A CASE STUDY OF A TULSA, OKLAHOMA SCHOOL NAME CHANGE FROM CONFEDERATE TO INDIGENOUS ROOTS: SUPPORTERS' MEANING-MAKING

By

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Abstract: This qualitative case study focuses on renaming an elementary school in Tulsa, Oklahoma from a Confederate namesake (Robert E. Lee elementary) to a name reflecting Indigenous roots of the Muskogee Creek Nation (Council Oak). The renaming took place during a national movement of removing Confederate symbols and names from public places. The school's original naming occurred in 1918, and the renaming occurred after a multi-year school board and community process in 2018. Using a constructionist and interpretivist approach and a conceptual orientation to memory work, I focused on the meaning making of community members who supported the name change about the original and new names. I interviewed 16 people individually and through focus groups, collected documents, and observed community events to examine how supportive members constructed meanings through a continual, dynamic, social, and relational local process. For supporters, the process involved phases of awareness and action over multiple years. The renaming also caused community tensions and disagreements. The case is one of few studies focused on school renaming processes. It reflects both national meanings of Confederate names as "remembering" problematic histories as well as local meanings unique to "remembering" and "forgetting" aspects of Tulsa and Oklahoma's racialized history.

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CHAPTER I

A CASE STUDY OF A TULSA, OKLAHOMA SCHOOL NAME CHANGE FROM CONFEDERATE TO INDIGENOUS ROOTS: SUPPORTERS' MEANING-MAKING

Prologue: October 2017. I walked down the street of an older, affluent neighborhood to visit Lee Elementary School. This school opened in 1918. It is in Tulsa's downtown, historic district's center, and near Black Wall Street, a once-vibrant Black business community destroyed in 1921 (Messer et al., 2018). The area teemed with life on that day as I strolled through the neighborhood with manicured lawns and massive trees, leaves rustling in the fall breeze. Parents walked their children to school, hustling to get there on time. I noticed a monument outside the entrance in the walkway of this captivating, red-bricked school. This historic, colonial building evoked nostalgia, and it beckoned my attention as I listened to the sounds of children rushing to school.

My gaze turned to the monument where I read, "Lee School, In Honor of Gen. Robert E. Lee, 1918." From the memorial, my eyes moved to the other objects. I noticed tall pillars labeled "Lee School," iron benches marked "Lee School," and a stone header chiseled with "Lee Public."

Ornamental early American-style carvings majestically framed the concourse looming over the entrance. On this Fall, October day, the symbols caught my attention for the first time, and I connected the Lee name to the Confederate icon, General Robert E. Lee. I noticed Lee's large, framed portrait matted with Confederate flags. My gaze turned to the Lee School signage carved on the building, iron benches, and a century-old obelisk [small monument] dedicated to the Confederate general in 1918. How did I miss this on the way by?

The name, Lee School, had existed in this community for a century. I wondered if the existence of this namesake implied a long-standing consensus about the meanings of these material symbols, particularly at a public school (See figure 1).

Figure 1. Obelisk. The century-old obelisk and Lee School signage (Pingry, 2018).

Historical Background of the School Namesake, Robert E. Lee

Who was Robert E. Lee? Lee (1807-1870) was the highest commander of the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Lee became a Confederate icon, a symbol representing Confederate values. His rise to heroic role model status is a complex topic studied by historians (e.g., Cobb, 2011; Fellman, 2003) and actively debated within the public sphere. Lee declared in 1861 that slavery was the "cornerstone of the Confederacy." However, the former vice president of the Confederate States,

Alexander Stephens, claimed in 1868 the war involved "that peculiar institution [enslavement]" but was primarily "a strife between the principles of states' rights and centralism" (Cobb, 2011, p. 4). Today, Americans still argue about diverse interpretations of Confederate symbolism, the Confederate Army, and the causes of the Civil War. In 1918, the Tulsa Public School Board decided to name a Tulsa public school after Lee. This reflected post-Civil War sentiments and patriotic nostalgia for war veterans. On the day of the official naming ceremony at Lee School in 1918, local newspapers honored Confederate and WWI veterans (Brady, 1918).

In recent years, the name Lee has become contested as an appropriate symbol and name to affix to public spaces like schools. I, like many of those who supported the renaming of this school, believe the Lee name and other Confederate symbols carry offensive and racist meanings that necessitate "forgetting" through renaming. Members of the local community advocated for a name change that began in X and continues today as people make sense of the new name, Council Oak. In this study, I focused on the nuanced meanings of the shared place names and symbols in the (now) Council Oak school community. My case study examined how the school renaming process in one locality reflected dynamic, complex, constructed meanings that profoundly influenced collective memories and identity.

The School Name was Lee School for a Century. Why Change it Now?

My walk through the school's entryway, hallways, and classrooms inspired my inquiries about symbols and their role in communities. I became curious about this school, the community, and community members' meaning-making of those historical symbols. The name had stood for a century, so what caused this community to question it in 2017 and instigate a renaming process? As I visited my grandchildren, I began to talk with community members about their understandings I wondered if this close, interactive community noticed the display of honor for this man and his name carved in the architecture. Perhaps, like myself, other community members passed by the signage and

obelisk for years without thinking about whom they represented or what messages they might represent. Until, one day, the name and symbols captured their attention.

National controversies about Confederate symbols and removals contributed to Tulsans' meaning making in 2017 of the Lee school name as having problematic connotations tied to the Confederacy. These meanings contributed to renaming supporters' motivation to initiate the renaming process. In 2017, violence erupted in Charlottesville, VA, when a group acted to remove a Robert E. Lee statue. A young woman was killed, and 30 were injured in a rage car attack when a driver plowed through counter-protesters at a white nationalist rally (Fieldstadt, 2019). Local community members were concerned that violence might erupt in the Tulsa area like it had in Virginia either in response to the Lee name or efforts to change it. After Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) announced the renaming process, news and television crews lined the school's sidewalks (Hardiman, 2017).

Underlying the present-day controversies and debates are historical details about how/why the Confederate name and symbol became prominent in the first place. Scholars suggest two periods of increased construction of Confederate statues and monuments (Parks, 2017). The first spike occurred in the early 1900s, during the Jim Crow Era, beginning in 1880, and the second, during the civil rights movement (1950-1968) (Parks, 2017). The increase in Confederate namesakes coincides with the 1918 Lee School dedication (Brady, 1918). The second spike happened during a surge in civil rights advocacy and racial tension in the 1960s, during which various groups constructed Confederacy memorials across the nation (Parks, 2017).

Almost four decades later, in 1999, South Carolinians entered a long-lasting dispute about removing a Confederate flag from the state capitol's dome to a local museum (Carlson & Schramm-Pate, 2003). Racial tension intensified in the last ten years as many community members evaluated the meanings attached to symbols tied to enslavement. Some citizens experienced dissonance about Confederate symbols in their local contexts. In 2015, supporters of removing the Confederate flag held meanings for Confederate symbols that were divergent from those who insisted the symbol was

appropriate for public spaces. Those supporting the removal of Confederate symbols voiced that keeping them on public grounds was tantamount to condoning slavery, White insurrection, and resistance to racial equality (Brasher, 2021). The dispute in South Carolina lasted from 1999 until 2015, when they removed the Confederate flag and placed it in a museum (Worland, 2015).

In 2015, one month before the removal of the Confederate flag from the South Carolina capitol grounds, Dylann Roof, a neo-Nazi, killed nine Black church members at the A&M Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Two years following these murders, violent protests erupted in Charlottesville, Virginia, about the push to remove a Lee statue from the capitol building (Brasher, 2021; Payne, 2019). The violence centered on competing interpretations of the Confederate icon. One group protested to keep the statue in the public square as a memorial honoring a hero, and the other group demanded the removal of the statue from the public square because of its remembrance of a violent history for African American people. They suggested moving it to another place, such as a museum.

If the material environment provokes contested meanings, the potential exists for social turbulence and violent acts. In 2017, some interpreted the Robert E. Lee statue as a symbol of Southern heritage and pride in a "Southern way of life" (Keneally, 2018, p. 1). Others interpreted the Confederate icon as a symbol of the "Lost Cause," a "narrative that downplays or omits the role of slavery in the Civil War" (Keneally, 2018, p. 1). A Richmond, Virginia resident argued, "these monuments [will] continue to be pilgrimage sites, as long as they are up" (Keneally, 2018, p. 1). Scholars in various disciplines have developed criteria for handling the commemoration of Confederate sites to ensure a fair and equitable process and avoid negative implications (Fernandez, 2019). One implication of Confederate names and other symbols is the emotional responses to memories such symbols evoke.

Scholars have discussed varied connotations of the name Lee and other Confederate references. Many argue that some students of color and their families experience re-traumatization

encountering Confederate-related names and symbols (e.g., Agosto et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2019). Place names matter in this sense because they must represent all people in the community and because of their possible re-traumatizing effects for some community members who enter that space. In the past five years, communities have focused on specific renaming efforts. Some of these efforts include renaming schools, streets, and parks previously named after Confederate and pro-segregationist politicians. Other renaming projects include changing culturally insensitive names and mascots that misrepresent the symbolic customs of a particular group and changing neutral school names to reflect the people of that community. Among the organizations actively working on renaming Confederate-related sites are Black Lives Matter, Southern Poverty Law Center, and Southerners On New Ground (SONG).

Some community members argue that changing names and removing Confederate markers erases the complex events that make up United States' history. Others assert that museums or historical societies are the only appropriate places to store material objects representing memories and histories of harmful events (Hardiman, 2018b). Some rationalize that we must move historical objects that can retraumatize citizens from public places because namesakes, monuments, or memorials that appear on public land can appear as if the public collaboratively consented to it. In other words, honoring specific people or versions of history appears to be the product of community agreement, reflecting collective values (Bailey, 2022). In this case, the school's name reflects what is important to the people and represents a shared identity. The shared meanings can reflect a sense of belonging or a sense of alienation.

Symbolic representations are produced through intense struggle, hold diverse interpretations, and can lead to extreme violence and destruction (Gillis, 1996). Ongoing disputes about Confederate symbols and names in recent years have gained attention because they have inflamed violence. Even so, the place names are not the source of the violence. The source is the debate over which histories and heritages should be honored and which historical version deserves honor and remembrance. The

meanings and interpretations of symbols in the community, particularly those connected to public schools, reflect much about community values and how the community holistically represents diverse groups with various experiences and historical narratives.

School Name Changes: A Symbolic Site of Contention

In the past decade, scholars in various disciplines studied place naming as part of the broader critical examination of commemoration practices and the meanings of names, monuments, and memorials. Across the nation, community members and city leaders have re-evaluated the meanings of place names. Community members' critiques of school names led to a surge in renaming processes. All school sites hold various meanings, regardless of the name. Community members, leaders, and scholars assign symbolic meanings to schools as places to learn, preserve childhood innocence, and develop civic life (Boyte, 2016; Dewey, 1902; Levinson et al., 2019). Public schools are often considered the social center or meeting ground for people of all ages and a place to educate and prepare students for citizenship (Dewey, 1902). Scholars have described schools as social spaces to learn about history, democratic principles, dialogue, and community outreach to resolve societal issues (e.g., Boyte, 2016; Dewey, 1902).

Given the role of public schools in the nation, school names also matter and have become a focus in the emerging body of renaming scholarship. According to toponymic scholars, school names can legitimize the values and character of the namesake as a reflection of the community, local school, and district (Alderman, 2002). The school's name can become part of a school's overt and hidden curriculum and influence generations of students, parents, administration, and staff. School names are also geo-political, a blend of geographical places and political influence. Historically, city planners used school names to reinforce racial and economic boundaries, creating injustice in the urban landscape (Alderman, 2002). School namesakes always highlight one historical figure and leave other heroes invisible. Names with historical backgrounds highlight only one version of history

through “remembering” while neglecting or “forgetting” others. Place names and symbols also often create unforeseen implications.

The public nature of schools also shapes renaming controversies. School renaming issues reflect far more labor and time than creating an initial school name (Prier, 2018). School renaming reflects diverse community investments and relates to community identity, family heritage, and patriotic symbolism. Because tax dollars fund public schools, they are places for citizens to gather equally and inclusively. The federal government does not own public land; it manages it (Toll, 2021). Public land is a property shared by the state and federal government (Toll, 2021). The public-school name and symbols on public land can reflect the surrounding community and therefore lead people to act to change names to empowering namesakes for the community (Prier, 2018). According to scholars, school sites and names hold contested meanings that warrant "further investigation of their commemorative use" to "extend our understanding of that landscape and the people who created it" (Stump, 1988, p. 215). School renaming, as in my Tulsa case, can also reflect a commitment to a new school identity, such as one that focuses on reparative justice: removing a name associated with a violent or racist past and replacing it with an empowering or aspirational locally influenced community name. Some communities have renamed schools in that spirit (Brasher et al, 2018). Others have maintained that changing the name does not solve systemic racism in our communities, but this is a necessary first step (Mitchell, 2020).

Many schools in the nation hold names linked to the Confederacy. On November 23, 2023, approximately 350 schools in 21 states currently with namesakes tied to the Confederacy (Mitchell, 2023). From the Summer of 2020 to November 2021, at least 50 Confederate-named schools replaced their names and symbols (Mitchell, 2021, p. 2). In 2021, almost all of the remaining Confederate-named schools were below the Mason-Dixon line, which was the nation’s dividing line "between slave states and free states" prior to the Civil War (Mitchell, 2021, p. 2). In 2021, Virginia. Alabama

and South Carolina enacted laws restricting name changes for Confederate-named schools and removing statues and monuments that honor them (Mitchell, 2021).

Robert E. Lee's name is at the center of the school's name-change debate; more schools were named Robert E. Lee than any other name (Mitchell, 2021). In the 2023 list of 350 school names tied to pro-segregation are 22 politicians who signed the 1956 Southern Manifesto, a document that opposed the integration of schools following the 1954 *Brown V. Board of Education* ruling (Mitchell, 2021, p. 2). Examples of school names of pro-segregationist senators are John Sparkman, Alabama; Robert E. Jones, also from Alabama; J.W. Fulbright (Mitchell, 2021, p. 2). Some of the most common Confederate names for schools are Robert E. Lee, Thomas Saltus Lubbock, Lucius Q.C. Lamar, Sidney Lanier, Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, and Nathan Forrest (Mitchell, 2021).

Council Oak, once Lee School, is among those schools that completed the name change process from 2017 to 2019. TPS officially changed the name to Council Oak in 2018. I explored the complex perspectives of community members who supported the name-change process and their experiences during and after the name change. Local and national events shaped the context of the Tulsa name change. The school is near the Council Oak Tree site, which for some community members in Tulsa, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, holds significant meaning. The renaming occurred in time for the 100-year remembrance of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre held in Tulsa in 2021. Recent discussions about Tulsa's buried truths about the White violence of the 1921 Race Massacre became part of this profound reckoning with the past that influenced the name change.

Such names changes reflect varied and highly contested meanings in communities nationwide. Some Tulsa members interpreted Robert E. Lee as an offensive symbol, upholding blatant racist policies or messages hostile to people of color. The Tulsa case was a microcosm of larger issues and disputes in the US. This school name-change process was part of a national debate about dominant historical narratives, racist namesakes, and symbols (Mitchell, 2021).

Tulsa Name-change Process

In 2017, the members of the Lee Foundation in Tulsa, a privately funded organization associated with Lee School, planned a community celebration of its 100th birthday dedication to General Lee: 1918–2018 (Hardiman, 2018a). While planning for this Tulsa celebration, the national media reported violent protests over removing the Lee statue in Charlottesville, VA. Following the news of the deadly Charlottesville protests, some Tulsa residents became concerned about potential violence erupting at Lee Elementary School. One of many emails sent to Dr. Gist, the Superintendent of TPS, requested a "calm, measured and cadenced approach… not to spark the tinder" surrounding the issue, which could make the school a target for a shooter (Goforth, 2017, p. 2). One resident expressed, "No one wants to see Tulsa be the next Charlottesville...not much we can do to fight White Supremacists, but this [changing the school's name] is something we *can* do" (Hardiman, 2017, p. 1). Like other arguments about preserving "heritage" nationally, some Tulsa residents thought the school's name was part of a long southern heritage and "[by] keeping it Lee, and it serves as a reminder of our past, lessons learned and what more we can achieve" (Hardiman, 2018a, p. 1).

The same year, 2017, community members petitioned the TPS Board to change Lee Elementary School's name. The members' voiced that prolonging this name change would build tension evoking violence (Hardiman, 2017). Others suggested that Confederate names represented racist ideologies and contradicted the TPS mission to offer equitable and inclusive education to all students (Hardiman, 2017). This petition created the momentum necessary for TPS to examine school namesakes. Also, in 2017, the TPS Board established a community advisory council with 25 Tulsa community members and local historians, a Harvard Law School graduate, and Professor Hannibal Johnson (Hardiman, 2017). They held a meeting to educate the community about TPS's rationale for renaming Chouteau, Columbus, and Lee Elementary School (Hardiman, 2017).

Scholarship: Place-naming Trends and School Renaming

My case study advances scholarly research on school renaming through a social foundations approach. I used this approach to create a holistic view of one school-renaming process from the perspective of community members who supported the name change in Tulsa from 2017 to 2019. Chapter II provides an overview of the shifts in place-naming literature to school-renaming scholarship from 1893 to 2022.

In Chapter II, I observed broad patterns and traced changes within a wide variety of place-naming scholarship as contextual events, and new social matters merged to shape naming practices. I examined place-naming scholarship to understand how school renaming, situated within this larger body of work, emerged as a phenomenon of study. I traced the historical, anthropological, and geographical roots of early American place-naming scholarship from 1893 to 1985. The background literature for this case study involved an overview of place-naming scholarship from 1893-1985. From the late 1800s to the early 1900s, place-naming scholarship reflected the concerns of geographers, documentation of names, and their origins (e.g., Egli, 1893; Gannett, 1902; Taylor, 1896). Scholarship in the 1900s included details and descriptions of natural and cultural features of place names within regions (Farquhar, 1926; McArthur & Biggs, 1928; Meany, 1917;1923). During this era, scholars rarely focused on the political or community process.

For two decades, scholars and journalists from the humanities, social science, cultural geography, history, sociology, and memory studies have examined the phenomenon of place and street naming (Alderman, 2002; Alderman & Inwood, 2013; Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020; Azaryahu, 1996; 1997; Berg & Kearns, 1996; Bodnar, 1991; Brasher et al., 2017; Brasher et al., 2018; Fuchs, 2015). Despite this robust scholarship on place naming, only a few educational studies have focused on school renaming (Agosto et al., 2017; Greene et al., 2007; Levy et al., 2017; Moran, 2004; 2019). Critical scholars have concentrated on the school's curriculum as a cultural production of meaning (Carlson & Schramm-Pate, 2003) and school sites as places for producing and debating cultural identities (Alderman, 2002).

Scholars in sociology, geography, history, education, political science, and law have studied Confederate symbols for many years (Brasher et al., 2017; DeMitchell, 1999; Giguere, 2019; Nichols, 2018; Carlson & Schramm-Pate, 2003). Many studies have focused on school policies, students' rights to free speech, and how Confederate symbolism in books and t-shirts impacted teaching and learning (Alford, 2002; DeMitchell, 1999; Kennedy, 2018). However, during this pivotal historical moment of school name-change initiatives and dialogue across the nation tied to the widespread demand for racial reckoning, scholarly research is scarce about the meaning-making of school name-change processes and symbols.

School renaming studies are vital to gain insights into name-change processes, symbolic meanings, and current socio-political problems at both the local and national levels. This includes the hidden and overt meanings of the new names that take their place. My case study of a Tulsa school name change in school-renaming case study literature contributes to the sparse research on community interpretations of existing names reflecting Confederate history. My study highlighted the nuances of supportive engagement and advocacy for name changes in local communities to enhance broader inquiries about national issues.

Problem Statement

Contention continues to rise concerning meanings of symbols, namesakes, and monuments, particularly those connected to the Civil War. The meaning-making of place names and symbols changes over time (Alderman, 2002). During this time of evolving place-based symbolic meanings, few scholars have studied the school renaming phenomenon, particularly the historical and contemporary meanings of school names. Scholars in the field of education have examined school name changes as related to critical studies, civic mission, curriculum, and as a cultural production of meanings (Agosto et al., 2017; Carlson & Schramm-Pate, 2003; Greene et al., 2007; Levy et al.,

2017; Moran, 2004; 2019). However, there is a gap in the literature that focuses on school names, related symbols, and name-change processes through local place-based case studies.

Few studies discuss the significant role that local and state histories play in local members' development of meanings. School names, in particular, hold distinct symbolic meanings for community members. Further, researchers in social foundations know very little about the individual and collective meaning-making of school names, symbols, and the process within local contexts. Schools are central symbolic sites of democracy, hope, and aspiration.

This study is the first to highlight members' meanings of a local school renaming process, public school names, and materiality. As local place-based meaning-making evolves, it is important to study how local processes affect community members' meanings and how members' meanings affect processes. Foundation scholarship is scarce that examines how communities make meaning of symbols such as Confederate icons and engage in changing the names of public schools.

My case study of a Tulsa public school name change contributes to this gap in scholarship. My study focused on community members' meaning-making of the name and symbols tied to Lee Elementary and the new name, Council Oak Elementary. My research *with* members (Ingold, 2018) organically evolved into a case study of members who supported the name change. My inquiry about meaning-making revealed underlying local, place-based meanings. This case study offered an understanding of local processes to enhance broader research inquiries.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to investigate community members' meaning-making of the name Lee Elementary School and the symbols related to the name during and after a school name change process in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This case organically emerged as a case of members supporting the name change. My purpose in studying the supportive community members' meanings of the Tulsa name-change case was to understand the case in depth and detail (Stake, 2005). I studied supportive

members' meanings and experiences through an interpretive lens to discover insights about local renaming processes for illuminating how meanings possibly influence collective meaning-making and other underlying public school community effects.

During my early process of investigating the name change, I openly supported the name change and participated in the school board meetings with my daughter, her husband, and other community members. I sensed a heated division between members at school functions. Some wanted the name to change completely, and some argued for a minimal change, to remove the symbols, and create a neutralized Lee name, perhaps as an acronym for something else. I named the two groups that formed, the "change the name" community members and the "keep it Lee" community members. The two groups formed camps that wrote letters to the TPS Board. One name-change supporter spoke with TPS officials about removing the material symbols. She reached out to TPS to explain how she experienced trauma as she daily walked her bi-racial daughter to class, and they passed by the framed picture of Robert E. Lee matted with Confederate flags. The "keep it Lee" group were invested in the familiar name and long history of association with the school.

I positioned my inquiry within a larger movement of name changes nationally tied to the common beliefs that Confederate statues, monuments, street names, and school names represent troubling histories of racism. My connections with community members organically developed as I scheduled interviews and conducted focus groups of members that supported the name change. Though most participants in my preliminary research agreed the name should change, in some ways, they held different rationales, experiences, stories, and engagements with the symbols, the ongoing change process, and their meaning-making about the broader cultural, political, and social contexts. I explored the historical, cultural, and local context in which the renaming process occurred to situate and understand the meanings that infuse community members' meaning-making process, particularly supporters of renaming this Confederate-named public school. To situate the case, I explored the milieu of the original Lee Elementary School naming occurring in 1918 and the 2017-2019 school

renaming to Council Oak Elementary one hundred years later. Through an interpretive lens, I examined and described the case that included the meanings that name change supporters constructed individually and co-constructed in groups within its local and historical contexts.

Research Questions

1. What led the supportive community members of the school name change to join together and act to change the school name?
2. What meanings did the name-change supporters make about the toponymic and material symbols related to the previous and new school names and the name-change process?
3. How did local/state place-based meanings and local historical narratives inform the meaning-making of those supportive of the change?

Epistemology/Philosophical Positioning

This section briefly introduces philosophical frameworks, such as ontology and epistemology, that guide my work and view of the world. My philosophical beliefs influenced my inquiries as I began this research study. Foundational elements that underlie a researcher's philosophical beliefs are ontology (what is real?) and epistemology (what can we know and how can we know it?). My belief about reality is a "modified realist ontology" rather than reality based on absolutes as that reflected in objectivism and realism (Zhao & Bailey, Unpublished manuscript), and my epistemology is constructionist; to seek knowledge is to seek truth within my own and others' existential interactions with the realities of life.

Ontologically, I view reality as socially constructed and represented by facts that are often obscured, limited, and shaped by subjective beliefs or meaning-making. Therefore, my ontological stance inspired my engagement in social action. I spoke at the school board meetings to support changing the name. My case study explored the community members' meaning-making of the Confederate name and their experiences during and after the renaming process and, through a broad

lens, discovered relationships between national and local school renaming.

Epistemologically, my views align with constructionism. As a constructionist, I searched for insight into the school's name change within the community members' meanings. I sought to understand how community members engaged with, understood, and made meanings of the school's name and the renaming process. The focus of my study organically formed into a study about community members who supported removing the name and renaming the school.

I focused on the meaning-making of community members to understand how they worked together to create and co-create new understandings. The renaming process in Tulsa led to the renaming of the school. My interest extended to the members' experiences throughout the renaming process and their acceptance of the new name, Council Oak School. Tulsa and Oklahoma history was a crucial part of the symbolic meaning-making of Council Oak. I explored members' historical connections and meaning-making of the name Council Oak.

Theoretical Paradigm

General interpretivism aligns with my constructionist epistemology and modified realist ontology. During this study, guided by my epistemological and ontological beliefs, I focused on the meanings of community members who were supportive of the Tulsa name change with the aim of examining members' meaning-making. Each supporter experienced the name change uniquely and constructed meanings that moved them to act. In nuanced ways and with various levels of conviction, members supported the removal of the Confederate school's name and the historical items displayed inside and outside the school building.

My axiological views, ethics, and aesthetic values support my constructionist paradigm. Personal moral principles and value judgments directed my research goals and influenced my explicit attention to members' meanings. During this study, I sought to work with others to understand how they socially interacted and constructed meanings during this contentious time. Although I

acknowledge my own critical stance toward the Confederate symbols and the critical stance that community members in this case study held, my approach to this study was to interpret meanings and discover how those meanings enhanced a broader understanding of the national issue. My purpose, however, is not to discuss whether the meanings are right or objectively true. My purpose was to generally interpret and study the members' meanings and experiences to discover insights about local renaming processes for illuminating how meanings possibly influence collective meaning-making and other underlying public school community effects.

Knowledge in the social sciences is "known through meanings" of individuals and constructed in groups (Crotty, 1998). In other words, through a general interpretivist lens, I employed multiple methods to understand the social aspects of the Tulsa name-change issue holistically from the perspective of supporters of the name change. I interviewed diverse community members, studied letters written to the parents, examined artifacts and photographs, and newspaper articles from 1918 and during the name-change process. My case study explored the contentious name-change process in Tulsa, which stemmed from the school's name-sake's connection to slavery and Confederate symbolism. The Tulsa name-change problem was "historically situated" in the present and the past and "culturally derived" in the heart of downtown Tulsa (Crotty, 1998, p. 76).

My axiological views underlie the ethics and aesthetic values that influenced my explicit and implicit attentiveness to specific interests, goal setting, and research choices. In general, as I sought to understand the human meaning within social interactions during a contentious conflict, my axiological assumptions influenced my beliefs about essential aspects of research. My choice to study community members' meaning-making reveals how I value their role in community processes of change, civic engagement, and interactions with symbols. My values reflected how I interact, protect, and value community members' meaning-making. I reflected "passion, trust, and respect" for each person involved in the study (Crotty, 1998, p. 45).

Methodology

The methodology for my proposed study aligns with Stake's (2005) description of a qualitative case study. Stake **(**1995**)** describes three specific distinctions between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. For instance, qualitative researchers generally seek understanding, and quantitative researchers seek explanation (Stake, 1995). Second, the role of the researcher is "personal" for qualitative work and "impersonal" for quantitative (Stake, 1995, p. 37). Third, the purpose of qualitative work is to gain "knowledge constructed," and the goal of quantitative work is "knowledge discovered" (Stake, 1995, p. 37).

A qualitative methodology aligns with my constructionist epistemic beliefs, modified realist ontology, and axiology that holds to internal value, respect, and compassion for human meanings. I also used case study methods and methodology to examine human experience and meaning making (Stake, 2005). My case study focused on a school name-change phenomenon. The case was a bounded system focused on a phenomenon in depth and detail (Stake, 2005). The contextual setting of this case was Lee, now Council Oak public school, and the context of the local name change in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Cultural memory studies, a body of scholarship and conceptual understanding of place naming guided my study.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this case study was the focus on local meanings and experiences of a school renaming process during a surge of name changes across the nation. One of few case studies on this topic, this study contributes to memory, place naming, and school renaming bodies of work through its primary focus on a local process and members supportive meaning making during a school name change. It is unique in its focus on members' contemporary (2018-2019) and retrospective (2022) meaning-making of the original school's name, Lee, and the new name, Council Oak.

Names, symbols, memorials, and monuments reflect the core values of a community; therefore, the collective and individual meaning-making of these symbols is an essential element of name-change controversies. Education and social foundation studies that examine how communities make meaning of Confederate symbols and engage in changing the names of public schools are scarce. As local place-based meaning-making evolves, it is important to study how local processes affect school communities.

For several decades, cultural geographers have studied controversies about street and building names, memorials, and monuments related to slavery, the Civil War, and the civil rights movement in relation to geography, critical theory, and history (Alderman & Inwood, 2013; Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020; Azaryahu, 1996; 1997; Berg & Kearns, 1996; Bodnar, 1991; Brasher et al., 2017; Brasher et al., 2020; Fernandez, 2019). However, only a few studies in education scholarship address K-12 school renaming (e.g., Agosto et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2019; Levy et al., 2017; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019).

Case studies about current place naming controversies provide depth and detail of the phenomenon in context, utilizing rich descriptions and contextual data to advance knowledge salient to other contexts (Stake, 1995; Patton, 2015). An examination of the members' process of meaning-making of names and symbols, particularly those members who were supportive of the name change, can bring to the fore local meanings of symbols and experiences during school renaming processes.

Definition of Terms

1. Confederate Symbolism – The symbols of the Confederacy include the flag, which has changed four times, and the emblem, which is the 'Southern Cross' design, also called the "Battle Flag" (Brasher, 2021, p. 3). Most recently, insurrectionists carried the "Battle Flag" into the Capitol building on January 6, 2021. Meanings about Confederate symbolism are highly contested. Violent acts can be tied to Confederate symbolism, such as the January 6th

incident (Brasher, 2021), the 2017 Charlottesville riot (McKenzie, 2017), and the 2015 Dylann Roof murders (Webster & Leib, 2016).

2. Decolonization – "The process of deconstructing colonial ideologies" (Cull et al., 2018, p. 7). Examples of colonial ideologies are Western superiority and privilege. Such ideologies also result in historical imbalances in structural power dynamics in national and local communities and city governments that have perpetuated the same historical unfairness and inequalities for many decades. For Indigenous people, decolonization is the deconstruction of this power difference. At the same time, for non-Indigenous people decolonization is coming to a better and more whole understanding of yourself relating to the community and an examination of personal prejudice (Cull et al., 2018).
3. Indigenous – "A place-based human ethnic culture that has not migrated from its homeland and is not a settler or colonial population" (Stewart, 2018, p. 1). Indigenous is an adjective used to describe people, language, culture, or an aspect of culture. Its capitalization or lack of capitalization has specific meanings as well (Stewart, 2018). The United Nations adopted understandings of "Indigenous," to broadly refer to peoples with long settlements and connections to specific lands, who have experienced "incursions by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others" (Weeber, 2020, p. 1). This definition includes Native Americans, First Nations, Aboriginal peoples, and other communities with ancestral lineages that existed in territories prior to European contact (Weeber, 2020).
4. Place – In the context of this study, the place is more than the geographical position of a building or school. The place is the story of localities, such as the Lee Elementary School community, a construct that tells a cultural and historical story. The community members remember some things, choose to honor, commemorate some things, and others remain invisible on the geographic landscape.

5. Memory work is a concept and part of a body of scholarship. It refers to community stories and ideas as social constructs about the past, visible in geographic landscapes, such as public memorials, parks, and other sites marking the city's legacies (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007). Young (1997) describes memory work as the debates about contested meanings and emphasizes that such work occurs in the early stages of commemoration planning.
6. The South consisted of states that seceded from the Union during the Civil War. The 1860 South is also defined historically as the states that joined together to protect racial slavery in the US. Although not exclusively, the South is the region south of the Mason and Dixon Line, the Ohio River, and the 36°30′ parallel (Britannica, 2021, p. 1).
7. Toponym – A toponym is a street or building name. A place name "use[s] a single word or series of words to distinguish and identify one place from another" (Alderman, 2016, p. 196). Toponyms are influential in the lives of people as they "evoke powerful images and connotations" and "contribute to the development of a sense of place" (Alderman, 2016, p. 196).

Chapter I Summary

In this chapter, I described a case study of supportive members' meanings of the previous and current school name and their experiences during the renaming process. This case study emerged when I spent time in the field as a participant/researcher and encountered others actively involved in the name change. I walked to Lee School and noticed the symbols of the Confederacy outside and within the building. I engaged with the material symbols on public school grounds as a PhD student and a grandmother of two students who live in that district. Renaming supporters, like me, conveyed that the Lee name was inappropriate for a public school supported by tax dollars to serve children.

My interpretive case organically emerged as a study of supportive members' meanings of renaming the local school through a constructionist lens. School renaming scholarship is expanding,

but only a few studies in various fields focus on a local school renaming process (e.g., Agosto et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2019; Levy et al., 2017; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019). In the next chapter, I provide a literature review from the 1800s to 2023 to explore varied trends in place-naming scholarship. I note that most current scholarship (2000-2023) about place naming used a critical approach. The name change from Confederate General Robert E. Lee to Council Oak reflects and draws attention to Tulsa's history and extends to national issues of contested meanings. This local name-change process occurred during other national name-changing initiatives emerging from critiques of racist histories highlighted in collective memory through school names. My specific case is an interpretivist study of community members' meanings of those supporting the name change.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

I sought to advance scholarly research on school renaming through this case study, using a social foundations approach and drawing on various disciplines. Through historical, sociological, philosophical, and anthropological studies, I researched school renaming, a complex social issue that influences education, culture, and society. I used this approach to focus holistically on one school renaming process from the perspective of community members who supported the name change in Tulsa from 2017 to 2019. I explored the meanings of the school's original name, Lee Elementary, given in 1918, and its new name, Council Oak Elementary, issued in 2018. To do this, I interviewed community members and analyzed members' meanings and documents, such as newspaper articles and letters from school board representatives and administrators.

My focus on one case in depth and detail also revealed broader issues about renaming processes. Within the last six years (2017-2023), social issues tied to name changes and dominant narratives of history intensified both in the public realm and academic literature. Also, during this time, school renaming took place in many communities influenced by changing and competing interpretations of place names. Therefore, Chapter II provides an overview of the shifts in

in place-naming literature to current school-renaming scholarship from 1893 to 2022. I observed patterns and traced changes within various place-naming scholarship as contextual events and new social matters emerged to shape naming practices. I examined place-naming scholarship to understand how school renaming and K-12 renaming scholarship, situated within this larger body of work, emerged as a phenomenon of study. I organized this chapter into two parts, early place-naming patterns (1893-1985) and recent place-naming patterns (1985-2022).

