe always “served as a mentor” (Anderson Interview, 2001). She noted that Black women who “raise themselves up to [Wolfe’s] level often just leave all others behind,” but that Wolfe “continued to work for all people and fight for social and political causes” (Anderson Phone Interview, 2001).

**Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)**

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), founded as a department of the National Education Association, resulted from a merger of the Society of Curriculum Study and the Department of Supervision and Directors of Instruction (ASCD Online, 2001; Kliebard, 1995). An international, nonprofit, nonpartisan association of professional educators, ASCD attends to issues of curriculum development and supervision in education. ASCD draws its membership from a widely diverse body of professional educators, university professors, counselors, curriculum specialists, administrators, parents, and supervisors (ASCD Online, 2001). Wolfe became a charter member of ASCD in 1943 and remains a member today. Wolfe’s interest in
curriculum development and her experiences working with Black School supervisors drew her to ASCD (Wolfe Interview, 2000a), and she served in a number of capacities, including chair of the review council, chair of the nominations committee, member of the publications committee, and member of the plans and appraisal committee. She reflected that

I’ve held almost every office [in ASCD] except the presidency – they wouldn’t put Black folks up there, but I should have been. You know Alice Miel was president of ASCD [as were] all of my friends and former classmates [at Teachers College]. You know they didn’t have a Black president until the 1960s. But I stuck with them. I was on the board of ASCD, chairman of all the major committees, and never had the pleasure of being president, but I fought for those who came after me. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

**Graduate Record Examination Advanced Education Committee**

Wolfe served on the Graduate Record Examination Advanced Education Committee (Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). The Graduate Record Examination acts as one of the measures used by many graduate schools in the selection of graduate student applicants (GRE Online, 2001). The test is developed by the Educational Testing Service through a committee of examiners from the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe explained that she accepted this position because

I have for so many years complained about the cultural bias of those tests. I believe and felt, as many people have to admit, that they are standardized on middle class Whites, with little reference to minorities, whether they be Black, Puerto Rican, Indian, women, or any other kind of minority. But particularly because of the Black students who so often have not in the past had the kind of opportunity for examinations. Since so many of the states depend upon accreditation and certification on the basis of one’s success on the GRE, I thought it was exceedingly important that I take part in it, even though I find it [to be] one of the most difficult jobs that I’ve ever done. But I saw it as a really great
opportunity to write most of my items on minorities and, interestingly enough, most of my items were accepted. You know it's a rigorous method we use for writing those tests. The team has to accept each item first, and you have to defend every question and support it with data. But when my learned colleagues, all of whom were men, took the examination, they flunked it. Then I had the chance to call attention to the fact that they were culturally deprived, even if they have been saying Blacks have been culturally deprived, when they have to take tests that are made up only about White past experiences and so forth. (Wolfe, 1979)

**Associate Minister of First Baptist Church, Cranford, New Jersey**

Wolfe attended Union Theological Seminary from 1950-1951, where she studied under several “great and important theologians” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe entered Union Seminary “not necessarily to earn a degree” but to “enrich her understanding of the Bible and to learn how to preach” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe reflected:

I found Union to be one of the most exciting places because it is not traditional, not fundamental – it exposed me to a wide range of religious ideas, from modern thinkers in theology as well as more traditional. [Union provided] the whole gamut of viewpoints, which is how it ought to be. One of the great aspects [of Union] was its diversity. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe was ordained into the Progressive Baptist ministry on June 7, 1970, in Hartford, Connecticut. Her mother, Gertrude Cannon, attended Wolfe’s ordination. Wolfe remembered the sense of occasion and excitement surrounding her ordination; she reflected that she felt she was being ordained “for my mother, who always wanted to be a priest, for myself, and for all the women who were to follow” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Following her ordination, Wolfe served and continues to serve as Associate Minister of First Baptist Church of Cranford, the same church in which she was baptized and her father worked as pastor (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe frequently preaches the sermon at Sunday services; her sermons revolve around issues related to democracy, respect for
difference, and love of Jesus and the Bible. Following her ordination, Wolfe joined the New Jersey Convention of Progressive Baptists; in 1999 she was elected as its first female president (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe’s active religious life and her interest in religion compelled her to join a myriad of organizations centered on religion, society, and education. These included Church Women United, the New Jersey Convention of Progressive Baptists, the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen, and the National Council of Christians and Jews (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe actively participated in each of these organizations.

