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Namesake schools: Vulnerable places and cultural narratives of the South

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ABSTRACT

Geographic place and socio-political space are salient in struggles for justice in education. Social geography provides a frame for discussing the relationship between names of schools and narratives of race, place, and justice (racial and spatial) in the US South. Featured herein is an illustrative case of how a school named after an African American man is implicated in the construction and preservation of cultural memory through its namesake status and the curriculum. In the literature, commemoration policies are often ignored as little points of support that codify the processes of deliberation and decision-making that guide how school buildings are named. Commemoration policies from two school districts are juxtaposed to show the varying levels of attention each gives to diversity and culture. The notion of curriculum leadership advanced is characterized by socio-political consciousness about how racial justice is linked to spatial justice and how both are mediated by practices, policies, and politics around the naming of places. This discussion has implications for other sites of cultural memory whose futures are increasingly governed by market demands, such as commodification and commemoration, rather than the legacies of humanitarians.

Namesake schools: Vulnerable places and cultural narratives of the South

The year 2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the 1965 march for Civil Rights that journeyed from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. Historians often refer to the march as “Bloody Sunday” due to the brutality protesters faced from law enforcement agents and individuals from the general population. Bloody Sunday marks one event among many of the Civil Rights Movement that brought attention to racial (and other types of) injustice in the U.S. South and the struggle to secure equal rights for Blacks to use and enjoy common public sites and services, and receive fair treatment under public policies and the law.

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As part of the 50th year anniversary of the march, a commemoration was held, during which U.S. President Barack Obama gave a nationally televised speech. Behind the podium from where he delivered the speech stood another structure: the Edmund Pettus Bridge—a national historic landmark since 2013. The Edmund Pettus Bridge was a site (place) of contact between people who were on different sides of the debate in 1965 about who should be counted (be represented) and who should count (be recognized) in the political deliberations affecting the future of the United States and the South in particular. Its commemoration further marked it as a symbol of the struggle for racial equality.

In his speech, President Obama alluded to the vulnerability of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and emphasized that while the violence of racism had diminished as a structural force, racism had not ceased to exist. He cautioned the audience to consider how that which was gained through struggle can be taken away once one fails to notice when and how those gains are being gradually diminished, and fails to struggle to retain them. The delivery of the speech from a podium someone *placed* in front of the bridge illustrated how race and place matter ontologically, epistemologically geographically, and socially. In 2015, these events converged to further shape an historical and cultural narrative involving struggles amid places and races. The overall televised commemoration worked to arouse collective memory, awaken the public out of social amnesia, offer political and legal insights informing deliberation over the future of the Voting Rights Act, and relate the 1965 spirit of protest to more recent protests over instances of police (or security guard) brutality that have resulted in the deaths of unarmed Black youth.

In the same year, 2015, the phrase “stand your ground” took on a more literal meaning in association with the 2012 killing of a Black youth named Trayvon Martin by a security guard. After the security guard was acquitted in 2013 under the self-defense statute colloquially referred to as “stand your ground” (first passed in Florida), the Department of Justice decided in 2015 there was insufficient evidence to determine whether the murder was racially motivated (a hate crime), and therefore, the security guard could not be charged with violating Martin’s Civil Rights. In reaction to the decision, the figurative meaning of the phrase “stand your ground” (i.e., stand firm on one’s opinion or argument) became pronounced as public protests began in largely Black communities. These related events occurred in places such as the community through which Trayvon Martin traveled when shot, and the streets where people gathered to make public their dissatisfaction with the court’s decision. Whether commemorated or not, places can hold meaning, help preserve memory, and provide impetus for reflection and social change.

Blacks have been particularly vocal about the exclusion or misrepresentation of their heritage in various places (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, & Azaryahu, 2010). Even in cyberspace, their history and cultural memory are imbricated with struggles over how places are named. Such struggles are exemplified in a White supremacist group’s registration of the domain name martinlutherking.org. The group’s appropriation of M. L. King’s name in cyberspace can misdirect inquirers away

from legitimate sites about him (Alderman, 2009). Instead, such sites redirect inquirers toward extremist attitudes and activities they had not intended to encounter.