In Part One: Early Place-Naming Literature Patterns (1893-1985), I trace the historical, anthropological, and geographical roots of early American place-naming scholarship from 1893 to 1985. I describe how place-naming scholarship changed during specific periods. In the late 1800s to early 1900s, scholarship reflected the importance of documenting place names and their origins (e.g., Egli, 1893; Gannett, 1902; Taylor, 1896). Scholarship in the 1900s contributed examples of place-naming practices and meanings focused on regions in the US (Kroeber, 1916; Wright, 1929). In the 1920s, scholars included natural and cultural features in regional nomenclature, explored Indigenous place naming, and theorized about changes in place names on the geographic landscape (Farquhar, 1926; McArthur & Biggs, 1928; Meany, 1917, 1923). Notably, during the 1920s, unlike when my study occurred, scholars rarely focused on the political or community processes related to place naming.

In Part II: Recent Place-Naming Literature Patterns and Shifts (1985-2022), I explore place-naming literature in the past decade and observe broad patterns and trends toward critical place-naming research from 1985 to 2022. Also, in Part II, I explore common terminology used by contemporary place-naming researchers to frame memory processes within communities. Place-name scholars contributed to memory studies during the 1980s through scholarship focused on naming practices in the community and the development of public memory (e.g., Azaryahu, 1986; 1996; Baudrillard & Hildreth, 1981).

During the early 21st century (2000 to 2008), researchers contributed to place-naming scholarship by examining school names over time within specific school districts. School naming scholarship from 2000 to 2008 focused on the trends away from names reflecting civic purposes, school naming practices after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, segregation effects of school names, and school names as cultural arenas for debating student/community identities (Alderman, 2002; 2008; Greene et al., 2007; Moran, 2004).

In Part III, A Review of K-12 and University-renaming Literature (2004-2022), I observe how school and campus building renaming, situated within place-naming scholarship, reflected critical school renaming studies (e.g., Alderman, 2002; Brasher, 2017; Agosto et al., 2017; Levy et al., 2017; Prier, 2019). Although schools across the nation are undergoing renaming processes, the topic of school renaming is understudied within place-naming scholarship (e.g., Agosto et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2019; Levy et al., 2017; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019). School renaming requires rescinding the previous name and thus involves different processes than naming. In this last section of Part III, I review recently published studies that discussed K-12 school naming (Alderman, 2002; Greene, Kisida & Butcher, 2007; Moran, 2004, 2019).

Part One: Early Place-Naming Literature, Land and Indigeneity (1893- 1985)

In this section, I explore literature from 1893 to 1985. During this period, scholars shared a common purpose to accurately document the dates, locations, and pronunciations of place names in the US. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, place-naming scholars focused on various geographical regions (e.g., Barrett, 1908; Kroeber, 1916; Sapir, 1912). For instance, Kroeber's (1916) study of California place names described place names of "Indian" origin. He noted that such "Indian derivation is very imperfectly known, and has often been thoroughly misunderstood," and the "best literature dealing with this topic contains more errors than truths"

(p. 31). Kroeber's (1916) study highlighted the shortage of accurate lists with dates, place names and locations, pronunciations, and scholarly work in geographical place naming.

Academic scholarship from 1923 to 1928 not only documented place names, but many scholars also included brief commentary about the endurance of some names, which suggested group agreement over time was necessary for preserving names. Krapp (1925), a scholar of the English language, wrote, "Names are applied only by agreement and convention, and though natural causes may suggest a name. Only common acceptance of such a name can root it in common use" (p. 171). He proposed, "Names must be a part of common human experience" (p. 171). Krapp's (1925) account of the early development of the English language in America revealed his understanding that place names impact human experiences through everyday use. He also noted the paucity of knowledge about Indigenous languages informing place names,

> The prime necessity in explaining of Indian place names in America is a fuller and better knowledge of the phonology and etymology of the American Indian language than has been the possession of any of the investigators who have hitherto exercised themselves within this field (p. 179).

Krapp (1925) explained, "a very large number of Indian names of rivers in Pennsylvania and along the shores of the Chesapeake have survived" (p. 175). He reasoned that Indian place names were established on maps but "[later] crowded out by the white man's nomenclature" (p. 175). Unlike contemporary critical scholarship, he presented this information, in this paper, without critique or questions about white settlers assuming the power to rename regions.

The study of place names in the late 1920s advanced beyond lists and tables of naming practices to include commentary. Wright (1929), a geographer, published a historical synthesis of American studies of place naming from the late 1800s to 1929. He explained that scholarship from 1893 to 1902 were rudimentary lists of place names in various parts of the US with natural and cultural features (e.g., Egli, 1893; Gannett, 1902; Taylor, 1896). Wright (1929) contributed a landmark study focused on an interest "not confined to or centered upon the individual name." Still, it concentrated on place naming as a phenomenon and topic of study (p. 140). He studied

how place names changed over time and how people engaged with place names. He also studied the connections between place names, land, and language.

Wright's (1929) historical synthesis of place name scholarship also included his conception of place naming. Rather than document the place name during specific periods, he theorized why some remained the same, and others changed. Wright (1929) described enduring place names as "living names" (pg. 141). He observed the names that were not "dead" or "not abandoned in local usage" by 1929 stayed active in part due to both the density of the population, the migration of people occupying the land, and the changes in spoken language in that region (Wright, 1929, p. 141). Wright's (1929) description of place names as living or dead in local usage offered insight into how one scholar in 1929 made sense of place naming and the forces that might lead to keeping or abandoning names.

In contrast, one might conclude the Lee School in my case was a living name. The Confederate name occupied the school building and place for 100 years. According to Wright's (1929) theory, one could propose the name stayed consistent and active due to population growth during the naming in 1918 and the migrations to Tulsa during the oil boom and the common use of Lee in naming. Wright's (1929) theory that names stayed active because of the changes in spoken language also applies to the Lee School name, considering that once Indigenous-occupied space in the late 1800s, the residents became primarily English-speaking by 1918.

Based on my review, I believe that scholarly interest in Indigenous place names and culture increased during the 1920s and 1930s. Those examining Indigenous place names offered cultural observations and historically accurate lists with dates, place names, and locations (e.g., Waterman, 1920; 1922). Indigenous place name studies helped document pronunciation (Wright, 1929). As Wright (1929) explained, these names "demand[ed] highly technical knowledge, especially because many of these aboriginal designations have undergone violent transformations during the centuries, [and] that they have been maltreated on the tongues of white men" (p. 142).

Some scholars during the early 1930s researched Indigenous place naming and cultures with an anthropological focus to explore the cultural influences of a specific region (e.g., Boas, 1936; Kniffen, 1939). These scholars focused on geographical names as a reflection of the cultural life of people within particular periods. Boas (1936) emphasized that geographical nomenclature described the "legendary history" of tribal members, and his exploration of place name meanings often offered insight into the unique characteristics of people groups. For instance, the Kwakiutl tribe was a group of sea-faring people, and the meanings of the place names often reflected such characterization (Boas, 1936).

Between 1944 and 1950, scholars questioned the governmental role in place-naming decisions. At the time of his published article, Caldwell (1944) mentioned, "There exists, however, no authority which can control the naming of places" (p. 30). Interestingly, two decades before Caldwell's writing, Krapp (1925) wrote that the US Geographic Board does "render decisions as to the correct name of places in dispute, but its decisions even in this field are binding only on government departments" (p. 172). Both statements from Krapp (1925) and Caldwell (1944) seem to contradict Wright's (1929) view that the US Geographic Board "exerted powerful influence" (p. 142). Nevertheless, these three scholars asked a common question, even familiar to scholars who study place naming today: "What is the role of the local or national government in place naming?"

Many scholars from the 1950s to 1980s analyzed the life histories of Native Americans and studied place name meanings as reflecting markers and experiences of the life journey of human beings (e.g., Basso, 1988; Mead, 1953; Levi-Strauss, 1966). Cruikshank (1990), a historian examining oral histories, noted many Indigenous women told detailed stories about the names of places, contributing to the understanding of place-based meanings (e.g., Bataille & Sands, 1984; Cruikshank, 1990). Cruikshank (1990) explained six ways that "place names help people to think about the past, ways that give them special value for ethnohistorical

reconstruction" (p. 63). Cruikshank (1990) studied the importance of place names to the Athapaskan people through oral histories of people with diverse ages and backgrounds. He found six common reasons: "Names are mnemonic, they glue history together," "Names can persist" even when English became the dominant language, "Names provide a unique way of encoding information," reflecting changes in the landscape, "Names describe a rich mythscape," giving detailed descriptions to add to scientific descriptions, "Names are indicators of land use" and land claims research; "Names are a kind of language play"; one word can hold complex ideas as word pictures (p. 63, 64).

In summary, the focus of place-naming scholarship shifted from the late 1800s to 1985. Most of the early scholars, from the 1890s to 1920, who studied place names, were concerned about the accuracy of lists with dates, place names, and locations, as they noticed the gradual shifting of place names in the geographical landscape (e.g., Egli, 1893; Gannett, 1902; Taylor, 1896). Scholars in the late 1920s and 1940s focused on specific states and regions with an increasing interest in place-name practices, meanings, and origins (e.g., Caldwell, 1944; Engeln & Urquhart, 1924; Farquhar, 1926). From the 1950s to the 1980s, some scholars turned to oral histories for insights into personal meanings of place names and detailed descriptions of the land (e.g., Basso, 1988; Mead, 1953; Levi-Strauss, 1966). As the world and the US changed, scholarship changed to meet each period's shifting current concerns.

Part Two: Recent Place-naming Literature Shifts (1985 - 2022)

This section focuses on place-naming scholarship trends from 1985 to 2022. First, I explain common terminology contemporary place naming and school naming researchers use to frame specific cultural issues, such as cultural remembering, cultural forgetting public, and landscape memory. Next, I review the scholarship about place naming in this period, which includes landscape memory (e.g., Dwyer & Alderman, 2008) and critical toponymies (e.g., Berg &

Vuolteenaho, 2009; Fuchs, 2015). Because place naming influences collective and cultural memory, I also review memory studies in academic fields focusing on sociocultural group memory, which emerged around the 1970s and 1980s (Casey, 2004).

During my broad examination of patterns in place-naming scholarship, I observed scholars' shifts in approaches to examining commemoration, place names, and renaming. Since the early 21st century, as detailing the histories of marginalized peoples and calls to reinterpret the past have increased in the United States–along with contention about versions of history–place-naming scholarship has shifted from research reporting and exploring school naming trends (e.g., Moran 2004; 2019) to studies conducted through a critical race perspective (e.g., Reichmann, 2018). In this section, I provide an overview of the place-naming literature that shows the growing trend toward critical place-name scholarship occurring in recent years. The increasing trend also speaks to a gap in research that primarily examines community members' meaning-making of place naming to understand how place naming works locally.

From 1980 to 2022, local leaders in communities throughout the United States worked with members of communities to name and rename buildings and erect and remove statues, monuments, and memorials. Much of this renaming and movement was focused on a critique of names and objects symbolizing the Confederacy and perceived, from this contemporary perspective, as racist remnants of racist actions in history. Proponents of name changes and removals reflect the idea that "remembering" some histories and "forgetting" others is cultural memory work that sustains some aspects of history on the landscape and downplays others (Bailey, 2022). From the 1980s to 2022, some scholars shifted their focus from trend research to critical analysis of place names, procedures, and name-changing processes (e.g., Azaryahu, 1986; 1996; Baudrillard & Hildreth, 1981; Baldwin & Grimaud, 1989). Some scholars inquired about particular place names and commemorative policy-making effects on public memory (Houdek &

Phillips, 2017). I review the scholarship, which focuses on renaming K-12 schools and college campuses, in Part III of this chapter.

Scholars studied the renaming of college buildings around the early 2000s (e.g., Alderman, 2002). In educational journals, a few studies focused on place naming from 2002 to 2022. In a landmark study he published in 2002, Alderman, a leading scholar in geography – particularly critical geography–conceptualized school names as cultural arenas and examples of symbolic resistance. Focusing on the commemoration of Martin Luther King through a school name, Alderman (2002) used the metaphor of the school's name as a cultural arena for debating symbolic meanings and interpretations of history and ideologies. He argued that such naming practices for King nationally are "part of a larger refashioning of the urban cultural landscape as racial and ethnic groups increasingly seek public recognition of their historical achievements" (p. 601). This is part of a broader set of critical approaches to analyzing place names and toponymic practices as social justice and symbolic resistance (e.g., Alderman & Inwood, 2013; Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020; Brasher, Alderman, & Inwood, 2017; Dwyer & Alderman, 2008).

By 2017, many local and national leaders questioned the names of buildings at universities and military bases with now troubling connotations in a climate in which scholars and public figures are scrutinizing names for which, often hidden, legacies of the past they are preserving. Some turned their attention to K-12 public school names (Mitchell, 2020). In the US, public school boards developed processes for community members to participate in replacing school names and mascots in question for racist or disparaging meanings (Mitchell, 2020). Place-naming scholarship reflected the rising contention nationally over symbolic meanings of public school names and symbols tied to racist legacies (Agosto et al., 2017; Carlson & Schramm-Pate, 2003; Greene et al., 2007; Levy et al., 2017; Moran, 2004; 2019).

A Review of Concepts Related to Recent Place-naming Scholarship

In this section, I explain the conceptual language used by contemporary place-naming and school-naming researchers to frame specific cultural issues concerning cultural memory. Memory, by definition, is a recollection of the past as it "exists in the present" (Bridges & Osterhoudt, 2021, p. 1). Cultural memory processes connect brief, finite moments in time through intended or unintended "acts of remembering" (Bridges & Osterhoudt, 2021, p. 1). One such act of cultural remembering is evident in my study: the dedication of the Tulsa school to a Confederate General and the later renaming ceremony of this school to honor Tulsa's Indigenous roots. Understood through this memory framing, both naming ceremonies were acts of remembering that created cultural memory for the community of people near the school. In 2019, for example, the Tulsa community members gathered for the renaming ceremony at Council Oak school as an act of remembering. They engaged in a cultural memory process as they met, conversed, and participated in this event. Each year, communities around the globe collaboratively and individually engage in activities that mark and create specific, finite moments to remember.

Cultural remembering, cultural memory, or related terms such as "collective memory" or "public memory" have specific applications in humanities and social sciences (Casey, 2004, p. 17). Cultural forgetting is another concept that describes memories forgotten or silenced as some community members selectively hold to narratives about aspects of a community's history and forget other aspects (Bridges & Osterhoudt, 2021). During the past two decades, some scholars have expressed concerns about the widespread patterns of cultural forgetting, particularly the meaning-making of Confederate place names that ignores symbolic ties to enslavement (Huyssen, 1994; Stack & Boyarin, 1997; Yoneyama, 1999). Some Tulsa community members echoed these concerns during the Lee School name-change process (Hardiman, 2017). Some critical scholars also referred to cultural forgetting or "filtering" as "historical amnesia" that distinguishes "what

has been marked rather than what has not been [marked]" in the landscape; in turn, these markings or absences shape what people remember (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007, p. 129).

Anthropological scholars discussed interesting aspects of place naming by making connections among place names, landscapes, and cultural memories. Scholars suggested that landscape and cultural memories embodied or substantiated one another (Bridges & Osterhoudt, 2021, p. 1). Bridges and Osterhoudt (2021) proposed that landscapes often refer to the physical terrain of geographic locations encompassing human entities and animals that live in and shape such places. Scholars argued that landscape and place-based commemoration could be material, physical, and architectural, but also formless, "unbodied," referring to space filled with abstract meanings such as invisible traces of cultural forces, called the cultural terrain or cultural landscape (Bridges & Osterhoudt, 2021, p. 1).

Inspired by scholars' conceptions of landscapes, descriptions of public schools alive with trees, humans, sounds, squirrels, rabbits, and birds symbolize physical aspects of school as a place within the community. In addition, community members often view school buildings as symbols holding varied abstract meanings, such as the community school as a learning space, a symbol of generativity (Dewey, 1902). Therefore, the material and abstract conceptual explanation by Bridges and Osterhoudt (2021) contributed to my understanding of the high stakes involved in renaming the Tulsa school. Community members associate complex symbolic meanings with the local school as a space to represent the community, teach the next generation, find support, and meet community members.

Place-naming Scholarship from 2008-2023

I now discuss the place-naming scholarship from 2008 to 2022. Some scholars during this time used the common language I explained to describe place naming as a phenomenon in communities: cultural memories, landscape, cultural remembering, and cultural forgetting. In educational journals, a few studies focused on place naming from 2002 to 2022. From 2008 to

2022, geographic place-name scholars emphasized the growing use of theoretical traditions in research on landscapes and memorials in contrast to earlier examples which seemed more generally a-theoretical. Many critical scholars referred to cultural landscapes and places to explain their focus on the intricate details of the site and situation as the scene of an event (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008).

Critical geographers have examined such scenes as elements in a broader cultural landscape and the product of struggle, compromise, and negotiation. One example is Dwyer & Alderman's (2008) comprehensive, critical, geographical study of civil rights memorials across the United States which described visible, tangible scenes, abstract meanings, and invisible traces of cultural remembering and forgetting. The authors also studied racial, gendered, and class-based naming patterns in a city's landscape related to the placement of MLK memorials and street names and, perhaps more importantly, where the memorial or street names were *not* situated (p. 17).

Dwyer and Alderman's (2008) findings underscore a common point that emerges throughout members' interpretations in my study, to which I will return later: that names are not just names. They reflect power in who can name and what those names are. Dwyer and Alderman (2008) showed that planners often kept civil rights memorials/street names out of central business districts and placed them in low-visibility areas (to tourists). Critical geographers referred to such lines in the geographic landscape as racist boundaries which shaped the city's economics. They considered the memorial's visibility and proximity to power sites such as centrally located business districts (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008, p. 17). Opponents of the renaming of Chattanooga, Tennessee's Ninth Street, for example, argued that King was an African American icon; therefore, "only a small portion [of the street] should be renamed" (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008, p. 16). The scholars argued that these racist boundaries are power strategies fueled by white

dominance and either conscious or unconscious fear or prejudice, intending to hold firmly to power. Such boundaries are intended to keep inequality and segregation alive.

During the past two decades, critical geography scholars focused on particular ways of engaging with naming practices in geographical areas. Recent critical studies, such as Dwyer and Alderman's (2008) study, raised many questions about public school naming and the historical narratives, power hierarchies, and racial geographic boundaries that inform them. Racist boundaries appear on geographical maps as one implication of place naming.

Place Naming in Various Academic Fields of Study

Some scholars, in past years, considered traditional geographic studies "largely esoteric and encyclopedic" (Rose-Redwood et al., 2009, p. 454). However, within the last decade, a growing trend among critical geography scholarship focused on locations and place names that contributed to and reflected spatial justice and injustice (e.g., Alderman, 2016; Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020; Brasher et al., 2017; Soja, 2009). Critical geographers examined if and how political power played a role in place naming and how naming places impacted local social injustice, racial discrimination, and segregation. Some scholarship related to place naming included a dual purpose of geography and political analysis, called geopolitical studies (Coleman, 2003). Recently, place-naming scholars offered diverse approaches, such as critical toponymies (Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2009; Fuchs, 2015), historical place naming (Mostern & Johnson, 2008), and place naming as symbolic capital (Alderman, 2008).

Alderman (2008) conceptualized place naming as symbolic capital and a powerful way to separate groups of people (Alderman, 2008; Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2009). Particular names that reinforced dominant histories served as sources of social distinction for some and marginalization for others. His work highlighted how place names, such as Confederate-related names, were powerful symbolic components that reflected and produced racialized meanings. He noted how place names took on racist connotations and affected the economics of places.

Everyday interactions with toponyms are unique to each person, and Alderman and Rose-Redwood (2020) described community members' "affective entanglements" with symbols in the geographic landscape as reflecting a range of feelings, such as "pride to ambivalence to resistance" (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020, p. 135). Alderman and Rose-Redwood (2020) considered that people might feel offended or hurt depending on their engagement with the place name within a particular cultural place. Scholars suggested that people were unaware of how a geographical place, its name, memories, racist origins, and histories, both personal and collective, could work together to create a sense of place (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020).

Some community members interpreted specific names and symbols as holding implicit racist meanings, while others hardly noticed the name or material symbol on the building or street sign (Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2009). Some community members took for granted the effects of the name until active citizens engaged in conversations to discuss the social, economic, and political power of naming and renaming (Berg & Vuolteenaho, 2009). Similarly, in my Tulsa case study about school renaming, community members experienced a variety of "affective entanglements" (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020, p. 135).

Place-naming Memory Studies

Scholarship in memory studies began between the 1970s and 1980s (Bridges & Osterhoudt, 2021). A wave of memory studies about place naming emerged. According to Foote and Azaryahu (2007), memory work within a community encompassed socially-created community stories and ideas about the past, evidenced by markers in various forms, such as public memorials and parks. Memory is also formed through community events and activities. Studying the chronology of the commemorative process and community members' meaning-making is essential to leaming how memories evolve around events (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007). Foote and Azaryahu (2007) suggested that memories and recall are most fresh immediately

following an event, and "debate, however, heated" is essential for understanding the shaping of memory from contested meanings (p. 129).

Memory work in this scenario of early discussion can lead to disputes, contested meanings, and interpretations rather than consensus. This open debate forces contrasting interpretations to the forefront and "in the long run, is perhaps of greater importance than any tangible, physical monument [or namesake] that may result" (Foote, 2003, p. 342). Foote (2003) argues the process is vital for communities to co-create respectful meanings for all groups. One group may not favor the name, but the criteria for names specify acceptance only of suggestions that respect all cultural and racial groups.

Tulsa's Place-based Memory Work. Some scholars and members of the Tulsa community invested their energy and time in uncovering racist meanings lurking in local names. Brasher et al. (2018) conducted a historical street-name study of Tate Brady, an investor in the 1901 Red Rock oil boom who built The Brady Hotel, the first luxury hotel in downtown Tulsa. Given Brady's early influence, city leaders named areas of downtown Tulsa after Brady between 1907 and 1918 (Chapman, 2012). His name was a common referent in Tulsa areas across the century. Yet Brady was also an influential leader in the Klu Klux Klan. He was instrumental in the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and an appointed member of the Tulsa Real Estate Exchange, which participated in a thwarted attempt to displace Black Tulsans through property zoning in 1921 (Day, 2016). Until 2017, five prominent Tulsa places were named Brady: Tulsa's Brady Arts District, Brady Historic District, Brady Heights, and Brady Theater. The Brady theater was once the detainment site for displaced residents following the Tulsa Massacre (Brasher et al., 2018, p. 8).

Brasher et al.'s (2018) findings revealed the city of Tulsa's toponymic framing of the name "Brady" as a benevolent Tulsa founder created a "signifier within Tulsa memory" that he argued blatantly disregarded and selectively "forgot" Brady's ties to the Ku Klux Klan and his

participation in the Tulsa Race Massacre (p. 12). Brady's connections to racist groups before, during, and after the 1921 Race Massacre were not coincidental (Brasher et al., 2018). The city's complicity in using the name Brady on street signs and marketing materials exemplifies how toponymies merge history and geography to "influence place and group identity" and can be powerful vehicles for impacting racial relations and racial belonging (Alderman, 2016, p. 196).

Brasher et al. (2018) argued that Tulsa's use of "Brady" to name streets, districts, and businesses hindered the enactment of what Till (2012) called "place-based ethics of care" (p. 3). Till (2012) wrote that cities become wounded from past violence and exclusion, which in this case, manifested in city naming practices. Some constituents offered a naming compromise to honor M.B. Brady, a Civil War photographer with no ties to Tulsa, to preserve the signage (Brasher et al., 2018). However, many community members found this problematic. Many considered the change to M.B. Brady a blatant disregard for the wounding effects of the original name. Brady's local connection to the largest underground and most violent racist organization in history and his part in the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre constantly reminded the 1921 descendants of the race massacre. Many saw the naming process as a compromising strategy.

In 2018, Tulsa leaders renamed the street Reconciliation Way/M.B. Brady Street (two signs posted on the same road, one in each direction). For many, the compromise to leave both street signs added insult to painful memories. I perceived these two events, Tulsa's 1921 Race Massacre, and the street renaming compromise, as examples of Till's (2012) "wounded place" (p. 4). Again, in 2021, some community members petitioned the Tulsa city leaders to rename the Brady Heights housing addition (Personal Communication). Place names in Tulsa and around the nation are ongoing sites of dynamic meaning-making and contention. Brasher's scholarship re-conceptualized place renaming as a practice that promoted memory work restored a sense of acceptance and supported the preservation of the dignity of wounded people and places (Alderman & Inwood, 2013).

Brasher et al. (2018) argued that local citizens, activists, educators, and artists who engage in place-based commemorative work play essential roles in healing wounded cities. Names matter in this work as well, as my case study also shows. Many in Tulsa continued discussions about commemorating the 1921 Race Massacre and the long-term effects of this racial violence destroying lives and buildings in Tulsa's Greenwood District. They expressed that the nation was watching as Tulsans tried to heal their "wounded" community (Till, 2012, p. 1). Till (2012, p. 1) introduced the concepts of "wounded cities" and "place-based ethics of care."

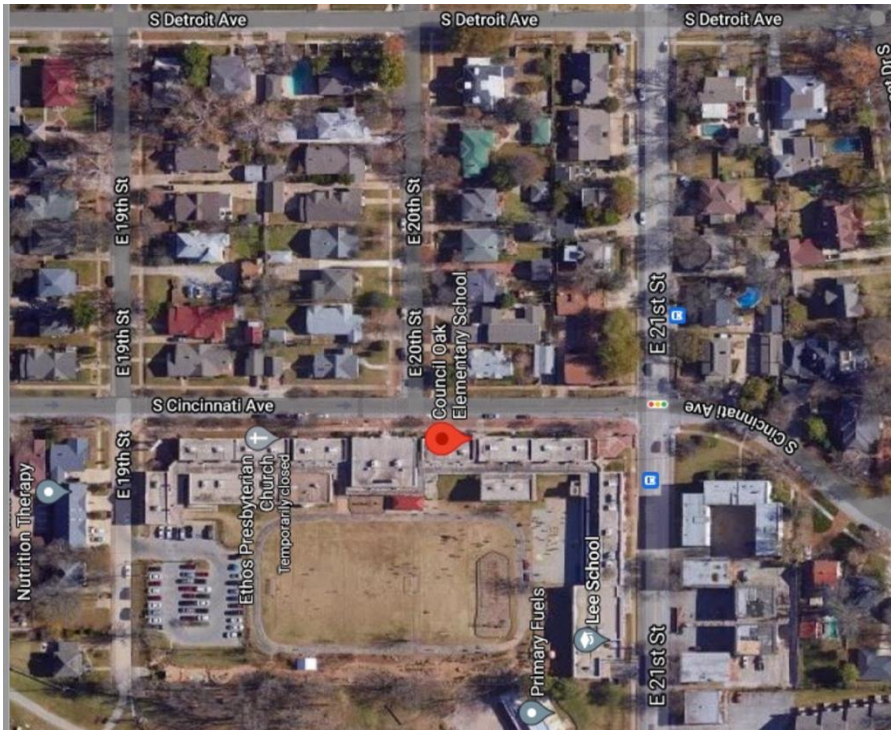

Figure 2. Council Oak Elementary, formerly called Lee School (Google Maps, 2021)

I read the naming practices in Tulsa and other cities that Brasher (2018) and Till (2012) detail as only part of place-based care. Other Wounded cities are places of past injustices and lingering effects. Till (2012) argues that artists, residents, city planners, policymakers, and urban theorists, can move to a deeper appreciation of the lived, place-based experiences of community members by imagining a different urban future. Till's (2012, p. 8) concept of "place-based ethics

of care" was closely related to Smith's (2005) argument that cities have the responsibility to include the provision of "equal access to the giving and receiving of care" (Smith, 2005, p. 10). Till (2012, p. 8) described "place-based ethics of care" as envisioning practices of memory work that center on participatory forms of belonging and building a "political community" that might initiate a more "just and equitable democratic society."

The topics of public memory and commemoration have a longstanding presence in the literature (Alderman, 1996; Azaryahu, 1996; 1997; Berg & Kearns, 1996; Bodnar, 1991; Dwyer, 2000; 2002; Fuchs, 2015; Lowenthal, 1975). The collective and collaborative memory that place naming represents attends to cultural memory's past, present, and emerging future rather than focusing on a fixed point in time (Smith, 1999). In my study, community members engaged in the name-change process recall past emotions and experiences in the present moment, continuously shaping their meanings. Thereby, public memory work continues to unfold.

Martin Luther King Street Renaming Case Studies: Barriers to Member Participation

One recent turn in place-naming literature since 2007 uses a critical lens to highlight racialized meanings of toponyms. This includes naming and memorialization in public spaces, which raises issues about naming practices in relation to segregation and the legacy of civil rights (Alderman & Inwood, 2013; Dwyer & Alderman, 2008). Alderman and Inwood (2013) analyzed two case studies for segregation patterns: Statesboro, Georgia, and Greenville, North Carolina. They compared two distinct geographical landscapes, Georgia and North Carolina cities, to explore barriers to member participation in the place-naming processes and identify racial segregation and marginalization patterns in each place (Alderman & Inwood, 2013).

In these two place-based case studies, they suggested place names were "mechanism[s] of spatial (in)justice," which reveals the vital role geographic and place name analysis can play in studies focused on racial discrimination, segregation, and inequality (Alderman & Inwood, 2013, p. 211). Aligned with Alderman and Inwood's (2013) study, which highlighted ground-up social

action and barriers to member participation, other scholars developed and argued for renaming processes that sought participation from diverse community members (e.g., Fernandez, 2019; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019).

The Greenville, North Carolina case involved a street renaming project (Alderman & Inwood, 2013). The citizens who requested renaming Fifth Street after Martin Luther King, Jr. wanted the name to include the entire street. However, residents and business proprietors balked at the recommendation and won the dispute (Batchelor, 2006c). The study revealed visible differences between the east and west sides of the street, indicating an economic boundary (Alderman & Inwood, 2013). While one side flourished economically, the other struggled (Alderman & Inwood, 2013). Racialized meanings affected the economic border. One business owner complained that if someone were to call his business to ask for the address, Martin Luther King Street would imply his business was on the Black side of town (Alderman & Inwood, 2013). The business owners' complaint revealed explicitly the meaning-making of some community members concerning Black and white sides of town as segregated communities.

In Statesboro, Georgia, the case findings involved the failed renaming of Northside Drive to King Street. They revealed that officials created the passage of a new ordinance to require seventy-five percent of the property owner's approval after the proposed renaming. Therefore, the study purported that policymakers created the law in response to the petition to rename the street to thwart renaming efforts. Although clearly racialized, the argument against the proposed renaming was framed as a matter of "cost and convenience" (Alderman & Inwood, 2013, p. 226). Alderman and Inwood (2013) concluded that the cases in North Carolina and Georgia provided a "glimpse into US race relations, casting doubt on conservative declarations that we have moved into a post-racial or post-civil rights era" (p. 227).

Other scholars argued that any streets named Martin Luther King act as visual economic boundaries that transition into a different street name at the juncture of economic growth (Jan,

2021). In addition to the examples above, a street called MLK Boulevard exists in a primarily Black residential area in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Martin Luther King Boulevard stops at the end of the Frisco Railroad tracks and does not continue through downtown Tulsa. The section of the downtown area in Tulsa at the track's end is primarily a white residential side of town (Jan, 2021). Visual economic boundaries throughout the United States are common (Jan, 2021) and racialized. During my review of studies, I sensed the overlapping complexities between visible economic boundaries, racialized perceptions of communities, and barriers to some community members' participation in local naming processes, which influenced place-name decisions. I also concluded, from these examples, that fair and open procedures encourage ground-up political involvement and incorporate diverse voices in the conversation.

The process of "remembering" and "forgetting" takes place in collective memory within a community or a group of people who live in the same area and share the same space (Smith, 1999). In Social Foundations, scholars care about local meaning-making within local, historical, and cultural contexts (Bailey & Kingston, 2020). They recognize that meanings are not stagnant but are always shaped by forces within a given context. Dwyer and Alderman (2008) explained, "the act of identifying those [memorializing] events and interpreting their significance takes place in the present," and "these present-day interpretations will, in turn, affect the future" (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008, p. VIII). The collective memory process in Tulsa and the specific details Tulsans remember and forget through local acts of place naming are salient for understanding how community members make meaning and function as co-creators of their community.

Indigenous Place Naming and Nation-building

Although early-century place name scholarship focused on detailing and understanding Indigenous namings, in the last twenty years, scholarship has shifted to focus on place names and the phenomenon of countries changing place names as a spatial strategy to reclaim indigenous identities (Azaryahu & Golan, 2001; Gill, 2005; Guyot & Seethal, 2007; Light et al., 2002; Yeoh

& Kong, 1996). Recent name changes in post-apartheid South Africa have functioned as tools to restructure and represent all identities within a local space (Guyot & Seethal, 2007). Place renaming there is trending toward using Indigenous names to return to the "origins" of particular places. Most recently, for example, South African place names have begun to represent the original inhabitants, such as the "Khoi-San," the oldest known Indigenous people of South Africa (Guyot & Seethal, 2007, p. 1). Using pre-colonial historical references in place naming has allowed some South African groups to avoid the "disputed historical periods" of colonization and the apartheid era as strategies for naming. Other naming trends include names "external to the country or borrowed from nature," sometimes described as neutral terms (Guyot & Seethal, 2007, p. 12). Green, Kisida, and Butcher (2007) studied the effects of neutral names on schools' civic mission and civic education. Although neutralized names stimulate little dispute, a lack of civic mission evident in names could influence the level of community members, teachers, and students' engagement with meanings and civic participation.

Many countries around the world are changing place names to Indigenous names. A movement to Indigenous place naming has occurred in Dakar, Senegal; West Africa; and other postcolonial geographies such as Singapore (Bigon, 2008; Nash, 2002; Yeh, 2013). Through changing place names, Singapore became active in a nation-building project to incorporate Indigenous names as toponymic symbols in the landscape. Singaporean "erasure of place names (E.P.N.s)" began in the 1960s. According to Yeh (2013), historical and cultural geographers define place names as temporary "spatial impressions" that are "products of human-land interaction" (Yeh, 2013, p. 121). Place names reveal "evidence of things that have disappeared or changed" as well as "projections of people's ideologies" (Yeh, 2013, p. 121).

Not all renaming practices are welcome. These resistances, too, provide insights into the meaning of place names. Scholarship has shown that people in Palestine, Northern Ireland, and Pretoria, South Africa, actively struggled against political control and decolonizing names (Nash,

1999; Swanepoel, 2009). The people in various countries, such as Pakistan, have resisted decolonized names that were too long (Addleton, 1987). South Africa's naming committee renamed the capital Tshwane, but people said it had a distasteful meaning, "small monkey," and refused to let go of the original name (Swanepoel, 2009, p. 100). In Singapore, some advocated for changing names back to earlier forms because Singaporeans who were non-Chinese said they had difficulty pronouncing them (Yeh, 2013, p. 121). Another argument by constituents is the cost of renaming. This is an expensive process. In post-socialist Bucharest, officials marked four thousand streets for renaming after a political change in regime (Light, 2004).

Part Three: Recent Directions in College Campus and K-12 School Renaming (2000-2023)

In Part Three, I review two types of findings in scholarship related to school-renaming practices: (1) *K-12 School Naming and Renaming Scholarship* and *Renaming Buildings on College Campuses*. Although writers have written hundreds of public articles about the topic of school renaming, place-naming scholarship on this topic is sparse. I reviewed recently published studies about school renaming in various disciplines and one dissertation study (Agosto et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2019; Levy et al., 2017; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019). Note that school renaming is a different process than naming. School renaming requires rescinding one name and a process involving a school board to select a committee to recommend the new name to the board. It involves cost of removing physical symbols of names and creating new ones. I reviewed K-12 school naming (Alderman, 2002; Greene, Kisida & Butcher, 2007; Moran, 2004, 2019). In Part III, I include several studies discussing renaming buildings on college campuses that contributed to place-naming scholarship from 2008 to 2022 (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020; Brasher et al., 2017; Inwood & Martin, 2008; Fernandez, 2019; Reichmann, 2018).