For example, Wolfe served as Church Women United’s Non-Governmental Representative to the United Nations for many years. An ecumenical group of Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and other Christian women founded Church Women United in 1941; the organization has more than 1,400 local and state units. “Gifted by...diversity or race, economics, age, culture, and theology,” the group is biblically based through “shared Christian faith” (Church Women United Online, 2001). As an Non-Governmental Organization of the United Nations, Church Women United supports the UN in order to promote peaceful approaches to conflict resolution. Wolfe joined Church Women United because of its commitment to human rights and social justice, as well as to the Charter of the UN.

Wolfe reflected that her active religious life enriched her conception of education and reinforced her dedication to improving society through social and political action.

She noted that religion for me has meant that I have a picture of what I would be if I really could be the best person I ought to be. Religion gives me a goal beyond myself, a cause greater than myself – it sets goals for me. No matter how much I achieve I have
so much more to do. Religion for me, of course, is a means through which and by which society itself can be changed. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

She observed that “teaching and preaching are both centered on the person and making them a better person, a more complete individual” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Other Interests

Wolfe believed that each person required balance in life; despite her busy schedule, Wolfe dedicated time to a variety of hobbies and interests. She enjoyed singing, playing the piano, engaging in different sports, and reading. She even tried flying; while at Tuskegee, Wolfe took flying lessons from one of the famed Tuskegee Airmen. She recalled:

During World War II Tuskegee had the only airfield for the training of the Tuskegee Airmen, the only group of Black airmen in World War II. I felt very close to them. I took my flying lessons from Captain Anderson and I raised the question – why couldn’t women be a part of this program? I’m sorry I didn’t keep up with flying. I wish I had taken the whole program. There were two women who completed the whole flying program, but [the airmen] didn’t have any place for them anyhow. But it made me feel like I could relate to the cadets in a different kind of way. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)

Wolfe also considered her extensive travel experiences as one of the most “significant aspects” of her life, experiences that enriched her as a person and deepened her respect for cultural pluralism. Wolfe argued that travel contributed to her conception of education and society, asserting that world understanding could occur only if people took the time to understand and really know each other. She explained, “I have been on every continent except Antarctica because I believe there is no other way you can really know people. You know people best when you work with them in their home settings and understand what is important to them” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).
Wolfe traveled for a variety of reasons: family vacations, religious pilgrimages, educational conferences, comparative educational study, and study abroad programs. For example, Wolfe traveled to South Africa with the Comparative Education Society, the group visited Johannesburg, Kruger National Park, Swaziland, Zululand, Natal, Golden Gate National Park, Lesotho, Bloemfornstein, and Orange Free State, and then traveled to Blantyre, Malawai and Nairobi, Kenya (Wolfe Speech J, n.d.). Wolfe embarked on numerous other trips to Africa, with Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, with her African Study Abroad Group, with the AAUW, and for UN conferences. Wolfe traveled extensively in other continents; she visited the Soviet Union, China, Western and Eastern Europe, Australia, and numerous other places around the world (Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

**Awards and Recognition**

Stevens Institute Technology (1991), Rutgers University (1992), Thomas Edison College (1992), and Queens College (2001).

Wolfe’s contributions also garnered honors: Distinguished Medal Award, Union College New Jersey; George Washington Carver Award; Distinguished Service Medal, National Top Ladies of Distinction; Distinguished Service Award, National Association of State Boards of Education; Recipient of Woman of the Year Award, Delta Beta Zeta; Medal of Honor, Daughters of the American Revolution; Member of the Citizen’s Advisory Committee; Citation New Jersey State Board of Education; and a Citation from the New Jersey State Council of Vocational Education.

Wolfe is listed in Who’s who in the world, Who’s who in America, Who’s who among American Women, Leaders in Education, International Biography, Current Biography, and Who’s Who in Black America. Additionally, Wolfe has two buildings named in her honor. To recognize Wolfe’s contributions to Tuskegee’s Laboratory Schools, the Macon County Board of Education named the new junior-senior high school in Shorter, Alabama, after Wolfe. The Deborah Cannon Wolfe Junior-Senior High School opened on January 1, 1962, and the dedication took place on October 28, 1962. Also, New Jersey honored Wolfe’s contributions to its educational system by naming a dormitory at Trenton State College in her honor.