Schools are also places that occupy territorial and political space, and recent changes to the names of schools point to ongoing struggles over cultural memory. In January 2014, a school in Jacksonville, Florida changed its name from one associated with a Ku Klux Klan leader (who was also a confederate general) to the name of the school's neighborhood (Klein, 2015). In 2015, attention to schools named after confederate soldiers was reignited after an episode of actual violence—the murder of nine Blacks by a White male who entered a church and began shooting. Amid questions in the public media over whether or not it was a hate crime, photos were released of the assailant holding a gun and a confederate battle flag (Jenkins, 2015). Whether at a church or school, attacks on Blacks and the places where they congregate to study are episodes of actual violence in cultural memory.

What has been overlooked in the educational literature on race and place in the South are not schools, but the names of schools in narratives about communities and their struggles for racial and spatial justice. The study of namesake schools can provide insight into the social context when changes in names are explored in connection to social issues such as segregation and stratification, or economic decline or development. Furthermore, the limited information on the involvement of marginalized groups in the academic literature on education, educational leadership, and curriculum studies can be expanded through research on namesake schools that have been commemorated in honor of humanitarians from groups typically ignored in the curriculum of K–12 schooling. The processes of naming or commemorating, whether a country or a school building, can be understood as part of ongoing struggle among various communities to preserve cultural memory.

We present the case of the Charlie Walker Middle School—one of several schools that prompted us to consider the relevance of namesake schools to broader conversations about racial justice that wax and wane in national discourses. In 2013 to 2014, we consulted with the Charlie Walker Middle School leadership team on infusing the life of Charlie Walker across the school's curriculum. Providing students with opportunities to learn about the person for whom a school was named is not unheard of in the educational literature (e.g., Thomas A. Edison Middle School linked the namesake to the establishment of an invention club [Vanloon, Kornoelje, & Rowman, 2014]). However, the approach to curriculum enhancement at Charlie Walker Middle School not only involved learning about Walker's biography, but also involved enhancing the school-wide curriculum (i.e., all the experiences in the learning environment).

Our engagement with the school brought us to the following speculative question: What would happen to the namesake school's culture and curriculum if its name were to change? The question reflected our concerns about the vulnerability of the school's name given that just a few years earlier, a school in the same district

had undergone a name change (reduced from two names to two initials) without fanfare or public outcry, and within a decade of having been converted to a magnet school. We present this case to suggest variations of a school's name can signal its increasing vulnerability—being at risk of reduction or erasure. We point to school district commemoration policy as a point of support in mediating political might when used to name or rename schools, especially when political might hinges on racial and economic power and privilege. Before describing this particular case, we introduce literature on schools and naming, alongside similar explorations of place-names informed by critical social geography (Soja, 2009).

Naming struggles for racial and spatial justice

Naming (and renaming) people (i.e., those who were treated as slaves, those who immigrated to the United States, those who were taken from home to attend boarding schools) and places (i.e., schools, streets, bridges, buildings) involves power, privilege, history, and geography. Thus, naming in the United States is tied to the promulgation of Euro-Western epistemologies and ontologies, systems that organized and classified time, space, people, and the natural environment into separate entities, along with practices that remain part of the legacy of colonization and imperialism (Smith, 1999). Place-naming has been studied as a spatial practice in the colonial process of nation-building and as commemoration through research examining economics, neoliberalism, and relationships between naming, heritage, and identity (Azaryahu & Kook, 2002; Breymaier, 2003). Research has also explored how Chicano communities, for example, have engaged in conflicts over space and place-identity since the United States' annexation of Mexican territory in the 1840s (Villa, 2000). Such research is informative for communities engaged in similar conflicts—a point to which we refer in the conclusion implicating extra-legal inscription and curriculum leadership.

Critical social geography

Critical social geography holds place and space together as a relationship between social and geographic locations involving issues of spatial justice and injustice (Soja, 2009). Scholars in the United States have given much more attention in recent years to how inequity is perpetuated in schooling by engaging lenses of spatial justice and injustice (e.g., Grant, Arcello, Konrad, & Swenson, 2014) to examine the relationship between housing and schooling policies (e.g., Lipman, 2012), whether alone or in combination with social capital theory (e.g., Alderman, 2008; Holme & Rangel, 2012). Focusing on naming draws attention across space-time (Smith, 1999), rather than toward a fixed point of reference (a name, a school) to consider the past, present, and emerging future of cultural memory.