A few areas of education research were exceptions to the lack of place-based studies, although they did not focus on school renaming, leisure, outdoor education, and sports education

(e.g., Leather & Nicholls, 2016; Lee & Gregg, 2017; Lee et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2015). Leisure and outdoor education scholars explored how communities can use outdoor space to enrich students' sense of place (Leather & Nicholls, 2016; Robertson et al., 2015). Although not focused on names, the studies of outdoor spaces explore connections between spaces, sense of place, and learning. Sports education scholars Lee et al. (2019), and Lee and Gregg (2017), discussed the use of Native American and Confederate imagery in K-12 sports teams. These critical scholars described logos, branding, and imagery related to Indigenous cultures or the Confederacy as divisive and problematic. The symbols' meanings provoked varied negative responses. Members perceived confederate symbols as having ties to slavery; others critiqued the imagery related to Native Americans as disrespectful mimicry and cartoonish representations of symbols significant to culture, religion, and marginalized history.

K-12 School Naming and Renaming Scholarship (2002-2023)

Although many studies address educational issues, limited case studies have focused on K-12 school renaming within specific cities and examined the process over time. My work contributes to this understudied area. The scholarship I review in this section includes Alderman (2002), a leader in his field of cultural geography. He conceptualized school names as cultural arenas for debating diverse meanings of public school names (Alderman, 2002). Next, I discuss Moran (2004, 2019) and Greene et al. (2007). They contributed to studying place naming and school renaming by exploring naming trends within several communities' evaluation and naming processes. Also, in this section, I discuss scholars examining how dominant paradigms within educational environments and school names shape cultural identity and affect marginalized students and teachers (Ferguson, 2019, Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019).

The final two studies reflect the limited scholarship on Confederate-named schools. I detail these given their direct salience for my study. The first Confederate school renaming study

I reviewed examined how school names affected educational policy, curriculum, and civic mission, by juxtaposing two school districts' commemorative processes, one of which was a Confederate-named school (Agosto et al., 2017). Second, Levy et al. (2017) case narrative examined varied historical narratives concerning Confederate namesakes, ties to enslavement, erasing history, and diverse community members' meanings of public-school symbols.

Alderman (2002) conducted a historical study that discussed school names as cultural arenas. As a scholar often cited in school renaming studies, Alderman's work over the past two decades has focused on landscapes of public memory, race, heritage tourism, new directions in critical place-name studies, and MLK memorials, streets, and school names. Alderman's (2002) study examined school naming as an under-analyzed part of the civil rights commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr. The school renaming struggles that Alderman (2002) examined launched the conceptualization of the metaphor describing "school names as cultural arenas for debating student and community identity" (p. 601). Alderman's (2002) critical study introduced diverse meanings of the school name MLK. In describing the struggle about the MLK name in the Riverside, CA community, he developed a framework for understanding school naming ideologically (Alderman, 2002). According to Alderman (2002), "schools play an important role in shaping the collective memory and historical identity of their students and the attendant community" (p. 605). Alderman's (2002) conceptual explanations and exposure to other theoretical descriptions were integral to my conceptual learning.

Some scholars focused on specific school districts tracing the historical context of school names. Moran's (2004, 2019) place-based analysis and findings pointed to the complexities of naming schools in Kansas City, segregation, and the city's progression over several decades. Moran's (2004) study focused on the historical context of 55 years and the naming practices in Kansas City, Missouri, from 1940-1995. In contrast, Moran's (2019) study focused on naming

practices in Kansas City from 1940-1953. It covered the impact of African American migration and school renaming that coded schools by race during that period (Moran, 2019).

Moran (2004) traced the Kansas City, MO school districts' naming practices over 55 years from 1940 to 1995. The authors reported a large migration of African American population from 1950 to 1980, which changed the demographics in Kansas City, Mo., during that period (Moran, 2004). As a result of this demographic shift and pressure from local civil rights groups, African American public-school representation increased substantially in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Moran, 2004). African American and Latino civic organizations increased between 1985 and 1995. Unlike previous school naming practices in Kansas City school districts in 1985, district leaders sought community members' participation in naming processes (Moran, 2004). The progress in diverse representation encouraged citizens to develop and participate in community forums. In turn, the community members participating in these forums selected the names for new schools from 1985 to 1995 (Moran, 2004).

Moran's (2019) study focused on the segregation effects in Kansas City's school system for 13 years between 1940 -1953. During this period, the author discussed the relationship between school names and Black and white segregation within the city (Moran, 2019). Some white neighborhoods created restrictions against Black families who applied for loans to buy homes in certain areas (Moran, 2019). The author concluded that between 1940 and 1953, school names codified schools and neighborhoods and segregated communities by race (Moran, 2019). The Moran studies (2004, 2019) found evidence of racial boundaries in Kansas City like Dwyer and Alderman's (2008) evidence of economic and racial boundaries concerning Martin Luther King street names and memorials I mentioned in Part II of this chapter.

Moran (2004, 2019) described eras of demographic change, particularly the migration of African Americans between 1940 and 1953 that influenced school naming practices. Moran's (2019) research concluded the naming process was more than just an "act grounded in cultural

meanings and value considerations" (p. 66). They posit that school names can indicate the students' race and where they live (Moran, 2019). Tulsa's Lee community in 1918 was primarily white. Based on this contrast to Moran's (2004, 2019) study, one might conclude that historically, Robert E. Lee School was a naming practice that established a geographic code for racial segregation within the city of Tulsa.

Greene, Kisida, and Butcher's (2007) work examined the changing relationship between civic mission and school names. The authors focused on the noticeable decline of school namesakes that were historical or civic leaders from 1947 to 2007 to names they considered generic, such as a nearby housing addition, or names related to nature, such as Quail Creek Elementary. A name is neutral, by some, if reflecting a neighborhood or a flower, such as Sunnybrook Middle School. The authors argued that a correlation existed between the decline in the number of schools named after historical and current civic leaders and the declining trend in the number of schools that emphasized a school-wide civic mission and civic education (Greene et al., 2007). The authors contributed to school-naming literature by analyzing trends from several states and the role of school names in civic purposes (Greene et al., 2007, p. ii). The civic report stimulated discussion about school-naming intentions. It argued that the trend to neutral names "reflects broader cultural changes, including increased skepticism of inherited wisdom, revisionist history, and increased interest in the environment" (Greene et al., 2007, p. 4).

Greene et al.'s (2007) inquiry about names reflecting a school's civic mission and the changing pattern of using neutral names stirred my thoughts about the name chosen by the TPS board. Although the new school name, Council Oak Elementary, was named after a tree, it was not a "neutral" name (Hardiman, 2018, p. 1). With suggestions from the community, the TPS Board chose a name related to recovering and honoring Native American history. As the community members in my study engaged with and created meanings of the new name, some were aware of this Supreme Court ruling that redefined who owns the local land. Geography

scholars argue that place naming is symbolic and material (Alderman, 2002; Berg & Kearns, 1996). The place names and material symbols work together to create an order with a norming effect (Berg & Kearns, 1996). According to Berg and Kearns (1996), a norming effect happens as place names provide a sense of "normality and legitimacy" to both the name and connotations (p. 99). The fact that the Lee name remained intact for so long alludes to the norming effect of names, such as "Lee " and the Confederate symbol attached to this name.

In 2017, one school renaming study focused on disparate experiences of African American Students at a high school named Robert E. Lee in Central Virginia. Critical scholars Levy et al. (2017) wrote a case narrative of the situation at Robert E. Lee High School in Virginia as part of a professional development workshop aligned with standards for the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The Levy et al. (2017) study revealed the value of having a model for school administrators to respond to debates about the history of the school name, mascot, and symbols represented.

The scholars explained leadership practices that center on care, offer "a response to oppression," and promote a "positive school climate" "as a way to invite the disenfranchised to speak and be heard," and ask questions concerning symbolic naming, such as: "Who benefits?", "Who might be hurt? "What are the long-term effects of the decisions?" (Levy et al., 2017, p. 117). Levy et al.'s (2017) study included members' meanings within the case narrative as part of a holistic understanding and analysis of the school administrator's actions. The study offered Virginia community members meanings during heated arguments about Confederate-named schools, mascots, and symbols which are salient to my case study.

One student in Levy's study reflected, "As a Black student, I don't always feel welcome or that it's easy to learn in a place that honors a man like Robert E. Lee." A white student shared their meaning-making about the school's name, "Our school is ready for a name that we can all feel good about. Robert E. Lee is not that person" (Levy et al., 2017, p. 114). The Levy et al.

(2017) case study also offered meanings of the name change process in Virginia. For instance, the president of Lee High School, class of 1977, wrote, "The intent of the board...was not to condone enslavement, but to honor an important Virginian." The student continued, "Are you going to start erasing the names of these famous Virginians because they owned slaves?" (Levy et al., 2017, p. 114). Another VA student said, "My dad was a Rebel. My mom was a Rebel, and I'm a Rebel" she continued, "Who would we even be if we weren't the Rebels?" then she rationalized, "It's not the fact that the school is named after a Confederate leader that people hold onto. It's the history of the school itself " (Levy et al., 2017, p. 114). Levy et al., 2017 and other studies confirm that renaming debates are currently rooted in competing interpretations of history and what we should forget and remember through naming. The interpretations and meaning-making locally seem to mirror the ongoing arguments across the nation.

Agosto et al. (2017) examined school naming, educational policy, curriculum, and pedagogy. They emphasized the importance of educational leadership to shape the curriculum to reflect the civic mission of school names (Agosto et al., 2017). Agosto et al. (2017) examined how school names affected educational policy, curriculum, and pedagogy by juxtaposing two school districts' commemorative processes, one of which was a Confederate-named school. Like Greene et al. (2007), Agosto et al. (2017) noted a decline in the civic mission of school names. Agosto et al. (2017) concluded that racial justice links to spatial justice, and "curriculum leadership could draw on the story buildings tell (Yanow, 1995). Agosto et al. (2017) discussed the commercializing effects of school naming, branding, and rebranding. Scholars have also discussed how curriculum and school naming shape students and community members (Agosto et al., 2017; Greene et al., 2007).

Prier (2019), Mansfield and Lambrinou (2022), and Ferguson (2019) are three of the most recent studies that focus on K-12 school renaming. All three used a critical race theory (CRT) approach, which according to Prier (2019), enables scholars to "center unheard voices in

the face of school policy-making by a school board who negated those voices" and "this discourse possesses sensitivity to the historical, cultural, social, economic, and racial tensions from with these perspectives emerged" (p. 187). Prier (2019) studied how the African American community challenged and succeeded in renaming their school to a name that reflected the diverse context in place of neutralized names chosen by school officials. Mansfield and Lambrinou (2022) and Ferguson (2019) similarly centered specific voices in their scholarly work.

While Prier (2019) focused on the ground-up approach of African American community members as stakeholders, Mansfield and Lambrinou (2022) discussed students' role in creating anti-racist policy changes through naming, and Ferguson (2019) focused on the effects of school names on African American professionals' agency concerning teaching and learning. Mansfield and Lambrinou (2022) centered on student voices, and Ferguson (2019) centered on the voices of African American teachers. Each study amplified the diverse members' voices during name change processes (Ferguson, 2019; Mansfield and Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019). All three studies on community members' political voices reiterate the importance of diverse community engagement as stakeholders in school renaming processes (Ferguson, 2019; Mansfield and Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019) and reveal different agents in that process in local sites.

Renaming Buildings on College Campuses

Universities have become sites for renaming controversies that reflect critical trends analyzing histories of parks, statues, and district namesakes discussed earlier. Media have reported debates on university campuses about building namesakes tied to enslavement, the Confederacy, or white supremacy (Alderman, 2020). Place naming and school-renaming literature include studies that examine the renaming process on college campuses.

Several researchers have focused expressly on evaluation processes used to determine responsible policy for place naming and the relationship to minority exclusion (e.g., Agosto et al., 2017; Brasher et al., 2017; Fernandez, 2019; Levy et al., 2017; Reichmann, 2018). Others focus

on precedence and the history of legal proceedings concerning renaming university colleges whose namesakes were blatantly racist (Reichmann, 2018). Reichmann (2018) is a study about Boalt Hall, a building at Berkeley Law School, named in 1911. The namesake wrote an anti-Chinese speech published in 1877 (Reichmann, 2018). This study, published in the Asian American Law Journal, is a historical case for legally renaming Boalt Hall. In my view, the scholar presents a strong case for renaming but does not explain Berkeley Law School's renaming process or the stakeholders' meanings.

In the last decade, university leaders, students, and surrounding community members examined names on campus buildings and statues that honor prominent people and histories. Brasher et al. (2017) focus on school renaming on a college campus and the site of my doctoral degree program. In 2006-2007 Oklahoma State University leaders discussed a name change for one campus building. The building's namesake was Bill Murray, a governor of Oklahoma (1931-1935), who held anti-Black, anti-Semitic views. He was also a congressman in 1910, presiding over the state's constitutional convention in 1906.

Murray was an attorney for the Chickasaw Nation, then became a Chickasaw Nation citizen (Korth, 2022). Initially, OSU leaders decided to keep the name Murray and erect a display describing the namesake's life and legacy during a "political generation that imposed Jim Crow laws" (Brasher et al., 2017, p. 4). The purpose of the display was to teach students and the public about past social injustices (Brasher et al., 2017; p. 4). College officials placed this display in the building's basement. Brasher et al. (2017) questioned how the location of the display accomplished the goal of educating the present and future generations about social injustice.

In reviewing the Brasher (2017) and Reichmann (2018) studies, I questioned the decision-making process and the absence of community engagement in the name change process. A National Public Radio article reported that in 2020 Murray Hall was changed by a "deliberate, inclusive process" (Korth, 2022, p. 1). Community members lobbied OSU for the name change

for years; the author reported the process lasted two decades (Korth, 2022, p. 2). The OSU officials appointed a policy review committee, including the Student Government Association, \faculty, staff, and alums in June 2020 (Korth, 2022). The committee removed Murray's name from the building (Korth, 2022). However, other place names in Oklahoma continue to honor Bill Murray's legacy, such as Murray County, Murray Lake, and Murray State College in Tishomingo, Oklahoma (Korth, 2022, p. 2).

Oklahoma State University's recent naming of the Human Sciences building at OSU after the African American educator and activist Nancy Randolph Davis provides another example of such memory work in universities (see Figure 3). The OSU students, faculty, and leadership worked together to rename the Human Development and Family Science building after Nancy Randolph Davis, the first Black student at OSU to enroll and attend in 1949 (Egleston, 2021). Davis' parents were one generation removed from enslavement. She was the first Black woman to graduate with a master's degree from OSU, a teacher in the Oklahoma public school system for forty-three years, and a civil rights activist (Egleston, 2021). The decision to rename the building after Davis exemplifies raising a subjugated history, one that, for many, demonstrates restorative memory work and "place-based ethics of care" alongside a dominant narrative which is to ignore a painful past. (Till, 2008, p. 3). The new name, Nancy Randolph Davis, represents a scene of past events the current campus community chose to emphasize and learn from in this contemporary era.

Unfortunately, segregation laws and practices prevented this young Black woman from sitting with her classmates when she first attended OSU. Instead, she sat in the hallway. After Davis scored the second highest, the school allowed her to join the other students. Today, a beautiful life-size sculpture of Davis stands in the courtyard of the building named in her honor (*Nancy Randolph Davis* – Oklahoma State University, n.d.). Autumn Brown, an OSU graduate of the doctoral program in social foundations, said, "I don't know if I could study there [Oklahoma

State University] as a Black woman if it hadn't been for Nancy Randolph Davis" (Egleston, 2021, 3:01). For many students at OSU, particularly African Americans, Davis' name "symbolizes bravery," and represents a "pioneer for inclusivity" (Egleston, 2021, p. 3:31).

Figure 3. Nancy Randoph Davis, https://www.education.okstate.edu

In contrast, a recent study focusing on a place name at the University of Georgia (UG) exemplified a landscape policy scholars believed seemed insincere rather than *responsible*. The University commemorated the Hunter–Holmes building in 2008. It was the only building on the campus with a name representing a Black or Brown student. Hunter and Holmes were the first African American students allowed to enroll at the University in 1961. The story on the building's memorial plaque omitted details and downplayed the events on the day these students enrolled. A UG student of color said, "You have this huge, semi-ornate building...plain sign in front of it. It gives you a false impression... that they [Hunter and Holmes] just kind of walked into the school, and that was it" (Inwood & Martin, 2008, p. 391).

Inwood and Martin (2008) reported the historical account of the two Black students as a traumatic incident. Before their enrollment at UG, Holmes and Hunter were only allowed admission after a series of court battles that determined the University's application procedures

were unconstitutional. The two young Black students experienced hostility and hate entering the classroom building. They dodged "bricks and bottles" as they entered the college campus, the "police dispersed tear gas, and many students were injured" (Inwood & Martin, 2008, p. 391). The current Black students shared their meanings of the story in 2008. The students expressed that the omission of the true story on the plaque in front of the building revealed the efforts by UG leadership to honor Holmes and Hunter were disingenuous (Inwood & Martin, 2008). Naming practices, in this sense, were insincere and performative.

Fernandez (2019), a librarian for the Oregon Multicultural Archives, contributed to a college campus renaming scholarship about Oregon State University's building names evaluation process. Fernandez's (2019) case study provides historical context about the evaluation criteria for the name change process, the community engagement plan, and how to implement this process in other communities. She included seven elements about the process in no particular order: (1) committee formation, (2) evaluation criteria development, (3) response to student protest, (4) communications plan development, (5) historical research development and collaboration with other scholars, (6) designing and implementing a community engagement plan, and (7) decision-making process and renaming processes (Fernandez, 2019, p. 2). She worked with other archivists to bring awareness and understanding to college students and community members about name-change processes.

In addition, Fernandez's (2019) work created opportunities for informing engaged citizens alongside college students about the historical contexts of building names at Oregon State University. Fernandez (2019) offered students and citizens within the community the opportunity to engage in "transformative and productive discourse" (p. 1). This work provided helpful insights into my study. Fernandez (2019) studied commemorative planning committee discourse and noted seven elements serving cities and school districts as an informative guide to renaming processes, which can be transformative.

Interdisciplinary studies have also expanded educational place-naming research and strategies for activists to engage in a name change. University of Tennessee, Knoxville, officials, and faculty worked alongside researchers to develop a pedagogical framework for college students to use in their college community for renaming buildings (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020). The study of the renaming process at the University of Tennessee offered a critical analysis of naming practices in local space and discussed the pedagogical power of names and naming procedures. Alderman and Rose-Redwood (2020) traced the histories of building names on campus. During meetings with communities and students, researchers empathized with the emotional struggles of marginalized students who engaged with racist names daily, sometimes experiencing retraumatization due to constant reminders of microaggressions and stereotypes (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020).

The community members and campus leaders examined policies and procedures for campus naming (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020). Scholars exploring renaming processes on college campuses can increase cultural awareness and responsiveness through curriculum and pedagogical frameworks for transforming classrooms into "toponymic workspaces" (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020; p. 124). The growing attention on college campuses to change names perceived to have troubling legacies heighten the saliency for research about renaming college classrooms and entities as workspaces for civic education, linguistic patterns, landscape artifacts, and learning how "names and memories are entangled" (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020, p. 139).

Chapter II Summary

Chapter Two provides an overview of trends in place naming scholarship from the 1800s to 2023. Geographers examined school names in 2002, and education scholars first studied school naming and renaming in the 21st century. Part I reviews early scholarship from the late 1800s to

the 1980s (e.g., Egli, 1893; Farquhar, 1926; Gannett, 1902; Kroeber, 1916; Meany, 1917). Scholars in the 1920s to 1950s expanded topics to Indigenous place naming (e.g., Engeln & Urquhart, 1924; Farquhar, 1926; McArthur & Biggs, 1925). In Part II, I discussed place naming studies from 1985 to 2022. I explored studies primarily focused on historical accuracy, listing date, and basic descriptions. From 2002 to 2022, I observed a gradual shift to critical studies focused on street naming, commemoration, and memorials as social justice issues.

In Part III, I discuss a noticeable gap that exists in educational studies, particularly for K-12 school-renaming literature. I specifically sought scholarship that, like my case study, discussed schools undergoing name changes, particularly K-12 schools (e.g., Alderman, 2002; Agosto et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2019; Greene et al., 2007; Levy et al., 2017; Moran, 2004; 2019; Prier, 2019; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022). Some current scholarship focused on school renaming case studies of K-12 schools with Confederate namesakes (Agosto et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2019; Levy et al., 2017; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022). Lastly, I reviewed studies that focused on renaming buildings on college campuses. I noticed an increase in university renaming scholarship during the 21st century (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020; Brasher, 2017; Inwood & Martin, 2008; Fernandez, 2019; Reichmann, 2018).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter III describes the methodology of my study. I used a case study methodology through a general interpretivism paradigm and approach. In this chapter, I provide a detailed background to the research problem and discuss how my investigation of school renaming studies revealed a gap in academic scholarship. I approached this social issue as an interpretive researcher to understand members' meanings to enhance broader inquiries of ongoing local and national trends of school renaming. In this chapter, I restate the context of the study, problem statement and purpose, research design, and methodological procedures. I also describe the research setting as Lee School, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the school renamed Council Oak Elementary. Finally, I conclude with a summary of this chapter.

Context of the Study

As noted in Chapter I, the riot in Charlottesville, VA in 2017 significantly affected the recent controversies about Confederate names and symbols (e.g., Alderman, 2022; Brasher, 2021). This violence preceded the school renaming of Lee Elementary in Tulsa and created a stir in the school community, which led the parents collectively act.

Dr. Gist sent a message to the parents in the TPS District. When Tulsa community members signed a petition to rename Lee School in 2017, other schools and communities across the nation also questioned the propriety of Confederate symbols.

Dr. Gist wrote,

> If a school building's namesake represents an integral, foundational role in shaping the systems, mindsets, and practices that hold communities back from the promise of equal rights and access to opportunity, we believe that it is in the best interest of our students to implement a name change.

The historical events leading up to the original Tulsa school naming in 1918 were also salient to this case's context. Understanding the historical milieu of the naming of this public school is necessary to reach a holistic and critical examination of the first naming in 1918 and the renaming in 2018. I examined various historical events leading up to the 1918 dedication of the new school to General Robert E. Lee as part of the context (see figure 3). The Tulsa Public School (TPS) Board, and the Board eventually changed the school name in 2018 (Hardiman, 2017). Today, controversies about Confederate names and symbols continue (e.g., Alderman, 2022; Brasher, 2021). Below is a visual of this case and the contextual information I examined as part of this dissertation (See figure 4).

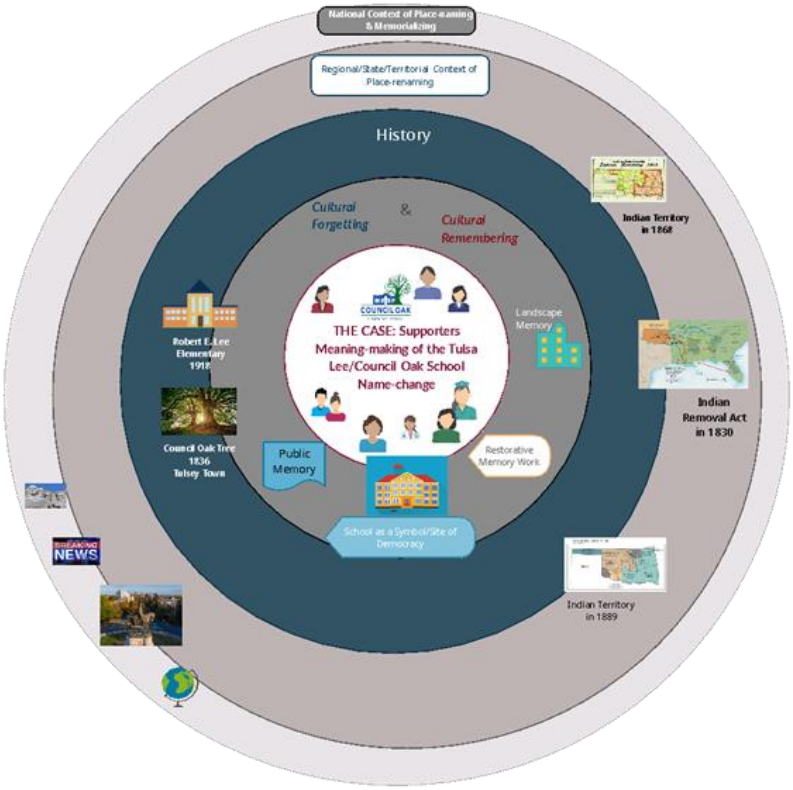

Figure 4. Concentric circle: A visual of the School Name-change Supporters Case

The outer ring of the visual above represents the national context (see figure 4). In the following paragraphs, I summarize the national events leading up to the petition to change the school's name in Tulsa and then move to the local events in the case context.

National Context. In 2000, South Carolina officials moved the Confederate flag from the capitol dome to a Confederate soldier's monument but kept it on the same grounds as a compromise (Leib & Webster, 2004). The conflict about whether the Confederate symbol should fly on Public Capitol grounds lasted fifteen years, from May 2000 until July 2015. Confederate icons have meanings connected to race, religion, and political identity (Webster & Leib, 2016).

On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof, wearing Confederate symbols and flag, walked into a Bible study at the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church and killed nine church

members (Webster & Leib, 2016). Nikki Haley, the Republican Governor of South Carolina from 2011 to 2017, gave an address one week after the shooting on June 22, 2015, calling for the removal of the Confederate flag. Haley recognized that removing the flag "would not remove all hate and bigotry," but she recognized the symbol's meaning in Roof's actions and argued the "Capitol belongs to all of us" (Webster & Leib, 2016, p. 34).

Two years after the Dylann Roof murders, a white nationalist protest erupted over removing a General Lee statue in Charlottesville, Virginia, that "stood in the city since 1924" (McKenzie, 2017, p. 1). A white protester rammed his car into a crowd of counter-protestors at the "Unite the Right" rally, killing one and injuring nineteen (Keneally, 2018, p. 2). The violence and death in Charlottesville stirred the Tulsa community to question their local school names related to enslavement and the Confederacy (Hardiman, 2017). The highly publicized violence on national television stimulated a surge of place renaming nationwide (Agosto et al., 2017; Greene et al., 2007; Lee & Gregg, 2017; Levy et al., 2017; Sieff, 2010). Meanwhile, in response to the violence, public schools nationwide examined the meanings of school names and symbols (Hardiman, 2017). Cable News Network (CNN), in July 2020, reported more than two hundred and forty schools in the US to have Confederate namesakes (Kim, 2020). Almost half of these schools serve predominantly Black or Brown students (Kim, 2020).

After the Charlottesville riot (2017), Tulsa community members gathered to discuss the recent heinous events as they petitioned to rename Lee Elementary (Hardiman, 2017). One of the material symbols on Lee's school grounds was an obelisk (small monument) dedicated to Lee in 1918. This obelisk stood between three and four feet high and sat in the center of the brick walkway in the school's grand entry from 1918 to 2018, with the words "Lee School in Honor of Lee 1918" (Hardiman, 2018a). More than a century has passed since Tulsans named the school Lee. In the last century, school board members across the US named hundreds of public schools after politicians and generals linked to the Confederate Army (Mitchell, 2021). In 2018, scholars

reported 1500 school names, streets, and parks honoring the Confederacy (Gunter & Kizzire, 2018). Many communities wrestle with these meanings linked to Confederate symbols.

Problem Statement

Symbols, namesakes, monuments, and memorials, particularly those connected to the Civil War, continue to cause contention today. Members' meaning-making of place names and symbols shifts over time (Alderman, 2002). Though many perceive the local school as a social center of the community, and a symbolic site of democracy, hope, and aspiration, during this time of evolving place-based symbolic meanings, few scholars have studied the current school renaming phenomenon in the past decade. Yet the number of studies is growing. Education scholars have examined school names by conducting studies exploring civic mission, curriculum, and school names as a cultural production of meanings (e.g., Carlson & Schramm-Pate, 2003; Greene et al., 2007; Moran, 2004; 2019).

Recently, critical scholars explored K-12 school renaming focusing on the local process, civic engagement, and impacts on the marginalized members (e.g., Agosto et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2019; Levy et al., 2017; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019). Scholarship about college campus renaming through a critical lens also increased in the past five years (e.g., Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020; Brasher et al., 2017; Inwood & Martin, 2008; Fernandez, 2019; Reichmann, 2018). Despite some increases, in 2023, at the time of my literature review, there remained a gap in school renaming literature. Limited studies focused on school names, related symbols, and name-change processes through place-based case studies.

Recent school renaming scholarship rarely centers on community members' meaning-making of name changes to understand local meanings. This study is the first to highlight members' meanings of a local school renaming process, public school names, and material symbols. Few studies discuss the significant role local, and state historical interpretations play in local members' development of meanings. Further, researchers in social foundations know very

little about the individual and members' meaning-making of school names, symbols, and the process within historical contexts through an anthropological, sociological, philosophical, or historical lens. This study emphasized the nuances of members' meanings, local experiences, and historical contexts of school names and the renaming process through a social foundations lens.

As local place-based meaning-making changes, it is important to consider how toponymies influence public identity, particularly how school names can shape community identity. Scholarship about community members' meanings of Confederate symbols and civic engagement tied to Confederate history in local contexts is valuable to understand in depth and detail. It also enhances research inquiries about renaming nationally. My case study of a Tulsa public school name change focused on community and national meaning-making of the name and symbols at Lee Elementary during the renaming process (2017-2019). The case encompassed the dynamic meanings of the new Indigenous-inspired name, Council Oak Elementary, to enhance inquiries about the ongoing national and world trends to return to Indigenous roots.

My research with—rather than on—members (Ingold, 2018) who supported the name change examined underlying local, place-based meanings and interpretations of both the historical context of the Lee School name and the historical context of Council Oak School. The Council Oak Tree and the Council Oak school land allotments were integral to Tulsa and Oklahoma's history and pertinent in shaping the Tulsa case.

Purpose of the Study

This case study examined members' (supporters of the name change) meanings of a local elementary school renaming process that occurred in Tulsa, Oklahoma from 2017-2019. My purpose was threefold; to understand how community members make meaning of school names and symbols through the Tulsa case, to contextualize the case through historical and current data, and holistically understand the school renaming through an interpretive lens to enhance local, national, and global social inquiries. The case surfaced local meanings involved in the renaming

process. It also enriches current place naming and school name change scholarship. My purpose in studying local meanings through a general interpretive paradigm was to understand how meanings unfolded within the local context during a national movement to remove Confederate names and symbols from public places. Although my original research purpose was to explore all community members' meanings of the renaming process, the project emerged organically to focus on those members supporting the name change, which officially occurred in 2018.

Research Questions

1. What led community members who supported the name change to join together and act to change the school's name?
2. What meanings did the name-change supporters make about the toponymic and material symbols related to the previous and new school names and the name-change process?
3. How did local/state place-based meanings and historical narratives inform the meaning-making of those supportive of the change?

Epistemology/Philosophical Positioning

Philosophical beliefs significantly influenced the purpose and methodology of my research. The four foundational elements in research, ontology (what is real?), epistemology (what can we know and how can we know it?), and axiology (study of values), underlie my philosophical beliefs and work. My ontological beliefs align with a "modified realist ontology" (Zhao & Bailey, Unpublished manuscript). In other words, I view reality as possibly absolute, but I believe that human beings cannot know reality with certainty (Zhao & Bailey, Unpublished manuscript). Meanings and knowledge are socially constructed.

My epistemological beliefs align with Constructionism. Constructionism describes the epistemological beliefs that "there is no objective truth waiting for us to discover," instead "truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world"

(Crotty, 1998, p. 3). My focus during this project was not to find the objective truth but to understand the constructed meanings community individuals and groups create. In this case study, I focused on the constructed meanings Tulsans made concerning the toponymic names and symbols and the contextual details related to the Lee Elementary name-change process. A constructionist epistemological stance suggests all "meaningful reality as such is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of the interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42).

To further explain these concepts, Crotty (1998) writes, "human being means being-in-the-world"; therefore, the interplay between humans and the world is essential existentially as knowledge (p. 45). This "essential relationship" between humans and their world implies "no object can be adequately described" apart from the "conscious being experiencing it, and neither can the experience be described apart from the object" (Crotty, 1998, p. 45). The members were the center of my case in, experiencing the shifting, complex inner workings in the social context of the renaming process in their changing community.

Constructionist epistemology focuses on "people interacting in a network of relationships who interpersonally and intersubjectively define the meanings of the world around them" (Crotty, 1998, p. 45). In turn, as part of the participants' social world and as a researcher, I interpret the meanings of the process to enhance broader contextual understanding. Therefore, the focus of my work considered emic understandings as insightful forms of meaning-making.

I approach research, what can I know and how can I know it, by focusing on the essential relationship between the subject and object while using a case study approach and a general interpretivism paradigm to inquire about a local/national issue. Most importantly, the primary purpose of my inquiry is to interpret the meanings and experiences to gain understanding and insight into the impacts of social issues on local communities to enrich my understanding of broader inquiries, such as the national context of school renaming and symbolic meanings.

Theoretical Paradigm

I focused on a general interpretive view of the complex and nuanced perspectives of community members who supported the name change as an inherently valuable bounded focus. The case inquiry also increases understanding of school renaming issues nationally. A general interpretive paradigm aligns with a constructionist epistemology which proposes the nature of knowledge is known through meanings constructed individually and collectively (Crotty, 1998). The meanings of the Lee School name and symbols evolved from the original naming in 1918 to the present day, 2021, and the name change to Council Oak School continues to grow into future meanings individually and co-created by the community.

Meanings are always evolving and changing. While I acknowledged my personal perspectives about names and symbols, the group of participants in my study joined in critiquing and changing the school's name from their own perspectives. I focused on the emic words and meanings within this group of community members who supported the name change. I inquired about the members' motivations, historical interpretations, and meanings. Their detailed descriptions offered insights into lived experiences in communities undergoing the tense "cultural arena" of school renaming (Alderman, 2002). The case is "historically situated" in the present and the past and "culturally derived" in the heart of downtown Tulsa (Crotty, 1998, p. 76). The meanings of the original name and symbols evolved from their 1918 context to the present day, 2023, and continue to grow into future meanings individually and co-created by the community.

Axiological assumptions influenced my beliefs and guided my research goals. Regarding my axiology, values are part of the nature of this study (Stake, 1995). I openly acknowledge I supported the school's name change during this study as a participant/researcher in the renaming process. My political and ethical values reflecting respect for members and their meaning-making influenced my process of knowledge construction. My primary goal was to understand rather than evaluate community members' meanings to explore their subjective perceptions and discover

what mattered most to them during this life-altering social process. My case study approach explored an insider perspective of the name-change process within unique historical and cultural contexts and an understanding of intersubjective meanings of the toponymic name and symbols.

Methodology: Case Study

I chose a qualitative case study methodology as the research design. Qualitative study is useful for exploring how people make meaning of phenomena (Patton, 2015). A qualitative case study design aligns with a general interpretivism paradigm, a constructionist epistemology, a modified realism ontology, and an axiology that values human meanings as knowledge. According to Merriam (1998), "a qualitative case study can be characterized as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic" and "an analysis of a social unit" (p. 29). The purpose of a case is to focus on a bounded phenomenon in depth and detail for the intrinsic value of understanding that phenomenon (Stake, 2005). In this study, supporters' meanings were the case.