Conclusions

Kathleen Delehanty, a staff member of the New Jersey Commission for Higher Education, recalled that

for some sort of celebration or gala, they put together a list of achievements for each member of the [New Jersey] Board [of Education], and I remember being
amazed at all [Wolfe] had accomplished and how scholarly she was. She was doing and accomplishing unbelievable things at a time when it was difficult for anybody to do those things, particularly a female minority. She obviously had to fight – in those times you couldn’t just squeak by. (Delehanty Telephone Interview, 2001)

Wolfe concurred, also referring to herself as a “fighter” -- a fighter for democratic education, a fighter for freedom, a fighter for equality and respect for diversity. Wolfe joined organizations that advocated these issues that were closest to her heart and that allowed her to promote her beliefs in social justice, respect for diversity, and the democratization of education. But, also, Wolfe believed that she often made a political statement merely by joining a group. She explained:

A lot of these organizations I’ve gotten involved in because they haven’t had any Black women in them. I was the first Black national officer of the American Association of University Women, even though that’s one of the oldest women’s organizations. So you sometimes do things, not for yourself, but for your whole race, you know? The same thing might be said of some of these other organizations, they have never worked with Blacks that were their peers, so that I feel, well, there’s an opportunity for me to extend their knowledge at a sacrifice, sometimes, for myself. But I figure, wherever we can build that kind of opportunity and understanding, the better it is. (Wolfe, 1979)

Wolfe asserted that each organization she joined provided her opportunity and access to a wide range of diverse peoples. Wolfe noted that her activities “have been my training ground. I have had my greatest growth development and leadership through my participation in activities of these kinds; each time I feel that I’m a better person because of the opportunity that I had for my participation” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Beyond improving herself, Wolfe also sought to serve as a mentor for those “who followed” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She explained, “I’m concerned and interested in seeing that what I’m thinking today will be the foundation for a new kind of world tomorrow” (Wolfe, 1979).
In terms of her role as mentor, Wolfe differentiated between her membership in “Black” groups and “White” groups. She noted that “my Black groups make me constantly aware of my responsibility to my own group and [reinforce] my love of my group” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe possessed a strong sense of duty and commitment to Black Americans who were less educated and had fewer opportunities than she. Additionally, she believed deeply in her responsibility to serve as a strong, independent, well-educated Black female mentor to Black women “following behind her” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). In her “White” groups, Wolfe felt pressure to demonstrate that a Black female was equally capable of fulfilling leadership roles. She admitted that she often had to be an “aggressive son of a gun” to earn her leadership roles, but noted that the situation gradually improved over the years “because of affirmative action and a growing sensitivity that there ought to be more mixture in the organization leadership” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

Wolfe’s participation in multiple realms of community life garnered attention and respect from her peers who recognized her contributions to society and education through her political and social action. For example, Syd Lefkoe, who nominated Wolfe to receive an honorary degree at the Queens College 2001 Commencement, observed that

[Wolfe] has pushed the box and blazed trails in many arenas, and continues to encourage young people to do the same [and she] has taken herself to the center of the most meaningful causes of our times. She belongs to a long list of organizations prominent in the last two decades in national transformation in education, inter-religious and interracial understanding, women’s and minority rights, and youth and community affairs. (Lefkoe Memo, 2000)

Former New Jersey Chancellor of Higher Education T. Edward Hollander referred to Wolfe as one of the “pioneers of opportunity...working for social progress [with]
devotion to improving the quality of human life, to duty, to the intelligent use of skill...” (Hollander, 1989). He added that Wolfe’s life is a demarcation of what it really takes to make a difference.... [Wolfe’s] speaking, conferencing and travel schedule is overwhelming in her quest to motivate people to action...Her background as teacher, professor, and minister, her scholarship and contributions to the intellectual, political, civic, and social life of our nation, her stellar reputation as a major women’s and humans rights activist, long before it became fashionable to be identified as such – these are endearing qualities [as well as] her brilliance and her solid record of accomplishment...(Hollander, 1989)

In interviews, articles, and speeches, Wolfe consistently reiterated her commitment to democratizing American society by “doing democracy” rather than merely “talking” democracy (i.e., Wolfe, 1979; Wolfe Interview, 2000a). She reflected that “community activity is just a part of living as a human being, as a citizen, as a professional...I just see that as a natural part of doing my share to make this a better world” (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS OF WOLFE’S WORK

As an educator, Wolfe 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. And by attending to the key issues of democracy within the context of social and cultural diversity, Wolfe, in her laboratory schools and college classrooms, attempted to create “democracies in microcosm” (Dewey, 1916). The curricula Wolfe created and enacted reflected John Dewey’s belief in the need for schools to teach students the particular processes, values, and attitudes necessary to become involved citizens in multiple realms of community life (Dewey, 1916; 1927). Wolfe constructed curricular experiences designed to teach students democratic habits of mind; how to think critically, view ideas with skepticism, engage in democratic discourse, and consider ways to become politically active (Partridge, 1945).