Place-Names: Namesake schools

Studies of namesake schools can help to shed light on the often contentious and changing nature of what might be called American collective memory (Alderman, 2002), especially memories enmeshed in the production of racialized cultural landscapes (Rose-Redwood et al., 2010). Beyond just adding to the knowledge base on relationships between schools and communities in which they are situated (e.g., Kifano, 1996; McCall, 2006; Polsky, 1998; Wolfe-Dawson, 2008), this research also points to the intersection of place and race in education across the U.S. in order to provide lessons on how youth resist White supremacy (Duncan, 1996), achieve academically (Morris & Monroe, 2009), and learn from the historical narratives of racial identity among individuals, schools, and communities (Alderman, 2002; Callejo-Pérez, 2012).

Historically, issues of equity in education pertaining to race and place in the Southern U.S. have been codified in the legal and historical narratives on school segregation and White flight. Although most commemorations of significant people from Black history occur in the South, with Florida ranking third among all U.S. states behind Georgia and Texas (Tretter, 2011), accounts of naming schools after Blacks are still uncommon in the academic literature on education. While others in curriculum studies have contributed to understandings of the American south as place and identity by drawing on social psychoanalysis, critical theory, literary theory, and autobiography (Brass, 2013), none to our knowledge have examined school and community leadership, past and present, tied to school curriculum and commemoration.

While political friction over place-names on a global scale can be addressed at the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (Kadmon, 2004), disputes over the naming of schools are hashed out locally by individuals and communities. Such disputes are reported more frequently in local news than academic literature. Reporters tend to focus on disputes over school names that have become public and/or charged with tension and ignore the politics and policies of naming that occur gradually and without public debate. Academic literature addressing disputes over school naming tend to focus on school board meetings while ignoring the role of policy, curriculum, and school leadership (For an exception, see Levy, Salamon, Waters, & Mansfield, [in press](#))

In Virginia, for example, one such dispute was spurred by the need to replace decaying signage (Sieff, 2010). The media reported the event as a fight over the spelling of a name—whether the new sign would have one or two “s’s” after the “a” in Douglas/s. Speculation among community residents over the history of the school’s name were reported, including a story of a principal who dropped the second “s” in Douglass in the 1940s after being pressured by White residents to disassociate it from Frederick Douglass, who was a Black abolitionist. The reporter described the dispute as part of the narrative construction of collective memory and identity politics, stating, “No matter the spelling, Frederick Douglass is still at

the core of the school's historical memory. A sign bearing his likeness and name (spelled correctly) sits just behind the building" (Sieff, 2010, n.p.). The reporter also added those left who care about preserving the memory of segregation in Virginia were worried that "their hold on that chapter of local history could be slipping away" (Sieff, 2010, n.p.). The school was originally built for Black students and used by Black residents who would go there to watch movies when local public movie houses restricted their access.

Place-naming, especially of schools and streets, can be understood as a practice through which social groups with varying degrees of power debate their different understandings of the past and how they should be commemorated across the geographic and cultural landscape (Alderman, 2008). Thus, the vulnerability of names is entwined with the vulnerability of the cultural narratives that shape what African and/or American history is taught in schools. In other words, the degree of standardization or variability of school names depends on the political activity among members of community, school, and school district, namely the actors who shape policy, guiding the commemoration of buildings. The naming of school buildings, we suggest, can contribute to storytelling about the histories of policy, buildings (Yanow, 1995), and curriculum (Davis, 2001). The politics and policies of naming, in addition to concerns about racism and the vulnerability of civil rights legislation (as described above by President Obama), are illustrated in the following case of a namesake school located in a Southern rural community of Florida.

The Charlie Walker Middle Magnet School bears the name of a local activist of African descent and is an interesting case because its historical cultural narrative of the place-name is unfolding in the context of demographic change, desegregation policy guided by civil rights legislation, and curriculum development. The past efforts by Walker's family to name a school after him mirror broader efforts in the past and present to acknowledge Blacks/African Americans in the history of the United States. The narration of this case transverses two schools: (1) the Citrus Park Colored School, and (2) the Charlie Walker Middle School. We integrate the narration with theoretical insights illustrated through artifacts gathered during a collaborative project between a university and a school during 2013 to support the development of curriculum inspired by the life of Charlie Walker. Artifacts such as oral histories with family members and a former school administrator, newspaper clippings, and other documents saved by the Walker family, as well as data housed in the University of South Florida Tampa Library Archives contribute to the theoretical understanding of place, race, and place-names. As part of a critical conversation about curriculum, we use an intersectional racial/spatial justice framework to raise concerns about access to valued knowledge and terrain.