The researcher often relies on theory and techniques for analysis that draw upon many disciplines, such as history, sociology, philosophy, and anthropology (Merriam, 1998). Inspired by Ingold (2018), I drew from scholars in interdisciplinary fields and relied heavily on geography, history, and anthropology as education. This case was my "way of attending to things, opening up paths of growth and discovery" (Ingold, 2018, p. ix). My attention to meaning-making transformed and continues to influence my educational being and guides my path as I continually interact in social connection, communication, and community.

I avoided preconceptions by remaining close to members' words and terminology (Emerson, 2011), close to the phenomenon, observing, asking questions, and obtaining an insider view (Stake, 1995). This fieldwork style is a "distinctive method for uncovering and depicting local interpretations or indigenous meanings [in their words]" (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 16). The case study revealed Confederate and Indigenous meanings in the data about Indian Territory, Oklahoma, and Tulsa's historical beginnings at the Council Oak Tree. To understand the context

of the case, I turned to various historical sources, some primary and secondary, which I detail in Chapter IV. That chapter offers my interpretation of the historical background of the school site and includes current and historical Indigenous connections to the new name Council Oak. The public school's Confederate name change occurred within a local, geographical, and national context at a particular historical and political moment of school name changes. The historical time of dedicating the school building to the Confederate General was 1918, during the last year of WWI, over one hundred years ago. My secondary sources were varied historians' interpretations (Chang, 2010; Johnson, 2012; 2020; Saunt, 2020). The primary sources were select archival typed and handwritten notes and official journal entries from school board members from 1917 to the 1970s.

This case study provided a holistic description of individual and group meanings necessary to understand the phenomenon of meaning-making among select participants in this school community and the phases of the renaming process as they experienced them. In 2018, I contacted community members who supported or resisted the name change to interview the stakeholders. Consequently, this case organically formed into a study of supporters, those who found the Lee name problematic and sought to engage in social action for change. The case was a "bounded system," delimiting a specific object of study (Smith, 1978). This case, bound by the category of stakeholders: the supporters' meanings about the school's symbols, involved data from 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022, focused on supporters' meaning making during a local name change process.

As Stake (2008) notes, "previously unknown relationships and variables can emerge" from case studies, which may lead the researcher to "rethink" the phenomenon (p. 119). A well-written case study can "illuminate the readers' [and researcher's] understanding" and sometimes surprise readers and the researcher with unexpected insights (Wilson, 1979, p. 448). I detail these

insights in Chapter VI. Research implications enhance scholarship, future name-change processes, community memory work, and future reparative work in cities throughout the US.

Setting and School

The setting of this case study was the elementary school community. It is part of TPS. The population of Tulsa was 396,543 (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Recent demographic statistics of Tulsa reveal 64.0% white, 15.3% African American, 16.3% Hispanic or Latino, 4.4% Native American, 3.3% Asian, and 7.6% biracial or multi-racial (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Located at 1920 S. Cincinnati Ave., Council Oak Elementary is a Wallace Foundation Social/Emotional Leaming Grant recipient. One of five recipients, Council Oak used this grant for curriculum to support student development in three areas: cognitive, interpersonal, and character-building skills. The school's website states, "With strong social and emotional skills, our students will be able to set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions" (*Council Oak Elementary School*, 2021).

Council Oak's three goals are effective communication, data-driven instructions, and a positive learning environment. The website states: "What we believe: Rooted in unwavering respect for every child, Council Oak Elementary fosters learning communities immersed in critical thinking, academic ideation, creative design, and emotional intelligence" (*Council Oak Elementary School*, 2021). In 2021, the total enrollment was 444 for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade (*OSDE public records*, 2021). The demographics are 61% white, 16.4% more than one race, 11.9% Black, 5.4% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 4.1% Hispanic/Latino. The minority enrollment is 39%, with 40% economically disadvantaged students at Council Oak Elementary (*Council Oak ES in Oklahoma*, 2021).

Table 1			
Participant Diversity Table			
Participant	Race	Gender	Type
1	Hispanic	Female	Individual
2	African American	Female	Individual
3	African American/Indigenous	Female	Individual
4	Caucasian	Female	Individual
5	Caucasian	Female	Focus Group
6	Caucasian	Male	Focus Group
7	Mexican	Male	Focus Group
8	Caucasian	Female	Focus Group
9	Caucasian	Female	Focus Group
10	Hispanic/Caucasian	Female	Focus Group
11	Indigenous	Female	Focus Group
12	Indigenous	Male	Individual
13	Indigenous	Female	Individual
14	Indigenous	Female	Individual
15	Caucasian	Female	Individual
16	Caucasian	Female	Individual

Table 1: Participant Diversity Table

Participants

Stake recommended six participants for case studies (Stake, 2013). I had a total of 16 participants. Over the years 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022, I interviewed nine individuals and conducted a focus group in 2018. In 2022, I followed up with the same focus group plus two new members, then conducted follow-up interviews with two individuals from 2018. I transcribed approximately 18 hours of individual interviews and data from two focus group meetings producing over 520 transcribed pages. I used purposeful selection to choose the members for the case. Some were actively involved in the renaming process and others supported the change but were not actively involved. All participants lived in the Tulsa area during the renaming process (see Figure 5). I recruited members by word of mouth. Members represented various roles, including nurses, educators, social workers, Indigenous leaders, and professionals. Members were also racially diverse (Table 1).

Methods

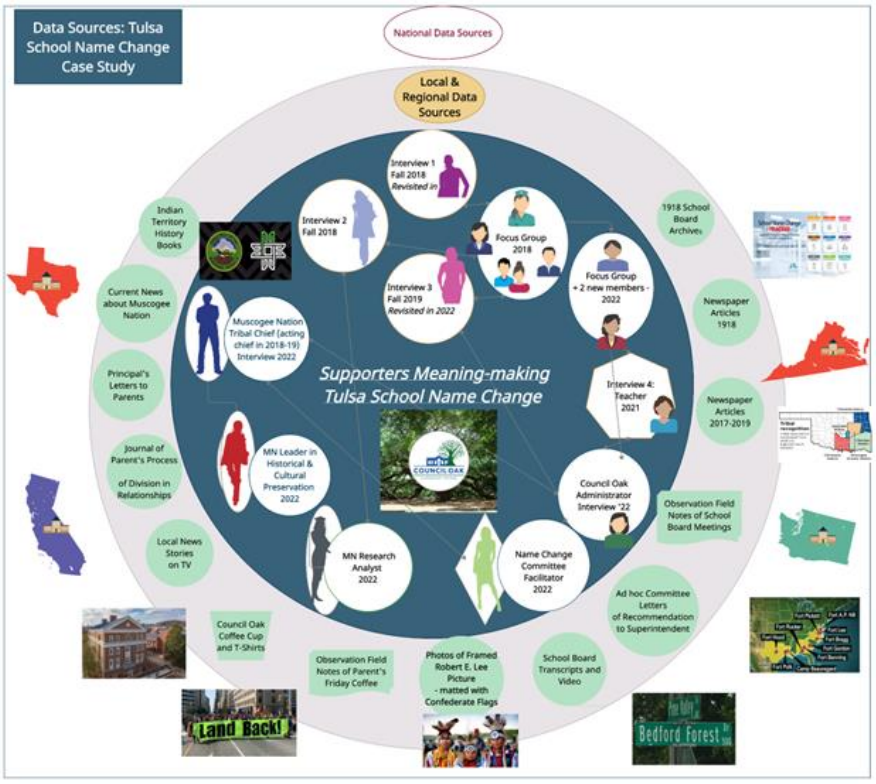

Figure 5. Concentric circle of case data (2018-2022)

Focus Group

Focus groups can provide diverse viewpoints, often providing checks and balances and "weed[ing] out false or extreme views" (Krueger & Casey, 2008). The new name for the school, Council Oak, became official on August 20, 2018. I conducted a focus group of members supporting the name change on October 23, 2018. I facilitated this focus group as part of this case study to draw from diverse data sources as aligned with Stake's (1995) case study guidelines. The five-member focus group included three Caucasian females, one Mexican American male, and one Caucasian male. They discussed how and why they became involved. In 2022, I revisited this group of five and added one spouse, a Mexican American female, and an Indigenous female. All five members of the original focus group were parents of children who attended Lee Elementary

during the name change. Their professions were accountant, social worker, nurse, lawyer, and civil draftsman. The two new members added in 2022, both new to the community, included a graduate student and member of an Indigenous education organization.

All focus group members shared their individual positioning as supporters of the name change. The conversation unfolded as they worked together to recall their experiences and shared emotions about the process, nuanced meanings, and national reckoning. After transcribing, I checked with members to clarify questions and verify meanings. (See Table 1).

Interviews

After the name change, I recruited nine additional participants for individual interviews. Conversations provided rich, detailed descriptions and interpretations as they recalled their recent experiences during the name change process. Each interview lasted a little more than one hour. The first two interviews in October 2018 were with a Hispanic female and an African American female. One supported the name change, and the other felt neutral about changing the name. The Hispanic female's children attended Lee Elementary in the 1980s; the African American female was the mother of a child who attended Lee Elementary before, during, and after the name change in 2018. On October 2019, I interviewed one Indigenous-Caucasian female with a Bi-racial daughter (Caucasian and African American). Her daughter attended Lee from 2016-2023, before, during, and after the name change years. I met with this mother again in 2020 and 2022. I asked if I could see the photos she took of the framed picture of General Lee, one with and one without the Confederate flags. Later, I asked if she would draw how she felt as she walked her daughter to her classroom. As she explained her drawing, she described the children as "Brown and white babies lining up against the wall" underneath the Lee portrait.

In 2022, I revisited two community members to ask questions about the name Council Oak and to understand how their meanings might have evolved since 2018. In 2022, I interviewed five more individuals new to this case, three of whom were Indigenous community members, to

ensure I was including the perspectives of Indigenous people in my case. I used a general semi-structured interview protocol with questions that also allowed for follow up questions depending on the responses. Sample questions are below.

Sample Interview Questions

I. Background

1. How do you identify? Male? Female? Other?

2. What best describes you? Married? Single? Partnered? Widowed?

3. What best describes you? African American? Native American? Hispanic? Caucasian? State if not listed_____.

II. Involvement

1. How did you become involved in the renaming process?

2. What effects did you see in your community and the city during the process?

III. History

1. What did the name change from Lee Elementary to Council Oak mean to you concerning Tulsa's history and general history?

II. Schools

1. What does Council Oak Elementary School mean to you? The name and the place.

2. What do a school name and its related symbols mean to you?

3. How important is a school's name?

IV. School Symbols

1. What does this Council Oak symbol mean to you?

2. What emotions does it evoke for you?

3. What do you know about the historical background of this symbol?

Observation Data

During the 2017-2018 school year, I attended TPS Board meetings in person, live-streamed, and took detailed notes. Board members discussed the name-change process, allowing

community members with varying viewpoints to share their views. On May 10, 2019, I observed the 100th-year celebration day at Council Oak Elementary and noticed the interactions between community members and school staff. For two school years, between 2017 and 2019, I interacted with community members while taking walks with my grandchildren, meeting teachers on the first day of school, going to a gymnastics event, Friday coffee-time, the school's one-hundred-year anniversary, and grandparent's day. I casually talked to community members during the fifth-grade graduation ceremony and basketball games.

My observation experiences in the field provided essential contextual information related to the case (See Figure 5). My observation experiences offered insight into the tension, dialogue, relational climate, and the school administrators, individuals, and the efforts of informal and formal parent groups' (PTA) to handle each event with care and concern. In the summer of 2021, I also observed the remaking of the 1921 parade, the Greenwood District reopening, and the John Hope Franklin Symposium act of remembrance ceremony. The Council Oak Tree is near the school. I have observation notes from my visit to the Creek Nation Council Oak Park.

Documents and Artifacts

My database included newspapers and local television reports about the Tulsa name change. As the school renaming issue evolved nationally, I added to my existing database to stay up to date with the latest events related to dialogue about the new name, Council Oak. The archives of the TPS Education Service Center, Tulsa Historical Society, Tulsa Public Library, and the Oklahoma Historical Society provided insight into the historical details of the original naming of the school in 1918 (see Figure 5). I searched these databases for descriptions of community members' experiences during that era: 1) How did they make sense of the name, 2) Why was Lee an honorable namesake, and 3) What else happened during this time? My purpose for seeking contextual information was to explore meanings beyond the contemporary dialogue about names

to enhance analysis and, specifically, for insight into the meanings of those supporting the school's name change (see Figure 5).

I gathered artifacts from Lee Elementary and the latest symbolic representations of Council Oak. Some artifacts related to this study were T-shirts for children and adults with the Lee Elementary name and various symbols screen-printed on the t-shirt and coffee cups. Other artifacts are photographs of the Lee portrait, which included Confederate flags on the matting. This was displayed in a central school hallway before the name change occurred.

Data Analysis

I moved back and forth from seeking members' meanings (Emerson et al., 2015) to coding and categorizing data, to multimodal analysis. I used a variety of approaches to do this. As I discovered and stretched my understanding of members' meanings, I intentionally practiced remaining "experience-near" to emic meanings, as Geertz (1985) inspired (p. 57). I used a cyclical process and embodied analysis, listening to recordings while following the cursor aligned with members' words, to understand various modes of data. My cyclical process directed and redirected my attention "to issues and possibilities, further reading and additional field notes" (Saldaña, 2015, p. 105). As I journaled and referred to theoretical memos which relied on evidentiary warrants (Erickson, 1986), I tracked my process and interpretive work *with* others. I used multiple data sources and member-checking to clarify meanings and substantiate interpretations.

Gather and Organize the Raw Data

Throughout the process, I organized the data to analyze it. Again, I used a cyclical method to listen to recordings and read and organize bits and pieces of data into potential themes and categories. I scanned all digital data, such as the signed consent forms, my field notes, and sources of information, and kept them in a secure drop box, backed up in a cloud, following IRB procedures. During the dissertation process, I practiced organizational skills as my database grew.

Detailed notes, memos, and jottings became salient for recollecting sensory descriptions, non-verbal expressions, and interruptions in the field. I scheduled time before and after to make detailed notes. I labeled my database by author, title, and date. I filed my interview data by date and number of interviews or focus groups.

Convey Findings and Interpret Meanings

I developed a case study oriented toward meaning-making (Patton, 2015, p. 261). I remained faithful to my epistemology and research goals as I analyzed concepts and patterns in the data. The entire process was cyclical from conception to completion; it has been a moving collaboration with members and, for me, a transformative process. The dissertation process, in collaboration with my faculty advisor, conveying findings and interpreting meanings, ultimately brought meaning and coherence to the study (Tracy, 2010). I used analytic tools such as reflexivity, visual analysis, memos, metaphorical analysis and guidance from my leading advisor. I utilized bits of data to serve as essential "evidentiary warrants" for my "empirical assertions" (Erickson, 1986). Further, as salient, I drew from scholarship in foundations to situate my work.

Merriam (1998) stated that case studies identify and explain "specific issues" and "often draw upon other disciplines such as anthropology, history, sociology [and philosophy] for theoretical orientation and techniques... for analysis" (p. 34). I studied concepts from the field of cultural memory work introduced in Chapter II and analyzed data inductively. I looked for patterns of member experiences, evidence of place-based references, and concerns about Confederate racism shaping meaning-making. The outer rings (See figure 3) of the case, the context relating to Tulsa specifically, the race-based meanings, helped inform my analysis of how the people understood the situation and created touchstones for meaning-making.

Researcher Background and Positionality

My research began in the Fall of 2018 during my Ph.D. coursework. I facilitated focus groups and collected artifacts. During the summer of 2018, I read a statement to the TPS Board to

remove the Lee name, which focused on community dialogue and empathetic listening to diverse experiences. A few months later, in the Fall of 2018, the Oklahoma State University (OSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my application for research on this topic. My participant group organically developed into a group that did not want to keep the Lee School name, with one member who remained neutral. My study continued to emerge as I entered and reentered the field, observing and gathering more stories, experiences, and meanings. As a Caucasian female, I realized that my experiences and engagement with symbols, particularly those with ties to enslavement, may have differed from the perspectives of community members of color: Hispanic, African American, Native American, and biracial individuals (BIPOC).

I acknowledge my experience as a Caucasian female, part of the dominant culture, differs in a world where historic and systemic racism exists on many levels. My researcher's role was to understand the meaning of names and the change processes in which community members gathered, critiqued, and advocated for change. It was and is my responsibility as a researcher to work *with* participants (Ingold, 2018) to represent their stories and viewpoints with attention to the roles they play in the community as citizens and professionals. I regularly checked with members and shared my writing to clarify and verify my work. As my life and the lives of those in the Tulsa community "intertwined and overlapped," they "mutually responded to one another in alternating cycles of tension and resolution" (Ingold, 2018, p. 4).

As I shared in Chapter I, this project had personal and professional meaning. The norms of qualitative research indicated that I must identify specific criteria to structure my work and be explicit about my role and relationship with the community. During data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the case, I played a multifaceted role as a "constructionist evaluator" in this study (Patton, 2015, p. 123). I anticipated that even supporters had different experiences and perceptions of the process. Therefore, my role was not to judge the stakeholder's perceptions as suitable or proper but instead observe perceptions as part of the holistic picture. As the research

instrument, I aimed to experience "direct contact with" community members (Patton, 2015, p. 46). Communication skills were of utmost importance. My subjective experiences and insights shaped this study. I grew up in the Tulsa area and attended Tulsa Public-schools (TPS) in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. I witnessed life in Tulsa and through decades of social and cultural changes. My experiences as a student, mother of three children, the surrogate mother of three, and grandmother of six children growing up in the Tulsa area influenced my perspectives.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

A qualitative case study is personal and situational (Stake, 1995). The case was delimited to only one group of community members who advocated for the name change and others who were not actively part of the process but supported the change. Focusing on supporters organically occurred, I believe, due to the contentious nature of the topic. Originally, I hoped to hear from community members against the name change too. My participation in the case in relation to those supporting the change affected the participation of some members who opposed the name change. I was upfront about my role as a supporter. This is both a delimitation (only focusing on supporters) and a limitation (one set of perspectives in the name change process). The limitations of this work of scholarship included constraints side of my control, such as scheduling issues, COVID-19 procedures, weather constraints, time constraints, and the hesitance of some participants to share their views.

Trustworthiness

I used rigorous methods and credibility to design an ethical study. Patton (2015) wrote, "for better or worse, the trustworthiness of the data is tied directly to the trustworthiness of those who collect and analyze the data and their demonstrated competence" (p. 706). Methods, research design, analytical techniques, and procedures do not ensure rigor because "rigor resides in, depends on, and is manifest in rigorous thinking about everything, including methods and analysis" (Patton, 2015, p. 706). As a social researcher, ensuring my findings are rigorous was

also important. In other words, I asked myself, "Can my readers trust and feel secure about these findings to construct social policy based on them?" I aimed to create a trustworthy study.

Reflexivity

I approached this study to learn from participants as my teacher. I sought to understand and observe rather than judge while remaining honest about personal self-awareness and growth areas. I learned through their interpretations and meanings. I grew personally and professionally during every interview and focus group. Patton (2015) discussed triangulated reflexive inquiry, including self, participant, and audience reflexivity (p. 604). During my writing marathons, deep conceptual thought, and long study hours, I continually practiced reflexivity in all three contexts. I exerted energy, time, and attention to communicate my thoughts and those of others in ways that honor and respect. I studied this case by learning from people by doing my "philosophizing *in* the world" through a "deep involvement in observation, conversation, and participatory practice – *with* the people" in Tulsa (Ingold, 2018, p. 4).

Inspired by Ingold (2018), this wisdom enlists participants as teachers to provide a window into the workings of the renaming process. I valued their meaning-making of symbols and experiences in their community with other members. My role as a researcher/participant is a learner. I am continuously curious about individual experiences. This guides my work and life. I viewed school names as powerful and contested memorials that represent a school community and extend outside the local people to reflect the school district's values and identity. These commemorative symbols are socially constructed. They define and legitimize certain heroes that reflect the values of the people living within geographical landscapes.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are taken very seriously in research, whether the work is qualitative or quantitative. It is essential to trust research as valid and reliable, with purpose, to

cause no harm as they intervene in people's lives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Specific terminology and criteria are a point of debate in academia. However, traditional terminology of validity and reliability in qualitative research involves how the researcher investigates in an "ethical manner" (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 237).

Data Collection Ethics

Ethical considerations for the case study included following the OSU-IRB (Internal Review Board) criteria for approval and continuation of responsible conduct training. As a researcher, I had the responsibility to stay connected with the IRB, submit necessary forms, and make changes promptly. I remained current with the Responsible Conduct of Research training, given its guidance to ethical dilemmas and questions. The University Research Compliance website regularly updated the special instructions.

I kept all information confidential and only discussed the data with my colleagues and committee without identifying actual persons who willingly offered their perspectives about this emotional topic. I did not wish to betray the participant's trust in any way. I cannot be entirely sure that the focus group members kept the group conversations confidential (Patton, 2015). Still, the participants in my focus group were well-respected professionals with integrity and conversations about the naming process occurred regularly in the community, and still today.

Data Analysis and Interpretation Ethics

I considered ethical standards during data analysis and interpretation. To do this, I developed mutually supportive relationships with my interviewees, focusing on "trust, respect, and cooperation" (Patton, 2015, p. 396). It was of utmost importance to stay close to the "members' meanings." Another way to reach a level of trustworthiness was to involve them in my interpretation process. I regularly connected with members to ask them if my interpretations

seemed plausible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My ethical consideration was establishing trust relationships with those who have entrusted me with their meaning-making.

During the interview process, I journaled my process and emotions. I entered deep layers of listening into the members' words and emotions, reliving the conversations repeatedly. I engaged with the words inhabiting the members' language as they recounted their stories. Each person was extraordinarily gifted at communicating their story. During the first layer of analysis, I wrote about the respondents' phrases and words in pencil. I wanted to be able to erase and change my markings. I found many intriguing phrases that gave me a sense of the participants' values. In subsequent layers of analysis, after I gathered more data, I saw categories surface as the participants emphasized themes. Other coding revealed emotions related to the name change process, "feeling strongly," "a frustrating process," "very little thought to the site level," "awkward now," "it [Council Oak name] makes you feel really proud."

As the layer of analysis continued, I realized that a word document would not suffice. I started an excel file with each interview. After several layers of reading and listening to the audio, I went from the transcript, circling to the excel document over and over. I searched for common emotions, values, and emic descriptions. The most prevalent topics were history, trust, loss, grief, pain, pride, work, community, futurity, and diverse voices at the table.

Significance of the Study

This case significantly offers a close examination of school renaming in one context from the perspective of supporters. It is one of few case studies about school renaming at the elementary school level. It is one of few case studies available focused only on supporters. In addition, it is the only case I could find that focuses on members' meanings in making sense of the name change process and the local influences of those meanings and the names and symbols. In this period of mass national removal of the Confederate Names, symbols, memorials, and

monuments, case studies with local nuances help researchers understand the individual, community, local, as well as national influences of renaming schools.

For several decades, cultural geographers have studied controversies about street and building names, memorials, and monuments related to enslavement, the Civil War, and the civil rights movement in relation to geography, critical theory, and history (Alderman & Inwood, 2013; Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020; Azaryahu, 1996; 1997; Berg & Kearns, 1996; Bodnar, 1991; Brasher et al., 2017; Brasher et al., 2020; Fernandez, 2019). However, only a few studies in education scholarship address K-12 school renaming (e.g., Agosto et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2019; Levy et al., 2017; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019). Focusing on schools renaming is important because school missions, names, and namesakes can reflect the core values of a community; therefore, the collective and individual meaning-making of school symbols is essential to understand as part of name-change controversies.

Educational studies examining how communities make meaning of Confederate symbols and change the names of public schools are scarce. As local place-based meaning-making evolves, it is important to study how local processes affect school communities. This case enhances future work and adds to existing literature through a greater understanding of how the community identity can be stabilized, disrupted, and wounded by "daily" interactions with symbols laden with meanings that members construct as a continual, personal, and social process. The meanings changed over time, through internal and external forces and social experiences. On supporter describe an emotional "tug of war," reflecting the internal struggles with symbols that contradicted perceived values. Other supporters discussed the influence of the 2021 Tulsa Race commemoration that brought national visibility to racial issues in Tulsa, and others described how the pandemic influenced meaning-making through a delayed re-entrance to the school, and how that hindered the "rebuilding process" for their community identity. This study offers unique

findings and discoveries that I explain in depth and detail in Chapter VI: Discoveries and Implications.

Chapter III Summary

Chapter III is an overview of my qualitative case study methodology. In this chapter, I included the research questions guiding this case study project and my constructionist philosophical positioning to understand members' meanings and school renaming through an interpretivist lens. I also described my purposeful sample selection for supportive name change members' interviews, focus groups, and data analysis for my study methods.

Chapter III described the national context, background to the problem, and the gap in scholarly work about community members' meanings of school names, symbols, and school name-change processes. This study advances scholarly work with its unique emphasis on supportive community members' meaning-making of school names and symbols in relation to local, regional, and national meanings during unprecedented calls for restorative justice to be marked in the material and geographic landscape–including public schools. My interpretations of members' meanings offer insightful connections to the issues of place naming and school renaming across the US. Finally, I communicated my commitment to and understanding of trustworthiness, reflexivity, and ethical responsibilities as a researcher. I shared the sense of purpose I experienced in collaborating *with* community members in this scholarly work.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES:
THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF A SCHOOL BUILDING AND ITS NAMES

This chapter summarizes my exploration of the historical background of the Robert E. Lee School's original naming in 1918 and of the name Council Oak to provide historical context for my case on renaming. As noted in previous chapters, "rememberings" refers to historical events within milieus that communities and researchers choose to mark and preserve in popular memory (Bailey, 2022). Historical interpretations and narratives evolve as new facts and perspectives come to light. Understanding historical narratives is useful for understanding how community members made meaning of the Tulsa renaming process. As I explored historical themes that might confirm, explain, or clarify the meanings of the two names, I explored how historical events in the Oklahoma and Tulsa context set the stage for the school's original naming and dedication to Robert E. Lee (see Figure 6) and renaming to Council Oak.

Figure 6: Lee Elementary School (City of Tulsa Preservation Commission, 1996)

Newspaper stories, biographies, place names, and memorials shaped Tulsa's unique historical story and collective memories. Individuals and groups recall memories of past events and preserve and retell them through community interactions and oral histories. Tulsa is home to diverse groups who share ancestral memories with their children, teach cultural practices, and co-create community life. Individuals, families, communities, and nations construct stories organically and generationally. Communities highlight specific events and experiences while downplaying others (Bailey, 2022). Although such collective memories are partial, they become the stories people tell their children about their lives and schooling. The US government Indigenous removal, also known as the Trail of Tears, the forced relocation of Native peoples, and the land allotment act are integral parts of history that reflect the dynamic, ongoing struggles related to the school renaming story of my case.

Indigenous Entry into Oklahoma Territory

My research of historical meanings helped situate contemporary meanings that have evolved and contributed to a deeper understanding of how remembering and forgetting worked in the Tulsa case. Diverse peoples came to Tulsa historically and constructed their meanings of concepts such as land, territory, place, and home according to their cultural traditions, values, and beliefs. These meanings informed my Tulsa case. This section describes elements of the Indigenous entry into Oklahoma territory.

Before European colonists came to America, the Indigenous population lived in organized societies across the territory with their forms of government, cultures, and languages (Johnson, 2012). Indigenous families practiced communal ownership of land (Chang, 2010). In 1526, Spanish and English explorers claimed and conquered the land and brought their ways of living, which changed the lives of the original inhabitants and descendants forever (Chang, 2010). During the Colonial Period (1492-1828), Europeans came to settle on this continent. They came to escape England's political control, establish freedom of religion, and find economic resources (Johnson, 2012). The Europeans and Indigenous people did not share cultural beliefs or traditions.

The early colonists acquired Indigenous lands by locating and laying claim to the land they wanted by setting up agreements with the Indigenous peoples, determining the borders, providing access to the resources on their land, and establishing treaties (Johnson, 2012). However, Europeans came to the new world with a Eurocentric lens, which centered on European ideas and ways of living and assumed superiority over other races. These beliefs disrupted civility and communication (Chang, 2010). Enslavement and land ownership were part of the economic "systems of property" from the 1600s to 1863 (Chang, 2010, p. 4). The Eurocentric way of categorizing race into hierarchies justified the long history of enslaving African-Americans. A small minority of the Indigenous nations that enslaved people cooperated with and adhered to

these current economic "systems of property," specifically land ownership and enforcing laws regarding enslaved people (Chang, 2010, p. 4).

Forces Leading Native People to the Historical Trail of Tears

In the early 1800s, the colonists feared racial intermixing and lacked control of the increasing prosperity of Native nations in the South. Eurocentric philosophies about Indigenous people made them vulnerable targets for expulsion (Chang, 2010; Saunt, 2020). Historians agree that forcing Indigenous tribes in the Southern U.S. to relocate to land in Indian Territory was the US government's answer to two misperceived problems that took hold early in the 1800s (Chang, 2010; Johnson, 2012; Saunt, 2020). One common misperception was that people with diverse cultures could not coexist (Chang, 2010; Johnson, 2012; Saunt, 2020). Another misconception was that the Indigenous people were fragile, and their (so-called) savage cultures, hunting, and communal ways of living, were dangerous to their continued existence (Chang, 2010; Johnson, 2012; Saunt, 2020).

Conversely, some historians argue the decrease in Indigenous populations was due to exaggerated reports, sickness, war, and migration rather than their cultural ways of living (Chang, 2010; Johnson, 2012). Letters and documents before 1800 indicated peaceful relationships between the Native Peoples and their white neighbors, trading and sharing traditions (Chang, 2010; Johnson, 2012; Saunt, 2020). Native people adapted to white southern ways of living and blended into the regional economy by adopting practices of enslaving African Americans and intermarrying (Saunt, 2020). According to Doran (1978), "over five percent of the sixty-six thousand residents" on Indigenous land were enslaved (Doran, 1978, p. 34).

Despite these interactions, Thomas Jefferson and US officials believed a "law of nature" made coexistence impossible (Saunt, 2020, p. 15). The "law of nature" was a racial construction that became prevalent and influential in social decisions affecting generations of Indigenous peoples through unjust dealings between the US government and tribes (Saunt, 2020). The

experiences of the Muscogee tribe contradicted this racial construction that different people groups could not co-exist. The Muscogee (Mvskoke) people, who are descendants of Ancestral Muscogee (800-1540 CE), originally constructed pyramids along the rivers as part of their ceremonial practices. These practices extended throughout the region to Macon, Georgia (Littlefield, 2001). Around 1800, traders and farmers in Creek towns enslaved at least three hundred people (Littlefield, 2001). Over time they gradually adopted ownership of private farmlands to replace their previous communal farming systems.

Trail of Tears

During the early 1800s, the US government instigated conflict over national sovereignty and land ownership through treaties involving promises to the Five "Civilized" Tribes (Five Tribes): Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Choctaw (Saunt, 2020, p. 21). Such disputes centered on property and its resources. Thomas Jefferson (US president from 1801-1809) was the first to promote voluntary Indian removal (Reed, 2016). Jefferson's goal was assimilation, a "civilization policy" (Reed, 2016). Historians argue there were three goals of assimilation: 1) Christianize the Native peoples, 2) teach them the English language, and 3) coerce them to participate in the market economy as farmers (Reed, 2016).

The US treaties in 1817 and 1819 with the Cherokee tribes included removal. Still, the treaties offered tribal members options to move anywhere west of the Mississippi. Therefore, some considered this a volunteer removal at that time (Reed, 2016). Jefferson's successors followed his lead and successfully convinced more Indigenous tribes to dispossess their land in the 1820s (Saunt, 2020, p. 6). Today, the possession of land and its resources continues to be a source of control, authority, or influence over others (Chang, 2012; Saunt, 2020). As of July 2020, Oklahoma is the home of thirty-nine tribes (Wamsley, 2020).

The US population expanded in 1828, and the colonists wanted the land on the East Coast for its resources and mild climate. In 1829, prospectors discovered gold on Cherokee land in

northern Georgia (Johnson, 2012). The Cherokees, non-citizens of the US, became vulnerable to violence from colonists without recourse or support from the court system (Saunt, 2020). Under the leadership of President Andrew Jackson, the US government wanted sovereign power to deport the Native People. The US President asserting sovereign power was a federal act to extend their legal authority and control of land that belonged to Indigenous people (Saunt, 2020). From 1829-1837 the federal government forced the Cherokees off their ancestral lands to relocate to what is now Oklahoma.

White people justified the removal of Indigenous people in part by claiming they were "protecting" this "endangered" population to find "salvation in the West" (Saunt, 2020, p. 17). The tribes labeled the Five “Civilized” tribes by the US government, including Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole, were under insurmountable pressure to give up their land and move west. US government officials and explorers described the land with contradictions. Some described it as an "American Sahara," and others as a "fine country," and much later, the superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1826 admitted that no one [read: white] knew anything about the land west of the Mississippi (Saunt, 2020). Historians have called the forced removal of Native People from their land an act of genocide and "The Trail of Tears" (Saunt, 2020, p. xiii).

Saunt (2020), a historian of the dispossession of Native Americans, used three words to label and apply meanings to the forced removal: 1) "expulsion," a historical term used in the 1830s by the victims; 2) "extermination," a historic term used by the perpetrators themselves; and 3) "deportation," a current word which means to move undocumented citizens out of the US (p. xiii). The term Indian Removal "distorts our understanding of the past" by confusing people about who is enacting the removal, as if the removing is doing itself (Saunt, 2020, p. xii).

In addition, the label "Indian" "conjures up so many stereotypes that it clouds the mind" (Saunt, 2020, p. xii). Saunt (2020) insists that "removal" is "unfitting for a story about the state-sponsored expulsion of eight thousand people" and is "a 'soft word,'... and words are delusive"

(Saunt, 2020, p. xii). As I also argue in this dissertation, words, and meanings matter. According to Saunt (2020), expulsion, extermination, and deportation are fitting descriptions of the state-sponsored takeover of land and assault on Indigenous families.

In 1830, the Indian Removal Act gave President Andrew Jackson the power to negotiate "Indian removal" treaties with nations (Saunt, 2020). Surprisingly, in 1832, the Supreme Court decision in Cherokee Nation versus Georgia maintained the Cherokee Nation had the right to govern itself as a distinct community and live within the bounds of its homeland (Meraji, 2020). According to this ruling, the state of Georgia had no jurisdiction over the Cherokee Nation. However, President Andrew Jackson refused to enact this decision by executive power.

In 1835, a series of bloody ambushes and battles took place in Georgia between the Seminoles, their Black allies, and the US troops. Two companies of the US Army were annihilated (Wilkins, 1889). Amidst the conflicts, a small minority of Cherokees agreed to sign the Treaty of New Echota, including Major and John Ridge, Elias Boudinot, and Andrew Ross, who insisted they were doing what was best for the Cherokees (Wilkins, 1889). According to some accounts, these men were self-appointed Cherokee leaders without formal authority (Wilkins, 1989, p. 254).

Muscogee People Arrive in Tulsa

The Muscogee People traveled from Alabama on a two-year journey known as the "Trail of Tears" from 1834-1836 (Debo, 1943, p. 4). The Lee/Council Oak School story interconnects with Tulsa's beginning in the 1830s. Seven decades separate the Trail of Tears (1834-1836) to Oklahoma statehood (1907) and another decade from statehood to the naming of Lee School in 1918. Within these eight decades, there are layers of complex, dynamic societal changes. In 1836, the Creek Indians arrived and settled near the bend of the Arkansas River. They came to a land of foothills that stretched west into treeless grasslands. The tribe built ancestral fires in Alabama to honor and remember their ancestors when they were forced at gunpoint to leave their homeland.