Additionally, Wolfe adhered to the Deweyan notion of an educator’s “moral commitment to the public good” (Dewey, 1927, p. 143). In her work as an educator at Tuskegee and at Queens, Wolfe conceived of the school as an integral part of the community. She advocated active community participation in school events and urged her student teachers to attain a deep understanding of the community context in which their students lived. Wolfe consistently emphasized the vital importance of recognizing the sociological, cultural, and psychological context of the students and their community
before developing a curriculum. Also, Wolfe argued that schools held the responsibility to provide opportunities for adults in the community to continue their education for democracy.

Wolfe epitomized Dewey's vision of active citizen participation in the community. She sought out organizations and societies that fought for issues of democracy -- civil rights, gender equality, educational access for all, respect for diversity, and religious freedom. Wolfe hoped that her social and political activism would inspire other people to work together to democratize and improve American society (Wolfe Interview, 2000a), and in many instances, her work did exactly that.

Wolfe also contended that schools should teach future citizens the relationship between rights and responsibilities in a democracy. In what Benjamin Barber has termed “citizenship education for strong democracy,” Wolfe urged teachers to instruct students in their obligations and responsibilities as citizens and create classrooms and schools that provided an “apprenticeship of liberty” (Barber, 1984; 1992). In her writings and speeches, Wolfe frequently lamented the tendency of American citizens to focus too narrowly on their rights and freedoms and to ignore their responsibilities as citizens. Much like Dewey (1916; 1927/1954), Barber (1984; 1992), Parker (1996b), and other democratic theorists, Wolfe conceived of the responsibilities of citizens as extending far beyond the act of voting. Wolfe drew attention to the issue of responsibility through her course readings, her teaching approaches, her school curricula, her speeches, and her involvement in community activities.

Through her scholarly writings, speeches, and teaching, Wolfe also continually grappled with Parker's (1996b) 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?” (Parker, 1996b, p. 113). Wolfe consistently urged educators and curriculum developers to understand the diverse backgrounds of students while also constructing curricula that met their “democratic needs” (Partridge, 1945; Wolfe, 1968a). She denounced the common perception of the United States as a cultural “melting pot” and asserted that education for democracy required recognition that each student possessed a unique cultural background. However, she also emphasized the importance of teaching students to live together in a democratic society through facilitating the development of practical judgment, deliberation skills, and respect for differences. Wolfe made a conscious effort to attend to the delicate balance of political unity within the context of social and cultural diversity.

A final important aspect of Wolfe’s commitment to education for democracy involved her service to the government. In particular, Wolfe viewed her tenure as education chief of the United States House of Representative’s Committee on Education and Labor as a means to democratize education by increasing access to education, creating programs designed to assist culturally deprived students, generating federal funding of education, and attempting to alleviate the burden of poverty for many in society (Wolfe Interview, 2000a).

On the whole, Wolfe’s major contributions to the field of education lie in her advocacy for democratic ideals through her work as a social educator. Wolfe consistently drew attention to issues of democracy, diversity, and equity through her teaching, curriculum development, scholarly writings, speeches, government service, and social activism. The story of Wolfe’s life and career offers insight into the complex social,
political, economic, and ethical dilemmas associated with building an inclusive
democratic society (Makler, 1999, p. 253). Moreover, Wolfe’s career provides a glimpse
into the discourse about education, diversity, social justice, and democracy taking place

Wolfe entered the world of academia and education at a time when very few
Black females held college degrees, much less a masters and a doctoral degree from
Teachers College, Columbia University (Anderson, 1984). Wolfe embraced the
progressive ideals espoused by the Teachers College faculty; in fact, she maintained her
dedication to progressive educational philosophy throughout her career despite the
attacks levied at progressivism and its eventual disintegration in the 1950s. Wolfe truly
believed that progressive ideals held the potential to democratize education and foment
change in the larger society. Thus, Wolfe consistently advocated a child-centered
curriculum that de-emphasized the dominance of subject matter knowledge, focused on
meeting the cultural, sociological, and psychological needs of the “whole child,” and
taught democratic habits of mind. Wolfe applied her progressive philosophy to the
different environments in which she worked and taught: segregated Black rural Alabama
laboratory schools, the historically Black Tuskegee Institute, predominantly White
Queens College, the ethnically diverse P.S. 201, and several other institutions.
Additionally, in her scholarly speeches and writings, Wolfe called for progressive
curricula that met the unique needs of overlooked, disadvantaged, and “culturally
deprived” children.