Historical memories of striving for education: What's behind a name?

In 1996, the Charlie Walker Middle School was commemorated after Reverend (Rev.) Charlie Walker, a Black minister who successfully campaigned to launch

the first school for Black/African American children in the area during the early 1900s. Moving to the rural community of Citrus Park in Odessa, Florida in 1922, by 1924, Charlie Walker had begun advocating for a school to be built for Black children. He made several visits to school board meetings and waited to be heard by its members. Charlie persisted in trying to secure education for his children, younger siblings, and future generations of children. Eventually, the school board agreed to support a school for Black/African American students, but stipulated a few conditions. Rev. Charlie Walker was charged with finding the students, the teacher, and land for the one-room schoolhouse. After a local Black woman donated the land and Charlie Walker identified a teacher and the minimum number of students needed to get district support, the Citrus Park Colored School was built in 1925 with help from members of the community.

Since the school served students only up to 6th grade, Black children had to relocate to other areas and live with kin if they wanted to continue their education. Rev. Walker returned to the school board on several occasions to request that a school bus be provided (the School District refused to provide transportation) for Black/African American students entering 7th grade (Rogers, 1996). The representatives of the district provided the bus for Charlie Walker to drive using his one remaining hand; he lost the other when, after injuring himself while cutting wood, he was refused medical care at the local facility, which only served White people. The district paid Charlie Walker to drive the bus; however, not only did they pay him less than they paid other (White) bus drivers, but they also made him responsible for the cost of fuel. Furthermore, they painted the bus black to designate that it was transporting Black/African American students. Black is a descriptor steeped in narratives of racial inferiority, and painting it marked it as a mobile place of symbolic violence that disparaged rather than celebrated Walker's struggle for racial equity in education. This act of mobile place-naming brings attention to how names are imposed on people (Zelinsky, 1992), whether or not in conjunction with commemoration, branding, or labeling, as a political event that pairs the symbolic with the material. A more complex narrative braiding comes through framing the story of Charlie Walker and the students who rode the "Black/black" bus to school as an expression of agency and activism. Renaming or rejecting a name can be a means of contesting normative definitions of cultural and historical identity (Alderman, 2002).

The original building that housed the Citrus Park Colored School closed in 1948 and is designated as an historical landmark. Almost 50 years after it closed, Charlie Walker's granddaughter (retired teacher Shady Richardson Hunter) raised the idea of naming a school after him. At that time (the early 1990s), student enrollment was increasing in the district, averaging about 3,000–5,000 new students per year. In response, the Hillsborough County School District (HCSD) committed to building five to seven new schools a year, totaling just over 60 schools built within that time. According to Ms. Luney, the first principal of the Charlie Walker Middle School, the sharpest rise in new schools occurred around and after September 11,

2001 (9/11). In response to 9/11, many Northeastern U.S. corporations relocated some of their offices and operations to Southern states. In an oral history interview students conducted with Ms. Luney in 2013, she further described how Chase Bank bought large chunks of land both for its offices and employees, most of who were relocating from the Northeast. She also described being part of a contingent of educators who were sent by the Tampa Chamber of Commerce to New York to help corporate employees make the necessary adjustments before relocating to Tampa.

Walker's daughter, Curtiss Wilson, submitted a request to speak at the School Board meeting in March of 1996 on the topic of *naming of middle school in Citrus Park*. She then launched a campaign, circulated petitions, and solicited accounts from then current and former public officials who had personal knowledge about Charlie Walker. In a letter to her niece A. J., she wrote she had already solicited at least 1,000 signatures from the community-at-large, and had been appointed the presenter/spokesperson and given "an absolute time limit of 3 minutes" to present the case. Included in her presentation were newspaper clippings about her father, which had been published in the early 1980s in the Tampa Tribune. The campaign was successful and the Charlie Walker School was commemorated.