When they arrived in the northeast part of Indian Territory, Locvpokv Muscogee (Creeks) placed ashes at the base of the Council Oak Tree as a sacred act of remembrance of their ancestors (See Figure 7). Fire is a "revered element of the Mvskoke people" and an act "to honor those [people] past and present that preserve, protect and live the Mvskoke traditions, cultures, and lifeways" (*Where it all began Muscogee Creek Nation*, 2018). For the Muscogee people, the tree "speaks to continuity, to survival" (Johnson, 2012, p. 275)

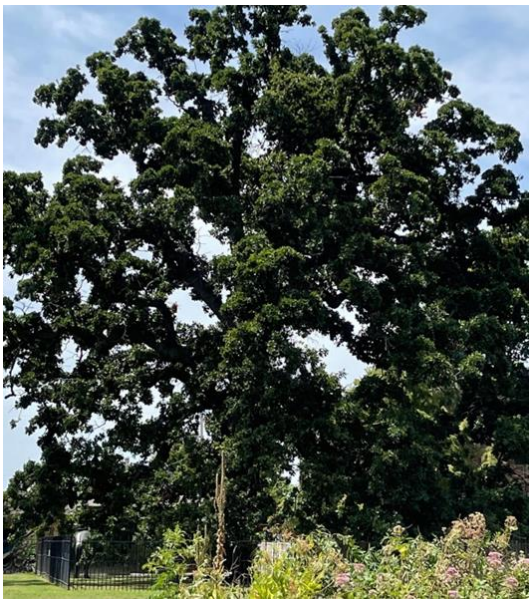

Figure 7. Council Oak Tree, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Each decade between 1836 and 1918 included events and experiences that shifted meanings influencing the collective memories of future generations. The Muscogee People named the outpost in the northeast part of Oklahoma "Tallasi." "Tallasi" is "a form of Tullahassee, meaning 'Old Town,' "Tulwa" meaning town, and "ahassee," meaning something old" (Debo, 1943, p. 4). The Muscogee people settled in the Northeast corner of Indian Territory, present-day Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the area where the historical memorial of the Council Oak Tree now rests within walking distance of Council Oak School. The physical land of Indian Territory interconnects with

Indigenous peoples' tribal identities. The land was and is not only where they lived; it is tied to tribal identity and marks where their ancestors lived and died.

Later, the name became Tulsey Town (Debo, 1943). Rich historical, symbolic meanings imbue the names, Tallasi, Tallahassee, Tulsey Town, and Tulsa, but only some people know these prolific, profound pieces of Tulsa's heritage as rooted in Indigenous history. Points of origin perhaps became hidden as city leaders named schools, streets, and buildings within this exciting multicultural city. Other historical events overshadowed this heritage. Some historians point to the oil boom in nearby Glenpool, which brought people to Tulsa to build thriving businesses and an entire block of successful Black-owned businesses on Greenwood Avenue (Johnson, 2012). The oil businesses and the Greenwood District were thriving side by side in downtown Tulsa during the 1918 naming of the new public school, Robert E. Lee School.

The Council Oak Tree is an intricate part of Tulsa's history (See Figure 7). In 1913, Creek Chief McIntosh worked alongside an eight-year-old girl, Mary Veasey Leech, and her parents to prevent Tulsa planners from destroying the tree (Bennett, 2020). Together they fought developers' plans to destroy the Council Oak Tree to make way for the rapid influx of businesses and people coming to live in the booming city called the world's oil capital (Bennett, 2020). Many years later, in 1976, the Council Oak Tree was protected and registered as a National Historic Site (Bennett, 2020). These meanings inform the school renaming to Council Oak.

Chang (2010) described the "history of Oklahoma [as] a history of movement, possession, and dispossession" (p. 2). Like much of U.S. Indigenous history, state history reflects a story of forced removal, corruption, and human resilience. Indigenous tribes, dehumanized in the minds of white colonizers, US officials, and politicians, were forced out of their homes in the southern United States to the unwanted, untamed (Oklahoma) territory to make way for white expansion. In Choctaw, Oklahoma means "red man" (Chang, 2010, p. 4). Yet, ironically, during the 19th century, some descriptions of the territory now known as the state of Oklahoma were

"white man's country, a white heartland, while simultaneously a Black promised land" (Chang, 2010, p. 4). Black Americans settled in this territory long before statehood in 1907 as enslaved people who endured the Trail of Tears (Merano, 2021). Between 1865 and 1920, they traveled to Indian Territory for its reputation of equality, and they formed more than 50 all-Black towns (Moreno, 2022). In 1918 the Black businesses on Greenwood in Tulsa were thriving. Just a few miles away, the school district dedicated the new, segregated all-white school to Robert E. Lee during a large Confederate celebration.

Land Allotment: An Ongoing Issue

Land allotments began in 1887, but the implications are ongoing. The meanings of familiar terminology such as sovereignty, territory, land, property, and ownership are constantly shifting and moving. In this section, I explain how the land allotment issue has evolved and introduce terms and legislation related to land, property, and ownership, such as treaties, dispossession, and the Dawes Act.

The word, treaty, symbolized negotiation and forced agreements with Indigenous tribes. In the early 1800s, treaties became the primary way of US government negotiations with Indigenous people. In 1835, the treaty of New Echota, signed by only a minority of Cherokees, ceded all Cherokee territory east of the Mississippi in exchange for five million dollars and forced the removal of the tribes to Indian Territory, Oklahoma (Meraji, 2020). This famous treaty also assigned a Cherokee delegate to the House of Representatives. Still, for almost two hundred years, the position remained unfilled. Some say that was because the treaty of New Echota was not signed by the Principal Chief and, therefore, invalid (Brewer, 2019). In 2019, the Cherokee Nation council approved Kimberly Teehee as its first official representative to Congress (Brewer, 2019). A crucial victory, Teehee will advocate for all tribes (Brewer, 2019).

After officials signed the treaty of New Echota in 1835, the US Army attacked the Cherokee people and forced them into fort stockades by gunpoint. The US War Department could

no longer pretend it was "engaged in a humanitarian effort to save the continent's first peoples by moving them to civilized territory" (Saunt, 2020, p. 240). In 1871, Congress approved the rider to the Indian Appropriations Act. This rider stipulated all future dealings with Indigenous People through the court systems only (Indian Land Tenure Foundation, n.d.). From this point forward, Native Americans and the US court system presented arguments and litigated cases to define the act of enslavement, property, sovereignty, notions of race, and nationhood.

Senator Henry Dawes and President Grover Cleveland (1885-1889; 1893-1897) passed the 1887 Dawes Act (Indian Land Tenure Foundation, n.d.). This act was an allotment system designed by the federal government to grant individual acres of land to Native Americans after the Civil War (1861-1865) (Indian Land Tenure Foundation, n.d.). According to the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (n.d.), this is known as the "single most destructive piece of legislation aimed at tribal land" (p. 1). The construction of land as individual property reflected a Eurocentric view.

The Dawes Act also called the General Allotment Act, decreased Indigenous land holdings to less than half, from one hundred thirty-eight million acres in 1887 to forty-eight million acres by 1934, when allotment ended. Each member of a tribe or reservation was offered a tract of land from 40 to 160 acres for their family. If reservation land exceeded the amount for individual allotments, that land was labeled "surplus lands" (Indian Land Tenure Foundation, n.d., p. 2). As a result, sixty million acres were sold to the government or ceded outright by 1934 (Indian Land Tenure Foundation, n.d., p. 2). The Dawes Rolls, first intended for issuing land allotments of the five tribes, later became controversial for other reasons, such as determining the "blood quantum of 'full blood' equivalent to Freedman Descendants" (Johnson, 2012, p. 127).

Intertwined Roots of Native/African American Peoples

Historians have discovered Native/African American ascendants as far back as 1526. A Spaniard named Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon led an expedition to present-day South Carolina with five hundred Spanish settlers and one hundred enslaved African people (Johnson, 2012). Allyon

died, and the Spaniards abandoned their mission, leaving the enslaved to live among the Native Americans, documenting the first accounts of Native/African ascendants (Johnson, 2012). Historians emphasize both racial-ethnic groups were Indigenous to America (Katz, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Perdue, 1987).

Scholars reflect upon the paucity of historical research on Native/African-descendant interactions (McNeal, 2019; Woodson, 1920). Yet Native/African American peoples have interacted for centuries. This is an important part of the history of Oklahoma territory as well. Historians note that Native-American history renders African Americans passive members of society (McNeal, 2019). A freedman was "a freed African who had been held in bondage [enslavement] by particular Indian tribes and other persons of African descent who had tribal affiliations, listed on census rosters" (Johnson, 2012, p. 13). African Americans are seldom "given their proper place as moral guides and political instigators in the struggle which came to define a people" (McNeal, 2019; Woodson, 1920, p. 45).

This allotment system granted individual parcels of land to Native Americans and Freedman. The African American names were documented on the Freedman Roll and the Native American names were placed on the Blood Rolls (Johnson, 2012). The agents made decisions to label people as "African blood" through visible features, denying their own classifications and that some were mixed-race (Johnson, 2012, p. 12). The division and allotment of land caused heartaches for the Native American population, at the same time, offered Freedman economic and political opportunities.

Historically, the role of blood quantum has created tensions between African/Native American people. This socially-constructed concept refers to the "percentage of tribal blood by lineage" (Johnson, 2012, p. 14). This was a Eurocentric concept imposed on Native American/African American peoples. Indian leaders have argued that sovereignty includes the right to exclude Freedman and those entitled to citizenship through treaty rights (Johnson, 2012,

p. 14). The Cherokee Nation and the US Department of Interior have litigated many court cases arguing for and against Cherokee Freedmen's rights (US Department Interior, 2023). The complicated arguments are ongoing.

Adding fuel to Native/African American contention was the alignment of the Five Tribes with the Confederacy. Some Native Americans resented the inclusion of Freedmen citizenship and "felt that the federal government foisted non-Indian people upon them as a punishment for their tribal alliances with the defeated South" (Johnson, 2012, p. 81). In 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson* upheld the "separate by equal" influenced relationships across the nation, encouraging "honorary whiteness" status for Native Americans (Johnson, 2012, p. 81).

Oklahoma passed many Jim Crow laws between 1890 and 1957, reflecting the hypersensitivity to the idea of “race-mixing.” During the same time, more than 50 all-Black towns existed in Oklahoma (Moreno, 2022). The 1907 Oklahoma Constitution authorized separate school facilities for white and "colored" children (Johnson, 2012, p. 39). Despite long histories of interaction among groups, statehood and Jim Crow laws created more reasons for division between the African American and Indigenous populations.

To counter the racialized school inequities in Oklahoma, Julius Rosenwald (1862 – 1932), a Jewish-American philanthropist and former president of Sears, Roebuck & Company, funded many African American schools. Among many contributions, in 1917, The Rosenwald Fund financed one hundred and ninety-eight African American schools in forty-four Oklahoma counties between 1920 and 1932. Rosenwald had two prominent African American friends that shaped his "spirit of shared humanity." William Baldwin, Jr. founded the National Urban League and became Boston railway executive. Rosenwald’s friend, Booker T. Washington, was a former enslaved renowned educator.

The Indigenous People Survive Another Attempt to Deculturalize with Resolve to Preserve Their Ways of Living

Another significant aspect of Indigenous history in Oklahoma is a recent public and academic discussion about the widespread establishment of Indigenous residential boarding schools (Honderich, 2021). In 1870, 50 years before the all-white segregated school was named Lee School, located just two land allotments from the Council Oak tree, federal legislation forced Indigenous children across the nation from their families to residential boarding schools. The insurmountable multiple cruelties that Indigenous people experienced during the Trail of Tears, and the Dawes act continued as the next generation suffered anguish in a different form.

Families were separated as children were transported to boarding schools to receive education for deculturalization. The Indigenous people encountered the loss of their native language, passing their culture and spiritual heritage to their children. Still, the Indigenous People resolved to preserve their ways of living, and their language remains today against tremendous odds. In the time between the Council Oak gathering in 1836 and the 1918 naming of Lee School, the Indigenous people dispersed, and the once Indigenous home in Tulsa became a bustling city during the oil boom. I wondered how different Tulsa might be if the Indigenous people were allowed to live freely on their land, teaching their children their ways of life.

After the Civil War ended in 1865, the US Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement forced more than 150,000 Indigenous children to attend boarding schools between the 1870s and 1996 (Pember, 2021). Federal Indian policies removed children from their homes to 350 government facilities, some far away from their family members (Pember, 2021). The federal government aimed to civilize and permanently deculturalize Indigenous young people (Pember, 2021). The assimilation process created a severe loss of lives, native languages, and cherished traditions (Satz, 2002).

Recently, Canadian officials found two hundred unmarked graves, with the tally rising to more than one thousand one hundred and still rising (Honderich, 2021), which inspired Secretary of the US Interior Deb Haaland to investigate boarding schools in the US at the National

Congress of American Indians to address the urgency for documentation (U.S. Department of Interior, 2023). Haaland, who is Laguna Pueblo and the first Native American interior secretary, said, "We must uncover the truth about the loss of human life and the lasting consequences of these schools" (Young, 2021, p. 1).

According to Jim Gerenscer, the co-director of the Carlisle Indian School Project, one thousand five hundred to one thousand eight hundred Native American students from Oklahoma attended the boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania (Kliewer et al., n.d.). The Carlisle school opened in 1879, and its operational model set the standard for the other boarding schools in the nation. Within Oklahoma were many Indian boarding schools (Kliewer et al., n.d.). Riverside Boarding School was also known as Wichita Caddo School in Anadarko, Oklahoma (Kliewer et al., n.d., para. 8). Descendants of Indigenous people listen to their grandparents' stories. They construct contemporary meanings from their ancestral stories, racist trauma, and healing journey.

The grandson of Joe and Ethil Wheeler remembers his grandparents' heartbreaking story. Wheeler's 'rememberings' were descriptions of the trauma his ancestors experienced at the Wichita Caddo School in Anadarko (Kliewer et al., n.d.). His grandpa told stories about how the teachers cut his hair, made him eat soap, and beat him for using his native language. His grandmother ran away by jumping in a cattle car, "shipped by train in the dead of winter to Phoenix, where she stayed until she was nineteen" (Kliewer et al., n.d., para. 8). She told her grandson, "Some didn't survive the journey" (Kliewer et al., n.d., para. 8).

Oklahoma's Indigenous history is a heartbreaking account of people whose culture thrives and whose language survived despite multiple attempts to assimilate diverse groups into the dominant culture. Although the Indigenous families were torn apart from the long expulsion, deportation, and extermination journey, they gathered to rebuild and start over. In the years ahead, they suffered even more losses and fought to preserve the continuity of their culture,

language, and belief systems through their children. Historians called the 1871-1928 period the "Allotment and Attempted Assimilation Period" (Johnson, 2012, p. 375).

During this period, the TPS Board decided to name their school Robert E. Lee Elementary. Perhaps the city leaders, the school board, and the citizens of Tulsa wanted to "remember"—preserve the memory—of the Southern General as an honored leader of state rights while "forgetting"—actively silencing or turning away from—the insurrection he led and the army's fight for the right to enslave people, and "forgetting" the Indigenous People, their reservation, and cultural preservation. The city's landscape of names and symbols emphasizes what is important to remember, while some names and histories, by omission, emphasize what people should forget (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007).

Contemporary Issues Concerning Indigenous Sovereignty

The US government promised Indigenous tribes' sovereignty over tribal lands in the 1830s, but Oklahoma "pushed treaty rights aside" to litigate Indigenous issues (Nagle, 2020, p. 2). In 2018, the same year that Lee School changed its name to Council Oak, the Supreme Court began proceedings against Patrick Murphy, a Creek man sentenced to death in Oklahoma for murder (Nagle, 2020, p. 2). Murphy's lawyer fought the Oklahoma court, arguing that the state of Oklahoma could not prosecute his client because it was out of its jurisdiction. The crime occurred on the Muscogee Creek reservation (Death Penalty Information Center, 2020, p. 2).

The Murphy case was pending when the Supreme Court granted review in *McGirt versus Oklahoma* (2020), "a non-capital case" that raised the same issue (DPI, 2020, p. 2). Justice Gorsuch "concluded that almost half of Oklahoma, including the city of Tulsa, remains Indian Country" (DPI, 2020, p. 3). The Supreme Court's decision recognized the US has "repeatedly violated treaty obligations to Native Americans" (DPI, 2020, p. 3).

The reserved lands (1866) were never lawfully "disestablished," and therefore, the "federal Major Crimes Act vests" that Oklahoma state courts "had no authority to convict Jimcy

McGirt" (DPI, 2020, p. 3). This significant ruling challenges thousands of previously convicted cases in Oklahoma (DPI, 2020) and points to the ongoing navigations of the land allotment process a century ago. Justice Gorsuch noted, "the magnitude of a legal wrong is no reason to perpetuate it" (DPI, 2020, p. 3). This historical breakthrough for Indigenous people is celebratory but continues to surface racial tension linked to understanding America's problematic past. The Oklahoma court system and politicians continue to fight for competing priorities in relation to the land and Indigenous sovereignty (DPI, 2020, p. 3).

On January 30, 2023, supporters attended a Creek Freedman civil lawsuit hearing for two freedmen seeking citizenship in the Muscogee Nation (Harper, 2022). The petition sought a declaratory judgment from the court that all Creek Freedmen's descendants are Creek citizens under Article 2 of the 1866 treaty (Harper, 2022). The judge heard the arguments and decided to issue a ruling in April 2023 (Harper, 2022). The freedmen case reflects the complexities of interrelated Native/African ascendant histories and ongoing issues about Indigenous citizenship, freedmen, and sovereignty.

Civil War (1861-1865) and General Robert E. Lee, The Making of a Hero

Most Americans refer to the intrastate war that occurred from 1861-1865 as the Civil War. Some have called it the War of Northern Aggression and the War between the States (Foster, 2018). Today, Americans continue to disagree about the meanings of the iconic symbols of the Civil War and the war's purpose. The American Civil War (1861-1865) was the bloodiest event in our nation's history, situated during and overlapping with the Indian Removal and the Relocation Period (1828-1871) (Johnson, 2012). US Civil War (1861-1865) and post-Civil War meanings continue to affect how present-day citizens view history, civil rights, race, land allotments, namesakes, and Civil War symbols.

Myer's (2016) researched Lee's creation into a hero immediately following his death in 1871 to analyze how the meanings of this iconic hero changed over time. General Robert E. Lee

(1807-1870) was one Civil War figure whose likeness was preserved as a symbol of the Confederacy in many national sites. Myers (2016) analyzed 210 articles from 1865 to 1870, which included obituaries and essays immediately after his death. He only examined articles published in Northern states (Myers, 2016). During the years 1865-1870, the period of reconstruction, Americans created distinct and familiar imagery of General Lee, which set the stage for making his representation into a Confederate icon or a problematic figure (Myers, 2016). Technological advances, such as the printing press, expanded literacy, photography, and detailed descriptions in newspapers, which helped the press create a narrative and imagery of Lee (Nichols, 2018). Newspapers before 1870 described Lee either as a traitor or as the epitome of an American Hero (Myers, 2016). The Lee-as-Hero narrative emerged in the press in 1870, during his funeral and after his death (Myers, 2016).

In June of 1865, the *New York Times* wrote, despite "his manifest treason, Gen. Lee has retained a strong hold upon Northern regard" (Myers, 2016, p. 219). Myers (2016) explained "the process of remembrance and memory-making" transformed the minds of Americans to collectively ascribe the American values of exceptionalism, patriotism, and valor to the name Lee (p. 219). This scholar theorized that mythologizing Lee served to immortalize "a simpler era" while it allowed for a "romanticized Civil War that reflected Victorian values of chivalry, honor, and masculinity" (p. 291).

From the end of the Civil War in 1865 to the year of his death, the press frequently omitted discussion of Lee's support of enslavement and the leader of the states that seceded from the US (Myers, 2016). Lee's heroic image in 1870 was long-lasting (Myers, 2016). In 1918, this widespread image of Lee as a hero may have inspired the TPS Board to choose the namesake. Meyer's (2016) conceptualization of Lee's heroism explains the rationale during the time that Lee School was dedicated, especially considering the connections to the 1918 *Tulsa Daily World*

articles about the Confederate parades and celebrations during the same week of the dedication of Lee School ("Robert E. Lee School dedicated tonight", 1918).

An Exploration of 1918 Historical Context: School Board Archives and Newspapers

Figure 8. Tulsa Public School Board Records

During this research, I examined handwritten and typed school board archives for contextual information leading to the board's decision to name the school Lee (See Figure 8). I explored archives stored in a vault in the superintendent's office, searching for historical details and specific people involved in the naming of Lee Elementary in 1918. In 1917, the records revealed that Tulsa citizens passed bond issues to build eleven new schools. The title page listed E. E. Oberholtzer as the Superintendent of Schools. The President of the Board was H.O. McClure, and the secretary was R.S. Fellows. The Board members were Lockwood, Welch, Temples, Mayginnis, and League (TPS Board meeting minutes, Personal Communication, July 2, 1917). I recognize some of these names on lakes and parks in Oklahoma.

The first mention of Lee School was in the January 1918 record book. Twenty-one schools existed in Tulsa. Lee School was listed among them. TPS Board records offered no information about the naming process or who chose the name. I also researched digital storehouses in the Oklahoma Historical Society using search words such as Lee School,

September 1918, Tulsa School Board, and others for any information about this date. No articles offered details about the naming process; the only details focused on the 1918 Confederate parade and the dedication ceremony. The Confederate parade suggests support at that time, for Confederate history and glorification here in Tulsa.

In April 1918 records, the Tulsa Board of Education convened in an Executive session with most members present. Mr. Baker of the Council of Defense was present at this meeting. The Tulsa School Board minutes (1918) reports briefly mention three contextual points of interest. The concerns at this time were WWI, a corresponding nationwide ban on teaching German as a foreign language, and a call to schools and personnel to "stand four-square with our nation." This resolution, presented before the board and the Council of Defense, took place in September 1918, before the end of WWI (November 11, 1918).

The 1918 August issue of the *Tulsa Daily World* and other newspapers printed many articles about the planning of the Confederate Parade and patriotic events in Tulsa. The news articles promoted patriotism and support for the troops in WWI. This patriotism seemed to translate support for all veterans of all wars, including the Confederate Parade planned for September 1918. Scholars also noted that Tate Brady and Nathan Bedford Forrest II hosted the 18th Annual Reunion of the United Confederate Veterans (Brasher et al., 2018). Nathan Bedford Forrest II was a Grand Dragon of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) and the grandson of a Confederate Army general known to be the first national leader of the Klan (Hirsch, 2003). Brady owned Tulsa's luxury hotel, named it Brady Hotel, and held events such as the first gubernatorial campaign convention. Brady was also a KKK member. Business proprietors and community members named neighborhoods, streets and districts after Brady (Brasher et al., 2018).

The link between white power in Tulsa and celebration of the Confederacy is evident in the description of events. Forrest and Brady organized the "largest gathering of Confederate Veterans since the Civil War," with more than forty thousand veterans attending (Confederate

Magazine, 1918). Brady addressed the veterans in patriotic language, describing the Civil War as nothing more than the outcome of "divergent interpretations of our federal Constitution" and described the Confederate soldier as "the purest and proudest of the Anglo-Saxon race" (*Tulsa Daily World*, 1918, p. 1). On September 27, 1918, Robt. E. Lee School Dedicated Tonight

> Particularly fitting will be the dedication of the Robert E. Lee School on Nineteenth and Detroit tonight at 7'oclock when Col. E. Pope Jennson of Louisville, Ky., a member during the war of General Joe Wheeler's regiment, will deliver an address on his personal knowledge of the life and character of the great southern commander, Robert E. Lee. The music will be furnished by the high school trio and will consist of music from the old South. (p. 1)

"Particularly fitting," according to the writer of this notification, reflected the meaning of the Lee name during this period, which worked to influence the cultural remembering of Tulsa and the local school community. The September 27th issue of the Tulsa Daily World included pieces titled: "Veterans Will Close Reunion Today with Big Annual Parade," "Crowder Cancels Entrainment Orders Due to Spread of Spanish Influenza, Many New Cases Reported," and "Buy Liberty Bonds." Also included in this issue of the Tulsa Daily World were accounts of WWI allies closing in on German forces. It was only a matter of weeks before Germany's Kaiser, Wilhelm II, would abdicate, and Armistice Day declared victory (*Tulsa Daily World*, 1918, p. 1).

Between October 1, 1918, and April 1, 1919, 7350 people died of Spanish influenza and related infections in Oklahoma. Tulsa was "running out of caskets," and the health department fumigated homes and streets. Restaurants were allowed to stay open and fumigated at night; courtrooms, schools, theaters, and churches were closed in October 1918 (Jackson, 2020). City workers washed the streets with formaldehyde, and the newspaper articles emphasized that spitting on the sidewalks was prohibited (Jackson, 2020).

In 1918, white businesspeople owned at least two newspapers, *The Tulsa Democrat* and *The Tulsa Daily World*. A weekly African American newspaper, *The Tulsa Star*, was also well-established as a news source. It functioned as a voice for democracy and covered African American issues until it dramatically stopped on May 31, 1921, after white rioters burned the

Black Business District. *The Tulsa Star* was influential in developing Black leadership, shaping the Black Community, and openly criticizing the white Republican City administration (The Gateway to Oklahoma History, 2021). On Saturday, September 28, 1918, The *Tulsa Star's* headline read: "Co-operation Between the Races." The front page included articles "Strong Plea for a United People" and "Abolish Jim Crow."

The article "Strong Plea for a United People" was a moving tribute to African Americans and their patriotic contributions to WWI and a plea for unity ("Aged Colored Confederate Conspicuous," 1918).

> No one in the South, or in this country, for that matter, is doing more to supply the soldiers at the front than Colored men, women, boys, and girls. They have produced most of the cotton, corn, and potatoes in the South, and we are proud of what they are doing. Let other race groups join them, and the victory is won.

This article in *The Tulsa Star*, precisely the phrase, "Strong plea for a united people," is telling. This plea for unity might have signified the growing disunity and violent end of the Black community just three years later, in 1921.

Tulsa grew exponentially during the oil boom from 1905 to 1918. Wealthy investors built theaters and hotels catered to oil executives, brokers, businesspeople. In 1918, the TPS Board named the Lee school, which was the center of the Tulsa community, with tall columns embossed with "Lee Stadium." It was the city's first school with a new football stadium. The Central High School football games at Lee Stadium drew large crowds of up to ten thousand people (Tulsa Preservation Commission, 2011).

The African American community was prosperous in Tulsa; Black entrepreneurs were excited about the economic possibilities available. The naming of Lee School in 1918 was a historical moment for the Tulsa community and the nation. The news traveled everywhere about the Confederate parade and patriotic festivities; a commemorative act of remembrance of Southerners who fought for slavery that cumulated in the grand finale, the naming of the new

Tulsa public school after Lee. Considering the celebration, patriotic fanfare, pomp, and circumstance, it is difficult to ignore that only three years later, violent historical moments overshadowed this memory. As I researched Tulsa's history to write this chapter, I wondered about connections between naming the public school Lee in 1918 and the violent burning of the once-vibrant Greenwood District, also called Black Wall Street.

Chapter IV Summary

In this chapter, I examined varied historical information related to the Lee and Council Oak names. The historical background to this Tulsa case reflects the national history from the Civil War to ongoing issues facing Indigenous people. The events from the 1800s to the present reveal the powerful implications of racial constructions and meanings ascribed to collective memories. The Tulsa case background involves heartbreaking histories with ongoing implications concerning political sovereignty, collective memories, and reparative memorializing in Tulsa.

I explored the historical contexts of the period before and after the Indigenous tribes met at the Council Oak Tree in Indian Territory in 1836 to the original naming of Lee School in 1918. This chapter included prevailing racial constructions that led to the Trail of Tears and the attempts to deculturate the Indigenous community. The Jim Crow Laws and all-Black towns in Oklahoma set the stage for the 1918 Confederate parade, Lee school naming, and the 1921 Race Massacre. I engage with history not as a static set of dates; it is an ongoing set of events to interpret, meaning we continually interpret the past. The dates and events in this chapter involved human lives, loss, and suffering beyond my imagination. Our national and state history is disturbing and painful, but this study calls for deep reflection and complex questions.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present my interpretations from my inquiry into the meanings of members who supported the Tulsa school's renaming. Some members were active throughout the name change process, while other supporters who lived in the Tulsa community outside the neighborhood were not directly involved. Members created meanings of the names and renaming process over time in various contexts. The members described their intersectional identities by gender, race, and either as Tulsa natives or transplant status. Their community roles included parents, administrators, and faculty at Council Oak Elementary and/or local tribal members and leaders. Each member offered vivid descriptions of their meaning-making and emotions regarding the renaming process over the years. They reflected on how their experiences with the name change influenced meaning-making relating to the future. of the names, school picture displays, and obelisk; attending school board meetings; and writing, speaking, reading, and responding to articles and social media posts. I generated these themes from my observations of common patterns as members recalled their experiences.

Following the methods described in Chapter III, I conducted a thematic analysis of community members' meanings (Patton, 2015) to create findings. I analyzed each member's reflections and then compared and integrated them. I present those findings here. My thematic analysis of the case study data suggests distinct differences, commonalities, and interconnected meanings formed during the case. The members' meaning-making processes were not discrete, with distinct starting and ending points, but overlapping and interconnected. I organized by the phases that inductively emerged in which the meanings followed different phases of the name change process. In addition, I weave in particular members' perspectives and data to reveal nuances within those perspectives. Based on the inductive meanings that emerged in different periods in the case process (phase one and phase two), I organized Chapter V into three parts: Part I: Phases I and II of the Name Change Procedures; Meanings During the Name Change Process; Part II: Meanings of the New Name, Council Oak School; Part III: Futurity, Imagining the School Community. Throughout the inductive phase analysis that highlights the meanings within each phase of the renaming process over time, I also highlight themes demonstrated by nuances in members' wording, concerns, and perspectives within each phase.

Part I: Phases I and II of the Name Change Procedures; Meanings During the Name Change Process

In Part I, I describe the name change in two phases. In Phase I of the Name Change Procedures, I present findings of the beginning of the TPS procedures as the supporters connected with each other and began to form a group to take action to change the name. Phase II is marked by the first committee's recommendation to name the school Lee School, to detach the Confederate meanings to make Lee an acronym or namesake other than Robert E. Lee. The themes in this section that manifest within varied stages demonstrate the investment in the

meanings of names. The themes are growing awareness, internal dissonance, initial hope, disappointment, belonging, community tensions, networks, equal representation.

Overview of TPS Name Change Phases

In the first phase of the renaming process, both national, local, and school board actions occurred. As noted previously, the national movement to remove Confederate names and instances of violence about Confederate removals informed the local school context. Supportive members described their emerging awareness and interpretation that the Confederate name and symbolic displays at their local school was problematic. Influenced by national patterns in which groups identified Confederate statues as racist and worked to remove them, members similarly began to view the Confederate name and symbols on the Lee School as problematic in the neighborhood. The first phase of the renaming procedures involved this awareness, the petition to change the name, the TPS board choice of a facilitator for the first committee from the board: the Lee School TPS representative. The facilitator led a committee from the school community through a one-year process. Once TPS leaders announced a name-change process, members initially trusted in leadership. They felt hopeful that educated people would step in to lead the process. However, their hope turned to disappointment.

What I label as Phase II of the name change procedures occurred after May 2018, when the school board received the recommendation from the year-long process from the first committee. The recommendation was to shorten the name to Lee school. TPS Board members voted in favor of the recommendation, with outcry from the community in response. Supporters wanted to remove the name Lee entirely from the school. Several weeks later, the TPS Board voted again to rescind the name, Lee School, to choose a new committee and facilitator to start the process again. The themes in this section follow.

Phase I of the Name Change Procedures: Collective Civic Engagement–Doing Something That Matters

The members became motivated to act for varied reasons. I inductively perceived four stages within the members' reflections during Phase I. The first stage was characterized by the themes of individuals' internal struggle ("Inner tug-of-war"); the second stage was empathy and interacting ("It was my friend who lit a fire"); the third stage they discovered community racial issues were not limited to the name Lee ("This issue goes much deeper"), and the fourth stage they discussed what they learned (Community Action as Education).

"Inner Tug-of-War"

Many members emphasized feeling an internal struggle that the racist meanings of the symbols (a Confederate icon, obelisk, and pictures of Lee with small Confederate flags) were located on the public school building. As awareness grew, they described internal feelings—nudges—to take action to change symbols they interpreted as condoning historical violence and abuse against African Americans. They struggled with the symbolic representation of their local school and community identity with icons/names they felt were racist. This internal struggle was a key motivator for getting involved in the name change. All of the members of the first focus group interpreted the Lee name as offensively representing "associations with slavery" and "oppression of Black people." These critical reactions to the Lee name were increasingly common in national discourse, as noted in Chapter 2, and informed Tulsans' meaning-making of the Lee icons as racist as well.

One member, who identified as white and Indigenous, described her reasons for engaging in this name change issue as an inner "tug-of-war between the greatness of what was happening at the school [educating children] versus the historic symbolism [picture of Robert E. Lee] we were choosing to showcase in the main entryway." Another white member explained, "I was on the PTA board. I just remember we were getting ready to celebrate his [Robert E. Lee's] birthday and

the president received many emails regarding why we were celebrating this individual." Some had not noticed these connotations previously; community members seemed to be questioning the symbolism of the Lee name in greater numbers than in the past. This parent, who was white, continued,

> That was the first time I started paying attention to [the name]. And then, my husband pointed out to me at that point that we still had a picture in the hall with a Confederate flag. We had his picture up in the gym, but there wasn't any conversation amongst the school that I was a part of until the beginning of the school year when the Charlottesville [VA] issue started.

They questioned why these Confederate symbols were present in their local public school given the patterns of national violence, such as those in Charlottesville, and connected name changes happening nationwide to their meaning-making of the Lee symbols as racist. Awareness varied among members, and concerns grew with interactions about the objects and name they had not discussed with the same focus previously.

Belonging and Networks: "It Was My Friend Who Lit a Fire."

Members mentioned interacting with friends who asked the TPS to remove the Robert E. Lee picture framed with Confederate flags as motivating their involvement in the early name change process. Some members' protests to TPS spurred other members' awareness of the issue. One white/Indigenous mother of a bi-racial child vividly described her experience when she first observed the framed picture displayed in the school hallway and considered the implications for her child at the school.

> The moment I saw the picture, I felt it might not be the best place for her [the member's biracial child]. With my core values being around her learning and loving all parts of herself, I worried about the messages being transmitted to her not only through imagery but by the people on staff willing to leave the imagery visible or, worse, fighting to keep it visible. I honestly considered other [schooling] options for her.
>
> I saw the Robert E. Lee with Confederate flags in the main entryway and all these Brown and White babies lined up underneath, so from there, I decided just to take the photo on my phone, so I could provide that information to the school administration and the TPS administration to get the picture removed.

One can sense her concern as she notices the picture with embossed Confederate flags hanging above young children representing different racial groups. She thought social action was urgent: "Get the picture removed." For the first time, she interpreted these visible symbols as more than connections to events in America's distant past and instead directly connected to her biracial daughter's present feelings about belonging. She was concerned about the current lives of all the diverse students and families who attended the public school. Her interpretations of the visible picture of Lee and the flags symbolized messages of Confederate and white pride which countered "her [the members' daughter's] learning and loving all parts of herself." The parent perceived the name as actively undermining the messages of inclusion an elementary school should support.