Throughout her career, Wolfe also remained committed to the “social
reconstructivist” ideals promoted by Harold Rugg, John Childs, and George Counts in the
heyday of the progressive education movement. She consistently viewed schools as a means to change society, arguing that education could foster the democratic skills that would teach students to appreciate differences and similarities among people of different classes, races, and religions and inspire them to engage in social and political activism in order to improve society. Wolfe conceived of schools as the vehicle to propel American society closer to the democratic ideals espoused in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, particularly the creed that “all men are created equal.” Wolfe also visualized democracy in the same way that Dewey did, as an ongoing experiment, a “creative, constructive process involving continuous change” (Dewey, 1916, p. 101). She believed that American democracy had yet to fulfill its true potential. She concurred with Dewey (1927), who noted that

> we should not speak of democratic societies as if they were fully in place. Better to speak of societies attempting to become more and more democratic, struggling against the ever-present forces which tempt them away from the further realization of democratic ideals (p. 106).

Education, to Wolfe, could serve as the “keystone to the arch of freedom” and the “great equalizer”; in her view it held the potential to transform American society and mitigate the forces stifling democratic ideals. An examination of Wolfe’s application of progressivism and social reconstructivism provides insight and reflection on “discourse about education, gender, and social justice...within a national conversation that included John Dewey, William Kilpatrick, George Counts, Jesse Newlon, and Mabel Carney” (Crocco, Munro, and Weiler, 1999, p. 3). Crocco, Munro, and Weiler (1999) note that “the stories of male progressive educators are far better known than their female counterparts.... Only recently have feminist scholars in the history of education begun to
provide a corrective to versions of the history of education that feature women merely as sidekicks or ciphers (Apple, 1986) when they are visible at all” (p. 3).

Additionally, Wolfe drew attention to issues of democracy, diversity, and equity long before “multiculturalism” and “culturally relevant teaching” became catchphrases in education (i.e., Banks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1997). Wolfe’s interest in intercultural education, her advocacy of “culturally appropriate” teaching approaches for “culturally deprived” students, and her arguments for the integration of Black history into the school curriculum situate her firmly within the history of multicultural education. Wolfe believed that democracy must be inclusive, and her insight into “advanced ideas about democracy” (Parker, 1996b) foreshadowed the current debate over diversity issues in education.

Moreover, Banks (1995) examined the historical development of the dimensions and practice of multicultural education, arguing that the history of multicultural education needs to be more fully described. In fact, Banks calls for more historical studies examining

the teaching of African American history in the schools and colleges from the turn of the century to the 1960s. Studies are also needed to determine the extent to which the intergroup education movement intersected with the ethnic studies tradition...the role of African American institutions, such as churches, schools, sororities, fraternities, and women’s clubs in promoting the study and teaching of African American history also needs to be researched...[and a] comprehensive history of the intergroup education movement is needed. (Banks, 1995, p. 18-19)

Thus, Wolfe’s career provides a glimpse into some of the issues raised by Banks and illuminates some of the history of multicultural education.

Wolfe’s career also provides perspective on the current educational policy discourse revolving around democracy, education, and multiculturalism. The present
cultural, academic, and linguistic diversity of many American public schools, and the growing presence of high stakes testing and standards-based reform, have drawn attention to the challenges of providing instruction that accommodates all levels of diversity (i.e., Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gomez, 1996; Meier, 1995; Zeichner, 1996). Educational research has attempted to address approaches to culturally relevant pedagogy that meets the needs of culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse learners (i.e., Banks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1997). Wolfe's work as a social educator provides a glimpse of how one teacher considered issues of democracy, diversity, equity, and culturally appropriate pedagogy, and how she applied her democratic ideals in the classroom.

Several factors may account for the apparent lack of sustained attention to Wolfe's contributions to education. First, 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 or teaching recommendations. Additionally, many of her publications appeared in traditionally African-American journals. These journals, while respected and well-read within the African-American community, may not have reached an extensive audience in the larger, predominantly White, academic world in which Wolfe worked.

Wolfe did conduct several extensive educational studies during her tenure as Education Chief of the United States Congress. These publications, however, were labeled as committee prints and did not credit Wolfe with authorship. Thus, because Wolfe chose not to build a substantial body of scholarly research, her ideas did not receive widespread, sustained attention. This choice, however, was consistent with
Wolfe’s emphasis on “teaching and doing” rather than talking or writing about democratizing education (Wolfe Interview, 2000a). Wolfe believed that she could influence more lives by applying ideas of democracy in the classroom and educating students for active citizenship.