Issues of spatial justice related to educational access in the South became salient again in 2011 when the school was renamed The Charlie Walker Middle Magnet School, after receiving a grant under the Magnet School Assistance Program (MSAP). The MSAP was established by the U.S. Department of Education under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to federally fund magnet schools for the purpose of eliminating, decreasing, and preventing minority isolation in public schools based on race, gender, and national origin (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Such programs aim to bring "different social, economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds together" and are approved by Secretary of Education under the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (p. 116). Specifically, Title VI states:

[n]o person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001, p. 2)

Funds from the MSAP grant can be used to support activities directly related to "improving student academic achievement ... or directly related to improving student reading skills or knowledge of mathematics, science, history, geography, English, foreign languages, art, or music" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 116). The grant funded curriculum development focused on integrating culturally relevant content about Charlie Walker in order to improve students' knowledge in all content areas.

Since the commemoration of the school in Walker's honor, the demographics of the community shifted significantly and rural farmland was developed into estates with luxury homes—a change that makes class and place stratification more visible

(Dorling, 2010). Additionally, in order to maintain the district's unitary status (gained in 2001) bussing in the district had been a common method of seeking racial distribution of students and avoiding the reversion to a dual system of education: one for Black students and the other for White students. To prevent further "minority group isolation," 200 students rode a bus (or two) to the Charlie Walker Middle Magnet School, most of whom were Black/African American students traveling from areas and families with a socioeconomic status lower than those in the surrounding community.

After noticing several students were consistently arriving to school feeling upset—a disposition not observed throughout the day—the school leadership team surveyed the students to gain insight into their morning experiences and at least one member of the team rode the bus with the students to observe the conditions. They found that many students were traveling several hours to get to school, after waking up between 4:00 A.M. and 5:00 A.M. Additionally, the busses were overcrowded with students sitting three to a seat, which prevented them from reclining if they wanted to take a nap. The leadership team found the busses were not air-conditioned and those that were air-conditioned were distributed to other routes as bus drivers with seniority could choose the routes and busses they desired. To make a bad situation worse, the leadership team found that bus drivers were making derogatory comments to students. In response, the leadership team instituted a reward system based on the exchange of praise between bus drivers and students.

Variation, vagueness, and vulnerability among names and commemoration policies

The case of the Charlie Walker Middle Magnet School provides an opportunity to trace the history of its name, identify signs of its vulnerability, as well as consider how namesake curriculum can contribute to the community's political power to preserve it. Some instances of naming and renaming have been publicly contentious struggles, while others seem to occur more gradually without fanfare and devoid of scrutiny. A limitation in the study of names thus far is the lack of attention given to what happens between naming and renaming. Rather than view renaming as a single event, we consider how variability of a name develops over time to further an inconsistent narrative that increases its vulnerability—its risk of being removed altogether.

We found inconsistency in the name used to describe the school across formal structures from the school's logo and website to the directory of schools accessed through the district's website. At the top of the school's webpage was the logo, which read Walker Middle Magnet. Above that was the name Walker, and at the bottom of the page was a caption stating:

Charlie Walker Middle School opened in fall of 1997. Rev Walker was a leader in the early 20th century rural communities of northwest Hillsborough County. His life embodied the IB Learner Profile traits of caring, risk-taking, and principled actions. The school was

renamed Charlie Walker Middle Magnet School for International Studies in fall of 2011 and is currently an IB-MYP candidate school.

Between February 2016 and February 2017 that statement was removed. In addition to the statement of commemoration and placard on the building, there were other names circulating as official as listed on [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Names of the school circulating since it was built and commemorated in 1997.

Names in physical places and virtual spaces (2017)	
School's website	Url: http://walker.mysdhc.org/ (our emphasis) Walker Middle Magnet (home page)
District's website directory	W: Walker
Building entrance sign	Charlie Walker Middle
Building	Charlie Walker Middle Magnet School
district's webpage for school	Charlie Walker Middle Magnet School for International Studies Renamed in 2011
School's logo	Walker Middle Magnet for International Studies

While the use of “Walker” was consistent, there was inconsistency in what followed “Walker” (i.e., Middle, Middle Magnet, Middle Magnet School for International Studies), if anything at all. We noticed that the school’s name posted on the physical place (building placard) was not identical to the name posted in the virtual place (school’s website). Inconsistency in the use of names to describe the school raised for us the question of whether or not it was an antecedent to renaming either through reduction of the school’s name or replacement. The school district’s policy on naming buildings gives some indication as to what change is possible and under what conditions. Given that individuals create policies, curriculum leadership is implicated in monitoring policy changes and identifying the range of issues involved when discussions about renaming surface.