Community networks and interactions often influenced members to get involved in the name change process. As other members recalled their first entry into the renaming process, they explained how social interactions directly influenced their decision to participate in discussions about potentially renaming the school. Before attention turned to the Lee name, an early step in phase 1 was the removal of the Confederate flags in the matting on a picture of Lee. A member discussed it with leadership and they took action to remove the flags on the matting and then told others about the action

> No one knew about [the removal of the Confederate flags in the matting]. It just kind of happened. [My friend] was walking her daughter in every day. She brought it [the issue of the Lee picture matted with Confederate flags] up to the principal, and I think it went to the school board, and then within that year, they re-matted it. They kept the picture of Lee, but they re-matted it because the Confederate flags [now removed] were once below Lee.
>
> I think it was the first time I felt that we could even do anything. I had just kind of written it off as this was just Oklahoma. I felt like [the TPS leadership, school leadership] watered it to the point that nothing would happen. I would say it was my friend who lit a fire, and we were all in the same class.

Social interaction and dialogue about the racist meanings they ascribed to the physical symbols, such as the obelisk and the framed picture of Lee, were essential parts of the members' experiences as some of the neighborhood stakeholders joined together to change the school name and remove what they considered to be offensive, harmful symbols. The members experienced a sense of agency in their actions for change, the idea they could do something to make a difference; as the member suggests, "I think it was the first time I really felt that we could even do anything." Social interactions motivated empathetic responses, new understandings, and new questions, which led to advocating for the name change they saw as an important community effort.

The meanings of the name and symbols varied. For example, as I described earlier, one community member interpreted the Confederate symbols as offensive and clearly misaligned with TPS's mission of inclusivity and equity. She protested to the school administration and district leadership, in response, after approximately 5 months the TPS district replaced the large picture of Lee without the embossed flags. However, another parent explained that putting the picture back on the wall without the Confederate flags did not address the issue of inappropriate symbolism. For this parent, the rationale was that if the picture symbolized racism, the name was also racist.

This rationale opened the discussion about renaming the school. If the picture was offensive, the name was offensive. She conceptually linked the flags, the picture, and the name. This parent and ll of the early focus group members also believed that TPS separated the meanings of the Confederate flags as offensive from the picture and the Lee name. In contrast, most members reflected that all of the symbols reflected the same problems, which required a name change process to change.

"It was a no-brainer to us... This [issue] goes much deeper."

Members supporting the name change explained how they gradually realized some neighbors felt differently about the name. The community experienced growing tensions about the name change. Although advocates for change saw the name as problematic, they noted that some neighbors held different interpretations of the Confederate name and symbolic displays at the school that unveiled "deeper" underlying political differences among community members. Some perceived that nonsupporters of the name change wanted to keep the name Lee because it was too much trouble to change symbols, and some were nostalgic about Lee because they were part of several generations that attended and invested memories at the school.

One white female parent voiced excitement about coming together as a community to change the name until experiencing "pushback from people that we thought we were really close friends with, being like this [the Confederate name] isn't an issue for us." In sharing the excitement, this member expected a celebratory response to the name change process some community members initiated but felt estranged from someone she thought was a close friend. Another member said, "We were so excited about it. Yay! They are going to do something. It was a no-brainer to us. And then it was like, no, this [issue] goes much deeper."

The members' "deeper" issues in this community referred to varied historical events underlying the Lee name. One deeper issue was the perceived racist, derogatory, harmful, and damaging meanings they attached to Confederate symbolism, which some believed TPS ignored or dismissed as unimportant for a century. Members interpreted the century-long silence from TPS and the community ignoring the Confederate symbology as part of a complex web of white privilege, power dynamics within the PTA, nostalgia, and familiarity with the name as the identity of the school community. The focus members associated the meanings of the Lee name

with a range of racial inequities and local violence historically. For example, some connected the continuing presence of the name on the school to Tulsa's racial history, the 1921 Race Massacre, and the silence in the Oklahoma history curriculum about the massacre.

These silences exemplified city-wide shame and wanting to "forget" the brutal crimes committed by white Tulsans historically. The focus members also blamed the silence on deep layers of systemic racism that exist everywhere, not only in Tulsa or the South, and a century of historical power hierarchies pushing historical narratives and meanings that justified keeping the Confederate icon as the namesake of a public school. Until national events and a surge in examinations of school names, the namesake seemed hidden in plain sight, and many considered it just "Lee School," just a name, not problematic.

However, as members of this school community, supporters I interviewed felt responsible for changing the name away from the racist symbolism representing their school and community identity to an identity that promoted contemporary community values. They defined the "deeper" issue also as the relational divisions created through community members' divergent meanings and the intensity with which these meanings mattered to individuals and groups. They became aware of stark differences between symbolic interpretations among neighbors during the "pushback" they received as they entered conversations with others about renaming the school.

The Lee associations differed for community members. Supporters I interviewed linked the significance of renaming Lee School to Confederate removals nationwide because they were experienced and interpreted as condoning enslavement and representing insurrection. Some perceived community differences to reflect highly contested versions of U.S. history occurring nationwide about whether to acknowledge or forget Confederate monuments in public places. Those differences in interpretation of the meaning of the Lee/Confederacy were evident in the violent protests in Charlottesville, VA.

In Charlottesville, White protestors fought to protect a Lee statue from removal, which led to a tragic death. The protestors against the statue's removal interpreted Confederate symbols as reflecting patriotism, honoring war veterans, and political views of the state's rights to override federal control. Some local supporters perceived these interpretive differences as "deeper" meanings about resistance to removing the Lee name.

During this stage, members sensed a community-wide concern that Tulsa could become another Charlottesville. The dialogue revealed that the name had various meanings; the name and its removal thus also symbolized potential violence that could occur in the community. Serious disagreements in the school community about the meaning and significance of the name reflected divisive issues that might very well lead to violence in Tulsa. One member explained that TPS leaders were concemed about protesters to the name removal, "They didn't want the angry people getting angry or making really big waves." The "angry people," according to members, were extremists, mostly outside the Tulsa area. They alluded to the unpredictable responses from protesters who, as in the Charlottesville event, violently opposed the removal of Confederate symbols. This potential violence reveals the deep investments in monuments/names' meanings.

Many understood the renaming of Lee School was essential and imminent, but not uniformly accepted for a variety of reasons. These reasons included the concern for the safety of school children; the labor of an unprecedented, time-consuming process; and political divisions on the perceived value and harm of the name, both nationally and locally. Concerns about violence were linked directly to concerns for children's safety. Members perceived that if the media stirred controversies about community efforts to remove the Lee name, their children might be unsafe, and disruptions like those in Charlottesville might affect their education. Supporters insisted the tensions would continue unless TPS disconnected the school name from the harmful Confederate meanings. Some exclaimed that changing the name "was inevitable,"

given the tide of removal and renaming nationwide, but also urgent. They feared waiting for a school name change might make the situation more dangerous.

Supporters wondered why the school name had endured for 100 years. They discussed how those who did not support a name change might rationalize keeping the Lee School name. In addition to the concerns about safety and the time and trouble of changing the name, members realized that other people in the community "felt attached to the name" for various reasons that had little to do with racist beliefs. They thought it did not hold the same racist meanings for them.

> Lee is one of the most affluent schools; it was one of the most high-performing, high-achieving schools with a ton of parent engagement, ties in the community, the Lee Foundation, the PTA, and all the people who had poured hours and hours into the school. This was actually part of the really hard challenge, as changing the name doesn't discount any of it [time investments]. It doesn't discount all the hours of volunteerism you put into the school. People felt attached to the name, I think, for that reason. That's my identity as a parent as I'm the PTA president here, or I'm a volunteer; I volunteer 100 hours here.

Some rationalized that members who resisted the name change must be attached to the original name because of the school's prestige, nostalgia for their own family's schooling at the elementary, and years of contributing their time and energy to the school named Lee. They voiced perceptions that non-renaming supporters may experience the name change as a loss of their "identity as a [Lee] parent" and as a Lee "volunteer." Advocates described this as the "hard challenge" because people's identities and histories were tied to the name because of personal history rather than Confederate associations. They tried to reassure those community members that "changing the name doesn't discount" their long hours of volunteerism, family connections, or financial investments. Supporters thus recognized the name had identity associations for those resisting the renaming as well.

Community Action as Education

A theme emerging inductively from members' meanings was learning through the process of renaming. One supporter said, "looking back on [the process], I think there are so

many lessons to be learned in that space in between." As one aspect of their learning, members shared a common understanding that, despite their convictions in the positive reasons for the name change, they recognized that relationships with other parents attending the school or living in the neighborhood would never be the same. Relationships changed because of the differing beliefs about the name and the behavior exhibited during the renaming process. One member said, "I know I can't go back to seeing it [the community] through rose-colored glasses the way I saw it before." Members referred to the "community" in this quote as the neighborhood, the parents, students, and the faculty at the school. Another said, "It is just never gonna feel so warm and fuzzy like it [the community] used to." Many acknowledged the stark realities of the divided community were painful but necessary for change.

Although specific tensions in relational experiences varied for members, the general view from supporters who lived in the community was its change in community relations. Where people stood on the issue of the name change mattered in relations. These differing beliefs affected how people treated each other, "Half the people in the room didn't really want me to be there" and "It was for no reason other than I said things during the name change that they disagreed with." Members experienced relational disturbances throughout the name change that impacted how they viewed each other, interacted with, and functioned in their roles. They described the school renaming process as "painful," "difficult," and "hard" as a collective group. Name change processes can disrupt communities as diverging interpretations, values, deeper roots, and ideologies rise to the surface. One parent stated, "We had to grieve the fact that our community was torn apart."

One powerful meaning and outcome of the renaming process was members' retrospective interpretation that their engaging in civic action brought about "true" understandings of the divisions in the community. They believed the name change uncovered all kinds of ideological issues lurking below the surface of friendly relations, disrupting what seemed to be a previously

close community. A white parent said, “Reality is, this whole experience has shown me that people are not always good and that these idealized views I had about humanity are not true” which is a “scarring feeling.” This exposure was both revealing and troubling. The name-change process surfaced divisions they apparently did not think about previously because they were not striking enough to cause much concern. However, supporters perceived the rancor over the name change process from those “for or against” the change as surfacing strong ideological divisions that were there all along. Supporters believed the process provided a realistic view of political and social differences in how relationship networks problem-solve within the community.

Name changes about racial meanings are complicated because they are about differences, underneath the surface, that significantly matter to shared identities. These changes evoke resistance. One outcome of the politically charged process was the tensions raised awareness of differences that existed below the surface. A white parent described her experience, “Once you shot out that email, or you said something, and you realize you were on a different page, those conversations got shut down.” She explained, “all sorts of friendships were just, ‘Oh, you're on that side, you're on that side,’ and it was really weird.” Both for supporters and resistors, a supporter noted there is a lot more work to be done: “I mean the name change, that’s just a one-time deal, right? That doesn’t…translate to an active set of procedures, of goals, of commitments that you’re making…to continue this work.”

Place names are one part of the work; they are powerful vehicles that symbolically work to legitimize ideas to create a "mental sphere"(the conceptual image of the place reflecting the name and symbolic objects) that is part of the place and community identity (Knapp, 2006, p.68). The supporter acknowledged that the name change was a “one-time deal,” but the work continues as people actively engage in creating a conceptual image of their shared place. In this sense, the entire process was educative. One mixed-race supporter reflected, “I feel gratitude, just like immense gratitude for each piece of it, right.” There was so much that was learned. She

continued, “Even the darkest valleys during that whole process, I think the feeling of gratitude is one, we did it, but, two, this is how we move forward together”.

Phase II of the Name Change Procedures: The Tumultuous Nature

Phase II of the name change illustrates the tumultuous nature of unprecedented school name change procedures. The members' reflections on Phase II involved trust issues with how leaders were handling the name change issue, members clarified their main goal was to change the name to anything but Lee. During this stage, members became concerned about ensuring equal representation of diverse community members in the discourse and procedures in the name change processes.

In May 2018, the school board rescinded the Lee name a second time and paused to start the renaming process again. At this point, the members clarified that rescinding the Lee name in all its forms was their primary goal. One biracial, white/Indigenous parent said, “Like, it just can't be Lee. I was very unattached to what the name actually would become.” They were not invested in choosing a new name at this stage because they believed they must focus on one goal, to oppose the (supposedly) neutral name, Lee. Members agreed that the slight change, the neutralized version, was an insult because it retained the same symbolic violence of the Confederacy as did the full name. One white parent said about the people “justifying the compromise, ‘Let’s just name it Lee School,’ and they [the non-supporters] used codewords like tradition, and slavery was okay, but why was slavery ok?” She continued, “You know there are all these ways that we can culturally justify why we suppress other people.” Like the “faux’ alteration of the name Brady in the nearby district to attempt to refer to a namesake other than Tate Brady, the Ku Klux Klan supporter, the shortening of Lee did not fix the issue. When the Lee name was rescinded a second time, they became more determined to speak out and write public articles for local news outlets to protest leadership decisions and advocate again for the full Lee removal. One mixed-race participant felt “rage” because she believed TPS had to “do better.”

The TPS' stated value of "equity" was at odds with three local school names that "do not reflect equity, do not reflect basic human decency." She insisted, , "They [the school board] could name it 21 Jump Street for all I care, just not Lee." The members witnessed the community dividing into two camps. I refer to these diverse camps of perception as the "Keep it Neutral Lee" group and the "Change the Name to Anything but Lee" group.

The TPS name change procedures represented complex conceptual understandings about the meaning of renaming practices. One clear implication is that names can be questioned and sometimes changed, indicating that names are dynamic, not fixed. Name scholars study name-signaling effects, which are the associations attached to names (Figlio, 2005). Name-changing trends point to deep inquiries about what the name implies and what it signals. The implications of the name Lee became a major point of debate. Names imbue powerful signaling effects, potentially creating barriers or aspirational expectations for individuals and collective communities, creating "judgments about competence and suitability of its bearer" (Konnikova, 2013). At the same time, one supporter commented that she felt "distant" from the name. What did matter to her was the "commitment to think actively about 'how do you promote equity from a variety of different places or…at different levels." Naming was one process to do so.

Community politics were emotional and tumultuous. One focus group member said community members would not even talk to each other during some of this process. She said,

> Listen, we need to hear what, specifically what the families of color in our school feel about this. But we need to hear what everybody feels about this, we need to talk about this. And they [the administration] did not want to have that conversation with me. And the only time that they made time to have a talk with me at all was after they heard that we had had a meeting on the playground, which was our small group of parents, and then all of a sudden they had time to talk to me.

Her interpretation was that parents were fearful she would "organize" and spoke to her because of that fear. Silence and voice influenced the process in varied ways. One teacher reflecting on the first vote to choose the name Lee School explained that the "Keep it Lee" group was influential

for leadership because it dominated school community organizations. A mixed-race supporter explained, "It is a challenge in elected leadership; there's always going to be a group that is louder, always." She continued, "If you only do things based on what you hear from the loudest group, you are missing a whole bunch of voices." The case members believed that the TPS leadership heard only the loudest group, the "Keep it Lee" group, which supporters believed reflected a partial and unfair process. One member described the progression of emotions during this part of the process as they witnessed leaders' superficial actions to address the name conflict without input from all stakeholders,

> I saw the original [first] ad hoc committee just throw something real quick in the books without really including the school or parents or community. I think my white privilege blinded me until I started seeing the bullying and then the secrecy. I think that was what opened my eyes. Then [I felt] a complete rage at that point, like, no, this [community] has to become something completely different than it is right now.

The members perceived bullying behavior by parents who wanted to "Keep it Lee." They threatened to pull their Lee Foundation funds (Hardiman, 2018a) if the name changed. Supporters also perceived "secrecy" by the first ad hoc committee which kept their approach and dealings in private conversations. One Black supporter said, "I think transparency and procedure is really important." Another member reflected, the behavior of other parents "opened [her] eyes" to the racial influences in decision making. The perceived unruly behavior of the parents to influence the school board and threaten the removal of funding illustrates that this school name was much more than just a name.

According to this member, the Lee name signaled something the "Keep it Lee" parents needed and wanted to hold tight to, collective power in the community, a sense of elite entitlement through time and monetary investments. Some described the resistors' commitment to "tradition" as a cover for maintaining white privilege. The member, once "blinded" by "white privilege," became aware of the lengths the other parents might go to keep the Lee name and said, "this [community and the process] has to become something completely different [a fair

representative process]." She wanted to be a part of a community with a name that signaled or implied something other than "white privilege."

Concerns about Equal "Voice" and Community Discourse

Members wanted a fair name-change process with diverse racial and socio-economic representation in those voicing the next steps. White members wanted to hear from people of color from the local school community to ensure diverse representation in the thoughts and feelings about the Lee name. Yet one Black supporter noted that "the people of color who spoke at every school board meeting, were not local to the school community, which I think was a real challenge." This representation complicated whose voices were dominant, sometimes outsiders rather than insiders in the school community. One white supporter said, "I hoped to pull some of my Black friends in the school into that meeting, but only one came that day." She wondered why some Black people from the local school community remained silent, even as outspoken Black leaders in the wider Tulsa area were quite involved as change makers, calling out the symbolic violence of the century-long school name. Members urged the TPS leaders and school community in Tulsa, known for its racial violent history (1921) and a history of a school name that excluded African American Tulsa voices, with psychic costs for people of color, to fairly represent the people of color in the name change procedures.

Some white members believed white privilege was shaping decision making and procedures about the name. Longing for a designated "space" for building trust and addressing the problem of under-represented African American voices, members often voiced frustrations that school administrators "shut down" conversations at the local school. They longed for space for the school community to discuss their views and address their concerns that people of color were not heard. One white parent said, "The conversation was always but we can't have an open conversation about this and invite all of the families to come because the media will show up." She continued, "but the media is here anyway, so I think they were using fear tactics to block it

[an open meeting].” White and Hispanic supporters expressed frustration, "waiting for the party, but the party never happened." "The party" was one member’s metaphor for this space for open dialogue about the name. Instead, members remained active in school board meetings, as opposed to participating in facilitated dialogue.

At this stage, supporters believed race mattered in representation and were invested in dialogue that included all groups. Scholars describe school names as "cultural arena[s] for debating" the highly contested symbolic interpretations at play in each community. In the arena in the school community, white members did not want to speak for others but only for themselves. They recognized some voices were dominant. Therefore, some wanted to speak for others as a solution to the perceived problem of underrepresented voices.

Supporters from different racial groups experienced unique situations concerning their meaning-making of "voice." The data revealed varying experiences of the metaphor of "having a voice" or " no voice" in the name change issue. One white member described her experience as "no voice" in the renaming process. She stated, "I had tried all year and exhausted myself to have a voice in the process and felt like I had no voice." For this member, feeling like she had no voice meant that she did not feel her opinions were heard despite her efforts. Members speculated that the school administrators’ concerns for safety and control constrained their willingness to create spaces for public dialogue about the issues affecting the community. Although safety concerns were understandable the members, frustrated with the estranged relationships, longed for a "space" for community discourse.

In contrast, one African American member used the concept of voice differently. She referred to the problematic history of whites “presuming” to speak for others (Goldsten & Shuman, 2012, p. 179) that was visible in some supporters’ efforts to speak “for” the full community. She described the assumption that others “can’t speak for themselves” as “pandering.”

> I tried to take a lot of care and help others understand I was speaking for myself. One of the ongoing points of concern was non-African Americans presuming to speak on behalf of the other, right? This sort of ongoing [idea], like, 'I need to speak for those who somehow can't speak for themselves.' It's pandering.

She pointed out several components of her experience. The first was her "care" to "help others understand" that she "was speaking" for herself and not all African American members everywhere. She did not want people to "presume" that she was speaking for others. This is a common experience for people of color to be attributed to speaking for their whole group (Alcoff, 1991). Second, she explained that she "became very sensitive to the fact" that some non-African American members "presumed to speak" for African Americans. She explained, speaking for herself, that priorities may differ among community members. She said, "A potentially valid interpretation [for why many of the African American parents were silent] is that this [community process] may be more of a priority for some of us than for others [to be involved in the name change].". Her comment reflected the awareness that regardless of community members' personal feelings about the name, speaking out about it or changing it was not necessarily an immediate priority to all, including African American community members.

The African American member wanted to be clear that the "lack of speech" may be for various reasons and may not be because "they [African Americans] can't [speak out] because of their race." She elaborated, "Maybe there are other kinds of concerns they [African American parents] have," and the name change was not "most important." From her perspective, the non-African-American school members assumed that they knew why many African American parents from the community did not speak at meetings fighting with them for the anti-racist cause. Assumptions about race and voice matter as communities work through social and civic issues. From her perspective, "non-African Americans" speakers at the TPS board meetings assumed that African Americans could not speak out about racist school names because of their race, which was "pandering." If

members of all races had more opportunities to meet and openly dialogue, perhaps some confusion would dissipate. I believe this example highlights a problematic and complex issue in this community, the lack of spaces for discourse and the common misunderstandings about racial experiences. These dynamics influenced the name change process.

Part II: Meanings of the New Name, Council Oak School

In Part II, I describe members' meanings of Council Oak as the new symbolic name of their school (officially renamed Council Oak School on August 6, 2018). They discussed the name Council Oak as a symbolic centerpiece for an emerging vision and promotion of place identity. The concept of place identity reflects the socially constructed meanings ascribed to places, which people often perceive differently. In Tulsa, diverse interpretations (historical, cultural, symbolic) lay dormant for years and surfaced during the name change process. The themes in this section are aspirational identity of inclusivity, reparative justice, and community healing, rebuilding after change.

The "mental sphere" is part of the place identity involving embodying symbolic and material images (Knapp, 2006, p. 68). The name, place, and material symbols "establish the foundation for people's regional structures of expectations," which influences community identity (Knapp, 2006, p. 68). The symbolic and material images in communities, particularly at a public school, reflect and contribute to the regional expectations of its members. The Council Oak community members ascribed meanings to the new place name as part of the "mental sphere" of the geographical place, the local public school. Local members explained meanings such as a "sense of belonging for all," "inclusivity," and "coming together." Members perceived the name change as a realignment to current TPS values and expectations, such as equity and honoring historical indigenous roots. In this case, the realignment to regional expectations mattered to members as the basis for changing the name.

This study highlights members' meaning-making of the "mental sphere" in developing community identity (Knapp, 2006, p. 68). Place names merge history and geography to shape "place and group identity" (Alderman, 2016, p. 196). The name and symbols can be powerful vehicles for fostering identities. They can also be powerful in shaping racial relations and belonging, but their meanings are often taken for granted (Alderman, 2016). Many go about their daily routines without realizing how place names affect their sense of belonging or the collective identity of the holistic community where they live. Supporters' interpretation of the symbolic violence of physical references to the Confederacy in Phase I led to the sense that they did not want their school, or themselves, or their children, to be associated with these meanings. Similarly, they began to identify the new name as more closely aligned with an aspirational identity of "who they wanted to be." In Part II, I present the findings from members' meanings of Council Oak: (1) *The Council Oak School as Place Identity,* (2) *Members Connected the Local Process to "Whom they Wanted to Be,"* (3) *External Influences on Members' Meaning-making and* (4) *Members perceived the new name as Rebuilding Community.*

The Council Oak School as Place Identity

The Council Oak School name officially changed on August 6, 2018, merging history and the geographical location of the school building with a historical landmark. The historical Council Oak Tree is an Indigenous land allotment within walking distance from the Council Oak School. Consequently, because the school name changed from symbolizing a Confederate icon to using the name of an Indigenous referent, the community identity is still forming at this writing in 2023. New meanings and collective memories continue emerging and taking shape. According to Alderman (2002), "schools play an important role in shaping the collective memory and historical identity of their students and the attendant community" (p. 605). To Alderman, names matter; School names shape cultural identity (Ferguson, 2019; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022; Prier,

2019). Alderman (2002) examined school renaming and launched the conceptualization of "school names as cultural arenas for debating student and community identity" (p. 601).

Some supporters of the name change made meaning through interpreting and connecting the distant past with recent memories of the renaming process. For instance, some community members conceptually connected and narrated the historical tribal council meeting at the Council Oak Tree in 1836 as an example of the "coming together" of the school community to change the name in 2018. They connected 1836 events to those in 2018. Others argued that rather than "come together," the community was "torn apart." They discussed how, through the name, the community can "move forward," "heal," and "rebuild."

The members approached the meaning-making of the new symbol as a fluid and multidimensional community process of developing new understandings of the past through activities, events, teacher-student collaborative artwork, field trips to the Council Oak Tree, and other materialities such as benches and displays. They recognize that their part in community meaning-making continues as they fulfill various professional and family roles as part of the many significant behind-the-scenes investments (see Part III). Council Oak, like the old name, Lee, highlights aspects of history while excluding others. As members discussed their individual and collective meanings of the new name, members described Council Oak as a historical symbol of aspired ideals for representing their new public identity.

Members Connected the New Name to Aspirational Identity: "Who they wanted to be."

Just as supporters believed the Lee name was antithetical to the school and community identity many members wanted to hold, supporters of the name change began associating the new local school's name with how they wanted to represent themselves as a community. A teacher described Council Oak as a name with "lasting meaning." One Hispanic neighborhood resident explained, "There's a big draw of people who want to live in Maple Ridge, near the Gathering Place Park, and want to go to a good public school." She continued, "Now they won't feel guilty

about sending their kids to a place called Council Oak." These comments indicated how the members' emotions, particularly the "guilty" feelings attached to the Confederate name, influenced their meaning-making concerning the new name and their support of the school. They believed the new name "took away" negative feelings and represented positive connotations for future community members.

The members explained the new name, Council Oak, would be a lasting symbol better representing "who they wanted to be" as a community. As the members reflected on the renaming process, one said, "We were able to progress through really difficult conversations and accomplish something that I think we knew would have lasting meaning in our community." In this sense, Council Oak was more than just a new name; they perceived its connotations as a powerful vehicle for creating and supporting a sense of belonging. One indigenous supporter explained the new name symbolized reparative justice because it the "took a bad memory from us [Indigenous people]." The Lee name stirred "bad" memories and emotions about our nation's complex past with unique meanings for Indigenous people. In addition to the connotations of slavery other non-Indigenous members articulated, one/some/all connected Lee to the seeds of distrust from the Confederacy toward Indigenous people. One citizen of the Muscogee Creek Nation noted, "Our historical dealings with the Confederacy gave us [Indigenous people] nothing positive in the end." Some Indigenous people resented the forced alliance with the Confederacy through treaties, the inclusion of Freedmen citizenship and "felt that the federal government foisted non-Indian people upon them as a punishment for their tribal alliances with the defeated South" (Johnson, 2012, p. 81).

Another set of meanings of the removal of Lee and the new name was its potential to influence people beyond the local community to affect city-wide public identity. They reflected on how the community's identity conveyed through the local school name might affect outsiders to the city.. The social and historical context of the name change influences this meaning making;

as noted earlier, the historical background of Tulsa involved violent racial events that have been a topic of national study and media reporting in the past decade (Brasher, 2021; Brasher et al., 2018; Johnson, 2012). The name change in 2018 happened during a time of city and state planning for memorializing and honoring the 1921 Race Massacre descendants in a 2021 centennial commemoration. To members, the 1921 Race Massacre omission "in the schools" and the long silence about the Confederate name, Lee School, seemed connected. Members felt invested in how people in other cities and states perceived their identity through the new name. The case members' prediction that Tulsa would draw national attention during the 2021 Race Massacre anniversary came true. At the Tulsa Commemoration in 2021, President Biden came to Tulsa's Greenwood Cultural Center. President Biden said, "For too long, the history of what took place here was told in silence, cloaked in darkness... and while darkness can hide much, it erases nothing." Like the long-standing acceptance of the Lee name, it took years before the active silencing of the Tulsa Race Massacre became visible. Tulsans have learned about this silencing from newspapers, curriculum, and media.

The removal of Lee, and the name, Council Oak, symbolized supporters' strong expectations and responsibility for their city to lead the nation in social justice efforts. One white/Indigenous parent said, "Why do we always wait for someone else to prove that it [a change] is effective? We [Tulsa] should be leading these efforts." They believed Tulsans should lead in reconciliation efforts for past blatant and overt violence people of color experienced, but also efforts to restore through everyday acts, such as naming practices, educating children about historical events, and memorials. They envisioned place names as reflections of "who we are" and who "we want to be." Another parent explained, "Who we choose to honor tells a lot about who we are, right?" The "we" operating here seems to be a caring community, reflecting in its place names and commemorative spaces an ethics of care (Till, 2012) and the aspirational "we" they wanted to be and become. And a few supporters said the aspirational "we" was ongoing; one

faculty member said, “What we need not to happen is the name to be changed and that people to sort of pat themselves on the back and then think that it's all done right.” The name is only one step of the justice work.

External Influences on Members’ Meaning-making

External events influenced members’ meaning-making of the renaming process, which delayed community members’ place-based engagement with the physical site of the school and the new name. Place-based engagements at school sites, like Council Oak elementary, provide social experiences and opportunities to form collective memories as a community of people invested in the school. These engagements can happen during an open house, enrollment, and other school activities. Members described external influences that affected members’ meaning-making experiences during the name change process within the local school. The pandemic, which led to virtual schooling for safety reasons, intruded on members' engagement with the new symbols and social connections to build collective memories at the local school, the place designated for these activities. Members suggested these external forces delayed the community’s social cohesion, opportunities to create new memories, and collective learning about the new symbols to embrace the new place identity.

COVID Safety Delayed Connecting with the New Name

The context of this study occurring before and during a global pandemic influenced meaning-making in varied ways–particularly once the new name, Council Oak, replaced the original name. The COVID-19 pandemic affected communities nationwide. Council Oak Elementary started distance learning in August 2020 (Payne, 2019). For the 2020-2021 school year, the school was closed, and all activities stopped. The health officials urged families nationwide to quarantine in their homes when possible

and follow quarantine procedures. Members described community-wide traumatic stress during the renaming process and into the pandemic:

> We all have PTSD, [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] a little bit about it [the renaming process]. We had COVID PTSD on top of that. We haven't got to the part of rebuilding yet. We tried to get there, but we're just now to the point where people can mention the name change without really having strong reactions to it.

The members described the two consecutive stressful events as traumatic. These external events influenced the community's "rebuilding process" by delaying their entrance into the building and opportunities to engage socially and co-create memories.

COVID safety quarantine procedures influenced the possibility of engaging with the physical space of the newly named school and connecting to the new name, Council Oak. Council Oak families were confined, working and schooling from home, which delayed community stabilizing after the fragmenting renaming process. For this community, the physical school building mattered as a site in the transitional stage to engage with, affirm, accept, and recognize their new Council Oak Elementary name. The pandemic delayed any activities that might aid the community in developing collective memories and coming together to learn about their new name as the representation of their school community. The external circumstances, particularly distance learning due to COVID, delayed the school community's engagement with the symbols in the building for more than a year. A shift in population in the community added complexities to a smooth transition to build affinity with the new name as reflecting community identity. The members felt as if the pandemic robbed them of the physical place, time, and energy it would take to reconnect to the school's new name and welcome the new families that moved into their community.

Members were preoccupied with surviving the pandemic, and although they wanted to converse with the school administration about ideas to learn more about and

recognize the new name, they sensed that safety procedures and decisions about distance learning also bombarded the staff.

> The last two and a half years had been a ****show just keeping kids safe, educated, and continuing to work full-time jobs. [The new name] hadn't crossed my mind at all. I'm curious, in this group, has anyone tried to have this conversation with [administration]? I feel like they also are just trying to keep their heads above water. But they would be very sensitive to that and want to do that [develop ways to rebuild community identity, learn about and develop the new material symbols].

They believed entering the building was essential to develop a connection with the nuances of the new name in relation to the physical place of the school. One member described the importance of welcoming the changing school population after the name change and virtual schooling, that "we have this whole gap of new parents who have never even been in the building," which stirred members' curiosity about what directions the school would go, particularly co-creating meanings and memories together with new people who were not part of the initial stages of the name change process.

> I think, especially, to bring in the tribes, and next year we can actually bring people back into the school again. We might have the opportunity to do something like that. But you know, we couldn't bring anybody in for the last two years.
>
> And now we have this whole gap of the new parents who have never been in the building.

The two-year delayed entry, after the name change, at what was once the central site of controversy created a "strange," "curious," and an "unknown" experience for the community. Strange because some of the families enrolled their children in 2017 with "idealistic views" of "what the community is," then a few years later, in 2021, re-entering the building with a new name, new groups of people, and new faces they had never seen before. For these members, this shift was more than just a name transition. Each member shared how meeting at the school building was an essential part of their lives and "identity." When they enrolled their children in a

school named Lee, they established routines, relationships, roles, and expectations. All of that was different now.

They also remained hopeful that re-entering the building–the physical place–might start the healing and learning process connected to their community identity. They also welcomed the "gap of new parents" that "have never been in the building." A remnant of the original name change supporter group was still there, working through the uncertainty, indicating their continuing commitment to the school and community.

Rebuilding Connection in Community

Places hold symbolic meaning through names and physical objects influencing a community's collective, place identity, and memories (Bridges & Osterhoudt, 2021). For a century, the symbolic meanings of the Lee name, obelisk, and other material objects were the centerpiece of the community's identity. Although supporters used aspirational language to describe symbolic meanings of the new name, Council Oak School, they also recognized a continuing need for "space" to release, unfetter, and detach from the past school identity.

Examples of aspirational language were "community coming together," "rebuilding lives," "hope for belonging," and symbolizing "past, present, and future." Some expressed difficulties embracing the new name until they "gave it that space" to grieve relationships, re-enter the building, develop new collective memories together, and learn more about the historical background of the name. Many acknowledged, "To some degree, we had to grieve it before we could" embrace it. Others processed that we must "redevelop what that symbol [Council Oak] means to us now. And that is the part we have not done yet."

Embracing the new name was not an automatic process. Recalling painful experiences during the renaming process, they honestly shared, "We are in the process of rebuilding the community, so how do we highlight the value of community?" Questions about the new name

evoked deep emotional responses. I asked the members, "What feelings do the new symbol, the new name evoke for you?" Rather than discussing the name's positive connotations immediately, many members described lingering pain and painful memories from the broken relationships. This name change was about more than just a name; it was also about changes in relationships and remaking and re-forming identity. As they reflected on the gradual development of personal and collective meanings of the new name, they recognized that it was an ongoing process.

Some indigenous members described the Council Oak name as a rightful honoring and visibility of the indigenous past preceding the settling of Tulsa. Ben Yahola of Muscogee Nation said, "Today we have evolved to be a little bit more understanding and inclusive in our social journey here in Tulsa. It is vital to recognize Indigenous places and history and to reconcile with the past" (Payne, 2019, p. 2). Principal Flowers said, "Celebrating the Council Oak and learning more about that roots us in that knowledge and history, and that enhance[s] when we partner our history to that history and the meaning of Tulsa itself." Each meaning alludes to multiple layers of Indigenous invisibility in historical narratives. Council Oak renders an important set of roots visible, those that preceded the Lee school and the founding of "Tulsa" or "Oklahoma."

Aspirational descriptions for Council Oak as a symbolic name included "hope," "belonging," community, and related phrases such as "communal way of life," "community building," and "the community coming together." Other descriptive words and phrases were "gathering people in a council to make decisions collectively." One member described it this way,

> Not much good history comes out of Tulsa, and I felt like it [Council Oak] was a tie-back to something really beautiful. I looked at the tree symbol, and I think it is the connection of the past, future, and present.

Even though most members' descriptions connected the new symbol to aspirational public identity, some were hesitant in statements such as, "Let's just get everybody settled, and we'll embrace it later, I hope." The effects of the past name and tumultuous renaming process lingered even as some members worked to "embrace" the new name, "It makes me feel like it [the new

name] is kind of hypocritical because you watch a big community that was really close just completely tear apart" Another member said, "I see like a Council Oak symbol on the shirts, and I always have in the back of my head 'Lee,' as well. For me, it's still attached to it."