Secondly, Wolfe worked during a time period in which Black females struggled to achieve equal rights and equal recognition in American society. Wolfe faced multiple challenges in the world of academia, challenges directly related to her race and gender. As a Black female academic, Wolfe existed in the upper echelons of educated African-Americans (Anderson, 1984). However, within the Black community, prevalent male attitudes assumed that Black women existed to serve men rather than lead in the work of “racial uplift” (Higginbotham, 1992). Black women teaching at historically Black colleges often were promoted later than male colleagues who were less qualified (Crocco, 1999a; Higginbotham, 1992). Within the White academic world, Black females found themselves marginalized and challenged by pervasive racism and sexism (Crocco, 1999b; Makler, 1999). Educational histories only now are focusing more attention on the contributions of women as social educators (i.e., Crocco and Davis, 1999). Wolfe may have been overlooked because of her race and gender within an educational and historical context that greater valued the stories and achievements of male theorists (Makler, 1999).

Thirdly, Wolfe’s contributions to education centered on the application of her progressive, democratic educational philosophy in schools, classrooms, and multiple realms of community life. She practiced democratic education, but chose not to publish extensive theories of democratic education. Accordingly, her work most likely suffered from academia’s emphasis on and valuation of published theory versus classroom
practice. Crocco and Davis (1999) noted that many female social educators' contributions were overlooked as they chose to engage in low-status "practice" rather than high-status "theory." Wolfe fits within this group. Wolfe's extensive involvement in community life clearly demonstrated her commitment to social activism and her service to the profession of education, but such activity traditionally has been devalued and de-emphasized in academia.

Wolfe's colleagues acknowledged her significant contributions to education, particularly her work as a social educator fighting for democratic ideals. For example, reflecting on Wolfe's contributions to education, former Chancellor T. Edward Hollander of the New Jersey Department of Higher Education remarked in 1989:

Each generation, if it is lucky, has its share of those exceptional, rare, compassionate, wonderful human beings whose very lives exemplify concern for the young, whose works represent a steadfast commitment to their nurturing and to their futures, whose dedication bolsters humanity. Deborah Wolfe is such an individual. She will not allow any child regardless of color, gender, or background to be weighed in the balance of any system and left wanting. [Wolfe] is living one of those lives that is devoted to making a difference on the education front. The message of her commitment is plain and straightforward: help our young people, and all people, to be freed of the narrow constrictions of the mind. Help them to realize the beauty they possess inside; help to strengthen them to stand up against the vicissitudes of hatred and ignorance; and give them the courage to face life's responsibilities with determination and clarity of purpose. (Hollander, 1989)

When asked to reflect on her own contributions to education, Wolfe summed up her career by saying:

My legacy to education? Well, that's hard to put into words. It's rather like writing your epitaph.... I would certainly hope they would believe that here is a woman who gave her all to education in the fullest sense of the world...who attempted to empower every individual to the point that they understand their strengths and weaknesses and are willing to share themselves with others. A teacher who was concerned with each individual with whom she interacted, recognizing that no two are alike. Therefore, it is important to study each person
carefully, be hesitant about over-generalizing and allowing them to grow in new
directions. A woman who knew and enjoyed a wide range of ideas and areas of
human knowledge. Above all, here is a woman who loved people and truly cared
about people and who believed strongly “of one blood God made all to dwell on
the face of the earth.” And I’d go to the end of the earth to help people
understand that color, race, creed, and formal conditions of servitude are only
superficial. We are one. (Wolfe Interview, 2000a)
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Stephanie van Hover was born in Bethesda, Maryland, on June 14, 1973. She is the oldest daughter of Anthony J. van Hover and Kathleen I van Hover. She has two sisters, Angela and Christine. After graduating from Satellite High School in 1991, she entered the University of Florida in Gainesville. She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in history *cum laude* in 1995 and her Master of Education in 1996 from the University of Florida. She taught social studies in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. In 1998 she entered the doctoral program in social studies education at the University of Florida.
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Elizabeth Anne Yeager, Chair
Associate Professor of Teaching and Learning

Gene Todd, Co-chair
Professor of Teaching and Learning

Mary T. Brownell
Associate Professor of Special Education

Robert Sherman
Professor of Foundations of Education
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Colleen Swain
Assistant Professor of Teaching and Learning

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dean, College of Education

Dean, Graduate School