Commemoration policies

The Hillsborough County Public School (HCPS) District’s Commemoration of School Facilities Policy (P-7250) states:

School sites and facilities shall be named for individuals who have rendered outstanding public service to public education, for geographical locations, and for groups and clubs as indicated: A. Elementary, middle, and secondary schools - for U.S. Presidents, school board members, educators, outstanding citizens and geographical location.

Section B describes what facilities can be named for whom, which includes those who assisted in establishing the facility. The following two sentences describe the process in its entirety: “When naming a new school or other existing facility, input shall be solicited from neighboring schools and/or the community at large. A new

school or facility shall be named after the construction contract has been awarded” (HCPS). The HCPS policy is vague in terms of who “outstanding citizens” and process “input shall be solicited from neighboring schools and/or the community as large” (HCPS).

We located the Clark County School District (CCSD) in Nevada by conducting a simple search of the Internet using the phrase “school name policy.” In comparison, the commemoration policy of the CCSD was more robust and posted in full (as a PDF document). The CCSD Commemoration of School Facilities Policy (P-7223), last revised in May of 2015, stated:

- I. A Board of Trustees establishes the criteria, determines the process of selection, and establishes a School Name Committee. The Committee then reviews nominations, recommends names, and forwards their recommendations to the Board of Trustees.
- II. The School Name Committee will be comprised of seven culturally diverse members. The School Name Committee Chair and one additional trustee will be appointed by the board president in addition, this superintendent will appoint five members of the committee. ... To include one administrative employee of the CCSD, one former or current teacher, one parent representative with at least one student currently attending, and two additional members from the community.

According to the CCSD policy, membership on the School Name Committee was to reflect cultural diversity, whereas the HCPS policy made no mention of diversity. Additionally, the CCSD policy required two seats on the committee be reserved for members of the community, whereas the HCPS policy described community input as optional—it would be solicited from *schools and/or the community*. Furthermore, the CCSD commemoration policy stated the official name selected for an educational facility is a vital factor “in the public image of the school system” (CCSD, n.p.). In other words, the CCSD policy echoed claims in the literature that place-names help construct an image of the specific place *and* the system of which it is part.

Finally, unlike the HCPS policy, the CCSD policy on school naming included a statement on rescinding a name (i.e., renaming), which could occur only in “extraordinary circumstances,” such as the named person being convicted of a felony or a crime involving moral turpitude, or participating in any disreputable behavior that would negatively reflect on or bring discredit upon District students or staff. Though criteria describing who would qualify to have a school named for them were not stated, the criteria for exclusion were clearly stated. Although we do not know whether the policy under which Charlie Walker’s daughter and others campaigned to have the school named after Charlie Walker was different from the policy now in effect, we can infer from activities, letters, and other historical documents describing the process that it was just as vague then as it is now (2014–2017).

Extra-legal inscription (*con safos*: *c/s*) and curriculum leadership (CL)

Why might one expect a school district policy on commemoration to protect a name (the honor of commemoration) that was painstakingly earned through humanitarian efforts and acquired with community support? According to Grider (1975), people attach varying degrees of importance to personal names and nicknames. This is especially the case on the West Coast of the United States, where the graphic depiction of a name is regarded as a tangible extension of the person, which was a similar perspective among some American Indian ancestors who “regarded a person’s name as a vulnerable extension of the person himself” (Grider, 1975, p. 133). As Grider (1975) noted, even though public inscriptions of names are vulnerable to defacement and insult is it still done because “to declare one’s name on a wall is to claim that name for oneself; it can also be a public announcement of one’s role in a peer group. If there are no ‘legal’ ways to proclaim the important aspects of cultural life, communities invented such extra-legal procedures” (Kohl & Hinton, 1972, p. 124 as cited in Grider, 1975, p. 133). For instance, the inscription *con safos* provides an extra-legal protective measure to reduce the vulnerability of the name as long as others threatening to deface the name share an understanding of what names mean for a community and the significance of *con safos*. Though the history of the term is uncertain, its cultural significance indicates the importance some people place on names, especially names of places.