Developing the New Identity

Members connected the meanings of the name Council Oak to the school site and the community's identity. One member explained that "it [the name] is a huge piece of our identity as a building," and "we carry it [the identity] with us." They discussed meanings as fluid as they learned more about the name and symbols. Rebuilding and community were common themes in meaning-making. Members applied their conceptual understanding of the past and contrasted the historical tribe's experiences (in the 1800s) to their present-day community. One member noted, "What we should take away from that historical site are the values because as a tribe that was displaced, moved to a whole new spot to rebuild, but the point of it is *community*."

Many members positively interpreted historical linkages to the new name, Council Oak Elementary, as a name that "correctly recognizes the area, significant to us as we exist now." They perceived the name as one that warrants teaching, connection, and pride to a local place. According to members, it matters that children learn the history of the area surrounding the school, "[Children can learn] this is the Council Oak School, there is Council Oak Park, this is where they [the tribes] lived, this is where they [the tribes] did business, which is just a mile or two away from Greenwood." Members highlighted that the new name, Council Oak, recognized Tulsa's beginnings through a historical account of the Council Oak Tree. They emphasized that the tree, located within walking distance of the school, is a historical marker of the first Indigenous tribes' meeting place after the forced removal of Indigenous people to the Indian Territory. They also mentioned the Council Oak Tree is where the city was first named, a derivative of

Tulasi, which later became Tulsa. These meanings were necessary for rebuilding the connection to their new community identity through the name.

Honoring the survivance of Indigenous people through place names was an important theme. Members discussed how the symbolic naming of a public school after Council Oak in Tulsa recognized the oppression but also emphasized the survival of Indigenous people. One member said, "[Indigenous people] were rounded like cattle, forcibly removed, herded like objects, like cattle, like property." She recognized that the Council Oak name honors the people of color who experienced historical "oppression and genocide." She noted, "You know, those people need to be honored for their survivance." In contrast, remaining Confederate names and symbols are public identifiers honoring "the oppression of what they [Confederate soldiers] fought for."

Recognizing Indigenous ties to local and national history symbolized the remembering of a hidden history. The name highlights the years before the first oil boom in Glenpool in 1901. Others agreed the new name correctly counters the interpretation that "the history here [in Tulsa and Oklahoma] is oil." Another member highlighted the Muscogee (Creek) Nation as the founders of Tulsa, "I think, what better name than Council Oak to pay respect and honor the first people who came and are the founders of this town, and then [founders] of this name [Tulsa], I was happy to see that happen."

In addition to honoring the survival of historically oppressed people, the members reflected on national trends in renaming to highlight indigenous histories. What mattered to some members was preserving the Indigenous way of life. One member said,

> I think primarily. And during that time [of the renaming process], you know, I think we (the US citizens) were at the beginning of a trend nationally of renaming things. Initially, I wasn't looking at it in terms of nationally very much. I was looking at it in terms of the preservation and protection of our (Indigenous) history.

A common theme for members was recognizing the name's reflection of Indigenous ties to U.S. history to protect and preserve Indigenous culture. The Council Oak Tree symbolizes the history of Tulsa, the Council Oak Tree Park, and now, the Council Oak School.

Part III: Futurity, Imagining the School Community

The Council Oak School community experienced tumultuous shifts during and after the name change, leading to the pandemic and virtual schooling. Many grew up in this area or lived their adult lives there and dreamed of their children attending this school, known for its learning environment, inquiry-based teaching, parent involvement, and once-close-knit relationships. When I met with members in the Spring and Summer of 2022, they were trying to discover a "new normal," with their main priority focusing on the well-being of their children.

Once parents knew the children were safe, members conceptualized a new identity that matched their values, "inclusivity and equity," with a school name they knew little about. The members connected the new name with generativity. They spoke about children as a symbol of hope for future generations to learn, understand, repair, and reconcile with the city's violent racial history. Members envisioned social learning, and parent involvement, to "rebuild" the community and "heal" connections. They considered the school a space to learn and teach these connections. They imagined teacher-student collaborations co-creating meanings of new symbols, stories, and curriculum, gathering at the Council Oak Tree and on school grounds to create new memories. Members also discussed curriculum, teaching, and learning as essential for passing the meanings—the new "memory"--of Council Oak forward. They wanted their children to learn about Muscogee (Creek) history. Members shared, "It would be cool if the [Muscogee Creek] tribe could come in and teach and talk, share more about their culture so kids who have never had access would better understand it."

All members wanted the collective community to learn about the new name. Many envisioned future generations growing in understanding of Tulsa's tribal history. One member anticipated future parental engagement:

> At least half of the students have parents that the only school name they really know as Council Oak, so I think there will come a time when someone raises their voice and says, "Hey, I think it's time to really learn more about the name."

Members visualized a new group of parents enrolling their children in Pre-K or other grades. Although families typically move in and out of communities, this one has seen more than the usual amount of flux. The renaming procedure and new name shifted this school community's collective memories and meanings. As "memorial spaces," school names not only affect the collective memories of local communities but also "shed light on the changing and often contentious nature of American collective memory" (Alderman, 2002, p. 604).

The Tulsa case is a microcosm of national disputes centering on naming and the perceived role of the public school in cultural production of the next generation. The public school is a key site for social learning and producing cultural meanings (e.g., Boyte, 2016; Dewey, 1902). Dwyer (1993) argued that schools are sites for more than transmitting the dominant culture to the next generation, but where "cultural meanings can be resisted or contested" (p.143). Schools are arenas for disputes (Grufford, 1996; Vaughn, 1997), and school names are arenas for cultural debates (Alderman, 2002).

Members acknowledged that they knew very little about the Indigenous symbols, but they wanted to grow in their understanding. They expressed how learning about the name, tree, and historical connections could signify new hope, new racial relationships, reconciliation, and growth. Tulsa's return to Indigenous roots through the school name Council Oak is not only a local occurrence, but it is also a worldwide trend. Scholars described Indigenous naming as a spatial strategy for reclaiming identities (Azaryahu & Golan, 2001; Gill, 2005; Guyot & Seethal,

2007; Yeh & Kong, 1996). Indigeneity is the idea of place, the name, what it is called, and by whom, and it is integral to how people position themselves within a space (Phillips, 2021). One member recognized that the human connection to the land is a significant part of belonging. He said, "the name change here provides the connections for everybody in the city of Tulsa." The Council Oak name functioned to remember and honor those who suffered and survived oppression during a historical atrocity but also as a human-land connection for all Tulsans.

Council Oak School faculty teach K-12 subjects with an inquiry-based philosophy that allows children to guide their learning through the questions that spring from their curiosity. They encourage students to ask questions and use natural-sensory materials for artistic expression in their learning experiences. Members believed Council Oak School's educational philosophy promoted students' connection to the new name and symbols. In turn, this potentially influences the way the community connects to the name and symbols.

Cultivating Citizens: Students " Wrestling" with Hard Conversations in the Future

Parents expressed hope that participating in the name change process would help students prepare for hard conversations in the future. Many expressed interest in how children process complex information, "It's just crazy to me how the kids really understand. I think we don't realize, if you just stop and ask them about some of these things, the kind of intelligent answers they're gonna give you." Members emphasized, "We need spaces to empower students to beable to lead some of these hard conversations." Though they may not understand the issues, "Kids still hear about all of these topics, right?" Members wanted to find ways to teach children to dialogue about racial experiences. One member said, "I hope kids can learn in direct relation to the name change, and the efforts also globally, that there has to be access to talk about hard things and wrestle with hard things."

Clear Vision in Partnership with the Name. The name change brought a clear vision of what the school and community want for the children. "Most importantly, as a result of the name change, we have a really clear vision of what we want for children." She continued,

> It (our clear vision) stands in partnership with our name instead of ignoring the name (in reference to ignoring how the name Lee was not aligned with the school mission). Our vision for what we want for children, our mission, and the daily work we do with children all stand in partnership with our name [Council Oak], which is really important.

The school identity and name needed to match. "The new name is one we can be proud of. Now that they [the name and vision] are aligned and in full-swing partnership, it's beautiful." One educator stated:

> Everybody says this about their own school, but it truly is a place of wonder, joy, and unearthing knowledge. That is what I want for children in the world; I want them to discover learning, right? Because you naturally learn and naturally discover, I want them to find joy in that. That's why I go to work every day.

The community continues to rebuild from the multi-year process. Each member declared various degrees of hope, influenced by a deeper awareness of differences, experiences of loss, and renewed vision for the future—including the "work that still needed to be done." All agreed that rebuilding and creating their public identity with the new name was an evolving process.

Futurity, Defining Work: "This is How We Move Forward Together"

It mattered to members that they defined the requirements of the work. One member called attention to the "worry that you had not been heard clearly, but that is part of the work." She noted, "any transformational change requires some sort of blood, sweat, and tears," indicating that change "requires" painful experiences. She continued, though, "people want the magic pill." The "magic pill" was a metaphor to describe a process people might desire to substitute for the difficult and painful process of real

dialogue and meaningful change. Perhaps a "magic pill" was an easier and less painful way to solve deep-rooted social issues.

Members described varied work they were doing. Some defined work as transmitting values to the next generation, such as empathy, respect, kindness, equity, and inclusion. Others described it as having the courage to endure surfacing divisions and taking necessary action to provide an inclusive school environment for all children to learn and feel accepted. They agreed that the "significant work" was not accomplished by just one name change but by a daily investment "toward a better, more inclusive society." One member articulated, "So the notion that you do significant work towards eradicating racism through any particular thing [like a name change] is flawed in and of itself."

Connecting the name with Tulsa's Indigenous roots and teaching the children about that history was an important next step for members. Some members discussed the new name and *work* as "honoring Tulsa history with names and symbols," "approach[ing] diversity," and acknowledging "the race massacre as part of that [Tulsa's] history." They often discussed feelings of gratitude and their plans to "move forward" as a community. Many suggested that their individual and collective work was engaged as "thought leaders and change agents" in various roles:

> It [the Council Oak name] is significant to my own history, and in Tulsa, it had ripple effects. The hospital has an official program to approach diversity now, and the framework we're working on because of the race massacre is part of that history. So the little changes, symbols, and names have a bigger ripple effect in our community than we may even recognize.

This member identified with the name personally as significant to her history. She perceived part of the "work" as racial diversity training in professional workspaces and similar "ripples" in the community. The parents, teachers, and children "work together" to capture experiences, take memory walks to the tree, learn, draw illustrations, and write essays to build on past conversations. The multidimensional, shifting, and constantly

emerging meanings of the names reflect community members' investments in this "work."

Figure 9. View from the Tree, Taylor Painter-Wolfe.

Symbol for our school - the Council Oak Tree.

> "It tells us about Tulsa's history," "It is a symbol for our school because it stands tall and strong," "the tree never gave up even when something happened to the branch that fell, it continued to grow," "the tree has endured and survived a long time." (Quotes from students at Council Oak Elementary, Co-created by teacher, Taylor Painter-Wolfe)

Children's Voice in Symbolic Meaning-making

Most participants discussed the importance of the name change *for* the children, their identities, and their future. Children were often the objects or motivations of the change, yet few participants discussed children as active stakeholders in the process. Although there were traces

of data that focused explicitly on children's "voice" and their role in decision-making, it was a central point for two members. One member/educator explained,

> Throughout the process, it was critically important to me that the children have a voice in the conversation. We [the students and this community member] had conversations about what was happening. The news [television media] on the curb, and all the parents were talking about it.

Some members expressed the view that involving children as stakeholders were essential to the process for posterity. Public school students, as stakeholders in the name change and influencers of the next generation, carry vital roles in the continuity and stability of society. Students learn and develop within the "mental sphere;" the conceptual image of the place reflecting the name and symbols of the public school's place identity, the name, images, and symbols (Knapp, 2006, p. 68). Public schools have place identities that reflect regional expectations and influence community identity through symbolic and philosophical meanings.

One member explained, "When I think about public schools, my innate heartfelt belief is that public education is the foundation of democracy." She also described the local school as "one of the pillars of our democracy." Her philosophical view of the school as the social center of democracy relates to why the names attached to public schools are essential for unique reasons compared to other place names. A street sign, for instance, is a geographical marker with significant importance. Still, according to this member, the local school's meaning and role in society is "one of the pillars of our democracy."

Chapter V Summary

In Chapter V, I presented findings from my study. I discussed my analyses across interviews and focus groups that manifested clear inductive stages of the renaming process as articulated by members. Within those stages, supporters of the name change became active in doing something that mattered. The old name mattered to them because it symbolized offensive, racist ideologies. They wrestled with working across differences in a community that they once

believed more cohesive than it proved to be. They manifested and made new meanings intersubjectively and collectively. They perceive the new name as aspirational, honoring a past of surviving oppression and offering a significant vision and identity for the future. As this analysis shows clearly, a name is far more than a name. For this community, it signals "togetherness," who we are," "whom we want to be," and becoming a "community" that is "learning more about the history and the name."

According to members, this community experienced numerous changes between 2018 and 2023. They revealed that the supporters of the name change invested a considerable amount of time and physical, mental, and emotional energy in agitating to remove three words from their community school name and eventually support a new name, Council Oak. They interpreted the meaning of these names using broad cultural and racial understandings. Names were not just names; they symbolized racist histories, invisible histories, silenced histories, remembered histories, and aspirational visions for a school community identity. In the process, supporters experienced fragmented relationships and grief. They experienced simultaneous and overlapping events while new families moved into their neighborhood alongside existing members integrating the community identity with the new name, Council Oak. In the next chapter, I discuss names as powerful mechanisms for symbolic interaction and the conveyance of meanings.

CHAPTER VI

DISCOVERIES AND IMPLICATIONS

The case site is a school once named Lee School in Tulsa, Oklahoma. After a long and tumultuous process, the school's name changed to Council Oak School on August 6, 2018. For this qualitative inquiry project, I interviewed community members who were supportive of the change to seek their meanings of the previous and current names and their impressions of the name change process. My purpose was to understand supporters' meanings of the names in this local process and how they connected with broader inquiries about the ongoing national renaming issues. This study advances scholarly work through its attention to a local name change process–one of few studies of this kind. It offers a unique emphasis on supportive community members' meaning-making of school names and symbols in relation to local, regional, and national meanings during unprecedented calls nationally to alter the material, geographic and toponymic landscape from Confederate war references–including symbols in public schools–in the name of restorative racial justice. My interpretations of local members' meanings offer insightful connections to the issues of place naming and school renaming across the US.

Across the years of the name change, primarily 2018-2022, I interviewed nine individuals, all representing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities that supported the name change. During this time, from 2018-2022 I also conducted a focus group of five members, representing four Caucasian and one from the BIPOC community and then followed-up with this group in 2022, adding two new BIPOC members, all supporters of the name change. In 2022, I conducted two individual follow-up interviews with members of BIPOC communities from the earlier data in 2018. Conversations with participants provided approximately 520 pages of transcribed data encompassing rich, detailed descriptions as community members supportive of the name change recalled their experiences during and their reflections after the name change process.

I participated in school board meetings, researched newspapers, and historiographies, archived school board records, attended Council Oak activities with parents, observed the 2021 Commemoration of the 1921 Race Massacre, and visited the school site many times before, during, and after the name change. The school's new name, according to members, is a return to Tulsa's Indigenous roots. The historical and current context of this name informs the meanings evident in the case. When the Lee name was rescinded and the new name became Council Oak, I sought to explore how Indigenous place names influenced members' relationship to place. I used the following questions to direct the focus of the study about the meanings community members held who were supportive of renaming the Lee school.

1. How did supportive community members describe their experiences working together to create and co-create meanings to enact social change through the name-change process?
2. What meanings did the name-change supporters make about the toponymic and material symbols related to the previous and new school names and the name-change process?
3. How did local/state place-based meanings and dominant historical narratives inform the meaning-making of those supportive of the change?

I used case study methodology within an interpretivist paradigm to respond to the research questions. The case study methodology enabled me to interpret and explore members' meanings of those who supported the renaming of Lee school. My role as a researcher and teacher is both inquirer and learner; I strove to create "workspaces" in classrooms and research *with members* in lived communities (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020, p. 124). I used a constructionist epistemological stance, which suggests that what we see as reality is "constructed in and out of the interaction between human beings and their world, developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p.42). I interpreted the case by explicating supportive members' meanings of the material toponymy (symbolic objects, obelisk, and pictures), the name change process, and their community experiences. The case is valuable for surfacing local meanings and processes involved in the renaming process. It also enriches current place naming and school name change scholarship.

In Chapter V, I presented the findings from my thematic analysis (Patton, 2015) of supportive community members' meanings of the renaming of Lee School. I interpreted individual transcripts and then compared and integrated them. Notably, members' motivations and meanings evolved across phases of the name change process as they manifested and made new meanings intersubjectively and collectively. The name was not just a name; it signaled a host of investments and identities for community members and the deep symbolism of which values schools should stand for in their naming. They connected the name Lee and materiality (pictures of the namesake, obelisk, and others) to offensive meanings related to the Confederacy and to a history that merited "forgetting." Social relationships strained and split as the supporters experienced tension between those advocating for a name change and those resisting it. Shaped by similar interpretations of Confederate names nationally, supporters believed that no reasons could justify retaining the unacceptable and racist toponym of Lee to represent their school.

Overview of the Tulsa Renaming Process

The following paragraphs describe the various phases of the name change process in detail and the fluctuations as TPS worked to design a fair and just process to represent the school community and align with the TPS mission. They also identified ways to neutralize the meaning of the name Lee. Finally, as the paragraphs below describe, after long and emotional deliberation, TPS voted to start the process over and choose a facilitator not affiliated with the TPS Board or the school administration. The outcome was the Board's decision to name the school Council Oak Elementary.

The Complex Renaming Process in Detail. In 2018, due to pressure from concerned citizens, the TPS board initiated the decision to vote on renaming four schools in their jurisdiction, all of which, in cultural memory studies language, had connections to historical pasts in need of "forgetting." Chouteau, Columbus, Jackson, and Lee Elementary Schools. Next, TPS appointed the Lee School Board representative as the ad hoc committee leader to choose members that would undergo meetings to formally recommend a name to the Board.

The school board formed an ad hoc committee with members from the school led by the TPS Board representative from the Lee School district (Hardiman, 2018b). There were approximately eight public TPS Board meetings and multiple ad hoc committee meetings before May 7, 2018, when the first ad hoc committee presented a recommendation letter to the TPS Board to shorten the name to 'Lee School' from Robert E. Lee Elementary School. They suggested this neutralized acronym and removing the school's material symbols about the Confederacy to a museum. The first ad hoc representative explained, "There were many people who did not want to change the name at all" and "many people that wanted to change it totally," therefore he explained that shortening the name [to 'Lee School'] "is a compromise" (Hardiman, 2018b, p. 1). The representative noted, "I believe there is a wide consensus to remove the [material] symbols representing Robert E. Lee…and rededicate the site as 'Lee School' in conjunction with centennial ceremonies of the building." He added, "the lens of history has

changed. We are living in 2018, not 1918" (Hardiman, 2018b, p. 1). After a split 4-3 vote, the superintendent announced the new name as "Lee School" (Hardiman, 2018b, p. 1).

However, this was not the lasting outcome. After the May 7, 2018, decision, many were concerned that the ad hoc committee did not represent the school community fairly. Some TPS Board members stated the shortened name to Lee School preserved the connection to the Confederate general; therefore, they considered the name as inappropriate. On May 21, 2018, TPS Board meeting, community, and school board members spoke openly about regretting their decision (Hardiman, 2018a). One board member who initially voted for the shortened version confessed, "I am embarrassed by both my lack of action before the vote and my actual vote [to change the name to Lee School]" (Hardiman, 2018a, p. 1). Another member said the "current name [Lee School] will overshadow the work to educate students about diversity and inclusion" (Hardiman, 2018a, p. 1).

Most Board members said the name Lee school held racist meanings, contradicting the TPS mission for equal and equitable education for all students (Hardiman, 2018a). Several committee members asked for a "delay of implementation" of the school's name (Hardiman, 2018a, p. 1). Dr. Gist, the TPS Superintendent, agreed with several board members that the lack of criteria for renaming from the first ad hoc committee was problematic (Hardiman, 2018a). In June 2018, TPS reopened the decision to choose a new name. Later that summer, events were set up for community members to engage with the suggestions, dialogue, and add their suggestions for new names (Personal Communication, 2021). A community member highly invested in the community, but not directly affiliated with the school or the TPS Board, was appointed to facilitate the next committee.

The new committee members included students, teachers, parents, and a TPS Board member. The gender makeup of this second ad hoc committee included six females and seven males. One member identified as bi-racial (African American/Indigenous), three identified as

African American, five adults identified as White, and two students also identified as White. Two members of the first ad hoc committee were also on the new committee; they identified as White. Through a series of approximately six meetings, the committee narrowed a compiled list of 144 names sent in by the public to 5 names input from the community again and a committee consensus.

On July 24, 2018, the TPS Board announced that Council Oak was the finalist of five names. The five finalists were: Abraham Lincoln, Clara Luper, Woody Guthrie, Council Oak, and Maple Ridge, the name of the housing addition. Lee School was officially renamed Council Oak on August 20, 2018. The name Council Oak was the final recommendation for the TPS board after a several month process guided by the facilitator who was not directly affiliated with the school board. The facilitator encouraged committee members to ask questions and learn how to understand the viewpoints from divergent and diverse sides of the issue. The new name reflects Tulsa's Indigenous history, "where the Muscogee (Creek) Nation first gathered in Oklahoma in 1836 after being forcibly removed from lands in the southeast" (Hardiman, 2018, p. 2). After the TPS Board announced its decision, they canceled the 100-year community Confederate celebration (Hardiman, 2017).

In 2018, the principal chief of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation worked in various capacities with the TPS superintendent on projects throughout his term and wrote a letter to support the name change to Council Oak. He explained, "So my involvement, you know, was directly through the letter and indirectly through my staff, and I felt very good about that. I thought it [the Council Oak name] was a great recognition." On behalf of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Principal Chief James R. Floyd officially supported the renaming of Council Oak Elementary on Monday, August 6, 2018 (The Muscogee Nation, 2018). The Historic and Cultural Preservation Department of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation presented the storyboard and background information to the public (The Muscogee Nation, 2018). Neely Tsoodle expressed the tribe's

support with an emphasis on the land, "We look forward to the opportunity to educate our children about the very land they walk on every day," and explained, "Their classrooms were built on Creek land that was originally allotted to a Creek citizen before statehood" (The Muscogee Nation, 2018, p. 1).

In 2019, the community celebrated the new name, Council Oak. The school faculty and staff, members of the community, members of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and the students met on school grounds to learn about the new name. The TPS spokesperson said he "dedicated the next 100 years as a new era and the first steps into the future" (Payne, 2019, p. 2). Ben Yahola of Muscogee (Creek) Nation said, "The Council Oak symbolizes the center, a place where another 100 years of students can trace back to where they made friends, learned about life, and who they are" (Payne, 2019, p. 2). He continued, "Today we have evolved a little more understanding and inclusive in our social journey here in Tulsa" (Payne, 2019, p. 3).

Tulsa's push to rename schools is part of a national reckoning in the last decade concerning the Confederate names and symbols established during the Civil War and the civil rights movement. Names of schools, streets, parks, and other public entities are essential sites for critical investigation. Place names symbolize "community values, attitudes, and beliefs, revealing the character of both the figure/event commemorated and the community that has honored [the namesake or the historical event]" (Stump, 1988, p. 215).

Findings: Four Stages of Meaning-Making

A finding of this study was the clear stages the supporters' narratives revealed about the name change. I inductively perceived four stages within the members' reflections during Phase I. The first stage was characterized by the themes of individuals' internal struggle ("Inner tug-of-war"); the second stage was empathy and interacting ("It was my friend who lit a fire"); the third stage they discovered community racial issues were not limited to the name Lee ("This issue goes

much deeper"), and the fourth stage they discussed what they learned (Community Action as Education).

In the initial stages, those who were involved in the name change process began to interpret the Confederate artifacts and original name, Lee, as symbolizing racist ideologies. School names shape cultural identity (Ferguson, 2019; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019). Alderman (2002) examined school renaming and launched the conceptualization of "school names as cultural arenas for debating student and community identity" (p. 601). The school name, Lee, served as the “arena” for this community (Alderman, 2002, p. 601).

The first stage was characterized by the member’s new awareness of the name as racist and internal struggle with these racist meanings on a public school serving their children and representing their community. The second stage involved empathetic listening to others’ interpretations of the name. It also involved actions to remove the Confederate symbols. In the third stage, tensions in the community began to surface and intensify. Name change supporters, who assumed others would support the removal of the Lee name, discovered intense differences about whether to rename the school revealed ideological and political differences in their community. During the fourth stage, supporters claimed their community action to change then as an important undertaking and transformative process that would have long-lasting effects on the community.

Lastly, during Phase II of the name change, after the second vote to rescind the name, the members clarified their meanings and collective action to change it to “anything but Lee.” Also, during this stage, members voiced the need to have equal representation of racial groups during civic processes. Tensions surfaced about which community members presumed to be speaking for others. They connected the school's name to their vision of community identity. After the official name change in 2018, members agreed that place names reflect key identity issues: “who we are” and "who we want to be.” Members held common aspirational meanings for Council Oak,

including "hope," "belonging," "community building," and "coming together" as they envisioned the importance of the name change for the children, their community's future, and their identities within the school. To members, the new name honored and remembered a people that survived oppression, highlighting new memories that reflect particular characteristics and offer a vision for an aspirational identity.

They envisioned the names, in fact, as educational tools for children to teach about difficult national and regional histories. They envisioned discussions of the name as a vehicle for children and community members to learn more about the name and Tulsa's history and expand cultural and racial understandings of the nation's past. In the rest of this chapter, I discuss the findings and connect them to theory and scholarship as I answer my three research questions. I also discuss the implications and significance of this study and make connections to future work.

Discoveries

This section of the chapter turns to my discoveries, my interpretation of the findings and responding to my research questions. Through a discovery process, I explore and expand the findings to seek insight and inform and enhance broader inquiries about the ongoing school renaming and memorialization issues. Particular racialized frames of understanding shape the symbolic meanings people ascribe to place names. Scholars of race and geography, for example, examine how current racial issues inform ongoing struggles "to recognize and fully embrace contested racialized histories" as community identities (Inwood & Martin, 2008, p. 374). Symbolic interactionism (SI) is useful for understanding how members contributed to this memory work. SI centers on meanings as the central aspect of human behavior (Blumer, 1969). Meaning, language, and thought are components of human acts toward people and objects (Blumer, 1969).

Research Question 1: How did supportive community members describe their experiences working together to create and co-create meanings to enact social change through the name-change process?

Chipping Away at Just Accepting How Things Have Always Been

The case indicated that the name change process involved time and "chipping away" in phases over years. The meanings of the experiences and the names changed in each phase. Slight changes, such as noticing and acting on symbols in the school, created momentum for greater actions for supporters. The case revealed the "chipping away" of one symbolic representation, the successful lobbying to the school district to remove Confederate flags stamped on the matting framing the large Robert E. Lee picture in the hallway, created an acceleration that led to more significant changes and finally, the name change. Though it seemed minuscule to some, this slight change indicated notable change was possible. They could "no longer accept" the symbolic displays on school grounds. *Renaming* is a more complicated process than *establishing* a name for a building. Their actions and labor in taking a stand to rename over several years revealed their dedication to this as a worthy cause.

Scholars recognize that name-changing emanates from contentious debates over what and who should be memorialized (Brasher et al., 2018). However, few studies explore community members' experiences with the place name and materiality (symbolic objects such as removing the symbols at Lee School) together (Fuchs, 2015). Members' engagement with the matting and photo in the school as offensive inspired a new struggle to identify with the school's name. The materials, in this case, were significant to the members' connecting the school name as a memorial toponym representing past and present racist ideologies.

Members gradually recognized the materiality and toponym condoned racist ideologies and that action for change was necessary. They decided to "no longer accept how things have always been." CRT recognizes that racism, although socially-constructed, pervades daily life and

lurks within symbols with different effects for different people. Many recognized they "drove by every day" but did not realize this school was a Confederate memorial until they noticed the Confederate symbols. The material symbols were vital to the members' identification process.

Fuchs (2015) argued the significance of parallel studies of toponymic and material aspects of the environment expands "understanding [of] broader sociocultural contexts and their local implications" (p.11). This case provides insight into the necessary and time-consuming progression of changes in a community invested in the name change and the influence of broader sociocultural regional and national meanings of names in this local context. The process involved gradual shifts in awareness, meaning-making, priorities, and understanding the deeper meaning of the community's division over the name change as reflecting different perspectives. Members first engaged with the symbols of the Confederacy before recognizing the school's name as memorializing a Confederate general. Many described sociocultural influences in forming meanings of the symbols as they engaged with other school community members.

School Renaming as Reparative Memory Work

The theoretical orientation and body of scholarship that lightly guided this study, memory work, helps in understanding supporters' experiences of the complex process of naming the Tulsa school. My review of newspapers revealed the naming of Lee School in 1918, connected to the KKK and white supremacist leaders in Tulsa, influenced and constrained public memory for 100 years. Each toponymic and material symbol in the Tulsa school pointed to some memories while it stifled others. The same is true about the present-day influence of the new name, Council Oak, and its impact extending into the future, as it highlights Indigenous history over other historical narratives. Council Oak, an Indigenous name, can also enable and constrain particular memories.

Mansfield and Lambrinou (2022) argued school names are not just descriptors of static buildings. They matter; they are seen as having the potential to harm or lift the psyches of those within marginalized identities (p. 37). They can have long-lasting implications for students,

teachers, and families (e.g., Ferguson, 2019; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022). The supporters of the Tulsa case believed this too. Parents were concerned about students' daily exposure to the contested symbols and school name. Members worried about exposing families of color to this perceived racist name and symbols. They believed place names can be sites of psychological and social damage to communities of color and allies, in which past harms to Black people in the United States are steadily re-ignited as they become re-exposed to markers of racist histories in their environments. Members rationalized that consistent exposure to remembrances of racial historical trauma works to perpetuate and keep alive the racist memories. Names of public places can function as reminders of alienation for marginalized groups. Names have become a steady and important site of reparative work (Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022).

Supporters helped make these new public memories. Humans respond to people and objects according to their symbolic meanings. Language allows humans to share meanings through acts of speech to negotiate meanings with others. Thoughts are also a part of the symbolic interaction process; thoughts negotiate meanings through internal conversations requiring varying viewpoints (Blumer, 1969). Supporters saw themselves as "thought leaders and change agents." They were actors, locally involved in "little changes, symbols, and names" that one parent explained could "have a bigger ripple effect in our community than we may even recognize." They enacted the first part of a longer change that contributed to public memory. Supporters saw themselves as actors, locally involved in enactments of lasting change. Scholars suggest that memory work includes dialogue, collective meaning-making of memories, and dynamic repetitions of stories in different eras (Halbwachs, 1992). Supporters actively engaged in meaning-making through dialogue, exchanging ideas as thought leaders.

The case members committed to the name change process, carried it through despite the division between friends, disappointments in the process, and the tumultuous emotions during school board meetings. Those interactions became part of public memory as they shared their

stories in a social environment and made meanings of their experiences. The members actively, through public protest and commitment, contributed to new public memory, influencing present and future collective memories through toponymic, visible change in their local landscape. Many connected Tulsa's history of racial unrest, especially the 1921 Race Massacre, to the original naming, the longevity of the Lee name, and the ad hoc committee's earlier recommendation to retain the name. According to Alderman (2002), "schools play an important role in shaping the collective memory and historical identity of their students and the attendant community" (p. 605). The supporters through their role in the name change, emphasized a sense of belonging to displace memories of racial hostilities with inclusivity and the replacement of a problematic history in Tulsa with an empowering one—they acted/supported for varied reasons--, motivated by an internal "tug of war," empathy toward diverse experiences, and envisioning a more inclusive school identification for their children.

The change to Council Oak signified a return to Tulsa's Indigenous history to the community members in my study. Some community members welcomed this approach as a return to the Council Oak name, a story about the Muscogee (Creek) Nation tribe's journey to Indian Territory decades before Oklahoma became a state, while others questioned how this new name could adequately heal the century-long wounding the Confederate name caused the Black community in Tulsa. They agreed that the "significant work" was not accomplished by just one name change but by a daily investment "toward a better, more inclusive society." One member articulated, "So the notion that you do significant work towards eradicating racism through any particular thing [like a school name change] is flawed in and of itself." Supporters viewed the work as ongoing, and the name change as a small step toward a better community.

Research Question 2: What meanings did the name-change supporters make about the toponymic and material symbols related to the previous and new school names and the name-change process?

Names are more than just labels; the core element at work in toponyms are the meanings the name represents. Ideally, public school names represent diverse community members that make up the "public." Questions about who decides what is appropriate for the wide population and how to represent this "public - we" rise to the surface in renaming processes. Name meanings reflected accountability to the past, a common aspirational identity for the school community, and promoting an image of the community for others. A shared name that represents the "public-we" involves negotiation and compromise between members that live in the shared community. Some Tulsans seemed to celebrate the name Lee and symbolic objects in 1918 based on the newspaper reports of a Confederacy celebration and parade. The names at that time did not have the same meanings as they do now in a period in which name changes reflect a commitment to reducing harm for people of color. The members' resolve to change the name implies that supporters were no longer willing to accept the symbology as their current identity, even though some in the larger community perceived the name Lee as acceptable.

The public image or identity also reflects the regional expectations of the city (Knapp, 2006). Some supporters also believed the name reflected the character of their community and the region as a model for the nation. The context of the renaming occurred with the 1921 Race Massacre commemoration approaching, media attention to Tulsa, and people visiting the city. It was important how the nation perceived their city and handling of this name change. They were sensitive to the way the nation perceived their city after its violent past, and wanted to be an example of restitution, progress, and healing.

Understanding the Struggles Over Names

Recent scholarship characterizes renaming as commemorative work and reparative tools (Alderman, 2002; 2022; Alderman & Inwood, 2013). Alderman (2022) argues the "world is in the midst of a renaming moment" (p. 30). Policymakers, local school districts, "elected officials, journalists, citizen groups, and even some scholars lack a full understanding of these *struggles* and what they mean" (Alderman, 2022, p.30). The struggle about place naming is more than a struggle over a name—in this case, one word, Lee. Name changes reflect a contemporary struggle over which lives and stories matter. It is a struggle over what is important to mark and remember in the local or national history (Alderman, 2022; Knapp, 2006). The upsurge in local protests, policy-making, removal of symbols, and name changes indicates a contemporary obsession over symbols within city landscapes. Scholars recognize that commemorative place naming for centuries was important for "storytelling, lived material experiences and political, emotional well-being as they inhabit, claim and create places" (Alderman, 2022, p. 30).

Community members interpret school names as representing the neighborhood families within an area and create a public persona or identity that can create cohesion and promote commonality (Bridges & Osterhoudt, 2021) and values. Generational pride was also evident as one member explained, "Grandparents and parents also went here," and they "poured hours and hours" of "volunteerism," "parent engagement, and [had] ties to the community." They explained that "people felt attached to the name for those reasons." The members voiced that "part of the hard challenge" was explaining that "changing the name does not discount" any of the community members' "hours of volunteerism and investments that people put into the school."

Members socially constructed meanings of the name through other members' experiences and historical narratives. One member listened as a Black community member addressed the school board, "You know, we are sitting here talking about having to change benches [remove the Lee bench] but I [as a Black man] couldn't have even sat on it in 1918." His words revealed his understanding of how segregated schooling affected Black Tulsans historically and made it

visible to the primarily white board. The Lee bench symbolized the continuing presence of that segregated past in the community's school. This woman, open to transformational change, listened to his perspective and allowed his meaning-making to impact hers.

The Black member said he was a descendant of Black Tulsans who faced barriers during the 1918 era. During that era, such barriers to Black students created differential access to goods, services, and opportunities, such as access to the Lee School facility and public education overall. Schools were primarily segregated throughout Oklahoma until the 1960s. These barriers also created inequities and negative messages experienced by the stigmatized race. He revealed his understanding of racism as continuing and commonplace, evident even in the name on a bench at the school, a tenet aligned with CRT in that racism is daily, widespread, and comes in varied forms. His historical interpretations and social construction of meanings influenced his support for removing the name.

Name change processes take time and reveal the degree of community investments in the process necessary over time. The Tulsa name change was a multi-year effort that involved varied forms of activism, time, and work for supporters. Supportive members believed that this reparative work was important. Many arranged childcare so they could write, speak, and take time out of their busy schedules to meet and plan. Adamant they would not support a Lee name in any form, they measured the significance of their cause and took safety risks, as they realized undergoing such processes might stir trouble, leading to protests, violent disruptions, or threats at the school, placing their children in danger and escalating trouble such as the violence happening in other parts of America. The supporters believed these risks were necessary and worth it.

Place-based Memory Work. Local place-based meanings in the Tulsa case nuance national engagements in public remembering and forgetting in ways that involve collective groups interconnecting within communities centered in local historical narratives. While other schools chose namesakes, place mattered to the renaming of Lee School—the new name represents a

historical, geographical place, Council Oak Park where the Council Oak Tree is protected and registered in the National Register of Historic Places. This Indigenous name is not limited to one tribe but rooted in a connection to the local Muscogee tribe. Instead of giving credit to a figure, the name, Council Oak, emphasizes a gathering, a "council."

One might perceive that the new naming pushed aside one history to reclaim a memory connected to emancipation. Tribal members in this case mentioned that the new name and recent additions of Osage and Muscogee names, tribal language on street signs in Tulsa, also "offers new perspectives, brings more insight, to hear other sides of history, other stories that haven't been told," and histories "not well known." She also said, because of the name change, "it makes students a part of that history. And helps them (students) have active roles in it."

Recent scholarly work focused on Indigenous restorative justice work, involves various kinds of land acknowledgements, educational outdoor classrooms, survivance – overarching interventions, district Indigenous education trainings for preservice and service teachers. This case is unique to other cases of school renaming due the connection to Indigenous roots, and distinct community identity effects. Scholars understand place names as reflecting community identities within larger constructions of race, and history (Levy et al., 2017). Like Agosto et al.'s (2017) study of the public image of two schools through namesakes, a few members of my study discussed the new name, Council Oak, as a rebranding and a "new logo" and reimagining of the local area, and the city, Tulsa. The supporters viewed the local members' role as active agents in reimagining, a continual process of creating this new image, and connections to a historical identity.

Recent memory work conceptualizing place names as sites of problematic histories and renaming as a potential practice of restorative justice highlights a widespread progressive narrative to rid the landscape of names and memorials reflecting racist injustices of the past (Fernandez, 2019; Inwood & Martin, 2008). In this view, leaving racist names in public and community places perpetuates remembering of histories of oppression. According to recent racial

analyses of the past in public and scholarly work, toponyms imply, signal, and legitimatize values and expectations, such as who belongs and who is allowed access to that space (Alderman, 2002; 2020). Therefore, in the current context of examining the histories of streets, schools, and building names for their connotations, naming a shared space is a complex process involving dynamically constructed meanings reflecting understandings of the past and present. Alderman (2002) argued, for instance, that naming practices for Martin Luther King nationally are "part of a larger refashioning of the urban cultural landscape as racial and ethnic groups increasingly seek public recognition of their historical achievements" (p. 601). Like the name Martin Luther King, Council Oak recognizes distinct Indigenous roots, geographic proximity as part of the "larger refashioning" (Alderman, 2002, p. 601).

As communities undertake name changes as forms of reparative justice work, the meaning and constructions of names perceived as "aspirational community identities" also change. Based on patterns of Confederate naming at the turn of the century, Lee might have been an aspirational name. In the current context, members perceived Council Oak as an identity they "could be proud of," and one they would "no longer feel guilty about." This experience of the name Council Oak as inspiring, "righteous," or "racially just" reflects the investment in certain naming patterns and initiatives in different periods. The constructions ascribed to the Council Oak name as returning to Tulsa's Indigenous historical roots were perceived as guides for aspirational community values, expectations, behaviors, and shared identities. People in this community understood their participation in a name change as what good people who want to reduce harm and work toward a more equitable future need to do.

This process in Tulsa with Lee and Council Oak names are indicators of recent national discussions of historical symbols in public places. Memorializing names, statues, parks, or streets on public property raises questions about who the public is, how to fairly represent this broad description of people, and who decides. In 2017, Nikki Haley, Republican Governor of South

Carolina from 2011-2017, recognized that removing the symbol, a Confederate flag, "would not remove all hate and bigotry." However, she argued the "Capitol belongs to all of us" (Webster & Leib, 2016, p.34). Haley called attention to the "public-us," illustrating the point that removing the symbol was worth the invested action because the public place and symbolic flag were perceived as a shared subjective symbol, "belong[ing] to all of us." The national attention to violent symbol-related events coincided with testimonies of widespread racism and calls for examinations of school names and symbols. Some interpreted the presence of these symbols on public grounds as legitimatizing racist ideologies and encouraging violence.

My study reveals the importance of place names in how Americans are understanding their responsibility to be accountable to the past harms committed against Black, Indigenous, and other people of color through slavery and settler colonialism. Renaming is an act of identity that is seen to break from that past. And unlike other schooling renaming practices cited in scholarship (Levy, etc), the Tulsa school changed to an Indigenous place name symbolizing community rather than a person/namesake. This is a type of Indigenous restorative justice memory work. As toponymic scholars have said, place names are more than just markers for navigation. They are "symbolic resources that can be used to encode, enrich, and even structure accounts of the past" (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 52). In addition to erasing names deemed racist, engaging in renaming using Indigenous place names highlights accounts of the past that at one point were dominant but in recent centuries became invisible in the landscape.

The term Indigenous refers broadly to people who have "long settlement and connection to specific lands which have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others" (Weeber, 2020, p. 2). Indigenous people include Native Americans, First Nations, Aboriginal peoples, and other communities that have ancestral lineages to societies that existed in territories before contact with European settlers (Weeber, 2020). Members' meanings, public articles, and statements from

Indigenous tribal leaders recognize the Council Oak name brings landscape, words, and the past together, uplifting a particular regional narrative, preserving historical memories, and honoring the survivors of oppression. Although I cannot make any claims about how all Muscogee Creek people, or other tribal members, feel about the name, some supporters interviewed in my study reflected on the name in positive terms,

Supporters believed their vision of the "us" was important to fight for regardless of the effects on community tensions. They perceived themselves as actors in a larger transformational process happening in Tulsa and this nation. Naming can memorialize problematic histories and make hidden histories visible. They perceived the Lee name as memorializing hurtful parts of history and the Council Oak name as making a once hidden and important history visible. They perceived the rescinding of this name and acceptance of the name connected to Indigenous roots as creating a more inclusive public that would foster pride and a sense of belonging. Council Oak was both symbol and aspirational identity to influence the past, present and future meanings of the school for children and the community. The community actively created these understandings, interacting socially, in discourse, and discussing different experiences.

Schools as a place of memory work. The recent surge of local name changes indicate that name change supporters perceive names as a site for reparative justice. Recent place name scholarship study names as sites to claim the past and repair futures (Alderman, 2022). Schools are often places undergoing these name and identity changes. Public schools are symbolic sites, social centers for place-based learning and community identity that hold various meanings, in addition to the "mental sphere" (Knapp, 2006, p. 68) or conceptual image reflected through its symbols, mascots, objects, and name.

In this case, name-change supporters described the "public" broadly as "we," and "us" as the people who identify with the school community. They connected the name to an aspirational identity for students and families. They sought a symbol that envisioned the community, the "us,"

the "public," to aspire to a core set of values, behaviors, and ideals, highlighting a history that seemed hidden within an emphasis on the oil boom in Tulsa. Implicitly, they framed the public place name of Council Oak not merely as a word but as a guide for social functioning, uplifting marginalized histories. They believed this new aspirational place name would influence the school community and already perceived the "ripples" in the city to inspire hospitals and other institutions to educate their employees about ignored racial histories, reparative practices, and justice.

The supporters said that they "knew little about the Council Oak story," but they "wanted to learn more." After the pandemic, they discussed plans to "bring in the tribes, and next year we can bring people back into the school again." The school as a site for memory work, recognizing "Indigenous places and history to reconcile with the past" (Payne, 2019, p. 2). Scholars suggest place names are more than a place to transmit the dominant culture to the next generation but a place where "cultural meanings can be resisted or contested" (Dwyer, 1993, p. 143). Schools are sites for local memory work involving culturally derived and historically situated meanings, "democratic pillars" in the local community.

At the naming ceremony, which is an act of remembrance, Principal Flowers said, "Celebrating the Council Oak and learning more about that roots us in that knowledge and history," "enhances" the community as we "partner our history to that history." The school in this case is a place of memory work, a site for reworking the Tulsa memories through uplifting Indigenous roots, working alongside Indigenous communities. The students are also "partners" in this work. The supporters envisioned the elementary students learning about Tulsa's Indigenous history as a symbol of hope for futurity, and partners in remembering and forgetting, honoring schools as memorial spaces for understanding the past in reparative ways. Although the supporters saw aspirational potential, they also considered the ongoing struggles to share public names, identities and places during highly charged and divergent ideologies. One stated it this

way, “Reality is, this whole experience has shown me that people are not always good and these idealized views I had about humanity are not true” which is a “scarring feeling.”

Research Question 3: How did local/state place-based meanings and dominant historical narratives inform the meaning-making of those supportive of the change?

Local and state placed-based meanings informed the meaning making of those supportive of the change. The issues of renaming in the community reveal how people in communities perceive others with divergent understandings of the past, locally and across the nation. Names and name changes can reveal divisions among people occurring at different points in time. Members speculated whether the original naming of the public school in 1918 had any connection to the all-Black business community in the Greenwood District, just a few miles away. They wondered if the local school board’s decision in 1918 to name the school Lee was a strategy to mark the Maple Ridge housing district as a welcoming place for white families only.

Names can take on geographic and territorial meanings. Scholars who examined segregation-effects of naming streets Martin Luther King noted that streets named after the Civil Rights leader revealed visible economic and racial boundaries in the geographic landscape (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008). Creating meanings about the implicit reasons for the Confederate name in 1918, they questioned the racial and economic segregation of Tulsa and whether the school district covertly or overtly chose the name as racial redlining. In this case, meanings developed as collective members responded to past historical events, questioned, discussed, and debated.

In my case study research, I examined the members' meanings that evidenced different facets of Tulsa's public memory. I inquired about how various influences enabled or constrained particular memories in Tulsa. The Lee name highlighted and downplayed specific memories. The new name, Council Oak, highlights and downplays other memories. I connected the school renaming to the similar process of renaming Brady Street in Tulsa. Like phase one of the

renaming process of Lee School, the Brady Street process first decision was a "faux-renaming" (Brasher et al., 2018, p. 15) by trying to connect the street to a different historical figure named Brady. This "faux renaming" was a cost-conscious orientation to fixing a community problem by trying to associate new cultural memories with the "faux name." When this process was unsuccessful, they later replaced the "faux Brady" with Reconciliation Way. This is also the name of a nearby park, and John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation. The park and center tell the story of African Americans' role in building Oklahoma and the Tulsa Race Massacre, called the worst civic disturbance in American History (*Reconciliation Park, n.d.*).

Members also made historical connections between the naming of Lee School in 1918 to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. One member explained, "Leading up to Charlottesville and the name change, I started learning more about the [1921] Tulsa Race Massacre, and thinking to myself, that is right around the time that Lee was named." In 1921, just three years after school district leaders built and named Lee School in 1918, White rioters burned the Black businesses to the ground and massacred the Black community (Brasher et al., 2018). The members asked if the two events in 1918 and 1921 might be connected through racial, economic, and power dynamics within the city. The name Lee School became a metaphorical arena (Alderman, 2022) for debating historical events leading to the name.

In my analysis, members' interpretations reflected components of contemporary critical theory in related historical meanings of the symbol, Council Oak, to social hierarchies, as they historically remembered the treatment of the Indigenous people during the Trail of Tears. They referred to this treatment as a society divided "into the powerful and the powerless, the dominant and the subordinated" (Zhao & Bailey, unpublished, p. 3). They ascribed historical interpretations to the Council Oak honoring those who survived the forced removal from their tribal towns. The historical interpretations involved the United States government as a dominant force and the Indigenous people as powerless to resist. Some members questioned the symbolic logo and

branding and noted the sensitivity of using Indigenous symbols for a public school. Supporters agreed that the school district "should stay in close contact with the Indigenous community" for educating the school community about the Indigenous culture and meanings.

Historical Narratives Vary Within Communities Impacting Belonging and Care

Recently, scholars suggest that people are unaware of how a geographical place, its name, memories, racist origins, and histories, both personal and collective, could work together to create a sense of place (Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020). Levy et al.'s (2017) case narrative, comparable to the Tulsa case, additionally centered on care and leadership practices. The scholars asked stakeholders about their interpretations of history concerning their school's name, Lee High School. Both cases involved supportive name change members concerned about students' learning and belonging as they attended a school with a namesake who fought for the enslavement of Black people during the Civil War. The authors questions centered the discussions of the name change on the concept of care, "Who benefits?" "Who might be hurt?" and "What are the long-term effects of the decision?" (Levy et al., 2017, p. 117).

Conversations about diverse interpretations of history expanded as a members responded to "who might be hurt?" As in my case study and Levy et al. (2017), deeper historical narratives framed members' responses. One cannot answer these questions without noting how the past influences the present and future. As SI outlines, people interacted with the toponym according to their beliefs about the continuing effects of history. In this case of Confederate symbolism, members responded to the question, "who might be hurt?" The members in my case answered, "The descendants of the enslaved, Black people, and all who consider themselves as allies of the marginalized" might be hurt by the Lee name. Students could also be hurt. In contrast, another Tulsan responded to this question, "It hurts no one because, history is in the past" and to "change the name is to erase history" (Hardiman, 2017). These are two divergent answers reflecting diverse understandings of a racialized past and the continuing implications of that past.

Others acted toward the Council Oak name as having transformational effects. An Indigenous member in this case explained the Council Oak name in positive terms. They noted, the name "took a bad memory from us [Indigenous people]," revealing this member's connection to the name Lee as a hurtful reminder, and implied that the new name could be restorative. Scholars in one study drew from individuals' firsthand experiences 'wanting to forget' some of the painful historical past while daily experiencing symbols in their material environment that stirred unwanted memory and 'memory returns' (Muzaini, 2015, p. 110). The Tulsa member perceived the bad memory of the name continued to affect him and others now, in the present. He perceived the name as part of the local area's remembering/forgetting processes.

The local name change was part of a broader national movement of memory work. The memory work not only reflected important practices of remembrance (Council Oak) and of forgetting (Lee) for members in this case but for the region and nationally, as other communities learn from Tulsa as a microcosm of community efforts and movements in the United States. Countries worldwide are adopting Indigenous naming practices (Bigon, 2008; Guyot & Seethal, 2007; Nash, 2002; Yeh, 2013). Yeh (2013) describes this work as revealing not only "evidence of things that have disappeared or changed" but also "projections of people's ideologies" (p. 121). Scholars have noted that Indigenous place naming in recent decades is part of a spatial strategy to reclaim marginalized identities and as a tool for returning to origins and pre-colonial references world-wide (Azaryahu & Golan, 2001; Gill, 2005; Guyot & Seethal, 2007).

Implications for Practice

My study has various implications for practice, including memorial entrepreneurship, teacher preparation programs, facilitator and citizen dialogue instructional spaces, and attention to Indigenous history at public schools.

Memorial Entrepreneurship

This study offers promising practical implications for developing memorial entrepreneur training, conferences, tourism planning, commemorative advocacy meetings, artists, and others civically engaged in commemorative work. Scholars comprehend place naming as contemporary commemorative work involving the social construction of history (Alderman, 2022). This contemporary work involves people in the community that hold various roles, such as artists, tour guides, community activists, policymakers, public writers for editorials that focus on local history, government officials, museum curators, commission members, school board and business leaders considered memorial entrepreneurs that shape public perspectives and future construction (Alderman, 2022; Dwyer & Alderman, 2008; Naef, 2019).

Teacher Preparation Programs

This case offers educational information for teachers in preparation at universities and TPS training. As part of the community, teachers often become the center of political arguments concerning teaching the next generation about local, regional, and American history. This case offers insightful information for teachers for a practical understanding of how school renaming, and community divisions affect families and students. It also offers insights for teachers to explore the toponymic landscape in their schools and communities and to educate and shape collective remembering and forgetting of historical narratives. I believe the case can provide future teachers with examples of community meanings, encouraging collaborative school displays, and inspiring them to closely examine the school names and materials and how they connect to identities in their community for sense of belonging.

Attention to Indigenous History at Public Schools

The indigenous meanings of Council Oak have implications for the next steps for the school community. This case can stimulate conversations in communities with indigenous leaders about land acknowledgments at public schools. Land acknowledgments show respect for the "human-land interactions" (Yeh, 2013, p.121) during the pre-colonial eras of the local region.

Such land acknowledgments can take many forms. Land acknowledgments are often written on plaques that acknowledge the indigenous people, celebrating the first people to live and call this land home while also acknowledging the long history of violence toward Native Americans and the injustices that continue today. Land acknowledgments at local schools sometimes accompany outdoor gardens, used as classrooms that intersect lessons for indigenous history, geography, and environmental initiatives (e.g., Beasley, 2022).

Since the Council Oak name is a form of land acknowledgment, one next step could be to design a culturally responsive curriculum about its historical context for students. Designed in cooperation with the Indigenous leaders of all tribes in the Tulsa region, groups could create an outdoor project for the community and the students to learn more about the name. Remembering Oklahoma territory and Indigenous history through the Council Oak name was an act of memory work to acknowledge Muscogee Creek Nation's gathering at the Council Oak tree in 1836, after a long journey from Alabama under the control of the United States government (Payne, 2019). These initiatives potentially bring people together and educate Tulsans and outsiders about our significant beginnings and the importance of roots in place and in the land.

Significance of this Study

This Tulsa, Oklahoma case offers a close examination of school renaming in one context from the perspective of supporters. It is one of few case studies about school renaming at the elementary school level and of few case studies focused only on supporters and their unique culturally derived meanings. In addition, it is the only case I could find that focuses on members' meanings in making sense of the name change process and the local influences of those meanings and the names and symbols. Moreover, my focus on the meanings and phases over time reveals the intricate shifts and processes involved as one community committed to the name change, fragmented into different groups for and against the change, and the long-lasting effects of the

change. I mark an important multi-year process for local history that also works against silencing of supporters; a steady message they perceived.

Progressive narratives that interpret Confederate names as racist involve situating injustice in the past through symbols. During this surge of school renaming, emotional and civic investments in names and symbols have increased and reflected community divisions over how we make sense of the past and its continuing harms or benefits. Examination of the Tulsa local process and meaning-making through an interpretive lens offered insights leading to the intricate meanings to enhance understanding of contemporary symbolic interactions with a school name linked to Confederate symbols, and a name connected to Indigenous history. My analysis of meanings revealed that the members collectively constructed these meanings through a continual social, relational process. In this period of mass national removal of the Confederate symbols case studies with local nuances and meanings help researchers understand the individual, community, local, as well as national influences of renaming schools. Supporters' meanings microcosm broader national meanings, mirroring some of aspects of national name change movements and CRT.

While other studies offer case narratives (Levy et al., 2017), they center on other renaming aspects, such as philosophical arguments about racial justice mediated through commemoration policies (Agosto et al., 2017). Compared to these cases (Agosto et al., 2017; Levy et al., 2017), the Tulsa case involved two phases in which the supportive members voiced their complaints, leading district leaders to re-evaluate the process and start over. This was significant to underscore the tumultuousness of the process. The members' commitment and endurance through both phases confirmed that "removing this racist name" became the members main priority. Highlighting the members' affective entanglements, relational fragmentation, and personal investments to change the name, my case study, as in other studies, indicated members

deemed this cause worth the safety risks and large investments of arranging childcare, labor, time, entangled emotions.

My interpretivist study provides insights from holistic analysis of one local process that is occurring in other sites nationwide. This case illustrates how a local community within its past and present contexts, through the meaning-making of members supportive of a name change, experienced the socio-cultural process of changing a school name. Currently, most place-naming and education scholars approach the phenomenon of school renaming through critical and critical race theories. Recent critical studies examined how names can cause retraumatizing effects over time and create barriers to equality, belonging, learning, and implicitly segregate communities (e.g., Agosto et al., 2017; Levy et al., 2017). Although critical interpretations were common among supporters, the study was not designed from a critical perspective. Its interpretivist purpose to examine supportive members' meanings through general interpretivist lens revealed larger context/forces that shaped the local case, the pandemic, HB 1775, and local historical narratives.

For several decades, cultural geographers have studied controversies about street and building names, memorials, and monuments related to enslavement, the Civil War, and the civil rights movement in relation to geography, critical theory, and history (e.g., Alderman & Inwood, 2013; Alderman & Rose-Redwood, 2020). However, only a few studies in education scholarship address K-12 school renaming, some which include Confederate symbols (e.g., Agosto et al., 2017; Levy et al., 2017; Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022; Prier, 2019). This unique case reflects a series of changes, phases and commitments over years from the first removal of embossed Confederate flags to the school name change. Supporters of the name change reckoned with how to commemorate the 1921 anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre with sensitivity about how outsiders would perceive their city through names as a reflection of the community's core values legitimatizing what and who is important to remember. As I detailed earlier, public schools are

also sites that contribute to public memory work as social centers within communities. As local place-based meaning-making evolves, name change processes affect community identity and contribute to public memory.

Most recently, scholars advanced knowledge of renaming processes focusing on high school student anti-racist activism (Mansfield & Lambrinou, 2022), an all-white school board in an African American community, and the renaming of an elementary school via a name, Rosa Parks, important to the Black community in which the school was located (Prier, 2019). Findings in Tulsa add to these previous case studies by providing an understanding of supportive members' perception of the name, Council Oak, as reparative justice for Indigenous people and historical roots. The school, two land allotments from the Council Oak Park. The Council Oak Tree is a historical landmark which represents the founding of Tulsa by the Lochapoka Tribal Town of the Muscogee Nation.

This study aligns with memory-work scholars' arguments that urban spaces affect members' lived experiences and connections with the past (Inwood & Alderman, 2021). According to Brasher et al. (2018), who examined the role of neoliberalism in shaping toponymic politics, and street naming in Tulsa, Oklahoma, memory work is essential to healing the wounds of historical violence in any community. As part of this memory work in the same city, my study provides details of the school renaming just one or two years later with a name that "returns to Indigenous roots." My case study reveals how supporters investment in the name change of their elementary school reflects how they perceived the public school as a "pillar of democracy" that symbolizes rhe socialization of children. Even at the early elementary levels, children have a stake in cultural remembering and forgetting. Participants in this study believed engaging in this type of social change was an act of "restorative justice" and "restorative memory work" (Brasher et al., 2018; p. 6). It was important to these members for citizens to acknowledge racist complicity in place-naming policies while focusing on social justice.

Implications for Future Research

Further research to understand how emotional entanglements of the Confederate name and fragmented relationships residually affect the community's identity and the acceptance of the new name and identity as Council Oak School could enhance a broader understanding of national community identity adjustments to name changes. This case offers scholars insight into the community effects of Confederate naming and the effects of Indigenous naming practices on collective memory and community identity but is limited to just the years the community re-entered the building after the pandemic. Further research is necessary to follow the daily effects of the new name on community identity, students, faculty and parents.

Particularly in communities returning to Indigenous names in Oklahoma, nationwide, and worldwide, this study inspires future studies on how naming strategies affect public schools' cooperative relationships with tribal leaders. Oklahoma was the home of thirty-nine tribes, and in July 2020, the Supreme Court ruled that almost half of Oklahoma's land was within a Native American reservation (Wamsley, 2020). Opportunities for collaborative connections between researchers and Oklahoma tribes for various projects, land acknowledgments, educating teachers and students, and restorative memory work. Future ideas to further this case study research include involving Indigenous students, their families and others from the BIPOC communities attending Council Oak School, to develop acts of remembrance and enhance resources that support culturally responsive teacher preparation programs.

Finally, opportunities exist for reconceptualizing the "spatial narrative" (Azaryahu & Foote, 2008, p. 179) in Tulsa as reparative memory work in relation to Indigenous history. The Council Oak Tree, located at the Creek Nation Historic Council Oak Memorial Park, was barely visible within this urban socio-spatial area for over a century, hidden for years within the downtown cityscape and high rises until the school was renamed Council Oak School. Members in this case who identified as Indigenous offered deep meanings of Council Oak as part of

Oklahoma and American history. Other members, in this case, understood the connections of the school name to Tulsa and Oklahoma's past, but they voiced that they wanted to learn more about it.

Studies that examine how Indigenous meanings change in this school community and the effects on identity are salient for understanding how Indigenous school names work along with other symbols to create a spatial narrative. Valuable and powerful symbols in urban and rural landscapes can often represent various kinds of reparation and reconciliation. This case study about memory work through a school name, is part of larger forms of memorial politics, and "production of shared memory" (Naef, 2019, p.1). The school is a site of cultural tourism along with the Council Oak Park. My Tulsa case study, through local meanings, can help remind memorial entrepreneurs that memorials represent shared values while inspiring their work with and in local communities with principles of sensitivity and ethics of care (Till, 2012).

Implications for Theory

Most scholarship about place naming explores recent school renaming cases through critical theory, examining the racial implications of historical names with social justice aims to use school names as sites of counter-memory work, and reparative tools (Inwood & Alderman, 2021). My general interpretive lens of the Tulsa school name change case offers scholarship a different approach to expand theories of local meanings as core elements of socio-political debates, not to promote social action (a tenet of CRT), but for understanding the current phenomenon and members' meanings through a general interpretive lens. I focused on understanding meanings; they were critical of the name and absorbed the critical nature of the national movement toward anti-racist practices.

I sought to interpret and understand the holistic case through a lens focused on supportive members' meanings to understand what influenced their meaning-making and experiences. The supportive members, recognizing perceived racial injustices in the symbolic landscapes, names,

and materiality, similar to other name change supporters across the nation, "without fully framing their language as CRT, reflecting theoretical frames once used in legal studies and graduate courses" (Bailey, forthcoming). This case illustrates how "tenets of theories can circulate in common discourse and inform people's understanding of current events and the creation of sites of reconciliation and peace" (Bailey, Forthcoming) such as the way supportive members interpreted and experienced the school name Council Oak as a site of reconciliation. Through a general interpretive lens in which members saw their work as part of a reparative racial justice and equity process, the findings of this case offer promising insights into how community members nationwide might understand and experience their actions for name changes. Intepretivism can contribute to building an analytical, informative understanding of a local school renaming process from those undertaking the process (Blumer, 1969).

In this section, I draw out possible implications from the findings of this case for potential theoretical directions in place naming scholarship. I propose that names are linguistic tools, words with varied, nuanced shades of meanings, denotations, and connotations. They are rooted in individual and collective meanings within temporalities, past, present, and future. Geographic places are more than markers on a map that people use to navigate from here to there. I describe places as spaces that involve inhabitants and visitors, learning, relational experiences, and significant memories. Place names are more than just labels of space. They are symbolic representations of dynamic and nuanced meanings. Historical and cultural geographers define place names as "temporal and spatial impressions produced by people," reflecting how they perceive their surroundings, and "are products of human-land interaction" (Yeh, 2013, p. 121).

In considering the Tulsa public school case study through a historical, cultural, and geographical theoretical lens, the school name acts as a "temporal and spatial impression" (Yeh, 2013, p. 121). The name attached to a public space for learning, a public school, involves emotional attachments, memories, and experiences, "human-land interaction" (Yeh, 2013, p.121),

and nuanced attachments and experiences connected to teaching, learning, philosophies of education, school communities, and generativity. Place naming as a "temporal and spatial impression" of the "human-land interaction" nurtures an understanding of place through several theoretical frames and echoes the work of cultural geographers that place names are vehicles for "creating and maintaining emotional attachments to places" (Rose-Redwood et al., 2010, p. 457, 458).

The Tulsa case study revealed the school community members' emotional attachments to the local school and its meanings. A broad view of commemorative renaming examined current reparative place naming as memory work and characterized it as a "redistribution or sharing of naming power yet unrealized" (Alderman, 2022, p. 40). This case study provides possibilities for extending the advancement of memory work theories for community rebuilding after school renaming processes. Members' meanings revealed findings that temporality and adjustment to external forces were important components for grieving relationship losses, detaching emotions, and accepting the new name as identity. Such theories for community rebuilding might include social detachment processes from past school names, addressing loss and retraumatization of past names, and community re-establishment of meanings and discourse within this public school space.

Exploring local processes can help scholars and leaders understand the varied interpretations, rationale, and fragmentation effects at the local level and how they connect to national issues relating to place naming and commemoration. This case is about a ground-up effort to rename Lee School revealed members' interpretations of struggles that lay dormant until local and national events stirred members to get involved. Other communities and cities harbor racist histories and highly contested symbols. Regional leaders and members of this case wrestled with respectful ways to recognize, repair, and reconcile the generational damage and losses of their racist history. Leaders in other communities may undergo renaming procedures

unprecedented in their local region and, therefore, seek information for their procedures. Scholars study these local processes as commemorative work to develop ideas for fair and safe renaming processes for public schools, streets, housing additions, military bases, and university buildings (e.g., Agosto et al., 2017; Alderman, 2002; 2022; Alderman & Inwood, 2013; Alderman & Reuben, 2020; Brasher et al., 2017).

Researcher Reflection on Research Experience

I entered this study as a participant- researcher, grandmother of two students at Lee School. I walked to the Lee School campus many times without noticing the Confederate link to its name. After the 2017 white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, during which a counter protester was killed, I connected Confederate symbolism and contemporary meanings associated with enslavement and racism, causing harm and re-traumatization. People ascribe varied meanings to names and symbols. Displaying Confederate symbolism in public spaces was once celebrated and considered appropriate by some people. However, at this time, many consider these symbolic representations harmful and inappropriate for naming or displaying within public spaces unless it is a museum or place to store objects for historical study or documentation.

In these contemporary times, some perceive displays of Confederate symbolism as disruptive but a perpetuation of detrimental ideologies and dangerous to society. Combined with symbolic materiality (objects), they create a "mental sphere" (Knapp, 2006, p. 67) and a "spatial narrative" (Azarahu & Foote, 2008, p. 179) that legitimizes the beliefs for which these symbols stand (Azarahu & Foote, 2008). During this case study, I focused on a group of people who supported the renaming of this public school. I centered my work on their meanings, perceptions, and conceptual understandings of the phenomenon of school name-changing.

Stake (1995) describes case studies as "empathetic, attending to actor intentionality," seeking emic meanings and value commitments; although planned, the design is "emergent,

responsive, progressively focused" and provides "vicarious experience" (p.48). My research journey nurtured my way in the world, leading to new inquiries, curiosity about emic meanings and experiences, placing significance on meaning-making, and understanding symbols and the past as socially constructed knowledge.

School districts undergoing name changes continue to face mounting fears and safety concerns. I observed this courageous community undergo a school name change during heightened political divisions. Insight from emic meanings revealed that growth is painful and requires grieving. As I observed this community, I felt moments of pain and hope as a grandmother of this generation. From the harsh reality of the political process, I learned how tightly people can hold to their constructed meanings. Names matter eminently, and reflect important shared values, expectations, and identity, with powerful connotations and implications.

I believe this work, aligning symbols with community values and designing new "spatial narratives"(Azarahu & Foote, 2008, p. 179), is not complete, but continues to emerge and change as communities enter the arena, learn how to dialogue, and listen to experiences in democratic spaces. I want the community members to know that their meanings shaped mine. Our interactions, text sessions, and emails continue to shape me. A personal outcome of this project is my renewed determination to discover my Indigenous roots. The members' perceptions of indigeneity transformed how I see myself, my ancestors, and my grandchildren as part of the human-land connection. It has been a privilege and honor to cross paths with the Indigenous community, and the Council Oak School Community.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT FACE PAGE

Please take a moment to help us understand your characteristics, and feel free to leave any of these blank if you would rather not answer.

Name _____ Age _____

Role in the Name Change:_____

Role in the Tulsa Community _____and/or in the Muscogee Creek Community_____

Check one: ☐ Female ☐ Male

☐ Other/preferred pronouns_____

Check what best describes you.

☐ Single ☐ Separated
☐ Partnered/common law ☐ Divorced
☐ Married ☐ Widowed

Check what best describes you.

☐ African American ☐ White
☐ Indigenous _____tribe
☐ Native American ☐ _____ (biracial or state if not listed)
☐ Hispanic

How long have you lived in Tulsa?

APPENDIX B: ADULT CONSENT FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

PROJECT: PARENT AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS PERCEPTIONS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

INVESTIGATOR:
JOAN BROWN, PH.D. CANDIDATE OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

DISSERTATION ADVISOR:
LUCY E. BAILEY, PH.D., PROFESSOR, OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

PURPOSE:
This study will examine parents' and community members' perspectives of civic engagement in school board meetings and activities related to the renaming of an elementary school. I will also examine parents' and community members' perspectives of civic engagement in focus groups.

PROCEDURES:
You will complete an interview with the principal investigator. The principal investigator will record and transcribe the interview into a written document.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:
There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:
The anticipated benefit for participation is an opportunity to voice your perspectives. If you are interested, we will send you a copy of the results of the study when it is finished.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored on a password protected computer in a locked office and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. Data will be destroyed three years after the study has been completed. Video or audio tapes will be transcribed and destroyed within 14 days of the interview. You will not be identified individually; we will be looking at the group as a whole.

COMPENSATION:
There will be no compensation offered.

CONTACTS: You may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses and phone numbers, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information

about the results of the study: Joan Brown, Willard Hall, SCFD, College of Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (918) 381-9323. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty.

CONSENT DOCUMENTATION:

I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and of the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:

I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher

APPENDIX C: OSU IRB APPROVAL

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Application Number:	ED-18-114
Proposal Title:	Parent and Community Member's Perceptions of Civic Engagement
Principal Investigator:	Joan Brown
Co-Investigator(s):	
Faculty Adviser:	Ben Bindewald
Project Coordinator:	
Research Assistant(s):	

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Study Review Level:	Exempt
Modification Approval Date:	04/08/2021

The modification of the IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46. The original expiration date of the protocol has not changed.

Modifications Approved:
Modifications Approved: Change advisor from Ben Bindewald to Lucy Bailey

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved.
2. Submit a status report to the IRB when requested
3. Promptly report to the IRB any harm experienced by a participant that is both unanticipated and related per IRB policy.
4. Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the OSU IRB and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
5. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Sincerely,

Oklahoma State University IRB
223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078
Website: https://irb.okstate.edu/
Ph: 405-744-3377 | Fax: 405-744-4335| irb@okstate.edu

VITA

Joan Lea Brown

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: A CASE STUDY OF A TULSA, OKLAHOMA SCHOOL NAME CHANGE FROM CONFEDERATE TO INDIGENOUS ROOTS: SUPPORTERS' MEANING-MAKING

Major Field: Education

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2023.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Human Development and Family Science at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2016.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Family Studies and Gerontology at Southern Nazarene University, Tulsa, Oklahoma in 2013.

Experience:

Graduate Teaching, HDFS, May 2015-December 2016
Graduate Teaching, Social Foundations, Fall 2018-Spring 2023
Graduate Research Associate, HDFS, Spring 2014-2016
Graduate Research Associate, SCFD, Spring 2017-Spring 2023