Con safos expresses a concern for place-identity popular among Chicano graffiti artists past and present who have been known to write the phrase *con safos* or *c/s*. For added protection, a name could be surrounded by a box and accompanied with *con safos* (or *c/s*). “In such cases the *con safos* literally defines the boundaries of a sacrosanct area within which the name is written” (Grider, 1975, p. 138). *Con safos* derives from the verb *zafar* (to loosen, untie, or clear) and the adjective form meaning “intact” or “unhurt” (Grider, 1975, p. 133). In simple terms, it means whatever you do to insult or disgrace this name (as stylized graffiti) will reflect back onto you. It is meant to prevent others from disrespecting “the neighborhood by disfiguring the public imprint of place-identity” (Villa, 2000, p. 153). With regard to names of schools, a school commemoration placard and a school district’s commemoration policy both proclaim that a school’s name is an important aspect of cultural life for the school and the surrounding community, and can be understood as equivalents to other protective markers (i.e., *c/s*).

Embedded in this particular case of the Charlie Walker Middle School are issues of control over whose lives, knowledge, and actions are memorialized in textual and material artifacts. From this vantage point, seemingly neutral stances on how schools are named or renamed are problematic. We implicate curriculum leadership in the practice of making explicit the relationships between the public image of schools, the lives they commemorate, and discourses about who is a human(itarian) worthy of study in schools and communities. In the context of these concerns, we suggest a need for curriculum leadership that is socio-politically conscious

about names as culturally relevant markers along the historical and geographical landscape.

Those enacting curriculum leadership can make conscious decisions about which cultural narratives of identity and memory to support if that leadership understands and monitors local policies affecting a school's public image. Such leadership can ask whether or not the official curriculum of the school or the hidden curriculum is (in)attentive to those who have promoted or intervened in efforts to construct a socially just system of education. Our understandings and expectations of curriculum leadership are akin to Foucault's expectations of people generally. In his debate with Chomsky in 1971, he stated:

The real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the workings of institutions that appear to be both neutral and independent, to criticize and attack them in such a manner that the political violence that has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them. (Chomsky & Foucault, 2006, p. 41)

Namesake schools can be understood as one of the "little known points of support" for political power largely wielded by the dominant class (Chomsky & Foucault, 2006, p. 41). Curriculum leadership has a role to play in bridging schools, districts, and communities by critiquing naming practices and (commemoration) policies privileging those already privileged financially and politically.

On a global scale, concerns about nation-states and political regimes offer guidance for curriculum leadership. In cases where leadership changes or undergoes administrative instability, name changes can result through politically motivated disputes between regions or countries (Kadmon, 2004). Similarly, deliberations over the names of schools are embedded in broader discursive and geographical markers of identities and histories of peoples and places that also undergo change. However, prior to namesake change, leadership in the areas of curriculum and policy can build in processes that protect prior work from opportunistic power grabs to enact politically motivated changes. Not all regime changes and cultural conflicts are unwelcome, for at times, they may stimulate more equitable commemoration policies that help preserve or restore sites of cultural and regional heritage. Curriculum leadership can draw on the stories buildings tell (Yanow, 1995), to stave off social amnesia and instead support the development of commemoration policies explicit about the importance of diversity, culture, and public image.

Curriculum leadership that embodies socio-political consciousness involves an awareness of how commercialization, commodification, and exchange can influence a district's policy on naming. At the university level, renaming schools has been more broadly publicized given the size of the donations spurring the renaming. In Florida, for example, the schools of business (Trigaux, 2014) and accountancy (Trigaux, 2015) on campuses within the University of South Florida system were renamed after donors made large financial gifts. If higher education is any indication of what is to come with the rising power of market and political forces,

the decline in the civic mission of school names will likely continue (Manhattan Institute, 2007).

The school-based leadership efforts to shape curriculum around the life of Charlie Walker signaled a shift in the school's treatment of his contributions. What had been a case of name-dropping (making superficial references to his life intermittently) became a school-wide effort toward a substantive integration of his life with the curriculum, and therefore, the lives of students attending the school. Now that the project has ended, we wonder if those efforts are being sustained to provide students with curriculum that lives up to its name.

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